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1.0 Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to give an account of the role of the discourse competence component in the one-year and two-year foundation course\(^1\) in common general studies of the upper secondary school in Norway. My focus will be to investigate the syllabi and selected textbooks\(^2\) which have been intended to cover the aims of the 1976, 1990 and 1994 curricula for upper secondary education. My expectation is that the focus on discourse competence, as a component of communicative competence, has changed in the period of the implementations of the three curricula. I found it natural to investigate some acclaimed and representative textbooks published in relation to the curricula, as they have been and still are very central to the teaching of English in the classroom.

Background

So, why discourse? Discourse and discourse competence in language teaching are important issues for several reasons. First and foremost, it is the notion that language is much more than isolated to the sentence itself. The traditional grammatical and linguistic devices and rules are not sufficient as guidelines to produce a language in context intended for communication. Second, students should learn how to produce written and oral texts that are coherent in thoughts and ideas, and how to use cohesive devices to link these ideas together. The use of such techniques and strategies is one characteristic of the "good" language learner. Therefore, I chose to look at how authors of different textbooks have included and focused on the discourse component in their works during the period central to this thesis. The foundation course, being the first year of upper secondary education in Norway, is a step into the proficient use of English as a foreign language. Students meet challenges both during their studies and professional life which require a good command of the language. The ability to develop a good discourse competence is therefore important.

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\(^1\) The curriculum of 1976 implemented one-year and two-year foundation courses. In the 1994 curriculum only one-year foundation courses exist.

\(^2\) Textbooks must be understood as the course books provided to the pupils attending the actual course, containing various literary texts and activities.
A secondary focus of this thesis has been to illuminate the role of discourse competence in second language teaching. Early in my current study I took interest in the discourse competence component of the communicative teaching approach. First of all, I felt that I lacked knowledge about discourse competence and wanted to find out more about it. The more I learned what discourse and discourse competence meant, and still mean, I have understood the value of including discourse strategies in second language teaching. My practice as upper secondary school teacher in foreign languages, has given me insight to how discourse has been used – or not used – in the classroom. I have also through this study seen the importance of a focus on discourse competence through the pupils’ production of oral and written texts.

**Aims**

The overall aim of this thesis is presented in the following question:

- How is the discourse competence concept reflected in syllabi, textbooks and workbooks in the period 1976 - 2003?

In detail, the aim of this thesis is to answer the following set of questions:

- What is the focus of discourse competence in the 1976, 1990 and 1994 syllabi?
- What is the focus of discourse competence in textbooks and workbooks selected?
- Has there been a shift of focus during the period in question?

**Validity and reliability**

In the process of analysing syllabi and textbooks with a focus on discourse features, decisions had to be made. Of practical reasons I had to make a selection of areas to focus on in order to keep within the limits of a thesis. I have attempted to justify these selections in the discussions prior to the analysis of the textbooks and syllabi and in the presentation of the chosen categories.
The validity of this thesis is to what extent the measurements measure what it is intended to measure. The results are based on a thorough investigation of the targets of the syllabi in question and activities provided in the textbooks/workbooks selected. The reliability refers to how consistent the measurement instrument is, and whether this instrument will produce the same results in a different setting with the same aims. The selection of material investigated is limited. I have attempted to prepare an instrument which measure the same type of data even if I selected a different material for investigation. This instrument is expressed in a didactic model.
Chapter 1: A period of transition (1970s – 1990s)

1.0 Introductory comments

It will be natural in this thesis to explain the background of English Language Teaching (ELT) in a historical and theoretical context. The period in question had a shift of paradigm in the teaching of foreign languages. This chapter will give a brief overview of the changes that took place over the decades. The focus of this chapter will be on two central features of ELT: the Audio-Lingual method and the Communicative approach which led to the incorporation of discourse competence. Methods prior to this period, such as the Grammar-Translation method and recent approaches in syllabus and textbook design, such as those reflected in recent Common European Framework (2004), would give a broader picture of the historical development. However, these elements are not directly concerned with the topic of this thesis and must be dealt with elsewhere.

1.1 The Audio-Lingual Method

The era prior to the mid 70s was characterised largely by a scientific approach to second language (L2) teaching. American structuralists developed models of describing modern languages through objective methods and empirical findings. Later on, these models were combined with behaviouristic concepts of learning, such as conditioning and reinforcement (habit formation). This scientific approach viewed language as physically observable utterances in which phonetics and morphology were considered most important. Focus on meaning in language (semantics) got little attention.

The spoken language had priority among the American structuralists. However, written language was considered “purer” and grammatical forms were studied here like in the traditional grammars, such as in Latin. Behaviouristic theories emphasised practice in large quantities. This meant many exercises and repetition (Simensen 1998:44-48).

The scientific approach culminated in what is known as the Audio-Lingual Method. In practice this employed, by and large, mechanic drills of language patterns and imitating native speaker language. Grammar instructions should be given by trained linguists. Further, the
notion that the mother tongue (L1) structures or habits might interfere with the L2-learning had major influence among the scientist. This notion was based on the contrastive analysis hypothesis.

Audio-lingual teaching was specified through system and control. Language passages were selected and repeated extensively in the teaching resources, and the progress in learning was carefully controlled. Normally, the teaching consisted of a demonstration phase of a language structure, then a practice phase where the language structures were carried into effect. Ideally, the language should be presented through audio-taped dialogues played for the pupils. The dialogues should be rehearsed and imitated, and even memorised.

Sentence patterns and structures of grammar should be practised through drills. Such drills included exercises with substitution tables so that there could be a controlled response to them (ibid: 55-56). The example below is taken from *Active English Workbook* (1977: 37, adapted) and is typical of such drills:

**How many reasonable sentences can you make on the basis of the table?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miss Bunn</th>
<th>Mr Thompson</th>
<th>Anna le Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>didn’t, doesn’t</td>
<td>detest, dislike</td>
<td>resent, avoid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his, her</td>
<td>their</td>
<td>Not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you may put the verbs in any tense</td>
<td>you... saying “hello” to people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being in for supper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being introduced to people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transformation exercises were also widely used. Such exercises should for example transform the verb tense, pronouns, positive/negative phrases or conjunction of sentences e.g. (*Active English Workbook* :56):

**Example:**

*The red book contains great wisdom.*
*You negligently dropped the red book.*
*The red book you negligently dropped contains great wisdom.*
*The red book that you……………..*
*The red book which you……………..*
*The red book, which you negligently dropped, contains……………..*
Grammar should be taught inductively. Such exercises should be preceded by a generalised explanation of the grammar phenomena. Principally, grammar instruction should be kept to a minimum but was often used all the same (Simensen 1998:56).

Moreover, the audio-lingual method involved complete control from the teacher. Classroom activities should be planned so that pupils’ responses were inevitably correct. The use of the language laboratory was one such tool. Instructions were given by the teacher and correction of mistakes should be performed immediately. Avoiding errors was important, and could thus be overcome by practising a given model a sufficient number of times. The primary objectives were the audio-lingual skills, listening and speaking. Vocabulary training and practice of writing and reading had secondary focus (op cit:57-58). To sum up, slogans from this period comprise the aspects of this method:

1. Language is speech, not writing.
2. A language is what its native speakers say, not what someone thinks they ought to say.
3. Languages are different.
4. A language is a set of habits.
5. Teach the language, not about the language.

(op cit:58)

1.2 The communicative approach

However, the scientific approach of language teaching had critics. R. Lado had in 1957 emphasised that automatic language habits must be produced so that the mind could concentrate on the communicative message rather than grammatical structures (ibid 1998:48). Noam Chomsky was one of many scholars who brought about new concepts of language teaching. He made a distinction between linguistic performance and linguistic competence in which the observable utterance of a native speaker and the underlying meaning were separated. Language in context was the new field of focus (ibid 1998:64).

Several linguists viewed learning of language through strategies in communicative situations. Such strategies could for example be to appeal for assistance, paraphrasing, code-switching or meaning replacement. *Speech act theory* was one force which supported the communicative approach. This theory understands language both as *saying* and *doing*. Substantially, this meant conveying the literal meaning of words and grammatical structures (*propositional*
function) and conveying the intentions or purposes of the speaker (illocutionary function) (ibid 1998:74).

Canale & Swain’s work of 1980 (see below) had a great influence also in Norway. The communication concept they presented involved social interaction with a high degree of unpredictability and creativity within discourses and social contexts. Communication always had a purpose and the outcome of such discourse might be both successful and unsuccessful. Canale & Swain presented four components of knowledge and skills – grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence -, which are further dealt with below (ibid 1998:105).

The new approaches within language teaching gained ground in syllabus design from 1975 onwards. The Council of Europe performed research which had a major influence on syllabi throughout Europe, including Norway. The outcome of this research is known as the Threshold Level Project. Documents like The Threshold Level in a European Unit/Credit System for Modern Language Learning by Adults (1975), Scope 1986 and Threshold Level 1990, were guides which provided models for syllabus designers. Principally, these documents are frameworks of what to teach, and hence specifications of language learning objectives. The 1975 document specified teaching of language as both functional and semantic. The 1986 and 1990 documents went further and included the communicative competence concept in addition to a functional basis of teaching. Canale & Swain’s components (above) were central in these documents. They were extended with two components, sociocultural competence and social competence (ibid 1998:106-110). The components are attended to in more detail below.

Communicative language teaching (CLT) focuses on comprehension and meaning. Learning of the target language is viewed as a fundamental tool for communication in which at least two parties are involved. Discourse competence, as a part of the communicative competence concept and a tool to mediate communication, was highly influential in this approach as a structuring force of both written and oral texts. The use of language should be intentional, and risk-taking skills should be developed. CLT had communication as the main objective and the classroom activities included abundantly communicative activities that were meaningful in certain communicative contexts. Such activities could be primarily transactional i.e.
conveying information or interactional which pursued to establish and maintain social relations (ibid 1998:115).

As to the Norwegian school subject, there were several warnings about mechanistic drills and incoherent exercises in syllabi presented in the 70s, 80s and 90s\(^3\). It was emphasised that meaningful input would develop communicative competence as well as through systematic practice. Longer texts, such as novels and short stories, were presented and read as parts of the input language. Errors should not be avoided but approached constructively so as to learn from them. Communicative competence was fully spelled out in the 1994 curriculum for upper secondary school (see below). The four components introduced by Canale & Swain, and the additional two in *Threshold Level 1990*, as referred to above, were introduced here and aspects such as discourse were explained. This will be explained further below.

### 1.3 Summary

This chapter’s purpose was to give an overview of the central aspects of L2 teaching from the 1970s to the 1990s. I have chosen to concentrate on the Audio-Lingual Method and the Communicative approach as they have served as mainstream strategies in the teaching of foreign languages. We have seen that the early parts of the given period were anchored to the Audio-Lingual method which involved system and control. Later, the communicative approach broke through and various communicative competences were in focus, such as discourse competence. The new approach abolished mechanistic drills to the advantages of language in context and maintenance of social relations.

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\(^3\) Syllabi for the primary and lower secondary school.
Chapter 2: What is discourse?

2.0 Introductory comments

In this chapter, there will be a presentation of the theories of discourse within ELT of the given period and in relation to the development of discourse competence, as stated in the Introduction above. First, I will give definitions of discourse in order to explain the different aspects of the development of discourse competence as presented by many contributors of the field. Central in this perspective is also the work conducted by the Council of Europe. Next, I will go one step further and elaborate two important elements of discourse: coherence and cohesion in spoken and written texts. Finally, I have chosen to devote space to a central aspect of discourse which includes both coherence and cohesion and employed in both textbooks and syllabi, namely genre. The purpose of this chapter is to answer the question as stated in the headline: What is discourse? Nevertheless, this chapter will also bring about the basic features of the topic to be discussed in Chapter 3.

2.1 Definitions

Teachers of English as a foreign language must focus on many aspects of communicative language learning. Among these aspects is discourse competence that has been included in recent curricula. Discourse in ELT, and in all modern language teaching, comprises different devices which may be visualized contextually both in spoken and written texts. In this part I will clarify and define what is meant by discourse competence in ELT. In explaining this, I will use the general term discourse and theories of discourse analysis.

Short definitions of discourse define it, on one hand, as communication of thoughts in words and in conversation, and on the other hand as a formal discussion or debate of an issue presented orally or textually, for example a lecture or a letter to the editor. However, discourse and the ability to obtain discourse competence through ELT include more than these short definitions. In the 1960s and 1970s a new dimension of language competence was introduced, namely communicative competence, which was presented above. Hymes (1972:278) defines communicative competence as: ‘when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner.’ It is out of this concept we have to
understand discourse competence even though this definition, first and foremost, characterises the competent native speaker, as Simensen (1994:18, my translation) argues.

Further, Canale & Swain (1980) introduced discourse competence as one out of four partial competences defining communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Canale (1983) explains grammatical competence as to the formal rules of the language comprising vocabulary, word formation, syntax, pronunciation, spelling and linguistic semantics. Sociolinguistic competence refers to ‘the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on contextual factors such as status of participants, purposes of the interaction and norms or conventions of interaction’ (Canale 1983:7). Discourse competence is understood, by Canale, as the ‘mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres’ (op cit:9). In addition to this explanation, Canale extends the definition of discourse competence to involving both processing and production of spoken and written texts in so far as he includes listening and reading (op cit:23-24). Last, strategic competence involves strategies that interlocutors use to initiate, direct and maintain or repair communication (Canale 1983, as cited in Korsvold 1997:11f).

