

# **Form and Meaning: Multiple Perspectives**

*James F. Lee and Albert Valdman*  
*Editors*

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# LINKING FORM AND MEANING IN READING: AN EXAMPLE OF ACTION RESEARCH

Catherine C. Fraser

*Indiana University*



## Background

The data and observations to be described in this paper are the result of action-based research or, to use Ellis' (1990) term, "classroom process research," which he defines as "concerned with the careful description of the interpersonal events which take place in the classroom as a means of developing understanding about how instruction and learning take place" (1990, p. 64). Although one characteristic of such research is that it is primarily based on observation rather than being "theory-led," Ellis notes that there is always some underlying hypothesis, something that piques the interest and suggests an experiment. In this case, Berkemeyer's (1994) study, "Anaphoric Resolution and Text Comprehension for Readers of German," provided the theoretical underpinning for the study and something to "look for" within the broader context of researching ways to teach foreign language texts effectively.

One might argue that the activity of reading is, first and foremost, a linking of meaning to form through decoding. This used to be interpreted as a laborious looking up of unfamiliar vocabulary, which was subsequently tested in some way or another, often sending the message that the main point of reading was to learn low-frequency vocabulary items. While those researching reading in the past fifteen years or so have led—or attempted to lead—the profession away from encouraging L2 readers to follow traditional bottom-up approaches and have emphasized the value of top-down strategies (using background knowledge and familiarity with genre) at all levels of language learning, the most recent research

has focused on how the two can be integrated. The next question raised regards which types of activities—both bottom-up and top-down—are most effective. Scholars have pointed to the need for L2 readers to look beyond content words and foster an awareness of function words and those elements that provide cohesion or coherence to a text (cf. Barnett 1989; Bernhardt 1991; Swaffar, Arens and Byrnes 1991). Barnett (1989) pointed out that for students reading in a foreign language “syntax can be troublesome, especially with regard to *reference words* (e.g., relative pronouns, demonstrative adjectives and pronouns, object pronouns, possessive adjectives)” (p. 129). She went on to say that “[F]oreign language reference words might be syntactically difficult, might encourage erroneous first language transfer, or might be skipped as unimportant” (p. 129). With this in mind, she advocated reading tasks that require students to “find the word or idea to which each underlined reference word refers” and suggests that “the teacher may need to explain the difference between *anaphora*, reference to something preceding the reference word, and *cataphora*, reference to something following the reference word” (p. 130). Moser, Young, and Wolf (1997), the authors of *Schemata*, a recently published German reader, are to be commended for putting many of the newer L2 reading theories into practice. In their book they include exercises that focus readers’ attention on decoding by means of prefixes and suffixes (pp. 23, 25), guessing meaning from context (p. 56), focusing on words that negate meaning (p. 118) or qualify statements (p. 137), identifying sentence types (p. 132), and conjunctions (p. 154). However, there is nothing on anaphora and cataphora.

Although most foreign language educators have now moved beyond the debate of “whether or not” to teach grammar to “how” to teach it (Lee and VanPatten 1995, p. x), and agree that grammar should be taught within a meaningful context, I suspect that there is hesitation to introducing exercises of this type for fear of recalling the old days of the “grammar translation method.” If students were asked only to label the pronoun type, this objection would certainly be valid. However, the task can focus on the role certain grammatical forms play in discourse cohesion. As Berkemeyer (1994) states in her concluding paragraph, “Grammar instruction needs to be contextualized so that readers can learn to use their linguistic knowledge more efficiently and effectively during reading” (p. 21).

Another more productive label for this type of task is “consciousness raising.” Ellis (1990) points out that this “differs from traditional grammar-

teaching in that it sees form-focused instruction as a means to the attainment of grammatical competence, not as an attempt to instill it. Consciousness raising aims to facilitate acquisition, not to bring it about directly. It recognizes that the learner will contribute to and shape the process of acquisition herself” (1990, p. 15ff). In discussing the opposing views of Prabhu and Rutherford on the matter of whether “a linguistic focus, in the form of grammatical consciousness-raising activities, should be incorporated into task design” (Nunan 1989, p. 38), Nunan points out that: “While in some ways the top-down, bottom-up distinction corresponds to the distinction between form-focused and meaning-focused tasks, there is no one to one correspondence” (p. 38). To pursue his discussion to its next logical step, one could argue that a task that helps L2 readers link form and meaning will be more beneficial than one that separates the two elements. However, the question of whether L2 readers need labels for the forms is another matter.

