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EXTENSIVE AND INTENSIVE WRITING AT THE UPPER SECONDARY
SCHOOL LEVEL: KEY TO SUCCESS IN NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

Master's thesis

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PREFACE

The teaching of the written form is one of the most significant, whilst equally complicated, parts of the entire process of preparing upper-secondary students for the National Examination in English. It can be a very stressful time for both teacher and class, as teaching writing is also a challenging and often difficult task. Individual skills, motivation and attitude towards learning tend to vary widely from student to student; nevertheless, according to the National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools, by the time of graduation it is compulsory for each student to have passed at least one National Examination in a foreign language. For the majority of students, it is English. Furthermore, in the studying process, we need to take various aspects into consideration. Study success depends on various issues: students' motivation, teachers' approaches and competences, methods used in the lesson, the provided material and its volume, time frames and other possible factors and circumstances.

The main emphasis in the present MA thesis is made on the influence of the combination of extensive and intensive writing activities during the preparation period on better students' performance in the National Examination in English. The purpose of the thesis is to find out whether intensive regular writing activities, together with extensive writing approaches, are necessary pre-conditions for achieving higher exam results in the National Examination at the Upper Secondary level. This study, through comparison of Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School and Narva Language Lyceum in their approaches to preparation for the National Examination, aims to reveal the best practices in preparation for the writing part of the National Examination and to offer activities/tasks/to-do-list to make such preparation successful in terms of achieving better results.

The research paper consists of the Introduction, Chapter I and Chapter II. The Introduction of the thesis gives an overview of the most important aspects such as writing as a skill, writing as a process, gives definitions of extensive and intensive writing. The introductory section also presents a description of upper-secondary students, and possible roles of the teacher that could be applied and used with benefits for learners, whilst ensuring their adequate preparation for the National Examination.

Chapter I "Regulations and Requirements Set to the National Examination: Writing" uncovers the structure, important issues, and problem areas of the National Examination, presents an overview of writing as a separate part of the examination. Furthermore, the chapter gives a brief description of the National Curriculum for upper-secondary schools.

In Chapter II “Key to Success with Preparation and Passing the National Examination” discusses such aspects as why to teach for the examination, providing an overview of the most popular approaches that are based on intensive, extensive or mixed writing activities. Chapter II also includes the empirical part of the thesis – an observation of 11th and 12th grade students’ English lessons in Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School and Narva Language Lyceum. In addition to the observation, a survey was conducted among 11th and 12th grade students and their five teachers on the basis of questionnaires with the following purposes:

- to investigate all possible approaches based both on intensive and extensive writing activities,
- to discover the potential of intensive and extensive writing activities used in the lesson and at home, and the given time for their completion,
- to find out to what extent writing is considered to be the most difficult part of the examination,
- to see how students rate their writing skills and how much time they need to write the examination tasks: letters, reports and essays.

The Conclusion sums up the results of the research and comments on the hypothesis of the research.

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INTRODUCTION

To teach writing is a very complicated task, especially when the preparation period is time-consuming and always needs practicing. The aim of the teacher is to provide students with all necessary knowledge and practice tasks that will contribute to the better performance in writing and turn writing practice into a constructive and worthwhile process in class.

Unfortunately, according to Bowen and Marks (1994:143) writing is sometimes regarded as the “forgotten skill”. Teachers pay less attention to writing, in comparison with reading, speaking, listening. It is the last competence in the list of teachers’ priorities due to many reasons. The most common are: limited classroom time, limited time for correction of written work, and excessive preparation time. Teachers prefer to spend time on more active aspects of language learning in classroom, whereas writing is regarded as something that “takes care of itself”, a side issue that usually is given for homework task (ibid.). However, the National Examination in a foreign language is unavoidable and needs thorough preparation of 4 competences: reading, speaking, listening, and writing.

There is no specific or 100% right model that will help upper-secondary school students easily develop writing skills and succeed in the National examination. In spite of that, there are numerous approaches, techniques, various strategies and recommendations that will help to develop students’ writing skills and perform in a better way.

Writing as a Skill

According to Milrud (2007: 182), writing is a communicative skill to send, store and retrieve messages with the help of written symbols. Zhenhui Rao, in his article “*Training in brainstorming and developing writing skills (2007)*”, determined writing as an important skill in the teaching and learning English as a foreign Language. On the one hand, it stimulates thinking, compels students to concentrate and organise their ideas, and cultivates their ability to summarize, analyse, and criticize. On the other hand, it reinforces learning in, thinking in, and reflecting on the English language.

Byrne (1988:6) defines writing as a skill which is both limited in value and difficult to acquire. Meyers (2005:2) has another definition for writing: “Writing is speaking to others on paper- or on a computer screen. Writing is partly a talent, but it’s mostly a skill, and like any skill, it improves with practice. Writing is also an action – a

process of discovering and organization your ideas, putting them on paper, and reshaping and revising them”.

Steve Graham and Dolores Perin (2007: 3) define writing as a necessity: “Writing well is not just an option for young people—it is a necessity. Along with reading comprehension, writing skill is a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participation in civic life and in the global economy”.

As Harmer (1991:16) points out, writing involves language production and is therefore often referred to as productive skill, while reading and listening are referred to as receptive skills. The skill of writing will provide a good example of this, since clearly there are many different kinds of writing. Writing an informal letter is very different from writing a scientific report. Writing a poem means using skills that are different from writing a brochure – which is again very different from taking notes (Harmer, 1991:17).

For White and Arndt (1991:11) writing is not just one skill. There are certain skills used in the process of writing as the following: generating ideas, focusing, structuring, drafting and evaluating.

In general, writing is one of communication forms that expresses our feelings, emotions, ideas and thoughts. A good piece of writing implies students’ believes and knowledge that has to be supported by convincing arguments and organizes all these aspects into a coherent text with a logical structure. There are various purposes and styles that students have to be aware of and be able easily recognize them. Furthermore, it requires understanding the fundamental system of a language such as: vocabulary, spelling, grammar, punctuating and sentence structure. Consequently, it could be said that the ability to write well, considering all the aspects above, is a skill that could be learned as any other skill. Writing as a skill is necessary for school students and should be taught and practiced constantly by using extensive and intensive writing activities, not only in class but also out of class.

Writing as a Process

According to Milrud (2005:200), there is a three-phase framework of teaching to write. It includes “familiarization with similar pieces of writing”, “creation of written discourse” and “sharing pieces of writing in the group”. The process of teaching is organised according to the three-phase framework:

- 1) Pre-writing (schemata activation, motivation for writing, preparation for the language, familiarization with the format of the target text)

- 2) While-writing (thesis development, writing from notes ending up with a given phrase, proceeding from a given beginning phrase, following a plan, following a format and register, solving a problem)
- 3) Post-writing (reflection on the spelling and reasoning errors, sharing writing with group mates, redrafting, peer editing)

(Adopted from Milrud, 2005)

Ron White and Valerie Arndt (1991: 5) highlight that “writing is re-writing; that revision – seeing with new eyes – has a central role to play in the act of creating text”. For White and Arndt (1991:11-37), there are certain skills used in the writing process:

- 1) Generating ideas – a crucial part of the writing process. Especially, at the initial stages when students are attempting to discover a topic and identify the purpose. This requires special techniques that are used to stimulate possible ideas.
- 2) Focusing – includes discovering main ideas. Here the focus is given to the main idea of the text.
- 3) Structuring – includes various organization processes of grouping ideas together and build up a coherent text.
- 4) Drafting – the key word is “how”. How best to organize an idea for the reader. The aim of a writer is to think how to attract the audience and how to lead them through the text to a conclusion.
- 5) Evaluating – deals with the assessment of the draft. The basic features of evaluation are: mechanisms of writing, length and organization of the text.
- 6) Reviewing – checking context, connections, assessing impact, editing.

In fact, writers have to deal with a number of different factors when producing a written product

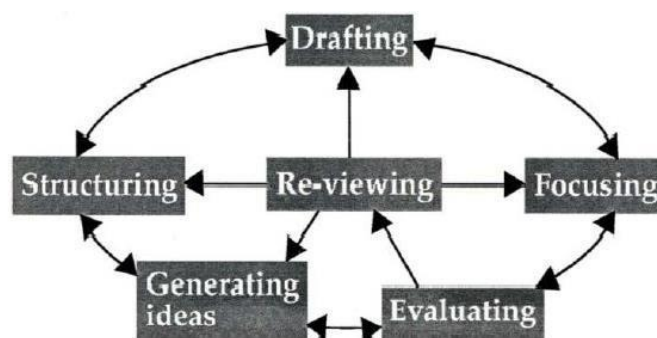


Figure 1. *The writing process (White and Arndt, 1991)*

This model demonstrates that writing is not a linear process, it is rather a complex process that always occurs to be in a constant cycle. In this process, different writing operations interact with one another, sometimes even simultaneously. Thus, a writer

must all the time move backwards for re-viewing, changing and improving words, structures, ideas, etc. until they are satisfied with the end product.

Bowen and Marks mention that writing is considered by many learners to be the most difficult and challenging issue. If to compare writing with speaking, written discourse requires much more formal accuracy than spoken discourse. As Bowen and Marks (1994:144-145) said, “The whole process of writing seems more time-consuming, more demanding and, possibly, less rewarding. Writing, as part of the language-learning spectrum, is an area where tasks are set, written and corrected (either by the teacher or by the learners), and where accuracy of written form is the ultimate goal”.

Many adolescents are able to handle various tasks with different complexity on reading, speaking, listening but have serious problems with writing. The process of writing requires a formulation of own thoughts, accuracy, proper organization, spelling and grammar convention (Graham & Perin, 2007:7).

Upper-Secondary School Students – Who are They? How to Teach?

Harmer (2001:263), states that it is crucial for teachers to know who students are, what social background they have, and what students need. Each class is unique; hence it needs to be treated differently. Knowledge of students and their needs helps the teacher to plan efficient strategies and activities that will be relevant and interesting for his/her students. Also it is important that students should be able to manage with the level of difficulty. All these make students more motivated and turn the studying process into beneficial. Harmer (2001:39) stresses that teenagers, if they are engaged, have a great capacity to learn, a great potential for creativity, and passionate commitment to things which interest them.

The age of our students is a major factor that should be considered by all foreign language teachers in their decision of how and what to teach. Students of different ages have different needs, competences, individual features, and cognitive skills. Children of primary age learn everything through games, whereas teenagers and adults learn through integrated activities and are able to use abstract notions. Harmer (2001:37) defines a student as “an individual with different experiences both in and outside the classroom. Comments here about young children, teenagers, and adults can only be generalization. Much also depends upon individual learner differences and motivation”.

Upper-secondary students are teenagers at the age from 16 till 19. According to Harmer (2001:39), teenagers are in a difficult age with the whole baggage of personal

problems and the need of self-esteem. In adolescence children search for individual identity, which contributes to the key challenge for this age group. Their identity among classmates and friends, peer approval may be considerably more important than the studying process itself and the attention of the teacher which, for young children, is so significant. To support the idea of a difficult age Cummins and Davison (2007:639) believe that adolescence is regarded as a particularly malleable and difficult age in the development of social identity and conception of self, and even more potentially problematic for multilingual and multiethnic English learners. Jeremy Harmer (1998:11) admits that in adolescence each failure leads to more failure, each success induces the hope of more success.

A teacher should be aware of the peculiarities of this difficult age in order to make assignments and studying material more relevant and attractive to their age and engage them into the learning process. Students' success and the way of acquiring the language depends on teacher's approaches, strategies and roles she/he adopts while teaching.

The Roles of a Teacher

The right choice of teacher's role affects students' motivation and further success in the examination. According to Harmer (2001:57), teachers' role may change from one activity to another or from one stage of an activity to another. The main purpose of all roles of a teacher is to facilitate the students' progress and success in learning English. Harmer (2001:58) describes 8 roles of a teacher in the classroom:

- 1) Controller – usually stands at the front of the class like mistress controlling everything: work at the lesson, behavior, language they use. A teacher is in complete charge of the class and is in the centre of the studying process.
- 2) Organiser – supposed to be the most important and challenging role that teacher has to play. The success of many activities depends on good organization and students' understanding of a task. A teacher makes a topic lead-in, gives clear instruction and provides feedback.
- 3) Assessor – gives feedback, correction and grades students in various ways. There are two types of assessment: correction (to show the problem places and help students to improve that) and feedback (is intended to show the extent of students' success or failure and provides possible ideas to solve problems).
- 4) Prompter –directs students forward in a supportive way. A teacher uses encouraging words and phrases that make the student speak or think.

- 5) Participant–takes part in an activity not as a teacher, but also as a participant in her/his own right.
- 6) Resource – is used as a source of information. A teacher is helpful and available for students.
- 7) Tutor–works with individuals or small groups. The teacher’s aim is to point them in directions they have not yet thought of taking.
- 8) Observer – observes what students do so that it was possible to give them useful group and individual feedback.

Harmer (2001:57) admits, “Yet in one sense any role which the teacher adopts- and which is designed to help students learn is to some extent facilitative. All, roles, after all, aim to facilitate the students’ progress”. The main idea that he suggests is that a teacher has to be able to switch between the different roles considering what is appropriate for a particular activity (2001:63). The way the teacher behaves in various range of activities depends on the nature of the activities (Harmer, 1991:235).

