GFL

German as a foreign language

Redacting Internet Short-Texts (IST) to Improve Second-Language German Writing Skills

William C. McDonald, Charlottesville

Redacting Internet Short-Texts (IST) to Improve Second-Language German Writing Skills[1]

William C. McDonald, Charlottesville

Internet short-texts (IST), approximately 250 words in length, are a ready, but underused, resource for enhancing second-language writing skills. Here we discuss the implementation of such short-texts from the *dwworld.de* and *Yahoo! International* websites both as prototypes for written discourse in the target language and as a bridge to free-writing. In allowing students to choose the model texts for adaptation within a stable master-site, the instructor encourages productive Internet surfing, the object being to acquaint learners with a wide range of topics, stylistic registers, and authentic written communication.

1. Introduction

Internet Short-Texts (hereinafter IST) are Web-articles of around 250 words. Here we discuss the employment of IST as the foundation for second-language writing exercises. Gathered on a single, stable and well-managed site, these Internet articles have to do with current events, business, culture, lifestyle, sport, geography, environmental issues, health and wellness, study abroad, weather conditions, etc. Broad enough in spectrum to appeal to a wide range of students, IST are generally well-written. They are both timely and set down in the language that native speakers understand and use. IST change daily, but are housed in an archive for reference. Students literally have IST at their fingertips, needing only to select and print a text.

The process advanced in this paper arose from frustration and failure, trial and error. As a second-language learner of German myself, I struggled over the span of three decades to teach writing skills to German majors and minors at university. My results, following the traditional stages of the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, submitting to instructor), were uniformly disappointing. After years of reading

---

compositions written in bad German, and believing I was helping students only minimally to achieve a measure of writing fluency – even the re-writes of compositions contained new errors – I determined to seek out a more effective procedure. It had to satisfy six criteria:

1) to encourage students to use authentic vocabulary and syntax;

2) to provide reliable cultural contexts, from which composition and conversation topics arise naturally;

3) to inspire students to read more widely in the target language, so as to be seek out useful models for imitation;

4) to provide model texts that students could imitate, and learn from – texts that could serve as a bridge to free writing;

5) to allow students to write within the bounds of the target language – without the intermediary step of translation from English.

6) to give non-native instructors the confidence that they are reading – and teaching – genuine and credible language and syntax that is understood and used by native speakers and writers.

Incredibly, a single source met all these criteria, Internet short-texts, which are accessible to every student. I have used the approach here described with students in beginning, intermediate and advanced composition courses, both for classroom and out-of-class activities. At first I employed IST only for purposes of in-class conversation, but then realized they could serve, too, as the basis for out-of-class modeling for written exercises. Using IST as archetypes for second-language writing, and augmenting the writing assignment with online dictionaries and synonym sites, my results have been so positive as to allow me to convert all composition classes to IST. At the same time I continue to utilize IST for classroom conversation, thus conducting all instruction with Internet writing samples. Over time, mangled syntax disappeared, and student writing began to look less like English translated into the target language, and more like native discourse. In short, the writing was "more German." Student enthusiasm for the writing task improved visibly because learners pursued their own interests, selecting IST to imitate, and adapt. Students also were excited to bring their computer skills to class assignments.

The method we have devised thus has four steps, here expressed in short-hand: first, to imitate; second, to adapt; third, to synthesize, and fourth, to generate. None of these is a discrete action, each phase in the process contributing to the goal of greater autonomy in FL writing. The premise is that controlled imitation of authentic specimen texts promotes the ability to produce original written material.

The usual academic requirement for foreign language majors and minors is a course in composition. Sometimes combined with conversation, composition classes aim to improve written expression in the target language. The aim is easier to express than to attain, however. In a limited time-frame, perhaps a single semester, teachers review grammar and idioms, go over various types of style and syntax, propose topics for at-home writing assignments and correct the same, many of which read like a literal translation from English into the foreign language. The teacher marks corrections, hands back the composition and hopes that, on the next writing assignment, the student avoids past errors.

Educators traditionally look to textbooks for teaching advanced intermediate and advanced language students. There they expect to find materials contributing to the mastery of skills, while fostering a positive attitude toward the subject matter. But textbooks have become problematic for FL writing courses. One issue is proficiency. Not all authors are native speakers; and authors who are, may not have kept up with changes in word usage, syntax and style. Another concerns vocabulary. Too many authors have a literary bias; students may therefore fail to learn expressions regarding subject-areas like weather, transportation, astrology, shopping, and films.

There is also the matter of topicality. The time-lag between completion of a book manuscript and its use in the classroom has direct bearing on the pertinence of the subject matter. Finally, textbooks – and teachers – assume they know, and should therefore choose which topics will interest students and thereby encourage writing skills.

This paper argues that a new model is necessary, one that shifts the dynamic within, and outside, the second-language writing classroom. Recognizing that students perform best and learn most effectively when stimulated by the instructional material, we propose to encourage them to become their own authors and editors, devising their own open-ended "textbooks" that integrate language and culture. There is already a source for topical, communicative activities that appeals to students and stimulates their

participation in foreign language classes. In profusion it displays current, linguistically authentic written passages in all stylistic registers and text types on numerous subjects. I speak, of course, of the Internet and its rich assortment of IST – heretofore an underused resource for second-language writing.

Our experience with these short-texts in composition courses shows them to be significant for developing foreign language writing skills. The method outlined in this paper is, in brief, a two-part exercise: 1) copy out a portion of a second-language IST, altering at least one element per clause, or sentence; and 2) an analytical response, in the target language, to the IST chosen. What especially appeals to second-language writers is the sense of "listening in" on a contemporary, thematically current and newsworthy discourse formulated by native speakers. The very authenticity that is the mark of IST reminds us of the centrality of authentic materials, placed in context, to foreign language teaching itself (Omaggio-Hadley 2001). End-of-semester evaluations show students appreciate discovering in IST not only vocabulary and syntax, but prevailing opinions in German-speaking lands about which they otherwise would have remained uninformed.

2. Technological dimension

Requirements:

1*)* Access to the WWW and to a computer printer.

2) Suitable composition course sites for German, general FL and ESL (English as a Second Language).

A) The ARD (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlichen-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*) is a publicly funded consortium of German public-service broadcasters. It is affiliated with http://www.tageschau.de, a daily television news program that spans current events, culture, the stock market, children's programming. The *Tagesschau*- Internet site offers many IST, a blog, a forum, and broadcasts the news in a four-minute segment via LiveStream (Windows Media and a modem/ISDN) that is suitable for the German classroom.

B) Whereas http://www.tagesschau.de is German-specific, another international broadcaster associated with the ARD has an extensive span of languages: *Deutsche*

*Welle (*http://www.dw-world.de).[2] Headquartered in Bonn, *Deutsche Welle* is the former German shortwave radio station, now transformed into a digital technology center for multimedia and multilingual information, including email newsletters to educators (http://newsletter.dw-world.de). A public broadcasting corporation under federal law, *Deutsche Welle* characterized its mission in January, 2007 as a dual promotion: the German language, as well as understanding and dialogue in the wider world.[3] *Deutsche Welle*, which is closest in style and content to the American NPR, the BBC and the CBC, sponsors DW-TV (Internet television, also available via cable) and DW-RADIO (LiveStream radio), in addition to offering news and cultural IST in 30 languages around the clock. (Languages in the American curriculum are, besides English and German, Arabic, Chinese, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.) The many language sub-sites carry culture-specific materials; in other words, the German pages are not duplicated in other languages.

The IST on *Deutsche Welle* are especially good at casting light on current German cultural affairs, and are unafraid to tackle thorny topics, for instance, German xenophobia. But they also illuminate the culture and politics of the United States. Used as a means of highlighting cultural differences and communalities, these short-texts are effective as stimuli to in-class FL conversation. Since *Deutsche Welle* advances an especially broad perspective on public affairs, it is my choice for writing exercises with IST.

