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ENGAGING THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNER:
USING HYBRID INSTRUCTION
TO BRIDGE THE LANGUAGE-LITERATURE GAP

By

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ABSTRACT

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This study describes the design, implementation, and effectiveness of hybrid course modules in fourth-year German-as-a-foreign-language classrooms at a large research university. Hybrid instruction refers to a carefully planned blend of both traditional classroom instruction and online learning activities and represents an innovative curricular facet that takes into account recent trends in foreign language education such as student-centered, engaged, and active learning, enhanced proficiency, and computer-assisted language learning. This delivery model is rapidly gaining popularity in US institutions of higher education and offers an effective way to integrate the teaching of academic content and linguistic skills at all levels. Following a qualitative case study design, this dissertation investigated opportunities that enhanced students' active engagement with the language, content, and each other as well as their perceptions of the effects of technology in the language learning context.

Short-term hybrid modules were piloted in a fourth-year course on 18th and 19th century German literature in order to test format, content, and outcomes. Based on the results, a hybrid course on the German fairy tale tradition was developed and implemented. Data were collected from nineteen students over the course of a semester,

where 34% of face-to-face sessions were replaced with online assignments. Data sources included student questionnaires, instructor reflective essays, student access and completion logs of online assignments, student interviews, and classroom artifacts.

Results indicated that, generally, students preferred a hybrid format and felt it enhanced not only their content knowledge but also developed their language skills and levels of fluency. In addition, the hybrid delivery format encouraged student engagement, collaboration, and responsibility both online and in class and provided an interactive yet flexible learning context. Various challenges related to work load, instructor involvement, and functionality issues are also discussed.

Overall, the student-centered format supported the integration of academic content and linguistic skills in the observed multilevel courses and may provide language educators with specific examples to help bridge the gap between lower- and upper-level foreign language courses through online activities.

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Für meine Eltern

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Foreign language departments at US institutions of higher education often struggle with articulation between lower- and upper-level courses at the undergraduate level. While most first- and second-year foreign language courses follow a communicative approach that aims to develop learners' functional ability to communicate in interpersonal contexts, third- and fourth-year courses are generally content-based and aim to sharpen learners' analytic skills and enrich their cultural and literary sensibilities through the investigation of literary genres, time periods, or cultural themes (e.g., Kern, 2002). Many students feel that too little emphasis is placed on continuing to develop oral proficiency throughout their coursework, which they perceive to be a primary goal of their foreign language education (e.g., Glisan, 1987; Harlow & Muyskens, 1994; Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995b; Ossipov, 2000; Saussy, 2005). This circumstance is directly mirrored by course offerings in fourth-year courses, which heavily (if not exclusively) focus on literary and cultural studies (see Chapter 2.1).

This so-called language-literature gap has been addressed by many scholars and practitioners over the past 25 years (e.g., Barnett, 1991; Bernhardt, 1995; Byrnes, 1988, 1990, 1996, 1998b; Byrnes & Kord, 2002; Davis, 2000; Henning, 1993; Hoffmann & James, 1986; James, 1989, 1997, 2000; Kern, 2002; Kramsch, 1985, 1993, 1998; Kramsch & Nolden, 1994; Schultz, 2002; Schulz, 1981; Scott & Tucker, 2002; Shanahan, 1997; Swaffar & Arens, 2005; Swaffar, Arens, & Byrnes, 1991). German Programs in particular have engaged in vigorous debates over the last decade and have implemented

innovative models that offer a more integrated curriculum (e.g., Georgetown University, University of Texas at Austin, and Michigan State University¹). Yet, the integration of linguistic skills and academic content still pose an urgent problem today and empirical data that (a) focus on advancing language skills, particularly speaking, in upper-level undergraduate courses and (b) investigate German Studies are scarce.

1.1 Rationale

In order to add to ongoing curricular reforms in German Studies and to the existing research base on the language-literature gap, I offer an integrated technology-based approach and practical suggestions for upper-level instructors, who may not necessarily have extensive background in second language acquisition or online education. This dissertation describes hybrid course modules that were implemented in fourth-year German content classes at Michigan State University with the goal to provide varied opportunities for input, interaction, and output, with particular emphasis on speaking (e.g., Gass, 1997; Long, 1996; Swain, 1985; see Gass & Mackey, 2006a, 2006b for an overview of the interaction approach). While scholars such as Byrnes and Kord (2002), Eigler (2001), Kern (2000, 2002), Kramsch and Nolden (1994), Swaffar and Arens (2005), and Redmann (2008) have approached the problem of articulation from the point of literacy², their research has focused mainly on a holistic curriculum that implements

¹ While the first two programs mainly focused on the undergraduate level in their curricular reforms, Michigan State University has placed particular emphasis on the graduate level and the implications for graduate training.

² Kern (2000) defines literacy as “the use of socially-, historically-, and culturally-situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts. It entails at least a tacit awareness of the relationships between textual conventions and their contexts of use and, ideally, the ability to reflect critically on those relationships. Because it is purpose-sensitive, literacy is dynamic—not static—and variable across and within discourse communities and cultures. It draws on a wide range of cognitive abilities, on knowledge of written and spoken language, on knowledge of genres, and on cultural knowledge.” (p. 16)

literature from the very beginning. Only few studies have focused on continuing to improve *language* skills in upper-level courses.³ While I do not discount the notion of literacy to bridge the language-literature gap, I argue that a continued focus on language development in upper-level courses is equally important as the integration of texts from the beginning. I therefore approach the issue from a different angle and propose that the implementation of technology can offer effective ways to address the gap in terms of continuing the development of language skills at advanced levels. I argue that, apart from the much discussed language-literature gap, there is also a literature-language gap in advanced content courses where language development has been marginalized at the expense of literary and cultural studies.

This dissertation proposes one way to integrate the teaching of academic content and linguistic skills by offering a hybrid course model. A study piloting short-term online modules was conducted in a spring semester at Michigan State University in a fourth-year course on 18th and 19th century German literature to test format, content, and outcomes. Based on the results, the short-term online modules were revised and extended into a complete hybrid course on fairy tales that was implemented in the subsequent fall semester at Michigan State University. In line with recent trends in foreign language education, this course model emphasized student-centered, engaged, and active learning (e.g., Bean, 2001; R.-M. Conrad & Donaldson, 2004; Lee, 2005; Meskill, 1999), worked toward enhanced proficiency (e.g., Byrnes, 1998a; Saussy, 2005), and capitalized on the benefits of technology (e.g., Felix, 2001; Gannon, 2004; Hokanson, 2000; Saussy, 2005).

³ While the field of advanced (foreign) language learning has addressed the theory of teaching and learning in upper-level courses (e.g., Byrnes, 2006; Byrnes & Maxim, 2004; Byrnes, Weger-Guntharp, & Sprang, 2006; Graham, 1997; Scott & Tucker, 2002)) the majority of the literature focuses on advanced-level reading and writing skills. Few articles have addressed advancing linguistic skills (Donato & Brooks, 2004; Maxim, 2004; Polio & Zyzik, in press; Zyzik & Polio, 2008), however, empirical research is lacking.

Research findings from a qualitative perception study revealed several positive outcomes including increases in students' self-perceived confidence and language skills as well as various challenges related to work load, instructor involvement, and functionality issues. The proposed online modules may prove appropriate in other foreign language classes, thereby providing language educators with specific examples to help integrate the teaching of language and content through online activities.

1.2 Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions were used to guide this study.

- (1) What are students' perspectives on hybrid language learning, specifically in terms of advancing oral skills, within the context of an upper-level content course?
- (2) What effects does the implementation of technology have regarding students' levels of engagement, collaboration, and responsibility?
- (3) What assignment types and technologies yield high levels of effectiveness in improving language skills?
- (4) What are the perceptual differences of online assignments between highly proficient and strong students (in terms of language learning background and GPA) and students with lower abilities and grades?
- (5) What effects do previous experience with and attitudes toward technology have on how students perceive the hybrid course?

In qualitative research, hypotheses generally emerge from the data (Duff, 2008). The following hypotheses, which were informed by the existing research on the language-literature gap and hybrid education, served as heuristics at the outset of the study.

Hypotheses are that

- (1) Online assignments will offer more varied opportunities for students to engage with the course materials, with peers, and with the language and as a result will help them advance all language skills while acquiring content knowledge. In addition, students will enjoy the convenience of online assignments in terms of access and pace and will become more confident speakers of the language as a result of individual online speaking activities.
- (2) Students will engage more with course materials, feel more responsible for their work, and collaborate with their peers more because of the online delivery mode.
- (3) Innovative and interactive assignment types that integrate academic content with linguistic skills as well as technologies that allow students to collaborate will be perceived as most effective in improving language skills. Specifically, online assignments that address students' perceived areas of weakness will be rated highest.
- (4) In general, students will prefer the hybrid course model to a traditional classroom setting. Particularly weaker students will prefer this model because it allows them to work at their own pace and removed from their peers.

- (5) Students will have extensive experience with online technologies, which will result in positive attitudes toward the course model.

The participants' insights will prove useful to language educators of all fields and levels. Instructors will gain deeper insights into the effectiveness of certain activities, exercises, and technologies and the results of the study may prompt curricular changes, such as increasing the focus on language in advanced foreign language courses or hybridizing language curricula. Also, the results may offer deeper insights into the benefits of using technology for language teaching, which can further enhance instructional practices.

1.3 Definition of Terms

Delivery methods in language teaching range from traditional face-to-face instruction to complete online delivery. Definitions vary from country to country, between institutions, and from scholar to scholar, evolving continuously as technologies develop. For the purpose of this study, the following terms will be used to define these variations.

Articulation: Articulation refers to curricular arrangements that facilitate movement or progression from one educational level to the next, for example the transition from high school to college or, as used in this study, the transition from lower- to upper-level courses within one field of study.

Face-to-face instruction: Face-to-face instruction refers to traditional classroom settings where course content is delivered with students and the instructor present in the same place at the same time. For upper-level courses, traditional tasks generally entail listening to lectures, class discussions, and reading and composition assignments.

Web-enhanced instruction: Web-enhanced or web-supported instruction refers to courses where between 1 to 29% of the content is delivered online. Such courses generally entail that students and the instructor are in the same place at the same time while engaging in instruction and learning with and through technology.

Hybrid instruction: Hybrid instruction describes a carefully planned blend of both traditional classroom instruction and online learning activities, combining the best of both styles of instruction. Generally, courses are considered hybrid when between 30 to 79% of the content is delivered online.

Blended learning: Blended learning is a term predominantly used in European contexts to refer to the concept of hybrid instruction in the US: A blend of traditional media and methods with technology-enhanced elements. In the context of this study, the term education is seen as encompassing the concepts of learning and instruction without distinguishing between the different processes and behaviors entailed in the two latter terms. They are used interchangeably here.

Online instruction: Online instruction refers to courses where at least 80% of course content is delivered online. Generally, online courses are delivered virtually via the Internet and students and the instructor are at different locations and engage with each other synchronously (i.e., at the same time) and/or asynchronously (i.e., at different times).

Course management system: Course management systems are web-based course management tools that allow for online instruction in any of its delivery modes. The course management system used in the present study was ANGEL, which is similar to Blackboard or WebCT. Its features include a variety of online tools such as built-in

lesson folders, course announcements, course email, a calendar function, an attendance manager, discussion boards, drop boxes, surveys and tests, blogs, wikis, chat rooms, live office hours, and a grade book.

1.4 Outline of the Study

Chapter 1 introduced the topic and presented the problem and research questions. The following chapter will review the related literature with particular focus on the language-literature gap and proposed solutions as well as literature on online and hybrid language education, outlining benefits and challenges. Chapter 3 will illustrate the context in which the pilot study and the hybrid study were conducted and will offer a description of the research paradigm. Chapters 4 and 5 will present the methodology of the pilot study and the hybrid study respectively, including information on the courses, the participants, data collection procedures, treatment instruments, and data analysis procedures. Chapter 4 will close with a discussion of the pilot results. In Chapter 6, I will provide and discuss the results of the analyzed data of the hybrid study according to the research questions outlined above. The perceptions and evaluations of all participants are reported, highlighting the effectiveness and limitations of the treatment instruments and a general evaluation of the hybrid course. Chapter 7 concludes my research and revisits the initial hypotheses, connects the study to existing literature, and summarizes implications, limitations, and future directions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Foreign Language Education at the Undergraduate Level

In recent years, foreign language enrollments at US institutions of higher education have steadily increased. Comparing numbers from the 2002 MLA survey with those from 2006, Furman, Goldberg and Lusin (2007) noted a 12.6% increase for the fifteen most commonly taught languages (i.e., Arabic, Chinese, Korean, American Sign Language, Japanese, Italian, Portuguese, ancient Greek, modern Hebrew, Spanish, Latin, Russian, German, French, and biblical Hebrew), ranging from 2.2% (French) to 126.5% (Arabic) with biblical Hebrew as the only language that decreased in enrollment by 0.3%.⁴ Along with rising enrollment numbers in foreign languages, there is an increased demand for language departments to provide quality instruction to a diverse body of learners in a wide variety of languages under varying learning conditions. As the global network continues to grow, so will the need for global citizens with proficient intercultural communication skills. It can be assumed that global communication will take place to a large extent in computer-mediated environments, which also calls for sufficient technology skills in the future global workforce (NMC, 2007). Therefore, technology poses a necessary component of curricular enhancement across educational institutions and not least in language departments (e.g., Gannon, 2004; Hokanson, 2000). Digital tools can not only enhance language learning in general, but also increase its efficacy and capacity while increasing students' computer literacy (Barrette, 2001).

⁴ German took the antepenultimate spot with a 3.5% enrollment increase from 2002 to 2006.

Rising enrollment numbers display a positive development, yet, many language departments face the problem of classrooms that are filled to capacity and significant drops in enrollment numbers between lower- and upper-level courses (Furman et al., 2007). A review of three Big Ten institutions that all follow semester systems⁵ revealed that in Spring 2008, 22% of first-year language classes in French, German, and Spanish and 29% of second-year classes were filled to or beyond capacity (see Appendix A). It is not hard to conceive that with student numbers approaching 30 for lower-division language classes, traditional classroom settings do not offer many opportunities for students to use the target language and to receive feedback.⁶ Also, a strategy that would rely solely on hiring additional instructional staff is not cost-efficient.

Similarly, if we take a closer look at enrollments in upper-level courses, they continue to reach capacity limits, which still approach and at some institutions even exceed 30 students per section. Naturally, the total number of enrollments drops significantly between second- and third-year courses since this stage generally marks the transition from taking languages to fulfill a requirement to taking languages as a major.⁷ However, with numbers still approaching 30 for third- and fourth-year courses, it is clear that providing all students ample opportunity to engage with the language in traditional classroom settings poses a challenge. Zyzik and Polio (2008), for example, noted that

⁵ Indiana University Bloomington, Michigan State University, and University of Minnesota Twin Cities were selected as a representative sample of large Midwestern universities whose enrollment numbers were publicly accessible.

⁶ The ADFL Guidelines suggest a maximum class size for foreign language instruction of 15-20 students, particularly at lower levels, as to enable effective interaction between students and teacher that is conducive to language development (MLA, 2001).

⁷ Furman, Goldberg and Lusin (2007) list the ratio of introductory to advanced courses in French, German, and Spanish as 3:1 and describe these differential enrollments as “dramatic” (p. 4).

student output was limited to less than 10% of observed classroom interactions in three advanced-level Spanish literature courses.

It is also interesting to note that the majority of enrollments in third-year courses across languages (i.e., French, German, and Spanish at the three above-mentioned institutions) are in language-related courses⁸ as opposed to literary and cultural studies courses⁹.¹⁰ The situation changes drastically when we take a closer look at fourth-year offerings. Courses with a language focus are marginalized if not even eliminated and, while student numbers continue to decrease, the few language-focused courses that are offered are in high demand. There seems to be a correlation between attrition and lack of course offerings that speak to the educational, vocational, and personal interests of and relevance for our student population (Davis, Gorell, Kline, & Hsieh, 1992), which stress communicative skills in multiple modes.

The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (1999) list communication as the first of five areas of language competency. The statement of philosophy reads:

Language and communication are the heart of the human experience. The United States must educate students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad. This imperative envisions a future in which ALL students will develop and maintain proficiency in English and at least one other language, modern or classical. (ACTFL, 1999, p. 2)

Communication is not only a major aspect in our daily lives, foreign language students specifically state that one of their top priorities in language classes is to gain oral fluency,

⁸ Language-related course topics include, for example, oral expression, pronunciation, conversation, linguistics, and grammar.

⁹ Literary and cultural studies course topics include, for example, literary themes, cultural history, and reading and expression.

¹⁰ Specific purpose courses such as business or medical language as well as pure composition courses and historical language courses were excluded from the count.

which will enable them to communicate and use the language in every-day situations (e.g., Glisan, 1987; Harlow & Muyskens, 1994; Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995b; Ossipov, 2000; Saussy, 2005), but that too little emphasis is placed on this skill in classrooms that seat many students and, in upper-level courses, students with often differing proficiency levels (Lyman-Hager & Davis, 1996).

Another challenge for language educators is the implementation of authentic materials in their teaching practices. Most often, such materials are limited in textbooks and materials from other sources may be inappropriate in terms of level of difficulty (e.g., Geltrich-Ludgate & Tovar, 1987; Katz, 2002; Omaggio Hadley, 2001; Paesani, 2005; Rogers & Medley, 1988). Along with the lack of authentic materials goes a general lack of variety of input from different sources. Students are rarely exposed to another speaker besides the instructor, and in the case of non-native instructors, students might never be exposed to native speakers at all (Lazaraton, 2001; Medyes, 2001). They also have few if any opportunities to observe and engage in communication with several native speakers in multiple modes (speaking and writing).

One of the biggest problems, however, that language educators across departments are charged with, is the divide between lower-level language courses and upper-level content courses and the integration of literature, language, and culture across levels. This problem will be addressed in more detail in the following section.

2.1.1 The Language-Literature Gap: Program Articulation

For decades, program articulation has posed a particular challenge to language educators and has been a topic of much debate. The term articulation refers to curricular

arrangements that facilitate movement or progression from one educational level to the next. Much of the research on articulation focuses on the transition from high school to college (e.g., Andress et al., 2002; MLA's Articulation Initiative, 1998; Watzke, 2000) or, within postsecondary institutions, on so-called “bridge courses” between lower-level language and upper-level content courses (e.g., Guenther & Roller, 1996; Gutschke, 1996; Mantero, 2002; R. Weber, 2000). The literature seems to end at that level. Only very few studies take advanced courses into consideration when discussing issues of articulation. Examples mainly stem from the field of advanced (foreign) language learning, which has addressed the theory of teaching and learning in upper-level courses (e.g., Byrnes, 2006; Byrnes & Maxim, 2004; Byrnes et al., 2006; Graham, 1997; Scott & Tucker, 2002). The majority of this literature, however, focuses on advanced-level reading and writing skills. Few articles (Donato & Brooks, 2004; Maxim, 2004; Zyzik & Polio, 2008; Polio & Zyzik, in press) have addressed advancing linguistic skills and empirical research, particularly in the field of German Studies, is lacking.

Generally referred to as the language-literature gap, dichotomy, or divide in US undergraduate foreign language education, the topic has been addressed by scholars and practitioners in second language acquisition (e.g., Bernhardt, 1995; Byrnes, 1988, 1990, 1996, 1998a; Kramsch, 1985, 1993, 1998) and literary/cultural studies (e.g., Barnett, 1991; Henning, 1993; Hoffmann & James, 1986; James, 1989, 1997, 2000; Schultz, 2002; Schulz, 1981) alike. According to Davis (2000), the year 1967 marked the division of “language teaching” and “literary studies” when the Modern Language Association (MLA) founded the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and literary and cultural studies instructors at the university level “began their disastrous

withdrawal from a sense of responsibility of language teaching, choosing to believe that this could be done ‘at the lower levels,’ that students would come to them with ‘language competence as a foundation’ and could then be taught ‘literature’” (James, 2000, p. 247). Most scholars now acknowledge that foreign language students remain language learners throughout their studies (e.g., Byrnes, 1998a; Byrnes & Kord, 2002; Polio & Zyzik, in press; Redmann, 2005; Scott & Tucker, 2002; Zyzik & Polio, 2008) and that language and literature need to be integrated from start to finish. I particularly agree with Klee (2006), who cautioned that “upper-division courses must be carefully designed to introduce sophisticated content and concepts while at the same time providing opportunities for advanced language development” (p. 23).

Already in 1989, James had described the split situation in foreign language department as “a recipe for disaster” (p. 81) and sparked much debate (Berman et al., 1998; Byrnes, Kleinhenz, Mignolo, Pratt, & Vieira, 1998) with her 1997 *ADFL Bulletin* article on the leadership crisis in the field of foreign languages and literatures. The gap, however, was and continues to be widened by common practices in foreign language departments that “use teaching practices that separate form from meaning” and that “treat courses as separately owned property, independent of a larger curricular context” (Swaffar & Arens, 2005, p. 12).

In 1990, the MLA Executive Council established an Advisory Committee on Foreign Languages and Literatures that was charged with the mission to pay “particular attention to foreign language and literary studies at all levels of the educational system and in society at large” (“Meeting,” 1990, p. 944; see also Byrnes, 1998b). In response, the *MLA Teaching Languages, Literatures, and Cultures* series was created. The first edited

volume *Learning Foreign and Second Languages* (Byrnes, 1998b) offered insights into second language acquisition research and scholarship and was specifically geared toward “literature colleagues” (p. vii). It marked the first publication of its kind that approached the divide from a linguistic angle and encouraged mutual understanding. The fourth volume *Remapping the Foreign Language Curriculum: An Approach through Multiple Literacies* (Swaffar & Arens, 2005) offered practical solutions from the literary and cultural studies side by describing an integrated curriculum that implements literary and cultural studies throughout all stages of foreign language education. It offered template-generated exercises for different levels of instruction that also took language development into account.

As has been pointed out above, the issue has been discussed extensively in a variety of academic journals, most notably in the *ADFL Bulletin* and the *Modern Language Journal*, however, much of the existing literature has been theoretical in nature, focusing on a presentation of the issue and a case for either one of the two sides. More practical approaches that offered possible solutions to bridge the gap have mainly focused on the integration of literature in lower-level language courses. Unfortunately, empirical data from advanced courses are scarce. Recent exceptions are the studies by Donato and Brooks (2004), Zyzik and Polio (2008), and Polio and Zyzik (in press), all of which focus on attention to language forms in advanced Spanish literature courses at US research universities.

Donato and Brooks (2004) investigated literary discussions in an advanced Spanish literature course with the goal to determine how such discussions provided “discourse opportunities to students to develop advanced language functions, as defined in ACTFL

Proficiency Guidelines for Speaking” (p. 183). Their findings revealed that class discussions were mainly teacher-dominated and therefore prevented students from moving beyond word- and sentence-level utterances, however, the authors pointed out that advanced-level literary courses certainly have the potential to address advanced proficiency goals if orchestrated properly by both the teacher and students.

Zyzik and Polio (2008) examined attention to linguistic form in instructor oral feedback in advanced Spanish literature classrooms. In particular, they investigated “the advanced undergraduate literature course as an avenue for form-focused instruction by examining the ways in which literature professors do or do not attend to problems of linguistic form” (p. 54). Results indicated that oral feedback was mainly provided in the form of recasts¹¹ but that instructor feedback was limited due to students’ limited output in the classes under investigation, which replicated Donato and Brooks’ findings. These results were part of a larger case study on multiple perspectives on language learning in content-based classes (Polio & Zyzik, in press). Participant perspectives revealed that both students and instructors rated students’ speaking and writing skills as weak and listening skills as strong. In terms of course goals, two of three instructors did not have specific language-related goals¹², contrary to the majority of students, who hoped to learn about the content while improving language skills. The article also discussed emergent issues of concern for students and instructors with respect to language learning in their content-based literature classrooms. Results revealed four salient themes:

¹¹ A recast is an indirect and subtle form of feedback: The reformulation of an incorrect utterance that maintains the original meaning. For example, the teacher (T) reformulates the student’s (S) incorrect utterance: T: Where does the woman go? – S: He goes to work. – T: She goes to work?

¹² All three instructors were tenure-stream faculty members with backgrounds in literary and cultural studies. The one instructor who did mention language-related goals for her students hoped that they would improve their reading skills as a result of extensive reading assignments in class.

- 1) an incidental view of language learning
- 2) the lack of output and oral fluency, with study abroad as solution
- 3) the importance of vocabulary, and
- 4) problems with reading and reading comprehension.

One of the final recommendations from the perspective of the researchers that would allow for more extensive focus on linguistic skills in advanced literary and cultural classes was to offer hybrid options:

A series of online language support activities could be developed by teaching assistants or faculty with expertise in language teaching. These could include outside-of-class activities that literature faculty might be reluctant to complete in class including dictoglosses, cloze activities, audiojournals, and so on. ... [H]ybrid options allow instructors to focus on their strengths, that is, language or literature.

The advanced-level literature classrooms described in the above-mentioned research studies highlight an apparent disconnect in advanced-level content courses in terms of an interaction approach to second language acquisition. “The interaction approach considers exposure to language (input), production of language (output), and feedback on production (through interaction) as constructs that are important for understanding how second language learning takes place” (Gass & Mackey, 2006a, pp. 3-4). While there is no scarcity of meaningful input in these advanced-level content courses, the mere provision of such input in written and/or oral form does not guarantee that students advance their linguistic proficiency. As Polio and Zyzik pointed out: “while such input may be enough to *maintain* a learner’s language skills, it is unlikely to *push* them to *higher levels* of proficiency or help them gain control over certain L2 forms” (emphasis added; see also Donato & Brooks, 2004). What appears to be necessary, then, are varied opportunities for conversational interaction and output, which a traditional, teacher-centered classroom oftentimes does not provide.

To my knowledge, no studies have been conducted that investigate the development of linguistic skills in advanced-level German courses. There have been, however, various practical initiatives in the field of German that address the language-literature gap, once again mainly from the point of view of integrating literature and culture from the beginning. One example is the literacy-based curriculum (“Developing Multiple Literacies”) developed by Byrnes and her colleagues at Georgetown University (1997-2000). The goal of their integrated, content-oriented, task-based curriculum was to “focus on literary-cultural studies content from the beginning of the instructional sequence and continue[] to devote explicit attention to connecting content and language acquisition at the upper levels of instruction” (Georgetown University, 2003a).

Other initiatives, spearheaded by the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG), include the 2002 edited volume *Teaching German in America* (Peters, 2002), which offered a broad scope of articles on the past, present, and future of German Studies in educational institutions in the US, as well as the AATG Literary Task Force, established in 2006, that aimed to provide practical solutions to the diminishing interest in the study of literature and culture. Preliminary results of the Task Force were published in both AATG journals, *Die Unterrichtspraxis / Teaching German* (Wurst, 2008a; Kraemer, 2008b; Redmann, 2008) and *German Quarterly* (Wurst, 2008b; Byrnes, 2008; Byram & Kramersch, 2008; Arens, 2008).

In cooperation with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German Studies Program at Michigan State University invited scholars Arens, Byrnes, and Kramersch to a symposium on engaged learning in 2006, where they discussed best practices to invigorate German literary and cultural studies as part of integrated language

curricula. All these examples speak of the crucial position this issue has taken within the field of German Studies; however, classroom-based data and empirical evidence are lacking.

In order to frame the discussion on the language-literature gap for German, I will now focus on the debate in the academic journal *Die Unterrichtspraxis / Teaching German*. Since its inception in 1968, *Die Unterrichtspraxis / Teaching German (UP)* has contributed to the debate on the language-literature gap in collegiate contexts.¹³ The first *UP* article published was entitled “Die Mittelstufe: Übergang vom Sprach- zum Literaturunterricht” by Kritsch Neuse (1968) and provided practical suggestions on selecting appropriate textbooks, implementing media (i.e., records, movies, images), increasing students’ vocabulary range, structuring reading activities, and developing automaticity in speaking. Rooted in the direct method, Kritsch Neuse promoted the exclusive use of the target language from the beginning. Over time, teaching methods and approaches changed but the problem of articulation remained. The following two decades continued to produce articles on the topic. Bauer Pickar (1975) offered an integrated approach that “strengthens understanding and perception in both areas” (p. 28), language and literature, through the introduction of short literary texts in the students’ early learning stages. Lotze (1975) also argued for the inclusion of literature in beginning foreign language classrooms as a means to integrate both areas and offered answers to the questions why, when, what, and how to implement literature in language courses.

In the 1990s, the topic resurged with publications by Kramsch and Nolden (1994), Guenther and Roller (1996), Byrnes (1996), and Bernhardt and Berman (1999). Kramsch

¹³ Articles discussing articulation between high school and college will be disregarded.

and Nolden referred to the “institutionalized dichotomy between literary studies and language training” (p. 28) and proposed a redefinition of second language literacy. Their framework of oppositional practice placed the foreign reader at center stage and facilitated understanding through cross-cultural literacy. Guenther and Roller described the challenges in intermediate language courses as threefold: students’ diverse language learning backgrounds, the role of grammar in communicative language teaching, and student motivation. They offered activities and strategies to overcome these problems and reported positive preliminary results from their classrooms.

In her 1996 summary report on the future of German in American education, Byrnes listed “the bifurcation of the curriculum into a language and a content component with its repercussions in a discontinuous curriculum and radically different faculty status, which, most recently has led to ‘outsourcing’ of the language component” (p. 256) as one of the obstacles the profession needed to overcome. She wrote: “Reforming curricula at all levels of instruction is the most important task for the German profession in the United States. The need for such reform is greatest at the collegiate level... The key concept in curriculum reform is articulation” (p. 256). The recommendation offered was to

replace an additive model of language learning (e.g., first mastery of the formal inventory of German, then content knowledge, then culture, then literature, then access to professional subfields; first oral then literate use of the language) with a holistic model that integrates linguistic and cultural knowledge right from the beginning. (p. 256)

Bernhardt and Berman (1999) followed this recommendation and reported on their curricular reform at Stanford that acknowledged the “inextricable link between language and culture” (p. 25). Focusing on first-year instruction, the Stanford project included an English-language culture syllabus that accounted for 10% of class time. According to

Bernhardt and Berman, English reading materials about German culture and literary texts in translation gave “the students a knowledge base—gave them things to say *auf deutsch*” (p. 26), which may have accelerated their overall language acquisition. Unfortunately, their description was only based on personal observations and left many questions unanswered such as how language skills were measured, how English reading materials translated into expanded German linguistic knowledge, or what effect a significant reduction in class size may have had on proficiency. While the authors mentioned that their experimentation continued on to the second year, they did not provide information about an integrated curriculum that spanned all levels of instruction; however, they claimed that they were successfully able to integrate literature, culture, and language in their first-year curriculum.

As has been mentioned above, Byrnes and her colleagues at Georgetown University revised their German curriculum into the nationally recognized literacy-based curriculum, “Developing Multiple Literacies” (1997-2000). In contrast to Bernhardt and Berman, the Georgetown revision resulted in a true integration of language and content throughout the undergraduate curriculum, following a genre-driven approach that strives to produce competent and literate non-native language users (see Eigler, 2001 and Georgetown University, 2003b for a list of related publications).

The millennium volume of *UP* included an article by R. Weber (2000) that proposed a possible alternative curricular design of undergraduate courses, focusing on two categories: “(1) redefining and thus reorienting the lower-level courses; (2) patterning the middle and advanced levels of instruction on what might be termed a “German Studies” program not only to include more interdisciplinary content but also to achieve a smoother

perhaps less intimidating sequence of undergraduate courses” (p. 52). As continuing challenge he saw the design of “courses that address literature and culture at earlier levels and incorporate language instruction while still foregrounding the content of such courses” (pp. 56-57).

In the following years, articles by Eigler (2001), van Handle (2002), Peters (2003), Levine (2006), Melin and Laun (2007), Hock (2007), and Redmann (2008) continued to attest to the difficulty of providing integrated instruction at the intermediate level. They discussed models that addressed the problem by following a content-oriented, task-based approach (Eigler), by focusing on the interconnectedness of reading and writing (van Handle), by integrating culture as part of a proficiency-based curriculum (Peters), by following a sociocultural approach that problematized the teaching and learning of grammar (Levine), by implementing multimodal contemporary content as part of a holistic curriculum that emphasizes reading and writing skills (Melin & Laun), by advancing students language skills through information-literacy training (Hock), and by approaching the issue from the stance of literacy (Redmann).

In summary, the majority of the existing literature in *UP* focused on articulation in general terms (curriculum revision for all levels), on the integration of literature in lower-level language courses, or on the redesign of intermediate-level courses. Nonetheless, these examples speak of the crucial position the issue has taken within the field of German Studies in the US. However, classroom-based data and empirical evidence on advanced-level courses (i.e., fourth year) are scarce and the integration of linguistic skills and academic content particularly in upper levels continues to pose an urgent problem today.

The present study attempts to address this lack of empirical data by investigating fourth-year German content courses that implemented innovative online tools for language learning with the goal to advance students' linguistic development. The following sections will provide background information on online education and hybrid language education, outlining benefits and challenges.

2.2 Online Education

The educational landscape has changed tremendously since the advent of the Internet in 1969 and particularly since public access to the World Wide Web in 1991 (Boyle, 1995; White, 2003). Information technology is becoming more and more important and relevant for all areas of life, including education and communication (Cooper & Victory, 2002).¹⁴ In the last 15 years, online and distance learning opportunities have mushroomed around the globe (NCES, 1997, 1999, 2003; Oh, 2003; Saba, 2005) and different generations of technological innovations have influenced and shaped learning and teaching formats.¹⁵

2.2.1 Course Delivery Methods and Web Applications

Course delivery methods range from traditional face-to-face instruction to complete online instruction. Table 1 presents general classifications to distinguish between these different course types that were developed by the Sloan-Consortium, who conducts annual surveys aimed at the state of online education in U.S. higher education.

¹⁴ While the growth in popularity in online education is generally seen in a positive light, scholars like Saba (2005) and Conrad (2007) cautioned that technology needs to be seen as a means to an end, not the end itself and that critical issues such as the effects of globalization and the potential of interdisciplinary collaboration need to be further investigated.

¹⁵ See Kraemer (2008a) for an historical overview of the different generations and classifications of technologies used to mediate distance learning and teaching situations.

Table 1
Course Delivery Methods

Course Type	Percent of Course Content Delivered Online	Description
Face-to-face	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional classroom setting where course content is delivered without online technologies. • Students and the instructor are in the same place at the same time.
Web-enhanced	1-29%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional classroom setting where web-based technologies facilitate content delivery. • Students and the instructor are in the same place at the same time while engaging in instruction and learning with and through technology.
Hybrid/Blended	30-79%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course setting that blends face-to-face and online formats. • Portions of content delivery takes place online with students and the instructor at different locations.
Online	80+%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual course setting where course content is delivered without face-to-face meetings. • Students and the instructor are at different locations and engage with each other synchronously (i.e., at the same time) and/or asynchronously (i.e., at different times).

Note. This table presents an overview of different course delivery methods based on the general classifications put forth by the Sloan-Consortium (2003).

Computer- and online-based media and information and communications technologies opened up new possibilities for interactive learning and teaching, which is of particular relevance for language learning (White, 2003; Winke & Goertler, 2008). Web 1.0 applications such as e-mail, discussion forums, chat rooms, and instant messaging were predominant in the 1990s. The term Web 2.0 was coined by O'Reilly in 2004 (O'Reilly, 2005) and signifies web applications that increase user participation, collaboration, and

interaction¹⁶, for example, social networking technologies such as blogs, wikis, and *YouTube*. These application types allow learners to collaborate with other students and the teacher, emphasize two-way communication through various synchronous and asynchronous avenues, offer a high degree of flexibility for the learner in regards to time, place, and pace, and increase learner control.

Jenkins (2007) described *Second Life*, an Internet-based 3-D virtual world launched in 2003 that is entirely created by its users, as potential beginnings of Web 3.0. This immersive online game has received extensive attention by higher education scholars and language educators in particular. The Chronicle of Higher Education published 17 articles on *Second Life* in 2007 and listed 65 blog entries on the topic. In November and December of 2007 there was a discussion on the CALICO listserv about creating a special interest group for virtual realities and gaming, which sparked a lot of interest from educators around the world. Language teachers and learners are experimenting with this platform as a new environment to use languages. When “matched with the open source nature of the read-write Web and social networking, a next-stage in the level of conversations redirecting our interpersonal and societal interactions” might be reached, as Stevens (2006) described the potential impact of *Second Life* on language education.¹⁷

While the outlined possibilities of online technologies and computer-based instruction carry much potential for (language) learning and teaching, they do not come without

¹⁶ The terms interaction and feedback are used here from a CALL perspective rather than from the perspective of the interaction approach.

¹⁷ Further empirical research on this topic is necessary and under way. Several research projects were presented at CALICO 2008 such as Sadler’s workshop and presentation on task-based instruction in *Second Life*, Canfield’s presentation on *Second Life* as immersive learning environment, Cooke-Plagwitz’s presentation on student and faculty responses to a course in *Second Life*, Luke and Kuriscak’s presentations on pragmatics and language learning, and Zheng, Li, and Zhao’s presentation on research conducted in *The Confucius Institute Chinese School in Second Life*.

drawbacks. One of them is the high initial cost for institutions and students alike and, depending on the software used, continuing costs for maintenance and upgrades (Davis, 1998). It also generally demands higher teacher involvement because the learning situation is more individualized. The 2000 report of the Web-based Education Commission stated that the creation of online courses can take anywhere from 66% to 500% more time than creating traditional courses (Web-based Education Commission, 2000). Increases in teacher involvement do not stop at course creation. As Taylor (2001) pointed out “[t]he underlying resource model [of online courses] is not significantly different from conventional on campus teaching, with a staff member being necessary to manage groups of approximately 20 students to maintain a reasonable quality of interaction and academic support” (slide 15). In order to make online education a cost-efficient undertaking for both learners¹⁸ and institutions, he proposed an “Intelligent Flexible Learning Model” (Taylor, 1999, p. 1), which language scholars generally refer to as intelligent computer-assisted language learning or ICALL. Gamper and Knapp (2002) defined ICALL as exploring “the use of Artificial Intelligence methods and techniques for language learning” (p. 329).¹⁹ Such intelligent technologies can significantly decrease institutional costs by reducing the need of teachers to supervise and intervene in computer-mediated communication (CMC), be it synchronous or asynchronous. Automated personalized responses in CMC draw on intelligent object databases and allow the teacher to maximize instructional time focusing on those aspects that cannot be

¹⁸ According to Taylor, the Intelligent Flexible Learning Model “has the potential to decrease significantly the cost of online tuition and thereby increase significantly access to education and training opportunities on a global scale. ... [It] will deliver a quantum leap in economies of scale and associated cost-effectiveness.” (1999, p. 1)

¹⁹ Their article also provided a comprehensive overview of the evolution of ICALL and reviewed existing ICALL systems.

replaced by the computer.²⁰ It remains to be seen how ICALL continues to be developed and implemented in online language learning and if the claim of reduced costs will be met in reality. The development of ICALL materials is still expensive and unless they are commercially available and used in a wide context, cost savings seem unlikely.

Table 2
Web Applications for Language Learning

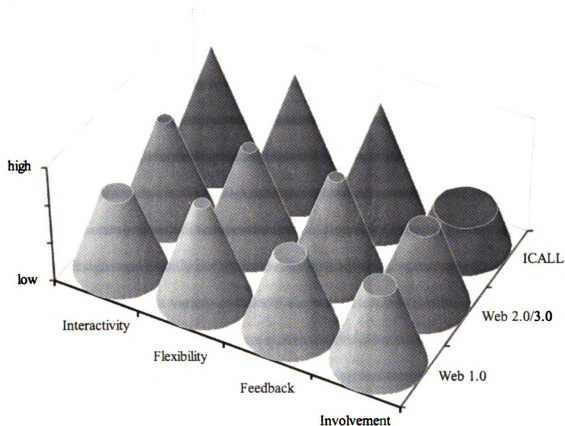
	Since	Medium	Examples	Advantages	Disadvantages
Web 1.0	1990s	Computer + Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · E-mail · Discussion forums · Chat rooms · Instant messaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Real-time · Flexible · Individualized · Interactive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · High initial costs · Maybe high maintenance costs · High teacher involvement
Web 2.0 Web 3.0	2000s	Computer + Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Social networking technologies (blogs, wikis, <i>YouTube</i>) · Virtual realities (<i>Second Life</i>) · Desktop videoconferencing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Real-time · Flexible · Individualized · Interactive · Collaborative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · High initial costs · Maybe high maintenance costs · High teacher involvement
ICALL	ongoing	Computer + Internet + Automated Response Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Object databases · Text and voice scans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Decrease in teacher involvement · Significant decrease in costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · High initial costs

Note. This representation is a simplified description of recent web applications for language learning and constitutes by no means an exhaustive list.

²⁰ For a detailed discussion of how intelligent flexible learning is conceptualized and carried out, refer to Taylor (1999). For further readings on CMC in distance language education, see Murray (2000).

Table 2 summarizes the above-mentioned web applications and provides information on their emergence, delivery medium, examples, as well as a general (but by no means exhaustive) list of advantages and disadvantages.

Figure 1
Relationship among recent Web Applications for Learning and their Associated Variables



Note. This figure offers an overview of the relationship among the recent web applications for learning outlined in Table 2 and their four associated variables.

Figure 1 is an attempt to visualize these web applications outlined in Table 2 along the line of four variables: interactivity, flexibility, feedback, and involvement. These variables range from low to high, with a shorter, flat cone indicating a low level of the variable, and a high, pointed cone indicating a high level of the variable. Interactivity

refers to the engagement between and among users and materials. Flexibility refers to the ease of access in time, space, and pace. Feedback refers to the option of teachers providing their learners with immediate feedback, and involvement refers to the amount of work and time necessary by teachers.

The level of interactivity increased as new web applications evolved. For language learning, this is an important facet because languages can be learned best through active participation and engagement (Gass, 1997; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Pica, 1994). Along with interactivity, the possibility of giving and receiving immediate feedback also increased, adding to the level of interactivity when considering student-teacher, student-peer, and student-computer relationships. Flexibility is high for all applications. For synchronous applications in Web 1.0-3.0, students (and the teacher) are required to be online at the same time, which reduces the level of flexibility slightly. ICALL with its intelligent design significantly decreases teacher involvement, as automated personalized response systems handle a variety of tasks of the human teacher. It is important to keep in mind that intelligent web applications are still in the fledgling stages and until reliable technologies have been developed for language learning and teaching, educators are left with higher levels of involvement.

Future technological developments and their possible impact on and relevance for teaching and learning are discussed in detail in the 2007 *Horizon Report* put forth by the New Media Consortium and the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative. This annual report “seeks to identify and describe emerging technologies likely to have a large impact on teaching, learning, or creative expression within higher education” (NMC, 2007, p. 3). In its fourth year, it identified six areas of emerging technology within three adoption

horizons. The six areas are: (1) user-created content; (2) social networking; (3) mobile phones; (4) virtual worlds; (5) new scholarship and emerging publications; and (6) multiplayer educational games. The adoption horizons are one year or less, two to three years, and four to five years. Each area included an overview, its relevance to teaching and learning, specific examples of its use, as well as references for further reading. All six areas are directly relevant for language learning and can help foster all four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). For example, area 4 listed *Second Life* as an emerging technology and included “Expand understanding of cultural and societal experiences” and “Learn through simulations and role-plays” as potential benefits for learners (NMC, 2007, p. 19). The report specifically mentioned foreign language learning in areas 2, 3, and 6 with the benefits of immersion environments and the potential for studying foreign languages and cultures. The report offered a positive outlook for online education in general and a plethora of direct applications for language learning in particular.

