STUDENT AND INSTRUCTOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE L2 WRITING-FOR-READING PROCESS

BY

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Building on current research about the reading-writing connection, this study examines the writing-for-reading process in the context of foreign language instruction. The central research question which guides this study is: How do intermediate second language (L2) learners of German engage with and manipulate an original source text when composing a creative writing task? To understand the extent to which integrated reading-writing tasks support reading abilities, this study analyzes student and instructor reports about their understandings of the writing-for-reading process. Participants (86 university students and 4 instructors) from two intermediate-level foreign language (FL) German courses completed voluntary questionnaires. Four students also participated in a one-hour focus group to elaborate on their experiences composing a written narrative based on a source text. These questionnaires elicited information from students about specific strategies they utilized while writing as well as their perceived learning outcomes. Instructors’ perceptions of the writing-for-reading process were also examined so as to provide a comparative view to the students’ reports. The two-phase methodology applied in this study allowed for both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results. According to student reports, most students relied on various reading strategies, such as rereading or skimming during the writing process. Some students noted that referring back to the source text helped them better comprehend certain aspects of the story. They also utilized vocabulary strategies, such as identifying and looking up unfamiliar words. It was uncommon, however, for students to actively search for vocabulary from the text to incorporate in their writing. The majority of students also did not engage in planning or problem-solving strategies, such as creating an outline, discussing ideas with classmates, or consulting the instructor. The findings from the questionnaire and the focus group suggest that creative reading-writing tasks
can facilitate literacy development as students move between their own work and the source
texts. This study contributes to emerging research in the field of L2 writing and offers several
pedagogical implications about how to strengthen the writing-for-reading process.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

While current literacy research no longer accepts the view of reading as a receptive skill, discussions about the reading-writing connection still tend to focus on how reading can support writing development. According to Hirvela (2004), by viewing reading as a model or “springboard” to writing, “many researchers assume basic reading abilities for their students or see such learning issues for reading as unproblematic” (p. 18). The assumption of reading as an effortless process is perpetuated by textbooks used in beginning and intermediate second language (L2) classrooms which conclude reading texts with comprehension questions. This practice is problematic because it suggests not only that there is one correct answer, but that the answer can also be easily found somewhere in the text itself (Leki, 1993; Kern, 2000). An emphasis on mere comprehension as the end goal of a text further conflicts with current research about literacy, which views reading as much more than word or sentence recognition. In their comprehensive review of L2 literacy theories and research, Hedgcock & Ferris (2009) explain that, in addition to cognitive skills, literacy is also comprised of awareness of the sociocultural structures and ideologies that impact texts (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Cummins, Brown & Sayers, 2007). In this definition of literacy, culture is intertwined with reading and writing. Because L2 learners often do not share the cultural or historical background with the writer or intended readers, reading can cause significant challenges for these learners (Martin, 1993; Kern, 2000; Frantzen, 2002). While it is important for researchers and instructors to recognize the complexity of reading in the L2, literary texts need not be reserved for advanced-level ‘literature’ courses (Swaffar & Arens, 2005). If there is a disconnect between the pedagogical goals of ‘language’ and ‘literature’ courses, beginning and intermediate L2 instruction may not adequately develop students’ familiarity with the cultural and historical context that is necessary to understand texts.
at higher levels. One way “to understand another way of thinking, [to] be sensitized to different cultural frames [. . .] is by reading, writing, and discussing texts” (Kern, 2000, p. 1). To help students understand the experiences, assumptions, and connotations that readers and writers bring with them, it has been advocated (Kramsch, 1993; Kern, 2000; Scott & Tucker, 2002; Swaffar & Arens, 2005) that language programs should incorporate a wide range of text types into all levels of instruction.

Because of the close relationship between language, culture, and literature, many scholars promote a literacy-based approach to language learning which integrates a variety of texts and meaningful writing activities from beginning to advanced L2 instructional levels (Blanton, 1993; Gajdusek & van Dommelen, 1993; Kern, 2000; Hirvela, 2001; Byrnes & Kord, 2002; Hirvela, 2004; Swaffar & Arens, 2005). Kern (2000) explains that the main emphasis in the literacy-based approach is on “real reading and writing—meaningful uses that promote thinking, learning, and (consequently) motivation in patterns acknowledged as part of a culture’s interactions” (p. 7). Integrated reading and writing tasks are a major component of literacy-based instruction, because such tasks are purpose-driven and require the learner to be an active participant in the meaning-making process. Within a literacy-based approach, integration of reading and writing is achieved with tasks that go beyond a basic summarization or synthesis of a text. One example of task types found in literacy-based instruction is creative writing tasks (Kramsch, 1993; Kern, 2000). Creative writing assignments can encourage students to engage with a text by responding to it from a different perspective, by taking on a new identity, or by adapting the genre. When reading and writing are connected in meaningful ways such as this, “writing provides a way into reading, extends reading, and consolidates understanding of a text just as reading sustains writing and furnishes, for the writer, the counterpoint of another voice” (Carson & Leki, 1993, p. 2). It is this
symbiotic relationship between reading and writing in a literacy-based instructional context that is the focus of this study.

Because of the complexity of reading and writing processes and the disconnect between research and practice so often found in instruction and textbooks, it is essential that scholars and practitioners deliberate on how we can best support the development of learners’ literacy abilities. In this study, I consider this question by exploring the relationship between reading and writing in the context of L2 instruction and how these processes support each other when integrated together in literacy-based instruction. This topic is of personal interest because as a language teacher, I have observed reading to be a challenging and sometimes frustrating experience for students and teachers alike. In my own teaching, I have utilized purposeful and creative writing tasks as a means for motivating learners to engage more deeply with texts and am therefore interested in further investigating the L2 reading-writing connection.

While much of the research on the reading-writing connection is based on a traditional, linear model in which reading precedes and fosters writing, this study will focus on the less studied writing-for-reading process. By examining the relationship between reading and writing from this direction, I would like to expand on the claim that “through writing, students gain a fuller understanding of their reading” and that during this process, “material is not simply ingested; it is digested” (Flynn, 1982, p.149). In order to gain insight into how writing supports reading, this study provides an analysis of student and instructor self-reports on their understandings of the writing-for-reading process. These reports discuss the strategies that intermediate-level L2 students used while composing a creative writing task based on a source text, such as a story continuation or an adapted version of a story. Students also described their experiences with these integrated tasks in terms of learning outcomes and affective responses.
The focus on learner and instructor perceptions is motivated by previous research that recognizes the value of participants’ perspectives on curricular and instructional design (Levine, 2003; Chavez, 2005). Listening to students’ voices and comparing their expectations and insights with the assumptions that we as instructors hold is especially important for deep understanding of classroom life. As Kramsch (2009) reminds us, “we are fooling ourselves if we believe that students learn only what they are taught” (p. 4). Thus, integrating learners’ perspectives into L2 research allows us to gain a fuller understanding of the multiple factors that play a role in language learning.

The central research question which guides this study is: How do intermediate learners of German engage with and manipulate an original source text when composing a creative writing task? Specifically, this study will investigate the following questions:

1. What reading strategies do L2 learners utilize while completing a reading-writing activity, and how do these strategies impact students’ overall comprehension of the source texts?
2. How do students approach new vocabulary, and what types of vocabulary from the source text(s) do they incorporate into their stories?
3. What are students’ affective responses towards integrated reading-writing tasks?
4. What are learners’ and instructors’ perceived learning outcomes of an integrated reading-writing task?

The present study builds on current literature on the reading-writing connection and investigates several aspects of the writing-for-reading process by analyzing student and instructor perceptions. The main goals of this study are to learn more about the effects that creative writing tasks can have on the way students interpret texts and to offer suggestions to strengthen integrated reading-writing tasks in foreign language classrooms.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading and writing research has developed greatly over the past 40 years and has had significant implications on language teaching. Reading and writing instruction in the 1970s, which reflected the then prevalent audiolingual method, considered reading and writing to be unrelated skills. The two modalities were not only taught separately, but linearly as well: it was considered necessary for learners to master reading before progressing to writing (Carson & Leki, 1993). Reading-writing research and instruction have moved away from this strict division and scholars have since recognized that reading and writing involve similar processes. This literature review follows the development and emerging themes in research on reading-writing relations. The benefits of integrating reading and writing have been well-received and may seem commonsensical to many practitioners. Perhaps because of the wide acceptance of this relationship, there is a lack of empirical research that investigates the impact of combining reading and writing on learners’ literacy abilities.

While much of the early research examined the reading-writing connection from a directional model, in which one skill improves the other, current studies suggest a recursive movement between reading and writing activities and view these skills as mutually supportive. To understand what these directions mean, it is necessary to turn to Eisterhold’s (1990) three models of reading and writing relationships. The first is the *directional model*, which suggests that knowledge from one skill can inform the other. This transfer only follows one direction, namely “reading provides input for writing or writing provides input for reading” (Hirvela, 2004, p. 72). Compared to this unidirectional view of reading and writing, the *nondirectional model* maintains the assumption that knowledge from one skill can transfer to the other, but that
movement can occur in both directions. The third model is the bidirectional model, which considers reading and writing to be not only recursive but interdependent as well.

**Reading and Writing Connections**

It is now commonly believed that reading and writing support each other (Spack, 1985; Carson & Leki, 1993; Hirvela, 2001; Hirvela 2004). As mentioned previously, however, prior to the 1980s, reading and writing were considered isolated skills and were consequently taught separately in both L1 and L2 instruction. At that time, “reading was generally conceptualized as a passive act of decoding meaning and information in accordance with the intentions of the author of a text” (Hirvela, 2004, p. 9). Deviating from this view of reading as a receptive skill, Tierney & Pearson (1983) proposed that reading and writing “are both acts of composing” (p. 1). In arguing for reading as an active skill, they mapped on the construction of meaning that takes place during reading to established writing stages: planning, drafting, aligning, revising, and monitoring. This seminal article stimulated much discussion about the connection between reading and writing. In the first review of early L1 reading-writing research, Stotsky (1983) introduced correlational studies investigating the relationship between reading and writing ability as well as studies examining how one skill supports the other. In her widely cited synthesis of the correlational studies, Stotsky (1983) concluded that:

> better writers tend to be better readers (of their own writing as well as of other reading material), that better writers tend to read more than poorer writers, and that better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers. (p. 636)

Those studies that looked at the unidirectional influence of one skill on another produced varying results. While the use of writing was seen to enhance reading, studies that examined the influence of reading on writing did not yield significant results (Hirvela, 2004).
Following Stotsky’s review, Tierney & Shanahan (1991) provided the next major review of work in reading-writing research. Their analysis maintained the view that both reading and writing were composing processes that required learners’ active participation in the texts (Tierney & Pearson, 1983). The major themes of interest were the similarities between reading and writing processes, the relationship between readers and writers and how they negotiate meaning, and what type of learning takes place when these skills are integrated. In comparison to earlier research, the studies included in this review focused on both the cognitive and social dimensions of reading and writing, allowing for an exploration of the collaborative and communicative nature of these skills. The authors derived strong pedagogical implications from the body of research and called for an integration of reading and writing in language instruction.

Despite both reviews’ focus on the reading-writing connection in the L1, these works have led to the established conceptualization of reading and writing as “complementary acts” (Scholes 1985, p. 20) and “reciprocal activities” (Grabe & Kaplan 1996, p. 297) and has greatly influenced many assumptions about the interconnectedness of these skills in the L2.

In their edited book Reading in the Composition Classroom: Second Language Perspectives, Carson & Leki (1993) responded to the lack of discourse on L2 reading-writing connections. Despite their claim that “reading and writing abilities are inextricably linked,” much of the research at this time focused on the reading-for-writing process and how to incorporate reading into composition classrooms to improve writing (p. 1). Thus, although reading and writing research and instruction had made significant developments since the 1970s, reading was still considered a precursor to writing in the 1990s (Hirvela, 2004). While some scholars briefly noted that writing might also affect reading (Carson, 1993), most of the studies investigated the
traditional, linear view in which reading precedes writing. This directional model continues to be emphasized in reading-writing research.

Leki is one researcher who has made significant contributions to the impact of writing on reading. She criticized approaches that separate reading and writing, because she not only considered reading to be “a major source of new knowledge,” but also believed that writing was a way to “internalize [this] new information” (1993, p. 10, 12). According to Leki (1993), when reading is separated from writing in L2 classes, learners are reading for no other purpose than to practice reading. While debatable, with this claim she posited that reading strategies taught during isolated reading lessons are meaningless exercises. When combined with writing, however, students selectively utilize reading strategies and identify what information is relevant to their topic or interest. The idea that writing not only facilitates purposeful reading, but also helps learners to see “reading as dialogic” is the central argument of Leki’s article (1993, p. 22).

Belcher & Hirvela’s (2001) edited book Linking Literacies: Perspectives on L2 Reading-Writing Connections provides more recent insights into developing themes in the field of cross-modality research. As opposed to a directional model, their view of literacy conceived of reading as writing and writing as reading. In terms of pedagogy, a new focus emerged on the role of literature in L2 learning, specifically how it could be used in connection with reading and writing, thus corresponding to similar discussions in language learning that advocate for a literacy-based approach (Scott & Tucker, 2002; Swaffar & Arens, 2005). Attention was also given to the challenges that can arise when reading and writing are combined, such as textual borrowing and plagiarism (Barks & Watts, 2001; Bloch, 2001; Pecorari, 2001). Copying directly from or relying heavily on the language used in source texts complicates the claim that reading supports writing in so much as learners may not be internalizing, but merely reproducing this
knowledge. These particular issues continue to be well-researched, yet focus primarily on advanced-level learners in ESL classrooms (Barks & Watts, 2001; Bloch, 2001; Pecorari, 2001; Thompson, 2001; Keck, 2006).

Grabe (2001) articulated which gaps exist in current L2 reading-writing research and theory. He noted that there is a need for more research that considers the challenges of reading, as most studies continued to concentrate on the directional model in which reading serves as a catalyst for writing. Other areas that he cited as requiring further investigation include: L1/L2 literacy transfer, the role of motivation as a social factor, and reading and writing in the context of newer approaches to L2 instruction such as content-based or task-based instruction. He therefore called for more empirical research to learn more about how approaches that integrate reading and writing support literacy development and benefit language as well as content learning.

There have been a limited number of current studies which investigate how learners engage in and learn from integrated reading and writing tasks. The work that has been conducted recently, however, demonstrates a shift from the directional model to a bidirectional view of reading-writing relations, which involves back-and-forth movement between the two processes. While previous studies have focused on the linear movement during reading-to-write and writing-to-read activities, this directional view seems simplified when compared to studies such as Esmaeili (2002) and Plakans (2009) that describe how learners use reading and writing strategies together when completing integrated reading-writing tasks.

Esmaeili (2002) investigated how the integration of reading and writing tasks affected the performance of a group of adult ESL learners in terms of writing strategies and recall of reading material. Participants took two language tests: one which linked a reading passage and a writing
task and one which kept those elements unrelated. These tests were followed by an interview with the learners about their attitudes towards the tasks and a checklist to indicate which writing strategies they utilized during the task. Based on his measures (i.e., holistic ratings of writing compositions and summary recalls of passages), participants were found to perform better in both reading and writing when they took the test that connected the reading passage with a writing task. Participants also indicated that they relied on the text while composing their response (i.e., borrowing words/phrases, recalling from reading, or accepting/rejecting viewpoint in reading). Thus, even though reading preceded writing in this test, both skills seem to support the other during this recursive reading and writing process.

Plakans’ (2009) study examined specific reading strategies learners use while completing a reading-to-write task. Qualitative measures such as think-aloud protocols and interviews were used to gain insight about how learners engaged in an integrated reading-writing task across various stages of the writing process. The elicited task was to develop an argumentative essay, which synthesized information from a source text about cultural borrowing or technology. This study looked not only at when learners use reading and writing strategies, but also how these strategies vary between learners at different proficiency levels (based on TOEFL scores). The results show that low-scoring writers used bottom-up reading strategies\(^1\), while high-scoring writers used more strategies overall and made greater use of global strategies. The strategies that high-scoring writers used during this task (i.e., goal-setting, self-regulating while reading, and mining) all indicate that these learners were engaged in a more purposeful and holistic reading of the text than the lower-level learners. These findings align with research that reports that lower-level learners tend to rely on decoding strategies in the reading process (Koda, 2005). Plakans

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\(^1\) Bottom-up reading involves the process of beginning a text by focusing on the individual words and sentences and creating meaning out of what is stated in the text (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009).
also found that the L2 writers used the majority of reading strategies during the pre-writing process that consisted of reading the source text for the first time and planning, rather than during the writing or revising stages. The only reading strategy found predominately during the writing and revising stages was *mining*, described by Greene (1992) as reading for a specific purpose of selecting information from a text (as cited in Plankans, 2009). Participants used this strategy often in order to find relevant passages to integrate or paraphrase in their own writing task. Because learners activated reading and writing strategies as needed, this recursive movement between reading and writing suggests that writing-to-read tasks and reading-to-write tasks do not necessarily follow a directional path.

More empirical research on L2 reading and writing connections is necessary to expand on these studies and better understand how writing involves and promotes reading skills. One major catalyst for the present study on the writing-for-reading process is Zamel’s (1992) article, “Writing one’s way into reading.” In this widely cited piece, she criticizes the underrepresentation of writing’s influence on reading in the literature. While the reading-for-writing process considers reading as input or as a model for developing writing abilities and writing as the end product, the writing-for-reading process is built on the belief that writing “makes reading an activity of finding and making connections, of figuring out what speaks to the reader and why” (Zamel, 1992, p. 471). Through purposeful writing tasks, learners are invited to enter into a dialogue with a text and consider the reading from a new position as reader/writer.

*The reading-writing connection in a literacy-based approach*

From early on in reading-writing research, the effectiveness of using literary texts to strengthen this connection has been cited. In Stotsky’s (1983) review of instructional materials used during
reading-writing tasks, literary texts were considered to be the most advantageous in terms of improving learner’s writing. The use of literary texts certainly does not come without challenges. Scholars recognize that students find literature difficult because they lack the appropriate cultural or historical background knowledge (Kramsch, 1985; Shook, 1996; Kern, 2000; Frantzen, 2002). Many would argue, however, that the presence of such difficulties should not prevent learners at lower-levels from having access to this enriching input (Byrnes & Kord, 2002; Frantzen, 2002; Katz, 2002; Swaffar, 2002; Swaffar & Arens, 2005). When incorporating literary texts (e.g., poems, short stories, plays, novels) into lower-level courses, therefore, it is necessary to carefully select which texts to use and create materials and tasks to support student learning (Frantzen, 2002). Writing can serve as an important resource to aid comprehension because in addition to “slow[ing] down the process of communication, it fosters reflection and a critical stance vis-à-vis one’s own and the foreign meanings” (Frantzen, 2002, p. 175).

When discussing the use of literary texts as part of the reading-writing connection, many scholars speak of its motivating effects (Blanton, 1994; Hirvela, 2004). As Hirvela (2004) explains, “there is something about narrative, about the structures of storytelling, that captivates both readers and writers and thus increases motivation to read and write” (p. 153). Literary texts may be more meaningful to some students and can lead to greater engagement in writing or discussion because of their intriguing plots, events, and characters (Hirvela, 2004). Kramsch (1993) also recognizes the positive affective responses of learners when completing an integrated reading-writing task: “we should not underestimate the pleasure students can derive from experimenting with literary form” (p. 171). While Hirvela suggested that instructors use writing tasks such as journals, response papers, and reading logs to develop their understanding of a source text, others have recommended creative applications such as reconstructing or adding to a
text (Kramsch, 1985; Zamel, 1992; Cheung, 1995; Frantzen, 2002). For example, Urlaub (2011) considers the use of creative writing as a way to develop literacy abilities, specifically critical reading. To date, little research has been conducted on the connection between creative writing and reading. Urlaub’s definition of creativity is influenced by Csikzentmihalyi, a cognitive psychologist, who understands creativity as restructuring or manipulation of information as opposed to individual, novel ideas. With this definition in mind, some examples of creative tasks that can be linked to literary tasks are story continuations, adapted versions of a story, assuming the role of a character, and responding to another character (Kramsch, 1993; Kern, 2000; Urlaub, 2011). Based on text analyses and student reflection papers, Urlaub (2011) concludes that “creative writing activities can be effective in fostering critical reading when designed in an integrated context with literary reading activities” and that learners differ in their affective responses to such tasks (p. 103). While his study presents only preliminary findings, it offers valuable insights into how students work with a source text as well as their attitudes toward creative tasks. His call for further research examining the relationship between creative writing and literary texts serves as a motivation for the current study.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The Curricular Context

This study on student and instructor perceptions of the writing-for-reading process was conducted across four classes of German as a foreign language at a large Midwestern state university. The basic language program at this university is comprised of four, sequential levels of German. Students and instructors of the intermediate levels (third and fourth semester) of German are the focus of this study. This section begins with an introduction of the goals and approaches of the language program in order to frame the curricular context of this study. Three main pedagogical approaches are integrated into the instruction of the lower-division courses at this university. One approach that is taken is the communicative approach to language learning, which embeds grammar and vocabulary instruction into meaningful contexts. Communicative language teaching focuses heavily on the use of real-life situations and oral interaction (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Recognizing the potential limitations that an over-emphasis on oral language abilities can have on students entering upper-division content courses, this program also integrates literacy-based approaches and task-based language teaching into the curriculum (Byrnes, 2006). Through these approaches, students are exposed to several text types (e.g., short stories, movies, young adult novels) and complete corresponding writing and speaking tasks. By using these texts and tasks as a platform for discussion and analysis, the units build knowledge of the German language and its cultures. The goal of integrating multiple modalities, i.e., reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing, is to help develop students into “literate users of the German language” who are prepared to face a variety of language demands (German 103 and 104 course syllabi, 2012).
In the third-semester German course (German 103), students complete the final chapters of the textbook, *Kontakte*, which they also used in the first two semesters. Each chapter begins by introducing the main themes, grammatical structures, and cultural information that will be focused on in the unit. Activities based around these topics provide students with opportunities to interact and use the language. Three supplemental thematic units allow students to explore related topics such as German children’s stories, interpersonal and intercultural relationships, and the Fall of the Berlin Wall.