If to be more precise, in the writing process, when students are asked to write, there are 3 the most important roles of a teacher (Harmer, 2001:261):

- 1) Motivator –motivates students, encourages them to make much labor in order to get better results, provides with supporting examples and creates the right conditions for the generations of their own thoughts and ideas.
- 2) Resource – supplies information and language, gives advice, offers suggestions and is always ready to help during the writing process, especially during more extended writing tasks.
- 3) Feedback provider –gives feedback on writing tasks in a constructive and tactful way.

As teaching has become more learner-centered, learners’ needs and experience are primary in the educational process. In the process of education teachers’ typologies, ideologies and believes play a crucial role as they determine teaching approaches, strategies, methods, material, lessons organization and assessment procedures. Consequently, teachers are responsible for the way how learners acquire a language and apply it in practice. In the case of writing learners are given tasks to work on, and learning is the process of performing these tasks. Thus, a teacher is no longer the giver of knowledge, the controller, and the authority, but rather a facilitator and a resource for the students to draw on (Harmer, 2001).

Intensive and Extensive Writing at Upper Secondary School

Most upper secondary school teachers would agree that the main purpose of their role is to help students master writing skills by engaging them in a variety of writing activities. For this purpose, there are various approaches and writing activities that facilitate students' preparation for final examinations and make the studying process more efficient and productive. There are two main processes of learning to write that could be used during the preparation for the National examination: intensive writing and extensive writing.

Intensive writing, also known as controlled or guided writing, has been an efficient tool for English language acquisition and tradition in English as second/foreign language classrooms (Silva, 1990). As Raimes (1983:95), one of the main proponents of controlled writing, admits, unlike free writing, controlled writing takes place when learners are supplied with “a great deal of the content and/or form [such as] an outline to complete, a paragraph to manipulate, a model to follow, or a passage to continue”. Raimes points out that controlled writing is a practical process of “reinforcing grammar, vocabulary, and syntax in context. Controlled writing involves “using the conventions of written English, such as indentation, punctuation, and connecting words, and spelling” (ibid.:97).

Generally, in intensive writing learners have to be careful of their grammar and of organization of their writing work. Students are supposed to acquire the basis of academic writing: topic development, convincing and logical argumentation, paragraphs organization and coherence, logical relations between the ideas and thoughts. The teacher provides the grammar structures, proper vocabulary, samples, schemes and topics that the learner must use. Many classroom writing activities are controlled writing.

As teachers are mainly focused on the process of learning to write, unfortunately they pay less attention to another kind of writing – writing to learn, that is also a very powerful tool for improving and developing writing skills. According to Louanne Piccolo (2017: para 1), a native English speaker who is also an English language teacher, “with extensive writing, there is less emphasis on accuracy and grammar and more on fluency and expression. So, it is important not to concentrate on errors but to focus on what the learner is saying”. Almost the same definition is given in “Writing Journals and Book Reviews Teacher’s Guide” (n.d.): “Extensive writing is doing a large amount of free writing on a range of topics and in a range of styles. In free writing learners focus less on accuracy (correctness) and more on fluency

(communicating information and ideas without worrying about accuracy). It is important not to correct the learners too much in free writing”.

Cathrine-Mette Mork (2017: para.1), characterizes extensive writing as:

- 1) writing as much as possible both in and out of class;
- 2) writing on a wide range of topics;
- 3) writing for different reasons and in different ways;
- 4) student-made decisions as to what to write about;
- 5) writing at one’s own pace; and
- 6) writing faster than normal.

According to Mork (2017: para 2), “the aim of extensive writing is to help students become comfortable writing larger volumes on a consistent basis, thereby more efficiently and effectively expressing their ideas. As the focus is on fluency, teacher correction is not common in extensive writing. Correction is not only inconsistent with its goals, but might serve to undermine them”. Truscott (1996) believes that grammatical mistakes of students’ writing seem to improve more from constant practice than they do as a result of having errors corrected. Louanne Piccolo (2017:section 5,para 1) highlights the same idea “some teachers may feel uncomfortable because they are not correcting grammar and spelling, but it is important to remember that extensive writing does not focus on accuracy. As soon as learners start worrying about tenses or sentence structure, they stop writing freely”.

Louanne Piccolo (2017) in her article “*Activities for Extensive Writing in the EFL classroom*” stresses that extensive writing in foreign language learning allows students to focus toward fluency and a large quantity of informal writing on a wide range of topics and in various styles, while intensive writing focuses on accuracy.

Intensive writing	Extensive writing
Teacher-centered	Student-centred
Manipulative	Communicative
Structured	Open-ended
Predicted-student responses	Unpredicted responses
Pre-planned objectives	Negotiated objectives
Set curriculum	Cooperative curriculum

Table 1. *The main differences between controlled and free writing in the practical stages of a lesson by Crookes and Chaudron (1991:52).*

Due to the National Examination in English requirements learners are expected to perform more academic writing tasks. Therefore, most classroom writing activities at schools are intensive: teachers set a task with grammar structures and topics that learners must use and then grade afterwards. However, there are researches that highlight the importance of extensive writing at the upper secondary school level. One of them is Adele MacGowan-Gilhooly, associate professor of English as a second language (ESL) at The City College of The City University of New York. In her study “*Fluency First: Reversing the Traditional ESL Sequence (1991)*”, MacGowan-Gilhooly describes an ESL department's whole language approach to writing and reading, replacing its traditional grammar-based ESL instructional sequence. The new approach is enabling students to become fluent in writing and reading before having to produce grammatically correct pieces or to comprehend academic material. To support her hypothesis, she conducted a survey in which the new approach was embedded. At the end of semester teachers reported unprecedented improvement in students' work (greater clarity in expressing ideas, using vocabulary, greater speed). As a result, students' essays had more depth and richness, more fluency, and better grammar.

Another research “*Extensive Writing: Another Fluency Approach for EFL Learners*” was carried out in 2012 by Steven Herder and Rebecca King. Their approach to teaching writing begins with fluency. Over the five years they had examined Japanese EFL students during their English classes. Gained results show immediate changes in writing speed and writing volume as well as an encouraging increase in self-confidence and improved motivation to study English.

One of researchers, who has already made various investigations in connection with the present topic is Anna Wahlström with her research essay “*Teaching Writing in Upper Secondary School (2006)*”. The aim of her study was to investigate how writing is taught in upper secondary school, how teachers prepare students for the national tests and how writing assignments are assessed. Anna Wahlström interviewed four upper secondary school teachers from two different schools and found out that for preparation for the national tests they used completely different methods. The most common were the paragraph-pattern approach and the grammar-syntax-organization approach. Less often the teachers use free writing as a method.

In 1998, Theresa A. Dean-Rumsey in her master's thesis “*Improving the Writing Skills of At-risk Students Through the Use of Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing Process Instruction*”, based on her experiment, pointed out that evaluation of the pre-test and post-test data found no significant differences in the students' scores.

Her findings did not support the hypothesis that writing across the curriculum, combined with writing process instruction, would improve the writing skills of at-risk students. However, teacher observations suggested that students' writing had improved in several areas, including students' knowledge of and use of the writing process. The purpose of the study was to conduct an experiment to determine effective strategies for increasing the writing skills of at-risk students at Hesperia Middle School.

Another research on the topic writing skills development was conducted by Ashok Sapkota in 2012. In his study "Developing Students' Writing Skill through Peer and Teacher Correction: An Action Research" after the analysis of data collected through test items, there was seen improvement in students' writing in post-test than in pre-test. The students were found using the words in an increased order and grammatically correct sentences in their writing in each test made and committed fewer grammatical errors in the post-test than in pre- and progress test. The peer correction and teacher correction technique was found productive in teaching writing through action research as a whole.

One of the recent research papers on the topic "Using Modern Technology to Develop English Writing Skills in the Third Stage of Narva Basic Schools (Safajev, 2017) studied the influence of modern technology on developing English writing skills among the third stage students of Narva basic schools. The purpose of the paper was to conduct a qualitative research among the students and English teachers of three Narva basic schools on the problem of using modern technology to develop English writing skills. As a result of conducted interviews and online questionnaires it was found out that not all of the modern technological solutions are used in the teaching process.

Ingvar Veidenberg (2017) investigated differences between individually and collaboratively written texts in case of Estonian upper secondary school EFL students. His study results show that there are no significant differences between collaboratively and individually written texts in terms of sentence complexity or linguistic accuracy. Neither were there significant differences between individually written texts before and after the collaborative writing task.

Despite the plethora of researched topics on the development of writing skills with the help of collaboratively and individually written texts, modern technology, extensive and/or intensive approaches, peer and teacher corrections to name but a few; there has not been such an abundance of studies dedicated to the manner in which upper-secondary level students prepare for the National Examination.

In light of that, many of the preparatory practices used by Estonian teachers with regard to the writing skill level required for successful completion of the National Examination are not widely published, nor reach at large an academic market; consequently, there exist few sources to help understand how, if at all, any differences in the balance between intensive and extensive writing affect directly student's success in the National examination in a foreign language (English).

Taking into consideration the mandatory status of the National Examination in a foreign language and the importance of a preparatory period supported by various approaches based on intensive or extensive writing the following hypothesis can be formulated for the present research:

The combination of regular extensive and intensive writing activities in and out of class results in a better performance in writing. Higher examination results in writing of Narva Language Lyceum in comparison with Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School can be an example of such a combination contributing to the success.

CHAPTER I

REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS SET TO THE NATIONAL EXAMINATION: WRITING

According to Mihkel Lees (2016:6) the new National Curriculum, adopted by the Estonian Parliament in 1996, focuses on school learning outcomes. It describes competencies, or standards, to be achieved at the end of each school stage and provides guidance about how to organize a student-centered learning process in school. In 2011 the National Curriculum was separated into two frameworks: one for the lower secondary school and one for the upper secondary school. Each framework enabled schools to develop their own curricula, while taking students' interests and regional cultural differences into account.

1.1 The National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools

According to the Estonian Academic Recognition Information center (2010:14), "the requirements concerning secondary education, i.e. the educational standards, are established in the National Curriculum approved by the Government. The National Curriculum determines the study objectives, the duration of studies, the relationship of the state curriculum to the school curriculum, a list of compulsory courses, including the number of lessons and their contents, the options and conditions for the selection of courses, as well as the requirements for students in terms of different study periods and graduation".

One of the many objectives of learning and education in upper secondary schools is to help students to acquire sufficient knowledge, skills and values that will help them in the future life and will prepare them for working or further educational career.

The National Curriculum includes the following subject fields: 1) language and literature; 2) **foreign languages**; 3) mathematics; 4) natural science; 5) social studies; 6) art subjects; 7) physical education.

For English the National Curriculum (2014) aims for the students to reach the language proficiency level of B2 by the end of upper secondary school, which in case of writing skills means that the students can write coherent texts on specific and general themes, while train of thought is logical; can explain their viewpoints; can use varied expressions in order to avoid repetitions; use punctuation marks in sentences mostly according to the rules; have mastered grammar fairly well and do not make mistakes

that cause misunderstanding; in most cases can correct occasional slips, accidental mistakes and lapses in syntax themselves. This implies that the students should be able to write clear, logical and relatively error-free texts that the reader could understand while maintaining variety in expressions. They should also be able to successfully proofread, analyse, and, when necessary, correct their writing products themselves. Some misconceptions of grammar are allowed, but only to the degree that does not cause misunderstanding.

In many Estonian schools students usually learn at least two foreign languages. According to the National Curricula, in Estonian schools students could choose as the first foreign language: French, English, German or Russian. The majority students give their preference to learning English as the first foreign language. In Narva schools the situation is a little bit different. Estonian language is compulsory for Russian students; it comes as their first foreign language and English as their second foreign language.

According to the National Curriculum for upper secondary schools, by the time of graduation it is compulsory for students, whose second language is Estonian, to pass at least one National examination in a foreign language. Students should have achieved the B level – a level of an independent user (B1 or B2 according the Common European Framework).

1.2 The National Examination in a Foreign Language

According to J. Parri and K. Aas (2006: 259) in order to finish upper-secondary school in Estonia, one has to take final examinations in the 12th grade. The examinations are school examinations and national examinations. National examinations are composed and graded outside the school and are identical all over the country. They are supposed to give an objective picture of the mastery of the national secondary school curriculum. Examinations scores are valid during the whole lifetime of an examinee.

The National examination in a foreign language is prepared by The Innove Foundation. Innove is responsible for supporting general education and vocational schools in implementing the National Curriculum to make sure that every student's capacity to learn is developed to the maximum.

Parts of examination	Number of tasks	Number of questions	Duration	Maximum points
Writing	2	2	90	25
Listening	5	40	40	25
Reading	7	60	90	30
Speaking	2	2	15	20

Table 2. *The structure of the National Examination in a Foreign Language (English)*
(The Innove Foundation, 2017)

The National Examination in a Foreign Language includes B1 and B2 level tasks that are evaluated by 4 competences: writing, listening, reading and speaking. The examination consists of the writing part (writing, listening, reading) and the oral part (speaking).