As mentioned, these notions of communicative competence have later been adopted in the European Council’s Scope (1986) and Threshold Level (1990) which served as guidelines for the development of national syllabi also in Norway (see Chapter 4). Scope (van Ek 1986), was a work ‘in progress’ for the later Threshold Level 1990 (van Ek & Trim 1991) and a revision of the former Threshold Level 1975. The work that culminated in these documents was used to ‘specify how a learner should be able to use a language in order to act independently in a country in which that language was the vehicle of communication in everyday life’ (van Ek & Trim 1991:iii). Thus, the work of the European Council has constituted a major impact on the work of ‘syllabus designers, for curricular reforms, for examination development, for textbook writing and course design’ (op cit).

Scope defines discourse competence as ‘the ability to use appropriate strategies in the construction and interpretation of texts’ (van Ek 1986:47). Here, a text is understood the way

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Halliday & Hasan (1976) define it: ‘any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that forms a unified whole’ (ibid:29). Even though this definition covers both texts created by several sentences and texts consisting of a single sentence, *Scope* applies to the strategies that string sentences together. The discourse competence is further specified through text-types and strategies. The text-types have been classified into five categories as shown below:

**Fig. 1 Specification of text-types (van Ek 1986:47)**

Categories 1 and 2 include texts such as reports, comments and presentations etc of a wide range according to the level of education. Strategies to employ in producing such texts involve: structuring (e.g. introduction – discussion – conclusion; development of an argument; provision of logical links; ensuring coherence; etc.), highlighting, distinguish between fact (objective) and comment (subjective) and gearing presentation to intended reader(s)/listener(s). As for spoken texts prosody features (such as intonation and stress) must be used appropriately, as well as mime and gesture.

In category 3, the learner is both a producer and an interpreter. Here, communicative events such as conversations, discussions and debates are included. Learners are obliged to both be ready and able to take part in discussions in their natural environment. Discourse strategies when participating in for example discussions may include e.g. to express
agreement/disagreement, asking for the floor, make objections, interrupt, to clarify, to structure the discourse (e.g. open, close, emphasise) etc.

Categories 4 and 5 deal with listening and reading. In working with spoken or written text receptively, normally three steps are applied. The first step is to understand the factual information of the content. Next step is to interpret the ‘intentions’ of the text i.e. what the text is meant to achieve regarding the listener/reader. The final step is to relate the text to one’s own background knowledge (schemata). Strategies to employ when listening and reading texts are to segment (distinguish within the text, more or less coherent parts), establish links between segments, distinguish essential and non-essential information, and fact from comment, cope with unfamiliar linguistic elements, supply lacking or deliberately omitted information and use various study-techniques. Further, strategies dealing with oral texts will include awareness of non-verbal features (such as mime and gesture) and prosodic features (ibid: 48-52).

Threshold Level 1990 specifies language functions – i.e. what people do by means of language - as an element of communicative competence. One of these language functions is structuring discourse. Threshold Level 1990 (van Ek & Trim 1991: 41-47) exemplifies strategies of structuring discourse. Such strategies include for example ways of opening or closing conversations, turn-taking, exemplifying, communication repair among other central elements of both written and spoken discourse. Threshold Level 1990 provides substantial examples of how these functions operate in discourse. Thus, these examples and pinpoint selection of strategic discourse have influenced the understanding of discourse competence as undertaken in many textbooks and in syllabi. Further, as for writing the discourse competence concept is strengthened in the sections Dealing with texts: reading and writing and Writing. Here, central explicit objectives are concerned with how to distinguish between main points and details in the text, and how to open and close letters (op cit; Simensen 1994:27).

Simensen (1994:19) explains that the notion of discourse competence in language teaching originates from the shift of paradigm in linguistics in the 1960s and 1970s (see above). This shift broke with the tradition of analysing and describing language primarily limited to the sentence. The new paradigm took interest in analysing and describing coherent texts, oral “texts,” conversations as well as speeches/lectures, and written texts, tales as well as formal
texts. In this shift discourse analysis became important. Thus, discourse analysis generally has two main goals:

1) to analyse the language beyond the sentence
2) to analyse the language in use

In discourse analysis utterances (words/phrases uttered and understood in a given context without the requirements of a sentence) as well as sentences in connected text, are equally important.

Further, Simensen explains discourse competence as:

[...]the ability to combine utterances into coherent discourse i.e. the ability to combine ideas so that there is coherence in form by for example using pronouns and grammatical connectors, and the ability to create a “read thread” in thought and consequently continuity in the text. Discourse competence also comprises, among other things, the ability, both receptively and productively, to distinguish between different text- and conversation forms, to structure texts, to master different types of conversations, e.g. how to open and close a conversation, to combine different utterances in meaningful communicative patterns and to master different strategies of conversation, e.g. to make oneself heard or give the floor to the next etc.

(op cit, my translation).

Guy Cook has contributed extensively to the development of discourse as an element in language teaching. His definition of discourse is: 'stretches of language perceived to be meaningful, unified, and purposive' (Cook 1989:156). He explains in theories of discourse that there are two different kinds of language that are potential study objects:

[...]one abstracted in order to teach a language or literacy, or to study how the rules of language work, and another which has been used to communicate something and is felt to be coherent (and may, or may not happen to correspond to a correct sentence or a series of correct sentences). This latter kind of language - language in use, for communication - is called discourse; and the search for what gives discourse coherence is discourse analysis

(op cit:6).

Cook further emphasises that grammatically well-structured sentences do not necessarily convey coherence. Grammar must be seen as a resource in discourse when needed, but can be
left out when not. The importance is not the conformity to rules but the fact that the language used communicates and is recognised as coherent by its receivers. In this, he concludes that identifying stretches of language as discourse may be perceived differently by individuals, and is hence a subjective matter (ibid:7). Cook, then, emphasises the interdependence of grammar and vocabulary: ‘Discourse and formal skills are interdependent and must be developed together’ (ibid:79).

Michael McCarthy (2001) defines the study of discourse as the study of language independently of the notion of the sentence. Such study involves the examining of the relationship between a text and the situation in which it occurs (op cit:48). McCarty explains that the terms text and discourse have been used interchangeably in the study of utterances, or set of utterances as part of a context. However, he points out the distinction between texts as products of language use (e.g. public notices, novels, academic articles or transcripts of conversations) and discourse as the process of meaning creation and interaction, either written or spoken (referred to as transactional and interactional). In this light, Nunan (1993) has argued the difference between the terms text and discourse, referring to text as any written record of a communicative event (spoken or written), and discourse as the interpretation of the communicative event in context (op cit: 6-7). Others (such as Crystal 1992:25 and 72) draw little distinctions between the two terms.

Furthermore, McCarthy emphasises the importance of spoken discourse by referring to Sinclair & Coulthard’s work (1975) which examined classroom interaction between pupils and teachers. This study found that the classroom interaction was defined by several factors such as setting, institutional roles of the teacher (source of input, evaluator and controller) and pupils as receptors and respondents, and the goals transmission of knowledge in question-answer sessions or controlled discussion, key knowledge and testing of its reception. Structurally, the context was reflected in this possible sequence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiation (I)</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>What does ‘slippery’ mean?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response (R)</td>
<td>Pupil</td>
<td>That you can fall, because the floor is polished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up (F)</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Yes, you can fall, you can slip, good.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(cited in McCarthy 2001:50)
Even though Sinclair and Coulthard’s model was applicable outside the classroom it was criticised for not including other types of interaction such as talk between equals. Such talk is less controllable and thus unpredictable, nevertheless something to be achieved in spoken discourse. This is the concern of conversation analysts.

Jennifer Jarvis and Mark Robinson (1997) have developed the ‘I:R:F’ structure further. They were interested to see whether, in the interaction of the classroom, the teacher’s feedback (F) moves as a discoursal means of formulating and aligning meaning (op cit:214). This work is seen through a Vygotskian perspective (Vygotsky 1962) in which learning is seen as facilitated in the socalled “zone of proximal development” (ZPD). In this zone a learner is able to enhance his or her stage of conceptual development through instruction as well as imitation, and also interaction with more knowledgeable others (Jarvis and Robinson 1997:213; Ellis 1997:48-49). Through this research, which was conducted in primary schools, the elaboration of the Focus, Build, Summarize pattern of discourse was presented. Through a clear focus a topic may be clearly articulated. Next the build sequence will help the pupil to create meaning and give the teacher the opportunities to appropriate what the children say in the target language and concepts. Summarize is of great importance in articulating clearly what the segment of the lesson has been. However, a successful achievement of such an approach may not always be evident in classes where discourse skills are difficult to accomplish. But it may prove important in the identification of an interactive discourse where the teacher supports the pupils in their learning (Jarvis and Robinson 1997:226-227). Here, the role of the teacher in the process of developing discourse is illuminated.

2.2 Coherence and cohesion

David Nunan (op cit) has also contributed to theories of discourse. He explains discourse as piece of communication in context and describes a text as a written or taped record of a piece of communication (Nunan 1993:6-7,20). Nunan focuses on two central elements of discourse, coherence and cohesion.

A text which is coherent literally means that sentences or utterances and larger passages seem to ‘hang together’ so that they appear to be meaningful in a context. Apart from understanding the grammar and vocabulary of the text, we need to know how the sentences relate to each
other. The interpretation of a text which is coherent depends largely on the text-forming devices such as ordering sentences or paragraphs, and the use of words with certain references. Moreover, in explaining discourse as ‘communication in context’, Nunan emphasises context as vital in coherence. He distinguishes context on one hand as linguistic – the language that surrounds and accompanies the piece of discourse, and on the other hand as non-linguistic or experiential in which the discourse takes place. The latter includes types of communicative events (jokes, lectures, conversations etc), topics, purpose of the event, setting, time, physical aspect and the participants and the relation between them. An important element here is also the background knowledge (schemata) which underlies the participants and the communicative event (op cit:8). The context and the non-linguistic features of a communicative event (spoken or written) will make sense in terms of the ‘normal’ experience of each individual. This ‘normal’ experience will be interpreted locally and be linked to what is familiar and expected (Yule 1996:84).

Example:

1. Plant Sale
2. Garage Sale

In the example above we see two notices of the same kind. The first one indicates that plants are for sale, whereas the second example does not mean that garages are sold. Since most people know that garage sale means selling household items from their garage, this will be interpreted in this way (op cit).

In this context, discourse also involves the cognitive processes of how readers or listeners perceive and interpret a spoken or written text. These cognitive processes are often related to schemata theory which account for how we relate new information to pre-existing knowledge about the world and the text. This combination of background knowledge and the text itself, will direct the interpretation of coherence in extended texts i.e. how sentences relate to each other and how the units of meaning are combined. Techniques which activate cognitive processes are numerous. One such technique is the use of pre-text or pre-reading activities. This will be dealt with below (McCarthy 2001:52).

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5 See also Simensen 1998 pp. 88-91.
Cohesion is thus the set of devices which make a text coherent. Simensen (1998:66) defines cohesion as ‘those linguistic devices that can be used to obtain texture both within and between sentences.’ Halliday & Hasan (1976) identified five different types of cohesion: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion (collocation and reiteration). Hasan (1985) has altered this list and reduced it to four categories as substitution is being seen as a sub-category of ellipsis (Nunan 1993:21). Nunan describes referential cohesion as words in the text which point backwards (anaphoric) as well as forward (cataphoric) to the source of interpretation. Reference could for example be the use of personal pronouns e.g.

“James Olivier is a great chef. He has made TV-cooking popular.”

Demonstrative reference is expressed through determiners which represent single words, pharases or longer chunks, e.g.

“In spite of low popularity, President George W. Bush continues his war of freedom in Iraq. This seems to be his most important goal.”

A third reference device is comparison which could be expressed through adjectives or adverbs, and serve to compare items within a text, e.g.

A: Would you like these seats?  
B: No, as a matter of fact, I’d like the other seats.

Substitution refers to words within the text that can be substituted to avoid repetitions e.g.

“There are some new tennis balls in the bag. These ones have lost their bounce.”

Ellipsis occurs when an essential structural element is omitted from a phrase and can only be recovered by referring to an element in the preceding text. The second statement in the example below cannot be interpreted without the first, e.g.
Sylvia: I like the blue hat.
Mary: I prefer the green.

Both substitution and ellipsis have three types: nominal, verbal and clausal.

Conjunction differs from the cohesive devices mentioned above in that it does not remind the reader of previously mentioned entities or actions. Nevertheless, conjunction is a cohesive device because it signals a relationship that can only be interpreted fully through reference to other parts in the text. Conjunctions might be adversative e.g. “However,..”, “On the other hand..” They can be additive e.g. “From a marketing viewpoint, the popular tabloid encourages the reader to read the whole page instead of choosing stories. And isn’t that what any publisher wants?” (“And” signals additional information). Conjunctions could also have a temporal function where they relate in terms of timing of their occurrence e.g. “First….., then….., last.” Further, a conjunction could be causal as it functions as a signal of cause or consequence e.g. “He closed the window because the cold draught was intolerable.”

Lexical cohesion refers to a semantic relationship between two words in a text. The two major categories of lexical cohesion are reiteration and collocation. Reiteration refers to repetition of words (e.g. a house – house), synonyms (e.g. slope – incline), superordinates (e.g. pneumonia – the illness) or general words (e.g. steamed buns – things). Collocation means all those items that are semantically related in a text (e.g. a biological context: synthesise… organic… inorganic…green plants…). However, many linguists have problems determining whether such cohesive relationships exist. These words must be understood in a context as they often occur together and are associated to each other (op cit:21-33; Simensen 1998:66-67). This information structure elaborated above is displayed below:
As McCarthy (2001:52) defines cohesion with reference to Halliday & Hasan’s work (1976, above), it is concerned with the surface linguistic ties (grammatical and lexical) in the text rather than the cognitive processes of interpretation as explained through coherence. Halliday & Hasan (1989) extended the definition of cohesion to include other discourse phenomena such as adjacency pairs, parallelism, theme-rheme development, and given-new information.

