

AAUSC 2008 Volume

Conceptions of L2 Grammar:  
Theoretical Approaches and their  
Application in the L2 Classroom

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## Chapter 10

# Developing Advanced Formal Language Abilities along a Genre-Based Continuum

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## Introduction

One of the central and long-standing characteristics of most collegiate foreign language (FL) departments is the division between so-called language courses at the lower levels of instruction and so-called content courses at the upper levels. This division has been widely discussed (e.g., Byrnes, 1998; James, 1989; Maxim, 2006; Swaffar & Arens, 2006) and, in light of the recent MLA report (2007), now enjoys more prominence and priority than ever before. Nevertheless, very few departments have actually been able to overcome this pernicious organizational structure in any systematic and substantive way.<sup>1</sup>

This departmental division or “bifurcation” (Byrnes, 1998) manifests itself in many ways and is perhaps no more obvious than in how departments approach formal language instruction. At the lower level, instruction typically consists of an introduction to the grammatical canon within a communicatively oriented framework in the first year and then a thorough review and slight expansion of the canon within a more textual- and theme-oriented second-year course. In both years, but particularly when a commercial textbook forms the basis of a course, grammar predominates as the central sequencing and organizing principle for material. Of course, many instructors and coordinators strive to link form and meaning at the lower levels, but the challenge remains being able to do so in a consistent and systematic fashion from year to year.

In contrast to the lower level and its explicit focus on formal instruction, the upper level in most FL departments makes a pronounced shift toward courses with specific content foci but without any substantive or systematic attention to learners’ language acquisition (Byrnes, 2002a; Byrnes, Crane, & Sprang, 2002). Instead, the focus has been on content acquisition in a more or less random order under the assumption that learners have a foundation in the language from their lower-level FL courses that is robust enough to handle essentially all content areas.

The realities of collegiate FL learning indicate otherwise. Not only do collegiate learners need additional attention to language learning at the upper level, but the approaches typically implemented for promoting learners’ advanced language abilities need considerable refinement. For example, collegiate learners are often encouraged to spend time abroad to develop their language abilities further, but as researchers on study abroad have demonstrated, the acquisition of advanced language features is not automatic in a study-abroad context and can depend on length of stay—a luxury that not all collegiate FL learners can afford

(e.g., Isabelli, 2004; Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey, 2004). Furthermore, Kagan and Dillon (2004) argue that even heritage learners who have completed a significant amount of schooling in the target culture need explicit attention to language acquisition, rather than additional time in a naturalistic immersion setting, to develop their language abilities further.

Another common approach is to develop context-independent grammar or stylistics courses to bridge the gap between the expectations of lower- and upper-level instruction. Whereas the rest of upper-level courses have a specific content focus, these form-focused courses have the goal of covering discrete grammatical or discursive features with the idea that these features can then be applied in any of the subsequent content-oriented courses. In addition to the statement that advanced grammar and stylistics courses make about the lack of articulation between lower- and upper-level instruction, attending to advanced language acquisition in any substantive way only within an advanced grammar course does not fully take into account the (con)textual nature of language use that permeates all levels of language use and that inherently requires grammar to be inextricably linked to meaning, and function to form. It is ironic that at the place in the curriculum where there is so much context—namely, in the content-oriented courses of the upper level—there is so little systematic attention to form.

## Grammar as a Resource for Meaning Making

That grammar, particularly at the upper level, continues to be examined in these context-independent settings reflects the pervasive and still influential notions of language as a rule-based system. In other words, the implication of a course that presents grammar outside of a meaningful context is that language is a system of rules that the individual learner must acquire to form meaningful utterances.

In the meantime, a wealth of scholarly work, particularly within the fields of systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) and sociocultural theory, has approached language differently. This vein of research argues that, to quote a central principle of SFL as stated by its leading figure Halliday (1994), language is a “system of meanings, accompanied by forms through which meanings can be realized” (p. xiv). For SFL, language remains a system, yet one that is inherently meaning-based, rather than rule-based. This prioritization of meaning does not dismiss the existence of rules in language, but it does stress that rules serve as a resource for meaning making rather than as an end unto themselves. Language learning then becomes not an individual rule-based activity but rather an activity that is usage-based, functional, and social in nature. Furthermore, the units of analysis for accessing language are not isolated sentences but rather texts, for it is within or as a text that language becomes meaningful. Texts do not appear in a vacuum, however. To analyze a text also requires analyzing the context in which it appears, reiterating once again the centrality of context for language use and analysis.

