Form and Meaning: Multiple Perspectives

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Meaning and Form in Classroom-based SLA Research: Reflections from a College Foreign Language Perspective[1]

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Introduction

Words that refer to the most central concerns in our lives often have a remarkable range of meanings since the issues they call up are ubiquitous and therefore allow for a multiplicity of human intentions and interests to be associated and enacted with them. *Water* as a way of quenching our thirst on a hot summer day is quite different from *water* in the context of ancient natural philosophy that postulated four basic elements, from *water* being subjected to a chemical analysis in a laboratory setting and being implicated in soil erosion or understood as a precondition for life as we know it on Earth.

So it is with the words *meaning* and *form* which, as this volume thematizes, allow for multiple perspectives within the field of foreign languages. In fact, for those most knowledgeable on the topic, the terms *form* and *meaning* can evoke associations that may override what is otherwise shared. Thus a cognitive psychologist interested in the phenomenon of language processing might say that learners have "to map the vocabulary (lexicon), grammar (syntax), and rules for building up sentence meanings (semantics) on their prior knowledge of the world" (Greene 1995, p. 89). Here *meaning* differs from its use by applied linguists in the term "negotiation of meaning" as a way of contrasting their notion of communicative competence with a universalist grammatical competence which, under the

influence of Chomsky, had dominated much previous theorizing in linguistics. Finally, foreign language teachers might wonder what is so new about the centrality of meaning in the currently vibrant SLA research area Focus on Form (FonF). To them such an emphasis hardly seems novel when all along they have modeled the inseparability of meaning and form so that learners would acquire the second language not only fluently, accurately, and with sociopragmatic awareness, but also with literary sensitivity.

Language professionals, therefore, face a number of paradoxes. Our community is built around shared interests that manifest themselves in shared meanings in our discourses. But the resultant internal efficacy and efficiency of our communication can over time erode when the initial consensus gradually comes to be articulated in a number of highly specific interests. As a consequence, our communication practices must increasingly recognize the diverse audiences and interests in our midst aside from attending to outside constituencies. Internally, these are groups like the theoretician-linguist, the SLA researcher, the psychologist, the language teacher, the teacher-educator, and the program administrator; externally a lay public also has certain legitimate interests in our work. Finally, as Thomas (1998) convincingly points out for SLA theory construction, we must also be aware of our past, a formidable challenge in light of a kind of programmatic ahistoricity that asserts that SLA research has essentially appeared out of nowhere in the last generation.

To make an initial contribution to these efforts, this paper offers a critically interpretive reading of main directions in our most recent past, SLA research over roughly the last three decades, as these pertain to the relationship of meaning and form. I explicitly query the applicability of those research foci as well as their findings to college foreign language departments. Since for many readers the issues to be addressed lie within their own memory and experience, I hope to stimulate a reappraisal of both sets of practices, those in theorizing and research and those in teaching. I do so by suggesting that our ways of researching the developing meaning-form relationships in adult instructed language learning, of providing metaphors for college-level professionals to understand both their students' learning and their own classroom practices, and, finally, of recommending advantageous instructional interventions all are in need of being rethought within a framework that takes seriously *the* overriding characteristic of language learning, namely its long-term nature. For the instructed setting this translates into the need for comprehensive curricular planning.

I envision a number of benefits for our field. With a long-term curricular perspective, SLA researchers might be able to consider certain outstanding theoretical and empirical issues about adult-instructed foreign language learning that they cannot now frame, much less answer satisfactorily. Language teachers in turn might be able to make informed choices which, as Larsen-Freeman (1983) noted long ago, involves awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills beyond those derived from narrowly linguistic assumptions, institutionalized through the dominance of methodologies and textbooks. Indeed, all faculty members in a foreign language department, irrespective of their instructional assignments, could begin to realize the benefits of a practice that Tedick and Walker (1994) characterize as "an understanding and internalization of complex sociocultural relationships as they are reflected in verbal and nonverbal discourse" in the classroom (p. 301). Finally, intellectual, institutional-structural, administrative, and pedagogic issues that now crowd in on collegiate foreign language departments might also be addressed in new ways. By engaging in what Freeman (1994) calls a "grounded examination . . . within the broader framework of teacher-learner, context, and process" (p. 195),[2] all members of a departmental faculty could, in a comprehensive and intellectually and ideologically less constricted fashion, attend to the specific nature of the setting in which their teaching and their students' learning takes place, an activity that constitutes the heart of developing appropriate curricula and appropriate pedagogies. That such an engagement might be the real essence of the calls for accountability that our external audiences have repeatedly raised with us—an interpretation that contrasts with the frequent analysis of a corporate takeover of the soul of the academy—only adds to the urgency and soundness of the project.

Some explanatory comments are in order. First, by concentrating on SLA research foci pertaining to meaning-form connections, as contrasted with pedagogical practices, I do not endorse the pecking order that teaching is the passive recipient of research results and itself has little effect on the research agenda nor on proposed solutions. To the contrary, by recommending a curricular frame of reference, I question the continued tacit assumption that even classroom-based SLA research can establish and assert its scholarly status, validity, and value largely independent of language teaching and learning contexts.

Second, my characterization of the collegiate teaching and learning environment might appear unnecessarily restrictive. I rely primarily on

North American research, not because I am unaware of excellent work elsewhere, but because I believe that the insights about language learning that a number of groups within the SLA community now urgently need arise from a better understanding of how educational and instructional contexts themselves, with their contingencies and dependencies, deeply affect the very nature and quality of language learning (van Lier 1988).

Finally, I feature curricular and instructional practices associated with foreign language programs that maintain a graduate component. I do so because those SLA researchers who focus on foreign language learning (as contrasted with ESL) generally reside in graduate foreign language departments or, at least, use their undergraduate courses, largely taught by graduate TAs, as their research sites. Also, future academics, irrespective of their specialization in literary, linguistic, or cultural studies, are socialized into the profession within graduate programs. In other words, for better or for worse, graduate programs assume a particularly prominent role in our understanding of foreign language learning and teaching.

Foreign language supervisors and coordinators are the crucial audience for what I want to argue. Although they themselves are often vulnerable members of graduate departments, they are key actors working toward their change. As SLA researchers they also contribute to that community. Finally, given their varied backgrounds—from applied linguistics, to FL education, to literary or cultural studies—they may also be a critical audience in the other sense of the word. Inasmuch as they do not share my assumptions, experiences, and interpretive assessments, they may also question my two-pronged recommendations—namely, to create comprehensive collegiate curricula in order to make possible an expanded classroom-based SLA research effort and, on its basis, to enhance college foreign language teaching and learning. It is a challenge I hope that all parties can meet in the interest of enhancing the adult learners' ability to learn foreign languages, the real goal of my paper.

Situating Meaning and Form in SLA Research

Recent SLA research has approached language learning through a relatively small number of concepts that reside along the comprehension-production axis for explicating the acquisition of meaning-form relationships—input, interaction, negotiation, intake, and output. In contrast with an earlier

emphasis on formal aspects of language as provided by structural linguistics, the '70s saw the development of theoretical constructs and methodologies in SLA research that focused on meaning through the notion of comprehension. As a consequence, studies increasingly used psychological concepts for new insights, most notably developmental psychology with its inherent interest in child language acquisition and educational psychology with its concern for the success of children in educational contexts, particularly immigrant and minority children.

One can readily understand such an emphasis on comprehension. After all, for a language to be learned, it must first come to the learner's attention, a step research operationalized in terms of language becoming comprehensible. So central was this notion for theorizing and research on acquiring a language that it was dubbed "natural" even within instructional settings that patently lack key ingredients of the "natural" environment of child first-language learning (Krashen and Terrell 1983). In other words, for both kinds of language learning it was claimed that the learners' focus on meaning, that is, comprehension, was essential, since it simultaneously enabled them also to acquire the formal features of a language.

Three developments subsequently challenged Krashen's so-called Input Hypothesis (1982; 1985). First, the theoretical claim that comprehensible input is not merely a necessary but also a sufficient environment for second-language learning early on invited strong counterarguments (Gregg 1985). For one, it made instruction irrelevant at best, counterproductive at worst. From the standpoint of psychology, too, Krashen's separating "language learning," the conscious attending to form through instruction, from "language acquisition," the essentially unconscious internalization of the system of a second language, seemed both needlessly dichotomous and counterintuitive. Finally, gradually accumulating experience with older second- and foreign-language learners, particularly in college foreign language programs that espoused a communicative or proficiency orientation that often incorporated some of the comprehension-based tenets of the Natural Approach, raised serious doubts in foreign language departments. Some professionals questioned the gains when programs perhaps no longer produced communicatively and sociopragmatically limited learners with halting, though reasonably correct, language but, instead, graduated fluent, but woefully inaccurate, even fossilized, learners with seemingly little hope of further progressing in their acquisition (Byrnes 1992; Hammerly 1991; Valette 1991).

But the concern transcended the well-known institutional and pedagogical limitations of foreign language instruction in the United States. Canadian immersion learners, who presumably enjoyed the benefits of the desired focus on meaning and long-term instructional sequences, turned out to be unable to control the more formal features of language and fell short of targetlike language ability with regard to other important aspects of language performance (Harley and Swain 1984; Swain and Lapkin 1989). In response, SLA research, over a period of years, reconsidered its central understandings about the nature and role of comprehension in language learning and concluded that "comprehensible output is a necessary mechanism of acquisition independent of the role of comprehensible input" (Swain 1985). At minimum, it was suggested, a focus on output, not only comprehensible input, was critical for encouraging learners to move from purely semantic analysis and processing to a syntactic analysis.

