

## Chapter 5

# Articulating Foreign Language Writing Development at the Collegiate Level: A Curriculum-Based Approach

Hiram Maxim

### ***Abstract***

*In light of the well-documented structural and professional obstacles to developing articulated curricula in collegiate foreign language (FL) departments, in this chapter the author presents a procedural approach for overcoming these obstacles and implementing an integrated four-year undergraduate curriculum. Specifically, the approach consists of the following steps: the formulation of shared departmental goals, the establishment of a close linkage between language and content at all levels of instruction, a clear principle for organizing and sequencing the content, a consistent pedagogy for engaging the content, and a systematic approach for assessing the degree to which the curriculum meets its stated goals at all levels of instruction. To demonstrate the practical application of this approach, the author discusses the implementation of an articulated program for developing collegiate FL learners' writing abilities within a recently revised and integrated undergraduate curriculum. Following a genre-based literacy orientation, the curriculum is able to establish a context for developing learners' writing abilities across all four years of instruction. In addition, the implications of an articulated curriculum for the language program director are discussed.*

### **Introduction**

Over the past decade, articulation, defined here using Byrnes' characterization as "well motivated and well designed sequencing and coordination of instruction toward certain goals" (1990, p. 281), has received increasing attention from practitioners and administrators at all levels of instruction. Although the exact genesis of any educational movement is hard to pinpoint, the increased attention to articulation can be traced in part to the recent confluence of several larger educational issues in the United States that have in common the public desire for accountability in education. First, the escalating cost of higher education has led students and parents to demand more tangible results, more "practical" courses of study, and greater accountability from the institutions in which they are investing so much capital. Second, students and parents have been joined by state and federal legislators in demanding accountability from the public K–12 educational system that

increasingly does not appear to be meeting constituents' level of expectations. Last, shrinking state and federal budgets have legislators and educational administrators at the secondary and post-secondary levels looking closely at which programs of study are worthy of continued financial support. Disciplines suffering from declining enrollment have come under particularly close scrutiny.

Recognizing that these issues need to be acknowledged and addressed, often simply out of financial necessity, educational institutions at all levels of instruction have begun exploring responses to the increased public demand for accountability. Not surprisingly, a common theme to many of the solutions proposed is articulation. After all, schools and universities cannot realistically expect to meet externally or internally mandated standards unless they institute an articulated program of study with an obvious curricular progression and clearly stated educational goals.

That the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (1996) arose out of this political and educational climate is no coincidence. With the five goals of Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities, the Standards look to establish articulated guidelines for foreign language (FL) study at the K–16 level. Because of the broad and resounding support that the project has received from various professional organizations (e.g., the American Associations of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, French, Italian, and German, American Association for Applied Linguistics, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages [ACTFL], Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages [TESOL], elementary, secondary, and post-secondary educators, and state education departments), it represents one of the most comprehensive attempts to date for envisioning and coordinating FL education across instructional levels. As a result of the professional support for the Standards and the political realities facing U.S. education, its five goals have been widely implemented nationwide at the K–12 level and have become a central component of K–12 FL teacher education programs.

At the post-secondary level, however, the response to the Standards and to articulation in general has been much more sporadic. To be sure, scholars have suggested applications for the Standards at the collegiate level (e.g., Arens and Swaffar 2000; Wright 2000), and there are notable examples of successful articulation projects, such as the highly coordinated College in the Schools program in Minnesota (Melin and Van Dyke 2001), that are based on the Standards. Moreover, at the national level, FL professional organizations have actively promoted articulation over the past decade,<sup>1</sup> and broader professional efforts, as exemplified by the American Association of Teachers of German's (AATG) Maintaining the Momentum project (Andress et al. 2002), have investigated the possibilities for and obstacles to increased articulation between high schools and universities. In addition, the increase in FL pre-professional programs, such as the University of Rhode Island's German for Engineers (Grandin, Einbeck, and von Reinhart 1992), can be seen as a reflection of a growing interest in developing articulated courses of FL study. Nevertheless, these important initiatives stand out as isolated cases that belie the limited priority collegiate FL departments have placed on articulation, whether Standards-based or not.