A functional and socially oriented approach to language, therefore, has significant implications for grammar study. If the object of study is no longer isolated rules but rather how language is actually used and functions, then contexts

of language use and their textual manifestations need to be identified, thematized, and featured in instruction. Central to such an instructional approach are the notions that language use changes depending on the setting in which it is found and that a good part of language teaching and learning entails determining and ultimately incorporating the appropriate language choices for specific contexts. Instead of assuming that an additive approach of "more and better" is the appropriate instructional path for language learners, an ability to recognize how language choices change, depending on the context, becomes a central instructional goal.

This notion of changing language use and choices is perhaps no better explicated than in the discussions about language use in public versus private settings. Gee (1998, 2002) discusses the range of interactional patterns and activity types that constitute language use and distinguishes between primary discourses of familiarity and secondary discourses of public life. Children acquire primary discourses as they become socialized into the private sphere of their families and friends. Consequently, primary discourses are mostly oral, concrete, experiential, intimate, and interactively situated. As children enter formal schooling, they gradually learn various secondary discourses that can be found in public, institutional, and professional settings (i.e., beyond the intimate sphere of their family). Explicit teaching of the discourses of various academic disciplines—history, math, social studies—and the many genres they represent becomes particularly important at postsecondary levels of education (e.g., Schleppegrell, 2004).

This continuum between primary and secondary discourses can also be explicated linguistically based on the distinction Halliday (1993) makes between two semiotic practices: one associated with highly situated and often interactive oral activities of daily life, and the other associated with written and public language. The first, referred to as a congruent form of semiosis, conceptualizes reality in terms of actors and actions and, being verb-based, emphasizes function, process, and flow. The second, a non-congruent or synoptic form of semiosis, construes human experiences as objectified knowledge. Heavily based on nominal patterns, it emphasizes stasis, structure, and "thinginess." Literate adults are able to employ both semiotic practices as they participate in various situations along the continuum between private and public contexts.

One of the key distinctions between the two types of semiosis becomes particularly evident at the lexico-grammatical and clausal levels and involves a shift from the verbal to the nominal paradigm. More than merely acquiring abstract nouns or specialized vocabulary, this shift is described by Halliday and Martin (1993) as a cognitive-linguistic phenomenon that emerged with the development of modern sciences in an attempt to objectify the world around us for analysis and manipulation. Perhaps the most common linguistic strategy that marks the shift to the nominal paradigm is the use of nominalizations to transform processes, as expressed by verbs, into nouns that can then be described and analyzed (e.g., "after the meal" versus "after we ate"). The development of advanced language abilities, therefore, requires helping learners make the cognitive-linguistic transition from interactively driven, experiential expression into metaphorical and objective realms.

## Organizing Curricula according to Genre

In addition to situating language use on either a primary–secondary continuum or a congruent–synoptic continuum, a third, closely related way to approach this continuum is in terms of genre. Defined here as a "staged, goal-oriented purposeful activity with its own schematic structures" (Martin, 1985, p. 251), genre is a way of conceptualizing language use that takes into account its conventionalized, socially situated, and culturally anchored nature. In turn, because a genre is tied to a specific communicative situation and purpose and is structured in a way that is understood and recognizable by those most familiar with its use, its particular structural properties, from the macro, textual level down to micro, word level, can be identified and analyzed.

At the same time, genres do not necessarily have inflexible properties. Indeed, choice and flexibility exist within a genre. Martin (1985), for example, points out that a given genre draws on various obligatory and optional strategies for its communicative purpose to be achieved successfully. In other words, there are certain steps that one is required to take to successfully carry out a particular communicative event, but there are also a finite number of voluntary steps that would be considered culturally accepted and appropriate for that event. However, the choices available within a genre are limited by the conventions that have become culturally valorized for that specific communicative situation. Bakhtin (1986) remarked on this balance between prescription and choice within a genre by arguing that subverting a genre and flouting its conventions becomes possible only after the patterns of a genre are mastered. This view of genre is important because it supports a reflexive examination that questions the underlying assumptions and ideologies tied to genres' production. As Hasan (1996) proposes, learners should be encouraged "to ask why the said is being said, what it implies, and on what grounds . . . ; whose point of view does the writing represent . . . ; why it [the text] is structured the way it is; [and] what would change, for whom and at what price, if the structure were to be changed" (p. 411).

