May 2005, Volume 9, Number 2
pp. 64-89

"MISSED" COMMUNICATION IN ONLINE COMMUNICATION: TENSIONS IN A GERMAN-AMERICAN TELECOLLABORATION

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This qualitative study explores the factors that contributed to limited interactional involvement in a telecollaborative project linking two groups of participants: 12 advanced-level students of English in northeastern Germany and 9 advanced-level students of German in the southwestern United States. Drawing on data from online transcripts, interviews, and questionnaires, I examine the tensions that arise when students' attempts at communicating online result in missed opportunities for engaging with their online partners. I report on the results of a discourse analysis of the online transcripts and rely on extensive interview and survey data to examine which factors made it difficult for students to maintain sustained interpersonal involvement in the online discourse. I document three main contextual tensions that arose from the different socially and culturally situated attitudes, beliefs, and expectations that informed students' communicative choices in the online discourse. I address the pedagogical implications of each of these three tensions. The findings suggest that research needs to focus not only on how students jointly construct online discourse, but how they co-construe the context for their participation. The paper concludes by addressing the implications of these findings for future research promoting language and culture learning online.

Recent research has consistently documented how telecollaboration, a form of network-based language teaching that links students using Internet-mediated communication tools, can be used as a viable classroom alternative for meeting a range of pedagogical goals. For promoting communicative competence, telecollaboration can increase student motivation and promote greater target language output (Beauvois, 1998; Kelm, 1996; Kern, 1995, 1996; Meagher & Castaños, 1996; Toyoda & Harrison, 2002; Warschauer, 1996a, 1996b, 1998). Research addressing cultural and social issues has explored the potential for international online encounters to promote greater cultural awareness (Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet, 2001; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002; Warschauer, 1999) and intercultural competence (Belz, 2003; Brammerts, 1995; Müller-Hartmann, 2000; O'Dowd, 2003).

Attention has recently turned, however, to documenting the tensions that can arise in these international language-learning partnerships. Students have been found, for example, to engage in polarized discussions about cultural values (O'Dowd, 2003). Misunderstandings online are often difficult to resolve because of differences in social and institutional dimensions of online learning (Belz, 2001, 2003). Students and teachers must negotiate different, culturally contingent understandings of the purpose of online discussions (Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002), and the online medium itself supports a range of avoidance strategies that would not otherwise be available to students communicating face to face (Ware, 2003). In short, research has shown that telecollaboration does not automatically promote the kinds of language learning that educators often anticipate (Kramsch & Thorne, 2002).

In this qualitative study, I contribute to recent work on the tensions that can occur in telecollaboration by examining factors that contribute to limited interaction among foreign language students in a German and American telecollaborative project. In particular, this project complements the recent work of Julie Belz (2001, 2003), whose focus on the institutional and individual dimensions of telecollaborative partnerships has provided evidence of factors that contribute to "high group functionality" (2001, p. 216) and "low group functionality" (p. 220) among American and German foreign language students. She found three

factors that appeared to contribute to how "low group functionality" unfolds at the micro-interactional level: a) differences in how each culture values the study of foreign languages; b) diversity of prior experiences with electronic communication; and c) institutional differences in how foreign languages are taught at each participating site. In a later article, Belz (2003) provided linguistic evidence for factors leading to miscommunication, including culturally contingent differences in conversational style, in appraisal patterns, and in the use of language-specific features for indexing of speaker attitude.

This article focuses specifically on the tensions that arise in groups that exhibited low functionality in a telecollaborative project between students in former East Germany and students in Texas. I draw on discourse analysis tools within a qualitative framework to demonstrate how students in these low functioning groups co-construct their interactions in ways that negatively contribute to the unfolding of online discourse. In this respect, the study extends Belz's (2001, 2003) work in three significant ways. First, whereas the German students in Belz's studies had less ease of access to technology than their American partners, in this study German students were provided with two free hours of Internet access each day to complete their assignments. Second, usage norms for online communication differed in unanticipated ways from those previously documented. Finally, my findings draw more extensively on student evaluations of the exchange through interview data elicited from face-to-face interviews with students on both sides of the exchange.

FROM CO-CONSTRUCTION OF ONLINE DISCOURSE TO CO-CONSTRUAL OF THE ONLINE CONTEXT

In a sociocultural view of online communication (Belz, 2002; Kinginger, Gourves-Hayward, & Simpson, 1999; Lee, 2004; Warschauer, 1999), social interaction is co-constructed, such that discourse is the "joint creation of a form, interpretation, stance, action, activity, identity, institution, skill, ideology, emotion, or other culturally meaningful reality" (Jacoby & Ochs, 1995, p. 171). Such jointly constructed interactions unfold between interlocutors through verbal speech, or between correspondents through written interactions. In both modes -- oral and written communication -- the exchange of words takes place at two levels of context: the context of situation and the context of culture (cf. Kramsch, 1993). In the context of situation, people are primarily concerned with grasping the immediate meanings, motives, and directionality of the words. These words and beliefs are intimately linked to a larger context of culture that provides speakers or writers with a framework for interpreting and acting upon the immediate context of situation. Social interaction, taking place within both layers of context, includes not just the exchange of words, but the exchange of words-as-actions.