Students could get the maximum of 100 points for all parts of the National Examination in a foreign language (e.g. English). Examinees whose results are 70-100 points get level B2. Those whose results are between 50-74 points get level B1. Students under 50 points do not achieve language skills.

The main purposes of the National Examination in a Foreign Language are:

- 1) To give students, their parents, school and the state objective feedback about teaching and learning productivity, results and good practices
- 2) To explain all possible changes in teaching and learning processes and students' performance
- 3) To provide the state with information for making educational policy decisions
- 4) To support the national curriculum application and guide the content and form of the exam through the learning process
- 5) To decide whether students graduate from school or not
- 6) To provide individuals with better opportunities in the globalising world and to increase their competitiveness in the labour market.

Year	Number of students in Ida – Viru County	Level not reached	Level B1	Level B2	Level C1
2015	533	41%	35%	23%	1%
2016	505	44%	35%	19.4%	1.6%
2017	469	39%	33%	28%	

Table 3. *English language proficiency levels achieved in the National Examination by Ida-Viru County students in 2015, 2016 and 2017 (The Innove Foundation, 2017)*

The table above illustrates the number of Ida-Viru County students who took the National Examination in English during the last 3 years, and displays their results in the level of proficiency gained.

The data provided by the Innove Foundation shows that there was a high percentage of students (41.3%) who failed the examination; consequently, failing to meet the necessary target for successful school graduation. Level B1 was reached by 34.3%, with the proficiency level of B2 having been achieved by the remaining 23.5%. Generally, almost half of Ida-Viru County students did not succeed in the examination, which indicates presumably the high complexity of the National Examination and undoubtedly demands a thorough preparation.

1.2.1. Writing as a Part of the National Examination in a Foreign Language: Structure, Issues

As it can be seen in *Table 2*, the writing section consists of two assignments with the total length of about 320 words. The first task is to write a formal or informal letter of 120 words; the second task is an essay or a report of 200 words, with 90 minutes being allocated for this part of the exam. The maximum score of the writing section is 25 points. The first task in the writing section is measured by three criteria: task completion, vocabulary and grammar. For each aspect, the maximum score is three points. The second task of the writing section is measured by four criteria: task completion, organization, vocabulary, grammar. For each aspect the maximum score is four.

Parts of Examination	Pass rate Year 2016	Pass rate Year 2017
Writing	58%	65.1%
Listening	63.4%	66.2%
Reading	60.1%	71.6%
Speaking	76.9%	78.5%

Table 4. *Comparison of the pass rates between all parts of the National Examination in English in 2016 and 2017 (The Innove Foundation, 2017)*

This table is provided in order to reveal the most complicated part of the National Examination in the last two years. It depicts the percentage of students who managed with writing, listening, reading and speaking. As it can be seen from both columns, the most difficult part of the EL National Examination is writing with a pass rate of 61.6%, which is less than the other parts of the examination (listening– 64.8%, reading – 65.9%, and speaking – 77.7%). The data from this table is very important for the present research, as it clearly depicts the fact that writing needs more attention and support during the preparatory phase for the National Examination in a Foreign Language (English).

1.2.2. Common Problem Issues in the Writing Section of Examination

Writing is believed to be one of the most difficult skills to demonstrate in examination conditions. If we want to help students improve their writing skills, it becomes necessary to reveal their weaknesses. Hence, it would be useful to investigate all problem places and difficulties in the writing section that upper-secondary students encounter.

Writing Part	Pass rate 2015	Pass rate 2016	Pass rate 2017
Task 1 (letter)	64,8%	61,9%	71,2%
Task 2 (essay/report)	61,8%	55,8%	61,8%

Table 5. *The percentage of students who passed the examination tasks in 2015, 2016 and 2017(The Innove Foundation, 2017)*

This table depicts the percentage of students who successfully completed the first and the second tasks in 2015, 2016, and 2017, to the satisfaction of the examiner. From the table, it is clear that the percentage of examinees, who passed the first task (that is 66%) is generally higher than the pass rate of the second task which is 59.8 % during the last three years; therefore, enabling us to extrapolate from the data that the second task (essay/report) of the writing examination is more complicated for students than writing a letter.

Considering the evaluation of the writing section on the basis of certain criteria, it becomes readily apparent how well students complete a task, and most problem issues are revealed.

Aspects	Pass rate	Pass rate	Pass rate
	2015	2016	2017
Task completion (letter)	60%	56%	72%
Vocabulary (letter)	69%	66%	71%
Grammar (letter)	66%	64%	70%
Task completion (essay/report)	63% (essay)	52% (report)	60%(report)
Organisation (essay / report)	64%(essay)	63%(report)	66%(report)
Vocabulary (essay/report)	60%(essay)	56%(report)	62%(report)
Grammar (essay/report)	59%(essay)	53%(report)	59%(report)

Table 6. *National Examination pass rates, with reference to each individual criterion*(The Innove Foundation, 2017)

The average percentage of students who managed to successfully complete the letter task for the last three years is 62.7%, thus showing that this section is, indeed, the most difficult part. In the vocabulary section, the average percentile is 68.7% (the highest percentage of completion). Lastly, the average percentage for the grammar section is 66.7%

For the essay and report section, the most difficult aspect is grammar as the percentage of those who passed is 57%. The data reveals a slight percentile increase in task completion; namely, 58.3%. Those who passed the vocabulary section numbered at 59.3, with organization being the highest overall 64.

To plan an effective strategy for the preparation of students for the National

Examination, with a particular focus on the writing element, it becomes necessary that we consider general aspects of pedagogical approaches to writing with regard to upper secondary school students; whilst, similarly, maintaining a special focus on the various combinations of extensive and intensive writing activities that support each of the skills and enhance students' performance in the National Examination.

CHAPTER II

KEY TO SUCCESS WITH PREPARATION AND PASSING NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

2.1 Teaching Writing

2.1.1 Why to Teach Writing

The most significant reasons for teaching writing, as claimed by Harmer (1998:80), comprise reinforcement, language development, learning style, and most obvious, acquiring writing as the language skill.

Bowen and Marks (1994:151), state that writing is multifaceted and has many purposes and for different teachers purposes of it are also different. For some teachers writing is as a means of consolidating of the learned material, a means of practicing language. From the point of view of language purpose, writing is seen not only as a forum for more accurate use of language but also as means of assessing formal knowledge of the language. For others writing is a part of communication as a whole, thus the purpose of writing is to improve written fluency.

According to Donn Byrne (1988:6) writing has a diversity of pedagogical purposes:

- a. The introduction and practice of some form of writing enables us to provide for different learning styles and needs.
- b. Written work serves to provide the learners with some tangible evidence that they are making progress in the language.
- c. Exposure to the foreign language through more than one medium, especially if skills are properly integrated, appears to be more effective than relying on a single medium alone.
- d. Writing provides variety in classroom activities, serving as a break from oral work.
- e. Writing is often needed for formal and informal testing.

(Adopted from Byrne, 1988)

In a recent report, the National Commission on Writing (2007:2) states, “If students are to make knowledge their own, they must struggle with the details, wrestle with the facts, and rework raw information and dimly understood concepts into language they can communicate to someone else. In short, if students are to learn, they must write.”

To sum up, purposes of teaching writing are different, but the most common reason for teaching it is to serve learners needs and to make them acquire writing as a language skill. Considering the fact, that upper-secondary school students are obliged to

pass the National Examinations in a Foreign Language, where writing is an inherent part of it, the main aim of a teacher is to teach them how to produce a reasonable and coherent text against the clock, practice all necessary writing skills that will contribute to better results in the National Examination. However, to choose proper approaches in order to engage students and keep them motivated during the whole preparation time is very difficult.

2.1.2 How to Teach Writing

According to Byrne (1988:27) writing skills require special teaching, strategies and techniques, thus the main purpose of a teacher is to teach learners how to write correctly. Students have to be able to organize sentences into a coherent text. Therefore, they should be taught logical, grammatical and lexical devices of the written language that will help them to produce different types of text. The teacher should not expect students' to master all the possible types of the written form of the language. At least students have to be able to choose an appropriate style, formal or informal, depending on what they are writing about and whom they are writing. Moreover, they should be able to present their text to the reader in appropriate form, such as a letter or report. It is extremely important to make students write as much as possible using varieties of practice formats and integration with other classroom activities involving not only reading but also speaking and listening. It could be done in pair or group work. Byrne admits that writing should not be used only for homework; it has to be perceived as a real activity. He invokes teachers to make writing tasks more realistic and relevant. In order to provide students with higher level of engagement and motivation, writing tasks and writing forms have to be interesting and relevant to the students' needs. All the tasks have to be appropriate for the students' level of the language. Students have to be aware of how we communicate with the help of writing. They have to understand that any piece of writing has a communicative purpose. Teachers should not demand from their students a high level of proficiency. It is very important not to put an accent on what students have failed to achieve, instead, in order to support them it is crucial to highlight what they have succeeded in doing (Byrne, 1988: 27- 29).

Claudia Pesce in her article "Writing is one of those skills that deeply requires student to be motivated", states that first of all a teacher has to know why to teach writing. In order to develop all necessary skills a teacher has to define which writing skills students really need. This can be done by asking yourself such questions as: What level are my students? Why do they need that? Do they need writing for specific

reasons? What do you expect them to produce? After that a teacher decides which strategies, approaches and activities are worth using to develop students' skills.

Considering that upper-secondary school students are to pass the National Examination in a foreign language which allows them to graduate from an upper-secondary school, a huge variety of writing tasks should be narrowed down. This examination demands students to write letters, essays, report etc., that meet specific requirements. As well as Byrne, for better final results, Pesce insists on providing students with plenty of samples of the various types of written tasks they may encounter on the examination. Moreover, it should be constantly practiced not only in-class but also be given for homework. The more students practice the better.

According to Bowen and Marks (1994:152) the need for more formal accuracy in written discourse requires a lot of concentration, care and application on the part of the writer. Writing process turns out to be sophisticated and demotivating for those students who prefer using language for a communicative and fluent way and for whom is difficult to apply themselves to a formal task for any length of time. However, for some students a writing task will be the best opportunity to study and practice the language as they enjoy a more analytic and measured approach to language learning. Consequently, the most significant issue of teaching writing is reconciling wishes, needs and abilities of both groups of students.

Some methodologists argued that writing activities in the classroom or for homework need to be based on one of two distinct purposes – either their focus is writing to practice language items of some kind (lexis, syntax, structures, functional exponents) or to practice the skill of writing itself (organizing the message, determining an appropriate style). The implicit message behind this is that the two areas are mutually exclusive, that teachers should either be concentrating on one or the other. However, it is also rather difficult to separate the areas of writing to practice language and writing as an end in itself in this way (ibid.)

Herder and King (2012:128) in their research ‘Extensive Writing: Another Fluency Approach for EFL Learners, stand against typical activities such as letters, reports, essays, etc., where the main focus almost entirely on accuracy.

This focus can be understood due to the pressure on students, teachers and schools to prepare for university entrance examinations; however, unfortunately, students stop learning any English of particular value beyond the test itself. The decoding and translation skills that students acquire are only useful if students wish to become translators or high school English teachers themselves someday. The real shame is that the constant focus on accuracy leaves little time to focus on fluency or complexity (ibid.).

They believe that such imbalance has two negative and harmful outcomes. Firstly, many students become more demotivated, as their efforts do not bring any success. Secondly, they do not get the opportunity to gain confidence and increase motivation that comes with developing fluency in any writing skill. Herder and King

invoke to teach writing against the norm and use innovative approaches of extensive writing (free writing activities), where needs of the students are highly considered. Like Pesce, they support the idea of constant practice, both in-class and out-of-class, in order to improve writing.

According to Donn Byrne (1988:111-112) upper secondary school students practice their writing skills mostly through tasks in a form of composition or essay. As compositions and essays are still a feature of many public examinations, students expected to be prepared for this type of task. However, it is wrong to accept this type of writing activity as a dominant one. He invokes to consider other alternative ways that will help to develop those skills that involve the ability to organize ideas in a reasonable piece of writing. For this purpose, Byrne recommends practice further through activities that are in more realistic form, such as writing a letter or report. With relevance to real life. Also students can be engaged in this kind of writing task through some kind of role play. It is highlighted that writing should be integrated with other language skills such as reading, listening and speaking. For example, a class discussion of the topic (ideas, points of view, the main idea and important aspects) could be the greatest support for further individual writing. Moreover, it arouses an interest and students' motivation in a particular topic. Project-type work could be also beneficial as it is also an integrated type of activity where students are supposed to work in groups, discuss the content of the project and do a considerable amount of reading.

The aim of a teacher is to offer students more opportunities for self-expression through writing. In his words, "It is wrong to destroy both their interest and confidence in writing through excessive correction". It is necessary to separate tasks which are corresponding to improve their examination performance and those that develop communication skills and fluency.

