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AP[®] German Language Writing

Special Focus



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Introduction to Special Focus Writing

Mary Ashcraft

The articles in this publication contain a wealth of information and ideas for making writing easier and better for both teachers and students at all levels of German instruction. Teachers will benefit from an overview of current research regarding the writing process as a skill in second language learning, the role of technology, and the all-important topic of effective assessment and feedback. The ideas and suggestions in the articles that follow illustrate the use of successful writing strategies from experienced AP teachers. These include writing activities throughout the curriculum, writing checklists, useful phrases, a variety of formative assessments, and the use of holistic scoring. All of these terrific suggestions will help students reach the goal of writing—the successful communication of information and ideas. What an important skill to have as we embark on the adventure of learning about and from one another, in the German classroom and beyond!



The Role of Writing in Foreign Language (FL) Instruction: Research Insights for Teaching

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Why Do We Include “Writing” in our Foreign Language Classrooms?

It’s a fair question, and one that we as teachers need to answer for ourselves before engaging our students in an activity that will seem to many of them to have little utility beyond the obvious need to write tests—including the AP[®] Exam—as part of their school instruction. Let’s be honest: Do they actually *need* to be able to write in a foreign language? Granted, some of them will participate in study-abroad programs that will require them to use written communication in a foreign language (L2). Some of them may eventually find themselves living in an L2 context, where writing will be an everyday necessity. But beyond these, few of our students will ever need to write an e-mail, a letter, or an office memo—let alone an academic essay—with the L2 they’re currently learning (Reichelt 1999, 2001). With English functioning as a world language—perhaps *the* world language, at least for this generation—there seems to be little cause to insist on L2 writing skills, unless the L2 happens to be English. In other words, those of us who teach in a foreign language context, as opposed to a second language context (such as an ESL class in an American school), need to think critically about why we teach and test writing, and based on that, how we can do so most effectively. This paper is a means to that end, and shows, by way of second language acquisition (SLA) theory and methods, how L2 writing can be used as a tool for second language acquisition and development.

To do so, it will (1) look briefly at how several theorists view the role of writing in the SLA process; (2) consider various writing tasks that can be useful in the classroom; and then (3) analyze two critical issues in current writing instruction: the interface of L2 writing and computers, and the role of corrective feedback in writing.

Writing and Second Language Acquisition

It will be helpful, first of all, to step back and review the ways that writing has been used in L2 classrooms over the past few decades (Silva 1990; Reichelt 2001). At one pedagogical level, many teachers think of writing primarily as a *mirror of their students' L2 development*. In other words, they view writing as a way of finding out what learners do know and don't know about the L2 being learned; a record of their proficiency levels that doesn't disappear into thin air the way speaking does (unless it's somehow recorded); a static representation of speaking, i.e., a form of expression that the teacher can look at and correct more thoroughly—and at a more comfortable remove—than spoken language.

On another level, writing has been viewed as a *tool for acquisition*. In the heyday of behaviorist language pedagogy, for example, when L2 learning was thought to be a matter of linguistic habit formation, writing was seen primarily as a way of reinforcing learned structures through intentional repetition. (This is still the case, of course, with workbook-style fill-in-the-blank exercises and substitution drills.) As a teaching tool, so the reasoning went, it was useful in helping to form habits, but not an important goal in and of itself. Wilga Rivers, prescribing such teaching procedures in the 1960s, claimed that writing must be “considered as a service activity rather than as an end in itself” (Rivers 1968, 258). There was little thought at that point that writing should be seen as a natural outgrowth of a learner's own creative thought processes or an expression of the learner's own ideas; the goal rather was one of “controlled composition” (see Silva 1990, 12 for a list of references), formal accuracy, and the development of correct linguistic responses to stimuli.

Growing dissatisfaction with this view (of language learning in general and writing specifically) led in the years following to “process” writing approaches. Process writing, as described by Zamel (1982), sees the writing process as a nonlinear, generative process, in which ideas are gathered, organized, reshuffled, written down, reflected on by the writer and peer writers, then revised and eventually shaped into a coherent text. As the name indicates, the focus is not so much on the product as on the process of writing; not on producing a text, but on allowing the process of writing to generate and refine ideas. Zamel's (1982) seminal work, *Writing: The Process of*

Discovering Meaning, underscored in its title the central idea of this approach, namely, that meaning was of paramount importance (as opposed to structural accuracy or prescribed formats) and that the process of writing itself was the way to uncover and develop that meaning.

While this concept was applied primarily to L1 writing pedagogy at first, researchers saw it as potentially valuable for L2 instruction as well. By engaging in a repetitive, cyclical process that included brainstorming for ideas, organizing those ideas, and shaping them into texts, L2 learners could stretch their vocabulary, sharpen their syntactic control, and push themselves toward more native-like expression. This replicated, in fact, Michael Long's emphasis during the 1980s on *negotiation of meaning* as a critical element in SLA—the conviction that two speakers, working hard to express meaning, will push themselves toward native-like usage (see Long 1985). Extrapolating this idea to writing means that L2 writers, seeking to express ideas as effectively as possible, will likewise push themselves to use more accurate, lexically precise language. And it means that the classroom where this writing takes place needs to provide an encouraging, collaborative, and creative environment, in which learners are encouraged to brainstorm, give each other feedback, and work at expressing what they themselves want to say. In process writing, the act of writing not only mirrors language development but actively promotes it, as learners work to convey their own ideas. And the writing instructor plays a crucial role in this process, as Silva notes:

The teacher's role [in process writing instruction] is to help students develop viable strategies for getting started (finding topics, generating ideas and information, focusing, and planning structure and procedure), for drafting (encouraging multiple drafts), for revising (adding, deleting, modifying, and rearranging ideas); and for editing (attending to vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar and mechanics). (1990, 15)

In other words, the instructor stands on the sidelines and coaches the learners as they create language to convey their own meanings.

But while learners are, in this sense, *creators* of language, they are also *interactants* who engage in dialogue with a reader. This more recent view of the writing process, which adopts the language of *social constructivism*, emphasizes how each writing community has its own goals, expectations, writing formats, and even vocabulary—in other words, how the particular dynamic of each writing situation affects the writing itself. Here the interaction of writer and audience is all-important:

You write one way when you write an e-mail to a friend, another way when you write an e-mail to your parents or a teacher, and still other ways for a research paper, a movie critique, a short story, or a love letter. Knowing who you're writing for, and knowing how they perceive your writing, are important elements in learning how to write effectively. For L2 learners, this means learning a variety of styles, registers, and vocabulary. Indeed, writing an essay for an AP Exam means learning to write with a particular audience in mind, including all the particular expectations the AP Readers have when they sit down to evaluate that essay.

Guidelines for L2 Writing Instruction

These various functions of L2 writing—mirroring the proficiency levels of learners and pushing learners to increase their syntactic accuracy and vocabulary range—provide several useful guidelines for teaching L2 writing.

First, they strongly suggest that writing in the L2 classroom, like speaking, should be genuinely communicative whenever possible. There is good reason to take the substantial body of research on *negotiation for meaning* seriously and encourage learners to express their ideas in writing as precisely as possible. To the extent that this forces them to extend the limits of their lexical and structural knowledge, it will foster more native-like usage (see Gass and Varonis 1994 for evidence of this in spoken language). Conversely, the research to date gives us little reason to assume that “fill-in-the-blank” writing, or any other kind of prescribed language—forcing the learner into a fixed mode of expression, to be repeated merely for the sake of reinforcement—has any significant long-term benefit. Teachers will do well to ask themselves: Are my writing assignments communicative, in the sense that I am asking learners to tell me something I don't already know? Or is it the case that while my classroom speaking activities are meaning-based, my writing assignments are following a pedagogical model from the 1960s—a model that has not proven itself to be particularly effective?

Second, allowing learners to express their own thoughts will not only aid them in their interaction but will also help them deal with what Peter Harder (1980) has called “the reduced personality of the language learner.” Anyone who can remember learning an L2—especially in an immersion environment, or the pseudo-immersion environment of a target-L2 classroom—knows how frustrating it is not to be able to convey thoughts, feelings, and ideas in a way that approximates what you take to be your “real” self, revealing your “real” personality, intelligence, wit, and voice. The more the classroom allows for this expression of personal opinions, ideas, and creativity, the more a learner feels integrated with the learning experience and the activities

that go on in the classroom. But speaking the L2 is precisely where problems emerge: Learners' ideas and the language necessary to express them work too slowly in the L2 to allow for effective communication in the give-and-take of spontaneous speech. For many students, therefore, writing provides precisely that expressive outlet that allows them to feel that they can be "known" in the classroom. Writing, by its very nature, slows down the process of expression, which in turn enables the learner to draw on more vocabulary, organize thoughts more clearly, see what's being said more lucidly, and reshape it in real time. Learners can convey information in writing that they cannot possibly manage in spoken discourse, allowing them to "reveal" themselves more satisfyingly to the audience of their writing (teacher and/or peers). This itself is an important reason for including writing in the curriculum, provided that the writing assignments foster personal expression, i.e., that they are genuinely communicative.

Third, the process writing agenda ideally follows the same instructional arc inscribed by (spoken) communicative teaching methods. Teachers who know the value of having learners brainstorm for vocabulary and review phrases, or other structures that are necessary for later speech production in a given oral task, can use precisely the same techniques in process writing approaches. We know from SLA research that L2 learning is not linear: It is not as if a learner "gets" one structure (say, the accusative case) and then "adds" to that the new knowledge of another structure (the dative case), as if building blocks labeled "perfect tense," "relative pronouns," and "passive voice" were being neatly stacked up in the learner's mind. Rather, the external order and neatness of the classroom syllabus masks an internal jumble of gradual, shifting, continually reshuffling gains and losses, as the learner develops the cognitive ability to juggle more and more distinctions and nuances of meaning, to respond in real time to other speakers with appropriate words and ideas, to access words and structures from more and more sources, and to gain increasing control over input and output. This internal pattern of SLA mirrors in many ways the gradual development one sees in the writing process—which, as we know, does not consist merely in "filling in an outline," but rather shifts and stumbles along, as the writer suddenly sees new ways of connecting and framing ideas. Process writing, in other words, forms a pedagogically useful parallel to L2 language processing, and should be exploited as a means of pushing it forward.

And finally: As learners develop along these lines, and grow in their ability to express their own ideas, they should be encouraged to do so with a particular audience in mind. To the degree that teachers can do so, they should be teaching students how to relate to that audience in culturally appropriate ways, from suitable

forms of address and appropriate levels of (in)formality, to suitable topics, discourse markers, and stylistic registers. This audience is ideally one that will not merely read and critique the (lack of) accuracy of the learner's writing, but will engage meaningfully with the content of that writing. Cohen and Cavalcanti's (1990) research shows that many students feel their teachers are merely judges of their writing, and not true "readers" who are interested in what they have to say. This can have a profound effect on how much learners will push themselves to express their meanings clearly and with maximum detail.