In order to begin to operationalize this line of thinking, new research methodologies began to explore the following notions: learners noticing the gap between their own and targetlike performance; learners engaging in hypothesis testing through modifying certain parts of their speech in order to determine more closely how the language works; and learners consciously reflecting, through the forms used in their output, on the essence of their hypotheses about the language. As Swain (1995) states: "Learners negotiate meaning, but the content of that negotiation is language form, and its relation to the meaning they are trying to express; they produce language and then reflect upon it. They use language to 'negotiate about form'" (p. 133).

In this fashion, it was hoped, research would be able to address two problems of instructed language acquisition: the need to expand students' opportunities for a range of registers in language use and the premature stabilization of interlanguage systems and its consequences for less than acceptable levels of accuracy. In other words, SLA research had taken an important step toward understanding characteristics of instructed language learning that were not captured by the previous emphasis on comprehended meanings. Reconsidering an input focus with a near prohibition of instructional interventions, studies now not only investigated the role of input and output but explored a range of pedagogical interventions, from implicit to explicit, in order to focus the learners' attention on formal aspects of language while maintaining the centrality of meaning.

Indeed, such a more balanced development of meaning and form relationships in the interlanguage of instructed learners is the prominent concern of ongoing research reported in the *focus on form* literature.[3] The aim is to connect the benefits of communicative language teaching which primarily lie in interactional fluency with the advantages of attention to linguistic form, thereby assuring long-term interlanguage restructuring that can lead learners to target-language-like levels of performance. Long (1991) states the stance taken by researchers and practitioners with a FonF orientation in the following fashion:

> *Whereas the content of lessons with a focus on* forms *is the* forms *themselves, a syllabus with a focus on* form *teaches something else—biology, mathematics, workshop practice, automobile repair, the geography of a country where the foreign language is spoken, the cultures of its speakers, and so on—and overtly draw [sic] students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning, or communication (pp. 45–46).*

In clarifying how a focus on form is to deliver the benefits of a communicative approach while attending to language code, Doughty and Williams observe that

> *during an otherwise meaning-focused classroom lesson, focus on form often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features—by the teacher and/or one or more students—triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production (1998b, p. 23).*

In other words, form and meaning are no longer juxtaposed to each other in polar opposition.

> *Rather, focus on form* entails *a focus on formal elements of language, whereas focus on formS is* limited *to such a focus, and focus on meaning* excludes *it. Most important, it should be kept in mind that the fundamental assumption of focus-on-form instruction is that meaning and use must already be evident to the learner at the time that attention is drawn to the linguistic apparatus needed to get the meaning across (Doughty and Williams 1998b, p. 4).*

Fundamentally this is a learner-centered approach, one that "is always triggered by an analysis of learner need rather than being imposed externally by a linguistic syllabus" (Doughty and Williams 1998b, p. 5) and one

that attempts to guide learners' attentional resource allocation in ways that are most conducive to developing both fluency and accuracy. From a more theoretical perspective, Doughty also characterizes it as subscribing to an interlanguage model (see Selinker 1972) that

> *proposes that learners mentally formulate and test hypotheses about what is and what is not possible in the target language and test those hypotheses through interaction with speakers of the target language. . . . Learners are thought to be equipped with significant psycholinguistic mechanisms that assist in the language-construction and hypothesis-testing processes of SLA (1998, p. 141).*

Consequently, carefully channeling learners through various strategies for attending to, comparing, and mapping meaning-form relationships, noticing differences and frequencies; and storing chunked language complexes in memory are central features within the six major pedagogical choices that are integral to the FonF movement:

- whether to focus on form;
- reactive versus proactive focus on form;
- choice of linguistic form;
- explicitness of focus on form;
- sequential versus integrated focus on form; and
- the role of focus on form in the curriculum

(Doughty and Williams 1998c).

Answers to these questions are sought through research that varies along the dimensions of (1) the continuum from explicit to implicit learning with its careful delineation of the notions of attention, awareness, noticing, and consciousness (e.g., Fotos 1993; Robinson 1994, 1995a; Schmidt 1995a, 1995b; Tomlin and Villa 1994); (2) the importance of both positive and negative evidence in the learning environment to make learners aware of otherwise unnoticeable features to assure continued restructuring or potentially to speed up the acquisitional process; (3) various techniques for input enhancement (Sharwood Smith 1993); (4) different approaches to feedback, including error correction (Tomasello and Herron 1988; Lightbown and Spada 1990); and (5) fixed acquisitional sequences (Pienemann 1985, 1989; Pienemann and Johnston 1986) with their impact on a number of the aforementioned questions, particularly timing and the choice of forms that are to be the focus of instruction.

In investigating these topics, an increasing number of FonF studies have concluded that the robustness of their findings depends on four critical aspects: (1) Studies need to consider with much greater care the subjects' learning environments; (2) repeat studies with an ethnographically similar learner group that would corroborate earlier findings are critical; (3) longitudinal investigation is no longer nice but dispensable, but central for making valid claims; (4) such longitudinal studies should be located within a curricular context.

Of course, classroom-based research has always included a minimal ethnographic perspective so as to assure the validity of the researcher's analytic categories and also the appropriateness of applications in the varied contexts of language classrooms (e.g., Chaudron 1988, p. 24). However, demands for a critical examination of the available resources and constraints of a particular learning environment are now made more explicit in order to develop a theory of situated practice that starts by recognizing the impact of various local contingencies (Bailey and Nunan 1996; van Lier 1988, 1996). Taking a long-term developmental view likewise is not new. Prominent focus-on-form researchers like Long have consistently called for that perspective, and most recently Doughty and Williams (1998c) have reiterated the importance of curricular contexts in their decision-making grid for FonF treatments. However, in the absence of extended foreign language curricula, research has continued to focus on detailing the psychological mechanisms of the individual learner, not on investigating situated and developing performance capabilities. Thus we have highly refined treatments of the nature of input and output processing, particularly such central notions as noticing, attention, awareness, and consciousness in assuring continued interlanguage development (see particularly Bialystok 1994; Ellis and Beaton 1995; MacWhinney 1987; Robinson 1995a; Robinson et al. 1995; Schmidt 1995a, 1995b; Segalowitz 1995; Segalowitz et al. 1995; Sharwood Smith 1993; Skehan 1998; Tomlin and Villa 1994; VanPatten 1994, 1996, 1998). What remains to be considered in depth, however, are stages of learning within a particular learning environment, specifically long-term development within a curricular framework.

A similar need for a curricular context, I believe, is now also surfacing in two other long-standing lines of SLA research that deserve mention: those exploring interaction and negotiation as facilitating comprehension and, more recently, language development (Mackey in press), and those focusing on input processing. Interaction-focused research (e.g., Gass

1997; Gass and Mackey 1998) builds on the realization that much in the learners' language environment is actually incomprehensible rather than comprehensible input. However, it can be made more comprehensible through various forms of linguistic adjustments in interaction between native speakers and nonnative speakers alike. An expanded line of thinking concentrates on how interaction itself, between the participants in communication, affects the pragmatic dynamic between them through such communicative moves as confirmation checks, clarification requests, agreement with someone, or expansion on someone's turn (e.g., Pica 1992, 1994; Pica, Young, and Doughty 1987). Current work thus explores a direct connection between interactional modifications and learning outcomes, rather than via comprehension (Mackey in press).

Recognizing that interaction likely increases the amount of language exchanged but does not necessarily involve participants equally, researchers have elaborated the notion of task. It is worth observing that *task* is not the same as a communicative group or partner activity that has a *real-world* flavor. Instead, as used in the research literature and as a pedagogical and curricular concept, the notion of "task" refers to refined specification of the cognitive demands that attend to various aspects of language use, particularly in negotiated interaction (e.g., Coughlan and Duff 1994; Crookes 1986; Crookes and Gass 1993a, 1993b; Duff 1993; Foley 1991; Fotos and Ellis 1993; Gass and Varonis 1985; Kumaravadivelu 1993; Long 1989; Loschky and Bley-Vroman 1993; Nunan 1989; Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun 1993; Plough and Gass 1993; Robinson, Ting, and Erwin 1995; Yule, Powers, and Macdonald 1992). Initially, the most prominent task environments explored the effects of convergent as contrasted with divergent tasks (Duff 1993; Robinson 1995b), information gap tasks, jigsaw, problem solving, decision making, and opinion exchange (Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun 1993). More recently, task as a viable research construct—task complexity; in terms of cognitive task demands; task difficulty, in terms of learner factors such as aptitude or motivation; and task conditions, in terms of the interactive demands of a task—has begun to be extended to other genres and forms of language use (e.g., narrativity). That has shown that, ultimately, the researchability, satisfactory resolution of seeming inconsistencies in findings, and usefulness for pedagogical interventions require a curricular context (Robinson in press).

The second direction, input processing research, directly concerns itself with the nature of learner language processing. Accordingly, VanPatten

(1990, 1994, 1996, 1998) and VanPatten and Cadierno (1993) have highlighted noticing, awareness, and consciousness, as contrasted with the more standard emphasis in much language teaching on output processing and production, practice, and control. They found that, through processing instruction, their collegiate learners of Spanish gained both in comprehension and production (VanPatten and Cadierno 1993). But here, too, a curricular context would significantly bolster research results.[4]

In other words, a number of key research approaches in instructed SLA now require curricular contexts. In light of the history of foreign language education in the United States, it is difficult to be optimistic that foreign language departments will respond to this challenge. However, that is all the more reason for taking the first steps toward making it a professional priority.

Assumptions in SLA Research and the Construction of College Foreign Language Instruction

My overview thus far has indicated that choices in SLA research foci and conceptual and methodological approaches often reveal remarkably specific interests. That is, of course, to be expected. Nor would it be cause for concern, were it not for a strong tendency to generalize from these interests and the research findings they generate to other learning contexts, to privilege certain agendas and approaches, and to derive from them major theoretical positions or even undergird them with powerful *a priori* theoretical positions. More often than not collegiate foreign language learning plays a marginal role in this interplay. Indeed, one could say that its instructional approaches reflect a kind of "receivership," with others' findings not only accepted generously but naturalized to an amazing degree. Our first task, therefore, is to deconstruct those "natural orders," by examining characteristics that inhere in the sites favored by SLA research for their applicability to college foreign language learning. I single out three broad areas: the language learning task itself, the instructional context with its implications for a focus on meaning/content or form, and the learners' presumed cognitive/content needs along with their linguistic needs and goals.

