Linking L2 reading and writing through textual borrowing

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The centrality of reading for L2 learning

- A process for gaining access to cultural content and discursive practices that then can be appropriated by the reader-learner for meaning making

Underlying premises (1)

- Socio-cultural approaches to SLA
  - The central role of appropriation in the social learning process of the apprentice (e.g. Lantolf, 2000)
- Systemic-Functional approaches to SLA
  - The textual, contextual, and intertextual nature of language use (e.g., Halliday & Hasan, 1989)
- Genre-based & literacy-oriented approaches to SLA
  - The focus on conventionalized textual properties of genres and their lexico-grammatical realization (e.g., Johns, 2002)

Underlying premises (2)

- Departure from communicative language practices and the emphasis on developing individualistic self-expression, i.e, "saying it one's own words"

- Self-expression in terms of not just *how* one uses language but also on *why* one makes certain choices based on the purpose and context of use (Hyland, 2003)

Rethinking textual borrowing

- Units of inquiry
  - Texts as the meaningful units for developing learners' meaning-making abilities

- Vocabulary acquisition
  - Interrelationship between lexicon, grammar, genre, theme

- Explicit instruction
  - Meaning-based explicitness for developing declarative and procedural knowledge

Curricular manifestation

- Georgetown University German Department (GUGD)
  - Four-year integrated, literacy-oriented curriculum
  - Genre-based pedagogy
    - Explicit attention to generic textual properties and their lexico-grammatical realization (Byrnes, et al. 2006)
    - Explicit encouragement of textual appropriation --> "reading for writing"
  - Curriculum-embedded research
    - Development of syntactic complexity in writing (Byrnes & Maxim, 2005)
    - Coherence and cohesion in advanced-level writing (Ryshina-Pankova, 2006)

Research questions

- How much do learners borrow from their reading?

- What do learners borrow and why?

- Do learners' borrowing practices change over time?

Data source (1)

- "Intensive Advanced German"
  - Prerequisite: 12 credit hours of collegiate German (170 contact hours)
  - 5 contact hours each week = 70 contact hours total
  - "German Histories, German Stories" (1945 to present)
    - Public framing of personal narratives

Data source (2)

