

# Fostering advanced L2 writing: A longitudinal case study of curriculum-based L2 writing development

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# Longitudinal language research

- Long-term nature of SLA
- Development rather than achievement (Antonek et al., 2000)
- Dynamicity, variability, and non-linearity of SLA (Ortega & Byrnes, 2008)
- “Different, nested, levels of scale” (Larsen-Freeman, 2009, p. 584)

Longitudinal FL writing research

→ Complexity (e.g., Sasaki, 2009; Vyatkina, 2012)

# Curriculum-based FL learning

= Learning within a coherent, articulated program of study that allows for the development of ever increasing capabilities to make meaning within a disciplinary context (Byrnes, 2009)

Coherence and articulation in terms of

- Theoretical framework
- Pedagogical approach
- Disciplinary orientation
- Learning outcomes



# The *challenges* of collegiate FL curriculum-based writing research

Lower-level instruction	Upper-level instruction
“language” courses	“content” courses
“content-indifferent”	“language-indifferent” (Byrnes, 2009, p50)
“learning to write” “writing to learn language”	“writing to learn content” (Manchon, 2009, p3)

→ Absence of coherent, systematic learner pathway to support writing development

# Longitudinal curriculum-based FL writing development

Georgetown University German Department:

- **Syntactic development** (Byrnes, Maxim, Norris, 2010):
- **Relativization** (Byrnes & Sinicrope, 2008):
- **Grammatical metaphor** (Byrnes, 2009; Ryshina-Pankova, 2010; Ryshina-Pankova & Byrnes, 2013)
- **Thematization** (Ryshina-Pankova, 2006)
- **Clausal manifestation of advancedness** (Maxim & Petersen, 2008)



# Mapping content along a genre-based continuum II:

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(Maxim, et al., 2013)

Identify content areas whose primary textual representations exemplify the discursive focus targeted for a specific level

Level	Discursive focus (Coffin, 2006)	Content focus	Sample genres
1	Recording, recreating, recounting, narrating	Self-identity	Recount, narrative
2	Recounting, narrating, accounting	Coming of age	Narrative, fairy tale
3	Summarizing, expounding, explaining	Love & hate	Characterization, appeal, summary
4	Arguing, contextualizing, discussing, analyzing	Literary and non-literary expositions on cultural issues	Editorial, debate, interview, literary analysis



# Pedagogical foci, Levels 1-3

Lvl	Content	Genre	Field	Tenor	Mode
1	Self-identity	Autobiog recount	Recording who is doing what when/where/how	Evaluation of people/events	Thematization of participants & time
2	Coming of age	Narrative	Narrating who is doing what <i>to whom</i> when/where/how/ <i>why</i>	Multi-perspectival evaluation of people/events	Thematization of participants, time & cause
3	Love/Hate	Literary analysis	Explaining why and how characters and actions are portrayed	Evaluation of characters/ actions & their factors/ consequences	Thematization of cause & effect



# Quantitative research findings

(Maxim, 2014)

Based on the analysis of end-of-level genre-based writing performances on curriculum-embedded writing tasks for 6 measures of complexity (Mean length of sentence (MLS), Mean length of clause (MLC), Clause per sentence (CS), Coordination, Subordination, and Lexical Density),

learners' writing development approximated earlier research findings regarding syntactic and linguistic complexity (Byrnes, Maxim, & Norris, 2010; Cooper, 1976):

- Longer sentences
- Longer, more lexically dense clauses
- Fewer clauses per sentence at upper levels

BUT

- Unclear correlation between subordination/coordination
- Less than expected development from Level 1 to 2 and from Level 3 to 4 in some areas



# Limitations of group averages

(Larsen-Freeman, 2009, p. 585)

“Although a learner’s language production may not look qualitatively different from one time to the next, a learner’s language resources are always being updated quantitatively, in the learner’s registering the frequency of forms to which he or she is being exposed and which he or she employs thus increasing the probability of their future use. It is possible, though, that our view of development is obscured because our instruments are too blunt or that we are not looking in the right places.”