Turning back to the scholarly debate of technology applications for German language learning and teaching, *UP* offers a long list of articles; too long to be dissected within the context of this study. A short overview shall suffice to underscore the importance this area has taken in German Studies. A more detailed discussion of hybrid language courses, focusing on the debate in technology-related journals such as *CALICO* and *ReCALL*, will be presented in Chapter 2.3.

UP has followed the major shifts in technology applications: From laboratory work in the late 1960s (Horvay, 1968) to detailed discussions of the challenges and benefits of computer-assisted instruction in the 1970s until the early 1990s (Grundlehner, 1974;

Balser & Blice, 1978; Park, 1984; Jorgensen, 1984; Wazel, 1988; Fraser, 1993) to more recent trends in computer-assisted language learning focusing on web-based applications (see Pusack, 1997 and Tschirner, 1997 for an overview). Online modules have focused on integration of literature (Fraser, 1999; King, 2000), culture (Kassouf, 2000; Hasty, 2006; Schueller, 2007), grammar (Alm-Lequeux, 2001; Böhlke, 2003b), reading and writing (Schaumann, 2001; High, Hoyer, & Wakefield, 2002), and business German (Carstens-Wickham, 2001). These articles speak of the accomplishments of instructional technology in language classes and programs; however, research on speaking and listening skills falls short.

2.2.2 Learners in the Digital Age: Digital Natives and Digital Divides

Today's students are generally assumed to be computer-savvy "digital natives" (Cini & Vilic, 1999; Facer & Furlong, 2001; Spodark, 2001). In describing the current generation of learners, Prensky (2001), who coined the term "digital natives," noted that

[t]hey have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age. Today's average college grads have spent less than 5,000 hours of their lives reading, but over 10,000 hours playing video games (not to mention 20,000 hours watching TV). Computer games, email, the Internet, cell phones and instant messaging are integral parts of their lives. ... Our students today are all "native speakers" of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet. (p. 1)

In order to reach these learners, Prensky (2005) argued that we need to actively engage them through the use of digital technology. However, two practical implications pose problems for the implementation of online technologies in and outside the classroom.

Already in the mid 1990s, the Clinton-Gore administration warned about a "digital divide" (Gore, 1996) that rests on economic, educational, social, geographical, and ethnic

reasons (Web-based Education Commission, 2000; K. Williams, 2001). Statistical data provided by the US Census Bureau (2001) and the US Department of Commerce (Cooper & Victory, 2002) underscored the existence of the digital divide in terms of access to computers and the Internet.²¹ Secondly, Attewell (2001) argued that access or lack thereof only formed one half of the divide. The second digital divide he saw in computer use and literacy: Simply having computer access did not necessarily translate into academic success. Recent studies by Messineo and DeOllos (2005), Foster (2006), and Winke and Goertler (2008) emphasized that today's college students indeed lack computer literacy. Messineo and DeOllos focused on college students' self-perceived computer skills (N=233) and found that while they felt comfortable using computers for personal use such as email and word processing, their comfort-level for course-related tasks was lower, particularly for advanced applications such as online homework submission or online courses. Foster reported that ICT (information and communication technology) test results of 3,800 college students and high school seniors yielded only 13% of them as "information literate," which she defined as having "the skills needed to retrieve, analyze, and communicate information available online" (A36). Winke and Goertler's study of 911 college students enrolled in foreign language classes revealed that while 98% owned one or more computers, other hardware that might be required for online learning such as microphones or web cams were difficult to come by. Similarly to Messineo and DeOllos' findings, their study revealed that advanced computer tasks such as typing in non-English characters, making sound recordings, uploading a video recording, or developing and maintaining a web site were rated as difficult.

²¹ Access to technological resources including computers and the Internet increased with household income. Only 28% of households with less than \$25,000 annual income had access to a computer and only 19% of these households had Internet access.

Due to the ubiquity of information and communications technologies and documented benefits in terms of language learning and teaching, many language departments across the country choose to combine online learning with traditional classroom instruction, resulting in hybrid or blended course designs. The following section will provide an overview of current issues and research in hybrid language education, which will serve as a backdrop upon which the present study was developed.

2.3 Hybrid Language Education

Hybrid instruction denotes a carefully planned blend of both traditional classroom instruction and online learning activities, combining the best of both styles of instruction.²² Such courses still offer the crucial face-to-face interaction with instructors and other students (particularly important for foreign language courses) but reduce seat time at the institution and therefore expenses for reserving classrooms by moving parts of the learning process online.

According to the definition by the Sloan-Consortium (2003), courses are considered hybrid when between 30 to 79% of the content is delivered online. Cross (2006) cautioned that providing such percentages of instructional style combinations are mere oversimplifications because

[b]lended learning can take place while waiting in line at the grocery store or taking the bus home. Its ingredients may be courses, content chunks, instant messaging pings, blog feedback, or many other things. Interaction is the glue that holds all these pieces together. Interaction comes in many forms, not just learner and instructor, but also learner-to-content, learner-to-learner, and learner-to-infrastructure. (p. xix)

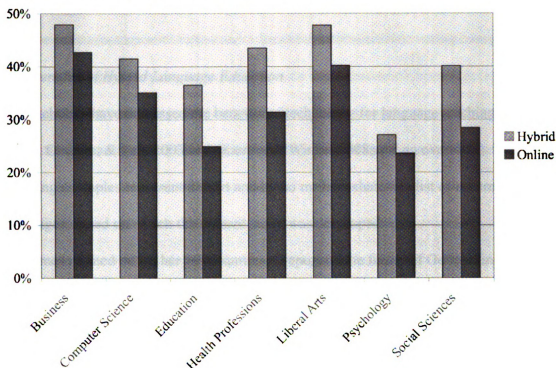
²² In Europe, the term “blended learning” is generally used to refer to the concept of hybrid instruction in the US. In the context of this study, the terms are used synonymously without distinguishing between the different processes and behaviors entailed in learning vs. teaching.

This already entails two of the major features and often-cited advantages of hybrid education: flexibility and interaction. Described as “the single-greatest unrecognized trend in higher education today” (Young, 2002, p. A33), this delivery method is rapidly gaining popularity in US higher education.

In 2007, the Sloan-Consortium reported on a three-year study of hybrid education in the US. Between 2002 and 2005, the number of hybrid course offerings remained stable with 55% of over 1,000 institutions offering at least one hybrid course. In terms of disciplines, penetration rates of hybrid offerings in Fall 2003 in the field of Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies, Humanities (47.8%) exceeded those of online offerings by 7.6% and marked the second highest percentage rate of hybrid offerings besides Business (47.9%). Figure 2 compares the two different delivery formats (online vs. hybrid).

It is interesting to note how equal the distribution is across disciplines, with hybrid offerings outnumbering online offerings. In the same year, institutional responses to the question whether hybrid courses hold more promise than online courses were in favor of hybrid education: 67.4% indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (Sloan-C, 2003). Unfortunately, there are no detailed descriptions of the individual disciplines that would allow deeper insights into the exact number of available hybrid foreign or second language courses.

Figure 2
Hybrid vs. Online Offerings by Discipline in Fall 2003



Note. This graph compares program penetration rates for online and hybrid offerings from Fall 2003 based on information from the 2007 Sloan-C report.

Goertler and Winke's *Opening Doors through Distance Language Education: Principles, Perspectives, and Practices* (2008a) is, to my knowledge, the only source of information for enrollment data for hybrid language courses. Survey results of 39 Midwestern universities revealed that only 8% of programs offered hybrid courses (which they defined as having between 30-90% online content delivery), while 38% of programs implemented online assignments that did not, however, replace face-to-face time. The volume also offers discussions of existing hybrid courses (Kraemer, 2008a), the role of the teacher (Wildner-Bassett, 2008), teacher training (Sánchez-Serrano, 2008), and the effectiveness of technology-enhanced foreign language teaching (Goertler & Winke, 2008b). Along with White's *Language Learning in Distance Education* (2003), these

volumes are invaluable resources for language educators who wish to design, implement, and assess hybrid courses.

2.3.1 Benefits of Hybrid Language Education

Many scholars have discussed the benefits of technology for language teaching (see Liu, Moore, Graham, & Lee, 2003 and Goertler & Winke, 2008a for an overview). The following examples represent a short and by no means exhaustive list of recurring advantages, based on which the present study was developed.

Byrnes pointed out in her 1996 summary report on the future of German in American education that:

[i]n contrast with the past, the technology available now inherently shifts the emphasis from teaching to student learning, opening up new roles for learners and teachers alike, and inviting a reconsideration not only of the process of learning, but also of the kind of learning deemed to be crucial for responsible and rewarding citizenship in an American democracy in the twenty-first century. (p. 254)

She recommends considering technology “not merely as an optional add-on but as potentially reshaping the entire language-learning construct (more individualized, student-centered learning, access to on-line information, task-based learning, interactive linked learning with native speakers of German, distance learning in areas where German programs can otherwise not be supported, language maintenance, specialized programs)” (p. 257). These benefits echo those listed by Quinn (1990), who described the benefits of computer-assisted language learning as follows:

it increases student interest, promotes retention of the subject matter while substantially reducing the time needed for instruction, and lightens the burden for both teacher and student by providing individualized, self-paced instruction. ... Overall, microcomputers reduce the time needed to do our work, help improve the quality of what we produce, and allow us to be more creative. As a result, they

give us more time to perform the tasks that teachers do better than machines. For instance, they can “humanize” our classes by allowing us more opportunities to provide individual attention for our students. (pp. 297-98)

More recently, Hokanson (2000) noted “classtime flexibility, cost savings, remote access, and flexible program sequencing” (p. 85) as well as student-centeredness, increased control, effective communication, immediacy of feedback, tracking of student records, and greater learning as advantages of online language learning. Connecting to the ACTFL *Standards* (1999) and the five areas of language competency, she wrote:

There are more ways to include activities germane to these areas than with traditional use of textbooks and chalkboards. “Communication” activities include e-mail, listservs, and chatrooms ... employed for genuine exchange of ideas with others via the target language, usually about “Culture” facts and ideas. Communicative activities make “Connections” with other subject areas... “Comparisons” between the native and the target languages and cultures are frequent in such an activity... “Community,” language learning directly from contact with a community of target language speakers or the sharing of target language projects with local, non-target-language communities... (p. 88)

Felix (2001) investigated students’ perspectives of the web’s potential for language learning, yielding similar results: Reported advantages were time flexibility, wealth of information, reinforcement of learning, privacy, ability to repeat exercises, gaining computer literacy, and the absence of the teacher.

Gannon’s (2004) list of benefits of hybrid courses (even though from a psychology rather than a language learning perspective) included “flexibility, independence, and convenience. In addition, the hybrid course offers numerous opportunities for active learning to be introduced in both the classroom and online environments” (p. 253).

One of the underlying commonalities in all these descriptions is the shift away from the teacher and toward the learner. This shift in classroom practices denotes a general

change in educational approaches across disciplines in the new millennium, as described by Chute, Thompson and Hancock (1999, p. 206):

Twentieth-Century Learning (Instructor-Centered)	Twenty-first-Century Learning (Learner-Centered)
Lecture	Facilitation
Individual Learning	Team Learning
Student as Listener	Student as Collaborator
Instructor as Source	Instructor as Guide
Stable Content	Dynamic Content
Homogeneity	Diversity
Evaluation and Testing	Performance

Online technologies are a perfect match to accommodate twenty-first century learning, as outlined above, and to address today's students' interests and needs. Of particular relevance for language educators is that placing students at center-stage and providing active and interactive ways to engage with course materials and with each other can enhance language acquisition:

The optimal role for language learners is active. It is through active participation in thinking and using the target language that the opportunity for language acquisition is maximized. Examination of learning contexts where computers are used to enable and support student-centered tasks reveals that features of task and medium in consort contribute to optimal, *active* student engagement. (Meskill, 1999, p. 144)

In addition to active engagement, the implementation of technology can increase students' responsibility and accountability, as Pederson and D. Williams (2004) noted: "Essential to student-centered approaches is student ownership of their goals and activities. Because students make decisions about which actions to take to meet their goals, their work is meaningful to them, a condition that encourages depth of understanding and an intrinsic motivational orientation" (p. 284).

We can summarize the following benefits from these descriptions: Online technologies offer a student-centered and flexible approach for language learning. In particular, such technologies encourage

(1) different learning styles

- individualized and self-paced learning
- active and engaged learning
- interactive and collaborative learning
- task-based learning
- reinforcement of learning (e.g., through the ability to repeat exercises)

(2) different learner types

- student interests
- creativity
- privacy
- convenience

(3) skill building

- language skills
- time management
- problem-solving
- critical-thinking
- computer literacy

(4) access

- to a plethora of (authentic) materials and native speakers
- to education for non-traditional student groups

(5) instructional features

- time efficiency
- immediate feedback
- increased control
- tracking of student records
- humanized instruction

(6) outcomes

- improved quality
- greater learning and retention
- citizenship
- cost savings
- increased enrollments

(7) connection to the ACTFL *Standards*.

By combining the best features of online technologies with face-to-face interaction, we can create a perfect blend of instructional methods that maximize learning outcomes: “a thoughtful integration of distance learning techniques, judiciously selected and implemented by knowledgeable foreign language teachers will accomplish the pedagogical goals that promote overall successful language learning for the largest number of students” (Spodark, 2001, p. 1207).

The listed benefits are also instrumental in addressing the challenges that language programs today are faced with, as outlined at the beginning of this chapter (i.e., filled classrooms, a diverse body of learners, the need for global communication and computer skills, implementation of authentic materials, and the integration of academic content

with linguistic skills). Larger student numbers can be accommodated at reduced costs when moving portions of instructional time online. The interactive and student-centered nature of online tools can also increase the amount of exposure to and engagement with class materials, particularly increasing communicative language skills and advancing language development. In addition, the Internet offers a plethora of authentic materials that can be implemented as part of a hybrid component. Lastly, the problem of articulation can be alleviated by developing a smooth sequence of courses that integrate literature, culture, and language from the beginning, which can be supported by online technologies. However, all that glitters is not gold and hybrid education carries some inherent problems that need to be resolved. These will be briefly outlined in the following section.

2.3.2 Challenges of Hybrid Language Education

Recent research has identified various areas of improvement that require thorough consideration on behalf of language educators and practitioners. Among the most widely cited difficulties are:

- (1) Lack of training for students and teachers in using technologies (Barrette, 2001; Quinn, 1990; Sánchez-Serrano, 2008).
- (2) Ambiguous instructions and lack of clarity about hardware and software requirements (Rivera, McAlister, & Rice, 2002).
- (3) Technical problems, accessibility to the Internet, and lack of web support (Hara & Kling, 1999; Harker & Koutsantoni, 2005; Sampson, 2003; Stracke, 2007).

- (4) Sustaining learner motivation (Strambi & Bouvet, 2003).
- (5) Hidden costs (Davis, 1998; Valentine, 2002).
- (6) Time in planning and implementation (Davis, 1998; Web-based Education Commission, 2000).
- (7) Lack of speaking practice and inadequate feedback (Blake, 2008; Felix, 2001).
- (8) Questionable effects on foreign language proficiency (Sanders, 2005).

While none of these problems have been completely resolved to date, some appear to be addressed more easily than others. The first area of difficulty can be solved by providing solid training options for everyone involved in hybrid language learning and teaching in a timely manner: For teachers, that means *before* a hybrid course is implemented, which will enable them to anticipate problems and trouble-shoot in case an application malfunctions; for students, that means *at the onset* of a hybrid course. The second problem is a mere lapse in transparency. In online environments, particularly for asynchronous tasks, it is of utmost importance to provide learners with explicit and detailed information about course requirements and expectations because the absence of face-to-face interaction diminishes the opportunity to ask questions and receive immediate answers.

Just as in any other teaching context, it is important to have a contingency plan in case technology fails and to allow for more flexible due dates of online assignments. Most postsecondary institutions require incoming freshmen to own a personal computer and dormitories are generally equipped with Ethernet access, which should provide equal access to course materials. For nontraditional students, alternatives need to be sought.

When portions of face-to-face instruction are moved online, a higher degree of independent study, self-discipline, and motivation are needed. The question of how to sustain learner motivation in online environments is still debated. A possible solution might be to cater to different learning styles and learner types and to address topics that are of immediate interest and relevance to our student body (Felix, 2001).

While costs for hardware might be an initial burden for institutions and students alike, there are potential continuing costs for maintenance and upgrades. Also, the cost of human capital is often underestimated in hybrid and distance education. This area is directly tied to problem six, time in planning and implementation. As mentioned earlier, the creation of courses with online components can take anywhere from 66% to 500% more time than creating traditional courses and new materials need to be piloted and revised before they can be successfully implemented (Barrette, 2008).

Problems seven and eight appear to be particularly troublesome for language educators, especially against the backdrop of the ACTFL *Standards*. Inadequate provision of feedback seems to be just a negligence that should be resolved easily. Implementation of online oral practice and its effects on language learning, however, is an area that has not been much researched (Barr, Leakey, & Ranchoux, 2005; Liu et al., 2003). In fact, most of the existing research on computer-assisted language learning has been in the area of reading and writing (for comprehensive reviews of existing research see Liu et al, 2003; Grgurović, 2007). The present study tries to address this gap by focusing on opportunities for oral language development in advanced-level German content courses.

Questionable effects on written proficiency were found in a study conducted by Sanders (2005). His study will be addressed in the following section, along with other recent empirical studies that specifically investigated hybrid language learning in US higher education.

2.3.3 Empirical Studies in Hybrid Language Education

In the most extensive CALL database of its kind, Grgurović listed 86 studies conducted between 1972 and 2006 that compared the “effectiveness of computer-assisted pedagogy with other modes of instruction” and also distinguished these studies by skill/knowledge areas (i.e., grammar, pronunciation, reading, vocabulary, writing, communication, and integrated skills).²³ The database contains 25 comparison studies on hybrid learning, 22 of which were conducted in college settings.²⁴ Overall results of these studies suggest that hybrid courses are as effective, if not more effective than traditional face-to-face settings.

Of the 22 hybrid studies in college settings, three studies were conducted in the field of German. One focused on grammar and vocabulary knowledge (Teichert, 1985), one on learner strategies, attitudes, and achievement scores (Kunz, 1998), and one on integrated skills (Green & Youngs, 2001). The first two studies found significant differences in favor of the hybrid groups, while the comparison groups in Green and Youngs performed similarly. Of all 22 hybrid studies, only two addressed the language skill communication: Ibarz and Monaghan (2000) investigated e-mail communication of beginning-level Spanish learners and found positive effects for the hybrid group. Payne and Whitney

²³ For earlier CALL surveys, see Levy (1997) and Liu et al. (2003).

²⁴ While Grgurović does not claim that her database includes all relevant studies on the topic, it is interesting to note that she did not mention Sanders’ 2005 study, probably because it was published in the *Foreign Language Annals* and not in any of the journals specifically dedicated to research in technology and language learning.

(2002) examined oral proficiency development in chatrooms in third-semester Spanish courses and found significant differences for the hybrid group on speaking performance tests. None of the hybrid studies addressed pronunciation. Once again, a lack in research investigating oral language skills, particularly in advanced-level courses becomes apparent. This lack is consistent in non-comparison studies that focus on hybrid foreign language course offerings. A few studies that were not included in Grgurović's database will be addressed in the following.

Harker and Koutsantoni (2005) reported on retention, achievement, and student satisfaction in hybrid and online learning contexts in English for Academic Purposes courses. Results indicated higher retention and higher achievement levels in the hybrid option as well as higher levels of commitment and motivation. They concluded that face-to-face contact is crucial in language learning and that a blended context offers the best environment for maximum success. Leakey and Ranchoux (2006) came to the same conclusion. While students in a first-year French course preferred the hybrid model to traditional classrooms, 68.8% of them felt a "real need" (p. 367) to have a combination of both settings.

Stracke (2007) also investigated retention in hybrid courses. Her case study discussed the reasons why three students had dropped out of first-year hybrid French and Spanish courses: lack of support, lack of traditional media types, and rejection of technology as a medium. While Stracke's study was very small in scale, the results emphasize the need to address the challenges of hybrid education discussed above in order to develop successful hybrid language offerings.

Das Neves Seesink's (2007) case study of six Intensive English Program students investigated their perceptions of hybrid language learning environments that focused on vocabulary, in particular collocations. Results revealed a lack of commitment to working online because students did not perceive the online assignments as integral to the course. Whenever portions of face-to-face instruction are moved online, it is crucial that they are not mere add-ons but that they are integrated well into the course as a whole and that students can make connections between learning online and learning in class.

Barr et al. (2005) represents one of the few recent studies on oral development in hybrid education. Addressing the dearth of research in this area, they argued that "technology for oral language development has posed the greatest challenge to both hardware and software developers" (p. 56). In addition, implementing and evaluating oral practice online can be very time-consuming for teachers. Their study of first-year French students in a hybrid approach revealed that the traditional group made more progress than the hybrid group in terms of fluency, content, and grammar. Particularly the last area was surprising and the authors suggested that apart from the short duration of the whole study, the hybrid group first needed to take some time to get used to the new learning environment, while the traditional group was already on task. Initial problems with using the voice recording equipment may have also negatively influenced students' attitudes toward the entire hybrid experience. Once again, this speaks to the crucial position proper training and support take in a hybrid learning context.

Goertler and Winke (2008b) compared six reports on program overhauls where language departments moved from face-to-face instruction to web-enhanced, hybrid, or online courses. Two of these six overhauls were outside the US. Of the remaining four,

three curricula were changed into hybrid formats: Beginning Spanish at Portland State University (Sanders, 2005), beginning and intermediate French and Spanish at Carnegie Mellon University (Chenoweth, Ushida, & Murday, 2006), and beginning Spanish at University of Virginia (Scida & Saury, 2006).

The first-year hybrid Spanish courses at Portland State University replaced 50% of face-to-face time (two of four class sessions) with multi-modal online activities (including WebCT Chat and Discussion Board activities). Sanders (2005) reported overall positive results (i.e., enrollment increase, class size and seat time reduction, institutional cost reduction, instructor pay increase) and Portland serves as a stellar example of streamlining in-class and online activities to offer the students the most efficient, interactive, engaging, and effective way of language learning and teaching.²⁵ Overall, the redesign maintained student achievement outcomes, however, as mentioned above, Sanders found a significant difference in written proficiency between the traditional and the hybrid group, where the former outperformed the latter. As possible explanation, he offered that “[r]educed seat time may have influenced lower proficiency scores in the redesign” (p. 530). He continued to address one of the limitations of the study that may have led to these negative results in written proficiency:

While most of the “traditional” instructors had 2 or more years prior experience teaching Spanish as a foreign language, all 9 instructors for the experimental courses had only 1 year or less prior experience. It seems reasonable that an 86% decrease in instructor experience would have an effect on proficiency outcomes. ... Employing experienced, part-time instructors the last year of traditional instruction may have contributed to high base-line proficiency outcomes. (p. 530)

As this quote entails, the traditional courses were taught by experienced part-time instructors as well as experienced and inexperienced graduate teaching assistants. The

²⁵ For a more detailed discussion of the Portland project, see Kraemer (2008a).

redesigned course model, however, was taught exclusively by inexperienced graduate teaching assistants, which may have contributed to the lower proficient scores more so than the reduced seat time. It seems, then, that the issue of proficiency can be effectively addressed by employing experienced instructors who can give adequate feedback in both spoken and written formats.

At Carnegie Mellon University, traditional beginning and intermediate French and Spanish courses met 4 and 3 times per week respectively for 50 minutes each. All hybrid courses met one hour per week as a class and students attended individual face-to-face tutoring sessions once a week for 20 minutes. The remaining face-to-face time was replaced with multi-modal online activities (including WebCT Chat and Discussion Board activities). Chenoweth et al. (2006)²⁶ reported overall comparable results in terms of effectiveness for all language skills for the traditional and the hybrid design. Of particular interest to the present study are the positive results that were found for two hybrid courses (beginning French and intermediate Spanish), where students outperformed offline students in oral production scores. They cautioned, however, that such comparisons “need to be interpreted carefully because this was not a controlled study in which we could randomly assign students to courses (conditions) and have the same teacher teach both sections (a way to control for teacher effects)” (p. 128).

Students in the hybrid courses reported frustrations with online materials and technological problems, however, as the courses progressed, they became more familiar with the structure of the course and the materials. Lack of technology support was another recurring problem in the hybrid courses that led to frustrations for both students

²⁶ See also Murday, Ushida, and Chenoweth (2008) for a further discussion of the Carnegie Mellon project.

and instructors. Both these problems can be addressed by providing continuing general guidance for everyone involved in the learning and teaching process.

Overall, students made similar progress in both course options across languages and levels, which the authors described as “extremely encouraging since they provide support for alternative delivery methods for courses that often are unavailable to students with schedule conflicts” (p. 132).

The first-year hybrid Spanish courses at University of Virginia replaced 40% of face-to-face time (two of five class sessions) with multi-modal online activities (including Mallard²⁷ grammar and vocabulary drills). Scida and Saury (2006) reported overall positive results in terms of enrollment increases, class size reductions, and modest gains in language skills compared to traditional courses. While the main goal of the hybrid redesign was resource management, the hybrid courses also aimed to “improve student mastery of the language and to offer the instructor more resources and means to reach students with different learning needs or who simply wanted (or needed) more practice with grammar and vocabulary” (p. 521). Results indicated that students felt a positive impact of the hybrid module on their learning, which particularly resulted in higher levels of confidence in using vocabulary in-class. The redesign also opened up more time to focus on communicative activities in class, as grammar and vocabulary studies were moved online and students were better prepared for face-to-face sessions. Overall, Scida and Saury concluded that “through the implementation of a hybrid course, we have actually achieved close to the ideal teaching and learning scenario in language

²⁷ Mallard is a course management system similar to ANGEL or WebCT.

acquisition, guiding students to master form, structure, grammar, and vocabulary, while also being able to speak, read, and write with greater fluency” (pp. 527-28).

These three examples of successful language program overhauls and the other studies discussed above attest to the outlined benefits and possibilities that hybrid education has in store for language learning and teaching. All of them, however, focused on lower-level language courses, predominantly in the Romance languages. To my knowledge, no reports on hybrid program overhauls in German have been published and research on the use of hybrid instruction in upper-level courses is lacking. It seems like not much has changed since 1990, when Quinn noted that “CALL experiments ... have concentrated on students in introductory classes” (1990, p. 306), or since 2000, when “very little reference has been made to the role of computer technology in oral language development” (Barr et al., 2005, p. 55).

In order to address these gaps, my dissertation investigates opportunities for the continuing development of linguistic skills, particularly speaking, in fourth-year German content courses and student perceptions of the effects of technology in the language learning context. It follows the suggestion by Polio and Zyzik (in press) to offer hybrid courses that combine the teaching of academic content and linguistic skills. The research design and methodology employed in their study served as a guideline for this dissertation and detailed comparisons will be drawn in the following chapters. Chapter 3 will illustrate the institutional context in which the pilot study and the hybrid study were conducted and will offer a description of the research paradigm.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Context

The German Studies Program at Michigan State University (MSU) is home to a robust undergraduate program. In the academic year 2007/08, 30 students were German primary majors, 41 students had German as their secondary major, and 11 students were enrolled in dual degree programs. In the same year, 336 students were enrolled in first-year language classes, 280 students in second-year language classes, 144 students in third-year courses, and 102 students in fourth-year courses (MSU, 2007).

Housed in the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages, German Studies “seeks to serve all undergraduate and graduate students in their acquisition of the German language and of critical knowledge about the cultures of German-speaking countries in their historical context” (MSU, 2008). As part of a land-grant institution, the program sees its responsibilities, among others, in

Infusing our instruction with methods and content that help students achieve the following humanistic goals:

1. to make meaning out of information;
2. to manage technology in the acquisition and processing of knowledge;
3. to be open to new learning and diverse ideas;
4. to develop a sympathetic imagination;
5. to assume responsibility for one’s thoughts and actions;
6. to communicate one’s ideas, values, beliefs, and imagination to others;
7. to form reasonable judgments after considering facts and opinion;
8. to understand the value of independent and collaborative work habits.

The integrated undergraduate curriculum offers a sequence of courses in language, culture, and literature. Lower-level courses follow an integrated communicative approach and focus on German language, civilization, and culture for first-year students and on the

development of all language skills with an emphasis on reading and writing for second-year students. These courses fulfill standard college language requirements. First-year courses are usually taught by teaching assistants who are graduate students in the program. Second-year courses are taught predominantly by visiting assistant professors and, depending on the number of sections, by advanced graduate students and tenure-track faculty. The majority of undergraduate students who go beyond second-year courses are those majoring in German.

Offerings in third-year German include advanced language courses, business German, oral communication, and content courses on the historical, social, and cultural developments in the German-speaking world before and after 1918. Fourth-year courses include advanced language and grammar, linguistic analysis of German, and a variety of literature and culture courses including 18th and 19th century literature, 20th century and contemporary literature, cultural history, and special topics courses.

Even though the mission statement specifically mentions the use of technology for acquisition and processing of knowledge, it has not been consistently integrated as a core component of the undergraduate curriculum.²⁸ Individual undertakings and research projects are exceptions. In an effort to address the lack of suitable textbooks and teaching materials for second-year German, the program had obtained 33 wireless laptops²⁹ and piloted web-enhanced course modules in fall 2002. The modules were not implemented in subsequent semesters because the pilot phase had not yielded exceedingly positive results in terms of instructional methods, content, learning outcomes, and participant

²⁸ Most courses use ANGEL, MSU's course management system, to post information online, however, few courses go beyond this use of web-based technologies.

²⁹ These wireless laptops were obtained as part of an MSU grant project by two former Ph.D. students, Cate Brubaker and Elizabeth Priester, who studied the implementation of Internet technology in the second-year German language classroom. Portions of their findings are published in Brubaker and Priester (2007).

feedback. While the modules certainly had potential, the German Studies Program did not have sufficient resources to revise them and it was deemed easiest to go back to a traditional textbook approach. In summer 2004, data were collected on student perceptions of technology applications for language learning, particularly speaking, as part of a larger study on portfolio assessment in a second-year language course (Kraemer, 2005). Students reported that the online activities were meaningful because they were task-based and provided additional contextualized language practice. The majority of the students felt that their speaking abilities improved because of the online modules. Other technology-enhanced instructional practices of individual professors have included electronic feedback on composition assignments in third-year courses and video recordings of face-to-face lectures in fourth-year linguistic courses that allowed students to revisit the lectures later.

Since 2007, language faculty across departments in the College of Arts and Letters have been studying the benefits of lower-level hybrid language courses, particularly in Spanish where hybrid courses have been implemented for multiple years. Pilot studies in second-year German are currently being conducted to evaluate the effectiveness for language development. No advanced-level courses in German, however, have taken a hybrid approach. In order to provide a systematic evaluation of an advanced-level hybrid course in terms of participant perceptions and effects on (oral) language development, hybrid course modules were piloted in a fourth-year course on 18th and 19th century German literature to test format, content, and outcomes. Based on the results, a hybrid course was developed and data on participant perspectives were collected throughout its implementation.

3.2 Research Paradigm

The primary criterion for designing a research study is the appropriateness of the methodology (Patton, 2002). For the present study, a qualitative research paradigm was selected. Only in recent years has qualitative research become a more established and accepted paradigm for language-related inquiries (Felix, 2005; Duff, 2008). The quantitative-qualitative research distinction has relegated qualitative studies as inferior to quantitative ones due to their subjective and ungeneralizable nature (Nunan, 1992). However, scholars in hybrid language education have pointed out the importance of student attitudes for enhancing future practices:

the influences that shape the learners' perception of CALL emanate from their experience gained from learning with a combination of CALL and FtF teaching. On the basis of this experience, learners develop attitudes towards learning with the assistance of computer technology that is highly influential on the future of CALL. (Neumeier, 2005, p. 163; see also Felix, 2001 and Stracke, 2007)

Only through qualitative measures can we come to a deeper understanding of student perceptions and can in turn improve teaching methods and outcomes. For the field of German, Andress et al. (2002) noted that it is crucial to “pay careful attention to what motivates students when they appear in our programs” (p. 5). I would extend this notion and argue that it is equally important to maintain students' interests and motivation throughout their language learning experience in college. In-depth qualitative inquiries will provide a better picture of student attitudes toward and motivations for language learning and will shed light on promises and challenges of hybrid course formats.

The complexity and heterogeneity of student learning require not only diverse forms of student work, but also multiple methods of assessment (Maki, 2004). This, in turn, means that we need to offer students “additional and more diverse opportunities to

succeed” (Andress et al., 2002, p. 6) and technology can assist teachers in offering “a broader repertoire of activities and assessments” (Andress et al., 2002, p. 6). Studies in CALL have found that online technologies increase the number of opportunities for students to produce output and can motivate students more due to the student-centered format (Chun, 1994; Kern, 1995a; Warschauer, 1996). In addition, technologies can facilitate instructors in gathering multiple sources of student work, including contextualized real-life tasks, and in assessing progress longitudinally in a way that also allows students to self-monitor their progress, taking performance abilities as well as complex cognitive tasks into account (Darling-Hammond & Ancess, 1996).

In addressing the lack of qualitative research in hybrid language education (Neumeier, 2005), this study followed a case study approach that explored opportunities for the continuing development of linguistic skills in the context of a content course as well as participant perspectives of the effects of technology in the language learning context. Case studies have been a common research method in the social sciences for decades (Yin, 2003) and have also become popular in applied linguistics and second language acquisition (Duff, 2008). They are characterized by key principles such as “boundedness or singularity, in-depth study, multiple perspectives or triangulation, particularity, contextualization, and interpretation” (Duff, 2008, p. 23). This study can be classified as both a descriptive and exploratory study. Descriptive studies set out to “answer[] ‘What?’ questions” while exploratory studies “formulate new research questions” (Duff, 2008, p. 101).

The case study guidelines put forth by TESOL (“TESOL,” n.d.) and Duff’s (2008) recommendations for applied linguistics case studies formed the basis of the study

design. Following these guidelines, my study seeks to identify important patterns and themes in the data and to explain the findings in a descriptive, interpretive, and inductive manner. The analytic process inherent in interpretive research involves repeated testing and revision of preliminary assertions against the entire body of data (Contreras-McGavin & Kezar, 2007) until those assertions can account for all the data presented. This follows the tradition of case studies in the field of education where emphasis is placed on “issues such as learners’ and teachers’ identities, skill development and its consequences for learners, teachers’ professional development experiences, and the implementation of language policies” (“TESOL,” n.d.).

Providing sufficient detail and contextualization are crucial elements in qualitative research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). This chapter has presented a detailed description of the institutional context. Chapters 4 and 5 will provide detailed information on the courses in which the pilot study and the hybrid study were conducted, the participants, data collection procedures, treatment instruments, and data analysis procedures.

Addressing the issues of validity and credibility of conclusions, the study design involved persistent observation over an extended period of time, triangulation across data sources, and the use of transparent analytic methods. These issues will be discussed in more detail in the following two chapters. Due to the small sample size, generalizations or inferences can and should not be drawn, but rather a model and principles are proposed that other researchers should consider when undertaking similar projects.

Chapter 4 will describe the pilot study that tested short-term hybrid modules in a fourth-year German course. It includes information on the course, the participants, data collection procedures, treatment instruments, and data analysis procedures. The chapter

closes with a discussion of the results, based on which a hybrid course was developed and implemented the following semester.

CHAPTER 4

PILOT STUDY

To better understand what is happening in the advanced German classroom and how an integrated, hybrid approach of content and language might influence learners and learning outcomes, I observed a fourth-year German course and designed and piloted short-term hybrid modules to test format, content, and outcomes. Of particular interest were possible ways to address oral language development by providing students with multiple opportunities to create more language output without taking away from course content. Participants' engagement with the hybrid modules was tracked online and their perceptions were collected in a pre-post-treatment design.

This chapter describes the pilot study that followed a qualitative case study approach (Yin, 2003; Duff, 2008). It offers information on the course, the participants, data collection procedures, treatment instruments, and data analysis procedures. The chapter closes with a discussion of the results, based on which a hybrid course was developed and implemented the following semester.

4.1 Course

GRM 435: 18th and 19th Century German Literary Studies is a fourth-year content course that focuses on the representations of cultural identity, social issues, and intellectual debates through literature and other texts before 1919. In the spring semester during which the pilot study was conducted, the course topic was Biedermeier and Vormärz 1815-1848. The goals of the course as listed on the syllabus were:

1. To gain an understanding of the period and some of the significant literary texts.
2. To improve German skills (reading, speaking, and writing) through interaction with these authentic cultural texts.
3. To develop critical thinking skills by asking new and appropriate questions about this period. How can we re-evaluate the texts to gain new insight into the ideas and struggles of a previous generation?³⁰

The course followed a lecture-discussion model with heavy emphasis on reading and writing assignments, albeit many sessions were led by individual students and were supplemented to varying degrees with group activities and projects (see Appendix B for complete syllabus). It was a 3-credit course that met twice a week for 80 minutes.

4.2 Participants

*4.2.1 Teacher*³¹

The course was taught by a visiting professor, Gina³², who had recently completed her Ph.D. in literary and cultural studies with an emphasis on German Romanticism. Gina, a native speaker of English, had extensive teaching experience in lower-level language courses in US postsecondary settings, had co-taught a third-year German language course at MSU, and had taught a variety of levels in Germany including a third-year literature course. This was her first fourth-year course.

Gina had taken one course on teaching methods and a course on second language acquisition as part of her graduate requirements. The rest of her graduate coursework had focused on literary and cultural studies. She had used course management systems for most of the courses she had taught, however, that use was restricted to posting

³⁰ See Appendix B for the syllabus.

³¹ The descriptive information about the teacher is based on the initial interview (see Appendix C).

³² All participants were assigned pseudonyms.

information online and having students submit homework assignments electronically.

Gina had never taught or taken a hybrid course before but was very open to the idea of enhancing her classroom with hybrid modules, hoping they would represent a “nice change of pace” for her students.

When asked about her teaching style in the initial interview, Gina said that students usually read assigned texts at home, responded to teacher-prompted questions in class, and addressed questions in writing that challenged their critical thinking skills. Student-led presentations on authors’ lives and presentations of critical articles in relation to the primary texts were another major component of her regular classroom routine. Her objectives for the course were for students to learn about the time period in question, to learn about major literary texts produced during that time and how such texts reflected the political and social environment, to learn how to work with and interpret literary texts in general, and to advance their German skills, particularly reading, writing, and communication.³³ Students were mainly evaluated based on their writing assignments (80% of final grade); only 15% of the overall grade was in connection with oral proficiency (i.e., class participation, oral presentation, and discussion leading), however, the majority of these assignments focused on content rather than language.³⁴

From the beginning of the semester, Gina was very pleased with the language skills of her students. She felt that, overall, the students had very high levels of communication skills; only a few students had lower levels. She attributed that to the fact that these students had not studied abroad before and had therefore had less exposure to the German

³³ This last language-related goal is similar to the goal of the one instructor in Polio and Zyzik’s study (in press).

³⁴ The generic evaluation form for oral presentations, for example, included three sections: content, organization, German. Out of seven subcategories, only one addressed oral language use (“Student spoke clearly and slowly”).

language and culture. Gina also addressed the articulation gap between lower-level language and upper-level content courses as a problem for these students and speculated that the topic of 19th century literature may have been another reason for some students' difficulties in the course. Despite her students' "great language skills," Gina mentioned that oftentimes, students were hesitant to respond to the questions she posed in class and that group discussions lacked engagement. She hoped that students would benefit from the hybrid modules and that the online assignments would transfer into more engaged classroom discourse.

*4.2.2 Students*³⁵

Fifteen students were enrolled in the course, fourteen of which participated in the pilot study. Of these fourteen students, five were males and nine females. Three were juniors and eleven were seniors with an average age of 21. Five students had German as their primary major, eight as secondary major, and one student took the course because he was interested in German language and culture. On average, they had taken 6 years of German in high school and college combined; one student was a native speaker of German. All but two students (including the one who did not have German as a major) had traveled to Germany before.

When asked about their rationale for taking this course, twelve students indicated that it was a requirement and specified that they hoped to improve their understanding of the literature and culture of the specific period and improve their German language skills, particularly gaining speaking practice and maintaining listening, writing, and reading

³⁵ The descriptive information about the students is based on the initial questionnaire (see Appendix D).

skills. These dual content and language learning goals were similar to the ones reported in Polio and Zyzik's study (in press). All students indicated that they were interested in the German language, however, only seven students indicated that they were interested in German literature and three of them only in modern literature. Five students specifically stated that they were not interested in literature because it was "boring" and "difficult." These varied results were also similar to findings of Polio and Zyzik (in press).

In terms of technology experience, three students indicated that they had taken online courses before in economics, physics, and Spanish. All but one student had used computers as part of an assignment in foreign language classes, mainly to write papers, for web-based grammar assignments, to access online dictionaries, and to turn in assignments. Students liked the convenience of working with computers, being able to learn at their own pace, and the opportunity to receive immediate feedback. They disliked the lack of speaking practice, the fact that working with computers required more self-motivation, and the repetitive nature of certain assignments. Overall, students had a neutral to positive attitude toward using computers in foreign language classes³⁶; only two students indicated that they disliked using computers because of the boring and repetitive nature of online assignments. In terms of perceived benefits of computers and the Internet in foreign language classrooms, students mentioned easy access to authentic resources, the availability of listening materials and online dictionaries, and the interactive nature of online applications.

³⁶ Students were asked to rank how they felt about using computers in foreign language classes on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 indicating strongly dislike and 5 indicating strongly like. The average response was a 3.5, which ranked between "neutral" and "like."

4.3 Data Collection Procedures

One aspect of a rigorous qualitative study is data triangulation (i.e., the collection of data from multiple sources and using multiple methods to ensure their validity). Therefore, a variety of data were collected from different sources.

- (1) The instructor was interviewed on aspects pertaining to classroom practices at the beginning of the semester. Personal information such as background, course goals, materials/syllabus used to reach those goals, and perception of students' goals was also collected (Appendix C). The interview was tape-recorded and transcribed.
- (2) I observed the classroom for one week prior to implementing the hybrid modules to gain a better understanding of what is happening in the advanced German literature classroom. I took detailed notes, focusing on activity and exercise types, classroom interaction, and language use in general.
- (3) A questionnaire pertaining to classroom practices and expectations was given to all students on the first day of classroom contact. Personal information on backgrounds, previous language learning experiences, and reasons for taking the course was also collected (Appendix D).
- (4) Two short-term hybrid modules were implemented that were integrated into the regular syllabus as to not interrupt the normal dynamic of the class (see Chapter 4.4). Student access to the modules was tracked via ANGEL and assignments were logged online. I also observed the classroom during the implementation of the modules and in the weeks following.

- (5) A student questionnaire pertaining to perceived differences in classroom practices was given to all students at the end of the semester. Information regarding improvement of language skills and content learned in the class was also collected (Appendix E).
- (6) Two students were interviewed upon completion of the course to clarify and elaborate on questionnaire results (Appendix F). The selection process was based on voluntary participation. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.
- (7) Upon completion of the course, the instructor was interviewed on aspects pertaining to classroom practices, perceptions of online versus traditional activities, and additional topics that arose as the research progressed (Appendix G). The interview was tape-recorded and transcribed.
- (8) Artifacts such as the syllabus, readings, assignments, and handouts used throughout the semester were also collected.