- 6 learners
- 4 writing tasks
  - Thank-you letter for care package
  - Personal narrative about fleeing East Germany
  - Public appeal for action ("Aufruf")
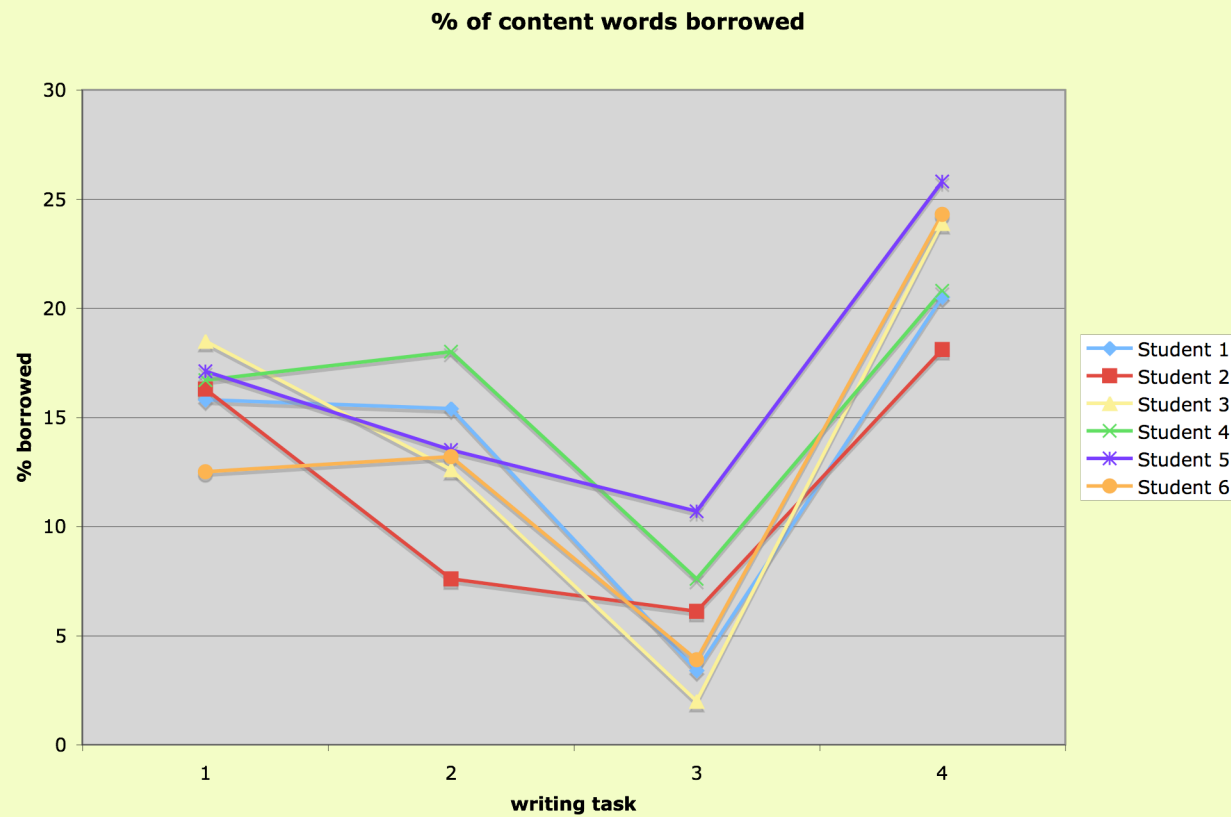 - Journalistic portrait of Vietnamese in Germany

Data source (3)

- Rough draft of writing tasks
- Recorded interviews with learners after each writing task
- Classroom observations
- Meetings with instructor
- Instructional materials

Instructional approach

- Narrow reading on a particular theme
- Attention to generic textual properties and their linguistic realization at the textual, sentential, and lexico-grammatical levels
- Creation and explicit use of text-based semantic fields
- End-of-theme writing task targeting a particular genre

Amount of textual borrowing

% of content words borrowed

Overview of writing tasks

Task	Textual model	Content basis
Thank-you letter for care package, Germany 1946		Multiple texts about post-war Germany
Personal narrative about fleeing East Germany	Narrative on same topic but from different perspective	Multiple texts about divided Germany
Public appeal for action	2 public appeals to East Germans, 1989	Learners' own research on topic
Journalistic portrait of Vietnamese in contemporary Germany	Portrait of 3 different minority groups in Germany	4 background texts on Vietnamese in Germany

Instructional approach, task 1 (thank-you letter)

- Content focus: Post-war Germany
  - 4 different personal narratives about post-war experiences
  - 1 descriptive text on care packages
- Language focus
  - Telling chronologies; indicating temporality
  - Semantic fields: War; destruction; suffering

Textual borrowing practices, task 1

- Temporal expressions
  - Subordinate clauses (after, before)
  - Adverbs of time
- Lexical items from semantic fields
  - Direct borrowings
    - "The city lay in rubble and ashes" (*in Schutt u. Asche liegen*)
    - "The care package reduced our suffering" (*Not lindern*)
  - Transformed borrowings
    - "The package reduced our *hunger*"

Student comments on task 1

"I had to rely heavily on the material, and we were specifically told that, if it fits best, we could directly quote from the text, because, you know, when you're learning, it's not plagiarism, you just learn the expressions. So, a lot of it came from the text and relying heavily on what was in the text, because otherwise I would have no idea what to say."