Translating Guidelines into Practical Tasks

To help ensure that what learners are asked to write is communicative (in the sense of conveying meanings that the instructor doesn't already know), L2 writing tasks can exploit several areas of learner knowledge and ability: *personal information*, *personal memory*, *personal opinion*, *personal creativity*. Tasks that draw on these areas can be configured to match a wide variety of proficiency levels, allowing learners to provide information about themselves, their families, their lives outside of the classroom, as well as their own thoughts and creative efforts. Consider the ways in which the following writing activities function:

- filling in a form, as if for a German driver's license
- filling in short blanks of a personal "diary" that calls for certain kinds of information
- writing out a list of verbs that pertain to what the learner did over the weekend or last summer, or wants to do next month
- writing descriptions of the learner's home, room, or best friend
- creating a list of short sentences in response to a listening activity
- jotting down a list of words that the learner remembers from a short story just read
- making a list of words that the learner knows and can associate with a topic (as simple as "sandwich" or as abstract as "justice")
- finishing a sentence stem creatively
- finishing a story creatively
- filling in half of a dialogue, in which one speaker's utterances are already recorded
- writing a dialogue that might have taken place in a story being read

- responding to a provocative statement about the interpretation of a story or a comment on a current news item
- brainstorming words that are suggested by a picture or video clip
- brainstorming short sentences suggested by the same trigger
- combining those sentences in original ways with conjunctions or relative pronouns
- rewriting the text of a short story or news story, with a particular informational slant or stylistic register
- writing a postcard for three different audiences, using appropriate tone and associated vocabulary
- imagining what a character from a story would write in a diary
- imagining what two different characters from two different stories would say if they met on the street (or wrote on each other's *Facebook* wall)
- keeping a dialogue journal by writing to the instructor (or a classmate) on one page of two facing pages, with the reader writing back on the other page and responding primarily to the contents of the learner's writing

This is not meant to be an exhaustive listing but rather a sampling of the kinds of activities that illustrate the guidelines above. There are many useful ideas provided elsewhere in this publication. What unifies the list above is the shared conceptual format of providing a prompt and a structure for writing that allows the learner to communicate effectively within the boundaries of the learner's developing capabilities, and that provides as often as possible the prospect that someone will read what has been written and respond to its meaning.

Instructors who wish to delve deeper into the research on L2 writing (see especially Reichelt's 2001 review) can gain insights into the relative value of various genres of L2 writing assignments: descriptive versus narrative writing (Koda 1993), explanatory versus formal writing assignments (Martinez-Lage 1992; Paulson 1993), the use of prewriting activities (Martinez-Gibson 1998), and teaching learners to self-monitor in their writing (Reichelt 1999), to name just a few.

L2 Writing and New Media

L2 instruction has always been quick to make use of any and all available technology, from radio broadcasts and LP recordings to Internet chat rooms and iPods. Some of these have proven to be useful, some less so; and teachers should always be asking the question: What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a particular

technology? For our purposes, the question needs to be formulated more specifically: What are the pros and cons of using computer technology in L2 writing instruction? To address this topic adequately would exceed the scope of this discussion, but several issues should be touched on.

First, one must realize that there are many different “computer technologies,” beginning with the fill-in-the-blank approach of early CALL (computer-assisted language learning) applications, moving on to CMC (computer-mediated communication) by way of word processing and simple e-mailing, and from there to complex collaborative projects with synchronous text conferencing that span multiple continents and cultures. But regardless of the conceptual complexity of the projects, instructors still want to know: Does the use of computers in writing instruction make a difference?

There is little if any evidence that CALL applications of the sort referred to above enhance grammatical accuracy. Indeed, studies such as Ittzes’ (1997) suggest that learners who are more focused on getting meaning across to a real audience than on filling in blanks with correct adjectives endings end up writing more correctly. The kind of feedback that CALL offers seems to provide little or no advantage in terms of developing accuracy over the long term. Several studies show that an important factor in improving writing (depth of ideas, lexical range, as well as structural accuracy) is not so much the use of the computer per se as the computer’s ability to connect learners with a native-speaker audience who reads the writing output as a “real” text.

The type of text produced and tested in such cases is crucial: Leh (1997) had one group of learners engage in Spanish e-mail correspondence with pen pals in Mexico, while another group simply wrote for the teacher. An essay assignment for both groups written after 10 weeks showed no significant difference in the development of writing skills between the two groups. Similar results were obtained by McGuire (1997), who showed that learners using a synchronous computer conferencing tool and learners engaging in out-of-class “enrichment” activities (films, short writing assignments, etc.) exhibited no difference on a holistically graded writing assignment after 12 weeks. But when researchers looked at the communication itself—the texts created by learners for their intended audiences, rather than an artificially assigned essay—clear differences emerged in vocabulary range and clarity.

Other studies bear this out: Ittzes (1997) demonstrated how a network-based interaction group improved in terms of grammatical accuracy, lexical richness, and comprehensibility as compared with learners writing in a journal for the teacher. Florez-Estrada (1995) found the same to be true; in addition, she pointed out that

the learners in the computer group spent three times as much time on task as the other group, writing to native-speaker readers rather than to the teacher. And it appears that online chatting does indeed promote negotiation for meaning and increased linguistic and metalinguistic awareness, as discussed above, in studies by Blake (2000), Smith (2003), and Ware and Kramsch (2005; involving intercultural communication in German). These all suggest that developmental gains brought about by computer writing do not necessarily transfer to other *kinds* of writing, or to face-to-face oral interaction, as Abrams (2003) shows in the case of intermediate German. In other words, computer technology is useful for L2 writing only to the degree that it fosters real communication between participants, and to the degree that the kind of writing being practiced is the kind of writing that is aimed for in instruction and testing.

Corrective Feedback on Writing

We turn finally to an aspect of L2 writing instruction that vexes and perplexes teachers perhaps more than any other: What kind of feedback should the instructor provide on written output? This is not a trivial question, given the immense amount of time and concentration routinely (and dutifully) invested in correcting student writing. Nor is it dealt with adequately by way of pat answers (“You have to nip mistakes in the bud!”) or formulaic procedures (“I just use my own shorthand in the margins, you know, ‘t’ for tense mistakes, that sort of thing.”). Here too, a full treatment of the topic would require something approaching a book-length study, but it will be helpful to mention several issues in the current research that teachers should keep in mind.

The way a teacher deals with corrective feedback reveals something of what the teacher assumes to be true of second language learning as a whole. Those who embrace the view that L2 learning is largely habit formation will be quick to correct all errors in written output, so that these will not “fossilize” in learners’ speech (or writing). On the other hand, those who believe that languages are learned mostly by interacting with L2 input—without an explicit focus on accuracy or grammar—will avoid error correction altogether, at least at the outset. But it is probably true that the majority of teachers simply do what they’ve always been doing in this respect, which in turn mirrors the way they’ve been taught (see Rankin and Becker 2006 for an example of this for oral output in a beginning German class). This usually involves pointing out by some means (underlining, color-coding, marginal shorthand, or outright correction) all or most of the errors in any written learner output—and especially in a formal essay.

It comes then as something of a surprise to read the research findings on such feedback. Truscott (1996), for example, reviews the recent empirical research on written error feedback, and argues that there is little if any evidence that grammar correction on written output does any good in the long term; in fact, he maintains that grammar correction may well do more harm than good. In study after study, researchers have found no significant long-term difference in writing quality—including grammatical accuracy—between learners who receive grammar correction on their writing as compared with learners who do not and are simply encouraged to write. Does this mean that teachers should abandon all corrections?

While Truscott and some others would say yes, the answer is not quite that clear-cut, to my mind. First, we know from studies such as Semke (1984)—which confirms any teacher's experience in the classroom—that students want and expect feedback. Like all learners, they want to know: Am I doing this right? Is this good or bad? What's the *right* way to say what I want to say? Second, almost all the research reviewed by Truscott—and he reviews all that was available at the time—was conducted without taking into consideration the learners' level of language development, and thus neglected an aspect of corrective feedback that could potentially show some long-term benefits. Language development, as any teacher knows, is not a question of what's been covered on the syllabus, but rather how much the learners have actually internalized to the point where they can produce certain structures correctly, most of the time, on their own in spontaneous speech (or writing). Learners who are still stumbling regularly over word order and case endings, for example, cannot process feedback on all those points at the same time; more proficient learners, on the other hand, can do so more successfully. This means that the nature of feedback, i.e., how narrowly focused it is, and how well it is tailored to an individual learner's proficiency levels, is crucial in determining how well it achieves its goals. Doughty and Varela (1998) have shown, in the arena of oral corrective feedback, that fine-tuning feedback to match the learners' stage of development is successful; and it stands to reason that similar results might be obtained for written feedback as well, but the research has yet to demonstrate that.

In the meantime, teachers would do well to assume that learners want feedback of some kind on their writing, and that it will be most useful for them if it follows several guidelines:

- Feedback should respond meaningfully to the content of the writing, not merely mechanical or grammatical mistakes.

- Feedback should take the learner's developmental progress into consideration, focusing on what learners can actually handle (i.e., the teacher can choose one aspect of grammar or vocabulary as a focal point of feedback).
- Feedback on lexical problems is easier to process than feedback on syntax errors, and should take precedence, at least in early stages of L2 production (i.e., it's easier for a student to grasp that "eine Entscheidung *treffen*" is better than "eine Entscheidung **machen*" than to be corrected for not having placed the conjugated verb at the end of a subordinate clause).
- Feedback can come from peers, not just the teacher.
- Feedback should lead to rewriting, not merely assessment (Fathman and Whalley 1990).

The underlying principle behind these guidelines is of a piece with the principle mentioned throughout this discussion, namely, that writing is best viewed as meaningful communication between writer and reader. When classroom writing tasks conform to this principle, they encourage negotiation of meaning on the writer's part, whether in a dialogue journal, a cross-cultural online chatting session, or a short diary entry. This in turn helps learners to increase their functional vocabulary; to use grammatical structures to say things precisely and clearly; and to do all this in a way that is sensitive to how native speakers use language to communicate. If writing can accomplish this, then it deserves a prominent position in L2 classroom instruction.

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How r u teaching riting?

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“Hey frau r u goin to the game t/m” “Hi frau! Sup girl? G-class rox”

Unfortunately that is the type of writing in which most of our students are currently becoming proficient. This “text speak” allows them to communicate with each other and me in a timely manner. It is our solemn duty to get them from these popular forms of communication to more acceptable, standard written communication. That is certainly no easy task, but it can be achieved. As with everything else we teach, we know there are a few students who are natural language learners; they know instinctively how to write. Unfortunately, writing is not that easy for most of our students in their native language, let alone in a language to which they might be exposed only in a classroom setting.