There appear to be two closely related reasons for this degree of inaction. First, because the Standards' five goals reflect the belief that a focus on content or meaning, rather than on formal linguistic features, is most conducive for second language acquisition (SLA), practitioners who wish to abide by the Standards can no longer rely on the traditional grammatical syllabus to select and sequence their materials; that is, developing content-oriented curricula calls for different organizing criteria. However, as Byrnes and Sprang point out in their call for articulated, integrated collegiate FL curricula, the Standards do not provide guidance on how to translate its goals "into a principled approach to curricular selection and sequencing and, from there, into pedagogical praxes" (2004, p. 52). As a result, FL departments are largely on their own to figure out how to develop curricula that focus on content while also assuring formal accuracy. That arrangement, Byrnes and Sprang rightly argue, has thus far not been successful because departments either fall back into an additive, form-focused approach or they abandon "all hope for linking the acquisition of cultural literacy to the acquisition of the formal features of the L2" (2004, p. 52).

Second, closely related to FL departments' inability to effectively integrate content and language acquisition is the much-documented departmental division between so-called language and content courses (e.g., Byrnes 1998; James 1989; Kern 2002; Swaffar 1999). Arguably both a cause and an effect of departments' lack of success at developing content-oriented curricula that also attend to accuracy, the language-content split in FL departments is part of a much larger bifurcated departmental structure. This bifurcation, usually between lower-level and upper-level courses,<sup>2</sup> characterizes collegiate FL instruction in the following ways:

The traditional split between graduate teaching assistants, part-time instructors, and untenured professors teaching lower-level courses and tenured or tenure-track faculty teaching upper-level courses (Pfeiffer 2002)

The emphasis on spoken language at the lower level and written language at the upper level (Byrnes 2001; Kramersch 1995b)

The use of short, simplified texts at the lower level and the predominance of literary texts at the upper level (Maxim 2002)

The linear- and additive-oriented approach to language acquisition at the lower levels that leads to the erroneous assumption that students have in fact "mastered" the language by the time they enroll in upper-level courses (Weigert 2004)

The emphasis on explicit, form-focused instruction at the lower level and more naturalistic acquisition environments, exemplified by study abroad, at the upper level (Maxim 2004)

All of these curricular dichotomies compound to make any attempts at programmatic articulation extremely difficult. Moreover, if undergraduate programs themselves are not articulated, departments cannot be expected to engage in any substantive articulation projects across other departments or levels of schooling. At first glance, the solution to this dilemma would appear to be for departments to overcome their internal divisions and establish greater intra-departmental coherence through the creation of an articulated curriculum across all four years of undergraduate FL study. However, as Swaffar points out in her discussion of the

changes facing FL departments in light of increased demands for accountability in higher education, such an obvious process of pooling departmental resources “challenges deeply held beliefs and feelings about such sensitive issues as academic freedom, classroom autonomy, individual scholarship, and the nature of humanist learning” (1998, p. 35).

Although these issues would seem to preclude any chance at departmental articulation, I argue that it is precisely these shared beliefs within a department that need to serve as the foundation for implementing articulated collegiate FL study. Specifically, in this chapter I contend that a department’s ability to formulate and act on its common core values and goals is the first step in a procedural approach for developing an articulated departmental curriculum across all levels of instruction. I then demonstrate that once a department has determined its shared educational goals, a framework exists for implementing the remaining four steps of a procedural approach for the purposes of designing a curriculum that capitalizes on all of its members’ expertise to achieve its collective goals, that is, a “curriculum by design” (Byrnes 1998): the establishment of a close linkage between language and content at all levels of instruction; a clear principle for organizing and sequencing the content; a consistent pedagogy for engaging the content; and a systematic approach for assessing the degree to which the curriculum meets its stated goals at all levels of instruction. To illustrate the practical application of this procedural approach, in this chapter I present the implementation of an articulated program for developing second language (L2) learners’ writing abilities within the recently revised integrated four-year undergraduate curriculum of the German Department at Georgetown University. Through such a procedurally-based and practically-oriented explication of an articulated approach to L2 writing development, it is hoped that this chapter will contribute to a generalizable model of articulation for collegiate FL instruction.