Halliday & Hasan’s cohesion theory has been criticised by several linguistics such as Carrell (1982) and Morgan and Sellner (1980) (quoted in Celce-Murcia 1990:136). They have pointed out that the cohesion theory does not account for all aspects of discourse as they represent a bottom-up (microanalytic) approach to discourse competence rather than a top-down (macroanalytic) approach (see section 3.1 below). However, the theory has had a major impact on research among applied linguists e.g. in the area of composition.
2.3 Genre

Another term which is incorporated in the notions of discourse is genre. Originally, this term has been used in reference to literary discourse styles such as novels, poems or plays. Genre means that different types of discourse can be identified by their overall shape and generic structure. More recently, applied linguists have adapted the term to include different types of communicative events. Their argument lies in the fact that language has the purpose of fulfilling certain functions and that these functions will determine the overall shape or generic structure of a given discourse. The emergence of such structure is based on the predictable stages when people communicate. The communicative purpose will also be reflected in the basic building blocks of the given discourse, i.e. words and grammatical structures. This means that each communicative event will have its own distinctive characteristics which will be identifiable by its receivers. These communicative events may be sermons, speeches, newspaper articles or casual conversation. Giving the fact that e.g. a sermon is different from another sermon or a casual conversation is different from another, there are characteristics which will distinguish this from other discourse types (Nunan 1993: 48-49).

Grabe and Kaplan (1996:138) have said that ‘Genre is a key notion in writing development, and learning through writing. As students master genre, they also learn to control language, writing purpose, content and contexts’. When employing genre as a discourse technique in the classroom, it is important to emphasise that each genre has its conventions and that the pupils have to be extensively exposed to examples of different genres (Drew and Sørheim 2004:69). Examples may be taken from the textbook of the relevant course. It is important that the teacher provides sufficient material to be read and that the discourse characteristics of each genre are identified. Further, as noted above, genre exceeds restrictions to writing only. Genre characteristics must also be seen through the production of spoken texts. I will elaborate the notion of genre in the chapter below.

2.4 Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to define what is meant by the concept of discourse. The introduction of the communicative approach naturally entailed discourse competence. Discourse competence within ELT was explained through the works of the European Council (Scope and Threshold Level 1990) and subsequently adopted in syllabi and language
education. Discourse competence deals to a large extent with the ability to locate coherence and continuity in written and spoken texts. Coherence and cohesion are key concepts in developing discourse. Concepts of teaching have been presented, for example through the ‘I:R:F’ model. A transitional concept within discourse, genre, was introduced for further elaboration below.
Chapter 3: Discourse competence in teaching theories

3.0 Introductory comments

This chapter intends to present some teaching theories and ideas of the development of discourse competence related to ELT. Furthermore, there will be a discussion of how textbooks may function as a tool for developing discourse competence. The purpose will be to look at important concepts which lie behind text types and activities that may be important in the development of discourse competence. Since my chosen area is to study syllabi and textbooks in upper secondary school, it will be natural to present these theories in that context. This chapter will put the development of discourse competence in a methodological light. Therefore it will be necessary to establish a didactic model based on the theories and discussions that have been presented. This didactic model may serve as a tool for analysing the textbooks in Chapter 5 further below. Theories of discourse elaborated in Chapter 2 must be seen in connection with this.

3.1 An approach to developing discourse competence

In Chapter 2 above, I have elaborated concepts of discourse in relation to ELT. In short, discourse is related to language beyond the sentence and to language in context. Further, important cornerstones of discourse lie in the interplay between coherence and cohesion. In addition, the awareness of genre substantiates notions of producing discoursal texts. The nucleus of teaching discourse is to make the pupil aware of these features so that s/he will become a competent language producer.

Discourse processing is perceived differently from person to person. For a language learner it may be difficult to understand discourse which is beyond his/her current knowledge. However, the learning process involves filling in pieces in the jigsaw puzzle. All learners do to some extent have facts in their pool of knowledge through which they understand and see different communicative situations. When reading a text or participating in a conversation a learner will establish an understanding of the context in which the discourse is presented. Words, phrases and passages that may seem unfamiliar to a learner will soon be made comprehensible in context. Cook (1989) has presented a top-down model of how discourse is processed. He argues that the process of developing discourse competence starts on a top level
where social relationships are the overall concept, and down to the smallest pieces and details of language such as grammar, lexis, sounds and letters. It will be difficult for a learner to develop discourse competence if starting with the details first and from that constructs a general context. Cook suggests, in other words, that a learner should start with the general ideas of discourse first and then fill in the difficult word meanings and subject related details later (op cit: 81).

In the teaching of discourse a separation of levels as to what to teach may have a function. A top-down approach to language regards all levels of language as a whole, while a bottom-up approach separates communication into discrete levels according to Cook. A great deal of language teaching has been concerned with the bottom-up approach in the way that it has considered only the formal language system. Such an approach has not demonstrated or developed the way language operates in context. Furthermore, this separation of levels could be referred to as either *atomistic* or *holistic*, where the atomistic approach deals with language separated in parts and the holistic approach deals with language as a whole working together (op cit:83). Thus, this holistic approach to teaching discourse originates from the native speaker’s approach, and hence a step to follow for the teaching of discourse in foreign languages.

In the process of producing discourse Marianne Celce-Murcia (1990), with reference to Levison (1983) and Stubbs (1983), argues that ‘in a top-down macroanalytic approach to discourse […] one begins by defining a written or oral genre such as narration or argumentation, or by defining a text type, one further defines specific divisions, episodes, or functions (e.g. rhetorical blocks, speech acts, steps) such as introduction, agreement, directive,
spatial description, past habitual events, and specific types of interactional transitions (topic shift, topic resumption). These divisions are some of the discourse units that have typically been the object of communicative language teaching.’ (Celce-Murcia 1990:138).

3.2 The use of textbooks

The use of the textbook as a tool in the teaching of English as a foreign language has a long tradition in Norway (Drew and Sørheim 2004:96). The textbook contains a wide range of texts and activities and other teaching materials which are resourceful for both the pupil and the teacher. A textbook also, in most cases, provides a clearly thought out and structured study programme both globally and locally. Another important feature of textbooks is the use of illustrations and lay-out which have motivating forces. Hence, the textbook is important for the English teacher in his/her practice. However, textbooks are individually different and maybe some of the books do not contain sufficient activities or materials required in the language classroom.

Seen in this light, textbooks should include material which would develop in the learner of discourse competence as well as the other components of the communicative competence concept as dealt with above. Most of the development of discourse competence may find its course through the production stage. In the textbook, this might be the outcome of a pupil’s work with the various activities provided. A textbook then, roughly speaking, contains texts and activities, either in the same book or separately. The normal pattern is to read or listen to a text and then do activities which are based on the text or the specific theme. Ideas, thoughts, experiences and questions which rise in a pupil’s mind after the exposure of the text are then processed through the work with activities. Activities in the textbook should normally involve working with all aspects of language as reflected through the targets of the current syllabus.

A partial focus of this thesis has been to see the development of discourse competence in textbooks during the investigated period. The question that rises in this context is: How does the teacher utilise the texts and activities in the book? An answer to that question lies beyond this thesis but is clearly a research problem. We don’t know how the teacher uses the

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6 The production stage is the last stage of the so-called PPP-cycle (Presentation – Practice – Production) which is a variation of the Audio-Lingual Method. In this procedure the teacher introduces a situation which contextualises the language to be taught (Harmer 2002:25). Still, the production stage is also normally evident in communicative language teaching.
textbook. Further, we must anticipate that one teacher will use and focus on elements that another teacher will eliminate. Some teachers utilise the textbook extensively while other teachers choose to liberate themselves from the same textbook. In relation to discourse competence it will be natural also to ask: How much focus does the teacher give to the development of discourse competence when using the textbooks? In ELT it is of course the teacher who is responsible for such development through the course. It is up to the individual teacher to plan the course according to the syllabus.

Consequently, this thesis must focus on the possibilities of developing discourse competence through the activities provided in the textbook. We have to figure out how the teacher can make use of a variety of activities that include strategies to developing discourse competence. A broader picture of the place of discourse competence in L2 teaching would include a study of the teacher’s methods of teaching. However, the textbooks must be considered as one out of several tools to train this component of communicative competence. There is reason to believe that the textbook is and will be a central tool for most English teachers.

3.3 Teaching discourse

This section will discuss the aspects of the teaching of discourse in the classroom. The discussion is seen in the light of the various aspects of discourse competence which have been elaborated above. Discourse competence as a target both in ELT in general, and as a target in the syllabus, must be seen as a part of the overall language competence a pupil should accomplish in a given course. The introduction of the communicative competence concept and the communicative approach within language teaching would imply a focus on discourse competence on the same grounds as the other competences\(^7\). However, such focus may be various. Teachers of English in the foundation course\(^8\) may utilise several approaches to develop discourse competence. But some may not focus explicitly on discourse competence at all\(^9\). Since discourse competence is an important element of both the written and spoken skill it is highly appropriate that the L2-teacher is aware of this when working within both. By producing oral and written texts with texture and continuity the foundation course pupil should be able to reach a high degree of competence in the language. Central issues in this connection are to what degree the teacher must focus on discourse in the teaching and to what

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\(^7\) See section 2.1 above.

\(^8\) See explanation in the Introduction above.

\(^9\) Statement based on short interviews with a handful of L2-teachers in the foundation course.
degree the textbooks have a potential in the development of discourse competence. Below I have discussed various aspects of the teaching of spoken and written discourse as seen through a selection of writings in the field.

3.3.1 Teaching of spoken discourse

The spoken skill has aspects which prove to be difficult for the non-native speaker. In the written skill the pupil can work individually and is not necessarily required to share his writing with no one but the teacher. Speech is also typically different from writing. The language might be the same, but the size and shape of its sentences tend to be different. Speakers have little time to plan, organise and execute their message and they often need to facilitate the production and to compensate for the difficulties (Bygate 1988:14).

Speaking is also different as it involves interaction and it requires interlocutors to whom the pupil can converse. The exception is of course the language laboratory where each pupil may practise in an undisturbed atmosphere. Other variables which have to be taken into consideration are the notions of ‘correctness’ and how to express oneself (Brown & Yule 1983:25ff). As educators we cannot expect ‘correctness’ in terms of complete sentences or in terms of pronunciation. In previous syllabi such goals have been central (see Chapter 4 below). Brown and Yule (op cit) argue that such approaches and emphasis would currently be boring for most L2-learners. Those who really need a focus on these aspects of spoken language are those who require a polished accent for their competence in a certain job e.g. English teachers, business professions, journalists etc. These writers claim that the ‘minority of competent students who emerge from a course with good pronunciation seem to gain more spontaneously mimicking good models than from hours spent drilling vowels and consonants and words in isolation’ (op cit:27). Furthermore, the notions of ‘correct responses’ might enable the pupil to improve her pronunciation and her ability to produce short structured responses to known dialogue chunks. But it would not prepare the pupil for creating a ‘long turn’ or an extended response. It would not make the spoken L2 ‘work’ for her by thinking out what to say and then modifying it. Brown & Yule disapprove of the type of assessment at the end of courses where ‘correctness’ has a high star, but prefer to expect the pupils to give extended stretches of speech (e.g. prepared talk) (op cit).
The development of spoken discourse has effectuated instructional tasks and activities which combine accuracy and ‘communicative’ practices. Findings have indicated that an orientation solely to develop communicative competence might deprive the pupil of a focus on form, both on the discourse level (macro level) and the grammatical level (micro level) (Higgs and Clifford 1982; Larsen-Freeman 1980; Wolfson and Judd 1983 referred to in Riggenbach 1990). An important question here is: are learners exhibiting competence if there is incomplete knowledge of discourse norms and if there is a great deal of grammatical inaccuracy? Riggenbach (op cit) argues that discourse analysis, i.e. the analysis of the language beyond the sentence and language in use (see Chapter 2), is an efficient approach in the learner’s need to communicate accurately and effectively. An aspect of this approach is that the pupil could be placed in the role of a language researcher instead of being a passive recipient of other’s materials and pre-packed texts. Activities where the pupil should experience (the “experience model”) through language or activate “the system for discovery of the new” would help her to structure, clarify and organise her spoken texts, and are preferable in the language classroom (op cit: 153 with reference to Hatch, Flashner and Hunt 1986). Furthermore, Riggenbach emphasises the communicative movement’s support of discourse analytic techniques in language learning. They propose, among other things:

1. to delegate more responsibility to the language students, implying less of a reliance on more teacher-dominated approaches; and
2. to use meaningful, “authentic” language materials and language activities, excluding a dependence on the kinds of context-less drills used by proponents of audio-lingual methodology.