4.4 Treatment

In the fall semester preceding the pilot study, I contacted Gina about her course and the possibility of implementing short-term hybrid modules that would provide her students with varied interactive and engaging opportunities to use the language online and that would allow me to test format, content, and outcomes of the modules before designing an entire hybrid course. She was open to the idea and we settled on class periods after Spring Break during which I could pilot my materials. Once her syllabus was finalized, we selected the primary text *Wally, die Zweiflerin* by Karl Gutzkow (1811-1878) for the

first hybrid module. The book is divided into three main sections, each of which was discussed for one week (the class met twice a week for 80 minutes each). My initial classroom observation took place during week nine and section one of *Wally*. I implemented the first module during week ten (section two of *Wally*) and observed the class again during the first session in week 11 (section three of *Wally*). The second module focused on the primary text *Die Judenbuche* by Annette von Droste-Hülshoff (1797-1848) and stretched over class sessions in weeks 12 and 13; I also observed the second class session in week 13. Face-to-face time was cut in half during the hybrid modules; students met for 40 minutes per class session instead of 80 minutes and were asked to spend the remaining time at their own convenience with the online materials that were all available on ANGEL. Gina felt that it was important to maintain bi-weekly contact with her students rather than meet once a week for the entire session during the implementation phase of the hybrid modules. Also, since the modules were short-term and introduced half way through the semester, I felt it would be best for those students who may not have access to the necessary hard- and software to be able to spend the remaining class time in the Language Learning Center on campus where all necessary programs were installed.

I had interviewed Gina about her classroom practices at the beginning of the semester and developed hybrid modules that would complement her teaching style without being intrusive or interruptive to the normal dynamic of her course. Instead of assigning stand-alone complex readings that were discussed in large groups and individual writing assignments on the course topic (Gina's normal teaching style), the first hybrid module consisted of a set of assignments students had to complete before, during, and after

reading the assigned primary texts. Such a pre-, during-, and post-reading framework has been advocated by scholars for many years because it prepares students for reading, guides them through a text, and extend the newly acquired knowledge (Grellet, 1981; Stoller, 1994; C. Wallace, 1992).

- (1) The pre-reading activities prepared students for the general content of the novel and sensitized them to difficult linguistic and grammatical aspects of the text. Second language acquisition research has shown that vocabulary knowledge is closely related to reading abilities (e.g., Bernhardt, 1990; Laufer, 1992; Nation & Coady, 1988; Qian, 2002; Stoller & Grabe, 1993; Tozcu & Coady, 2004) and a large vocabulary base is necessary for advanced university studies in a foreign language (e.g., Hazenberg & Hulstijn, 1996). Also, vocabulary knowledge is indispensable to acquire grammar (e.g., Ellis, 1997). Therefore, the pre-reading activities focused on these areas.
- (2) While reading, students were asked to keep notes on certain aspects, helping them to read purposefully and strategically and directing their attention to relevant contextual and linguistic concepts (e.g., Grabe & Stoller, 2001). The chapters were made available as mp3 files for students to download and listen to while reading. This allowed students to make explicit connections between the spoken and written form of the language (Lebauer, 2000).
- (3) Post-reading activities reviewed content and language found in the texts and offered opportunities for online speaking practice. Similar to talking

journals³⁷ that are successfully implemented at lower levels EFL/ESL classes (Allan, 1991; Foley, 1993), online conversation and pronunciation practice extended class time, integrated academic content and linguistic skills, and allowed attention to accuracy while practicing fluency.

The first module was divided into two parts, based on the portions of the primary text that had been assigned for the two class sessions in week ten. While both portions followed the pre-, during-, post-reading framework, not all of the above activities were included in each portion but rather a selection to allow for variety and exposure to and practice with all language skills.³⁸

In general, the hybrid modules were aimed at catering to different learner styles and learning modes and enhancing students' motivation for and enjoyment of the course through engaging and interactive activities. Prior to their implementation, I discussed all assignments with Gina and made modifications based on her comments, which focused mainly on functionality issues and on content that she had deemed too difficult for her students. I also modeled all activities in class before students had to work with them individually and provided detailed explanations of all assignment types online in case students encountered difficulties. In addition, students were encouraged to email me with any questions, particularly when they could not access certain technologies or when

³⁷ In talking journals, the teacher records a prompt or directions for the students, generally on individual audiotapes, students then record their reactions, and return the tapes to their teacher, who then records comments and/or feedback.

³⁸ The second hybrid module focused on difficult vocabulary items in the primary text and asked students to create a list of these words, including their definitions and examples of how the words could be used in a sentence. The text was divided so that each student would be responsible for one section. Students had to submit their vocabulary lists to a drop box before the text was discussed in class. Using their lists, I then created online crossword puzzles, where students could test their vocabulary knowledge.

glitches recurred. I wanted to circumvent student frustrations with failing technologies and wanted to keep students from spending hours online to complete the assignments.

Despite the fact that Gina believed that her students would “really benefit” from the exercises, Gina decided that she would not give students credit for completing the hybrid modules because she had not included these assignments in her syllabus and felt it was unfair to make changes throughout the semester. This had considerable effects on the modules and how students perceived them, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.6.

All assignments were posted on ANGEL in designated lesson folders, which would allow me to track students’ access. For each hybrid module, individual folders were created that contained relevant information, links, and drop boxes (see Appendix H for screenshots of the lesson folder for the first part of the first hybrid module and one of the subfolders).

In the following, I will briefly describe the individual assignment types that were part of the first hybrid module.³⁹

4.4.1 Word Associations

Word associations are common activities in vocabulary acquisition (e.g., Schmitt, 1998) that focus students’ attention on semantic aspects and prepare them for words and word clusters from a text that they may find difficult. Students were asked to submit 3-4 words or ideas that they associated with a given term in a drop box on ANGEL. The first word association assignment was:

³⁹ The assignments in the second module were targeted toward vocabulary acquisition and preparing students for understanding the primary texts. The assignments were similar to the ones described in the following and will therefore not be addressed separately.

Was assoziieren Sie mit den folgenden Begriffen? Schreiben Sie alle Ideen auf, die Ihnen spontan einfallen (3-4 Ideen pro Begriff sind OK). Sie müssen die Assoziationen am Freitag bis 17 Uhr in dieser Drop Box abgeben. Hier ist ein Beispiel für eine Liste mit Assoziationen:

Universität:

Lehrer

Hausaufgaben

Studenten

Wissen

Bildung

lernen

Schreiben Sie jeweils eine Liste zu den folgenden Begriffen:

- Natur

- Ehe

- Kunst

- Revolution

- Liebe⁴⁰

This assignment was included in the pre- and the post-reading folder to determine if students' vocabulary use had changed after reading the primary text.

4.4.2 Web Quests

Web quests are online scavenger hunts in which students are asked to find information on a certain topic online. This assignment prepared students for new and unfamiliar concepts that were treated in the text, for example the historical July Revolution or the term "tableau vivant." It also engaged students on a linguistic level by having them analyze, comprehend, and summarize authentic materials online (Simina & Hamel, 2005).

Students were asked to describe the terms in 1-3 sentences and upload them to a discussion forum so that all students would have access to the descriptions of these terms.

⁴⁰ What do you associate with the following terms? Write down any ideas that come to mind spontaneously (3-4 ideas per term are sufficient). You have to submit your associations on Friday by 5 p.m. to this drop box. Here is an example of a list of associations: "university" – teacher, homework, students, knowledge, education, learning. Compile a list for each of the following terms: nature, marriage, art, revolution, love.

4.4.3 Key Word Writing

To allow the students to use some of the important and recurring vocabulary items from the primary texts in a new context, they were asked to write sentences containing a selection of these words, as suggested by Hyland (2003). These sentences were submitted to a discussion forum to give all students access to what they had written. This assignment offered another way to sensitize students to keywords from the novel before they read the text and was designed as a fun activity that would familiarize them with potentially unknown vocabulary items.

4.4.4 Interactive Activities⁴¹

These activities were included in the pre-reading assignments to preview vocabulary items and grammar concepts and also in the post-reading assignments to give students the opportunity to self-check their comprehension. All activities were created in *Hot Potatoes*⁴² and linked to my personal web page.⁴³ *Hot Potatoes* offers multiple-choice, cloze, true-or-false, sentence scramble activities, and crosswords, some of which also allow for oral rather than written prompts. Unfortunately, *Hot Potatoes* does not track student access or completion of exercises. Therefore, I posted the direct link to the activities on ANGEL so I could at least check when students accessed my web page. What *Hot Potatoes* does offer is immediate feedback on the correctness of an answer and

⁴¹ The terms interactive/interaction and feedback are used here from a CALL perspective rather than from the perspective of the interaction approach.

⁴² *Hot Potatoes* is an online authoring tool that is available at no cost for educational purposes and allows users to create interactive exercises (<http://hotpot.uvic.ca/index.htm>).

⁴³ For examples, see <http://www.msu.edu/user/kraemera/Wally/VorDemLesen.html> for pre-reading activities and <http://www.msu.edu/user/kraemera/Wally/NachDemLesen.html> for post-reading activities.

a score in percentage. Appendix I shows screenshots of the post-reading activities for the first *Wally* module.

4.4.5 Sentence Rewrites

Sentence rewrites were only included in the pre-reading assignments and focused on complex grammatical aspects found in the novels. Since the primary texts were written in the 19th century, some of the grammatical structures were archaic and it was assumed that students would have a hard time deciphering them. This paraphrasing activity guided them in breaking down complex sentences into smaller constituents and encouraged explicit focus on form (e.g., Doughty & J. Williams, 1998; J. Williams, 2005). The activity was modeled in class before students were asked to complete it online. The following is an example:

Schreiben Sie den folgenden Satz um, so dass er keine Relativsätze und Konjunktionen enthält. Sie müssen Ihre Umschreibungen bis Montag um 17 Uhr in dieser Drop Box abgeben.

“Wenn wir im folgenden mehr ein Verhältnis schildern wollen, das in Wallys Hause und in ihrer Verwandtschaft sich entwickelte, so ist es deshalb, um einesteils über ihren Mann eine Ansicht zu haben, andernteils, um nichts zu unterlassen, was zuletzt doch berichtet werden müßte, weil es eine entscheidende Folge hatte.”

Beginnen Sie so: “Im folgenden wollen wir ein Verhältnis schildern. Das Verhältnis...”⁴⁴

4.4.6 Notes

While reading the primary texts, students were asked to take detailed notes on a pre-specified set of characters and concepts that would facilitate in-class discussions.

⁴⁴ Rewrite the following sentences by eliminating all relative clauses and conjunctions. You have to submit your rewrites on Monday by 5 p.m. to this drop box. [Sentence follows] Begin your rewrite like this: [First relative clause is eliminated by ending the main clause and replacing the pronoun with its referent.]

4.4.7 Audio Files

19th century texts provide several challenges for 21st century foreign language students of German. For one, the texts are culturally and linguistically removed both from a national as well as a temporal perspective. The texts are complex and in a variety of the foreign language that may be unfamiliar in terms of genre as well as diachronic linguistic features (Lyman-Hager, 2000). Having the option to listen to the text while reading therefore allows the learners to combine the intonation patterns and the pronunciation with the letters and punctuation symbols they see on the page. This is hypothesized to enhance their understanding of the reading materials and to help them develop reading fluency. From my experience, listening to foreign language students read German literary texts aloud, their intonation indicates lack of understanding or misinterpretation of the text. Listening to the correct intonation may help them identify the important elements of a sentence and the relations among them, especially in syntactically complex sentences (as referred to above). In addition, especially those students who have studied abroad may know the sound of a word, but not its spelling. Hearing it will help them recognize it. As suggested by Grabe and Stoller (2001), having students read along silently while they listen to the teacher read aloud can help develop overall fluency, rate, and word recognition. Therefore, I recorded the chapters of the second section of *Wally* and posted the mp3 files on ANGEL for students to download and listen to. It also provided more exposure to listening to a native speaker other than the instructor, an aspect that Gina felt lacked in most upper-level content courses.

4.4.8 Chapter Summaries

Students were assigned portions of each primary text that they had to write a short summary of, adding a title and a discussion question. As reading provides the foundation for synthesis and critical evaluation skills (e.g., Grabe & Stoller, 2001), this assignment asked students to read carefully, summarize the gist in a title and short description, and go beyond the text by offering a critical discussion question. Students were asked to upload their summary to a discussion forum that allowed all students to access their information. Students were also asked to review all summaries before class and to respond to at least two of their peers' discussion questions. These summaries were then used as a springboard for in-class discussions.

4.4.9 Online Speaking Activities

To practice and improve their speaking and listening abilities, students had to listen and respond to content questions online and received oral feedback on their answers. Using *Audio Assignments*, a program developed by Dennie Hoopingarner at MSU⁴⁵, students subscribed and listened to my pre-recorded questions, gave short answers, and received oral feedback from me on their production. The assignment directed students to the Language Learning Center on campus, in case they did not have the required hard- and/or software to work with the program. The content questions usually started out with a brief description of a character or situation and also included an open-ended question where

⁴⁵ *Audio Assignments* (<http://www.audioassignments.com/>) is a program that allows teachers to create structured speaking assignments. Assignments consist of a question prompt, student responses, and teacher feedback. Teachers create assignments, students record their responses, and teachers listen and give feedback to the students. Teachers subscribe to the program for a \$50 fee; students can access the program for free. The program stores all recordings on its server, so no large audio files need to be sent back and forth between teacher and students.

students had to speculate on the reasoning behind certain actions, provide information on how they would have reacted in a similar situation, hypothesize about the next chapter, or elaborate on their own assessment of a character's behavior or actions.⁴⁶ The online speaking activities also included a question on areas where students experienced difficulties with reading the text and gave them an avenue to comment on the text as a whole.⁴⁷

4.4.10 Pronunciation Practice

While students in advanced-level courses have generally mastered segmental features of the language (i.e., articulation of individual sounds), suprasegmental features such as intonation, rhythm, and stress still pose problems (e.g., Goodwin, 2001). To provide targeted pronunciation practice, I recorded sentences from the primary texts in *Audio Assignments* and asked students to record their own voice, comparing their recording with mine. Students also received oral feedback on their recordings.

4.5 Data Analysis Procedures

Yin (2003) pointed out that “[a]nalyzing case study evidence is especially difficult because the strategies and techniques have not been well defined” (p. 109). He suggested principles that should guide sound analysis procedures, including “attending to all the

⁴⁶ Examples are: “1. Beschreiben Sie den sardinischen Gesandten Luigi. Was denken Sie über sein Verhalten? Können Sie sich mit ihm identifizieren? Warum oder warum nicht?” [Describe the Sardinian minister Luigi. What do you think about his behavior? Can you identify with him? Why or why not?]; “2. Beschreiben Sie Wally am Ende von Kapitel 10. Wie reagiert sie nach dem Selbstmord von Jeronimo? Wie hätten Sie in der Situation von Wally reagiert?” [Describe Wally at the end of chapter 10. How did she react after Jeronimo's suicide? How would you have reacted in her position?]

⁴⁷ “Womit hatten Sie beim Lesen der Kapitel 6-10 Schwierigkeiten? Was war einfach? Was war kompliziert?” [Where did you have difficulties reading chapters 6-10? What was easy? What was complicated?]

evidence” and addressing “the most significant aspect” (p. 137). Data analysis, therefore, included evaluations of the classroom observations and artifacts, evaluations of all questionnaires and interviews, as well as detailed examinations of the hybrid modules and students’ access and responses to the online assignments.

As case studies are “driven by the researcher’s and the discipline’s current interests” (Duff, 2008, p. 17), I analyzed the data with respect to promising hybrid assignment types for integrating linguistic skills and academic content as well as potential benefits of online technologies for language development in upper-level literature courses as perceived by the participants. I did not, however, formally assess students’ proficiency levels at the beginning or end of either one of the studies (pilot or hybrid).⁴⁸ My dissertation work focused on students’ perceptions of online assignments that offered extended opportunities for linguistic development as well as the functionality of the online assignment types I had developed. I felt that assessing oral development over the course of a two-week pilot study or a semester-long class was not warrantable or conformable with my primary goal of investigating student perceptions. Inferential comments on language development will be made based on a comparison of student production at the beginning and the end of the study. Needless to say, such comments can only be made about the semester-long hybrid study and not the short-term pilot study.

For the pilot study, data analysis of the classroom observation notes, the syllabus, and the initial instructor interview focused on identifying salient themes that provided a baseline for assignment types typically used in a traditional advanced-level content course as well as typical classroom interaction patterns. Responses to close-ended student

⁴⁸ This is one of the limitations of the study and will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 7.4.

questionnaire items were quantified and nonparametric repeated measures tests were performed to determine potential significant differences in student ratings.⁴⁹

Following Stracke's (2007) analysis of open-ended questionnaire and interview responses, such items were examined in terms of positive, negative, or critical attitudes toward the hybrid modules and technology in the language classroom in general. All responses to the questionnaires and interviews were compared within and between participants, following a cyclical, iterative design (Duff, 2008). In terms of analyzing students' access and responses to the online assignments, the focus was less on the content of students' responses but more on the functionality of the modules and how students reacted to them. Their online activity was automatically logged on ANGEL and frequencies were calculated. It needs to be pointed out that tracking students' logged activity does not necessarily translate into active engagement with online assignments. Students may have clicked on an assignment but may not have read or worked with the activity, or their access may have been logged right before their computer crashed or before they started chatting with a friend in another browser window. Accurate tracking of students' online performance would require screen capturing and eye-tracking, which has been suggested for measuring second language acquisition in CALL environments (Smith, 2008) but which the German Studies Program did not have the capabilities for. While there certainly are limitations to what online tracking can tell us about student learning, it does offer an approximation of learning behavior that is more detailed than what instructor observations of traditional face-to-face classes can reveal. Moreover, it

⁴⁹ This also allowed for direct comparison with the results presented in Polio and Zyzik (in press).

offers an unobtrusive way to track student actions in independent learning contexts (Fischer, 2007).

The data were checked for similarities and differences in students' responses to the hybrid experience, identifying salient and repeated themes and patterns, based on which the modules were redesigned for the hybrid course.

4.6 Results

The main goal of the pilot study was to test format, content, and outcomes of the hybrid modules. I was particularly interested in organizational issues such as when and where to post the hybrid modules, when to assign due dates, the activity types that students would respond to and engage with, as well as students' overall perceptions of the modules, especially in comparison with the traditional assignments in class. The collected data yielded a plethora of information beyond these areas; however, only those aspects that were immediately relevant to this study will be presented here.

4.6.1 Classroom Observations

To establish a baseline in terms of what is happening in the advanced German literature classroom at MSU, I observed the course during two class sessions before the implementation of the hybrid modules. I was interested in assignment types typically used in an advanced-level content course, typical classroom interaction patterns, as well as language use in general. As mentioned above, the syllabus suggested a traditional teaching approach (i.e., heavy focus on reading and writing, lecture-discussion model),

which was further underscored by the initial interview with Gina and the classroom observations.

The classroom was arranged in rows and students tended to sit in the middle and rear half. Gina began her classes by writing an outline on the board of topics that would be covered. In the first session observed, two students gave presentations in German on the author Gutzkow's life (10 minutes) and his works (12 minutes). During the presentations, some students seemed to take notes, others leafed through papers, and one student, Bianca, was on AIM on her laptop. The presentations ended with three discussion questions that were moderated by the two presenters with the help of Gina. Only three students participated in the discussion. Gina posed additional questions, to which none of the students responded at first; she rephrased a few of her questions and eventually Benjamin, the native speaker in class, offered his opinion and two other students responded as well, one of them in English. After 40 minutes (when half the class was over), Gina split the class into five groups and assigned approximately four pages of the primary text to each group with the task to summarize the content. All groups seemed to be on task; only one group, however, completed the assignment in German. After ten minutes, Gina asked a group representative to write keywords on the board and summarize their portion in German. She supplemented the groups' summaries with additional information and posed questions on content and the meaning of individual vocabulary items. Student answers were very slow and Gina called on specific students to respond to her questions. With ten minutes left to go, Gina directed her students' attention to ANGEL where she had posted information about upcoming assignments and discussed the midterm, which she handed back.

Overall, there was little student participation in class discussions and Gina employed a variety of elicitation strategies to encourage student answers, which, if at all, the same set of students responded to. In terms of language focus, the first class session focused on individual vocabulary items and their meaning, sometimes initiated by the students (either when they did not understand a word in the text or when they did not know how to express what they wanted to say in German), sometimes initiated by Gina (in reference to the text). Gina spoke German throughout and most students used the target language as well when speaking up in class though not always in group work.

The second session I observed was very similar to the first one. It contained a student-led presentation, followed by a teacher-led lecture on the historical and political background of the time period that included questions posed both by Gina (usually ending in “Was meinen Sie?” [What do you think?]) and by the students. Some students asked questions in English⁵⁰ but for the most part Gina encouraged her students to use German whenever possible. Instead of group work, Gina discussed the Gutzkow text with the entire class. She started out asking broad questions about the content of the primary text, which students did not respond to. When Gina posed more focused questions, different students promptly answered.

Once again, most of the language focus was on individual vocabulary items (“Wie sagt man ENGLISH TERM?” [How do you say ENGLISH TERM?]). I did notice one instance of recasting by Gina after a student had used the term “geselbstmord” several times:

Lauren: “Sechs [Menschen] sind geselbstmord.” [Six [people] are suicided.]

Gina: “Sie haben Selbstmord begangen.” [They committed suicide.]

⁵⁰ English questions were often introduced by a precursory “I can’t express that in German.”

Gina also often used comprehension checks as parts of her lecture. Her explanations were generally follow-up with “Ja?” with rising intonation [Right?].

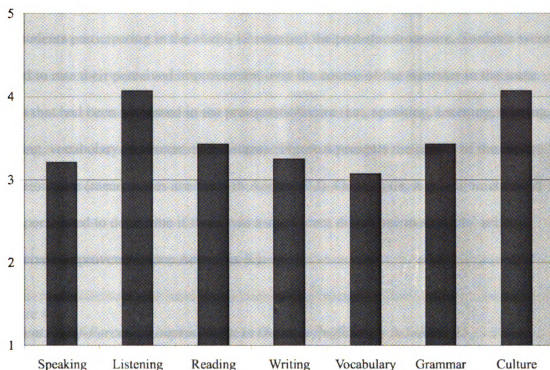
The classroom observations confirmed my expectations of typical advanced-level content courses: Much of the interaction followed a lecture-discussion model (the lecture being either by the teacher or by individual students), students were hesitant to participate in class discussions⁵¹ and seemed to have difficulties with the comprehension of the assigned primary texts, and explicit language focus centered around explanations and translations of individual vocabulary items.

4.6.2 Student Responses

At the beginning of the study, the students were asked to rate their proficiency in and knowledge of German in seven areas: speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and culture. While self-assessments of this kind are subjective and may not accurately reflect students’ actual proficiency in these areas, they provide deeper insights into students’ own perspectives and are an important facet of helping students to construct knowledge, to attain autonomy, and to actively shape their learning experience (e.g., Chen, 2008). Quantified average results are presented in Figure 3 (Appendix J lists mean scores from both the pre- and post-questionnaire). A nonparametric repeated measures test (Wilcoxon Signed Ranks) was performed to determine if there was a significant difference in students’ self-perceived proficiency (Appendix K summarizes significant differences from both the pre- and post-questionnaire).

⁵¹ This further confirmed findings from Dontao and Brooks (2004) and Zyzik and Polio (2008).

Figure 3
Students' Self-Perceived German Proficiency in GRM 435



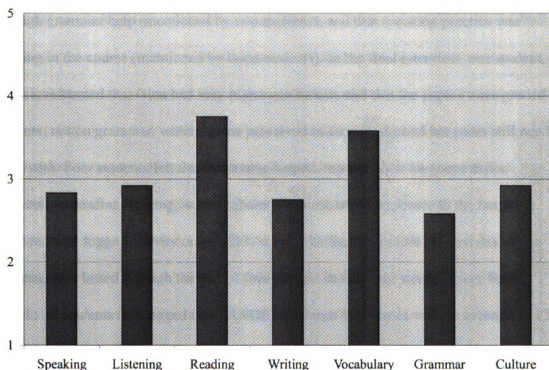
Note. This graph indicates average scores of students' self-perceived proficiency in and knowledge of the areas of speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and culture. Results are based on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being very weak in a given area and 5 being superior.

Students rated their listening and cultural skills as best, and significantly higher than speaking, vocabulary, writing, and reading. Knowledge of vocabulary as well as speaking and writing skills were ranked lowest, however the differences were not significant. An open-ended question asked students to specify the area in which they felt weakest and why; the majority of them listed speaking because they were concerned about mistakes and lacked vocabulary to express their thoughts.⁵²

⁵² These results are similar to Polio and Zyzik's (in press) findings of advanced-level Spanish learners' perceptions of their language skills. Their results revealed that students rated listening as best and significantly higher than the other skills (their study did not include culture as a knowledge area) and the majority of students also listed speaking as their weakest skill on the open-ended question.

The post-questionnaire contained questions in relation to students' self-perceived improvement in language proficiency and their perceptions of classroom practices. Of the 14 students participating in the study, 12 returned the post-questionnaire. Students were asked to rate their perceived improvement over the course of the semester in the same areas that had been addressed in the pre-questionnaire (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and culture). Figure 4 presents the results of the post-questionnaire (mean scores are listed in Appendix J). Once again, a nonparametric test was performed to determine if there was a significant difference in students' self-perceived improvement (see Appendix K).

Figure 4
Students' Self-Perceived Improvement in German Proficiency in GRM 435



Note. This graph indicates average scores of students' self-perceived improvement in the areas of speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and culture. Results are based on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being no improvement as a result of taking this course and 5 being enormous improvement as a result of taking this course.

Due to the text-based nature of the course, it is barely surprising that students rated their improvement of reading and vocabulary⁵³ highest, and significantly higher than speaking, writing, listening, and grammar.⁵⁴ What is surprising though are the low mean scores for writing and grammar (even though statistically not significant).⁵⁵ The course focused heavily on composition and Gina's written feedback on her students' essays, while mainly focusing on content, included some comments on grammar. A closer look at students' responses to the open-ended post-questionnaire items will help illuminate this disconnect.

When asked if their German language abilities improved as a result of taking this course, six students clearly said no and highlighted that the materials were too complicated, that the course focused on literature and not language, that there was not enough grammar help (mentioned by two students), and that speaking practice was lacking in the course (mentioned by three students). In the final interview, one student, Lynne, reiterated that Gina had very high expectations and that the papers were graded on content, not on grammar, which Lynne perceived as an area she and her peers still needed help with. Four students felt that the course helped improve their language skills, particularly reading, writing, and vocabulary because of the exposure to the language.

Students' logged activity on ANGEL started the Sunday before the first day of the semester and lasted through the end of finals week. In the eight weeks before Spring Break, all students had logged on to ANGEL between 9-19 times with an average of 13

⁵³ The course appeared to be successful in addressing the area that students had rated as their lowest skill (i.e., vocabulary) in the pre-questionnaire.

⁵⁴ These results are different from Polio and Zyzik (in press) who found that students rated their improvement in speaking as significantly worse than all other areas (culture was not included on the questionnaire).

⁵⁵ Results from Polio and Zyzik (in press) showed that students rated their improvement in grammar as worse than all other areas except speaking.

times total or 1.6 times a week. ANGEL access peaked during the implementation phase of the hybrid modules: The first module was implemented over the course of one week and all students had logged on between 3-18 times with an average of 10 times; this represents a sextupled logged activity per week.⁵⁶ This leads me to believe that the students were curious to see what the modules were about.⁵⁷ Despite the fact that students did not receive credit for these activities and could have simply not worked with them, access and response rates were high and students appeared engaged.

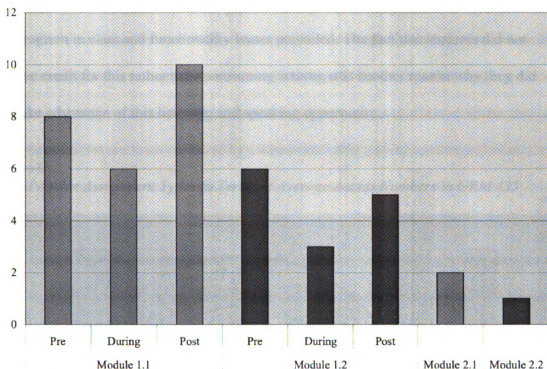
Participation in the hybrid activities decreased from the first to the second module and across parts within each module. All 14 participating students accessed the pre-reading folder of module 1.1 and 13 students accessed the during- and post-reading folders. For module 1.2, 13 students accessed the pre-reading folder while all students accessed the during- and post-reading folders. Module 2.1 was accessed by 12 students, module 2.2 only by 6 students. These numbers reflect a steady decrease.

Figure 5 shows average student access numbers to the different parts of each module. As can be seen in Figure 5, in module one, students were least interested in the during-reading activities and generally accessed all subfolders of the first part more often than the subfolders in the second part.

⁵⁶ The week following module one, all but one student logged on between 1-5 times with an average of 3 times. During module two (1.5 weeks in length), all students logged on between 2-10 times with an average of 5 times. The last three weeks of the semester, all but one student logged on between 4-30 times with an average of 8 times.

⁵⁷ As pointed out above, measures of logged activity do not necessarily translate into active engagement with materials or assignment completion.

Figure 5
Average Student Access Numbers for the Hybrid Modules



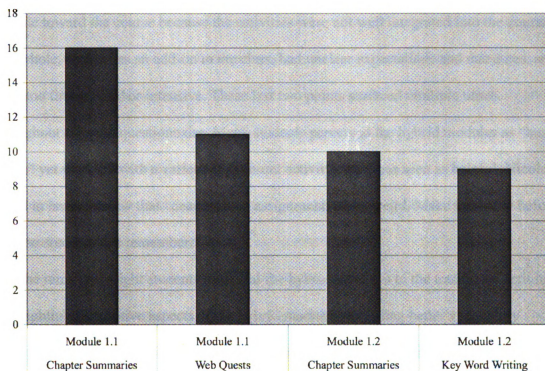
Note. Both hybrid modules were divided into two separate folders on ANGEL: Modules 1.1 and 1.2, and modules 2.1 and 2.2. The first hybrid module was further divided into pre-, during-, and post-reading folders. This figure shows average student access numbers to the modules during the implementation phase.

A closer look at access numbers of the individual assignment types in module one as outlined in Chapter 4.4 is presented in Figure 6. Chapter summaries were by far the most popular hybrid assignment in terms of average student access numbers, followed by web quests and key word writing. All other assignment types were accessed on average less than 3 times per student with pronunciation practice as the assignment with the lowest access rate.⁵⁸ Only six students had subscribed to the online speaking activities in module 1.1 and only two students had subscribed to the ones in module 1.2. Of these students

⁵⁸ Even though six students had accessed this assignment on ANGEL, none of the students subscribed to the prompts I had recorded in *Audio Assignments*.

only one, Benjamin, answered the first of five questions in module 1.1.⁵⁹ Many students reported difficulties accessing the voice-recording program even though I had modeled the program in class and functionality issues prevailed. The fact that students did not receive credit for this rather time-consuming activity was another reason why they did not take advantage of this listening and speaking opportunity.

Figure 6
Most Popular Assignment Types in Terms of Average Access Numbers in GRM 435



Note. This figure presents the most popular assignment types of module one in terms of average access numbers during the implementation phase.

In terms of the hybrid modules, results showed that students enjoyed working online and felt it gave them more exposure to and diverse opportunities using the language in a non-threatening environment. Of the 12 students who completed the post-questionnaire, only

⁵⁹ One other student, Nicole, tried for multiple hours to record her answers without success and eventually turned in a written version of her responses.

one specifically expressed a strong negative influence of the hybrid component on her attitude toward the course because it was “unexpected and irritating.” This student, Bianca⁶⁰, who also had been chatting online when I observed the class, gave the class the overall worst rating and assessed improvement in content knowledge and language proficiency in all areas as none to minimal. With the exception of Monica, Bianca logged on to the modules the least often and appeared to be rather disengaged.

Three other students expressed a negative influence of the hybrid component on their attitude toward the course because the activities were not well integrated into the course as a whole, seemed as an add-on to the class, had unclear expectations and due dates, and were too time and labor intensive. These last two points surfaced multiple times throughout the post-questionnaire. Many students perceived the hybrid modules as “busy work,” yet working with a variety of different activity types was seen as helpful. Nicole stated in her interview that “deadlines on assignments were weird. Make them due before class so students can remember.”

The remaining eight students preferred the hybrid activities to the traditional activities and highlighted positive aspects of the hybrid modules, including better vocabulary retention, improved listening comprehension, improved understanding of complex 19th century authentic texts, interactive activity types, self-paced learning, and higher attention rates. As Monica stated: “It was a great way to learn and understand the themes by myself, outside of the classroom.”

Overall, students’ experiences with and perceptions of the hybrid modules were positive. Their suggestions for change centered on shortening the modules, implementing

⁶⁰ Bianca was a German major who had studied the language for 4 years in high school and for 3 years at MSU. She had participated in a 6-week exchange program in Germany the summer prior to this semester.

them from the beginning into the course, and setting convenient due dates of assignments.⁶¹ The two students who participated in the final interview both commented on the assignment types and mentioned that the post-reading activities seemed “redundant” and “a waste of time” because the text was discussed in class and content questions were posed by Gina. This explains the decrease in student access numbers indicated in Figure 5. Both students highlighted the benefits of the pre-reading activities that helped them prepare for understanding the primary text. Lynne, one of the two students, also commented on the speaking activities: “I liked the idea behind the speaking activities. It was a no pressure situation.” In response to the question of how the effectiveness of the hybrid modules could be increased, Lynne said that students should receive credit for their work. As indicated above, I had initially planned for students to receive credit for their work, but Gina decided that she could not make changes to her syllabus halfway through the semester. This might have affected students’ attitude toward and engagement with the modules to a large extent.

4.6.3 Teacher Responses

During the final interview, Gina expressed her satisfaction with the course and her students. She felt that the three goals she had set for this course were accomplished: The final student presentations showed that students had a grasp of the topic and their written work served as evidence of improved language and critical thinking skills. She did acknowledge though that getting her students to speak remained a challenge throughout

⁶¹ As seen in Nicole’s quote above, students were irritated by due dates that fell out of the norm of what they were used to. They preferred due dates right before class because many students would work on course materials and assignments the day of class.

the course⁶² and that she needed to be more transparent in terms of assessment criteria. In contrast to her students' perceptions, Gina felt their writing abilities had improved immensely.

Regarding the hybrid activities, Gina stated that they should have been integrated better into the whole course and not simply added on to her students' responsibilities. Still, she felt that in-class discussions were more engaged as a result of the hybrid modules and that more students participated in face-to-face discussions following the hybrid assignments than usual. She also observed a more positive attitude because students seemed to have understood the readings better and were able and willing to engage more during in-class discussions. Gina speculated that her students' attitudes would have been influenced even more positively had they received credit for their work.

When asked about the individual activity types, Gina specifically emphasized the value of the audio files of the texts because they addressed the need for listening components in an upper-level class: "The audio recordings were fabulous. In 400-level courses, there should be more listening because there is not that much exposure to the spoken language." She felt that the audio files and the online speaking activities accomplished exactly that and gave her students much needed opportunities to listen to a native speaker.

In terms of connecting the teaching of literary and cultural content with language instruction at the advanced level, Gina supported the notion of bridging the gap. "You can't let either side slide. My course goals reflected that. I think it's important to do both. You can't talk about Heine without talking about the complexity of his sentences or talk

⁶² As I had joined the class only halfway through semester and was only present for a few class sessions, I was in no position to assess proficiency levels or evaluate developments in students' speaking skills, or any other skills, in this specific course.

about Kafka without talking about the subjunctive.” While this comment speaks of the importance of vocabulary and grammar knowledge to dissect complex authentic texts (e.g., Ellis, 1997; Qian, 2002), the latter of which her students felt was neglected in this course, it does not address the need for more opportunities to develop speaking skills to actually discuss the readings in the target language (e.g., Davis et al., 1992). In order to address this problem, I developed a hybrid course that would give students varied opportunities to actively engage with the language and create output, with particular emphasis on speaking.

4.6.4 Summary of Victories and Challenges

In summary, results from the pilot study revealed that the majority of students enjoyed working online and felt it gave them more exposure to the target language in a non-threatening environment. These positive results are particularly encouraging when considering that students did not receive credit for their work and had therefore no external motivation to complete the assignments. Based on student responses, the hybrid modules were successful in offering increased opportunities for vocabulary retention, improved listening comprehension, improved understanding of authentic readings, interactive and self-paced learning, and higher attention rates. Generally, those activities that prepared the students for the texts ahead of time were found more helpful than post-reading activities. Chapter summaries, web quests, and key word writing activities appeared to be the most popular assignment types in terms of frequency of access.

A variety of problems surfaced regarding organization, content, and functionality. Students perceived the hybrid assignments as add-ons to their regular workload, found

them too time and labor intensive, and reported unclear expectations and due dates. Some assignment types were perceived as redundant because they were part of the regular classroom routine; for example, the post-reading activities that checked comprehension were similar to content questions posed by Gina. While most assignment types were successful in engaging students and connecting language skills with content, the online speaking activities that I was most interested in were among the least accessed activities. Since students had to log on to a different program outside of ANGEL that only I had access to, they felt it was the easiest assignment to “ignore” because Gina could not “monitor” their work. For all other assignments, Gina had direct access through ANGEL. In addition, functionality issues with *Audio Assignments* kept students from recording their responses.

The design of the hybrid modules resembled what Polio and Zyzik (in press) proposed as a possible solution to the language-literature gap, an adjunct model with a literature and a language expert co-teaching. However, students did not perceive me as a full-fledged instructor because I did not teach them in a traditional manner or grade them. While the modules resulted in no additional work for Gina, my time commitment for developing, revising, and implementing the modules was substantial and would have been significantly larger had students recorded their spoken responses and had I given oral feedback.

Based on the results from the pilot study, the short-term online modules were revised and extended into a complete hybrid course on fairy tales that was implemented in the subsequent fall semester at Michigan State University. As was suggested by the pilot participants, the hybrid course implemented online modules from the beginning,

integrated online assignments throughout the syllabus and course requirements, trained students in the necessary technologies, and allowed for variety in assignment types.

Chapter 5 will describe the hybrid study, including information on the course, the participants, data collection procedures, treatment instruments, and data analysis procedures.

CHAPTER 5

HYBRID STUDY

5.1 Course

The first consideration in the development of the hybrid course was an appropriate course topic. GRM 455 at Michigan State University is a fourth-year course on major themes in German cultural history and the special course topic is open to the interest and expertise of the faculty member teaching it. Topics in the past have included literary genres, minorities in Germany, nationalism, or popular cultures. For the hybrid version of this course, fairy tales were selected as the major topic due to their popularity among students (Davidheiser, 2007), their potential for increasing participation as a result of lower anxiety with known texts (Blickle, 1998), their short length and the appropriateness of the level of vocabulary (H. Weber, 2000), their potential for teaching about culture (Ecke, 2004), and their accessibility online. The special course topic was listed as “The German Fairy Tale Tradition” and moved beyond merely reading and discussing fairy tales to an exploration of the global circulation of these stories through history and their sociocultural impact.

Relegated today to the realm of children’s literature, fairy tales were originally told among adults to create communal bonds in the light of the overpowering inexplicable forces of nature. These oral tales challenged common values, norms, and belief systems (Zipes, 1999). In general, fairy tales negotiate key ideas in human experience such as good and evil, life and death, love and abandonment, violence or nourishment (Lüthi, 1982). They are cultural documents that have a general appeal but are also specific in

how they express morals and social values. Fairy tales are an important aesthetic repository of cognitive and emotive knowledge and a tool that individuals, communities, and nations utilize to work through deep anxieties, painful experiences, hopes, and aspirations (Zipes, 2001). As cultural documents, they lend themselves as excellent material for foreign language courses that integrate literature, culture, and language (Roberts-Gassler, 1987). Not only can fairy tales help students develop their fluency, but also support active learning of vocabulary and interpretation skills while making students more knowledgeable about literary and cultural history.

GRM 455 is an advanced-level literature and culture course and students generally enroll during their last semesters of coursework in their German major. As a prerequisite, students have to have had at least two courses at the third-year level, which focus on advancing all four language skills (i.e., speaking, listening, writing, and reading) and learning about Germany's place in the world through various media types. As pointed out above, special topic third-year courses include business German and German literature and culture before and after 1918.

The course description for GRM 455 read as follows (see Appendix L for the complete syllabus):

Once upon a time, long before Tolkien, Disney, or Rowling, two brothers named Grimm published a collection of fairy tales that went on to have an immense cultural impact throughout the world. The Grimm fairy tales will be our textual point of departure for a multi-faceted, integrative exploration of this popular and influential genre through time. We will examine traditional cultural theories of the fairy tale, psychoanalytic and pedagogical approaches, and contextualize this genre in cultural and social history. The focus is on the role that the literary fairy tale by male and female writers assumes in the civilizing process.

Aside from studying some of the tales in depth, we will discuss how the Grimm brothers collected the tales, how they changed over time, and how they portray values and ethics of different (European) cultures. To this end, we will compare the Grimm versions of some tales to other well-known versions (e.g., from the

Italian Renaissance, early courtly fairy tales in 17th- and 18th-century France, and contemporary Disney adaptations) and look at the different societal and moral codes they promoted. The course explores how the fairy tale has become institutionalized in Western culture as a means to communicate about social and psychological experiences, a mode of socialization, and a way of institutionalizing culture, norms, values, and taste. We will extend our readings to 20th-century fairy tale adaptations and discuss the relevance of these themes for present-day Germany.

The course was divided into eight broad themes. At the beginning of the semester, the focus was on secondary readings that furnished the students with relevant socio-historical and literary background information to situate the tales in a European cultural context. The themes included: (1) introduction (including the history and development of fairy tales, characteristics and elements, and research traditions); (2) collectors of tales (including the life and works of the Brothers Grimm and Frenchman Charles Perrault, 1628-1703, who is well-known for his collection of tales entitled *The Tales of Mother Goose*); and (3) interpretation of fairy tales (including cultural theory, social history approaches, and psychoanalytic and pedagogical approaches). Once a general knowledge base had been established, the course moved on to discuss various primary texts within the following broad themes: (4) male and female socialization (including *Dornröschen* [Sleeping Beauty] and *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella]); (5) animal grooms (including *Das singende, springende Löweneckerchen* [Beauty and the Beast] and *Froschkönig* [Frog Prince]); (6) family relationships (including *Hänsel und Gretel* [Hansel and Gretel]); (7) fairy tales and media (including illustrations and Disney versions based on Perrault); and (8) fairy tales today. Different European versions of the five major fairy tales were discussed and compared with each other, with the modern Disney versions, and with other short tales from different international origins. The reading load was similar to other fourth-year courses with approximately 20 pages in German per class session.

The goals of the course were:

1. To gain an understanding of the literary genre of fairy tales and the developments it underwent throughout German cultural history.
 - a. To develop a critical understanding of how people live in a culture not as an “add-on” but as a medium in which we act.
 - b. To learn to analyze significant social and cultural processes in the social history of Europe.
2. To improve German skills (reading, speaking, writing, and listening) through interaction with these authentic cultural texts.
3. To develop critical thinking skills by asking new and appropriate questions about this genre and the relevant time periods. How can we re-evaluate the texts to gain new insight into the ideas and struggles of previous generations?

In its traditional design, this 3-credit course meets two times a week for 80 minutes each.

For the hybrid course, seven class sessions (24%) were replaced with online activities to allow students to work on online assignments both individually and collaboratively.