Genres would appear to have compelling pedagogical applications, but the range, type, and number of genres are so immense that some framework is required to organize, sequence, or categorize them. One way to organize genres is to situate them along either the primary–secondary discursive or congruent–synoptic semiotic continuum. For example, a communicative situation involving one's close friends, such as a personal recount of a particular event, would be a primary discourse that would most likely rely heavily on the verbal paradigm to make meaning. In contrast, a more public situation, such as a university lecture, would be a secondary discourse that would most likely consist of more nominalizations in an attempt to objectify the subject matter and comment on it.

As a way of conceptualizing genre even further, Grabe (2002) proposes that genres can be categorized as either one of two macro-genres or genre families: narrative or exposition. Central characteristics of a narrative include sequences of events typically chained together causally, characterization, and a protagonist's perspective. In addition, Grabe (2002) cites the seminal narrative analysis by Labov and Waletzky (1967) to further define a narrative as consisting of "settings,

characters, initiating events, episodes, conflicts, emotional feelings, outcomes, resolutions, and evaluations" (p. 252). Expository texts, meanwhile, "provide ways of framing our knowledge of the world, synthesizing diverse sources of knowledge, classifying and categorizing our knowledge in various hierarchical (rather than strictly sequential forms), and representing what we have come to know in conventionalized discourse structures" (p. 252). Grabe (2002) then points out that not only do the purposes of each macro-genre differ, but so does our engagement with them. Whereas we typically interact with a narrative by reviewing the plot sequence and drawing inferences based on actions or ideas in the text, with an expository text we usually synthesize information, which often results in reconfiguring our existing knowledge structures.

In his affirmative response to Grabe, Martin (2002) offers further guidance in grouping genres by proposing viewing genres topologically—that is, by positioning them along a continuum of similarity and difference. He argues for a topological, rather than a typological, perspective because it "allows for the possibility of fuzzy borders, a notion that is probably critical to the plausibility of narrative and exposition as encompassing macro-genres" (p. 270). Also referring to a topology of genres as a "learner-oriented pathway," Martin presents as an example a topology of secondary-school history genres that spans, at one end of the spectrum, from the "personal recount" to the "multi-sided discussion" and eventual "deconstruction" at the other end of the spectrum. Martin characterizes this continuum as moving from "common sense experience of naive apprentices through to mature construals of history informed by contemporary critical history" (p. 271). Furthermore, this continuum "highlights major steps in learning given the new kinds of semiotic resources that need to be drawn on to construct the genre" (p. 271). In terms of Grabe's distinction between narratives and expositions, Martin sees the initial genres along this learner pathway (e.g., personal recount, autobiographical recount, biographical recount) as belonging to the narrative genre family. With the next three genres (historical recount, historical account, and factorial explanation), Martin sees the lines blurred between narrative and exposition, which is to be expected in a topology. The remaining genres on the continuum then adhere increasingly to the conventions of exposition, culminating in the aforementioned sophisticated and public genres of multisided discussions and deconstructions of historical phenomena.

In addition to offering a systematic way to view language use and choice, these three different, yet closely related continua for conceptualizing and sequencing genre (primary–secondary, congruent–synoptic, narrative–expository) are particularly relevant for collegiate FL education in general and for collegiate curriculum construction in particular, because they provide a highly efficacious principle for organizing instructional content that is a socially situated, meaning-based alternative to the traditional grammar-based approach. For example, the beginning instructional sequence would consist of topics/content areas in which primary discourses figure prominently. As the carriers of the content, the texts that need to be selected for beginning instruction must then exemplify primary discourses. A newspaper report on a particular individual would not be as appropriate for the beginning level, for instance, as a personal, more private recount of

that same individual. Such a discourse- and genre-oriented approach to text selection and sequencing can be applied across the entire curriculum to articulate content foci and language acquisition goals.

## Educational Setting for Developing Advancedness

Such an approach for conceptualizing language use as well as text selection and sequencing has served as the theoretical framework for the integrated undergraduate curriculum in the German Department at Georgetown University. No longer distinguishing between language- and content-based courses, the curriculum consists of five levels that move from primary to secondary discourses and that integrate language and content via oral and written textual genres selected for their appropriateness for a given curricular level.

In addition to the genre-based continua for guiding text selection and sequencing, the integration of language and content throughout the four-year program, and the close articulation of learning goals across curricular levels, the department has found a genre-based pedagogical approach extremely beneficial for enabling learner progression across the curriculum and achieving literacy-oriented learning goals. Developed by systemic–functional linguists interested in genre theory (e.g., Halliday, 1994; Martin, 1985, 1997, 1999; Martin & Rose, 2003; Rothery, 1996), genre-based pedagogy provides a particularly effective way for learners to become familiar with understanding the meaning–form relationship instantiated in genre and making situationally appropriate meaning within genres.

