

# **AAUSC Issues in Language Program Direction**

## **Advanced Foreign Language Learning: A Challenge to College Programs**

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Advanced Foreign Language Learning: A Challenge to College Programs

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# “What’s Business Got To Do with It?” The Unexplored Potential of Business Language Courses for Advanced Foreign Language Learning

Astrid Weigert

## **Abstract**

*Advanced-level foreign language business courses have an as yet unexplored potential to contribute to advanced students’ literacy and discourse development. The first part of the paper highlights current limitations for the development of new approaches for advanced-level content courses as they present themselves within the SLA research community, within departmental structures, and within the practitioner community of business language instructors. The second part of the paper offers a theme and genre-based approach to the design of business language courses. Examples are drawn from a thematic unit on international mergers developed for a Business German course at Georgetown University.*

## **Introduction**

Most undergraduate business language courses take place at the advanced level of instruction (third year or higher), yet their possible role and potential contribution to advanced foreign language learning in an academic context remain unexplored, undefined, and underutilized. This phenomenon of neglect or inattention is not unique to advanced-level business language courses but is shared with the majority of advanced-level, upper-division “content” courses of a literary/cultural orientation, where explicit “language learning” is no longer a pedagogical goal, since students have presumably “mastered” the language in lower division courses. The result is a paradoxical situation in which we teach these courses, whether with a business or literary/cultural content focus, but do not attend to the requisite language learning. I contend that business courses, a category of courses which has traditionally been relegated to a second-class niche existence in foreign language departments, could very well make a substantial contribution to advanced foreign language learning. Specifically, when they are designed with a strong literacy orientation, they can contribute to developing advanced students’ cognitive and linguistic abilities and not merely convey factual information or focus on specialized vocabulary, as is so prevalent in business language courses today.

For a definition of literacy, I draw on socio-culturally focused literacy research, in particular Gee’s article “What is literacy?” (1998). The basis for Gee’s argument is the distinction he makes between “primary” and “secondary” discourses, where primary discourse is “our socio-culturally determined way of using our native language in face-to-face communication with intimates” (55) and where secondary discourses “involve social institutions beyond the family” (56) such as “schools, workplaces, stores, government offices, business, churches, etc.” (56). Having established this distinction, Gee defines literacy as “control of

secondary uses of language (i.e., uses of language in secondary discourses)” (56). Gee understands the term “control” not as synonymous to mastery, but rather as a matter of degree in being able to use and function within secondary discourses. For advanced foreign language learners in postsecondary academic settings, the goal of acquiring “control” of the discourses of public life is appropriate as it moves learners beyond the primary discourses of familiarity, which dominate introductory and intermediate levels of instruction. Discourse communities of specific professions, such as academics, economists, politicians or journalists, have developed particular discursive frameworks and features whose use marks them as members of the respective community. Certain genres dominate the discourse of certain communities and are therefore particularly useful for advanced language learning. In the realm of politics, it may be the public speech, in economics the statistical report, for example. Some genres are used with slight variations in a number of discourse communities and are therefore particularly valuable and productive for advanced learners. One such example is the genre of the book review, which can involve such areas as literature, economics, history, and politics. It is this particular genre that I have chosen as the focus for the instructional unit that I describe in the second part of this paper.

The purpose of this paper, then, is two-fold: first, it seeks to highlight some of the current limitations hampering the development of new approaches towards advanced level content courses, including business language courses. These limitations are evident within the SLA research community, within departmental structures, and within the practitioner community of business language instructors; second, it seeks to offer a new approach to the design of business language courses that is firmly grounded in the above defined notion of literacy. Of the many aspects important to course design, my comments highlight the foundational aspect of materials selection. The organizing foci of my approach are theme and genre. I will present sequenced materials for a thematic unit on international mergers with a genre focus on book reviews, as well as task sheets for written and oral assignments.

## **Current Limitations: The SLA Research Community**

Two research areas are particularly relevant for instructors of advanced-level content courses: one, research on content-based instruction (CBI) and two, research on advanced foreign language learning. While there is a wealth of literature on CBI, the research community is just beginning to focus on issues of advanced foreign language learning. With regard to CBI, a particularly useful volume within the vast literature is Snow and Brinton’s *The Content-Based Classroom. Perspectives on Integrating Language and Content* (1997). As indicated by the second part of the book’s title, for the editors it is precisely the combination of focused language instruction and content teaching that lies at the heart of CBI. The initial chapter by Stoller and Grabe offers an overview of research that supports CBI, ranging from second language acquisition to cognitive psychology. It concludes with a list of seven strong rationales for CBI, of which I will highlight two that are most relevant to my argument. The first emphasizes the contextualized nature of language learning through CBI: “[...] students are taught useful language that is embedded within relevant discourse contexts rather than as isolated language fragments. [...] Thus, CBI allows for explicit language instruction, integrated with content instruction, in a relevant and purposeful context.” (20). I address the issue of “relevant discourse context” through my advocacy of a theme and genre-based approach, and the issue of embeddedness vs. fragmentation of language through my advocacy of vocabulary acquisition via semantic fields later on in this paper. The second concerns the issue of curriculum flexibility: “CBI allows greater flexibility and adaptability to be built into the curriculum

and activity sequences. [...]” (20). I address this issue through my advocacy of specific criteria for materials selection and sequencing.

The initial, theoretically-oriented chapter is followed by a very practically-oriented chapter by Stoller and Grabe, in which the authors outline a six point program which they label the “Six T’s approach to language and content instruction” (82). A fundamental curricular tenet established by Stoller and Grabe is the equivalency of content-based instruction with theme-based instruction and the resulting interchangeability of the two terms. It is therefore not surprising that the first “T” is Themes, defined as “the central ideas that organize major curricular units” (83). The other five “T’s” are Texts, Topics, i.e., “subunits of content which explore more specific aspects of the theme” (83), Threads, i.e., “linkages across themes which create greater curricular coherence” (84), Tasks, defined as “the instructional activities and techniques utilized for content, language, and strategy instruction in language classrooms” (84), and finally Transitions, i.e., “explicitly planned actions which provide coherence *across* topics in a theme unit and *across* tasks within topics” (84). Stoller and Grabe are not satisfied with simply presenting and defining the Six T’s, but also outline eight concrete steps for implementing their approach, include caveats, and conclude with listing issues that still need further elaboration. Among these issues is that of “principles of text selection” (94), for which I propose concrete criteria later on. Another issue on that list is “the concept of threads and their contributions to curricular coherence” (94). I propose that the notion of genre, and for purposes of this paper the genre book review, could fulfill this important function.