To navigate *Deutsche Welle,* the student goes to the home page, http://www.dw-world.de – which is in English – selects the flip-down panel called "Choose from 30 Languages" (Albanian to Urdu), then clicks on the target language to receive a page showing categories, among them Germany, Europe, Business, Culture & Lifestyle, German Soccer, Visit Germany, Map, and Weather. News stories of the day are headlined in the center of the page.

---

[2] Other online sites with a range of German IST are http://www.zdf.de, http://www.ard.de and http://www.focus.de, displaying, among others, the categories: news, sports, finance, health and wellness, weather, culture, travel, and gastronomy. Also useful is the site for BBC Languages (http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/languages), which offers IST in over thirty languages, excluding German.
[3] http://194.55.26.46/dw/article/0,2144,823222,00.html.

Examples of IST are whether Germans are averse to financial risk, the Dafur peace mission, and French President Sarkozy's nuclear deal with Libya. There follows a sample paragraph:

> Bislang sind es jedoch vor allem die höheren Preise, die den Verbraucher abschrecken. Zwar gibt es günstige Importe – vorwiegend aus China – diese sollen jedoch auch weiterhin mit einem „Anti-Dumpingzoll" von bis zu 66 Prozent des Importpreises belegt werden. Erst im Oktober 2007 hatte sich die EU-Kommission sich für die Verlängerung dieser seit 2001 geltenden Regelung um ein weiteres Jahr ausgesprochen. „Wir müssen Umweltinteressen mit den Interessen des fairen Handels in Einklang bringen", verteidigte der Sprecher der Kommission den Beschluss.[4]

If *Deutsche Welle* can be criticized, it is on the puzzling omission of Italian and Japanese from its wide palette of languages. IST in these tongues can be found, however, on *Y!International,* the Yahoo global site under the addresses http://it.yahoo.com and http://www.yahoo.co.jp. A glance at the short-texts there shows similarities to *Deutsche Welle* in phraseology and subject matter.

Some students complain that *Deutsche Welle* is "too serious," by which they mean that its IST are occupied with "too many" current events. However, most student writers remark in evaluations at semester's end that they leave the composition class better informed about world affairs and more cognizant of a global perspective.

3. Pedagogical dimension

3.1 Premises:

1) Researchers have focused on the theory of second-language writing (for instance, Grabe 2001) and on the *Schreibprozess,* that is to say, on writing strategies (Blatt 2004). There is still much "talking about writing" (Weissberg 2005); and most attention is devoted to word processing as the electronic medium of choice for second-language writing (Pennington 1999, Pennington & Stevens 1992). These topics are, of course, important and valid, but can also limit our perspectives insofar as they slight FL writing using Internet texts.

2) Discussion on the role of the computer and composition, specifically writing programs, goes back at least a quarter century, when a scholar complained about the "large number of computer programs which taught grammar and spelling drills

but ignored the larger problem of teaching writing" (Wresch 1983a; see Wresch 1983b).[5] Although some researchers have explored computer adaptive testing and other aspects of CALL (Bangert-Drowns 1993, Starr-Egger 2001; Pennington 2004), the clear danger is that language teachers reduce the computer to an instructional mechanism for writing aids, vocabulary acquisition, and the like, or to a medium for e-mail (Nabors & Swartley 1999). Along these lines, much research on German classroom writing looks to the computer as a programming tool, referring to computer applications such as software, online reference grammars and programming for verb forms and word order (Witton 1992; Bräuer 1997; Blatt 2004).[6] This paper reasons that, beyond composing and revising with the computer, the student can access IST to enhance writing skills.

3) Concentration on the writing process as such (prewriting, first draft, revisions, paragraph writing, sentence cohesion, etc.) may, by focusing on mechanical aspects, blind us to the benefits of modeling existing Internet texts with a dual methodology of imitation and editing. Students learn by handling such texts to develop skills as reader, editor, and adaptor.

---

[4] http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2934063,00.html (21.11.2007).

[5] Acronyms trace the march of electronic media in the foreign language classroom, from CALI (Computer Assisted Language Instruction), and CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) to TELL (Technology Enhanced Language Learning). Second-language writing was the step-child of research until recently, perhaps because of the dominance of the audio-lingual approach (Krapels, 1990; Matsuda, 2003 The neglect of past decades has been remedied most especially by the monographs and collected essays of Martha C. Pennington (1999, 2004, 2006), Carol A. Chapelle (2001, 2006), Barbara Kroll (1990, 2003), Tony Silva & Paul Kei Matsuda (2001, 2005). Silva and Matsuda are closely involved with the *Journal of Second Language Writing* (est. 1992), which publishes "theoretically grounded reports of research and discussion on central issues in second and foreign language writing and writing instruction" (Matsuda, 1997). One of these studies (Keck, 2006), offering an excellent overview of research on the use of the paraphrase in second-language compositions, impacts on our own, by validating textual borrowing from source texts – a method which earlier carried the stain of plagiarism. See, also, the *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning* (est. 1985), a "source … for research students in areas such as collaborative learning, knowledge engineering, open, distance and networked learning, developmental psychology and evaluation" (Website: http://www.blackwellpublishing.com).

[6] Ingrid Böttcher (1999, 2006) of the Institut für Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft at the University of Aachen has markedly gone in other directions, having explored creative writing exercises and the concept of writing competence using process writing. See the summary of writing research by Paris (1999). See also Brenner (1994) and Faistauer (2000b).

4) Using IST as a template, and a strategy to replace lexical items in the master text with synonyms, students are free to focus on the function of syntax and style in the target language.

5) It is not enough to caution second-language writing students against composing in their native language, and then translating the composition into the target language. Learners can easily be shown, as they chronicle their progress in writing assignments based on IST, the benefits of remaining within the framework of the foreign language.

6) We surmise that students need to imitate, and then adapt, good models of foreign syntax before they can synthesize and produce such syntax on their own. Our guiding assumption is that adaptive imitation of Internet texts on *Deutsche Welle* (and other carefully chosen multi-lingual sites) instills over time sufficient skills in second-language writing to improve sentence generation and to act as a stimulus to free-writing.

3.2 Rationale for the method: written discourse in German

Attaining competence in writing German is a tedious and lengthy process. The grammar is complicated, having many exceptions. "The topic of German word order," Owen Rambow has said, "is vast and complex" (1993: 2).[7] With only slight exaggeration, Strube & Hahn label German "a free word order language" (1996: 270; Rambow & Joshi 1995). German allows for scrambling, defined by Holger Hopp as "the optional syntactic reordering of verbal arguments, which is licensed by interface considerations (semantics, information structure)" (Hopp 2003; Lenerz 2001). The language is also characterized by topicalization (Rambow 1993; Fandrych 2003; Moyer 2005), that is to say, subject-verb inversion in the front field (*Vorfeld*) of the sentence, or clause. This means that students of German routinely place a range of syntactical units in front of the inflected verb. Because the S-V-O (subject-verb-object) pattern is so prevalent in

---

[7] Rambow (1993, *Introduction: German Syntax,* p. 2.) gives this overview: "German is a verb-final language, but in addition it is verb-second (V2), which means that in a root clause, the finite verb (main verb or auxiliary) moves into the second position in the clause (presumably the COMP position). This divides the clause into two parts: the position in front of the finite verb, the Vorfeld (VF), and the positions between the finite and non-finite verbs, the Mittelfeld (MF). This is summed up as follows: VF V-2 MF Verb-non-finite." Rambow goes on to speak about

English syntax, student writers must check over every composition assiduously, making sure that sentences and clauses have sufficient variety in the front field.