Three additional class sessions throughout the semester (10%) met in the Language Learning Center where the different technologies were explained to the students mainly in the target language and where they had additional time to work on the various assignments under the teacher’s supervision. As pointed out above, such training sessions are crucial because inadequate training of teachers and students in using online technologies is one of the major problem areas of CALL (e.g., Barrette, 2001; Sánchez-Serrano, 2008; Winke & Goertler, 2008).

The course management system used for this class was ANGEL, where all online assignments, course materials, and grades for GRM 455 were available. Students were notified in the syllabus that the online assignments were intended to help them with the course materials and with practicing their German language skills. Since I was proposing a new course model, I felt it was of utmost importance to provide students with as much

detail as possible and a specific rationale for its implementation, including benefits for the students. These aspects were also discussed at length during the first week of class.

Face-to-face sessions were structured in a student-centered format in which all participants (including the teacher) sat in a semi-circle⁶³ and one or two students were in charge of leading the discussion and posing questions to the group (for which they were graded). Whenever possible, engaging and interactive team or group tasks were implemented in class such as the creation of a contemporary version of a Disney film production, for which students had to apply and transfer what they had done online to a new context and which they had to present to the class. This gave students the opportunity to further practice their language skills.

5.2 Participants

5.2.1 Teachers

The course was co-taught by a senior faculty member, Maria, who served as mentor to me, an advanced graduate student, who was in charge of all online assignments and the majority of face-to-face sessions. Maria, a native speaker of German, had a background in literary and cultural studies and extensive teaching experience in lower-level language, upper-level content, and graduate courses in US postsecondary settings. As mentor, Maria supervised the entire course and observed and facilitated some face-to-face sessions. Since I was in charge of implementing all online assignments and most face-to-

⁶³ Several students mentioned in the weekly self-evaluations and final interviews that they liked sitting in a semi-circle because “people really respond to sitting like that-like we’re all on the same level” (Judy) and “the open class format of sitting in a circle resulted in more discussion than in other classes” (Angela).

face sessions, I will focus on my own experiences and perceptions in the remainder of this study.⁶⁴

I attended a German university from which I obtained the equivalents to American B.A. degrees (*Zwischenprüfung*) in German and English language and literature studies. I also received additional certifications in German as a foreign language and in pedagogy. While attending the German university, I worked as an assistant in the German as a foreign language department and mentored freshmen in the English department. Upon completion of the *Zwischenprüfungen*, I joined the German Studies M.A. Program at Michigan State University, where I worked as teaching assistant, gaining several years of experience teaching lower-level courses (both first and second year). I completed M.A. degrees in German Studies and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and joined the Ph.D. Program in German. During my graduate studies, I assisted in a variety of upper-level content courses and was able to implement short-term modules myself. GRM 455 was the first fourth-year course I was able to teach on my own (under Maria's supervision).

My interest in technology had been sparked by my work as graduate assistant in the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), where I developed content for an innovative web-based program for learning, practicing, and assessing pragmatic language skills. Through the close contact with the undergraduate students in our program that spanned beyond their completion of my courses, I became increasingly aware of the disconnect between lower- and upper-level courses. Based on my academic background as a researcher and teacher, researching classroom practices and improving

⁶⁴ The descriptive information about me is based on the initial reflective essay I wrote (see Chapter 5.3).

teaching methods have always been areas of particular interest to me. In addition, I have always felt that students' views and perceptions of classroom practices and instructional methods were not adequately taken into account when designing courses, which led to the topic of the present study.

*5.2.2 Students*⁶⁵

Nineteen students were enrolled in the course, fifteen females and four males. Two students were native speakers of German (Rita and Benjamin) and one was a near-native speaker (Evelyn). Sixteen were seniors and three juniors with an average age of 21. Six students had German as their primary major, nine as secondary major, and the remaining four students took the course because they wanted to maintain and advance their language proficiency. On average, they had taken 6 years of German in high school and college combined. All but two students had traveled to Germany before.

When asked about their rationale for taking this course, sixteen students indicated that it was a requirement and specified that they hoped to improve their fluency and their understanding of German literature and culture.⁶⁶ All students indicated that they were interested in the German language. Eleven students indicated that they were interested in German literature and two students specifically stated that they were not interested in literature. These varied results are similar to the findings in the pilot study and to the findings of Polio and Zyzik (in press).

⁶⁵ The descriptive information about the students is based on the initial questionnaire (see Appendix D).

⁶⁶ These dual content and language learning goals were similar to the ones reported in the pilot study and in Polio and Zyzik (in press).

Students rated their technology skills as good to very good.⁶⁷ In terms of technology experience, three students indicated that they had taken online courses before in economics, educational administration, and microbiology. One of these students, Monica, had also been enrolled in GRM 435, along with Benjamin and William. All but one student, Rita, who felt very hostile toward using computers because “it can get frustrating and confusing,” had used computers as part of an assignment in foreign language classes, mainly to write papers, for CD- or web-based homework assignments, to watch German TV, to prepare PowerPoint presentations, and to access online dictionaries. Students liked the convenience and flexibility of working with computers, the access to a variety of materials and information that caters to different learner types (e.g., visual and auditory learners), the interactive nature of online applications, the extension of class discussions outside the classroom, and the self-paced and low-pressure nature of online environments. “It allows for a more intense, multifaceted experience” (Tim). Students disliked the time commitment required for many online activities, the lack of clear instructions and easy access to hard- and software, frustrations caused by equipment failures, and the lack of technology support. Jill summarized these sentiments well: “Computers are great and allow one greater flexibility, but nothing beats being face-to-face. They aren’t a cure-all magical pill. But computers and the Internet allow students more time to reflect and continually add to discussion. They create debate outside of classroom time.”

⁶⁷ Students were asked to rate their technology skills in regards to using computers and the Internet on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 indicating very weak and 5 indicating superior. The average response was a 3.5, which ranked between “good” and “very good.” Only one student, Rita, rated it with 1, and one student, Peggy, rated it with 5.

Just like the students in the pilot study, these students had an overall neutral to positive attitude toward using computers in foreign language classes.⁶⁸ As mentioned above, Rita strongly disliked the use of computers in general. The other two students who disliked the use of computers in foreign language classes were Benjamin and William, who both had taken GRM 435 the previous semester. William had rated his sentiments in the previous semester as neutral (3 on a 5-point Likert scale), Benjamin had rated his feelings towards computers as very positive (5 on a 5-point Likert scale). Their negative attitude toward computers in GRM 455 may have resulted from their experience in the pilot study.⁶⁹ Monica, on the other hand, had been open to the use of computers in foreign language classes both at the beginning and the end of the pilot study (4 on a 5-point Likert scale). Her experience in GRM 435 seemed to have had a positive effect because she indicated on the pre-questionnaire in GRM 455 that she strongly liked using computers in foreign language classes (5 on a 5-point Likert scale).

5.3 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures for the hybrid course were similar to the ones used for the pilot study. In order to triangulate data, the following procedures were employed:

- (1) A questionnaire pertaining to classroom practices and expectations was given to all students on the first day of class. Personal information on backgrounds, previous language learning experiences, and reasons for taking the course was also collected (Appendix D).

⁶⁸ Students were asked to rank how they felt about using computers in foreign language classes on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 indicating strongly dislike and 5 indicating strongly like. The average response was a 3.5, which ranked between “neutral” and “like.”

⁶⁹ William had reported at the end of the pilot study that the hybrid component did not have an effect on his attitude toward the course. Benjamin had reported a negative influence.

- (2) I, the main teacher/researcher⁷⁰, wrote a reflective essay on aspects pertaining to classroom practices on the first day of classroom contact. Personal information such as background, course goals, materials/syllabus used to reach those goals, and perception of students' goals was also included.
- (3) I kept a reflective blog over the course of the semester, focusing on my perceptions of how assignments worked both in class and online.
- (4) Throughout the semester, student access to the hybrid course portions (see Chapter 5.4) was tracked via ANGEL and assignments were logged online.
- (5) A student questionnaire pertaining to perceived differences in classroom practices (compared to previous advanced-level content classes taken) was given to all students at the end of the semester. Information regarding improvement of language skills and content learned in the class was also collected (Appendix M).
- (6) All students were interviewed upon completion of the course to clarify and elaborate on questionnaire results (Appendix N). The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.
- (7) Upon completion of the course, I wrote a reflective essay on aspects pertaining to classroom practices, student engagement, language development, and additional topics that arose as the research progressed.
- (8) Artifacts such as the syllabus, readings, assignments, and handouts used throughout the semester were also collected.

⁷⁰ One of the major limitations of the study is that the teacher was also the researcher. This will be further discussed in Chapter 7.4.

5.4 Treatment

The hybrid course was developed based on recent trends in foreign language education, which emphasize student-centered, engaged, and active learning (e.g., Bean, 2001; R.-M. Conrad & Donaldson, 2004; Lee, 2005; Meskill, 1999), work toward enhanced proficiency (e.g., Byrnes, 1998a; Saussy, 2005), and capitalize on the benefits of technology (e.g., Felix, 2001; Gannon, 2004; Hokanson, 2000; Sanders, 2005). A major objective of the course was to address the gap in empirical research on advanced-level German students' perceptions of the effectiveness of hybrid assignments with particular focus on continuing to develop speaking skills in a literary and cultural studies course.

Results from the pilot study were used as a baseline to design the hybrid course. In addressing the problems found in the pilot study, the course integrated online assignments throughout and gave students credit for their work. A variety of online assignments were selected that would allow for an integration of academic content and linguistic skills while attending to the above-mentioned trends in foreign language education. The online assignments were aimed at catering to different learner styles and learning modes and enhancing students' motivation for and enjoyment of the course through engaging and interactive activities. Students were notified in the syllabus that these assignments were intended to help them with the course materials and with practicing their German language skills. They were also trained in the necessary technologies and technology support was provided on a needs basis. Training took place mainly in the target language as to enable students to talk about technology in German.

As was the case in the pilot study, all assignments were posted on ANGEL in designated, time-sensitive lesson folders, which would allow me to track students' access.

Unlike in the pilot study, the online assignments were not divided into pre-, during-, and post-reading activities but were arranged by assignment type. Certain assignments still assisted students at the various stages of reading authentic texts but were not overtly designated as such. Because of the nature of the primary texts in GRM 455 (fairy tales as opposed to long, complex 19th century novels), I did not feel it was necessary to focus the hybrid assignments on such a division. Results from the pilot study had also indicated that students did not take equal advantage of these categories (Figure 5) and a categorization by assignment type seemed to be more fitting for the hybrid course. Each lesson folder on ANGEL contained detailed information on the assignment, expectations, and due dates. Appendix O shows a screenshot of the main lesson folder for this course.

In the syllabus, the grading criteria listed 25% of the final grade for online assignments. However, many of the other assignments for which students received credit had an online component, as will be illustrated below. All assignments were evaluated regularly and grades were uploaded to the ANGEL grade book. I hoped that by providing students with ongoing information on where they stand and their progress (or lack thereof), they would feel more responsible for their work and could better gauge time and effort put into the course. To help them keep track of their assignments and due dates and to increase students' own responsibility even further, students were given an assignment checklist and all due dates were also listed in the calendar function on ANGEL, including individual reminders for presentations.

In the following, I will briefly describe the individual assignment types that were part of the hybrid course. For the majority of the online assignments, only the best portion counted toward the final grade because of the plethora of assignments. This allowed for a

buffer and enabled students to skip certain assignments if they did not have enough time or did not feel prepared to complete them.

5.4.1 Self-Evaluations

Self-evaluations require students to critically reflect on what they have (not) done and what they have (not) learned, which makes them more responsible for their own work by keeping track of their performance (Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs, & Robinson, 2004). Students had to complete an online survey at the end of each week that was created in ANGEL (Appendix P). The survey contained ten multiple-choice items⁷¹ that asked for preparation, participation, and performance rankings. It also included five open-ended items where students had to summarize what they had learned, could voice their opinions, offer suggestions for improvement⁷², and were asked to grade their overall performance, to which I made adjustments if necessary. The survey items were all in English. Students received feedback and a grade on their evaluations on a weekly basis in the grade book on ANGEL. The survey was due before the first class session each week and ten out of 15 evaluations counted toward the final grade.

5.4.2 Online Speaking Activities

Even though students in the pilot study had not taken advantage of the online speaking activities, I included a similar assignment to provide ongoing speaking and listening practice. As has been pointed out, targeted listening and speaking practice are areas that

⁷¹ The options were provided in form of a drop-down menu online where students had to select the answer that fit best.

⁷² These suggestions were taken into account throughout the semester and changes were made accordingly. For example, students requested longer access to class readings, so I changed the access dates on the respective sub-folders.

are oftentimes marginalized in advanced-level courses that focus on content because its implementation can be time-consuming and the instructor's expertise is generally in literary and cultural studies and not language acquisition. As Liskin-Gasparro (2000) observed: "it is a rare upper-division course that includes systematic attention to the development of students' language skills" (p. 841) and the area has not been widely researched (Donato & Brooks, 2004). In order to address this gap, online speaking activities were made an integral part of the hybrid course. A program called *Conversations* was used. It was developed by CLEAR and is available online at no charge for non-commercial, educational use.⁷³ The program lends itself to simulate face-to-face conversations, role-plays, or virtual interviews and enables instructors to establish a more personal relationship with each student. In addition, it allows teachers to assess their students' speaking skills much more accurately and, more importantly, early on in the semester.

Each week, students had to listen and respond to my prompts that generally addressed topics in the reading assignments. I provided individualized oral feedback⁷⁴ to their responses focusing on content and language in *Audio Assignments*, which gave students the opportunity to leave questions for me in return. Students were graded on content, accuracy, fluency, and vocabulary. The lesson folder contained a detailed description of the programs' functionalities and during the first lab session I modeled an activity and gave students the opportunity to practice using the program under my supervision.

Screenshots of *Conversations* are provided in Appendix Q.

⁷³ Students only need speakers and a microphone to work with the program. Teachers have the option of allowing their students to practice or use the live mode. *Conversations* can be accessed at <http://clear.msu.edu/teaching/online/ria/conversations/index.php>.

⁷⁴ As pointed out above, the terms interactive/interaction and feedback are used here from a CALL perspective rather than from the perspective of the interaction approach.

Some prompts asked for specific information based on the readings (e.g., name four aspects that influenced the development of fairy tales as discussed in an assigned reading), some asked students to interpret certain aspects of the readings (e.g., compare the main characters of two tales and discuss their similarities and differences), while others were simply used to work on intonation and stress patterns (e.g., read and record a fairy tale and compare it with my recording). Appendix R offers a selection of prompts used in this course.

These weekly activities gave students the opportunity to practice their listening and speaking skills in a non-threatening environment, removed from their peers, and at their own convenience and pace. It also allowed them to monitor their own progress and increase their proficiency and fluency over the course of the semester, and it enabled me to respond individually to each student. The assignment was due before the first class session each week and ten out of 15 conversations counted toward the final grade.

5.4.3 Chats

Research on peer-to-peer chatting has found positive results in terms of creating community among students, improving personal confidence, offering opportunities for real communication, and overcoming writing apprehension (e.g., Ortega, 1997; Skinner & Austin, 1999). Designed as a fun activity, the students had to chat with at least one of their classmates three times during the semester. I created chat rooms in ANGEL that were time sensitive and automatically logged students' chats. The topic of the chats was left open; the only requirements were that the chat had to be in relation to the course (e.g., students could continue a class or online discussion, comment on the readings, or discuss

a movie in relation to the topic) and that each student had to contribute at least 20 turns in each chat with a turn consisting of a complete sentence, containing at least a noun, verb, and object.

This assignment allowed for interactive, real-time communication between the students. Because the assignment was designed to allow students to use the language spontaneously, no feedback was provided as to not inhibit their language use but I read all chat logs and deducted points if multiple turns were off topic or in English. All three chats counted toward the final grade.

5.4.4 Blogs

A blog or weblog is “a Web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 1999). Their high level of interactivity stems from connections (in the form of hyperlinks) made to other resources and the option for readers to directly comment on what the author wrote. In the language classroom, students can show development over time and use them as a creative outlet for language use. One of the major advantages of blogs is that the readership can extend beyond the teacher and classmates. “Self-publishing encourages ownership and responsibility on the part of the students, who may be more thoughtful (in content and structure) if they know they are writing for a real audience” (Godwin-Jones, 2003, p. 13). ANGEL includes blogs that restrict accessibility to the secured environment of the class and was therefore chosen over free online services.

I set up a blog for each student and arranged them in alphabetical order by first name. The task was to write a reaction to class assignments, readings, or discussions or other

experiences in connection with the course topic every other week. Blog entries needed to be in German and at least 5 sentences long with a sentence containing at least a noun, a verb, and an object. Blogs were graded on language and content. Students were also required to respond to at least three blog entries of their peers, forcing them to read each other's blogs. The blogs were intended as a fun environment in which the students could write about the course topic. I commented on the blogs every other week and challenged some of the things the students had written. Five out of seven blogs counted toward the final grade.

5.4.5 Threaded Discussions

Research on online discussions found that students used lexically and syntactically more complex language structures than in face-to-face discussions, highlighting potential advantages of this assignment type (e.g., Warschauer, 1996). Because of the overwhelming positive feedback on chapter summaries in the pilot study, each student was in charge of posting a brief summary of one of the assigned readings, along with an interesting quote from or statement about the text and two critical, open-ended questions. The class was divided into two groups by last names and all students in each group had to alternate in contributing to the weekly discussion. This allowed the students to continue in-class discussions and to react to their peers' points of view. The student in charge also had to moderate the discussion online and react to the comments posted. The lesson folder for threaded discussions on ANGEL included discussion forums for each individual topic and all students had access to all forums. While the blogs allowed the students to go beyond the readings, the threaded discussions were intended as a reinforcement of the assigned

texts and they could also be used as a springboard in class to stimulate discussion. They also strengthened students' critical thinking and expression skills. The moderation as well as five comments counted toward the final grade and students were graded on content and language. Appendix S shows a screenshot of the threaded discussion folder.

5.4.6 Web Quests

Web quests had been one of the most popular and frequently accessed hybrid assignments in the pilot study, which was why they were also implemented in the hybrid course. They were designed to help students better understand a certain topic or reading and to find related information online. As has been pointed out, web quests engage students on a linguistic level by having them analyze, comprehend, and summarize authentic materials online (e.g., Simina & Hamel, 2005). Three web quests were assigned over the course of the semester either before a specific topic was discussed in class in order to allow students to gain some knowledge on the topic (e.g., history and development of fairy tales) or after the topic was discussed in order to find information from a different perspective (e.g., fairy tales in other German-speaking cultures). Students had to find at least two sources of information online and annotate them (i.e., they had to provide a brief summary of the content of their sources in German including a personal comment on why the source is relevant and how it could be used in the context of the course).

The tasks were posted on ANGEL and students also submitted their results to a drop box on ANGEL that was accessible to all students. The assignment for the first web quest read as follows:

Das Thema für den ersten Web Quest ist “Geschichte und Entwicklung von Märchen”.

Bitte suchen Sie Informationen im Internet zu diesem Thema. Erstellen Sie eine Liste mit Links und annotieren Sie diese Liste. Annotieren bedeutet, dass Sie eine kurze Zusammenfassung über den Inhalt jedes einzelnen Links schreiben. Die Zusammenfassung sollte mindestens 3 Sätze lang sein.

Schreiben Sie auch Ihre eigene Meinung zu den Links, warum die Information relevant ist und wie sie in unserem Kurs verwendet werden kann.

Links können individuelle Webseiten sein, Bücher, Audiodateien, Videoclips usw. Sie können Links über verschiedene wichtige Personen suchen oder auch über Kulturen, Epochen in der Geschichte, literarische Werke usw.

Jeder Student muss mindestens 2 Links finden und in der Drop Box auf ANGEL abgeben.⁷⁵

By engaging with a certain topic in a creative way, this assignment prepared the students for the following readings and exposed them to themes and vocabulary items they encountered later in the texts. This online assignment provided a smooth transition to the theoretical background texts. Two out of three web quests counted toward the final grade and students were graded on content and language.

In general, the assignment allowed students to browse German web sites and be exposed to authentic materials. It was also intended to help them refine their online research skills, engage deeper with the topic, practice skimming and scanning in the target language, and synthesize the information in their own words. The annotated results served as a resource for other assignments such as reaction papers and the final paper.

⁷⁵ The topic of the first web quest is “History and development of fairy tales.” Please search for pertinent information online on this topic. Compile a list with links and annotate your list. Annotating means to provide a short summary of the content of each link. Your summary should be at least 3 sentences long. Write your opinion about the link, why the information is relevant, and how it could be used in our course. Links can include individual web sites, books, audio files, video clips, etc. You can search for links on different important figures or on cultures, time periods in history, literary works, etc. Each student has to find at least 2 links and submit them to the drop box on ANGEL.

5.4.7 Wiki

Wikis are social computing tools that focus on reading and writing in an interactive and engaging way. “They feature a loosely structured set of pages, linked in multiple ways to each other and to Internet resources and an open-editing system in which anyone can edit any page (by clicking on the ‘edit this page’ button)” (Godwin-Jones, 2003, p. 15). One of the best-known examples is *Wikipedia*. Wikis use content as their organizing principle (as opposed to blogs which are arranged chronologically) and offer a great opportunity for collaborative online projects. In terms of language development, wikis

foster attention to aspects of language use that span from appropriate lexical choice to syntactic accuracy and from rhetorical style to textual cohesion and genre specificity. Furthermore, they have the potential to encourage awareness of the use of written language and visual expression as forms of representation that are rooted in, often pluralistic, linguistic and cultural conventions. (Sykes, Oskoz, & Thorne, 2008, p. 530)

Wikis allow users to create, edit, and link web pages and give the teacher as space organizer the opportunity to review any changes made on any page and compare different versions of pages that are logged, which provides insights into students’ writing processes (e.g., Kost, 2007). Appendix T shows an example of the course wiki, including the outline of topics students had to work on.

Wikis provide diverse opportunities for students to use the language in a non-threatening environment, at their own convenience and pace, and with the option of editing and revising. They integrate content and language by asking students to synthesize and summarize course materials and express them using their own words. Links to authentic online materials can be included to supplement students’ own written products. Wikis can function as great resources for students to review course content and create a collaborative drop box of materials related to a course. Particularly in upper-level content

courses, wikis can help students share references and materials for course assignments and encourage interaction with authentic materials found on the web. Students can continue engaging with the course materials outside of class by summarizing and reformulating class readings and additional online resources.

Due to the collaborative nature of this tool, it provides ample opportunities for students to interact with each other outside the classroom (Sykes et al., 2008). Therefore, I set up a wiki for this course using *Wikispaces*⁷⁶, with the task to create an online resource that would cover the major topics discussed in class. Students had to contribute to two major topics, one of which could coincide with the topic they did their oral report on. Grades were based on the final draft of the wiki site⁷⁷ and students were evaluated on content, language, and editing.

5.4.8 Online Readings

Ercetin's (2003) study on hypermedia reading revealed that the online presentation of texts had a positive impact on students' attitudes towards reading on the computer. While the majority of the texts in this study was not presented as hypertext, it was still hoped that ease of access and storage as well as the ability to adjust the font size would have a favorable effect on students' reading habits, as suggested by Noam (1998). In addition, while reading online, students were found to access online dictionaries frequently and looked up substantially more words than when using paper dictionaries (e.g., Roby, 1999), which helped advance comprehension and language development. All fairy tales were

⁷⁶ *Wikispaces* is a publicly available provider of free wiki space that can be accessed at www.wikispaces.com. As space organizer, the teacher can invite students as members, restrict editing rights to members only, and restrict open access to certain pages (e.g., the main page cannot be modified by students). The wiki itself is public but for a small fee, space permissions can also be set to private.

⁷⁷ Earlier drafts of the pages were studied for research purposes.

available on the web and, whenever possible, other class readings were made available in password protected, time-sensitive folders on ANGEL. This was also a practical consideration, as I wanted to cut down on the number of books students needed to purchase and the number of copies I needed to make.⁷⁸

5.4.9 Audio Files

The benefits of audio files of reading assignments in terms of language development have been outlined in Chapter 4.4.7. Even though only few students in the pilot study took advantage of the audio files of the primary texts, I posted audio files of all fairy tales and some additional secondary texts, alongside their written versions on ANGEL. This enabled students to listen to the texts while reading along. I felt, as did Gina and the students I had interviewed at the end of the pilot study, that opportunities for listening comprehension lacked in upper-level content courses, particularly longer stretches of spoken German by a variety of native speakers. Most fairy tales were available as mp3 files to download on the web or I recorded them for this class. Other audio files included short biographies of the main collectors of fairy tales and fictional interviews with them and served exclusively as listening comprehension activities.

5.4.10 Interactive Activities

In the pilot study, students reported that the interactive activities were useful in terms of vocabulary and grammar work. I had created these activities ahead of time based on the readings and felt that a different approach that would make the students not only receptive

⁷⁸ Apart from the syllabus that was handed out on the first day of class, there was no paper used in this course. All assignments, including papers, were submitted online and students received feedback online using Word's comment function.

users but creative producers of such activities would be a more powerful tool for learning. Constructivist learning theories see teaching and learning as a bi-directional activity (e.g., Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978). Empowering students to teach themselves and each other helps them process information in meaningful ways, which leads to more efficient learning and greater retention (e.g., Carlson, 2003). Students were therefore given the task to develop interactive activities for their classmates on one of the secondary articles they had read for a discussion leading, using the free CLEAR program *SMILE* (Server-Managed Interactive Language Exercises)⁷⁹. Similar in its functionality to *Hot Potatoes*, *SMILE* offers easy access to templates for creating interactive language practice activities that include a variety of exercise types (i.e., multiple choice, true or false, drag and drop, sentence mix, paragraph mix, cloze, and multiple select). No software packet needs to be downloaded and installed for *SMILE*, which makes the program more accessible for students than *Hot Potatoes*. Most exercise types in *SMILE* allow for immediate feedback, which the student-author has to provide as well. The program therefore offers deeper engagement with content materials and can also include linguistic exercises (e.g., semantics, pragmatics, sentence- or paragraph-level processing). All individual exercises can be grouped into one activity that is assigned its unique URL and published online. The sample activity I created that models the exercise types is shown in Appendix U.

Students were asked to devise activities that could focus on vocabulary items in the text, grammatical structures, or specific content and post them before class on the day of the assigned reading. It was hoped that in the process of creating these activities, students would review what they had learned and rephrase the information to make it more

⁷⁹ *SMILE* is available at <http://clear.msu.edu/teaching/online/mimea/smile/v2/index.php>.

comprehensible for their peers. To ensure that students would work with each other's activities, they were required to respond to the activities of at least seven of their classmates and write short reflective statements about them that were uploaded to a drop box only I had access to. The actual activities were graded on content and language.

5.4.11 Multimedia Team Project

Sykes et al. (2008) noted that emerging media offer “(a) meaningful contexts for L2 language development and (b) a means for adding real world relevance ... transforming the practice of collaborative content building, dissemination, and categorization” (p. 529). Furthermore, familiarity with digital media is seen as highly relevant for students’ “current and future lives as language users” (Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008, p. 560) in social, academic, and professional environments. As pointed out above, collaborative projects offer ample opportunities for students to interact with each other outside the classroom, strengthening team working and communication skills. In addition, student-led projects that utilize new technologies not only encourage ownership and responsibility through self-publishing (e.g., Pederson & D. Williams, 2004), but can also make assignments more meaningful and relevant when producing them for a real audience (e.g., Godwin-Jones, 2003). In order to combine all these aspects, students had to collaborate on team projects that encouraged the use of all language skills.

Fairy tales reveal a lot about the culture(s) in which they were told, about socialization, values, and ethics. Therefore, the course also included a discussion of cultural identity as part of the introduction outlined above and woven in throughout the discussion of the tales. For their midterm, students had to create a multimedia team

project on their own cultural identity that consisted of three parts: (1) What am I?/What is identity?; (2) What is American?; and (3) Interactive Activities.

Each project needed to include a video and/or audio component, some text, and interactive exercises on the content. Optional features were images and additional links. A variety of CLEAR products, all available at no charge, were used to create the project: *Viewpoint*⁸⁰ for recording or uploading audio and video files (similar to *YouTube*), *SMILE* to create interactive exercises, and *Mashups*⁸¹ to combine the different online sources in one web page.

It was important to me to create a context that would force students to combine and apply all of their language skills and to create an assignment that carried meaning beyond the classroom. Therefore, the projects were compiled in a separate web site and shared with an 8th grade English class at a German Gymnasium.⁸² The German students were encouraged to comment on the projects in a blog and engage in a transatlantic exchange.

Students had to collaborate on all parts of the assignment and received a single grade for their work that evaluated language and content.⁸³ For parts 1 and 2, I set length requirements that the groups had to adhere to. Depending on the students' comfort and technology level, they could either produce a short video clip in German describing their identity and what it means to be American or they could complete the assignment through visuals, which they had to present (i.e., record) orally. Students were advised that if they did not have a video camera, web cam, or microphone available, they could use the

⁸⁰ *Viewpoint* is available at <http://clear.msu.edu/viewpoint/>.

⁸¹ *Mashups* is available at <http://clear.msu.edu/teaching/online/mashup/index.php>.

⁸² Even though 8th grades are significantly younger than American undergraduates, this grade level was deemed appropriate because their English curriculum covers "Die Vereinigen Staaten von Amerika" [The United States of America] as the overarching theme. The transatlantic exchange allowed the German students to expand their knowledge about America and Americans by engaging with the projects.

⁸³ Detailed feedback on all aspects of the project was provided in the ANGEL grade book.

technologies in the Language Learning Center. Part 3 asked them to create activities corresponding to the content of their video/presentation using *SMILE*. All components were then uploaded to *Mashups* where the groups could add images, text, links, and additional video and audio clips. The sample mashup I created as a model is shown in Appendix V.

This assignment not only asked students to critically engage with their own identity, but also to become creative users of various technology applications and to express themselves in multiple modes.

5.4.12 Other Assignments

Other assignments included three short reaction papers, an oral presentation on materials only read by the presenter, an in-class discussion leading on materials read by all students, and a final paper. For descriptions of these assignments, please refer to Appendix L. Students were also given multiple opportunities for extra credit throughout the semester, for example, when attending German guest lectures or opera performances of fairy tales that were staged on campus.⁸⁴

As was mentioned above, for the majority of the online assignments, only the best portion counted toward the final grade. This allowed for a buffer and enabled students to skip certain assignments if they did not have enough time or did not feel prepared to complete them.

While not an assignment per se, I set up regular online office hours on ANGEL. As noted by Wankat and Oreovicz (1999), office hours are a central aspect of the educational process because they provide individualized interaction between teacher and student.

⁸⁴ In order to receive extra credit, students generally had to submit short reflective statements about the events they attended.

Traditional office hours, however, are limited by time and space. Since this course was designed as a hybrid course, I decided to move office hours to the online environment, hoping to encourage students to take advantage of this platform. Past experience has shown that students are reluctant to come to office hours even though they may have questions. Online office hours offer a more convenient medium, automatically log the conversation between teacher and student, and have the added advantage of “increased opportunity for the students to directly communicate with the teacher and/or with other students” (F. L. Wallace & S. R. Wallace, 2001, p. 196).

5.5 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis followed the same procedures as for the pilot study (see Chapter 4.5) and included evaluations of all questionnaires, interviews, and reflective statements as well as detailed examinations of the hybrid course components and students’ access and responses to the online assignments. In analyzing the data, a variety of statistical analyses were run to determine significant differences. These will be explained in more detail in the relevant sections of Chapter 6.

The data were checked to confirm that the hypotheses given in Chapter 1 hold true. Specifically, I looked for similarities and differences in students’ responses to the hybrid experience, identifying salient and repeated themes and patterns that can help others in designing and implementing similar hybrid courses. The goal of my study was to explore opportunities for the continuing development of linguistic skills in the context of a literature course as well as participant perspectives of the effects of technology in the language learning context.

The following chapter will provide and discuss the results of the analyzed data according to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1.2. The perceptions and evaluations of all participants are reported, highlighting the effectiveness and limitations of the treatment instruments and a general evaluation of the hybrid course.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents and discusses the collected data in terms of the effectiveness and limitations of the treatment instruments for integrating linguistic skills and academic content in an upper-level German class. In order to manage the plethora of data, results will be presented according to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1.2.

It is the goal of this chapter to highlight participants' perceptions of the online assignments, offering a general evaluation of the hybrid course. As pointed out above, the focus was less on students' products but more on the process of working online, the functionality of the assignments, and how students perceived the hybrid activities. I was particularly interested in ways that enhanced students' active engagement with the language, specifically in terms of advancing oral production, while attending to content. It will be shown how students' perceptions can be translated into more effective instructional practices and how hybrid courses offer a possible way to bridge the language-literature gap in upper-level content courses.

6.1 Research Question 1:

Students' Perspectives on Hybrid Language Learning

Research question 1 investigated students' perspectives on hybrid language learning, specifically in terms of advancing oral skills, within the context of an upper-level content course. This question aimed at illuminating students' perceived benefits of technology applications and assignment types for language learning and offered insights into what is

happening in the context of foreign language content classes in terms of language development.

6.1.1 Technology and Language Learning

Recall that all but one student (Rita) had used computers as part of an assignment in previous foreign language classes, mainly to write papers, for CD- or web-based homework assignments, to watch German TV, to prepare PowerPoint presentations, and to access online dictionaries. 89% of the students specifically stated at the beginning of the study that computers and the Internet are beneficial for language learning because they afford convenience and flexibility, offer access to a variety of materials and information that caters to different learner types (e.g., visual and auditory learners), are interactive in terms of assignment types, extend class discussions outside the classroom, and allow for self-paced and low-pressure learning in the online environment. While a few students mentioned benefits in terms of extended listening practice, only one student specifically addressed speaking skills. Benjamin cautioned that “it is very difficult to use a computer to practice *speaking* German because you usually don’t receive feedback.” Students disliked the time commitment required for many online activities, the lack of clear instructions and easy access to hard- and software, frustrations caused by equipment failures, and the lack of technology support. Jill summarized these sentiments:

1. Computers are great and allow one greater flexibility, but nothing beats being face-to-face. They aren’t a cure-all magical pill. But computers and the Internet allow students more time to reflect and continually add to discussion. They create debate outside of classroom time. (Jill)⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Student quotes are numbered consecutively.

6.1.2 Classroom Practices

In previous upper-level German courses, students had been mainly exposed to lecture-discussion models including extensive reading and composition assignments, group projects, and film clips. Only few students mentioned the use of online assignments in their previous coursework. In general, students liked group projects, in-class group discussions, and film clips best. For group projects and discussions, students highlighted their engaging, interactive, and collaborative nature, that such assignment types accomplish the most in terms of comprehension and learning, and the fact that during such assignment types students “get a chance to speak with other students” (Judy). Students appreciated the immersive environment of film clips and stated that films held their interest better because it did not feel like studying. “I found it an effective way to improve comprehension and picked up new words from subtitles” (Sabrina). In the words of Cathy:

2. I prefer film clips, group projects, & online activities, because I feel that since these involve collaboration w/ peers, it allows one to improve their skills gradually w/ the help of others; it’s more interactive and hands-on. (Cathy)

At the end of the study, students were asked to comment again on activity and exercise types and compare the online assignments to those in their previous courses. 56% of students clearly preferred the online activities to traditional assignments because they offered more exposure to and practice with the language. The following comments illustrate this point:

3. It was nice to have a combination and activities like the web quest were fun. Because it was so diverse it stayed interesting while lecture-type classes are very boring and less effective. (Benjamin)
4. The only other activities were generally book work, which was boring. The online activities made the homework more interesting. (Angela)

5. Using the language through a variety of mediums vs. read, take notes, paper, repeat. That's why I like the idea of technology. (Sabrina)
6. We used current things + *not* the overhead all the time. (Judy)
7. I liked the online activities because they force you to think in German outside the classroom and in a more casual, less daunting way. (Monica)
8. This course had me involved way more, while at first I hated (a lot of work) but now I'm extremely glad for it! I learned *way* more here than I have before. (Amanda)

Students particularly highlighted the speaking activities for extensive listening and speaking opportunities and blogs because they offered an engaging and fun way for practicing writing. Gordon noted that because "all activities in this course were online, this is the only class that advanced my speaking ability."

33% of students indicated that they liked the combination of both traditional and online assignments that was offered in this course because the various assignment types complemented each other well. A general tendency among these students was that the overall heavy workload took away from the potential of the online assignments, as Jen pointed out: "I think I would have enjoyed the technology aspect even more if there was not so many things that we had to do. It was really hard to keep track of all the activities."

The remaining two students (11%) clearly preferred traditional activities because they liked being lectured (Rita⁸⁶) or felt that editing abilities fell short online (Susie⁸⁷). This affected their perception of language development in this course:

9. I'm more of a traditional learner and prefer listening to lectures. (Rebekka)
10. Previous GRM classes weren't as technology based and that allowed more learning of the German language. (Susie)

⁸⁶ Recall that Rita was the student who felt hostile toward computers in general and for language learning in particular.

⁸⁷ Susie preferred receiving written comments on papers that allowed her to revise her work and turn it back in. As will be discussed in more detail in the following section, Susie did not take full advantage of the editing abilities that were part of this course and never accessed any of the online feedback I provided. Her case will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

The following section will take a closer look at students' self-perceived language skills and improvement in this course.

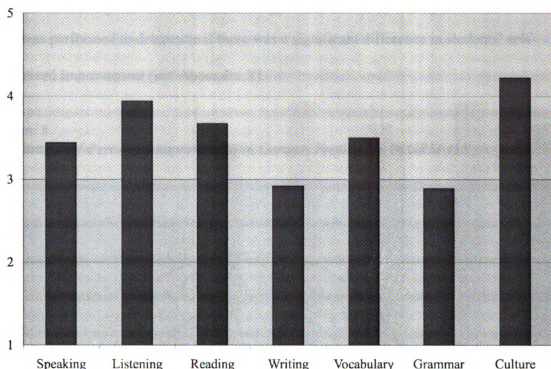
6.1.3 Language Skills and Improvement

Following the same procedures as in the pilot study, the students were asked to rate their proficiency in and knowledge of German at the beginning of the semester in seven areas: speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and culture. Quantified average results are presented in Figure 7 (Appendix W lists mean scores from both the pre- and post-questionnaire). A nonparametric repeated measures test (Wilcoxon Signed Ranks) was performed to determine significant differences between mean ranks of students' self-perceived proficiency (Appendix X summarizes significant differences from both the pre- and post-questionnaire).

Like in the pilot study, students rated their listening and cultural skills as best, and significantly higher than vocabulary, writing, and grammar.⁸⁸ Culture was also rated significantly higher than speaking. In addition, students rated their grammar and writing skills significantly lower than their reading and vocabulary skills (and also significantly lower than their culture and listening skills, as mentioned above). With the exception of grammar and vocabulary, students in both courses rated their proficiency very similarly (average scores for these two areas were switched in the two studies: in the pilot study, grammar was rated higher and vocabulary lower than in the hybrid study).

⁸⁸ In the pilot study, listening and culture were ranked significantly higher than speaking, vocabulary, writing, and reading. Overall comparable results were found by Polio and Zyzik (in press).

Figure 7
Students' Self-Perceived German Proficiency in GRM 455



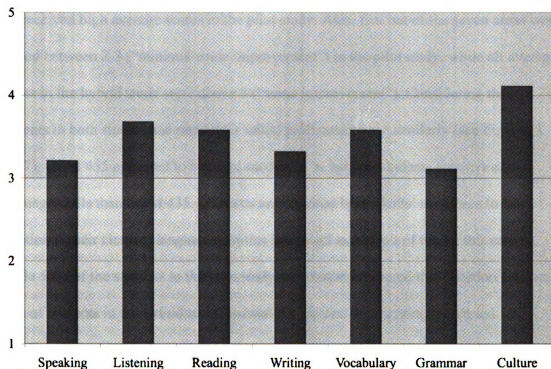
Note. This graph indicates average scores of students' self-perceived proficiency in and knowledge of the areas of speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and culture. Results are based on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being very weak in a given area and 5 being superior. Only 18 students completed this portion of the questionnaire.

An open-ended questionnaire item asked students to specify the area in which they were weakest and why; the majority of students listed grammar, writing, and speaking because of the lack of focus and feedback in these areas. In response to this question, Gordon wrote on his questionnaire: "Speaking, because I just have not enough exposure. I think classrooms give you minimum time speaking (because there are so many students)." Other students also mentioned the lack of opportunities to speak and their lack of confidence, which inhibits them to use the language in class.

The post-questionnaire asked students to rate their perceived improvement over the course of the semester in the same areas that had been addressed in the pre-questionnaire

(i.e., speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and culture). Figure 8 presents the results (mean scores are listed in Appendix W). Once again, a nonparametric test was performed to determine if there was a significant difference in students' self-perceived improvement (see Appendix X).

Figure 8
Students' Self-Perceived Improvement in German Proficiency in GRM 455



Note. This graph indicates average scores of students' self-perceived improvement in the areas of speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and culture. Results are based on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being no improvement as a result of taking the course and 5 being enormous improvement as a result of taking the course.

Overall, students rated their improvement in the area of culture as highest, and significantly higher than speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar. Listening was significantly higher than grammar and speaking; vocabulary was rated significantly higher than grammar. When asked about what they considered as part of "culture" in the final interviews, it became obvious that students equated it with content knowledge,

mentioning aspects such as the history, elements, and interpretations of fairy tales and their impact throughout cultural history. The course, therefore, appeared to have met its first goal of providing students with an understanding of the literary genre of fairy tales and the development it underwent throughout German cultural history.

In comparison with the improvement scores from the pilot study (see Figure 4), the biggest difference in the hybrid study was in the areas of culture and listening, which had not received high average scores in the pilot study. Also, five out of the seven areas were ranked between 2-3 (“minimal-some improvement”) in the pilot study, while all average scores in the hybrid study were above 3 (“some improvement”). Considering that students in both studies had rated their initial proficiency very similarly (see Figures 3 and 7), GRM 455 appeared to be more successful at helping students improve all language skills than GRM 435. This was underscored by students’ responses to the question if their German language abilities improved as a result of taking this course. While 50% of the students in the pilot study had clearly answered this question with no, 63% of students in the hybrid study answered with yes, highlighting the varied opportunities to use the language, increased exposure to the language, as well as increased learning curves as a result of the amount of materials. The course therefore also appeared to have met its second goal of helping students improve their German skills. 26% of the students indicated that the course helped them maintain their abilities or brush up on certain areas.⁸⁹ Only two students indicated that the course did not help improve their language skills:

⁸⁹ These students included both native speakers.

11. I don't think so but, not in a bad way. This course was not geared towards language improvement, rather the discussion and analysis [sic] of fairy tales. (Tim)
12. More back and forth (aka. I turn something in, you return it corrected, I can see my mistakes and correct) would have been more helpful. With everything online, I could get a good enough response. (Susie)

Susie's comment is similar to her comment above (7.) and seems to refer to feedback on papers. She did, however, not write the first of three reaction papers, received detailed feedback on the second one and the option to revise it (which she did), admitted to writing the third one in English and then translating it into German, and did not access the correction code for papers until the penultimate week of the semester.⁹⁰ In addition, she never accessed my comments on her other assignments on ANGEL and was the student who only accessed a quarter of the mandatory readings online. She admitted in the final interview that the one thing she took away from the course was "I really can't understand German. I do need to practice my German more. ... I had a hard time understanding a lot what was going on." Considering her overall performance and comments, it is not surprising that she did not feel that her language abilities improved.

