

Toward an understanding of advanced collegiate L2 writing: Findings from a longitudinal study

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Data source I

- 14 learners who completed three consecutive curricular levels in the German Department at Georgetown University:
 - Level II: telling personal stories about contemporary issues in the German-speaking world
 - Level III: framing personal stories in public events and histories, 1945-present
 - Level IV: “reading” discourses of contemporary public life
 - “Students begin to develop the kinds of literacy abilities that are at the heart of summarizing, interpreting, critiquing, presenting and substantiating an opinion or argument, and practice these orally and in writing. Such language use is critical for study abroad as well as any other professional context in which the German language is used.” (Developing multiple literacies)

Data source II

- End-of-level prototypical performance writing tasks (PPTs)
 - Curriculum-dependent and pedagogy-embedded tasks that reflect content, language, and textual focus of particular level
 - Detailed task sheet divided into 3 categories
 - Task appropriateness
 - Content
 - Language focus
 - Rough draft submitted to corpus

Previous research on data source

(Byrnes, et al. 2005; Byrnes, et al. 2010)

As learners progressed through the curriculum,
there was ...

- Increase in
 - Mean length of T-Unit (MLTU)
 - Mean length of clause (MLC)
- Decrease in
 - Clauses per T-Unit (CTU)

→ Phrasal rather than clausal elaboration

Systemic Functional Linguistics

- Theoretical framework for examining how grammar is used as a resource for making meaning in language
- Analytical tools to focus on clausal phenomena from a functional perspective
 - Clausal realization of experiential meaning → how learners represent experiences in language (transitivity system)

Clause analysis

- As learners progressed through the curriculum, their trend was to produce ...
 - Longer sentences
 - Longer* & more lexically dense* clauses
(lexical density = content words/sentence)
 - Fewer clause per sentence= grammatically less intricate sentences
(grammatical intricacy = clauses/sentence)

*statistical significance (alpha = 0.05)

INTER-clausal relationships for expressing experiential meaning

- Taxis = linking of clauses through dependency or interdependency
 - Parataxis: clauses are equal and independent
 - Hypotaxis: clauses relate to a main clause through dependency relationship
- Conjunctive relations = logical relations between clauses
 - Elaboration / restatement / clarification (e.g., For example; in other words)
 - Extension / addition / variation (e.g., in addition; on the contrary)
 - Enhancement temporally, causally, comparatively (e.g., then; as a result; likewise)

INTER-clausal relationships: Findings

- Taxis
 - Significant increase in hypotaxis as learners progressed through the curriculum
- Conjunctive relations
 - Significant increase in elaboration;
 - Significant decrease in extension

INTRA-clausal relationships for expressing experiential meaning

- Processes (verbs)
 - Actions / events vs. States of being
- Participants (nouns)
 - Specific vs. generic human participants
 - Concrete vs. abstract (Martin & Rose, 2003)
- Circumstances (adverbials and prepositional phrases)
 - Time, manner, place, etc.

