

The development of the passive voice in L2 German writing: A functionally oriented longitudinal study

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Impetus for study

- Ongoing curriculum-based research on the development of advanced L2 writing abilities in the Georgetown University German Department (GUGD)
- Awareness during data analysis of the passive voice as a linguistic feature for furthering the understanding of advancedness



Advancedness

- Varied operationalizations
 - Institutional status / Program level
 - Test scores
 - “Native-like” ability
 - Facility with late-acquired language features
 - Increasing incidence, variety, and length of clauses yet reduced number of clauses
- Varied research designs
- Varied educational contexts
- Varied data elicitation
- Varied or absence of theoretical framework
- ➔ Absence of longitudinal research at collegiate level from programmatic perspective

GUGD-based writing research 1

- Syntactic development (Byrnes, et al., 2005; Byrnes, et al., 2010):
 - Increase in Mean Length of T-Unit (MLTU) and Mean Length of Clause (MLC) from intermediate to very advanced learners
 - Increase in Clauses per T-Unit (CTU) for intermediate and advanced learners but decrease for very advanced learners
- 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

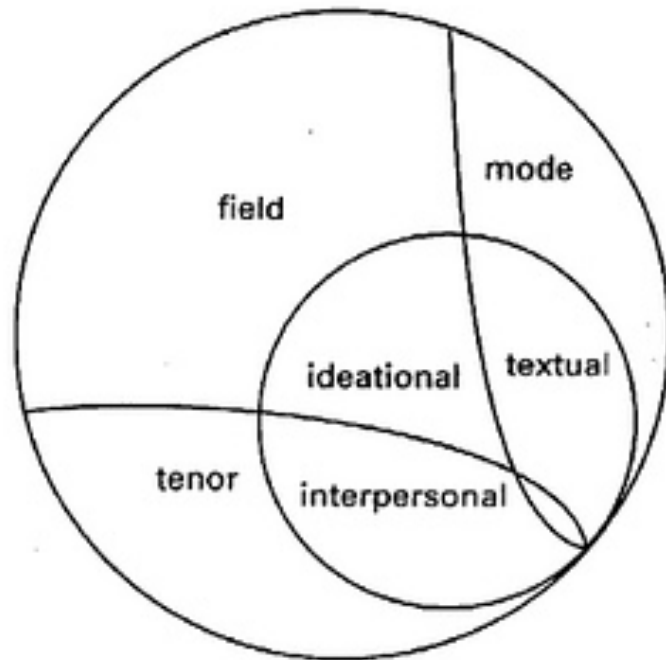
GUGD-based writing research 2

- Grammatical Metaphor (Byrnes, 2009):
 - Increase in use of grammatical metaphor for meaning making and information structuring
- Clausal manifestation of advancedness (Maxim & Petersen, 2008):
 - 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, i.e., increased lexical density and decreased grammatical intricacy)
⇒ increase in *intraclausal* activity & decrease in *interclausal* activity

Passive voice in German (Pape-Müller 1980)

- Omission of explicit agent
 - institutionalized identification
 - specific process in connection with circumstance of location
 - text type
 - generalization of proposition
 - cataphoric or anaphoric ellipsis
- Text structure

Systemic Functional Linguistics



Processes

Participants

Circumstances

Educational setting: Georgetown University German Department (GUGD)

- Integrated four-year, literacy- and content-oriented, genre-based undergraduate curriculum
 - Articulated curricular and pedagogical practices across 5 curricular levels for the development of advanced competencies
 - Sequenced, genre-based learner pathway
 - Primary – secondary discourses (Gee, 1998)
 - Congruent – synoptic semiotic practices (Halliday, 1993)
 - Narrative – expository language (Martin, 2002)



Data source I

- 14 undergraduate learners who completed three consecutive curricular levels:
 - Level II (“Intermediate”): telling personal stories about contemporary issues in the German-speaking world (e.g., environment, multicultural society, identity, art and society)
 - 170 contact hours upon completion of level
 - Level III (“Advanced”): framing personal stories against public events and histories in the German Federal Republic (e.g., post-war Germany, divided Germany, unified Germany)
 - 255 contact hours upon completion of level
 - 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)
 - 310 contact hours upon completion of level