“Averaging group data has its limitations. Group data may often describe a process, or a functional relation, that has no validity for any individual (Sidman 1960).”

# Case study approach

Provides the opportunity to examine . . .

- Particularity (van Lier, 2005)
- Variability (Bulte & Housen, 2012)
- Systemic change (Larsen-Freeman, 2009)
- Local ecology (Ortega & Byrnes, 2008) → pedagogical effectiveness/teaching-learning dialectic
- Communicative success (Pallotti, 2009)
- Advancedness (Harklau, 2008)



# Research questions

1. Can a case study approach complement the existing quantitative findings to capture the dynamism of longitudinal writing development?
2. To what degree is the explicit genre-oriented, meaning-based pedagogical focus reflected in the learners' writing?



# Case study procedures

- 3 learners who completed levels 1-3
- Comparison of individual performances with group results on 6 quantitative complexity measures
- Qualification of complexity measures via Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) to evaluate meaning-making abilities (Byrnes, 2013; Ryshina-Pankova & Byrnes, 2013)
  - Ideational meaning: Transitivity pattern (MLS, MLC), taxis & logico-semantics (C/S, LD, subordination, coordination)
  - Interpersonal meaning: Evaluative language
  - Textual meaning: Thematization patterns
- Qualification of pedagogical effectiveness
- Examination of history and agency of learners via background questionnaire and post-performance interview