INTRA-clausal relationships: Findings

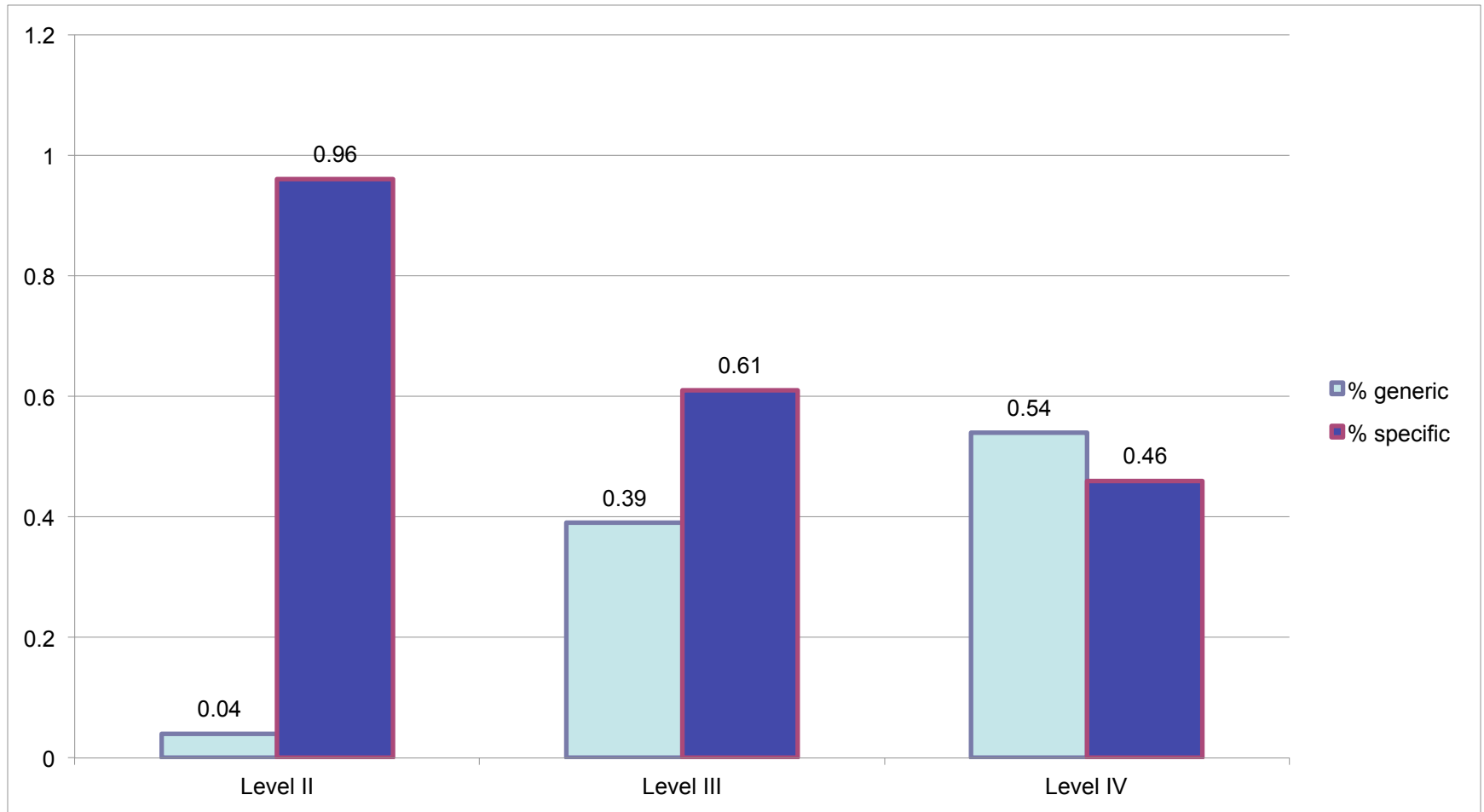
- **Processes**
 - Significant increase in expressing meaning as states of being (relational processes)
 - Significant decrease in expressing meaning in terms of actions/ events (mental, behavioral, verbal processes)
- **Participants**
 - Significant increase in generic human participants
 - Significant increase in abstract participants
- **Circumstances**
 - Significant increase in circumstances of manner & cause
 - Significant decrease in circumstances of location

Example of a relational process in Level 4

Die Vereinigung der amerikanischen Staaten (T) war (Pi) eher eine Notwendigkeit als eine echte Wahl (V).