Byrne (1988:112) indicates that main features of the writing programme are:

- 1) Provision should be made for remedial work
- 2) Opportunities for free expression should be increased
- 3) Writing activities should be in the form of realistic tasks such as report and letter writing
- 4) Examination requirements should not be neglected

(Adopted from Byrne, 1988)

Byrne (1988:7), points out those students who are obliged to do some form of written examination could be more motivated in learning to write well. He highlights that a teacher can identify and concentrate on forms of writing that have a practical

value. Moreover, this practical value should arouse interest and be relevant to the students. Hillyard (2005:80) mentions that studied topics, such as sport, fashion, family, culture, education are boring for students. In her own words “there is little for adolescents to get their teeth into; there are very few life hooks”. Another person who agrees that relevance and reality of the given topic play a crucial role in students’ motivation is Claudia Pesce (section 1:para 1), “you can have them write about anything that interests them, just make sure they write, and make sure it’s a regular activity”.

Considering all these opinions and recommendations it is clear that there is no one specific model of how to teach writing. Different teachers use different approaches, techniques and strategies for developing students’ writing skills. Some teachers put emphasis on accuracy, others on fluency. Consequently, it highlights the fact that both accuracy and fluency play a crucial role in writing skills development. One of the most important issue in teaching writing is how to find a balance between accuracy and fluency. Thus, the learners need practice in both free and controlled writing techniques. Furthermore, these activities should be relevant to students and accompanied by topics that will arise their motivation to write.

2.2. Approaches and Activities Used for Preparation for the National Examination at Upper Secondary School

There are many various approaches that help to practice and develop students’ writing skills. Approaches are to be chosen, according to different learners needs depending on their level and the purpose of their writing. As Harmer (2001:257) says, “we need to choose between them, deciding whether we want students to focus more on process of writing than its product, whether we want them to study different written genres, whether we want to encourage creative writing – either individually or cooperatively”.

Properly chosen and applied approaches together with supporting activities will contribute to better results in the National Examination. This part of the paper will introduce some approaches that are based whether on extensive (fluency) writing or intensive (accuracy) writing. Some approaches involve both extensive and intensive writing.

2.2.1 Intensive Writing Approaches

According to Byrne (1988: 21-23) there are some key approaches that are focused on distinctive problematical aspects in writing. He allocates such approaches that are focused on: accuracy, fluency, text and purpose. For intensive writing we could

highlight approaches that are based on accuracy and text. The other two refer mostly to extensive writing.

The accuracy-focused approach – emphasis on how various sentence types are combined, what grammar, lexical mistakes students make. This approach stresses the importance of control writing.

The text-focused approach – stresses the importance of paragraphs construction and organisation. There are some efficient techniques for practicing: forming paragraphs from mixed sentences; writing parallel paragraphs; developing paragraphs from topic sentences.

The product - oriented approach—a traditional approach, in which students are expected to produce their own piece of writing with the support of a standard sample of text, which is presented at an early stage. In this approach organisation of ideas more important than ideas themselves and students are expected to work independently. This approach comprises four stages:

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Stage 1 | Model texts are read, and then features of the genre are highlighted. For example, if studying a formal letter, students' attention may be drawn to the importance of paragraphing and the language used to make formal requests. If studying a story, the focus may be on the techniques used to make the story interesting, and students focus on where and how the writer employs these techniques |
| Stage 2 | This consists of controlled practice of the highlighted features, usually in isolation. So if students are studying a formal letter, they may be asked to practise the language used to make formal requests, practising the 'I would be grateful if you would...' structure. |
| Stage 3 | Organisation of ideas. This stage is very important. Those who favour this approach believe that the organisation of ideas is more important than the ideas themselves and as important as the control of language |
| Stage 4 | The end result of the learning process. Students choose from a choice of comparable writing tasks. Individually, they use the skills, structures and vocabulary they have been taught to produce the product; to show what they can do as fluent and competent |

users of the language.

(Adopted from Md. Kamrul Hasan & Mohd. Moniruzzaman Akhand, 2010:78-79)

The controlled-to-free approach– was presented by Raimes (1983). This approach highlights the importance of grammar, syntax, and mechanics. It deals with accuracy rather than fluency and originality. Teaching writing first implies sentences exercises and then work with paragraphs (to copy or manipulate grammatically). Students may also combine sentences, change words or clauses. Most of writing is strictly controlled. It helps students to avoid errors in their writing pieces, so that it can lead to a free composition. A. Raimes (1983:76) wrote, “this approach stresses three features: grammar, syntax, and mechanics.”

The writing and genre approach– before starting to compose their own pieces of writing, students are given a vivid example of a genre they are dealing with. Thus, if students are about to write business letters, first of all, they should be given typical models of such letters. If students are supposed to write newspaper articles, foremost, they should study real examples of constructing and specific language use which is common in that genre. This approach is especially useful for general English students, if they are expected to produce a reasonable piece of writing. There are still a number of different factors that should be considered in writing process. In Harmers words, “Students need to have knowledge of the topic, the conventions and style of the genre, and the context in which their writing will be read, and by whom” (Harmer, 2001:259).

The balanced approach – takes into account all of the factors that are involved in good writing. Teachers should be eclectic, use all methods available and diverse range of sources. Students need to think about to whom they are writing (reader) and for what they are writing (purpose). They need to learn the value of writing drafts, as it will help them to discover and develop new ideas. Students also need to learn various styles and formats, depending on a purpose; learn the grammatical and lexical terms; learn to assess other students’ writing (Kral, 1995:123-124).

The functional approach– for the post-intermediate level; Byrne (1988:113-116) pays special attention to remedial work and describes the value of a functional approach. It can be used to give another focus to the programme, where already familiar things can be seen from the other sight and studied in a new way. In the functional approach the same items are reviewed under the umbrella of particular language functions, such as expressing, requests, suggestions, invitations, etc. It allows to explore the other language functions, such as comparing and contrasting, generalizing, exemplifying, defining deeper.

For this approach Byrne gives an example of a task that deals with comparison and contrast. This activity could be done in three stages

- a) Study the language of comparison and contrast in the report below:

Key Language	Report on Exhead and Portsea
<i>in many ways/</i> in some respects/ <i>to some extent, alike/</i> similar, <i>both, each, like, similarly/</i> likewise/ <i>in the same way, but, dissimilar/</i> different/ <i>unlike, compared with/in</i> comparison with, <i>while, on the other hand, unlike, difference</i> between, <i>however/</i> in contrast / on the contrary	Exhead and Portsea are two towns on the south coast of England which <i>in many ways</i> are very <i>alike</i> . They are <i>both</i> old towns and <i>each</i> has a large harbor. <i>Like</i> Portsea, Exhead has a population of approximately 12,000. It has a growing number of local industries. <i>Similarly</i> Portsea is also expanding on the industrial front, too. <i>But</i> in other respect, the two towns are quite <i>dissimilar</i> . For one thing, <i>compared with</i> Portsea, Exhead is much more attractive place. For this reason it is a popular holiday resort in summer, <i>while</i> Portsea, <i>on the other hand</i> , attracts very few visitors. <i>Unlike</i> Portsea, Exhead has extended its hotel facilities because of the tourist trade. One striking <i>difference between</i> the two towns is that Exhead has located its new industries on an estate outside the town. In Portsea, <i>however</i> , there are even factories near the harbour.

Table 7. Adapted from Byrne(1988:114)

- b) For the next stage, the students are given two or more bio-data cue-sheets that include, for instance, name, date of birth, marital status, occupation, etc. of different people. The students work in pairs, contrasting and comparing any two people of the people described with the use of appropriate language from the previous task.
- c) In the final task the students are given data in tabular form, on the basis of which they are asked to write a report. In their reports they have to compare and contrast something, depends on the task, with other ones in the same group, where this is appropriate.

The content of the activity could vary, depending on the topic and students' needs. This approach is very efficient as it includes: an example of particular language functions and their alternative forms; opportunities for using these items orally and practicing in fairly flexible way; an individual writing task, which shows how the language functions relate to a specific communicative purpose.

The cooperative approach– the teacher and students can work together with others to make a cooperative activity, with great benefit to all those involved (Harmer, 2001:260). Cooperative writing can be applied with both process and genre-based approaches. As students work together, they research, discuss, evaluate each other, produce and generate ideas more lively, hence the end product turns to be more successful. Harmer (ibid.) believes writing in a group, whether as part of a long process or a short game like a communicative activity, can motivate the students. In spite of

this, the cooperative approach is focused on the reasonable, grammatically correct end product.

2.2.2 Extensive Writing Approaches

The fluency-focused approach– is applied to encourage students to write as much as possible and as quick as possible. This approach offers students to enjoy the writing process and not to think about making mistakes (Byrne, 1988: 21-23).

The purpose-focused approach– it highlights the reason of writing and to whom it is addressed. This approach allows students to write purposefully and shows that writing is a communicative form (ibid.).

Creative writing–suggests imaginative tasks such as writing poetry, stories, and plays. The end result is usually seen as some kind of achievement. Creative writing, in most cases, motivates students as it implies their own experience, feelings and creativity of mind; that is not a routine assignment. Moreover, the final product could be read by real audience– not only by the teacher or classmates, it could be on notice boards, publishing in school/class magazine, posting on web, etc. (Harmer, 2001:260). Of course, for some students to write imaginatively could be challenging and stressful. That is why teachers should not expect whole compositions from the very first. It should be done step by step, gradually (starting with phrases and sentences before expecting whole compositions) (Hammer, 2001:259-260).

The free writing approach– this approach is focused on fluency. Students have to feel actual writing by getting their ideas on the paper freely expressing their thought and feelings. Byrne (1988) admits that “many students write badly because they do not write enough,” which subsequently makes them incapable of writing. He suggests that writing about something personal, like keeping a diary, could help. According to Shkurova and Turaeva free writing approach is about quantity rather than quality. Students can use the free writing approach and try some free compositions only after reaching a high intermediate or advanced level of proficiency. The free writing approach teaches writing freely by any given topics with minimal correction of errors, using feedback and comments on expressed ideas (Шкурова, Тураева, 2015: 807-808).

Byrne (1988:116-122) suggests some efficient procedures in the free writing approach. It is believed that production of a text in form of an “essay” or a “composition” on a given topic, either in an examination or in a similar situation it is not an easy task. Also, it is assumed that students have not got any motivation to write on a given topic, especially without any special preparation and provided structure of

the text they have to produce. There is no data which determines what should be the content and the format of such kind of writing, as it is in articles, letters, reports, etc. Thus, students have to organise the data for themselves. In this case students have to understand the necessity of writing notes and drafting. Unfortunately, they find it rather problematic when they are asked to write against the clock as it is at examination. Frequently students complain about the lack of ideas and thoughts. In this case a teacher could support students with a short class or group discussion for a number of ideas. In the absence of this opportunity students need to brainstorm themselves. Byrne offers 6 steps that will help to facilitate the writing procedure:

- 1) List possible ideas – generate all possible thoughts and ideas;
- 2) Select and expand one idea – to decide which idea is the best one;
- 3) Make an outline – make a plan of how to organise all ideas, provide a scaffolding for the draft version (students should be taught to do this);
- 4) Write a draft – should be written quite quickly;
- 5) Correct and improve the draft – check for mistakes through reading, review the text from the point of view of expression and organization;
- 6) Write the final version.

For composing a successful piece of writing students should be taught all these procedures. In terms of examinations, where time is limited, they may not have time to work through the all stages. However, as Byrne (1988:122) states, “the experience of having learned to make notes, to write drafts and to correct them will stand them in good stead. And they will appreciate, it is hoped that because it is a thinking process, writing is not just a question on inspiration: it also generally involves a great deal of hard work and organisation”.

The communicative approach– it stresses the purpose of writing and the reader for it. Students are expected to be in a writer’s role and to think: Why are we writing that? – Who are we writing? Traditionally, the teacher is in the role of the reader, though she/he can engage the other students to be the real readers, who not only read but getting involved in it (respond, rewrite in another form, summaries, or make comments) (Шкорова, Тараева: 2015). It is important not to correct other students writing, however it is possible to give feedback or response to the writer in form of questions, exchanging letters, emails or messages, all that without any correction of the text (Raimes, 1983:8). Students can write letters, messages, post cards, birthday cards, advertisements, cookery recipes, dairies, memos and etc.

The Process writing approach– the focus is on various classroom activities which contribute to the development of language use: brainstorming, group discussion, rewriting. This approach includes a group of different processes that come in a particular order. It could have any number of stages. The most common are:

Stage 1 – Brainstorming. Generating ideas by brainstorming and discussion. The teacher is not involved in the process. However, if required, provides students with language support.

Stage 2 – Planning/Structuring. Students organise ideas into note form and judge quality and importance of ideas.

Stage 3 – Mind mapping. Students create mind-maps using all their ideas. Hierarchical relationship of ideas helps students with the structure of their texts.

Stage 4 – Writing the first draft. Students write the first draft. Usually it is done in pairs or groups.

Stage 5 – Peer feedback. Students exchange their drafts. It develops the awareness of the fact that a writer is producing something to be read by someone else, and thus can improve their own drafts.

Stage 6 – Editing. Students return peers' drafts and make necessary improvements upon peer feedback.

Stage 7- Final draft. Students write a final draft.