Topicalization (see Appendix) is triggered by writer emphasis, something previously mentioned by the writer, contrast, or something already known to the writer and the reader. The most difficult of these to master is emphasis, that is, German gives pride of place to the element that the writer or speaker wishes to highlight, or to call attention to. An example of a non-subject in sentence-initial position would be, translating literally here from a German IST: "From executed people are in China bodily organs taken" (*Hingerichteten werden in China Organe entnommen*).[8] Unfortunately for learners of German, the front field without the grammatical subject is no marginal feature of syntax. Computational analysis shows that roughly 50 % of German sentences fail to start with the subject as English prefers to do [S-V-O word order] (Speyer 2003 and 2007).

Subject-verb inversion, as it appears in German, is particularly difficult for English-speakers (Rogers 2003). Any sort of writing exercise challenges them to manipulate syntactical units, sometimes completely reversing the word order of their native syntax. Routinely they move sentence elements appearing in English to the left, the front field, with corresponding effect on signification. Speaking of this so-called "leftward movement," Markus Bader and Lyn Frazier isolate two main differences between English and German:

> First, in every German declarative main clause, a phrase has to be moved to the sentence-initial position immediately in front of the finite verb …While it is often the subject of the sentence that is topicalized, topicalizing the object … is in no way exceptional and much more common than in English…. The second difference is that German not only allows one to topicalize a complete DP [determiner phrase], but also to topicalize only part of a DP … so-called 'split' topicalization… (Bader & Frazier 2005; see also Durrell 2002).

Since American students are accustomed to the sequence: S-V-O, it is not surprising that the majority of their German sentences contain subject pronouns and nouns in the initial position.

---

the complicated German word order activated by subordinating conjunctions. See also Rambow (1995) and Fung (2001).
[8] Originally published 21.4.2006 at http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,1975233,00.html.

Another difficulty for second-language learners of German is the discrete stylistic register called elevated style (*gehobener Stil*). In rough terms, German written culture, especially in the Liberal Arts, strives to communicate thoughts with rhetorical effect, thereby valorizing fine style as a mark of erudition. Educated written German is characterized, on the level of phraseology, by subtle shades of meaning conveyed by verbal prefixes, and on the level of sentence structure, by sometimes tangled constructions, the favorite of which is the involved participial construction – the extended modifier. American English, on the other hand, strives for comprehensibility as an ideal of style. So challenging is the compass of "good" German style that most PhD students require more than a single reading course to master it.

Perhaps because German writing is so difficult for Americans and is easily the most challenging of the traditional four skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking), students tend to imitate English vocabulary and syntax in free-writing exercises. The result is not only an abuse of topicalization and the introduction of Anglicisms, but a contribution to a pidgin tongue residing somewhere between German and English that renders English expressions literally in German. An example is the use of the preposition *in* before dates, for example, *in 2007*, when German has no such preposition. Literal translations (the genesis of many student compositions in German) produce a contact language with significant overlap with *Denglisch*. An officially recognized entity that is an amalgamation of German and English, *Denglisch* has arisen in German-speaking areas under the influence of American media, the computer and commerce (Marks 2006). Examples of *Denglisch* are: *relaxtes Outfit*, *Checkliste* and the verb *downloaden*.[9]

It is essential here to stress that the foregoing remarks on writing German, though language-specific, by no means imply that using IST for written exercises is limited to German. Each of us teaching another language – including ESL – could make a list of features of the target language that present difficulties for learners. This paper argues that modeling FL texts as they appear on selected Internet sites is the first and very important step to developing skills in written discourse.

---

[9] Hohenhaus (2001) employs the term "Neuanglodeutsch" to describe the phenomenon of German-English amalgamation.

4. The process[10]

4.1 Imitation in Writing on the Basis of IST

Our German writing course approaches composition as a weekly, out-of-class assignment on the basis of IST. The premise is that the IST is a stylistic sample providing a standard for imitation. The first part of the written "essay" is a creative imitation of the model Internet text, as chosen by the student.

The concept of modeling, in various forms, has been attempted in English composition courses (Harris 1983; Charney & Carlson 1995). We here extend the method to second-language writing, supplanting the traditional German essay (*Aufsatz*) with IST. The usual prose essay, an exercise in free-writing, is conceived as a linear process and relies on a prescriptive and descriptive systematic process, its guiding principle of composition being, as stated in the title of one German textbook, the movement from "sentence" to "essay," that is, from "Satz" to "Aufsatz" (Neuse 1971). Student writers were expected to begin with mastery of the grammar of a smaller unit – the clause, or sentence – and advance to the larger unit of the essay, combining parts to form a whole. Scholars in Germany have given much attention to the concept of style itself, *Stil/Stilistik*, as a precursor to the writing process (Sowinski 1973 and 1991; Göttert 2004). Process-writing, in contrast to the Romance languages and ESL, is not well-established in German writing courses (Krueger et al. 2004; Krueger 2005-06). This is not to slight the contributions to *Schreibdidaktik* of Portmann & Feilke (1996) or Becker-Mrotzek (2006), Becker-Mrotzek & Schindler (2007).

Supplanting the established *Aufsatz* means, of course, replacing a methodology that charts a process from pre-writing to re-writing. As a standard text on teaching writing explains, writers use three major processes: planning, sentence generation and revising research (Tarvers 1992). For a classic writing assignment, the second-language learner typically faces a blank page and the following prescriptive guidelines: locate suitable material ("What I did on my vacation", etc.) limit the subject; develop a thesis; strive for the logical sequence of ideas; vary simple and compound sentences, include compound-complex sentences; avoid sentence fragments, run-ons and choppy sentences; heed coordination of sentence elements; pay attention to the agreement of subject and verb, and pronoun and antecedent; watch tenses; beware of worn-out words;

---

[10] See the Appendix for examples of student editing and writing.

and shun telegraphic speech –   while aiming for sentence clarity and paragraph development.

We eliminate entirely the process of pre-writing and the technique of paragraph development, relying on the IST that the writing student has selected for re-working. This text provides the stylistic model for the first half of the writing exercise. For the second half, it serves as the spur to emotional engagement, pro or con.

The instructor places two restrictions on the student search for IST:

1) The text and topic must be educationally appropriate in tone and expression (Note: the master-sites chosen have transmitted consistently appropriate material).

2) No single subject, for instance, German soccer, may appear more than twice a semester in written work.

The element of student choice is crucial, because learners respond to topics in which they have invested curiosity and enthusiasm. Student selection of IST encourages productive Internet surfing, inasmuch as the choice of a subject – and the rejection of others – requires both wide-ranging reading and exercise of the power of discrimination.

4.2 Part One of the Writing Assignment

Students first locate a promising IST; they read the entire text; then they choose paragraphs to reproduce and revise. This paper argues that less is more in mastering second-language writing. It is not the length of the passage to be revised that is crucial, but its value as paradigm. The question should be: is this specimen of FL writing worthy of imitation by student writers?

In the process of revision, students use online dictionaries, for example, http://www.leo.org, which hosts three FL dictionaries: German-English, German-French, and German-Spanish. Also useful is http://dict.tu-chemnitz.de.

When seeking synonyms, students use an online thesaurus, for instance, http://www.woxikon.de. For questions of usage and for examples of idiomatic expressions, they consult the lexica: *Duden: Das Stilwörterbuch* (2001) and *Langenscheidts Großwörterbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (2002).

Students attach the print-out of the entire IST to the first page, so that the instructor can assess the revisions made. All changes to the original are highlighted, underlined, or bracketed, in order to facilitate teacher assessment and correction. With both documents in hand, the writing teacher has a concrete means by which, first, to assess student comprehension of the material and second, to monitor skills in synthesis and written communication.