(op cit:153)

Discourse analysis would address both of these issues, she argues (op cit). Moreover, discourse analysis in the classroom would help language learners become conscious of processes in operation when producing the language they hear and use. For example speech acts, such as authentic “thanking” sequences by native speakers, can be examined by the language learners to see how these acts are structured. Further, strategies of how to maintain discourse could be examined, such as “stalling” mechanisms and repair phenomena, or the noticing of the different rules of grammar which may exist between spoken and written English. A study of native speaker speech may motivate learners to think about their own language production (op cit: 154).
Riggenbach further suggests activities which make use of the notion of discourse analysis with a native speaker focus. The following is to a large extent based on Riggenbach (op cit: 155-158):

1) **Activities analysing speech acts/language functions:**
   Pupils could observe or record (audiotape) native speaker speech with the objective to “discover” the components of certain speech acts (e.g. greeting, thanking, accepting/refusing invitations etc.). Pupils could select a site and carry out their observations through e.g. audio-taping or taking field notes which later are presented to the class and analysed. Preceding in-class activities of the observed data are to determine “formula” of the speech act or perform role-plays which practise the elicited situations. Variations of such activities could e.g. encourage the pupils to make short prompts (descriptions of fictional situations) where variations of responses could be discussed, or to record rehearsed stories which could be used both as a basis of listening comprehension and to understand the components that are essential to a narrative. A third variation of this activity could be to analyse news broadcasts so that the pupils may improve their ability to recognise discourse features and their effects. The latter activity would provide an opportunity for the pupils to study formal discourse features of news-reports supported by “rhetorical modes” such as cause-effect, comparison-contrast and the chronology of events.

2) **Activities involving sociolinguistic variables:**
   Speech act analysis would reveal factors which affect the form of utterances. Teaching materials in terms of speaking and listening texts expressing language functions often provide a list of phrases which are appropriate both for formal and informal situations. Exposure to such texts may enable the pupil to determine when the realisations of language functions or utterances are appropriate. In performing their own analysis, the pupils may be able to distinguish what type of language functions is appropriate in official contexts and what is appropriate among close friends etc. A benefit of a pupil’s personal work with such utterances is that s/he will most likely comprehend both the regularity of discourse patterns and frequency of occurrence for certain utterances.
3) **Activities with a focus on discourse maintenance and coherence strategies:**
Riggenbach suggests that the pupils could audiotape unstructured conversations of selected native speakers in order to understand discourse maintenance and coherence strategies. The pupils could listen to each other’s recordings and try to search for turns in the conversation e.g. where there are problems with comprehension. Can other steps be taken to get a “smoother” conversation or increase the comprehension? This could be developed further if the teacher provides the pupils with instruction and information about turn-taking conventions in English. For example, such conventions could be turns to gain the floor when somebody else is speaking. Further, this activity could reinforce strategies which have been observed and also include a practice in turn-claiming strategies, backchannelling/attending skills and language functions such as e.g. disagreeing. Backchannelling could be difficult for non-native speakers as they may not be aware of listening/attending strategies (e.g. body language, eye-contact etc.). The pupils can observe native speakers as listeners or themselves as listeners in conversations. Another activity suggested by Yule and Gregory (1989) is to conduct survey interviews. This activity is not only to perform meaningful social interaction but also to focus on pupil nominated issues that can be audiotaped and presented in class. This may be especially helpful in ensuring comprehension of clarification requests and confirmation checks.

4) **Activities focusing on the distinction between speaking and writing:**
If pupils transcribe native speaker speech it will increase their awareness of how written and spoken language vary in English, especially as to the informal conversation. A transcription procedure may be used as a dictation in class where audiotaped speech should be written down, including fillers and other disfluencies which may be common in normal speech. This activity will turn the attention to normal native speaker speech patterns, characterised by repairs, repetition, reduced forms, and conventions of vocabulary and grammar usage which seem inappropriate in the written mode. The differences in speaking and writing can be taught through the textbook or the teacher, or the pupils may discover the differences themselves. What language learners can be surprised by is the frequency with which native speakers use contractions and ellipses, and how rarely full forms are used in informal speech.
Another feature of spoken discourse that might be discovered in this deductive teaching is the use of discourse markers (e.g. “OK”, “Yes”, “Right”) connected to the surrounding discourse\textsuperscript{10}. Activities of this kind could also illuminate how informal conversational contexts make use of vocabulary and grammar structures which are different from more traditional, prescriptive structures. The pupils may note down unfamiliar words and idioms, and discuss their meaning in context. In this way the language learners can learn that certain vocabulary items are used in informal speech but inappropriate in writing. (A typical example in the Norwegian classroom is the pupils’ use of “wanna”, “gonna”, “gotcha” etc. instead of “want to”, “going to” and “got you” in writing). Further, language learners may notice that ‘liberties’ can be taken in informal discourse versus in formal written contexts.

The activities which have been presented above have the purpose of examining discourse features in native speaker speech. However, material produced by the language learners themselves is suitable for learning spoken discourse. Ideally, speeches or oral presentations should be videotaped and analysed in the classroom. Written composition and essays have been used in the process of teaching writing. Such skill involves editing and rewriting the written discourse ensuring the best possible result. Strategies of this kind could be adopted in the spoken skill. Very often oral production in the classroom involves formal speeches such as presentations or lectures. Such productions have similarities with written composition, for example organisational concerns such as the logical progression of ideas and the use of appropriate transitions, and content issues such as limiting and supporting the topic. These features can be monitored by the pupils in addition to other aspects of delivery such as eye contact, volume, appropriate and unobtrusive use of media, and prosodic features such as stress and intonation patterns. Videotaped speech of language learners could also reveal errors in grammar and vocabulary which in turn might make pupils aware of problems they may have. This must of course be used constructively. Self-correction may be useful (see above).

Furthermore, an important element of spoken discourse is fluency. By using their own data the pupils could approach this concept as a set of discourse strategies which could be explored in their own speech. They could examine the use (or misuse) of fillers and pauses as planning

\textsuperscript{10} See Bygate 1988.
and stalling mechanisms; they could examine their rate of speech and eventual strategies for increasing it (Riggenbach 1990: 159-160).

Such strategies in teaching spoken discourse could also involve peer evaluation. It is important that the pupils cooperate when analysing native speech or their own language. Having other critics than the teacher is a step towards awareness and consciousness of how they use the language, and how they might learn from each other. In this context it is important to be aware that the pupils can feel uncomfortable in this situation. Therefore it is highly important that the teacher creates an atmosphere of confidence among the language learners and avoids putting pressure on those who dislike exposure.

Brown & Yule 1983 (op cit) have suggested steps to avoid what they call ‘communicative stress’ in spoken activities and deliveries. First, they define a context where the listener should be the pupil’s peer or junior to him/her. The situation should be familiar and private. Second, the listener’s state of knowledge should not exceed the knowledge of the target language of the speaker, and the speaker should not possess more information than the listener possesses. That could secure control and ease the communication of the information. Third, the task which the speaker is expected to solve should include information which s/he understands well and where the foreign language vocabulary is familiar for a completion of the task. Further, the task’s structure should include a language supported by the requirements of the task. It would be easier for the speaker to give an account of a series of events than it is to provide arguments explaining why those events occurred in that order (op cit:34).

The above suggestions would mainly occur in the transactional use of the spoken language (long turns). However, a specification of the conversational features of spoken discourse which have been presented above is needed. Brown & Yule suggest interactional short turns of how to open conversations, and continue with expanding what the previous speaker has said, and to make the speaker take the initiative and introduce a topic of her own. Here are some extracted short turn responses from conversations as cited in Brown & Yule:
1) The speaker agrees to co-operate or not:
   yes, of course
   right
   right, I will
   sure, of course
   sorry, I can’t
   I really can’t manage it
   I’m afraid not

2) The speaker agrees with what is said avoiding simple yes or no responses:
   yes, it is
   yes, that’s right
   of course it is
   quite, absolutely true
   yes, I do/yes, he was/yes, they were, etc.

3) The speaker politely disagrees suggesting agreement outcome
   well not really
   not quite, no
   perhaps not quite as bad/good/difficult, as that
   erm, I don’t know

4) The speaker may merely indicate ‘possible doubt’:
   I’m not quite sure
   really?
   is that right?
   is that so?
   are you sure?

5) The speaker needs to be able to express an opinion. He needs a set of ‘good’
   expressions and a set of ‘bad’ expressions and a set of modifiers to attach:
   Very nice indeed
   Really nice
   Quite nice
   Not very nice
   Not at all
   Very nasty indeed
   Really nasty

6) The speaker needs a set of ‘fillers’ such as:
   well
   erm
   er (supported by pauses)
   ah
   uhm
   mhm

   Prefabricated interjections such as:
   of course
   obviously
   it’s clear that
   perhaps
   I think
   I suppose

7) The speaker needs a highly general vocabulary to construct ‘short responses’:
do, be, come, get, can, know, thing, bit, person, one, side, place, bit, little, nice small, good, easy, hard, etc.

8) The speaker needs a few simple structures:
   (I think) it’s a good one/it’s good/it’s really/very nice
   (of course) he’s difficult/it’s no good etc
   (op cit:29f)

With such simple interactional gambits stored, it may be fairly easy to take part in conversations and to interact with native speakers.

Brown & Yule, moreover, suggest that the teacher can select the level of difficulty that s/he wishes his/her students to be able to cope with in the teaching of the spoken language. S/he may analyse the linguistic requirements that a particular type of task puts upon the speaker, as well as cognitive demands. Further, s/he can teach the necessary linguistic skills in the context where such skills are needed. Brown & Yule emphasise the role of the teacher in the development of such skills:

This approach demands that the teacher becomes much more aware of how discourse in spoken language is produced, and how long turns are structured. The teacher must observe not only sentence structures which have traditionally been the concern of ‘short turn’ approaches, but how native speakers inventively and flexibly use the language to cope with the demands of the communicative situation.
   (op cit:50)

So, what kind of activities in the textbook may be suitable to exercise the aspects of spoken discourse as they have been discussed above? Spoken discourse would include the following features:

- accuracy and fluency (pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, stress)
- transactional as well as interactional speech functions
- conversational skills (e.g. turn-taking, open/close a conversation, etc.)
- sociolinguistic awareness (e.g. appropriate words/level of formality, etc.)
- sociocultural awareness (e.g. social conventions, politeness patterns etc.)

Hence, activities that involve construction and performing of language functions will enable the students to e.g. seek information, invite, ask for assistance etc. A step further involves

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sequences where the pupil corrects him/herself in case of misunderstandings. Language functions where the pupil has to choose the most appropriate language according to the situation are also parts of such activities. Types of activities where these language functions can be practised may for example be role plays, discussions, interviews, continuous speech or information gaps (Simensen 1998:179ff). Such activities can practise the ordinary spoken discourse features that are common in both transactional and interactional language.

### 3.3.2 Teaching of written discourse

The nature of writing is often complicated. Even though there is more time to plan the production of a written text compared to a spoken text, there are aspects of writing which are far more difficult. Written texts require linguistic accuracy (i.e grammar, syntax, vocabulary) and a systematic presentation of the content; they need continuity and to be structured in a logical manner including devices that link the text together. In short this is referred to as coherence and cohesion (see Chapter 2).

Writing is an act of communication between the writer and the reader. The reader and the writer may be the same person, e.g. in situations where we write shopping lists, notes or diaries. But in most cases we write with a specific reader in mind. The purpose of writing may vary considerably. It may vary from personal letters to business/professional writing. The reasons for writing may be to:

- **Describe**
- **Inform**
- **Enquire**
- **Entertain**
- **Persuade**
- **Recount events**
- **State an opinion**

(Drew & Sørheim 2004:68)

As I have discussed earlier (see Chapter 2), aspects of genre are key notions in written discourse. Writing in the foundation course, and elsewhere in EFL teaching, focuses on producing texts which will be categorised in various genres. The awareness of genre

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12 As seen in an L2 teaching context.
characteristics will develop as the pupils mature and the knowledge increases. Such knowledge involves the mastering of different written genres. Roughly, we may group genres into three main categories in a school context, based largely on Drew & Sørheim (op cit:69-72):

1. **Creative/expressive writing**
   This type of writing is typical of the intermediate level, as well as the lower and upper secondary level. That is the case because it is the most practised form of writing in both the mother tongue and in the L2 classroom. This category may include the following genres: *personal narratives, narratives (stories), poems, dialogues and plays*. Such genres can be fairly open and based on a personal or invented experience. Thus, it may become easier for the pupil to write. Dialogues and plays can make a clear link between the oral and the written language (see also above about spoken discourse).

2. **Functional writing**
   The development of functional writing is evident at the more advanced level. Such writing is common outside of school as it is part of everyday life. Genres that may be functional in nature include for example: *Letters, emails, postcards, descriptions, reports, instructions, advertisements, articles, diaries and logs*. Some of these genres have obvious practical functions. Writing an application for a job is highly relevant for upper secondary school pupils. Writing a report or a log in connection with a project done in class or in a job (e.g. hospital) are other examples of functional writing. The teaching of functional writing should create awareness among the pupils of how the language is organised and used in different contexts. Simultaneously, a practice of functional writing may benefit other writing tasks in school. For instance, descriptions are important features in narrative writing, where descriptions of people, places or items, are necessary to get a full picture.  

3. **Argumentative writing**
   Argumentative texts have the purpose of discussing or arguing a point of view or an issue. The pupils are encouraged to find solid arguments which could manifest their  

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13 See section 5.3 below on various text types.
viewpoint about matters which for example could be disagreed upon. Such matters may e.g. be political issues or local community cases. An argumentative genre found in textbooks or workbooks could e.g. be the letter to the editor or an argumentative article. In other activities of this kind the pupil is simply asked to give her opinion about certain issues.