Stage 8 – Evaluation and teachers' feedback. Students' writings are evaluated and teachers provide feedback on it.

Despite the fact that the main purpose of this approach is to achieve the best product possible, students are still given considerable freedom within the task. The process approach is mainly focused on students' ideas and the emphasis here is more on creative approach rather than on the end product(Md. Kamrul Hasan &Mohd. Moniruzzaman Akhand, 2010:79-80).

The integrated approach - Graham Burton (2013:10), a teacher on examination preparation courses, suggests an integrated approach in four stages that is called Product plus Process. This approach combines two completely different approaches. The Product plus Process approach commences by means of dialogue between the teacher and the class. Before the students are given the opportunity to produce their own texts they work through a similar text analysis and the joint construction of it.

Stage 1: Analysis

This stage consists of 3 sections:

1) The question

In the examination, students have to write two compositions. They could be asked to write letters, emails (formal and informal), articles, reports, proposals, contributions, essays, reviews and etc. The first step of this section is to analyse the requirements of a particular task. Further, the teacher gives learners 1-2 minutes to read through the question and then leads them through a dialogue to develop awareness of the requirements of the question.

2) The genre

The class with the help of the teacher explores the genre required by the particular question. In this section the teacher detects what the students already know about a genre.

3) The model text

The aim of this section is to analyze a model text to see how it works. Through dialogue between the teacher and the students it is possible to identify the cultural context, organization, language peculiarities used in a text, structure (the content of a paragraph, how ideas are organized, how paragraphs develop), and any linguistic features that are used (a topic-specific vocabulary, fixed phrases).

Stage 2: Joint reconstruction

Before a joint reconstruction it is necessary to leave some time for brainstorming activities that could be done in pairs or in groups. The teacher has to make sure the students have time to think about how would they organise their ideas. He/she could ask them to make a plan, write topic sentences, think of headings (for report), and most importantly for the exam to decide how to organize the information they are given in the question. By the end of this stage, students should have a good idea of the genre (product) they have to produce.

Stage 3: Individual reconstruction

At this stage the students now need to produce a text of their own, which they do for homework. The teacher may give them a new question or the same question they have looked at in class. It is important to correct students' drafts with a marking code and avoid providing a correction. Instead of corrections the teacher has to underline the error and write a code (G = grammar error, SP = spelling) to indicate what kind error it is.

Stage 4: Rewriting

Eventually, the students rewrite their compositions, producing a second draft, again for homework. This time the teacher corrects any remaining errors without the

marking code and assesses the final drafts. The author recommends to give feedback by using the Cambridge English handbooks.

In the process and product approach the focus could be either on the product of writing or on the writing process itself. If to concentrate only on the product approach, we are interested in the purpose of a given task and in the end product. The process approach deals with various stages, such as: pre-writing phases, editing, redrafting, writing, etc. By going through all these stages students practice various skills that help them in further writing. Unfortunately, the process approach has one disadvantage. It takes time: time to brainstorm ideas; time to draft, redraft, re-edit and so on. Various stages may involve discussion, research, language study, interaction between teacher and students, etc (Harmer, 2001:257-258).

The modern approach it is a combination of the communicative approach and the process approach, where writing is seen as a communicative act. It is based on three assumptions:

- 1) People write to communicate with readers.
- 2) People write to accomplish specific purposes.
- 3) Writing is a complex process.

(Adopted from Kral, 1995)

In this approach students are asked to think of whom they are writing to and why they are doing that. Here, meaning of a text is more important than form. Writing is seen as a process, including prewriting, composing, and revision. Students are trained to identify why they are writing, whom they are writing; to gather material through observing, brainstorming, making notes, talking to others, and reading; to organise the material, to revise; to proofread for errors (ibid.).

2.2.3 Intensive and Extensive Writing Activities

Traditionally, writing is believed to be a tool for assessing learning. As it reflects cognitive processes, it is typically used to assess higher level learning and critical thinking skills. Considering that writing is seen as an assessment tool, writing should be clear, correct, coherent, accurate, etc. ("Writing to learn", n.d.). According to Joan Sedita (2013), learning to write, that refers mostly to intensive writing, consists of two sets of skills: composing skills using the writing process (pre-writing, planning, drafting, revising), and transcription skills (punctuation, capitalization, spelling, handwriting). A composing skill deals with knowledge of grammar, text structure,

paragraphs, and longer passages of text. Students are expected to recognize types of writing (narrative, formal, informal) (ibid.).

Extensive activities or writing to learn have an entirely different purpose. Learn to write by writing is the main feature of extensive writing. It is a tool that promotes content learning. Thus, the main purpose is not good writing, but good learning. Extensive writing activities help students learn subject matter, organize their thoughts and ideas, and improve their retention of content (Joan Sedita, 2013). Extensive writing tasks can be based on reading, classroom discussion, own experience, etc. Extensive writing activities require at least intermediate level of English, that upper- secondary students have to possess and could be assigned in many forms.

There are some examples of activities aimed at intensive and extensive writing that could be applicable for in- class practicing as well as for out-of –class practicing, whether individually or collaboratively. Depending on teachers’ creativity and originality some of these activities could be somehow combined with each other and imply skills required for both intensive and extensive writing. The combination of approaches with its activities would result in better writing, where fluency and accuracy would be equally worked-out.

Intensive writing activities	Extensive writing activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reports, Essays, Letters (formal writing) - Writing words (spelling) - Writing sentences (combined, sequence) - Writing paragraphs (Structuring, organisation) - Writing error correction - Writing mock tests - Directions on how to perform an activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Letters/ notes to each other/ to a teacher (informal), responses - Essays (on free topic) - Write a journal / diary - Notes in class - Creative writing: role- plays, poetry, fiction or short stories - Prewriting activities (brainstorming, mapping) - Chatting/ blogs/ forums - Descriptive writing - Narrative compositions - Newspaper and magazines articles - Responses to reading, films, class discussion - Summaries/ “one-minute” paper - Exploratory writing - Drafts for peer feedback - Write as quick as possible on a given topic - A summary of a story that they read or heard (using own words)

Table 8. *Intensive and extensive in-and out-of-class writing activities.*

Generally speaking, approaches with the focus on intensive writing are aimed at the final product where grammar, sentences structure, paragraphs organization and cohesion are the first of importance, whereas extensive writing approaches are based on fluency and creativity where writing is seen as a constant process. Both extensive and intensive writing could imply various stages based on integrated activities that could be done in pairs, groups or all together. However, in the case of intensive writing the final draft should be written independently and graded.

All these extensive and intensive writing activities and approaches, described above, give a brief overview on various ways and strategies of teaching. During lessons observation it is significant to be aware of all possible approaches and their peculiarities including variations of extensive and intensive writing activities, in order to identify them correctly. Writing activities directly depend on teaching ideology and approaches that are supported by the teacher, and vice versa all writing activities used in the class could point at a particular approach. Nevertheless, for being more precise in revealing all possible extensive and intensive writing activities, first of all, it is necessary to find out the approaches teachers use in the class.

2.3 Narva Language Lyceum and Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School: Preparation for the National Examination (Writing)

The aim of the following research is to provide a comparison between Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School and Narva Language Lyceum in their approaches and activities used for preparation for the National Examination. The research will help us to reveal best practices in preparation for the writing part of the examination, find out all possible intensive and extensive writing activities used in the lesson and their volume and see how they overlap together, if any. Furthermore, the research will show us whether such preparations are successful in terms of achieving better results or not.

2.3.1 Outcomes of National Examinations (Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School and Narva Language Lyceum) in 2015, 2016, 2017

For the data integrity it is necessary to present the National examination results of Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School and Narva Language Lyceum in 2015, 2016 and 2017. The comparative tables with results depict the exact number of the students who took the National examination in English and exact percentage of those who get proficiency levels of B1, B2 and C1, and the percentage of those who did not reach any level of proficiency.

School	Number of students	Level not reached	Level B1	Level B2	Level C1
Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School	67	61%	33%	6%	0%
Narva Language Lyceum	22	0%	55%	45%	0%

Table 9. *A Comparison of the National Examination between Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School and Narva Language Lyceum in 2015 (The Innove Foundation).*

School	Number of students	Level not reached	Level B1	Level B2	Level C1
Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School	40	72.5%	25%	2.5%	0%
Narva Language Lyceum	55	0%	41.8%	47.3%	10.9%

Table 10. *A Comparison of the National Examination between Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School and Narva Language Lyceum in 2016 (The Innove Foundation).*

School	Number of students	Level not reached	Level B1	Level B2	Level C1	Level C2
Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School	27	22%	33%	44%	0%	0%
Narva Language Lyceum	30	0%	30%	57%	10%	3%

Table 11. *A Comparison of the National Examination between Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School and Narva Language Lyceum in 2017 (The Innove Foundation).*

The first thing that attracts attention is that for the last three years all students from Narva Language Lyceum passed the examination in a foreign language and

received a proficiency level. Most of them got the B2 level proficiency. Whereas students from Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School in 2015 and 2016 had a high percentage of students failed the examination. The B1 level proficiency was received by just about one quarter of them and only few students received level B2. However, in 2017 there is obvious improvement of Soldino Upper Secondary School students' results. 33% received level B1 and 44% - B2, which is almost similar with the results of students from Narva Language Lyceum. Another point to mention is that in 2016 and 2017 students from Narva Language Lyceum achieved C1 and even C2 level proficiency which is an impeccable result. In the light of these it could be assumed that preparation for the National examination in English in Language Lyceum is more intensive than in Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School.

This brief overview and comparison of the National Examination outcomes will be the basis of the further research that is dedicated to revealing all possible extensive and intensive activities used during the preparatory period in the schools. From the tables above it is obvious that students' examination results of Narva Language Lyceum are higher with positive tendency that assumable could prove the hypothesis of the present study - the combination of regular extensive and intensive writing activities in and out of class results in a better performance in writing. Higher examination results in writing of Narva Language Lyceum in comparison with Narva Soldino Upper Secondary school can be an example of such a combination contributing to the success.

2.3.2 Observation and Survey Analysis

In order to verify the hypothesis formulated in the introductory part a case study was chosen as a research method. The study was based on three stages of gaining the data: lessons observation, questionnaire-based survey for the teachers and questionnaire-based survey for the students. Lessons were observed following the criteria which purposes were to find out how much time is devoted to writing in and out of the class, detect all writing activity types used in and out of the class, its volume, way of accomplishment (individually, pair or group work) and assessment (grades, self-assessment, peer-assessment, feedback, etc.). All these issues were the criteria for the observation, which is supposed to reveal the most popular approaches based whether on extensive, intensive or mixed writing activities during the preparation time. The experimental group consisted of Narva Language Lyceum and Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School students of the 11th and 12th grade and their five teachers, the only gymnasium teachers in two schools.

Analysis of Observation

During the period of the observation of English lessons in Narva Language Lyceum in the 11th grade for 2 weeks a teacher used the following writing activities: fill in correct particles (phrasal verbs), quiz, writing tests that require short answers, translate sentences from Russian to English (17 sentences) in writing, write 6 questions for the text, writing while listening, writing after reading. For homework they did almost the same writing activities: write sentences, comprehension writing activities after reading a text, translation in writing, fill in tasks and one transactional letter. While writing students work mostly independently. Sometimes the teacher asked them to work in pairs to discuss a topic or check the answers. The majority of writing activities were graded, especially homework assignments, a letter, sentence translation, reading comprehension, in-class tests, phrasal verbs writing test, listening tests. The students checked some in-class writing activities all together or in pairs. To sum up, there were not found any extensive writing approaches and activities. From the observation it was difficult to understand even which intensive writing approaches the teacher used in the teaching process, because students did not write examination tasks (letters, essays and reports) in the class. However, from our conversation with the teacher it was clear that she prefers intensive writing approaches. During two weeks the huge emphasis was made on vocabulary, structure of complex sentences and questions. The teacher used mostly integrated activities that included writing while/after/before reading and listening.

The writing activities, during the observation of the English lessons in Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School in the 11th grade, were the following: fill in writing activity while listening, planning an essay in pairs (writing a structure), writing sentences on the topic of crime, writing a test on the topic of crime, production of introductory and concluding paragraphs, an opinion essay, and a newspaper article. Students worked in their books at home and did various fill in and matching tasks, they wrote one essay following the sample in the book. The students mostly worked independently; but, while planning the essay, they worked in pairs and shared ideas. For evaluation of the students' writing papers, the teacher used grades and additional feedback for the essays and tests, peer-assessment for paragraph writing and newspaper articles.

In the 12th grade during the first week of observation, Narva Upper Secondary School students practiced conditionals, composed stories in groups, practiced gap-filling activities while listening, and at the end of the week had a 45 minute test on conditional sentences. During the second week of observation, the students worked individually,

making a plan of a report, before completing the report at home. At the end of the second week, they were given 45 minutes in the class to write it for a grade. There was also one activity that included extensive writing- writing compliments for each other on pieces of paper. The final in-class report was graded, for other writing activities different types of assessment were used, such as feedback, peer-assessment, self-assessment.