In summary, students were excited about the possibilities for language learning that online technologies offered. While they were generally well aware of and critical toward the drawbacks and difficulties of these technologies as outlined in Chapter 2.3, they appreciated the different approach to language teaching that was more interactive, engaging, and collaborative than previous upper-level courses they had taken. In terms of advancing oral skills, students' self-perceived improvement scores at the end of the semester were encouraging, however statistically not significant. Individual comments

⁹⁰ Students were also given a 6-page handout with detailed information on grammatical aspects that they appeared to have difficulties with. Based on recurring errors in the first reaction paper and areas of difficulty that had been encountered by students in earlier courses, I compiled this reference sheet.

pointed toward the benefits of online speaking activities, however, the quantity of assignments throughout the course may have had a negative impact on the effectiveness of individual online assignments. This will be illustrated further throughout the remainder of this chapter.

6.2 Research Question 2:

Effects of Technology on Students' Engagement, Collaboration, and Responsibility
Research question 2 investigated effects of technology implementation on students' levels of engagement, collaboration, and responsibility. Engagement was measured by students' logged activity online and the number of assignments completed. In order to investigate effects on students' collaboration and responsibility, inferences were drawn from access and completion numbers and students were specifically asked about these areas in the final interview.

In order for any assignment type to be effective, students have to access and work with it.⁹¹ To encourage student engagement, teachers should offer activities that are interesting and motivating to students, as pointed out by Andress et al. (2002). A closer look at students' logged activity and assignment completions will provide insights in terms of the popularity of activity types. This information can help others in deciding what online assignments may work well with students.

The various online activities in GRM 455 required different amounts of access, as described in Chapter 5.4 and summarized in Table 3. For example, students had to complete self-evaluations and online speaking activities once a week (the highest 10 of

⁹¹ As pointed out in Chapter 4.5, measures of logged activity do not necessarily translate into active engagement with materials or assignment completion.

which counted toward their final grade) but chats only three times over the course of the semester (all of which counted toward their final grade). Therefore, when looking at individual access numbers and assignment completion rates as presented in Table 4, these different minimum requirements need to be kept in mind.

Table 3
Minimum Required Access per Assignment Type

Assignment Type	Number of Options throughout the Semester	Minimum Requirement throughout the Semester
Self-Evaluations	15	10
Online Speaking Activities	15	10
Chats	3	3
Blogs	unlimited	7 + 3 comments
Threaded Discussions	1 + moderation comments + comments to others	1 + 2 moderation comments + 8 comments to others
Web Quests	3	2
Wiki	13	2
Online Readings	24	
Audio Files	16	

Note. This table presents an overview of the different online assignment types for which access was logged online.

The first column in Table 3 identifies the assignment, the second column lists the number of options students had over the course of the semester to complete the assignment (in the case of self-evaluations, for example, 15), and the third column lists the minimum requirement to receive full credit (in the case of self-evaluations, for example, 10, which means that students had the option to disregard 5 of the 15 assignments if they were satisfied with the grades they received on completed assignments). For online readings

and audio files, no minimum requirement is listed. Students did not receive credit for these assignments but were expected to access all of them (particularly the readings) in preparation for class. All other online activities not listed (i.e., interactive activities, multimedia team project, and other assignments such as reaction papers, handout for oral presentations, and final paper) simply required students to upload their work to ANGEL but not necessarily work in an online environment and are therefore not included.

Table 4 provides a detailed overview of each student's total access numbers and completion rates (measured by submissions) for the assignment types listed in Table 3. With the exception of completion rates for online speaking activities and the wiki, all numbers (both access and completion) were directly logged on ANGEL. For self-evaluations and online speaking activities, the last assignments in week 15 were eliminated because students needed more time to work on their final paper, reducing the total number to 14 in each category. All students were given full credit for these two eliminated assignments.⁹²

⁹² This meant that students could choose to complete only 9 other assignments in each of these two categories to meet the minimum requirement of 10 assignments that counted toward their final grade.

Table 4
Student Access Numbers and Completion Rates for Assignment Types

	Self-Evaluations		Speaking Activities		Chats		Blogs	
	total access	submissions out of 14*	total access	submissions out of 14*	total access	total # of turns	total access	submissions + comments
Amanda	14	12	1	12 (-3)	3	142	11	7+3
Angela	21	13	29	13 (-3)	3	93	96	7+3
Benjamin	10	9	5	13	2	122	19	5+2
Cathy	16	7	34	12 (-1)	1	20	15	6+0
Evelyn	5	4	19	7	3	222	12	3+1
Gordon	20	13	19	14 (-1)	3	115	50	7+3
Jen	19	14	35	13 (-3)	3	105	31	6+4
Jill	16	12	18	14	3	90	27	7+0
Judy	16	13	33	13 (-2)	3	109	38	7+2
Monica	14	10	18	13	2	47	29	6+1
Nadia	23	13	48	7	1	22	135	7+3
Peggy	18	8	15	8 (-2)	2	37	24	3+3
Rita	12	10	13	10	3	85	27	5+3
Sabrina	13	8	20	9 (-3)	3	87	30	7+0
Scarlet	23	12	24	8 (-2)	3	58	33	5+3
Sharon	7	5	9	10 (-1)	1	28	18	4+0
Susie	20	12	2	14 (-2)	3	90	38	7+4
Tim	11	7	12	12 (-4)	1	15	11	4+1
William	39	13	23	13	3	80	70	7+2

Table 4 cont.

	Threaded Discussions		Web Quests		Wiki		Readings	Audio
	total access	submissions: entry+moderation+ comments	total access	submissions	total access	submissions: contributions (# of edits)		
Amanda	24	1+2+8	10	2	1	2 (1,1)	15 (10/24)	
Angela	61	1+3+7	25	3	7	2 (1,1)	27 (15/24)	
Benjamin	37	1+0+6	15	2	2	1 (3)	18 (12/24)	
Cathy	33	1+0+2	23	3	4		41 (17/24)	1 (1/16)
Evelyn	5	1+0+1	6	1	1		18 (12/24)	
Gordon	82	1+2+6	18	3	6	2 (3,2)	54 (23/24)	4 (4/16)
Jen	78	1+2+7	18	3	8	2 (3,4)	25 (14/24)	1 (1/16)
Jill	50	1+0+6	17	3	7	1 (3)	38 (22/24)	10 (10/16)
Judy	108	1+1+6	24	2	6	2 (1,1)	51 (20/24)	2 (2/16)
Monica	56	1+0+7	18	3	9	2 (1,1)	32 (14/24)	4 (4/16)
Nadja	275	1+2+8	96	3	21	1 (1)	48 (24/24)	21 (12/16)
Peggy	106	1+0+6	14	2	9	1 (2)	23 (19/24)	
Rita	18	1+1+7	19	2	11	2 (1,1)	49 (18/24)	2 (2/16)
Sabrina	25	1+2+0	12	2	5	1 (1)	33 (15/24)	
Scarlet	70	1+2+5	39	3	14	2 (1,4)	73 (19/24)	2 (2/16)
Sharon	67	1+0+2	9	3	2		26 (15/24)	
Susie	67	0+0+7	35	2	7	2 (2,3)	12 (6/24)	
Tim	19	0+0+5	8	2	2	2 (1,1)	34 (16/24)	
William	87	1+3+6	26	3	15	2 (3,1)	35 (19/24)	4 (4/16)

Note. This table provides student access numbers by assignment type and information on the number of assignments that were completed by each student.

*The last self-evaluation and online speaking assignment were eliminated because students needed more time to work on their final paper, reducing the total number to 14. All students were given full credit for these two eliminated assignments.

As mentioned above, total access numbers for the speaking activities were based on logged activity in ANGEL. Students, however, did not need to access the subfolders I had created for each week's speaking assignment because the necessary access code to join a conversation was also available in the main lesson folder (see Appendix Y). Completion rates of online speaking activities, on the other hand, are based on students' actual submissions of their oral responses in *Conversations*. The negative number in parentheses indicates the number of conversations that were joined by the student but not completed (i.e., either not recorded or shared with me).⁹³ In contrast to the pilot study, where students had not participated in the online speaking activities mainly because of functionality issues of the program and because they did not receive credit for this rather time-consuming activity, students in the hybrid course were very engaged and went beyond the minimum requirement for this particular assignment.

For the chats, the second number provided in Table 4 lists the total amount of turns students took in all chats they participated in (recall that students were required to contribute at least 20 turns per chat). The completion rates for blogs include the number of entries students submitted to their own blog plus the number of comments on their peers' blogs. Similarly, completion rates for threaded discussions contain the initial entry, number of entries as part of the required moderation, as well as comments provided on their peers' discussion forums.

Total access numbers for the wiki are once again based on ANGEL logs, the number of submissions, however, were logged on the wiki itself. Information on the number of

⁹³ In Amanda's case, she only accessed one of the subfolders in the online speaking activities lesson folder in ANGEL. In *Conversations*, she had joined 12 of 14 assignments, but had failed to record her answers twice and did not share her recordings with me in one instance (marked by a warning triangle in the instructor's view of the program as explained in Appendix Q).

edits per submission is noted in parentheses. Last but not least, total access numbers are provided for the online readings and audio files, followed by the number of texts/audio files that were accessed in parentheses (24 text files and 16 audio files were available online and some students accessed the same file more than once).

With the exception of audio files, all online assignment types were accessed by all students at some point throughout the semester. In terms of assignment completion, students generally did the bare minimum⁹⁴ with two exceptions: Three students did not submit any entries to the wiki and, on a positive note, the vast majority of students went beyond the minimum requirements for the self-evaluations, the online speaking activities, the chats, and the web quests.

In summary, audio files and the wiki were assignment types that least engaged the students in contrast to self-evaluations, online speaking activities, chats, and web quests where they completed more work than was assigned. These results were confirmed by students' responses in the final interview where most students indicated that they did not use the audio files (Amanda, for example, noted that she "didn't even know they were there") and were "confused" (Cathy) and "unclear" (Sabrina) about the wiki. Self-evaluations were seen as a good idea for "reflection" (Jill), to "self-monitor your work" (Judy), and for "comments on the class" (Benjamin, Tim). All students commented positively on the online speaking activities that helped them with their listening, vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking skills. The adjectives used most often in conjunction with the chats were "fun" and "casual" and students enjoyed "using real world German" (Evelyn). Students particularly liked the exposure to "authentic stuff

⁹⁴ This course required students to work with a large variety of different assignment types – in the opinion of most students too large of a variety. The fact that students generally completed most required assignments speaks of their responsibility as learners.

online” (Cathy) as part of the web quests, the fact that they could “gear it toward my own interests” (Tim), and that the assignment was useful beyond the context of this class because “I found stuff to use for other German classes” (Judy).

Noteworthy is also the high access rate for both the threaded discussions and the blogs. While students generally submitted only what they had to⁹⁵, they accessed their peers’ information markedly often, leading me to believe that they were interested in seeing what their peers wrote and enjoyed assignment types that promoted collaboration and exchange of ideas. Once again, students confirmed the usefulness of these assignment types in the final interviews where they indicated that the threaded discussions “helped a lot with reading and understanding the complicated German texts” (Angela) and made students “become aware of my peers’ ideas and views” (Gordon). Students liked the free and casual format of the blogs but several students mentioned it would have been easier for them had I preassigned topics to blog about. These results mirror the popularity of assignment types in the pilot study where students had accessed chapter summaries (similar to threaded discussion) and web quests the most (Figure 6).

It needs to be pointed out that one student in particular contributed to the high overall access rates. Nadja⁹⁶ had the highest access rates across the board and was also the only student who had accessed all readings and most of the audio files. Her combined access rates for the outlined assignment types numbered 669 hits on ANGEL. The student with the next highest overall access rate was William with 302 hits (who had indicated at the

⁹⁵ Interestingly enough, this holds true for both Rita, who “strongly disliked” the use of computers for language learning, and Peggy, the computer-savvy language learner. For the most part, Rita completed the minimum number of required activities for all online assignments. Peggy, on the other hand, completed fewer than the minimum required activities (with the exception of web quests where she submitted the required two entries, however, one of them late).

⁹⁶ Nadja was a nontraditional student who was significantly older than her peers in class and was taking this course in preparation for graduate coursework in German Studies.

beginning of the course that he disliked the use of computers in language classes, mentioned in the final interview that he didn't like the course and felt that the online assignments were obligations that did not help his understanding but had generally completed more than the minimum required number of activities). Thirteen students were between 282 and 139 hits and four students (Benjamin, Tim, Amanda, and Evelyn in descending order) were at the lower end with between 108-70 hits.

In the pilot study, participation in the hybrid activities (measured by logged activity) had decreased from the first to the second module and across parts within each module. In the hybrid course, students' total class activity remained steady throughout the entire semester, peaking each week on the days of class meetings, that is Tuesdays and Thursdays (generally in the morning and afternoon right before class), and on the days preceding class meetings (generally in the evening and at night). Table 5 provides total class activity numbers by days of the week for the entire semester.

Table 5
Total Class Activity by Days of the Week

Day of the Week	Total Class Activity
Tuesday	3535
Thursday	2482
Monday	2209
Wednesday	1967
Sunday	1340
Friday	571
Saturday	432

Note. This table presents students' logged activity on ANGEL over the course of the semester, arranged by days of the week.

In general, online assignments promoted high levels of student engagement as evidenced by access and completion rates. The assignments also encouraged collaboration among students. Approximately half of the online assignments (i.e., chats, blogs, threaded discussions, wiki, and multimedia team project)⁹⁷ were collaborative in nature. With the exception of the wiki, students participated actively in these assignments and highlighted benefits as well as their general enjoyment of these activities in their weekly self-evaluations, the post-questionnaire, and the final interview. The most widely mentioned aspects students appreciated about frequent collaboration with their peers online (and in class) were the ability to exchange ideas and see different points of view, the flexibility of online access, as well as the fact that students got to know each other well quickly, which positively affected the classroom atmosphere and students' overall attitude toward the course.

13. I liked working with the other people online. It was really nice to have somebody else's input and it was convenient to work whenever I had time. (Cathy)
14. Collaborating was a good learning experience. It was interesting to find out about others' perspectives by reading their comments to the blogs or discussions. I helped my peers during the midterm and in group work in class, so they learned from me. We all laughed a lot in class, which was fantastic. (Benjamin)
15. It was good being able to bounce ideas. During the chat, we would be on AIM at the same time and we always helped each other with vocab and grammar or when one of us had questions about an assignment. It's less awkward to ask others than asking the teacher. (Sabrina)
16. Working with my peers a lot was great. I know more people well in class now than in any other class at MSU. The collaborative assignments were very personal and had a lot of flexibility because we could work on them whenever it was convenient for our schedules. It wasn't hard to meet up online. (Judy)

⁹⁷ Students also had the option of writing one or more of their reaction papers collaboratively on Google Docs. None of the students took advantage of this option throughout the semester so I encouraged students to write the third reaction paper collaboratively, however, most students felt it was forced last minute and some had difficulties working with the program.

17. Group work, especially the midterm, made the class closer. In collaborative work you got to see what others do, learn about your peers, and get to know them. The chats really helped in getting to know other students better. (Peggy)

Apart from Sabrina, two other students specifically pointed out the benefit of collaborative work for language skills:

18. Collaboration is helpful because German is about communication. You had to communicate with your peers for these online activities. You had to read what they wrote and then react. (Scarlet)
19. The chats were fun. It was good to speak with each other and we helped each other out with words. (Jen)

Sharon was the only student who was critical toward collaborative projects.

20. I'm not a group person and levels of proficiency can be different in groups, which can make it really hard and unequal. I never felt I could contribute as much to the discussion boards as some of the more fluent students. As I said before, the balance between native speakers and students who haven't been to Germany is tough in classes at this level. (Sharon)

While students had fun completing most of the collaborative assignments and felt it helped their language development and enhanced classroom atmosphere, they also reported that the online delivery mode increased their responsibility as (language) learners. As pointed out above, students generally completed all minimum requirements and oftentimes went beyond those requirements, attesting not only to their active engagement with course content but also to their seriousness as students. The fact that all materials, assignments, and due dates were posted in one place and that their work was automatically time-stamped facilitated access on the one hand and increased students' accountability on the other. Many students commented on their increased self-reliance as a result of the hybrid course:

21. With the technology, everything built up and forced you to do work weekly with the materials. I think continuous work is more beneficial than one big final paper. (Gordon)

22. Seeing all the stuff posted online helps seeing what you could and should do and what others did. That definitely pushed me to do more and work better and to become more responsible. (Sharon)
23. The online work makes you more self-reliant. Everything depends on you. If you want a good grade, you can push yourself and do more. It was nice to have choices as well so you could work on what you were interested in and good at. Other classes don't do that. (Nadja)
24. The work totally immersed me into the content. You had to think more about the course and about what you would write or say in response. (Amanda)

Many students also pointed out that the online delivery helped them with time

management and organizational skills:

25. In this hybrid course, you needed to be responsible from the start. It helped me with my management skills to stay on top of things and complete my work on time. Everything was well documented and it was also nice and easy to reach all resources on ANGEL. (Evelyn)

Overall, the implementation of technology in this class yielded positive results in terms of students' levels of engagement, collaboration, and responsibility that had been highlighted independently by students throughout the semester in their self-evaluations and were confirmed at the end of the semester in students' final questionnaires and interviews.

6.3 Research Question 3:

Effectiveness of Assignment Types in Improving Language Skills

Research question 3 investigated students' perceptions of assignment types and technologies in terms of their effectiveness for improving language skills. I was specifically interested in providing students opportunities to practice their oral skills and to examine their perspectives of such assignments, as research has identified speaking as one of the areas in upper-level foreign language courses whose implementation often poses difficulties to instructors (e.g., Donato & Brooks, 2004; Klee, 2006; Polio & Zyzik,

in press). Recall that at the beginning of the semester, students had specified speaking as one of their weaker skills (see Figure 7) because of the lack of focus and feedback in this area and their lack of confidence in using the language around more proficient peers.

As discussed in Chapter 6.1, those students who had preferred the online assignments to traditional activity types had favored the online speaking activities for extensive listening and speaking practice and blogs because they offered an engaging and fun way for practicing writing. In terms of overall access and completion rates (Chapter 6.2), the speaking assignments and blogs had also been among the most engaging assignments along with chats, web quests, and threaded discussions. While neither access nor completion rates had been calculated for the multimedia team project⁹⁸, students highlighted their enjoyment of this assignment and benefits in terms of language development throughout.

In order to assess which assignment types students perceived as most effective for improving specific language skills, I encouraged them to comment on the course and the assignments in the weekly self-evaluations. This assignment offered an excellent opportunity for me to learn more about my students, their interests, hopes, insecurities, frustrations, what they did (not) learn, and what did (not) work well in class; for the students, it offered an outlet and the opportunity to actively shape their learning.⁹⁹ At the

⁹⁸ Students were graded on the final product, which only one student uploaded to ANGEL. It was therefore impossible to assess students' preparation and work-sharing for this assignment. However, the final products speak of high levels of engagement, which was further confirmed by students' commentary during the final interview where they reported that they had spent a lot of time on this projects but didn't mind because it was "fun," "integrative," and they "learned a lot."

⁹⁹ As pointed out above, the vast majority of students went beyond the minimum requirements for this assignment and submitted 12 evaluations of the maximum 14 possible. As part of the self-evaluation, students were asked to grade their performance throughout the week, taking preparation and participation into account. It was interesting to note that in general, students were very critical and harsh on themselves and gave themselves lower grades than I would have given. I made necessary adjustments based on my perceptions.

end of the semester, Jill noted that “I liked that we spent a lot of time on surveys – it shows the professor is very open to feedback and concerned about students.” Students’ suggestions for improvement were taken into consideration and modifications were made to increase the effectiveness of the online assignments. For example, various students indicated that they had a hard time “keeping track” of due dates and asked for “suggestions for managing assignments” (Sabrina), so I created a checklist early on in the semester that highlighted due dates, weighting, and minimum requirements. In addition, I scheduled mandatory face-to-face office hours with each student half way through the semester to discuss their progress in class, to answer any questions, and to gain deeper insights into their perceptions of the course.¹⁰⁰ These meetings were appreciated by the students, who felt more confident afterwards and “learned that asking for help really does help” (Susie). Other students requested in the self-evaluations that access to the online readings should be extended so they could go back to the texts after they had been discussed in class and that class sessions should include more reading aloud because “it helps with understanding and speaking” (Angela).¹⁰¹

The most frequent comment was on the quantity of assignments, where students expressed their feelings of being overwhelmed. The following examples illustrate this point:

26. I wish that sometimes I had a little bit more time to devote to this class. There are just so many activities that I don’t want to forget anything and not receive

¹⁰⁰ Only one of the students, Scarlet, took advantage of the online office hours. However, she was unable to enter the online chat and as a consequence simply emailed me her questions. Scarlet also met me in the lab twice to go over the functionality of the online assignments. The only other student who requested a face-to-face meeting was Susie, who wanted to talk about her presentation ahead of time. Most of the other students communicated via email, whenever questions arose.

¹⁰¹ Following this request, we did read aloud in class more often and students promptly pointed it out in the “I really liked” section on the self-evaluation.

the points for it; I do feel a little overwhelmed with it all but I know that in the long run it will help with my understanding. (Amanda)

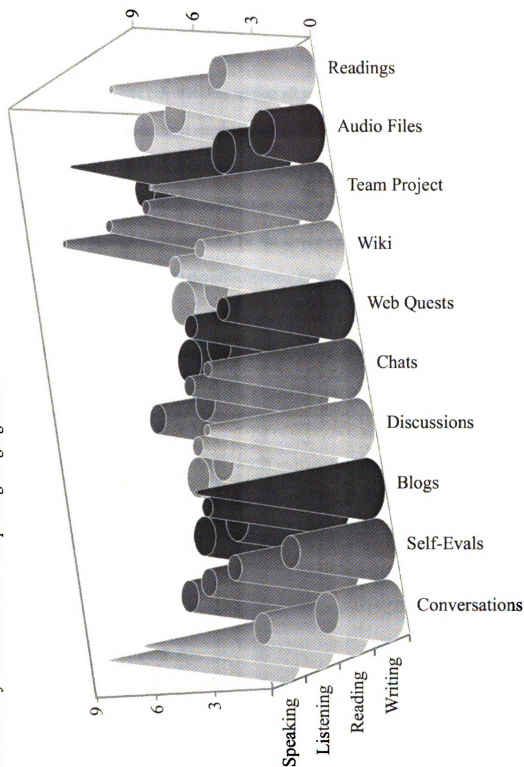
27. Despite their seemingly simple requirements, they [the online assignments] are time consuming and working with everything online is a bit frustrating. I find myself to focus more on simply completing the online assignments instead of actually trying to learn from them as well. (William)
28. Pertaining to ANGEL assignments – many of them seem to be fulfilling the same function (developing our own ideas about Maerchen), although in different formats. While I find a lot of this helpful (especially CLEAR) I do think a bit of it is repetitive in that all of it is some form of online discussion, but using different tools. In the future, I would limit the amount of ANGEL/web applications used to three – one oral activity, one interactive activity, and one independent activity. Right now it's just a lot to keep track of. (Jill)

Despite the plethora of materials, students valued the “variety of experiences” they were exposed to in this course (Scarlet) and the fact that the activities helped “improve my German in every aspect” (Gordon).

Admittedly, the course design was overly ambitious in the amount and variety of assignments and I had a hard time keeping up with grading, so the students and I decided together to drop the interactive activities, particularly because students were required to create these activities also for their multimedia team project. The assigned points were therefore added to the midterm.

Figure 9. This graph provides the results of students' perceived effectiveness of the online assignments in improving their language skills. The cones display overall averages. Shorter, flat cones indicate a low level of effectiveness; a high, pointed cone indicates a high level of effectiveness. Students could assign the same scores to more than one skill within an assignment, which is why the total number of points per assignment exceeds 10. In the case of the online speaking activities (labeled "Conversations"), for example, students rated the effectiveness in improving speaking with an average of 9.17, listening with an average of 8.76, reading with an average of 4.54, and writing with an average of 3.08.

Figure 9
Effectiveness of Online Activities in Improving Language Skills



At the end of the course, students were asked to rate the effectiveness of the online assignments in improving their language skills (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing) on a 10-point Likert scale with 1 being the least effective assignment for a particular skill and 10 being the most effective assignment. Figure 9 summarizes their perceptions. Averages were calculated by adding all scores students had provided in each individual cell, divided by the total number of students. For example, the sum of students' rating for the blogs/writing cell was 163, divided by 19 students, yielding an 8.58 average. Based on the sums, all assignment types were also ranked within each language skill; the highest sum received a 10, the lowest sum received a 1. Table 6 presents the rankings according to the effectiveness for all four language skills.

Table 6
Absolute Ranking of Effectiveness of Online Activities in Improving Language Skills

	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
Self-Evaluations	7	7	3	4
Speaking Activities	10	9	2	2
Chats	8	6	7	7
Blogs	6	4	8	10
Threaded Discussions	4	5	9	9
Web Quests	2	2	5	5
Wiki	1	1	4	6
Online Readings	3	3	10	3
Audio Files	5	10	1	1
Team Project	9	8	6	8

Note. This table presents absolute rankings of the assignment types according to their effectiveness for improving language skills. The higher the number, the more effective the assignment type in improving the particular skill.

In line with the results presented in the previous two sections of this chapter, the online speaking activities (labeled “Conversations” in Figure 9) received overall highest scores and ranks in improving both speaking and listening skills. Blogs, threaded discussions, and chats were all rated and ranked high for improving reading and writing skills. Based on these results, it becomes apparent that those assignment types that students liked and labeled as “fun” were also the assignments that they perceived to be most beneficial for their language development. The most successful assignment in terms of practicing all four language skills was the multimedia team project.

In the following, I will take a closer look at the assignments that received overall highest scores and ranks for the different modalities, that is, the blogs for reading and writing, the online speaking activities for speaking and listening, and the multimedia team project for all four language skills. Trends in students’ perceptions of these assignments will be presented and challenges and victories will be discussed.

6.3.1 Reading and Writing Skills: Blogs

Overall, students rated blogs as the most effective online assignment in improving their reading and writing skills.¹⁰² As described in Chapter 5.4.4, I had created individual student blogs on ANGEL that were arranged in alphabetical order by students’ first names (see Appendix Z for a screenshot of the blog lesson folder). The students had to submit an original post every other week and had to respond to at least three of their peers’ blogs over the course of the semester. I as the teacher had an active role in students’ blogs as well, commenting every other week on their entries. The task was to

¹⁰² The average reading score in terms of effectiveness was 6.35 (with a range of 1-10), the average writing score was 8.58 (with a range of 4-10). The writing score was the highest out of all assignments, the reading score was the third highest, following online readings and the multimedia team project.

write a reaction to class assignments, readings, or discussions or other experiences in connection with the course topic. Blog entries needed to be in German and at least 5 sentences long with a sentence containing at least a noun, a verb, and an object. Even though students generally only completed the minimum requirement in terms of posting entries and commenting on their peers' blogs, access rates indicate high levels of engagement with this assignment. Students liked the free and casual format of the blogs but several students mentioned it would have been easier for them had I preassigned topics to blog about. The following comments illustrate this:

- 29. I really liked that the blogs were so casual. You could just get your thoughts out and not worry about every grammatical ending like you would on a paper. It helped a lot with fluency in writing. (Scarlet)
- 30. It was nice having to react to what the others wrote. That made you think back on what we had discussed in class but not in a formal way or anything. (Amanda)
- 31. I sometimes really didn't know what to write about. It would have been much easier and quicker to complete these assignments had there been preassigned topics. (Jen)

While the less proficient students tended to have a harder time coming up with things to blog about and would have preferred specific topics, the more proficient students in class enjoyed the freedom that went along with this assignment that allowed them to write about a wide variety of topics. Blogs with specific topics received more responses than blogs with general topics, for example, students who posted general comments on fairy tales or general comments on the course received fewer responses than students who wrote about specific aspects of fairy tales such as cruelty, sexuality, or gender roles in fairy tales.

On average, students submitted 6 original posts with an average length of 111 words and an average of 1 response per original post. This includes my responses to students'

blogs. Subtracting my responses, only every third original entry received a response with an average length of 46 words. Table 7 summarizes this information.

Table 7
Average Blogger Profile

	Original Posts	Length per Post	Responses per Post		Length of Responses	
			All Responses	Student Responses Only	All Responses	Student Responses Only
Mean	6	111.32	1.11	.38	46.74	45.55
SD	1.25	44.18	.53	.46	24.25	18.4
Range	3-7	65-202	.04-3	0-2	9-152	17-101

Note. This table presents information on mean, standard deviation, and range of students' blogs. The first column refers to the number of original posts, followed by average length. The third column contains information on the number of average responses per original post according to all responses (peers and teacher) and by students only. The last column refers to the average length of these responses, divided again by all responses (peers and teacher) and by students only.

Only three students received peer responses to all their entries: Evelyn, Jen, and Susie.

While Evelyn posted only 3 original entries, Jen and Susie posted 6 and 7 entries respectively. Throughout the first weeks of the semester, cliques had formed in class. Students in a clique tended to sit together and worked on in-class and online group activities together. I was interested in determining whether or not clique membership had an effect on blog responses or whether the rank of a blogger's own blog within the lesson folder would influence students' choice of which blogs to respond to. There were two other students in Evelyn's clique (Benjamin and Gordon) and three other students each in Jen's (Amanda, Judy, and Sabrina) and Susie's (Angela, Monica, and William) cliques. With the exception of Nadja, who accessed everybody's blog between 2-10 times, Evelyn's, Jen's, and Susie's blogs were accessed by their clique members at 47%, 41%,

and 84% respectively. In general, students were more likely to access the blogs of clique members than other students' blogs with two exceptions: Blogs that were top- or bottom-ranked within the lesson folder received most hits overall. Amanda's and Angela's blogs, the first two in the folder, were accessed most, followed by Susie's and William's blogs, the last ones on the list.¹⁰³ In addition, four students had significantly higher blog activity than the remainder of the class. Those students had accessed almost every blog at least once. All other students had accessed blogs outside their clique, if at all, no more than twice.

It appears that students felt most comfortable to collaborate with their friends and that it was easier for them to respond to specific rather than broad themes in the postings. Blogs allowed them to use the language in a non-threatening environment, at their own convenience and pace, and in creative ways. The blogs integrated content and language by asking students to elaborate on course materials and express their opinions using their own words. Due to their collaborative nature, blogs provided ample opportunities for students to interact with each other, albeit asynchronously. The assignment offered a meaningful context in that students wrote for an audience that extended beyond the teacher (i.e., their peers). Many students mentioned that they felt the threaded discussions and the blogs covered similar topics and suggested to keep only one or the other, preferably the blogs.

While the blogs were a successful assignment overall, there were some challenges throughout the semester. The password-protected access to ANGEL offered a safe environment for language learners, however, the layout of the actual blogs was not

¹⁰³ Tim's blog was located between Susie and William, however, Tim did not belong to any clique and had very few hits on his blog overall. He also asked to complete the multimedia team project by himself because he did not feel comfortable working with any of his peers.

clearly arranged. It was difficult to determine when and where new entries were added, blog entries disappeared, and time stamps changed. Using a different blog provider can easily circumvent these functionality issues. As pointed out, not all blogs were accessed or responded to equally. In general, those students with fewer friends received fewer responses and hits and those blogs that were located in the middle of the lesson folder were accessed less often than blogs at the beginning or end of the folder. A possible solution to these problems is to assign students to blog communities in order to limit the total number of blogs and encourage higher engagement with fewer bloggers.

6.3.2 Speaking and Listening Skills: Online Speaking Activities

The online speaking activities were identified as the most effective online assignment in improving students' speaking and listening skills.¹⁰⁴ In fact, the average speaking score in terms of effectiveness was the highest score received for any assignment type and language skill (see Figure 9). It was also the assignment that students across the board worked with the most. On average, students completed 11 of the possible 14 assignments, 22% more than the required minimum.¹⁰⁵

At the beginning of the semester, students had rated speaking as one of their weaker skills because of the lack of focus and feedback in this area and their lack of confidence in using the language around more proficient peers. These issues surfaced multiple times throughout the semester in the self-evaluations. As I provided feedback on the self-evaluations, I always tried to encourage students to participate more in class. In response, many students commented on their insecurities about speaking in front of others:

¹⁰⁴ The average speaking score in terms of effectiveness was 9.17 (with a range of 2-10). The average listening score was 8.76 (with a range of 5-10) and was slightly below the score for audio files.

¹⁰⁵ Only four students were below the requirement with a total of 7 or 8 recordings.

32. As to speaking, for years it was very difficult to communicate to others in my own language without feeling just a little intimidated! But I think I'm improving. (Sharon)
33. I wish that my speaking skills were better. I'm trying to improve them and the online conversations really help, but it's very intimidating to be in a class full of people who have already been to Germany and can speak without flinching. This is mainly why I hesitate to participate. (Cathy)
34. I'm really trying not to be discouraged by the native speakers and I am going to try and contribute more to classroom conversations, despite my insecurities! I guess I shouldn't compare myself to students who have more experience with German, although they are kind of intimidating. I need to work at my own pace. (Scarlet)
35. I wish that everyone would talk more and not just the same four kids that are obviously from Germany and understand everything. (Peggy)

These comments point to the challenge of providing an inclusive learning environment in upper-level classes where students may have diverse backgrounds and proficiency levels. By providing additional speaking opportunities online, I hoped to help students overcome their insecurities in a private environment, which ultimately led to increased participation in class, as noted by Peggy, among other students, in week 13:

36. I really liked the in-class discussion we had today. I just felt that it was really productive and everyone got into it. I think our class is getting more and more comfortable with the texts that we're reading and can hold a conversation for a long period of time on it. Pretty exciting. (Peggy)

As described in Chapter 5.4.2, the online speaking activities were intended to address students' perceived lack in this area by providing them extended, contextualized listening and speaking practice while focusing on important aspects of the course materials. Each week, students had to listen and respond to my prompts that generally addressed topics in the reading assignments. Some prompts asked for specific information based on the readings, some asked students to interpret certain aspects of the texts, while others were simply used to work on intonation and stress patterns (see Appendix R for a selection of prompts). I provided individualized oral feedback to their responses focusing on content

and language, which students felt was much needed. As pointed out by Scarlet: “The conversations are definitely beneficial because we need feedback in speaking in German.” Yet, only 9 students subscribed to their feedback online,¹⁰⁶ two of whom (Amanda and Gordon) also left comments in response, which tended to be longer than their initial responses to the prompts in *Conversations*. When asked why they did not take advantage of this opportunity, students stated that they forgot about the oral feedback.

As I transcribed students’ responses to my prompts, I was interested in determining whether any differences in levels of fluency could be discerned between students of different proficiency levels or between the beginning versus the end of the semester. This was measured by c-units, which Böhlke described as

more inclusive for measuring oral discourse [than t-units] because it does not require a verb or predicate. Since many utterances in oral discourse lack a verb, but still communicate pragmatic meaning, the c-unit is appropriate for the analysis of spoken language. ... [A c-unit] include[s] any contribution without a verb, if it is communicative, comprehensible. (2003a, pp. 72-73; see also Crookes, 1990 and Duff, 1986)

The following excerpts from the transcripts illustrate how student responses were coded using c-units. Each c-unit is indicated by a slash:

Sie handeln von Rituale oder Sitten / und geben einem ja sie geben einem die Meinung / dass es eine bessere Zukunft geben könnte / und der Erzähler ah könnte sie ändern / je nach Zustand. / (William)¹⁰⁷

Mythen und Sagen sind ganz gleich / alle kommen aus andere Quellen / und die Publizität war wichtig / und die Zuhörer / erst war es Erwachsene / und jetzt ist es mehr Kinder. / (Judy)¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Generally, students with average proficiency subscribed to the feedback. Those students with either high or low proficiency did not subscribe. Jill, a student with high proficiency, and Angela, a student with low proficiency, were the exceptions who subscribed to the feedback but did not leave comments for me in return.

¹⁰⁷ They are about rituals or customs / and give you well they give you the idea / that there could be a better future / and the narrator uhm could change them / depending on the state. /

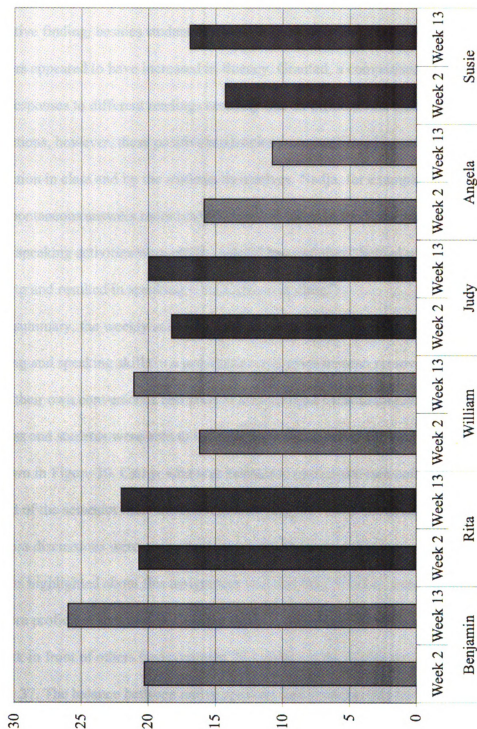
¹⁰⁸ Myths and sagas are very similar / all come from different sources / und publicity was important / and the audience / first it was adults / and now it is more children /

William's excerpt contained five and Judy's six c-units. Each c-unit communicated a new concept and was meaningful. False starts, fillers, incomprehensible sentences, utterances in English and the like were not counted as separate c-units.

Because not all students participated in the same conversations each week, I selected samples of six students from weeks 2 and 13 to allow for comparison. The prompts in these two weeks were comparable in terms of difficulty and content addressed. The six selected students included the native speakers Benjamin and Rita, proficient speakers William and Judy, and lower-proficient speakers Angela and Susie. The first two students participated in every in-class discussion. William and Judy generally participated well when called on, while the last two students were hesitant at first but became more outspoken as the semester progressed. These students' responses in weeks 2 and 13 were timed and coded. To determine reliability of c-unit identification, a second rater coded the data, and both the Pearson and Spearman correlations were 0.98. To determine students' fluency levels, the number of c-units per week was averaged by length of responses to obtain a score of average c-units per minute. Figure 10 shows the comparison of these six students' fluency levels in weeks 2 and 13.

As can be seen, with the exception of Angela, all students increased in fluency from weeks 2 to 13. Angela admitted to not having read the assigned texts for week 13 and had therefore been unable to respond to the prompts in detail. Throughout the semester, she got discouraged by the level of difficulty of the readings and her lacking language skills, which prohibited her from understanding them: "I know I would have enjoyed the course more had my German vocab been bigger, that hindered my ability to understand. I didn't get the readings. The vocab was too specific, so I simply stopped bothering."

Figure 10
Fluency Levels for Online Speaking Activities



Note. This figure shows fluency levels measured by c-units per minute in the online speaking activities for eight students. The students are listed by decreasing proficiency levels. For each student, the left column shows the fluency level in week 2, the right column represents the level in week 13.

It appears hardly surprising that students of higher proficiency levels generally had higher levels of fluency than the weaker students, both at the beginning and end of the semester. A positive finding, besides students' overall improvement, is that even the native speakers appeared to have increased in fluency. Granted, a comparison of only relatively short responses to different readings certainly had an influence on students' oral productions, however, these positive tendencies were confirmed by students' oral production in class and by the students themselves. Nadja, for example, noted that "I can give spontaneous answers more readily" and Jen stated in the final interview that the online speaking activities were mostly helpful because they "helped with speaking *and* listening and resulted in speaking more German in class."

In summary, the weekly activities gave students the opportunity to practice their listening and speaking skills in a non-threatening environment, removed from their peers, and at their own convenience and pace. It also allowed them to monitor their own progress and students were able to increase their fluency over the course of the semester, as shown in Figure 10. Cathy, who was hesitant to participate (see comment 30.), noted at the end of the semester that "the conversations helped with pronunciation. Participation and class discussions went easier because of it." The aspect that some of the weaker students highlighted about this assignment was that they felt they were not graded against the more proficient speakers in class but against themselves. Sharon, who felt intimidated to speak in front of others (see comment 29.), stated in the final interview:

37. The balance between native speakers and students who haven't been to Germany is a problem but in this class I could show my potential because I wasn't put on the spot online and could take chances with words and grammar. (Sharon)

The assignment enabled me as the instructor to assess my students' proficiency levels much more accurately and, more importantly, early on in the course. It was particularly interesting to listen to those students who rarely participated in class. On many occasions, Cathy, for example, did not speak up in class at all and only responded very hesitantly when called on. In the online environment, however, Cathy produced long stretches of connected speech, had interesting viewpoints and ideas, and was able to synthesize course content well.

Only two students reported difficulties using the programs. Benjamin had microphone trouble in the beginning and ended up using computers in the language lab; William was unable to access *Audio Assignments* and gave up after a few tries. One of the major drawbacks of this assignment was the time commitment for me as the instructor. While recording prompts was quick, listening to all students' responses and providing feedback took a long time. I was able to limit my time spent on this assignment by recording shorter prompts and more targeted questions and by not allowing students to practice their answers but rather answer spontaneously using the program's live mode. It needs to be pointed out though that students could still click through the entire live mode and listen to all prompts before they actually recorded and submitted their answers. As a result, particularly the weaker students wrote out their answers and read them aloud. Benjamin had doubted the usefulness of this program:

38. Ich persönlich finde es sehr "akward" [sic], mit einem Computer eine Konversation zu haben. Es ist so unnatürlich und unpersönlich. In wie fern helfen diese Aufgaben eigentlich dem Lerner? Beantworten die meisten Studenten die Fragen spontan und frei, oder schreiben sie ihre Antworten erst aus und lesen sie dann vor? Wenn es das zweite ist, dann ist die Clear-Konversation meiner Meinung nach überflüssig, dann könnte man die Antwort auch ausdrucken und im Unterricht abgeben. Wenn der Sinn der Aufgabe ist, Aussprache zu üben und eine Konversation zu haben, dann sollte

man das im Unterricht machen. Auf diese Weise wird der Schüler gezwungen, spontan und frei zu sprechen.¹⁰⁹

While his comment is correct in addressing the lack of a natural conversation, the program still offers valuable targeted language practice for all students, particularly those who are hesitant to speak up in a traditional classroom. Despite his criticism, Benjamin gave this assignment the highest scores for effectiveness in improving speaking and listening on the post questionnaire and also indicated that he felt it helped with reading as well because in order to respond to the prompts, “you had to read the texts, which otherwise I probably wouldn’t have.” While his point is well taken and while I do not suggest that online speaking activities could or should replace face-to-face conversations in foreign language classes, students still perceived the additional opportunities to listen to and speak in German as valuable and had reported significant improvement in listening and some improvement in speaking at the end of the semester.

6.3.3 Integrated Skills: Multimedia Team Project

The multimedia team project was rated as the most effective online assignment in improving all four language skills¹¹⁰ and therefore achieved what it set out to do, namely allowing students to combine and apply all language skills in a meaningful, collaborative context. Recall that the projects were shared with an 8th grade English class at a German Gymnasium and therefore encouraged ownership and responsibility through self-

¹⁰⁹ I personally find it rather “awkward” to have a conversation with a computer. It is very unnatural and impersonal. To what extent do these assignments help the learner? Do most student answer the questions spontaneously and freely or do they write out their answers first and then read them off? If the latter, then the Clear-Conversation is redundant, in my opinion, and one could print out and turn in the answer. If the point of the assignment is to practice pronunciation and to lead a conversation, then this should be done in class. That way, students will be forced to speak spontaneously and freely.