Data source II

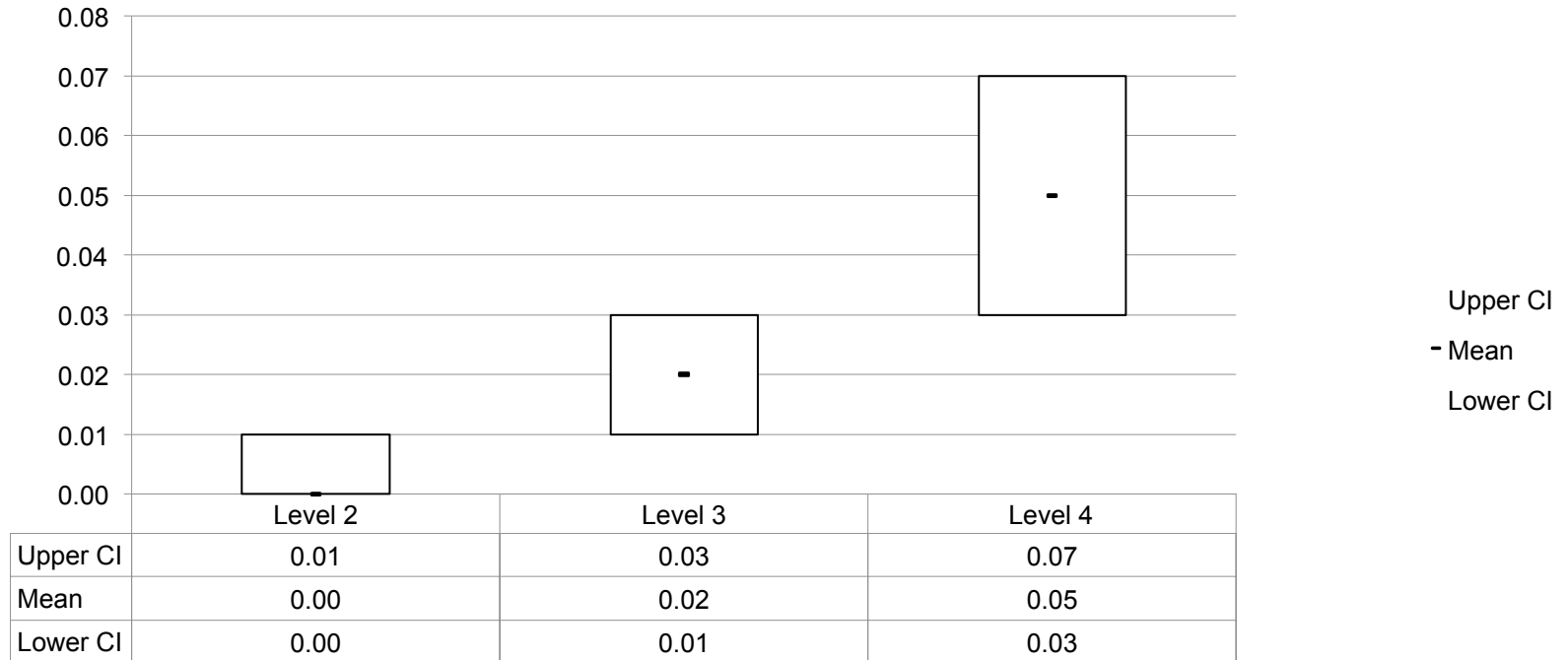
- End-of-level prototypical performance writing tasks (PPTs)
 - Curriculum-dependent and pedagogy-embedded tasks
 - that reflect content and language focus of particular level
 - that are designed to elicit performances prototypical for end-of-level learners
 - Detailed “task sheet” divided into 3 categories
 - Task appropriateness
 - Content
 - Language focus
 - Rough draft submitted to corpus

Overview of PPTs

Thematic Focus	Textual Focus	Audience
<p>Level II</p> <p>Imaginative treatment of personal relationships</p> <p>[Alternative Ending to the Novel „The Story of Mr. Sommer“]</p>	<p>Placing narration about personal lives into the context of a literary work, literary conventions</p>	<p>Personal and public</p>
<p>Level III</p> <p>Multicultural lives in contemporary German</p> <p>[Journalistic treatment „At home in Germany? A Portrait of a Vietnamese Family“]</p>	<p>Placing personal experiences into a broader social context</p>	<p>Public</p>
<p>Level IV</p> <p>Germany’s role in the EU; creation of a constitution</p> <p>[European Union and the United States: comparisons and lessons“]</p>	<p>Making an argument about social, political, economic developments in societies</p>	<p>Public</p>