While German 104 continues to emphasize meaningful and contextualized language use, the focus varies slightly from the previous levels of German. This course takes a *content-based approach*, which uses content knowledge about Austria to develop students’ language abilities. The major themes of this course are Austrian identity, history, and culture, which students explore through subtopics, such as music, art, and post-war Austria. A variety of genres and text types are utilized to introduce students to authentic material and support their content knowledge. Students are expected to engage with this information in both written and oral assignments throughout the semester.

Given the emphasis on the development of multiple modalities through engagement with meaningful texts, the lower-division courses contain a heavy writing component. Students complete writing tasks beginning in their first semester and develop their writing across different genre types through regular coursework. The integration of a genre-based approach into a communicative program aligns with Swales’ (1990) description of genres as “communicative events” that serve distinct “communicative purposes” and convey these messages using a “structure [and] style” that reflect the expectations of the targeted audience (p. 58). Some examples of the genres that students in the program engage with are: descriptive tasks, letters,
recounts, film and play scripts, reviews, story adaptations, and story completions. In each of these tasks, the writers take on a different relationship with the text and the intended readers. This literacy-based approach therefore helps learners to think of “reading and writing as acts of communication” (Kern, 2000, p. 45).

The Writing Tasks

A central research question in this paper is: How do students engage with source texts while composing a creative writing task, such as an adapted version of a story, or a story continuation? As these writing tasks serve as a focal point for this study, it is important to briefly describe the writing assignments and their instructional contexts. Students receive a prompt sheet and a grading rubric (see Appendix A) when introduced to the writing tasks so that they may have clear guidelines and questions to consider as they compose their texts. In order to start developing ideas for the writing tasks and receive feedback on their writing, students also complete a short writing quiz (Kurzschreiben Quiz) with a similar thematic focus.

The first writing task in German 103 is integrated into a unit that focuses on different topics related to childhood. After talking about their own childhoods, students read an uncommon fairy tale, Der standhafte Zinnsoldat (The Steadfast Tin Soldier) in the textbook. A supplemental unit provides students with additional children’s tales as well as exposure to the simple past. Over this three-day unit, students read Die Geschichte vom Daumenlutscher (The Story of Little Suck-a-Thumb), a well-known German children’s story from a collection of short stories called Struwwelpeter (Hoffmann, 1845). These illustrated stories were originally intended to serve as a didactic tool for teaching children the importance of obeying their parents. In the story of the thumb-sucker, for example, a young boy who sucks his thumb even after his
mother’s warning is punished by a tailor who runs into the room and cuts off the boy’s thumbs.

This shocking story is then compared to a more modern parody *Nuckelconny*. This story is part of the children’s book *Peter Struwwel* from 1972, which questions the authoritarian parenting style depicted in the 1845 version by allowing the child to explain the reasons behind his actions and placing the blame on the parents. In the writing task, which is introduced on the third day of the unit, students are to write a modern *Struwwelpeter* or an anti-*Struwwelpeter* such as *Nuckelconny*. Similar to the source texts, their stories should focus on a child who repeats a behavior deemed undesirable by society. This behavior leads to a conflict between the child and an adult figure; by the end of the story, the child learns an important lesson. The story should be approximately 250–300 words and include language features from the chapter such as the simple past, conjunctions, and varying word order. This interconnectedness of language and content is intended to give students an opportunity to practice the forms they have learned in the unit and “to strengthen [their] writing abilities in German in meaningful and creative ways” (German 103 course syllabus, 2012). To encourage students to start thinking about possible bad behaviors, they are given a prompt for the short writing quiz asking them to describe a time when they had done something bad as a child. It is also important to mention that this supplemental unit continues with another popular German children’s story *Oh, wie schön ist Panama*, a cheerful tale about two animals and their journey to paradise. This will be significant in the data analysis as students reported drawing from all of the texts and genres in this unit while composing their modern *Struwwelpeter*, not just the model source texts.

Students in German 104 similarly compose a creative writing task in the form of a story continuation. In order to gain familiarity with the history of post-war Austria, students in this course read part of a young adult novel called *Maikäfer, flieg!* by Christine Nöstlinger (1973).
This autobiographical story describes the daily life of a young girl growing up in Vienna following World War II and thus offers an interesting perspective about what life was like for families during this period. During the four-week unit, students explore the major themes of this book through a variety of activities and resources, such as semantic fields and helpful phrases to scaffold class discussions and writing. The language focus of this unit is to review independent and dependent clauses and develop vocabulary related to the topics at hand. After reading the first third of the book, students are introduced to the corresponding writing task in which they continue narrating the story in the form of a new chapter for the novel. For this continuation, they are to describe the preceding events, introduce a new and significant character, and develop the plot based on predictions about what could happen next. While writing, it is important that the students consider the historical context and maintain the style of the author. Targeted language use includes vocabulary from the book on the topic of war, discourse markers to coherently connect ideas, adjectives to vividly describe scenes and characters, and relative clauses to vary sentence structure and concisely add information to a sentence. The story continuation should be 400–500 words and students are encouraged to think creatively for this assignment.

Study Design

Questionnaire on the Perceptions of the L2 Writing-for-Reading Process

In order to gain an introspective view of the writing-for-reading process, students currently enrolled in German 103 and 104 classes were recruited to comment on their perceptions through an in-class questionnaire. L2 researchers have frequently utilized questionnaires as a means for collecting data about the opinions and attitudes of learners (Turner, 1993). This questionnaire was designed to elicit student and instructor perceptions about how students engaged with a
source text while composing the creative writing assignments described above. In order to ensure that the survey items were relevant to the research questions, the questionnaire underwent several revisions as to “eliminate all the questions that [were] only of peripheral interest but not directly related to the variables and hypotheses that the questionnaire [had] been designed to investigate” (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 32). The questionnaires were administered within two days of the students completing their first writing tasks for their German courses so that accuracy would not be affected by delayed reporting.

In the questionnaires (see Appendix B), students were first asked to provide general background information that would help to gain a sense of the student population in the study. In the second section of the questionnaire, under the heading Reading and Writing Strategies, students were asked to assess the frequency of the strategies they used while composing their writing assignments on a Likert scale. In the findings, the 15 questionnaire items were categorized into five groups: reading strategies, vocabulary strategies, planning strategies, utilization of resources, and problem-solving strategies. While the reading and vocabulary items were developed based on the strategies students have learned and practiced within the curricular context, several of the writing items were created and categorized based on Grabe’s (2001) list of processes that writers need (as cited in Hirvela, 2004, p. 26):

1. Planning for writing
2. Using language resources
3. Using background knowledge
4. Solving rhetorical problems
5. Reading to review text to that point
6. Balancing processes strategically
7. Monitoring outcomes
8. Revising plans and text appropriately.
The specific questionnaire items for each course are illustrated in Table 1. Because of the different instructional contexts in the two German classes, certain individual items on these two questionnaires vary, such as the resources used. To account for the variety of resources provided in the German 104 unit, there were two more items on the German 104 questionnaire in this category. In order to maintain an equal number of questionnaire items, these items replaced the vocabulary strategy of highlighting or circling useful phrases and the problem-solving strategy of talking to classmates or friends. Highlighting or circling useful phrases was removed based on the assumption that the resources (e.g. vocabulary worksheets) would be a major source of useful phrases for students. The decision to omit talking to classmates or friends as a problem-solving strategy was made, because out of all the items, this one had the greatest overlap with the planning strategy of talking with others as both items targeted the social dimensions of writing.

Table 1. Categorization of Questionnaire Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>German 103</th>
<th>German 104</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading Strategies</strong></td>
<td>Rereading the source text(s)</td>
<td>Rereading the source text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scanning for specific information</td>
<td>Scanning for specific information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consulting task sheet and/or grading rubric</td>
<td>Consulting task sheet and/or grading rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary Strategies</strong></td>
<td>Highlighting or circling useful phrases</td>
<td>Identifying unfamiliar vocabulary words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identifying unfamiliar vocabulary words</td>
<td>Looking up unfamiliar words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Looking up unfamiliar words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning Strategies</strong></td>
<td>Creating an outline</td>
<td>Creating an outline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talking to classmates or friends about ideas</td>
<td>Talking to classmates or friends about ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of Resources</strong></td>
<td>Class discussions</td>
<td>Class discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorporation of useful phrases and/or vocab</td>
<td>Online homework submissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorporation of Kurzschreiben Quiz</td>
<td>Incorporation of useful phrases and/or vocab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drawing on stories heard in the past</td>
<td>Phrases from worksheet on describing people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary from other worksheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Drawing from stories heard in the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem-solving Strategies</strong></td>
<td>Consulting instructor for help</td>
<td>Consulting instructor for help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Referring back to the text(s)</td>
<td>Referring back to the text(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talking to classmates or friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to explain how these categories were operationalized, a brief description of each category and the corresponding item is provided. Reading strategies are defined as actions that are used to achieve a certain purpose (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009). Both *rereading the source text*
and scanning for specific information are common goal-directed strategies that are introduced in language textbooks, such as Kontakte, the textbook used in the first three semesters of the lower-division courses. Because the writing task guidelines were written in German and it was necessary for students to comprehend this information in order to successfully complete the task, consulting the prompt was categorized as a reading strategy in this study. The vocabulary strategies of identifying and looking up unfamiliar words also reflect strategies that students have been introduced to in the lower-division courses of this language program. In order to examine whether students effectively used the strategy of looking up unfamiliar words (e.g. selecting relevant words or words that cannot be inferred from contextual clues), follow-up questions elicited information about students’ reasons for looking up or not looking up unfamiliar words. While the vocabulary strategy of highlighting or circling useful phrases is not explicitly taught in either of the courses, this item was included in this questionnaire based on previous studies which have examined mining strategies (Plakans, 2009). Grabe (2001) considers planning, or the organization of ideas, to be a significant part of the writing process. Creating an outline and talking with classmates or friends about ideas were chosen for this category because they both elicit information about how students develop ideas, yet represent different domains: cognitive and social. Questionnaire items about the use of language resources (Grabe, 2001) incorporated the specific instructional materials that students received in each course. While drawing on previously heard stories corresponds with the process of using background knowledge (Grabe, 2001), this study considered this type of background knowledge to be a helpful resource available to students. The fifth category was made up of problem-solving strategies that students might have used when monitoring outcomes (Grabe, 2001). The specific items were developed based on the researcher’s experiences and observations as an instructor.
Following the Likert scale items, participants were asked to provide examples of specific vocabulary or phrases from the source texts they used in their writing tasks and to indicate to what extent certain story elements (e.g., plot, characters, structure, etc.) influenced their stories. The final part of the survey targets the perceived learning outcomes of the students’ reading-writing assignment. Students were asked to rate to what extent they had developed certain language abilities and cultural knowledge. The end of the questionnaire consists of four to five open-ended questions. As Dörnyei (2003) notes, open-ended questions can be useful to enrich data and provide a space for respondents to elaborate on any of the items. The survey questions were thus intentionally broad in order to “lead us to identify issues not previously anticipated” (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 47). The length of the questionnaire was two pages and participants were given 15 minutes to complete, both ideal limits for avoiding inaccurate responses due to the fatigue affect (Dörnyei, 2003).

In order to provide a comparative view to the students’ reports, the instructors of these courses were also given similar surveys with instructions to answer as they believe an average student in their class would. The open-ended questions asked instructors to note which reading and/or writing strategies they introduced while working with the texts in class. These responses help to gain a better sense of the instructional context which may influence students’ reading-writing processes.

**Focus Group**

According to Dornyei (2003), an effective strategy to gain further insight into questionnaire responses is to combine data collection methods. A ‘mixed methodology’ design is advantageous because it helps to balance the limitations of questionnaires, such as simplistic responses or
inaccurate responses based on self-deception (Dörnyei, 2003). In order to address these issues, a student focus group was organized in order to explore certain topics in greater depth. Insights from these discussions add much rich data to complement the questionnaires. Students self-selected themselves for participation in this focus group by indicating interest on the consent form. The approximate duration of the focus group was one hour and took place within the same week that the questionnaires were collected so that both the writing task and the questionnaire were recent events. Because the researcher is the instructor of one of the German 103 sections, the students in this class were excluded from participation in the focus group. From the remaining German 103 students, there were no volunteers who took part in the focus group. The focus group was therefore conducted only with German 104 students. During this one-hour session, the investigator asked students to elaborate on topics elicited in the questionnaire and to describe how they worked with the original text while writing their assignment. While questions were formulated by the researcher to inquire about topics of particular interest, participants were encouraged to respond to each other’s comments and the discussion thus developed with little interference or biases from the researcher. The focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher (see Appendix D).

Participants

Students and instructors of intermediate-level German instruction were recruited for this study. Questionnaires were administered in two sections of third-semester German (German 103) and two sections of fourth-semester German (German 104) in spring 2012. The four instructors of these courses also completed questionnaires. Out of the 97 students enrolled in these courses, 86 students participated in the study. The first part of the student questionnaire elicited background
information in order to gain insight into their educational and language experiences. The 41 students in German 103 consisted of 12 freshmen, 10 sophomores, 12 juniors, and 7 seniors. They also varied in terms of majors. The colleges represented by students in this course were: LAS Humanities (12), LAS Sciences (11), Engineering (7), Business (4), Music and Fine Arts (4), Agriculture (1), and Undecided (2). The diversity of fields of study was most likely the result of the language requirements that students must fulfill for their programs’ graduation requirements. While some students entered German 103 based on their scores on a placement test, 34 students in this study had completed the first- and/or second-semester courses in the university’s language program. Most students were therefore familiar with the curriculum’s writing task procedure and how they were evaluated. The majority of students (36) spoke English as their native language, but there were also four bilingual speakers as well as a native speaker of Chinese enrolled in this course.

There were two instructors of German 103, one of which is the researcher for this study. Both instructors had taught in the German department at this university for two years and were introduced to the curricular and pedagogical approaches of this program during a departmental training orientation. They also had experience teaching German in other settings, such as student teaching, immersion language camps, and tutoring. The instructors therefore had very similar profiles in terms of teaching experience and their instruction was standardized by common curricular learning objectives and assessments.

German 104 was made up of a similar student composition. Out of the 45 students in these sections, 25 students had completed the previous three courses in the language sequence. Four had taken two previous courses and 18 entered into this sequence in the third semester. For two students, German 104 was their first German course at this university. Similar to German
103 participants, the students in German 104 represented various levels and fields of study. Across the two courses, there were 7 freshmen, 10 sophomores, 9 juniors, 17 seniors, 1 graduate student, and 1 non-degree student. Students reported a variety of fields of study as well: LAS Humanities (20), LAS Sciences (10), Business (7), Engineering (3), Fine Arts (1), and Undecided (1). Only one student indicated German as her major. English was the common native language amongst the majority of the students (36). Four students were native speakers of Chinese and the other language backgrounds represented in these classes were: Gujarati, French, English/Italian, Tagalog, and Urdu.

The instructors of these courses were both experienced language teachers, having taught several courses in the German department and in different instructional settings. They had both been instructors of German 104 in the past and were therefore very familiar with the content and objectives of this course. Like the instructors in German 103, these two instructors prepared their lessons based on common learning objectives and met regularly to discuss upcoming units and pedagogical goals.

Data Analysis

Data collected through the student and instructor questionnaires were analyzed in two ways. In order to detect certain trends or preferences amongst students, the numerical data from the Likert scales were calculated using frequency counts. Only data from the two sections of each course (i.e., German 103 and German 104) were combined in the analysis; data from the two courses remained separate due to variation in the instructional contexts. The frequency counts allow one to comment on what participants report about students’ engagement with source texts while writing. The data from the open-ended questions on the questionnaire were analyzed through
qualitative means in order to help illustrate and make sense of the numerical data (Dörnyei, 2003). While reviewing this portion of the questionnaire, these responses were categorized according to the reoccurring themes that emerge. Responses were cited directly to emphasize the importance of the students’ voices in this study. The instructor questionnaires that ask how they believe an average student works with a source text provide a comparative view to the students’ responses. This comparison of perceptions as well as the instructors’ reflections on the reading and writing strategies used in instruction can lead to suggestions for strengthening the reading-for-writing process in class.

As a second phase of this study, a focus group made up of German 104 students was conducted. This “two-phase design” where quantitative and qualitative measures are combined has been recommended by several researchers (Creswell, 1994; Dörnyei, 2003; Gillham 2000) as a way of getting deeper insight into what the numerical data and responses mean. As with the open-ended responses, the data collected from this focus group were categorized according to major themes related to the study. Insights gained from the focus group were integrated into the discussion of the main research questions as direct quotations. According to Hatch (2002), one major benefit of presenting data in this way is that the reader is able to hear the participants’ contributions directly (as cited in Crane, Sadler, Ha, & Ojiambbo, 2013).
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The following section reports on how students and instructors responded to the Likert scale items on the questionnaire. The main topics of interest are the reading and writing strategies that students utilized while completing their integrated reading-writing task and the perceived learning outcomes of this assignment. The findings from the instructor questionnaires are also compared with the trends found in the student data in order to provide a fuller picture of the writing-for-reading process.

Reading and Writing Strategies

In order to understand how students engage with a source text when composing a corresponding writing task, 15 strategies were listed on the questionnaires, and students were asked to evaluate to what extent they utilized these strategies during the writing process. As noted in the methods section, the strategies elicited in the questionnaire can be categorized into five groups: reading strategies, vocabulary strategies, planning strategies, utilization of resources, and problem-solving strategies. To account for the different instructional contexts in the two German classes, the findings from German 103 students are examined first, followed by the reports from the German 104 students.

German 103 Reading Strategies

The reading strategies elicited in the German 103 questionnaire consist of: rereading the texts (Daumenlutscher and Nuckelconny) thoroughly, scanning the text for important information, and consulting the task sheet and/or grading rubric that outlined the assignment in German. The frequency counts and percentages of these strategies are represented in Table 2.
Table 2
Reading Strategies Reported by German 103 Students
(n=41)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Strategies</th>
<th>Yes, to a great extent</th>
<th>Yes, somewhat</th>
<th>No, not much</th>
<th>No, not at all</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rereading source texts</td>
<td>6 (14.6%)</td>
<td>20 (48.8%)</td>
<td>11 (26.8%)</td>
<td>4 (9.8%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scanning for specific information</td>
<td>11 (26.8%)</td>
<td>24 (58.5%)</td>
<td>4 (9.8%)</td>
<td>2 (4.9%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting task sheet and/or grading rubric</td>
<td>20 (48.8%)</td>
<td>18 (43.9%)</td>
<td>2 (4.9%)</td>
<td>1 (2.4%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table shows, approximately half of the students (48.8%) reported that they reread the original text to some extent and 14.6% did this to a great extent. Few students (9.8%) said they did not reread the texts at all. In comparison to rereading the stories, even more students reported scanning the texts for specific information while composing their writing tasks; 26.8% did this to a great extent and 58.5% to some extent. The reading strategy that students utilized the most in this process was consulting the task sheets and/or grading rubric. While approximately three-fourths of the students reread or scanned the texts to a great extent or somewhat, most students (92.7%) consulted the task sheet and/or grading rubric to those same extents. Additionally, out of the 15 students who did not reread the texts much or at all, 9 of them reported reviewing the task sheet to a great extent and the other 6 did this somewhat.

Studies on L2 writing similarly show that writing prompts play a central role in the writing process for beginning L2 writers. For example, Way, Joiner, & Seaman (2000) investigated the effects of prompts on the writing of novice L2 learners of French and found that bare prompts (i.e., simple explanation of the task in English) resulted in the poorest writing in terms of fluency, syntactic complexity, accuracy, and overall text quality compared with vocabulary prompts (i.e., prompt including a list of relevant words) and prose models (i.e., prompt with a model letter). While the present study does not look at the quality of students’
writing, it does confirm how influential task guidelines are in the writing process and the importance of the prompt should be considered when designing prompts.

