

Three-hour Symposium:
Researching advanced L2 writing: Theoretical, methodological, and empirical issues
 15th World Congress of the Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée
 (AILA), Essen, Germany, August 2008

Summary of symposium

Responding to recent interest in advanced L2 abilities, the symposium considers meaning- and choice-oriented theoretical frameworks, expanded methodological tools, and text-based research categories and constructs. After an introductory paper addressing challenges of annotation in corpus-linguistic work with learner language, empirical research on instructed and mixed instructed-naturalistic L2 German learner writing traces evolving forms of the expression of causality through the use of connectors, shifting intra-clausal and interclausal resources as a way of “objectifying” meaning, and the use of nominalization in sentence-initial position, one form of grammatical metaphor, as a way of creating textual coherence. Cross-sectional and longitudinal data are presented.

Presentation 3: The clausal manifestation of L2-German advancedness: A functionally oriented longitudinal study (Hiram H. Maxim & Lone Petersen)

Abstract

Competent L2 writing has been described in the research in terms of an increasing incidence, variety, and length of clauses within independent sentences or T-units; a countervailing compactness and tightness with reduced numbers of clauses even as clause length expands; and various interrelationships between syntactic realizations of texts (e.g., paratactic, hypotactic, and embedded clauses) and the genres they represent. These partly contradictory features are typically related to the fact that “advancedness” is both a notoriously vague term and a developmental stage that is considerably more expansive than are introductory and intermediate levels of L2 performance and development.

To contribute to a more differentiated understanding of advancedness, particularly its gradual development in instructed settings, this paper examines these proposed characteristics of advanced writing through an analysis of data that are

- ❖ longitudinal, rather than cross-sectional, and span a time period that can be assumed to be meaningful for the gradual development of advancedness (approximately 150 hours of instruction across three consecutive curricular levels of a U.S. undergraduate German program)
- ❖ embedded in an instructional environment that has implemented principled, articulated curricular and pedagogical practices for the development of advancedness;
- ❖ analyzed within a systemic functional linguistic framework in order to focus on the central notions of experiential and logical meaning, and the analytical categories used to describe the transitivity system within simplex clauses (e.g., processes and circumstances) and the logico-semantic system in clause

complexes, which enables the construction of diverse logical relations for experiences.

By analyzing the intraclausal and interclausal resources evolving advanced learners use and by relating them to the learners' developmental trajectory, the paper aims to contribute to a better understanding not only of the nature of advancedness but also of its development by adult instructed learners.