## Relevant Research

Berkemeyer (1994) conducted a study on just this aspect of text decoding for readers of German. The purpose was “to determine if readers of German are able to identify correctly the coreferents of various anaphoric expressions in a German text and if this ability is related to their overall comprehension of the text and their baseline German language ability” (p. 16). Fifty American subjects and four native speaker/readers of German were first tested for baseline language ability and then given a text on recent German history, selected because “(a) it was an authentic, naturally occurring text, and (b) it contained a high density of anaphoric expressions” (p. 17). Comprehension of the text as a whole was assessed by means of recall protocols written immediately after reading the passage and scored following the procedures described by Bernhardt (1988, cited by Berkemeyer). In addition, subjects were given a coreferent selection task. This consisted of “a copy of the expository text in which the anaphoric references of interest were underlined” (Berkemeyer 1994, p. 17). The score on this task was determined by the number of correctly identified coreferents for the underlined expressions. The scoring instrument was created by a native speaker to insure that all “syntactically and semantically appropriate coreferents were considered” (p. 17). In the subsequent correlation analysis, Berkemeyer demonstrated a significant connection between

“coreferential tie comprehension and overall text comprehension” (p. 17), suggesting that “certain linguistic processing skills, such as the ability to resolve anaphoric expressions, do contribute significantly to readers’ abilities to comprehend written discourse” (p. 17). She also found a significant correlation between “baseline German language ability and coreferential tie comprehension” (p. 17).

Based on Berkemeyer’s findings, there is reason to assume that tasks focusing on anaphora and cataphora, features that link microforms to a larger meaning, if presented with a minimum of grammatical terminology but stressing the link between form and meaning, could well help L2 readers to develop a sensitivity to elements of cohesion and coherence in a text. They will also pinpoint misunderstandings and possibly lead to discussions of meaning in a text where various interpretations are possible.

As with so much in task design, the effectiveness depends on the learner’s perception. If L2 readers perceive an activity as designed solely to test a knowledge of linguistic labels, to detect errors, and one that will inevitably lead to a lecture on case usage, then the constructive, facilitating aspect would certainly be lost. If a student’s (essentially correct) link to a noun rather than to a noun phrase, that is, without its article and any modifying adjective, were marked as incorrect, then this could easily be labeled a pedantic grammar exercise and a source of frustration to the student who had followed the cohesive elements of the text correctly but had not paid attention to linguistic technicalities. If, however, the main feedback given to students was on interpretation, on linking the pronominal forms to their meaningful referents, then the activity can be defended as constructive.

Though the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for reading have been shown to lack “predictive capability” across text types and skills (Lee and Musumeci 1988, p. 180), they do nevertheless raise some relevant points for this project, particularly in the subskill of “decoding and classifying” which, as Lee and Musumeci (1988) pointed out, “forces the reader to operate strictly within the linguistic boundaries of the texts” (pp. 176, 182). In describing the intermediate-high reader (typically students in the fifth or sixth or even seventh semester in German) the guidelines state: “Has some difficulty with the cohesive factors in discourse, such as matching pronouns with referents” (ACTFL 1986). The guidelines for writing describe the advanced foreign language writer as follows: “Uses a limited number of cohesive devices, such as pronouns, accurately” (ACTFL 1986). It would seem then that an activity designed to focus the attention of L2 readers on cohesive devices in authentic texts might also provide a

form of structured input on which to model writing output. Again, Ellis' (1990) research provides further justification: "Conscious knowledge of marked forms may help to accelerate learning and may also be necessary to prevent fossilization" (p. 170).