There are a couple of things we must always keep in mind when attempting to teach writing. First, it is a productive act. In order to write, or produce, a person must have had some type of input from which to work. To make writing vital, we must choose assignments which are relevant to the students and to everyday life. If the students perceive that there is truly a reason to write, they will be more likely to develop that skill. Also, we must strive for a balance between writing that flows in a natural manner and writing that has enough accuracy to not only avoid misunderstanding but to further communication. As we consider these two important aspects of writing, we will see that they cannot be separated. The receptive input will directly and positively affect the fluency and the accuracy of writing.

From the first day of first-level German, as any good teacher would, you have been speaking German and encouraging your students to write, regardless of errors.

SPECIAL FOCUS: Writing

You have inspired them to write freely without worrying about a lot of red ink. Now, you are at the AP level and you are ready to help your students refine their writing in preparation for the AP Exam. Just how are you going to vary writing tasks in a unit and gradually lead them to address complex issues and language skills? Using the book *Das fliegende Klassenzimmer* by Erich Kästner, and the movies based on that classic novel, I have found that I can help students work on all aspects of writing.

As your students read the book, or watch the movie, have them choose one character. They are going to keep a journal based on that one character's feelings and activities. This writing, which is done in the first person, is very informal and should not be graded for accuracy. The students should be writing as they would speak. Encourage them to ask you for help with idiomatic expressions and work with them on using the dictionary correctly to find just the right word. This writing should not be long, nor should you give them much time to do it. It will build fluency because they know that although you will correct their errors, this is just a completion grade. Because students will be writing from different perspectives, you might enjoy reading these more than if they were all writing as the same person. If you want them to write several days a week but you don't have the time to correct them that often, divide them into three or four groups and randomly grade different groups each time the assignment is completed.

Other writing assignments that can be completed during the unit have varying degrees of difficulty. What is more basic than filling out a form? At some point students fill out a police report dealing with the kidnapping and theft or reporting the *Mutprobe*. What happened? Who was responsible? Students could also create posters offering a reward for the people who burned the dictations or music. They could also make posters that advertise the upcoming Christmas program. In the course of the book, as the students are chided for breaking the rules, have the students write two letters. They should write one from the perspective of the benevolent teacher, who wants to impress upon the students the importance of following rules but also the significance of standing up for friends. The second letter should be from one of the students who was involved. The students should be contrite about their actions but also show amazement at seeing a new side of their teacher. The letter from the teacher will naturally be in a more formal tone and in a business format. The letter from the student will be more informal, yet should still follow basic letter-writing rules for personal letters.

After you have completed a series of events in the book or the movie, it is time to write a *Zusammenfassung*. This is also relatively short, but should be more

structured than the journal writing. I like to target certain grammatical points on the *Zusammenfassung*. For instance, one time I will only grade for word order, and the next time I may grade for subject/verb agreement. You can establish the grammar target based on what you are studying at the time or just select an area that you have noticed needs improvement based on their journal entries. The *Zusammenfassung* is short enough that you can grade it fairly quickly, even while marking the grammatical mistakes. It is generally going to be written in the third person, which offers the students yet a different opportunity in writing. Their input is the story, so any vocabulary and structures that they have seen while reading, or that they have heard in the movie, or that they have heard while you have been discussing either the book or the movie, should increase their fluency. These assignments force the students to synthesize what they have read or seen, and that brings them to a higher level of communication. In the course of the book or the movie, there could be three or four opportunities to write a *Zusammenfassung*.

One culminating activity for *Das fliegende Klassenzimmer* is to have the class work together to produce a newspaper. Students could be assigned different parts of the newspaper. For instance, the regular beat reporter could report on Kreuzkamm's kidnapping and burning of the dictations or the musical notes. The entertainment editor would report on the Christmas production. If writing about the movie, the entertainment editor would also include the concert performances. In the advertisements, there would be ads recruiting students and/or teachers for the *Internat*. The weather is very important because without the snow, the *Schneeballschlacht* would not have ensued. Why not have an advice column? Surely the students at the *Internat* have problems that need to be addressed. In a letter to the editor, an irate or concerned citizen might write about the *Nichtraucher Waggon* that is sitting in the field. Is it an eyesore? Does it promote the wild behavior of the boys in the area? There are many possibilities. It is important that all the articles for the newspaper be plausible in terms of the story, so students would really have to be familiar with the time period, the setting, and the plot.

Students could also be asked to rewrite a scene from the movie with dialogue. What if Justus was not the understanding teacher? How would he have reacted and what response would the boys have? Students could be asked to write about how they personally have helped a friend or a good friend has helped them. What does true friendship mean? Have them speculate as to whether they will remain friends with the people with whom they hang around today. Project 20 years into the future. What

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will you be doing? What will your best friend be doing? Will you be as close? Why or why not?

A more traditional culminating writing assignment is a full expository essay. I try to give them choices of how to approach the topic. Students are asked to react to the quote that is at the beginning of the movie and in the introductory chapter to the book:

„Wie kann ein Erwachsener seine Jugend so vollkommen vergessen, dass er eines Tages überhaupt nicht mehr weiß, wie traurig und unglücklich Kinder sein können? Es ist nämlich gleichgültig, ob man wegen einer zerbrochenen Puppe weint, oder weil man, später einmal, einen Freund verliert.“ (Das fliegende Klassenzimmer, 2006, 15)

- Welche Erfahrungen sollen hier beschrieben werden?
- Kennen Sie vielleicht schon das Gefühl des Abschiednehmens?
- Im Film geht es aber auch um das Wiedersehen zweier Freunde. Wie ist es, wenn man jemandem wieder begegnet, den man über einen längeren Zeitraum nicht gesehen hat?

The students can consider one or all three of these questions in their essay. This essay is graded holistically with the rubrics used to grade AP German Exams. Although it is graded holistically, to be used as a part of their writing development, feedback is imperative. Although the best way is to have a consultation with every student about the paper, that is not always realistic. Writing is sometimes tedious, and because you are explaining how accuracy affects fluency, there is often a lot to say. There is nothing wrong with typing out your critiques and even e-mailing them to the students. This essay is where it all comes together, and the students need to come away from the writing experience with a sense of how all the skills collaborate.

If the class is watching the movie, have the students write a movie review. They would include setting, time period, type of film, character analysis, and reasons why they would or would not recommend this film to someone else. If they are only reading the book, students could write a book review and compare the book to other classic children's novels. At either a mock book signing or a mock premier of the movie, students can assume the role of Kästner (at the book signing) or one of the characters in the movie, and pen one or two lines that reflect the important message of the book.

By offering students a chance to write in several styles, with different expectations and for different audiences, we are preparing them for any situation.

Through all of the writing assignments, it is imperative that students have input on which they can base their writing. This input will provide students not only with ideas, but also the vocabulary and structures that help with fluency. And, although the fluency is important, it is more important that the student learns that accuracy is what causes the communication to be successful. Without this magical and correct combination of fluency and accuracy, a student will fail at his or her efforts. As students continue to text one another, hopefully they will add: “Wrtng n grmn s fn!”

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Focus on Writing: Helping AP German Students Improve Writing Skills

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Focus on Writing

Writing is an essential skill that must be given a prominent place in the German curriculum beginning with the first few days of language instruction. Out of the four modalities, speaking and writing are the most challenging skills to develop. Writing uses all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy: knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar rules, comprehension of the topic matter, application of grammar rules, analysis of topic matter, synthesis of vocabulary in grammatical structures, and evaluation of opinions and support statements. Writing as a skill does have an advantage over speaking, however, in that the writer can take time to ponder word choice and grammar usage, and has the opportunity to self-edit before the writing is submitted.

Another factor that can make writing challenging is that students who struggle with writing in their native language tend to struggle even more to write in German. The teacher needs to be prepared to remediate students with a weakness in this area, even to the point of teaching students basic writing skills. We all know how much students learn about the English language while learning German; students can also learn to improve their English writing skills in a German classroom.

Unfortunately, not all skills that students use for writing in their native language transfer to writing in German. Most students are able to organize their ideas using paragraphs and topic sentences in English, yet when they write in German they seem to lose the ability to structure and organize their compositions. Once the teacher points out that organization, paragraphs, topic sentences, and supports also apply to

writing in German, students are more likely to transfer the skills that they learned in English class to their writing in German.

While writing can be challenging for both student and teacher, it can also be rewarding and enjoyable. As a teacher with 23 years of experience, I have grappled with the best practices to help students achieve success in writing, and all of the other language skills, more efficiently. The language learning model that has been the most helpful for me is the language acquisition theory of Stephen Krashen. The concept of comprehensible input, as described in Krashen's book *The Power of Reading*, is the basis for Blaine Ray's TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling). According to Krashen's scheme, listening gives rise to speaking and reading gives rise to writing. Even in English educational circles, it is commonly held that good readers make for good writers; it stands to reason that if readers are frequently exposed to good writing, they will soon start to imitate it. I have seen significant improvement in my students' German skills since I began using Krashen's model as the framework for my curriculum.

Reading and Writing

One of the biggest challenges with reading is to get the students to pay attention to the text itself. Reading will not produce good writing if the reader does not focus on the text. Many times, students simply skim the page and do not really read it intensively. Starting in level 1, it is essential to involve the students with the text. This may be done through comprehension questions, acting out the text, *Lückentexte*, context activities, pointing out idioms and grammatical structures, games, and any other activities that engage the student with the text in more than just a rudimentary way. If students actually read and reread the text several times, the chance for acquiring language greatly increases.

As obvious as it seems to us as language teachers, students often do not realize that their primary job is to find out how a native speaker uses the language, and to then imitate the usage. Their job as language learners is not to come up with their own new grammar structures, translate English into German word for word, or find novel ways of using vocabulary. It is simply to imitate how a native speaker would use the language. Once students realize this, it is like a revelation to them, and that helps them become better writers.

One activity that helps students to focus on reading is to give students a set of new vocabulary words from the text. Since I hold to the theory of comprehensible input, I preteach the vocabulary, so that when the students read the text in which the

vocabulary appears, they understand what they are reading. Using the vocabulary list, students find those words in the text and write down the context in which they appear. Then students practice the new vocabulary, imitating the structure of the sentence in which they find it. In upper levels, the focus is not on nouns as much as it is on verbs, case, and idiomatic structures.

Once students have focused on an authentic reading, the perfect segue into writing is a written response to the reading. Usually there is a class discussion about the reading, and from there, students get ideas for their response writing. I encourage students to keep the authentic reading out, and refer to it, imitate it, and even quote from it while they are writing. If students are using good texts upon which to base their own writing, their chances for writing success increase.