**German 104 Reading Strategies**

Despite the significant difference in text type and page length of the texts used in German 103 and 104, students in German 104 reported similar use of reading strategies. Table 3 shows to what extent students used these strategies while working with the novel *Maikäfer, flieg!*

Table 3
Reading Strategies Reported by German 104 Students
n=45

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Strategies</th>
<th>Yes, to a great extent</th>
<th>Yes, somewhat</th>
<th>No, not much</th>
<th>No, not at all</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rereading source texts</td>
<td>6 (13.3%)</td>
<td>24 (53.3%)</td>
<td>11 (24.4%)</td>
<td>4 (8.9%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scanning for specific information</td>
<td>18 (40%)</td>
<td>23 (51.1%)</td>
<td>3 (6.7%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting task sheet and/or grading rubric</td>
<td>16 (35.6%)</td>
<td>16 (35.6%)</td>
<td>12 (26.7%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A little over half of the students (53.3%) reported that they reread *Maikäfer, flieg! to some extent* and 13.3% said they did this *to a great extent*. By going back to the source text and rereading with a specific purpose in mind, this strategy may have helped clarify certain passages for students’ story continuations (Leki, 1993). In terms of scanning for specific information, the majority of students (91.1%) indicated that they scanned *Maikäfer, flieg! to a great extent or somewhat*. Scanning for relevant information was most likely an important strategy for students to utilize during this task as they had to make sure that their continuation developed coherently, that they did not contradict any facts that were presented in the story, and that the characters maintained their roles and personalities. It is also interesting to note that 28.9% of German 104 students reported *not* using the task sheet much or *at all*, which differs significantly from the 7.3% amongst the German 103 students. This could be a result of increased familiarity with the
general structure of writing tasks in the language program or more class time spent on explaining this task.²

German 103 Vocabulary Strategies

Three items in the German 103 questionnaire asked students to assess to what extent they drew on specific vocabulary strategies to assist in their reading or writing. These strategies included: highlighting or circling useful phrases from the text, identifying unfamiliar words, and looking up unfamiliar words from the story. To clarify, highlighting or circling useful phrases would involve students recognizing phrases that they may have already been familiar with and found potentially useful in their own stories. Thus, searching for useful phrases can be considered a mining strategy because students selected information from a text for a specific purpose. Table 4 represents the students’ responses to these three items.

Table 4
Vocabulary Strategies Reported by German 103 Students
n=41

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Strategies</th>
<th>Yes, to a great extent</th>
<th>Yes, somewhat</th>
<th>No, not much</th>
<th>No, not at all</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highlighting or circling useful phrases</td>
<td>4 (9.8%)</td>
<td>6 (14.6%)</td>
<td>17 (41.5%)</td>
<td>14 (34.2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying unfamiliar vocabulary words</td>
<td>17 (41.5%)</td>
<td>18 (43.9%)</td>
<td>6 (14.6%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking up unfamiliar words</td>
<td>22 (53.7%)</td>
<td>14 (34.2%)</td>
<td>5 (12.2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated on the table, the vocabulary strategy that more than half of the students (53.7%) used to a great extent was looking up unfamiliar words from the text. An additional 34.2% looked up new words to some extent. In terms of identifying unfamiliar vocabulary words, 41.5% did this to a great extent and 43.9% to some extent. In a follow-up question, when asked which explanation best describes their main reason for deciding which words to look up, most students (68%) reported that they did so when they did not understand the sentence and could therefore

² Both 103 instructors indicated that they had little time to explain the writing task in class, and consequently advised students to refer to the task sheet.
not infer the meaning of the word from context. 22.7% looked vocabulary up when they were curious about a particular word, and the remaining students (9.3%) looked words up when they thought the words could be useful in their story. In the cases where they did not look up unfamiliar words, the majority of students (89.5%) were able to understand these words from contextual clues. These results show that students are demonstrating characteristics of good readers, as reflected in research on dictionary use that shows strong L2 writers are selective about which words they look up when reading (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009). Compared to identifying and/or looking up unfamiliar words, the percentage of students who highlighted or circled useful phrases from the text to some extent was much lower at 14.6%, and only 9.8% used this mining strategy to a great extent. These responses are consistent with Plakans (2009) findings that lower-level L2 writers used little to no mining strategies while composing an integrated reading-writing task. It may therefore be beneficial to explicitly teach strategies that allow students to recognize key vocabulary or common phrases in order to strengthen the reading-writing connection.

**German 104 Vocabulary Strategies**

German 104 students responded similarly to the German 103 students in the questionnaire items that targeted new vocabulary. Students were asked to what extent they identified useful phrases and looked up unfamiliar words from the text. Students’ responses to these two items are shown in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Strategies</th>
<th>Yes, to a great extent</th>
<th>Yes, somewhat</th>
<th>No, not much</th>
<th>No, not at all</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifying unfamiliar vocabulary words</td>
<td>8 (17.8%)</td>
<td>29 (64.4%)</td>
<td>6 (13.3%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking up unfamiliar words</td>
<td>21 (46.7%)</td>
<td>15 (33.3%)</td>
<td>8 (17.8%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of students reported that they identified unfamiliar phrases or vocabulary words from the text to some extent (64.4%) or to a great extent (17.8%). Almost half of the students (46.7%) looked up unfamiliar words from the text to a great extent and a third (33.3%) utilized this strategy to some extent. Like German 103 students, when students reported on which words they decided to look up, the main reason (64.9%) for looking up a word was that they did not understand the sentence, and if they decided not to look it up, the majority of students (77.8%) indicated that they understood the word from contextual clues. One significant difference between the students in these two levels is that German 104 students appeared to attend more to the relevance of words. Of the German 103 students, 9.1% of students said they looked up words because they thought they would be useful compared with 16.7% of German 104 students who chose this reason. Additionally, only 5.3% of German 103 students chose not to look up a word if it seemed irrelevant, whereas 22.2% of students in German 104 answered in this way. While this may have to do with the nature of the tasks (parody vs. story continuation), it may also indicate students’ language development in distinguishing the relative importance of words or phrases for their reading and writing purposes. These results are consistent with Plakan’s (2009) findings that mid-level learners’ usage of mining skills in an integrated reading-writing task was much higher than that of low-level learners (19.6% of mid-level used mining strategies compared with 3.8% of low-level students).

**German 103 Planning Process**

To elicit information about student’s planning process, two items addressed planning strategies, such as creating an outline and discussing ideas with friends or classmates. The results of these items are shown in Table 6. Interestingly, few students (7.3%) noted that they had made an outline for the task to a great extent, whereas over half (51.2%) said that they did not do this at
Similarly, the majority of students (58.5%) reported that they did not talk to classmates or friends about the task while planning.

Table 6
Planning Strategies Reported by German 103 Students
n=41

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Strategies</th>
<th>Yes, to a great extent</th>
<th>Yes, somewhat</th>
<th>No, not much</th>
<th>No, not at all</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating an outline</td>
<td>3 (7.3%)</td>
<td>10 (24.4%)</td>
<td>7 (17.1%)</td>
<td>21 (51.2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to classmates or friends about ideas</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>8 (19.5%)</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
<td>24 (58.5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**German 104 Planning Process**

German 104 students’ planning processes were quite similar to those noted in the German 103 responses. As illustrated in Table 7, more than half of the German 104 students reported that they did not create an outline or talk to classmates or friends about ideas. Although the story continuation has an added level of complexity because it needs to coherently follow the source text, very few students indicated that they had planned to a great extent.

Table 7
Planning Strategies Reported by German 104 Students
n=45

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Strategies</th>
<th>Yes, to a great extent</th>
<th>Yes, somewhat</th>
<th>No, not much</th>
<th>No, not at all</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating an outline</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td>8 (17.8%)</td>
<td>9 (20.0%)</td>
<td>26 (57.8%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to classmates or friends about ideas</td>
<td>3 (6.7%)</td>
<td>10 (22.2%)</td>
<td>6 (13.3%)</td>
<td>26 (57.8%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The absence of planning across both levels may be due to the narrative text type called for in the assignment, which may not have necessitated organizing ideas to the extent that other genres would. However, L2 studies investigating planning effects (e.g., Ellis & Yuan, 2004) have demonstrated benefits from planning on the fluency and complexity of L2 narrative writing.

While the writing prompts in Ellis & Yuan (2004) were not based on a source text, their findings suggest that instructors may wish to introduce explicit planning stages for the writing tasks in
instruction. Further research is needed to learn more about the impact planning can have in narrative reading-writing tasks.

German 103 Use of Resources

To learn more about what resources students used when completing the integrated reading-writing task, there were four questionnaire items that tapped into the use of specific textual resources: recalling class discussions, incorporating useful phrases from the text into the story, incorporating the short writing assignment (Kurzschreiben) into the story, and drawing on other, past stories heard to develop a storyline. As shown in Table 8, all of these resources were used by the majority of students somewhat or to a great extent with the exception of incorporating the Kurzschreiben. More than half of the students (56%) responded that they did not integrate their short writing assignment into the writing task at all, and only 7.3% of students used these texts in their story to a great extent. These results are surprising given that the intention of this shorter task is to help students develop ideas for their longer writing assignment. In order to foster students’ planning process and consequently their writing, it is important to consider which prompt types for Kurzschreiben could be easily and effectively integrated into students’ writing tasks.

Table 8
Use of Resources Reported by German 103 Students
n=41

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Yes, to a great extent</th>
<th>Yes, somewhat</th>
<th>No, not much</th>
<th>No, not at all</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class discussions</td>
<td>11 (26.8%)</td>
<td>15 (36.6%)</td>
<td>10 (24.4%)</td>
<td>3 (7.3%)</td>
<td>2 (4.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporation of useful phrases and/or vocab</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
<td>22 (53.7%)</td>
<td>8 (19.5%)</td>
<td>1 (2.4%)</td>
<td>1 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporation of Kurzschreiben Quiz</td>
<td>3 (7.3%)</td>
<td>5 (12.2%)</td>
<td>10 (24.4%)</td>
<td>23 (56.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing on stories heard in the past</td>
<td>7 (17.1%)</td>
<td>21 (51.2%)</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
<td>4 (9.8%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
German 104 Utilization of Resources

Due to the length of and the complexity of the material in the German 104 unit, a number of instructional materials from the unit were targeted in the questionnaire: recalling class discussions, considering online homework, incorporating useful phrases and/or vocabulary into the story, using discourse markers from a worksheet on describing individuals (Personen beschreiben), using additional vocabulary from worksheets such as a semantic field about war, and drawing on other stories to develop the story continuation.

Table 9 provides an overview of the extent to which these five resources were used. Drawing on class discussions and incorporating useful phrases or vocabulary words appear to be the most helpful resources based on student reports (80% drew on class discussions to a great extent or somewhat and 91% incorporated useful phrases or vocabulary words to a great extent or somewhat). Students’ responses varied in terms of the extent to which they used phrases or vocabulary from the worksheets. The majority of students also stated that they did not use online homework submissions much (37.8%) or at all (20%) to help them on the writing task. A possible reason why students did not draw on these homework postings was described by one student during the focus group. This student found questions such as “Who is your favorite character and why?” to be too subjective to help him develop more complex ideas for his storyline. The student suggested that a question which required students to go back to the text would have been more helpful. The example he provided was: “What did the Grandfather do that made Christl (the main character) like him so much?” This insight offers considerations for how to develop homework assignments to better prepare students to engage in reading-writing tasks.
Table 9
Use of Resources Reported by German 104 Students
n=45

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Yes, to a great extent</th>
<th>Yes, somewhat</th>
<th>No, not much</th>
<th>No, not at all</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class discussions</td>
<td>16 (35.6%)</td>
<td>20 (44.4%)</td>
<td>7 (15.6%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online homework submissions</td>
<td>5 (11.1%)</td>
<td>10 (22.2%)</td>
<td>17 (37.8%)</td>
<td>9 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (8.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporation of useful phrases and/or vocab</td>
<td>13 (28.9%)</td>
<td>28 (62.2%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrases from the Personen beschreiben worksheet</td>
<td>4 (8.9%)</td>
<td>14 (31.1%)</td>
<td>16 (35.6%)</td>
<td>5 (11.1%)</td>
<td>6 (13.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary from other worksheets</td>
<td>4 (8.9%)</td>
<td>20 (44.4%)</td>
<td>14 (31.1%)</td>
<td>5 (11.1%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing from stories heard in the past</td>
<td>7 (15.6%)</td>
<td>20 (27.8%)</td>
<td>3 (18.9%)</td>
<td>12 (46.7%)</td>
<td>3 (1.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*German 103 Problem Solving*

Three items on the German 103 questionnaire addressed possible problem-solving strategies so as to understand what students did when they encountered difficulties in writing, such as running out of ideas. Students were asked to what extent they: consulted the instructor for help, referred back to the text(s), or talked to friends or classmates for help. The results are represented in Table 10. More than half of the students (61%) reported that they did not consult the instructor at all nor did they talk to friends or classmates for help (58.5%). It is noteworthy, however, that students were twice as likely to discuss their story with peers (26.8% to a great or some extent) than consult the instructor (12.2% to a great or some extent). Even though the number of students who spoke with classmates or friends is not remarkably high, it shows that students are more likely to turn to their peers with questions than to the instructor, a finding that has interesting implications for further research in the conceptualization of writing as a social activity (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996; Storch, 2005).
Table 10
Problem Solving Strategies Reported by German 103 Students
n=41

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem-Solving Strategies</th>
<th>Yes, to a great extent</th>
<th>Yes, somewhat</th>
<th>No, not much</th>
<th>No, not at all</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consulting instructor for help</td>
<td>2 (4.9%)</td>
<td>3 (7.3%)</td>
<td>11 (26.8%)</td>
<td>25 (61%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring back to the text(s)</td>
<td>6 (14.6%)</td>
<td>12 (29.3%)</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
<td>13 (31.7%)</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to classmates or friends</td>
<td>1 (2.4%)</td>
<td>10 (24.4%)</td>
<td>5 (12.2%)</td>
<td>24 (58.5%)</td>
<td>1 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

German 104 Problem Solving

There were two items on the German 104 questionnaire that elicited information about problem-solving strategies: consulting the instructor for help and referring back to the text. Table 11 illustrates the results of these items. If problems occurred during the writing process, the majority of students (71.1%) did not consult the instructor for help at all. Instead, the majority of students (57.8%) referred back to the text to a great extent or to some extent when they ran into a problem. This percentage is considerably higher than the number of German 103 students (43.9%) who utilized this strategy somewhat or to a great extent. While there may be many factors that account for this difference, such as proficiency levels or text complexity, these results also hint at the influence that task types have on the reading-writing connection. A question for further research therefore is to investigate which task types encourage students to work the closest with a source text.

Table 11
Problem-Solving Strategies Reported by German 104 Students
n=45

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem-Solving Strategies</th>
<th>Yes, to a great extent</th>
<th>Yes, somewhat</th>
<th>No, not much</th>
<th>No, not at all</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consulting instructor for help</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (8.9%)</td>
<td>9 (20%)</td>
<td>32 (71.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring back to the text(s)</td>
<td>5 (11.1%)</td>
<td>21 (46.7%)</td>
<td>8 (17.8%)</td>
<td>10 (22.2%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning Outcomes

The last section of the questionnaire focuses on students’ perceived learning outcomes. Students were asked to assess the extent to which they developed certain abilities or content knowledge as a result of this integrated reading-writing task.

German 103 Learning Outcomes

Five questionnaire items targeted students’ learning outcomes of the content and language forms emphasized in this unit. In response to the extent to which their vocabulary related to the topics of childhood and youth expanded, 26.8% of the German 103 students responded with yes, to a great extent and 58.5% noted yes, somewhat. Because it was necessary for students to apply the simple past to narrate their stories, one questionnaire item evaluated this grammatical feature. The majority of the students (63.4%) reported feeling confident using the simple past tense in a story, a point echoed in student responses to the open-ended questions on learning outcomes. As stated in the writing prompt, students were to make sure that the behavior of the child was perceived negatively by society. When asked how well students were able to include a moral that represented the values of their society, most of the students reported that they did this either to a great extent (46.3%) or somewhat (46.3%). In order to explore whether writing tasks can encourage students to reconsider the meaning or the content of the reading, they were asked to what extent their initial interpretation of the texts developed as they wrote. Half of the students (50%) reported that their interpretation did not develop much and 24.4% reported that their interpretation developed somewhat. This finding may be explained by the fact that these stories were supported with visuals on every page, which clarified the main storyline. One of the questionnaire items sought to tap into students’ affective responses towards this task. In terms of the extent to which students enjoyed working with these texts, almost half of the students
indicated that they enjoyed these texts somewhat and 29.3% said they did to a great extent. Table 12 represents these responses.

Table 12
Learning Outcomes Reported by German 103 Students
n=41

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By the end of my writing task,</th>
<th>Yes, to a great extent</th>
<th>Yes, somewhat</th>
<th>No, not much</th>
<th>No, not at all</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My vocabulary related to childhood and youth has expanded.</td>
<td>11 (26.8%)</td>
<td>24 (58.5%)</td>
<td>4 (9.8%)</td>
<td>1 (2.4%)</td>
<td>1 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident using the simple past in a story.</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
<td>26 (63.4%)</td>
<td>5 (12.2%)</td>
<td>1 (2.4%)</td>
<td>1 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The moral of my story conveys a message about certain societal values.</td>
<td>19 (46.3%)</td>
<td>19 (46.3%)</td>
<td>2 (4.9%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My initial interpretation of the plot and/or characters changed as I wrote.</td>
<td>5 (12.2%)</td>
<td>10 (24.4%)</td>
<td>21 (51.2%)</td>
<td>3 (7.3%)</td>
<td>1 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed working with these texts.</td>
<td>12 (29.3%)</td>
<td>19 (46.3%)</td>
<td>7 (17.1%)</td>
<td>2 (4.9%)</td>
<td>1 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

German 104 Learning Outcomes

Six questionnaire items asked students to assess their learning outcomes in terms of content knowledge and elicited language forms. As shown in Table 13, the majority of students responded that they achieved these learning outcomes somewhat for five of the six categories. 73.3% of the students reported that their vocabulary related to war and the post-war period had somewhat expanded as a result of the reading-writing task. 51.1% of the students felt that they were able to produce complex sentences to some extent and 35.5% felt that they could do this to a great extent. Approximately half of the students (55.6%) indicated that their understanding of the historical context of World War II developed to some extent. Similarly, 53.5% felt somewhat confident that their new character fit into the story well. Over half of the students (53.5%) also enjoyed reading and working with this text to some extent. The only item where the majority of students (46.7%) reported that they did not achieve a certain learning outcome was in response to
whether their initial interpretation of the plot and/or characters changed as they wrote. Only 22.2% reported that their interpretation changed somewhat, 11.1% to a great extent, 15.6% not at all, and 4.4% were unsure. While this text was more challenging than the text used in German 103 given the lexical and linguistic complexity, one possible reason why the students reported their interpretations did not change could be a result of their comfort level with the main events and characters in the book prior to writing. Students may have developed an overall understanding of these elements by means of class discussions and materials.

Table 13
Learning Outcomes Reported by German 104 Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By the end of my writing task,</th>
<th>Yes, to a great extent</th>
<th>Yes, somewhat</th>
<th>No, not much</th>
<th>No, not at all</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My vocabulary related to war and the post-war period has expanded.</td>
<td>8 (17.5%)</td>
<td>33 (73.3%)</td>
<td>3 (6.7%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to produce complex sentences (e.g., relative clauses).</td>
<td>16 (35.6%)</td>
<td>23 (51.1%)</td>
<td>5 (11.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I developed an understanding of the historical context of World War II.</td>
<td>11 (24.4%)</td>
<td>25 (55.6%)</td>
<td>6 (13.3%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident that my new character fits into the story well.</td>
<td>17 (37.8%)</td>
<td>24 (53.3%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My initial interpretation of the plot and/or characters changed as I wrote.</td>
<td>5 (11.1%)</td>
<td>10 (22.2%)</td>
<td>21 (46.7%)</td>
<td>7 (15.6%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed reading and working with this text.</td>
<td>8 (17.8%)</td>
<td>24 (53.3%)</td>
<td>10 (22.2%)</td>
<td>3 (6.7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Instructor Perceptions_

In order to provide a comparative view to how students engage with source texts during a writing task, instructors from both courses were also given questionnaires. They were asked to rate the same items that were on the student questionnaire according to what they believed an average student in their class did while writing. While the amount of data is limited, this comparison allows for a fuller understanding of students’ reading-writing processes.
German 103 Instructors

The instructors completed a similar questionnaire and were asked to answer the Likert scale items as an average student in their class would. The two instructors of German 103 agreed with each other on seven out of the 15 items assessing which reading and writing strategies they believed students used. For the other items, the range of disagreement was no more than one gradation. When compared to the students, at least one of the instructors matched how the majority of students responded for 13 of the items. The two items which produced a slight discrepancy between instructor and student perceptions were in regard to the planning process, i.e., creating an outline and talking to classmates or friends about ideas for their story. Both instructors believed that an average student would respond no, not much to creating an outline, whereas an overwhelming majority of students reported that they did not engage in this planning strategy at all. This difference in perception is noteworthy as it highlights the assumption that many educators may hold about the way students prepare for a writing task based on “the essential characteristics of effective composing” (Tierney & Pearson, 1983, p. 2). Although neither instructor advised students to develop an outline to organize this idea, it seems that they believed students would at least write out some main points before starting to write. Bearing the previous discussion of the positive effects of planning on L2 narrative writing in mind, it is important to recognize the mismatch between student and instructor perceptions on this topic, so that steps can be taken to implement the planning process as part of reading-writing tasks (Ellis & Yuan, 2004).