As alluded to above, research on advanced foreign language learning is scarce within the SLA community. Workable definitions of the characteristics of advanced learners as well as theoretical models for the intellectual, cognitive, and linguistic goals of these learners are just beginning to emerge. As a consequence of these research deficits, advanced-level instructors lack a readily available knowledge base for the design and/or re-design of their advanced-level courses. Such redesign is a formidable task and that is, of course, the reason why we shy away from it. The task becomes less formidable, however, if we actively avail ourselves of those research approaches already available on advanced language learning.

The most convincing theoretical frameworks in this research area involve precisely the concepts of literacy and discourse competence. Kern (2002 and this volume) advances the notion of literacy as a means to overcome the language-content (in his case literary content) split so prevalent between lower-division and upper-division courses in foreign language departments. Based on a sociocognitive view of literacy, Kern establishes his own definition of literacy in the specific context of academic foreign language education. The first sentence of his definition may suffice here: “Literacy is the use of socially-, historically-, and culturally-situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts” (22). Kern draws up a list of seven key principles that evolve from his definition of literacy. For Kern, literacy involves interpretation, collaboration, conventions, cultural knowledge, problem solving, reflection and self-reflection and, finally, language use. While Kern stresses the applicability of these principles to all levels of language learning, he specifically advocates the ability to create, analyze, interpret, and transform discourse as goals for the upper end of the curriculum. To this end, Kern advocates a renewed emphasis and “commitment to the study of written communication” (24) in order to, among other reasons, also develop the oral abilities required in academic settings.

A very recent and welcome addition to the literature on advanced foreign language learning is Leaver and Shekhtman’s *From Advanced to Distinguished: Developing Professional-level Language Proficiency* (2002). The volume contains an article by Byrnes that addresses academic-level foreign language abilities. Drawing on Gee’s definition of literacy as being able to use and function within discourses of public life, she convincingly

advocates the development of literacy and discourse competence as specific goals for advanced learners in academic settings. In her comprehensive article, Byrnes first lays out current assumptions and pervasive metaphors about the advanced learner that include the influence of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, the privileging of the formal features of the language, the dominance of interactive speech, and the influence of assessment and particular assessment practices. In the following section, she draws up a profile of the advanced learner and on the basis of this profile presents four principles for a pedagogy of advanced foreign language learning. The first, a cognitive focus on the learner, requires doing away with “an either-or focus on meaning or form” (54) and replace it with carefully developed pedagogies “that foster awareness of intricate meaning-form relationships at various levels...” (54.). The second principle, explicit genre-based teaching, “facilitate[s] the qualitative shift in language use that AL2 (advanced foreign language learning, A.W.) abilities require” (55), particularly when the genres under investigation are those of public or, in Gee’s terms, “secondary” discourse. An explicit focus on genre allows the advanced learner to acquire “register- and genre-appropriate textual organization and also [...] the characteristic lexicogrammatical collocations of a particular genre and topical area” (55). To this end, Byrnes, like Kern above, advocates a renewed emphasis on written communication as a means to develop the oral abilities required in academic settings.

Byrnes’ third principle is a pedagogy of modeling, coaching, and scaffolding which is also termed “learning-through-guided experience” (56), where carefully devised models of analysis and interpretation encourage and enable students to tackle linguistically and cognitively complex and challenging tasks. The fourth and last principle is that of a task-based pedagogy. Here, Byrnes addresses such issues as authentic and pedagogical tasks, task complexity, task difficulty, and task conditions, which are crucial to any well-designed curriculum.

The research by Kern and Byrnes that was highlighted here offers accessible and productive approaches towards rethinking some of the foundational aspects for the design of advanced-level content courses. Practical applications of some of their most salient points, such as genre-focus, modeling, and task, play an important role in the sample instructional unit in the second part of this paper.

Business language instructors might be prone to question the validity and value of these principles and learning goals for their courses, which traditionally claim to prepare students for the “real world.” Typically, content materials are fact-based, information-laden texts on such topics as the types of industries in Germany, the German social system as it relates to work issues, trade fairs, modes of transportation. In addition, the mechanics and formulaic expressions used in business letters are addressed. In contrast, I contend that literacy and discourse competence are valid and attainable goals in business courses, because they raise the intellectual bar on business language courses and therefore put them on a par with upper-level courses focused on literature and/or culture. The application of these principles does, however, make for very differently designed business courses.

## **Current Limitations: Departmental Structures**

The second set of limitations for new approaches to business language courses is of an institutional nature. One of the major issues is the limited role of Language Program Directors/Coordinators (LPD/Cs) with regard to advanced-level courses in most departments. The majority of LPD/Cs spend most of their professional energy on coordinating multi-section first and second-year language courses with an emphasis on supervisory and administrative duties. Advanced “content” courses and issues of advanced language learning usually do not fall into the LDP/Cs’ sphere of influence. This is a lamentable fact

for two reasons. First, while most LPD/Cs may be content not to be involved in advanced-level coordination due to their heavy workload, their almost exclusive presence in lower-level courses and their ensuing absence in upper-level courses with more intellectual substance may be exactly what is contributing to their often marginal status in foreign language departments. It is therefore crucial that departments create opportunities for LPD/Cs to be included in advanced-level issues and equally crucial that LDP/Cs seize these opportunities. Second, coordination of advanced courses is just as important as coordination of lower-division courses. The lack of a coordinator for advanced courses coupled with the lack of an articulated curriculum in most departments results in the current status of content courses as individualized endeavors, where all aspects of a course are left to the individual instructor. With this individualized approach to advanced language learning, collaboration on this level is rare, support and incentives for collaboration even rarer. Formulating broader learning goals for content courses that would apply to all advanced courses taught in a department, no matter their content focus, takes a concerted effort by a department and its individual faculty members. At my home department at Georgetown University, for example, curricular reform has only been possible as a collaborative effort between faculty, graduate students, and adjuncts with the LPD,—in our case, the “Curriculum Coordinator”—playing a central role on all instructional levels.