Our second-language writers are instructed to leave intact the word order, sequence of sentences, and structure of the paragraphs as found in the IST. Next, they undertake at least one alteration per clause, or sentence. Copying out the phrases from the model IST, they carefully select items to replace, or re-write, with synonyms. Subjects for revision include all vocabulary items (nouns, adverbs, adjectives, prepositions and prepositional phrases, conjunctions, etc.), plus idioms. Although basic grammatical structures remain constant, students may change verbal tenses (for example, simple past to present perfect), and substitute voices (active to passive, and the reverse). The borrowing strategy is therefore near-verbatim reproduction. On the scale used for judging paraphrasing, we ask for a "near copy" with slight alterations (Keck 2006; Campbell 1990).

An example in English would be:

> *Original*: The new retirement age is scheduled to be introduced in a gradual process starting in 2012 and ending in 2029.
>
> *Redaction*: The new retirement age is supposed to be introduced gradually starting in the year 2012 and ending in 2029. (See Appendix for examples in German.)

The composition strategy here sketched is fully open-ended, and adaptable to various classroom levels and exigencies. The writing teacher can expand and contract it at will, based on the academic level of the composition course, specifying how many paragraphs to modify (even the whole text) and how many emendations to make per sentence or clause. As these redactions multiply, the teacher pushes the writing exercise up the scale from "near copy" to "minimal revision."

The best description of our method of textual borrowing comes from Rebecca Moore Howard (1993, 1995 and 1999), a specialist in writing and rhetoric whose research concentrates on English-language writing. She identifies a composing strategy as "patchwriting" (her own coinage), by which she means "copying from a source text and

then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym-substitutes" (1993: 233).[11] Patchwriting can have a very negative connotation, as when online university tutorials against plagiarism warn: "In patchwriting, the writer may delete a few words, change the order, substitute synonyms and even change the grammatical structure, but the reliance on the original text is still visible when the two are compared" (Simon Fraser University 2007). These are excellent summaries of our methodology which, to borrow Cherry Campbell's phrase, is "writing with others' words" (Campbell 1990), or, to cite Glynda Hull and Mike Rose, is a "pedagogy of imitation" (Hull & Rose 1989: 151). But there is a fundamental difference. Our concern is not with deceptive appropriation, or literary theft, but with its opposite number: deliberate, and open, borrowing of others' words – studied imitation of model texts in the target language. We expect, and assign, textual borrowing in near-verbatim form in some portion of the master text, appropriating existing textual passages as FL paradigms, but just as vigorously encourage redactions, modifications sufficient in kind and degree to demonstrate full comprehension of the larger written source and the relevant passages that have been adapted.

The premise that imitation is a path to free-writing finds perhaps surprising support from creative writing programs, here and abroad. After arriving at the method sketched here, I discovered that teachers of creative writing routinely employ the technique of imitation – and that imitation is crucial to a set of books on writing by Matt Whitling, the *Imitation in Writing Series* (Aesops Fables, Fairy Tales, Greek Myths, Medieval Legends, Poetry, etc.).[12] The Oxford Royale Academy, for example, teaches a summer course called "Creative Writing-Poetry," and explains one aspect of the course methodology: "Using texts creatively (examining examples of existing poems and making creative use of them through imitation, parody, updating and other forms of intertextuality)" (http://www.oxford-royale.co.uk).

"Imitate the style" is the catchword of exercises in creative writing programs, the teachers believing that good imitating leads to good writing. Some call the method

---

[11] Howard (1999: 799) views patchwriting as a pre-autonomous, "transitional writing form". The implications for second-language writing are obvious: the imitation of a model text is to be understood as a transition to freewriting.

[12] The description on the website of the *Imitation in Writing Series* (Logos School Materials) is "to teach aspiring writers the art and discipline of crafting delightful prose and poetry by using the time-tested method of imitation" (http://www.hsresourceexchange.com).

"creative imitation practice" (UC Riverside Creative Writing), while others speak of "mimicking the style of the text" and "careful stylistic imitation" (U of Southern Maine, MFA in Creative Writing). Already in 1981, Don Bogen called for an alternative for the then-standard undergraduate creative writing course, one focusing on "learning through imitation and on the writing process rather than the product. This alternative model also involves considerably more reading than a typical workshop class, requiring students to read … with … critical understanding" (Abstract). And Bogen later advocated a creative workshop model "to shift the focus from the product of writing – the finished poem or story – to the process of writing by engaging students in the imitation of writing processes used by published writers" (Bogen 1984, Abstract).

Imitation as a technique to improve and develop writing skills dates to classical antiquity (Aristotle, Cicero, Horace), with its ideal of style known as *imitatio* (Clark 1951). What this paper proposes for second-language writing is therefore adoption of an ancient method. The acceptance of imitation/mimicking/copying-out as a writing strategy demands, of course, that we re-think what we mean by "creative writing" in the FL classroom. Most of us conceive of composition as a creative activity, "creative" here defined conventionally as originality of thought and expression and use of the powers of imagination. To re-define what we mean by "creative," in order to encompass near-verbatim imitation (at least for one part of the writing exercise) is, for many, a difficult step to take. But if we could persuade them that modeling not only the structure of sentences and paragraphs on IST, but also verbs, adjectives, adverbs, noun placement, subordinate clauses, etc., could, by inculcating patterns of authentic language, aid in "creative writing" in the accepted sense of the term, then they might attempt the exercise. While I can state now, categorically, that this method has dramatically improved the quality of FL writing in my classes, my evidence is still more anecdotal and observational, than scientific. But I am confident in concluding: If students are able to show their creativity within the smaller precincts of language and style, and on the basis of the choice of synonyms, instead of in the drafting process, or in the development and coherence of topic sentences and paragraphs, then they have more time, and space, to engage with textual models and authentic style.

4.3 Part Two of the Writing Assignment

The second part of the writing exercise is a student-generated text. It is both personal and analytical, and can best be summarized as the critical analysis of the IST adapted in the first part, a point of view based on opinion and experience. Here the writer justifies his/her selection of material. In the syllabus students are told to express in this portion "your feelings and reactions to the paragraphs you have selected." Vital is the emotional engagement of the second-language writer, expressed as either agreement or disagreement with the IST as chosen and revised. From the reaction-section it should be obvious why the student selected this IST in the first place, as well as why he/she chose the section to be edited.

The second half of the writing exercise, like the first part of the assignment, is open-ended and easily admits amplification, so that the teacher can adapt to varying levels of writing competence. Usually students compose two good-sized paragraphs in the target language.

To anchor the student writer's reaction to the German text that was modeled above, the instructor hands out set opinion-phrases in the target language, of the sort: "I don't agree with that," or "I see that differently." (Samples in German: *meiner Meinung nach*; *ich bin aber anderer Meinung*; *ich stimme dem (nicht) zu; ich finde, dass)*. At least one of these phrases of agreement-concession-disagreement should function as a sentence starter, thus providing useful responses that students can learn, and successfully transfer, to other writing, and conversational, situations.

Fig. 1: Schema of the method

1) Choose	Article from Internet
2) Choose	Aspects to adapt
3) Cut and paste	Attach to top of paper
4) Copy and edit paragraphs	Alter at least 1 element per clause
5) Critical reaction	Analysis. Student reacts in target language to central ideas in model text.

To summarize, the second part of our writing exercise is a blend of analysis and emotional reaction to the IST. It is also fundamentally a comprehension task, for without understanding fully the material in the greater text, the student is unable to take

a stance on it. While part one is source-dependent, and a minimal revision of a master text, part two is free-writing, using a few prescribed opinion phrases, as the writer responds to the text and topic s/he has chosen. The instructor's benchmark for successful completion of this writing assignment is the rough stylistic parity of parts one and two. In other words, the student should be learning through imitation to alter his/her own free-writing. Various labels could describe the writing practice here sketched: paradigm and rejoinder; pastiche and response; modeling and commentary, patchwriting and feedback, cut-and paste and personal reaction; and modified re-telling and analysis. But whatever term we use, the method can contribute to language learning success by allowing students to concentrate on the language itself, not on pre-writing, drafting, revising, developing a thesis, or thematic coherence.

