Students' textual borrowing practices and their development as advanced L2 writers

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Hiram H. Maxim

Department of German Studies

Emory University

hmaxim@emory.edu

http://userwww.service.emory.edu/~hmaxim/

Theoretical premises

- Language use
  - functional $\Rightarrow$ textual (Halliday & Hasan, 1989)
  - socially situated & culturally embedded $\Rightarrow$ contextual (Halliday, 1993)
  - conventionalized & generic $\Rightarrow$ intertextual (Bakhtin, 1986)

Implications for FL teaching and learning

- Departure from communicative language practices and the emphasis on developing individualistic self-expression, i.e, "saying it in 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)

- Focus on conventionalized textual properties of genres and their lexico-grammatical realization (e.g., Johns, 2002)

- Central role of (textual) appropriation in the social learning process of the apprentice (e.g. Lantolf, 2000) ⇒ "Renting" of meaning rather than outright ownership (Holquist, 1981, p. 164)

- Importance of meaning-based explicit instruction

Instructional approach

- Theme-based narrow reading
- Genre-based teaching-learning cycle (Rothery, 1996)
  - Negotiating field
  - Deconstruction
    - Context of culture
    - Context of situation
    - Schematic structure
    - Linguistic realization
      - Discursively
      - Lexico-grammatically
  - Joint construction
  - Independent construction
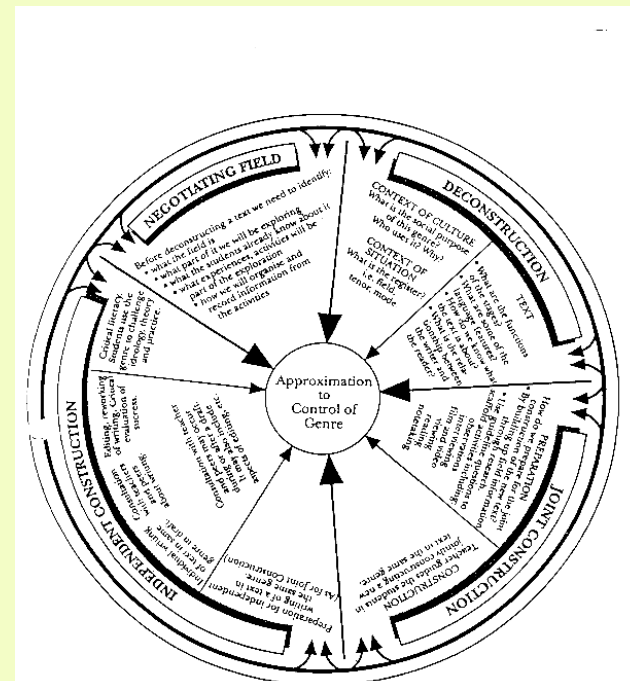   - Genre-based writing task

Figure 4.1   The teaching cycle

Rothery, Joan. 1996. Making Changes: Developing an Educational Linguistics, in R. Hasan and G. Williams (eds.), *Literacy in Society*, 86-123. London: Longman.

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 (1 per thematic unit)
  - Post-war Germany: Thank-you letter for care package
  - Divided Germany: Personal narrative about fleeing East Germany
  - Unifying Germany: Public appeal for action ("Aufruf")
  - Contemporary, multicultural Germany: 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

Thematic Unit: Post-war Germany
Writing task 1:
<u>Thank-you letter for care package</u>

- Textual basis
  - Students' own knowledge of thank-you letters
  - Task guidelines

- Content basis
  - 4 different personal narratives about post-war experiences
  - 1 descriptive text on care packages

- Language focus: Thank-you letter for care package
  - Chronological narration (temporality [time adverbs, subordination]; past tense) & causality (subordination)
  - Semantic fields: War; destruction; suffering; migration