What people say or write is an act of communication that is always oriented toward particular addressees (Bakhtin, 1981; Voloshinov, 1973), contingent on the affordances of their learning environment (Lantolf, 2000; van Lier, 2000), and partially governed by social practices. In the unfolding of social interaction that takes place online, what participants write to one another indexes their position within a situational context in which they must make sense of words without many of the non-verbal cues that often accompany face-to-face interaction. To help interpret the words on the screen, writers draw on expectations about communication norms and processes that have been formed across a personal history of other culturally conditioned experiences with communication. They use the immediate contexualization cues (Gumperz, 1982) in the context of situation -- that of reading and responding to the words on the screen -- to help them interpret the meaning in light of their context of culture, what they know from shared cultural experience about social expectations and interpretive norms.

To understand what is meant by the "missed" opportunities for communication in the telecollaborative project reported here, it is helpful to start by outlining how successful communication has been defined in other studies of online exchanges. First, telecollaboration appears to be a viable way to promote co-construction of online discourse. Whereas instructors have had to rely mainly on decontextualized textbook presentations of the target language and culture, the Internet provides for the enrichment of

traditional print materials (Breindl, 1997; Richter, 1998) and allows for the creation of meaningful, rich forums for interaction in which students have personal interactions (Brammerts, 1996; Kern & Warschauer, 2000; Warschauer, 1999). Such online discussions serve as a forum for eliciting a wide range of discourse functions (Belz & Kinginger, 2003; Blake, 2000; Pellettieri, 2000; Sotillo, 2000) and produce a database of interactional language that can be used for in-class discussions (Sengupta, 2001).

Second, a recent interest in the development of intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Byram & Zarate, 1994) through telecollaboration has led to studies that document the viability of telecollaboration for promoting intercultural learning. O'Dowd (2003), for example, in an exchange between British and Spanish students, used Byram's (1997) model of intercultural competence to document features of e-mail correspondence that fostered "interculturally rich" (p. 138) relationships, including sensitivity to the sociopragmatic rules of their partner's native language, willingness to share personal opinions, attempts to establish personal relationships beyond the academic tasks, abilities in asking questions that elicited responses, and awareness of when and how to react to their partners' requests and interests.

Belz (2003) also used Byram's theoretical model, with an emphasis on the attitudes component, to analyze data between German and American students. She provided a linguistically grounded analysis of what successful intercultural competence might look like in a telecollaborative project by analyzing student messages using a range of discourse analytic tools including rates of positive and negative appraisal, epistemic modality, and question types. She offered insight into what online intercultural learning might look like linguistically; learners should not simply mirror or parrot the interactional "norms" of their language partners, but rather "become aware of the existence and, most importantly, the meaning of the pattern" (p. 91). These discourse patterns, she suggests, are "integral components of sociolinguistic and interactional competence ... and the speaker who is unaware of them will suffer the interactional consequences" (p. 92). Ultimately, what is hoped for in such intercultural online exchanges is a developing ability on the part of students to take an intercultural stance (Kramsch, 1999; Ware & Kramsch, in press), from which they willingly engage in an exploration of difference, not just in an assumption of similarity, and from which they develop a decentered perspective that invites them to go beyond the meaning of words into the culturally situated logic that informs them.

While these studies collectively demonstrate the possibilities for a wide range of communication opportunities for students in online intercultural exchanges, students do not always engage at this deeper level of online interaction (Belz 2001, 2003; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002; O'Dowd, 2003; Ware & Kramsch, in press). Successful online communication requires that students sustain their engagement in intercultural interaction across at least several weeks or longer. As Wong (2000) suggests, for native and non-native speakers engaged in interaction of any kind, the possibility for miscommunication is already amplified, and therefore many learners choose strategies that "aim at averting, avoiding, or correcting miscommunication and misunderstanding in the talk" (p. 244). In the virtual world, language learners' aversion to *mis*communication can lead them to avert other kinds of positive learning interactions, including the potential for gradual development of intercultural competence. As the data in this project demonstrate, the turn-by-turn unfolding of discourse reveals that many students avoided directly engaging with their online partners. This avoidance strategy, while potentially helpful for saving face, can lead to "missed" communication, or missed opportunities for approximating the kind of rich, meaningful intercultural learning that instructors often intend with telecollaborative projects.

This study focuses on how students' communicative choices online can lead to a lack of communication despite their self-reported interest in maintaining and deepening their cross-linguistic and cross-cultural interactions. I begin by extending Belz's (2001) notion of low group functionality to include the construct of missed communication. Using a linguistically grounded analysis of the written transcripts of discussions among 9 students of German in the southwestern United States and 12 students of English in northeastern Germany, I show how the use of questions and personal pronouns provides a lens for identifying missed communication online. I then turn to interview and survey data to examine what

factors inform this lack of communicative convergence. The analysis results in three areas of tension: a) different expectations and norms for telecollaboration; b) social and institutional factors that shape tensions; and c) individual differences in motivation and use of time. I conclude by addressing the pedagogical implications of each of these three tensions.

METHODOLOGY

This study is guided by three overarching research questions:

1) What general views of technology and communication inform students' interactions in an international telecollaborative exchange?
2) How might the social and institutional settings in which telecollaboration takes place influence the communicative and interpretive choices that individuals make online?
3) How might the findings of this study extend current pedagogical knowledge about telecollaborative projects?