Some aspects of the writing of various genres need clarification. The structure of genres is central to the discourse features, and hence important to clarify for the pupils. For example, the simple narrative (compare creative/expressive writing above) normally consists of three or four parts:

1. Orientation: introducing characters and setting
2. Complication: introducing a problem
3. Resolution: the problem is concluded – good or bad
4. Optional part: the moral of the story

(Simensen 1998:72)

Drew & Sørheim (op cit) echo the same structure of texts similarly as ‘the rule of three’. Their claim is that this structure is fundamental to any piece of written work: it should have a beginning, a main body and an end (Drew & Sørheim 2004:74 referring to Peck and Coyle 1999).

The organisation of the information in texts may have various patterns. A coherent structure will imply the use of various cohesive devices which function as discourse markers (see Chapter 2 above). The information organised according to time order will have words or signals such as: ‘first’, ‘next’, ‘last’, ‘in the beginning’, ‘soon’, ‘finally’, ‘eventually’, ‘later on’, ‘in the meantime’. Further, the information in texts will normally compare and contrast certain issues or things. Words that signal comparison or contrast may be: ‘in the same way’, ‘similarly’, ‘correspond to’, ‘but’, ‘different’, ‘however’, ‘contrary to’, ‘on the contrary’, ‘yet’, ‘instead’, ‘on the other hand’. Information may be organised as a collection of descriptions such as listing of facts and ideas about the same topic. Such signal words could be: ‘many’, ‘some’, ‘a few’, ‘first’, ‘second’, ‘third’, ‘finally’, ‘instead’, ‘on the other hand’. Finally, information can be organised in terms of a cause-effect/effect-cause relationship in order to show causes or effects of a certain situation. Words that signal a cause-effect pattern may be: ‘lead to’, due to’, ‘owing to’, ‘on account of’, ‘come about’, ‘consequently’, ‘as a result’, ‘result’, ‘because/because of’, ‘since’ (Simensen 1998:72).
So far I have discussed aspects of written discourse which deal with the writing of various types of genres and how structures of content information may be linked and unified. In perspective, I have discussed writing at a macro level (organisation and structure) and aspects of the micro level (details in the sentence). Between those levels there is an important feature of written discourse, namely the paragraph. Several linguists have explained what a paragraph is and its role. Björk and Räisänen (1997:172) have defined the paragraph as:

*a thought unit with a topic sentence. A paragraph deals with one main idea or topic, or one aspect of a large topic. When you indicate a new paragraph (by indentation or an empty line) you signal to the reader that you are moving on to a new topic or to aspect of the topic.*

Another definition of a paragraph is given by Bates (1993:7):

*A paragraph is a group of sentences that develops one central point. A writer often directly states this point in a sentence near the beginning of the paragraph; this statement is called a topic sentence. The writer then develops the topic sentence more fully within the body of the paragraph.*

Rice and Burns (1986:29) define the structure of a paragraph:

*A paragraph has a very clear-cut structure. It has three major parts. The first part of the paragraph is called the topic sentence. It introduces the reader to the main idea of the paragraph. The second part of the paragraph is called the body. The body is made up of several sentences which support, prove or explain the statement made in the topic sentence. The third part of the paragraph is called the concluding sentence. This sentence summarizes what has been said. If a paragraph contains all these parts, it will be well structured.*

A paragraph focuses on one main idea. As we see in the definitions above the topic sentence is an important feature of the paragraph, especially in non-narrative texts (see also Drew and Sørheim 2004:74; Simensen 1998:73). The topic sentence is normally found in the first sentence of the paragraph and will serve as a signal to the reader what the specific paragraph is about. The paragraph’s structure, which Rice and Burns (op cit) define, is also similar to the structure found in complete texts, as described above. The L2-teacher’s objective must be to make the pupils aware of the paragraph as a discoursal device when writing. One approach can be to single out a specific paragraph and analyse it. Another activity can be to split up a
text in paragraphs, mix them and let the pupils try to arrange the paragraphs into a unified text again. Simensen (1998:199-203) has given examples of activities which will ask the pupil to discriminate between topic sentences (general statements) and sentences that contain examples (specifications). Further, these activities can be developed when classifying general statements according to their degree of generality. The pupils may be asked to add additional information to the general statements such as supporting details and specifications. On the same grounds, key words in the sentences can be elaborated for more specification. The pupils can also be asked to identify patterns of organisation of the paragraphs by labelling them according to ‘time order’, ‘comparison/contrast’, ‘collection of description’, or ‘cause effect’, as dealt with above. Such activities may help the language learner to build paragraphs on the basis of a familiar structure.

Furthermore, an important issue regarding the development of written discourse competence should be taken into consideration. That is the role of text exposure. Various texts serve as language input and become sources of ideas and information, which will act as a foundation for writing and speaking. Graves (1991:13) utters that pupils (children) who read extensively will become ‘lifelong readers, writers and thinkers’. The exposure of different genres could generate ideas of how to construct the text. Text structures and reading comprehension have been discussed, among others by Connor (1990). She reflects upon the notions that certain expository text will develop awareness of discourse patterns (op cit 1990:173). However, could we say that reading of various genres would provide the pupil with knowledge of genre structures or discourse patterns? Simensen (1994:22) argues that this would most likely be evident for those pupils who read extensively and various genres. Probably would an explicit teaching of this be required to accomplish the targets of the syllabus? Thus, in this thesis I have not directly focused on reading and reading comprehension activities as means to develop discourse competence. That would be difficult to measure. Nevertheless, I found it important to show the kind of various genres which are provided in the textbooks selected (see below).

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14 See also van Ek’s *Threshold Level* referred to above in Chapter 2.
3.4 Summary – a didactic model

3.4.0 Introduction
Based on the elaboration and the discussions above, both in this chapter and in Chapter 2, I found it necessary to include a didactic model which can be used as a tool in analysing the textbooks and various activities I have selected. Discourse competence may be based on other competences and sometimes be difficult to discriminate in a linguistic context. Further, the syllabi and the guidelines are imprecise in establishing concrete suggestions for the teaching of discourse. In many cases it is up to the teacher to define methods of teaching discourse in the classroom. This thesis presumes that the teacher uses the textbook and/or workbook as a basic tool in his teaching, and that activities in these books can be used to develop discourse competence. However, the vast area of discourse competence involves too many aspects which cannot be included in this thesis. I have included only those aspects which I find necessary in describing activities that ideally can make a foundation for the teaching of discourse competence. The model below will be used in connection with the analysis of relevant activities from the three different textbooks and workbooks selected.

3.4.1 A didactic model of discourse competence
The textbook/workbook should include the following activities:

**Spoken discourse**

**Language functions**
Activities which practise various language functions which the pupil normally will need in certain discourse events and within his or her field of study, and which will enhance the pupil’s capability to process spoken discourse. Language functions are sets of discourse in connections with e.g. seeking information, signal misunderstanding, give/seek assistance etc. Speech acts, referring to language use which purpose is both conveying the literal meaning and information of words and the speaker’s intentions, are included.

**Interactional discourse**
Activities which practise short stretches (but longer than yes or no) of language. The purpose is to keep and maintain conversations or initiate social interaction. Such activities will
introduce smaller prefabricated gambits or appropriate short turns that are possible to use in various social situations. Such activities would train the pupil to stay in a conversation longer and to pick up an appropriate style.

**Transactional discourse**
Activities where the pupil is encouraged to produce longer stretches of continuous speech go further than interactional discourse. Here the pupils should be able to give a longer discourse about a certain field or theme etc. Such longer spoken discourses could e.g. be speeches, lectures, reports, presentations etc. The pupil will need information about how to produce such discourse and be exposed to examples of it.

**Prosody**
Activities which will give the pupils a certain insight how prosodic features play in discourse deliveries. Such activities may involve pronunciation, intonation, eye contact, fluency of speech etc. It is important that such activities should be connected to continuous speech rather than isolated to words and sounds. The pupil should be aware of how prosodic patterns may create meaning in spoken discourse.

**Coherence and cohesion**
It is equally important language functions and speech acts, whether they are of the interactional or the transactional type, have a continuity in language stretches so that utterances are combined logically. Activities which will give focus on coherence through cohesive devices e.g. discourse markers, turn-taking or strategies to gain/give the floor. It is also important that the pupil through such activities is able to distinguish between various spoken texts and know how to create coherence for each.
**Written discourse**

**Coherence**
Activities which illuminate how a text is woven together as a single unit may help the pupil to understand how coherence, global, local and themal, is achieved. Coherence in written text is a core issue in discourse. Pupil’s texts can be analysed (e.g. as a stage in the process-oriented writing) to see where coherence creates unity or where it fails to do so. Jigsaw reading is another activity where coherence is illuminated.

**Cohesion**
Activities which focus on the linguistic devices within the text which make it coherent. Such cohesive devices may be the use of verbs, pronouns, conjunctions etc. Various types of cohesive devices can signal reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, collocation, reiteration as described above in Chapter 2. Cohesion also comprises the use of discourse markers which signal organisational patterns in the text such as time order, compare/contrast, collection of descriptions and cause-effect relationships. Such activities involve analyses of various texts. Other activities identify such devices and give the pupil opportunities to see the pattern, e.g. in cloze tests.

**Genre**
Activities where pupils are encouraged to write various types of texts enhance the awareness of differences within written discourse. The pupils need to know what characterises each genre in addition to reading and analysing a variety of texts. The genres could be classified e.g. according to a creative/expressive, functional or argumentative style. The textbook should be provided with information of how different genres can be written. The pupil should be aware of the purpose of writing a certain type of genre.

**Paragraph**
Activities which focus on the paragraph as a thought unit within the text will enable the pupil to structure the written discourse coherently. Such activities may focus on what role the paragraph has and how the paragraph is constructed. Paragraphs should be analysed so that topical sentences and the structure patterns can be identified (e.g. the *introduction, main body, conclusion* pattern). Further, such activities should give an insight to how paragraphs are
united into a complete text (macro level) and how paragraphs are built up by words and sentences (micro level).

**Texts**
The textbook should give the pupils access to a wide range of texts to exemplify genres and to give textual input to activities outlined above. It is important that the texts are defined according to the pupil’s level and within the principles found in the curriculum. Working with various texts may provide knowledge about textual structure and passages essential in written discourse.
Chapter 4: Analysis of the 1976, 1990 and 1994 syllabi in English

4.0 Introductory comments

In this part I will analyse the syllabi in question regarding the aims to develop discourse competence. First, I want to present each syllabus with the overarching aim stated. Next, I will study closely the attainment targets and focal points of the syllabi with reference to discourse and discourse competence elaborated in Chapter 2. Since this chapter will compare and contrast the three selected syllabi, I find it important to illuminate those parts of each syllabi in which the concept of discourse competence, or the lack of it, gain ground. I will give reasons for my selections at the end of this chapter.

4.1 The 1976 syllabus

The syllabus for upper secondary school in Norway from 1976, Part 2 common general studies (hereafter L76a) was implemented after years of experimental programs. From 1965 till 1975 the syllabus, published by the Council of Experimental Programs, was revised several times. It was emphasised in the last revision of 1975 that the syllabus should be viewed as guidelines only, not as minimum requirements that was common earlier (L76a:5).

For English (and all other foreign languages in upper secondary education), the general targets were among others that the pupil should:

- develop the ability to understand the foreign language orally and in writing
- develop skills in using the language orally and in writing
- [...]  

Further, at the end of the given course of study and within the framework of the provided language content, the pupil should be able to (and subsequently be tested in):
- understand everyday speech about general topics
- use the language with good pronunciation about topics in everyday life
- read and understand texts of a reasonable linguistic level suitable for the age
- use the language in free production (e.g. letters, summaries, essays) about everyday and general topics

(L76a:78, my translation)

L76 emphasised that second language teaching should aim to be of practical value to the pupil and to which occupation the pupil would have in society. It was therefore important to develop the pupils’ skill in using the language (ibid:79). Exercises should be systematic and controllable.

In part four (ibid:85f) it was emphasised that the working methods in order to achieve the targets (above) must be systematic. The activities should be of such character that they would enlarge the pupil’s vocabulary, pick up good pronunciation and acquire more knowledge of how the language was used. Active language learning and motivation in class were central issues.

Subsequently, the ability to understanding the spoken word included ideally exposure of the educated and well-mannered standard English with variations such as between British and American English. This comprised everyday speech, radio broadcast news, informal\footnote{In Norwegian: kåseri.} and formal lecture, recorded speech of prose and fiction. When practising the oral linguistic ability the focus should be on an eloquent and accurate speech in a meaningful textual context. Hence, the most important features of oral practice were ‘to practise good pronunciation and intonation, to practise and enlarge the vocabulary and sentence patterns’ (ibid:86, my translation). L76 distinguished between closed and open oral tasks\footnote{In Norwegian: bundne og frie øvingar.}. The closed tasks implied the practice of pronunciation and intonation, and rehearsed dialogues. The open oral tasks included:

- questions and answers based on different texts,
- free conversation,
- summaries or accounts of read or texts listened to, announcements or pupil’s lectures,
- performances of skits, role-plays, group-work reports, individual work etc.

(ibid:87, my translation)
Text processing should involve *intensive* and an *extensive* reading. The aim of intensive reading was to understand a text completely both as to language and content. The aim of extensive reading was to provide the pupil with information and knowledge in the target language. Therefore, this part concentrated on the main content instead of details. Furthermore, this type of reading would create a basis for different oral and written tasks.