The observation shows that during these weeks there were no lessons dedicated solely to writing in Narva Language Lyceum, while in Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School there was one lesson where students wrote an essay for 45 minutes in the 11th grade and another one in the 12th grade- 45 minutes for writing a report. In both schools students completed different integrated activities that included writing through reading or listening. In comparison to Narva Language Lyceum, in Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School the students practiced a letter/an essay/a report writing, and some pre-writing activities. Furthermore, there were some extensive writing activities, such as the composition of a newspaper article and writing compliments on pieces of paper. The students of Narva Language Lyceum spent a significant amount of time performing tests and practicing new vocabulary through various activities in and out of the class; every lesson, the students had the opportunity to consolidate new material by practising it in the class.

Considering the fact that writing activities practiced in the class could vary throughout the entire academic year, the short-term observation period could not present a clear and definitive picture of the whole list of writing activities used during the preparation; nevertheless, it was assumed that the final weeks before the National Examination would provide the most accurate view and reliable data of the quality and intensity of the preparation given by the respective schools for the National Examination. Taking into account the fact that students had English lessons once a day, there did exist some expectation towards finding at least one lesson per week dedicated to developing and practicing students' writing skills. Unfortunately, in Narva Language Lyceum, it was impossible to observe English lessons with 12th grade students, as they had already acquired that proficiency level of English. Narva Language Lyceum teachers admit that they aim at preparing students for the Cambridge Suite First Certificate in English (FCE) examination.

Analysis of the Questionnaire-based Survey

To obtain data on how students and teachers in the schools under analysis view the whole process of preparation for writing at the National examination, a survey was conducted among students and teachers: 112 upper-secondary students from grade 11 to 12 and their five teachers were questioned. From Narva Language Lyceum were questioned 37 upper-secondary students from 11th grade and only 4 students from 12th grade. All other students of grade 12 have already passed their FCE examination. Consequently, they do not need to write the National examination in a foreign language.

In order to save teachers' and students' time questions in close ended format were chosen. These questions consist of Likert questions (the degree to which respondents agree to a specific statement), rating scale questions (a rating on a specific matter on a scale of "poor" to "good"), and some short answer questions. The respondents answer the questions by placing a tick in the answer box that corresponds to their answer. All questionnaires are anonymous. Questionnaires for the teacher comprise 15 questions and are divided into two sections. The first section deals with finding out general information about writing and the time dedicated to it. The second section is based on revealing intensive and extensive writing activities used in the class and at home. All these questions are aimed at detecting intensive and extensive approaches teachers stick to.

Analysis of the questionnaire-based survey among teachers

The analysis of 5 questionnaires based on the responses of the upper-secondary school teachers from Narva Language Lyceum and Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School are presented below.

Teacher A – Narva Language Lyceum

According to the teacher students write essays, letters and reports following samples with clear instructions. During the writing process they use prewriting activities such as brainstorming, free writing, matching tasks (put the paragraphs in the right order), class discussion etc. In the lessons the emphasis is primarily made on writing a report/ an essay/a letter through pre- and post-writing tasks. Writing down notes, different words, sentences, paragraphs, error corrections, mock tests, creative writing (role-plays, poetry, short stories) occur often in the lessons. Sometimes students write letters or notes to each other, recipes, giving directions, forums/blogs, narrative compositions, descriptive writing, newspaper and magazine articles, responses to reading/films/class discussion, summaries, exploratory writing, and practice such an activity to write as quick as possible. They never write an essay on a free topic and never write a journal or diary. In

evaluating students' papers the teacher uses very often grades, feedback, self-assessment, writing-code and often peer-assessment. Some of her students participate in school, town or regional language contests. In teaching and preparing students for the examination she considers both accuracy and fluency. Analyzing all this information it could be said that this teacher uses extensive writing activities as well as intensive writing activities and her teaching approaches are based both on accuracy and fluency.

Teacher B - Narva Language Lyceum

The teacher puts stress only on writing of essays, letters and reports. Sometimes she administers mock tests, very close to examination ones. While writing, students usually use samples with a detailed structure. Sometimes the teacher gives to her students some pre-writing activities, e.g. brainstorming, that are later discussed in pairs or in groups. For post-writing activities students sometimes rewrite their papers in class or at home. Rarely they share their papers. The teacher evaluates students' writing pieces only by grades. Sometimes she gives feedback, if needed. The teacher considers accuracy as an issue of the first importance. This description clearly depicts an intensive approach focused on accuracy and text. There are some features that point to the usage of product and process approaches that are also close to intensive writing.

Teacher C - Narva Language Lyceum

Very often students write reports, essays, letters, various notes, essays on free topics. Students usually write to follow samples with clear instructions and appropriate vocabulary. Before writing students brainstorm, make an outline and later discuss their ideas all together. For post-writing activities students sometimes rewrite their writing papers at home to produce a grammatically correct, coherent and reasonable text. Paragraphs, error corrections, mock-tests, pre-and post-writing activities are also often used in the class. The teacher never uses creative writing, writing blogs, forums, journal/diary, writing as quick as possible, writing responses to reading/films/class discussion, writing newspaper and magazine articles. Students' writing papers are assessed by giving grades, providing feedback and writing-code. The stress in teaching is made on accuracy because at the exam it is one of the most important criteria for assessment. Consequently, based on the analysis, the approach that is focused, to a greater degree, on accuracy and intensive writing is revealed.

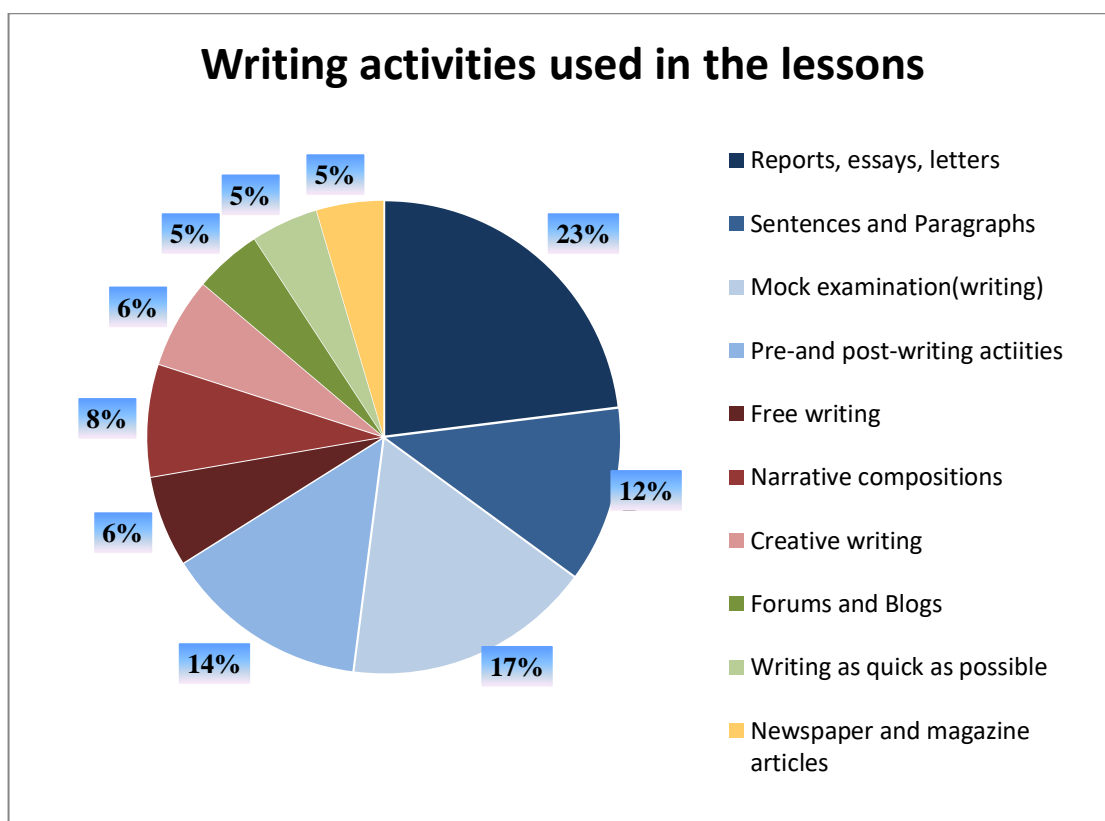


Figure 2. Extensive and intensive writing activities used in the lessons in upper-secondary school of Narva Language Lyceum.

This graph shows the results of a survey in which 3 teachers from Language Lyceum were questioned about the application of extensive and intensive writing activities in their lessons. All responses were based on Likert scale of frequency. Consequently, from the pie chart it is clear that, such writing activities as reports, letters, essays, examination writing tasks, paragraphs and sentences, pre-and post-writing activities constitute a significant part, more than a half, in preparation students for the National examination and are based on intensive writing. Approximately one third of activities are focused on extensive writing, which comprises free writing, narrative compositions, creative writing, forums and blogs, writing as quick as possible and newspaper and magazine article.

Teacher D – Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School

Students usually write by following samples with detailed instructions. They work in most cases independently. Sometimes, while pre-writing there could be the whole class discussion of all possible ideas. For pre-writing activities students make an outline or share their ideas in pairs or groups. While post-writing they can sometimes reflect on

peer work. Writing activities, that are used in the lesson or at home, are always reports, essays and letters. Nothing else. Students' writing papers are evaluated only by grades. Very rarely it is peer-assessment or self-assessment. The teacher places a particular focus on accuracy and explains it as "exams papers get fewer points without structure, logic, vocabulary and too many mistakes". At home students write quite rarely, mainly to prepare for an upcoming essay/report/letter for a mark. Sometimes they post a post on padlet.com with some information. Few students take part in out of school events in general and when they do, it is when the teacher asks them to write a post on the school website in English about their experience. Thus, it is obvious that the main approach of teaching writing is based on intensive writing activities. Nevertheless, some extensive writing activities are also applied in the lessons.

Teacher E - Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School

Students also write by following samples/models with a detailed structure. Sometimes they use all three stages of the writing process: pre-/while-and post-writing. They usually work while pre-writing independently, in groups/pairs and all together. For pre-writing activities students usually make an outline, sometimes brainstorm and have a whole class discussion, never free writing and clustering. For post-writing the teacher gives such activities as: proofread for spelling, vocabulary, grammar, rewriting, sharing papers. Students write reports/essays and letters once a month and write some sentences 2-3 times a week. Students' writing papers are assessed by grades and feedback, never self-assessment and writing-code. Peer-assessment is used rarely. For writing activities students often write words, sentences, pre-and post-writing activities, sometimes they write reports, essays, letters, summaries. Rarely they write responses to reading/films/class discussion, newspaper and magazines articles, creative writing, writing paragraphs writing some notes, and never journals/diaries, blogs, posts, chatting, essay on free topic, narrative compositions, write as quick as possible. While preparation for the National examination, the teacher highlights both accuracy and fluency. However, from her response it could be seen that the used approach is basically based on intensive writing activities, but the application of extensive writing activities in the lessons is not excluded.

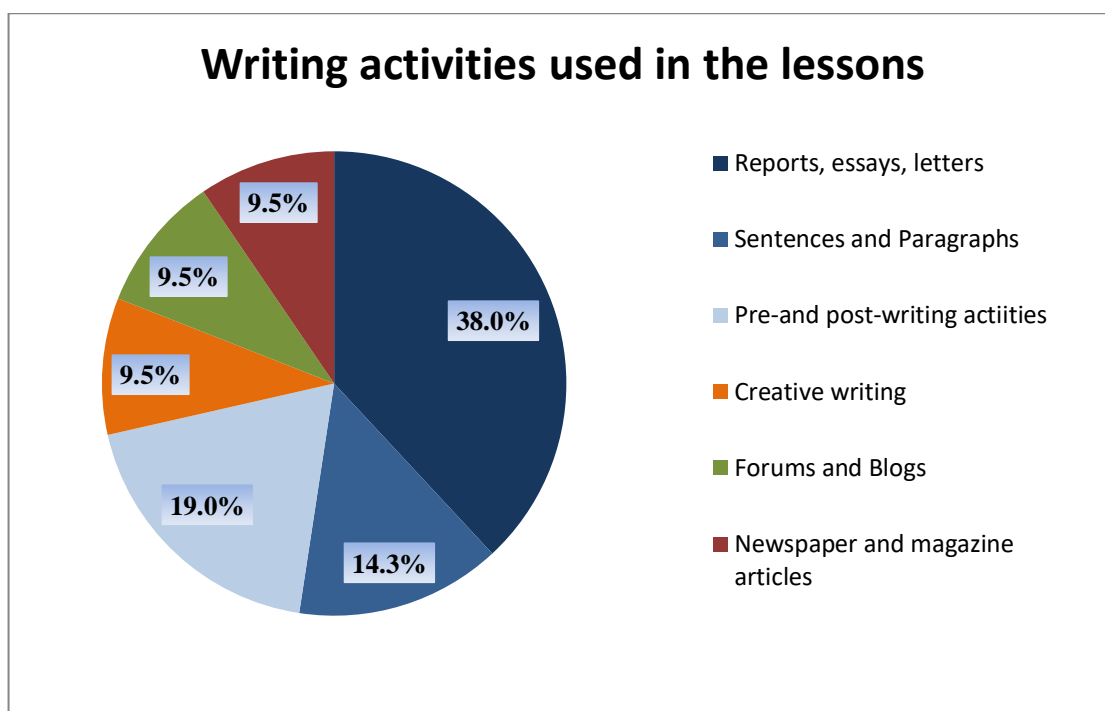


Figure 3. Extensive and intensive writing activities used in the lessons in Nara Soldino Upper Secondary School.