An obvious mismatch between the assumptions underlying foreign language learning and the majority of studies in second-language acquisition

pertains to the difference between second language learning, particularly ESL, and foreign-language learning. SLA researchers and practitioners have long been aware of this distinction. Yet, although foreign-language oriented studies have recently increased, the field as a whole continues to derive many of its theoretical constructs, empirical foci, and research methodologies from ESL contexts, either ESL in K–12, that is, mostly in the lower grades, or ESL studies pertaining to advanced learners in university settings.

Second, immersion language learning, particularly the near-unique Canadian situation, has been the site for SLA studies that have justly received much attention. But that instructional context is remarkably at odds with college foreign-language learning in the United States—a difference that would not much matter were it not for the significant impact that research findings derived from it have had on the conceptualization that the entire research community has developed, as well as for instructed foreign language learning. For, what is called foreign-language learning in the United States really does not focus on meaning or content as presupposed in the Canadian setting and in the FonF research agenda that, in important ways, builds on it (see the earlier quotes). Even communicative approaches in U.S. foreign-language teaching, by and large, continue to operate with an *a priori* underlying linguistic progression, the very aspect that is being challenged by this research, when it assumes a "prerequisite engagement in meaning before attention to linguistic features can be expected to be effective" (Doughty and Williams 1998b, p. 3). In other words, to this line of thinking, it is only on the basis of a well-established prior focus on meaning that the complex task of acquiring meaning-form relationships can be appropriately addressed. Only then is it possible to recommend the "what" and the "how" of a focus on form which, as the articles in the Doughty and Williams volume indicate, actually permit a broad range of types of interventions. Some of them (e.g., DeKeyser 1998) may even appear to be deceptively reminiscent of the old grammar instruction. But they differ importantly from those earlier formS-focused practices, due to their embeddedness within a content focus, because they build on previously established learner needs and because they recognize and creatively exploit different kinds of processing demands in language performance.

However, matters are even more complex. Where a foreign language program does focus on content, typically during the third and fourth years of undergraduate instruction, instructors and learners alike struggle

with the most peculiar ambiguities. Programmatically learners are presumed to be in command of the language; therefore they receive little instructional support for increasing their facility in the literate behaviors of language use, namely the discourse-level and genre-specific meaning-form relationships that characterize advanced language performance in all modalities. However, given the previous assumptions about meaning and form relationships that instructors and learners alike enacted in a formS-focused approach, a seemingly open-ended content focus, ironically, is neither appropriate nor possible at this stage since learners' interlanguage reflects a considerable need to attend to a host of complex meaning-form relationships in their language use—in terms of accuracy, fluency, complexity, and range. James (1989) eloquently described this dilemma over ten years ago; little seems to have changed.

In other words, neither the language teaching component of the typical undergraduate curriculum, which is focused on formS, nor the content focus of third- and fourth-year courses fulfills the conditions that characterize immersion instruction. Similarly, neither component meets the conditions for pedagogic interventions to enhance meaning-form acquisition as the FonF research agenda has proposed them.

Let me illustrate this point with an example. Learners of French must acquire the formal as well as the semantic properties of the imparfait and the passé composé (Salaberry 1998), a "local level" formal capability relating to tense and aspect. In current practice, the formal features associated with that distinction are typically introduced during second-semester French and thereafter much reiterated as formal phenomena due to persistent difficulties with accuracy. However, the real reason why learners need to command the multiple meaning-form relationships that instantiate tense and aspect phenomena is to be able to develop a finely honed narrative capability that is evoked by and enters into a host of communicative contexts, from face to face discourse to a range of formal environments of extended public speaking and writing.

Much research acknowledges that to be a long-term development that is central, if not definitional, to a number of genres (Dechert 1983; Salaberry 1998; Snow 1989; and the following discussion). By all accounts it is also a development that is fostered not by first attending to formal accuracy and then applying these accurate forms to various contexts, but *in the performing of these communicative tasks in a well-motivated sequence that recognizes various processing demands as it links meaning and form.* I

believe it is fair to say that such an approach is not enacted in foreign language departments because it is not really enactable in their existing curricular environments. As a result everyone loses. Teachers and learners are severely shortchanged. And researchers, too, are unable to accomplish their complex goals, such as understanding just how learners develop a kind of narrative ability that is marked by genre-specific, pragmatic, discoursal, sociolinguistic, institutional-ethnographic, and cultural aspects of language use (Robinson 1995b; Schiffrin 1987).

My last observation regarding the mismatch between the interests of SLA research and those arising within collegiate foreign-language learning refers to why students take language classes in the first place. Although all classrooms combine learners with differing attitudes, motivations, and learning goals, college language instruction, by virtue of its institutional setting, faces particular challenges. Sitting side by side are learners whose only "need" and intention are to fulfill the foreign language requirement and who terminate their involvement with language study at the earliest possible opportunity; learners who, often quite unexpectedly, actually develop some interest and vaguely perceived needs as they engage in learning the language; and learners who had explicit goals right from the start that required a long-term trajectory, for instance, the anticipation of using the language competently in a professional or academic context once they graduate. Therefore although the bulk of language instruction addresses the first group, it must be conceptualized and conducted in a fashion that includes the possibility for the second group to develop its interests, while supporting with appropriate pedagogical interventions the aspirations of the third to attain advanced levels of language performance. Despite much concern about fossilization or unbalanced language acquisition, I find little in research that directly addresses this pivotal issue.

Reflections on the Collegiate Language Learner and SLA Research

After having explored the disjunctures vis-à-vis college-level foreign-language learning that arise from the interests that dominate SLA research, we are ready to look, in some depth, at what I consider to be the most far-reaching concern, namely an insufficiently articulated acknowledgment that collegiate language learners have characteristics that must be taken seriously if they—and we—are to be able to act responsibly and successfully.

Specifically, college language learners in the United States, more often than not, are being researched in terms of being rank beginners or perhaps intermediate-level learners of a language. Such a conceptualization has privileged a focus on the acquisition of the formal inventory of the language, primarily in terms of morphological and syntactic accuracy and range of use in spoken language, at times also on the developing ability to read and write L2 texts. The result is a curious admixture of various, often contradictory, tenets, among them some derived from child language acquisition, some from naturalistic learning by adults in the L2 setting, some from habit formation, some from the nature of a generalizable rule-based calculus, some from interactional dynamics, and some from neurologically fixed sequences.

Arguably, adult instructed language learning combines all these features, but their relevance and usefulness can be ascertained and adjudicated only in relation to the fact that these are literate adults who therefore differ from the assumptions just mentioned in terms of who and what they already are, and who and what they aspire to be. Unless we recognize and research those differences, we continue to run the risk of overextending, underextending, or otherwise missing the mark regarding the best practices in adult teaching and learning.

I suggest two approaches: identify aspects in the setting, in relation to these learners, that are so definitional that classroom-based SLA research, to be relevant and maximally beneficial to collegiate learning, must take note of them; and return to existing SLA research for possible findings that specifically address characteristics of the collegiate-instructed learner and could therefore enhance instructional practice.

The Setting of College Language Learning

A key interest of college-level faculty in language departments is to assert and maintain the intellectual aspirations and goals that define them as college-level academic units. Although variations surely exist, the faculty in graduate departments who have the power to make such judgments, namely, the literature professoriate frequently conclude that much in contemporary language learning and teaching does not respond to that requirement. Most distressingly, the communicative turn is being interpreted as detrimental to these aspirations (see Byrnes 1998a) that are made visible by and are anchored in the familiar structural-administrative arrangements for language departments. Thus while many factors

contribute to the creation of language centers separate from language departments, their increasing use as a unit that attends to language learning and teaching at the very least signals that outsourcing that specific component has relatively few costs for the academic self-identification of language departments. Put slightly differently, engaging with language by emphasizing interactive, contextualized, everyday spoken language without a particular content focus, as much communicative language teaching does, contributes so marginally to the academic presence and self-identity of a department that its being spun off into a separate unit is not a debilitating, much less destructive, development that faculty should vigorously oppose. As I will explicate, I consider this position both understandable under current conditions—and extraordinarily shortsighted, counterproductive, and perhaps even negligent of professional responsibilities.

How could a changed SLA research agenda contribute to a reversal of this state of affairs? I believe a beneficial approach would be to recover from the construct of communication aspects that pertain to the variable, complex meaning-form relationships that mark, at times define, different genres and discourses (e.g., Biber 1986), and various kinds of literacies and literatures and are at the heart of inquiry and interpretation, creativity, and critical engagement in L1 and in L2—as contrasted with "mere" conversational interactions (Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes 1991). First and foremost, such a research orientation would seriously consider that college-level learners are literate adults who are pursuing an education with the intention of becoming effective participants in the world of work. That world makes high demands of them, regarding their working lives, their public lives as citizens, and their private lives in their respective life worlds (New London Group 1996). Education is now striving to contribute to their success in each of these environments through a kind of literacy pedagogy that addresses the different subjectivities they possess in different contexts—inherently a matter of attendant languages, discourses, registers, and their use as resources in learning (p. 72). Educational policy makers refer to these matters as the need to improve learners' ability to read and think critically, to write coherently, and to speak in public settings in ways that respect the emerging pluralistic forms of citizenship. Foreign language specialists would do well to join that reflection.

Fortunately in my estimation, SLA researchers and foreign language professionals are uniquely capable of linking up with this agenda of multiliteracies, a claim I hope to substantiate in the final section of this paper.