The pedagogy itself is conceived as a teaching–learning cycle that consists of three phases: modeling, joint negotiation, and independent construction. Modeling is characterized by the presentation of a textual genre and a discussion of its purpose, social function, and context of production. In addition, learners analyze how the genre is structured into stages and how the genre's purpose is realized linguistically at each stage. Joint negotiation involves the scaffolded examination and consideration of the resources and information needed to reproduce the genre. In the third phase, learners independently construct their own versions of the genre.

Reflecting both the ongoing nature of curricular work and the collaborative nature of the curricular reform process in the Georgetown University German Department, during the 2004–2005 academic year several instructors raised the concern that the six Level IV courses being offered were not as equivalent in terms of their acquisitional and pedagogical goals as they had been when they were first developed in the late 1990s. Because writing occupies a central place in the curriculum (Byrnes, 2002b; Maxim, 2005), an ad hoc committee investigated this issue and reached several important conclusions.

First, the strong focus on personal and public narratives in Level III should be gradually rather than abruptly phased out in Level IV to allow for a smoother transition from Level III to Level IV. In particular, the distinction between narrative and expository or analytical writing was seen as a helpful way to distinguish between writing tasks at Level IV and possibly to conceptualize the trajectory that writing development should take at Level IV.

Second, the narrative–exposition continuum and, specifically, the gradual shift from narrative to expository genres were highlighted as particularly advantageous ways to think of about development at Level IV.<sup>2</sup> To further refine this trajectory and to clarify the distinction between narrative and expository discourse, the departmental committee turned to Ryshina-Pankova's (2006a) systemic–functional linguistic analysis of written genres used at the upper level of the curriculum. In particular, her focus on the thematization patterns within a genre provided a clear way of identifying a text's discourse structure and, as a result, of situating it on a continuum. Drawing on the work of Halliday (1994), Ryshina-Pankova (2006a) defines theme as simply the first element of a clause and demonstrates that the themes within a particular genre adhere to a general pattern that can be used as one way of identifying a genre. For example, a text with greater degrees of narrativity will most likely thematize specific participants and temporal phrases to mark a chronology, and those themes will not necessarily be either grammatically or lexically complex. In texts that contain a greater degree of exposition, the participants become more abstract; there is an increase in the thematization of nominal structures (e.g., summarizing nouns, grammatical metaphors, noun clauses); and there is no longer the overwhelming presence of a chronology. This different thematization pattern is also marked by themes that are more grammatically and lexically complex.

Seemingly innocuous as the first element in a clause, theme—as Ryshina-Pankova (2006b) points out—offers a wealth of information for students and teachers for thinking about texts and form–meaning relationships within them. In addition to providing clear criteria for determining where a text might lie on the narrative–expository continuum, theme is the point of departure for a clause, the place where interpersonal and experiential meanings are realized. Equally important, for a text to “make sense” in its particular context (i.e., to be contextually coherent), its themes need to construe the meanings that are central to the achievement of its communicative purpose. In other words, if the first element of the clause is occupied by concepts or participants that are not relevant to the communicative goal of the text, then that text will most likely not be very successful. Finally, at the local level, theme can act as a cohesive connector between previous and following discourse.

The investigation conducted by the Georgetown University German Department ultimately reached a consensus on the nature of Level IV and provided a helpful guide on how to identify, select, and sequence texts to serve as models for writing assignments in Level IV. The next step in the process was to make specific changes to certain courses to bring them into line with this updated conceptualization of the level.

## Redesigning an Upper-Level Course along the Narrative–Expository Continuum

One Level IV course that was identified as needing some revision according to the newly stated level profile was “Berlin Stories.” Providing an overview of the city of Berlin from 1918 to the present for students who have completed 18 credit hours of

college-level German (approximately 225 contact hours at Georgetown University), the course explores through various stories the many social and political changes the city has undergone in the last century.<sup>3</sup> In its former instantiation, the course was organized chronologically. However, the writing assignments did not follow the trajectory agreed upon at the workshops, and no textual genres had been selected to be featured as models for learners' own production.