## **Establishing an Articulated Approach to L2 Writing Development**

### **Formulating Departmental Goals**

Although establishing common educational goals within a department is just the first step in articulating FL study, it also represents arguably the most important factor as well as potentially the greatest challenge to departmental members. The central problem lies with the fact that collegiate FL departments, despite sharing a common disciplinary focus, have traditionally not adopted a collective approach to teaching or learning. Admittedly, all departments have a course of study for their students to follow, but educational goals, pedagogical practices, and assessment procedures typically are course- rather than curriculum-dependent. As a result, most departments consist of a mere aggregation of independently designed courses without any true sense of curricular progression or trajectory, that is, a curriculum by default (Byrnes 1998). Regardless of how contradictory and counterintuitive

such practices appear, as Swaffar's (1998) comments above indicate, FL departmental members' working together to create a coherent, accountable curriculum runs against long-standing beliefs about higher education and, as such, has simply not been a high priority in collegiate FL education.

Part of the reason for the current state of affairs is that overcoming these obstacles to articulated curricula cannot be accomplished without rethinking departmental practices and the ultimate purpose of collegiate departments. To that end, in her discussion of the role departments can play in graduate student instructor development, Byrnes offers a compelling characterization of what FL departments can and should be: "[D]epartments are not so much defined by the quality of individual faculty scholarship and individual teaching as they are by jointly created and pursued programmatic goals, curricular frameworks, and publicly held pedagogical practices. In short, the totality of behaviors of a discursive community that shares an educational vision is what defines a department. This is so because departments, taken as a whole, constitute the primary functional-structural unit within which the full range of intellectual pursuits associated with FL study, in teaching and research, is realized" (2001, p. 513). Of course, FL faculty might not agree with this characterization, but the luxury of avoiding this issue in light of the current emphasis on accountability in education may no longer be an option. Although internally initiated change depends largely on the specific context of each department, Byrnes (2001) lists the following factors that contributed greatly to the collaborative curricular reform in our home department, the German Department at Georgetown University, and that would seem to be applicable to other departments as well:

1. Transparency in governance procedures and a culture of accomplishment
2. A strong departmental leader
3. Ability to relate structures and administrative procedures to academic work and vice versa
4. Commitment and buy-in by senior faculty
5. A history of collaboration among faculty
6. Sufficient internal expertise to be able to sustain momentum (Byrnes 2001, p. 525–526)

Again, these factors should not be seen as prerequisites for change, but at the same time they highlight that the characteristics of a department that was able to undergo substantive reform are not particularly extraordinary. To be sure, they indicate a certain level of transparency and inclusiveness within the department, but transparency and inclusiveness would seem to represent foundational governing principles of any functional department.

Moreover, thinking in terms of shared visions and jointly created practices does not have to mean abdicating deeply held beliefs about collegiate education. If, for example, departmental members agree with Swaffar's argument that the four subfields of FL study (language, literature, linguistics, and culture) have the common goal of enabling "students to recognize the various intentionalities behind

verbal and written texts and to use language effectively to achieve their own purposes within a cultural community” (1999, p. 7), then a foundation exists upon which collaborative departmental work can be conducted. Although Kramersch (1995a) points out the myriad of differences within the discipline, recognizing difference does not have to preclude departmental agreement on basic educational and programmatic issues. For instance, if, as Swaffar suggests, professors of literature consider working together on projects that address the Standards as signaling the “death of humanism” (1998, p. 35), then instead of dismissing collaborative work outright, the desire to preserve humanistic learning within the department could become a fundamental organizing principle of the department’s mission. Of course, realizing that mission at all levels of instruction presents a practical challenge, but it seems that if the emotional energy behind the objections to collaboration could be redirected into curricular reform that upholds deeply held principles, then departments would have turned the corner in laying the groundwork for establishing an articulated course of study.