Writing had a minor focus compared to the other skills. However, it should as far as possible be integrated similarly to the other skills and weighted according to the target. It was further emphasised that the purpose of written practice was to strengthen the oral practice of words, expressions and grammatical structures so that the pupil was able to express him/herself as *accurately* as possible. Written activities should as far as possible originate out of issues treated orally first. The suggested written activities were:

- Dictation
- *Fill-in and transform activities*
- Translation
- *Answer questions*
- *Re-narration*
- *Reports and summaries*
- *Notes and letters*
- Comments
- Composition

L76 commented on the last suggested activity “Composition.” This activity would practise the pupils’ ability to write coherently and independently, and to express their own thoughts and experiences. The free compositions should be prepared in the foundation courses by using different types of genres where elements were *rehearsed* or given *in advance* (ibid:88). The focus on grammar in L76 was that it, first and foremost, should serve as a mean to achieve a general language skill as expressed in the main target. In this sense, the teaching of grammar should be *functional* and serve the whole language education (op cit:88-89).

In a syllabus design perspective L76 includes features of the *formal syllabus* type. According to Michael P. Breen (1987) a formal syllabus has its roots in the analysis and description of the classical languages, and relies strongly on the descriptive accounts of academic linguists. The formal syllabus focuses on the systematic and rule-based nature of language and gives priority to working with phonology, grammar, lexis or morphology, and discourse in text.
Further, the formal syllabus focuses on linguistic correctness and accuracy, and it sub-divides the language into the smaller units. It sequences the learning process of language as gradually accumulative i.e. learning from what is ‘simple’ towards what is ‘complex’ in terms of form, structure or rule (Breen 1987:85f).

4.3 The 1990 syllabus

The 1990 syllabus (hereafter L90) was the result of piloting curriculum work in 11 upper secondary schools in the period 1984 and onwards. It was implemented in all upper secondary schools in 1990. However, the 1990 edition was regarded as preliminary and the final version came in 1991. The final edition had no changes compared to the 1984 edition (Pettersen 2001:20). As source in this thesis I have used the preliminary version of the English syllabus from 1990.

The education of English was strengthened with one lesson compared to L76, i.e. a total of five a week. There were no fundamental differences between the targets of L90 and the 1976 syllabus. The main, general targets in L90 suggested that through the foundation course the pupils should:

- develop the ability to understand the foreign language in speech and writing
- develop skills in using the language orally and in writing
- [...] obtain a fundament for further education and orientation through the language they acquire, and to get the opportunity to developing linguistic fantasy and creativity
  (L90:2, my translation)

An additional target compared to L76, was the concept of developing fantasy and creativity in the target language.

By the end of the foundation course and within the framework of the content provided, the pupils should know how to:\n
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17 Adapted.
understand everyday speech about general topics
use the language with good pronunciation about topics in everyday life
(...)
use the language in free production (e.g. letters, summaries, essays) about everyday and general topics

(ibid:2, my translation)

As we see, the targets are similar to the L76 targets (above). Further, the comments to the targets are principally the same as those in L76 except some essential points. In addition to developing the pupils’ skills in using the language in practice as a whole, the communicative competence concept and language functions were introduced\textsuperscript{18} in L90: ‘A natural focus will be language functions and communicative competence’ (ibid:2, my translation).

There are no major changes in the suggestions for course content. In specifying the course content words like \textit{systematic language education} are still used. However, the focus on \textit{systematic language exercises} (see above) has been removed or diminished (ibid:5). When working with the linguistic content (grammar and idioms), the focus should be on high frequency errors and passages where language mistakes block communication.

The suggested working methods comply with L76 to a large extent. There are, however, important additions in the first part of the section \textit{working methods} (L90:4.1) that are worth considering: “It is necessary to develop a warm and friendly atmosphere of learning so that the pupils will have the courage and desire to use the language to expressing thoughts, emotions and opinions” (L90:13, my translation).

Furthermore, the oral practice could open up for different types of English and representative pronunciations could be accepted in addition to a standard. In addition to developing good pronunciation and intonation, \textit{fluency} as a concept was introduced. It was added here that the attainment of oral skill should take place in a \textit{meaningful and natural} context.

Like in L76, a distinction between \textit{closed} and \textit{open} tasks (above) is continued in L90. The possibility of utilising closed tasks remained unchanged. The open tasks suggested some new and important additions by suggesting:

\textsuperscript{18} The introduction of the communicative competence concept included also the discourse competence concept (see Chapter 2).
Conversations which give the pupils opportunity to both provide and request information (tasks with information-gaps and tasks with constructed differences of opinion)
- Discussion of an issue
- Making [...] surveys

It was further emphasised that in working with all types of oral tasks it should be important to create a desire among the pupils to express themselves.

For the written skill L90 suggested the same exercises as in L76 (see above) with two supplements. The first one was parallel-writing, a composition based on a text used as a model, for example a description of the pupil’s hometown based on a text about a French town. The second supplement was free creative production in which genres like poems, short-stories or fairy-tales were introduced. It was further added that for all written exercises the focus should not only be on the end product but also on the process of seeking information and to utilise different aids, asking fellow pupils and the teacher en route. Drafts should be written and re-written based on feedback through different stages. This means a clearly process-oriented approach (L90:16).

The focus on grammar remains the same. Nonetheless, an important comment has been included: “It is essential to choose language functions which are applicable and acceptable in ordinary communicative situations. Language functions are based on a perception of language as action. Every utterance is according to this perception to do something – by means of language functions which correspond to the communicative purpose, e.g. to try to make acquaintance with somebody, try to convince somebody, to apologise etc.” (ibid:16, my translation). Here, a pragmatic view of language functions has been highlighted.

Even though many features of the formal syllabus were kept, a proposed shift of syllabus design was emerging. The focus on content, communication and language functions established guidelines found in a functional syllabus, which I have dealt with in 4.4 below.
4.4 The 1994 syllabus

The 1994 syllabus (hereafter R94) was different from the L90 syllabus and was part of a reform of the Norwegian upper secondary school\(^{19}\). In L90, the communicative approach was introduced with the different skills, contents and working methods. In R94 the communicative- and meaning-oriented perspectives were fully implemented. Compared to the syllabi of 1976 and 1990, R94 had six clearly formulated targets of which targets 1-4 comprised the four skills and targets 5-6 comprised content. As evaluation criteria the six components of communicative competence, as mentioned in Chapter 2 (above), were incorporated.

The overarching goal is that the pupil should achieve a high degree of communicative competence. This is stated in section 3.4 (R94, Norwegian version: chapter 3 about assessment). The fundamental principle of the final evaluation is to what extent the pupil is able to comprehend and convey meaning, i.e. what level of communicative competence the pupil has reached. R94 includes discourse competence as a part of the communicative competence concept\(^{20}\) as dealt with in Chapter 2:

- Discourse competence (to what extent the pupil is capable of grasping and achieving coherence in speaking and writing)
  
  (R94, Norwegian version:57, my translation)

A closer look at the attainment targets and focal points in Chapter 2 (R94:26) shows that some of the aims of the pupil’s study of English are (I have deliberately left out the aims that are not directly concerning with the focus of this thesis):

- To be able to use English which is suitable both in informal and formal situations, and to know how the social context affects the use of language

\(^{19}\) The ‘Reform 94,’ among other things, reduced the number of foundation courses and gave all pupils a statuary right to a 3-year upper secondary education. It is worth noting that the foundation course in question includes business and administration. The term in R94 is therefore “General studies and business studies.”

\(^{20}\) The full division of the communicative competence concept into components is that of Threshold Level 1990 which is presented above.
To be able to grasp the meanings and connections of spoken and written English, and express him/herself so as to bring out intentions and connections clearly
(R94, Norwegian version:26)

Further, the syllabus provides targets focusing on the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) i.e. Targets 1-4, and on contents of culture and areas of study in Targets 5 and 6. I have chosen to include the comprehension Targets 1 and 2, as they serve as input to developing discourse competence and will be discussed in that context. The main attention will, however, be at Targets 3 and 4 since they deal with the production of oral and written discourse. For reasons of space in the running text targets 1-4 (R94, English version:27-28) are quoted in full in the appendix below.

Alongside the introduction of R94, methodological guidelines (Metodisk Rettleiing Grunnkurs Engelsk 1994) were prepared for each subject. The purpose of these guidelines was to serve as advisory documents for the teachers about how to obtain the targets.

Metodisk Rettleiing recommends different approaches to realising Target 3, Use of spoken English. Among these approaches the conversation is central, ‘Discussions play an important role to enable the pupils to practise determined and serious communication. […] When organising speech, one has to consider whether the conversation situation is a formal or informal, so that the pupil becomes aware of this and can adapt the language use to the context.’ (op cit:43, my translation). Another approach is the use of role-plays which can give the pupils practice in various degrees of formality (e.g. polite complaints, agreement or disagreement, persuasion) and how to express attitudes.

Moreover, it is recommended that the pupils should have practice in addressing a larger audience. This will for many appear as risky, but there is reason to believe that this will enhance the pupil’s strategies in structuring oral texts. Self-confidence is an important feature of a good speaker. As for discourse competence in relation to spoken English a number of expressions of great importance were listed, and to be learnt by the pupils:
As to Target 4, *Use of written English*, it is advised to vary writing in terms of different types of genres. Letters and reports should be based on real-life situations. Fiction/non-fiction should form a basis of written tasks. Learning how to write different genres is an element of achieving discourse competence. Principally, writing should be seen as a process of different stages where the teacher and other pupils participate in giving response along the way. The focus of process-oriented writing is greater in R94 compared to L90 (see above). Different genres such as reports, summaries, diaries, narratives and expository texts etc, were suggested. There should always be an alternation between a personal and creative style and a formal style (op cit:48ff). It is further emphasised: ‘When working with all types of written tasks one should underline the importance of developing the discourse competence’ (op cit:51, my translation).

*Metodisk Rettleiing* has devoted a section to *discourse competence* for the use of written English:

> 'If we go beyond the sentence, we see that a good text contains “discourse markers” (...) that serve as “signals” to the reader. One of the most important purposes in target 4 is precisely to train the pupil to develop his/her discourse competence, i.e. the ability to perceive and produce coherence in written and spoken texts.

> The teacher can show the pupils texts where these markers are isolated, and the pupils can practise the use by working with paragraphs where missing words or expressions can be filled in.

> The pupils should practise so that they master expressions like ”as a result, as a consequence, consequently, so, since, as, because, one of the most important reasons why..., the main reason why..., despite, in spite of, however, yet, although, nevertheless, therefore, on the other hand”, etc.

(op cit:52, my translation)
Discourse markers are central devices of cohesion\(^{21}\) to make a coherent written discourse and can be compared to the oral discourse markers that are mentioned above. When a written work is assessed by the teacher it is important that the text is revised afterwards by the pupil. This is not only to reduce the number of grammar- and syntax errors but also to enhance cohesion and coherence (ibid:52).

*Methodisk rettleiing* also gives criteria of how discourse competence should be credited. These assessment criteria may serve as important guidelines for the teacher in the process of developing a pupil’s discourse competence:

‘*A pupil who possesses a good oral discourse competence knows how to open and close a conversation, and has knowledge of ordinary rules of conversations. A pupil with a good speaking ability can present and argue for a case. A good oral discourse is characterised by English speech conventions.*’

*A pupil who possesses a good written discourse competence produces texts with a good structure and good continuity. A good writer is conscious of genre.*’

(ibid:76, my translation)

Thus, the teaching of discourse as set out in the methodological guidelines of R94 involves an important focus on significant elements of oral and written discourse as have been accounted for in Chapters 2 and 3 above.

A closer look at the syllabus design of R94 shows differences compared to L76 and L90 above. The introduction of the communicative competence concept in L90, which later also was implemented in R94, suggests many of the features of a functional syllabus as described by Breen 1987 (op cit). A functional syllabus focuses on a learner’s knowledge of speech acts or the purposes a learner may achieve through language in certain social events or activities. Furthermore, it gives priority to both social appropriateness and correctness in comprehension and production of linguistic exponents (ibid 1987:88ff).

### 4.5 Summary

The general targets on the 1976 syllabus focused on the ability to understand, and the skills to use spoken and written language. The notion of discourse competence is, however, not explicitly recognised in L76. There is no evidence that discourse devices such as cohesion and

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\(^{21}\) See section 2.2 above.
coherence, textual binding or discourse markers have been mentioned or highlighted. The ways to develop the ability to use English were basically limited to activities in class. Such activities should be systematic and of a nature where correct pronunciation and vocabulary played a central role. There is also little variety in genres suggested. L76 had many features which are recognised in the Audio-Lingual Method (see Chapter 1, section 1.1).

The 1990 syllabus must be seen as an intermediate stage between two eras of syllabus design. L90 had many of same general targets as L76. The pragmatic view of language in terms of language functions is evident.

The 1994 syllabus was part of the curricular reform of upper secondary school in Norway. Discourse competence is directly referred to in the part that constitutes end-of-term assessment. Canale & Swain’s discourse competence component is explained. Understanding oral and written discourse of various kinds and to grasp main contents, attitudes and intentions, have received focus. Further, the use of spoken English is concerned with informal and formal discourse in conversations and discussions and also how to express attitudes and opinions are referred. It is further emphasised that coherence in oral presentations is important. The ability to write in different genres is very important. Some elements of the discourse competence concept are both implicitly and explicitly expressed. However, detailed features of discourse competence such as e.g. cohesive devices are not presented among the targets.