Individual instructors may ask themselves why they should be taking on such a time- and energy-consuming task when courses are seemingly working well and when the LPD/C is too busy with lower-level coordination to guide such an undertaking with her or his expertise. Furthermore, instructors may ask what such disparate content courses as, for instance, literary history of the Enlightenment, Berlin in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Business in Germany would have in common. The answer is that while the content certainly differs, these courses can share an emphasis on literacy and discourse competence, where its specifics will play out differently in each course, based on text materials and genres chosen. The broadly worded, yet focused level descriptions for Levels IV and V in Georgetown University’s German Department undergraduate curriculum may serve as an example here.<sup>1</sup>

## **Current Limitations: The Community of Business Language Instructors**

The third obstacle for new approaches lies within the community of business language instructors itself. I contend that the community has constructed too limited a *raison d’être* for its existence,—a view which stresses its separateness from other advanced-level content courses rather than the commonalities. In the Business German community, this view of a separate identity has even been expressed in the notion of a “new discipline” (see title of Cothran and Gramberg article (2000)), a claim that seems particularly far-fetched when one takes into consideration the authors’ statement that “a fundamental question still remains: What exactly is Business German?” (p. 151). Certainly, a field where such a fundamental question is still unanswered, cannot be considered a discipline. The Business German community has developed a rationale for its existence that centers solely on the practical needs of employers and students in a globalized business world. This view was first expressed by Keck back in 1991, continued to be upheld by Cothran and Gramberg in 2000, when they claimed at the conclusion of their article that “German for Business [...] will provide our students with knowledge that will equip them to be successful in the global marketplace” (153), and resurfaces again in the latest volume, again edited by Cothran and Gramberg (2002), when Cothran concludes her introductory article by saying that the purpose of the compiled essays is to help

instructors “to prepare the next generation of business men and women for successful global interaction” (17).

The exclusive focus on marketable skills has resulted in an increased emphasis on the internationally recognized Business German exam *Prüfung Wirtschaftsdeutsch International (PWD)* which is administered at U.S. universities by Business German instructors under the auspices of the Goethe Institute.<sup>2</sup> While obtaining such a certificate is certainly a valuable goal for students, it does not justify the fact that *PWD* content areas have been determining textbook structures, which in turn have been determining course structures. The perceived need to “cover” as many content areas as possible, in order to prepare students for the *PWD*, inevitably leads to superficial, merely fact-based treatment of topics, with communicative skills and vocabulary acquisition as its main goals. While the *PWD* has had significant influence on Business German textbooks and course structures, the small number of students actually taking the exam (only about 100 examinees per year), does not justify this influence.<sup>3</sup>

The “cover-all-fronts” approach robs Business German courses of their intellectual potential, since it leaves neither time for in-depth analysis of issues and texts, nor for the development of discourse competence and literacy.<sup>4</sup> Without such an intellectual frame that is grounded in core aspects of the humanities, Business German courses (and Business language courses in other foreign languages) run the risk of being identified by university administrators as pure service-oriented courses which could easily be outsourced to private language schools. While I consider this risk to be real, I am also aware of the fact that service-oriented and pre-professional courses are popular with students and therefore maintain or even increase enrollment. In that case, I see all the more reason for the community of business language instructors to seize this opportunity and contribute to the education of our students by framing their instruction within a literacy orientation.

In summary, the current limitations on developing intellectually demanding advanced-level Business courses in foreign languages reside in three communities and can and should be addressed by all three: the SLA research community is called upon to engage more intensively with issues of advanced language learning; departmental communities are called upon to involve LPDs also on upper-level course coordination and to work collaboratively in developing advanced-level content courses. Finally, the community of Business instructors in foreign languages is called upon to address issues of intellectual challenge and to reconsider its skewed focus on learners’ marketable skills.

## **Reconceptualizing Business Language Courses: Theme and Genre Focus**

In the following, I present an instructional unit on international mergers that is part of my course “German Business Culture and Globalization” at Georgetown University’s Department of German. At the core of my endeavor was the desire to design a Business German course whose intellectual merit would be on a par with other advanced-level content courses on literary and cultural topics offered in the department. Since literacy and discourse competence have been identified as central aspects on all levels of the department’s undergraduate curriculum, but particularly for advanced-level content courses (Levels IV and V in the Georgetown curriculum), all advanced content courses, including business-related courses, needed rethinking. For business content courses, the redesign meant a shift away from the conveyance of factual information and technical vocabulary towards furthering students’ development of literacy and discourse competence.<sup>5</sup> The task of putting these abstract concepts into concrete steps for design of a business course did not fall to me alone. Departmental workshops and discussion groups



by instructional level, and particularly my work with the Spencer Foundation grant<sup>6</sup> project on materials development, helped shape “theme” and “genre” as the two central organizing principles of my course “German Business Culture and Globalization.”

With regard to theme, I reconsidered the number of themes per semester, the linkage between themes, and the sequencing of materials within a given theme. My course concept drastically reduces the number of themes examined in a semester-long course. Given that a semester has about 14 weeks of instruction, with courses meeting 75 minutes twice a week, I have found it most productive to have 3–4 themes per semester which means one theme for about 3–4 weeks. Such a time frame allows for in-depth coverage of a content area, while at the same time providing enough thematic variety within a semester. Within a given theme of 3–4 weeks in length, 2–3 topics are an additional useful division. The linkage of themes in a semester generally falls into two categories: themes can be “open”, meaning closely connected so that one theme leads into the next one, or they can be “closed”, meaning they are self-contained units with no immediate links to each other. I chose the latter, the “closed” variation, based on the three themes which I had developed for the course: (1) international mergers and their cultural factors; (2) labor unions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; and (3) current issues in the EU. The choice of “closed” thematic units does not run counter to Stoller and Grabe’s call for curricular coherence via threads that link a course as a whole. Genre can function as the glue between self-contained thematic units when it is forefronted in the pedagogical approach as the overarching concept for content and linguistic work to be done in the course.