Writing Topics

Another way to meld reading with writing is to provide an authentic text in which students will take interest, and use the text as a springboard into an essay on a related topic. Some of the texts will unexpectedly pique student interest and result in enthusiastic responses. For example, I gave two different classes an authentic news story about the police in Berlin using helicopters to catch graffiti sprayers. One class reacted with such passion about the article that it became a perfect opportunity for students to write. The other class showed almost no interest in the topic, so we did another activity.

Students write much better and with more passion if they care about the topic. Before assigning writing, the entire class brainstorms topic ideas. In addition, I provide a list of many different topics from which they can choose. In the process of practicing the skill of writing, giving students the choice of which topic to write about is a good option. However, in preparation for the AP German Exam, students must also be able to write about one topic that is randomly chosen for them. A compromise is to focus on good writing skills early on with a topic of the students' choice, and once those skills are mastered, provide them with a single topic. In my situation, students in levels 1 through 4 choose most of their own topics, and in level 5 the topics are chosen for them, so that when they take the AP Exam, they are accustomed to writing about a predetermined topic.

A skill that students need to develop in upper levels is to be able to write about a topic that they may not know much about. Especially in AP German, students need to develop strategies to write something about any given topic. When I give students a topic that I know will be challenging for them, I walk them through ideas they can

use to deal with it. The first and most important step is to brainstorm. From a good brainstorming session, students can surprise themselves with how well they can deal with a seemingly challenging topic.

Writing Strategies

Students often write with a style similar to stream of consciousness, which might be fine for literature but not for essays. To avoid a nonstop mass of unorganized writing, students need to develop planning strategies. I have students first brainstorm their topic, and from the brainstorm, organize those thoughts into topic sentences and supporting statements. Students are often amazed that this is the most difficult task in writing, and that once there is an organization, the fleshing out of the writing is actually easier.

For the first few writing assignments, I prefer that students write in class. I encourage them to write about what they know, using vocabulary and grammar with which they are already familiar. By writing in class, without the use of dictionaries or online translators, students are forced to communicate using their own skills. I utilize the game Taboo throughout the curriculum so that students become comfortable with using circumlocution in their compositions. When students employ these important writing strategies early on, it is likely that they will be able to use them with success throughout the German sequence and on the AP Exam.

Improving Writing

Many teachers have had the experience of poring over papers, writing copious corrections and ideas for improvement, only to have the student simply look at the letter grade on the top of the paper and then shove it into their backpack, or worse, crumple it into a ball and throw it away. Teachers: Take heart, because research has shown that students learn little from teacher-corrected writing, so we don't need to laboriously correct essays for maximum benefit to the student. We need to find ways to efficiently help students produce better writing.

The most efficient way I have found to help students produce better writing is to have them edit their own writing before submission. Most students have no idea how to edit their own writing, nor what to look for while editing. The teacher then has to teach students editing skills.

While students are writing, I want them to self-edit. I want them to focus on correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and word choice. In the past, I have used

extensive checklists that include every item possible, but I found that long checklists overwhelm students. When students start with smaller pieces of writing, focusing only on a few issues at a time, they have a much better chance of success. Not only is this technique more manageable for the student, but it is also much more manageable for the teacher to evaluate.

The checklist I developed for students to use while they are writing is surprisingly basic. However, I have found that even upper-level students need to focus on the basics. Good writing is always clear and concise, which requires that the writer has a good grasp of the basics. I would much rather read a logical, well-planned piece of writing that uses basic grammar and structure correctly than a piece of writing that attempts to use vocabulary, grammar, and structures that are beyond the ability level of the writer.

There has been much debate about the value of teaching explicit grammar lessons and the effect it has on writing skills. In the past, I have tried teaching grammar units, expecting the students to implement the grammar I have taught into their writing. However, this has rarely been the case. I have found it more effective to have students focus on basic grammar rules and to learn them well. When students know the grammar rules, can focus on them, and have time to implement them, that aspect of their writing improves.

Improving writing is similar to going up a ladder: There are many steps along the way to the top. A short checklist is a great way for both student and teacher to keep a record of problem areas and improvement. If each student has a folder in which to keep the writing and checklists, the task of identifying areas that need improvement is facilitated. When the student begins a new piece of writing, the student should refer to the areas that need improvement and choose one of those areas to improve. Before evaluation, the student can write the problem area of focus at the top of the writing, and then the teacher focuses only on that area of improvement. Once a problem area is improved, the student moves on to another area for improvement.

Another effective way to help students improve their writing is the writing workshop. During class time, students write on a topic and one by one are pulled aside by the teacher to discuss the writing and give suggestions for improvement. Students who are struggling can be given encouragement, and even small successes can be applauded. Students who are mastering the basics can be given an additional challenge to fine-tune the writing even more.

Once students begin using the basics well, they can begin to use phrases that will refine their writing style. Approximately every week, I give students a German

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expression such as *meiner Meinung nach*, along with example sentences, and then we practice the expression both orally and in writing a short paragraph. Students share their writing with each other, and we discuss correct usage as a culminating activity. During the course of the week, I remind students of the expression and encourage them to use it in speech and writing. Some of the expressions have been learned in previous levels, while others need an additional week or so of practice. The expressions creep into student speech and writing to help them develop a style of their own.

The best way for students to develop a writing style is to read authentic texts from many different authors in order to be exposed to as many different writing styles as possible. Some students have a natural talent for writing and can identify and imitate style, while others need aspects of style pointed out to them. Periodically taking note of a certain masterfully written phrase or expression in a text helps students see the style in writing. One technique I use is to select representative stylistic passages from a text, discuss the style used, and have students practice writing in imitation of the style. Once students feel comfortable imitating a style of writing, they become more confident in developing their own.

Conclusion

In conclusion, improving student writing is a slow, step-by-step endeavor that is necessary in the German curriculum starting even in first-year German. Teachers can help students produce better writing at every level by providing them with well-defined expectations. The more preparation the teacher does before the writing is assigned, the better the resulting student writing will be. Once the writing is completed, good feedback and opportunity for revision will help the students learn from mistakes and help them become better writers.

Weekly Expressions

...ist nicht, wie ich (ihn/sie/es) mir vorgestellt habe.

Aus diesem Grund...

Ich nehme an, dass...

Ich schlage vor, dass...

Ich stelle mir vor, dass...

Im Großen und Ganzen

Ich meine, dass...

Meiner Meinung nach... /Ich bin der Meinung, dass...

Ich bin dafür, weil... / Ich bin dagegen, weil...

Man kann ... (nicht) vergleichen.

verschieden/gleich

Es ist mir wichtig, dass...

Als ich...

...spielt eine Rolle / eine große Rolle / keine Rolle

Es wäre schön, wenn...

Es handelt sich um...

Es ärgert mich, wenn / dass...

deswegen / deshalb

Es kommt darauf an, ob...

Man kann nicht vergessen, dass...

Es kann sein, dass...

Es scheint, dass...

Es sieht so aus, als ob...

Es ist unglaublich, dass...

Basic Writing Checklist

1. *Verb Second rule*

Make sure you put the verb second in sentences.

- Zuerst **lernen** wir Deutsch.
- Am Dienstag **gehe** ich zur Schule.
- Weil ich meine Hausaufgaben vergessen habe, **gehe** ich nicht zur Schule.

2. *Vocabulary*

Use a lot of vocabulary we have been learning this year. Impress me.

3. *Verb tense*

If you are talking about the past, use a past tense.

- With Perfekt, use the right helping verb and put the participle at the end.
Ich **bin** nicht nach Hause **gegangen**.
- With Imperfekt, make sure the verb is second.
Ich **ging** nicht nach Hause.

4. *Paragraphs*

Write using paragraphs. Here are four ideas to help you set up paragraphs (each sentence represents the first sentence of each paragraph):

Zuerst gehe ich nach Hause.....
Dann esse ich Spaghetti.....
Danach spiele ich Fußball.....
Zuletzt schlafe ich.....
Am Montag habe ich Schule.....
Am Dienstag spiele ich Fußball.....
Am Samstag habe ich nichts.....
Um zehn Uhr lerne ich Deutsch.....
Um fünf nach zwei gehe ich nach Hause...
Um halb acht mache ich meine Hausaufgaben...

Erstens ist es eine gute Idee.....
Zweitens bekomme ich viel Geld.....
Drittens sind meine Eltern froh, wenn ich ...

5. *Nouns*

Capitalize all nouns.

- Kick conjugated verbs when using subordinators.
Ich gehe nach Hause, weil ich sehr krank **bin**.
Ich weiss, dass er morgen keine Schule **hat**.
Wenn ich krank **bin**, bleibe ich zu Hause.
Als ich im Kindergarten **war**, habe ich Deutsch gelernt.
- Kick infinitive verbs when using modals.
Ich muss nach Hause **gehen**.
Ich darf keine Schokolade **essen**.

Writing Topics

Was ich werden möchte
Gewalt in der Schule
Politik in Amerika
Mein Familienleben
Schule in Amerika ist besser als [nicht so gut wie] in Deutschland
Der Film, den ich drehen würde

Wir haben zu viele [nicht genug] Gesetze in Amerika
Was tun gegen Armut?
Was ich für sehr wichtig halte
Welche Qualitäten ich in einem Freund [einer Freundin] suche
Ist Krieg nötig?
Das größte Problem mit Schulen in den USA
Der Tag meiner Träume
Kleine Kinder, kleine Sorgen, große Leute, große Sorgen
Wenn ich Präsident(in) wäre
Das Wichtigste, was ich bisher lernte

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Writing Across Instructional Levels in the German Curriculum

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In my high school, students can take up to five years of German if they begin their studies in eighth grade. The fifth year is AP, which is made up mostly of seniors. My school has an A/B block schedule, which means students meet for 85 minutes every other day. Instructional time is a precious commodity, and I always feel rushed to accomplish everything I would like to do with my students. Instruction then becomes a matter of prioritization: Of all the skills needed, which require the most class time? Which can be done at home? At the top of my priority list is what Stephen Krashen calls “comprehensible input,” which means that students are exposed to as much understandable language as possible through listening and reading, and through that exposure, language acquisition occurs. Since the students cannot provide comprehensible input on their own, the burden falls to the teacher. As a result, I spend the majority of instructional time on listening and reading.

While input activities are important for language acquisition, there comes a time in which students must practice what they have acquired. The practice, which is “output,” is speaking and writing. Language learning and acquisition can occur with speaking and writing as well, but for the most part those modalities are an application of acquisition. Since schools require grades, speaking and writing are the foremost means teachers have to evaluate students. Most teachers find writing to be the most convenient way to evaluate student language usage.

At each level of language instruction, teacher intentions and expectations must be considered in correlation with student ability. What learning objective does the teacher have for the student writing? What type of writing does the teacher want the student to produce? What does the teacher consider good writing for each level? How

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will the writing be evaluated? Clearly defined teacher expectations and intentions help students write to the best of their abilities.