To adhere to the guideline that Level IV is the level within the curriculum where learners move farther along the narrative–expository writing continuum to the point of beginning to develop their abilities to synthesize and analyze, genres that were to serve as models for student writing early in the semester needed to be more narrative in nature, whereas those models for writing later in the semester needed to reflect expository discourse structures. On the one hand, this trajectory provided a very helpful framework for selecting texts and developing assignments. On the other hand, the chronological approach to Berlin history restricted the time period when a particular genre could be located. Due in large part to the richness of Berlin's history, there is no shortage of textual genres from which to choose for any particular time period. At Georgetown University, four genres were identified as being particularly conducive to moving students along the narrative–expository continuum: personal letter, diary entry, film review, and literary analysis. Other texts and genres are read during the semester, but these four were chosen to serve as models for student writing.

The approach to all four targeted genres followed a similar process. First, at least two examples of each genre are read so that students can see variations within a genre. Following a genre-based pedagogical approach, instructors first guide students through a modeling phase consisting of four steps aimed at gradually increasing students' understanding of the content, context, schematic structure, and prominent lexico-grammatical features in the text. This first step involves, as Rothery (1996, p. 102) terms it, “negotiating field.” That is, the instructor explores with the students the specific content area that serves as the context for the instantiation of a particular genre. In the case of the personal letter, for example, both sets of letters were written from Berlin at the end of World War I. To fully appreciate these letters, students must become informed about the sociopolitical situation in Berlin at this time. In a L2 context, a key component of this step is building a semantic field of relevant lexico-grammatical items for this specific context.

Equipped with a basic understanding of the setting in which a particular genre was produced, students are then ready for the second step of the modeling phase—reading an example of the genre, thinking about its purpose, and identifying the different stages of the genre that function to allow the genre to achieve its purpose. This second step stays very much at the textual level and focuses on the structural properties of the text.

The third step explores the sentence-level phenomena of the text by focusing on theme and the thematization pattern in the text. While admittedly a new concept to L2 learners, theme, because it is the first element in a clause, is easy for students to identify. After underlining the themes, students are usually fairly adept at categorizing the themes and even formulating the pattern.

The fourth step goes yet another level lower by identifying specific lexico-grammatical features that figure prominently in the text and that are particularly relevant for portraying the specific topic and context of the text. These features are then added to the semantic field that was started in the first step of the process.

The goal upon completing these first four steps is that learners will have (1) an understanding of the content and context of the text; (2) an awareness of the structure of the textual model and the way in which the text's communicative purpose is realized through this structure; (3) an understanding of the text's thematization pattern; and (4) an expanding lexico-grammatical repertoire for discussing the text's topics and context. This procedural approach to texts is repeated with each example of the targeted genre and allows for a close, multifaceted engagement with the genre.

Armed with the elementary structural, topical, contextual, and linguistic properties of the genre, students are now in the position to begin the next two phases of the pedagogy—namely, negotiating and ultimately constructing their own version of the genre. To provide students with appropriate support for this instructional phase and to reiterate the features of the genre that were discussed during the modeling phase, instructors provide a detailed “task sheet” that outlines the writing assignment in terms of three foci: task, content, and language.<sup>4</sup> “Task” delineates the essential components of the communicative situation, including the communicative purpose, the schematic structure, and the intended audience. “Content” outlines the specific topics and issues that students are expected to address in the assignment. “Language” describes the specific linguistic features at the text, sentence, and word levels that figure prominently in the genre and that meet the demands of the situation. Significant class time is spent introducing the task sheet, and then students must submit an outline of their planned approach to the genre. Instructor feedback on the outline provides the guidance for students to write their first draft of the genre independently.

To elucidate this approach to textual engagement, the specific procedure implemented for each of the four targeted genres is presented here.

### Personal Letter

Situated in the first thematic unit of the course entitled “Berlin, 1918–1933: City of Conflict and Artists,” the personal letter was targeted as an appropriate genre on which to focus for two reasons. First, it clearly continues the strong emphasis on narrativity that students encounter in the preceding course, thus allowing for a smooth transition from one level to the next. Second, it is a genre that was quite popular during the time period. Specifically, two sets of letters were chosen for the course: the artist Käthe Kollwitz's (1992) letters from Berlin to her son on the western front during October and November 1918 and the writer Kurt Tucholsky's (1983) letters from Berlin to his friend and future wife Mary Gerold during the same time period.

Following the process outlined earlier in this chapter, students first familiarize themselves with the sociopolitical context in which the letters were written by reading a short social history of Berlin from 1918 to 1923. Based on that reading,

the class creates a comprehensive semantic field for the range of activities associated with Berlin during this time.<sup>5</sup> Next, the first set of letters is introduced, with specific attention directed at the eliciting students' expectations about the themes, issues, and tone that letters written by a mother to her son at the end of the war might contain. The letters are then assigned as homework, along with an accompanying worksheet. The worksheet serves the purpose of focusing students' attention on four points: (1) the leading issues raised in the letters; (2) the general tone of the author; (3) the communicative purpose of the letters; and (4) the general structure of the letters.