My proposal of a three-theme course is a significant departure from traditional Business German textbook structure of about 10 themes (equaling 10 chapters) per semester and therefore is not text-book-based but based on materials selected by me and compiled in a reader.

Having settled on a course structure of three closed themes, I next needed to decide on the sequencing of materials within a theme. Complexity and abstractness of content and language—which usually go hand in hand—were to be the endpoint of each thematic unit, not the beginning. In my experience, the most productive way of covering a thematic unit is on a gradual trajectory from the personal and concrete to the abstract and complex. Such an approach allows students to “enter” into a theme conceptually and linguistically, it allows them gradually to gain confidence in the content and the language used to express that content, and, finally, it prepares them for the interlocking conceptual and more abstract and complex linguistic character of the materials at the end of the unit (see also the chart “Continua of Multiple Literacies” in Byrnes and Sprang, this volume).

With these considerations in mind, I developed the following sequence of materials for the unit on international mergers. Based on the concrete-to-abstract trajectory, the unit starts with a very concrete example of such an international merger, the German-American merger of the automobile companies Daimler-Benz and Chrysler—which is followed by more abstract and more broadly applicable texts on mergers and their cultural factors in general.

## **Course Title: German Business Culture and Globalization**

### **Theme I: International Mergers and their Cultural Factors**

1. **Documentary video** (produced by Deutsche Welle; length: 30 minutes)  
“Stern über Detroit: Szenen einer Ehe”—“Star above Detroit: Scenes of a Marriage”

provides impressions of managers both at Daimler and Chrysler in the first months after the merger, impressions of headquarters, organizational structure, city of Detroit, first joint meetings of managers. Well-structured with different episodes, rather superficial information, but a good point of departure

2. **Advertising brochure** for newly merged company:
 

“Was geschieht, wenn sich 428 000 außergewöhnliche Menschen begegnen?”  
 “What happens, when 428,000 extraordinary people meet?”

10-page color brochure with portraits of Daimler and Chrysler employees/managers on opposite pages; small amount of text; shows how the newly formed company wants to portray itself
3. **Short newspaper article**

“Begegnungen bei DaimlerChrysler” (*Die Welt*, November 11, 1998)  
 “Encounters at DaimlerChrysler”

describes layout of advertising brochure and critiques effectiveness
4. **Two book chapters** of Holger Appel, and Christoph Hein, *Der DaimlerChrysler Deal*, Stuttgart, DVA, 1998.
 

provide background information on very different company histories of Daimler-Benz and Chrysler; interspersed with anecdotes about company founders and current and previous top managers
5. **Book review:** “Der große Coup” — “The Big Coup”  
 (*Die Zeit*, February 4, 1999)  
 review by Dietmar H. Lamparter of Holger Appel and Christoph Hein, *Der DaimlerChrysler Deal* German perspective
6. **Book review:** “Von wegen gleich” — “Anything but equal”  
 (*Die Zeit*, July 13, 2000)  
 review of Bill Vlasic and Bradley A. Sterz, *Taken for a Ride—How Daimler-Benz Drove off with Chrysler*, New York: 2000  
 American perspective
7. **English background articles** from *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* on personnel and financial developments of DaimlerChrysler over the last year
8. **Opinion piece**

“Der Schönwetterplan” — “A Plan for Good Times Only”  
 (*Die Zeit*, March 1, 2001)

argumentative opinion piece on the merits and effectiveness of most recent attempts by DaimlerChrysler leadership to turn around Chrysler performance
9. **Magazine article**, “Szenen einer Ehe” (“Scenes of a Marriage”) by German author Peter Schneider  
 unedited German version of article that appeared in *New York Times Magazine* of August 12, 2001  
 length: 12 single-spaced pages  
 entertaining examination of German-American cultural factors at play in merger; witty, ironic; metaphoric use of language  
 English version as published in *New York Times Magazine*
10. **Book review:** “Hätte Schrempp das gelesen” — “If Schrempp had only read this”  
 (*Die Zeit*, August 19, 2001)  
 review of Max Habeck et al., *After the Merger: Seven Rules for Successful Post-Merger Integration*, London: 2000

### 11. Complex and abstract newspaper article

“Wie sich Fehlschläge bei Übernahmen verhindern lassen”—“How to prevent mergers from failing” (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 13, 2000)

lists and describes 12 principles for successful mergers

### 12. Complex and abstract newspaper article by management consultant

“Die ersten hundert Tage einer Fusion entscheiden”—

“The first 100 days of a merger are key” (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 5, 1999)

abstract and complex analysis of “hard” and “soft” factors of a merger

The above list of sequenced materials exposes students to a number of genres, from an advertising brochure, to opinion pieces, to book reviews. Exposure to a variety of genres is certainly an important step towards the goal of increased literacy and discourse competence. At the same time, however, variety alone is not enough. I have found it productive to highlight one genre per thematic unit and to focus intensively on the genre-specific content and linguistic features in order to further students' literacy and discourse competence.

For the unit on international mergers, I highlighted the genre “book review”, for which the list contains three examples (numbers 5, 6, and 10). While at first glance this genre choice may seem counterintuitive or irrelevant for a business language course, its central communicative function, evaluation, is certainly highly relevant in the business arena. At the same time, evaluation is a key feature in literary and cultural studies as well. Focusing on such a broadly applicable genre and its language features in the target language, allows for increased transferability of students' knowledge: not only can they draw on their L1 genre knowledge but more importantly they can transfer acquired genre and linguistic features to foreign language courses with widely differing content foci.