The unification of the American states was a necessity rather than a real choice

Distribution of Human Participants in Processes

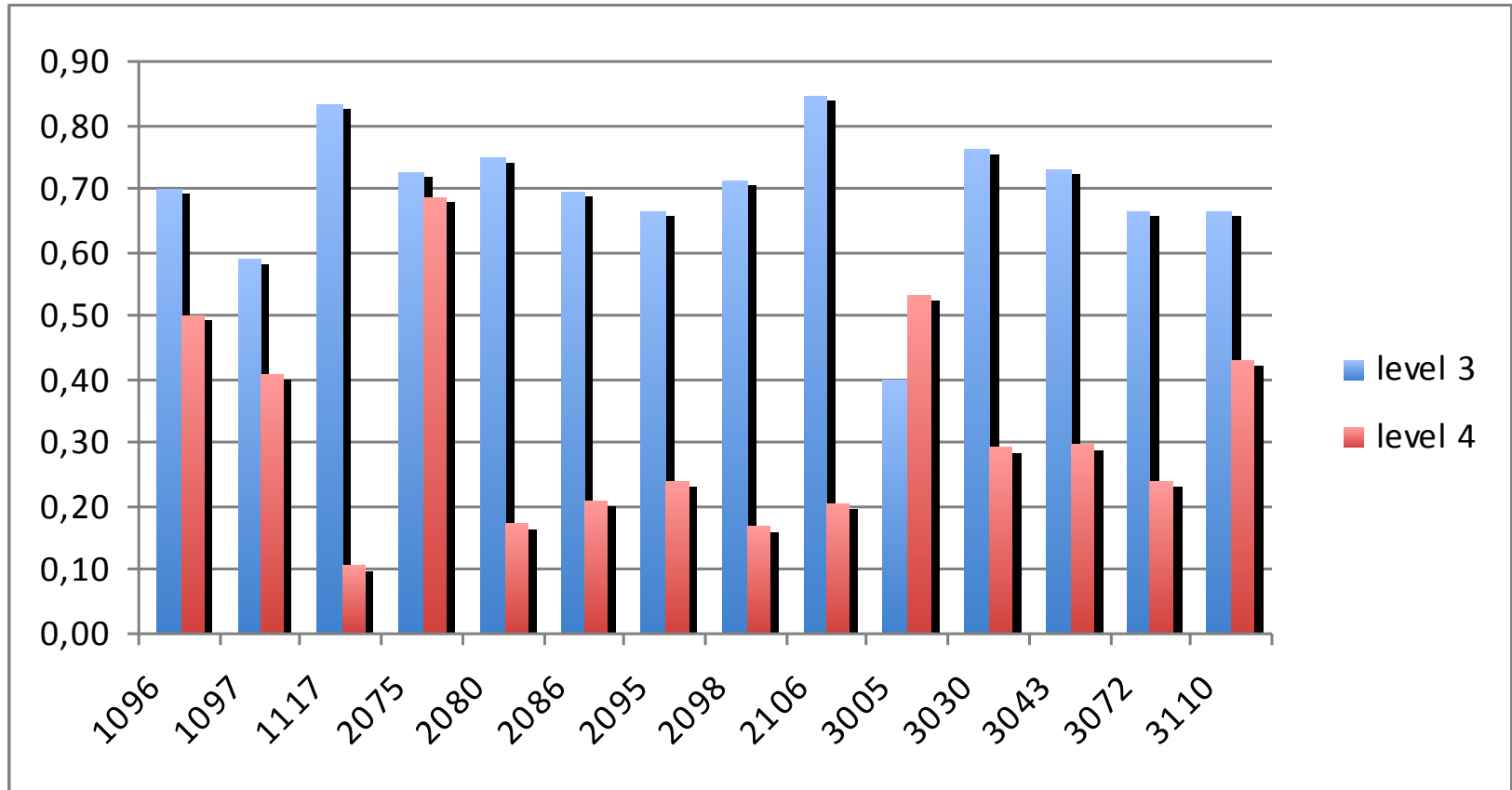


Participants across 3 levels: Examples from learner 3110

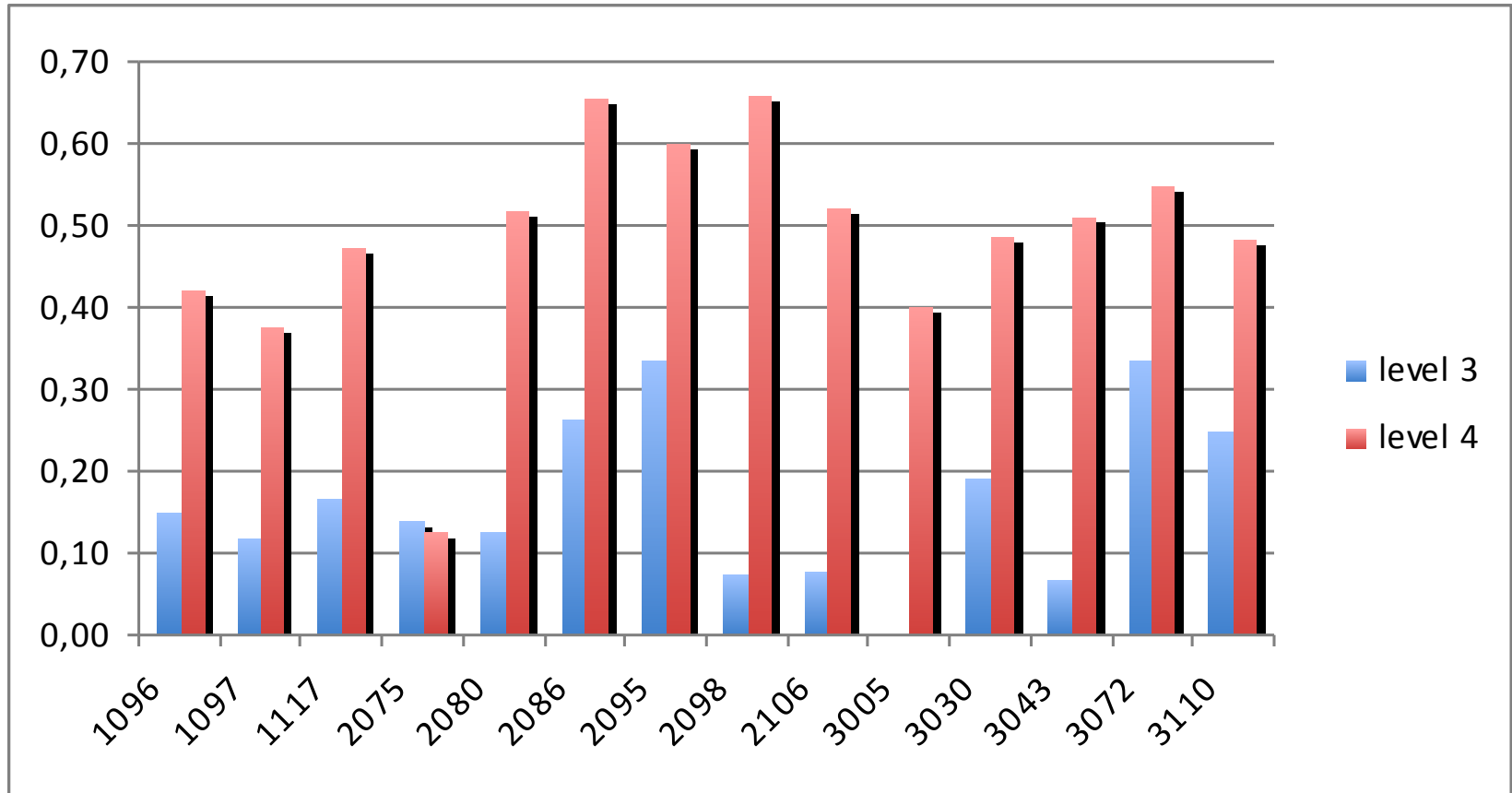
Level II	Level III	Level IV
3110.2 Herr Sommer Ich (<i>I</i>) Seine Frau (<i>his wife</i>) Seine Familie (<i>his family</i>) Sein Onkel (<i>his uncle</i>) Seine Eltern (<i>his parents</i>)	3110.3 Vietnamese (<i>Vietnamese</i>) Immigranten (<i>immigrants</i>) Tran ihre Familie (<i>her family</i>) ihre Mutter (<i>her mother</i>) ihr Vater (<i>her father</i>) Ausländer (<i>foreigners</i>) Pham van Man	3110.4 Ureinwohner (<i>native inhabitants</i>) Ethnische Gruppen (<i>ethnic groups</i>) Europäische Völker (<i>European peoples</i>) Staatsmänner (<i>statesmen</i>) Amerikaner (<i>Americans</i>)

Representation of national/regional space

National/regional space as circumstance



National/regional space as participant



Examples of representations of national space

Level 3

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Als Tung fast zwei war, ging seine Mutter **nach** **ehemaligen DDR**, als Vertragsarbeiterin in einer Schuhfabrik zu arbeiten. Sie tat dies, um ihr Kind und Mann, der als Bauarbeiter **nahe Hanoi** arbeiteten, zu stützen. Vor fünf Jahre entschied sie, Tung **nach** **Deutschland** für ein besseres Leben zu holen.