Not only would they assure greater depth and broader ranges of insights for their work and that of language departments, they would also be able to become a valuable presence in discussions about the goals of education now pervading higher education from the most general policy level to the creation of mission and goals statements in individual colleges and universities and departments.

A third characteristic of the context of college language learning and teaching that is much in need of rich, well-documented SLA research pertains to the severe time constraints imposed on both learners and teachers which, mercifully perhaps, we have learned to accept uncritically. But there is another way to look at time constraints, namely in terms of efficiency and efficacy of L2 learning under such conditions. The much cited evidence for hours of study that learners in the government language schools require in order to reach a certain level of proficiency or comparison studies of the *outcomes* of college foreign-language learning in terms of various proficiency measures get it only half right. Instead, we need longitudinal studies for both *efficiency of learning* and *effectiveness of teaching* that recognize the college foreign-language learning context with great honesty for what it is and for what it never was nor ever will be. Contrary to some fears, that is not the same as lowering the bar of expected outcomes. In fact, to be taken seriously, such a research agenda must envision, at least in principle, that learners can be more appropriately supported in their quest for learning languages to upper levels of performance than has customarily been the case.

Alternative Views of the Collegiate Foreign-Language Learner

Thus far I have highlighted what I consider to be dominant thinking in SLA research for explicating the learners' evolving capacity to develop a rich repertoire of appropriate meaning-form relationships. Although I have concluded that many of those findings have only limited relevance for college foreign-language learning and teaching, more recent studies with a cognitive frame of reference that show a much higher promise of addressing the adult-instructed learner have emerged.

Among these is a reconsideration of the well-known fact that humans learn a second language more effectively and completely before they become adults—often summarized under the so-called critical-period hypothesis and taken to account for much incomplete language acquisition,

even in the restricted context of college instruction. However, instead of interpreting that fact negatively as a biologically grounded deficit that results in insuperable limitations, one can also look at these social and psychological characteristics of adult learners in terms of possibilities and limitations that can be creatively incorporated into our awareness of what language learning might look like. Thus Skehan (1998) formulates the following central assumptions:

> *It is that* meaning *takes priority for older learners, and that the* form *of language has secondary importance. This claim relates to both comprehension and production. Regarding comprehension, the resources to extract meaning that humans possess increase in effectiveness as we get older. . . . Moving to production as language users, we develop effective means of coping with one of the greatest problems of all: how to keep speaking at normal rates in real time. We do this in a number of ways. . . . Rather than construct each utterance 'mint fresh,' . . . we economize by stitching together language chunks which free processing resources during communication so that planning for the form and content of future utterances can proceed more smoothly (1998, p. 3).*

Most notably, that statement connects the insights of a cognitivist approach with long-standing considerations in the literature that have proposed a dual-mode processing, one that relies on analysis and rule application and the other that is based on nonanalyzed exemplars, various collocations and memory based language chunks (Bolinger 1961; Carr and Curran 1994; Pawley and Syder 1983; Skehan 1998; Widdowson 1989). The two systems exist side by side, with each having clear advantages and disadvantages under different communicative demands. For example, while the syntactically oriented, rule-based system affords generativity through its rules, thereby enhancing complexity and accuracy of language use, exemplar-based processing contributes fluency to language performance.

What makes these two simultaneous processing systems so powerful for all language users is that users can access one or the other under different task conditions and task demands and achieve quite different performance profiles. Furthermore, there are processes that allow entire utterances or chunks of utterances, once they have been analytically created, to be stored in memory, thereby significantly expanding the potential for fluent memory-based processing of major syntactic units. In turn,

a predisposition toward a rule-based perspective, particularly in conjunction with a variety of metacognitive processes, is likely to lead to longer-term change in learners' interlanguage, either by making it larger or by making it more complex. Both shifts, in their own way, amount to a restructuring of the learner's interlanguage grammar.

The possibilities for applying these insights to instructed second language development are striking, particularly when we connect them to the task-based research mentioned earlier. We can then lay the foundation for a well-founded pedagogy that first takes the adult learner seriously and, second, builds into our decision-making process the possibility of long-term learning, potentially to advanced levels of performance (Crookes 1986; Crookes and Gass 1993a, 1993b; Long 1994; Long and Crookes 1993; Loschky and Bley-Vroman 1993; Norris, Brown, Hudson, and Yoshioka 1998; Robinson 1995b; Robinson, Ting, and Erwin 1995; Skehan 1998).

For example, Skehan (1998, p. 129) lists five principles for linking task-based instruction with the claims for a dual-processing capacity: Choose a range of target structures; choose tasks that meet the utility criterion that recognizes some forms have a particularly high usefulness for expressing certain meanings; select and sequence tasks to achieve balanced language development between accuracy, fluency, and complexity; maximize the chances of focus on form through attentional manipulation; and use cycles of accountability that reflect on what was accomplished with certain pedagogical tasks.

The three earlier mentioned aspects of tasks—complexity, difficulty, and conditions of performance—need particularly careful consideration: (1) The notion of inherent task complexity and the identification of factors addresses what are essentially cognitive burdens (e.g., familiar versus unfamiliar; here and now versus remote; concrete versus abstract; simple retrieval versus transformation); (2) the notion of task difficulty refers to individual learner factors, such as aptitude, confidence, motivation, and proficiency level; (3) task conditions affect the perceived difficulty during the performance of a task (e.g., time pressure, modality, language use, support, surprise, control, and stakes). As Robinson (in press) argues, task complexity "should be the sole basis of prospective sequencing decisions since most learner factors implicated in decisions about task difficulty can only be diagnosed in situ and in process." By extension, aspects of task difficulty and task performance would form the basis for pedagogical decision making in a particular classroom setting with its specific goals,

specific learners, and specific considerations of the instructional sequence. For instance, is the intention that learners reach toward new language capabilities, or are they to shore up fragile existing ones by carefully refocusing their attention to fluency, accuracy, or complexity of language? In the end, as Skehan (1998) notes:

> *This perspective implies that in addition to having principles for the selection and implementation of individual tasks, sequences of tasks should also be examined for the cumulative impact that they will have. In this way, knowledge about task properties and implementation alternatives can ensure that the flow of tasks and their use is not going to make it more likely that unbalanced development will occur (1998, p. 150).*

In Skehan's words, the emphasis has to be that of "bridging the gap between ongoing performance and sustained development" since it is by no means clear whether "introducing focus on form *at a time* will have a beneficial impact on interlanguage development *over time*" (p. 293)—once more a curricular focus.

To show how differently such an approach would play itself out in foreign-language learning, let us take as an example the already mentioned notion of fixed acquisitional sequences in language learning to which have been attached powerful claims of the learnability and teachability of certain formal features of the language (Pienemann 1985, 1989). It is well known that instructed learners of German show traces of the more advanced stages of Pienemann's five-stage model within the first few weeks of instruction. At the same time, pervasive difficulties with these grammatical features persist across a range of task environments until very late in the process of language learning (Byrnes 1998c), thereby significantly reducing the instructional utility, perhaps even the theoretical validity, of fixed developmental sequences. As Lightbown (1998) remarks, "the evidence, although suggestive, is far from overwhelming that learners benefit only from developmentally matched instruction" (p. 188). Moreover, one has to be concerned "that teachers and syllabus writers could come to treat developmental sequences as a new basis for syllabus or materials design, returning to the teaching of language features in isolation . . ." (Lightbown 1998, p. 188).

By contrast, an approach based on the notion of pedagogical tasks as suggested by Skehan (1998) would facilitate careful investigation of how

tasks that have a high utility for a certain structure would, under different task conditions such as planned or unplanned speech, lead to different performance profiles and, even more intriguingly, over time foster accuracy, fluency, and complexity of language use. That would make possible a richer interpretation not only of task-induced variation, but also of all variable performance, thereby fostering a reconsideration of our notions of competence, knowledge, and performance and their respective relationships, and of fixed sequences (Bialystok 1990; Duff 1993; Gregg 1985).

One could envision a similar corrective for the prevalent assumption that humans have limited attentional capacity (see Skehan's 1998 treatment of memory). While that assumption has intuitive appeal, it can easily lead to a problematic opposition between attention to meaning as opposed to form (VanPatten 1990), thereby leading to generalizations that would seriously limit teachers' instructional choices.

One of the few studies investigating advanced collegiate learners, Leeman et al. (1995) correctly emphasizes that the issue is not to "isolate attention to form as a separate component" but to "integrate attention to form with attention to meaning" (p. 221). Again, as Tomlin and Villa (1994) note, a coarse-grained conception of attention like that implied by a limited-capacity metaphor or an automatic versus controlled processing dichotomy may be insufficient to account for addressing learners' second-language processing. Instead, much finer-grained analyses regarding attention, such as those involving alertness, orientation, and detection may be required, an approach that would seem to be particularly appropriate for adult learners whose schooling itself, as formation toward literate behaviors, fosters such behaviors.

We noted that SLA research has strongly favored an instructional environment that promotes interactive and dialogic input/intake because of its presumed consequences for comprehension. While communicative situations focusing on information gap tasks and on simple problem solving and decision making favor sentence-level language use, monologic discourse (that is perhaps open-ended, extended, and often narrative) receives less positive consideration (Duff 1993). However, as Snow (1989) observes, regarding the social antecedents for the development of monologic skills, these require a whole series of opportunities for maintaining cross-utterance and cross-speaker cohesion in pursuit of a coherent dialogic text and extensive experience with long cohesive texts. Indeed, in contrast with the sentence-level syntactic skills that are basically shared by

all speakers, it is in the performance of monologic tasks, such as the retelling of a story, answering open-ended questions, giving explanations, and participating in a discussion, that large differences can be observed among learners (see also Skehan 1995). While Snow identifies these as social class differences, the fact that they are explicitly targeted at nearly all levels of native-language instruction indicates just how much consistent and careful attention is needed to develop and enlarge the kind of critical thinking and speaking abilities that literate societies—and even more so multilingual societies—require of their citizenry.