During the subsequent class discussion, the following conclusions are reached: The letters were written by a grief-stricken, concerned, agitated, and partially resigned mother to her only remaining son to show her love and support for him as well as to keep him abreast of issues in Berlin that are particularly relevant for him on the western front. Each letter adheres to a similar structural format of (1) expressing one's love and concern for the addressee, (2) bringing him up-to-date with the latest events, (3) catching him up on more local family- and neighborhood-related news, and (4) closing with further expressions of love, longing, and commitment.

To discover central linguistic features of the letters, the thematization pattern is analyzed by asking students to underline the first element in each sentence and to categorize those elements. As indicated in Table 1, most themes fall into one of three categories: specific participants (e.g., the author or the son), interjections, or temporal phrases.

In addition, the thematic development within each letter is very linear, which necessitates a fairly high use of textual connectors to link one sentence to the next. In German, one particularly effective way to achieve this connection is through inverted word order (i.e., beginning the sentence with something other than the subject and, therefore, having to invert the subject and the finite verb). Moreover, the themes themselves, regardless of the category to which they belong, are not lexically or grammatically complex. Finally, other lexico-grammatical items that are relevant for talking about this time period are added to the semantic field developed earlier (e.g., phrases such as “to reach a breaking point,” “something awful will come”). A similar approach is then applied to the letters by Tucholsky.

At the end of this examination of the letters, the students are given the task of imagining themselves in Berlin in 1918–1919 and of writing a letter of their own to a loved one. As the task sheet outlines, students are expected to adhere to the schematic structure of the letter, to write with solid knowledge and understanding of the sociopolitical situation, and to follow a similar thematization pattern as the one discussed in class. Within such an approach, form is not restricted to discrete grammatical points, although such topics as word order and temporal phrases are central to the assignment. Instead, form encompasses textual structure, lexicon, contextualization, and communicative purpose, all of which have their own grammar or system and must be attended to properly if the text is to be successful.



**Table 1**  
Analysis of Thematization Patterns

Genre	Personal letter	Diary entry	Film review	Literary analysis
<b>Model Texts</b>	Käthe Kollwitz, Letters to son on front, 1918 Kurt Tucholsky, Letters to Mary Gerold, 1918	Erna Becker, diary entries, 1937–1943 Karl Deutmann, diary entries, February 1945–April 1945	Film reviews of <i>Wings of Desire</i> (1987)	Analysis of Judith Hermann's short story "Bali-Frau" (1998)
<b>Thematization Patterns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific participants</li> <li>• Interjections</li> <li>• Temporal phrases</li> </ul> Linear thematic development → connectors	Becker <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific participants</li> <li>• Concrete aspects of daily life</li> <li>• Locative and temporal phrases</li> <li>• Explanatory, elaborative themes</li> <li>• Some linear thematic development</li> </ul> Deutmann <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locative and temporal phrases</li> <li>• War-time realities</li> <li>• Summarizing pronoun "it"</li> <li>• Specific participants</li> <li>• Less linear thematic development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific participants from film</li> <li>• Temporal phrases</li> <li>• Aspects of the film or the film itself</li> <li>• Evaluation/interpretive clausal theme</li> <li>• Linear thematic development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarizing words</li> <li>• Contrastive discourse markers</li> <li>• Linear development</li> </ul>
<b>Writing Task</b>	Letter from Berlin to loved one at war's end, 1918	Diary entries from Berlin at war's end	Film review of <i>Wings of Desire</i>	Analysis of the short story "Bali-Frau"

## Diary Entry

Thematized during the second instructional unit of the course entitled "The Imperial Capital, 1933–1945," the second targeted genre is the personal diary, a genre that was a common form of written expression during National Socialism and in the immediate years after World War II. Additionally, the diary continues the strong emphasis on narrativity, albeit with some variations (to be discussed later in this section). Two sets of diaries were selected for this unit: the diaries of a Catholic, Erna Becker (1996), who was married to a Jew and living in Berlin between 1937 and 1943; and the diaries of Karl Deutmann (1945), a German who experienced first-hand the heavy bombings of Berlin between February and April 1945.

Following the same process used with the personal letter, students first contextualize the diaries by learning more about the social, political, and military history of this time period. Based on their background readings from websites and a social history, they create a semantic field of key terms for this unit.