Additionally, while the majority of students across the two sections (58.5%) responded that they did not discuss ideas for the story at all with friends or classmates, one instructor thought they would do this somewhat and the other instructor was not sure. What is interesting
about this result is that in the course of the instructor who thought that students would talk somewhat to friends or classmates, many of the students from this section (38.4%) indeed answered that they consulted their peers to some extent. This speaks to the role class dynamics may play in the learning process as well as to the idiosyncrasies of students from section to section and level to level.

*German 104 Instructors*

While there were more differences between the two German 104 instructors in terms of how they believe an average student would respond to the reading and writing strategies, they did agree on four of the 15 items. Six of their responses fell within the range one gradation, but they had quite different perceptions on the remaining five items. The items which resulted in the most disagreement between instructors included: talking to classmates about ideas, using online homework as a resource, drawing on stories heard in the past to develop a storyline, consulting the instructor for help, and referring back to the texts if students ran out of ideas. In terms of problem-solving strategies, one instructor reported that an average student would not consult the instructor for help or refer back to the text if they ran out of ideas during the writing process. Conversely, the other instructor believed that students engaged in these strategies to a great extent. These differences in instructor perceptions may be a result of their varying teaching styles. One instructor indicated that she emphasized global reading strategies, such as reading for the gist and understanding the main themes. The other instructor focused on the usefulness of skimming the text as well, but also taught word-level strategies such as identifying key words and breaking down complex sentences and compound words. When comparing the student and instructor questionnaires, at least one of the instructors’ responses matched how the majority of students answered in 11 of the 15 items. Additionally, there were few significant differences
between their answers. The corresponding perceptions between students and instructors in German 104 could have to do with the length of this unit. Because this unit spanned over four weeks during which they worked intensively with this text in class, there may have been more time for explicit instruction about how to approach the reading and writing task.

One significant difference between student and instructor perceptions appears in the learning outcomes section. When asked if students enjoyed reading and working with the source text, one instructor believed that students did *not* enjoy the texts *much* and the other, based on quiz answers, thought they did *not* enjoy working with the text *at all*. Half of the students on the other hand indicated that they *somewhat* enjoyed working with the text. This comparison brings up intriguing questions about what makes a text enjoyable or rewarding to students and how instructors can access this information. The question of what students did or did not enjoy about these texts will be further explored in the following section.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This section discusses the perceptions of the writing-for-reading process in greater detail by looking at the major themes that emerged in the results. The discussion is organized around the research questions of this study and incorporates responses from the open-ended questions on the questionnaire, as well as those from the focus group.

Research Question 1:

What reading strategies do learners utilize while completing a reading-writing activity and do these strategies affect students’ overall comprehension of the text sources?

The majority of students in both courses reported that they reread and/or scanned the original text. Many students also reviewed the task sheet somewhat or to a great extent while they were writing. In order to understand if these strategies affected students’ overall understanding of the texts, an open-ended question was posed that asked students to report any “Aha!” moments as they were writing their own stories. The majority of German 103 students simply responded “no,” though some elaborated on their answer by explaining why their interpretation did not change much:

“No I did not, because I did not know we were supposed to use those short stories when writing out own modern day fairy tale.”

“No, beyond skimming through the stories again, I did not use them for this assignment.”

“No, I understood the other texts before beginning my story.”

These responses provide a variety of reasons as to why some students might not have worked closely with the texts during the writing process or why their initial interpretation of the texts did not change. It is particularly surprising that a few students seemed unaware of the major requirement of drawing from Daumenlutscher or Nuckelconny. This comment suggests the need
to strengthen the reading-and-writing connection in instruction. Although the goals were explicitly stated on the task sheet and most of the students consulted this document, students may have not comprehended certain points as it was written in German. It may therefore be helpful for students to see models of a parody written by the instructor or other students in order to recognize how the source texts can inform their own writing.

German 103 students who answered “yes” to the question about “Aha!” moments (11) brought up a number of interesting points that illustrate how an integrated reading-and-writing task can support reading comprehension as well as evoke other learning moments. While their responses are diverse, a few prevalent themes emerge. Several students suggested that their understanding of certain grammatical forms or words developed as a result of creating a story based on source texts. Examples representative of this theme are:

“Yes, I never could figure out what “weg” and “denn” meant until I reread some of the class texts for the construction of my story.”

“I have a much better idea of when to use wann, wenn, and als when I create my own context for the sentences.”

These comments support Blanton’s (1993) claim that “we don’t know what we’ve read until we begin to work with it by talking and writing about it” (p. 241). From this perspective, the 103 writing task likely provided a space for students to practice relevant lexico-grammatical forms in their own context. Through this contextualized activity, students were able to look back at the texts and find patterns that seemed to help them both in their writing and in clarifying parts of the stories. The writing task not only served as a potentially motivating context for students, but also allowed them to look back at the source texts as “readers/writers” (Zamel, 1992; Hirvela 2004). By becoming the authors of a story written in the same style as Daumenlutscher or Nuckelconny, learners may have become more aware of certain aspects of the stories:
“I understood why the author phrases things a certain way and the verb conjugations became more clear.”

“I had a few [Aha! Moments] when I went back to reread Daumenlutscher – I understood the story much better after having read it on my own.”

Zamel (1992) asserts that writing “helps [readers/writers] to understand how and why texts are written, gives these learners insights into the goals, constraints, and concerns of the authors, insights which they apply to their reading” (p. 469). In the case of the German 103 students, these insights seem to be mostly about sentence-level features pertaining to phrasing and verb conjugations. Although students may have approached parts of the text using bottom-up strategies, through this approach they were able to decode elements considered crucial for understanding the larger message of the written stories. Furthermore, the fact that students felt that they were able to unravel the phrasing of these poetically written texts is a significant development for intermediate-level learners.

German 104 students similarly described how reading strategies impacted their overall comprehension of the source text as well as their writing tasks. Several reasons as to why it was necessary for students to refer back to the story were brought up by students during the focus group. Rereading the story allowed one student to “pick out all the things that [she] wanted to somehow bring into the continuation.” Another student in the focus group further pointed out that overlooking a few key words during the initial reading could significantly alter the meaning of the text. On the questionnaire, when asked whether they encountered any “Aha!” moments about the text while writing their story, one student described how important rereading a scene was in order for his continuation to make sense:

“I had based my extension of Herr Forstrat’s house, and Christl and Gerald going back to explore and pillage it. During a rereading of one scene, I understood a line that I must have missed—that the house was nearly empty the first time they went.”
Such small details can have a large impact on the continuations that the students create, and for this reason it seems that many students found it necessary to go back and clarify the meaning of passages that are crucial to their story. Moreover, it is impressive that intermediate L2 learners can already recognize “the tremendous amount of meaning carried in small detail—facts that are keys to the puzzle-problem they are solving” (Gajdusek & vanDommelen, 1993, p. 202). In this particular writing task, the puzzle was to match their story continuation with the events and style of the original text and to introduce a new character into the story. With these guidelines in mind, a better understanding of the characters emerged as a major theme in response to the open-ended question regarding possible changes in interpretations:

“The only ‘aha’ moment that I had was when I incorporated the father’s habit of smoking into my story because it is descriptive of his character.”

“Simply in regards to ideas for creative development of my character.”

“While incorporating the characters into my story, I realized what their roles were more precisely in the original.”

These remarks hint at the recursive nature of reading and writing that learners experience when completing a writing task based on a text source. Upon their first reading, students may have understood the gist of the text, but once the writing task which facilitated purposeful reading was introduced, they seemed to be able to extract more meaning and subtleties out of the text. As one of the students in the focus group mentioned:

“I felt very overwhelmed by the content of the story, qualitatively. But by writing the story, it made me think of things more holistically, and that chronologically I knew what had happened and it made sense to refer back to certain things.”

Thus, this integrated reading-writing task seemed to help many students gain a better general understanding of the story. At the same time, they were able to focus on small details in the source text based on their own writing goals and incorporated those themes into their work. By
responding to a text as a reader/writer through a creative writing assignment, learners may become more attuned to important information they may have missed when they were looking at it from primarily a reader’s perspective.

**Research Question 2:**

**How do students approach new vocabulary, and which vocabulary from the source text(s) did they choose to incorporate into their stories?**

Just as reading and writing are considered interdependent activities, reading comprehension and lexical knowledge can support each other (Grabe & Stoller, 1997). It was therefore of interest in this study to explore the vocabulary that learners developed as a result of this integrated reading-writing task. The results from the questionnaires show that the majority of students at both intermediate levels found it necessary to identify relevant vocabulary and look these words up if they were unable to infer the meaning from context. Yet, in response to a questionnaire item asking what elements of the source text were most influential in the creation of students’ stories, most German 103 students agreed that vocabulary words or phrases were only *somewhat influential* (34.1%) or had *little influence* (24.4%). This is most likely because their stories, which were parodies of the texts read in class, could potentially contain a completely different content depending on their individual ideas. One of the task requirements, however, was that their parodies introduce a child with a bad habit who would learn a lesson after a confrontation with an adult. For that reason, several students reported using adjectives related to behavior and personality. Examples they gave included: *fromm* (pious), *hübsch* (nice), *unhöflich* (impolite), *böse* (mean), and *artig/unartig* (well-behaved/naughty). Some students also integrated the characters from the texts who taught the children a lesson: *der Schneider* (the tailor) and *der Kobold* (the goblin). Verbs pertaining to behavior such as *zuhören* (to listen to), *am Daumen
lutschen (to suck one’s thumb) and abschneiden (to cut off) were also incorporated. This writing task seems to have provided students with a reason to “pick out what they can use to advance their own agenda” (Leki, 1993, p. 24). Being able to identify relevant vocabulary is considered characteristic of good readers and by creating a context that necessitates this strategy, integrated reading-writing tasks can help learners develop selective reading skills.

One noteworthy finding is that the vocabulary words that the students listed are taken from a variety of texts, not just Daumenlutscher and Nuckelanny (see Appendix C). Two other children’s stories, Der standhafte Zinnsoldat and Oh, wie schön ist Panama, had been read during this unit on Childhood and Youth. In their parodies, students reported incorporating words and phrases from both of these texts as well. Particularly striking is the frequent use of the phrase, Es war einmal (once upon a time), which, while typical for fairy tales, was also used in the children’s book Oh, wie schön ist Panama. While the students’ use of vocabulary from different texts could contribute to their lexical development, this hybridity suggests that some students were unable to differentiate between the story types. When exposing students to a variety of texts, it may be beneficial to devote attention to comparing and contrasting features and functions specific to the different genres. This implication aligns well with Byrnes & Kord’s (2002) argument that instruction that combines literature and language learning should include:

an exploration of texts from two perspectives, as embodying the typified features of the genre they represent, and as showing particular, situated forms of social action which are made possible by and within the overall capacities of the genre (p. 52).

For example, in this children’s story unit, students could explore how the absence of a mystical character typical in fairy tales contributes to the overall fear that a story like Struwwelpeter evokes. Having a deeper understanding of the type of genre that they should produce in their
own writing could also lead to a more nuanced comprehension of the source text as students revisit it.

In students’ evaluation of the influence of certain story elements on their own writing, vocabulary was considered much more influential in the writing process by German 104 students than by German 103 students. Nearly one third of German 104 students (31.1%) reported vocabulary to be *quite influential* and just under half of the students (46.7%) noted that words from the story were *somewhat influential*. Again, this difference between the two levels may be a result of the task type. Because German 104 students were continuing a story, they most likely repeated certain words that came up in the source text. With the context of this book set in post-war Austria, much of the vocabulary that students incorporated into their story continuations related to war, such as *Bombardierung* (bombing), *erschossen* (shot at), *die Russen* (the Russians), *Deserteur* (deserter), and *Gewehr* (weapons). This is only a small sample of the words that students reported using in their stories; the complete list of words can be found in Appendix C. This extensive list of vocabulary, along with responses in the questionnaire suggesting that German 104 students often made use of instructional materials, conclusions can be drawn about the effectiveness of providing learners with resources focused on vocabulary development.

Vocabulary became a main discussion point in the focus group consisting of four German 104 students. They commented in depth about the difficulty in comprehending the source text based on their lack of lexical knowledge. Students explained:

“*When I’m reading, I have both the dictionary and Pons.de (online dictionary) there, because there were so many words [that I didn’t know.]*”

“I’d say it [the story] all didn’t make sense the first time I read it, because there were just too many words that I didn’t know.”

Other students discussed how they decided which specific words to look up when there were several unknown in a sentence:
“My general rule of thumb was verbs first, and then nouns that aren’t part of a prepositional phrase, so you’re pretty much just hitting the real basics.”

“I would say it’s basically tackling the sentence from the bottom up. Take away the description and then try to study it and then add the description so that it’s a more painted picture.”

Understanding how learners deal with and make sense of a text during their initial individual readings can have significant implications for how instructors can proceed with a challenging text in class and prepare students for an integrated reading-and-writing task. In order to complete a writing task such as a story continuation, it is helpful for students to have both an overall comprehension of the story as well as be able to interpret it beyond the word level to make inferences about characters and events. In line with this, students mentioned that it would be helpful when discussing comprehension questions to always go back to the text and find support for their answers. There was a general consensus among the learners that it would be beneficial for instruction to focus both on clarifying the general plotline and vocabulary words, as well as interpreting the leitmotifs and ironies that emerge. These types of discussions may help students better understand the intricacies of the text as they revisit the story and support them in the writing process.

**Research Question 3:**

**What are students’ affective responses towards integrated reading-writing tasks?**

The majority of students in both German 103 and 104 reported that they enjoyed working with the texts. To find out more about the affective dimensions of these specific reading-writing tasks, in both the questionnaire and focus group interview, students were encouraged to elaborate on why they did or did not enjoy this assignment. Among the German 103 learners, the creative aspect of the writing task emerged as a major theme. Some responses that illustrate this are:

“I enjoy any activity that allows me to express my creativity.”
“It was fun to do because I was able to create my own story in German, which I think is beneficial since you’re learning to put your thoughts and voice into it.”

“Yes, because I got to write a story that I chose to write about and not just a set topic.”

Overall, students appreciated that they were encouraged to be creative in this assignment. While creativity can be defined in many ways, in this context, students seemed to consider creativity as being able to put their own voice into their work, as best exemplified in the second student quote above. Providing students with an opportunity to explore and express their ideas as authors of writing tasks can have a substantial effect on their continued development as a multilingual individual (Kramsch, 2009).

It is also important to point out, however, that not all students reported enjoying the writing tasks. Some students mentioned that the process can be very stressful and time-consuming. Additionally, these writing tasks proved particularly difficult for those students not interested in creative writing. Urlaub (2011) also recognizes that the use of such activities may be a disadvantage to students who are not comfortable with this genre of writing. Because students who are resistant to creative writing may not experience the potential benefits that this type of writing might have on their reading development. Instructors should therefore continue to tap into their individual students’ perceptions on integrated reading-writing tasks.

Other students who experienced difficulties during this assignment specifically pointed out that the fact that this task was based on a particular source text made it more challenging:

“I did enjoy it, but it was also very stressful to come up with your own story similar, and yet unlike Struwwelpeter and not know how your lack of German understanding will be viewed.”

“I didn’t really enjoy it because the stories didn’t make a lot of sense.”
The tragic fates of the children who disobeyed in these stories were most likely unfamiliar to students, many of whom presumably were exposed to children’s stories with happy endings growing up. While it would be easy for instructors to assume that these texts were straightforward and easy because of the illustrations and short verses, there is a significant amount of cultural knowledge embedded in them. It is important to recognize this cultural disconnect as a challenge and allow time to contextualize the texts as a product of a specific time period. As Kramsch (1993) explains, a text in a foreign language affords learners access to both the thoughts of the author as well as the collective voice of that culture. Discussing the context of the story and building connections to one’s own culture could support the writing-for-reading process, because “particular meanings in a text can only be discovered if readers are ready to engage their own particular response to the text” (Kramsch, 1993, p. 129).

German 104 students had similar responses regarding the affective dimensions of writing a story continuation. Many students mentioned that it was enjoyable because of the creative freedom and more interesting than simple comprehension questions or fill-in-the blank activities. Although some students found the assignment challenging, they also felt proud of their end result. Students who did not enjoy this assignment mentioned the difficulty of both the reading text and writing in German. Several students had neutral opinions about this task. While one student believed that the reading was the most difficult part of the assignment, another felt the exact opposite:

“Reading the book was incredibly difficult, but the writing task was easier. I don’t mind writing in German, but reading is tedious.”

“I enjoyed the reading portion, but not so much the writing because I struggle with that.”

These responses highlight how challenging reading and writing in a L2 can be and that students have varying opinions about the difficulty of these modalities. Scholars who have investigated
L2 learners’ perceptions of reading and writing have also found that students’ attitudes towards these modalities are linked to several factors, such as their previous language experiences and their developing foreign language identity (Prior, 1995; Spack, 1997; Haneda, 2005). These studies highlight the multiple dimensions that are at play when students engage in reading-writing tasks and show the importance of eliciting students’ interpretations of such tasks.

While challenging, students acknowledged that these assignments were enjoyable as they offered an interesting way to support their literacy abilities. Many students felt that they gained valuable language learning experience through these tasks, for example:

“*It was challenging at first because it felt difficult to formulate my idea for the story and to organize words in German. After reading through the text for a second time, and writing out a draft, I felt more confident. And I felt successful after accomplishing the writing task.*”

“I enjoyed the fact that we were urged to be creative in telling a story. I feel it’s an important part in language development.”

Another student in the focus group found “*the creative aspect of the story instead of some sort of structured homework assignment*” to be an especially enjoyable component of the task:

“You’re able to draw from whatever character you want and create your own story, which is very nice, very free, but still incorporate all the different things that we’ve learned: relative clauses, other vocabulary...It was good.”

Some instructors may be hesitant to utilize creative writing assignments as a follow-up to a reading, assuming that such tasks are too open or that students might be more focused on the content of their stories than on the language focus. Student responses suggest, however, that many learners appreciate practicing different forms in a meaningful context. Moreover, it seems that student’s creativity is not stifled by the requirement of specific grammatical forms, and in fact students report that they are able to use what they have learned to express complex thoughts.
or ideas in their writing. This theme will become even more prevalent in the following discussion concerning learning outcomes.

**Research Question 4:**

**What are the perceived learning outcomes of an integrated reading-writing task?**

As a follow-up to the Likert scale items, in which the majority of students reported that they achieved relatively high learning outcomes by the end of this assignment, a very broad, open-ended question was included on the questionnaire to explore what students regarded as their major learning moment. A review of the German 103 responses shows, perhaps surprisingly, that over half of the students mentioned the simple past tense as their main learning outcome from the assignment. Students explained:

"I feel that through writing this story, I have become more comfortable with the simple past verbs. Actually having to use these words so often while writing made me think about/understand the verbs."

"I’m now more familiar with the simple past and using it to tell a story."

Because simple past verbs in German are used predominantly in writing, a children’s story provided an appropriate context for students to practice using this form. The student responses indicate that learners carefully attended to the grammatical forms that they needed to complete their creative stories. At the same time, it did not seem that students’ sole aim was to use “the low-level grammar forms in the most accurate way possible,” but rather, their emphasis on the simple past may have been a by-product of a contextualized reading-writing activity that is “meant to trigger a conscious reflection of the discourse value of the sequencing of events” (Frantzen, 2002, p. 150). One student commented on learning both about the simple past as well as an overarching theme of the story:
“I learned to use the simple past tense and how German culture teaches its children morals and values through fear.”

From these reports, one can conclude that creative writing tasks in which students respond to a reading can provide a motivating way for students to use a variety of grammatical forms. A greater familiarity with these forms can potentially lead to increased comprehension of the source text or subsequent readings.

Another learning outcome reported involved students’ assessment of their reading and writing abilities. Responding to the question about what they had learned through this assignment, many students described the difficulties they experienced and the discoveries that they made about themselves as readers/writers:

“I learned the difficulty of writing a coherent narrative, especially in German.”

“I have a very interesting train of thought.”

“That I am remarkably deficient in my apprehension of foreign languages.”