Genre specificity plays itself out both in content and linguistic features. Hyland's (2000) excellent book on disciplinary discourses devotes one chapter to the genre book review and offers highly productive analyses on such issues as categories of evaluation, structural patterns of praise and criticism, linguistic strategies for hedging criticism, e.g., the frequent use of modal verbs, the use of praise-criticism pairs in one syntactic unit, or the formulaic and restricted range of adjectives used. Hyland's chapter on book reviews offers a wealth of ideas for instructors on how to approach this genre through textual analysis. Table 1 on page 140 partially draws on Hyland's analysis, particularly in the use of contrastive pairs of praise and criticism under #3 in the right-hand “language” column, which include lexicogrammatical expressions to make positive and/or negative evaluative statements, to qualify such statements, and to support them. A more theoretical analysis of evaluation is presented by Hunston (1994). Hunston understands evaluation as “performing three distinct functions: that of status, value and relevance” (193–4) and subsequently elaborates on these three functions. While her analysis of each of these functions is a complex one, the scales of “certain-uncertain”, “good-bad”, and “important-unimportant” which she assigns respectively to the functions of status, value, and relevance provide another approach to address evaluative issues in textual analysis. Both Hyland and Hunston stress the communicative, interactional aspect of evaluative genres and the relevance of the discourse communities in which these genres are being used. One issue that would need further investigation is the transferability of these analyses across cultures. In my course design, I have transferred Hyland and Hunston findings to a German culture and language environment without having to make adjustments. Whether other European languages and cultures and in particular non-European languages and cultures would also allow for such easy transferability would require further research.

Overall, the inclusion of genre-specific content and language features adds a second dimension to the theme-related content and language features of the text. As such, work with the text becomes intellectually more demanding and stimulating.

The following schematic representation illustrates the linkage between content and language features as these occurred in a selected book review on the DaimlerChrysler merger whose text appears in the appendix (see Appendix 1). In particular, it shows the double-layers of theme and genre-specific content and theme and genre-specific language.

**Text: Book review : "Der große Coup: Wie es zur Fusion von Daimler-Benz und Chrysler kam" (Die Zeit, 4. February 4, 1999)**

**Table 1**

Content	and	Language
1. theme-related content: the DaimlerChrysler merger	↔ 1. theme-related textual language on merger	semantic field: "Fusion" (see below, Table 2)
names of principal actors		
secrecy of negotiations/surprise effect	↔ semantic field: "Überraschung" (see below, Table 3)	
initial merger talk: place/length		
stumbling blocks in negotiations	↔ <i>fast an ... scheitern;</i> <i>keineswegs immer glatt laufen</i>	
performance since merger	↔ <i>Klippen umschiffen</i> <i>Auftritt bravurös meistern</i>	
characteristics of corporate cultures	↔ <i>Tempo und Effizienzdenken der Amerikaner/Qualitätsideal und technologisches Niveau der Deutschen</i>	
legal form of merged company (AG)		
2. genre-related content: factual information on book	↔ 2. genre-related language: factual information on book	
approach: detail-oriented, interview-based	↔ <i>die Vorgeschichte nachzeichnen</i>	
background of authors (FAZ journalists)	<i>sämtliche verfügbaren Informationen über... zusammentragen; das Protokoll der Verhandlung nachverfolgen</i>	
time for writing of book		
length of book		
questions answered/not answered		
	↔ 3. genre-related language: contrastive evaluative statements [ +/- ]	
	↔ (a) <i>an der Oberfläche bleiben [-], über die kolportierten Klischees nicht hinausgehen [-]</i> <i>aber sich den wichtigsten Fragen stellen [+]</i>	
	(b) <i>keine völlig neuen Informationen liefern können [-], dennoch spannend sein [+]</i>	
	(c) <i>[solche] Fragen nicht beantworten können [-], doch nach der Lektüre eine solide Basis haben [+]</i>	

The top half of the left column lists the theme-related content information provided to readers of the book review. It presents a number of relevant points about the car company merger, such as the names of the principal actors in the merger, the secrecy of the merger negotiations, place and length of merger talks, stumbling blocks in negotiations, performance since merger, legal form of merged company, and the characteristics of the corporate cultures involved in merger.

Acquiring theme-related business terminology is approached not through vocabulary lists, but rather through semantic fields. Semantic fields are built around key concepts of the text, in this case the concept of merger ("Fusion"), and employ both form-based derivational and content-based associative strategies. Table 2 shows the semantic field "Fusion" which contains phrases from the text under analysis.

**Table 2**

die Jahrhundertfusion in der Automobilindustrie		
zur Fusion kommen		die Automobilriesen tun sich zusammen
der spektakuläre Deal	<b>DIE FUSION</b>	die fusionierten Konzerne
die Bildung eines Mammutkonzerns		die Hochzeit im Himmel
		das Wagnis einer Fusion eingehen

Table 2 shows derivational expressions which contain various grammatical manifestations of the word "Fusion", such as in the compound noun "Jahrhundertfusion" or in the form of the past participle "fusionierte Konzerne". The derivational strategy is usually the first step in assembling a semantic field, since derivational terms are most obviously connected to the key concept. Associative terms round out the field. They can, among others, be metaphors, such as the term "Hochzeit im Himmel" (marriage made in heaven) used for the automobile merger in the text, or they can express the consequences of the merger as the term "Bildung eines Mammutkonzerns" (creation of a behemoth company) indicates. The advantages of vocabulary acquisition via semantic fields are numerous. One, the controversy over lists with or without English translations becomes mute; two, students acquire not individual vocabulary items but collocations that mark a sophisticated level of language use. An example for this is the term "das Wagnis einer Fusion eingehen" ("to run the risk of a merger"), where students learn the expression "ein Wagnis eingehen" ("to run a risk") and simultaneously the use of the genitive case with the noun "Wagnis". With semantic fields students have a wealth of expressions at their disposal that allows them to vary their language use when talking or writing about mergers. The construction of semantic fields is explicitly modeled by the instructor so that in subsequent texts, students are able to draw up semantic fields by themselves.