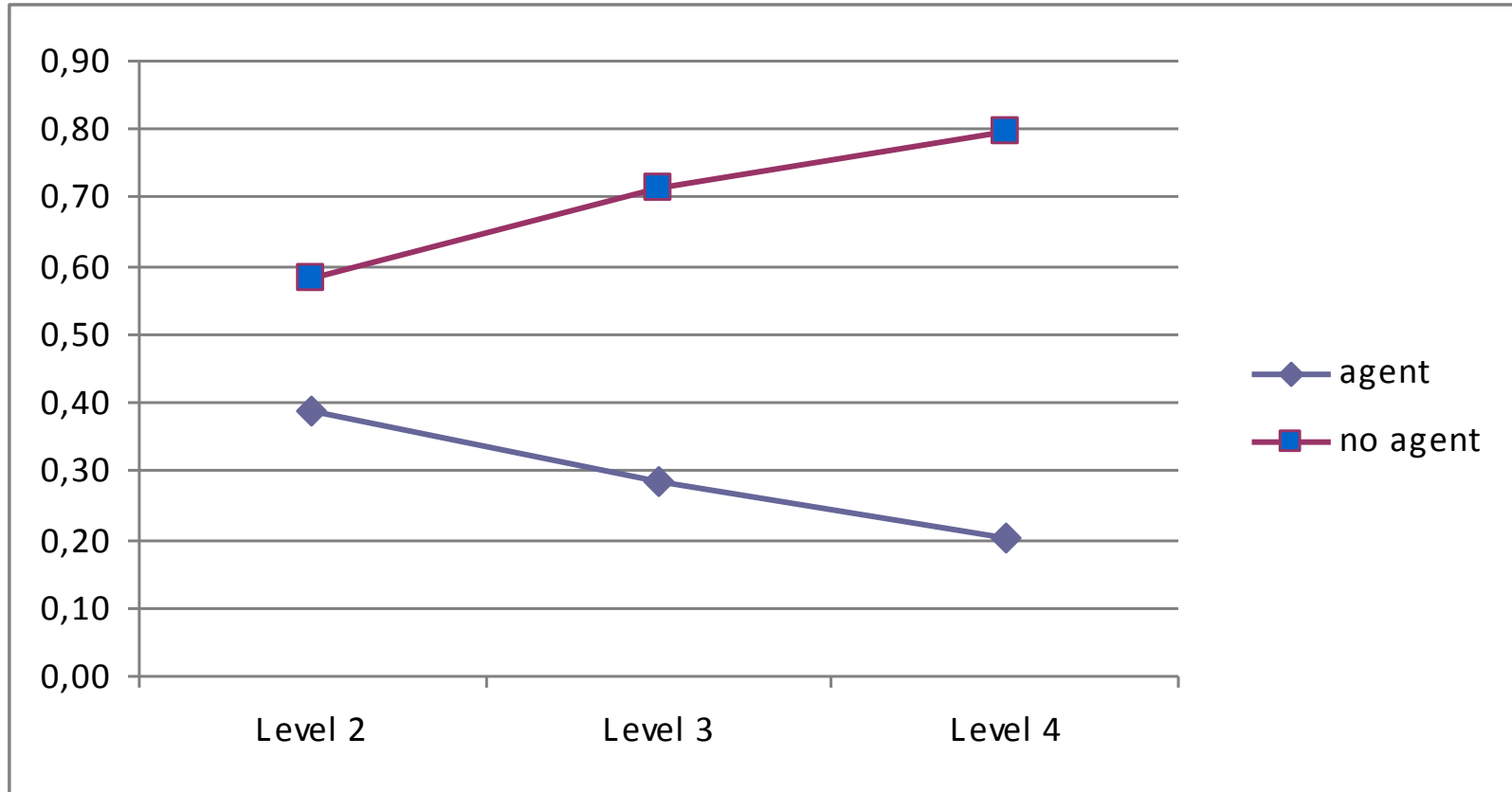
1. Incidence of passive voice

Clauses in the passive voice, Levels II-IV
(as percentage of total number of clauses)



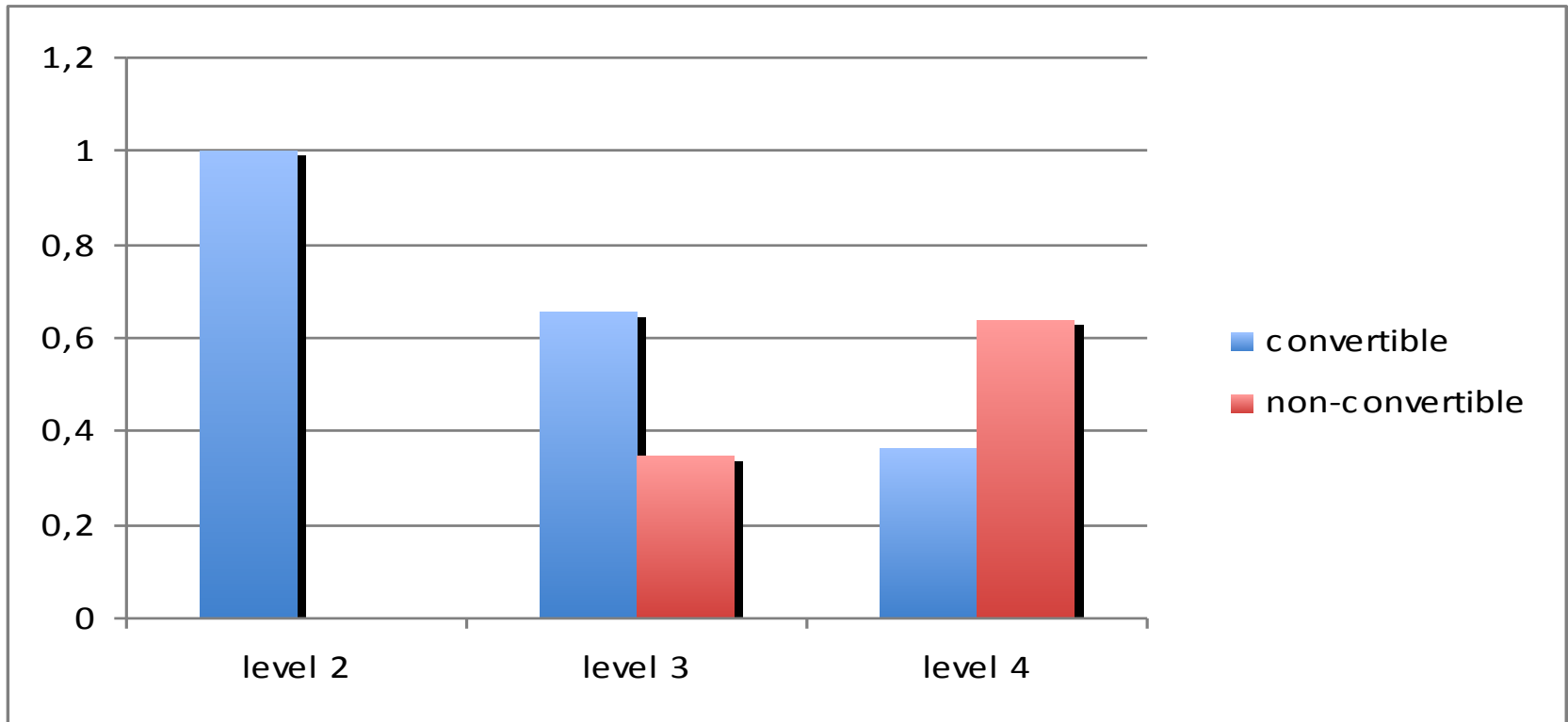
2. Agency:

Percentage of passive clauses with explicit agent,
Levels II-IV



3. "Convertibility":

Percentage of passive clauses that are convertible to active voice, Levels II-IV



Examples

Level 3

1117

Tung hat zwei der Jungen erstochen. Matthias F. starb an seinen Wunden. Der andere Junge **wurde ernsthaft verletzt**.

Tung stabbed two of the boys. Matthias F. died of his wounds. The other boy **was critically injured**.

2095

Oft **wurde** sie auf der strasse von deutschen **nach zigarretten gefragt** und einmal, als sie zum klavierunterricht gegangen sei **würde** sich von einem polizisten **gefragt**, ob er in ihren rucksack schauen konnte.

Often on the street she **was asked** for cigarettes by Germans, and once, as she went to her piano lessons she **was asked** by a police officer if he could look into her backpack.

Level 4

1117

Die Vereinigten Staaten **wurden** auf einer Standardsprache, einer Gewohnheit der Selbstverwaltung, einem geteilten Satz moralischen Werten und einem Glauben in der Gleichheit und in der Freiheit **errichtet**.

The United States **were built** on a standard language, a habit of self administration, a shared set of moral values and a belief in equality and freedom.

2095

Die Fundamente der EU sind ein Erfolg. Die Interessen aller Länder **werden gut repräsentiert** und man kann ihre Stimmen klar hören.

The fundamental parts of the EU are a success. The interests of all countries **are well represented** and you can hear their voice clearly.



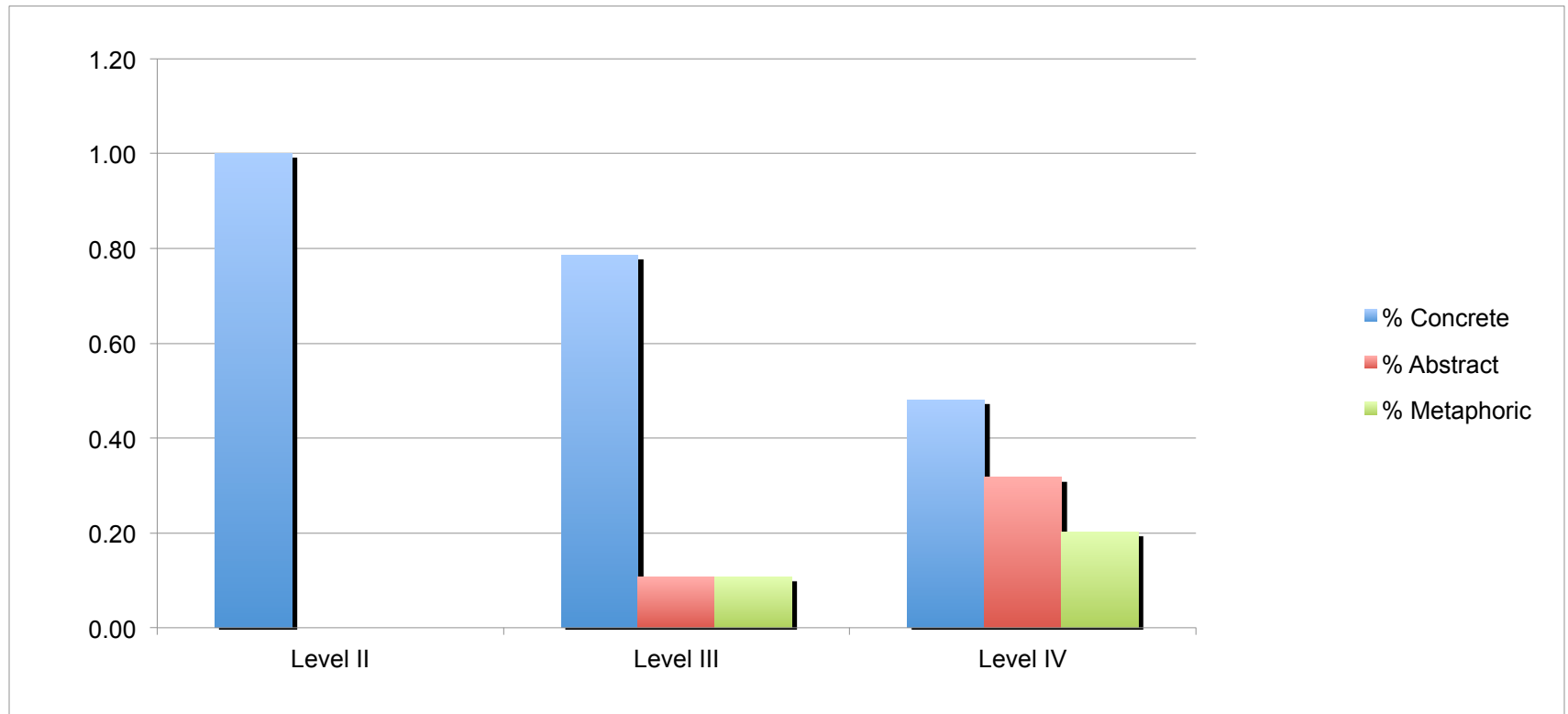
4. Classification of entities (Martin and Rose 2003)