## Linking Language and Content

Almost by default, a department that is able to establish common educational goals at all levels of instruction also will no longer be able to justify the traditional division between language and content courses. Maintaining two contrasting approaches to language learning, one that is form-focused and one that is content-focused, even if they are implemented at different levels of instruction, does not reflect commonality and coherence across a department. In principle, one could argue that overcoming departmental bifurcation is fairly straightforward: there needs to be a primary focus on content from the beginning of the instructional sequence and explicit attention to language acquisition throughout the curriculum, particularly at the advanced level. In practical terms, however, these two substantial changes to a departmental curriculum pose significant challenges. For example, adopting a content-oriented approach right from the beginning of instruction immediately raises questions about which content areas to focus on at that level. In addition, upper-level courses would need to be rethought to include systematic, explicit emphasis on language acquisition. Regardless of the instructional level, central to an integrated curriculum is that learners attend to the complex meaning-form relationships that characterize the different topics at each stage of language learning.

A framework that was particularly helpful for our department’s efforts at envisioning an integrated curriculum that reflects the intellectual learning goals of collegiate education was a literacy-oriented approach to FL instruction as advocated by Byrnes (2000, 2002b) and Kern (2000, 2002, 2004). With its emphasis on “creating and interpreting meaning through texts” (Kern 2002, p. 21) as the basis of FL study, such an approach allows each level of instruction<sup>3</sup> to have a content focus with a rich textual presence that contributes to the department’s humanistic goals. The texts themselves reflect textual genres that exemplify socially situated language use within a specific content area. From these texts, then, pedagogical

genre-based tasks were developed that require learners to make meaning-form connections appropriate to the topic and genre. Subsequent sections of this chapter offer more concrete examples of this close link between content, genre, text, and task.

Not surprisingly, developing an integrated curriculum required and continues to require significant commitment and collaboration on the part of faculty and, in our case as a graduate department, graduate students. Absolutely central to successful collaboration on this project was a shared knowledge base on curricular, pedagogical, and acquisitional issues, which needed to be facilitated through faculty development workshops, departmental meetings, level-specific meetings, and materials development.<sup>4</sup> With the exception of the development of assessment practices, the department relied on internal resources and expertise to coordinate the collaborative reform effort.<sup>5</sup>

Beginning with this early stage of articulated curricular reform there would appear to be a central role for the language program director (LPD). As often the lone departmental member with extensive expertise in applied linguistics and FL pedagogy, the LPD seems to be ideally suited to help coordinate departmental reform efforts. Of course, LPDs need to establish how this additional coordination might affect their existing workload in the department, but as the first step in this procedural approach to articulated curriculum development stressed, articulation can come about only through intra-departmental collaboration and a convergence of the beliefs and strengths of all departmental members. That is, developing an articulated curriculum needs to be based on consensus and commonality, and the actual hands-on work needs to be shared as much as possible by the entire department. In contrast, if the responsibilities for reforming the curriculum fall solely on the LPD, the project will have little chance of succeeding. At the same time, based on their knowledge of SLA research as well as their experience with course coordination and materials development, LPDs bring unique expertise to the reform project and therefore play an essential role in offering guidance on a range of curricular issues, such as linking form and content at all levels of instruction or developing appropriate assessment procedures. However, if the collegiate FL curriculum is to be articulated across all four years of undergraduate study and if LPDs are to offer their expertise on such a project, then their typical purview of a one- or two-year language program needs to be expanded to encompass the entire four-year undergraduate sequence (e.g., Byrnes and Maxim 2004). Again, such a rethinking of the LPDs' role in departmental curriculum construction cannot consist of simply expanding the LPDs' jurisdiction; rather, it needs to be carefully orchestrated with the changing roles of the rest of the department, who also must begin thinking "curricularly." To be sure, such recommendations for reform run up against some deeply entrenched practices that have become so naturalized that there appear to be almost insurmountable obstacles to effecting change. In the end, the exact configuration of a rethought department and curriculum needs to be based on each department's specific context, but one possible site for initiating such discussion might be the meetings that LPDs and department chairs invariably have to deal with the practicalities of course coordination.<sup>6</sup>