Returning to Table 1, the close linkage between theme-related content and theme-related language aspects is indicated by double-headed arrows. For instance, the content aspect of the merger's secrecy and surprise announcement is reflected linguistically in a

number of lexicogrammatical expressions associated with “Überraschung” (“surprise”), as the following semantic field in Table 3 shows:

**Table 3**

kein Fetzen Information war vorab nach aussen gedrungen	von der Fusion kalt erwischt werden
<b>DIE ÜBERRASCHUNG</b>	
die Überraschung war perfekt	den Coup perfekt vorbereiten den Deal geheimhalten

Returning to Table 1 again, the bottom half of the left-hand column provides the genre-related content aspects on the factual information of the book under review, including information about the authors' backgrounds, their approach, and the questions they do or do not answer in their book on the merger. Again, the right-hand column shows under (2) the language used to express these content points during the writing process. The language column then contains under (3) genre-related language specific to evaluative statements made in the book review. The review author weighs positive [+] statements of praise and negative statements [-] of criticism by linking them with “aber”, “doch” (but) and “dennoch” (nevertheless), thereby providing nuanced judgments on the book's merits.

The schematic analysis shows that students repeatedly encounter merger-related content information and business terminology through reading theme-related book reviews. More importantly, though, it shows that a genre-based approach to content and language features adds another dimension inasmuch as it explicitly links these features to a larger textual whole. For example, students' overall literacy development is enhanced by familiarizing or expanding their knowledge of the genre book review with its major genre moves of locating the publication within a larger context, providing an overview of its content, evaluating its merits, and offering a summative assessment at the end. They become familiar with the genre's typical evaluation categories and the typical discourse organization, such as the final summative statement. Their discourse competence is enhanced by recognizing the complexity of value statements and the linguistic mechanisms for making and supporting qualified value statements. After in-depth work with three book review texts in the unit on mergers, students will have sharpened considerably their cognitive and linguistic abilities regarding more explicit but also more implicit forms of evaluation and judgment.

A last step remains in presenting my unit on international mergers. I claim that the presented genre-based approach translates very well into a task-based pedagogy, which constitutes one of the four principles of a pedagogy for advanced foreign language learning advocated by Byrnes (2002). In the following, I will present a rationale and examples for three different tasks: a text-analysis task, a writing task, and finally a speaking task for the unit on international mergers. All three tasks proceed from the premise that students need intensive exposure to modeling by the instructor alongside the textual models. The first task, an intensive text-analysis task, is based on Table 1 above, which illustrates the linkage of content and language in one specific book review on the topic of the merger of Daimler and Chrysler. Under the instructor's guidance, students work intensively with Table 1 and the corresponding text (see Appendix 1) to notice, identify, and discuss theme- and genre-related

content and language aspects. Based on this model, students then use the template of Table 1 to analyze independently the theme- and genre-features of a second and third book review on the merger under discussion. In a next step, students compile a folder with self-selected book reviews on the issue of merger and acquisitions and highlight in particular the evaluative statements and their syntactic structure, using the [+] and [-] designations from Table 1. The writing task towards the end of the unit asks students to produce a book review of their own. I decided to have them write a review not of a whole book, but rather of a lengthy article by Peter Schneider which addresses the cultural issues of the DaimlerChrysler merger (see item # 9 on list of materials for unit). Because students had worked with and read a number of model book reviews with their typical discourse organization and linguistic features of evaluation and had acquired extensive background information on the merger via the list of unit materials, they were thus well-prepared to produce a book review on the respective theme. The detailed description of the writing assignment, including assessment categories, can be found in Appendix 3. The three main categories of "task", "content", and "language focus" on the assignment sheet also constitute the three main categories for assessment.<sup>7</sup> The details under each of these three categories stem directly from work done in class, ranging from central features of the book review genre, as described under "task", to content features on international mergers as described under "content", and finally to language features prevalent in the genre at hand, as described under "language focus". The genre-based approach thus provides clear assessment guidelines which are transparent both for students and instructors, an advantage that should not be underestimated. The unit concludes with a speaking task that is closely linked to the writing task. Students are to present and discuss their comments and evaluations on the Peter Schneider text under review within the format of a formal book discussion group. This task involves both the monologic presentation of their main arguments as well as the dialogic element of commenting on and reacting to other students' evaluative statements. Again, Appendix 4 provides a detailed description of this task.

While I have focused on the genre of the book review for this unit on mergers, I can envision a number of other genres of secondary discourses that would serve our students equally well in fostering their literacy within advanced-level content courses. As the course description (see Appendix 2) indicates, the second unit of the course has a content focus on labor unions and a genre focus on public speech, and the third unit has a content focus on current issues in the EU coupled with a genre focus on the newspaper interview. These genres have been selected both for their transferability to advanced-level content courses of a literary/cultural bend and for their potential contribution to students' development of literacy and discourse competence.

## Conclusion

Advanced-level foreign language business courses have an as yet unexplored potential to contribute to the development of advanced students' literacy and discourse development. Thus far, their contributions have been limited due to research deficits on the advanced foreign language learner, institutional deficiencies in foreign language departments, and a practitioner community with exceedingly narrow views of its curricular and course goals. I have been privileged to work in a department where collaborative efforts towards curricular reform have created an integrated curriculum in which Business courses are not relegated to a niche existence but are an integral part of the advanced-level course offerings. As I have shown in the discussion of the course unit on

international mergers, a reconceptualization of business courses with regard to theme and genre opens up intellectually stimulating avenues for the development of students' cognitive and linguistic development in business language courses.