To return to the focus of this volume and define the way in which the terms "form" and "meaning" are being used in this paper requires a brief description of the German language for those unfamiliar with it. German has three genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter. Nouns, articles, and pronouns are inflected to indicate number and case—nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive, of which the genitive is becoming less commonly used and has only archaic forms for pronouns. Another pertinent fact about German is that a verb cannot stand alone without a subject marker, cf. English, "there is a tavern in the town" where the grammatical form "there" can be seen as referring to the noun phrase "a tavern in the town" or simply as a subject marker. Thus while most pronouns (including relative pronouns) can be linked to their coreferents by reason of case, gender, or both, and thus carry a distinct meaning for the reader of the text, there are some that are arguably without meaning and are just fulfilling a formal grammatical function. In *Textgrammatik der deutschen Sprache*, Harald Weinrich breaks down pronoun types further, labeling the neutral *es* opening a clause in a comparable way to "there" in the phrase "there is a tavern in the town," as a "*Horizont-Pronomen*" (p. 389). He goes on to distinguish between textual and situational "horizons." The former refers to a situation "...wenn sich das Horizont-Pronomen *es* als genus-, numerus-, und kasusneutrale Form in unspezifischer Weise auf kürzere oder längere Abschnitte des Vortextes bezieht" (p. 391) (. . . when the horizon pronoun *es*—a form which is neutral as regards gender, number, and case—refers in an unspecified way to a shorter or longer excerpt of the preceding text). These "textual" pronouns are the ones that truly test comprehension at a macrolevel. Again, I would hesitate to discuss the various scholarly labels with L2 readers, but I would look for such forms in selecting texts for tasks focusing on anaphoric resolution.

## Methods and Procedures

### Subjects

The subjects of this experiment were twenty-eight students, twenty from a large state university and eight from a small liberal arts college. Since this was an informal experiment, complete background information on

each subject is not available. In general, students had either placed into the course based on previous high school instruction or had completed a language requirement sequence at the college level. Two subjects had Bulgarian as their first language, while the others were from the United States with English as a first language. All were in third-year-level (fifth or sixth semester) courses in which language skills were developed through a variety of communicative activities, including reading a popular crime novel. Typical classroom activities in both groups included illustrating and acting out scenes from the novel, as well as more traditional questions on the plot and speculation as to how the mystery would unfold. I asked colleagues teaching the courses to assign the task at their convenience toward the end of the semester when the text had been read. I was not present while students were completing the exercise.

## Materials

A Swedish textbook (Mathlein 1983) with activities designed to improve reading comprehension provided the impetus for the task to be described. Readers were required to link selected italicized pronouns in a short passage to their referents. The task had the appeal of a crossword puzzle—it was entertaining as well as challenging, and there was a certain sense of accomplishment upon completion. The model also lent itself to adaptation for an activity in German, and since both groups had read the same 266-page, popular, contemporary mystery novel, excerpts were selected from pages 50 and 105–6. In selecting passages and pronouns to test, I had looked for a mix of personal pronouns, both singular and plural, relative pronouns, neutral subject markers, and pronouns referring to phrases (Weinrich's "textual" pronouns). I was also looking for excerpts that would not rely too much on a reader's memory of the text for connections to be clear. In the directions for task completion, given in German, I used a minimum of linguistic terminology, although the heading on the exercise—An Exercise for Checking Anaphora and Cataphora in *Der Hahn Ist Tot* (Noll 1991)—may have been helpful for the linguistically sophisticated reader. I pointed out that German requires a subject marker, and thus it was possible that a neuter pronoun *es* was being solely used in that function, in which case they need only link the pronoun to the verb for which it was serving as subject. This offered students the opportunity to label all such pronouns as meaningless forms, and the responses were considered "correct" if they did so, as well as if they linked the pronoun to a phrase. To return to the



example—there is a tavern in the town—“there” could be linked to “a tavern in the town” or labeled as a subject marker and be considered correct either way. The first pronoun in the exercise provided an example for the students who were asked simply to indicate connections by drawing lines from the underlined and boldfaced pronouns to their referents.

## Scoring

In deciding whether a pronoun was linked “correctly” to its referent, I was not concerned with total precision. For example, if a third-person plural pronoun referred to all members of a family mentioned in two different places in the text, a linking to one of these was sufficient to be considered “correct.” Similarly, I was not looking for technical linguistic correctness, for example, linking to a full noun phrase as opposed to just a noun. For example, in item 14, the relative pronoun *der* refers to the noun phrase “den lasziven seidenen Schlafanzug” (the lascivious silk pajamas), but a response circling only “Schlafanzug” (pajamas) was accepted. Such responses were correct at the level of meaning and understanding the text, and so for the purposes of this experiment, no distinction was made at the technical level.