These comments illustrate how students reflect on the experiences with reading-writing tasks. While reading and writing are often performed as solitary activities, Lent (1993) argues that writing can be used as a way of “breaking the silence between [reading a] text and students” (as cited in Hirvela, 2004, p. 99). Additionally, after completing an integrated reading-writing task, providing opportunities for students to reflect on their writing process or the experiences with the assignment may lead to valuable insights for students and instructors alike. Through such discussions or reflections, students may become more aware of the complex work that they are doing in these tasks. Instructors can also help students to recognize the connections between creative writing and the reading skills that they are developing so as to enhance “the intellectual and critical potential” of future assignments (Urlaub, 2011, p.104).
The responses about the learning outcomes of students in German 104 reflect similar themes. When describing what they had learned through this assignment, some students indicated that they expanded their vocabulary, while others described their evaluations of their own stories as well as their L2 writing development. Most German 104 students, however, explained that they now feel more comfortable using structures such as relative clauses and that this allowed them to formulate complex sentences. That so many students elaborated on this grammatical feature was representative of their responses to the Likert scale items on the questionnaire. In that section, the majority of students noted that they were able to effectively produce sentences containing multiple clauses. Conversely, although approximately three-fourths of the students reported on the Likert scale portion that they had developed an understanding of the historical context of World War II, only three students mentioned history as a major learning outcome in the open-ended question about what they had learned. While not representative of students’ perceived learning outcomes, these comments bring up interesting insights into how some students engage with integrated reading-writing tasks:

“I learned about the history of Austria relating to WWII.”

“I learned a lot about the historical context of the story, since I had to look up some things in order to make my story more historically accurate.”

“Not much that I did not already know about the history, but the perception of the language in a primary source was enlightening.”

The focus group elicited additional information on students’ learning outcomes regarding the historical and cultural context of the book. Most students felt that they already had a strong understanding of the events that took place during and after World War II before this course, but they commented that the book offered an interesting mode of learning about history and new perspectives to consider, including for example:
“I definitely learned some stuff in there about Austria in 1945 and afterwards that I didn’t know before, so that was cool to use a story to relay that instead of just sitting in class being lectured at on post-war Austria.”
“I think it was interesting the difference that you saw in what was going on in the countryside versus where the populations centers...”

“My general perspective of [the historical context] also hasn’t much changed, but it was interesting to hear it expressed through this medium and actually, when I say that, I suppose I don’t even mean through a book, I mean in German.”

Because a general understanding of World War II was necessary to comprehend this text, before students began reading this story, class discussions focused on the events that took place at the end of the war and the living conditions during and after this time. As mentioned previously, when integrating literature into language instruction, it is important to reflect on the multiple factors that can make a text challenging. As Carson (1992) posits, reading can be a complex process because it is “bound up in a social, historical, and cultural network” (as cited in Leki, 1993). This literary text in the L2 provides a means for students to expand on this knowledge and acquire new perspectives on what they already know. By continuing a story in post-war Austria, students placed themselves in this setting and made decisions based on this context. Taking on a persona of a character who has experienced events unfamiliar to many students can help make the topics in the text more personal and relevant to them. Creative writing tasks like this therefore form a relationship between the reader and the original narrator and “allow language learners to develop and articulate a nascent critical thinking ability as a result of their interactions with literary texts” (Urlaub, 2011, p. 103).
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The present study has explored how creative writing tasks facilitate literacy development in the L2 and offered pedagogical suggestions of how to strengthen the reading-writing connection. A quantitative and qualitative analysis of student and instructor questionnaires provided insight into participants’ perceptions on the writing-for-reading process and how learners engage with a source text while completing an integrated reading-writing assignment.

Most students reported that during the writing process, they engaged in reading strategies such as rereading the text and scanning for specific information. The purposeful reviewing of these texts may develop learners’ understanding of certain aspects of the text. Additionally, the task type seems to play an important role in what information from the texts students deem relevant. For example, the *Struwwelpeter* parody that German 103 students wrote allowed them much freedom in terms of inventing the characters and their behaviors. They reported, however, that while rereading the texts, they came to better understand certain past tense verbs and German sentence structure. On the other hand, the story continuations of German 104 students necessitated that students focus on the characters and their intentions as well as the series of events to keep their continuation consistent with the source text. In terms of vocabulary strategies, the majority of students reported that they identified and looked up unfamiliar words that they could not infer from the context. Most students, however, did not utilize mining strategies such as marking useful phrases from the text. While students in their fourth semester mined the text more than third-semester students, these findings indicate that L2 learners might profit from explicit instruction on how to make use of this strategy when completing a reading-writing task. While few students engaged in planning strategies such as creating an outline or discussing ideas with others, some of the instructors believed that students would organize their
ideas prior to writing. Recognizing this mismatch between instructor assumptions and how students report actually beginning the writing process has important implications for staging assignments in instruction. Because planning has yielded positive results in L2 narrative writing (Ellis & Yuan, 2004), instructors might consider pre-writing activities, such as outlines, semantic fields, collaborative writing tasks, or individual short writing tasks that would give students the opportunity to plan for their writing tasks. Additionally, it does not appear sufficient to introduce these types of planning activities without explaining the connection to the longer writing task, as was seen in students’ reports indicating that they did not use the short writing task in their stories. Thus, it is important to communicate the intentions of such assignments so that students can take advantage of these resources to develop their literacy abilities.

Based on students’ reports of their experiences of the writing-for-reading process, learners can benefit in many ways when reading and writing are integrated. One learning outcome that students indicated was their vocabulary development. The assignments provided students with the opportunity to learn new words from both the reading and the writing portions. Students not only encountered frequent words repeatedly as they revisited the texts or materials in order to complete the reading-writing task, but they also had to make decisions about what words to look up and which words were considered relevant for their own stories. Many fourth-semester German students perceived vocabulary as a major hindrance to their initial understanding of the text. Because lexical knowledge “undergirds reading skills and promotes literacy development” (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009, p. 291), modeling and explicitly teaching effective vocabulary strategies can help learners focus their attention on the text as a whole. The creative writing tasks based on source texts also provided students with a meaningful context in which they could combine content and language forms. While they reported that developing
grammatical awareness was another major learning outcome, most students enjoyed the creative freedom that these tasks provided. These perspectives are useful for instructors when planning writing tasks. We see that the inclusion of a language focus does not inhibit students’ creativity but rather can serve as a tool for conveying complex ideas. Additionally, allowing students to be creative in their writing does not seem to reduce their attention to the language and content used. Rather, it seems more likely that students become more engaged in their writing when they have more freedom to make some of their own choices that reflect their own specific interests and background knowledge. The enjoyment that students experienced while writing this assignment and the success they felt after completing these challenging tasks should be considered an important part of their learning development. As Hirvela states, “making these early and formative encounters with L2 reading and writing exciting and enjoyable is crucial to the development of L2 literacy skills” (2004, p. 153). The findings of this study therefore suggest that literary texts should not be withheld from language instruction until the advanced levels, because integrated reading and writing tasks can help prepare learners for the demands that they will encounter in upper-level language courses. These tasks encourage students to engage with the source text and provide them with the opportunity to actively participate with and respond to the text. By combining their previous knowledge and creative ideas with the content from the source text, intermediate-level L2 learners are reading and writing as academics do: “They create new texts by weaving what is internal to the self to what is external and creating new perspectives, new insights as they go along” (Blanton, 2002, p. 240).

Limitations and Implications for Further Research

This preliminary study presents interesting findings on student and instructor perceptions of the writing-for-reading process. While the numerical data from the questionnaire allow one to
discover trends among student responses, they cannot be taken to represent students’ actual practices. An ethnographic lens of classroom practices coupled with discourse analysis of L2 learner texts would help to provide a more complete picture of the writing-reading process. Nevertheless, looking to the learner and instructor perceptions of reading and writing provides an important first step in understanding this topic. Replication studies would likely need to consider in the study design issues surrounding comprehension and interpretation of the questionnaire items. In this study, students may have had different understandings of what was meant by categories such as to a great extent, somewhat, not much, and not at all. Additionally, some students might not have consciously utilized certain strategies, which may have led to inaccurate reporting. Methods such as think-aloud protocols (e.g., Flower & Hayes, 1981) or stimulated recall (e.g., Uysal, 2008) that tap into learners’ cognitive processes could be used to gain more introspect into how students engage with a source text while completing a writing task.

This preliminary study contributes to the expanding field of L2 writing research by analyzing student and instructor perceptions in currently understudied contexts, such as FL instruction (e.g., Manchón, 2009). Additionally, the focus on creative writing tasks adds to emerging research that investigates genres beyond academic registers (e.g., Ryshina-Pankova, 2011). The findings of this study stimulate many topics for further research on integrated reading-and-writing tasks. In addition to conducting text analyses of student work as mentioned above, summary recall tasks that ask students to summarize a text orally (e.g., Esmaelli, 2002) is another method that could be used to investigate learners’ actual learning outcomes in terms of text comprehension. One could also examine how specific strategies such as planning affect not only students’ writing but their rereading of the text source, as well. Additionally, investigating the strategies that learners at different instructional levels use (before and after intermediate
levels) when completing an integrated reading-writing (e.g., Plakans, 2009) task could yield interesting results about the development of literacy abilities. Particularly, more research of L2 writing development prior to advanced levels is necessary, as exemplified in this study. Future studies on L2 reading-writing connections should continue to elicit learners’ perceptions and voices, as these insights can inform and enrich instructional practices.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: WRITING TASK PROMPT SHEETS AND GRADING RUBRICS

German 103 Schreibaufgabe (Writing Task) #1: Ein moderner Struwwelpeter

Die Aufgabe (The Task) [30%]
Für die erste Schreibaufgabe schreiben Sie eine moderne Kindergeschichte im Stil von Heinrich Hoffmanns Kinderbuch Struwwelpeter. (Die Geschichte kann auch ein „Anti-Struwwelpeter“ sein!)


Weiteres zum Stil:
• Müssen sich die Wörter reimen (rhyme)? ... Nein. Die Sprache kann sich reimen, aber sie muss nicht.
• Muss die Geschichte Bilder haben? ... Nein. Bilder sind schön, aber nicht obligatorisch für die Aufgabe.

Zum Inhalt (Content) [30%]
In Ihrer Kindergeschichte sollen Sie an folgende Aspekte denken:
(1) Figuren:
• Wie heißt Ihre Hauptfigur? Haben die anderen Figuren Namen?
• Welche positiven/negativen Eigenschaften (characteristics) hat die Figur?
• Wie sind die Erwachsenen oder andere Figuren?
(2) Die Handlung:
• Was passiert am Anfang?
• Was für einen Konflikt gibt es zwischen dem Kind und den Erwachsenen?
• Warum macht das Kind das Falsche?
• Was passiert am Ende?
(3) Die Moral:
• Was ist Ihrer Meinung nach gutes und schlechtes Verhalten (behavior)?
• Was lernt das Kind am Ende?

Sprachlicher Fokus (Language Focus) [40%]
Beim Schreiben wenden Sie sich bitte an Vokabeln und grammatische Strukturen aus dem Kapitel 9 (Kontakte), so wie aus den zwei Daumenlutscher-Geschichten. Benutzen Sie insbesondere folgendes:
• Vokabeln und Ausdrücke (expressions) zum Thema Kindheit und Jugend
• Tempus (Tense):
  1. Benutzen Sie Imperfekt, um die Handlung darzustellen (Use the simple past in order to present the plot). Benutzen Sie Imperfekt besonders am Anfang der Geschichte.
• Konjunktionen, um die Sätze an einander zu verknüpfen (z.B. als, wenn, weil, aber, usw.)
• Varierende Wortstellung: Das Subjekt soll nicht immer an erster Position stehen. Überlegen Sie sich (think about) stattdessen, welche Wörter besser an erster Stelle stehen könnten.

Schreibkonventionen
• Beachten Sie bitte die Rechtschreibung (spelling conventions and capitalization rules).
• Der Text soll ungefähr 275-300 Wörter lang sein.
Schreibaufgabe #1: Ein moderner Struwwelpeter  

Kapitel 9: Kindheit und Jugend

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<th>Task Appropriateness [30%]:</th>
<th>Kommentare</th>
<th>Note</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kindergeschichte im Stil von Struwwelpeter:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Das Kind macht etwas, was die Eltern nicht gut finden</td>
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<td>2. Konfrontation zwischen Kind und Erwachsenen</td>
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<td>3. Das Kind lernt etwas am Ende</td>
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<th>Content [30%]:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Figuren:</td>
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<td>Wie heißt Ihre Hauptfigur? Haben die anderen Figuren Namen?</td>
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<td>Welche positiven/negativen Eigenschaften hat die Figur?</td>
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<td>Was lernt das Kind am Ende?</td>
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<th>Language Focus [40%]: (complexity, accuracy, text flow)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vokabeln und Ausdrücke zum Thema Kindheit und Jugend</td>
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<td>Tempus: (1) <strong>Imperfekt</strong>, um die Handlung darzustellen, z.B. am Anfang der Geschichte; (2) <strong>Präteritum</strong> beim Dialog zw. Kind und Figuren und auf dem Höhepunkt</td>
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<td>Konjunktionen, um die Sätze an einander zu verknüpfen (z.B. <em>als, weil, aber</em>, usw.)</td>
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<td>Varierende Wortstellung</td>
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<td>Sonstiges: Genus, Kasus, Wortstellung, Rechtschreibung</td>
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You will have the opportunity to improve your final grade for this essay up to two half-grade points through a rewrite. A very good revision can improve a grade from a ‘B’ to an ‘A’; a satisfactory revision can improve a grade from a ‘B’ to a ‘B+’; a weak revision will, however, not improve a grade. Please note: The rewrite is considered part of this task and is therefore obligatory. If you do not turn in a second draft that shows you have attended to corrections noted on the first draft, your essay grade will go down an entire letter grade.
German 104 Schreibaufgabe #1: Fortsetzung (Continuation) von Maikäfer, flieg!

Aufgabe:
Bei dieser letzten Schreibaufgabe setzen Sie die Geschichte Maikäfer, flieg! fort. Bei Ihrer Fortsetzung werden Sie folgende Teile brauchen:

1. eine kurze Einleitung: Teilen Sie uns mit, wo Sie in die Geschichte einsteigen. Was ist kurz vorher passiert?
2. eine ausführliche (detailed) Einführung einer neuen Figur und deren Rolle in der Geschichte.
3. eine angebrachte Entwicklung (appropriate development) der Geschichte, in der Sie das weitere Geschehen beschreiben. Beachten Sie bitte den Schreibstil von Christine Nöstlinger, denn diese Erzählung ist auch eine Fortsetzung des Romans!

Das ist kein Aufsatz, sondern eine Erzählung. Ihr Text soll diese drei Punkte einschließen. Seien Sie kreativ! Sie sind jetzt der Autor/die Autorin!

Inhalt:
Überlegen Sie, wie die Geschichte weitergehen könnte: was passiert als Nächstes? Kommen die SS-Männer zurück? Kommen die Russen? Oder nimmt die Geschichte eine ganz andere Wendung?

Wer ist die neue Figur, die im nächsten Kapitel auftaucht? Wie verändert diese Figur die Geschichte? In Ihrer Fortsetzung sollen folgende Stilelemente vorkommen (appear):

- Dialoge zwischen den Figuren: Was sagen sie zueinander?
- Beschreibungen der Szene und Beschreibung der neuen Figur
- Die Motivation der Figur: Warum taucht die Figur auf? Woher kommt er/sie?

Sprachlicher Fokus:

- Vokabeln aus dem Buch, besonders aus dem Wortfeld Krieg und aus den Arbeitsblättern.
- Diskursmarkierer aus dem Blatt Personen beschreiben (siehe lila Blatt im Reader)
- Viele Adjektive, um die Figur und die Szenen zu beschreiben. Achten Sie besonders auf Adjektivendungen!
- Relativsätze, um die Sprache Ihrer Erzählung zu variieren und interessante Informationen zu präsentieren.
- Passen Sie sonst auf Kasus, Wortstellung, Kongruenz (subject-verb agreement) und Rechtschreibung auf.

Sonstiges zu den Schreibkonventionen für die Aufgabe

- Getippt in Times New Roman 12 mit doppeltem Zeilenabstand.
- Länge: 400-500 Wörter
**Schreibaufgabe #1: Fortsetzung von Maikäfer, flieg!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kommentare</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Aufgabe [20%]**
- eine kurze Einleitung
- eine ausführliche Einführung einer neuen Figur
- eine angebrachte Entwicklung der Geschichte
- Essay in Times, Font 12 mit doppeltem Zeilenabstand getippt
- Länge: 1 ½ Seiten

**Inhalt [40%]**
Sie beachten folgende Punkte:
- Dialoge zwischen den Figuren: was sagen sie zueinander?
- Beschreibungen der Szene und Beschreibung der neuen Figur
- Die Motivation der Figur: Warum taucht die Figur auf? Woher kommt er/sie?

**Sprache [40%]**
- Vokabeln aus dem Buch, besonders aus dem Wortfeld Krieg und aus den Arbeitsblättern.
- Diskursmarkierer aus dem Blatt Personen beschreiben (siehe lila Blatt im Reader)
- Viele Adjektive, um die Figur und die Szenen zu beschreiben. Achten Sie besonders auf Adjektivendungen!
- Relativsätze, um die Sprache Ihrer Erzählung zu variieren und interessante Informationen zu präsentieren.
- Sonstiges: Kasus, Wortstellung, Kongruenz, Rechtschreibung
# APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRES

**German 103 Student Questionnaire**

## Student and Instructor Perceptions of the L2 Writing-for-Reading Process

### A. Background Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: ______________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year in school: ____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major/Minor: ______________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Language(s): ________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other languages learned: ___________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German Courses taken at UIUC: __________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B. Reading and Writing Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies used in the writing process</th>
<th>5 = to a great extent</th>
<th>4 = to some extent</th>
<th>3 = not much</th>
<th>2 = not at all</th>
<th>1 = I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I reread Daumenlutscher and Nuckelconny thoroughly.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I scanned Daumenlutscher and Nuckelconny for specific information.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I consulted the task sheet and/or grading rubric.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I highlighted or circled useful phrases from the text(s).</td>
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<td>7. I created an outline to organize my ideas.</td>
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<td>8. I talked to classmates or friends about ideas for my story.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Class discussions about the texts helped me to develop ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I incorporated useful phrases and/or vocabulary words into my story.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I incorporated my Kurzschreiben Quiz into my story.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I drew on other stories I’ve heard in the past to develop my storyline.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I consulted my instructor for help.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. If I ran out of ideas while writing, I referred back to the text(s).</td>
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<td>15. If I ran out of ideas while writing, I talked to classmates or friends about my story.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>16. If you looked up unfamiliar words from the texts, which statement best describes your reasons?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I thought they would be useful in my story.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I didn’t understand the sentence(s).</td>
</tr>
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<td>I was curious about the word(s).</td>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>17. If you did not look up unfamiliar words from the text, which statement best describes your reasons?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They seemed irrelevant and not useful in my story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to understand from context clues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wasn’t interested in those words.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
18. Examples of phrases and/or vocabulary words from *Daumenlutscher* and/or *Nuckelconny* that I incorporated into my story:

19. What element(s) of *Daumenlutscher* and/or *Nuckelconny* influenced your story? On a scale from 1 to 5, assess the influence of the following elements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influential Element</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plot(s)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characters(s)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Format (pictures)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text structure (short verses)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary words or phrases</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetic devices (rhymes, words whose sound like their meaning, exclamations)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical forms (e.g., imperative, simple past)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>5 = to a great extent</th>
<th>4 = to some extent</th>
<th>3 = not much</th>
<th>2 = not at all</th>
<th>1 = I don’t know</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My vocabulary related to childhood and youth has expanded.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I feel confident using the simple past tense in a story.</td>
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<td>3. The moral of my story conveys a message about certain societal values.</td>
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<td>4. My initial interpretation of the texts developed as I wrote my story.</td>
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<td>5. I enjoy working with these texts.</td>
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6. What have you learned through completing this writing assignment?

7. Did you have any "Aha!" moments about the texts while you were writing your story?

8. Did you enjoy this assignment? Why or why not?

9. Use the space provided below for any additional comments.
German 103 Instructor Questionnaire

Student and Instructor Perceptions of the L2 Writing-for-Reading Process

A. Background Information
Name: ________________________________
Year in graduate program: ____________
Concentration: __________________________
Courses currently or previously taught at UIUC: _______________________________________
Briefly describe any other foreign language teaching experience: _________________________

B. Reading and Writing Strategies
To the instructor: Please answer the following questions by assessing what you think an average student in your class is doing while composing his or her writing task.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies used in the writing process</th>
<th>5 = to a great extent</th>
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16. If you looked up unfamiliar words from the texts, which statement best describes your reasons?
- I thought they would be useful in my story.
- I didn’t understand the sentence(s).
- I was curious about the word(s).

17. If you did not look up unfamiliar words from the text, which statement best describes your reasons?
- They seemed irrelevant and not useful in my story.
- I was able to understand from context clues.
- I wasn’t interested in those words.
18. Examples of phrases and/or vocabulary words from Daumenlutscher and/or Nuckelconny that I incorporated into my story:

19. What element(s) of Daumenlutscher and/or Nuckelconny influenced your story? On a scale from 1 to 5, assess the influence of the following elements:

1 = not at all influential; 3 = somewhat influential, 5 = very influential

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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C. Learning Outcomes

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<th>5 = to a great extent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By the end of my writing task,</td>
<td></td>
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<td>5. I enjoyed working with these texts.</td>
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</table>

6. Did you introduce any reading strategies during this unit (e.g., pre-reading activities, skimming the text, finding contextual clues, choosing which words to look up, scanning for specific info, understanding the main themes)? If yes, which ones and how were they introduced? If no, what influenced this decision?