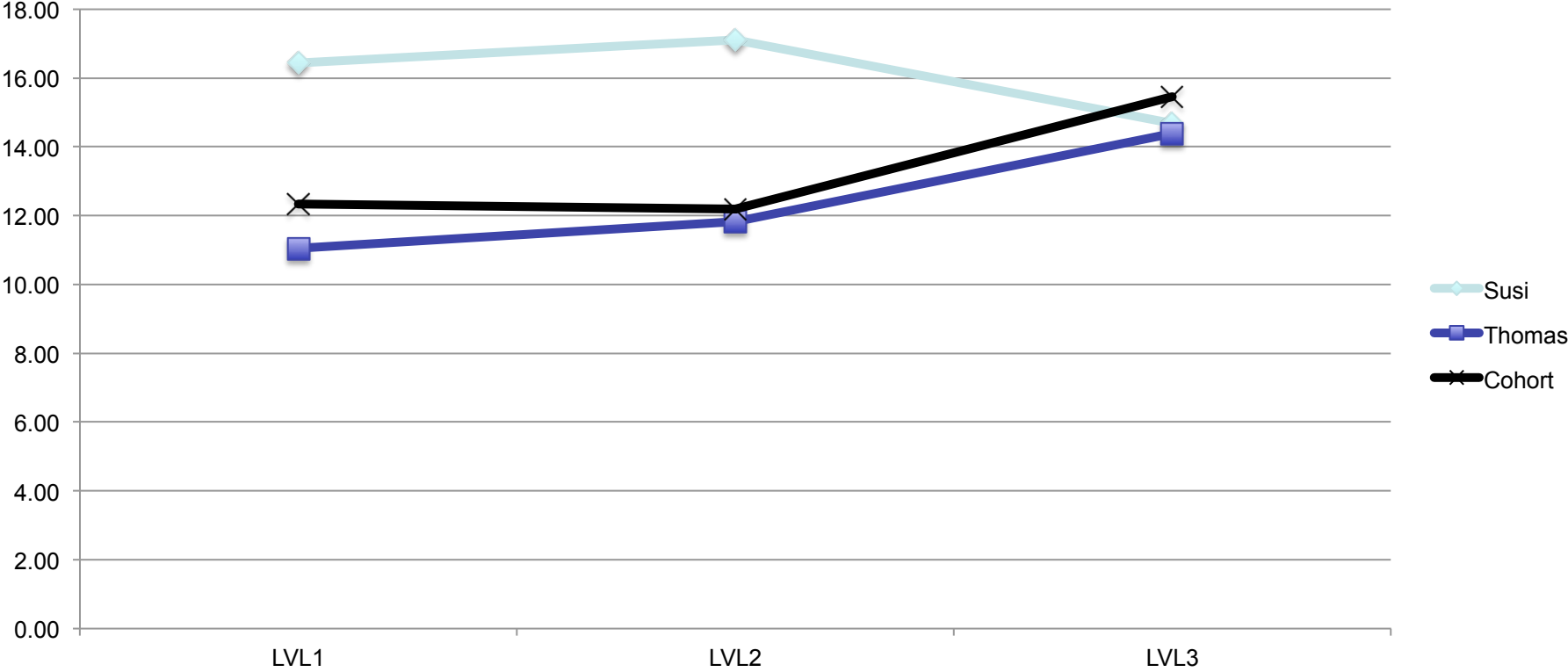


# Participants

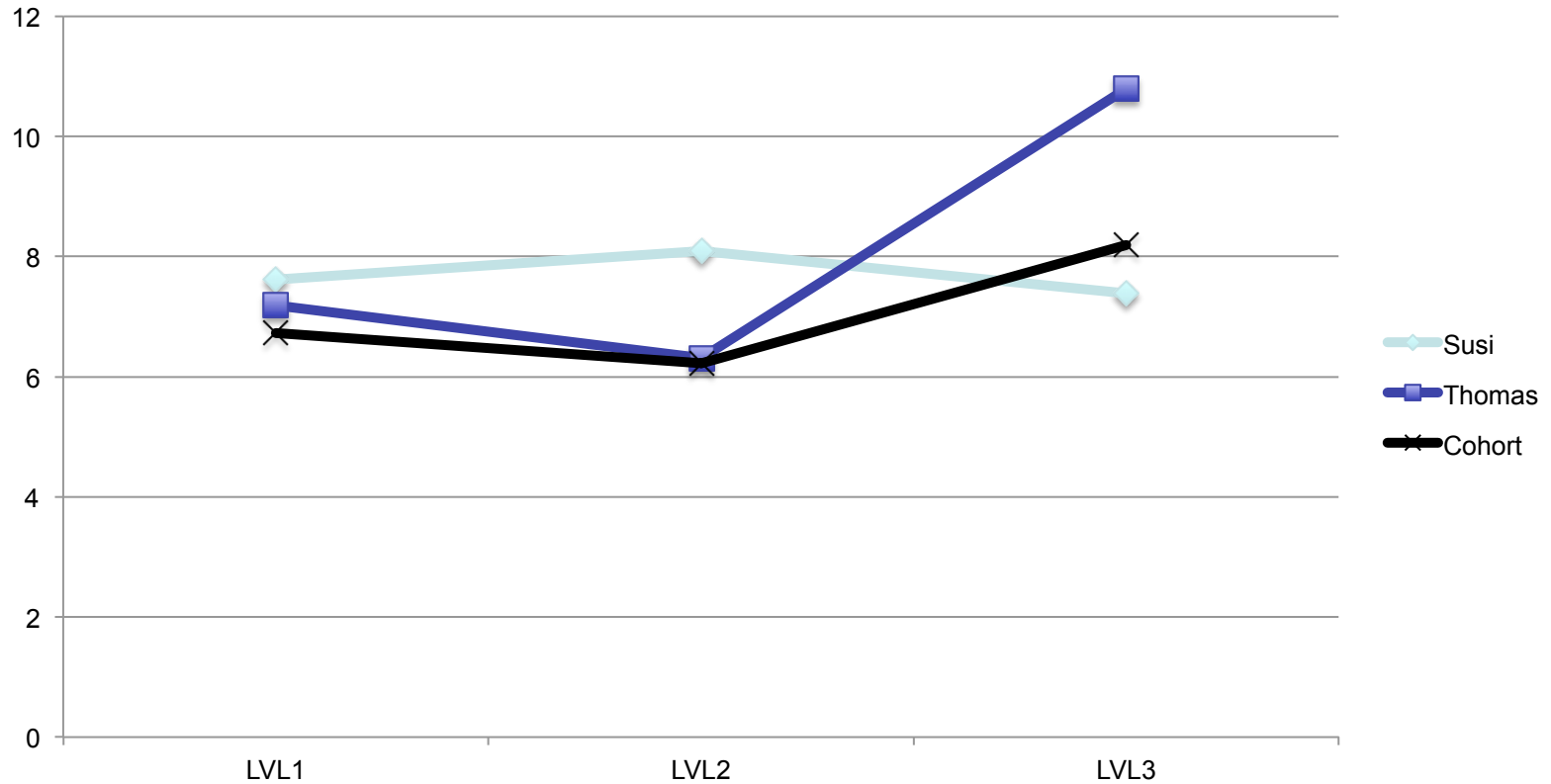
- Susi
  - Philosophy-Psychology/Linguistics double major; 3.89 GPA
  - Bilingual English-French; Mandarin-speaking grandmother
- Thomas
  - German-Anthropology double major; 3.95 GPA
  - German mother (10%); HS Spanish; 6-week study abroad in Austria
- (George)
  - Psychology major, German minor; 3.55 GPA
  - 3 years HS German (AP); placed into 102