## Results

I had expected to find that the easiest items for students to mark would be personal pronouns referring to characters in the text (items 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, and 15). As Berkemeyer (1994) pointed out in her study: “American readers of German, particularly beginning level language users, are expected to be strongly influenced by their knowledge of English when interpreting gendered anaphoric references in German text” (p. 16). A feminine pronoun is thus far more likely to be linked to a person than to an inanimate object, although both are grammatically feminine. I suspected the next level of difficulty would be determined by those pronouns referring to previously mentioned objects or phrases (item 11), with the third level being relative pronouns (items 2 and 14)—I expected those in the nominative case to be the easiest to identify. The textual pronouns, the uses of the third-person singular neuter *es* as subject marker (items 3, 7, 8, and 13) are ones I expected would be either labeled as such, given the hint in the directions, or even ignored as less important to the meaning of the text as whole. I did not really expect students to spend much time searching for meaningful links.

*Table 1*  
Responses Arranged in Order of Accuracy with Response Types Combined in Items 3, 7, 8, and 13.

Items	Description/ Identification	Correctly Connected to Referent	Incorrectly Connected to Referent	Ignored by Student	Totals
2. der	feminine dative relative pronoun	25	3	0	28
4. er	singular personal pronoun	23	3	2	28
12. er	personal pronoun	22	3	3	28
13. es	textual pronoun	22	3	3	28
6. er	personal pronoun	21	4	3	28
9. sie	personal pronoun	20	5	3	28
14. der	masculine nominative relative pronoun	20	6	2	28
15. ihn	personal pronoun	20	6	2	28
10. sie	personal pronoun	19	6	3	28
5. sie	plural personal pronoun	16	10	2	28
7. es	textual pronoun	12	13	3	28
8. es	textual pronoun	10	9	9	28
3. es	textual pronoun	7	13	8	28
11. es	referring to an unknown person about whom the speaker is conjecturing	2	18 (7 @ a)	8	28
<b>Totals</b>		<b>239</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>392</b>

The first surprising finding was the low level of accuracy of the student responses, indicating an unexpected level of misreading (see Table 1). One fear I had was that the task might be too simple at the stage in the semester it was given, since students had already talked about the text in class and would supposedly have eliminated some basic misreading, but this was not the case. Not one item was identified correctly by all 28 students, and no student had a perfect score. Two of them managed to match up only two pronouns accurately with their referents. The following

charts—first giving the results in descending order of accuracy and then broken down by pronoun type—show the responses with correct and incorrect identification, as well as the number of occasions in which the item was overlooked or ignored. The third category could, of course, be linked with “incorrect,” but another interpretation is that the L2 reader overlooked the pronoun because it was “meaningless” when decoding the text. In order to make this finer distinction, more data would need to be collected, but I believe it is important in tabulating responses to distinguish between the two types. The full results in order of item appearance in the text excerpts are given in Appendix B.

Though these results generally support Berkemeyer’s (1994) hypothesis about personal pronouns being the easiest, there are some surprises. The “easiest” item, item 2 (“Ich kenne keine Frau von fünfzig, der das große Glück über den Weg läuft”—I don’t know of any fifty-year-old woman, for whom good fortune crosses her path<sup>1</sup>), the one that produced the highest number of correct responses, was “easy” for only 25 out of the 28 students, or 89 percent. I had expected this item, a feminine dative relative pronoun, to cause students some difficulties. Perhaps the position in the exercise as the first item to be linked by students attracted attention, and the pressure of time had not become a factor. The item did, however, divide the two lowest scorers—one linked the item correctly to its referent, but the other did not.

The next easiest, item 4 (“Er ist verheiratet”—he is married) was identified correctly by 23 students (82 percent) and the next, item 12 (“beim ersten kranken Tag brauchte er mich weder zu kontrollieren...”—on the first sick day he doesn’t have to check up on me) by 22 (79 percent). Table 2 illustrates how these and other personal pronouns generally fit expectations.

With only two examples of relative pronouns (see Table 3), it is impossible to make generalizations, but the fact that the dative feminine was “easier” than the nominative masculine is surprising.

The items of prime interest for this study were, however, the textual pronouns—the four pronouns that could be regarded as meaningless forms. These are shown in Table 4 with responses broken down into both acceptable interpretations, that is, linking the neuter pronoun to a phrase or labeling it as a subject marker. As a group these textual pronouns were the most challenging for the subjects of this study, with the exception of item 13.