Next, their examination of the diaries' communicative purpose reveals in both cases the authors' intent to share with their imaginary readership, through a detailed portrayal of their personal hardships and struggles, the larger societal problems that many Berliners were facing. More of a challenge comes in establishing a schematic structure for the different entries. Differing in length and in focus, the entries nevertheless share the following general features: an immediate immersion in the day's situation/issue; a detailed account of the event(s); and a concluding thought or comment.

The analysis of thematization patterns proves highly informative in understanding in concrete terms how diaries can be composed. Whereas in Becker's diary the predominant themes are specific participants, concrete aspects of daily life, locative and temporal phrases, dominant themes of the day (e.g., "hate," "destruction"), and explanatory or elaborative themes (e.g., "although her father was a well-known personality"), Deutmann's entries contain very little thematization of participants. Instead, this writer thematizes locations and times of day, war-time realities (e.g., "bombings," "the bunker"), and the pronoun "it" as a summarizing device to refer to the preceding description in the entry. This absence of thematized participants in Deutmann's diary helps explain the students' comments that his entries are much more matter-of-fact, sober, and impersonal than Becker's. In addition, Deutmann's tendency to thematize events, locations, and times rather than people contributes to a much less linear thematic development than is observed in Becker's diary or in the personal letters.

Following this detailed examination of the diaries, students are asked to imagine themselves in war-time Berlin and to compose a diary entry about their experiences. Unlike the personal letter examples, which revealed a consistent thematization pattern in all cases, the different patterns observed in the two diaries allow students greater variation in how they conceptualize this assignment. Some opt for the more personal diary à la Becker, while others prefer the more montage-like reporting of Deutmann. In either case, the items that students thematize are crucial in establishing the proper tone for the type of genre they are producing.

## Film Review

In the fourth instructional unit, entitled "Berlin: A Divided City, 1961–1989," students have reached a point in the semester where, as in all Level IV courses, the shift from narrative to more expository discourse can begin to take place. A genre that has worked very well in different Level IV courses to bridge these two macro-genres is the film or book review. Consisting typically of both narrative and expository elements, the film review allows students to draw on their well-developed narrative abilities to render the events of the film, yet it also gives them the chance to comment on and evaluate those events and even to call upon the reader to see the film (or not).

In this unit, students view and discuss Wim Wenders's film *Wings of Desire* (1987) and then work with two reviews from leading periodicals as models for their own subsequent written review of the film (Althen, 1987; Oplustil, 1987). The first step of contextualizing the film involves exposing students to the realities of Berlin in the 1980s and, to some degree, the thematic tendencies of the director Wim Wenders.

The next step—identifying the communicative purpose of the review—rarely poses many difficulties for the students in large part because they are so familiar with this genre in the American context. That is not to say, however, that an American review and a German review are identical in purpose or structure. In fact, students are typically adept at observing that the two models are much more analogous to the reviews found in prestigious U.S. periodicals (e.g., *The New Yorker*) than the reviews that one might find in more popular publications or on websites. In terms of a schematic structure, the students are hard-pressed to find a format common to both texts, but they do tend to identify similar topics that both reviews address: the director, the setting (Berlin), the characters (the angels), memorable scenes (the opening sequence), technical aspects (camera work), and thematic issues (the role of history in contemporary Germany).

In their analysis of thematization patterns, students begin to see clear differences from their earlier analyses of the letters and diaries. For example, while specific people (e.g., characters, the director) continue to be thematized, many more aspects of a scene or event are thematized than just its participants (e.g., "filtered light," "the gaze of the angels," "voices in the street"). Reflective of the review's dual function of narrating and evaluating, some themes also consist of whole clauses that evaluate or interpret aspects of the film (e.g., "As amazing as this beginning is in actuality"; "By playing with the freedom of space and time"). As one might expect, the thematization pattern depends greatly on the purpose of the particular stage of the review. For example, the reviewers thematize characters in the film when they describe a particular scene. In contrast, when they comment on thematic or technical aspects of the film, they tend to thematize the film itself or whole statements that evaluate aspects of the film.

This shift in thematization depending on discursive function is a helpful feature for highlighting how language use changes as the communicative purpose changes. Also worth noting is that the themes themselves become more lexically and grammatically complex in the review, signaling a shift to a more sophisticated

discourse. All of these features of a film review are then included in the writing task sheet that asks students to compose their own review of the film.