Before the teacher considers giving a writing assignment, the purpose of writing should be clear. Why exactly should a student write? The first purpose of writing should always be communication. The writer should have a message for the reader. Secondary purposes include practicing language skills, including vocabulary and grammar. Unfortunately, the purpose of writing can become muddled in a foreign language classroom since other pressures and influences come into play. Students may not complete an assignment unless there is a grade attached, and teachers can grade the language usage while ignoring the message. Ideally, the main focus of any writing should remain the message, and the teacher needs to keep the message at the forefront of any evaluation.

With the message of the writing as the main focus, students must know the necessary vocabulary and grammar to convey that message. If student writing is poor, a consideration could be that the teacher is not providing adequate listening and reading for the student to acquire the language. Through writing, the full circle of language acquisition becomes evident: plentiful comprehensible input through listening and reading, grammar instruction, and vocabulary building lead to output. Without adequate input, there cannot be good output.

Adequate language instruction through input helps avoid situations in which students attempt to write above their level of ability. All teachers have experienced the frustration of trying to understand student writing that is full of words the student looked up in a dictionary. Since I use writing basically as an output activity (versus as a language acquisition activity), I discourage the use of dictionaries and encourage students to write using language they already know. If a student does need a word or two, I help them choose the right word for the right context.

The skill of circumlocution can be practiced to help students navigate past a word or two that may stop them dead in their tracks. A very effective game that I use frequently to practice this skill is “Taboo,” in which one player is given a word, which must then be described orally or in writing to the other player without using that word. The challenge of circumlocution is that it requires “thinking outside the box”—describing what the writer is trying to communicate rather than using the exact word. While it is much easier for the writer to use a dictionary than to use circumlocution, plentiful writing as well as speaking applications exist, which make teaching the skill valuable.

Along with vocabulary, it is also helpful for the student to know basic grammar rules. In speaking, students do not have time to think about grammar rules and often rely on what they have acquired or attempt to imitate language they have heard or read. In writing, there is ample time for students to use and apply basic grammar rules. Yet if students treat writing as they treat speaking—whatever comes to mind is immediately written down on paper with no further thought given—the grammar rules will have minimal effect. To encourage students to produce good writing, teachers should provide ample time to write and revise, give students writing rubrics, and allow other students to read and respond to the writing.

Because I encourage students to write about what they know and use language they have acquired, I prefer to have students write during class, even while acknowledging the scarcity of instructional time. The benefits include immediate help and feedback when needed, lack of distraction, and assurance that the writing is indeed that of the student. Students in the first years of language instruction require much assistance and encouragement, which I can provide in the classroom. Students in upper levels who have more experience writing in German can be given writing assignments for homework because they are more self-sufficient in using the language.

Another way to help students write well is to limit the scope of the writing. Their writing is already limited by what they know and language they have acquired, but the teacher can take it a step further by limiting the topic, especially in the earlier years of language instruction. For example, in first-year German, student vocabulary and grammar knowledge is very limited, and the topic of the writing should remain within those limited confines. Students do get frustrated because they often want to write in German using the same level of vocabulary and grammar at which they write in English. Students may even attempt to write in English first and then translate the writing into German with the help of a dictionary or online translator. My philosophy of writing is that it is a demonstration of what the writer knows—in essence, a practice or trial run, which is the French origin of the word “essay” (to try). Once students understand what they are trying to accomplish with their writing, their language accuracy increases and the writing becomes more focused.

Because students write best about things they know, I do like to provide a choice of topics within their knowledge base. For example, in second-year German, I teach a unit on the topic of “rooms of the house and chores.” Sample topics might include: “Compare your dream house with your real house,” “Write an e-mail to your friend in Stuttgart to complain about all the chores you have to do this weekend,” “Describe

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which chores you have to do in each room of your house,” or “You have hired someone to clean up your house, and you write down what needs to be done in each room.” In each of the topics, students are required to use the language they have learned in the unit, but in different ways and highlighting different interests.

Brainstorming is another technique that is useful in every level of language instruction. I always require that students brainstorm (in German) on the topic first, and then organize the brainstorm into an outline. I do not require a formal outline but simply an organization of the thoughts that guide their writing from a start to a middle and conclusion. For teachers pressed for instructional time, students can brainstorm on a topic as a homework assignment and bring the brainstorm and outline to the next class. In addition, students can also write down lists of useful vocabulary, grammar, and phrases to be used in the writing. With the preliminary work already done, students can devote the allotted class time to the writing itself.

In each level of instruction, the concept of audience is important to consider. Who is going to be reading the writing? If only the teacher is reading the composition, students tend to write only to achieve a certain grade or some other academic goal, and the writing can be very dull. However, if the audience of the writing is expanded to include other students, other teachers, parents, or native speakers, students tend to write with more interest, care, enthusiasm, and purpose. Many times after students have completed a writing task, I ask them to pass it around so that as many classmates as possible can read it. I encourage the readers to verify that it has been read by signing their name at the end and writing a short positive reaction to the writing in German. This activity takes only 5 to 10 minutes, but it is a valuable use of class time because it is a huge motivator to the writer to receive the writing back with readers' signatures and written reactions. Students will write much more willingly if the size of their audience increases.

Not only students should react and respond to the writing; the teacher should respond to the writing as well. It is a huge discouragement to a writer to receive a writing assignment back, smothered with grammar corrections from the teacher, but without a response or comments about the message of the writing itself. If the main purpose of writing is communication, then the teacher must encourage communication by responding to the ideas rather than just the mistakes.

Journal writing is a prime way to encourage response from the reader. When I have students do this type of writing, I prefer to have them write for a set amount of time rather than a set length: usually five minutes with a one-minute wrap-up warning. In this way, students are encouraged to write all they can rather than simply

get to a certain number of sentences. When time is up, students pass their journals to another student, who reads and writes a positive reaction. I specify which kinds of responses students should write in an attempt to avoid negative feedback. For the first year or two, the teacher can give students a phrase list to help them write their responses, with the list growing larger as the need arises. A list might include: „— gefällt mir auch. / Ich finde es interessant, dass du... / Das tut mir Leid. / Da stimme ich dir zu. / Ich habe eine gute Idee für dich: / Was ich interessant finde, ist...“

Along with curricular factors of writing, the evaluation of writing must be considered and planned. The teacher must be clear on not only the purpose and placement of the writing but also on the assessment of writing before the writing is even assigned. Is the writing to be formally or informally assessed? Which aspects of the writing will be assessed? Grading rubrics are the most common way to indicate the details of assessment as well as to make the job of grading a much less daunting task. The more specific the rubric, the more students will meet whatever expectations the teacher has set up for the writing, and the easier the grading of the writing will be. To be effective, students must know and understand what is included on the rubric so they can meet the expectation for evaluation. In fact, students should be able to refer to the rubric while they are writing so they can better keep their writing focused.

In my school system, foreign language students complete one formal writing assessment per quarter. The topics and parameters are based on the themes and topics I teach, and the grading rubrics are specific and clear for each level. The rubrics are set up as a scale of proficiency in such factors as clarity of message, correct use of grammar and vocabulary, mechanics, and organization. Students know what is included in the rubric for each level. While still time consuming and arduous, the rubrics make the grading easier and the results more meaningful to the writer.

Since formally assessing writing is indeed time consuming, I often rely on informal evaluative techniques to build up to the formal assessment at the end of the quarter. In this way, students can learn from writing without demanding much of the teacher's time. Informal assessment includes having the student or a peer check his or her writing with a checklist I provide, or I use the checklist to pinpoint areas that need improvement.

My experience with rubrics and checklists is that they can overwhelm the student, especially those with weak skills. To help all students improve in an efficient manner, I have students focus on only one or two items on the checklist or rubric. For example, if a student has problems with subject-verb agreement, then I have the

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student circle that item on the rubric (so both the student and I know what the issue is), and then the student makes a conscientious effort to make sure that every subject has a correct corresponding verb. Once that issue is resolved, then the teacher or student can look for other items on the rubric in which to improve.

Each level of German includes different types of writing based on the students' ability level. For the first level, when students are still working on basic sentence structure, the writing is relatively limited. In this level, students need to see good, basic, comprehensible writing, so I use short stories I have written for them to read and devise a number of writing activities to accompany them. I change the text into a *Lückentext* in which students manipulate selected words in an already complete written setting. In answering written questions about the story, I require students to use complete sentences so they can practice sentence structure. To expand into longer writing, students write journal entries, diaries, letters and e-mails, and short topical writings based on a theme or topic learned in class. Some writings emphasize grammatical aspects such as subject–verb agreement, verb second, and position of modal verbs and infinitives. Frequent shorter writings are more useful than longer writings since the goal is for students to practice and improve upon their writing skills. Longer writing does not necessarily produce better writing. Much can be gained if a student writes a paragraph, rectifies any mistake, learns from it, and avoids the same mistake in the next short writing.

In second-level German, the same premise holds true—students need to see good writing in order to receive the input value of it, yet at this stage students are more able to produce longer and more challenging writings. Students can write paragraphs, short topical essays, writings that imitate a text, scripts, and short stories. The emphasis includes sentence structure, yet also includes paragraph structure. Students at this stage tend to write in long blocks, using no paragraphs at all, so the teacher can show students how to organize thoughts into paragraphs. Writings can be used to practice grammatical aspects common to this level: use of tense, subordinators, case and position of time, manner, and place phrases.

Third-level German continues on with the addition of longer essays, summaries of texts, reports on various topics, newspaper or magazine articles, short poems, and songs. At this level, students begin writing with idiomatic expressions such as “meiner Meinung nach.” Grammatical concepts common for this level such as relative pronouns begin to appear in student writing. However, some students may still continue to struggle with issues such as sentence structure and paragraphs, so I continue to include basic items on their checklist and rubric.

In fourth-year German, students begin writing longer, more complete essays and responses to texts. I would like students to begin developing a writing style, which begins to emerge as students continue to read more texts. Plentiful authentic readings at or near their reading level are an invaluable tool to teach writing style. Fortunately for German teachers, many such texts exist from German publishers, magazines, and newspapers. Written responses to those texts provide a way to combine both reading and writing. Grammatical aspects of this level that can be practiced in writing include advanced sentence structures, including subordinators, verb tenses such as *Imperfekt* and *Konjunktiv*, and adjective endings.

Fifth-year German in my school is AP German. At this point, the focus is to get students ready for the AP Exam. What has been emphasized in the previous levels of instruction continues to be emphasized with even more intensity. Even at this level, students may slip and revert to basic writing problems, so I continue to include the basics on rubrics and checklists. Students in AP try again to write above their ability level, because their language abilities are growing but are not yet equal to their native language skills. Good writing is the “basics done right”; writing is better when it is clear, concise, and in control. Students need to be reminded to use whatever language abilities they have, and to apply them well.