Student comments on task 1

"I remember, actually, first semester, we didn't have many texts, it was just kind of like, come up with it, and it was a lot more of a difficult experience, but with the texts, you already have an idea of what you're going to write and how you're going to say it, so it's a lot easier, so at that point, then, when you have the vocabulary and you have the phrases, then it's just a matter of coming up with your own idea and incorporating them into it."

Student comments on task 1

"Especially with vocabulary, because you're already talking about the theme, you know, because it's made to match, and so having especially specific vocabulary there forces you, you know, it's a lot easier to just, you know, if I didn't have the *Wortfeld,* I could think of ways to say it, but probably a lot more primitive, but with the *Wortfeld*, it helps my vocabulary a lot, and actually gets me to be more creative in thinking about different ideas, instead of just what my ready vocabulary can give me."

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Instructional approach, task 2 (personal narrative)

- Content focus: Divided Germany
  - 1 descriptive text about the Berlin Wall
  - 1 descriptive text with terminology of Berlin Wall
  - 1 personal narrative about fleeing the East
- Language focus
  - Indicating temporality; expressing opinion
  - Narrative structure (orientation - complicating action - evaluation - resolution; Labov & Waletsky, 1997)
  - Semantic fields: the Wall; escape

Textual borrowing practices, task 2

- Temporal expressions
  - Subordinate clauses
  - Adverbs of time
- Lexical items from semantic fields
  - "to attempt an escape" (*einen Fluchtversuch unternehmen*)
- Lexical items from model text
  - "he enlisted to serve the GDR"
- Lexical items from previous units
  - "taken prisoner"
  - "to order an execution"

Textual borrowing practices, task 2 (cont.)

- Narrative structure
  - Orientation
    - "**We were 3 friends**" vs.
      - "We were 3 friends"
      - "When I was young, I had 2 friends"
      - "When I was young, I was loyal to my family and friends"
      - "The Wall has fallen."
      - "I am writing to you at the end of my life."
      - "As you can see, this story is entitled '2 false friends'"
  - Complicating action
    - "**Then, one day, the unthinkable happened**" (paragraph initial) vs.
      - "Then, something so awful happened that it still bothers me to this day" (paragraph initial)
      - "And now I will talk about that awful night"(paragraph initial)
      - "One day Eberhardt and I fell in love with the same woman" (paragraph initial) … "The fatal night came, we tried to escape" (paragraph initial)
      - "Tuesday came to an end and I was at home. Then, the unthinkable happened" (paragraph initial)
      - "One day Max and I escaped over the border" (paragraph medial)
      - "Then, one day, everything changed" (paragraph final)

Student comments on task 2

"I like to deviate from the text, so you kind of learn to say the similar things different ways, and you know, make it your own. But I also wanted to make it the similar dramatic feeling, because it was so dramatic, like, that one incident was the key event."

"I had already borrowed some expressions, so I didn't want to borrow too much."

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Instructional approach, task 3 (public appeal)

- Content focus: German unification
  - Background text on the fall of the Wall
  - 2 public appeals by East Germans to fellow East Germans to work for a post-Wall democratic East Germany

- Language focus
  - Generic structure of public appeal (problem statement & call for action)
  - Rhetorical devices (imperative; 1st-person pronomical usage; direct address; strongly connotated lexicon; modal verbs expressing urgency; parallel sentence structure)

Textual borrowing practices, task 3

- Generic structure
  - Problem statement
    - "**Our country is stuck in a deep crisis**" vs.
      - "Our education is stuck in a deep crisis"
      - "Our wonderful cafeteria is stuck in a deep crisis"
      - "Our city has a big problem"
      - "Our country faces an epidemic that is quickly getting bigger"
      - "Time at college is a critical time for the development of young people"
      - "Today we live in a period of globalization with connections between countries and peoples unheard of in earlier times"

Textual borrowing practices, task 3 (cont.)