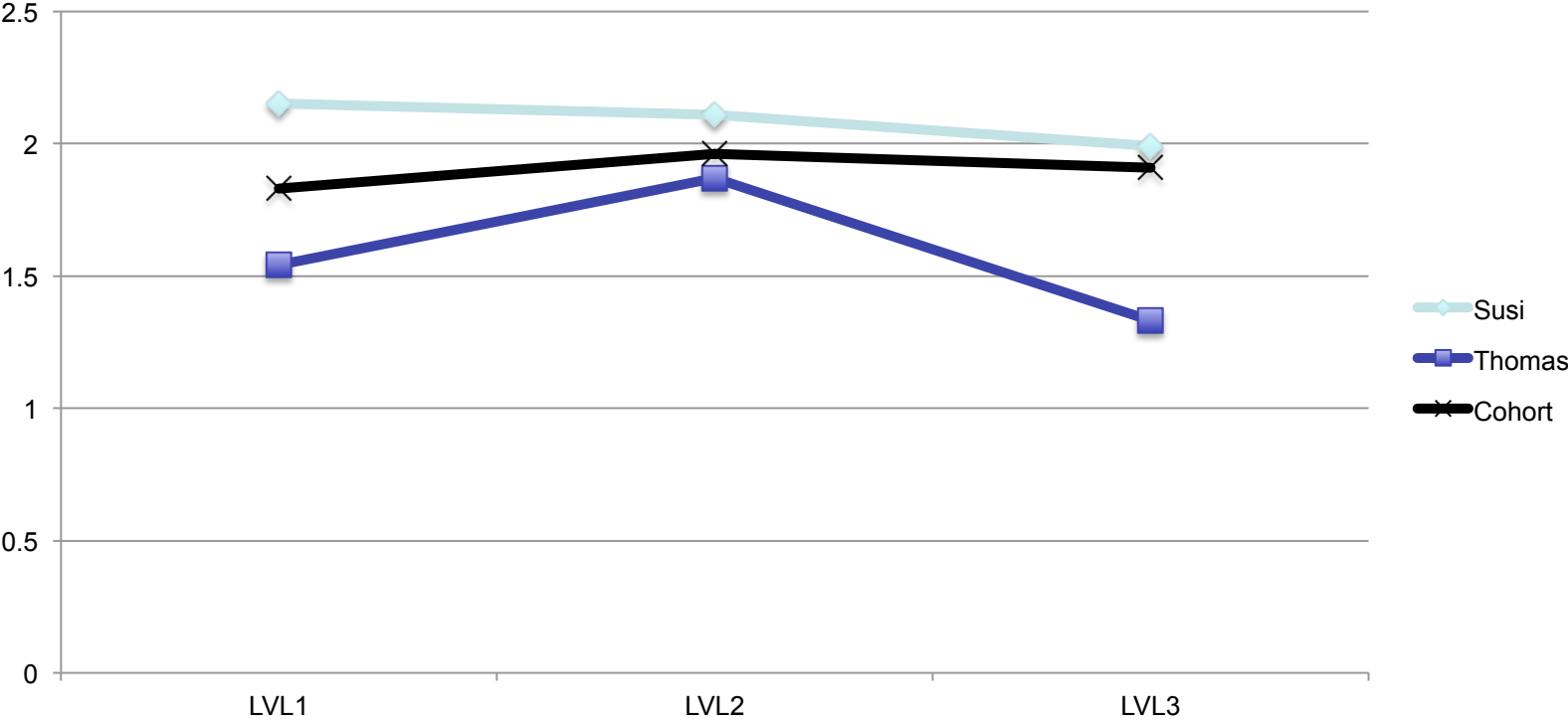
# Mean length of sentence (MLS)