Writing is an integral part of every level of language instruction, yet requires much consideration, planning, and time. When the teacher develops expectations, writing tasks, and assessments that are appropriate for each level, the students can develop writing skills to the best of their abilities. Students will then be able to use their writing skills to communicate their ideas, thoughts, hopes, and dreams to the people of the language and culture they have learned.

German 1 Writing Checklist

Sentence Structure:

Subject / verb agreement

Regular verbs

ich gehe	wir gehen
du gehst	ihr geht
er/sie/es geht	Sie / sie gehen

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Sein

ich bin	wir sind
du bist	ihr seid
er/sie/es ist	Sie / sie sind

Modal verbs (example: können)

ich kann	wir können
du kannst	ihr könnt
er/sie/es kann	Sie / sie können

- Verb second rule
Um neun Uhr gehe ich nach Hause.
Zuerst mache ich die Hausaufgaben.
- Time Manner Place – time (when), manner (how), place (where)
Die Freunde gehen um 8 Uhr zu Fuß ins Kino.
Wir fahren um halb sieben mit dem Auto nach Hause.
- Modal verb – goes second, other verb at end in infinitive form
Ich kann nach Hause gehen.
Du sollst das Buch lesen.

Nouns:

Genders

der Junge – masc.
die Schülerin – fem.
das Mädchen – neut.
die Jungen, die Schülerinnen, die Mädchen – plural

Capitalization of all nouns, regardless of where they are in a sentence

Ich esse eine Pizza mit Tomaten und Käse.

Cases

- Nominative, accusative (change masc. from *der* to *den*)
Die Lehrerin hat den Kuli, den Bleistift, die Papiere und das Heft.
Das Mädchen sieht den Jungen.

German 2 Writing Checklist

Sentence Structure:

Subject / verb agreement

Regular verbs

ich gehe	wir gehen
du gehst	ihr geht
er/sie/es geht	Sie / sie gehen

Sein

ich bin	wir sind
du bist	ihr seid
er/sie/es ist	Sie / sie sind

Modal verbs (example: können)

ich kann	wir können
du kannst	ihr könnt
er/sie/es kann	Sie / sie können

- Verb second rule
 - Um neun Uhr gehe ich nach Hause.
 - Zuerst mache ich die Hausaufgaben.
- Time Manner Place – time (when), manner (how), place (where)
 - Die Freunde gehen um 8 Uhr zu Fuß ins Kino.
 - Wir fahren um halb sieben mit dem Auto nach Hause.
- Modal verb – goes second, other verb at end in infinitive form
 - Ich kann nach Hause gehen.
 - Du sollst das Buch lesen.
- Subordinating conjunctions:
 - verb placement (end of phrase)
 - punctuation (comma precedes subordinator)
 - Ich weiß, dass ich um acht Uhr nach Hause gehen muss. Sie geht nicht zur Schule, weil sie krank ist.
 - Was machst du, wenn du zu Hause bist?

Nouns:

Genders

der Junge – masc.

die Schülerin – fem.

das Mädchen – neut.

die Jungen, die Schülerinnen, die Mädchen – plural

Capitalization of all nouns, regardless of where they are in a sentence

Ich esse eine Pizza mit Tomaten und Käse.

Cases

- nominative (subject of sentence)
Der Lehrer geht nach Hause.
- accusative (object of sentence / acc. preposition)
Ich sehe den Mann und die Frau.
Die Schokolade ist für den Jungen und das Mädchen.
- dative (indirect object / dat. preposition)
Die Frau gibt dem Jungen das Geld.
Ich schreibe die Hausaufgaben mit dem Kuli.

Tenses – Present, Perfekt

- Use present tense when it is happening now.
Jetzt gehe ich ins Kino.
- Use Perfekt when it happened in the past.
Am Freitag bin ich ins Kino gegangen.

Organization of sentences and paragraphs

- chronological order
heute Morgen, am Vormittag, am Nachmittag, am Abend
letzte Woche, gestern, heute
- logical order
zuerst, dann, danach, zuletzt
erstens, zweitens, drittens
- spacial order
zu Hause, in der Schule, im Eiscafé

German 3 Writing Checklist

Sentence Structure:

Subject / verb agreement

Regular verbs

ich gehe	wir gehen
du gehst	ihr geht
er/sie/es geht	Sie / sie gehen

Sein

ich bin	wir sind
du bist	ihr seid
er/sie/es ist	Sie / sie sind

Modal verbs (example: wollen)

ich will	wir wollen
du willst	ihr wollt
er/sie/es will	Sie / sie wollen

- Verb second rule
 - Um neun Uhr gehe ich nach Hause.
 - Zuerst mache ich die Hausaufgaben.
- Time Manner Place – time (when), manner (how), place (where)
 - Die Freunde gehen um 8 Uhr zu Fuß ins Kino.
 - Wir fahren um halb sieben mit dem Auto nach Hause.
- Modal verb – goes second, other verb at end in infinitive form
 - Ich kann nach Hause gehen.
 - Du sollst das Buch lesen.
- Subordinating conjunctions:
 - verb placement (end of phrase)
 - punctuation (comma precedes subordinator)
 - Ich weiß, dass ich um acht Uhr nach Hause gehen muss.
 - Sie geht nicht zur Schule, weil sie krank ist.
 - Was machst du, wenn du zu Hause bist?

Nouns:

Genders

der Junge – masc.

die Schülerin – fem.

das Mädchen – neut.

die Jungen, die Schülerinnen, die Mädchen – plural

Capitalization of all nouns, regardless of where they are in a sentence

Ich esse eine Pizza mit Tomaten und Käse.

Cases

- nominative (subject of sentence)
Der Lehrer geht nach Hause.
- accusative (object of sent. / acc. prep. / 2-way prep. w/action)
Ich sehe den Mann und die Frau.
Die Schokolade ist für den Jungen und das Mädchen.
Heute Nachmittag gehen wir in die Stadt.
- dative (indirect object / dat. preposition / 2-way prep w/o action)
Die Frau gibt dem Jungen das Geld.
Ich schreibe die Hausaufgaben mit dem Kuli.
Die Schüler übernachten in einer Jugendherberge.

Tenses – Present, Perfekt, Imperfekt

- Use present tense when it is happening now or in the immediate future
Morgen fahren wir nach München.
- Use Perfekt when it is in a quoted conversation referring to the past
Meine Freundin sagte: „Ich habe dich gestern gesehen“.
- Use Imperfekt when it happened in the past
Letzte Woche fuhr ich mit dem Zug nach Salzburg.

Organization of sentences and paragraphs

- chronological order
heute Morgen, am Vormittag, am Nachmittag, am Abend
letzte Woche, gestern, heute

- logical order
zuerst, dann, danach, zuletzt
erstens, zweitens, drittens
- spacial order
zu Hause, in der Schule, im Eiscafé

German 4 Writing Checklist

Sentence Structure:

Subject / verb agreement

Regular verbs

ich gehe	wir gehen
du gehst	ihr geht
er/sie/es geht	Sie / sie gehen

Sein

ich bin	wir sind
du bist	ihr seid
er/sie/es ist	Sie / sie sind

Modal verbs (example: dürfen)

ich darf	wir dürfen
du darfst	ihr dürft
er/sie/es darf	Sie / sie dürfen

- Verb second rule
Um neun Uhr gehe ich nach Hause.
Zuerst mache ich die Hausaufgaben.
- Time Manner Place - time (when), manner (how), place (where)
Die Freunde gehen um 8 Uhr zu Fuß ins Kino.
Wir fahren um halb sieben mit dem Auto nach Hause.
- Modal verbs – goes second, other verb at end in infinitive form
Ich kann nach Hause gehen.
Du sollst das Buch lesen.
- Subordinating conjunctions:
 - verb placement (end of phrase)
 - punctuation (comma precedes subordinator)

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Ich weiß, dass ich um acht Uhr nach Hause gehen muss.

Sie geht nicht zur Schule, weil sie krank ist.

Was machst du, wenn du zu Hause bist?

Nouns:

Genders

der Junge – masc.

die Schülerin – fem.

das Mädchen – neut.

die Jungen, die Schülerinnen, die Mädchen – plural

Capitalization of all nouns, regardless of where they are in a sentence

Ich esse eine Pizza mit Tomaten und Käse.

Cases

- nominative (subject of sentence)
Der Lehrer geht nach Hause.
- accusative (object of sent. / acc. prep. / 2-way prep. w/action)
Ich sehe den Mann und die Frau.
Die Schokolade ist für den Jungen und das Mädchen.
Heute Nachmittag gehen wir in die Stadt.
- dative (indirect object / dat. preposition / 2-way prep w/o action)
Die Frau gibt dem Jungen das Geld.
Ich schreibe die Hausaufgaben mit dem Kuli.
Die Schüler übernachten in einer Jugendherberge.
- genitive (object of genitive prep. / “of the”)
Das Haus meiner Familie
Wegen des Wetters

Pronouns

Die Reise war die beste, die ich je machte.

Ich backte den Kuchen, aber meine Freunde aßen ihn nicht.

Relative pronouns

Ich schreibe an meinen Freund, den ich seit Januar kenne.

Die Frau, mit der ich telefoniert hatte, war nicht zu Hause.

Tenses – Present, Perfekt, Imperfekt, Konjunktiv II

- Use present tense when it is happening now or in the immediate future
Morgen fahren wir nach München.
- Use Perfekt when it is in a quoted conversation referring to the past
Meine Freundin sagte: „Ich habe dich gestern gesehen“.
- Use Imperfekt when it happened in the past
Letzte Woche fuhr ich mit dem Zug nach Salzburg.
- Use Konjunktiv II when it would or could happen
Ich würde nach Deutschland fliegen, wenn ich Geld hätte.

Organization of sentences and paragraphs

- chronological order
heute Morgen, am Vormittag, am Nachmittag, am Abend
letzte Woche, gestern, heute
- logical order
zuerst, dann, danach, zuletzt
erstens, zweitens, drittens
- spacial order
zu Hause, in der Schule, im Eiscafé

German 5 AP Writing Checklist

Sentence Structure:

Subject / verb agreement

- Verb second rule
Um neun Uhr gehe ich nach Hause.
Zuerst mache ich die Hausaufgaben.
- Time Manner Place – time (when), manner (how), place (where)
Die Freunde gehen um 8 Uhr zu Fuß ins Kino.
Wir fahren um halb sieben mit dem Auto nach Hause.
- Modal verbs – goes second, other verb at end in infinitive form
Ich kann nach Hause gehen.
Du sollst das Buch lesen.