**Table 2.**  
**Personal Pronouns (Third Person Forms) Referring to**  
**Characters in the Text**

Item Number	Number, Gender, and Case	Correctly Connected to Referent	Incorrectly Connected to Referent	Ignored by Student	Totals
4. er	singular, masculine, nominative	23	3	2	28
5. sie	plural, nominative	16	10	2	28
6. er	singular, masculine, nominative	21	4	3	28
9. sie	singular, feminine, accusative	20	5	3	28
10. sie	singular, feminine, nominative	19	6	3	28
11. es	neuter, nominative, singular, referring to an unknown person about whom the speaker is conjecturing	2	18 (7 @ a)	8	28
12. er	singular, masculine, nominative	22	3	3	28
15. ihn	singular, masculine, accusative	20	6	2	28
<b>Totals</b>		<b>143</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>224</b>

a - the student linked the pronoun with the verb *angerufen*, a logical conclusion although incorrect

**Table 3**  
**Relative Pronouns**

Items	Gender and Case	Correctly Connected to Referent	Incorrectly Connected to Referent	Ignored by Student	Totals
2. der	feminine dative, referring to a woman	25	3	0	28
14. der	masculine nominative, referring to an inanimate object	20	6	2	28
<b>Totals</b>		<b>45</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>56</b>

Table 4  
Textual Pronouns

Items	Correctly Connected to Referent	Incorrectly Connected to Referent	Ignored by Student	Totals
1. das	refers to a phrase given to students as an example			
3. es	5	13	8	26
	2			2 28
7. es	2	13	3	18
	10			10 28
8. es	2	9	9	20
	8			8 28
13. es	3	3	3	9
	19			19 28
Totals	51	38	23	112

To save the reader from referring back and forth to the exercise in Appendix A, the items with translations are listed here:

Es (3) gibt überhaupt nur kleines oder kurzes Glück. (Anyway, there is only minor or short-term happiness.)

Aber es (7) fiel mir ein, daß ich mich offiziell krank gemeldet hatte; (But it occurred to me that I had officially called in sick.)

es (8) war immerhin möglich, daß der Chef den eiligen Vorgang auf meinem Schreibtisch einer Kollegin in die Hand gedrückt hatte.... (It was still possible, that the boss had handed a colleague the pressing matter on my desk . . . )

Wie wunderbar wöre es (13) gewesen, wenn ich sein Kommen geahnt hätte. (How wonderful it would have been, if I had suspected his arrival.)

The correct responses to these items given in Table 4 can further be broken down as follows and the results are presented in Tables 5 and 6. These tables indicate that the majority of these groups of L2 readers preferred to assign a meaning to a form than to give it a linguistic label.

*Table 5*  
Breakdown of Responses Accepted as Correct

Textual Pronouns	Students Identifying the Pronoun as a Subject Marker	Students Linking the Pronoun to a Phrase
Item 3	5	2
Item 7	2	10
Item 8	2	8
Item 13	3	19
Totals	12	39

*Table 6*  
Breakdown of Incorrect Responses

Textual Pronouns	Incorrect Linkings	Item Ignored or Overlooked
Item 3	13	8
Item 7	13	3
Item 8	9	9
Item 13	3	3
Totals	38	23

Again it is apparent that more students looked for a meaning than ignored the form for all but item 8. In fact, the maximum number of times an item was ignored was for that item, with items 3 and 11 being overlooked eight times each. My interpretation is that items 3 and 8 were ignored as being unimportant, while students failed to indicate form/meaning links in item 11 because it was problematic for them.

Without question, item 11 produced the most interesting responses. The neuter pronoun *es* in the sentence “Oder war es der Chef selbst?” (Or was it the boss himself?) refers to an unknown person about whom the speaker is conjecturing and for whom no immediately clear link can be made in the excerpt given. Some thought and creativity based on a global understanding of the passage were required to link the pronoun with a suitable referent. The brief excerpt from the text provides sufficient information for the reader to deduce that the unknown person is at the door.

The opening phrase “Nicht aufmachen!” (Don’t open!) provides the clue here, but the first person narrator goes on to tell of her fears that someone might not believe her story of being ill and thus unable to go to work, that her boss might have some urgent work for her and give this to a colleague, but then that the colleague would have phoned before coming. The next fear the narrator expresses is that the person knocking at the door could even be her boss. The colleague, the boss, or the unknown person (*Menschenseele*) referred to in the phrase “So häßlich, wie ich im Augenblick bin, sollte mich keine Menschenseele zu Gesicht bekommen!” (Not a soul should have to look me in the face when I’m as ugly as I am at the moment) were all considered correct following the experiment’s prime criteria of linking form to a defensible meaning.