7. Did you encourage students to work with the original text(s) or any other resources while composing their writing task? If yes, please specify which resources and explain. If not, what influenced this decision?

8. What advice, if any, did you give to your students on how to complete any aspect of the writing process?

9. Use the space provided below for any additional comments.
# German 104 Student Questionnaire

## Student and Instructor Perceptions of the L2 Writing-for-Reading Process

### A. Background Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: ____________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year in school: ___________________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native Language(s): _________________________</td>
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### B. Reading and Writing Strategies

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<th>Strategies used in the writing process</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I reread <em>Maikäfer flieg</em> thoroughly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I scanned <em>Maikäfer flieg</em> for specific information.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>9. Online homework submissions helped me develop ideas.</td>
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<td>10. I incorporated useful phrases and/or vocabulary words into my story.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. I used phrases from the <em>Personen beschreiben</em> worksheet.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I used vocabulary from other worksheets (e.g. mind map about <em>Krieg</em>).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13. I drew on other stories I've heard in the past to develop my storyline.</td>
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### 16. If you looked up unfamiliar words from the texts, which statement best describes your reasons?

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### 17. If you did not look up unfamiliar words from the text, which statement best describes your reasons?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>They seemed irrelevant and not useful in my story.</th>
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18. Examples of phrases and/or vocabulary words from *Maikäfer flieg* that I incorporated into my story:

19. What element(s) of *Maikäfer flieg* influenced your story? On a scale from 1 to 5, assess the influence of the following elements:

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<td>Characters(s)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical forms (e.g., relative clauses, adjective endings)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary words</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive adjectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse markers (from the <em>Personen beschreiben</em> sheet)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

C. Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 = to a great extent</th>
<th>4 = to some extent</th>
<th>3 = not much</th>
<th>2 = not at all</th>
<th>1 = I don’t know</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By the end of my writing task,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. My vocabulary related to war and the post-war period has expanded.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I was able to produce complex sentences (e.g., relative clauses).</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I developed an understanding of the historical context of World War II.</td>
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<td>4. I feel confident that my new character fits into the story well.</td>
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<td>5. My initial interpretation of the plot and/or characters changed as I wrote.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I enjoyed reading and working with this text.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

7. What have you learned through completing this writing assignment?

8. Did you have any “Aha!” moments about the text while you were writing your story? Please explain.

9. Did you enjoy this assignment? Why or why not?

10. Use the space provided below for any additional comments.
German 104 Instructor Questionnaire

Student and Instructor Perceptions of the L2 Writing-for-Reading Process

A. Background Information

Name: _____________________________________

Year in graduate program: __________ Concentration: ______________________________

Courses currently or previously taught at UIUC: ______________________________

Briefly describe any other foreign language teaching experience: ____________________

B. Reading and Writing Strategies

5 = to a great extent  4 = to some extent  3 = not much  2 = not at all  1 = I don’t know

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies used in the writing process</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I reread Maikäfer fliegt thoroughly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I scanned Maikäfer fliegt for specific information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I consulted the task sheet and/or grading rubric.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I identified useful phrases or vocabulary words from the text.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I looked up unfamiliar words from the text.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I created an outline to organize my ideas.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I talked to classmates or friends about ideas for my story.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Class discussions about the texts helped me to develop ideas.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Online homework submissions helped me develop ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I incorporated useful phrases and/or vocabulary words into my story.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I used phrases from the Personen beschreiben worksheet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. I used vocabulary from other worksheets (e.g. mind map about Krieg).</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13. I drew on other stories I’ve heard in the past to develop my storyline.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. If I ran out of ideas while writing, I referred back to the text(s).</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. If you looked up unfamiliar words from the texts, which statement best describes your reasons?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I thought they would be useful in my story.</th>
<th>I didn’t understand the sentence(s).</th>
<th>I was curious about the word(s).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. They seemed irrelevant and not useful in my story.</td>
<td>2. I was able to understand from context clues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. If you did not look up unfamiliar words from the text, which statement best describes your reasons?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>They seemed irrelevant and not useful in my story.</th>
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<th>I wasn’t interested in those words.</th>
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</table>
18. Examples of phrases and/or vocabulary words from *Maikäfer flieg* that I incorporated into my story:

19. What element(s) of *Maikäfer flieg* influenced your story? On a scale from 1 to 5, assess the influence of the following elements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plot</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characters(s)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical forms (e.g., relative clauses, adjective endings)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary words</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive adjectives</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse markers (from the <em>Personen beschreiben</em> sheet)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical context</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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C. Learning Outcomes

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7. Did you introduce any reading strategies during this unit (e.g., pre-reading activities, skimming the text, finding contextual clues, choosing which words to look up, scanning for specific info, understanding the main themes)? If yes, which ones and how were they introduced? If no, what influenced this decision?

8. Did you encourage students to work with the original text(s) or any other resources while composing their writing task? If yes, please specify which resources and explain. If not, what influenced this decision?

9. What advice, if any, did you give to your students on how to complete any aspect of the writing task?

10. Use the space provided below for any additional comments.
APPENDIX C: RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

German 103 Student Responses

Examples of phrases and/or vocabulary words from Daumenlutscher and/or Nuckelconny that I incorporated into my story:

Text sources:

Struwwelpeter
(009) sprach die Frau Mama (p. 2 Daumenlutscher)
(013) abschnitten
(017) du bleibst allein
(110) der Schneider
(110) hübsch
(114) lutschen
(114) Daumen
(114) abschneiden
(118) lutschen
(119) fromm
(119) Wapp

Nuckelconny
(002) Words describing the kobold
(013) das Kobold
(015) der Kobold
(016) I tried to incorporate the new vocab from pg 5 of the reader. It was all the behavior and personality adjectives. i.e., unhöflich, böse
(114) Daumen
(114) lutschen
(114) abschneiden
(118) artig/unartig

Der standhafte Zinnsoldat
(002) Words describing the kobold
(001) Es war einmal…
(003) Es waren einmal…
(006) Es waren einmal…
(012) The start to all German fairy tales
(013) das Kobold
(015) der Kobold
(113) Not from Nuckelconny, but Zinnsoldat. I used “schloss die Augen”
(115) Incorporated phrases from other assignments/readings such as Zinnsoldaten, e.g. “er schaute die Mädchen an” etc.

3 Students’ names have been coded with the numbers in parentheses. Responses (including errors) are presented in verbatim.
Oh, wie schön ist Panama
(001) Es war einmal…
(003) Es waren einmal…
(006) Es waren einmal…
(001) Sie lebten in einem großen Haus…

Kontakte
(015) die böse Hexe
(015) magischen
(015) der Schloss
(015) Prinzessin
(015) König/Könige

Miscellaneous
(002) Verbs and their conjugations.
(010) I just used various past tense verbs that I previously did not know.
(014) style, form and word structure
(016) Used the frame of the story to build my own.
(016) verb forms and the imperfect conjugation
(017) zuhörst (I’m not sure if this was in the stories or if we just talked about it in class)
(018) simple past tense words
(116) I use the stories as general guidelines to understand verb tenses and sentence structure
(119) Zunge

What have you learned through completing this writing assignment?

- (019) I learned the difficulty of writing a coherent narrative, especially in German.
- (018) How to better use simple past tense in my writing.
- (017) My vocabulary expanded, and I was forced to create my own sentences and so my understanding of German grammar improved.
- (016) I learned that reading the short stories really expands my vocabulary. It has been awhile since I took German, but the children’s stories refreshed and helped me relearn what I lost.
- (015) I have learned the overall use of “imperfect” verbs.
- (014) My knowledge of the simple past has definitely increased, as well as my knowledge of useful phrases for Kindheit and Jugend.
- (013) I can read and understand more than I can articulate.
- (012) How to use the simple past in telling a story, a few things about German fairy tales, and some vocab.
- (011) I feel that through writing this story, I have become more comfortable with the “simple past” verbs. Actually having to use these words so often while writing made me think about/understand the verbs.
- (010) I learned to use the simple past a lot better.
• (009) I have learned to think creatively while writing about childhood stories. My vocabulary comprehension has also been enhanced.
• (008) Just as important as being able to understand and interpret German text is being able to establish your own creative ideas.
• (007) I have learned how to utilize the simple past along with the present and future tense in a logical manner. Also, I learned common vocabulary of fairy tales and incorporated it into my story.
• (006) I have a very interesting train of thought.
• (005) Germans have violent, sad-ending children’s stories. I blame WW1 and WW2 on Struwwelpeter.
• (004) Simple past verbs are difficult to memorize
• (003) It offered a good excuse to practice the vocabulary and grammar. I am confident that it helped in this regard.
• (002) I learned how to use the simple past tense effectively. I learned about German children’s stories.
• (001) Mostly the simple past and “imperfekt” verbs.
• (121) The more time I can dedicate to the work the better I can comprehend it.
• (120) I learned to use the Präteritum verbs when referring to the past.
• (119) It’s fun to write a children’s story.
• (118) I have learned, more in depth as before, sentence structure and vocabulary usage.
• (117) A lot of new vocabulary. I have a much better grasp on the Präteritum and wenn/wann/als.
• (116) That I do not understand sentence order at all. I feel like it’s a guessing game of where I need or don’t need a conjugated or past tense verb.
• (115) That I am remarkably deficient in my apprehension of foreign languages.
• (114) I learned some fun new words. My story was intended to be humorous and ridiculous.
• (113) Mainly being able to write in the past tense for storytelling.
• (112) Mostly better grammar and syntax, as well as some additional vocabulary.
• (111) Definitely I’ve improved my comfort/strength with Präteritum (but there’s a long way to go)
• (110) I have improved my use of the imperfect past tense along with general writing skills.
• (108) I’m now more familiar with the simple past and using it to tell a story.
• (107) I learned that I am not good at German.
• (106) This writing assignment and unit was a nice refresher on Präteritum. It was good practice and I feel much stronger on that grammar point.
• (105) A few new verb conjugations, how to talk about a dinosaur.
• (104) The use of the simple past and other grammatical forms.
• (103) Practice with Präteritum, changing tenses according to narration and character quotations.
• (102) How to better use the past tenses to write/tell a story.
• (101) Simple past tense.
• (100) I learned to use the simple past tense and how German culture teaches its children morals and values (through fear)

Did you have any “Aha!” moments about the texts while you were writing your story?

• No. x 24
• (120) No I did not, because I did not know we were supposed to use those short stories when writing our own modern day fairy tale.
• (118) Yes, I never could figure out what “weg” and “denn” meant until I reread some of the class texts for the construction of my story.
• (117) I have a much better idea of when to use wann/wenn/als when I create my own context for the sentences.
• (110) No, but my general understanding of them did increase.
• (106) No, not really. I looked more off of the rubric, not the texts.
• (104) More during the lectures, when certain elements (grammatical) were explained in greater detail.
• (100) Not very big ones, but I certainly did understand the phrasing and grammar much more thoroughly.
• (019) I realized how useful images are to conveying the sometimes unclear message of a fairy tale.
• (018) No, I understood the other texts before beginning my story.
• (016) No “aha!” moments, but many “hrrmmm”s about the meanings and conjugations of certain phrases and words. I learned how to incorporate them and what I learned in class better.
• (015) I had a few went I went back to reread Daumenlutscher – I understood the story much better after having read my own.
• (008) Some parts of the story became clearer after reading the rubric/understanding the flow of the story.
• (004) Not while writing my own story, but when rereading the other stories I had a better understanding.
• (003) No, beyond skimming through the stories again I did not use them for this assignment.
• (002) Yes, I understood why the author phrases things a certain way and the verb conjugations became more clear.
• (001) Yes, seeing the somewhat pattern of imperfect verbs.

Did you enjoy this assignment? Why or why not?

Yes:
• (019) Yes, as it was a more interesting prompt than the average Schreibaufgabe.
• (016) I did enjoy it, but it was also very stressful to come up with your own story similar, and yet unlike Struwwelpeter and not know how your lack of German understanding will be viewed.
• (015) I believe this assignment was important because not only did it improve my German writing abilities, but also taught new vocabulary from the Kindheit chapter.
• (014) Very much! Especially because we have the choice to make our own story. I have a couple of roommates in Spanish classes who always say they are jealous of the German program because their homework sucks.
• (011) Yes, reading the story, and then writing a similar story was fun. Reading Struwwelpeter was a good reference I used while writing. However, the assignment was vague enough to allow creativity to flow while writing.
• (008) Yes, creative writing always helps me expand my vocabulary base by searching for new and interesting words.
• (007) I did enjoy this assignment. Unlike some assignments I have written in the past, this Schreibaufgabe was fun and allowed me to be creative with my German.
• (005) I enjoyed the creative aspect of this assignment.
• (002) Yes, I enjoyed reading the texts, I thought they were interesting. I also liked the assignment. It was straight-forward and related well to what we are doing in class.
• (001) Yes, it is interesting to develop/create a story in another language.
• (119) I did. Es war sehr Spaß. And I enjoy any activity that allows me to express my creativity.
• (118) Yes, I like learning a new language and I feel that the writing tasks help me out a lot in learning German.
• (117) It was fun but it was a little difficult. The most helpful part of the Schreibaufgaben is they force me to write at length so I get much more practice than I would just writing in shorter exercises.
• (114) Yes, I enjoy creative writing and I love writing in German.
• (113) I actually liked this assignment, it was fun to do b/c I was able to create my own story in German, which I think is beneficial since you’re learning to put your thoughts and voice into it.
• (111) Absolutely. Thinking in German is intrinsically rewarding to me, especially with free-form communication.
• (109) Yes, it was fun to shape a story around a moral and to create an attempt at rhyming in German.
• (107) Yes, it was simple and quite fun having to think of what the main character’s “fault” could be.
• (106) Sure. I like free-form creative projects.
• (105) Yes, it was a fun topic in comparison to previous writing assignments.
• (104) Yes, it was fun to write a children’s story.
• (103) Yes, because I got to write a story that I chose to write about and not just a set topic.
• (100) Yes, I thought it taught the simple past effectively and gave me insight into the German culture.

Neutral:
• (018) It’s ok, it’s good because it makes me practice writing and using new things from the chapter, but it can be kind of time consuming.
• (017) I enjoyed reading the texts because they are entertaining. The actual writing assignment was hard for me, so it was not so enjoyable.
• (016) I did enjoy it, but it was also very stressful to come up with your own story similar, and yet unlike Struwwelpeter and not know how your lack of German understanding will be viewed.
• (013) I never enjoy homework. However, it was a great prompt which made it bearable.
• (010) I didn’t really enjoy it because the stories didn’t make a lot of sense. I did like being able to use the simple past for the first time in my writings.
• (009) Yes and no; yes because I was very satisfied and proud of my final product. No because it was very difficult for me to think of a story line similar to those of the texts we read.
• (121) It was ok. Challenging but seemed right for the course.
• (120) To an extent yes, but I’m not much of a creative person, so it was difficult to come up with a story.
• (115) Attempting to utilize foreign language is fun, but the process is overcast by my concern over what grade I’ll receive/how many errors I’ve made and have failed to recognize.
• (112) I’m somewhat neutral about it, more because I do not care for writing assignments than due to the assignment itself.
• (110) No, it was time consuming, but it was good writing practice.
• (101) So la la. It’s good to practice writing but my story is a little boring.

No:
• (017) I enjoyed reading the texts because they are entertaining. The actual writing assignment was hard for me, so it was not so enjoyable.
• (012) No, I generally don’t like writing assignments in German class, just teach me how to speak the language.
• (006) Not really. It came at a bad time, smushed in between two big exams.
• (004) No, I ran out of words so my ending just stops, but other than that I liked making up a story.
• (003) No, writing tasks take a significant amount of time in my experience. If they coincide with assignments from other classes, they are an obvious source of stress.
• (116) I don’t enjoy many assignments. I am required to take a foreign language and I stumble through it badly.
• (108) No, I’m not hugely into creative writing.
• (107) Not really, it was a little stressful. I know how to order words and change the verbs, but that is not useful when you don’t know the meaning of the word.

Use the space provided below for any additional comments.

• (116) If it matter, I am 24 and the last FL classes I took were in high school freshman and sophomore year. And in Spanish. I find most tasks awkward to understand and spend a good deal of time just deciphering the meaning of sentences with new words.
• Children’s stories often sacrifice grammar in order to rhyme, which could affect the grade of the assignment.
• It takes a very long time to write these papers when you don’t know what the words mean.
• I have taken German courses in high school that jump right into larger texts but I think it is more beneficial to start with these shorter stories.
• Most of the time I feel the writing assignments force me to look up half of what I want to say since I have no idea how to say it. Sometimes I feel as if the assignments used more of what we learned in class and elaborated on those ideas that I would learn more.
• Although I did glance back at the texts while writing my story, most of the work done was based off of my own thoughts and ideas.
• Pons and Verbformen are lifesavers, even if pons gave me a lot of trouble during this assignment.

**German 104 Student Responses**

**Examples of phrases and/or vocabulary words from Maikäfer, flieg! that I incorporated into my story:**

(200) ---
(201) nachdem/nach
   bevor/vor
   fast
   Angst
   Ordnung
   denn
   weil
   kennenlernen
(202) zerstürtz
   Bombardierung
   Zitronengatsch
(203) die Bombentrichter
   Abzug
   erschossen
   Konzentrationslager
(204) Bomben fallen
   Vocab such as “Russens”
(205) werfen
   Soldaten
   SS-Männer
   Bücherzimmer
   Überraschung
(206) der Puppenwagen
   der Krieg
die SS-Männer
(207) Bääh
(208) ----- 
(209) bääh
(210) klettern
Verandach
Schrank
(211) Bomben fallen
erschossen
Deseteur
(212) Erdäpfel
(213) der Raun
Blöde Gurke!
Possibly others
(214) --- 
(215) --- 
(216) --- 
(217) Bomben
zerstört
Krieg
(218) ----
(219) Dessatur
Baah
Pfui
Puppenwagen
(220) das Krieg
der Soldat
verlassen
Kartoffeln
(221) ---
(22) Wiederaufbau
Erdäpfel
Flieger
Uhrenfurnituer
zittern
Angst
zerstören
(300) Engel
Soldaten
Front
Lazerette
(301) ----
(302) Nazis
Russen
Käfer
(303) Krieg
Numerous relative clauses
(304) Granatsplitter
(305) ----
(306) die Allierten
Descriptive words
Seuchtz, zerstorbte
Actions around Gartontor
(307) erschiessen
schwerhörig
(308) erschossen
SS-Männer
Wehrmacht
(309) I don’t remember
(310) Bombadierung
Gewehr
Russen
In dem Keller
(311) der Krieg
Mittelscheitel
Keller
rasieren
Uhrenfurnituren
(312) Several nouns such as Hirsch
Wehrmachtauto
Gartenzwerge
Schnitthaufen
Past tense forms
(313) Armee
Deserteur
Uniform
(314) merkwürigsten
Kamen über den Kiesweg auf das Haus
Schloss die Tür hinter ihm ab
(315) use of quotations
Adjective endings
(316) überlaufen
(317) ----
(318) Puppenkleid
Kratzen
(319) erschossen
(320) verbs
War related nouns/verbs
Past tense
(321) Schädel
Feuerstelle
What have you learned through completing this writing assignment?

- (200) Some verbs, adj, and nouns. Feel like I got better at using relative sentences.
- (201) I definitely got a better understanding in how to create complex sentences.
- (202) Better use of relative sentences; learned/practiced making more complex sentences (ex: nicht nur….sondern auch, nachdem…..etc)
- (203) use vocabulary learned in class. Use German to tell a story and describe a process. Try to portray a character
- (204) writing in German is much harder than reading
- (205) It’s fun to make up stories. Bombs scare everyone.
- (206) That I can write faster than I used to be able to (Ha hopefully I made less mistakes)
- (207) Writing complex sentences
- (208) Its better to have an English version of the story alongside the german version so that by reading the English version first you more quickly comprehend the german.
- (209) how to better incorporate genitive in my writing
- (210) Not to procrastinate as thoroughly as I just did.
- (211) The writing assignment allowed me to sum up my findings from reading the texts and to reiterate what I had learned.
- (212) history of Austria relating to WWII.
- (213) nothing really specific. It was just another writing
- (214) Writing is difficult, slow, and frustrating
- (215) This is the longest assignment I have written in German so I learned how to make it flow
- (216) I learned a lot about the historical context of the story, since I had to look up some things in order to make my story more historically accurate.
- (217) If you have an idea you want to use later but don’t write it down, you will forget it
- (218) My spelling and past tense verbs improved
- (219) How to better use relative sentences.
- (220) New words. New sentence structures and being creative.
- (221) Use of complex sentences
- (222) Not that much, I learned how to write: :Man kann entweder entsprechen oder übertreffen die Erwartungen” –R.G III
- (300) How to write in German with a ‘narrative’ feel.
- (301) Well the main thing I got out of it was a lot of practice forming more complex sentences in the form of relative clauses. I also learned a little more about the characters.
- (302) Writing a story in much more difficult than I initially thought.
- (303) Character development, new grammar/vocab
- (304) I learned how to better use relative clauses.
- (305) Using new vocab and grammar
- (306) I learned that I really enjoy using the genitive case.
- (307) writing complex sentences, description of a person
- (308) What I need to improve upon as a student, i.e. relative clauses
(309) I’ve learned that writing about war is difficult. There are a lot of unfamiliar phrases and words that were new to me.