In answering these questions, I developed a classroom-based, qualitative study that linked 12 university students learning English in northeastern Germany and 9 university students learning German in the southwestern United States in an online exchange in which they wrote in both English and German.[1] The choice to write in both languages was informed by current work in telecollaborative partnerships in which students write in both languages (see Belz, 2003; Furstenberg, et al., 2001; O'Dowd, 2003). From sociocultural and sociocognitive perspectives, writing produced in one's home language serves as one among many layers of cultural material that can be used to offer a window on the logic of another person's thoughts and beliefs.

The American students were enrolled in an upper-division German course, and all 9 had chosen German as either a major or minor. The German students were pursuing a newly created Bachelor of Arts degree and chose to attend the voluntary 3-week intensive English course because they believed that proficiency in English was an essential part of their later job marketability. Linguistic proficiency in both groups was relatively even. Most of the American students had not been studying German as long (4-6 years) as their German peers had been learning English (7-8 years). All of the American students had lived for varying lengths of time (6 months to 2 years) in a German-speaking country, whereas fewer than half of the German participants had lived in an English-speaking country.[2]

The study took place over the course of one semester, and the online exchange took place for a 3-week period in March. Using Blackboard, a Web-based interface that allows for asynchronous (delayed time) discussions, students were assigned to five groups of 3-5 partners to discuss texts related to the course topic of language in the media with a focus on current events and media (see Appendix A for a summary of discussion prompts). Students were encouraged to read the postings in other groups, but were only required to participate online within their own assigned group. Students were asked to alternate between their native and target languages with each assignment.

Drawing on interactional transcripts, interviews, and pre- and post-exchange questionnaires, I examined which factors contributed to students' ability to co-construe a context of situation that supported (or hindered) cross-cultural interactions online. I conducted interviews with participants at both sites. The interviews (see Appendix B) followed a semi-structured protocol (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Both groups of students responded to parallel pre- and post-questionnaires (see Appendix C for an English version of the pre-questionnaire).

Table 1. Data Collection and Analysis

Phase	Researcher role	Data Type	Analysis[3]
I January-February	Participant Observer (U.S. classroom)	9 pre-exchange questionnaires 9 face-to-face student interviews 8 classroom observations	Triangulating evidence: 1) background information, 2) open and axial coding of emerging themes using acts and stances
II March	Teacher Researcher (German classroom)	12 face-to-face student interviews 167 pages of online transcripts 2 focal group interviews	Discourse analysis: 1) question types, 2) personal pronoun deixis, 3) topic development, 4) frequency and length of interactions; Triangulating evidence
III April	Participant Observer (U.S. classroom)	8 face-to-face student interviews[4] 4 classroom observations 9 post-questionnaires	Triangulating evidence: 1) background information, 2) member checks, 3) thematic coding with acts and stances

I did a hybrid of qualitative participatory research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Strauss, 1987) and teacher research (Wallace, 1998; Warschauer, 1999) by positioning myself as a participant observer on the American side of the exchange and as a teacher researcher on the German side of the exchange. Before the exchange began in January and February, I was a participant observer in the United States in an upper-division German course, which was taught by a professor of German. I worked closely with the collaborating instructor to develop the course assignments for the 3-week exchange component of the course[5] and to troubleshoot problems with technology, but I was not in the position of an instructor for the American students. During those 2 months, I conducted classroom observations and interviewed each of the 9 students enrolled in the German course. In March, I flew to Germany to teach the intensive English course that took place across a 3-week time period. During this time, my role was that of a teacher researcher, while the German professor continued to work with the students in the United States. Each day across the 3-week period of the exchange, I taught for 4 hours, then interviewed students, and ended the days by writing my observational fieldnotes. During this period, all classroom sessions with the American students were tape-recorded to provide triangulating evidence for analysis. In April, I returned to the United States to conduct follow-up class observations and post-interviews with the American students.

To triangulate my findings with how students perceived and evaluated the online exchange, I analyzed interview data using the notions of "acts" and "stances" (Ochs 1990, 1993). Acts are social performances similar to the notion of speech acts (Searle, 1970), such as interrupting, asking a question, or apologizing. Stances are demonstrations of attitudes or points of view that are socially recognized (Biber & Finnegan, 1989; Ochs & Schiefflin, 1989). They include such markers as epistemic modality, or the certainty or uncertainty of a statement, as well as affective stances of emotion or involvement (Besnier, 1990; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1989). In follow-up interviews with the American students, and with focal group interviews with German students in late March, I invited students to interpret excerpts from their online discussions to provide triangulating evidence.

The results of the analyses are presented as a series of three overarching tensions in the findings section. These tensions became manifest in the communicative choices that students made online, often in choices that reflected limited interactional involvement. To provide a lens for viewing each of these three tensions in turn, the first part of the findings section illustrates the concept of missed communication.

FINDINGS

> Hey you guys, me (Anna) and Nina are with you in a group, as you probably already know! By now, we have some information about you, Sara. You are from France, right? That's kind of cool. What about you Andrew? --Anna,[6] student in Germany
>
> *Ja, ich bin Französin. Wenn Du mehr über mich wissen möchtest, kannst Du meine Webseite angucken. (Paige hat die Adresse.) Hier ist meine Aufgabe für Mittwoch.*
> [Yes, I am French. If you want to know more about me, you can look at my Web site (Paige has the address.) Here is my assignment for Wednesday.] --Sara, student in the United States

These two excerpts, taken from the first week of online writing, provide an illustration of how missed communication online might begin. The difference in conversational tone established by Anna and Sara on the first day of the online exchange is striking. Anna displayed her enthusiasm for the project and writes a message marked by an informal term of address, exclamatory sentences, and personal questions. In contrast, the message posted by Sara was much more task-oriented, as she redirected Anna's request for personal information and turned immediately to the assignment. In a later interview, Anna described her reaction as feeling brushed aside by this initial response, and in her subsequent online reply to Sara, she shifted to a more formal tone. Sara, however, whose own experiences with online writing were informed by different norms of Internet etiquette, abides by growing conventions of Internet chat, in which individuals "invite" others to learn about them through their Web sites. It was clear from follow up interviews that she did not intend to come across as dismissive.