We might also wish to reconsider whether informal, unrehearsed, timed, and on the spot language use, particularly in speaking, best indicates learner abilities. Does this bias really still constitute the most productive way of researching and assessing the kind of interlanguage performance we want to foster in adult learners? At the very least, a balance that includes writing and performance under planning conditions and with various possibilities for "scaffolding" both meaning and form would seem to be in order to help us better understand and encourage advanced-level learning (Crookes 1989; Foster and Skehan 1996; Norris et al. 1998; Ochs 1979; Vygotsky 1978; Wigglesworth 1997). A shift of that kind recommends itself all the more as planning, rehearsal in memory, and cross-modal tasks that connect reading, writing, and speaking are behaviors the academic environment demands in all disciplines.

Such thinking could also lead to reinterpreting error less as the result of learners' inability to "access" what is then metaphorically taken to be "existing" knowledge, linguistic or otherwise. Particularly for more complex tasks, errorful language that affects fluency in discourse could indicate that the speaker has yet to determine precisely how to assure that both the speaker and the hearer are directing their attention to the same focus in the flow of conversation, the precondition for coherent, cohesive, and ultimately successful conversational interaction. In that critically important on-line task, meaning is neither divorced from form in speech itself, nor does it exist, in finished fashion, prior to speech. Instead, it is being dressed up in its "formal" garment during the flow of speech, a dressing up that, in turn, gives final shape to meanings (Baars 1980; Chafe 1979, 1994; Slobin 1996). As Chafe reminds us, while cognitive science has emphasized maximally abstract rules and while a linguistically based instructional approach has privileged morphological and syntactic rules of

a specific language, it might be just as important to consider the shaping of meaning in consciousness

> *as the crucial interface between the conscious organism and its environment, the place where information from the environment is dealt with as a basis for thought and action as well as the place where internally generated experience becomes effective—the locus of remembering, imagining, and feeling (1994, p. 38).*

Finally, a view of language learning that limits itself to beginning levels of acquisition and does not consider the long-term developmental nature of second-language learning has little reason for dealing with one of the most fascinating aspects of learner processing that is likely to exist right from the beginning, although it does not demand direct attention until more advanced performance. I am referring to the difficulty of accounting for the phenomena of nativelike selection and nativelike fluency with our current models of language processing (Pawley and Syder 1983). For, contrary to what a syntactic-generation model based on generalizable rules seems to suggest, the native speaker community does not find equally acceptable the infinity of possible end products of such rule application. We might be able to say certain utterances and be syntactically correct, but we would likely hear "we don't say it that way," the very phenomenon advanced learners face repeatedly.

So, as implied earlier by the dual-processing model, by adhering to a linguistic-syntactic and rule-based model for language acquisition, much language teaching has been inattentive to the unique demands these features of language use place on the language learner as language user (see Bolinger 1961 for an early discussion; Pawley and Syder 1983; Skehan 1998; Widdowson 1989; Yorio 1989). Functionalist approaches (Bates and MacWhinney 1987) which require that grammar be stated in terms that express a direct relationship to semantic and pragmatic constraints, and connectionist approaches (Gasser 1990) that challenge the dominance of symbolic models in cognitive science by focusing on patterns of activation on the basis of regularities in input would, at the very least, contextualize the preferential position thus far accorded to the role of rules in the development of accuracy, fluency, and complexity of language use. Language acquisition in an instructed context could provide valuable additional evidence for those considerations.

Curriculum Construction in Foreign Language Departments: Challenges and a Response

Let us recapitulate: The sophisticated pedagogical interventions advocated under the focus on form rubric cannot be applied to most college foreign language teaching contexts because of the absence of a meaning focus. Furthermore, the findings and recommendations resulting from these studies can be chosen, implemented, and substantiated only when they are part of a long-term interlanguage development perspective in concert with other aspects of instruction—not when they are individual interventions. Only then is it possible to pass judgment on the efficacy and efficiency of these procedures.

We arrive then at a new way of asserting the interdependency of research and instruction that has always been part of our professional rhetoric, although it has been upheld more in the breach than in our conduct. In order to achieve their respective goals, both sides need to change, and they need to change toward each other. The context for exploring and implementing that change is the curriculum.

Existing Issues Affecting Curriculum Construction

As currently handled, college foreign language curricula generally are not the result of careful reflection about how to link the acquisition of meaning and form throughout a well-considered instructional program. As Byrnes (1998c) states, it is difficult to describe the aggregation of courses that constitute most undergraduate foreign language programs as a curriculum, if by "curriculum" we mean a "sequence of educational opportunities for learners that builds on internal interrelations and continuities among the major units of instruction . . . to enhance learning" (p. 265). In terms of both the selection of content and sequencing of courses, college undergraduate programs at best constitute a curriculum by default, a situation where students themselves have to create the benefits of articulated learning that would otherwise accrue from a carefully considered curriculum by design. An approach in which faculty determine students' learning needs and goals in terms of language and content tasks, categorize these needs and goals into major task types, and derive from them pedagogical tasks that reflect their likely difficulty from the standpoint of learner processing is so rare as to be virtually absent from the conduct of foreign language departments (Byrnes 1998b, 1998c).

Why is this so? First, the notion of curriculum is generally not well established among college faculty who tend, instead, to think in terms of individual courses. But the field additionally suffers from the larger educational context for foreign language learning in the American system, which relegates an inordinate part of the responsibility for teaching language to the college level but, even there, provides no substantive institutional commitment to it. It is patently absurd to believe that anything approximating any usable level of language ability—always a matter of linking meaning and form—can be acquired in the two to four semesters typically allocated to "language learning." From that perspective, curriculum construction is essentially irrelevant.

But the obstacles to curriculum construction are even higher. The deeply entrenched division between language instruction and content instruction that was already discussed is also a split in power relationships between those teaching content courses, the ordinary faculty, and those teaching the languages, term-contract lecturers, various adjuncts and part-timers, and graduate students. Recently, we have witnessed its further institutionalization through the creation of language centers that are in charge of the language teaching enterprise, thereby virtually assuring that no integrated curriculum can be built.

As a consequence, the two most important stakeholders, researchers on one side and faculty on the other, in their own ways both come to conclusions that totally contradict recent SLA research findings but which, in a wicked fashion, have their own internal logic: Curriculum construction is *neither possible nor necessary*. From the standpoint of the faculty, curriculum construction is not necessary because the split between language form and meaning is well established in the conduct of a department's program and serves the vested interests of the ordinary faculty quite well. Curriculum construction is also not possible because there is no intellectual connection between formS-focused language courses and meaning-focused content courses that are not designed to attend to learners' acquisitional needs in terms of meaning and form.

The same duality applies to SLA researchers. An emphasis on decontextualized learning of individual phenomena—many of which are formS-focused—by individual learners does not require a situated learning context within a curriculum. We are prepared to value SLA research that is conducted without considering the situatedness of learning, a stance that continues to hold even though focus on form research strongly indicates

otherwise. In defense of researchers, however, in the absence of comprehensive curricular work in college foreign language departments, there seems little choice in any case.

So, instead of engaging in curriculum discussion, foreign language departments resort to two substitutes: reliance on the textbook and reliance on various methodologies. As the ritual of textbook selection amply demonstrates, the textbook often masquerades as the curriculum, an insight that has certainly not been lost on the powerful first- and second-year college textbook industry. Publishing houses come to the aid of departments that are mercifully relieved and deliciously prevented from acquiring the kind of sophisticated awareness about second-language acquisition that would lead them to the conclusion that these materials are not the most conducive for language learning. Methodology is the second curricular substitute. Once more departments seem quite defenseless and are subject to repeated pendulum swings in methodological choices. But methodological purism is a myth not only with regard to implementation on the part of the teachers (Swaffar, Arens, and Morgan 1982) but also with regard to the justification and effect individual methods can claim for themselves (e.g., Freeman 1991; Long 1985; Pennycook 1989; Pica 1991; Prabhu 1990). The result is instructional programs that are adrift, lack intellectual merit and focus, and have little basis in what must be taken to be the best knowledge in second-language acquisition research.

A Response: An Integrated Content-based Foreign Language Curriculum Initiative

The previous discussion has outlined the formidable obstacles for curriculum construction in foreign language departments, the urgent need for such work (e.g., Byrnes 1996), and the wealth of insights about meaning and form relationships that is now available in SLA research in second-language learning. Can these three aspects be brought together? Do we have at least broad guidelines, some seemingly indispensable features for such curricula within which curriculum building could be set into motion? What characteristics of these adult literate learners who are studying language in the context of American higher education might we draw on in order to pinpoint their needs, determine content areas, select task categories, and subsequently sequence the kinds of pedagogical tasks that derive from them? What consequences for pedagogies and, by implication, for faculty development does research seem to suggest if such an

approach were chosen? What considerations regarding materials would follow? And, finally, what implications for assessment, short-term and long-term, would have to be contemplated?

The following pages can only begin to answer these questions in very broad terms, but they do benefit from being based on an actual comprehensive curriculum renewal project, "Developing Multiple Literacies," currently underway in my home department, the German Department at Georgetown University. Given the contentiousness of curriculum discussion, one comment that might be appropriate right at the beginning is that, assuming some common interest in student learning and a culture of cooperation, agreement on broad fundamental principles can relatively quickly lead to amicable and intelligent resolution of what was otherwise seen as an overwhelming multitude of intractable local issues. That, in turn, fosters building up a culture of joint action, common discourse around these matters, and the all-important understanding that curricula and pedagogical reflection are never finished but rather require continued attention.