Amount of textual borrowing

% of content words borrowed
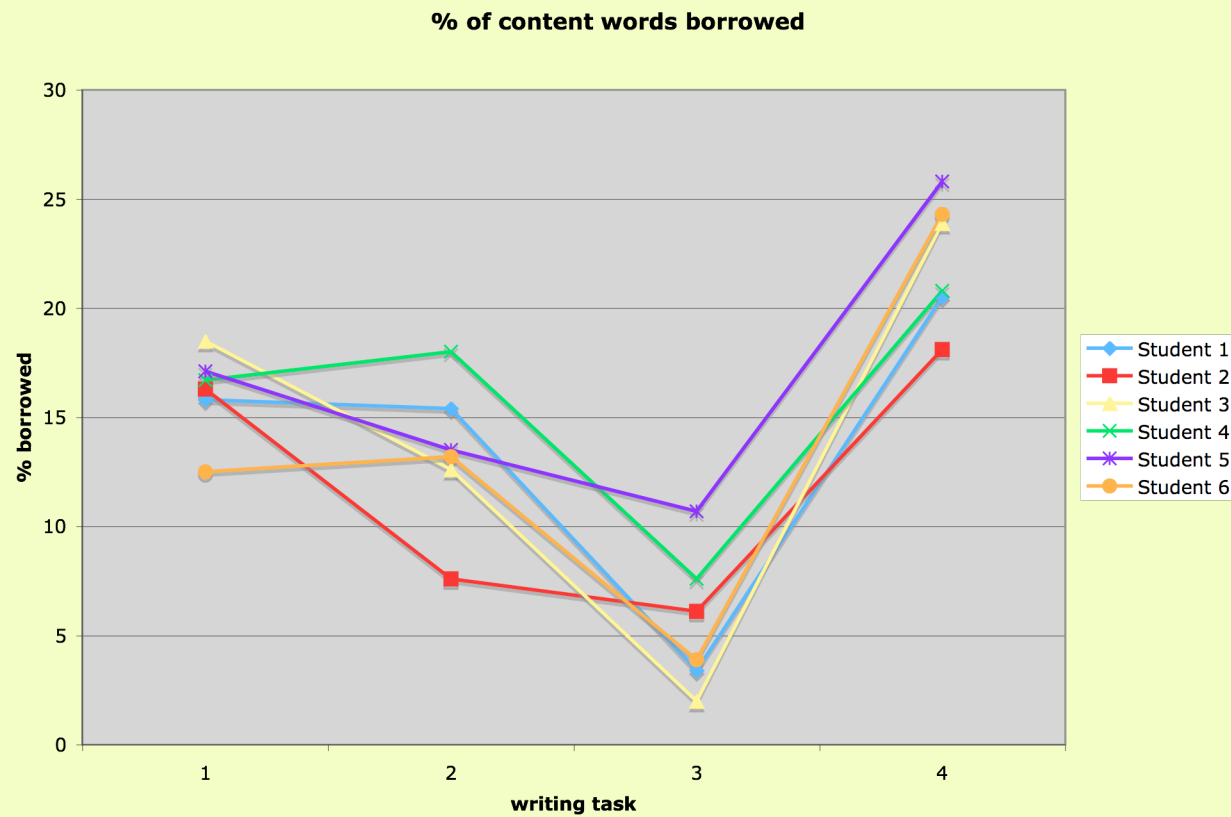
Textual borrowing practices, task 1

- 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*)
  - Modified 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."
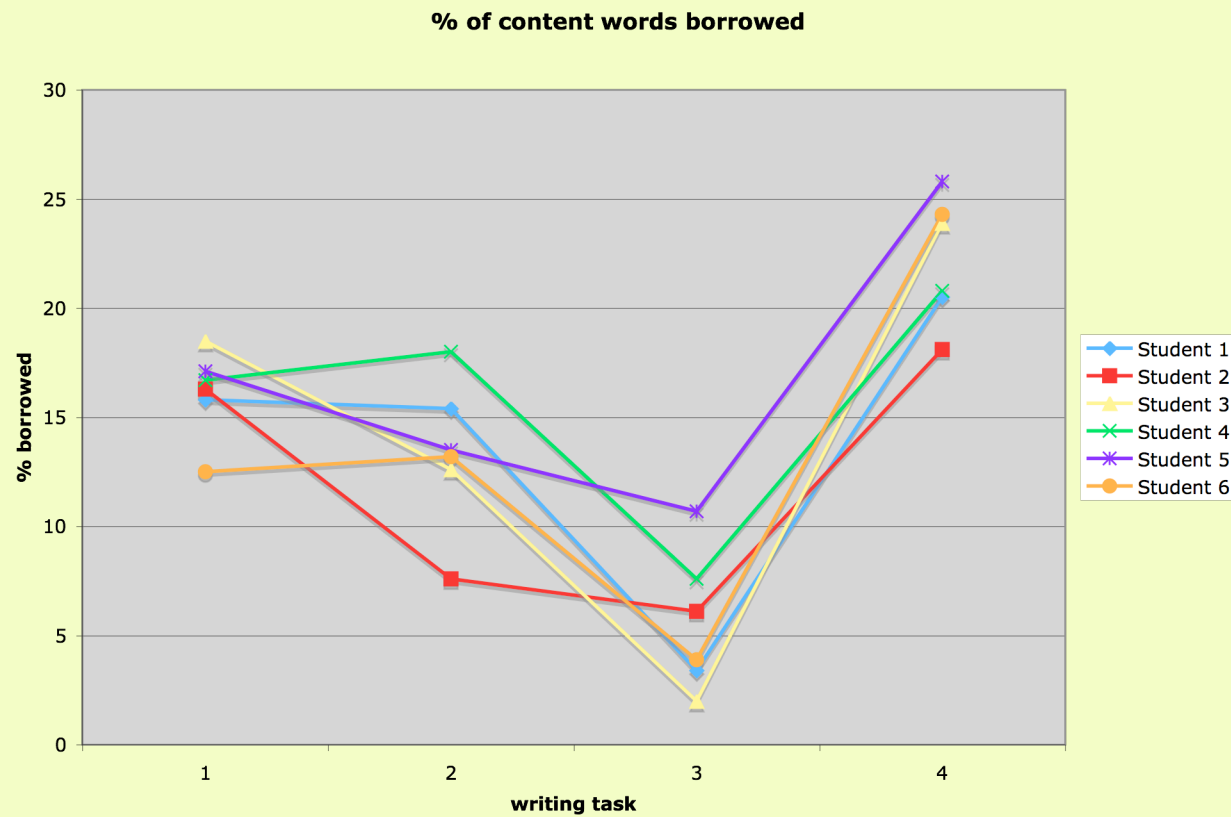
Writing task 2:
<u>Personal narrative about fleeing East Germany</u>