This brief episode illustrates a subtle way in which both students' assumptions about the nature of online writing must be negotiated as they work to develop a compatible online relationship. In their group, Anna and Sara were able to develop a rapport characterized not by the personal chattiness Anna used early on, but by the task-oriented, yet interested, orientation that Sara introduced. However, in this study many of the students were not as able to negotiate these unwritten assumptions about online communication. Using the results of a discourse analysis of their transcripts, I briefly illustrate this limited involvement by highlighting students' use of personal pronouns and questions.

One plausible way of establishing social alignment in online writing is through the use of personal pronoun deixis, with a greater frequency of using second person pronouns viewed as a display of interpersonal interest. Deixis is a way to refer to something usually outside of the immediate here-and-now of the linguistic interaction, such as location, time, or speakers (Loos, Anderson, Day, Jordan, & Wingate, 1999). Social deixis, in particular, also provides a way to index one's status within a social structure. In German, for example, the formal pronoun *Sie* can index power and distance, whereas *Du* can index solidarity and closeness. English has lost the pronoun distinction (thou), but speakers can use names and titles to accomplish some of the social positioning. Table 2 displays the use of second person pronouns across all five groups. It is noteworthy that the *Sie* form of address was not used by any of the students.

Table 2. Number of Uses of Second Person Pronouns in Student Writing by Group

	Students in Germany	Students in the US
Group 1	77	13
Group 2	98	9
Group 3	50	9
Group 4	95	34
Group 5	64	44
Total	384	109

The German students used second person pronouns three times as frequently as their peers in the American classroom. In Group 5, the group characterized as "high functioning," there was a more balanced use of *Du* and *you*. One would have expected students to use personal pronoun deixis in relatively equal ways to align themselves with one another and index a degree of closeness, particularly since all students invoked the *Du* form of address when writing in German. It remains unclear whether the use of personal pronoun deixis provides, in and of itself, a reliable measure of students' attempts at establishing social alignment.[7] Nonetheless, the absence of second person pronouns did not go unnoticed by many of the German students, who felt that their peers "only wrote in response to the assignments" (Inma, interview). The absence of particular *verbal* contextualization cues such as social deixis is perhaps more notable in a medium that does not readily provide the means for non-verbal cues such as gestures, tone, or inflection.

Questions can function to situate students and their partners in particular communicative roles: information-seekers, information-givers, and cultural informants (Belz, 2003; Schiffrin, 1994). Table 3 compiles the descriptive results of a tabulation of the number of questions students posed to their online partners.

Table 3. Number of Questions Posed by Online Partners by Group

	Students in Germany	Students in the US
Group 1	6	5
Group 2	37	0
Group 3	13	3
Group 4	50	17
Group 5	10	10
Total	116	35

The results show a striking imbalance in how students on each side of the exchange used questioning as an interactional strategy, with the exception again of group 5, which was evenly balanced. The students in Germany posed questions with three times the frequency of their online peers. This lopsided involvement led to frustration on the part of many German students, who reported that their partners had little interest in them or in jointly pursuing topics.

These two examples reflect an involvement trend in the telecollaborative project. With such different approaches to the online writing, students are likely to miss out on opportunities to engage in the kind of cultural interactions that language instructors intend telecollaboration to provide. To help explain students' inability to co-construe their online relationship in ways that promoted greater interaction, I turn to the three tensions that emerged from qualitative analyses of student interviews and questionnaires.

Tension 1: Different Expectations and Norms for Telecollaboration

Differences in Expectations. In their interviews and questionnaires, the German students reported being extremely pleased to use instructional technology in their English course. None of the students had used any form of technology in the language classroom except a proficiency placement exam. Bates (1995) characterizes individuals' experiences with technology on a continuum that begins with an early stage of "awe and high expectations" (p. 227). The German students could be characterized by this stage. They embraced technology as "always good" (Heiko, interview), as something that "simply has to be there" (Marie, interview), that is inherently "relevant" (Anna, interview), and that should be incorporated into every subject. They saw Blackboard as an inherently beneficial vehicle for interacting with speakers of English.

In contrast, questionnaire data showed that students in the American class had significant experience using technology in the classroom. They wanted technology to meet very specific learning goals, not

simply to provide them with native speaker contact. Prior to this course, they had used a range of Blackboard technology in other university-level coursework, from public bulletin boards to assignments carried out in synchronous chat environments. Under the pressures and commitments common to university students juggling a variety of academic and social obligations, many viewed the virtual encounter as an academic task:

> Like, I have to get on line again, because you know most of us have got computers at home, you know, the thrill wasn't there .... and most of us have traveled in another country before. So I'm gonna talk to another German -- you know? It didn't strike us as being that out of the ordinary. I think we're jaded. Quite frankly. (Ned, interview)

> I mean it's cool that they had pictures to take and all -- but nobody really cares about that -- I mean I know they had a great time because everybody just sent all these pictures out. (Andrew, interview)

> I'm a professional at this game ... of school .... I didn't feel any more motivated to chat with the Germans when I did my assignments. It's fine. It's what you're here for. Just do it. (Matt, interview)

Belz (2001) hypothesized that American students tend to have more opportunities to engage in electronic discourse communities and therefore "might view the telecollaborative partnership as an expansion of their already prolific electronically-mediated activities to include German" (p. 227). As these comments suggest, several of the American students in this project not only viewed the partnership as an additional activity, they saw it as relatively mundane. As Ned suggested, virtual encounters simply did not have the same "thrill" for them that he supposed it did for his German partners.