The methodological guidelines (Metodisk rettleiing) which were published with R94, is an important tool in interpreting the targets. Discourse competence has been explained extensively in this document, such as approaches to developing both written and oral discourse competence, and examples of cohesive devices (such as discourse markers) have been listed.
Chapter 5: Analysis of the textbooks

5.0 Introductory comments

The analysis of the selected textbooks used in the foundation course through this period has been challenging. I decided to select three textbooks which had been published during each syllabus period. A closer look at the textbooks shows that there has been a major development both in structure and content. But there are also similarities which have to be taken account of. Discourse competence involves many aspects of teaching and will hence be elaborated in a broader sense. In this part I will present the sections and categories used.

First, I will briefly present the different textbooks according to their length, structure and content. Next part of this analysis will look at texts and genres in the three textbooks. An important approach is to see whether the texts have differed much during the period, and whether the focus on genres differs radically. Third, the analysis is concerned with the activities provided in the different textbooks. This is the core issue in defining a change of focus of the discourse competence concept during the period. In this perspective, I selected those activities in the textbooks which may develop both written and oral discourse competence accordingly to the didactic model above in Chapter 3. At the end of this chapter I will sum up the findings of my analysis.
5.1 Presentation of the textbooks

The selected textbooks are only a few examples of published textbooks intended for the foundation course during the period studied. Therefore, this analysis must not be seen as an overall picture of the development of discourse competence in the foundation course, but as a glimpse of a small part of it. I have attempted to select applied textbooks widely used in the foundation courses. I decided to focus on the textbooks and workbooks exclusively, albeit resourceful reference tools are also parts of the textbooks, such as teacher guides, extra activity books, tapes/CDs and Internet pages. I will, however, mention these where appropriate.

Textbook 1: Active English
Textbook 1 consists of a textbook and a workbook. The textbook, Active English, Textbook (1977) consists of 159 pages and is divided into 37 chapters. Each chapter contains only one text which vary in type and length (37-39 texts each varying from 1-8 pages). New words have been listed in the margin in order of appearance. The workbook, Active English, Workbook (1977) has 107 pages and contains activities for each chapter. There is an average of 4 activities in each chapter. In addition, there are exercises for extra listening comprehension provided on tapes.

Textbook 2: Imagine
Textbook 2 consists of a textbook and a workbook. The textbook, Imagine (1989), contains 334 pages. It is divided into seven chapters containing a variety of 109 texts both as to type and length. The new words are listed in the workbook, Imagine, Workbook (1989). The workbook has 190 pages and provided with activities for text in the textbook. The number of activities can vary from 1 to 4 (labelled A-D) depending on how much attention each text is given of the authors. In addition to the activities and the glossary, there is a chapter containing information about English and American Holidays.

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22 In the headline, textbook refers to the course book in general including both the specific textbook (anthology) and the workbook.
Textbook 3: *Passage*

Textbook 3, is a textbook and workbook combined. *Passage, Engelsk Grunnkurs* (2003) contains 10 chapters which include 67 different texts (395 pages). Each text is followed by various activities in a fixed order. At the end of each chapter, there are extra activities for revision (Rapid revisions). *Passage* contains a section called *Toolbox* where techniques of how to write different text types and genres are presented. *Toolbox* should serve as a resourceful gadget when working with the activities. An additional workbook was also published, *Passage to Proficiency* (2003). This book contains mostly grammar exercises but also linguistic activities such as word grids, cloze tests and orthography tasks. Further, *Passage* provides a resourceful web-page: *passage.cappelen.no*, with numerous activities and links to information related to the chapters in the textbook.

5.3 Texts

This section presents an overview of the texts which are included in the different textbooks. Texts as models for developing discourse competence have been emphasised in the syllabi presented, especially in R94 above. Even though I do not include the reading of texts and reading comprehension activities as explicit factors to developing the pupils’ discourse competence, I found it important to illuminate what kind of genres are included in the textbooks selected. I have chosen to divide the texts presented in all textbooks according to genre.

If we take a closer look at the textbooks we identify many genres\(^\text{23}\). The pupils and teachers are first and foremost exposed to texts which are classified according to genre. Through reading the pupil may identify features about the text which make her able to tell whether the text is an article, a short-story or an excerpt from a novel. These features must be known to the pupil on the basis of instruction. The genres that were identified in the three textbooks selected were:

- Article (newspaper and/or argumentative)
- Short-story
- Story
- Novel (excerpts)

\(^{23}\) See also Drew & Sørheim (2004:59).
The above genres must be viewed as advisory only. Some genres, such as fairy-tales and tales, have been included as stories. The articles include texts which both include factual texts and newspaper articles. There are also articles which are argumentative included. In the term *letters* I have included both formal letters like applications, inquiries and informal such as personal letters, emails, letters to the editor etc. Scholars may disagree of my selection of genres, especially for not being detailed enough. My objective has been to focus on possible activities that may develop the pupil’s discourse competence. Texts as models may have a positive effect on the development of discourse competence (see my discussion in Chapter 3 above and Simensen 1994:22) used wisely. From my point of view I am unable to know how the texts in the textbooks have been worked with in relation to the development of discourse competence. Therefore I cannot include a reliable tool to investigate what impact the texts in the textbook have on discourse competence. Nevertheless, I cannot escape the fact that I study textbooks. Thus, I find it important that various genres are provided in the textbooks (see above in the didactic model).

Naturally, genres play a central role in understanding and producing texts. The discourse elements of such texts may contribute to the pupils’ awareness of discourse in their own production of texts. Such awareness might for example be coherence and cohesion as dealt with above. Simensen (1998:65-66) defines coherence in texts as the ‘covert meaning relationship among parts of text, made overt through processes of interpretation on the part of the listener or reader. For the text to be coherent, it needs to be structured in a logical manner. This does not […] mean that all texts are structured in the same way. The way texts are structured depends normally on the genre involved.’ Further, cohesion in texts is those linguistic devices that create texture and ties of a text (see Chapter 2 above). Therefore,

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24 See sections 2.3 and 3.3.2 above.
textbooks should include a variety of texts that encompass the targets in the curriculum. Below I have presented in tables an overview of the various genres which I found in the textbooks selected. I will not go into details of each genre as they have been outlined in section 3.3.2 above. Further, the exposure of texts may only implicitly enhance discourse competence as discussed above, and therefore this should only have secondary status in this thesis.

5.3.1 Findings

This section will present the range of different genres which are presented in each textbook. The tables below display the number of texts according to genre and percentage of the total.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Number of texts</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-story</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novel (excerpts)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poems/lyrics</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play (excerpts)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (N)</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Texts in *Imagine* (1989)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Number of texts</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-story</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novel (excerpts)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poems/lyrics</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play (excerpts)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (N)</strong></td>
<td><strong>102</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Texts in *Passage* (2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Number of texts</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-story</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novel (excerpts)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poems/lyrics</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play (excerpts)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (N)</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Activity types

In this section I will give an account of the various activity types represented in the selected textbooks and workbooks. I will focus on the activities that are most likely to comply with the didactic model outlined in Chapter 3. Therefore I have excluded activities which include practice of grammar structures or linguistic features. There are arguments, of course, that such activities train discourse competence, but I believe that is beyond the focus of this thesis. Discourse competence is chiefly developed in the productive skills and, hence, through textbook/workbook activities assigned in the course. It has been a challenge to classify the activities as many of them were borderline cases and thus proved difficult to determine. Below I have analysed each of the selected textbooks in accordance with features presented in the didactic model, bearing in mind that other researchers might disagree with my analysis.

5.4.1 Analysis of activities in Active English

Activities processing spoken discourse

It is difficult to identify activities in this textbook which comply with certain aspects, such as language functions, interactional/transactional language, prosody and coherence/cohesion as presented in the didactic model. The workbook seems to have no activities intended for spoken discourse. Dominant activity types in this book are activities that practise grammatical structures and translation.

I found one activity that, to some extent, would practise language functions:

1. A: Hold up you left hand! What did I do?
   B: You told to me to hold up my left hand.
2. Shake you head! What did I do?
   You told me to shake...

(op cit:32)

But these activities do not practise oral discourse in the sense that they do not practise real life situations which are meaningful. To some extent the above activity appear somewhat

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25 With reference to the Introduction and Chapter 3.
meaningless and repetitive. Further, the activity does not include interactional discourse where one of the purposes is to maintain the conversation.

I could not find activities which comply with transactional discourse e.g. longer stretches of continuous speech. Neither did I find activities which practised prosody, such as pronunciation, intonation, fluency of speech etc. The only trace of prosody was found in the phonetic symbols of the glossary.

Finally, I could not identify any activities that focused on strategies to construct and maintain coherence by use of cohesive devises in production of various spoken texts.

**Activities processing written discourse**

There are several activities which involve processing of written discourse. The activities are based on the texts in the textbook. Two of the activities are given as examples below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WRITTEN WORK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you think the story ended? Sir Charles Cumbersome was actually arrested by the police. Write in the police journal the reasons for arresting him. (must have...)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(op cit:7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESSAYS – Not exceed 70 words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Describe Mr Thompson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Give a summary of the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Jenny Bunn writes her mother a postcard. Write it for her.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(op cit:35)

The composition activities should be produced supported input language in the texts. Almost every chapter (37 in all) has writing activities of this kind. They encourage the pupil to write texts which are creative/expressive, functional or argumentative (see section 3.3.2 above). Many of the activities also suggest genres. However, no activities or information about how to write such texts are included in the workbook. One exception is the description of how to
write formal/informal letters (ibid:26-29). I found no activities which focussed on coherence in order to create continuity in writing. No activities focussed on cohesive devices as tools to achieving coherence.

5.4.2 Analysis of the activities in *Imagine*

**Activities processing spoken discourse**
Activities that practise language functions based on listening texts are represented in this textbook such as (*Imagine Workbook* 1989:8):

```
A Meeting New People

What do you say when you want to talk to somebody you have never met before? Listen to the conversation on the tape and try to write down answers to the following questions:
1 How does Kevin begin his conversation?
2 Where are Kevin and Marianne going, and why?
3 What do they do?
4 What does Kevin say at the end of the conversation?

(Follow up activity)
Walk around the classroom and start a conversation with someone in you class who you didn’t know before! Try to find out as much as possible about you classmates.

Here are some starting sentences:
Nice/interesting/boring class isn’t it?
English is hard, isn’t it?
Etc.
```

The ‘follow up’ activity would practice interactional language in order to expand social relations and maintain conversation. Prefabricated gambits/short turns may help the student to initiate with the other classmates.

Furthermore, there are some activities which practise spoken discourse and they appear regularly in each chapter. The most frequent activity type is *discussion* of a topic presented in the relevant text. Other frequent activities which involve speaking are *role plays, interviews* (would also involve writing) and *group activities* where the pupils should agree/disagree about a certain issue. Again, this would encourage the pupil to participate in interactional spoken discourse and thus practise the strategies and styles of various spoken discourses.
The workbook, to some degree, has included many of the aspects about spoken discourse that I outlined in the didactic model and there are many examples of authentic listening samples. However, there is very little information about how you structure various spoken discourse, including coherence and cohesion, which would be helpful. Properly speaking, activities which practise how you structure discourse would be the most reliable discourse activities. The activities involving prosodic features are to a great extent isolated to the word and sentence levels only.

**Activities processing written discourse**

As with spoken discourse activities there are also many writing exercises in each chapter. These are some examples:

```
Written work
Write a letter to your American pen-friend telling her that you have read about the Star Wars plan. Tell her what you think of this plan (at least 200 words)

(op cit:109)
```

```
Written Work
Describe in your own words what the Oedipus conflict is about

(op cit:49)
```

```
Write Another Version
The usage of language varies according to the context. Divide the class into groups of four and let each group rewrite the story as either:
1 a police report (…)
2 a fairy tale (…)
3 an article in the popular press (…)
4 a personal letter (…)

(op cit:53)
```
There is a great variation of written activities throughout the workbook. Here, activities are, in most cases, related to the topics given in the textbook. The pupils are encouraged to write in a variety of genres such as letters, stories, articles, reports, fairy tales, poems, expressive and argumentative essays, among others. Personal letters are the most frequent genre. Even though there is some variety in the written discourse activities, there are no guidelines as to how generic patterns are structured, or any aids for the pupil to utilise in his/her writing. The great supply of various genres in the textbook may have provided the pupils with models, but this cannot be proved. There are no activities which focus on structure at the level of the paragraph.

As to coherence and cohesion I found no activities which analysed texts in order to identify continuity or cohesive devices, or activities which would guide the pupils in such aspects of their writing.

5.4.3 Analysis of the activities in Passage

Activities processing spoken discourse

Passage includes a multitude of activities which practise spoken discourse. The most striking of these are the Speak your mind activities. These activities seek to debate issues in an oral context based on issues presented in the text. These activities are not directly asking for reading comprehension but seek interactional discourse of moral issues through debates.

Speak your mind

- Why was the building of Titanic important to British pride?
- How is the class system reflected on the Titanic?
- In recent years, tourists have had a chance to buy a trip with a submarine to see the remains of the Titanic on the ocean floor and possessions from the ship have also been brought up. Do you think such tourist industry is acceptable or should this “burial ground” be left in peace? Discuss!

(Passage 2003:154)

Another type of activity in relation to content of texts is to paraphrase passages or direct speech. Paraphrasing means that the pupil retell or rewrite given text in his/her own words. A variety of such activity would be to retell the story (or another genre) supported by key words
or paragraph headlines. Such activities may practise the transactional discourse as they would involve longer stretches of continuous speech.

*Passage* has many role play activities or activities which simulate actual situations where spoken discourse takes place. These activities will focus on and train the pupil in various speech acts and ability to use different language functions. One such activity is given as an example below (op cit:275):

**Act it out**

Pretend that you are hosting a group of foreign students who are visiting Norway for the first time and who keep bombarding you with questions about the words listed below. Work with two or three students in a group and try to explain in English what the words are. Give as complete explanations as possible. One of you is the guide, the others are the tourists. Switch roles after a while.