## Sequencing Content

One of the primary by-products of curricular reform that integrates language and content acquisition at all instructional levels is that the content itself, rather than grammatical topics, becomes the organizing principle of the curriculum. Departments must therefore decide which content areas will be treated at which instructional levels, and there is the potential that such decisions will not be as clear-cut as they once were when the grammatical syllabus dictated the sequencing of materials. In our curricular reform efforts, we found that a genre-based approach to language learning provided an effective basis for developing a coherent programmatic approach to collegiate language learning that includes attending to the attainment of advanced language abilities. Specifically, by following Gee's (1998) distinction between primary discourses of familiarity and secondary discourses of public life, we constructed an undergraduate content-oriented program that focuses on familiar, personal genres at the lower levels and then gradually shifts with each instructional level to the treatment of genres found in more public contexts.<sup>7</sup> In other words, content areas in which primary discourses figure prominently, such as one's childhood or the daily life of a U.S. university student, are logical choices for treatment in introductory levels of instruction, and topics that feature secondary discourses, such as current political debates or larger social trends, are better tailored for upper-level instruction. Texts, as the carriers of the content, then need to be selected so that they exemplify the discourses that are emphasized at each curricular level. For instance, a text about a politician's childhood appearing in a major daily newspaper might not be as appropriate for lower-level classes as a personal, more private account of that same individual. A discourse- and genre-oriented approach to text selection and sequencing, therefore, offers departments a framework for articulating content foci according to criteria consistent with an integrated approach to curriculum development.

## Systematically Engaging the Content

Following text selection in an articulated manner, there needs to be a systematic pedagogical approach to didacticizing the texts for instruction. In the German Department's case, because of our interest in genre as a sequencing principle, we also found that genre-based pedagogies (e.g., Christie 1999) provided a particularly effective way for learners to become familiar with both understanding the meaning-form relationship instantiated in genre and making situationally appropriate meaning adjustments within genres. Specifically, a revised notion of task as being genre-based became the primary pedagogical tool for treating texts. Differing from the standard notion of tasks as real-world communicative activities, genre-based tasks require learners to negotiate and appropriate the lexicogrammatical and rhetorical features of a particular genre for their own use. As Pennycook (1996) points out, because this type of textual reproduction runs the risk of learners adopting a static and prescriptive view of language use, learners need to be encouraged to view their understanding and negotiation of the generic



features in texts as their access to the dominant L2 discourses. Their successful completion of a genre-based task, therefore, is not merely the incorporation of generic conventions in their own language use, but also the self-conscious “denaturalization” (Fairclough 1989) of these conventions. In other words, learners explicitly examine textual models of a particular genre to see how socially situated language use has become naturalized and then use that knowledge to appropriate that very genre for their communicative purposes. Proficiency in a genre-based, literacy-oriented curriculum then becomes more than the ability to handle a wide array of communicative situations with fluency and accuracy; rather, it also involves an understanding of how knowledge and information are organized and constructed in the target culture. Equipped with that level of understanding, L2 learners are thus able to not only make meaning in the real world, but also reflect on and critique how the real world itself makes meaning. Learners would thus develop their own voices and identities in the FL in the only way that counts, namely in a culturally and situationally appropriate manner.

To ensure an articulated approach across the curriculum, each genre-based task consists of three main foci: the nature of the task itself in terms of the genre learners must produce, the content focus, and the language focus. Within the specific context of developing learners’ writing abilities, each formally assessed writing assignment is outlined in a writing task sheet that describes the task in terms of these three foci: task, content, and language (see the Appendix for a sample writing task sheet). Having a consistent format to all writing tasks then allows departmental members to better see the sequence and trajectory of writing development across the curriculum. An inventory of all writing tasks in the curriculum, for example, reveals which types of genres, which content areas, and which lexicogrammatical features are emphasized at each level. Such an inventory can also serve to check whether, for example, the genres that learners are asked to produce are consistent with the generic focus of that instructional level. Not only does a consistent format for all writing tasks facilitate curricular progression, but it also provides students with a framework for developing their writing as they move through the curriculum.