4.4 Limitations

1) In part one of the writing exercise, some students want to "take the easy way out," choosing to modify short paragraphs from the model text. Others mechanically redact the same items for each writing assignment, for instance, they change tenses, rather than engaging in the replacement of difficult synonyms or idioms.

2) The instructor should be prepared for a disparity in second-language writing between parts one and two of the IST writing exercise. Early in the semester, part two, the free-writing portion, can resemble the dreaded *Denglisch*, or some variety of S-V-O syntax.

4.5 Supporting the writing process through weekly e-mail

Valuable groundwork has been laid for the use of e-mail to promote FL learning (González-Bueno 1998; González-Bueno & Perez 2000; Gonglewski et al. 2001; St. John & Cash 1995). To improve competence in written discourse, we adopt an e- mail activity, which is conceived as a companion writing exercise to the IST. It, too, is due weekly and takes place outside of class, but involves a fundamentally different task – and thus requires a different communication strategy. Students listen to an Internet news broadcast (*Deutsche Welle* or *Tagesschau)*, then summarize, or paraphrase it in an e-mail paragraph in the target language which they send to the instructor, who corrects and returns it via return e-mail. Summary writing itself is an established technique for second-language learners (Keck 2006).

The e-mail abstract is also an exercise in choice, since students select the broadcast they report on. The typical newscast has ten stories (averaging ten lines of written text), covering news and cultural events in Germany and the world (including the U.S.), and concludes with a brief weather report. Important for second-language learners, newscasts on these two sites transmit authentic language, at native speed (including regional accent), from the lips of males, females and children. For those students having difficulty with the rapidity of speech delivery, *Deutsche Welle* also broadcasts "Slow News" (*langsam gesprochene Nachrichten*), with the option of verifying comprehension by means of printed texts of the spoken news broadcasts.

Regarding information gathering and personal attitudes, repeated exposure to international news coverage is instrumental in developing a world-perspective. For example, students tell me that German Internet news reports on American elections and foreign policy show in one clear way " how the world sees us."

An e-mail assignment of this sort tests more than writing skills, of course. In order to re-formulate in German what they have heard, students must have good understanding of news program content, control of grammatical structures, and must learn to condense information in a FL précis. They take notes during the broadcast, being careful to jot down the main ideas, and then formulate the chief points in complete sentences in the target language (the language of the broadcast), composing an e-mail summary of what they have heard for the instructor.

Once the instructor receives the e-mail, s/he gives on-line mentoring and assessment, so that students have no doubt where errors lie. This intervention in student writing is intended to aid the composing process, while at the same time permitting the instructor to monitor improvement over time in second-language writing. The teacher hopes to tell, through careful reading of the e-mail, whether errors result from poor oral comprehension, an uncertain command of grammatical structures, or both. Errors in the summary are corrected with brackets. An example in English: "He say [says]." The instructor summarizes the types of corrections (adjective endings, cases, tenses, etc.) at the bottom of the e-mail text. Here we follow the method of error correction "that focuses on patterns of error that can be addressed" (Ferris 2006: 81). Students respond best to brief, pointed and practical hints about correcting repetitive mistakes.

Having corrected the e-mail abstract, the instructor sends it back to the student by return e-mail. When persistent, excessive or serious mistakes of composition and

comprehension occur, the instructor can print out the corrected e-mail, take it to class and have a private discussion with the student writer.

This e-mail summary is intended to supplement, and reinforce, the IST assignment described above, specifically the second part of the written exercise, the analytical-reaction section. The instructor thus sees two specimens of free-writing per student per week, affording the opportunity to compare writing results in both formats – and to give feedback in two venues. S/he will want to put these writing samples side-by-side, in order to chart progress, as well as to determine inclination to error. Does free-writing, automatically trigger the S-V-O pattern, for example? By the conclusion of the composition course, it is to be hoped that free-writing (guided by teacher interaction and intervention), approaches native discourse, in tone, word usage and syntax.

4.6 Pedagogical implications

This author recognizes, with the National Writing Project (NWP), that "there is no single right approach to teaching writing." However, its statement on the Web page, "About NWP," continues, "some practices prove to be more effective than others" (http://www.nwp.org). The application of computer technologies to FL teaching reaches back to the 1960s with PLATO, and continues with Blackboard and WebCT in our era. Journals devoted to the subject date already from 1983 (*Computers and Composition*), But we have perhaps been too concerned with theory and with the impact of new and emerging media upon second-language writing, at the expense of using what is, in superabundance, at hand: IST.

The practice that I have found to be "more effective than others," to use the words of the NWP, is the introduction of short-texts from the Internet into the classroom. Student writing has improved dramatically, for one reason, because students react enthusiastically to writing samples that they have sought out. In these texts they see words in context, growing confident in their ability to understand sentences that they can profitably imitate. In the actual writing process, IST remove from FL writers the burden of balancing form and content, preparing outlines and drafts, mastering paragraph structure and logical argument, crafting topic sentences and conclusions, using correct grammar, and selecting words and phrases that a native would make use of in written communication. With a model FL text in hand, students can concentrate on paradigms, according to which they can model and shape their second-language writing.

Importantly, IST suit various learning styles (and seem appropriate for self-paced instruction), placing all students on an equal footing, since the methodology is student-centered and reliant on individual choice.

No: IST are not a magic pill, curing all writing ills. The student needs to work, and work hard, at translating, editing, finding appropriate synonyms, and collecting thoughts for a written reaction to the Internet text, which may only have been composed an hour ago. But the exercise is praxis-oriented and animated by choice, making the student an active learner – not only of grammar, but of culture-specific politics, economics, current events and geography. At no less than four junctures is student choice the motive force behind our writing exercise. First, s/he chooses a larger text among multiples topics, and next, a smaller passage; third, s/he must decide which elements of the shorter text to change, or adapt; and fourth, the student writer needs to decide whether to agree, or disagree, with the topic, for instance, a ban on smoking in restaurants. Given that the learner needs to be able to read, and understand, the whole essay before choosing those parts to imitate, alter, analyze and synthesize, all these steps require critical thinking and the ability to manipulate texts with skill. To complete the assignment successfully, one must therefore be the very opposite of a passive learner.

To validate IST exercises of this sort is, of course, no less than to challenge the efficacy of the classic essay, or expository writing itself, insofar as such writing makes the writer's sensibility the focal point of the composition. The personal component is present in any writing assignment, but is here necessarily subordinated to a model text. Even as the focus of the essays changes, so, too, does the role of the teacher. S/he is a peer reader and guide, aiding students in choices that enhance active learning. In this writing process the familiar stages of composition are now altered: the hunt for a topic has become the choice of an IST; the outline and pre-writing chores have become reading and understanding an entire text; the search for coherent transitions and the like has become the selection of passages to revise; and the summary (concluding paragraph, framing sentences) are now the student's analytical reaction to the IST.

Understanding Internet texts as archetypes, we re-define second-language composition as a two-step process of studied imitation within self-determined parameters and emotional engagement with existing writing. Not the least of the benefits is, to cite again Don Bogen's words in the context of creative writing, that our method "involves

considerably more reading than a typical … class, requiring students to read …with …critical understanding" (Bogen 1981, Abstract).

4.7 The teacher's role

The instructor's response to second-language writing, involving the analysis of errors and the presentation of these in written commentary to the student, is well-researched (Kroll 1990; Mantello 2002; Ferris 2003). The traditional categories of assessment are relevant for our method, for instance, identifying areas of improvement. But teacher feedback and error correction must necessarily assume a different coloration. Written responses to student revisions of IST are, for example, usually brief notes, confining themselves to suggestions for more appropriate redactions, for instance, different synonyms, or to teacher commentary of the sort: "Too many sentences start with the subject"; "Review preterite forms." Re-writing occurs only under the most extreme circumstances, that is, when errors of comprehension abound, or when alterations to the model text are flatly incorrect. Most important, as noted above, the corrector is not evaluating, in the first part of the writing sample, a thesis statement, sentence coherence, expository features, or the like, inasmuch as these are already present in the IST.