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

Amount of textual borrowing

% of content words borrowed

Textual borrowing practices, task 2

- Lexical items from previous units
  - "taken prisoner"
  - "to order an execution"
- Narrative structure
  - 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."

Thematic Unit: Unifying Germany
Writing task 3:
<u>Public appeal for action</u>

- Textual basis
  - 2 public appeals by East Germans to fellow East Germans to work for a post-Wall democratic East Germany (model texts)
- Content basis
  - Students' own research on chosen topic
- Language focus
  - Schematic structure of public appeal (problem statement & call for action)
  - Rhetorical devices
    - imperative;
    - 1st-person pronominal usage;
    - direct address;
    - strongly connoted lexicon;
    - modal verbs expressing urgency;
    - parallel sentence structure

Amount of textual borrowing

% of content words borrowed
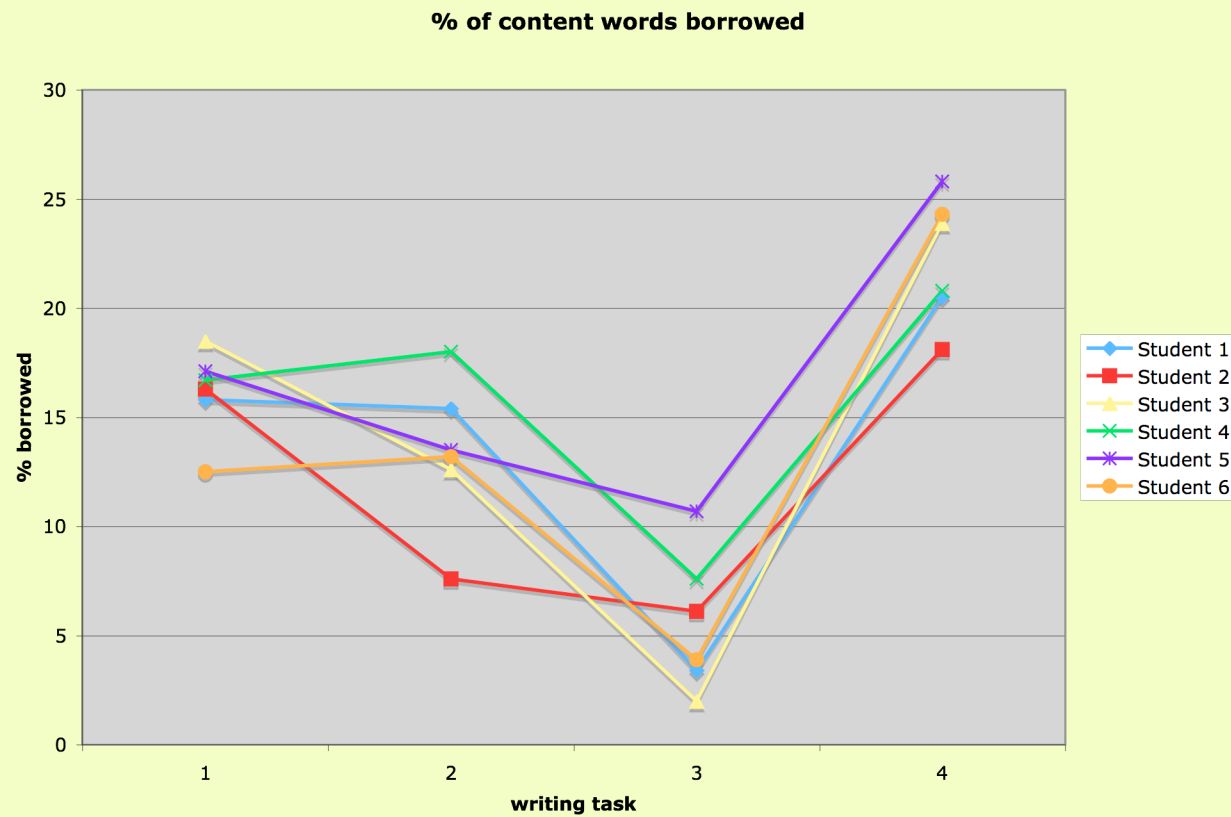
Textual borrowing practices, task 3