The writing tasks also reflect the pedagogical emphases of their respective levels. In other words, the written genres that learners are to produce at a particular level correspond to the genres that are exemplified and modeled by the texts at that level. Therefore, “teaching” a text that is to serve as a model for a future writing task involves, among many considerations, attending to the generic features of that text. Specifically, instructors guide learners through an analysis of that genre to familiarize them with the structural properties of the text. In the description of the task on the writing task sheet, learners are then reminded to include each stage in their reproduction of that genre. In addition to an analysis of textual properties, pedagogical emphasis is also placed on specific language features that occur in the texts. Reflecting the discourse orientation of the curriculum, the language of a text is examined at the discourse level, the sentence level, and the lexicogrammatical level. Learners must then attend to each level of language use in their own writing. Finally, as Swaffar (2004) points out in her discussion of genre, attention also needs to be directed at the texts’ original function and audience in order to underscore

that genres are not absolute; rather, they vary systematically depending on how publicly or privately, how formally or informally, they are used. Again, acknowledging this aspect of textuality and accounting for it in their own writing is yet another component of each writing task on which students must focus. This approach to texts is reiterated at each instructional level with the ultimate intention of fostering independent reading and writing behaviors that take into account the generic features of a text and the specific language features instantiated in that genre.

Developing learners' writing abilities by closely linking text, genre, and task represents, on the one hand, an application of the genre-based first language (L1) literacy initiatives (e.g., Cope and Kalantzis 1993, 2000; Gee 1990; Group 1996; Hasan 1996) to the collegiate FL context and, on the other hand, a departure from creative writing movements in which learners are encouraged to develop individualistic self-expression and to "say it in their own words." As the sample task sheet indicates (Appendix), writing is still viewed as a process for developing one's ability for self-expression, but writers no longer have limitless creative possibilities to express themselves. Instead, they need to recognize the socially situated and purposeful nature of the genre-based task and then make meaning within that framework. That is not to say that writers in a genre-based approach do not have creative freedom; it is just that their freedom exists in socially viable and valid contexts. As Byrnes argues, that kind of awareness of cultural and situational appropriateness represents a "profound learner-centeredness" (2002a, p. 435) that is potentially more empowering than the ability to create limitless utterances with no refined sociolinguistic or pragmatic understanding.

## Assessing Articulation

The final stage in the effort to articulate the development of collegiate FL learners' writing abilities is to systematically assess the degree to which the curriculum meets its stated goals for writing at all levels of instruction. Assessment in this context draws on Norris in that the purpose of such an exercise is "to better inform us on the decisions we make and the actions we take in language education" (2000, p. 19). In our own reform efforts, the first step in this process was to establish a baseline notion of what learners' writing should look like at each level. Once the writing tasks for each instructional level had been coordinated with each other and in terms of the larger level and curricular goals, we drafted level-specific statements that profiled the writing ability of our students. These statements drew on the experience of our instructors, their knowledge of student performance within the curriculum, and the content and pedagogical emphases at each level. Included in these profiles was a categorization of the weighting, in terms of explicit instructional attention and acquisition, that specific language features received at different stages of the curriculum.<sup>8</sup> Intended to reflect the long-term, nonlinear nature of language development, this categorization consists of three stages:

- + focused treatment by way of explicit teaching of a feature that is critical at this level but that will develop a satisfactory level of accuracy only over a longer period of time (e.g., an entire course, or even several courses)

- ++ focused treatment to assure accuracy of something that was previously introduced, has been used for quite some time, and now needs to be expanded functionally and in terms of accuracy (e.g., simple past) before patterned errors have a chance of settling in
- √ indicating that this feature is carried along (like many other things), with the expectation that accuracy will improve as students continue to have more opportunities for use (e.g., word order in subordinate clauses)

To ensure an articulated pedagogical approach, the categorization of language features was coordinated across levels with a common result being that features in the “+” category at one level typically were categorized as “++” at the subsequent level.<sup>9</sup>