Our curriculum renewal effort leaves many questions unanswered, not least because its initial construction period of three years is only two-thirds complete. But it takes seriously some insights from SLA research that I have highlighted and begins to consider their implications for curriculum and pedagogy. In the following pages I hope to provide sufficient information to invite comments to us and to stimulate discussion in the profession at large.[5]

Principles Informing this Curricular Initiative

The foundational principle underlying the curricular initiative is to make content central and to assure a favorable environment for language acquisition throughout the four-year undergraduate program. A related principle is to address meaning and form issues continuously, by carefully considering the adult learners' inherent focus on meaning and by choosing instructional interventions so that they foster accuracy, fluency, and complexity in learners' use and development of language in variable, although motivated, fashion. We subscribe to a high utility rather than to a task-essential understanding of meaning-form relationships. We do so since we neither can nor want to limit ourselves only to receptive competence, such as in reading, where one can work with fixed relationships between meaning and form (Loschky and Bley-Vroman 1993). Instead, we

must include productive language use (Swain 1995), a decision that places variation, probabilities, and choices within communicative contexts at the center of our curricular, our pedagogical, and our learning philosophy.

As a result of these foundational assumptions, the curriculum no longer distinguishes between "language courses" where language is taught and learned without noteworthy connection to meaning and "content courses" where content is taught without recognizing the ongoing demand for supporting learners' acquisition of a whole range of phenomena about meaning-form connections and their performance in language use. Curriculum planners and teachers alike find themselves in a real double bind. On the one hand, even when a program aims no higher than having students learn a language to a level of competence that is somewhat resistant to attrition and loss, the few semesters of "language instruction" that are generally available are wholly insufficient—all the more so as intricate meaning-form connections in any language tend to be acquired over long periods of time. On the other hand, whether students decide to avail themselves of the opportunity for long-term study or not, critical foundations can and must be laid in those first courses for the desired interlanguage development to be at all a possibility.

By extending its vision to the four years of undergraduate study, our project differs in important ways from other curriculum-renewal efforts of roughly the last ten years (for excellent overviews of issues, see Adams 1996; Eskey 1997; Krueger and Ryan 1993; Snow and Brinton 1997; Stryker and Leaver 1997). On one hand it is considerably more ambitious in that its programmatic conceptualization envisions students attaining professional-level abilities. At the same time it is also rather conservative inasmuch as it adheres to prevailing instructional formats for language courses; that is, it does not employ innovative curricular models as others have used them to link content and language learning (Wesche 1993). Therefore it makes no unusual demands on faculty resources as these models do, particularly those that emphasize reaching into other disciplines as part of the department's mission (Anderson et al. 1993). It does, however, make considerable demands on all members of the departmental teaching staff, faculty and graduate students, with regard to their willingness to be cooperative in all matters pertaining to the curriculum and teaching, and to consider ongoing faculty development a top priority. This is an important decision and an important change in departmental culture that must be present in order to assure the long-term viability of the initiative.

Other salient points characterizing the curriculum are the following: Its content-focus is not pushed back until after completion of the basic language sequence, as in the well-known St. Olaf model (Anderson et al. 1993) or the Foreign Language Immersion Program (FLIP) at the University of Minnesota (Klee and Tedick 1997). All courses are taught by departmental faculty and graduate students, an agreement that requires all faculty to reconsider the nature of meaning-form connections in the jointly constructed syllabi in the sequenced courses on Levels I–III and, just as important, in the individually created nonsequenced courses on Levels IV and V. It is rigorous about linking content and language acquisition throughout the program, not just with supplementary texts (Jurasek 1993) or primarily as language enrichment (Anderson et al. 1993). It does not specify a particular disciplinary area for its content (e.g., Klee and Metcalf 1994) nor any particular student group as its audience (Grandin, Einbeck, and von Reinhart 1992; Vines 1997). Instead, if for no other reason than the size of our undergraduate student body, approximately 5,500 students, it is inclusive and open to all students, regardless of school affiliation or content interests.

By envisioning a four-year sequence, the curriculum acknowledges that advanced levels of language use require discourse-level abilities that are closely tied to the phenomena of literacy. Recognizing that these are developed over long periods of time and with a range of tasks, a discourse orientation pervades the entire curriculum, wherever possible building on students' interests and our assessment of what would be appropriate content knowledge for them regarding the German-speaking area. Cross-modal tasks, particularly those that incorporate reading and writing, emphasize language use above the sentence level right from the beginning. In sum, the project has the explicit ambition of teaching language and content *simultaneously* over the four-year period.

The learner needs and goals underlying the curriculum project are those I discussed earlier with the term "multiple literacies." We had the advantage of being able to draw on an extensive learner-language database from our own program that was concurrently available in conjunction with a cross-linguistic faculty-graduate student research collaborative, Foreign Language Initiatives in Research and Teaching (GU-FLIRT).[6] Insights from this research project helped specify broad learner profiles for each level, based on learner performance at two key moments of our previous instructional program—at the end of the "language sequence" and

during the last semester of undergraduate study. In accordance with this information, an ideal-real learner profile was constructed for each instructional level.

The goal of the curriculum is to help students gain a multivoiced literacy that places foreign language study in the larger context of the academy and its educational mission. That focus was chosen for a number of interrelated reasons. First, we want to link our instructional program to the remainder of the university. Within its liberal arts emphasis we consider our unique contribution to be that of helping students cross the borders that inherently limit the monolingual and monocultural person, so that they may become the kind of multivoiced adults that contemporary society requires. In our estimation that contribution cannot be made at the same level of intellectual merit anywhere else. Second, we have no way of identifying our students' future real-world needs with regard to the use of German, and, therefore, cannot base curricular decision making on such information, as Long (1998), Long and Crookes (1993), and Long and Robinson (1998) demand. But we do know the real world of the institution's academic expectations in L1 and L2 and, therefore, used them to develop curricular specifications in terms of goals, tasks, knowledge and abilities, and language-processing demands.

We determined that students should acquire the ability to work critically with texts in a range of forms and to narrate in speaking and writing by the time they conclude the sequenced courses of Level III. This is an important mark since, for some of our students, it completes a requirement sequence. More important, however, thereafter they enroll in courses of their choice that reflect more closely their specific interests. Thus in order to be able to expand their narrative and textual capability into more genre- and content-specific areas and to enhance it in terms of accuracy, fluency, and complexity, a broad-based foundation needed to be created first. From this pivotal goal, we worked downward, upward, and sideways within the courses of the curriculum, identifying task types that trace textual and narrative abilities to their earliest beginnings, locating them in different contexts and across all modalities, undergirding their development through a range of pedagogical tasks, and both sequencing them consistently and interweaving them repeatedly and variably.

Undoubtedly among the most difficult and most consequential for faculty time was the decision to do away with textbooks. In stages we have come to see them as potentially particularly detrimental to realizing, in

the several meanings of that word, what a content- and task-based approach to teaching and learning a language entails. Since the fall of 1997 when the project was begun (after approval of the proposal in February of that year), we have gradually replaced all standard language textbooks with a theme- and topic-focused collection of authentic materials, moving slowly in that complex process, from the Level IV Text in Context course required of majors, to Level III, the advanced courses, and ultimately downward to Level I, the introductory courses.[7]

We take the college classroom seriously as an instructional site. That means, we focus on *teaching* meaning-making cognitive and linguistic abilities that are at the heart of all critical thinking, reading, writing, and speaking. This differs from our own past practice because it significantly expands the range of content areas and texts we incorporate into our instructional program. More important, we do not assume that learners on their own are able to become aware of many of the intricate linkages between meaning and form in German, not through some unspecified transfer of their abilities in English, and particularly not for the complex discourse-based connections. Instead, we recognize that German has its unique and distinct ways, through grammar, lexicon, rhetorical structures, and genres, to link meaning and form. Therefore these need to be brought to the learners' attention in various ways throughout the program. The focus on form literature provides many suggestions in this regard, from modeling to the most explicit instructional interventions (Doughty and Williams 1998c).

Curriculum Construction and Pedagogical Implications

The totality of courses in our revised undergraduate curriculum is arranged in five levels, with Levels I–III following in sequence as explained earlier. Thereafter students choose at least one course from the five Level IV options, all of which share an emphasis on discourse phenomena and textuality that is manifested slightly differently according to the course's specific focus, such as speaking in professional contexts or writing for public fora or literary interpretation. Of these courses, Text in Context is required of the majors. Since students at this level can have dramatically different performance profiles and certainly come with different long-term intentions regarding their future engagement with German, we do not formally limit the number of Level IV courses they can take. In practice, we expect them to progress to Level V after perhaps two such courses. At Level

V the emphasis is on developing students' academic literacy, a construct that we have broken down into two major groups, classroom-based genres and/or their subskills (e.g., various forms of note taking; extensive reading for extracting evidence; plot summaries; outlining with attention to rhetorical organization; determining author stance and position; establishing the validity and reliability of data, conclusions, and inference) and real-world genres (e.g., book reviews; literature reviews comprising a number of thematically coherent secondary works; abstracting; evaluative and interpretive comments on a primary or secondary work; newspaper articles directed toward a lay audience; a conference proposal; and, finally, an academic research paper with all its preliminary stages).

Level V courses draw on all areas of academic expertise of the faculty and incorporate various theoretical perspectives and genres. As they reflect language use that characterizes a given topic, they also emphasize different aspects of such language use, from performance (e.g., in a drama course) to beginning analytical and research abilities (i.e., through reading research articles in a certain field of inquiry) to being able to connect language form with a sociopolitical and sociocultural agenda. Both for Level IV and V courses, but most likely for the entire curriculum, the thematic focus at each level may not appear to differ much from a language studies approach elsewhere. However, I take our programmatic contribution to be the extent to which we have specified our instructional foci in terms of content and genre and with a language-functional and language-processing approach. To accomplish this we have followed a sequence of steps that continuously connect the desired intellectual exploration of the chosen topics, including literary works as works of representational and imaginative verbal art, with attention to enhancing literacy and writing skills in conjunction with a discoursal and textual focus, and accuracy and complexity of language use. This is our understanding of linking themes, topics, texts, and tasks (see also Stoller and Grabe 1997).