- Generic structure
  - Call for action
    - "**Either we can … Or we will have to … Let's take the first path**" vs.
      - "Either we can … Or we will have to … Our demands
      - "Either we can … Or students will have to … Let's take the first path"
      - "Either Georgetown … Or students will have to … Let's take the first path"
      - "Either we raise our own beef … Or we eat completely. Let's take the first path"
      - "Either we can … Or we can … Let's take the second path"
      - "Either we can … Or we can … Naturally we have to take the first path"

Textual borrowing practices, task 3 (cont.)

- Rhetorical devices
    - Imperative (6/6; mean=3.00; SD=2.19; ST=1)
    - 1st-person (6/6; mean=12.50; SD=8.02; ST=16)
    - Direct address (3/6; mean=0.83; SD=1.17; ST=1)
    - "Charged" lexicon (6/6; mean=4.50; SD=2.81; ST=13)
    - Modal verbs (6/6; mean=4.67; SD=2.07; ST=5)
    - Parallel structure (2/6; mean=0.83; SD=1.33; ST=1)

Student comments on task 3

"Rhetoric of text was very important"

"We were given a clear structure and then just plugged in information"

"The structure helped a lot, but I had to use the dictionary and *LEO* a fair amount"

"I missed the *Wortfeld* this time … I wrote it first in English and then translated into German"

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Instructional approach, task 4 (journalistic portrait)

- Content focus: Multicultural Germany
  - Statistics on immigration to Germany
  - Journalistic portrait of the three largest minority groups in Germany
  - Feature article on bureaucratic obstacles confronting immigrants
  - Satirical short stories by Turkish-German
- Language focus
  - Structure of a portrait (from private to public discussion of situation)
  - Indirect discourse
  - Semantic fields: immigration; citizenship

Textual borrowing practices, task 4

- Text structure
  - Private to public discussion (4/6)
- Lexical items from semantic fields
  - "to discriminate," "xenophobia"
- Lexical items from previous units
  - "then the unthinkable happened"
  - "stuck in a deep crisis"
- Lexical items from source texts
  - "early and late shift"
  - "to stab," "to injure," "prison"

Transformed borrowings from source text, task 4

Source text	Student text
"'Hello" and 'good night' were the first words that Tung could say in the foreign language"	"Tung knew almost no German when he came to Germany"
"Huyen's father was a contract worker in the GDR. Back then he had to leave his wife and daughters in Vietnam"	"When her father came to the GDR as a contract worker, his family could come along"
"Tung described the return to Vietnam as 'very good'. What did he particularly like about it? 'Talking with my grandparents and friends'"	"Tung was much happier during this time than the time in Germany"
"The mother told Tung that Germany was 'good', that one can live there 'normally', that the people are 'nice'"	"His parents said that he will have a better future in Germany"
"Because contract workers had to wait a long time after unification for permission to bring their families, Huyen came just 4 years ago to Germany"	"After unification they waited for permission to join their father and because of the bureaucracy Huyen came just 4 years ago to Germany"

Student comments on task 4

"When I could say it on my own and it would sound equally sophisticated, then I would say it on my own"

"If I find I am using too many words, I try to say it on my own"

"The more it was reviewed, the more able I felt to use it"

Summary of textual borrowing practices

- General familiarity with and appreciation for borrowing for helping them "say it right," "to the point," and in a more "sophisticated way"

- Developing ability to borrow independently of instruction and to manipulate borrowed items

- Desire to develop their own sophisticated voice in German but a recognition and appreciation for the role of textual appropriation in this development

Conclusions and implications

- Facilitation of textual borrowing through meaning-based explicit instruction --> consistent with findings on the role of depth of processing (e.g., Wesche & Paribakht, 2000), degree of involvement (e.g., Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001)
- Reading at this level by instructed learners remains primarily content-oriented, yet subsequent instruction and tasks lead to attention to language
  - Narrow reading supplemented by
    - Textually oriented tasks
    - Attention to linguistic realization of textual message (text & lexicogrammatical level)

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