To assess whether the level profiles in fact corresponded to actual student performance and whether students were making appropriate progress across curricular levels, one end-of-level writing task was developed for each of the five levels that was intended to elicit the type of writing prototypical for that level. These so-called prototypical performance writing tasks aimed to incorporate the major aspects of written language use that characterized their respective level. Consistent with all other writing events in the curriculum, the task sheet for all prototypical performance writing tasks described the assignment in terms of task, content, and language. As might be expected, developing such tasks involved revisiting and adjusting the profiles as well as the other writing tasks at each level. Once the prototypical performance writing tasks were developed, their validity as indicators of level prototypicality needed to be assessed. To accomplish this, random samples of student performance on the prototypical performance writing tasks were gathered and then subjected to the following two questions: (1) Does the task seem to be eliciting appropriate student performances that are helpful in understanding student learning? In other words, are students producing the kinds of language and writing features that are explicitly spelled out in the level profile statements (i.e., the *what* of student writing)?; and (2) To what extent are students achieving or progressing toward level-specific performance expectations (i.e., the *how well* of student writing)? Based on the extent to which the prototypical performance writing tasks were working as intended, instructors at each level, under the supervision of the LPD,<sup>10</sup> revisited and adjusted either the prototypical performance writing task itself, the pedagogy, the texts, the profile, or the other tasks at that level. For example, students at the intermediate level were not meeting level expectations as expressed in the level profile in their use of subordinate word order. Although the easiest solution would have been to revise the profile to reflect the student performance, the instructors reviewed the level and realized that subordinate word order had not received the amount of focused treatment that it required. They therefore reexamined the thematic units for the level and found two units in which there were texts that either exemplified subordinate word order or allowed students to use this form in their textual analysis. The didacticization of those texts was then updated so that in the future instructors would devote more explicit attention to subordinate word order. Such deliberations and adjustments between text, pedagogy, task, and profile continue on a regular basis at the end of each

semester when instructors from each level meet to reflect on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the different task-based assessment measures. All instructors in the curriculum have come to understand that such regular maintenance and enhancement of assessment practices is necessary to ensure articulation and success within the curriculum.

## Conclusion

As this approach to writing development indicates, implementing an articulated undergraduate FL curriculum requires first and foremost a substantial rethinking of department identity. Implicit in an articulation project is a level of commonality and collaboration among departmental members that has not often characterized higher education. In fact, it is precisely intra-departmental consensus, cooperation, and curricular thinking that are the basis and the prerequisites for a model of articulation for collegiate FL instruction. What this articulated approach to L2 writing has demonstrated is that commitment to an articulated undergraduate program and the maintenance of deeply held beliefs about post-secondary teaching and research do not have to be mutually exclusive, particularly if a department has basic educational goals upon which it can agree. After all, an articulated approach to education would seem to only facilitate learners' achieving a department's essential goals. In collegiate FL education the need for articulated curricula is especially pressing because of the limited amount of time there is to attend to a phenomenon that is long term in nature. It should be no surprise, for example, that students completing a two-year language requirement typically achieve only intermediate-level proficiency.<sup>11</sup> On a more positive note, however, developing an articulated curriculum that attends to the development of language learning abilities in a coherent and explicit manner consistent with the latest research findings on adult instructed SLA has the potential to compensate for the lack of time available for collegiate FL learning. The current paradox, of course, is that claims about the efficacy of an articulated curriculum cannot be made until such curricula exist, but the questions from legislators, administrators, parents, and students about our viability as well as our own internal recognition of detrimental dichotomous practices provide reason enough to embark on substantive and systematic examination of how increased coherence and articulation can be brought to collegiate FL education.

## Notes

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1. One example of the FL profession's giving prominence to articulation is the 1995 special issue of the *ADFL Bulletin* 26(3).
2. In the general discussion of instructional practices in this chapter, the term "instructional level" corresponds to a year of instruction. A first-year language course, for example, would be one instructional level. Lower-level instruction refers to the first two years within the undergraduate curriculum, often referred to as the introductory and intermediate levels, whereas upper-level instruction refers to the third and fourth years, often referred to as the advanced level.