Assessing both parts of the weekly written assignment, the teacher measures achievement using these five criteria: 1) Did the student comprehend fully the IST chosen? 2) Did the student choose an appropriate passage for redaction from within the whole text? 3) Is there evidence of skill in editing? 4) Do the synonyms and paraphrases accurately represent the way in which words or phrases appear in the original text? 5) Is the student able to synthesize information in the target language?

Since the fulcrum of the writing process itself has been shifted by admitting a model Internet text as the basis for the writing exercise, the task of assessment has also changed. The teacher response now centers on second-language comprehension and the appropriateness of substitutions of word/phrase/tense/case/mood. To be sure, the teacher still identifies errors, and makes corrections, but these tend to be seen by students as less subjective than for a "normal" writing assignment, because there is an authoritative IST against which to match their written expression. Having encouraged students to borrow from Internet sources − and thus removing the anxiety of plagiarism completely from the writing process − the teacher is seen less as an authority figure or master of the mechanics of writing and more as facilitator, peer reader, and a guide. After all, s/he,

like the students, ultimately bows to the authority of the second-language text chosen by the student writer.

5. Directions for future research

My confidence in the validity of this approach comes from improved student performance in writing German. Students using the method described here outperformed those in my earlier classes without IST. (An unexpected bonus was the increased global perspective that reading contemporary IST afforded my students.) However, I realize that the teaching practices as outlined, although tested with dozens of students and satisfying in respect to successful student outcomes, are preliminary findings and demand systematic data analysis. To place my conclusions on a more solid footing, I therefore put forth these recommendations:

1) An analytical study, with control groups, comparing second-language writing with and without IST.

2) A companion study, delineating those points of transition whereby second-language learners achieve autonomy of written expression, We have speculated on the basis of student writing with IST that creative imitation of Internet texts improves sentence generation and acts as a stimulus to free-writing.

3) An application of our methodology to ESL and other FL, integrating IST into the curriculum. At the same time, there is a need to assess whether students can go more quickly from imitating IST to free-writing in language environments other than German.

4) An investigation whether students using IST for writing develop above-average skills in reading, since they need to read widely in order to complete our written work. (A skill beyond writing is also required for our e-mail exercise, a summary of an Internet radio broadcast, which promotes aural comprehension.)

5) It would be instructive to see whether a collaborative e-mail project could be developed from IST. Full classroom-exchanges have been described in the research (Lawrence et al. 2002; Nabors & Swartley 1999).

6) The idea of collaborative revision of IST for in-class writing assignments should also be investigated. Students, either a full class or groups, might modify a

model text selected by the class and then, as a peer-group task, could compose a collective reaction to it. The use of peer tutors in writing classes has long been advocated (Held & Rosenberg 1983; Rogers & Horton 1992; Faistauer 2000a and b), as has the diminishment of the traditional roles of the teacher as authority figure and the author as a solitary figure.[13]   Collaborative writing with IST should serve to break down whatever barriers remain.

Bibliography

Bader, M.; Frazier, L. (2005) Interpretation of leftward-moved constituents. Processing topicalizations in German. *Linguistics,* 43.1, 49-87.

Bangert-Drowns, R.L. (1993) The word processor as an instructional tool. A meta-analysis of word processing in writing instruction. *Review of Educational Research*, 63, 69-93.

Becker-Mrotzek, M. (2006) Schreiben mit neuen Medien. In: D. Heints; J.E. Muller; I. Reiberg (eds.) *Mehrsprachigkeit macht Schule*. Köln: Gilles & Francke, 65-72.

Becker-Mrotzek, M.; Schindler, K. (eds.) (2007) *Texte schreiben*. Kölner Beiträge zur Sprachdidaktik 5. Köln: Gilles & Francke.

Blatt, I. (2004) Schreiben und Schreibenlernen mit neuen Medien. Eine Bestandsaufnahme. In I. Blatt; W. Hartmann (eds.) *Schreibprozesse im medialen Wandel. Ein Studienbuch* Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren, 30-70.

Bogen, D. (1981). Beyond the workshop. Some alternatives for the undergraduate creative writing course. *Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Modern Language Association of America,* New York (December 27-30, 1981).

Bogen, D. (1984). Beyond the workshop. Suggestions for a process-oriented creative writing course. *Journal of Advanced Composition* 5, 149-161.

Böttcher, I. (ed.) (1999) *Kreatikives Schreiben. Grundlagen und Methoden*. Berlin: Cornelsen.

Böttcher, I.; Becker-Mrotzek, M. (eds.) (2006) *Schreibkompetenz entwickeln und beurteilen*. Berlin: Cornelsen.

Bräuer, G. (1997) Schreiben im Frendsprachenunterricht? *Unterrichtspraxis* 30, 1-7.

Brenner, G. (1994) *Kreatives Schreiben. Ein Leitfaden für die Praxis*, 2nd ed. Frankfurt/M.: Cornelsen Scriptor.

Campbell, C. (1990) Writing with other's words. Using background reading text in academic compositions. In B. Kroll (ed.) *Second language writing. Research insights in the classroom.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 211-230.

Chapelle, C.A. (2001) *Computer applications in second language acquisition. Foundations for teaching, testing, and research.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

---

[13] On implementing peer response, see Ferris (2003), esp. pp.164-176.

Chapelle, C.A.; Douglas, D. (2006) *Assessing language through computer technology.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Charney, D.H.; Carlson, R.A. (1995) Learning to write in a genre. What student writers take from model texts. *Research in the Teaching of English* 29, 88-125.

Clark, R.L. (1951) Imitation theory and practice in Roman rhetoric. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 37, 11-22.

Duden. Das Stilwörterbuch. (2001) 8th ed. Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut.

Durrell, M. (2002) *Hammer's German grammar and usage*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Faistauer, R. (2000a) 'ja. kannst du so schreiben' – Ein Beitrag zum kooperativen Schreibprozess im Deutsch als Fremdsprache-Unterricht. In H-J. Krumm (ed.), *Erfahrungen beim Schreiben in der Fremdsprache Deutsch. Untersuchungen zum Schreibprozess und zur Schreibförderung im Unterricht mit Studierenden.* Innsbruck/Wien: StudienVerlag, 190-224.

Faistauer, R. (2000b) Schreiben in Gruppen- den Schreibprozess sichtbar machen. Ein Experiment aus der Lehrerfortbildung. *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* 3, 149-154.

Fandrych, C. (2003) Zur Textlinguistik des Vorfelds. In M. Thurmair; E.-M. Willkop (eds.) *Am Anfang war der Text. 10 Jahre Textgrammatik der deutschen Sprache*, München: Iudicium, 173-196.

Ferris, D.R. (2006) Does error feedback help student writers? New evidence on the short- and long-term effects of written error correction. In K. Hyland; F. Hyland (eds.) *Feedback in second language writing* New York: University Press, 81-104.

Ferris, D.R. (ed.) (2003) *Response to student writing. Implications for second language students.* London/ Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Fung, B. C. Y. (2001) Towards an interactive view of L3 acquisition. The case of the German 'Vorfeld.' *ZIF* (*Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht*) 6.1. http://zif.spz.tu-darmstadt.de.

Gonglewski, M.; Meloni, C.; Brant, J. (2001) Using E-mail in foreign language teaching. Rationale and suggestions. *The Internet TESL Journal* 7.3 (http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Meloni- Email.html)

González-Bueno, M. (1998) The effects of electronic mail on Spanish L2 discourse. *Language Learning & Technology* 1.2, 55-70.

González-Bueno, M.; Pérez, L. C. (2000) Electronic mail in foreign language writing. A study of grammatical and lexical accuracy, and quantity of language. *Foreign Language Annals* 33.2, 189-198.