When Tung was almost two his mother went **to the former GDR** to work as an employee at a shoe factory. She did this in order to support her child and her husband who worked as a construction worker **near Hanoi**. Five years ago she decided to bring Tung **to Germany** for a better life.

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die klüger kamen der abschiebung zuvor, indem sie **in einen staat** ausresiten, der kein solches abkommen geschlossen hatte. Als gegenleistung verpflichtete sich **hanoi**, die landsleute wieder aufzunehmen.

The wiser ones prevented deportation by leaving **for a state** that did not have that kind of treaty. In return, **Hanoi** obligated itself to take the fellow countrymen back again.

Level 4

1117

Ein anderer Unterschied ist, dass die **EU** die europäische Charter der grundlegenden Rechte annahm bevor **sie** eine Verfassung hatten. **Sie** erkannten, dass die **Mitgliedsstaaten** eine Tradition des Respektierens der grundlegenden Rechte hatten und es ein Teil ihrer einzelnen Verfassungen war.

Another difference is that the **EU** accepted the European charter of basic rights before **it** had a constitution. **It** realized that the **member states** had a tradition of respecting the basic rights and that it was a part of their constitution.

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Die originalen dreizehn Kolonien der USA hatten nicht eine solche Geschichte. **Sie** konnten ihre Macht nur bilden als **sie** vereinigt wurden. **Die Kolonien** hatten ein einziges Interesse, das durch die amerikanische Verfassung geschützt und vereint wurde. Diese Elemente sind nicht gegenwärtig **innerhalb der Union oder seiner Mitgliedsländer**.

The original 13 US colonies didn't have such a history. **They** could only build their power when **they** were united. **The colonies** had one single interest that was protected and unified by the American constitution. These elements are not existent **inside the union or its member countries**.

Discussion:

Toward advancedness

- Increased hierarchical organization of information through increased hypotaxis & decreased parataxis
 - Increased complexification at the phrasal, rather than at the clausal, level (longer, denser, yet fewer, clauses) ⇒ increase in intraclausal activity & decrease in interclausal activity through
 - Increased use of circumstances of manner and cause
 - Increased incidence of relational processes, rather than clauses, to link ideas/reasons
 - Decreased use of “action” processes ⇒ writer as authority
 - Increased use of generic and abstract participants ⇒ representations of the state of being rather than action
 - Increased use of clausal elaboration and circumstantial enhancement (i.e., manner & cause) and decreased use of clausal extension ⇒ increased need to establish how & why rather than when and where
 - Increased use and length of circumstances of manner and cause ⇒ focus on reasons and explanations
 - Increased use and length of circumstances of location that refer to time, space, location outside the personal sphere
- Texts organized in terms of ideas, reasons, causes, not in terms of actors

Needs analysis

- Theoretically grounded notions of advancedness
- Programmatic, curricular thinking to support development of advancedness
- Programmatic, curriculum-embedded longitudinal research to examine learner development
- Explicit instruction that targets features of advancedness – not necessarily more and better of the features targeted at lower levels

Other research on data source

- Relativization (Byrnes & Sinicrope, 2008):
 - Emergence and use of more marked relative clauses already at intermediate level. Increase in relativization and reduction of more marked types of relativization at upper levels
- Grammatical Metaphor (Byrnes, 2009):
 - Increase in use of grammatical metaphor for meaning making and information structuring
- Passive voice (Maxim & Petersen, 2009):
 - Increased incidence of passive voice

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Thank you

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