# Mean length of clause (MLC)

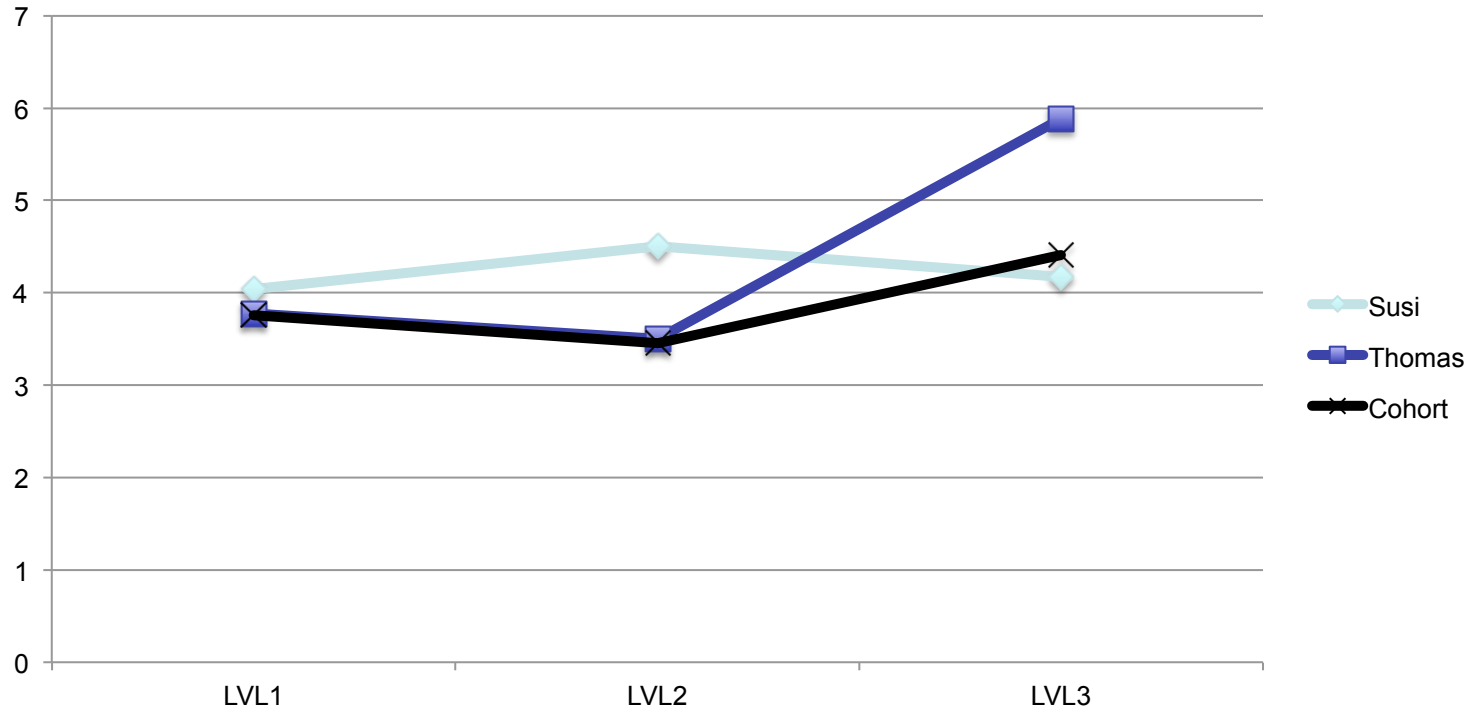


# Clauses per sentence (C/S)