The narrator’s reflections led seven students to link the pronoun with the past participle *angerufen* (phoned). Though an incorrect interpretation, this is a logical reading of the text and, I suspect, a linkage that a native speaker might make when reading quickly and without longer reflection. This is the type of response that could be discussed in a classroom setting, not as a grammatical exercise, but more one of close reading.

The students with the highest number of accurate linkings exhibited certain characteristics throughout their responses, showing a consistency in their approaches to decoding the text excerpts. (See Appendixes C and D for responses of the individual subjects, divided by group). Two students from the smaller college group were among the top scorers with 12 correct out of 14 (86 percent). Both students (CI and CK) confirmed my expectations that the tip to label a pronoun as a subject marker would be useful to some students. CI marked items 3, 7, 8, 11, and 13 as such, and CK labeled 3, 7, 8, and 13 as subject markers. Of these, only item 11 (the problematic one discussed earlier) was incorrect. The top score in the larger group was also 86 percent. Of the four students with this score, three (UG, UR and UT) did not label any pronoun as a subject marker, and one, UP, did. He followed the pattern of the top C group students and labeled 3, 7, 8, and 13 as such. These responses may reflect a difference in pedagogical training. CI and CK are both from Bulgaria, learning German as at least a third language, and coming from a different language learning environment than most of the students.

For the weakest students, namely CA and UF, who correctly linked only 2 of the 14 pronouns, or 7 percent, and UO, 3 correct linkages or

11 percent, the personal pronouns referring to characters in the text were indeed the easiest to link with their referents, as I had expected. UF linked items 4 and 5 correctly, both personal pronouns, one singular and one plural.

Er (4) ist verheiratet und hat kleine Kinder. Sie (5) wohnen aber im Münchner Raum. (He is married and has small children. They live in the Munich area.)

UO linked items 4 and 12, both singular personal pronouns.

beim ersten kranken Tag brauchte er (12) mich weder zu kontrollieren noch... (on the first sick day he doesn't have to check up on me or . . . )

CA's two correct items were 2 and 9.

“ich kenne keine Frau von fünfzig, der (2) das große Glück über den Weg läuft.” (I don't know of any fifty-year-old woman for whom good fortune crosses her path.)

...und sie (9) Fragen dazu stellen wollte. (. . . and wanted to ask her questions about it.)

While the latter was a personal pronoun, item 2 is the dative relative pronoun that I had imagined would be more difficult for students than the relative pronoun in the nominative case (item 14). As noted earlier, this was the item that attracted the most correct responses.

## Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

One encouraging message that came from this exercise is that L2 readers are willing to search for form/meaning relationships, even when offered an easy way out of doing so. I'd like to think that this tendency is a result of pedagogical practice in which less time is spent talking *about* language in classrooms and more on *using* it meaningfully and in a real-language task, such as reading. Ellis (1990) has stated that classroom research should pay more attention to “what learners can do in real-life situations than what they know but may be unable actually to use” (p. 200). He describes a classroom researcher as one who

*seeks to show how instructional events cause or impede the acquisition of a second language. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to*



*(1) identify which instructional events are significant, (2) find valid and reliable measures of the L2 learning that takes place and (3) be able to demonstrate that the relationship between instructional events and learning is in some way causal (1990, p. 199).*

While he goes on to caution that researchers “have faced a number of problems in carrying out each of these tasks,” he nevertheless admonishes his readers to continue in this vein so that rather than being simply “consumers of research,” we will “build our own theories of how learning takes place through instruction” (p. 204). If one regards a task as an “instructional event,” then tasks centering on anaphoric resolution can be defended on a number of counts. Berkemeyer’s (1994) research has already established that “there is a significant positive relationship between coreferential tie comprehension and overall text comprehension for readers of German” and led her to encourage instructors to teach grammar “within a discourse context” (p. 20). There is, therefore, justification for introducing this type of task at the beginning level of language learning and for encouraging novice teachers to recognize the value of such activities for the acquisition process.

To make such tasks more rewarding and entertaining, another variation is to involve students in creating exercises to challenge their peers. An initial experiment with a first-semester class indicated that creating a puzzle for fellow learners could be effective in helping beginning German students to focus on the suprasentential uses of anaphora, the cohesive aspects that lend meaning to the isolated pronominal forms. After working with a given text in which they linked pronouns to their referents, students then wrote a paragraph in which pronouns were used whenever a noun had been introduced. The competitive component of the task led them to reflect far more on the form/meaning relationship than a simple “fill in the blank” exercise and, when presented to peers on overhead transparencies, provided meaningful feedback on the successes (as well as errors) in their texts. A more formal experiment is needed to demonstrate a “valid and reliable measure” of the learning that took place.