## Notes

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1. These documents can be accessed at <http://data.georgetown.edu/departments/german/programs/curriculum>.
2. For an enthusiastic view of the Pruefung Wirtschaftsdeutsch International exam, see Broschek and Cothran 1991.
3. The Goethe Institute Chicago is responsible for the administration of the *PWD* in North America. According to their website, the number of examinees in 2000 was 106. It should be noted that, while the majority of examinees are undergraduate or graduate students, there is also always a small contingent of non-student examinees.
4. The only instance of a demand for intellectually challenging Business language courses that I could find is that by Azuma (1997) with regard to Business Japanese.
5. Paulsell (1994) acknowledges the importance of discourse analysis, but stresses the cross-cultural aspect only. Ultimately, she views the inclusion of discourse analysis features in the textbook she co-authored with Anne-Katrin Gramberg (Paulsell et al. 1999) as a means towards a high level of proficiency in Business German students.
6. My department received a grant for teacher-researchers from the Spencer Foundation. I was part of a research group on materials selection for advanced-level content courses, mentored by Heidi Byrnes. During the two-year project period, I redesigned a previous Business German course which is now offered as "German Business Culture and Globalization". More details on the Spencer Grant can be found at <http://data.georgetown.edu/departments/german/faculty/byrnesh/grants/index.html>.
7. All courses in the department employ the three categories of "task", "content", and "language focus" for writing and speaking assignments. This unified approach provides consistency across levels and courses.



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# Der große Coup

Wie es zur Fusion von Daimler-Benz und Chrysler kam / VON DIETMAR H. LAMPARTER

Die Überraschung war perfekt. Kein noch so kleiner Fezzen Information war vorab nach draußen gedrungen. Auch die Wirtschaftsjournalisten Holger Appel und Christoph Hein wurden von der Jahrhundertfusion in der Automobilindustrie kalt erwischt. Als das *Wall Street Journal* am 6. Mai vergangenen Jahres meldete, daß sich die Automobilriesen Daimler-Benz und Chrysler zusammen, gingen die Mitarbeiter der *Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung* gerade ihrer ganz normalen Arbeit nach. Im nachhinein wollten sie es aber ganz genau wissen. Auf annähernd 300 Seiten zeichnen sie jetzt die Vorgeschichte der „Hochzeit im Himmel“ (Daimler-Chef Jürgen Schrempp) nach.

Nur acht Top-Mitarbeiter der beiden Automobilkonzerne bereiteten diesen Coup innerhalb weniger Monate perfekt vor. Appel und Hein haben sie fast alle befragt, sämtliche verfügbaren Informationen über die beteiligten Manager zusammengetragen. Auch die später hinzugezogenen Experten – Rechtsanwälte, Investmentbanker und Aufsichtsräte – hat das fleißige Duo interviewt. Manche Charakterbeschreibung bleibt dabei an der Oberfläche, geht nicht über die allgemein kolportierten Klischees hinaus. Kein Wunder, die Autoren haben ihr Buch ebenfalls in rekordverdächtigter Zeit zusammengetragen.

Den wichtigsten Fragen aber, die der spektakuläre Coup aufwirft, haben sie sich gestellt: Wie gelang es, einen derart spektakulären Deal so lange geheimzuhalten? Weshalb lassen sich ausge-

rechnet zwei so erfolgreiche Unternehmen auf das Wagnis einer Fusion ein? Was unterscheidet die Unternehmenskultur von Daimler-Benz von derjenigen bei Chrysler? Weshalb wurde für Daimler-Chrysler ausgerechnet die Rechtsform einer deutschen Aktiengesellschaft gewählt – wo doch Amerikaner die Mitbestimmung gemeinhin fürchten wie der Teufel das Weihwasser?

Natürlich blieb offen, ob die nachträglich gesprochenen Verschwörer wirklich die ganze Wahrheit und nicht als die gesagt haben. Sicher wird vieles erst ans Tageslicht kommen, wenn Jürgen Schrempp und Robert Eaton dereinst ihre Memoiren veröffentlichen. Völlig neue, überraschende Informationen können deshalb auch die Autoren nicht liefern. Dennoch ist es spannend, das Protokoll der Verhandlungen, die keineswegs immer glatt liefen, nachzuvollziehen.

Exakt 17 Minuten dauerte das entscheidende Gespräch zwischen Schrempp und Eaton am Rande der letztjährigen Detroit Motor Show, in dem der Daimler-Chef die Fusion anregte. Das war die Initialzündung für die Bildung eines Mammutkonzerns mit rund 260 Milliarden Mark Umsatz. Stolpersteine gab es genug: Fast wäre der Deal an der Uneinigkeit über den künftigen Firmennamen gescheitert. Erst als die Mercedes-Leute schweren Herzens auf das „Benz“ verzichteten, durfte Daimler vor Chrysler stehen.

Inzwischen haben die fusionierten Konzerne weitere Klippen umschifft. Den ersten gemeinsamen Auftritt in Detroit 1999 haben sie bra-

vours hinter sich gebracht. Doch ob die versprochenen Synergieeffekte wirklich eintreten, ob der neue Konzern mehr ist als die Addition der beiden alten Unternehmen, müssen die Mächer noch beweisen. Für Spannung ist in den nächsten Monaten allemal gesorgt. Kann sich Mercedes-Pkw-Chef Jürgen Hubbert wirklich dagegen wehren, daß ihm die Spatnkünstler von der anderen Seite des Atlantiks billige Chrysler-Teile in seine Nobellakassen hineinschmuggeln? Kann es ein Auto der Marke Chrysler tatsächlich schaffen, in Europa den VW Golf und Opel Astras einzuheizen? Wie lassen sich Tempo und Effizienzdenken der Amerikaner mit Qualitätsideal und technologischem Niveau der Deutschen kreuzen, ohne daß dabei am Ende eine Mißgeburt herauskommt?

Solche Fragen kann auch das Buch von Appel und Hein nicht beantworten. Doch wer im weiteren Verlauf der Geschichte von Daimler-Chrysler Anspruch und Realität vergleichen will, hat nach der Lektüre eine solide Basis.



Holger Appel/  
Christoph Hein:  
Der DaimlerChrysler-Deal  
Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt,  
Stuttgart 1998;  
288 S., 39,80 DM

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## Appendix 2

### Course description

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#### German Business Culture and Globalization

(German 392)

Spring 2003

Dr. Astrid Weigert, ICC 459, weigerta@georgetown.edu

#### Course Description

This course is a **Level V** undergraduate course with a content focus on the effects of globalization on German business and society. Students will gain insights into the underlying cultural dimensions of the world of business in today's Germany *and* simultaneously refine the sophistication of their language use within an academic context. The course explicitly emphasizes cross-cultural awareness and encourages students to draw on their background knowledge in related fields.