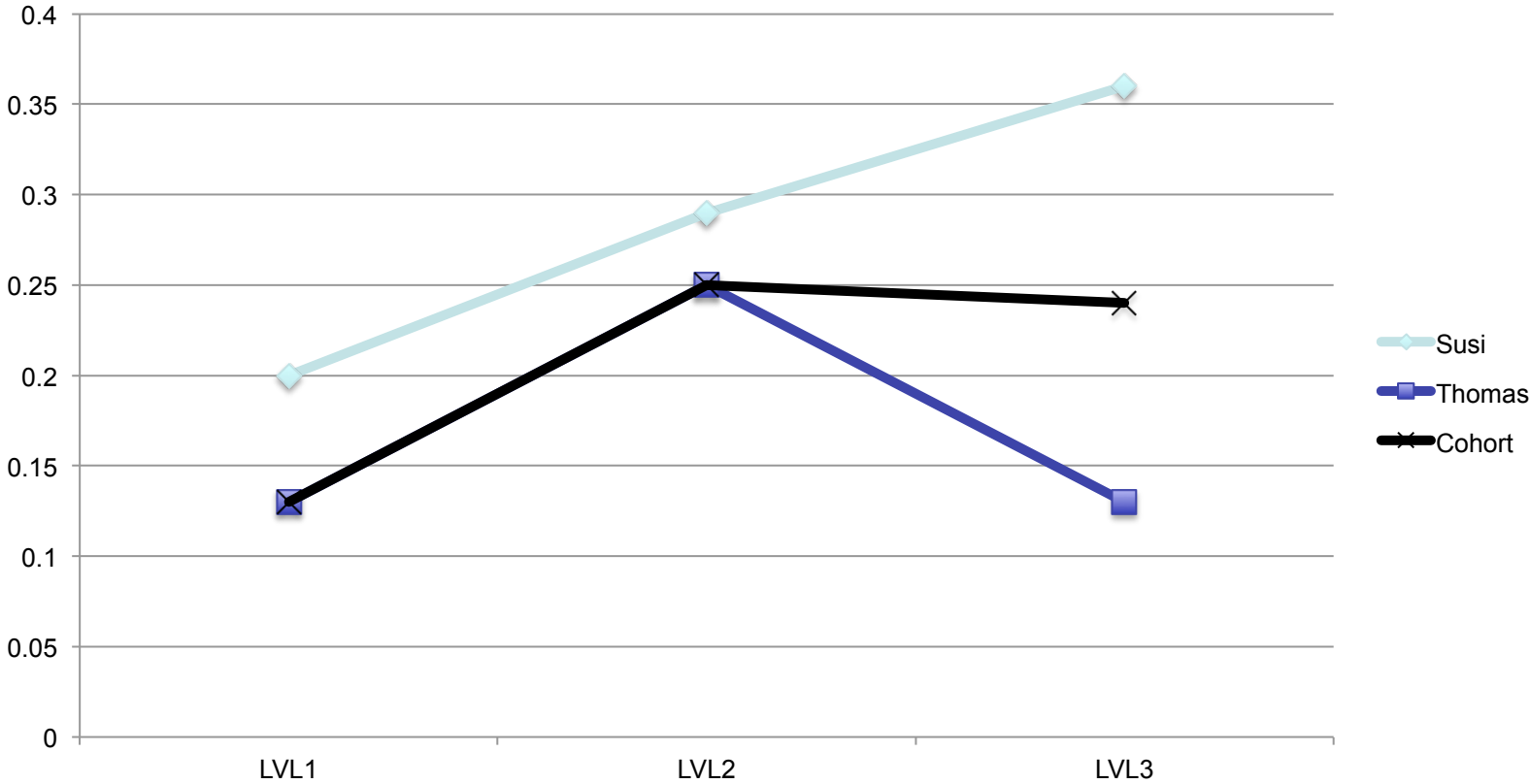




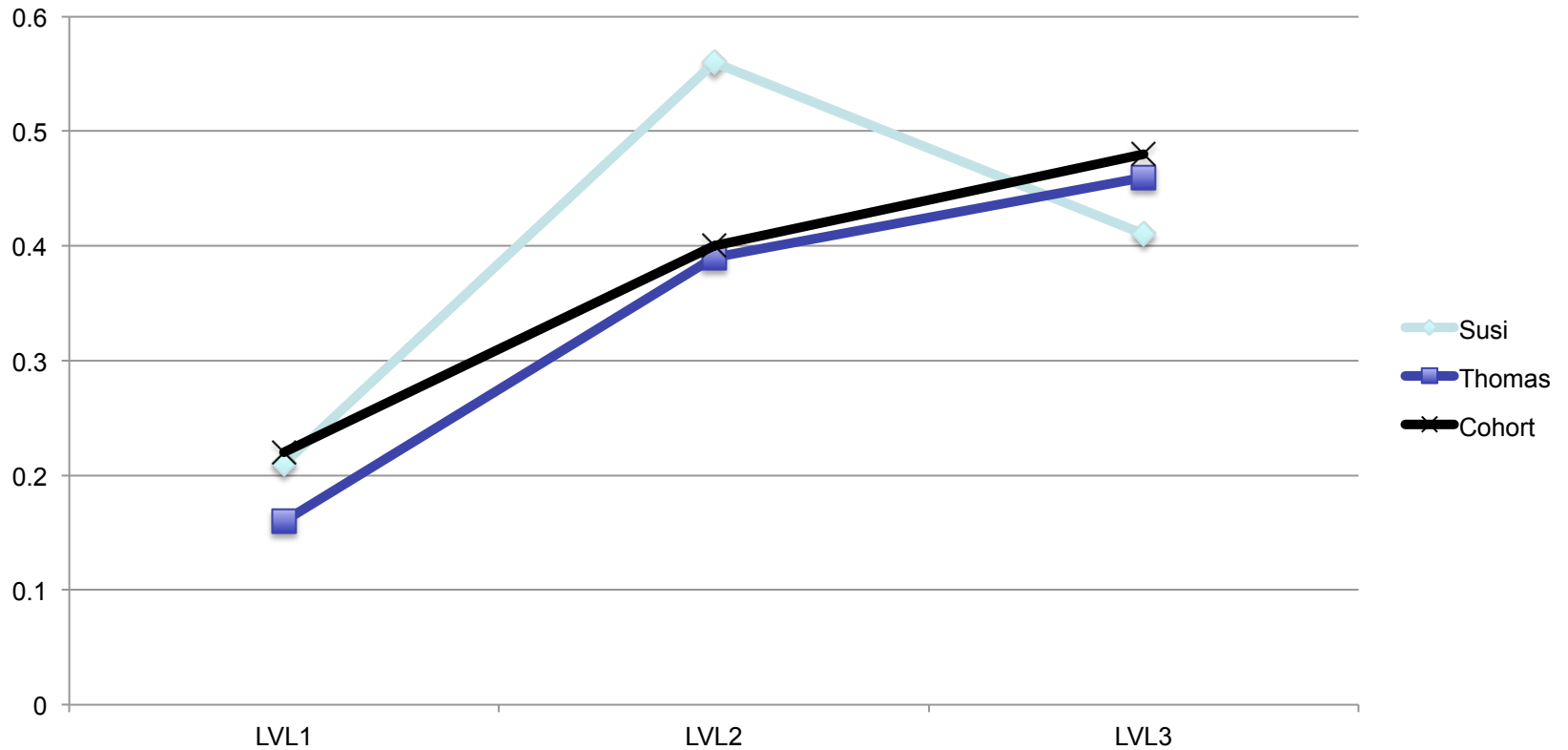
# Lexical density (LD)