3. In a variation on the standard understanding of instructional level, the Georgetown University German Department's undergraduate curriculum consists of five levels. The first three levels consist of sequenced courses that each last either one semester or one academic year, depending on whether they are taken intensively or non-intensively, respectively. These courses are followed by a group of six courses at Level IV that have similar acquisitional and pedagogical goals yet differing content foci. Upon completing at least one Level IV course, students are eligible to take any of the open-ended number of courses at Level V that reflect broad student and faculty content and research interests.
4. See Byrnes (2001) for a more detailed discussion of the work invested in the curricular revision.
5. The department's development of task-based assessment practices was greatly enhanced by the expertise of John Norris, who, among his many significant contributions over the past five years, presented numerous workshops on assessment to the faculty, guided the development of the departmental placement exam, and oversaw the development of level-specific assessment practices. See Byrnes (2002a) for a detailed discussion of task-based assessment within the German Department's curriculum and [http://data.georgetown.edu/departments/german/programs/curriculum/writing\\_overview.html](http://data.georgetown.edu/departments/german/programs/curriculum/writing_overview.html) for additional information on writing development.
6. The annual meeting of LPDs and department chairs from German departments belonging to the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CiC) serves as an excellent example of an attempt to foster dialogue intra- and inter-departmentally.
7. See Byrnes and Sprang's "Continua of Multiple Literacies" (2004, pp. 69–70) for a detailed listing of phenomena to consider when imagining long-term language acquisition from a genre-based perspective.
8. For a sample level profile for Level II visit <http://data.georgetown.edu/departments/german/programs/curriculum/writinglanguagefocusii.html>.
9. For a detailed discussion of assessment practices in the curriculum, visit the curriculum's Web site at <http://data.georgetown.edu/departments/german/programs/curriculum/>.
10. Because of the integrated nature of the Georgetown University German Department's undergraduate curriculum, the LPD is officially called the Curriculum Coordinator and is responsible for coordinating the integration and articulation of all five curricular levels. For more information on the Curriculum Coordinator visit <https://data.georgetown.edu/departments/german/programs/curriculum/enhancement.html>.
11. See Norris and Pfeiffer (2004) for an overview of studies examining students' level of proficiency after two years of study.

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## Appendix

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### *Intermediate German (Level II)*

Theme 1: “The place you call home”

Essay: My Hometown—then, now, and tomorrow

#### *Task*

Genre: personal narrative for a newspaper

The personal accounts by the girls in “Dorfschönheiten” were the first articles in a series of articles about the topic “Hometown” that the weekly newspaper *die Zeit* will publish in the coming months. In the next issue the newspaper would like to feature a foreign

perspective, and therefore it has asked students at Institution X to express their thoughts about their hometown. The article should consist of the following sections:

an introduction in which you name and briefly describe your hometown

a description of your childhood in the town

a description of the town where you live now

a few thoughts about where you would like to live in the future

*Die Zeit* is a highly regarded newspaper, but as you have already seen, in this series the tone of the articles is youthful and less formal.

### *Content*

Use the texts you have read in this unit as the basis for your article, particularly the description of hometown in the texts “Heimat ist schwer zu finden” and “Dorfschönheiten.”

Section 1: For those who grew up in one town, it will not be a problem to identify your hometown, but for those who moved a lot, you will have to think about how you even deal with the notion of hometown. Maybe there is a place that you can call home. In that case, you will need to explain why you consider it your hometown.

Section 2: Discuss your childhood in the town(s) where you lived. Were you in the country or in a city? How did you like it there? Why? What kinds of memories do you have from the town(s)? How did you spend your free time? etc.

Section 3: Describe your current relationship with the town where you and your family now live. Is it the same place where you grew up? How do you feel when you return home? Why? Do you still feel at home there, or is that feeling lost once one leaves home?

Section 4: Discuss where you would like to live in the future. Would you like to return to your hometown, or would you rather settle in a different location? Describe the community in which you would like to live.

### *Language focus*

At the discourse level: discourse markers for comparison and expression of opinion; adverbs of time

At the sentence level: verb forms, word order in independent and dependent clauses; comparative/superlative; adjective endings; punctuation

At the word level: relevant vocabulary from the texts and semantic fields; spelling

### *Writing process:*

Outline due on \_\_\_\_\_; essay due on \_\_\_\_\_; revision due on \_\_\_\_\_

*Length: 2 pages, double-spaced*

### *Assessment criteria:*

The categories task, content, and language focus are weighted equally. Based on the quality of your revision, your grade on the revised version may increase up to two “steps” (i.e., from B- to B+).