Differences in interactional purpose. Interview data further illustrate striking differences of opinion in students' expectations of the purposes of telecollaboration. In the syllabus, the students were told before the onset of the exchange that the instructors expected them "to increase opportunities for interacting cross-culturally and to jointly analyze texts from different sources in an attempt to develop better intercultural understanding of how opinions and interpretations are guided by cultural attitudes, values, and belief systems." Students interpreted the instructors' purposes differently. For example, Peter, a student in Germany, viewed the online component primarily as a way to connect personally:

> When I saw that we would be using the Internet and have students in the US where we could write, I was really excited ... Those are two different cultures, and about different topics, they have totally different opinions, so this is pretty interesting -- yeah, just to share experiences and opinions -- that's really interesting. (Peter, interview)

Andrew, on the other hand, saw the telecollaboration as an efficient way of meeting his academically-oriented goals of his German course:

> This is the chance to practice your grammar, practice your writing, without it being such a dead-set grade. This is a chance to use [German] a lot more and see what your mistakes are when you just start popping it out. When you just write, you can look at it, and see what mistakes you've made, then after you **think** you've corrected it, you can send it and see what mistakes you've made. (Andrew, interview)

Andrew viewed his online partners more as electronic tutors who could provide him feedback on his German grammar, not as potential same-aged peers who could afford him different cultural perspectives.[8] These two diverging attitudes were played out in the students' online writing. Peter's first message to his group included personal markers such as formulaic greetings and closures and the use of the informal "*Du*" form of personal pronoun address:

> *Guten Morgen! Hier die Umfragen Auswertung! ... Mein Freund Ulrich schreibt Dir gerade die positiven Umfrage Ergebnisse und ich habe die Aufgabe Dir nun die negativen, oder besser gesagt die unterschiedlichen Meinungen der verschiedenen Studenten näher zu bringen. ... Hoffe bald von Dir zu hören! Tschööö Peter*
> [Good morning! Now for the analysis of the survey! My friend Ulrich is writing you the positive survey results, and I've got the task of showing you more closely you the negative, or better said, the different opinions of various students... Hope to hear from you soon! See ya!] (Peter, March 5 posting)

Andrew's, however, contained none of these markers and was instead directed immediately at the assignment without framing his posting as an interpersonal conversational move:

> Here is my list of ten consequences of September 11 .... It is actually very interesting to read articles from two very different perspectives on September 11. It was at first obvious that the English article focused mainly on emotions and used specific examples... The German article focused more on tangible effects of the tragedy. (Andrew, March 5 posting)

Differences in Using Linguistic Conventions. Students further differed in how they viewed abbreviated spelling, inattention to grammatical form, and colloquial language, which often characterize informal Internet communication. In their post-questionnaires, students on both sides unanimously agreed that their interactions had not provided much help in improving their linguistic accuracy. Some students attributed this failure to attend to conventional grammar and punctuation rules:

> The German students were sloppy in the way they write. I'm very rigorous about it. If I don't know something -- a name, der, die, das -- I will check in the dictionary before writing something. I wouldn't say, "It doesn't matter." Maybe because of the type of medium we use -- on the Internet, nobody cares. (Sara, interview)

In her own writing, Sara carefully attended to form and accuracy, as well as to the communicative import of the message. Her disparaging term "sloppy" to describe her partners' online writing echoes the concerns and frustrations of more traditional educators who view the unique language of the Internet as a diluted form of a supposed "standard" national language.

For many advocates of Internet-based writing, however, the lack of capitalization and the different punctuation patterns of online writing represent an emerging and legitimate genre of Internet writing (see Crystal, 2001; Herring, 2001). Sara's context of culture, in this case, frames her social expectation that people should care about formal linguistic features when writing, regardless of the medium, but it would seem that the context of culture in which the majority of her peers operate -- at least regarding punctuation and capitalization norms -- is informed by different belief systems about the genre of Internet writing. When asked to comment on these transcripts for data triangulation, for example, Ruth, in the American class, accepts the writing and attributes the punctuation and capitalization features to the tendency for online writing to reflect "spoken" language:

> I think a lot of that had to do with time, because people aren't going to resort to their dictionaries for every single article... -- is this feminine? Neuter? You take to writing the way you would speak. I think in the email and discussion groups, people resort to the spoken word not the written form .... I thought [this kind of writing] was on both -- I think there were students here who said, hey, do you want accuracy or do you want us to do it? [Laughs] I heard that comment one time. So, I guess it's the level that people are willing to work at. (Ruth, interview)

In addition to viewing online writing as more akin to oral language, Ruth also pointed out that the tendency to compose messages more informally is tied together with choices about how to make use of time.