The **content focus** of the course is closely coupled with **language acquisition at an advanced level** that goes beyond the mere acquisition of business terminology. Therefore, the course structure follows a **theme and genre approach** in which each thematic unit emphasizes a particular genre.

- **Theme 1: International Mergers**

**Genre Focus: Book Review**

Proceeding from a case study of the DaimlerChrysler merger, we will look at challenges, successes and failures of large international mergers. In doing so, we will address differences in corporate and national culture between the US and Germany. Texts will progress from concrete examples of merger issues to more abstract and theoretical articles.

The focus on the genre "book review" will sharpen students' abilities to evaluate and critique written texts.

- **Theme 2: Labor Relations**

**Genre Focus: Public Speech**

Labor relations differ greatly in the U.S. and Germany. Initially, we will compare the historical and cultural contexts for these differences. In a second step, we will turn to the current situation of labor unions in Germany and explore challenges to their relevance in an increasingly post-industrial society.

The focus on the genre "public speech" will sharpen students' abilities to work with rhetorical devices, structure a text efficiently and the raise the level of audience awareness in their own speaking/writing.

- **Theme 3: The European Union: Current Issues**

**Genre Focus: Formal Interview**

One of the main challenges for the EU is the process of expansion, particularly eastward, to include countries from the former Eastern Bloc. We will follow the debate on inclusion/exclusion of particular countries. We will pay particular attention to the issue of labor migration.

The focus on the genre "interview" will sharpen students' abilities to discern and use question and answer strategies employed in interviews, such as politeness devices, leading questions and evasion techniques.

**Course materials:** Text package from instructor

**Assessment:** Student performance and progress will be assessed continually throughout the semester. Therefore, absences will automatically have a negative impact on the grade.

Written homework assignments	20%
3 essays	30%
Oral presentations/discussion (group/individual)	20%
Class participation/preparation	30%

## Appendix 3

### Writing assignment sheet

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**German 392: German Business Culture and Globalization**

**Prof. A. Weigert**

**Spring 2003**

**Instructional Unit: International Mergers**

**Writing Assignment: Genre: Book Review**

#### Task:

You are a journalist with an expertise in business and economics. As such, you have read a majority of relevant books and articles dealing with the DaimlerChrysler merger and international mergers in general. The renowned German weekly *Die Zeit* has asked you to submit a review of Peter Schneider's "Szenen einer Ehe" on the merger of the German and American automobile companies.

The following genre-specific elements need to structure your review article:

- Locating the text under review within the larger context of merger-related books and articles
- Brief background information on author
- Summary of content
- Evaluation of various aspects of article under review, such as content, style, etc.
- Summative evaluative statement

#### Content:

You will need to draw on all the articles of this unit for background knowledge.

Content will be assessed on the **quality and depth** with which the above-listed genre-specific elements are executed. The following questions for each generic element should be helpful:

- Contextualization: what other major articles and/or books have recently been published on the DaimlerChrysler merger? What new element does Schneider's text contribute or not? How relevant is Schneider's text for the topic of international mergers?
- Author background: what about the author's background is relevant for a review article? What qualifications does he have to write on the topic?
- Summary of content: conciseness of summary
- Evaluation: what are relevant aspects for evaluation? Why? How are evaluative statements supported?

- Summative statement at the end: How complex is the assessment?: Is it a clear-cut case or does it require qualified statements? How convincing is your final statement and how well supported?

### Language Focus:

- Discourse level:** competent use of discourse markers for description, summation, and evaluation
- Sentence level:** complex syntax with a variety of subordinate clauses; particular focus on complex relative clauses for description
- Lexicogrammatical level:** competent use of specialized, topic-relevant vocabulary; competent use of complex evaluative phrases

**Length:** 5 pages, double-spaced, typed; First draft due on \_\_\_\_\_

### Writing and Assessment Process:

Extensive feedback will be provided on first draft.

The categories “task”, “content”, and “language focus” will each receive a grade of **very good- good- fair- poor** and be weighted equally in the determination of the initial grade.

Depending on the quality and extent of the revision, your grade may improve by a maximum of two steps (e.g., from B to A-).

## Appendix 4

### Speaking assignment sheet

German 392: German Business Culture and Globalization

Prof. A. Weigert

Spring 2003

Instructional Unit: International Mergers

Speaking Assignment: Book Discussion Group

### Task:

A new book discussion show, modeled on *Das literarische Quartett*, but dealing with books on economic, business, and political topics, has been inaugurated on one of the many new private channel on German TV. You have been invited to participate in the show. One of the texts under discussion is going to be Peter Schneider's “Szenen einer Ehe” which deals with the DaimlerChrysler merger. As a renowned journalist with an expertise in mergers, you have much to offer to this discussion and will participate in a lively exchange of ideas with a number of other experts.

### Format:

The book discussion follows a prescribed format, in which each participant

- introduces him/herself in his/her role (expertise, profession, etc.)
- provides a brief, summative evaluation of the book under discussion.
- comments and presents counterarguments on statements by others
- reacts to statements appropriately (agreement, disagreement etc.)

The instructor will moderate the discussion.

**Content:**

The following aspects will be relevant:

- Conciseness of evaluative statement
- Breadth and depth of support for arguments
- Breadth and depth of background information on mergers

**Language Focus:**

<b>Discourse level:</b>	competent use of discourse markers for evaluation/opinion
<b>Sentence level:</b>	focus on verb position in subordinate clauses; some instances of subjunctive of indirect speech when quoting other participants
<b>Lexicogrammatical level:</b>	frequent and appropriate use of topic-relevant vocabulary; competent use of complex evaluative phrases
<b>Mode of presentation:</b>	speak as freely as possible (note cards only)
<b>Assessment:</b>	The categories “task”, “content”, and “language focus” will be assessed as very good—good—fair—poor and result in a letter grade.