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

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"

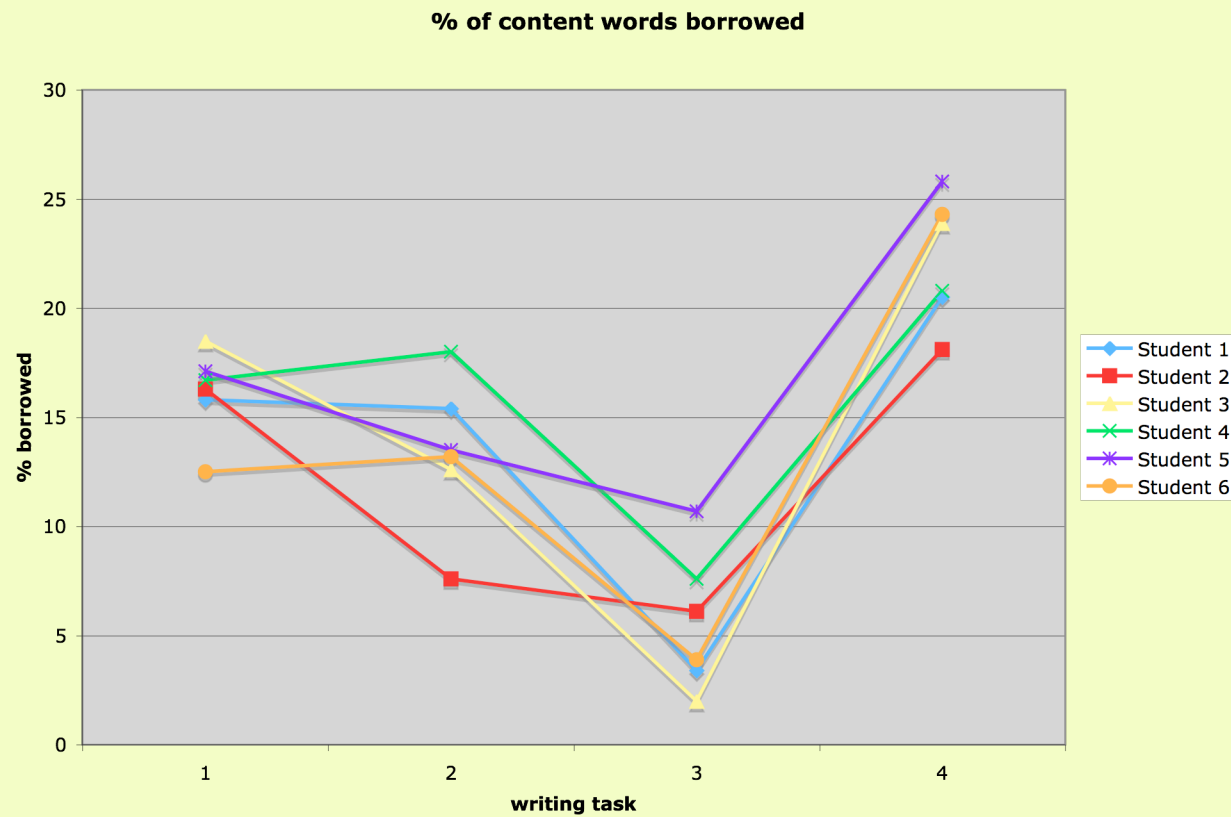"I missed the *Wortfeld* this time … I wrote it first in English and then translated into German"

Writing task 4
Journalistic portrait of Vietnamese in Germany

- Textual basis
  - Journalistic portrait of the three largest minority groups in Germany

- Content focus: Multicultural Germany
  - Statistics on immigration to Germany
  - Feature article on bureaucratic obstacles confronting immigrants
  - 3 background texts on Vietnamese in Germany

- Language focus
  - Structure of a portrait (from private to public discussion of situation)
  - Indirect discourse
  - Semantic fields: immigration; citizenship

Amount of textual borrowing

% of content words borrowed

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"

Modified borrowings from source texts, 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, yet still susceptible to truncating the text based on preconceptions.

- 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 $\Rightarrow$ 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 (discursive & lexicogrammatical level)
    - Focus on text-based reading to avoid misreading

Hiram H. Maxim
Department of German Studies
Emory University
hmaxim@emory.edu

http://userwww.service.emory.edu/~hmaxim/

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