## Literary Analysis

In the fifth and final instructional unit of the course, entitled "Berlin, the Federal Capital," one text read by students is the short story "Bali Frau" (1998) by the contemporary Berlin author Judith Hermann. In addition, students read an analysis of the story by literary scholar Magnus Schlette (1999), which then serves as a model for their own analysis of the text. As the final writing assignment of the course, reproducing this genre is seen as yet another step away from narrative discourse structures and toward exposition. By concluding with a short literary analysis, students are well-prepared for Level V courses in which this type of assignment is more commonplace.

As for engaging the text, the first step of contextualizing this story involves familiarizing students with the rich arts scene in contemporary Berlin and its counterculture tradition. In terms of identifying its schematic structure and communicative purpose, students note the linear thematic development within the text as the author moves from one topic to the next in his attempt to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the story. The thematization pattern offers students a very helpful view on how this genre differs linguistically from the narratives treated earlier in the semester. To begin with, the themes are noticeably more lexically and grammatically complex, particularly in that there is a high degree of abstract nouns. For example, Schlette writes:

Christiane's desire is very well-calculated . . . This monotony also corresponds to the melancholy, the suffering of the repetition. To be sure, the projected seduction dissipates in a chaos of drunkenness, impairment, and isolation: on the dance floor a woman is smashing her bloody head against the floor, an actress is having tormented sex with a stage hand, and Markus Werner, drunk and coked up, sways with a megaphone amongst the remaining guests, yelling about; the director had left a long time ago. But this turn of events changes nothing on the pattern: The excess is the latest attempt to break free from the incredibly monotonous daily life. In this tedious existence there is one exception, one true standout: the wife of the director, the Bali woman . . .

By using themes such as "monotony," "turn of events," "excess," and "tedious existence," Schlette is able to summarize a previous characterization with minimal wording and then devote the rest of the clause to commenting on the phenomenon just summarized. There are also other patterns at work in the analysis, including the thematization of contrastive discourse markers (e.g., "to be sure . . . But") that act to strengthen the author's argument. In other words, the students notice how the thematization patterns work hand-in-hand with the author's objective of making a convincing case for his analysis. It is interesting to see that the increase in nominalized themes confirms the arguments made in SFL that as texts become more formal and public in nature, meaning is made more through the nominal paradigm as authors look to objectify the content so as to comment on it.



## Conclusion

In presenting an upper-level course that uses the narrative-expository continuum as a criterion for text selection and adopts a genre-based pedagogy, this chapter argues for a view of grammar in which separating form from meaning is no longer viable. Perhaps no more evident than in the analysis of thematization patterns, the word choice and word order at the clausal level are vital to the successful achievement of a text's communicative purpose. Because form is so closely linked to meaning within a textual environment, a more appropriate way to expose learners to grammar is not through discrete rules, but rather through modeling of language in use. Without textual models and a systematic pedagogical approach for deconstructing the models, learners will be hard-pressed to draw any significant conclusions about language use on their own.

Moreover, the progression within a course is not dictated by intuitive notions about level of difficulty of specific grammatical topics, but rather by a genre-based continuum that moves the learner from private, informal ways of making meaning to public, formal modes. The grammatical focus of a course, then, is not arbitrary but closely tied to context and purpose. Not only does this approach keep form linked to meaning, but it also provides an organizing and sequencing principle for collegiate FL curricula.

There is no question that the practical implementation of an integrated approach to grammar is a long-term, never-ending process that is not immune to debate. Nevertheless, the FL profession would do well to consider seriously such an approach if our goal is to develop meaningful users of the language.

## Acknowledgments

This chapter is based on a presentation given at the AATG annual meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, November 2006. The author is deeply indebted to the volume editors as well as to two anonymous reviewers for their helpful editorial assistance during the writing of this chapter. He would also like to acknowledge the support of the German Department at Georgetown University during the development phase of the course described in this chapter.

## Notes

1. The German Department at Georgetown University (<http://german.georgetown.edu>) is one FL department that has been able to overcome departmental bifurcation.
2. I am grateful to Marianna Ryshina-Pankova for her help in understanding and conceptualizing these macro-genres for instructed L2 writing.
3. A copy of the course syllabus is available at <http://userwww.service.emory.edu/~hmaxim/teaching.html>.
4. A copy of a sample writing task sheet is available at <http://userwww.service.emory.edu/~hmaxim/publications/AAUSC09.pdf>
5. Copies of instruction materials (semantic field, reading worksheets) and translations of the model texts are available at <http://userwww.service.emory.edu/~hmaxim/publications/AAUSC09.pdf>

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