¹¹⁰ The average scores in terms of effectiveness for the language skills were 8 for speaking (with a range of 4-10), 7.33 for listening (with a range of 1-10), 7.07 for reading (with a range of 1-10), and a whopping 8.47 for writing (with a range of 1-10).

publishing for a real audience. As described in Chapter 5.4.11, each project consisted of three parts and needed to include a video and/or audio component, some text, and interactive exercises on the content. Optional features were images and additional links. Figure 11 shows an example of one team's project.

While some students questioned the topic of these projects within the context of the course¹¹¹, the general evaluation at the end of the semester was overwhelmingly positive and students described the midterm as “fun,” “interactive,” and “engaging.” Students enjoyed being able to demonstrate their technology skills, learn new technologies they could apply in other contexts, and appreciated the creative and artistic freedom in the project. They immersed themselves in the task and worked enthusiastically with each other. The following quotes illustrate this:

39. It was a fun and interesting project that made you think outside the box. Looking at my peers' projects was very interesting and I learned a lot about them. (Gordon)
40. I really enjoyed the midterm. It was a lot of fun and I felt inspired by the topic. I also felt proud of the end product and thought it was good for more exposure to German. (Scarlet)
41. I liked the midterm. It was fun and I learned how to work with the programs. The CLEAR programs are the most interesting thing I have ever seen in my entire life for class interaction. I think that they are the most innovative tools I've seen so far on the internet for language studies. I also learned how to upload on YouTube and already used this knowledge for another class. (Peggy)

¹¹¹ Jill, for example, wrote on her final questionnaire “It was fun, but it did not fit into this course + was better suited for a 300 level grammar class than a 400 level Fairy Tales class.” Rita mentioned in the final interview that she “didn’t see how the topic related to the course but it was interesting to see how people see themselves and reality. The idea of sharing it with others was cool.” I felt the topic fit in with the overall course theme as we discussed the concepts of culture and civilization and the impact of fairy tales on concepts of identity.

Figure 11
Multimedia Team Project

Was ist Identität?

Nach uns gibt es zwei verschiedenen Typen von der Identität. Es gibt die Identität eines Individuums und die Identität des Landes. Das Individuum des Individuums wird von der Welt herum definiert und wie sie in dieser Welt leben. Identität eines Individuums wird von seiner Familie, Herkunft, Geografie, persönlicher Religion und persönlicher Politik gekennzeichnet. Die Identität eines Landes wird von seiner Geografie und seinen Grenzen definiert. Die bestimmte und gemeinsame Geschichte eines Landes beeinflusst wie man sich mit der Identität eines Landes definiert. Deshalb identifiziert man mit zwei Identitäten – Identität eines Landes und die Identität eines Individuums.

Was ist Amerikanisch?

Es ist schwierig Amerika zu definieren, weil Amerika keine bestimmte gemeinsame Kultur hat. Amerika ist eine Mischung von Kulturen, die nach Amerika getragen wurden und Kulturen, die hier gewachsen wurden. Aber es gibt Persönlichkeitseigenschaften, die mit ganzen Amerika verbunden sind. Amerikanisches Essen wie Hamburgers, Hotdogs, Pancakes und Apple Pie. Auch amerikanische Sportarten wie Amerikanischer Fußball und Baseball. Amerikanische Kleider wie Blue Jeans, Cowboy Hats, Tennis Shoes und Hoodies. Hollywood und Fernsehprogrammen sind auch mit Amerika assoziiert (schau mal den Video-clip an). Es gibt auch Ideale, die als amerikanisch betrachtet

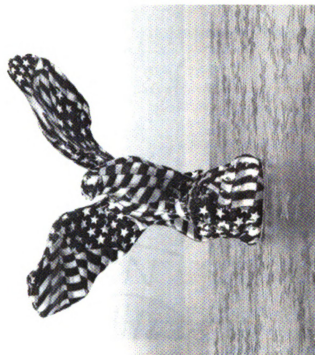


Figure 11 cont.

ITEMS

1

2

3

4

5

Blue Jeans

Amerikanisch!

Hoodies

Amerikanisch

Lederhosen

Nein!

Cowboy Hats

Amerikanisch!

Welche Kleidungen sind nicht amerikanisch?

Note. This screenshot represents the multimedia project by Angela, Monica, Susie, and William. Their mashup included text that covered parts 1 and 2 as well as an image. Underneath the image on the previous page are audio files recorded by the students that represented their personal takes on parts 1 and 2. The required interactive activities that focus on the content of the project and an additional video clip are shown on this page.

In one of the lab sessions, the students had to view all projects and comment on them in the blog that I had set up for the midterm. Their feedback speaks to the informative nature of these projects, how students learned a lot about each other, but also contained critical comments on the content:

42. Ich fand alle Projekte sehr interessant, manchmal lustig, aber alle haben die Aufgabe in Ernst genommen. Tims Projekt war besonders bewegend und informierend. Peggy und Scarlet bietet eine sehr bunte Projekt, mit viele Informationen durch visuelle Medien präsentiert und das hat mir gut gefallen.¹¹² (Jill)
43. Dieses Midterm [von Benjamin, Evelyn und Gordon] ist sehr gut gemacht und den Film finde ich besonders gut. Aber ich stimme mit ihrer Meinung nicht zu, weil die meisten negativ sind. Bestimmt haben die Amerikaner viele anerkannte negative Eigenschaften aber ich glaube, dass sie auch positive haben. Ausserdem war es sehr gut gemacht.¹¹³ (William)
44. Ich habe diese Midterm [von Jill, Nadja und Rita] sehr toll gefunden. Es gefällt mir das diese gruppe ueber Politik gesprochen haben. Die andere gruppe, denke ich, habe nur ueber sich selbst gesprochen, aber diese grupper benutzt eine kombination. Sie haben ueber sich selbst und uber etwas anderes Amerikanisch ist gesprochen.¹¹⁴ (Angela)
45. Das [von Cathy and Sharon] war nicht wie die andere. Die aktivitaeten habe ich sehr lustig gefunden. Die Video war aber ein bisschen komisch, aber auch lustig. Sie haben viel ueber Amerikanische Identitaet gesprochen.¹¹⁵ (Monica)

Following this lab session, most students highlighted in their self-evaluations that the viewing of all projects made the assignment come full circle. Gordon's comment illustrates this:

¹¹² I found all projects very interesting, sometimes funny, but all of them took the assignment seriously. Tim's project was particularly moving and informative. Peggy and Susie offered a very colorful project, with a lot of information presented through visual media types und I really liked that.

¹¹³ This midterm [by Benjamin, Evelyn, and Gordon] was done very well and I particularly liked the movie. But I do not agree with their opinion because it is mostly negative. Americans certainly have many widely acknowledged negative characteristics but I think they also have positive ones. But it was really done well.

¹¹⁴ I found this midterm [by Jill, Nadja, and Rita] great. I liked that this group talked about politics. The other groups, I think, only talked about themselves but this group used a combination. They talked about themselves and about other things American.

¹¹⁵ This [by Cathy and Sharon] wasn't like the others. I found the activities very funny. The video was a bit weird but also funny. They talked a lot about American identity.

46. Class this week was very interesting. It was great that all the projects were integrated into class. I liked looking over other classmates' midterms. They were all very well done. (Gordon)

While the 8th graders in Germany got a chance to look at the projects in class (the teacher projected the projects onto a wall), they did not have Internet access during class that would have allowed them to post comments in the blog. Only the teacher responded with feedback online: “Das Programm ist gut gemacht, die Fragen leider manchmal etwas schwierig. In den amerikanischen Videos kam die unterschiedliche Identität des amerikanischen Volkes doch ziemlich gut zum Ausdruck.”¹¹⁶

All groups exceeded my expectations and submitted excellent projects with well-delivered content. Some groups had reported difficulties with the online programs, which had been quickly solved by a lab session. Out of all assignments, this is the one I would definitely implement again because it presented the best ratio of (low) instructor involvement and (high) learning outcomes in all language skills. Students could demonstrate their understanding of assigned readings in the video/audio component as well as in the interactive activities they had to create. The project stimulated their critical thinking and expression skills and allowed the students to extend in-class discussions to a broader context outside of class.

¹¹⁶ The program is well-made but the questions were sometimes difficult. However, the American videos expressed the diverse identity of the American people well.

6.4 Research Question 4:

Perceptual Differences between Students with High vs. Low Language Skills

Research question 4 investigated perceptual differences of the hybrid course and its online assignments between highly proficient and strong students (in terms of language learning background and GPA) and students with lower abilities and grades. I was interested in determining if different learner groups deemed certain assignment types more effective in advancing language skills.

Students were assigned scores for language learning background and GPA. For each year they had studied German, students received 1 point. For study or travel abroad, students received 1 point if their length of stay was up to 2 months, 2 points for up to 6 months, 3 points for up to 1 year, and 4 points if beyond.¹¹⁷ If their overall GPA was between 0-1.9, they received 1 point, a GPA of 2.0-2.2 received 2 points, 2.3-2.7 received 3 points, 2.8-3.3 received 4 points, and 3.4-4.0 received 5 points. This allowed me to divide the students into three groups, which I labeled as highly proficient, proficient, and lower proficient. The results generally coincided with my perceptions of students' abilities with two exceptions. Gordon and William were both ranked toward the bottom of the lower proficient group. Neither of them had studied German in high school, which significantly decreased their overall score compared to their peers. However, the quantity and quality of their contributions in class and online were more similar to those students ranked mid-field than to those students ranked toward the bottom. Therefore, I moved both of them up.¹¹⁸ As a consequence, Peggy and Angela were moved to the lower group,

¹¹⁷ In the case of the native and near-native speakers, the categories of number of years studied and time spent abroad overlapped and therefore their years of exposure to the German language was translated into points.

¹¹⁸ My perception of William coincided with Gina's perception of his language skills in the pilot study.

which also coincided with my perception of their abilities. Angela's case was fairly clear in that she herself had indicated that she hardly ever participated in class because of her lacking language skills, which prohibited her from understanding the readings and her peers (see Chapter 6.3.2). Peggy was a borderline case. She participated well in class but the quality of her contributions was clearly lacking (in terms of content and language) and not comparable to students in the average range who generally participated less than her but produce quality statements when they did participate. Table 8 summarizes the division of students into the three groups.

Table 8
Students' Proficiency Levels

Highly Proficient	Proficient	Lower Proficient
Benjamin	Jen	Peggy
Rita	Amanda	Angela
Evelyn	Monica	Cathy
Nadja	Judy	Sharon
Jill	William	Sabrina
Tim	Gordon	Scarlet
		Susie

Note. This table shows the distribution of students into three proficiency groups based on their language learning background and GPA.

Prior to analyzing students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the online assignments, I crosschecked students' initial perception of their language skills (item B.1. on the pre-questionnaire [see Appendix D]). Results are listed in Appendix AA. The lower proficient and proficient groups rated their productive language skills lower than their receptive language skills, which was expected. The highly proficient group rated all four

language skills significantly higher than the other two groups and their language skills in oral modality (i.e., speaking and listening) as higher than those in written modality. Due to the fact that half of this group consisted of native or near-native speakers, who had spent considerable time in German-speaking countries but went through the majority of formal schooling in English-speaking countries, they had an excellent command of the spoken language but felt insecure about intricacies in writing and reading.¹¹⁹

Recall that 56% of all students had preferred online activities to traditional assignments while 11% had preferred traditional activities (see Chapter 6.1.2). When looking at responses by groups, preference of online assignments decreased with decreasing proficiency. 5 of 6 students in the highly proficient group clearly favored online to traditional assignments, compared to 3 students in the proficient group, and only 2 students in the lower proficient group. Learning online requires a high level of independence, self-reliance, and motivation and it appears that students with lower proficiency levels needed more handholding than students with higher proficiency levels. They consistently preferred a blend of traditional and online activities to help their understanding and language development. In the words of Sabrina:

47. The course had great balance between online and in-class activities. You definitely need both for language classes. (Sabrina)

Interestingly enough, when asked how the hybrid design influenced students' overall learning experience, students in the highly proficient group reported a neutral effect, whereas students in the proficient and lower proficient groups reported a strong positive effect because it offered more practice, as illustrated by the following comments:

¹¹⁹ In the words of Benjamin: "Es ist immer schwerer, Deutsch zu lesen als anzuhören." [It is always more difficult to read German than to listen to it.]

- 48. It forced me to pay attention to homework and actually use my German. (Angela)
- 49. I feel as though it was much more interactive & actually made me practice my skills, rather than jus blindly writing papers. (Cathy)
- 50. It offered more practice in the language (Scarlet)
- 51. It made me just a touch more confident in using my German. (Sharon)
- 52. I felt more connected to the material, like it was hands on learning, which increased my attention and learning abilities. (Monica)
- 53. I was more integrated in this class with all of the activities, so I was more involved. (Amanda)

Using students' data on their perceived effectiveness of the various online assignments in improving language skills (item B.10. on the post-questionnaire [see Appendix M]), I compared average cell ratings between the groups. The top ratings are summarized in Table 9.

In general, group results were very similar to the ratings of the entire class as presented in Figure 9. All groups rated the online speaking activities highest for improving speaking and listening skills. It is interesting to note that the average scores decreased, as the level of proficiency increased. Students in the lower proficient group rated the effectiveness of this assignment for speaking with a perfect 10, students in the proficient group with a 9.83, and students in the highly proficient group with a 7.5. This correlates with initial average proficiency ratings by these groups. Students in the lower proficiency and proficient groups had rated speaking as their lowest language skill (with an average of 2.58 and 2.83 respectively¹²⁰) and had been eager to improve their oral development, while students in the highly proficient group had rated their initial speaking skills as their second highest skill with an average of 4.33. It appears that assignments that overtly addressed students' perceived areas of weakness were rated high in

¹²⁰ Recall that these numbers were based on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being very weak and 5 being superior.

Table 9
Effectiveness of Online Assignments by Group

		Highly Proficient	Proficient	Lower Proficient
Speaking	10	Speaking Activities (7.5)	Speaking Activities (9.83)	Speaking Activities (10)
	9	Team Project (4.83)	Team Project (8.17)	Team Project (8.67)
	8	Chats (2.33)	Audio Files (4.17)	Chats (3.5)
Listening	10	Audio Files (7.67)	Audio Files (9.67)	Speaking Activities (8.67)
	9	Speaking Activities (6.5)	Speaking Activities (8.17)	Audio Files (7.33)
	8	Team Project (4.83)	Team Project (8.17)	Team Project (7.33)
Reading	10	Online Readings (9.33)	Threaded Discussions (8)	Online Readings (7.33)
	9	Team Project (5)	Blogs (7.33)	Chats (7)
	8	Chats (4.5)	Team Project (7)	Team Project (5.67)
Writing	10	Blogs (9.33)	Blogs (9.33)	Chats (8.17)
	9	Threaded Discussions (7.67)	Threaded Discussions (8.67)	Blogs (6.67)
	8	Team Project (7.17)	Team Project (7.33)	Team Project (6.67)

Note. This table provides information on the perceived effectiveness of online assignments in improving language skills arranged by the three proficiency groups. The numbers 10, 9, and 8 refer to the overall ranking with 10 being the most effective assignment. The numbers in parentheses following each assignment type are group averages.

effectiveness. This hypothesis is further underscored by the highly proficient group's initial low rating of their writing skill (with an average of 3.33) and the overall highest average scores in terms of effectiveness for writing (blogs received a 9.33, threaded discussions a 7.67, and the multimedia team project a 7.17).

All groups included the multimedia team project in the top three ranks for all language skills. Once again, this assignment appeared to be the most effective for an integrated approach regardless of proficiency level, which also suggests that this assignment type is suitable for a multilevel course because of its collaborative nature.

In terms of group differences, chats were identified by the lower-proficient students as an effective assignment for writing, reading, and speaking skills. The proficient group rated the blogs as effective for improving both writing and reading skills and audio files for improving both listening and speaking skills. The highly proficient group also identified blogs as effective for improving writing.¹²¹ Based on these results, instructors may want to consider offering different types of online assignment to students of different proficiency levels.

In terms of assignments that were not perceived as effective, students in both the lower proficient and proficient groups did not find web quests an overall effective assignment.¹²² In addition, students in the proficient group also identified the wiki as one of the lesser effective assignments across language skills, which is in contrast to the highly proficient group who rated this assignment high for reading and writing skills. Students in the proficient group mentioned that the wiki "stressed me out because I knew that people can look at it and I don't think my German is good enough for public

¹²¹ The lower proficient group had also ranked blogs among the most effective assignments for writing skills, however, average scores for chats were higher.

¹²² It was among the lowest average scores for all four language skills.

consumption” (Amanda). Students in the highly proficient group did not seem to have those fears and “enjoyed sharing my work with the public” (Nadja).

In summary, students’ levels of proficiency did not seem to have an immense impact on their perceptions of the effectiveness of online assignments for language learning but it did affect their preference of assignment types. As proficiency levels increased, so did students’ preference of online assignment types to traditional activities, suggesting that students with weaker language skills need an integrated approach that offers more in-class support and connects online with face-to-face learning.

6.5 Research Question 5:

Effects of Attitudes toward Technology on Student Perceptions of the Hybrid Course

Research question 5 investigated effects of previous experience with and attitudes toward technology on students’ perception of the hybrid course. Recall that at the outset of the study, the students had rated their technology skills as good to very good and had an overall neutral to positive attitude toward using computers in foreign language classes (see Chapter 5.2.2). Rita, one of the native speakers of German and excellent student¹²³, was the exception: She generally “disliked” computers, rated her technology skills as “very weak,” and “strongly disliked” the use of computers for language learning. At the other end of the spectrum was Peggy, an average student¹²⁴, who rated her technology skills as “superior” and liked using computers in language classes. Along with Rita, Benjamin, the other native speaker in class, and William also disliked the use of computers in language classes. Both students had participated in the pilot study, which

¹²³ Her overall GPA was between 3.4-4.0.

¹²⁴ Her overall GPA was between 2.3-2.7.

may have had a negative influence on their perceptions at the beginning of the hybrid course. Monica, the third student who had also participated in the pilot study, on the other hand, “strongly liked” using computers in language classes, which reflects an increase from her rating during the pilot study. Apart from the three students who participated in the pilot study, GRM 455 was the first hybrid language class the students had enrolled in (Scarlet had taken an online course in microbiology and thought “it was a wonderful learning tool,” Nadja in educational administration and mentioned she “needed ongoing technical support,” and Megan in economics and indicated she liked “the visual part of the computer and felt less pressure”).

Students were assigned scores for previous experience with and attitudes toward technology. High ratings of technology skills translated into high points, as did positive attitudes about using computers in foreign language classes (see items B.10. and B.6. on the pre-questionnaire [Appendix D]). For time spent online for German classes, students received 1 point for 0-4 hours, 2 points for 5-9 hours, 3 points for 10-19 hours, and 4 points for 20 hours or more. This allowed me to divide the students into three groups, which I labeled as technophil, tech-neutral, and technophob. Table 10 summarizes the division of students into these three groups.

I compared average group ratings of students’ responses to how the hybrid design had changed their attitude toward the course (ranked on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being a strong negative influence and 5 being a strong positive influence) and their ratings of enjoyment of the course (also ranked on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being strongly dislike and 5 being strongly like). Results are presented in Table 11.

Table 10
Students' Attitudes toward Technology

Technophil	Tech-neutral	Technophob
Monica	Nadja	Evelyn
Peggy	Judy	Sabrina
Susie	Jen	William
Scarlet	Cathy	Rita
Sharon	Amanda	
Jill	Benjamin	
Gordon	Angela	
Tim		

Note. This table shows the distribution of students into three groups based on their experience with and attitudes toward technology.

Table 11
Effect of Technology Background on Perception of Hybrid Course

	Technophil	Tech-neutral	Technophob
Perception of hybrid design	3.5	4	2
Enjoyment of course	3.5	4.43	3.5

Note. This table presents students' attitudes toward the hybrid design and their general enjoyment of the course by levels of technology skills.

Students in the tech-neutral group reported a positive influence of the hybrid design on their attitude toward the course and also strongly liked the course as a whole. It appears that the implementation of technology in a language course has positive effects on students with average technology skills and backgrounds. Students in the technophob group, on the other hand, reported a negative influence of the hybrid design on their attitude toward the course, yet, they rated their enjoyment of the course on the whole with

neutral to positive. It is barely surprising that students who dislike technology would perceive a heavy technology focus in a course as negative. Their ratings of their overall enjoyment of the course is still encouraging, especially when considering the plethora of online assignments in GRM 455. Technophil students rated both their perception of the hybrid design and enjoyment of the course as neutral to positive.

In analyzing students' open-ended comments on the post-questionnaire and their responses in the final interview, almost all students stated that they "hated" the course at first because of the heavy work load but "appreciated it" later for the extensive exposure to and practice with the German language through different technologies. These comments were made by the students, regardless of their language or technology level.

The following shall suffice as examples:

- 54. In the beginning, the course design had a negative impact but I enjoyed it in the long run. It was a nice change from traditional classrooms. (Benjamin)
- 55. This course had me involved way more. At first I hated it because it was too much work, but then I really liked it. I learned way more here than I have before because I participated more because of the hybrid. (Amanda)
- 56. First I was overwhelmed and scared but it got better over the first few weeks. But then I put off work and got frustrated easily. In retrospect, the hybrid design really helped in advancing my German. (Peggy)

6.6 Other Findings

One of the major objectives of this course was to integrate academic content and linguistic skills in an upper-level class. I had suggested that the implementation of technology can be useful in this endeavor and, based on the results presented in this chapter, this approach appeared successful. Students rated their knowledge of subject matter at the end of the course with a 3.84 on a 5-point Likert scale, which approached "I

learned a lot,” and also perceived improvement across all language skills,¹²⁵ particularly in cultural knowledge and listening comprehension.

In its hybrid format, the course emphasized the use of technology outside (and instead of) the classroom. However, the integrated approach of content and language was not only an important facet of the online assignments but was also applied during face-to-face sessions. Using a student-centered format, the course encouraged students’ active participation and involvement in large and small group discussions and in interactive and creative group projects. Most of the students highlighted these aspects in their weekly self-evaluations, the final questionnaires, and interviews. They particularly emphasized four assignments: 1. After reading the fairy tale *The White Bride and the Black Bride*, students had to rewrite the story in groups and switch the gender roles of the protagonists. We had discussed the portrayal of gender roles in fairy tales and the groups came up with interesting nuances and twists. Jill and Jen, for example, noted:

57. I liked the reinterpretation of the white and black brides. It was a fun and entertaining exercise, but also showed what the class thinks of gender, sex, and sexuality and how vital/non-vital they are to a story. (Jill)

58. I liked how we got to re-write the fairytale. I thought it was a very interesting activity. The discussion we had in our group and later in class was really good and I think my understanding may be improving. (Jen)

2. For various tales, we looked at illustrations throughout history, including illustrations from different origins, cartoons, and political satires. Students were asked to analyze and interpret the images in groups and present their thoughts to the class. All students were very engaged and they appreciated the change of pace from heavy readings to visual stimuli.

¹²⁵ Average scores for the areas of speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and culture were between 3.05 and 4.11 on a 5-point Likert scale with 3 being some improvement and 4 being a lot of improvement.

59. Mir haben die Illustrationen zu der Geschichte [von die Schöne und das Biest] gut gefallen. Sie waren sehr interessant; es war toll, diese Bilder vergleichen zu koennen und bestimmte Elemente wie die Rose herauszusuchen.¹²⁶
(Benjamin)

60. I liked looking at the different pictures of Beauty and the Beast. It actually gave me something to say auf deutsch for once. (Susie)

3. When we discussed the Frog Prince, students were given the task to design a modern Hollywood film version of this tale. Groups had to identify the main characters, choose the cast, draft the storyline, find a title, and create a movie poster. Students described it as a “fun” activity they got very engaged in and for which they stayed after class to work on and met throughout the week to prepare for their in-class presentations, on which we all voted.

61. I liked working in groups to come up with our own Froschkoenig, it was very interesting and fun. (Gordon)

62. Die Froschkoenig Aufgabe war toll, wo wir einen Film draus machen sollte. Das war ganz witzig und wir haben uns am Wochenende getroffen, um unser Filmplakat zu machen. Wir wollen auch Lindsay Lohan anrufen und fragen, ob sie die Prinzessin spielt.¹²⁷ (Tim)

63. Brainstorming and presenting new Froschkönig movies was entertaining. It seemed more engaging than other assignments and people seemed more involved. (William)

4. After discussing Hansel and Gretel, we held a mock trial in class where the parents of Hansel and Gretel were charged with negligence in supervision and the witch was charged with cannibalism. Students were assigned to groups and either had to prepare arguments for the prosecution or defense of the parents or the witch.

64. Forming our own arguments to defend/prosecute the different characters of the fairy tale was awesome. I think we had a really great discussion and people came up with some pretty interesting arguments. The parents are not guilty! :) (Amanda)

¹²⁶ I really liked the illustrations of Beauty and the Beast. They were very interesting; it was great to compare these images and identify certain elements like the rose.

¹²⁷ The Frog Prince activity was great, where we had to make it into a movie. It was super funny and we met over the weekend to work on our film poster. We also want to call Lindsay Lohan to ask if she can play the princess.

Providing fun and collaborative tasks that students can relate to and identify with helps to engage them with course content and language at the same time. Students had to apply their knowledge and extend it beyond the immediate text-based nature of the upper-level literature course to a broader context.

Another recurring aspect students highlighted throughout the semester was the importance of the language lab sessions that showed them the different technologies and explained the online assignments. This underscores research on the importance (and oftentimes existing lack of) training for courses that utilize technology (e.g., Barrette, 2001; Sánchez-Serrano, 2008).

- 65. The training sessions were immensely useful and I liked learning about the technology in German because I feel it will be useful in the future. (Monica)
- 66. The introduction classes helped because even though the technologies are simple to learn, having the entire classtime allowed is to experiment & explore the programs. (Susie)
- 67. The intro was the only way I would have been able to navigate through these things. (Judy)

A final quote summarizes the perceptions of the majority of the students regarding the hybrid course elements:

- 68. I think this class is a very good example of how teachers can integrate four skills of teaching and learning (reading, writing, speaking and listening) into technology. With essays, Wikispace and discussion forums the students can improve their writing skills, with Muendliche Uebung [speaking assignments] they can improve their speaking skills, we listen to Podcasts which is helpful to improve listening skills, we are reading the articles... What I like most is the self-evaluation part. Here a student not only evaluates his/her performance, but also makes a summary of what he/she learned from the previous class. I love that idea!!!! This class is not a traditional class type, so using the technology is changing the framework of this class. I have really enjoyed the variety of experiences that I have gotten from this course. (Nadja)

Chapter 7 concludes my research and revisits the initial hypotheses, connects the study to existing literature, and summarizes implications, limitations, and future directions.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Revision of Initial Hypotheses

The research questions outlined in Chapter 1.2 and discussed in Chapter 6 had guided this study and I had sketched out preliminary hypotheses, which were informed by the existing research on the language-literature gap and hybrid education. These hypotheses were that

- (1) Online assignments will offer more varied opportunities for students to engage with the course materials, with peers, and with the language and as a result will help them advance all language skills while acquiring content knowledge. In addition, students will enjoy the convenience of online assignments in terms of access and pace and will become more confident speakers of the language as a result of individual online speaking activities.
- (2) Students will engage more with course materials, feel more responsible for their work, and collaborate with their peers more because of the online delivery mode.
- (3) Innovative and interactive assignment types that integrate academic content with linguistic skills as well as technologies that allow students to collaborate will be perceived as most effective in improving language skills. Specifically, online assignments that address students' perceived areas of weakness will be rated highest.

- (4) In general, students will prefer the hybrid course model to a traditional classroom setting. Particularly weaker students will prefer this model because it allows them to work at their own pace and removed from their peers.
- (5) Students will have extensive experience with online technologies, which will result in positive attitudes toward the course model.

The data presented in Chapter 6 provide strong support for hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, partial support for hypothesis 4, and incidental support for hypothesis 5. As a result of the hybrid design, all students acknowledged the extensive exposure to and practice with the German language, with each other, and with a variety of assignment types that integrated course content and language skills. Amanda had noted that she “was more integrated in this class with all of the activities, so I was more involved ... I learned more because I participated more” and Sabrina liked “using the language through a variety of mediums vs. read, take notes, paper, repeat. That’s why I like the idea of technology.”

As indicated in Chapter 6.1.3, students perceived improvements in all language skills at the end of the course and had indicated great gains in content knowledge. While improvements in listening comprehension and cultural knowledge had been significant, students had commented on all aspects of the course as conducive to their learning.

69. There were many options, it was full of content and I learned more, more than in a regular course. (Nadja)

70. This is the most I’ve learned ever in a German class. (Peggy)

Many students pointed out the ease of access to materials and the fact that they could work on assignments whenever and wherever convenient.

71. The collaborative assignments were very personal and had a lot of flexibility because we could work on them whenever it was convenient for our schedules. (Judy)
72. Medien wie Web oder auch Film sind heutzutage leicht zugänglich und können leicht von Schülern eingesetzt werden.¹²⁸ (Benjamin)

While students' speaking skills did not improve significantly as a result of this course, all students did highlight their perceived benefit of the online speaking assignments.

73. They offered much needed practice. (Sharon)
74. The speaking activities helped with speaking *and* listening and resulted in speaking more German in class. (Jen)

Students not only became more confident users of the language but also more fluent speakers of German (see Chapter 6.3.2).

Hypothesis 2 was also strongly supported by the data. In terms of access and completion rates, students were engaged learners in this course and oftentimes went beyond the mere requirements (see Chapter 6.2). Assignments that resulted in particularly high levels of engagement were self-evaluations, online speaking activities, and web quests, as well as chats, threaded discussions, and blogs. The last three assignment types were collaborative in nature and students enjoyed working with their peers because of the ability to exchange ideas and see different points of view and the fact that students got to know each other well quickly, which positively affected the classroom atmosphere and students' overall attitude toward the course.

75. Group work, especially the midterm, made the class closer. In collaborative work you got to see what others do, learn about your peers, and get to know them. The chats really helped in getting to know other students better. (Peggy)
76. Working with my peers a lot was great. I know more people well in class now than in any other class at MSU. (Judy)
77. Collaboration is helpful because German is about communication. You had to communicate with your peers for these online activities. You had to read what they wrote and then react. (Scarlet)

¹²⁸ Media like the Web or film are easy to access nowadays and can be implemented easily by students.

It might seem counter-intuitive, but the hybrid delivery made the class closer because the online assignments encouraged more collaboration among students, which then translated into more engaged participation in class because of lower anxiety levels. Students also reported higher levels of responsibility because their work was automatically time-stamped and they could see online what needed to be done and what other students had already completed (similar findings were also reported by Sanders, 2005).

78. Seeing all the stuff posted online helps seeing what you could and should do and what others did. That definitely pushed me to do more and work better and to become more responsible. (Sharon)

An additional benefit of the hybrid format that surfaced in students' comments was that it increased their time management and organizational skills.

79. In this hybrid course, you needed to be responsible from the start. It helped me with my management skills to stay on top of things and complete my work on time. Everything was well documented and it was also nice and easy to reach all resources on ANGEL. (Evelyn)

Hypothesis 3 was also confirmed. The online assignment that received highest overall scores for all four language skills was the multimedia team project, which integrated content and language, was collaborative in nature, and had students utilize a variety of innovative online tools.

80. It was a fun and interesting project that made you think outside the box. Looking at my peers' projects was very interesting and I learned a lot about them. (Gordon)

The other two assignments that received high scores for improving individual skills were the online speaking activities for improving speaking and listening and the blogs for improving writing and reading.

As pointed out in Chapter 6.3, with the exception of the wiki, students generally rated collaborative assignments as most effective in advancing language skills. Two additional

factors had an influence on students' perceptions of the online assignments: Assignment types that students perceived as "fun" or "casual" and that extended their audience beyond the teacher were more meaningful to students (e.g., blogs, chats, and team project) than assignments that were just one-way (i.e., where students submitted something to a drop box as was the case with the self-evaluations and the web quests or where students were simply receptive users as with the audio files and readings). Overall highest scores for improving individual skills were given to the online speaking activities. Many students had commented on their fears of speaking in a class with native and very proficient speakers and the online activities offered students much needed practice away from their peers, which in turn helped them overcome their insecurities and "resulted in speaking more German in class" (Jen).

Results from Chapter 6.4 further underscored that assignments that overtly addressed students' perceived areas of weakness were rated high in effectiveness: Students with lower and average proficiency levels had rated speaking as their lowest language skill and had given highest average scores to the online speaking assignments, while students of high proficiency had rated their writing skill low and had given overall highest average scores to blogs and threaded discussions.

Hypothesis 4 was only partially confirmed. Overall, students did prefer the hybrid course model to a traditional classroom setting because of the diversity of assignments it offered and the student-centered format.

81. Technology is a very important tool that can be used to do many things more effectively. (Gordon)
82. I preferred the hybrid course because of the group work and the interaction. There was more hands-on learning and it caters to different learner types. Having many options makes you feel better in a class when the number of

assignments is within reason and if there is a perfect mix of face-to-face and online. (Peggy)

83. A teacher-centered format (paper+test) is boring, here I am in charge. (Amanda)

84. The hybrid format was a more modern, 21st century process of teaching. It also forces you to practice. (Cathy)

85. I liked the authentic input and outside practice. (Monica)

The second assumption had been that weaker students would prefer the hybrid model because it allowed them to work at their own pace and removed from their peers. While the flexibility in time, space, and pace had been mentioned by students, data did not support that level of proficiency was a decisive factor in students' perceptions of the effectiveness of online assignments for language learning. However, it did affect students' preference of assignment types. As proficiency levels increased, so did students' preference of online assignment types to traditional activities, suggesting that students with weaker language skills need an integrated approach that offers more in-class support and connects online with face-to-face learning.

The data revealed only little support for hypothesis 5. Despite existing research on students' lacking technology skills for hybrid courses (e.g., Foster, 2006; Messineo & DeOllas, 2005; Winke & Goertler, 2008), I had assumed that all students would be tech-savvy and technophil and would therefore prefer a hybrid course format to a traditional one. Overall, students had rated their technology skills as good to very good and had a neutral to positive attitude toward using computers in foreign language classes. However, a few students held negative attitudes toward computers in general and for language learning in particular. It did not come as a surprise that these students reported a negative perception of the hybrid design and only slightly positive ratings in terms of enjoyment of the course. The surprising finding was that students who neither had a strong positive or

negative attitude toward technology reported the overall highest positive influence of the hybrid design on their attitude toward the course and also on their enjoyment of the course as a whole. It appears, therefore, that the implementation of technology in a language course can have positive effects on students with average technology skills and backgrounds.

Three additional findings surfaced from the data that had not been addressed initially in my hypotheses. 1. The student-centered format in class that included interactive and creative group projects supported the integration of academic content and linguistic skills (as shown by students' high ratings for content knowledge and overall improved language skills). Providing fun and collaborative tasks that students can relate to and identify with helps to engage them with course content and language at the same time. For the in-class group projects, students had to apply their knowledge and extend it beyond the immediate text-based nature of the upper-level literature course to a broader context. 2. Students highlighted the importance of the training sessions for understanding the functionality of the various technologies and for supervised practice. 3. Students felt that the self-evaluations gave them an active role in shaping the course by providing ongoing feedback.

Based on the data, it seems appropriate to rephrase portions of the hypotheses to better reflect students' actual perceptions and to include those aspects that surfaced in the data that seemed to have had an impact on students' perceived usefulness and effectiveness of the hybrid course. The following statements are the result of a combination of the initial hypotheses and students' actual comments and highlight the benefits of hybrid language education that were found in this particular course. They do

by no means represent an exhaustive list, but taken together with the outlined benefits of hybrid language education in Chapter 2.3.1, they may offer incentives for other language teachers to go hybrid.

Benefits of hybrid language courses include

- more varied opportunities for students to engage with the language
- a more modern approach to language teaching that offers a chance of pace
- speaking to students' interests which results in higher levels of engagement
- advancing all language skills while acquiring content knowledge
- increased confidence and fluency
- convenience in terms of access and pace
- higher levels of responsibility
- better organizational skills and time management
- higher levels of collaboration
- better classroom atmosphere
- helping students in the areas they need most help with
- positive effect on students with neutral attitudes toward technology.

7.2 Connection to Existing Literature

The goal of this dissertation was three-fold: 1. I intended to contribute to the existing research base on the language-literature gap in collegiate contexts through an empirical investigation of student perceptions. 2. I was specifically interested in addressing the lack of research on language acquisition, particularly oral development, in upper-level foreign language content courses that has been pointed out by scholars like Barr et al. (2005),

Donato and Brooks (2004), Liskin-Gasparro (2000), or Liu (2003). 3. I approached these issues from a perspective of hybrid education, hoping to capitalize on the benefits of technology for language learning (e.g., Felix, 2001; Hokanson, 2000; Spodark, 2001).

My study investigated opportunities for the continuing development of linguistic skills, particularly speaking, in fourth-year German content courses and student perceptions of the effects of technology in the language learning context. It followed the suggestion by Polio and Zyzik (in press) to offer hybrid courses that combine the teaching of academic content and linguistic skills as a possible solution to the gap in articulation between lower-level language and upper-level content courses. To my knowledge, it is the only study that integrates a focus on articulation in upper-level courses with German language development and hybrid education.

One of the most widely cited difficulties in hybrid language education is the lack of training for students and teachers in using technologies, as pointed out by Barrette (2001), Quinn (1990), and Sánchez-Serrano (2008). In designing the hybrid course, I paid special attention to this issue and provided students with various training sessions throughout the semester and was also available for support as problems arose. As mentioned above, students were appreciative of these sessions and “would have been lost otherwise” (Angela). A second important aspect that influenced the design and implementation of the hybrid course was the perceived lack of speaking practice and provision of inadequate feedback in hybrid language courses, as observed by Blake (2008) and Felix (2001). While GRM 455 succeeded in providing students with extensive speaking practice, some students felt that they needed “more opportunities to receive feedback on assignments” (Jen). Students were given individualized feedback online on

almost all assignments on a regular basis, however, not many students accessed this feedback. It appears that even in a hybrid environment, written feedback that is handed to students is more effective than online feedback. The present study could therefore not completely disprove Felix' findings of lacking feedback in hybrid environments.

Results of the present study confirmed another area of difficulty in hybrid education that has been discussed by Davis (1998) and the Web-based Education Commission (2000): time spent in planning and implementing hybrid courses. The initial time commitment in setting up the course was high, however, maintaining the course management system was not very time consuming. What did increase time spent on this hybrid course was the ongoing evaluation of all assignments, in particular the oral speaking activities. This confirmed Barr et al.'s findings (2005) of increased instructor involvement in implementing and assessing oral practice online. As mentioned above, I was able to limit time spent evaluating these activities by modifying the quality and quantity of my prompts and by not enabling the practice mode in *Conversations*. Another way to reduce time spent would have been to change the assignment into a bi-weekly activity instead of a weekly assignment.

Scida and Saury's (2006) results of a first-year Spanish hybrid course indicated that students felt a positive impact of the hybrid module on their learning, which particularly resulted in higher levels of confidence in using vocabulary in-class. While the present study was conducted with upper-level language learners, it still yielded similar results. Students reported increases in all language skills, a general enjoyment of the course, and higher levels of fluency and confidence in using the language in class, lending support to the effectiveness of hybrid courses as instructional methods regardless of level.

In the present study, particularly students of lower proficiency had expressed their perceived need of face-to-face interaction alongside the online activities. This finding confirms results by Harker and Koutsantoni (2005) and Leakey and Ranchoux (2006) who found that face-to-face sessions are crucial in language learning and suggested that a hybrid course offered the best environment for maximum success. While the present study did not include a control group and any measures were therefore relative, students' and my own perspectives still revealed a strong preference of the hybrid format and improvements in all language skills and lent support to Felix' "large skew towards advantages" in hybrid education (2001, p. 56). She also noted that "none of this [new technologies] will ever replace best-practice face-to-face teaching, but what is becoming more and more obvious with emerging research is that the new technologies offer excellent potential for adding value to classroom teaching in a large variety of ways" (Felix, 2001, p. 57). In a similar vein, Leakey and Ranchoux reported that students found the hybrid environment a positive and motivating one and tended to prefer it to traditional instructional methods. This finding found strong support in the present data.

While, to my knowledge, there is no study that investigated the effects of hybrid education on students' perceptions of language skills in upper-level content courses, results of Donato and Brooks (2004) and Zyzik and Polio (2008) were relevant to my research. Both studies investigated opportunities for language development in upper-level Spanish literature courses and found that traditional, teacher-dominated classrooms were not conducive for students to produce extensive output. The hybrid design of the present study, on the other hand, actively engaged language learners through a variety of collaborative assignments, both in-class and online, that integrated content and language

and resulted in overall improvements in language skills. Hybrid courses, therefore, seem to offer opportunities for much needed practice and engagement with the language. As pointed out above, students in the pilot and the hybrid study were comparable in their perceptions of language skills at the outset of the studies. Improvement rates in the hybrid study were higher than in the pilot study, lending further support of the effectiveness of hybrid courses in improving language skills.

The present study confirmed the long list of benefits of hybrid instruction through a student-centered and flexible approach to language learning. Implications of the results will be discussed in the following.

7.3 Implications

This study has implications for language educators in planning course delivery and provides valuable student opinions of the effectiveness of instructional methods. In addition, instructors can use the data gathered to better understand what factors may increase or decrease student engagement and participation and how to leverage technology to assist the instruction, not to be the instruction.

As has been pointed out by students in the pilot and the hybrid study, it was important that technology supported learning and was not an “add on” or “busy work.” By utilizing technology to increase collaboration among students and engagement with course content, it created a positive environment that was conducive to learning. It also allowed for integration of academic content and linguistic skills and resulted in improvement in both areas.

While the presented hybrid design had its drawbacks (see Chapter 7.4), it was a first attempt at hybridizing upper-level German courses that focus on the integration of academic content with linguistic skills and offers other educators insights into challenges and victories. In general, I am very pleased with the implementation and the results of this project. The hybrid process was a useful professional development experience for me as it offered valuable insights into course development and student learning and assessment. These insights had a positive impact on my instructional practices because they were directly and continuously transferred and applied, which resulted in a classroom that was more conducive to learning.

Based on the students' comments and my own reflections, a few practical aspects are crucial to make the hybrid experience effective and should be taken into consideration when moving instruction to a hybrid format:

- It is of utmost importance to remind students over and over again of the functionality, purpose, grading criteria, and due dates of online assignments in class. Only once students truly understand the meaning behind these learning tools can they take advantage of all aspects to the fullest extent possible.
- The number of online assignments should be reduced to a level where task completion enhances the learning experience and is not perceived as busy work. It is also important to connect the work students did online to face-to-face sessions by sharing a few examples and using them as springboard for in-class discussions.
- Providing students with continuous training and feedback is a crucial aspect and the online environment is very conducive to doing so. Students need to be

reminded where they can access such feedback and how they can monitor progress.

- Offering different assignments to address students' differing needs individualizes the learning experience and may result in higher levels of achievement.

In contrast to the pilot study, the hybrid portions in GRM 455 were fully incorporated into instruction. It was a flexible educational tool that took the students', the teacher's and the supervising professor's suggestions into account throughout the semester and strove toward the best possible methods of learning and teaching. The online assignments integrated skill competence in context and moved toward a student-centered model that did not only take products (traditionally in the form of a final paper) but also processes of learning into account. Tim's comment captures some of the above-mentioned aspects:

86. Overall, I found it a well-rounded course. I myself have been interested in technology-based language learning, and this has certainly served to heighten my opinion of it. As for criticism, the pace could have been taken more slowly. Not so many activities are necessary. A frequent complaint - and tended to diminish the enjoyment students had initially felt. (Tim)

The hybrid course was successful in integrating academic content and linguistic skills in an upper-level content course. Results from this dissertation can inform similar projects in the future. The online assignments presented here are transferable to other foreign or second language settings and hybrid courses in general can be implemented in most subject areas. This innovative and engaging course design not only improves student learning, it can also enhance the quality of instructional practices by moving from a teacher- to a student-centered approach.