SPECIAL FOCUS: Writing

- Subordinating conjunctions:

- verb placement (end of phrase)
- punctuation (comma precedes subordinator)

Ich weiß, dass ich um acht Uhr nach Hause gehen muss.

Sie geht nicht zur Schule, weil sie krank ist.

Was machst du, wenn du zu Hause bist?

Nouns:

Genders

Capitalization of all nouns, regardless of where they are in a sentence

Ich esse eine Pizza mit Tomaten und Käse.

Cases

- nominative (subject of sentence)
Der Lehrer geht nach Hause.
- accusative (object of sent. / acc. prep. / 2-way prep. w/action)
Ich sehe den Mann und die Frau.
Die Schokolade ist für den Jungen und das Mädchen.
Heute Nachmittag gehen wir in die Stadt.
- dative (indirect object / dat. preposition / 2-way prep w/o action)
Die Frau gibt dem Jungen das Geld.
Ich schreibe die Hausaufgaben mit dem Kuli.
Die Schüler übernachteten in einer Jugendherberge.
- genitive (object of genitive prep. / "of the")
Das Haus meiner Familie
Wegen des Wetters

Pronouns

Die Reise war die beste, die ich je machte.

Ich backte den Kuchen, aber meine Freunde aßen ihn nicht.

Relative pronouns

Ich schreibe an meinen Freund, den ich seit Januar kenne.

Die Frau, mit der ich telefoniert hatte, war nicht zu Hause.

Tenses – Present, Perfekt, Imperfekt, Konjunktiv II

- Use present tense when it is happening now or in the immediate future.

Morgen fahren wir nach München.

- Use Perfekt when it is in a quoted conversation referring to the past.

Meine Freundin sagte: „Ich habe dich gestern gesehen“.

- Use Imperfekt when it happened in the past.

Letzte Woche fuhr ich mit dem Zug nach Salzburg.

- Use Konjunktiv II when it would or could happen.

Ich würde nach Deutschland fliegen, wenn ich Geld hätte.

Organization of sentences and paragraphs

- chronological order

heute Morgen, am Vormittag, am Nachmittag, am Abend

letzte Woche, gestern, heute

- logical order

zuerst, dann, danach, zuletzt

erstens, zweitens, drittens

- spacial order

zu Hause, in der Schule, im Eiscafé

Style

- use of idioms

Ich bin dafür, dass man ab 18 wählen darf.

- expressions

Man darf nicht aus einer Mücke einen Elefanten machen.

- varied sentence structures

Im Großen und Ganzen bin ich der Meinung, dass Vegetarier gesunder als Fleischesser sind.

- use of passive voice

Nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg wurde Deutschland wieder aufgebaut.

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Holistic Scoring

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When I started working as a German teacher 10 years ago, my expectations for my students' achievement were as high as they are today. Even though my expectations haven't changed, I have accommodated and changed quite dramatically the ways I guide and support my students to reach their highest proficiency levels.

One example, in which I have changed my own beliefs and methods throughout the years, is in feedback on writing. When students turned in an essay, I would use an error code that I had previously handed out to the students (e.g., subject–verb agreement error—SV). Students got back their own writings with numerous codes written all over the paper. How discouraging for them and what a lot of work for me! But I was tough and asked my students for a revision using my feedback. Over a considerable period of time, I realized that this was not the most efficient way for my students to improve their writings. Adjective endings changed from -es to -en but were still not correct. My corrective feedback focused entirely on mechanical, grammatical accuracy. I was frustrated with my own inability to provide my students with more useful feedback on their writing assignments.

In 2003, I became an AP Reader for German. I had seen the holistic scoring rubric for the composition section of the AP Exam before (see Appendix), but it didn't mean too much to me until I was trained in giving holistic feedback on students' compositions. Reading and grading so many students' essays at the AP Reading also made it very clear to me that conveying meaning is the key in writing. Can I as a reader understand the idea, and can I follow the students' logic? I became aware that the quality of writing is defined not just by its grammatical accuracy but also by its natural flow, by the students' ability to connect ideas, and by using idioms.

Where would I go from there? I realized that I needed to change not only the feedback I gave to my students but also the conditions under which they write. As

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a consequence, I have developed the following strategies, which work to make the writing process a more valuable experience for my students and a more satisfying one for me.

At the beginning of the school year my students and I go over the AP German Composition Rubric. We read the scores, the accompanying descriptions, and the possible point deductions out loud, and discuss what that actually means for their own writing. Familiarity with the rubric is essential, because it means that the students know exactly what is expected of them. I spend a lot of time on the 9–8 area, since this should be their goal. I make it clear to them that it is possible to achieve a 9 after learning German for four to five years in the classroom; it is not a grade for native speakers only. Furthermore, we discuss how to reach obvious fluency: “Practice makes perfect” is the key. I encourage my students to try out new words and phrases so that they become part of their active vocabulary and will eventually be used naturally and intuitively. My students are also curious about the meaning of the phrase “few significant errors.” Here I refer to their self-editing sheet (see Appendix). If the students check their work attentively using the categories given, they will likely not have significant errors in their writing.

During the school year my AP students write their essays in class. Most of the time they write about integrated topics that I design for the unit we are working on. I try to follow the format of the writing prompts given on AP Exams, or I use a previous AP composition topic (see Appendix) if it fits the unit. Students have 40 minutes to write 150–200 words, and I recommend 5 minutes of brainstorming, 30 minutes of writing, and the remaining time for self-editing (see Appendix—self editing sheet).

My students are always allowed to have a handout with idiomatic expressions (see Appendix), with adverbs (see Appendix), the above-mentioned self-editing sheet, and the AP rubrics for compositions on their desks. I have developed this practice because I find that using verbs with prepositions and using adverbs accurately in compositions is difficult and requires assistance during the writing process.

In addition, I have at least two adult native speakers volunteer and an exchange student from a German-speaking country as a teacher assistant in my AP class almost every year, and I schedule the essay writing on days when the volunteers are in the classroom. These native or near-native speakers help my students with their writing. This is especially effective since students know what they want to express, and they are eager to reveal their own personalities with their intelligence, sense of humor, and creativity. I find this support to be invaluable during the writing process.

As a result, students are motivated to write, and feel less of “the reduced personality of the language learner” to which Jamie Rankin refers in his article.

When I read these essays, I score them holistically (a 9 is an A+, an 8 is an A, etc.), but I also keep a journal. I write down names of students who expressed unique ideas, and I also take notes on major mistakes. In addition, students receive stars on their papers for appropriately used advanced vocabulary, or for minor corrections like an error in inverted word order.

On the day I give back the graded essays to my students, I ask the ones with the creative ideas to read their essays to the class. The class then discusses the main ideas of that essay. I also ask the students with stars on their compositions to read the beautifully and accurately used phrases to the class. Once I have analyzed the major errors, I create or find exercises for the concepts and spread them out over the next week. Sometimes I underline one sentence and give students time in class to correct just that sentence or to express that one idea in a different or more precise manner.

If a student is not satisfied with or doesn't understand the reasons for the given grade, I invite him or her to a tutorial. A 10–15 minute session, in which the student and I work on the graded essay together, makes a tremendous difference. The individual feedback and the immediate error correction, including the explanation of underlying concepts, are satisfying and motivating for the students. After such a session, a student gets a higher grade for the essay, since the student has increased his or her learning, and I want to reward the extra work.

Keeping in mind that no skill is acquired in isolation, I have developed, in cooperation with our school librarian, an extensive reading program for my AP students. We now have a German reading section in the library where students can choose a book of their own interest and at their reading level. This practice has become an overwhelming success; one student wrote “that certain things make sense to me in my head grammatically, whereas before everything was just a bunch of rules.” In order to keep track of what they have read, students write reading reflections outside of the classroom. This requires them to apply the techniques they have developed in writing their in-class AP essays independently and without the support of a native speaker. I gradually guide the students away from the traditional form of summaries by giving them a separate outline for the reading reflections (see Appendix), which I then grade using the same techniques as with the essays.

As a result of the changes I have implemented in teaching writing, I have noticed that my students enjoy the writing process much more. They no longer see writing as a test but as a way to express creative, unique ideas. Students are helping each

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other, and native speakers are here to support student efforts to communicate their ideas. Every student is encouraged to express himself or herself without feeling embarrassed or stressed, and everyone in the classroom is learning. It is also more satisfying for my students because they feel less restricted; they push themselves to a clear and accurate expression of their ideas, and they are able to observe their own improvement over time.

An added benefit for me is that I spend less time on evaluating students' work, although students are writing more. I feel that students now receive a more valuable form of feedback on their compositions. I actually enjoy grading essays and reading reflections in which I recognize my students' original thoughts, creativity, and improved writing skills.

Appendix 1

Note: I start introducing this sheet at the end of German I. I usually choose a composition from one of my students and make a transparency of it. As a class, we then start adding time expressions and location adverbs so that students become accustomed to using inverted word order and appropriate connectors.

Wichtige Adverbien

Wie man von einer Idee zur nächsten überleitet!

1. Temporaladverbien

Bezeichnung eines Geschehens:

- *in der Vergangenheit*
 - damals
 - früher
 - ehemals
 - kürzlich
 - neulich
 - vor kurzem
 - gestern
- *in der Gegenwart*
 - jetzt
 - nun
 - heute
 - heute Morgen/Abend. . .
 - heutzutage
- *in der Zukunft*
 - bald
 - gleich
 - sofort

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- heute (Morgen)
 - übermorgen
 - später
 - *zu einem anderen Zeitpunkt*
 - zuerst
 - danach
 - zunächst
 - vorher
 - dann
 - nachher
 - zuletzt
 - schließlich
 - inzwischen
 - bisher
 - seitdem
 - erstens, zweitens, drittens
 - zum Schluss
 - *Häufigkeit und Wiederholung*
 - niemals
 - selten
 - nie
 - manchmal
 - ab und zu
 - oft
 - täglich, jeden Tag
 - morgens, jeden Morgen
 - am Morgen
 - um _____ Uhr
 - *Augenblick und Dauer*
 - früh
 - monate-/jahrelang
2. Modaladverbien
- hoffentlich
 - leider
 - sicherlich
 - vielleicht

3. Lokaladverbien

- da drüben
- dort
- draußen
- drinnen
- überall
- irgendwo
- nirgendwo
- anderswo

4. Andere Möglichkeiten

- meiner Meinung nach
- ich bin der Meinung, dass
- auf jeden/keinen Fall
- einerseits
- andererseits
- außerdem
- deswegen
- aus diesem Grund
- dennoch



Appendix 2

AP Exam Essay Prompts

Reflect on the chapters in your textbook series to ensure that these topics are covered.