# Degree of subordination



# Degree of coordination



# Susi across levels 1-3

- Ideational meaning
  - Early facility with taxis (e.g., 10 different conjunctions at Level 1) to enhance meaning → longer sentences & more clauses per sentence
    - “*My hometown is very important to me **because** I have lived there in the same apartment my entire life, **and** I went to the same school **before** I came to Emory.*”
    - “*Their plan almost succeeded **but** Konrad didn’t have enough time to follow the others into the sewer **before** the Stasi came **because** he was busy with his shoelaces.*”
  - Expanding use of “that” clauses
    - Level 1: “*I think **that** ...*”
    - Level 3: “*The idea **that** all mankind is unified ...*” “*In order to show **that** his play has ...*” “*The main point is **that** ...*”



# Susi across levels 1-3 (cont.)

- Textual meaning via thematization
  - Limited thematization of time in Level 1
    - “*I would like **in the future** to live in a town in Ireland.*”
  - Increased thematization of time in Level 2
    - “*Finally after many years . . .*” “*One day ...*”
  - Emergent nominalization of processes (often as theme) in Lvl 2
    - “*They were overjoyed and spent the night together, but their **happiness** was soon destroyed . . .*”
    - “*She visited him to tell him that she was pregnant. Her **pregnancy** was a new complication . . .*”
  - Increased nominalization of processes in Level 3
    - “*The Sultan is the uncle of Recha and the templar, who are sibilings, and Nathan is not Recha’s father. Before the **discovery** of their genealogical history ...*”
    - “*The **repetition** of the words ...*”



# Thomas across levels 1-3

- Ideational meaning
  - More coordination than subordination at Level 1
  - Early implementation of pedagogical foci
    - *“The longer I live somewhere, the more attached I become to it”*
    - *“When I was a child . . . ”* (Temporality as clausal theme)
    - *“Because he tried to escape . . . ”* (Causality as clausal theme)
  - Phrasal elaboration and lexically complex themes by means of extended participial constructions at Level 3 → fewer clauses, higher lexical density, less subordination
    - *“Despite their commands ...”*
    - *“The three in different time periods by different authors written interpretations of Tristan and Isolde ...”*



# Thomas across levels 1-3 (cont.)

- Textual meaning
  - Early and consistent thematization of time (Levels 1 & 2)
    - “*After graduation . . .*” “*At Emory ...*” “*In the future ...*”
  - Textual theme
    - “*On the one hand, ...*” “*On the other hand, ...*”
  - Thematization of place at Level 3
    - “*In the epic by Straßburg ...*” “*In the opera ...*”
  - Emergent nominalization of processes as theme in Level 2
    - “*The mood among Konrad’s family was tense and turbulent, and Konrad’s **disobedience** aggravated the mood.*”
    - “*Sophie opened the door, and there he was [...] This **reunification** was as sweet as the others.*”
    - “*They loved each other very much, and their son was happy also. This **happiness** did not last.*”
  - Increased nominalization of processes as theme in Level 3
    - “*The **portrayal** of the **relationships** ...*”
    - “*Wagner changes the relationship. This **change** is noteworthy because ...*”
    - “*Tristan’s **posture** [Körperhaltung] is uncertain and humble*”



# “Scorecard”

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Complexity	Susi	Susi	Thomas
Ideational meaning	Susi	Susi	Thomas
Textual meaning	Thomas	Thomas	Thomas
Pedagogical uptake	Thomas	Thomas	Thomas
Agency	Susi	Susi	Thomas





# Discussion

- Benefits of case studies for understanding ...
  - Writing as meaning meaning
  - The role of choice
  - Dynamism and variability of development → The remarkable in the unremarkable
  - Teaching/learning dialectic (Lantolf)
- Next steps
  - Further systematicization of pedagogy
  - Analysis of interpersonal meaning
  - Analysis of genre-based meaning-making
  - Analysis of meaning-making resources of source texts
  - Analysis of participants' L1 writing
  - Denser data take (Harklau, 2008) – lack of emergence or lack of evidence? (Norris & Ortega, 2003)
  - Affective, ideological, and sociocultural factors of SLA
  - Participant attitude toward language & curriculum → learner autonomy



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# Danke schön!

## Questions?

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