Indefinite pronouns		<i>some/any/nothing/nobody/no one</i>
Concrete	everyday	<i>man, girlfriend, face, hands</i>
	specialized	<i>mattock, lathe, gearbox</i>
Abstract	technical	<i>inflation, metafunction, gene</i>
	institutional	<i>offence, hearing, applications</i>
	semiotic	<i>question, issue, letter</i>
	generic	<i>colour, time, manner, way</i>
Metaphoric	process	<i>relationship, marriage, exposure</i>
	quality	<i>justice, truth, integrity</i>

4. Classification of entities:

Classification of subjects of passive clauses, Levels II-IV

(as percentage of total number of clauses in passive)

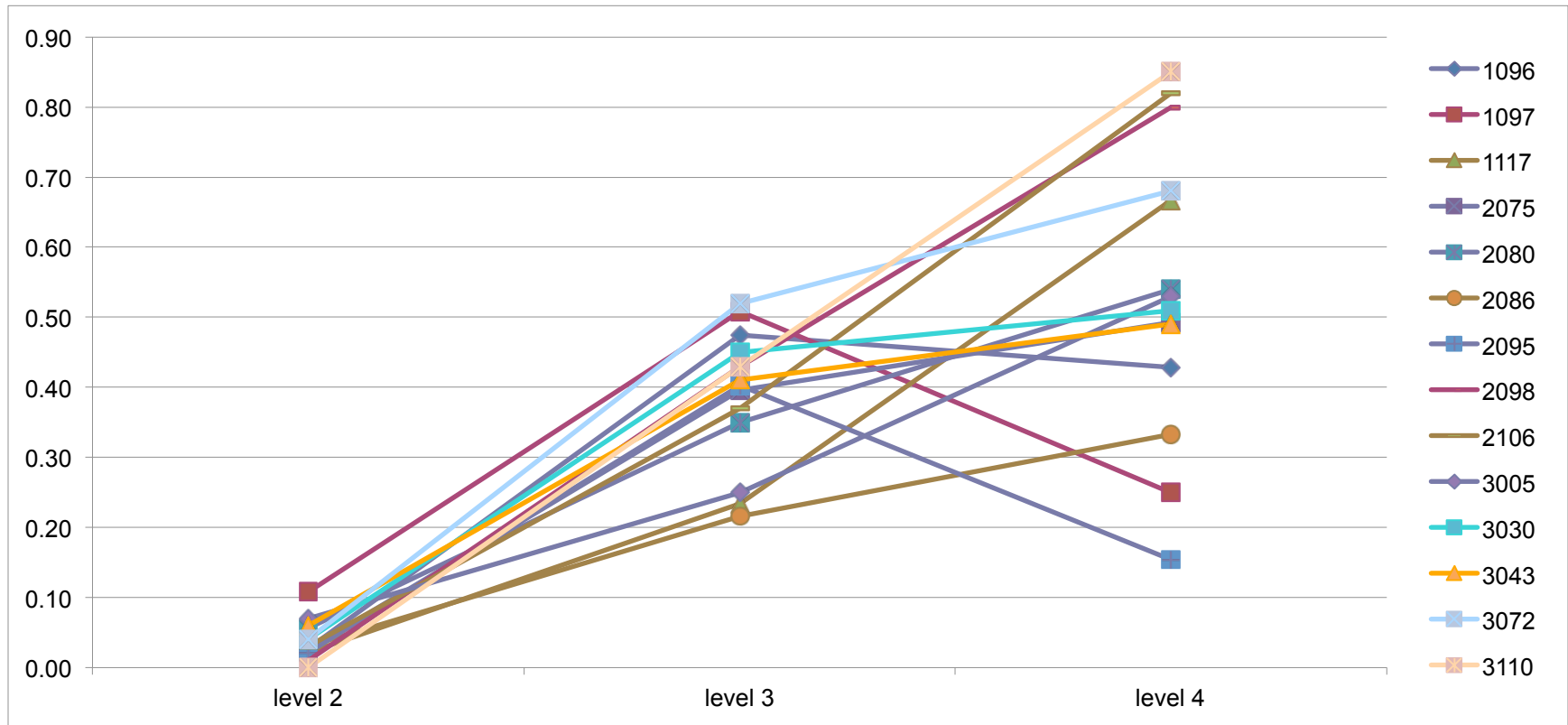


Examples of entities as subjects, Levels II-IV

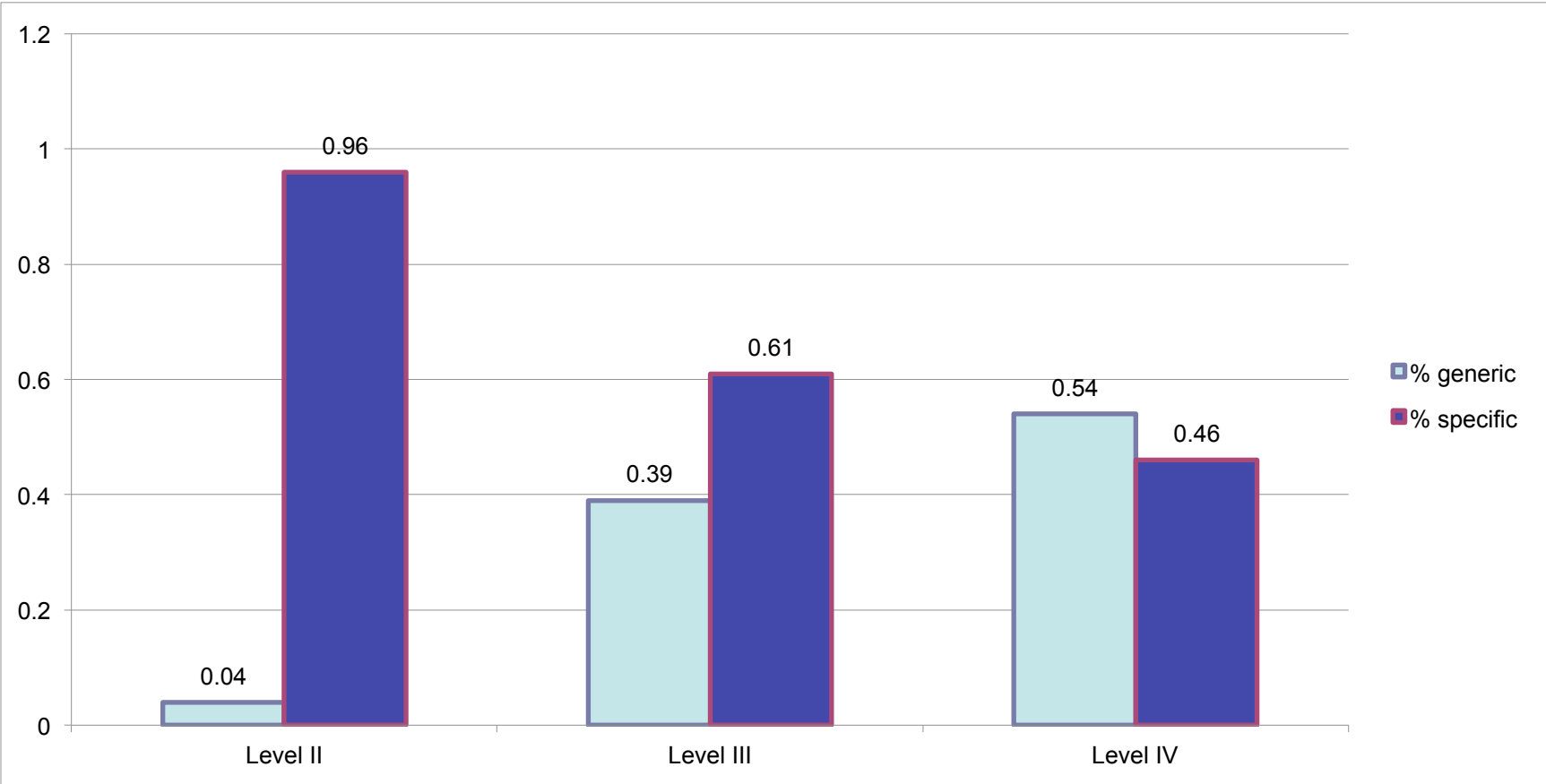
Level II	Level III	Level IV
<p><u>Concrete – everyday:</u> -Herr Sommer wurde von der Regierung geschickt <i>(Mr. Sommer was sent by the government)</i></p>	<p><u>Concrete - everyday:</u> Oft wurde sie auf der Straße von Deutschen nach Zigaretten gefragt <i>(Often on the street she was asked for cigarettes by Germans)</i></p> <p><u>Abstract:</u> Frauen werden misshandelt <i>(Women are mistreated)</i></p> <p><u>Metaphoric:</u> Aber neulich wird wenig Fortschritt gemacht. <i>(But recently little progress has been made)</i></p>	<p><u>Concrete – specialized:</u> Die 13 Kolonien wurden vereinigt <i>(The 13 colonies were unified)</i></p> <p><u>Abstract:</u> -Die Interessen aller Länder werden gut repräsentiert <i>(The interests of all countries are well represented)</i></p> <p><u>Metaphoric:</u> Eine starke Einigkeit wurde gefördert <i>(A strong unity was promoted)</i></p>

5. Classification of human participants

Incidence of generic participants, Levels II-IV
(as percentage of total number of human participants)