The nature of these linkages throughout the five levels of the curriculum was extensively discussed during faculty development workshops, and materials were created by faculty-graduate student teams during the intervening summers as well as during the semesters. Among the criteria for text selection were interest level; likely background knowledge; relationship of background knowledge and students' presumed textual genre knowledge; textual transparency; and an initial preference for narrative texts over descriptive or abstractly argumentative texts. We explicitly

sought variety in textual, written, auditory, audiovisual, and web-based media. In an iterative process we then connected pedagogical tasks as they made sense in light of our academic focus with texts collected on certain themes and topics and, in reverse, ascertained what formal emphases would most directly and naturally flow from the meanings conveyed in specific texts. After all, once we realized that, even with purposeful instructional interventions, much of our students' learning occurs through extensive modeling and rich input, we found the necessary flexibility in our own thinking to choose more wisely those meaning-form relationships that could and should be focused on with a particular text at a particular time—and those that should not.

Thus the ultimate decision for inclusion of a specific topical focus within a given theme and for the precise texts, particularly in Levels I–III, rested on our being able to construct pedagogical tasks that would readily arise from the content focus of the text, its characteristics of language use, and its suitability for devising appropriate pedagogical tasks. Key dimensions for the pedagogical tasks were their likely inherent task complexity in terms of processing dimensions (e.g., concrete to abstract; here and now to displaced; situated to decontextualized; narrative to descriptive and analytical), their task difficulty under different performance conditions (see the earlier discussion of Skehan), their dimensions of interactivity (interactive/dialogic—monologic; group and individual), and their purposes at a particular point at the curriculum which, themselves, could be variably constructed (see also Nunan 1993; Skehan 1996).

Central considerations for pedagogical choices were the need to balance different foci in comprehension and production; different performance emphases in terms of accuracy, fluency, and complexity; awareness of their location within the instructional sequence (e.g., introducing a formal aspect in response to a meaning focus, solidifying it, or extending its use into other task environments under different task conditions); a mix of defined and open-ended creative or cumulative tasks; a balance of individual and group work; chaining across modalities; connecting in-class and out-of-class tasks, such as e-mail discussion groups on a reading anticipating class discussion or in-class joint agreement on how to run a panel discussion leading to individual and group preparation outside of class for the upcoming panel in class.

In line with the curricular framework we have devised some pedagogical guidelines whose basis is not a particular methodology but a heightened

awareness of our roles and responsibilities as teachers and of the adult learners' processing abilities, preferences, and limitations. In addition, we have prepared for each level broad descriptors and detailed statements that offer further commentary on the range of learner profiles teachers will likely encounter and on appropriate instructional emphases in terms of pedagogical tasks (see appendix materials). Such documents and insights are incorporated into our mentored TA program and continue to be discussed at a range of faculty development activities. Among the emphases are

- considering language learning a creative construction in a sociocultural context;
- renegotiating the role of the teacher as someone who primarily models, brings students' attention to meaning and form relationships, and encourages learner autonomy, responsibility, and awareness;
- renegotiating the role of the learner as someone who constructs meaning with various processing approaches and becomes a self-reflective observer of the processes of language learning;
- deliberately placing pedagogical tasks in a long-term developmental perspective;
- considering tasks in terms of learner processing demands;
- providing for a movement from pragmatic contextualized message conveyance to highly differentiated syntax and vocabulary use in formal settings—and back;
- distinguishing between what is central and what is less central at a particular level, within a particular topic or task, and setting expectations jointly with the learners;
- involving learners in the negotiation of criteria and standards for performance in tasks, and in assessment of the tasks (e.g., through the syllabus and continually in instructional emphases, input, and feedback);
- integrating assessment into task performance;
- being aware of the tension between necessary challenge and necessary comfort level in order to advance learning that links all modalities; and

- watching for stages, thresholds, consolidations, restructurings, and U-turns, and responding to them with different interventions that keep learners affectively and cognitively engaged and appropriately supported pedagogically.

At present we are comprehensively dealing with assessment issues that obviously loom large with such a far-reaching revamping of curricular and pedagogical assumptions and goals.[8] This is an ongoing project that has already made us much more alert to our own often unexamined practices, aside from giving us much valuable information about our students' learning and their generally favorable reception of this project. The desired detailed analyses of their linguistic capabilities are projects that remain to be accomplished. However, no matter how in-depth such descriptions may ultimately be, we will be unable to offer proud "before-and-after" statements about the efficacy of this curriculum project, if for no other reason than a lack of a basis of comparison: Never before have we known as much about our students' learning as we do now!

We can, however, say without the slightest hesitation that this project has dramatically changed our entire departmental culture in ways that none of us anticipated or would have thought possible. Does this really matter beyond the inherent value of cooperative behavior and a heightened sense of our responsibilities toward our students? I believe it does, for I am unable to imagine how the intricate understandings about the relationship of meaning and language now available in research, teaching, and learning, and about the phenomenon of second language learning, particularly for adult instructed learners, could otherwise have entered our thinking and our actions in such a profoundly formative way. That, in itself, is worthy of reflection, not only from the standpoint of college foreign language departments but also from the standpoint of the SLA research community.

Notes

1. Preparation of this paper was supported in part by an Adjunct Fellowship at the National Foreign Language Center, Washington, D.C., during the summer of 1998. The curricular initiative to which this paper refers is the result of extensive collaboration among all members of the German Department at Georgetown University, faculty and graduate students. An ongoing project, some of its major assumptions and forms of implementation are documented at www.georgetown.edu/departments/german/byrnes.

2. While Freeman uses this phrasing to address needs for future teacher education, it is just as applicable for rejuvenating entire foreign language departments.
3. Doughty and Williams (1998a) provide an SLA researcher-oriented overview of the issues; Doughty (1998) and Spada (1997) provide a discussion for nonspecialists. Long and Crookes (1992, 1993) and Long and Robinson (1998) extensively treat curricular issues and foreign/second language pedagogy.
4. See Rafael Salaberry's article "The Role of Input and Output Practice in Second Language Acquisition" in the *Canadian Modern Language Review* 53.2 (1997): 422–451, the reply by Cristina Sanz and Bill VanPatten, "On Input Processing, Processing Instruction, and the Nature of Replication Tasks: A Response to Salaberry," *Canadian Modern Language Review* 54.2 (1998): 263–273, and Salaberry's reply in the same issue, "On Input Processing, True Language Competence, and Pedagogical Bandwagons: A Reply to Sanz and VanPatten," pp. 274–285.
5. For further details I refer readers to the departmental website that documents this project through various overview and policy documents, course syllabi, and assessment instruments. We would be particularly pleased to receive comments:
www.georgetown.edu/departments/ german/byrnes.
6. An overview of this project is also provided at the web address www.georgetown.edu/departments/german/byrnes.
7. The decision to retain a textbook for Level I results from a number of conflicting considerations. Some of these have less to do with our curricular and pedagogical convictions than they do with student expectations about what constitutes "real" instruction in a foreign language. Also, there is the constant need to bring new graduate students on board, along with the faculty also rotating through this level. Ultimately, the possibility of "undermining" an existing textbook with materials of our own choosing to such an extent that it will socialize students into the program in the appropriate fashion right from the beginning led to the choice that was made.
8. Here I would like to acknowledge with much gratitude the outstanding work being done within our curriculum project by John Norris, a Ph.D. candidate in the Applied Linguistics program at the University of Hawai'i, who has spent the spring semester and the summer of 1999

with us, observing classes, meeting with faculty at the various instructional levels, and helping us align our assessment approach, both within individual classes and for this content- and task-based curriculum as a whole, with our goals and our pedagogical approaches. Some of the materials that were used in faculty development workshops as well as questionnaires given to students and faculty are included in the website. A key project for summer 1999 and the academic year 1999–2000 was to create and implement a new placement test that better reflected our entire instructional approach.

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Appendix

Developing Multiple Literacies— An Integrated Content-based Curriculum

Overview of Curricular Sequence

A. Sequenced Courses

Level I: Experiencing the German-speaking World

Introductory German I and II: (2 semesters: 3 credits each) OR Intensive Basic German: (1 semester: 6 credits)

The themes for this level are coordinated with the textbook, but a significant amount of authentic outside material (e.g., videos, Gordon Craig *The Germans*) is brought in to reshape the emphasis of the book toward a content focus. (Extensive pedagogical work is planned with a newly chosen textbook for the summer of 1999.)

Level II: Contemporary Germany

Intermediate German I and II: (2 semesters: 3 credits each) OR Intensive Intermediate German: (1 semester: 6 credits)

Deutschland nach der Wende/*Germany after the Fall of the Wall*

Heimat/Ausländer/*A Sense of Home and Being Foreign*
Identität in anderen Ländern: Österreich und die Schweiz/*Identity in Other Countries: Austria and Switzerland*
Familie, Arbeit und Gesellschaft/*The Family, the World of Work, and Society*
Natur, Mensch und Umwelt/*Nature, Man, and Environment*
Literatur: Märchen/*Literature: Fairytales*
(Extensive reading: Patrick Süskind, *Die Geschichte von Herrn Sommer*)
(Additional pedagogical work is planned for the summer of 1999.)