(310) Yes, I believe this actually helped me a great deal with comprehension.

(311) Relative clauses

(312) Pending the instructor’s comments/connections, I can confirm that it’s getting easier to generate appropriate cases, tenses, etc.

(313) A little bit about relative clauses and various grammatical things

(314) New vocabulary and grammar

(315) How to take thoughts in English and use relative sentences to provide further detail about my story.

(316) Not much that I did not already know about the history, but the perception of the language in a primary source was enlightening

(317) A greater understanding of relative clauses

(318) I feel that the gains I make here are mostly with grammar and vocab – the practice of writing in German is the learning.

(319) I think I did the assignment wrong….

(320) I have learned that relative clauses are really confusing and they helped me figure out some other problems I was having with basic grammar.

(321) My ability to write German, though not great, is improving and expanding.

Did you have any “Aha!” moments about the text while you were writing your story? Please explain.

- No x 28
- (202) Not particularly, Did question where Berger Schurli was when the 2nd floor was bombed.
- (205) When I figure out that Christl was a child in the first few chapters
- (209) When I figured out a plot twist to include
- (210) Yes – I had based my extension on Herr Forstrat’s house, and Christl and Gerald going back to explore and pillage it. During a rereading of one scene, I understood a line I must have missed – that the house was nearly empty the first time they went. Having written ¾ of my writing task, it was more of an “oh shit” than an “aha”
- (211) At times, after I would reread sections, I would finally understand what the chapter was trying to say, It was exciting to comprehend difficult passages.
- (212) Not really, I knew the story pretty well going into the writing task
- (301) The only “aha” moment I had was when I incorporated the father’s habit of smoking into my story because it is descriptive of his character.
- (303) Yes, While incorporating the characters into my story, I realized what their roles were more precisely in the original.
- (308) Simply in regards to ideas for creative development of my character.
- (309) There were moments when I finally figured out what a certain phrase meant, but I don’t know if it was exactly an “aha!” moment.
• (311) When I thought to include the box with clock parts and pictures left by the main characters now deceased Grandfather, which she finds.
• (312) Since I’m an editor, I always take “match the style” seriously and at first thought that would be a major challenge. It did not turn out that way in practice.
• (313) When I finally decided on what to write I was happy because it goes reasonably well with the rest of the story.
• (315) Aha! They never mentioned Christl’s sister’s name.
• (316) Not particularly, it was difficult to create an additional plot because of the authenticity of the story.
• (317) No, in fact, my schedule prevented me from starting the assignment until Monday. Before writing I read the remainder of the story, so it was fresh in my mind.
• (318) No – we just wrote a quick recap of what we had already read, then made up the continuation. I don’t see how an “aha” moment would be common for this sort of work.

Did you enjoy this assignment? Why or why not?

Yes:

• (202) Yes somewhat because you have some creative freedom which makes it more enjoyable than a straight-forward fill-in-the-blank assignment.
• (206) Yes, I enjoyed trying to be creative with my limited vocab and Grammar knowledge in German.
• (207) Yes, I like creative writing
• (209) Yes, I enjoy writing assignments
• (210) Ja. Es war cool.
• (212) Yes, it was interesting to be able to finish the story.
• (213) Yes, I did. I enjoyed the story itself, to write a chapter of it was fun.
• (217) Yes, because I found ways to include “inside jokes” for my own amusement that still had relevance to my story.
• (219) Yes, I like writing stories.
• (220) Once I started writing, it became smooth and I enjoyed it.
• (221) Yes, because it was based on my opinion of the story’s outcome.
• (222) Yes, but I am apprehensive before I receive my final grade.
• (303) Yes, it was fun to extend the original story and follow up on characters
• (304) As far as enjoying homework can go, I did enjoy it. I like the creative control of writing a story and it helped me further my common knowledge.
• (306) Yes, I like writing creatively and using the preterate is a lot easier than Perfekt tense writing
• (307) Yes, it was challenging at first because I felt difficult to formulate my idea for the story and to organize words in German, After reading through the text for a second time, and writing out a draft, I felt more confident. And I felt successful after accomplishing the writing assignment.
• (308) I enjoyed the fact that we were urged to be creative in telling a story. I feel its an important part in language development.
• (310) Yes, it was an interesting story and topic
• (311) It was fun creating an extension, but the main story itself I found boring
• (312) More or less. Once I figured out my main plot point, it was fairly easy to do a “brainstorming” draft in a mix of English and German. Then I went back and developed the sentences.
• (313) Yes, beause it isn’t often that an assignment is to write a story.
• (314) Wasn’t bad. Nice to make up our own story.
• (315) Yes, I wish we had more time, though, from when we were given the task sheet. I like my story and I LEARNED A LOT from writing 500+ words in German
• (317) Yes
• (321) Yes, though I would have enjoyed it more if I had more time to work on it.

No:

• (208) No, 104 is very unstructured which makes it difficult to keep track of new grammar lessons/vocab
• (214) No. See #7 (Writing is difficult, slow, and frustrating)
• (301) Not really, I found it extremely difficult because I have not yet gotten to a point where I am completely sure of what has happened in the story.
• (302) I might have enjoyed it if it hadn’t been assigned this week. All of my classes assigned tons of homework and a couple tests.
• (305) Not really. I’m not interested in war story.
• (309) No. I find writing essays in another language to be the most challenging task in this class. I’ll form an idea of what I want it to be about but I don’t know how to say it in German.

Yes and No:

• (200) Reading the book was incredibly difficult, but the writing task was easier. I don’t mind writing in German, but reading is tedious.
• (201) Yes and no. I don’t enjoy any assignments in particular, but once I started, I was entertained.
• (203) To some extent.
• (204) Somewhat. It was hard to be creative in this German story.
• (205) Eh, it was ok. There were a few confusing plotlines.
• (211) I enjoyed the reading portion, but not so much the writing because I struggle with that.
• (215) Although it was challenging, I did not mind it
• (216) It was all right. I don’t think it was long enough to write a satisfying thorough continuation of the story, though
(218) I did not enjoy it, but it did not bother me. I am glad that it helped me to improve my writing, but I didn’t like the idea of the subject for the writing assignment.
(300) Somewhat. It was very long and took me several hours to complete.
(316) somewhat, though I do not think enough time was given.
(318) It was okay, I didn’t get to do it until the day before so I was stressed for time. I am seeing evidence of my own improvement through them, though, which is nice.
(319) It was good practice, but I struggle with German so it was hard
(320) Kind of, I enjoy writing in German, but I did not like having to think of an ending. It was harder to think of the story than write it.

Use the space provided below for any additional comments.

- (200) Include complete translation of book. Having to stop and do it myself disrupts the flow of reading.
- (205) Why couldn’t the father mesh with the townspeople? It’s not like Austria had a super advanced ID system at the time.
- (207) I only read Ch 8,9
- (208) I think the language department seriously overemphasizes the fostering of students writing ability in a language they don’t know why they should focus on teaching students how to speak a language – the same way native speakers learn
- (214) My college forces me to take this. I would drop it immediately otherwise. It is tedious, frustrating, and consumes my precious time.
- (310) very enjoyable project.
- (314) overall good story. Should be used again.
- (318) I believe that these assignments are good and should continue to be used, if nothing else than practice for a longer writing in German.
- (319) the instructors here are awesome. It is just difficult for me to learn new languages. For that, I apologize.
- (321) Need more time!!!! I don’t feel that we were given adequate time to complete this assignment. Would have also been beneficial to have completed the story in class.
Focus Group
March 16, 2012

In attendance: Jackie (researcher), Greg, Ron, Evan, Marie*
*Students have been given pseudonyms

J: My first question is a general question actually. How did you develop the ideas for your story continuation? What were some of the main influences that led to your story continuations?

G: Well my teacher let us know what the assignment was early enough to where after we had started the reading I was already looking for a place in the story where I could insert any sort of idea or where something could be left open to some interpretation or a place where the story could be elaborated on a little bit, so..

R: Um, yeah, we got ours about a week before it was due and I don’t know if we read much in between when we got it assigned to us. I would say the biggest influencing factor for me was like, we didn’t finish the last 2 or 3 chapters and so while we frequently just read in class by ourselves, or rather, one person would speak at a time and we would go around but we wouldn’t necessarily interpret what happened in that chapter, um since I had to read it all by myself, I had to pay much more attention and interpret it, I mean it took probably 3 hours to make sure that I got it correct, because it was complicated, you know one word can change the complete context of the sentence. Um, so I think that doing that and having a better understanding and getting that understanding myself, like I kind of just went on and continued on from the end of Chapter 10. And I mean, it was pretty abrupt. I know that there are more chapters to the story so I mean, it was pretty easy, I would say, for me and yeah..

E: I think the first few chapters were much easier to comprehend because our professor really went into the words that were in those, so most of my content for my story was focused around those or those ideas that were brought up in the first few chapters, because I understood them the best.

M: I think we were given the assignment early enough that

R: Were not, you said?

M: We were.

R: Oh, okay.

M: so that I read I guess the weekend before, I read through everything again because I knew we were going to have the test coming up but that also let me pick out all the things that I wanted to somehow bring into the continuation. And what I actually did to start writing, because I’m not
much of a fiction writer, I mean, I’m a writer, I just don’t do fiction, I do poetry before I do fiction, and so that was the hardest to figure out well what can I say that isn’t just lame. You know as a continuation but then as I was going through and picking out and making sure that, you know to try to hear her voice that time through, to sort of try to match what I was saying.

J: And what were those parts that struck your interest that you guys wanted to elaborate on? You said you picked your section because that’s the part you felt most comfortable with, that you understood the most.

E: Yeah, my part was mostly focused around the grandfather and the house, that original first bombing kind of area. How the house because semi-destroyed, so I figured I’d do like a revisitation to that place rebuilt and incorporate the grandfather more and have some more sentimental moments.

G: My part was about after Gerald and Hildegard and the narrator and her sister sort of made fun of their neighbor next door, and so they made fun of her, made her feel bad and pretty much got of scotch free and since this was a kid’s story, I thought they ought to make some sort of ramifications for letting them get off scotch free.

J: Are you thinking back to Struwwelpeter?

G: Well I mean it wasn’t anything harsh like that, but I mean just the character I made up, was that she had a brother and the brother came over and was going to chew them out or whatever, but at the same time I incorporated some of the narrator’s personality in a little bit more and she’s a little clever with her responses and everything, so I don’t know, I just thought that that was a really neat part of the story and I wanted to elaborate on that a little bit, so…

M: Well I wanted to have a character that didn’t require me knowing any more about the history that happened immediately thereafter, because I didn’t know in terms of, you know did the Russians really come to that area to whatever was going on, so I went back and looked at how the uncle, the SS Nazi uncle was handled and actually it was pretty ambivalent what they had to say about him, they didn’t say he was this horrible person, although they would say Nazis are horrible, they didn’t say uncle so-and-so is horrible. And he gave the father, you know he sort of facilitated the father coming back to Vienna, so I introduced him as the character who came and paid a visit, but to add a little drama, I took my favorite character, the grandfather, and killed him off.

R: In 500 words.

J: I take my favorite character and kill him off.

M: Well that was the rationale, it had to be something pretty drastic to get, for the SS-uncle to be able to come and visit them, so after grandfather died, he comes and dumps the grandmother on them.
R: So I guess, from my interpretation, when I read and translated the last three chapters or so for myself, I kind of focused on what would happen now that the SS-soldiers left them alone and then from my understanding, they got a radio- they heard on the radio that they left Vienna. So the grandfather, they said that he had walked slowly, but he had walked from Achau to Waldegg, so I figured the distance could be a bit of a trek but they might consider going back home, and so I explored the possibility that as they were going home, there’s also the consideration of getting food and then they encountered somebody on the way, for example, I just had them walk, the grandfather walked, I figured transportation wasn’t super available, just because of the infrastructure and where everything was at, and at the same time, like Marie said, I don’t know if there was a lot of damage in the area that they were at, but if they were about 3 hours away from Vienna, I don’t know if that’s correct, that’s what [my instructor] told me, that that was about the distance, but you know, if Vienna was getting all of this damage, it’s probably, though maybe localized to Vienna, there’s no reason why it wouldn’t happen nearby. So I mean, I guess when I was writing my story, I was just considering the tribulations of what they would face in that journey and being able to relate to another individual whose going through the same thing in their journey, so.

J: I wish I could read these! These sound very interesting. Let me throw some other questions out, what resources helped you the most during your writing process? Because I mean, these are complex ideas that you’re incorporating, so what resources from class or something like that..

R: I mean, in terms of resources, Pons helped a lot, but in terms of my ability to write, I’d say feeling much more comfortable with relative clauses enabled me to actually form complex sentences. Now that I feel that I understand them, there was rarely an instance where I didn’t use a relative clause unless it was a short response through a dialogue or something like that. Yeah, so I mean when I was in the lower level German classes, I felt really limited by not being able to say, I feel that I could move a mountain or something like that, you know, it was just, I could move a mountain, I want to move a mountain, but you know.

G: Well that’s exactly right, that was the biggest difference. Before this class, I definitely had to manipulate my sentences to where I could say something in German that made sense.

R: But it was awkward, right?

G: Yeah, it was so awkward. But now, there are, granted there are still sentences that I can’t translate perfectly, but I can still formulate a sentence that makes a lot more sense to the point I’m trying to convey than I could before that, so that helped a lot. And yeah, that was pretty much the biggest resource and obviously it helped to have my dictionary handy, just to translate a random word, you know, so, yeah that’s pretty much all I really used.

E: I know how they always say never use online translators, but I do that all the time. It’s so much more simple and so much faster than flipping through a dictionary or like
J: Do you mean like online dictionaries, or..

E: Yeah

G: Well sometimes I’ll use Google translate just to like, I don’t know how to say the word, softly in German, so I’m just going to type that in…oh it’s this.

E: I mostly know a lot of words but it’s like bringing them back into memory of what they are, so it’ll be like, you know

G: Right, right

E: Whatever this word is, translate, oh yeah, that’s what that was, so it’s just it’s a bit faster.

M: Yeah, I think when I’m reading, I have both the dictionary and Pons there, because there were so many words. I mean when I have taught beginning English students or kids, we would go through and say, well okay, to read independently, you know count the number of words on a page that you don’t know and you know, if you’re getting more than 5, you know, maybe that’s too hard for you. You know and this is like 10 times that.

G: Yes!

M: So it was, you know, I think I could read it for the gist and know what was going on, but I’m sure I missed a lot of the subtlety until I did go back and I have pages and pages of words I looked up.

E: I think the actual best resource I had to understanding the book was having Tim buy the English copy of it and then actually comparing that to like what they said in the English copy and in the German copy. Cause there’s just so much that I missed in the German copy where it was like, ohh, that’s what they were talking about, so it just makes a bit more sense even if the English copy is like, kind of different. I just think that’d be good in future years to have that as a part of the course book.

G: That is a good idea. I even looked for something like that.

R: Yeah, yeah, I didn’t see one either.

G: I looked online, but I really couldn’t find anything.

R: The other thing, I don’t remember her name exactly, but when we took 102 with Frau Schubert?

J: Uh huh.

R: Um she, she, it was the only time I’ve heard of Verbformen.de. It’s not a dictionary but definitely helps for conjugation or declension. When I looked up words just, it’s not available on
pons, like you can put in some word that’s formed by such and such way, and it just wouldn’t come up or it would come up as like an adjective or something, and if you were to search for that in Google, you’d get something from like Wikionary and it’s frequently incomplete, so Verbformen I would say was most helpful especially when we’ve got the um, uh-, I just remember in German now, uh the Präteritum and like the Plusquamperfekt or I don’t know how to say it or spell it, so. Um I know how to spell it, I don’t know how to say it, but um so frequently there were words in the sentence that would look like, you know, they were using different verbs from sentence to sentence, but it was just the difference between reading dialogue and reading the narrator speak about it. And so by using that website, I became more familiar with the written text. Cause this is the first time that I’d say we’ve really done a lot using the Präteritum, or is that right?

J: The past tense?

R: No..

G: The imperfect?

R: The, the type that’s only used when you write and not in conversation.

J: Präteritum.

R: Okay, that’s what I thought, but now I’m, I read it, I don’t say it.

G: The Präteritum is Imperfekt right?

M: Yes.

G: I don’t remember.

M: Yes.

J: Yes, there’s several names for it.

E: Past perfect, right?

J: That’s what we use, well that’s a little different. But Präteritum is the simple past.

R: Okay.

G: Okay.

J: I went.

G: Alright.
J: Okay. But if you said there’s so many words on a page that you don’t understand, obviously you can’t look up them all, so how do you choose which words to look up? Which words are the most important? How do you recognize those words?

R: Before verbs, or rather verbs first.

J: You think verbs first.

R: Especially if you have a nominative, like if you have a subject, you know usually it’s an individual or an object, but then, accusative case as well, if there’s some object or some place where something is happening, but otherwise like I’d say if I’m trying to understand something and there’s a lot of adjectives, I would just, it’s not that I would ignore the adjectives, but you go straight to what they’re talking about and then from there, like, you know, you can build on that. But I would say it’s basically tackling the sentence from the bottom-up. Like, take away the description and then try to study it and then add the description and so that it’s a more painted picture.

G: My general rule of thumb was verbs first, and then nouns that aren’t part of a prepositional phrase, so you’re pretty much just hitting like the real basics, but, cause I don’t, a lot of times the prepositions don’t really make a whole lot of difference to the understanding of the sentence. Sometimes it does, but for the most part it doesn’t.

R: I would say though that while I was reading this, I got, I feel more comfortable, I don’t know if I would feel comfortable, or I could say that I’m comfortable enough to do it on my own, but I, to understand the compound verbs (words), as they are in German as opposed to like English. Like I got much more used to translating words by recognizing like, you know, an iron fence, and that’s just one word. Um and that also helps with being able to pronounce it as well, cause in order to read that and recognize that it’s two words, like you have to be able to syllabize it which before was just, you know, you’d try to read it straight through.

M: Yeah, I mean, I literally was putting marks on words sometimes

R: Yeah, yeah

M: because I could recognize the parts of the words.

R: Yeah. Like in the last course, I don’t know if this is correct or not from memory now, but I wouldn’t know to look up Zaun and Eisen as opposed to Eisenzaun for iron fence.

J: That’s an interesting word you’ve learned.

R: Well it’s one that I had to do when I was in the last three chapters, so I mean, if that’s, that’s correct though, right?

J: Yeah.
R: Okay.

J: No, it’s just funny cause actually that’s one of my questions too. Which words did you pick up from the text and incorporate in your story? Everyone has very interesting words, um, yeah (looking at questionnaires) I mean a lot having to do with the Krieg obviously, yeah but just very, very interesting words, so how did you also decide which words to pull and use?

G: Well most of the ones we just talked about in class, cause I figured that that would probably resonate well with the teacher to use the vocabulary we had actually gone over.

J: We love that. We do.

R: And for mine I basically responded yes, because I didn’t feel like I had time to… So the problem is that I didn’t cognizantly choose words from the story. Um, I reread the latter parts because I felt like I had an okay understanding of what we discussed in class and I wrote my story out in English to make sure that it even made coherent sense with just my interpretation of the story and then I translated it from that point. Now if there were words that felt very pertinent to, that we learned from the story itself, and you now, I would incorporate it, but for example, I didn’t talk about things blowing up or people being shot or you know shrapneled, like it seemed that there were a lot of specifically war terms that we covered in class, um whereas I would say that when I was writing it, my focus was more on the story content and then I can’t say that I was trying to use relative clauses, but it was, you know, I was rather than trying to tell the story by using new nouns or you know whatever, I would do it by using relative clauses, cause it felt like I could more accurately articulate what I was trying to articulate.

M: Well I’m proud to say that this is the first time that I really did write my brainstorming draft probably in more German than English. You know, once I had a, the main idea of where I was going to go with it, I tried to just, you know, not paying attention to grammar or anything else, but just put something down and revert to English if I had to keep going and so that, maybe that made me feel better about this than I thought. It seemed a lot easier than I thought it would be a continuation.

R: And I can agree with that in that I was definitely like thinking of it in German. I would even like write down three sentences at a time, but then I would, when I would rearrange it, I would do it in English, cause it seemed so much more comfortable, especially like if we’re doing relative clauses or things where the verb jumps around them. For example, I feel like if we were reading that, like doing the Schreibaufgabe, I feel like I probably got most of that correct, but if I was to do that in conversation, I wouldn’t be aware enough, it’s just still so novel of a concept. So, yeah, I was definitely focusing on the grammar when I was doing it though.