#1 (1992) Was bedeutet Freundschaft für Sie? Schreiben Sie über mindestens zwei der folgenden Punkte:

1. Wahre Freundschaft
2. Probleme in einer Freundschaft
3. Freundschaft und Familie

#2 (1993) Was werden Sie in zehn Jahren über Ihre Jugend sagen? Behandeln Sie mindestens zwei der folgenden Punkte:

1. Ein vergessliches Erlebnis
2. Eine einflussreiche Person
3. Ihr Familienleben

#3 (1994) Ein Haustier (zum Beispiel, Hund, Katze, Kanarienvogel) erzählt aus seinem Leben. Es spricht über mindestens drei der folgenden Punkte:

1. Die Menschen
2. Das Alltagsleben
3. Andere Tiere
4. Zukunftspläne
5. Seine Wünsche

#4 (1995) Ein Problem unserer Zeit ist Verschmutzung der Umwelt. Was können wir dagegen tun? Machen Sie Vorschläge und behandeln Sie dabei mindestens zwei der folgenden Aspekte:

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1. Verkehr und Transportmittel
2. Industrie
3. Kosumgesellschaft
4. Regierung

#5 (1996) Sie bewundern eine berühmte Persönlichkeit aus den Bereichen: Musik, Literatur, Film oder Sport. Schreiben Sie über mindestens drei der folgenden Punkte:

1. Die Leistungen
2. Den Charakter
3. Den Einfluss auf Sie
4. Die Meinung Ihrer Freunde

#6 (1997) In alten Geschichten können Menschen sich oft unsichtbar machen. Stellen Sie sich vor, Sie könnten das auch, und niemand könnte Sie sehen. Beantworten Sie in Ihrem Aufsatz die folgenden Fragen.

1. Was würden Sie im Kreise Ihrer Freunde/Familie anders machen?
2. Welche Träume könnten Sie verwirklichen?
3. Welche Probleme hätten Sie?

#7 (1998) Der Weg vom Kind zum Erwachsenen ist nicht immer einfach. Was bedeutet Erwachsenwerden für Sie? Schreiben Sie über Ihre eigenen Erfahrungen. Behandeln Sie dabei mindestens ZWEI der folgenden Punkte:

1. Familie
2. Freizeit
3. Freundschaft
4. Zukunft

#8 (1999) Stellen Sie sich vor, Sie hätten die Möglichkeit, ein Jahr im Ausland zu studieren. Beantworten Sie mindestens drei der folgenden Fragen:

1. Wo möchten Sie studieren und warum eben da?
2. Würden Sie lieber allein oder bei einer Familie wohnen und warum?
3. Was würden Sie in der Freizeit machen?
4. Wie könnten Sie von einer solchen Reise profitieren?

#9 (2000) Wie stellen Sie sich Ihr Leben in der Zukunft vor? Schreiben Sie über mindestens drei der folgenden Punkte:

1. Beruf
2. Freizeit
3. Einfluss der Technik
4. Besondere Wünsche fürs neue Jahrtausend

10 (2001) Unsere Welt ist durch Computer und Telefon anders geworden. Diese Kommunikationsmedien spielen eine immer größere Rolle in unserem Leben. Schreiben Sie über

1. die Rolle, die diese Medien in Ihrem Leben spielen
2. die positiven und negativen Aspekte beim Gebrauch von Computer, Fernsehen und Telefon

#11 (2002) Stadt oder Land: Pro oder Kontra

Wo würden Sie lieber leben—mitten in einer Großstadt oder auf dem Land?

- Geben Sie Gründe für Ihre Meinung
- Besprechen Sie auch mögliche Argumente gegen Ihre Meinung

#12 (2003) Welche von den folgenden Faktoren sind für Sie wichtig, wenn Sie einen Beruf aussuchen?

- Geld zu verdienen
- Spaß bei der Arbeit
- Freizeit zu haben
- anderen Menschen zu helfen
- kreativ zu sein
- Wünsche der Eltern zu erfüllen

Schreiben Sie über mindestens drei der Faktoren, und erklären Sie, warum diese drei Faktoren für Sie wichtig sind.

#13 (2004) Stellen Sie sich vor, Sie sind Filmmacher. Was für einen Film drehen Sie als nächstes Projekt, z.B. eine Komödie oder einen Actionfilm?

Besprechen Sie in Ihrem Aufsatz die folgenden drei Punkte:

- Warum interessieren Sie sich für diesen Filmtyp?
- Für welches Publikum würden Sie diesen Film machen und warum?
- Beschreiben Sie die erste Szene Ihres Filmes

#14 (2005) In vielen Schulen sind Schuluniformen Pflicht. Sie Sie dafür oder dagegen? Begründen Sie Ihre Meinung, und diskutieren Sie auch Gegenargumente dazu.

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#15 (2006) Sie haben die Chance, ein Jahr lang in einem anderen Land zu wohnen. Beantworten Sie die folgenden vier Fragen in Ihrem Aufsatz.

1. Welches Land ist das?
2. Warum möchten Sie dort wohnen?
3. Was möchten Sie in dem Land machen? Erzählen Sie!
4. Wie wäre Ihr Leben dort anders? Beschreiben Sie!

#16 (2007) In den letzten 100 Jahren hat sich das Leben sehr verändert. Vergleichen Sie das tägliche Leben heute mit dem Leben vor 100 Jahren! Ist das Leben heute besser oder schlechter als früher? Geben Sie Beispiele und begründen Sie Ihre Meinung!

Keeping Your Reading Reflections Interesting

German 4H/5AP

Consider reading reflections as your primary way to be thoughtful and creative with the material you read at home. Since you will be writing seven reading reflections over the course of the semester, you may feel yourself slip into a rut or rely on the same approach every time. Once you have written several summarizing reading logs, consider pushing yourself by using any of the other methods. For every approach, you must include a passage from the text. Beyond that, the possibilities have only the limits of your imagination.

It would be outstanding if you could employ higher-level thinking skills (see “Bloom’s Taxonomy”). You need to make observations about the passage and scene, and then apply them to the work as a whole and the “greater truth” in life.

- 1) *Summary*: Using your own vocabulary, condense the main points; omit much of the detail; report the writer’s main ideas and the support
- 2) *Analytic*: This type of response uses a close reading and study of a selected passage to make observations about the work as a whole. The emphasis is analysis, evaluation and reflection.
- 3) *Personal*: This response emphasizes the “I can relate to that” experience. The emphasis is your similar or related experience and what it teaches you about the book (and vice versa).

Creative Writing Approaches

- 4) *Backtalk*. This is your chance to talk back to one of the characters in the story. Begin by identifying where you are entering the story. What would you say to this character? Would you give advice? Would you console her or him? Would you let him or her “have it”?
- 5) *Questions*. Begin with some question you have, something that puzzles you about the text. Then, attempt to answer it for yourself. One approach is deriving as many answers as possible and selecting the most reasonable.
- 6) *Diary*. Become one of the characters. Try to get deep into his or her head. Consider the character’s hopes, questions, thoughts, motivations and passions. Write as the character mimicking his or her voice and speech patterns as much as possible.
- 7) *Poetry*. You may use any of the issues, images, or characters from the work as a starting point. Incorporate poetic techniques such as imagery, metaphors, and any figurative language with which you are comfortable.
- 8) *Monologue*. Write a speech as one of the characters. It may be a speech designed to be delivered to an individual or to a group. Consider the intended audience as well as the character’s motives, objectives, hidden agenda, and feelings.
- 9) *Dialogue*. Have two characters talk to one another in an original dialogue. You may have two characters from the same work talk with one another. Be creative and accurate.
- 10) *Not enough choices*. If you have some other great idea, just run it by me.

All reading reflections should be between 150–200 words, type your logs using the “Lesereflektion-Format.”

Adapted from classroom teachings of Paul Dunlap, Gunn High School

Lesereflektion

Name:

Datum:

Titel des Buches:

Name des Autors:

Seiten gelesen:

A) Vokabeln, die du gern lernen willst!

Wort/Phrase Infinitiv der Verben	Englische Bedeutung	Deutsche Definition	Präsens des Verbes	Imperfekt des Verbes	Partizip des Verbes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

B) Wie schwierig war das Lesen? Welche Strategien hast du beim Lesen benutzt?

C) Lesereflektion (150–200 Wörter)

(Anzahl der Wörter)

AP German Self-Editing Checklist

<p>Title</p> <p>Only nouns capitalized in the title.</p>	
<p>Organization</p>	<p>Did I write a short introduction, a main part, and a conclusion? Are my ideas in the different paragraphs clear and precise?</p>
<p>Sentence variety</p> <p>Idiomatic expressions?</p> <p>Coordinating conjunctions?</p> <p>Subordinating conjunctions?</p> <p>Relative pronouns?</p> <p>Passive voice constructions?</p>	<p>Use sich freuen auf, grenzen an, sehen auf, sprechen über, warten auf, sich wundern über, Angst haben vor.</p> <p>Start sentence with something other than subject. Use a variety of verbs as well.</p>
<p>Word order</p> <p>Inversion in main clause that starts with something other than the subject?</p> <p>Regular after coordinating conjunctions?</p> <p>Conjugated verb last after subordinating conjunctions?</p> <p>Use of modals with infinitive at the end of sentence?</p>	<p>Use als, nachdem, bevor, bis, da, damit, dass, ob, obgleich, obwohl, seitdem, sobald, solange, während, weil, wenn</p>
<p>Comma</p> <p>No comma after adverbs at front</p> <p>Comma before conjunctions and relative pronouns</p>	
<p>Subject-Verb agreement</p> <p>Read just the subject and whole verb of complex sentences.</p>	<p>Watch for singular and plural subjects!</p>
<p>Verb tenses</p> <p>Read the verb complexes of each clause.</p> <p>Check irregular verb forms.</p>	<p>Each clause may have only one verb complex.</p>
<p>Gender/Nouns capitalized?</p>	
<p>Case</p> <p>Direct object? Indirect objects? Objects after prepositions? Genitive constructions?</p>	<p>Masculine changes most often.</p>
<p>Adjectives</p> <p>Do you have any?</p> <p>Check endings!</p>	<p>Use comparative and superlative forms!</p>

SPECIAL FOCUS: Writing

Spelling Check words you are unsure of! Umlauts where they should be?	
Content	Did I address the topic, including all subcategories?
Connecting ideas	Did I use appropriate adverbs?
Vocabulary	Did I use some words that I have learned that stand out? Did I include words that describe a feeling, a smell, or any other sense?

About the Editor

Mary Ashcraft taught high school German for over 25 years in the Cleveland area. She most recently served as Foreign Language Department chair and AP German teacher at Shaker Heights High School. She has been involved with the Advanced Placement Program® since 1994 as a classroom teacher, a College Board consultant, and AP Exam Reader. As an active member of the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG), she served on the Diversity Committee and was elected to the Executive Council in 2004. She is currently the College Board Advisor for AP German, and a part-time instructor of German at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

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SPECIAL FOCUS: Writing

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