Distribution of human participants, Levels II-IV

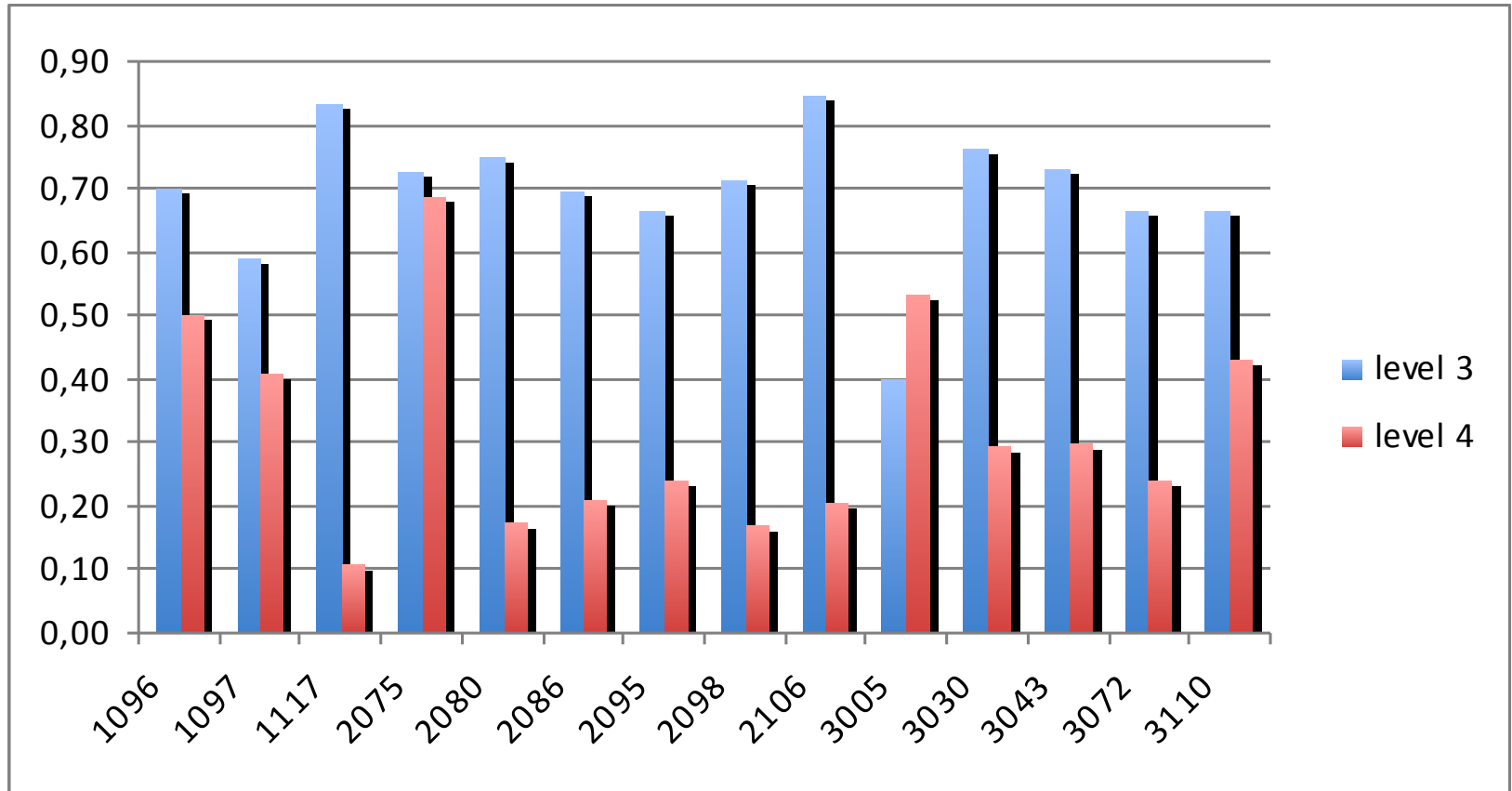


Human participants in one learner's writing, Levels II-IV

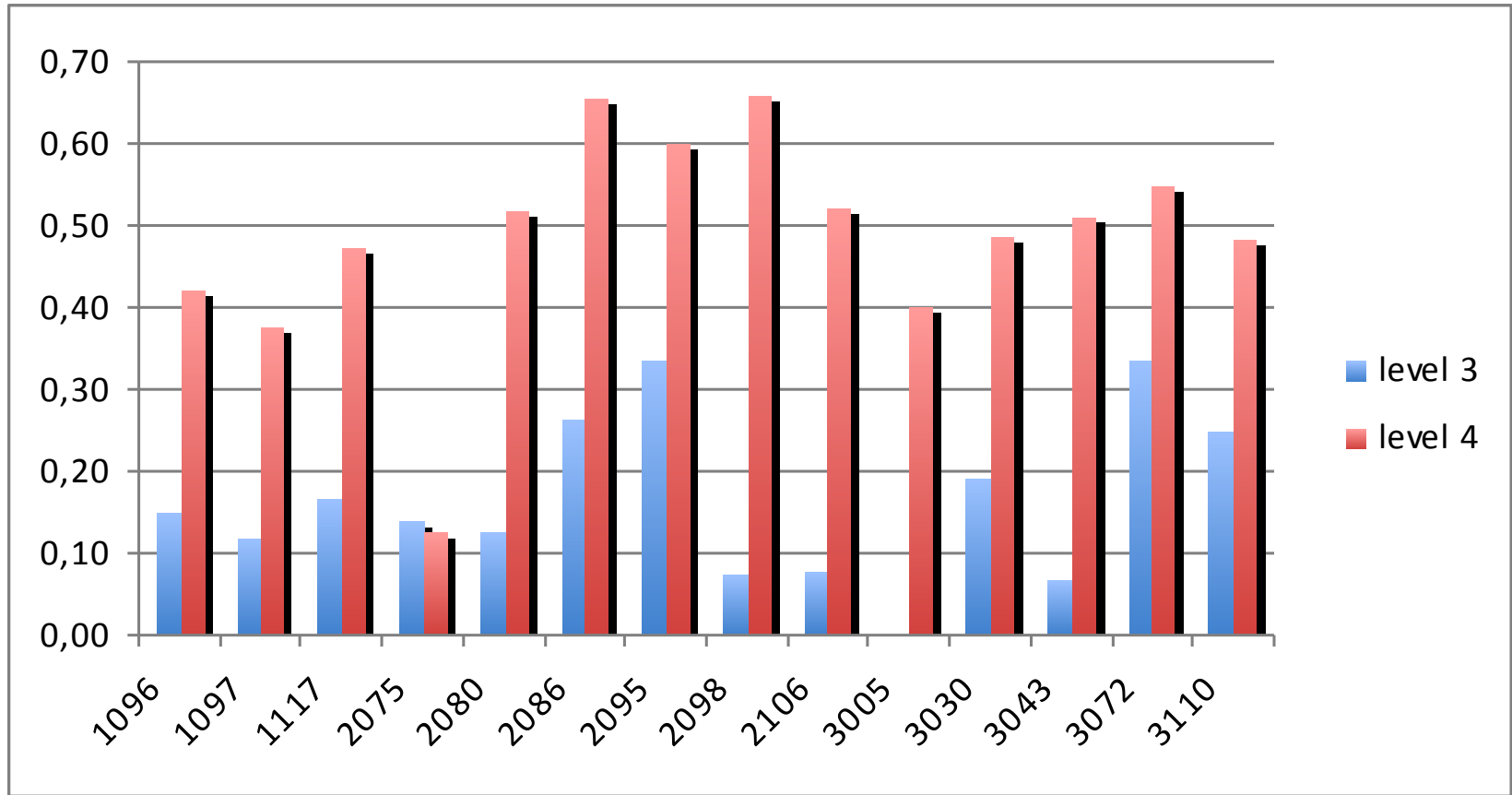
Level II	Level III	Level IV
3110.2 Herr Sommer Ich (<i>I</i>) Seine Frau (<i>his wife</i>) Seine Familie (<i>his family</i>) Sein Onkel (<i>his uncle</i>) Seine Eltern (<i>his parents</i>)	3110.3 Vietnamese (<i>Vietnamese</i>) Immigranten (<i>immigrants</i>) Tran ihre Familie (<i>her family</i>) ihre 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>)

6. Representation of national/regional space

National/regional space as circumstance

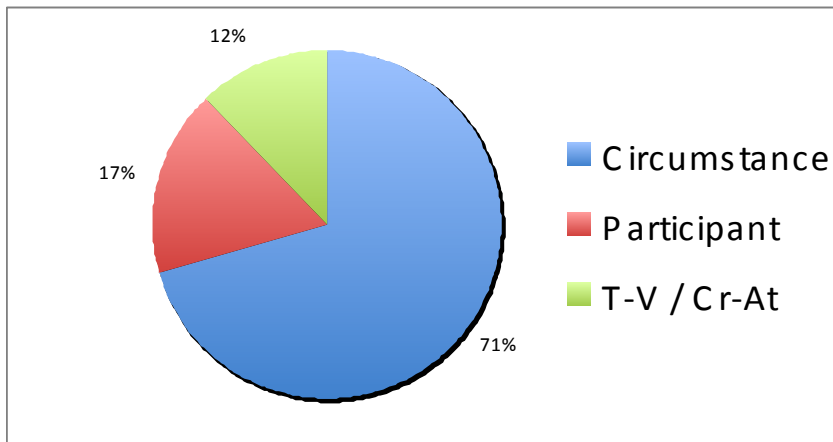


National/regional space as participant