Tension 2: Social and Institutional Factors that Shape Tensions

Social Factors. Students in Germany viewed learning English as a necessity for helping them obtain access to a lingua franca that promised access to better jobs and that provided social mobility within the new European Union. They frequently made reference to English as the world language, and indicated that with the Internet they could easily access information about other cultures and communicate across a variety of language barriers:

> And so I think ... that English is still *the* language, because you find it everywhere in the world -- where you can understand it, of course -- and I think it's cool, because it would get pretty hard somehow, if you go to Brazil, for example, and they can't speak German and you can't speak Portuguese. (Anna, interview, in the German class)

> [I like] that I can communicate with almost every person from all over the world -- it doesn't matter where you go -- if you go to Spain, you speak English and they speak English. (Peter, interview, in the German class)

Both Peter and Anna echoed a version of current discourses of mobility and globalization (Cameron, 2000) that leave unexamined the assumption that English is "the" language for communication around the world. Situated in a country in which students of higher education are encouraged through scholarships and educational programs to study abroad and travel, Peter and Anna were quick to point out the value of speaking this lingua franca.

Anna also pointed out that simply knowing English well is not enough to achieve a competitive advantage. She attributed this to the increasing numbers of people in Europe who are fluent in English and suggests, "English is practically the norm because so many people know it. So you're not special anymore" (interview). Questionnaire data corroborate her view. In the German class, all students had experience studying a third or fourth foreign language. French was studied by 88% percent of the students, Russian by 29%, Latin by 6%, and Finnish by 6% of the students. The students had begun English instruction in the fifth grade[9] and, as Anna suggested, knowing at least one foreign language well is the norm for university students.

In contrast, the study of foreign languages in the United States is generally promoted only at the high school and college levels and opens a range of travel and study abroad options.[9] Spanish, not German, is more likely to be the foreign language that has currency in American education because of immigration patterns and the growing marketability of Spanish in business and advertising. However, for students in the American class, the limited social valuation of German as a foreign language was not viewed as negative. Rather, learning German afforded them unique status. For example, Ned explained that his choice to study German in college was in part because "nobody takes that" (interview). Other students expressed frustration that many of their peers had a limited understanding of the purpose behind pursuing a foreign language:

> And everybody asks you -- you meet someone, you get their name, and they ask you, "What's your major," you say, "German,' and they ask, "What are you going to do with that?" ... so it's like, "Oh, you're going to be a German teacher." Well, maybe -- but that's not my hope. (John, interview, American class)

John's description of his peers is unsurprising since the study of foreign languages in the United States poses, as Bernhardt (1998) suggests, a "tension between the traditional, humanities-based, reading-oriented study of belles lettres and views advocating functionality and oral proficiency" (p. 51). For many students, learning a language such as Spanish, which is widely spoken in the U.S. southwest, is often directed toward communicative functionality and proficiency, whereas the study of German is often viewed as an end-point in itself, pursued for its own sake as part of a humanities-based course of study.

Institutional Factors. Belz (2001) discusses the impact of "institutionalized classroom scripts" (p. 227) on the functionality of student discussion groups. Her findings reveal that "based on culture-specific differences in the structure of US and German university-level classroom scripts, German students are not socialized to orient to evaluation scenes within individual courses in the same way that Americans are" (p. 228). In this study, attitudes toward performance assessment marked the most salient difference in these institutionalized classroom scripts.

Students in the American class overwhelmingly cited grades as one of the primary motivations for their participation in the telecollaboration, whereas their German partners showed no interest in grades, only in making interpersonal contact:

> I love learning, but all the deadlines -- it really makes it a headache ... if you want me to do it, you have to make an assignment and give me a grade for it. It's one of those things -- it's a form of motivation. (Cecil, American class, interview)

In his post-exchange interview, Matt in the American class suggested that future online exchanges move beyond a participation grade and toward more clearly established grading criteria: "You could base it more on grades. That's what a lot of people care about" (interview). Echoing this suggestion, John added the rationale: "because it's always about what's due because we're worried about grades" (interview).

Cecil, in the American class, acknowledged that telecollaborative interactions were difficult to evaluate using traditional assessment criteria. He was most interested in just doing what was needed to perform German academically by doing "the nitty-gritty, what can bring the German the farthest, what's getting the most bang out of our buck, and Blackboard and these videos aren't so much" (interview). His desire to streamline language learning echoes a utilitarian discourse (Scollon & Scollon, 1995) that values those activities that efficiently meet criteria deemed adequate by traditional academic evaluations. This discourse draws on a language of expediency and efficiency that highlights the benefits of immediacy and of cost-effective accessibility.

Citing grades as the impetus, students in the American class tended either to skim through the responses or to read selectively and to justify their limited participation based on what was explicitly required. They meted out their time in proportion to the weight their participation carried with their grades:

> I don't think we were really interacting with them, because we weren't required to read what they wrote, and I don't think they were required to read what we wrote, so it was kind of like just doing the assignment, that's it, there wasn't too much commentary on what they wrote. (Matt, interview)

In contrast, the German students were socialized into an academic system that evaluates students based on their performance on high-stakes exams that typically occur outside of the formal classroom. As a consequence, students in this study were perplexed by the concern for grades exhibited by their American peers. They themselves had voluntarily chosen to use their vacation time during the winter break to pursue a foreign language without the structured environment of a formal grading system.