As was pointed out earlier, the complexity and heterogeneity of students' learning require not only diverse forms of students' work, but also multiple methods of assessment, and online technologies offer various avenues to encourage both. This study does not suggest eliminating face-to-face contact because, as research suggests and as has been pointed out by participants in this study, students need live interaction with their teacher and their peers. Yet, online assignments can reduce anxieties of speaking in class and increase fluency, which in turn can positively affect in-class participation. In-class assignments such as the making of a Hollywood film version or the mock trial of Hansel and Gretel had students connect content and language and produce output. These assignments were received extremely well by the students because they were relatable and relevant and enhanced students' active engagement.

Students have rather strong opinions about instructional practices and their needs as language learners, as can be seen from the data presented in this study. Usually, students' opinions and preferences about classroom practices are barely considered when instructional decisions are made. However, being open to their suggestions and taking them into account can impact teaching practices in a positive way. It makes learning more purposeful in the eyes of the students and by knowing that a teacher cares about and values a student's opinion, not only the classroom atmosphere and the rapport between teacher and students might be enhanced but also student learning. Even though designing and implementing a hybrid course is time consuming, it is a worthwhile effort.

7.4 Limitations

There were several limitations in regard to the present study, the most pertinent ones being (1) issues in design, (2) the small scale of the study in both number of participants and duration, and (3) that the researcher was also the teacher.

The major drawback of this study concerned issues in design. Fitting a plethora of online assignments for all language skills into a fifteen-week course with a heavy reading load was overly ambitious, especially since it was the first time that such a project had been undertaken in an upper-level course. It was time consuming and cumbersome to create meaningful contextualized assignments and to grade all of them. The course was no less demanding for the students. For a first-time hybrid course, it might have made more sense to focus on one online assignment per language skill, as suggested by various students. Nonetheless, I was very pleased with the performance of the students in class and I believe that overall the implementation was a good first try.

Another major problem in design was the lack of formal assessment of students' proficiency levels at the beginning and end of the study that would have allowed for a more structured comparison on improvement. Conclusions were based on students' subjective reactions concurrent and retrospective to the study and were not based on measurements of actual learning gains. Simply asking students to rate their own skills might not reveal their true abilities, as was discussed in Chapter 4.6.2. Also, students' participation during class sessions was not measured or formally evaluated, which would have provided deeper insights into improvements in fluency. Lastly, the effectiveness of the hybrid course in comparison to traditional teaching methods could have been better evaluated, had there been a control group. This was, however, impossible at the advanced

level because generally the same course is not taught twice, especially not in one semester. The pilot study attempted to remedy this lack by offering a short glimpse into a traditional upper-level content course.

Certain technology problems arose over the course of the semester. I had assumed that all students would have access to a computer, the Internet, and necessary hardware requirements such as a headset and microphone at home, which was not the case. Students could work on the online assignments in the language lab on campus, but this took away flexibility and privacy. Also, some students reported difficulties with various technologies throughout the semester, despite elaborate training sessions. Since there was no time for additional lab sessions in the schedule, I offered to meet with the students outside of class to go over any difficulties, which generally took care of the problem but increased my time commitment even further.

The second major limitation was the small scale of the study in both number of participants and duration. Reporting descriptive statistical results of 19 participants does not allow for generalizations. Also, many variables such as students' language learning background and knowledge of German could not be controlled for, which rendered the participant group very heterogeneous. Such variables are very likely to have influenced students' perceptions of the hybrid course. This speaks of the dilemma that researchers generally face when conducting classroom-based studies of

whether to aim for high internal validity through laboratory-based methods where variables can be carefully controlled, while running the risk that equivalent results may not be achievable in the real classroom setting; or to aim for authentic use, which, while satisfying the need for studies in real contexts, raises the likelihood that the findings cannot be generalized beyond the specific context where the evaluation takes place. (Levy, 1997, p. 30)

The third major limitation was the fact that I as the researcher also taught the class and had preconceived notions about the hybrid context based on the literature I had read, which heavily influenced the design of the course. A teacher's enthusiasm about any aspects related to the classroom or the lack thereof can carry over to the students. My enthusiasm about hybrid education may have had an overly positive effect on students, who otherwise may have rated the effectiveness of online assignments differently. In fact, various students mentioned on their final questionnaires that I made the class enjoyable, so their ratings of the effectiveness of the actual assignments for language learning may have been jaded.

From a research perspective, the point of view of the teacher and the researcher converged and, apart from informal comments by Maria, there were no intervening factors that might have encouraged ongoing critical reflection about instructional practices. However, while being in the teacher role, I had ample background knowledge about hybrid education and language learning which might have not been the case, had I chosen to implement the hybrid assignments in a class I did not teach myself. I believe that this aspect greatly enhanced the hybrid experience, as I was flexible and knowledgeable enough to adjust to any arising problems.

Despite these limitations, I still feel that the implementation of the hybrid course was a success and was well received by the students. Their perceptions generally addressed their preference of this instructional method over traditional teaching styles, due to the advantages outlined at the end of Chapter 7.1. By integrating the online assignments with traditional essays and in-class group projects, I ensured to cater to different learner types, and the course design offered ample opportunities for all students to succeed. I would

implement hybrid courses again in upper-level German as a foreign language course, however, I would take the aforementioned limitations and practical aspects into considerations and make the proposed changes to the existing design.

7.5 Future Directions

Some suggestions for future research include the remedy of the identified limitations of this study. It would be interesting to see if and how teaching effectiveness and student learning are affected when online assignments focus on only one or two language skills, for example, speaking and listening, while the other skills are practiced through traditional assignment types. This would involve a more manageable course design.

Conducting a study that uses a control group would allow for comparison of student perceptions based on inclusion/exclusion of technology. This would provide better insights into the effects of online assignments on student learning. In order to measure gains in proficiency, students' language skills should be formally assessed at the beginning and at the end of the semester.

It would also be interesting to conduct research on the effectiveness of hybrid education on language development and student perceptions with different populations and levels. This would offer insights into the generalizability of findings across groups. In addition, evaluating instructor perceptions of and experiences with the different delivery methods (i.e., traditional and hybrid) could aid in identifying aspects that make the delivery formats more accessible to instructors who have no extensive background in language acquisition and computer-assisted language learning.

Finally, longitudinal case studies of individual learners would provide deeper insights into language development and other factors influencing language learning. Because upper-level classes are not homogeneous and different students enroll in different courses every semester, it would be complicated, if not impossible, to follow an entire group of students for more than one semester.

All these suggestions will help educators better understand students' perceptions of instructional practices as well their benefits for learning. One of the goals of a teacher is to provide effective language instruction that is contextualized, integrative, and meaningful. Hybrid courses seem to be a step into the right direction.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Spring 2008 Enrollment Numbers at Big Ten Institutions

Indiana University Bloomington

	French			
	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
# of sections:	19	19	16	3
# of sections by lit/cult or lang focus:			7 lit 7 lang	2 lit 1 lang
% of enrollments by lit/cult or lang:			55% 45%	67% 33%
Average # of Ss per section and range:	20 (16-23)	21 (15-24)	18 (6-27)	18 (18-19)
Median capacity per section and range:	23 (20-23)	23 (22-23)	22 (15-30)	20 (20)
# of sections filled:	4	5+1 beyond	9	

	German			
	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
# of sections:	10	7	7	4
# of sections by lit/cult or lang focus:			2 lit 5 lang	2 lit 2 lang
% of enrollments by lit/cult or lang:			31% 69%	35% 65%
Average # of Ss per section and range:	18 (14-20)	17 (13-23)	16 (10-25)	12 (8-19)
Median capacity per section and range:	23 (23)	23 (23)	23 (17-35)	18 (15-25)
# of sections filled:		1		

	Spanish			
	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
# of sections:	27	82	40	6
# of sections by lit/cult or lang focus:			11 lit 22 lang	5 lit 1 lang
% of enrollments by lit/cult or lang:			32% 68%	82% 18%
Average # of Ss per section and range:	22 (19-23)	21 (15-24)	20 (15-25)	21 (15-23)
Median capacity per section and range:	23 (23)	23 (23)	24 (16-25)	23 (21-23)
# of sections filled:	9	19+1 beyond	15	2

Michigan State University

	French			
	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
# of sections:	5	8	6	4
# of sections by lit/cult or lang focus:			1 lit 3 lang	3 lit 1 lang
% of enrollments by lit/cult or lang:			25% 75%	70% 30%
Average # of Ss per section and range:	29 (27-32)	24 (13-29)	17 (12-21)	21 (15-25)
Median capacity per section and range:	28 (28-30)	30 (20-30)	26 (20-26)	25 (20-26)
# of sections filled:	2+2 beyond			1 beyond

	German			
	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
# of sections:	8	5	4	3
# of sections by lit/cult or lang focus:			1 lit 2 lang	1 lit 1 lang
% of enrollments by lit/cult or lang:			45% 55%	32% 68%
Average # of Ss per section and range:	20 (11-26)	27 (22-30)	15 (8-23)	20 (13-28)
Median capacity per section and range:	28 (28)	30 (28-30)	28 (25-30)	25 (18-28)
# of sections filled:		1 beyond		

	Spanish			
	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
# of sections:	12+10 hybrid	27	19	9
# of sections by lit/cult or lang focus:			6 lit 13 lang	7 lit 2 lang
% of enrollments by lit/cult or lang:			29% 71%	78% 22%
Average # of Ss per section and range:	24 (14-30) 20 (17-22) hybr	26 (14-31)	26 (19-30)	28 (21-39)
Median capacity per section and range:	30 (30) 22 (22) hybrid	30 (28-30)	26 (26-30)	26 (25-30)
# of sections filled:	2+1 hybrid	4+1 beyond	3	2+5 beyond

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

	French			
	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
# of sections:	16+6 distance*	20	13	5
# of sections by lit/cult or lang focus:			4 lit 8 lang	5 lit 0 lang
% of enrollments by lit/cult or lang:			31% 69%	100%
Average # of Ss per section and range:	21 (15-24) 2 (1-4) distance	21 (15-25)	17 (12-21)	15 (10-19)
Median capacity per section and range:	23 (22-24)	24 (22-24)	20 (15-25)	20 (13-20)
# of sections filled:	4	5+2 beyond	1+2 beyond	1

	German			
	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
# of sections:	10+2 distance*	12	6	3
# of sections by lit/cult or lang focus:			2 lit 3 lang	2 lit 0 lang
% of enrollments by lit/cult or lang:			46% 54%	100%
Average # of Ss per section and range:	20 (14-24) 4 (2-5) distance	21 (10-25)	17 (9-23)	16 (11-22)
Median capacity per section and range:	24 (24)	24 (24)	23 (20-30)	15 (15-25)
# of sections filled:	2	2+1 beyond		1

	Spanish			
	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
# of sections:	21+7 distance*	49+8 dist.*	35	9
# of sections by lit/cult or lang focus:			13 lit 19 lang	6 lit 3 lang
% of enrollments by lit/cult or lang:			41% 59%	69% 31%
Average # of Ss per section and range:	22 (16-24) 5 (2-10) distance	22 (17-25) 4 (2-6)	19 (10-22)	22 (19-31)
Median capacity per section and range:	24 (23-24)	22 (22-24)	20 (15-25)	30 (25-30)
# of sections filled:	4	23+1 beyond	5+18 beyond	2 beyond

*The distance option did not have an enrollment cap, therefore, none of these numbers figure into sections filled to or beyond capacity.

APPENDIX B: Syllabus GRM 435

GRM 435 – 18th and 19th Century German Literature Special Topic: Biedermeier and Vormärz 1815-1848

This class will explore the transitional period of the early 19th century, specifically 1815-1848. This was a time when the German Confederation was oscillating between Restoration and Revolution. Because the literature of this period tended to either support the conservative agenda of the upper-class or radically oppose it, it is difficult to find a unifying term to describe this literary period. Generally speaking it is known as the time between Romanticism and Realism. This course will explore the different characteristics of this period by reading historical documents, including the “Beschuß des Bundestages” (1835), alongside selected literary texts of the time. We will discuss writers who are considered more mainstream and compare them to those who were banned for their radical ideas. We will also compare women writers to their male contemporaries. The texts selected for this course include one drama, two novellas, a travelogue, and some selected poetry. The goals of this course are:

1. To gain an understanding of the period and some of the significant literary texts.
2. To improve German skills (reading, speaking, and writing) through interaction with these authentic cultural texts.
3. To develop critical thinking skills by asking new and appropriate questions about this period. How can we re-evaluate the texts to gain new insight into the ideas and struggles of a previous generation?

Grades for the course will be based upon the following:

Attendance and active class participation	10%
Written assignments	25%
Oral presentations	5%
Lead a class discussion	5%
Take-home midterm	25%
Final paper	30%

Texts:

Georg Büchner *Woyzeck*

Reclam, 1999. ISBN 3-150-18007-4

Annette von Droste-Hülshoff *Die Judenbuche*

Suhrkamp, 1999. ISBN 3-518-18814-3

Karl Gutzkow *Wally, die Zweiflerin*

Reclam, 1978. ISBN 3-150-09904-8

Heinrich Heine *Die Harzreise*

Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992. ISBN 3-746-60158-4

Additional handouts will be provided.

Course Schedule:

Week 1

- Tu Introduction to course; German Literature timeline
- Th Discuss Robert C. Holub article (handout)

Week 2

- Tu Introduction to Heinrich Heine
Discuss Sammons' "Who did Heine Think he Was?" [course pack #2]
- Th 2 Students lead discussion on Heine's life and works
Die Harzreise [beginning – top 22]

Week 3

- Tu *Die Harzreise* [22- middle 40]
Discussion of final paper
- Th *Die Harzreise* [poem pg 40 – bottom 63]

Week 4

- Tu 1 Student leads discussion on Sammons' "Chapter 4 Heine's Prose Art: *Die Harzreise*" [course pack #4]
Die Harzreise [63-end]
- Th Discuss Kortländer "Die Harzreise" [course pack # 5]
Die Harzreise [finish discussion]
Written homework on *Die Harzreise* due

Week 5

- Tu Introduction to Georg Büchner [see course pack #6]
2 Students lead discussion on Büchner's life and works
- Th Discuss Büchner's "Der Hessische Landbote" (1834) [course pack #7]
1 Student leads discussion on "Der Hessische Landbote"

Week 6

- Tu *Woyzeck* [beginning – scene 7, top of 21]
Final paper topic due
- Th *Woyzeck* [scene 8 – end]
1 Student leads discussion on Richards' "Introduction & Chapter 1: Criticism to 1945" [course pack #8]

Week 7

- Tu *Woyzeck* [finish]
Written homework on *Woyzeck* due
- Th Discussion of "Beschluß des Bundestages" (1835) [course pack # 9]
Take-home midterm handed out

Week 8

- Tu Discussion of selected poetry; *Woyzeck* - Film
- Th *Woyzeck* – Film continued
Midterm due

Spring Break

Week 9

- Tu Introduction to Karl Gutzkow [see course pack # 10]
2 Students lead discussion on Gutzkow's life and works
Wally, die Zweiflerin [Erstes Buch – bottom 21]
- Th *Wally, die Zweiflerin* [Erstes Buch (6) 22 – 46]
1 Student leads discussion on Joeres' "Introduction" [course pack # 11]

Week 10

- Tu *Wally, die Zweiflerin* [Zweites Buch 47 – 65]
Bibliography for final paper due
- Th *Wally, die Zweiflerin* [Zweites Buch (6) 65 – 86]

Week 11

- Tu *Wally, die Zweiflerin* [Drittes Buch 87- bottom 106]
Outline for final paper due
- Th *Wally, die Zweiflerin* [Drittes Buch 106 – 132 (end)]
Homework on *Wally, die Zweiflerin* due

Week 12

- Tu Introduction to Annette von Droste-Hülshoff [see course pack # 12]
2 Students lead discussion on Droste-Hülshoff's life and works
- Th *Die Judenbuche* [9 – middle 41]

Week 13

- Tu *Die Judenbuche* [41 – (63) end]
First PAGE of final paper due
- Th *Die Judenbuche*
2 Students lead discussion on Joeres' "Chapter 2" [course pack # 13]

Week 14

- Tu *Die Judenbuche*
1 Student leads discussion on Krimmer's "A Perfect Intimacy ..." [course pack # 14]
- Th *Die Judenbuche*
Homework on *Die Judenbuche* due

Week 15 – Last week of classes

- Tu Oral presentations on final paper (4 Students)
- Th Oral presentations on final paper (4 Students)

Final Exam Week – Thursday, 12:45-2:45

Final paper due; Oral presentations on final paper (7 Students)

Student-led discussions: Students will give a 10-minute oral presentation for individual assignments, and a 20-minute presentation for partnered assignments. Each presentation will be in German on the day assigned and will count towards 10% of your grade. Presentations should be clearly organized, include the most relevant information on the given topic with respect to our class, and provide 3-5 questions for further class discussion. A handout or overhead of topic points is recommended.

Oral presentations: These presentations will be towards the end of the semester and will provide students with the opportunity to share their research projects with the class. They will be 15-minutes in length, in German. The use of PowerPoint, handouts, or the overhead is greatly encouraged. The presentation counts towards 10% of your grade.

Homework: At the end of the discussions on the 4 major literary texts (*Die Harzreise*, *Woyzeck*, *Wally*, *die Zweiflerin*, and *Die Judenbuche*) students will be required to turn in typed responses to questions about the works. The questions will be posted on Angel, but will need to be handed-in in class on the day specified. Each assignment counts towards 5% of your grade.

Final paper: The final paper will be in 5-7 pages in German and include a bibliography using the MLA format. The topic, preliminary bibliography, outline, and first page are due on the days marked in the syllabus. More specific guidelines about this project will be provided during the semester. Students are encouraged to explore other authors of the period, other works by the authors we have discussed, or another cultural or literary aspect of this time period. The paper counts towards 30% of your grade.

APPENDIX C: Initial Instructor Interview Questions for Hybrid Module

Questions for Initial Guided Interview Instructor 300/400/800-Level

1. What kind of background do you have in literary and cultural studies?
2. What kind of background do you have in second language acquisition?
3. What kind of courses did you teach while pursuing your graduate degree? At what institutions? Are they different from the courses you teach now?
4. What kinds of courses have you taught since you completed your graduate degree?
5. What materials do you typically use in your advanced literature/culture courses? Please explain.
6. Please explain typical activity/exercise/assignment types that you implement in a literature/culture course at this level.
7. What are your objectives for the course you are currently teaching? What do you hope students will have learned by the end of the semester?
8. What do you believe to be your students' goals and expectations of the course?
9. What is your general opinion of your students' language abilities in German? Are their language skills ever an impediment in understanding and/or discussing the material?
10. Follow up to question 9: If you feel that their language skills are weak, why do you think this is so?
11. What is your opinion about using English in the classroom? Do you ever use English while teaching? When and for what reason?
12. How are the students evaluated? How much does language proficiency affect their final grade or their grade on individual assignments?
13. Do you have any experience with online or hybrid (foreign language) courses? Please explain.

APPENDIX D: Student Pre-Questionnaire for Hybrid Module and Course

Initial Student Questionnaire 300/400-Level

Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions in as much detail as possible. If you need more space than provided, feel free to use a blank piece of paper. The questionnaire will remain confidential. Thank you for your cooperation.

A. Language background

1. Age:
2. Gender: ☐ M ☐ F
3. Class level: ☐ freshman ☐ sophomore ☐ junior ☐ senior ☐ graduate or other
4. Primary major:
5. Secondary major (if applicable):
6. How many years of German instruction have you received in high school and/or college? Please specify.
7. What other 300 or 400 level German literature/culture courses have you taken at MSU?
 - ☐ GRM 341 German Literature and Culture before 1918
 - ☐ GRM 342 German Literature and Culture since 1918
 - ☐ GRM 435 Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century German Literary Studies
 - ☐ GRM 445 Twentieth Century and Contemporary German Literary Studies
 - ☐ GRM 455 Major Themes in German Cultural History
 - ☐ Other:
8. Have you ever traveled to or lived in a German-speaking country? If yes, where, when, and for how long?
9. Are any languages other than English spoken in your home? Which one(s)?
10. Have you had any other substantial exposure to German outside of your high school and college German classes? If so, please describe.
11. What is your primary reason for taking German? What are your primary goals?

B. Language proficiency

1. Please rate your proficiency in German in each of the following areas.
(1=very weak, 2=weak, 3=good, 4=very good, 5=superior)

Speaking	1	2	3	4	5
Listening	1	2	3	4	5
Reading	1	2	3	4	5
Writing	1	2	3	4	5
2. Please rate your knowledge of German in the following areas (see scale above).

Vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar	1	2	3	4	5
Culture	1	2	3	4	5
3. In which area(s) (listed in questions 1 and 2 above) do you feel weakest? Why? What do you think you can do to improve your abilities in this area?

C. Classroom practices

1. What activity and exercise types have you been exposed to in previous German literature/culture courses at the 300 or 400 level (e.g., lecture-discussion model, use of film clips, silent reading, group projects, individual papers, online activities, etc.)?
2. Which of these activities do you prefer? Please explain.
3. Have you ever taken an online course? Please explain.
4. Have you ever used a computer as part of an assignment in a foreign language class? Please explain.
5. What did you like/dislike about it?
6. How do you feel about using computers in a foreign language class?
(1=strongly dislike, 2=dislike, 3=neutral, 4=like, 5=strongly like)
Use of computers in foreign language classes 1 2 3 4 5
7. Do you think there are benefits of using computers/the Internet in foreign language classrooms? Please explain.
8. How much time do you spend online per week (browsing web-pages, chatting, checking E-mails, doing research, downloading programs, etc.)?
☐ 0-4 hours ☐ 5-9 hours ☐ 10-19 hours ☐ 20 hours or more
9. How much time do you usually spend online for your German classes (including browsing German web pages) per week?
☐ 0-4 hours ☐ 5-9 hours ☐ 10-19 hours ☐ 20 hours or more
10. How would you rate your technology skills (in regards to using computers and the Internet)?
(1=very weak, 2=weak, 3=good, 4=very good, 5=superior)
Technology skills 1 2 3 4 5
11. Please add any additional comments or thoughts on classroom practices and on working with a computer to do language work.

D. Course expectations and professional goals

1. Is this course a requirement? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. What do you hope to learn in this course?
3. Are you interested in German literature? Please comment.
4. Are you interested in the German language? Please comment.
5. Are there German courses that you would be interested in taking that are currently NOT offered at MSU? Please explain.
6. If you have German as your primary/secondary major, what career goals do you have after graduating from MSU? Will you use German in your chosen field?

Thank you very much!

APPENDIX E: Student Post-Questionnaire for Hybrid Module

Final Student Questionnaire Hybrid Module

Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions in as much detail as possible. If you need more space than provided, feel free to use a blank piece of paper. The questionnaire will remain confidential. Thank you for your cooperation.

A. Language proficiency

1. After taking this course, please rate your perceived improvement in each of the following areas.

(1=none, 2=minimal, 3=some, 4=a lot, 5=enormous)

Speaking ability 1 2 3 4 5

Listening ability 1 2 3 4 5

Reading comprehension 1 2 3 4 5

Writing skills 1 2 3 4 5

Vocabulary knowledge 1 2 3 4 5

Grammar 1 2 3 4 5

Cultural knowledge 1 2 3 4 5

2. Overall, do you feel that your German language abilities improved as a result of taking this course? Why or why not? What additional activities could have been done to further help your language skills in this course?
3. Please rate your knowledge of the subject matter (content) of the course.
(1=none, 2=minimal, 3=some, 4=a lot, 5=extensive)
Knowledge of subject matter 1 2 3 4 5
4. What did you learn in this course? Is it what you expected to learn at the onset?

B. Classroom practices

1. Please rate your enjoyment of this course.
(1=strongly disliked, 2=disliked, 3=neutral, 4=liked, 5=strongly liked)
Enjoyment of the course 1 2 3 4 5
2. What aspects contributed mainly to your rating of question 1?
3. Please comment on the differences in activity and exercise types between the hybrid component and the rest of the semester.
4. Which of these activities did you prefer? Please explain.
5. How did the hybrid component influence your learning experience when compared to traditional classroom practices? Please explain.
6. Please rate how much the inclusion of a hybrid component changed your attitude towards this course.
(1=strong negative influence, 2=negative influence, 3=neutral, 4=positive influence, 5=strong positive influence)
Influence of hybrid component 1 2 3 4 5
7. Please add any additional thoughts or comments on classroom practices and suggestions for improving them.

Thank you very much!

APPENDIX F: Final Student Interview Questions for Hybrid Module

Questions for Final Guided Interview Student Hybrid Module GRM 435

1. Please comment on your experience in GRM 435 this semester.
 - a. Did you enjoy the course? Please explain.
 - b. What were your expectations and goals for this course?
 - c. What did you learn and were your expectations of the course met? Please explain.
 - d. Do you feel your language skills improved in this course? If so, in which areas? What was the reason for the improvement or lack thereof? Please explain.
 - e. Do you feel your knowledge of literature and culture improved in this course? If so, in which areas? What was the reason for the improvement or lack thereof? Please explain.
 - f. Did the presence of the researcher influence your performance in class? Please explain.
2. Have you ever had an online course or a hybrid course component in a (foreign language) class?
If yes, what class was it, what did you have to do online, and how satisfied were you with this form of teaching?
3. How did you like the hybrid component in GRM 435?
4. Were there any parts of the hybrid component you liked/didn't like working on?
Any parts you found not useful or unnecessary, easy or difficult?
5. Did you feel that by working online you were more responsible for your own work?
6. Please compare the activity types of the hybrid component with those during the rest of the semester. Which ones worked best for you and why?
7. Did you find working with your peers helpful (both while working in class and online)? Why or why not?
8. Do you think a hybrid course is a more effective and efficient way of teaching than traditional classrooms practices? Please explain.
9. Did the hybrid component influence your attitude towards the course in a positive or negative way?
10. Overall, do you think you learned more because of the hybrid component? In which areas (speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, culture)?
11. Would you prefer to have hybrid components for your other classes? Which ones? Why?
12. What, if anything, would you want to change or add to the hybrid component to make it more effective?
13. Please add any additional thoughts or comments on classroom practices and suggestions for improving them.

APPENDIX G: Final Instructor Interview Questions for Hybrid Module

Questions for Final Guided Interview Instructor 435

1. What is your opinion of how this class went this semester?
 - a. Did you feel that the students learned what you had hoped? Why or why not?
 - b. Would you do anything differently the next time you teach this class?
2. Do you believe that the students' goals and expectation were met?
3. Did you feel that the students' language skills improved? If so, in which areas? What was the reason for the improvement or lack thereof?
4. Do you feel that the students' knowledge of the subject matter improved? Please explain.
5. Do you believe that the researcher presence affected your teaching?
6. Please comment on the activity/exercise/assignment types that you implement in this course.
 - a. Do you think they were successful?
 - b. Did you perceive a difference in your teaching style before and after the hybrid component?
 - c. Did you perceive a difference in students' attitudes and language skills before and after the hybrid component?
7. Some studies have shown that teachers focus minimally on language in content-based classes and that a language focus may be at odds with the goals of a literature/culture instructor. What do you think?
8. Is it the place of a literature/culture instructor to help improve students' language proficiency? If not, can you suggest any modifications to the curriculum to help meet these goals?
9. Do you have any other comments?

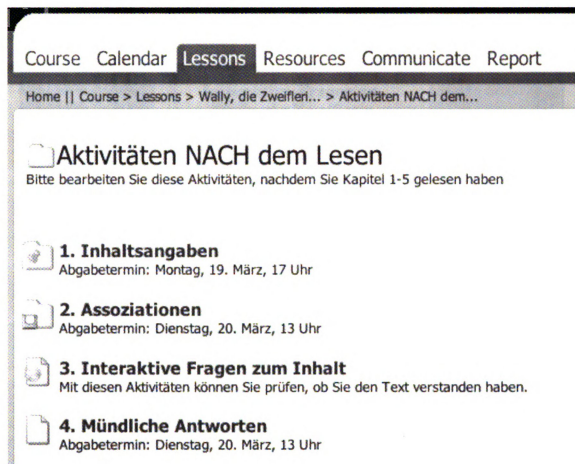
Figure 12
Screenshot of the Lesson Folder for the First Hybrid Module

The screenshot shows a web-based interface for a lesson folder. At the top, there is a navigation bar with tabs: 'Course', 'Calendar', 'Lessons' (which is highlighted), 'Resources', 'Communicate', and 'Report'. Below this bar, a breadcrumb trail reads 'Home || Course > Lessons > Wally, die Zweifleri...'. The main content area has a title 'Wally, die Zweiflerin 1' with a small icon to its left. Below the title is the subtitle 'Zweites Buch, Kapitel 1-5'. There are three sub-folders listed below, each with a folder icon and a title: 1. 'Aktivitäten VOR dem Lesen' with the instruction 'Bitte bearbeiten Sie diese Aktivitäten, bevor Sie Kapitel 1-5 lesen'. 2. 'Aktivitäten WÄHREND dem Lesen' with the instruction 'Bitte bearbeiten Sie diese Aktivitäten, während Sie Kapitel 1-5 lesen'. 3. 'Aktivitäten NACH dem Lesen' with the instruction 'Bitte bearbeiten Sie diese Aktivitäten, nachdem Sie Kapitel 1-5 gelesen haben'.

Note. This is a screenshot of the lesson folder for the first hybrid module. The lesson folder was entitled “Wally, die Zweiflerin 1” and covered chapters 1-5 of the second section of the book. The folder contained three sub-folders: activities before reading, activities while reading, and activities after reading.

Figure 13

Screenshot of the Post-Reading Sub-Folder for the First Hybrid Module






Course Calendar **Lessons** Resources Communicate Report

Home || Course > Lessons > Wally, die Zweifler... > Aktivitäten NACH dem...

Aktivitäten NACH dem Lesen

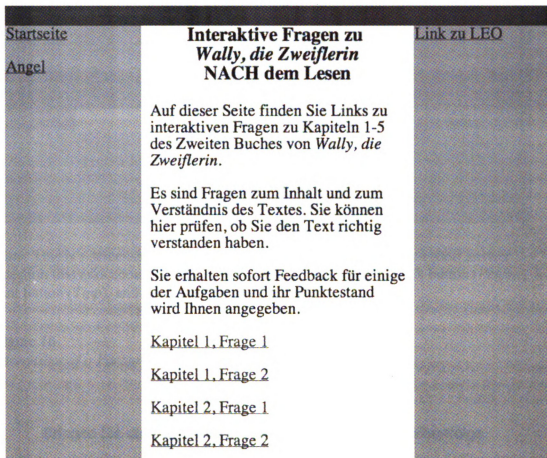
Bitte bearbeiten Sie diese Aktivitäten, nachdem Sie Kapitel 1-5 gelesen haben

-  **1. Inhaltsangaben**
Abgabetermin: Montag, 19. März, 17 Uhr
-  **2. Assoziationen**
Abgabetermin: Dienstag, 20. März, 13 Uhr
-  **3. Interaktive Fragen zum Inhalt**
Mit diesen Aktivitäten können Sie prüfen, ob Sie den Text verstanden haben.
-  **4. Mündliche Antworten**
Abgabetermin: Dienstag, 20. März, 13 Uhr

Note. This is a screenshot of the post-reading sub-folder. The sub-folder contained four activities: 1. Chapter summaries, 2. Associations, 3. Interactive content questions, and 4. Oral responses. Due dates for those activities that had to be turned in (i.e., 1, 2, and 4) were also indicated.

Figure 14

Screenshot of the Interactive Post-Reading Activities Website



Note. This is a screenshot of the interactive post-reading activities for the first portion of the novel *Wally*. The activities are contained in an external web site that students had to access through ANGEL. There are 16 activities total that focus on the content of the text. Some examples are provided in the following screenshots.

In the left navigation bar, the web site contained a link to the beginning of this page and a link back to ANGEL. In the right navigation bar, it contained a link to the online dictionary <http://dict.leo.org>.

The text in the center described the activities and noted that students will receive immediate feedback and a score. On the bottom of the page, an email address was provided where students could send questions to.

Figure 15
Screenshot of a Short Answer Post-Reading Activity

Kapitel 1, Frage 1

Geben Sie die richtige Antwort ein.

Welche Jahreszeit herrscht in diesem Kapitel?

Prüfen

Tipp

Lösung

Note. This is a screenshot of the first question for chapter one. It is a short answer question that asks about the season in the chapter and offers a check button (*Prüfen*), a hint button (*Tipp*), and a solution button (*Lösung*).

Figure 16
Screenshot of a Paragraph Mix Post-Reading Activity

Kapitel 1, Frage 2

Bringen Sie die folgenden Ereignisse in die richtige Reihenfolge.

Wally war sehr aufgeregt.

Prüfen

Neustart

Tipp

**Wally und Cäsar waren auf einem Ball. Wally sagte Cäsar, sie werden
den sardinischen Gesandten heiraten. Cäsar ging auf Reisen. Wally
verbrachte ihre Zeit mit Unterhaltungen.**

Note. This screenshot shows a paragraph mix activity where students have to sequence the action of the chapter. The sentences from the bottom move to the top when clicking on a sentence. Students can check their answers (*Prüfen*), start anew (*Neustart*), or ask for a hint (*Tipp*).

Figure 17
Screenshot of a Multiple Select Post-Reading Activity

Kapitel 2, Frage 3

Klicken Sie ALLE richtigen Antworten an.

Was ist laut Cäsar der Grund der vielen Ehescheidungen?	
a. <input type="checkbox"/> Geld	<div>3 / 4</div> <div>Richtig! Cäsar sagt, dass der Besitz einer kleinen Aussteuer zu Ehen führt.</div> <div>OK</div>
b. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> keine Liebe	
c. <input type="checkbox"/> Leichtsinn	
d. <input type="checkbox"/> keine Kinder	
<div>Prüfen</div>	

Note. This multiple select activity asked about a specific detail of chapter two. Option b was selected and feedback is provided in the white box.

APPENDIX J: Pilot Study Quantified Questionnaire Results

Means and Standard Deviations from Initial and Final Student Questionnaires

GRM 435 – Pilot Study	
<hr/>	
Speaking initial	3.21 (.98)
Speaking improvement*	2.83 (1.11)
Listening initial	4.07 (1.00)
Listening improvement	2.92 (.79)
Reading initial	3.42 (1.09)
Reading improvement	3.75 (.75)
Writing initial	3.25 (1.01)
Writing improvement	2.75 (1.06)
Vocabulary initial	3.07 (.92)
Vocabulary improvement	3.58 (.79)
Grammar initial	3.43 (.85)
Grammar improvement	2.58 (1.08)
Culture initial	4.07 (.99)
Culture improvement	2.92 (1.16)

*Improvement scores indicate the relative amount of students' self-perceived improvement, not the relative skill level as compared to their initial skill rating. Therefore, an improvement score that is lower than the initial score does not mean that the students perceived a decrease in skill level. The two scores provided here for any given skill should not be compared to one another.

APPENDIX K: Pilot Study Summary of Significant Differences

Summary of Significant Differences on Student Questionnaires

GRM 435 – Pilot Study		
Category	Comparison	Sig. Level
Students' perception of their skills on the initial questionnaire	Listening>Speaking	p=.015
	Listening>Vocabulary	p=.004
	Listening>Writing	p=.018
	Listening>Reading	p=.034
	Culture>Speaking	p=.016
	Culture>Vocabulary	p=.006
	Culture>Writing	p=.022
	Culture>Reading	p=.046
Students' perception of their improvement of skills on the final questionnaire	Reading>Speaking	p=.008
	Reading>Writing	p=.006
	Reading>Listening	p=.008
	Reading>Grammar	p=.009
	Vocabulary>Speaking	p=.034
	Vocabulary>Writing	p=.046
	Vocabulary>Listening	p=.011
	Vocabulary>Grammar	p=.006

APPENDIX L: Syllabus GRM 455

GRM 455 – Major Themes in German Cultural History Special Topic: The German Fairy Tale Tradition

Course Description

Once upon a time, long before Tolkien, Disney, or Rowling, two brothers named Grimm published a collection of fairy tales that went on to have an immense cultural impact throughout the world. The Grimm fairy tales will be our textual point of departure for a multi-faceted, integrative exploration of this popular and influential genre through time. We will explore traditional cultural theories of the fairy tale, psychoanalytic and pedagogical approaches, and contextualize this genre in cultural and social history. The focus is on the role that the literary fairy tale by male and female writers assumes in the civilizing process.

Aside from studying some of the tales in depth, we will discuss how the Grimm brothers collected the tales, how they changed over time, and how they portray values and ethics of different (European) cultures. To this end, we will compare the Grimm versions of some tales to other well-known versions (e.g., from the Italian Renaissance, early courtly fairy tales in 17th- and 18th-century France, and contemporary Disney adaptations) and look at the different societal and moral codes they promoted. The course explores how the fairy tale has become institutionalized in Western culture as a means to communicate about social and psychological experiences, a mode of socialization, and a way of institutionalizing culture, norms, values, and taste. We will extend our readings to 20th-century fairy tale adaptations and discuss the relevance of these themes for present-day Germany.

Objectives

The goals of this course are:

1. To gain an understanding of the literary genre of fairy tales and the developments it underwent throughout German cultural history.
 - a. To develop a critical understanding of how people live in a culture not as an “add-on” but as a medium in which we act.
 - b. To learn to analyze significant social and cultural processes in the social history of Europe.
2. To improve German skills (reading, speaking, writing, and listening) through interaction with these authentic cultural texts.
3. To develop critical thinking skills by asking new and appropriate questions about this genre and the relevant time periods. How can we re-evaluate the texts to gain new insight into the ideas and struggles of previous generations?

Required Readings

- Lüthi, M. (2004). *Märchen*. Stuttgart: Metzler. ISBN 3476200167
- Schödel, S. (1977). *Märchenanalysen*. Stuttgart: Reclam. ISBN 3150095328
- Additional readings available online

Recommended

- Online Dictionary: <http://dict.leo.org> or <http://dict.cc>

Grading System

Category	Weight	My points
Attendance/Participation/Preparedness (highest 10 count)	10%	_____ / 1000
Reaction Papers	15%	_____ / 1500
Angel/Online Assignments	25%	_____ / 2500
Blogs		_____ / 345
Wiki		_____ / 400
Chats		_____ / 180
Interactive Activities		_____ / 375
Web Quests		_____ / 200
Speaking Activities		_____ / 1000
Oral Presentation	5%	_____ / 500
Discussion Leading	5%	_____ / 500
Midterm	15%	_____ / 1500
Final Paper	25%	_____ / 2500
TOTAL	100%	_____ / 10000

Grading Scale

100-90% = 4.0	89-86% = 3.5	85-80% = 3.0	79-76% = 2.5
75-70% = 2.0	69-66% = 1.5	65-60% = 1.0	Below 60% = 0.0

Course Requirements

Attendance/Participation/Preparedness:

Your active participation in partner and small group activities and class discussions online and face-to-face is crucial to your progress and is therefore a graded component in the course. In order to participate most effectively, you will have to prepare many activities in advance. Preparation includes, but is not limited to, thoroughly and critically reading assigned texts, preparing answers to assigned questions, completing written exercises, and completing assignments online. It goes without saying that you cannot participate effectively if you do not attend. Students who frequently miss class are at a disadvantage on assignments and presentations, and miss the valuable opportunity to hear and speak German. For this reason, attendance is taken regularly. The best thing to do if problems arise is to keep in contact with your instructors so you can work through health problems or emergency situations. Finally, punctuality is also expected, and repeated late arrival will affect your grade. You will need to complete a self-evaluation form for participation at the end of each week on Angel. The instructors will make adjustments to your self-reported grade if necessary. Each week you can receive a maximum of 100 points, only the 10 best weeks will count.

Reaction Papers:

You will write three 600-word reaction papers (not accepted below 500 words or above 700 words) during the semester. Topics will be posted on Angel approximately two weeks before the assignment is due. You will need to respond to generalized questions on pertinent issues of selected assigned readings and engage critically with larger issues and

problems represented in the course materials and discussed in class. Your own perceptions, opinions, and interpretations are important. Each reaction paper needs to be 1.5-spaced in 12 point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins. They need to be written in German, reference literature discussed in class, and be turned in electronically on Angel as a word document before class on the day specified. These papers must be completed without help from a native speaker or tutor. HOWEVER, you have the option of writing one or more papers collaboratively on Google Docs with a co-student (your instructor will set up the document for you). Unless you are taking the Google option, no help from a fellow student is allowed for the papers. You will be graded on content, organization, accuracy, comprehensibility, and language use. Each paper is worth 500 points evenly distributed across the five categories.

Angel/Online Assignments:

There will be a variety of online assignments that are intended to help you with the course materials and with practicing your German language skills. These assignments include, but are not limited to, blogs, wikis, podcasts, chats, interactive activities, web quests, and speaking activities. Some assignments are purely receptive, others require you to respond and/or participate. Some will need to be completed individually, others will be done in teams/groups.

Blogs

You will need to write a bi-weekly blog entry on Angel. It can be in reaction to class assignments/readings/discussions or other experiences in connection with our course topic. Blog entries need to be in German and at least 5 sentences long (a sentence contains at least a noun, a verb, and an object). You will be graded on language and content. Throughout the semester, you will also need to comment on at least 3 of your classmates' blogs (you can receive up to 15 points for each of these responses). Your blog should be posted before class on Tuesday (you will need to post a total of 7 entries regardless of whether we meet on Tuesdays or not). Each blog is worth 60 points, the highest 5 entries will count. [Total number of points: 345]

Wiki

We will create our own wiki for this course. There are 6 major topics that we will cover, including 7 subtopics. You will need to contribute to 2 major topics; 1 major topic may coincide with the one you did your oral report on, the other topic should be a topic you did the regular required readings for. Your grade will be based on the final draft of the wiki site and you will be graded on content, language, and editing. Each wiki contribution is worth 200 points. [Total number of points: 400]

Podcasts

Some of the readings for this class will be available as podcasts on Angel.

Chats

You will need to chat with at least one of your classmates 3 times during the semester, using the Angel chat. Chat 1 should be completed by Thursday of week 2, chat 2 should be completed by Thursday of week 9, chat 3 should be completed by Thursday of week 14. You may chat about anything in relation to our course (e.g., you can continue a class or online discussion or comment on the readings). Each participating student should contribute at least 20 turns in each chat (a turn consists of a complete sentence, containing at least a noun, verb, and object). Each chat will be worth 60 points. [Total number of points: 180]

Interactive Activities

You will need to create interactive questions for your classmates on one of the articles you read for one of the discussion leadings. We will use *SMILE*, *Hot Potatoes*, and/or the Angel Game option to create the activities. The questions can focus on vocabulary items in the text, grammatical structures, specific content, etc. and need to be posted before class on the day of the assigned reading. The activities will be worth 200 points and will be graded on content and language. You will also need to answer the questions of at least 7 of your classmates (each worth 25 points). [Total number of points: 375]

Web Quests

On some topics, you will need to complete a web quest to help you better understand the topic and to find more information. Each web quest will be worth 100 points, the highest 2 assignments will count. You will be graded on content and language. [Total number of points: 200]

Speaking Activities

You will have to respond to questions online, using *Conversations*. I will record questions in relation to the readings and class discussions and you will need to answer them on a weekly basis. Each response is worth 100 points. The highest 10 will count. You will be graded on content, accuracy, fluency, and vocabulary. [Total number of points: 1000]

Oral Presentation:

You will need to prepare one oral presentation in German during the semester on selected readings (some presentations are partnered presentations). Each presentation should be 5-10 minutes long (5 minutes for individual presentations, 10 minutes for partnered presentations). Presentations should be clearly organized, include the most relevant information on the given topic with respect to our class, and provide 3-5 questions for further class discussion. You (and your partner) will be the only student(s) who will read the assigned text(s), so make sure to summarize and synthesize the information well and pose discussion questions that connect with the other course materials. The use of PowerPoint or overhead is recommended; a handout is required and needs to be posted on Angel before class. You will be graded on content and comprehensibility. Teams will receive a single grade on their presentation.