E: I wrote mine like straight in German, like thought it out, I don’t know, it’s gotten easier to the point where you know, it’s really not that hard to write in German or like have your sentences already kind of thought out and be able to you know go through it pretty quickly without having
to like constantly look up everything that you want to say cause they are all like very familiar
words now, so it’s easier.

J: And about the words that you picked from the text and incorporated: der Krieg, der Scheitel…

E: A lot of stuff about the Grandpa and just other words that [the instructor] had brought up, like
schlossen? to shoot and his

M: Yeah and all the variations

E: Yeah and all his prefixes. All its prefixes that he taught us to put on that to change what it
means.

J: Which variations?

R: Er- versus ver-, like erschiessen, verschiessen.

E: Shot at, shot to death, shot out….

G: That is an interesting thing your teacher decided to teach you.

R: I mean, right, with the prefixes, it was interesting in that it made it seem like there was a
higher level of understanding of it, but at the same time there were times when like he’d apply a
prefix and he’d tell us what the word means and then it just seems like, uh, oh well, if this, if ver-
kind of means into pieces or up or about, you know, this word doesn’t make sense when you
translate it, so it seems like there’s still a lot of, like you just need to know the words.

J: Were the any parts of the story that when you first read it in class or when you read it at home
as homework, that didn’t make much sense and then it only started to make sense as you started
to write this paper? Were there any parts of the story that you felt that they became clearer when
you started?

E: I’d say it all didn’t make sense the first time I read it, because there were just too many words
that I didn’t know. So the in-class stuff kind of helped, but there wasn’t much when I was writing
that I was looking back on. I was definitely checking to make sure that my content in my story
matched what had happened in the actual book. So definite continuation. I had it 10 years in the
future and I had her married, so I did 15 years instead of 10 because that would be a more
appropriate age I guess. Maybe not at that time period, but I guess relating to this time period to
have her slightly older to be married.

R: I mean for me I think that it was more so when we do the reading or the homework, I’d focus
on it but it was more point instances like what is the sentence trying to convey or the general
theme of this chapter. Not in terms of what was accomplished in the chapter but what were the
big things that I can think back on, cause I felt very overwhelmed by the content of the story,
quantitatively. But by writing the story, it made me think of things more holistically, and that
chronologically I knew what had happened and it made sense to refer back to certain things. For example, in mine, food was a problem when they were traveling but she gave a dog a potato. (Laughter)

R: Okay, well that’s totally out of context, like I understand where that’s at in my story but like she feed a dog a potato, she was empathetic towards the dog, but it was just a potato. I specifically drew on the potato because it’s all they had. They needed it because it was food, but at the same time, they didn’t care for it much.

J: What about you Greg?

G: Honestly, most of the stuff I just gathered from context what we were talking about in class. Like I didn’t revert back to the story much at all during the writing process. There was a couple times when I did to make sure I had my facts straight, to make sure that nothing in my story contradicted anything what was already conveyed, but other than that I didn’t do too much looking back.

M: And pretty much that was the same for me. I do think that Ron and I had talked about this yesterday,

R: Right before the test

M: that it seemed like we spent a lot of time reading in class, whereas I mean we had questions in the book, but I think if we had spent a little more time focusing on that which, you know, and then pointing out, rather than just coming up with an answer, that you know, one person happened to know the answer, that you actually went back to the text and said, well now this is how you know how she felt about her grandfather or something. I think maybe that would have helped us prepare for the writing better.

G: That’s actually what we did is that we were assigned to do the questions for homework, read it and do the homework and then, when we would review those questions in class, we would go back to the text and see why the answer is that, so I did appreciate that. I would have like if we had read a little bit more in class – we didn’t read at all in class besides that part. I would have liked if we would have done a little bit of that at least just to go over the more tricky parts, but.

R: I mean, yeah, with something more complicated came up, it’d be nice for him to kind of describe how it was a complicated sentence and these are the elements of it to break it down, but I’d say in general, we basically sat in a circle and each person would read 6 sentences. I mean, I appreciated it, it even helped phonetically just to hear other people speak German, you know, and so I think it helped my reading comprehension, but I feel like the weight to interpret things was largely placed on us without any form of reaffirmation. The homework wasn’t due, we did the grammar from the textbook, but there was no specific homework that we had to turn in for the story or no way for really validating that we had the correct interpretation of things.
J: Did you have online discussions?

R: It was like, describe your favorite figure. And I mean, I’m not saying that we just completely B.S.ed that, you know but

(Laughter)

J: Should I stop the recording?

R: No, no, no, no, no (laughing) but what I mean is like, it’s really easy to extract simple, simple, like that’s nowhere, like okay, the father’s talked about here or rather the grandfather, so you can draw on these point instances and formulate something. But to understand that content of an entire chapter is much different than write something about the grandfather, you know, why do you like him? The other things is that that’s objective information as opposed to, what did the grandfather do to make Christl like him so much? That’s a completely different type of question.

M: I realize that I probably, I have only 3 classes, so I probably have more possible time available than people who have 5 or 6 classes. But I think if there’s some way that we could have literally been more on the same page, rather than just doing it in class, because I mean quite honestly, a lot of people I don’t think had read it until we got to class and that makes me think we can’t discuss anything and in the story there are actually some, if you were reading it in a literature class, you know, there’s some pretty heavy irony in places that you know that it’s the narrator looking back and saying it even though mostly everything is as if she’s telling it from the eyes of a child. And it would have just been interesting to discuss it on that level instead of what do these three words mean.

R: Yeah, it would have been, I feel like it was a big assignment too, you know, in that, I devoted what time I could to it, but yeah, like for example this week, there’s 2 days that I haven’t slept. So actually

G: Yeah.

E: Yeah, same here.

R: this class has been my least workload so far and I’ve kind of acclimated to that, so this was a big difference. You know, I just picked up another class halfway through the semester. I mean, like, my schedule made it very difficult to spend, like if this were the only thing that I was doing, I feel like I could much more qualitatively sit down and just, like I don’t know if I would need him to reaffirm my interpretation of things for example. But for what I was able to put it to it and trying to balance everything, I just, it didn’t happen.

G: Yeah and that’s a good point. I would have liked to go through and try to translate every single word I didn’t know but I would have been reading a chapter for 3 hours. It just would not have been time efficient to do something like that at all.
J: Yeah, those are the realities. Just busy schedules.

M: And I was going to say, and I am concerned that we, you know, to move on to the next class, because I really want to take the literature class, you know, so I guess that’s one reason why I was trying to push and you know, do all of this on my own, rather than wait until we did it in class, but I think it is a big jump up from what we were doing in 103.

R: Well yeah, for example this isn’t a children’s book. It’s just not.

G: This is not Struwwelpeter.

R: Yeah, yeah, so I mean..

J: No pictures?

R: No, well I mean that’s okay, it’s just exponentially more words, you know. Like the error propagates. If you just get each sentence just a little bit wrong, you know, like, there have been some conversations I’ve had with other students in the class where we had major inconsistencies as far as what we thought had happened. And it took [the instructor] to come by and say, no, you know, this happened, not this. And even if we had the text in front of us and we were pointing things out, the point is, as students, neither of us could say that we actually knew that we were correct. I don’t know, that was just the impression that we got.

E: It’s very hard sometimes, because I feel like sometimes you’re just reading and you’re reading quickly. You skip a “keine” or a “nicht” and that’s the complete opposite. Like for the not the subway, but the trolley, like they didn’t take that because it wasn’t working, but like I missed that part where it said that they didn’t take it, so I thought they did. So I was like, they did take it but then they went by foot? And there would be parts like that where I was just kind of shaky on that because of..

J: But then when you noticed trouble, then you were able to go back?

E: Most times, the other parts were like, I’d talk to someone else and they’d be like, no, this happened, and I’d be like, really? Okay.

R: I mean, at the same time though, if it wasn’t challenging, if there was no learning curve than it wouldn’t be a memorable experience, like I wouldn’t remember these words that I had to look up and fight with the sentence to make it make sense. Like there needs to be a learning curve to make it stick. It just seemed a bit steep.

G: I wonder if you could just like teach a lot of the different vocabulary, like have a vocab quiz so to speak on some of the major words that are going to be in the story, if that would help maybe in understanding the book a little bit, just so like, a lot of these words that I read were completely new to me, I hadn’t seen them, I hadn’t even seen them before. And maybe just seeing them before on a vocab quiz or something would help me to get a lot more out of the
book. But like he said, obviously you still want some challenging words in there or you’re not
going to get as much out of it, but I just, I don’t know, that might be a completely stupid idea,
but.

R: Yeah, I mean, I suppose one thing that took really getting used to is saying a lot of the cases
for example, like I think that there’s kind of a disconnect between our 103 and our 104. [The
instructor has] kind of assumed that we know it and we’ve covered it a little bit but I mean, it’s
something where I would recognize if something were in the genitive but I don’t completely
know how to do it myself. And resources are available to me that I can figure it out if I need to
do it, but it’s definitely not in my, the way that I look out and think about German, you know
that, it doesn’t really seem that it’s that available to me. But it’s something that was actively
used in the story, so I mean yeah..

J: Yeah.

M: We did have a sheet that had some vocabulary words for some of the chapters.

E: I really didn’t find that that particularly helpful.

M: I didn’t either.

R: Yeah I just used the dictionary when, cause I mean, really what it came down to was if I came
across a word that I didn’t know it was likely that it wasn’t in that and so uh, rather than looking
through that in the dictionary, I’d just type it in and you know find which case it was in and then
look at those interpretations. And I mean, that was definitely much more efficient, you know,
you’re looking up a word a sentence or every 3 sentences or so. So just statistically.

J: And let’s see. Other questions: so, in terms of learning, you’ve talked about being able to
practice relative clauses, all the new vocabulary pertaining to war and post-war Austria. What
would you say were other learning outcomes of this assignment, either grammatically or a more
holistic learning outcome?

R: I mean, I think that was one of the first times that we’ve really seen prepositions (prefixes)
used as opposed to just separable prefixes, and I don’t know if I completely understand that as
well, but I mean they were actively used in the story. So I can’t necessarily say that I extracted
how to use them or when one is appropriate versus the other, like that still sort of a tipping point
for me. But at the same time, I’ve become more familiar, if I was to hear it, I could interpret it,
it’s just that I don’t know if I could construct my own sentence that’s the correct preposition
(prefix?) especially when there seems to be a lot of things, in this case, we do this and in this
case, we do that, when it seems like if we were to interpret it in English, it would just be the
same thing.

(Silence)
J: It’s a big question, yeah, what did you learn?

R: German.

(Laughter)

E: I don’t know much else besides like relative clauses and more vocabulary.

M: And I think being more comfortable writing in the simple past. That definitely..

E: Yeah, maybe pronunciation too. Just reading in class was definitely a changer for speaking out loud in German.

G: I mean a lot of the prepositions and all of the stuff like that, the more you see it, the better you get at it. And you saw it a lot in the writing and the reading as well, so like the more you practice it, the more you write it, the better you get at it, so I guess that’s what I got from it.

J: And in terms of the historical content or cultural content that the book was based on, do you feel more comfortable in that respect?

G: Yeah, I would say so. I definitely learned some stuff in there about Austria in 1945 and afterwards that I didn’t know before, so that was cool to use a story to relay that instead of just sitting in class being lectured at on post-war Austria. It was definitely more entertaining to do it this way as opposed to that method, so that I do appreciate.

M: I think it was interesting the difference that you saw in what was going on in the countryside versus where the population centers because well you know, economically, of course you have to bomb where there’s a whole bunch of people and I guess I just hadn’t thought about it in those terms and then, like in a lot of other situations, if you had the money, if you had the resources, you just moved away from that and your life wasn’t very much different. And that’s certainly the way it seemed for the people around them once they got to the villa.

E: I already kind of knew a lot of, like, WWII strain on people and culture and population, so it wasn’t like that new to hear, that you know, most of their diet consisted of potatoes. It was just kind of, meh, it wasn’t that new to me, but it was interesting to read about it.

J: Was it different reading about it from kind of a child’s perspective?

E: Yeah, definitely cause like looking back and knowing that she’s a child during this but you know she’s writing this as an adult and as an adult, she can really see those ironies like different parts that she- no child would understand that or know that.

R: My general perspective of things also hasn’t much changed, but it was interesting to hear it expressed through this medium and actually when I say that, I suppose I don’t even mean through a book, I mean in German. I mean, it seemed a lot more engaging as opposed to like you
go through the school system here and it’s just Civil War, WWI, WWII, WWI, WWII, some more civil war and it’s just like, you know, we go over all of these things, but it seemed engaging because it wasn’t just covering the facts as you knew them, I mean you had to-, like you’d read it in German, you’d translate it and then through translating it, it’d become memorable in German. I don’t know if that’s well articulated but..

J: Yeah, and I was thinking it kind of complicates too our understanding of WWII as well because I mean, how we’re taught is often United States as the heroes.

G, E, R: Yeah

J: and the Germans obviously as the bad guys, but yeah, when you talked about the SS-uncle that there is a lot of conflict and..

G: Yeah, that’s a good point too. I didn’t realize all the conflict. Obviously it’s in Austria so maybe it’s a little different than what it was in Germany, but yeah, there was a real mix of people who were pro-Nazi and then just completely hated the Nazis. That’s an impression that I never really read about before.

R: I mean, I guess like the naïve perspective is like the Germans, the Nazis, but I’ve known not to think in that way for quite some time now, like I’m used to like, I suppose that it wasn’t that, oh these people didn’t appreciate the Nazis and what they were doing and oh, these people feared the Russians, like that already made sense to me that just because an individual belongs to a country doesn’t mean that they commit themselves to that national, you know, um….

J: I guess I’m thinking more of the uncle who is the Nazi, but nobody wants to say if he’s good or bad and in that respect, somebody…

R: I mean, like I suppose it’s kind of, I don’t know like you could, I’m not saying, alright, I’m going to draw again an analogy, but I don’t mean to say that where we are at is anywhere like that, but you know, like I think there’s a lot of people who sign up and they join the military who don’t necessary, you know, they just join the military, it’s expected of them based on their culture, their demographic, you know, what their family-, and then it’s a process they go through without necessarily understanding the greater meaning of that, you know, what that represents, what that says about them, about their country, about their commitments, or what they believe in. I’m not saying that because they join the military that’s the case, but I think that somewhere in Nazi Germany, there’s people who did it because of the ramifications if they didn’t, the big stick, you know, there’s people who did it just for the benefits and there’s people who did it because they really believed in the Nazi motive, like they really supported that motive.

G: I really liked the Chapter 10 with the Nazi soldiers and they just go into the house and like they don’t do anything bad, they just chill, like, hey, we’ve got some potatoes, you want to fix them for us? And like they weren’t mean or anything, it’s just, I don’t know, it sort of brought
more of a human light to them. Generally when you think Nazi, you just think of mean people, but I don’t know, I just got more of a polite impression from them.

E: Yeah, it’s definitely like easy to group people in with like Nazis bad because of what they did, but you know, there’s a significant amount of people that you know, were forced to do that or it’s just like, they’re not entirely bad people, it’s just the government, it’s what they have to do.

J: A lot of topics and themes got brought up in this book. Those major themes, like the themes that you found most important, is that what influenced your story or was it the themes that you talked about in class maybe?

G: I think it was more where I could do the best job of adding something in and just like the place in the story where I felt could have been elaborated on is more of why I chose to do what I did as opposed to the themes.

R: And I mean, I would say like, right the big-, the reason that I wrote the way that I wrote, like I maintained historical perspectives so that it didn’t seem inconsistent because of the time or because of what the family has been through, but I didn’t draw on a specific circumstance. That girl that I was talking about, food, that was just a consequence of where they were at when they were there as opposed to a particular family. I mean, I suppose that right, they didn’t have all the Leberwurst because they weren’t associated with their country the way that other individuals were, but it was definitely a historical perspective. Yeah, ranting.

E: I definitely focused on the theme of the narrator really loving her grandfather, so that was my main point in my story to bring that up again.

M: I tried to make sure that the actions of the characters were consistent with what we did know about them and just wanted to leave it that, to leave them with unanswered questions at the end of that because it was a matter of who do you trust, who can you trust. In mine it ended up that the little boy, well you know the uncle and the mother were having a serious conversation, the little boy slips in and hits him over the head with one of the garden gnomes, and so he passes out and so they got to decide, are we going to trust what he’s telling them and have him help them somehow leave or I don’t know, do they leave and leave him there or whatever. But the little boy if you recall, you know he was pretty aggressively acting out with the cat in the doll buggy and also smashing in the windows of things, so it just seemed normal he would have escalated to the point of hitting this guy over the head.

J: What about the other characters? So one of the requirements for you was to introduce a new character into the story, how did you decide what character to bring in or how does your character fit in with the story?

E: I had her husband. It was all completely from the perspective of her husband. I just wanted to do that so you could actually get an outside view of the narrator. Like still keeping the same
format of kind of first, third person narrative, but you know, focus on the main character cause that was never really stressed in the book, cause she was, you know, just a child, she was just an observer, not really actively participating in this, whereas now you get to see her and what she’s doing, so.

G: I introduced a brother from the Engel or whatever, I don’t know why I really chose the brother. I was planning on doing the mother, but I guess that sort of seemed a bit too clique, so I just went with the protective brother instead who would have the same sort of opinions of what they did, I don’t know.

J: And teach your kids a lesson there.

R: I just had a stranger that they encountered in their travels. I mean, I didn’t even give him a name, but at the same time, we don’t even have the sister’s name or the father’s or the mother’s. I mean, I didn’t feel like that was a big difficulty or problem rather. It was more so the dialogue and the relation that took place. I guess how they related. It seemed like a less difficult situation because they had a positive outlook. They could go home, things should be better but at the same time, they were in a war stricken nation – things are destroyed, it’s not simple to just get back in the car and drive back to where you want to go.

M: By introducing the uncle, he had been mentioned I think twice before. Once in relation to the past and the other time when the little girl is telling the gardener next door that no, the Jews are not coming back. They’ve been burned up. Or they went up in smoke whatever she said. So those were the only times he was mentioned, so by bringing him there in the guise of being concerned about his parents and being very polite to the other woman, to the Jungfrau von Braun? But not trusting her. Trying to make it a little more complex character than you would – there’s this Nazi officer in the family, he must be terrible. Because I think, you know, as you were saying, there are different reasons why people would be in the military in any circumstance. So I tried to leave it kind of morally complex as to whether he was- whether they should accept the assistance from him or not.

J: Interesting. These sound so good! And I know you guys were all under busy weeks, but overall did you enjoy this assignment, this reading and the follow-up writing task? And why?

R: Though it was faster paced, I mean, right, we’ve spoken out against maybe it was too fast for our schedules or something like that, but at the same time, I feel like, I mean maybe it’s even my understanding of relative clauses now, but I feel much more comfortable speaking German and I’m sure that the reading helped that. I mean, it was huge, it consumed 4 weeks or 3 weeks, you know. Yeah, it was good. I liked it.

E: I definitely liked the creative aspect of the story. Instead of some sort of structured homework assignment for that, you’re able to like, you know draw from whatever character you want and
create your own story, which is very nice, very free, but still incorporate all the different things that we’ve learned: relative clauses, other vocabulary. It was good.

G: Pretty much exactly what I had to say. That’s pretty spot on. I mean, I like to read and I like to write, I don’t really like homework, but I definitely enjoyed both assignments, as much as I could anyway.

J: Enjoy with quotation marks.

M: You know I’m just always a little concerned when there aren’t options. Because I know in classes where you do have the option to do some sort of creative writing, some people really like that and others are just like: now what do I do? So I think it makes it harder. I wish there could have been another option.

R: Yeah, it’s definitely easier for me to respond than it is to sit down and think about what I want to say first before just doing an assignment, cause to me, it’s very goal-oriented right now, like what can I accomplish so that I can accomplish another thing, I mean I suppose that’s in corollary to my schedule but it is what it is. At the same time though, I feel like this Schreibaufgabe was structured enough that I guess, like you had to introduce a new character for example, it’s not just completely arbitrary but it was structured enough that you are responding to a story. It’s not just like, write a story about Germany during the 2nd World War, or excuse me Austria and this family. It’s, you’ve read 10 chapters, continue it. And it’s not that difficult to put a little bit more in, to say where they went, what they did when you’ve got all this information about them. Even if it wasn’t completely understood, you’ve got to have some factually correct stuff if you’re trying whatsoever.

J: Are you guys curious what happens at the end?

G: A little bit.

R: Kind of but there’s another 15 chapters at least, right?

J: Really?

R: I think that in the back there’s Kapitel 25 that they had vocabulary for it, so

G: Really?

R: Yeah.

G: Wow.

E: I read the Wikipedia page on how it ends.

R: I didn’t even check on Wikipedia.
E: Yeah, it was kind of hard to find, but I found that, I was like, oh.

M: In German?

E: Yeah

R: Yeah okay.

J: Well there you go. He’s got the spoiler alert for you guys if you want. Okay, well yeah.

R: I know that she doesn’t die, I mean..

J: That’s funny. Well I think that you guys have given me a lot of good stuff. Thank you so much for coming.