Where the lesson focus is on reading comprehension, learners will be given the task of selecting passages from assigned texts to challenge their classmates. This will have the added bonus of leading L2 readers to analyze a text for a range of cohesive devices, to note what challenges or confuses. Especially with mystery novels or texts with sudden switches in perspective, from first person to third person narrator, for example, such

assignments would help readers keep track of characters. Over a series of texts, L2 readers may come to notice stylistic differences. Their own writing may also benefit from this focus on the discourse structure of authentic input. They may also move up the ACTFL pyramid to become an advanced FL writer who “uses a limited number of cohesive devices, such as pronouns, accurately” (ACTFL 1986).

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## Appendix A

### An Exercise for Checking Anaphora and Cataphora in *Der Hahn ist tot* (Noll 1991)

Meistens bezieht sich ein Pronomen auf etwas, was vorher im Text steht, meistens auch auf ein einziges Wort. Ein Pronomen kann sich auch auf eine Phrase oder einen Satz beziehen, oder auf etwas Kommendes deuten. Sehen Sie sich die unterstrichenen Pronomen an und markieren Sie mit einem Kreis und einem Pfeil worauf sie sich beziehen. Das erste Pronomen ist schon als Beispiel so markiert. Manchmal benutzt man ein neutrales "es", einfach damit ein Verb nicht ohne Subjekt steht. In diesem Fall, verbinden Sie das "es" mit dem dazugehörigen Verb.

Translation of directions: Usually a pronoun refers to something preceding it in a text, usually just a single word. A pronoun can also refer to a phrase or a sentence or refer to something that will follow. Look at the underlined pronouns and mark with a circle and an arrow the word or phrase to which it refers. The first pronoun is marked in this way to provide you with an example. Sometimes a neutral "es" is used simply to avoid a verb standing without a subject. In this case, connect the "es" to the verb with which it agrees.

(Seite 50)

Denk dir, ich habe einen netten Mann kennengelernt", erzählte Beate und schilderte mir die Vorzüge eines zehn Jahre jüngeren Handelsvertreters.

Ogleich ich ahnte, daß Beate offenes Haus und Bett hielt, wurde ich ironisch: "Ist das (1) jetzt also das große Glück?" fragte ich.

Beate ließ sich nicht ärgern. "Ach du", meinte sie, "ich kenne keine Frau von fünfzig, der (2) das große Glück über den Weg läuft. Ich will dir die Schattenseiten auch nicht verschweigen: Er (4) ist verheiratet und hat kleine Kinder. Sie (5) wohnen aber im Münchener Raum, und er (6) fährt nur am Wochenende heim."

(Seite 105-106)

Nicht aufmachen! war mein erster Gedanke. Und weiter: So häßlich, wie ich im Augenblick bin, sollte mich keine Menschenseele zu Gesicht bekommen! Aber es (7) fiel mir ein, daß ich mich offiziell krank gemeldet hatte; es (8) war immerhin möglich, daß der Chef den eiligen Vorgang auf meinem Schreibtisch einer Kollegin in die Hand gedrückt hatte und sie

(9) Fragen dazu stellen wollte. Aber hätte sie (10) dann nicht angerufen? Oder war es (11) der Chef selbst? Ausgeschlossen; ich fehlte schließlich nie, beim ersten kranken Tag brauchte er (12) mich weder zu kontrollieren noch mir Blumen zu bringen. Also dann die Polizei.

Ich fuhr in einen rüdigen Bademantel und schlappte, kalten Schweiß auf der Stirn und übel aus dem Halse riechend, an die Wohnungstür. Ich drückte auf den Knopf und machte auf. Witold stand direkt vor mir, die Haustür war unten nicht verschlossen gewesen.

....

Wie wunderbar wäre es (13) gewesen, wenn ich sein Kommen geahnt hätte. Dann wäre ich in den lasziven seidenen Schlafanzug, der (14) an alte Greta-Garbo-Filme erinnert, geschlüpft, hätte gebadet und die klebrigen Haare gewaschen und mindestens zehn Minuten lang die Zähne geputzt.