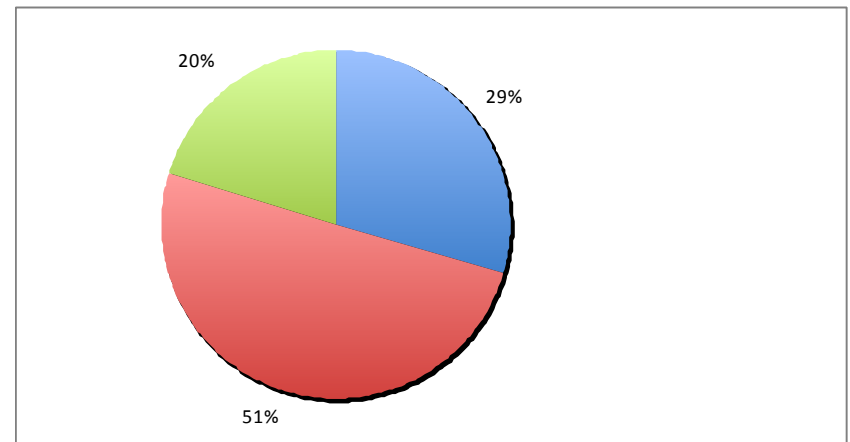


Representation of national/regional space in levels 3 and 4

Level 3



Level 4



Examples of representations of national space

Level 3

1117

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.

2095

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**.

Conclusions

- Factors affecting elicitation of passive voice among L2 German learners:
 - Synoptic semiosis
 - Field (as manifested in entities, participants)
 - Agent’s saliency
 - “Convertibility”
- Cline of appropriateness for passive voice
- Relevance of passive voice for lower-level instruction within articulated curricula

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