The graph depicts the intense and frequent use of intensive writing activities, especially, reports, letters and essays that account for 38%. On the second and the third place of the preferred activities are pre-and post-writing and paragraphs and sentences writing with just 4.8% difference between the two. Extensive writing activities, including creative writing, forums and blog writing, newspaper and magazine writing constitute more than one quarter of the whole activities applied in the lesson and equally account for 9.5% each.

Comparing these two diagrams above it is seen that teaching writing in Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School is focused basically on intensive writing activities such as: sentences and paragraphs writing, pre- and post-writing, reports, essays and letters writing - 71,3%, whether in Narva Language Lyceum the percentage of using intensive writing activities is lower - 66% out of which 17% goes for mock writing examination (that is not a popular activity among teachers from Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School). Another distinction between two schools lies in the spectrum of extensive writing activities where Narva Language Lyceum tends to apply more types of extensive writing, such as narrative compositions, free writing, creative writing, blogs and forums writing, writing newspaper and magazine articles, and writing as quick as possible. In spite of that, teachers from Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School

also use some extensive writing activities, like writing for blogs and forums, creative writing and writing newspaper and magazine articles.

The questionnaire analysis reveals that in both schools there are special days devoted only to writing. In Narva Language Lyceum students write for the whole lesson once per 2 or 3 weeks whether in Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School students usually have 1 lesson per a month devoted only to writing. Teachers from Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School admit that they write rarely, usually they do integrated activities, for instance writing after reading, writing while listening, filling the gaps, writing sentences etc. These integrated writing activities were also highly applied in Narva Language Lyceum during the observation period. The time devoted to any type of writing out of 45 minutes of the lesson is 10-20 minutes in both schools. The time devoted to an in-class letter is 25-30 minutes and for report/essay it is 30-45 minutes. In Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School students quite rarely write at home, mainly to prepare for upcoming essay, letter or report. In contrast, in Narva Language Lyceum a homework assignment always contains a writing task of varied length taking from 5 min to half an hour.

Analysis of questionnaire-based survey among students

The final part of the research is a survey conducted on the basis of questionnaires among students with the purpose to discover the most complicated part of the National Examination in a foreign language. Furthermore, it was decided to investigate how much time students need to write a letter, an essay or a report. It was also interesting to find out how students rate their writing skills and whether they are satisfied with the given volume of homework assignment or not.

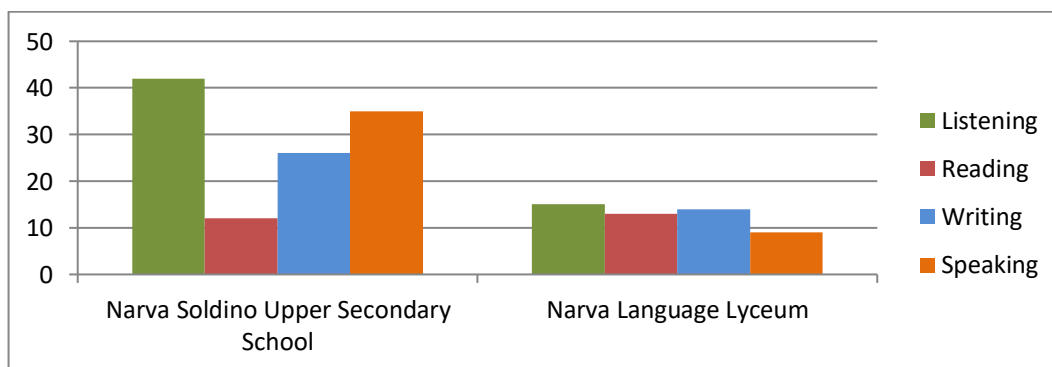


Figure 4. *The most difficult part of the National Examination in English language, according to students from Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School and Narva Language Lyceum.*

The above bar-chart shows which part of the National examination is considered to be the most difficult part for students. As it seen from the diagram the most difficult part for students from both schools is listening. More than half upper-secondary school students of Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School choose it as the most complicated part. Speaking has the second larger number among these students. Writing occurs to be on the third place of difficulty that is only one third of 75 students. However, in Narva Language Lyceum writing is on the second place.

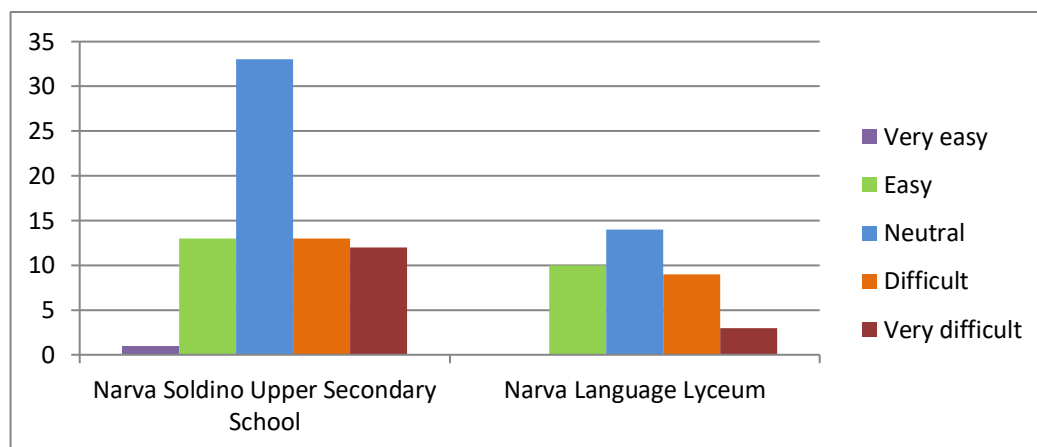


Figure 5. *Level of difficulty of the writing part of examination, according to students' responses and ratings.*

The majority of students from both schools have neutral attitude to writing. 23 students out of 112 consider writing as an easy part. While 22 students think that it is a difficult part of the examination. 6 students from Narva Language lyceum and 12 from Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School rate it as a very difficult part. So we can say that a significant number of students considers writing as a normal, usual and even easy task. However, there are still many people who are not so confident in that and refer it to a difficult and a very difficult part. Especially, students from Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School, where some upper-secondary students confessed that they even could not write at all.

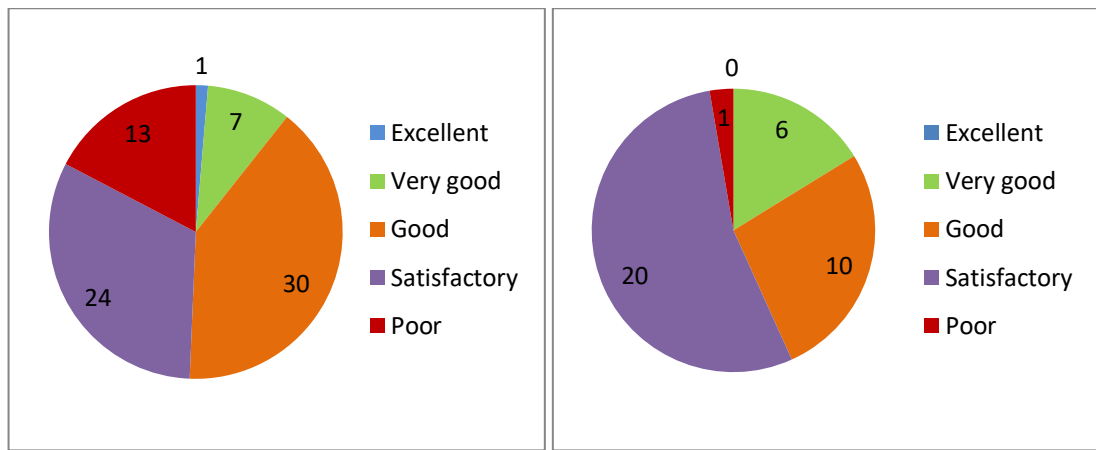


Figure 6. How Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School and Narva Language Lyceum upper-secondary students rate their writing skills

More than half of Narva Language Lyceum students give a satisfactory rate for their writing skills. Another half of students rate their writing skills as good and very good. Only 1 student rates his/her writing skills as poor.

In Soldno Upper Secondary School 50% of students rate their writing skills as good and very good. More than one quarter of students consider their writing skills to be satisfactory. 1/5 of students admit that they have poor writing skills.

All in all, it could be said that the amount of students who consider their writing skills to be poor is considerably bigger than in Narva Language Lyceum. Nevertheless, the number of students with good and very good self-rating in both schools is large.

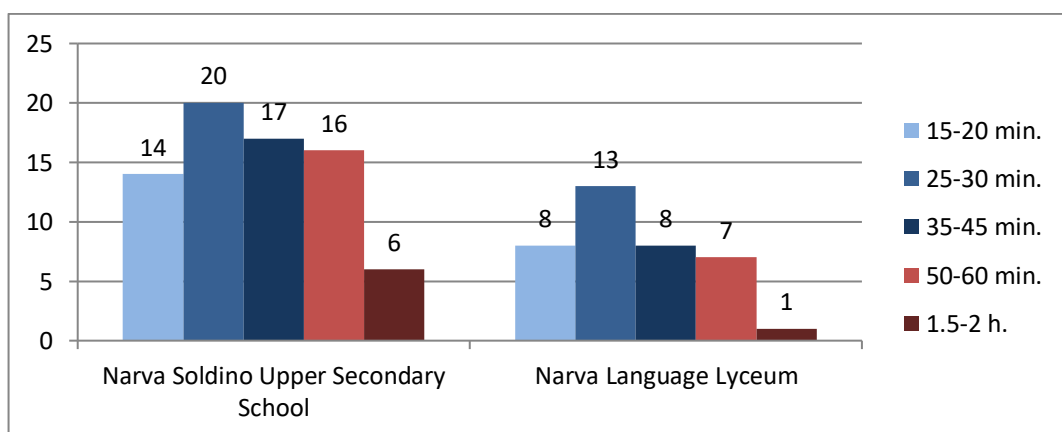


Figure 7. Time spent on writing a letter according to students' responses

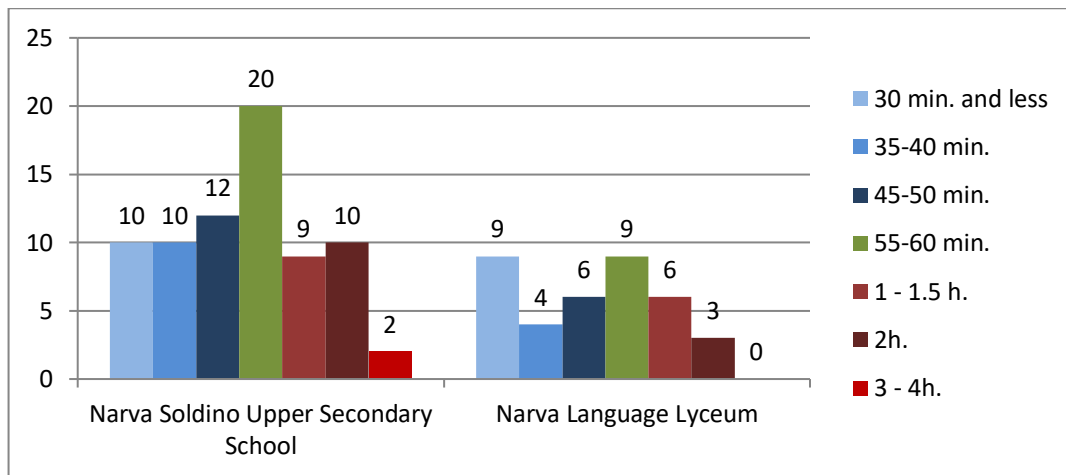


Figure 8. Time spent on writing a report or an essay according to students' responses

Taking into account that in the National Examination two writing tasks must be completed within 90 minutes, students have approximately 45 minutes per each task (the time could be divided as 60-for writing a report and 30 minutes for a letter, depends on student). The above tables are to show that almost half of all students do not have enough time for task completion. Roughly speaking, half students of Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School could write a letter within 30 minutes, as well as more than half students from Narva Language Lyceum. It is also vividly seen that writing a report takes more time than writing a letter. A significant number of Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School students need more time for writing a report, as well as for the half respondents from Narva Language Lyceum, as 45 minutes for a report is not enough. All in all, nearly 55 students out of 112 from both schools could easily manage with both tasks. This data could not help to reveal intensive and extensive practices in both school, but it gives a clear picture of students' readiness for the examination and confidence in their writing skills. These aspects are obvious determiners of teachers' work, that could help us to create the whole picture of teaching and acquiring written language. The above table shows that essay/report/letter writing requires much more time than it is given in the lesson.

All three parts of the conducted research are essential and complement each other. The observation together with questionnaires-based surveys make an overall picture more precise and more likely afford to reveal approaches based on extensive and intensive writing activities that contribute to better results in the National Examination in English.