As Stefan and Maren explained, the motivation for learning is intrinsic to their personal desire to improve, not to the extrinsic motivation of grades:

> Everybody from us is here in a voluntary way and we want to improve our English. We don't have to do this .... You choose that and you have to know that you have to do a lot of writing and speeching to other people; if you don't want it, you to don't have to. And so everybody who wants to improve -- it's the best way to improve. (Stefan, interview)
>
> During the intensive course, I really wanted to do something from this, and at home I sat down, wrote something, did something, did the homework, and normally .... during these three weeks, I really wanted to. (Maren, interview)

Tension 3: Individual Differences in Motivation and Use of Time

Differences in Motivation. Students in the American class, without a social imperative to become bilingual, generally cited personal reasons for pursuing the study of German, whereas most of the German students agreed that learning English was simply a necessity. Brad, in the American class, described his choice as motivated by intrinsic enjoyment: "I just love the language. I don't know -- I have this passion for the language." John, also American, indicated that his choice to continue studying German in college stemmed from doing well in high school and wanting to pursue something he had started: "It interested me. I'd done all these competitions and stuff, and I'd done pretty well, so I decided to study German." As a journalism student, Ned attributed his choice to a desire for greater academic status that would "make it look like I had actually studied something while I was at college" (interview).

One might anticipate that the American students, having chosen to continue their study of a foreign language despite its social currency, would have been actively involved in the interactions with native German speakers. One might also posit that the German students would be equally eager to interact, given the social imperative to learn English. When asked to self-evaluate their experiences of the language exchange, however, students were strikingly unanimous in judging the German student involvement as higher.

> I thought the German students were very into it. That's the impression I got. They were there, and ready to go. I don't know that we always were, looking at the times we posted -- my own involvement, time constraints. (Ruth, American, interview)
>
> I guess the Germans were surprisingly open. They were really enthusiastic about it, and on our side, we were kind of unenthusiastic about it. I wasn't so much surprised that the Germans were so enthusiastic, but I was surprised by how ambivalent we were towards it on our part, because everybody was like -- it just seemed like a chore for everyone. (Ned, American, interview)
>
> You always wrote a lot which I thaught was awesome but it was only about the assignments. What do you think about that. I'm excited to read your thaughts tomorrow. (Nina, German student, March 20 posting)

Students in the American class offered reasons for this lopsided involvement. Ned, surprised at how unenthusiastic he and his classmates were, suggested that the writing had turned into a "chore" for them because of the time commitment. In a similar vein, Ruth attributed their limited involvement to the time pressures they were under. Unlike the German students who were voluntarily attending class during the winter break, Ruth, Ned, and their peers had multiple courses to balance and felt more constrained by both the institutional demands and time constraints of the regular semester.

Differences in Use of Time. A difference in how students allocated time to participate in the exchange was a constant source of tension. In an attempt to head off a potential source of tension arising from a lack of Internet access and cost of access that Belz (2001) found to be problematic for the German students in her study, I organized up to two hours a day for the German participants to access the Internet at no cost. Even though American students had 24-hour access to computers on campus, and all had home access, they reported in their post-questionnaires that they had allocated little time to participation.

German students voiced disappointment with the limited amount of time the American students invested in the project. Marie captured this sentiment in her interview, echoing the writing of one of her discussion group partners: "I have learned that the Americans have no time. 'Sorry, I have no time. I have no time'" (interview). Both of Marie's American partners repeatedly apologized for posting short messages because they had no time:

> OK--Howdy, Now I am writing in English so it should not take any time at all. (John, March 5 posting)

> I am not sure I will be able to hold an interesting discussion today because I have had a very bad and long day and have a lot of work to do. (Rob, March 5 posting)
>
> *OK, tut mir leid, muss kurz sein, hab' wenig Zeit, fahre gleich weg...*
> [OK, I'm sorry, it's gotta be short, have very little time, leaving soon...] (Rob, March 8 posting)
>
> *Ich merke alles nicht, denn ich hab wenige Zeit.*
> [I don't notice everything because I don't have much time.] (John, March 19 posting)

In their messages, both John and Rob apologize for not having much time to write. Before the exchange began, they anticipated that participation would not take much time and they could "just shoot something out, and [the German students] can come back to you with something else. It doesn't take a lot of time. You can sit down and in two minutes you can write a reply to something they have" (Andrew, interview). At the end of the exchange, John evaluated his time commitment as minimal: "It didn't take up a whole lot of time. We all have access all the time, and it didn't take me but twenty minutes to throw something up there every other day" (John, interview).

This timesaving approach toward writing messages was a source of tension, however, when students were asked about the time it took them to read and interpret their partners' messages. Despite what participants said about online writing as quick and easy, they viewed reading responses and composing well-considered replies as much more time-consuming:

> I tried to look at the past two postings and answers and stuff, but like I said with time, it didn't always happen. (John, interview)
>
> I wish I could have spent more time reading what they thought which I didn't do a whole lot, because it wasn't for a grade. (Cecil, interview)
>
> You only have a given amount of time to express -- in another language -- your feelings on a topic. Not only are you spending time typing it in, but you're spending time thinking it out, how to express it. (Ruth, interview)

This tension might well have stemmed from the instructors' choice of the asynchronous medium for the online exchange. The rationale for choosing this medium was based on the time allowed for reflection and composition. It is certainly plausible, however, considering that many of the students valued the speed and efficiency of online writing, that the addition of a synchronous component to the exchange would have altered how students on both sides participated. In the asynchronous-only medium used in this study, students reported that the tasks of *reading* other students' responses in depth and *replying* with careful reflection were much more time-consuming, and by extension, more likely to be viewed as academic tasks rather than as communicative moves. Consequently, students tended to fill up the screen with words, but not necessarily after having fully read and reflected upon what their partners wrote.