Göttert, K.-H.; Jungen, O. (2004) *Einführung in die Stilistik.* München: Fink.

Grabe, W. (2001) Notes toward a theory of second language writing. In T. Silva; P.K. Matsuda (eds.) *On second language writing.* London/Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 39-57.

Harris, M. (1983) Modeling. A process method of teaching. *College English* 45, 74-84.

Held, G.; Rosenberg, W. (1983) Student-Faculty collaboration in teaching college writing. *College English* 45, 817-823.

Hohenhaus, P. (2001) 'Neuanglodeutsch.' Zur vermeintlichen Bedrohung des Deutschen durch das Englische. *GFL* 1/2001, 57-87.

Hopp, H. (2003) Locating near-nativeness. The relation between syntactic and interface knowledge. *Conference on Functional Approaches to Second Language Acquisition*. Edinburgh.

Howard, R.M. (1993) A plagiarism pentimento. *Journal of Teaching Writing* 11, 233-246.

Howard, R.M. (1995) Plagiarisms, authorships, and the academic death penalty. *College English* 57, 788-806.

Howard, R.M. (1999) *Standing in the shadow of giants*. *Plagiarists, authors, collaborators*. Stamford, CT: Ablex.

Hull, G.; Rose, M. (1989) Rethinking remediation. Toward a social-cognitive understanding of problematic reading and writing. *Written Communication* 6, 139-154.

Keck, C. (2006) The use of paraphrase in summary writing. A comparison of L1 and L2 writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 15, 261-278.

Krapels, A.R. (1990) An overview of second language Writing process research. In B. Kroll (ed.), 37-56.

Kroll, B. (ed.) (1990) *Second language writing. Research insights for the classroom.* New York: University Press.

Kroll, B. (ed.) (2003) *Exploring the dynamics of second language writing*. New York: University Press.

Krueger, C. (2005-06) An emphasis on process from assignment through assessment. In: *AP French Language 2005- 2006 Workshop Materials*, 60-67.

Krueger, C.; Siskin, H. J.; Fauvel, M. (2004) *Tâches d'encre. French composition*. 2nd edition. Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Langenscheidts Großwörterbuch. Deutsch als Fremdsprache (2002) Berlin: Langenscheidt KG.

Lawrence, G. (2002) The use of e-mail as a tool to enhance second language education programs: An example from a core French classroom. In Turnbull, M.; Bell, J.; Lapkin, S. (eds.) *From the Classroom. Grounded Activities for Language Learning* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 30-39.

Lenerz, J. (2001) Scrambling and reference in German. In Abraham, Werner (ed.), *Issues in formal Germanic typology* Amsterdam: Benjamins, 179-192.

Mantello, M. (2002) Error correction in the L2 classroom. In Turnbull, Bell and Lapkin (eds.) *From the Classroom. Grounded Activities for Language Learning* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 134-141.

Marks, J. (2006) From a trickle to a flood. English words in German. *MED Magazine* 41 http://www.macmillandictionary.com/med-magazine/August2006/41-New-Word.htm

Matsuda, P. K. (1997) The first five years of the *JSLW*. A retrospective. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 6, iv-v.

Matsuda, P.K. (2003) Second language writing in the twentieth century. A situated historical perspective. In: Barbara Kroll (ed.), *Exploring the Dynamics of Second Language Writing*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 15-34.

Moyer, A. (2005) Formal and informal experimental realms in German as a foreign language: A preliminary investigation. *Foreign Language Annals* 38, 377-387.

Nabors, L.K.; Swartley, E.C. (1999) Student e-mail letters. Negotiating meaning. gathering information, building relationships. In M.C. Pennington (ed.) *Writing in an Electronic Medium. Research with Language Learners*. Houston: Athelstan, 229-266.

Neuse, W. (1971) *Vom Satz zum Aufsatz. Exercises in intermediate and advanced composition.* Toronto/ Waltham, MA: Xerox College Publishing.

Omaggio-Hadley, A. (2001) *Teaching language in context.* 3rd ed. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Paris, B. (1999) Schreiben als Fremdsprachenerwerbsstrategie, *ZIF (Zeitschrift fur Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht*), 4.1. http://zif.spz.tu-darmstadt.de.

Pennington, M C. (1999) Word processing and beyond. Exploring the effects of writing in an electronic medium. In M.C. Pennington (ed.) *Writing in an electronic medium. Research with language learners* Houston: Athelstan 1-26.

Pennington, M.C. (2004) Electronic media in second language writing. An overview of tools and research findings. In: S. Fotos; C.M. Browne (eds.) *New perspectives on CALL for second language classrooms* London/Mahwah, NJ.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 69-92.

Pennington, M.C. (2006) The impact of the computer in second-language writing. In P.K. Matsuda, et al. (eds.), *Second-Language writing in the composition classroom. A critical sourcebook.* Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 297-317.

Pennington, M.C.; Stevens, V. (eds.) (1992) *Computers in applied linguistics. An international perspective.* Clevedon/Philadelphia/Adelaide: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Portmann, P.; Feilke, H. (eds.) (1996) *Schreiben im Umbruch. Schreibforschung und schulisches Schreiben.* Stuttgart: Klett.

Rambow, O. (1993) Pragmatic aspects of scrambling and topicalization in German. A centering approach. *IRCS (Institute for Research in Cognitive Science) Workshop on Centering in Discourse.* Unpublished Manuscript. University of Pennsylvania.

Rambow. O.; Joshi, A.K. (1995) A processing model for free word order languages. *IRCS Technical Reports Series*. Institute for Research in Cognitive Science, University of Pennsylvania, 1-23.

Rogers, M. (2003) Learners need grammar: but which grammar? The challenge of word order in German. *GFL* 2/2003, 69-75.

Rogers, P.S.; Horton, M.S. (1992) Exploring the value of face-to-face collaborative writing. In Janis Forman (ed.), *New Visions of Collaborative Writing* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 120-146.

Silva, T.; Matsuda, P.K. (eds.) (2001) *On second language writing*. London/ Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Silva, T.; Matsuda, P.K. (eds.) (2005) *Second language writing research. Perspectives on the process of knowledge construction*. London/ Mahwah, NJ.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Simon Fraser University. (2007) *Paraphrasing versus Patchwriting.* http://www.lib.sfu.ca/researchhelp/tutorials/interactive/plagiarism/tutorial/paraphrasingversuspatchwriting.htm.

Sowinski, B. (1973) *Deutsche Stilistik*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.

Sowinski, B. (1991) *Stilistik, Stiltheorien und Stilanalysen*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler

Speyer, A. (2003) Competing constraints on *Vorfeldbesetzung* in German. *Workshop for Dislocated Elements in Discourse* (Zentrum für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft, Berlin).

Speyer, A. (2007) Die Bedeutung der Centering Theory für Fragen der Vorfeldbesetzung im Deutschen. *Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft* 26, 83-115.

St. John, E.; Cash, D. (1995) Language learning via e-mail. Demonstrable success with German. In M. Warschauer (ed.), *Virtual connections. Online activities & projects for networking language learners*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 191-197.

Star-Egger, F. (2001) German computer adaptive language tests. Better late than never. *GFL* 3/2001, 12-30.

Strube, M.; Hahn, U. (1996) Functional Centering. *ACL (Association for Computational Linguistics) 1996 Proceedings*. uuencoded compressed PS file (see also Technical Report at: http://www.coling.uni-freiburg.de/public/papers/acl96.ps.gz, 270-277.

Tarvers, J. K. (1992.) *Teaching writing. Theories and practice*. 3rd ed. New York: HarperCollins.

Weissberg, R. (2005) Talking about writing. Cross-Modality research and second language speaking/writing connections. In T. Silva; P.K. Matsuda (eds.), *Second language writing research. Perspectives on the process of knowledge construction* London/ Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 93-104.