May 17
Fjord
“hytte”
goat cheese
Grieg
the midnight sun
“russ”
“hulder”
winter sports
“sparkstotting”

Some activities directly practise language functions such as this (op cit:119, shortened):

**Improve your language**

Below are some words and phrases that are useful when you have a problem and want to ask for advice.

What do you think......, Should I...., Could you tell me your opinion on...., What should I do if...(...)

Here are some words and phrases that will help you when you give advice:

I think..., What if you..., How about..., I would suggest...(...)

Work in pairs and take turns asking each other for and giving advice in the following situation:

a) Your parents work overtime a lot and are always tired and grumpy.

b) You have discovered that your colleague at work is stealing.

c) You cannot find a summer job.

(...)

---

26 This is explained in section 3.3.2 above.
Passage also includes many activities where the pupil should go deeper into the topic and then present it orally (and in writing) to the class (see R94: target 3c in Appendix). Here is an example (Passage 2003:195):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In groups, find information about the topics below. You can make wall posters where you present your findings or you can give a talk to the rest of the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The geography of Northern Ireland: cities, countryside, nature, scenery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle of the Boyne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Orange Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Potato Famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such activities are seldom represented in the other textbooks selected, if at all. But then there are no implications of such activities in L76 and in L90. These activities may give the pupil valuable practice of transactional discourse competence. The pupil needs to know how to structure a talk as coherent with much information so as to present it best possible to an audience. Passage refers the pupil to check the guidelines given in Toolbox (see above and in the Appendix below).

**Activities processing written discourse**

In Passage activities that encourage written discourse are well represented. The activities cover most of the types of writing which I have outlined in Chapter 3. Like in the other textbooks/workbooks selected, the written activities are related to the text and its topic. However, not all of these activities suggest a genre. Here is an example from Passage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pen to paper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Choose one of the two characters to work with, either the girl or the man. Reread he short story and pick out the adjectives which are used to describe the character of your choice. Include them in a character description where you also add your own adjectives to present as fully as possible what you think your character is like. Comment on the change your character goes through from beginning to end.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(op cit:179)
One activity is devoted to the notion of the paragraph (op cit:105) such as structure, topic sentence and the supply of extra information. First, the pupils are informed in advance about aspects of the paragraph. Next, they are asked to a) work with a partner and read the given text through and note down the topic sentence of each paragraph and retell what the text is about, and b) use already given topic sentences which should be expanded to fuller paragraphs. This activity would clearly create awareness of how paragraphs function in a text and how they could be written. The level of the paragraph is a central component given in the didactic model.

As with spoken discourse the pupils are encouraged to do research on a given topic which could be presented in writing. These research activities should give the pupil the opportunity to delve into a topic and utilise other sources than the textbook. The pupils’ findings could be presented on wall posters, in newspapers, reports or any genre suitable to the content. Generally, Passage provides such activities as optional between spoken and written discourse (see the example above).

The most striking feature of Passage compared to Imagine and Active English, is that the textbook contains helpful guidelines (Toolbox) involving the discourse aspects of writing and speaking. The guidelines include specifications of how to write different genres. A section of how to perform oral presentation in different genres is also included. This guide is comprehensive, but also very readable for the pupils. Most of Toolbox is devoted to written discourse. There are concrete examples of how to use written cohesive devices (op cit 2003:391, also in Appendix). Ideally, there should be more guidelines for spoken discourse such as how to perform language functions/speech acts and use cohesive devices/discourse markers etc.

Passage has a great variety of texts and examples of different genres. The texts are of various lengths and are at a level of understanding suitable for the foundation course pupil. The use of pre-reading activities has the purpose of activating the pupil’s previous knowledge (schemata) and experience (Simensen 1998:142; Kang 1987). Kang (op cit) discusses the differences between content schemata (familiar content of a text) and formal schemata (the formal rhetorical structure of a text). He argues, on the basis of a study27, that familiar formal

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27 That of Carrell, P. L., see References under Kang.
schemata helped pupils better recall protocol information. In the perspective of discourse competence such pre-reading activities of formal schemata will be the only that practise discourse competence. The pre-reading activities in Passage are generally of the content schemata type. There are examples of pre-reading activities of formal schemata in relation to the writing of various types of letters (Passage 2003:120).

5.5 Comparison
This chapter has analysed three textbooks selected from the period 1977 to 2003. As stated in the Introduction I assumed that a shift of focus regarding the development of discourse competence and, thus, this assumed shift would be reflected in the textbooks selected. The textbooks display a variety of texts (see tables above) which provide the pupils with input and models. Those books which include both a multitude and a variety of texts will be the most advantageous, seen from a discoursal point of view.

An important focus of this thesis was to analyse various activities which may develop discourse competence. Comparing the three textbooks/workbooks it is obvious that Active English lacks, to a great extent, activities which develop spoken discourse competence - unless we assume that e.g. reading comprehension activities are meant to be used orally. There are, however, many activities which involve written discourse. Information of how to produce spoken or written discourse was very limited.

Imagine has many activities which may enhance the pupil’s discourse competence. There is a clear difference in the variety of both written and spoken discourse activities compared to those in Active English. The pupils could get input from the textbook in terms of topics for discussions, speech acts, letters and other texts. However, no information about discoursal techniques is given.

Passage is definitely the textbook which has developed farthest in providing activities that may develop discourse competence. In addition to a multitude of written activities of various kinds, there are oral activities that practise prosody, language functions and speech acts in context. Further, the activities include an emphasis on cohesion and coherence and the textual input gives a good basis for developing discourse competence through both written and spoken tasks. Toolbox is helpful as it provides steps in relation to how to structure different genres and develops awareness of cohesive devices and prosody.
6.0 Conclusion

In this thesis I have described aspects of the development of discourse competence as it is reflected in syllabi and in selected textbooks for the English subject in the foundation course, general studies, in the period from 1976 to 2003. I have analysed the textbooks and syllabi separately according to their nature, but it has been an objective that the two types of documents must be seen in relation to each other. Textbook authors develop their books in relation to the current syllabus and teaching methods. The period analysed is characterised by a move from word- and sentence oriented teaching, to a trend in teaching where communication and meaning-oriented situations gained ground. My focus was to see how aspects of the discourse competence concept have been reflected in the documents.

The place of discourse competence in teaching theories supports a top-down process rather than a bottom-up model. Discourse exists in the social world and not in the linguist’s head (McCarthy 2001:55). The teaching of discourse should be based on an awareness that the pupil’s discourse competence can be developed properly only in meaningful and authentic contexts. Textbooks as tools in this development should include activities that practise language functions/speech acts, coherence and cohesion in various texts, discourse markers and genre features, among others, which are as close to the real world as possible.

The 1976 syllabus reflected an approach to language teaching which focused on skills more than knowledge. Here, the importance of accuracy in spoken and written texts and a systematic learning process for the pupil were evident. A possible development of discourse competence would clearly not take place in communicative contexts but through a focus on grammar, vocabulary and syntax (a bottom-up approach). The 1990 syllabus spelled out the same targets as that of the 1976 syllabus. However, the communicative competence concept was introduced and was seen as the overall objective in ELT. This syllabus had many features of the previous L76. Discourse features were not spelled out, but as the communicative competence concept had a superior place in the syllabus it is probable that the notion of discourse competence was implicitly included. The 1994 syllabus had a completely new focus compared to the previous syllabi. The communicative approach had a strong influence on the
approach to teaching. The targets were context-oriented and, among other things, implied a functional use of the target language. Discourse competence as a component of communicative competence was one of the evaluation criteria. *Metodisk Rettleiing* (1994) came up with ideas about how these targets could be reached, including activities and features developing discourse competence. It is evident that there has been a change of focus regarding discourse competence in the three syllabi, with R94 as the most significant.

The analysis of the textbooks showed that all had a variety of texts which would give a textual input to certain types of discourse. However, there were major differences between the activities that were provided in the different textbooks/workbooks. *Active English Workbook* had very few activities which practised oral discourse. There were various writing activities in the workbook which would develop the written discourse ability but no explicit information of how these should be performed.

*Imagine Workbook* had a variety of activities for the practise of both oral and written discourse competence. Especially oral activities with a focus on language functions and discussions/debates were included in this workbook. The workbook lacks information about techniques which could be utilised by the pupils in their production of discourse.

Unquestionably, *Passage* is the textbook which includes most activities for the purpose of practising and, hence, developing discourse competence. Text topics are provided as basis for a variety of written and spoken activities. In addition, there are activities that practise language functions and for developing an ability to structure both written and spoken discourse. The attached *Toolbox* is helpful in that it gives information adapted to the level of the pupil, on genre structures and discourse features. There is, however, little information of how to develop spoken discourse beyond that of oral presentations.

The focus on the development of discourse competence has shifted during the period analysed. It is clear that the introduction of the communicative competence concept in the
syllabus models in the 1980s and the 1990s (such as Scope and Threshold Level 1990) have been followed up in the national syllabi and textbooks published.

Therefore, to sum up I will answer my set of questions in this way:

*What is the focus of discourse competence in the 1976, 1990 and the 1994 syllabi?*

The focus of discourse competence in the 1976 syllabus was limited to the level of the sentence and to grammatical structures. Further, there were no suggested steps which gave a clear guide to the teacher or the pupil of how to develop discourse competence. Discourse competence as concept is not mentioned.

Albeit the communicative concept was introduced in the syllabus of 1990 there were no changes of the general targets compared to L76. The documents that were published in the same period, Scope and Threshold Level 1990, suggested steps to enhance discourse competence. However, the discourse competence concept is not clear and we can only assume that a focus on discourse competence might have been included in the realisation of the targets.

The 1994 syllabus has a clearer definition of the targets in which the discourse competence concept becomes visible. Even though discourse competence is not mentioned in the targets it is a clear evaluation criterion. *Metodisk Rettleiing* explains discourse competence thoroughly as an important step to reach the targets.

*What is the focus of discourse competence in textbooks and workbooks selected?*

The three textbooks and workbooks selected showed that the focus on discourse competence varied. In the oldest textbook selected (*Active English*) I found few or none activities which developed discourse competence according to my didactic model. The next book (*Imagine*) had several activities that may practise discourse competence but there were no activities or guidelines of how to structure discourse. The last textbook investigated (*Passage*) had a multitude and a variety of activities which focussed on discourse competence. In addition, the textbook included guidelines of how to structure discourse of various types.
Has there been a shift of focus during the period in question?

Supported by the theories on this field, syllabi and textbooks investigated and the account of the period studied, I dare say that the focus on discourse competence has changed. The teaching methods have had a major development and the syllabi have undergone substantial revisions which, to a great extent, are in accordance with current views of language teaching. This is also reflected in the textbooks selected. The focus on discourse competence is clearly prominent in modern textbooks.

I have to emphasise that I have investigated a limited number of textbooks out of a large number of textbooks which have been published in the same period. Therefore I could be in the danger of not providing a clearer perspective of the issues I have discussed above.

However, seen in this perspective, activities that might develop discourse competence in textbooks have developed in the right direction during the period. But there is still more to be done in providing the pupil (and the teacher) with better activities and more appropriate information where discourse characteristics could be analysed and developed further. Future syllabi and textbooks should also include a greater focus on the development of discourse competence, as elaborated in this thesis.
References:

Section I: Works referred to


Cooper, A. (1986). Reciprocal Questioning: Teaching Students to Predict and Ask High Level questions. In TESOL Newsletter XX:5, 9-10


Section II: Syllabi and guidelines of relevance for the notes on English as a subject in the foundation course, upper secondary school in Norway:


Appendix

Targets 1-4, Curriculum for upper secondary education (’Reform 94’: 27-28, English version):

Target 1  Comprehension of spoken English

The pupil should become skilful at understanding various forms of spoken English, ranging from informal to more formal uses of the language.

Main points

The pupil should

1a be able to understand everyday speech on general topics
1b be able to grasp the main contents of a longer utterance, also when it contains terminology relating to his or her area of study
1c be able to understand an oral instruction
1d be able to obtain information relevant to various needs from oral sources
1e be able to understand the attitude and intention of the speaker

Target 2  Comprehension of written English

The pupil should become skilful at understanding various types of English text, according to their nature and structure and the purpose for which they are read

Main points

The pupil should

2a be able to understand written presentations of general topics
2b be able to understand the main content of texts typical of his/her area of study, such as articles, working instructions, users’ guides or instruction manuals
2c be able to understand important subject-related texts in detail
2d obtain relevant information from a text according to various needs
2e understand the message and grasp the significant features of a text

**Target 3 Use of spoken English**

The pupil should develop good communicative skills in various situations, and be able to adapt his/her language use to the particular situation

**Main points**

The pupil should

3a master normal forms of communication like conversation and communication on social and job-related topics

3b be able to express and explain his or her own attitudes and opinions naturally and easily in conversations and discussions

3c be able to give a coherent oral presentation of a topic, for instance a set of circumstances or an experience

3d be able to communicate some prominent features of Norwegian culture

**Target 4 Use of written English**

The pupil should

4a be able to take written notes, for instance of key points in oral and written sources, and to report the main contents of written texts, talks, lectures etc.

4b be able to express and explain his or her own attitudes and opinions in writing

4c be able to write various kinds of texts, such as stories, formal letters, applications, reports, or passages of continuous reasoning.
“Toolbox” pp. 387-394 in Passage 2003