CONCLUSION

Writing as a skill is very sophisticated as it includes complex processes such as thinking, the organisation of ideas, analysis, concentration and critical thinking. Due to the precise requirements set to grammar, coherence, appropriate vocabulary, etc it is a difficult skill to acquire. Teaching writing in Upper Secondary School, and ways of developing and improving writing skills have been studied and described by researchers Anna Wahlsröm (2006), Ashok Sapkota (2012), Theresa A. Dean - Rumsey (1998), but no research has been conducted to check whether teaching writing in Narva schools through extensive and intensive writing activities contributes to better examination results.

Successful writing performance in the National Examination depends on various factors: students' interests, teachers' educational ideology, methods and approaches, students' abilities; however, the thesis implies that the most efficient way of teaching writing that, in turn, leads to better results in the National Examination is the combination of extensive and intensive writing activities during the preparation period. Furthermore, the preliminary aim of the study was to investigate whether intensive regular writing activities, together with extensive writing approaches, are necessary pre-conditions for achieving higher results in the National Examination at the Upper Secondary school level. For this purpose, English lessons in the 11th and 12th grade of Narva Language Lyceum and Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School were observed in order to identify extensive and intensive writing practices.

On the basis of the high rating of Narva Language Lyceum in National Examination Statistics, presented in Chapter I, it was assumed that there was a sound balance of extensive and intensive writing practices and approaches used within its classroom environment.

The other school that was chosen for the research was Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School - a good example of a standard upper secondary school, whose examination results were a little bit lower.

The results obtained through the observations and questionnaire- based surveys were compared and analysed, leaving the hypothesis to be half-true, due to the fact that intensive writing prevails in both Narva schools. However, in comparison with Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School, extensive writing is practiced more in Narva Language Lyceum through a variety of extensive activities.

The short-term observation revealed that in Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School, intensive and some extensive writing activities were practiced more frequently

than those in Narva Language Lyceum, perhaps owing to the fact that the students have to pass the National Examination in English in comparison with Narva Language Lyceum students, who have already acquired the proficiency level of English by passing FCE examination.

For a more precise and reliable picture of extensive and intensive writing approaches and activities used in the lessons, a questionnaire-based survey was conducted. Taking the received responses into consideration, it was found that in both schools the emphasis was mostly on intensive writing as it constituted nearly three-quarters of all classroom activities in Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School and two-thirds in Narva Language Lyceum. Writing a report, an essay, or a letter, was the most common task for upper secondary level students. One teacher (from Narva Language Lyceum) out of five supports such approaches as: the product and process, creative writing, communicative, fluency-based, accuracy based that are focused on combination of extensive and intensive writing. In contrast, the other teachers were inclined to use to a great extent intensive writing approaches and activities. In spite of that, the following types of extensive writing activities were found in Narva Language Lyceum: narrative compositions, free writing, creative writing, blogs/ forums writing, writing newspaper/ magazine articles, and writing as quickly as possible; whereas, for Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School the activities were blogs/ forums writing, creative writing and writing newspaper/ magazine articles. The survey reveals that teachers from Narva Language Lyceum dedicate one lesson to writing every two or three weeks, whilst teachers from Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School have only one lesson dedicated to writing per month.

According to the students' responses, almost all students from Narva Language Lyceum indicated satisfaction with their writing skills, whereas roughly one quarter of Narva Soldino Upper Secondary School students expressed little confidence in their writing skills. In addition, the survey shows that writing is not considered to be the most complicated part of the National Examination; nevertheless, it does present various challenges: task completion, grammar issues, text organisation, production of ideas, lack of vocabulary, and limited time. The last issue was a significant problem for students, as the questionnaire-based survey illustrates that more than half of respondents admitted they needed more time for the task completion.

In order to succeed in the National Examination, the following recommendations could be made:

- To practise regularly intensive writing tasks such as: writing letters, reports,

essays in and out of the class. In addition, to use specially designed activities for intensive writing (pre-writing, post-writing, gap-filling, identification of mistakes in essay, letter, report, paragraph sequencing etc.)

- For developing other skills of writing to apply some extensive tasks and activities such as creative writing: role- plays, poetry, fiction or short stories, essays on free topic, chatting/ blogs/ forums, write as quick as possible on a given topic etc.
- To use integrated activities: writing through listening, writing while reading,
- To devote to writing at least 10-20 minutes of each lesson. As it is seen from the survey all five teachers spend from ten to twenty minutes of each lesson on writing of any type.
- To dedicate to writing the whole lessons once every two or three weeks.

Consequently, considering the fact that the proportion of intensive writing and extensive writing practised in the class is not balanced, it remains evident that writing requires a thorough preparation and constant practice mostly on the basis of intensive writing. However, extensive writing activities aimed at developing other skills as fluency, creativity, critical thinking enhance students' motivation and self-esteem. Extensive writing complements intensive writing by making the learning process more holistic, and their combination is undoubtedly the key to success.

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Kirjutamise õpetamine on üks tähtsamaid, samas väga keeruline osa millega valmistatakse ette keskastme õpilasi riiklikuks Inglise keele eksamiks. Edukas kirjutamise etteaste sõltub mitmetest teguritest: õpilase huvidest, õpetaja ideoloogiast, meetoditest ja lähenemisest, õpilase võimetest ja paljust muust. Kuigi, antud magistritöö, teemal „*Ekstensiivne ja Intensiivne Kirjutamine Gümnaasiumi Tasemel: on Edu Võti Riigieksamitel*“, sisaldab kõige efektiivne kirjutamise õpetamise meetodid, mis on eelduseks paremate tulemuste saavutamiseks riiklikus eksamineerimise ja mis on kombinatsioon ekstensiivsest ja intensiivsest klassi sees ja klassi välisest kirjutamise programmist õpiettevalmistuse perioodist. Töö eesmärk on välja selgitada kas intensiivne kirjutamise tegevust, koos ekstensiivne kirjutamise lähenemisega on vajalik eeltingimus, et saavutada kõrgem eksami tulemus riiklikus eksamis kõrgemal tasemel. Uurimus baseerub võrdleval analüüsil Narva Keelte Lütseumi ja Narva Soldino Gümnaasiumi ning nende kirjutamise lähenemises nende kirjutamise õpetamine baseerub ekstensiivsel kirjutamisel, intensiivsel kirjutamisel või nende mõlema koosmõjul.

Uurimustöö koosneb neljast osast. Sissejuhatus annab ülevaate kõige tähtsamatest aspektidest nagu kirjutamise oskus, kirjutamine kui protsess, annab definitsiooni ekstensiivsest ja intensiivsest kirjutamisest. Esimene peatükk paljastab struktuuri, tähtsad murekohad ja probleemsed valdkonnad riiklikkust eksamist (kirjalik osa). Lisaks, see annab lühida ülevaate riiklikkust õppekavast gümnaasiumi koolidele. Teine peatükk annab ülevaate kõige populaarsematest lähenemistest mis on baseerunud intensiivse , ekstensiivse või kombineeritud kirjutamise tegevustest. Teine peatükk samuti sisaldab empiirilist osa- vaatluse analüüsi 11'nda ja 12'nda klassi inglise keele tundidest mõlemas koolis; küsimustik- mis on küsitlus analüüs 11'nda ja 12'nda klassi õpilastelt ja nende viie õpetajalt eeldusega saada täpsemat informatsiooni nende kõige tavaliste intensiivse ja ekstensiivse kirjutamise harjumuste kohta klassis. Samuti õpetajate ja õpilaste suhtumist kirjutamise osas ja õpilaste valmidust kirjutamaks riiklikku eksamit.

Kokkuvõttes võetakse kokku uuringu tulemused ja esitakse kommentaarid uuringu hüpoteeside kohta.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Criteria for Lesson Observations

26.03	Types or description	Time	Individually/ pair work/ group work	Assessment (grades, feedback, self- assessment, peer- assessment)
Writing activities used in the lesson	11- listening - fill in the gaps	10min	individual	feedback
	12 - making a story in groups	15min	group	peer-assessment
Writing activities given for homework	—	—	—	—
27.03	Types or description	Time	Individually/ pair work/ group work	Assessment (grades, feedback, self- assessment, peer- assessment)
Writing activities used in the lesson	11 - the planning essay	10min	pair work	feedback
	12 - listening - fill in the gaps	25min	individual	peer-assessment
Writing activities given for homework	11 - sample essay 12 —	45min	individual	feedback
28.03	Types or description	Time	Individually/ pair work/ group work	Assessment (grades, feedback, self- assessment, peer- assessment)
Writing activities used in the lesson	vocabulary work - crime - sentences, words... (11)	25min	individual	self-assessment
	12 - (New Yorker)	—	—	—
Writing activities given for homework	—	—	—	—
29.03	Types or description	Time	Individually/ pair work/ group work	Assessment (grades, feedback, self- assessment, peer- assessment)
Writing activities used in the lesson	written test on the topic of crime (11)	45min	individual	grades
	12 - test on conditional sentences	45min	individual	grades
Writing activities given for homework	—	—	—	—

- 1) Types of writing activities used in the lesson:
- 2) Volume of the writing activities:
- 3) Time devoted to writing during the lesson (type of activity and time for it):
- 4) Writing individually or pair/group work
- 5) Writing works assessment (grades, comments/feedback/ self-assessment, peer-assessment)
- 6) Activities given for homework (volume of writing activities):
- 7) Writing approaches revealed from the lessons:

Appendix 2. Questionnaire-based Survey for Teachers

Preparation for the National Examination in a foreign language (writing part) for upper-secondary school students

Questionnaire

Please respond to the following questions by placing a tick in the answer box that corresponds to your response and/or answer the question where indicated.

5 = Very often 4 = Often 3 = Sometimes 2 = Rarely 1 = Do not use

Section I: Writing Part

1. How much time of the lesson (45 min) do you usually devote to any types of writing activities?

- 10 mins or less
 10-20 mins
 20-30 mins

2. Do you have any special days devoted only to writing part?

- Yes No

3. How often do you have lessons devoted only to writing?

- or more lesson per week
 lesson per 2 or 3 weeks
 lesson per a month
 Other option _____

4. How do students usually write essays, reports, letters?

Following the samples with clear structure	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Using pre-writing (brainstorming/mapping)/while-writing/post-writing	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Free writing	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Other option _____					

5. How do students usually work while pre-writing?

Independently	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
In /pairs or groups	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
The whole class discussion	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1

6. Which pre-writing activities do students usually do before writing?

Brainstorming	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Clustering	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Making an Outline	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Free-writing	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Peer-editing	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
The whole class discussion	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1

7. Which post-writing activities do students usually do after writing?

Proofread for spelling, vocabulary, grammar	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Rewriting (for h/w)	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Sharing papers	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Reflection on peer work	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Peer-editing	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1

8. How long does it usually take students to write a letter of 120 words in the lesson?

9. How long does it usually take students to write a Report/an Essay of 200 words in the lesson?

10. How often and how much do students write at home?

11. Do students participate in any projects, contests (devoted to writing) out of class/school? What are they if any?

12. How are students writing works assessed?

Grades	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Feedback	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1

Peer-assessment	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Self-assessment	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Writing-code(eg G = grammar error, SP = spelling)	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1

13. In your opinion, during the preparation for the National Exam accent is made more on fluency or on accuracy? Why?

Section 2: Writing activities

14. Which writing activities do you usually use in the lesson?

Reports/ Essays/ Letters (formal writing)	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Letters/notes to each other(informal)	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Recipes writing/giving directions “tell me How”	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Writing a summary (about a story, video etc.)	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Writing an essay on free topic	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Writing a journal/ diary	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Writing down notes	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Writing words (spelling)	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Writing sentences (sentence combination/sequence)	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Writing paragraphs (structuring)	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Writing error corrections	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Writing mock-tests	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Creative writing : writing: role- plays, poetry, fiction or short stories	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Pre-and post-writing activities	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Chatting/ blogs/ forums	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Writing narrative compositions	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1

Description writing	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Newspaper and magazines articles	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Writing responses to reading/films/class discussion/peer essays or letters	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Summaries/ "one-minute" paper	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Exploratory writing	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Writing as quick as possible on a given topic	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1

Appendix 3. Questionnaire-based Survey for Students

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Your responses to this form are completely anonymous. Please answer the questions and fill in one response by putting a tick for each question below.

5 = Very easy 4 = Easy 3 = Neutral 2 = Difficult 1 = Very difficult
--

- 1) What is the most difficult part in the National Examination in English, in your opinion? Rate the level of difficulty for all Examination parts.

Listening <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Reading <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Writing <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1
Speaking <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 1

- 2) Are you satisfied with the volume of given writing activities for homework?

<input type="radio"/> Very Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> OK	<input type="radio"/> dissatisfied (too much)	<input type="radio"/> Very dissatisfied
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- 3) How long does it take you to write a Report/ an Essay of 200 words?

- 4) How long does it take you to write a Letter of 120 words?

- 5) How would you rate your writing skills?

<input type="radio"/> Excellent	<input type="radio"/> Very Good	<input type="radio"/> Good	<input type="radio"/> Satisfactory	<input type="radio"/> Poor
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