Witton, N. (1992) Answer analysis, Feedback and on-line reference help in CALL with particular reference to German. In M.C. Pennington and V. Stevens (eds.) *Computers in applied linguistics. An international perspective* Clevedon/Philadelphia/Adelaide: Multilingual Matters, 294-318.

Wresch, W. (1983a) Computers and composition instruction. An update. *College English* 45, 794-799.

Wresch, W. (1983b) A writer's tool. The computer in composition instruction. *Computers and Composition* 1, 2-3.

Appendix A

Example 1: IST writing assignment

(http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2421924,00.html)

Original Text: 'Die Patientenverfügungen sind *grundsätzlich verbindlich* – natürlich nur wenn es *keine Anzeichen dafür* gibt, dass dies nicht *dem* Willen des Patienten *entspricht'*, sagt Urban Wiesing, der die Ethik-Kommision bei der Bundesärztekammer *leitet*. Die Ärzte *seien* verpflichtet, *der Patientenverfügung zu folgen,* solange sie *sich* dabei *an die Gesetze hielten.*

Edit/Redaction: 'Die Patientenverfügungen sind *im Prinzip verpflichtend* – natürlich nur, wenn es *keinen Hinweis darauf* gibt, dass dies nicht *zum Willen* des Patienten *passt,'* sagt Urban Wiesing, der die Ethik-Kommission bei der Bundesärztekammer *führt*. Die Ärzte *wären* verpflichtet, *sich an die Patientenverfügung zu halten*, solange sie dabei *die Gesetze befolgten.*

Original Text: Wenn ein Patient *allerdings* die aktive Sterbehilfe *fördern* würde, *dürfe* ein Arzt diesem Wunsch nicht *entsprechen*, *weil* aktive Sterbehilfe *per Gesetz verboten sei*. *Ansonsten aber* ist das Selbstbestimmungsrecht des Patienten verfassungsrechtlich *geschützt*. Wenn ein Kranker *beispielsweise nicht operiert werden möchte*, *kann* ihn kein Arzt dazu zwingen, *auch wenn* er ohne die Operation *sterben* würde.

Edit/Redaction: Wenn ein Patient *aber* die aktive Euthanasie *verlangen* würde, *dürfte* ein Arzt diesem Wunsch nicht *nachgeben*, *denn* aktive Sterbehilfe *wäre gesetzlich verboten*. *Abgesehen davon* ist das Selbstbestimmungsrecht des Patienten aber verfassungsrechtlich *gesichert*. Wenn *sich* ein Kranker *zum Beispiel keiner Operation unterziehen möchte*, *könnte* ihn kein Arzt dazu zwingen, *selbst wenn* er ohne die Operation *ableben* würde.

Student Reaction to Text: Meiner Ansicht nach [Note set opinion phrase] sollte jeder dafür vorausplanen, wenn er sehr krank wird. Man sollte nicht warten, bis er sich im Krankenhaus finden [sic], sein [sic] Willen bekannt zu machen. Als gesunde Person wäre es aber schwer, alle Möglichkeiten zu überdenken. Genau aus diesem Grund wäre es ratsam, es bei der Familie bekannt zu machen, in welchen allgemeinen Fällen man lieber sterben möchte. Zum Beispiel könnte man seiner Familie sagen: "Lasst mich sterben, wenn ich nicht mehr verbale Kommunikationsfähigkeit habe." Wenn die Wünsche des Patienten nicht spezifisch genug sind, müsste der Arzt mit der Familie beratschlagen.

Example 2: IST writing assignment

(http://www.dw-world.de/dw/function/0,,12356_cid_2903126,00.html)

Original Text: Dem französischen Staatspräsidenten Nicolas Sarkozy steht sechs Monate nach *seinem Amtsantritt* mit einer landesweiten Streikwelle seine bisher größte innenpolitische *Kraftprobe* bevor. Als *Protest* gegen Sarkozys Pläne für eine Rentenreform wollen an *diesem* Dienstag abend die Eisenbahner in einen *unbefristeten* Streik treten. Am Mittwoch wollen sich die *Beschäftigten* der Strom- und Gas-Unternehmen sowie die *Mitarbeiter* des Pariser Nahverkehrs dem *Ausstand* anschließen. Für die nächsten Wochen haben Lehrer und Beamte Arbeitsniederlegungen *angekündigt*. – Sarkozy *betonte,* er *halte* an seinen Reformplänen *fest*.

Edit/Redaction: Dem französischen Staatspräsidenten Nicolas Sarkozy steht sechs Monate nach *seiner Amstsübernahme* mit einer landesweiten Streikwelle seine bisher größte innenpolitische *Krise* bevor. Als *Demonstration* gegen Sarkozys Pläne für eine Refentenreform wollen an *dem kommenden* Dienstagabend die Eisenbahner in einen *unbegrenzten* Streik treten. Am Mittwoch wollen sich die *Arbeiter* der Strom-und Gas-*Betriebe* sowie die *Beschäftigten* des Pariser Nahverkehrs dem *Streik* anschließen. Für die nächsten Wochen haben Lehrer und Beamte Arbeitsniederlegungen *angemeldet*.– Sarkozy *hob hervor,* er *ändere* seine Reformpläne *nicht*.

Student Reaction to Text: Was es Sarkozy angeht, finde ich, dass [Note set opinion phrase] er diese Reform ohne der [sic] Volksunterstützung nicht implementieren kann. Die Streike [sic] werden ihn drängen, die Reforme [sic] zurückzuziehen. Es wäre kein

Problem, wenn es nur die Arbeiter wären, die auf den Streik gehen [sic], aber es sind nicht nur die Bahnarbeiter sondern auch Lehrer und Beamte. Ein Land, in dem kein Lehrer und kein Beamte arbeitet [sic], geratet [sic] in Schwierigkeiten.

Appendix B

German e-mail news summary

Actual student summary with teacher corrections in brackets:

In dem ersten Selbstmord-Anschlag auf Israel seit neun Monaten wurden am Montag in Eilat drei Israelis getötet. Entgegen der Empfehlung der Armee wird Israel auf den Selbstmord-Anschlag nicht mit größeren Militäraktionen reagieren. Der [Dem] Rundfunk des Landes nach entschieden [entschied] die israelische Führung sich, die Waffenruhe im Gazastreifen zu respektieren. Trotz dieses Berichtes bombardierte die israelische Luftwaffe in der Nacht zum Dienstag einen Tunnel, durch den angeblich palästinensische Extremisten vom Gazastreifen nach Israel reisten.

Appendix C

Specimen of topicalization in German

Note: Each sentence of the German text begins without the subject. Source, also for the English translation: germnews@germnews.de (27 July 2007).

Zu den öffentlichen Vorträgen und religiösen Unterweisungen sind den Angaben zufolge bis zu 40.000 Menschen gekommen. Ins Zentrum seiner Auftritte stellte der Dalai Lama die Themen Gewaltlosigkeit und Mitgefühl in der globalisierten Welt. Seinen zehntägigen Deutschlandbesuch beendet der 72jährige morgen mit einem Vortrag in Freiburg. Danach kehrt das geistliche Oberhaupt der Tibeter nach Indien ins Exil zurueck.

Up to 40,000 people went to public lectures when the Dalai Lama came to Hamburg. The Dalai Lama put the emphasis on the absence of force and more compassion in this globalised world. He will wrap up his 10-day visit to Germany with a lecture in Freiburg before returning to his exile in India.

Biodata

William C. McDonald is Professor of German at the University of Virginia and currently NEH Distinguished Teaching Professor at the same institution. Trained as a secondary teacher of German, he became a widely published medievalist in German Studies but has continued to teach DaF in the Summer Language Institute (University of Virginia) and conducts regular composition courses. The present methodology arose from practical experience with German writing courses.