Ich ließ mich aufs Sofa fallen und sah ihn (15) mit meinen roten Augen an.

Appendix B: Breakdown of Items on Anaphora and Cataphora Exercise from *Der Hahn ist tot* (Noll 1991)

Response Tally—Responses from both groups, 28 students

Items	Description/Identification	Correctly Connected to Referent	Incorrectly Connected to Referent	Ignored by Student	Totals
1. das	refers to a phrase given to students as an example	25	3	0	28
2. der	feminine dative relative pronoun	5	13	8	28
3. es	subject marker- (Es gibt) linked to phrase	2			28
4. er	singular personal pronoun	23	3	2	28
5. sie	plural personal pronoun	16	10	2	28
6. er	personal pronoun	21	4	3	28
7. es	A) subject marker or B) linked to phrase	2	13	3	28
8. es	A) subject marker or B) linked to phrase	10	9	9	28
9. sie	personal pronoun	2	5	3	28
10. sie	personal pronoun	19	6	3	28
11. es	A) referring to an unknown person about whom the speaker is conjecturing	2	18 (7 @ a)	8	28
12. er	personal pronoun+	22	3	3	28
13. es	A) subject marker or B) linked to phrase	3	3	3	28
14. der	masculine nominative relative pronoun	19	6	2	28
15. ihn	personal pronoun	20	6	2	28
Totals		239	102	51	392

a - The student linked the pronoun with the verb *angerufen*, a logical conclusion although incorrect.

### Appendix C Tally of Correct and Incorrect/Ignored Responses by Group C Students

Student Name	Item Number																	Total +	Total -	Total 0
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17				
CJ	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-a	+	-	+	+	+	+	11	3	0
CL	+	0	+	+	+	+	0	+	-	-a	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	10	2	2
CS	+	0	+	+	+	+	0	+	+	0	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	10	0	4
CM	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	9	5	0
CK	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-a	+	+	+	+	+	+	12	2	0
CB	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	-a	-	+	+	+	-	-	7	7	0
CI	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	2	12	0
CA	+	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	11
<b>Total +</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>73</b>			
<b>Total -</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5/4a</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>			<b>22</b>			
<b>Total 0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>				<b>17</b>

Key: + = item correctly identified  
 - = item incorrectly identified  
 0 = item ignored/overlooked  
 +\* = the student marked the pronoun as a subject marker  
 a = the student linked the pronoun with the verb *angerufen*, a logical conclusion although technically incorrect

Note: The first item was given to students and thus not tallied.

3  
15

## Appendix D: Tally of Correct and Incorrect/Ignored Responses by Group 2 Students

Student ID	Item Number																	Total +	Total -	Total 0
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15						
UA	+	0	+	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	8	0	6	
UB	-	-	+	-	+	-	0	+	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	6	4	4	
UC	+	0	0	-	0	-	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	0	0	4	2	8		
UD	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	10	4	0		
UE	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-*	5	9	0		
UF	-	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	0	2	4	8		
UG	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-a	+	+	+	+	+	12	2	0		
UH	+	-	+	0	+	-	0	-	-	-a	+	+	+	0	0	6	5	3		
UI	+	+	+	+	+	-*	-*	+	+	+	+	-*	+	+	+	11	3	0		
UJ	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	+	0	+	+	+	+	+	8	5	1		
UK	+	0	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	0	+	+	+	+	+	10	2	2		
UL	+	-	+	-	+	-	0	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	8	5	1		
UM	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	0	0	9	4	1		
UN	+	0	+	-	+	0	0	+	+	+	0	+	-	+	+	8	2	4		
UO	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	+	3	11	0			
UP	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	12	2	0			
UQ	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	0	+	-	+	+	8	5	1			
UR	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-a	+	+	-	+	12	2	0			
US	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-a	+	+	+	-	9	5	0			
UT	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	0	+	+	+	+	12	1	1			
Total +	17	3	18	11	16	6	6	12	13	5	17	15	14	10	163					
Total -	3	12	1	8	2	12	8	5	5	8	1	3	5	4	77					
Total 0	0	5	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	7	2	2	1	6	40					

Key: + = item correctly identified  
 - = item incorrectly identified  
 a = the student linked the pronoun with the verb *angerrufen*, a logical conclusion although technically incorrect  
 0 = item ignored/overlooked  
 +\* = the student marked the pronoun as a subject marker  
 Note: The first item was given to students and thus not tallied.