Level III: Stories and Histories

Advanced German I and II: (2-semester sequence: 3 credits each) OR Intensive Advanced German: (1-semester course: 6 credits)

Deutschland nach 1945: Kriegsende, deutsche Teilung, Wiederaufbau/*Germany after 1945: End of the War, the Division of Germany, and Reconstruction*
Zwei deutsche Staaten/*Two German States*
Der Fall der Mauer und seine Konsequenzen/*The Fall of the Wall and Its Consequences*
Persönliche und nationale Identität: Deutschland als multikulturelle Gesellschaft/*Personal and National Identity: Germany as a Multicultural Society*
(English background material: Mary Fulbrook, *History of Germany in the 20th Century*)
(Barbara Honigmann, *Eine Liebe aus nichts)*

B. Nonsequenced Courses

Level IV: Text in Context

(1-semester course: 4 credits)

Von der Gegenwart der Vergangenheit/*The Presence of the Past (Emphasis on the Holocaust)*
Hochschulreform/*Reform of Higher Education*
Mitten in Europa/*Germany and European Integration—Challenges and Opportunities*
(Hans Werner Richter, *Damals war es Friedrich)*

In addition to *Text in Context* the following courses belong to Level IV: *Topics for Oral Proficiency: Issues and Trends 2000; Business German (Volkswirtschaft); Business German (Betriebswirtschaft);* and one literature course. At least one Level IV course of the student's choice is required. These courses share an emphasis on discourse phenomena and textuality that is manifested differently in each of them. Beyond that, they set their own focus (e.g.,

speaking in a professional context, in public settings, writing that reflects the approaches to and conventions of literary/cultural interpretation.)

Level V

The remaining courses in the German department are designated as Level V courses. Through exploring topics primarily in 18th through 20th century German studies and selected topics in German linguistics, they aim to develop students' academic literacy. The construct of "academic literacy" is addressed through two major genres: classroom-based genres or their subskills and "real-world" genres.

Future course development will focus on this level. Among recently designed courses that strive to incorporate the new curricular goals are *Mysteries, Madness, and Murder: German Responses to Modernity; Look Who's Laughing: German Comedy; Berlin Stories 1918–2000; Inside Out: Voices from Germany; Survey of German Literature; Kafka; Turn of the Century Vienna; Narrative and Memory; Reformation to Freud: German Civilization; Writing our Selves—Writing our Times: Letters, Diaries, Essays; Crossing Borders—the Native and the Foreign; Grim(m) Fairy Tales; Germany in Europe.*

Note: In order to gain a better understanding of the instructional approaches that characterize these courses, readers are encouraged to consult the detailed description of the levels and the Assessment page, particularly the overall policy statement, as well as the assessment specifications for Levels I–IV found on the departmental website.

Overall Descriptors for Level Goals

Level I: Experiencing the German-Speaking World

Students develop a sense of themselves as intelligent and respected learners/users of German, based on a continuously modeled and re-created classroom culture that focuses on the communication of meaning and greater understanding of others and themselves.

The overall goal of Level I courses is to help students develop knowledge about the cultures of German-speaking countries and, through that content, acquire linguistic knowledge that allows them to feel comfortable thinking of themselves as users of German, in listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Level I courses introduce students culturally to one's self and others (family and friends), referring to activities and events (in present and past storytelling), occupations and pastimes (school, work, and free time), and the world around us (environment, residence, etc.). Comparisons to current German life and society build the foundation for cultural literacy and familiarity with the German-speaking world.

Reflecting the content focus of our curriculum this course favors a communicative approach that highlights critical reading and writing right from the beginning. Students work with a variety of text types in a variety of media, in comprehension and production. These range from personal and interactional to routine public. At the end of the year they should be able to communicate effectively beyond immediate and person-centered areas of interest, incorporating broader cultural knowledge into a variety of topics and issues.

A mosaic of activities that put meaning in the center at the same time attends to gradual but continual development of accurate and differentiated language abilities in all modalities. That is, throughout the level, we emphasize effective and meaningful communication in which linguistic accuracy is an important long-term goal. Creativity, breadth of expression (through syntax and vocabulary), and variation of language ("style") in different social contexts and for different tasks are critical to long-term achievement. Assessment of progress will occur across all modalities and throughout the level.

Level II: Contemporary Germany

Students consolidate their syntactic awareness and increasingly routinize major sentence patterns, freeing up processing space for greater creativity within these boundaries.

Level II courses are organized topically to familiarize students with contemporary life in Germany. They place particular emphasis on the story in a German context—personal, public, and literary stories. Students will begin to develop self-expression across a variety of culturally and politically significant topics, thereby increasing both accuracy and fluency of comprehension and expression in all modalities—listening, speaking, writing, reading. The topics expand on those in Level I and lay the groundwork for those in Level III. Independent progress is emphasized through portfolio assessment of written and spoken production. Exposure to various text types and personal engagement in intensive study forms the foundation for future independent ability to access and work with German materials, the focus of Level III.

Level III: Stories and Histories

Students begin to reorganize their grammar from sentence-level processing to discourse-level processing. At the same time they are ready to be challenged by accuracy of use and some fluency at the local level (inflectional and derivational morphology, gender, noun plurals, case relationships, and markings). This challenge is set up at Level III and will continue particularly at Level IV and into Level V.

Level III courses are designed to give students a thorough understanding of contemporary German history (1945–present) and contemporary social issues, while improving their proficiency in German in all four modalities (writing, reading, speaking, listening).

The thematic sequence emphasizes personal and public stories throughout German history, while connecting oral narratives with written narratives. Students improve their ability to narrate, compare and contrast, and establish causal relationships in speaking and writing. Through the integration of all modalities, this course promotes accuracy, fluency, and complexity in language use. The development of advanced reading and writing is considered the primary means for expanding students' language abilities at this level of instruction.

In addition, students learn how to evaluate their own language learning and to set objectives for the improvement of their abilities and knowledge. Students engage in both independent and group projects through which they learn to evaluate their own performance. Speaking ability is enhanced through class discussion, group work, and panel discussions. By incorporating a range of textual sources and tasks, students have the opportunity to move from personal forms of communication to more public uses of language.

Students are encouraged to take increasing responsibility for their own learning. The courses focus on a theme for an extended period, so that students encounter multiple perspectives and genres in both written and oral forms. Students master theme-related vocabulary through repeated exposure and integrated tasks. By reading independently and working collaboratively through texts, students increase their understanding of textual organization and the way German structures are used to express ideas both orally and in writing. Students become increasingly proficient in shifting between personal and public forms of communication.

Level IV

Further stabilization of discourse-level processing in terms of accuracy and fluency, now deliberately expanded to complexity/variation. Students' performance variation is likely to increase even further. It is critical that students now take responsibility for their own learning. Through careful observation, teachers can guide their continued progress in learning; by agreeing on an individualized learning trajectory and identifying the most useful learning strategies, continued progress is made possible.

A small group of courses has been designated as Level IV courses (see previous overview). With their focus on discourse features and textuality, all Level IV courses build upon a number of intricately interrelated and at times

sequenced pedagogical tasks that raise students' awareness of and ability to use those features. These tasks focus on prominent characteristics of public discourse (monologic and interactive), textual organization, genre, the relationship of author stance and intention to language use, expanded syntactic patterns, and differentiated thematic vocabulary, including, as appropriate, special characteristics of literary language. Students' ability to produce high-level oral and written language is enhanced through the opportunity to practice and perform a series of previously identified subcomponents or subskills (e.g., through class activities and/or homework assignments).

At this level, the curriculum's overall emphasis on students' responsibility for their own learning becomes more prominent as students set specific individual learning goals within the course goals and objectives. As students progress through the curriculum, their performance profiles are likely to become highly divergent even though they are appropriately enrolled in a particular course. Therefore it is particularly critical to continue to work toward a balance between accuracy, fluency, and complexity of language use, something that is crucial for continued interlanguage development toward target language norms by the advanced learner.

Level IV: Text in Context

This is the last course in the required sequence for majors. Working at some depth with three topics, it is designed to help students gain in German a level of fluency and accuracy that enables them to live and study in a German-speaking country.

Building on the primarily contextualized, highly personal stories of Level III, it aims to familiarize students with public and academic forms of language. Therefore it makes explicit linkages between the literate forms of language use in reading and writing and more advanced forms of oral expression. Through this integrated text-based approach, students will gradually shift their language use from oral to more literate forms of expression in all modalities. They acquire differentiated vocabulary and greater grammatical accuracy, fluency, and complexity by focusing on the relationship between meaning/content and linguistic forms. They become sensitive to language use with different textual genres in different communicative situations where the participants have different communicative goals. They emulate such language use in a variety of assignments. Work inside and outside the classroom includes textual analysis and interpretation for enhancing reading comprehension in both intensive and extensive reading; creative, journalistic, essayistic, and academic writing in a process-writing approach; and listening comprehension with diverse audiovisual materials through outlining and note taking.

Students begin to develop the kinds of literacy skills that are at the heart of summarizing, interpreting, critiquing, presenting, and substantiating an opinion or argument and to be able to practice these skills orally and in writing. Such language use is critical for study abroad as well as any other professional context in which the German language is used.

Level V: Courses

At this level our program leading students toward *multiple literacy* within a content-based curriculum comes together: In terms of elaborated content-knowledge about the German-speaking cultural area, a high level of sensitivity and reflectivity and interpretive skill toward other and self in a cultural context, and the ability to function in the German language with academic-level proficiency in terms of accuracy, fluency, and complexity of language use in a variety of contexts.

These courses comprise the remainder of the offerings in the undergraduate curriculum. Course offerings include cultural, literary, and linguistic topics incorporating various theoretical perspectives and genres. Reflecting language use that characterizes a given topic, they emphasize different aspects of language, from performance (e.g., in a drama course) to beginning analytical and research abilities (i.e., through reading research articles in a certain field of inquiry) to being able to connect language use with a sociopolitical and sociocultural agenda. Throughout, intellectual exploration of the topics is connected with attention to developing appropriate literacy and writing skills in conjunction with textual analysis and accuracy and complexity of language use.

Two types of genres provide the basis for a range of tasks that support students' development of academic literacy: classroom-based genres or their subskills and "real-world" genres. As appropriate, faculty teaching these courses mentor students through the extended process of writing a research paper, from topic selection and delimitation to bibliography preparation, preparation of drafts, and final submission of the polished paper.