Discussion Leading:

You will be in charge of two discussion leadings during the semester. One will be done orally in class, the other one will be done online in the form of a threaded discussion with you as the moderator. All students will read all texts (unlike for the oral presentation). For the in-class discussion leading, you will need to be able to synthesize and comment on the reading, raise critical issues, and devise 2 questions that will stimulate class discussion. For the threaded discussion, you will need to post an interesting quote from or statement about the text and raise 2 critical, open-ended discussion questions (they should not be yes/no questions). Your comment and questions need to be posted before class. All students whose last name starts with A-L will have to contribute at least one sentence to each threaded discussion with an odd number. All students whose last name starts with M-W will have to contribute at least one sentence to each threaded discussion with an even number. The discussion moderator will also need to respond to at least 2 of your

classmates' comments within 1 week. You will be graded on content and language. Each discussion leading is worth 250 points.

Midterm:

This semester you will work on a multimedia team-project about identity. We will discuss in class issues of German cultural identity based on our readings and by looking at authentic German video clips from *YouTube*. For your project, you will need to produce a short video clip in German that represents your own culture and identity. If you do not have a video camera or web cam available, you can use the web cam in the Language Learning Center or you can make a digital slideshow or presentation using photos, pictures, art, quotes, etc. You will also need to create activities corresponding with your video/presentation using *SMILE*. Both components will then be uploaded to *Mashups* and shared with English high school classes in Germany (so you are producing these projects for an actual audience!).

Parts 1 and 2 have to include at least 200 words each, i.e. if you are completing the assignment through photos, you will have to present the photos orally (there will be space online in *Mashups* to include text also). You will also need to include references in parts 1 and 2 (references is defined rather loosely here; you may interview friends, use quotes from popular books or movies, etc.). You will be graded on language and content. Each project part is worth 500 points and groups will receive a single grade.

Part 1: Was bin ich? / Was ist Identität?

Describe who/what you are and how you got to be who you are. **OR** Define what identity is to you and how it is shaped. Discuss both national and individual identity. The topic selection of this part will depend on how open you are to sharing very personal ideas.

Part 2: Was ist amerikanisch?

Define what American/an American is and how one becomes American.

Part 3: Interaktive Aktivitäten in SMILE

Create activities corresponding with your project. Activity types include multiple-choice, true/false, drag/drop, sentence mix, paragraph mix, cloze, and multiple-select. You need to create at least five activities for your project. If you have additional links you want to include with your project, you can do so in *Mashups*.

Final Paper:

The final paper will consist of 5-7 pages in German, 1.5-spaced in 12 point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins. It needs to follow APA format and structure requirements, including a complex and explicit thesis, logical and well-defined paragraphs, coherent organization, proper use of citation and quotation, a bibliography, and an adherence to standard usage in syntax and grammar. For help with the format and structure of your essay (including citation, quotation, and bibliography), go to <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>. You need to use logical argumentation and support by referring to secondary materials outlined in the required readings. Include at least two secondary texts not listed on the syllabus. A good place to start your search is JSTOR (<http://er.lib.msu.edu/>). Make sure that you narrow your search as much as you can; otherwise you will end up with too many hits.

The topic, preliminary bibliography, and outline/first page are due on the days marked in the syllabus. Students are encouraged to explore other tales by the authors we have

discussed, compare different versions of the same tale written by multiple European authors, select a certain aspect or theme we have covered in class, connect two or more disciplines that were touched upon in the course (e.g., literary and cultural studies, history, psychology, visual and performing arts), etc. The paper counts towards 25% of your grade and will be graded on content, format, organization, accuracy, comprehensibility, and language use. More specific guidelines about the paper will be provided during the semester.

Academic Honesty

Article 2.3.3 of the Academic Freedom Report states: “The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards.” In addition, the Department of Linguistics and Languages adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide and/or the MSU Web site: www.msu.edu.) Therefore when you submit ANY work for a grade, the work must be your own. In a language class, where students frequently collaborate or get help from a tutor, there is sometimes confusion about the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable assistance. You must always make clear where the work you hand in has been corrected by somebody else. You are expected to develop original work for this course; you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Students who violate MSU rules may receive a penalty grade, including – but not limited to – a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Please consult your instructor if you are unsure how to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable help with your work. (See also <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/honestylinks.html>)

NOTE

This course is a hybrid/blended course, which means that some class dates will be replaced by online assignments and activities. The course will also serve as a research site for Ms. Kraemer’s dissertation. The procedures for her research will be explained on the first day of class.

Course Schedule

Datum	Thema	Vorbereitung für die diese Stunde	Referate und Hausaufgaben
EINFÜHRUNG			
Di	Einführung: Was sind Märchen? - <i>Das Unterrichtsgespräch</i> - Luthi 2004 (1-5)		
Do		Knoch (16-24) Röhrich 2002 (1-10)	Referat 1 „Die Gattung Märchen“
Di	Geschichte und Entwicklung der Märchen	Luthi 2004 (40-55) *Zipes 1999 (1-29)	Referat 2 „Entwicklung der Märchen“ Blog 1 due
Do	MEET IN 141 OLD HORT Merkmale von Märchen	Luthi 2004 (16-20, 22-23, 25-31) Röhrich 1964 (232-242)	Conversation 1 due Referat 3 „Merkmale von Märchen“
Di	<i>Film: Rothenburgs Kriminalmuseum</i>	Bloch in Schödel (31-38) Wollenweber in Schödel (62-70)	Chat 1 due Referat 4 „Grausamkeit im Märchen“ (2 Studenten) Referat 5 „Magie und Zauber“ Web Quest Conversation 2 due
Do	Märchenforschung NO CLASS	Luthi 2004 (63-111)	Wiki Merkmale und Elemente
Di	Kulturtheorie und sozialhistorische Ansätze	*Elias (5-30)	Blog 2 due Conversation 3 due
Do	Psychoanalytische und pädagogische Ansätze	Bettelheim (9-18) Röhrich 2002 (389-405)	Referat 6 „Psychologischer Ansatz“ RP 1 due
Di	NO CLASS		Conversation 4 due
DIE BRÜDER GRIMM			
Do	Leben und Werk der Brüder Grimm Leben und Werk von Charles Perrault	Podcasts Brüder Grimm Rölleke 1989 (305-317) *Zipes 1999 (30-48)	Referat 7 „Leben und Werk der Brüder Grimm“ Referat 8 „Leben und Werk von Charles Perrault“

Course Schedule cont.

Datum	Thema	Vorbereitung für die diese Stunde	Referate und Hausaufgaben
Di	MEET IN 141 OLD HORT		Blog 3 due Conversation 5 due
MÄRCHENINTERPRETATION			
Do	Wie interpretiert man Märchen?	Schödel (5-8, 167-176) Eicher (7-13)	Wiki Märchensammler Web Quest
Di	NO CLASS		Conversation 6 due
SOZIALISATION VON MANN UND FRAU			
Do	Das Menschenbild in Märchen	Merkel in Schödel (55-62) Knoch (115-116, 121-127) Lüthi 1983 (103-110)	Referat 9 „Das Bild der Frau im Märchen“ (2 Studenten) Topic for Final Paper due
Di	„Dornröschen“ - <i>Walser: Dornröschen</i> (209-218)	Grimm in Derungs (35-38) / Podcast Lüthi 1983 (5-18) Bettelheim (261-269)	Referat 10 „Dornröschen“ Referat 11 „Leben und Werk von R. Walser“ Blog 4 due Conversation 7 due
Do	NO CLASS		Midterm due
Di	„Aschenputtel“ <i>Film: Disneys Cinderella</i>	Grimm in Schödel (17-24) / Podcast	Referat 12 „Versionen von Aschenputtel“ Referat 13 „Psychologisch-didaktischer Ansatz“ Conversation 8 due
Do	„Aschenputtel“ - <i>Walser: Aschenputtel</i> (59-103)	Bausinger in Schödel (70-80) Bleckmann (21-22, 40-44)	Chat 2 due RP 2 due
Di	NO CLASS		Blog 5 due Wiki Sozialisation Conversation 9 due
DER TIERBRÄUTIGAM			
Do	Tiere in Märchen	Rölleke (228-240) / Podcast Bettelheim (330-334)	Referat 14 „Mensch und Tier“

Course Schedule cont.

Datum	Thema	Vorbereitung für die diese Stunde	Referate und Hausaufgaben
Di	„Das singende, springende Löweneckerchen“ „Der Froschkönig oder der eiserne Heinrich“	Grimms online / Podcast Grimms online / Podcast Röhrich 2002 (337-352)	Referat 15 „Froschkönig und La Belle et la Bête“ Conversation 10 due
FAMILIENBEZIEHUNGEN			
Do	„Hänsel und Gretel“	Grimm in Schödel (9-17) / Podcast Lüthi in Schödel (107-111)	Referat 16 „Versionen von Hänsel und Gretel“ (2 Studenten) Wiki Tierbräutigam Bibliography for Final Paper due Blog 6 due Conversation 11 due
Di		Bettelheim (183-191) Fetscher in Schödel (161-166)	
Do	NO CLASS		
MÄRCHEN UND MEDIEN			
Di	Märchen und Disney	*Zipes 1997 (89-110) *Griswold (231-252)	Referat 17 „Märchen im Film“ Wiki Familie Web Quest Conversation 12 due
Do	NO CLASS	THANKSGIVING	
Di	<i>Film: Shrek – Der tollkühne Held</i>		Blog 7 due Conversation 13 due Outline/First page of Final Paper due
MÄRCHEN HEUTE			
Do	Peter Rühmkorf	Rühmkorf (7-17) Rühmkorf (239-250)	Chat 3 due RP 3 due Conversation 14 due
Di	NO CLASS		

Course Schedule cont.

Datum	Thema	Vorbereitung für die diese Stunde ABSCHLUSS	Referate und Hausaufgaben
Do	Abschlussbesprechung		Wiki Moderne Märchen
Mi	Hausarbeit ist um Mitternacht fällig (drop box auf Angel)	HAUSARBEIT	

The instructors reserve the right to make announced changes or amendments to this syllabus.

We are looking forward to a wonderful semester with you.

APPENDIX M: Student Post-Questionnaire for Hybrid Course

Final Student Questionnaire Hybrid Course

Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions in as much detail as possible. If you need more space than provided, feel free to use a blank piece of paper. The questionnaire will remain confidential. Thank you for your cooperation.

A. Language proficiency

1. After taking this course, please rate your perceived improvement in each of the following areas.
(1=none, 2=minimal, 3=some, 4=a lot, 5=enormous)

Speaking ability	1	2	3	4	5
Listening ability	1	2	3	4	5
Reading comprehension	1	2	3	4	5
Writing skills	1	2	3	4	5
Vocabulary knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar	1	2	3	4	5
Cultural knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
2. Overall, do you feel that your German language abilities improved as a result of taking this course? Why or why not? What additional activities could have been done to further help your language skills in this course?
3. Please rate your knowledge of the subject matter (content) of the course.
(1=none, 2=minimal, 3=some, 4=a lot, 5=extensive)

Knowledge of subject matter	1	2	3	4	5
-----------------------------	---	---	---	---	---
4. What did you learn in this course? Is it what you expected to learn at the onset?

B. Classroom practices

1. Please rate your enjoyment of this course.
(1=strongly disliked, 2=disliked, 3=neutral, 4=liked, 5=strongly liked)

Enjoyment of the course	1	2	3	4	5
-------------------------	---	---	---	---	---
2. What aspects contributed mainly to your rating of question 1?
3. Please comment on the differences in activity and exercise types between the hybrid course this semester and those activity and exercise types you had in previous 300/400 level German classes.
4. Which of these activities did you prefer? Please explain.
5. How did the hybrid course design influence your learning experience when compared to traditional classroom practices? Please explain.
6. Please rate how much the inclusion of a hybrid course design changed your attitude towards this course.
(1=strong negative influence, 2=negative influence, 3=neutral, 4=positive influence, 5=strong positive influence)

Influence of hybrid course design	1	2	3	4	5
-----------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---
7. Do you think that this course should have had more technology, less technology, or was the amount about right?

8. Did the introduction to the online programs that we used in class (sessions in the Language Learning Center on Conversations, SMILE, Mashups, blogs, wikis) enable you to work with these programs? Please explain.
9. Did you encounter any difficulties with these programs? If so, please specify which program(s) and what the difficulties were.
10. Please rate the online assignments according to their effectiveness in improving your language skills and briefly comment on your ranking. You can give the same rating to more than one assignment.

(1 = least effective, 10 = most effective)

	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
Mündliche Übungen/ Conversations				
Selbstevaluierung				
Blogs				
Online Diskussionen				
Chats				
Web Quests				
Wikis				
Midterm				
Podcasts				
Texte online				

11. Do you feel that using tools like SMILE and Mashups to create materials helped you learn more than if you just used materials that were already created? Please explain.
12. Did you have to spend significantly more time on the work for this class as a result of its being a hybrid course? If so, how much more time? (Please give a rough estimate on the time you spent online for this course per week and indicate if you read course materials or worked on course assignments.)
13. Would you recommend this course in its current format to other students? What would you tell them about it?
14. Please add any additional thoughts or comments on classroom practices and suggestions for improving them.

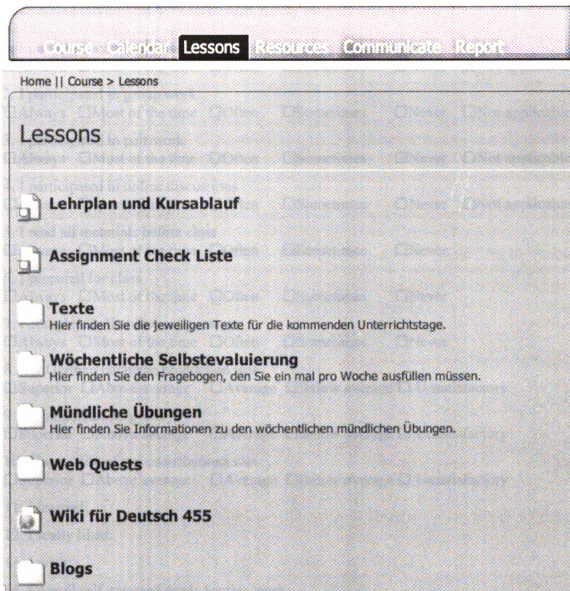
Thank you very much!

APPENDIX N: Final Student Interview Questions for Hybrid Course

Questions for Final Guided Interview Student Hybrid Course GRM 455

1. Please comment on your experience in GRM 445 this semester.
 - a. Did you enjoy the course? Please explain.
 - b. What were your expectations and goals for this course?
 - c. What did you learn and were your expectations of the course met? Please explain.
 - d. Do you feel your language skills improved in this course? If so, in which areas? What was the reason for the improvement or lack thereof? Please explain.
 - i. How can you tell that you improved? Could you read faster? Did you need less time looking up vocabulary?
 - e. Do you feel your knowledge of literature and culture improved in this course? If so, in which areas? What was the reason for the improvement or lack thereof? Please explain
 - i. Did you become a more critical reader of fairy tales and their adaptations?
 - ii. Do you now see Disney fairy tales in a different light than before you took the course? How did your perception change?
 - iii. Did the discussions help you think more critically, challenge your assumptions and beliefs?
2. Have you ever had an online course or a hybrid course component in a (foreign language) class?
If yes, what class was it, what did you have to do online, and how satisfied were you with this form of teaching?
3. How did you like this hybrid German course?
4. On average, how much time did you spend online each week (each day) to complete the activities?
 - a. Were there certain activities that took much/less longer than other or that you decided to spend more/less time on? Why?
5. Were there any parts of the hybrid course you liked/didn't like working on?
Any parts you found not useful or unnecessary, easy or difficult?
6. Please think about the different online assignments you had to complete throughout the semester. What, if any, difficulties did you encounter?
 - a. Did you find the online readings beneficial? Why/why not?
 - b. Did you find the podcasts/mp3 files of texts beneficial? Why/why not?
 - c. Did you find the weekly self-evaluations beneficial? Why/why not?
 - d. Did you find the weekly speaking activities beneficial? Why/why not?
 - e. Did you find the bi-weekly blogs beneficial (plus comments)? Why/why not?
 - f. Did you find the discussion boards beneficial (plus comments)? Why/why not?
 - g. Did you find the chats beneficial? Why/why not?
 - h. Did you find the web quests beneficial? Why/why not?
 - i. Did you find the wikis beneficial? Why/why not?
 - j. Did you find the collaborative essay beneficial? Why/why not?
 - k. Did you find the midterm project beneficial? Why/why not?

7. Did you feel that by working online you were more responsible for your own work?
8. Please compare the activity types this semester with those you completed in previous 300/400 level German classes. Which ones worked best for you and why?
9. Did you find working with your peers helpful (both while working in class and online)? Why or why not?
10. Do you think a hybrid course is a more effective and efficient way of teaching than traditional classrooms practices? Please explain.
11. Did the hybrid course influence your attitude towards the course in a positive or negative way?
12. Overall, do you think you learned more because of the hybrid course design? In which areas (speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, culture)?
13. Would you prefer to have hybrid courses for your other classes? Which ones? Why?
14. What, if anything, would you want to change or add to the hybrid course to make it more effective?
15. Compared to other German 300/400 level courses that you have taken, did you spend more or less money on textbooks this semester?
16. Was it beneficial to have two instructors in this class?
17. Please add any additional thoughts or comments on classroom practices and suggestions for improving them.



Note. This is a screenshot of the upper portion of the main lessons folder for the hybrid course. The lessons folder contained a variety of sub-folders for each major online assignment and other pertinent information in regard to the course. The content visible here is: syllabus and course schedule, assignment checklist, readings, weekly self-evaluations, speaking activities, web quests, wiki for GRM 455, and blogs.

APPENDIX P: Weekly Self-Evaluation Survey

Fragebogen zur Selbstevaluierung

1. I participated in full class discussions
☐ Always ☐ Most of the time ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐ Not applicable
2. I participated in group work
☐ Always ☐ Most of the time ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐ Not applicable
3. I participated in pair work
☐ Always ☐ Most of the time ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐ Not applicable
4. I participated in online discussions
☐ Always ☐ Most of the time ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐ Not applicable
5. I read all materials before class
☐ Always ☐ Most of the time ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never
6. I prepared for class
☐ Always ☐ Most of the time ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never
7. I completed all online assignments
☐ Always ☐ Most of the time ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never
8. My German language production was
☐ Superior ☐ Above average ☐ Average ☐ Below average ☐ Unsatisfactory
9. My understanding was
☐ Superior ☐ Above average ☐ Average ☐ Below average ☐ Unsatisfactory
10. The quality of my contributions was
☐ Superior ☐ Above average ☐ Average ☐ Below average ☐ Unsatisfactory
11. I learned:
12. I really liked:
13. I wish:
14. Overall self-assessed grade for this week:
15. Additional comments:

Figure 18. The first screenshot lists all conversations started by the user, in this case myself, on the left side. The functionality of the program is the same for teachers and students, meaning that both can create conversations to which they invite others or join existing conversations created by others. The pencil allows the user to edit each conversation (i.e., set the number of prompts, set the option for students to practice or complete the assignment in real time, and access the conversation code students need to join). The x deletes a conversation, the speaker icon allows for recording prompts, the eye allows for listening to students' answers (see second screenshot), and the open/closed lock permits/prevents students from joining the conversation. Users can join conversations below by entering a specific conversation code provided by the instructor. On the right side, the five prompts for week 6 are listed in the instructor preview and the first prompt is currently playing. In this window, teachers can record and review their prompts. The video function is not enabled for this assignment.

APPENDIX Q: Screenshots of *Conversations*

Figure 18
Screenshot of Conversations

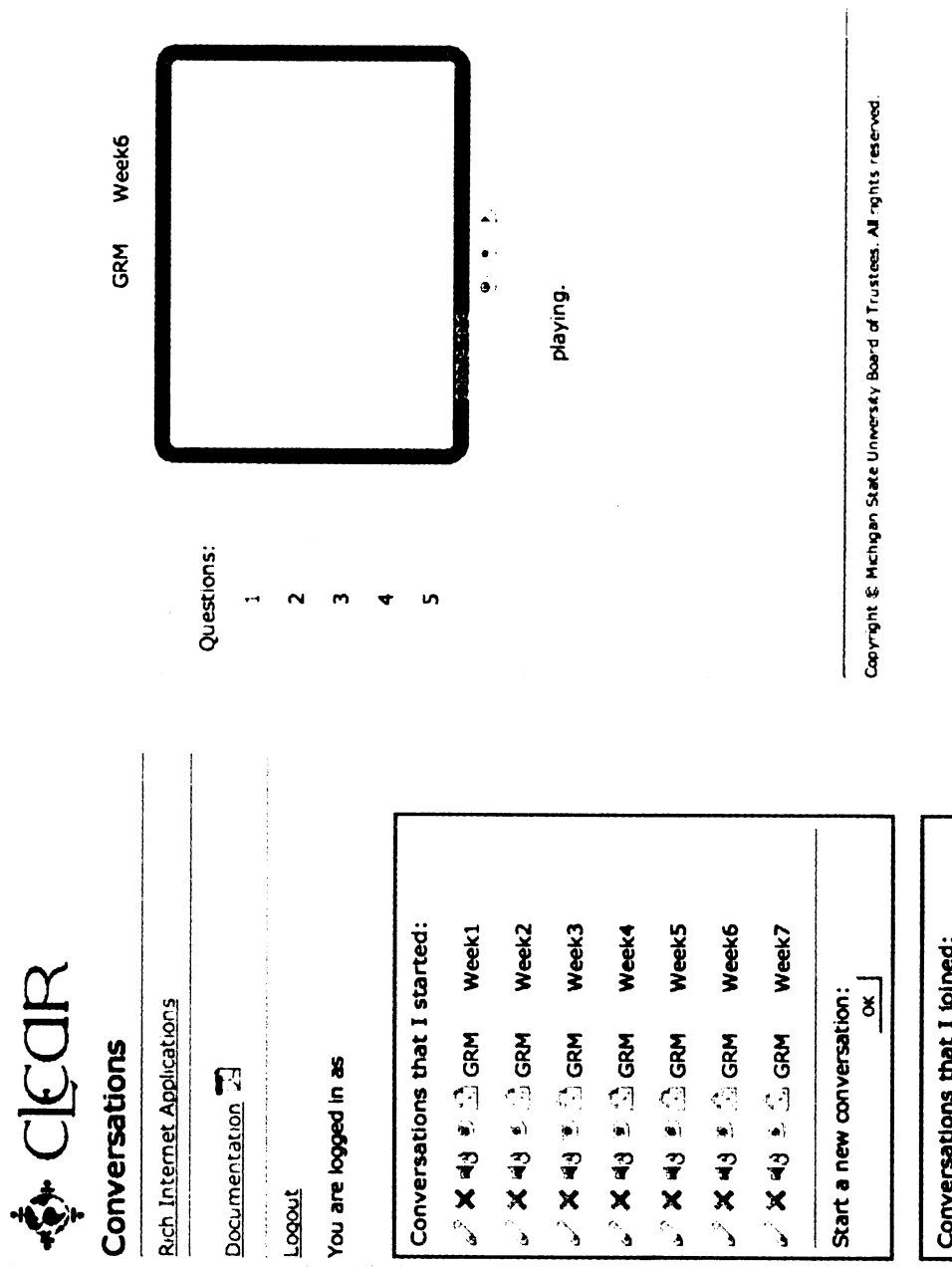
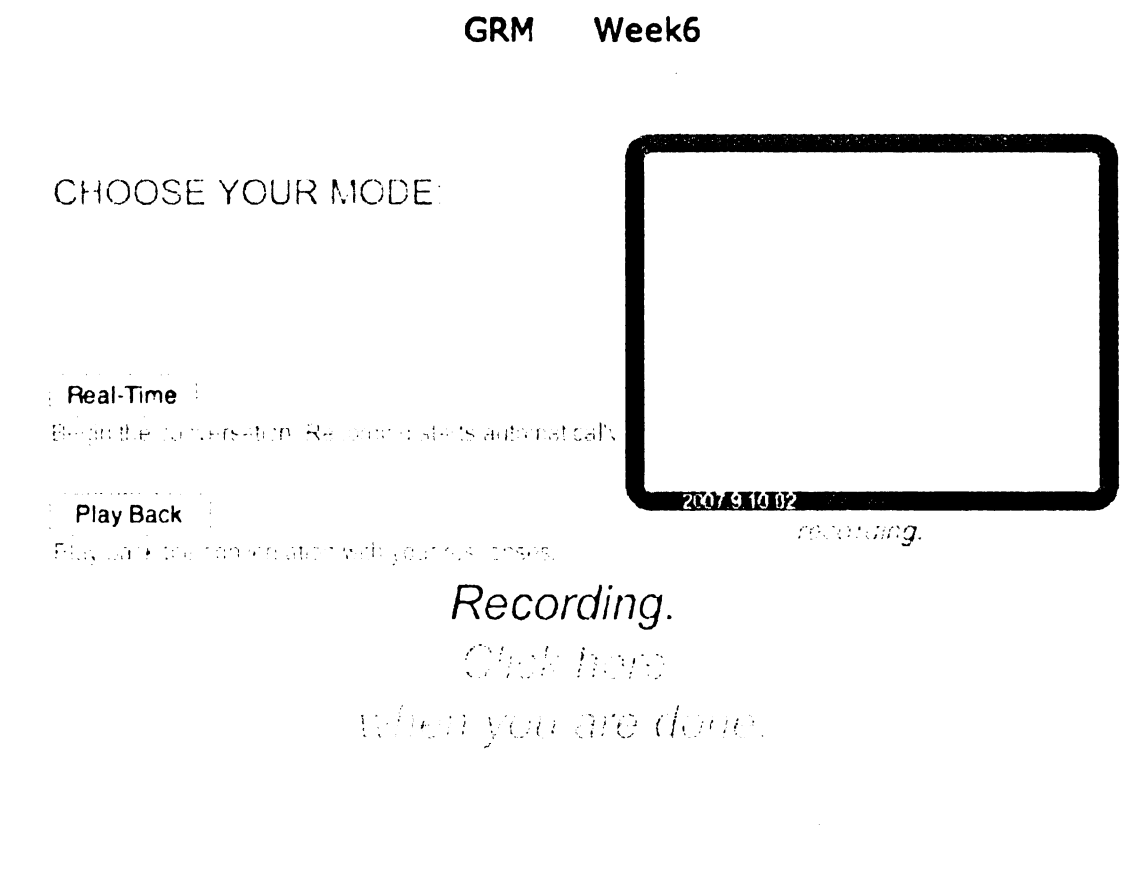


Figure 19
Screenshot of Student View of Conversations



Note. This screenshot shows the student view of the assignment for week 6. The practice mode has been disabled for this assignment and students can only choose between recording their answers in real time and playing back the entire conversation consisting of my prompts and their answers. Once students click on the real-time button, the first prompt will play and recording will start automatically at the end of the prompt. Students have to click on the white area that reads “Recording. Click here when you are done.” And the next prompt will play automatically.

Figure 20
Screenshot of Instructor View of Conversations

BACK

Conversation name: GRM Week6

Students currently participating in this conversation:

- William
- Cathy
- Amanda
- Judy
- Tim
- Jen
- Gordon
- Angela
- Nadja
- Rita
- Jill
- Monica

CONVERSATIONS

PLAY

STOP

PLAY

PLAY

Play back the conversation with student responses.

Play student responses only

Playing back conversation.

c.237 u.2181

William

Note. This screenshot shows the instructor's view of the completed assignment for week six when listening to students' answers (the eye icon). For week six, we see twelve of the students who have joined the conversation, in the order in which they joined (William joined first, then Cathy etc.). Jen joined the conversation but has not submitted her answer; therefore, her name is not preceded by an eye icon but rather by a warning triangle. On the right side, William's conversation is playing back.

APPENDIX R: Online Speaking Assignments

The following is a selection of prompts that students had to respond to on a weekly basis online. I recorded the prompts online in the program *Conversations* and students had to listen and respond to the prompts in order.

Woche 1 [Week 1]

1. Wie heißen Sie? [What is your name?]
2. Seit wie vielen Semestern studieren Sie Deutsch? [How long hve you been studying German?]
3. Warum belegen Sie diesen Kurs? [Why are you taking this course?]
4. Was erwarten Sie von diesem Kurs? [What do you expect from this course?]
5. Erzählen Sie mir etwas Interessantes über sich. [Tell me something interesting about yourself.]

Woche 2 [Week 2]

1. Wir haben über die Geschichte und Entwicklung von Märchen diskutiert. Was sagt Max Lüthi auf Seite 40-55 zu diesem Thema? Nennen Sie bitte mindestens 4 Dinge, die Märchen beeinflusst haben. Zum Beispiel: verschiedene Kulturen, historische Zeiten, Menschen, Ereignisse usw. [We have talked about the history and development of fairy tales. What does Max Lüthi say on pages 40-55 about this topic? Name at least four aspects that influenced fairy tales. For example, different cultures, historical times, people, events, etc.)]
2. Jack Zipes spricht in Kapitel 1 von seinem Buch *When Dreams Came True* vom Unterschied zwischen mündlichen Erzählungen (oral folk tales) und schriftlichen Erzählungen (literary tales). Bitte erklären Sie die Unterschiede zwischen diesen Erzählungen. [Jack Zipes talks in chapter 1 of his book *When Dreams Came True* about the differences between oral folk tales and literary tales. Please describe the differences between those tales.]

Woche 6 [Week 6]

1. Assoziationen. Antworten Sie spontan in einem Satz auf die folgenden Fragen. Was bedeutet für Sie Identität? [Associations. Respond spontaneously in one sentence to the following questions. What does identity mean to you?]
2. Was ist typisch amerikanisch und warum? [What is typically American and why?]
3. Was ist typisch deutsch und warum? [What is typically German and whay?]
4. Was können wir von Märchen über Identität lernen? [What can we learn from fairy tales about identity?]
5. Welche Interpretationsansätze gibt es für Märchen? Nennen Sie mindestens 3. [What are common approaches fort he interpretation of fairy tales? Name at least 3.]

Woche 7 [Week 7]

1. Bitte lesen Sie das Märchen Dornröschen vor. Sie finden es auf Seite 35-36 in dem Text von den Brüdern Grimm. Der Text ist auf Angel im Lessons Folder für den 16. Oktober. Lesen Sie bitte nur die Version von 1810, also Text Nummer 4. [Please read Sleeping Beauty out loud. You can find the fairy tale on pages 35-36 in the Brothers Grimm text. It is posted on ANGEL in the lessons folder for October 16. Please only read the 1810 version, which is text number 4.]
2. Jetzt lese ich das Märchen vor. Hören Sie es sich an und vergleichen Sie Ihre Aussprache und Intonation mit der von mir. Sie müssen hier nicht antworten, sondern nur zuhören. [Now I will read the fairy tale out loud. Listen closely and compare your pronunciation and intonation with mine. You don't have to respond to my recording, just listen closely.]

Woche 12 [Week 12]

1. Beschreiben Sie die Charaktere von Hänsel und Gretel. [Describe the two main characters, Hansel and Gretel.]
2. Vergleichen Sie die beiden Hauptfiguren mit den Hauptfiguren von Dornröschen und Aschenputtel. Wo gibt es Ähnlichkeiten, wo gibt es Unterschiede? [Compare these two characters with the main characters in Sleeping Beauty and Cinderella. Where are similarities, where are differences?]
3. Mit welchen Aspekten des Hänsel und Gretel Märchens kann sich der Leser heute identifizieren und warum? [Which aspects of the Hansel and Gretel fairy tale can a modern-day reader identify and why?]

Woche 13 [Week 13]

1. Jack Zipes bespricht in seinem Kapitel „Once Upon a Time beyond Disney“ auf Seite 93-94 fünf Aspekte, die in allen Disney Märchenverfilmungen gleich sind. Wählen Sie einen der 5 Punkte und erklären Sie, warum Sie damit übereinstimmen oder nicht. [Jack Zipes discusses in his chapter “Once Upon a Time beyond Disney” on pages 93-94 five aspects that are inherent to all of Disney's fairy tale movies. Choose one of these 5 aspects and describe why you agree or disagree.]
2. Jerry Griswold spricht in Kapitel 8 von verschiedenen Verfilmungen von „Beauty and the Beast.“ Er argumentiert, dass die Filme eine Darstellung von Homosexualität sind. Stimmen Sie damit überein? Warum oder warum nicht? [Jerry Griswold talks about different film versions of “Beauty and the Beast” in chapter 8. He argues that these movies are a representation of homosexuality. Do you agree? Why or why not?]

APPENDIX S: Screenshot of Threaded Discussion Folder

The screenshot shows a web interface for a discussion folder. At the top, the title "Diskussionsleitung" is displayed with a small icon to its left. To the right of the title are links: "My Notes | Print Previous Next". Below the title is a section header "Informationen zur Diskussionsleitung" preceded by a document icon. Underneath is a "Sign-up Liste für die Diskussionsleitung" section, also preceded by a document icon. The sign-up list contains the text: "Alle Studenten sind nun eingetragen. Bitte überprüfen Sie, wann Sie eingetragen sind und ob Sie einen Partner haben." Below this are three discussion forum entries, each preceded by a document icon: "Diskussionsforum 1: Röhrich (2002) S. 1-10" with the date "30. August", "Diskussionsforum 2: Zipes (1999) S. 1-29" with the date "4. September", and "Diskussionsforum 3: Röhrich (1964) S. 232-242" with the date "11. September".

Diskussionsleitung [My Notes](#) | [Print](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#)

Informationen zur Diskussionsleitung

Sign-up Liste für die Diskussionsleitung
Alle Studenten sind nun eingetragen. Bitte überprüfen Sie, wann Sie eingetragen sind und ob Sie einen Partner haben.

Diskussionsforum 1: Röhrich (2002) S. 1-10
30. August

Diskussionsforum 2: Zipes (1999) S. 1-29
4. September

Diskussionsforum 3: Röhrich (1964) S. 232-242
11. September

Note. This is a screenshot of the upper portion of the threaded discussion folder for the hybrid course. The lesson folder contained general information about the assignment, a sign-up list where students could check when they were in charge of a threaded discussion, and discussion forums for each individual assigned reading including due dates.

Appendix T. The six major topics for the course wiki, including sub-topics, are listed in the navigation bar on the left. The main body shows an excerpt of the wiki on characteristics and elements of fairy tales. It also reflects the history of changes made on September 13 between 12:52 pm and 2:00 pm. This screen shot compares two different versions of the web page and highlights inserted and deleted text. In this case, the student editing the page only focused on linguistic aspects and not on content.

APPENDIX U: Screenshots of *SMILE*

Figure 21
Screenshot of a SMILE Activity

Zur Geschichte des Märchens von Lüthi (S.40-55)

ITEMS Die Entwicklung von Märchen im Altertum: Welche Geschichte verbinden wir mit dem ägyptischen Altertum?

☺ 1

☺ 2 Amor und Psyche

3

Nein, das stimmt nicht. Diese Geschichte stammt aus Rom und wurde 150 nach Christus von Apuleius aufgezeichnet.

4 Anup und Bata


5

6

submit

Note. This screenshot shows a sample *SMILE* activity I created for one of the first readings assigned on the history of fairy tales by scholar Lüthi (pages 40-55). The activity contains six different items, the first two of which have been answered correctly (smiley faces next to the item numbers on the left). Currently displayed is item three, a multiple choice activity with two options. Feedback on the first option is provided. The item asks about the development of fairy tales in antiquity, specifically which tale is associated with Egyptian antiquity. The chosen answer is incorrect and the feedback reads “No, this is not correct. This tale [Cupid and Psyche] is from Rome and was written down by Christus of Apuleius around 150.” The activity can be accessed at <http://clear.msu.edu/teaching/online/mimea/smile/v2/viewActivity.php?ID=1679>

Figure 22
Screenshot of Instructor View of SMILE



SMILE

[Rich Internet Applications](#)

[Documentation](#)

[My Activities](#)

My items by type:

- Multiple-choice
- True/False
- Drag/Drop
- Sentence Mix
- Paragraph Mix
- Cloze
- Multiple-Select

BACK

Description GRM455Item3

Instructions Welche Antwort ist richtig?

Prompt Die Entwicklung von Märchen im Altertum: Welche Geschichte verbinden wir mit dem ägyptisch

Choice A Anup und Bata

Feedback for A Ja, das stimmt. Diese Geschichte wurde 1250 vor Christus aufgezeichnet.

Choice B Amor und Psyche

Feedback for B Nein, das stimmt nicht. Diese Geschichte stammt aus Rom und wurde 150 nach Christus von /

Correct Answer

Level

ItemID: 1178

This screenshot shows the setup of the multiple choice activity that was displayed above. Users can enter, edit, and save information here. The left navigation bar offers links to the different exercise types as well as a pdf file of the documentation of *SMILE*.




Was ist Identität?

Identität sind alle Merkmale, die eine Person oder auch ein Volk ausmachen. Die Identität von Deutschen unterscheidet sich also von der Identität der Amerikaner. Genau so unterscheidet sich aber die Identität von einzelnen Menschen innerhalb einer Gemeinschaft oder eines Volkes. Meine Identität kann also anders sein als die meiner Eltern oder meiner Brüder.

Was ist Deutsch?

Für mich bedeutet Deutschland Heimat. Ich denke bei Deutsch an Ordnung und Sauberkeit, aber auch an wirtschaftliche Probleme und Arbeitslosigkeit. Ich verbinde mit deutsch große Dichter und Denker, aber auch leckeres Brot und gute Schokolade.



ITEMS Hören sie Die Audio Datei noch einmal an. Wie viel Prozent der Deutschen denken, dass Deutschland ihre Heimat ist?

0 1	2	3	4	5	6
	10%	12%	Nein, das stimmt nicht.	5%	8%

This mashup was shared with the students as a sample of what their final multimedia team project could look like. It contained an image, audio recording and video clip on the left as well as some descriptive text and interactive comprehension activities.

APPENDIX W: Hybrid Study Quantified Questionnaire Results

Means and Standard Deviations from Initial and Final Student Questionnaires

GRM 455 – Hybrid Study	
<hr/>	
Speaking initial	3.44 (1.10)
Speaking improvement*	3.21 (.71)
Listening initial	3.94 (1.16)
Listening improvement	3.68 (1.06)
Reading initial	3.67 (1.08)
Reading improvement	3.58 (1.22)
Writing initial	2.92 (.73)
Writing improvement	3.32 (.95)
Vocabulary initial	3.50 (.79)
Vocabulary improvement	3.58 (.77)
Grammar initial	2.89 (.76)
Grammar improvement	3.11 (0.99)
Culture initial	4.22 (.94)
Culture improvement	4.11 (.88)

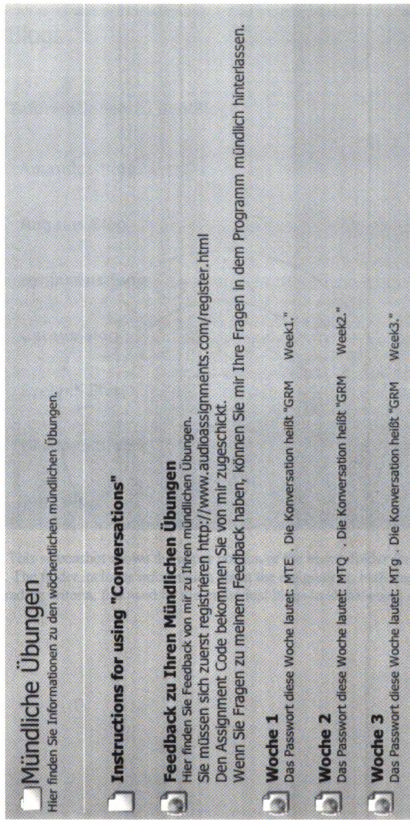
*Improvement scores indicate the relative amount of students' self-perceived improvement, not the relative skill level as compared to their initial skill rating. Therefore, an improvement score that is lower than the initial score does not mean that the students perceived a decrease in skill level. The two scores provided here for any given skill should not be compared to one another.

APPENDIX X: Hybrid Study Summary of Significant Differences

Summary of Significant Differences on Student Questionnaires

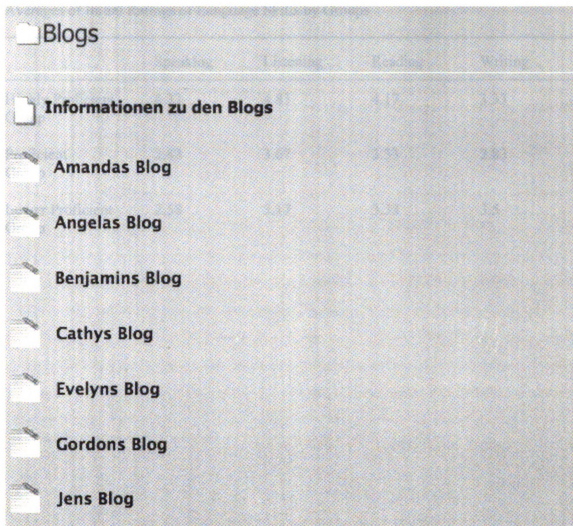
GRM 455 – Hybrid Study		
Category	Comparison	Sig. Level
Students' perception of their skills on the initial questionnaire	Culture>Grammar	p=.002
	Culture>Speaking	p=.014
	Culture>Vocabulary	p=.008
	Culture>Writing	p=.001
	Listening>Grammar	p=.005
	Listening>Vocabulary	p=.033
	Listening>Writing	p=.009
	Reading>Grammar	p=.039
	Reading>Writing	p=.030
	Vocabulary>Grammar	p=.026
	Vocabulary>Writing	p=.011
Students' perception of their improvement of skills on the final questionnaire	Culture>Grammar	p=.001
	Culture>Reading	p=.046
	Culture>Speaking	p=.003
	Culture>Vocabulary	p=.008
	Culture>Writing	p=.007
	Listening>Grammar	p=.029
	Listening>Speaking	p=.029
	Vocabulary>Grammar	p=.038

APPENDIX Y: Screenshot of Online Speaking Activities Lesson Folder



This screenshot shows the lesson folder for the weekly online speaking assignments ("Mündliche Übungen"). The folder includes instructions on how to use the program *Conversations*, information and a link to the program I used to record oral feedback, followed by individual subfolders for each week's assignment. The access codes were provided in the subscripts so students did not necessarily have to access each individual subfolder.

APPENDIX Z: Screenshot of Blog Lesson Folder



Note. This screenshot shows the upper portion of the lesson folder for the bi-weekly blogs. The folder includes information about the assignment, outlining the requirements and grading criteria, followed by the individual blogs in alphabetical order.

APPENDIX AA: Students' Initial Perception of Language Skills by Groups

Averages of Initial Ratings of Language Skills by Groups

	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
Highly Proficient Group	4.33	4.83	4.17	3.33
Proficient Group	2.83	3.67	3.33	2.83
Lower Proficient Group	2.58	3.17	3.33	3.5

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