Pedagogical measures could be taken, of course, to help mitigate the tendency for students to attend only superficially to their partners' messages. Müller-Hartmann (2000), for example, has pointed out the important role of carefully constructed tasks for fostering intercultural interaction. Kern (1998) has previously shown that more reflective writing can occur when students compose their messages offline before posting or combine their online messages with other textual products. O'Dowd (2003) also provides students with explicit guidelines and samples of student writing that are based on clearly defined, research-informed criteria. In this project, students were given explicit guidelines and class time was dedicated to discussing emails, but such pedagogical precautions provide no insurance against miscommunication. In fact, one would hope that students would not be engaged merely in a happy volley of messages that seek to avoid miscommunication at all costs. At issue is not *mis*communication, which can provide some of the most valuable learning experiences in an online exchange (Ware & Kramsch, in

press); rather, at stake is missed communication, disengagement from attempting to grapple with such moments of learning in the first place.

DISCUSSION

As foreign language educators turn with greater frequency to technology as either an extension to or an integral part of their pedagogical repertoire, they need to be well informed of the potential for unanticipated tensions to develop in online exchanges. Ideally, online exchanges can invite students to explore further the individual and social histories that inform their partners' views and beliefs (Belz, 2001; Kern, 2000; O'Dowd, 2003), to understand a wider range of linguistic features and discourse pragmatics of the language they are studying (Belz, 2003; Belz & Kinginger, 2003), and to examine the nature of the emerging genre of Internet writing with its resources and constraints (Kramsch & Thorne, 2002). Such involvement also entails a commitment to stay engaged in communication in the face of miscommunication and to view differing opinions or unfamiliar interactional styles as opportunities to grow.

In this project, two of the five groups of students in this study were indeed more successful at co-construing their online relationship in ways that were mutually compatible. They mirrored one another's interactional features by responding to and elaborating upon questions, using personal forms of address, following up on other-initiated topics, and converging on a conversational tone. Like the students reported by O'Dowd (2003), they wrote frequently, requested their partners' opinions, and worked to develop a personal relationship.

The main focus of this paper, however, has been on exploring groups that were low functioning. First, expectations about the use of technology differed based on different levels of prior experience of online writing. The American students were more accustomed to using technology in their language courses and therefore saw the telecollaboration as a familiar extension of previous coursework. They were critical of particular aspects of Blackboard, such as the slow navigation speed and the accessibility of multiple discussion threads. The German students, on the other hand, were more enthusiastic about using it simply to communicate with native-speaking peers, possibly because the use of technology in a language class was a novelty for them. Students' interactional purposes ranged from seeking interpersonal contact to practicing grammar with a native speaker, and opinions differed on what linguistic conventions were appropriate online. The American students viewed brevity and time efficiency as positive, whereas the German students wrote lengthier messages to try and engage their peers in extended discussions.

I next turned to an examination of how the social and institutional settings might have influenced the communicative and interpretive choices that students made online. Despite differences in how the study of English and German are viewed in Germany and the United States, respectively, students converged on the personal importance of studying a foreign language. Nonetheless, the German students had given up part of a vacation to study a foreign language, which points to the social importance for them of learning English. They were viewed by both groups of students as more motivated. Differing institutional constraints played a role in influencing the communicative choices that students made and how they interpreted the messages they received. For example, the importance of grades for the American students weighed in as a strong factor in influencing how they valued the time spent writing to the German students. Most of the American students felt they had a pedagogical mandate to perform a reply, even when they felt they had more pressing, institutionally imposed deadlines. Most of the German students, in contrast, were taking the course for a grade outside of the regular semester with no grade attached, and the time they spent writing was voluntary.

The third research question asked how the findings of this study might extend current pedagogical knowledge about telecollaborative projects. I address this question by examining it in light of each of the three tensions documented.

Tension 1

In the first tension, differences in expectations and norms for telecollaborative projects can be addressed by preparing students through explicit class discussions. With the increasing amount of research available on telecollaboration, students can jointly analyze published episodes of successful and unsuccessful communication before the exchange begins to open discussions about missed communication and help deflect potential tensions in their own communication.

Students should also be encouraged to discuss usage norms and expectations with their online peers. Many students in this study echoed the dissatisfaction cited by students in other telecollaborative projects who were frustrated with feeling ignored and with receiving limited feedback (Belz, 2001; O'Dowd, 2003). Often such frustrations are the manifestations of different beliefs about appropriate communication online. Instead of making and acting on assumptions about communication norms, students need to openly discuss their expectations of linguistic and grammatical accuracy, message length, and response time. For example, teachers can draw students' attention to how online writing in a classroom differs significantly from online writing in non-classroom situations. In asking students, for example, to consider how "netiquette" norms favor brevity in online communication (Tella & Mononen-Aaltonen, 1998), teachers can introduce the notion of netiquette "stances" that value intercultural engagement. As O'Dowd (2003) argues, "if students are to learn anything more than superficial knowledge about the target culture" (p.138), then they must be willing to take such an intercultural stance. As this study has shown, such online stances may well necessitate flouting the norms of informal email communication that favor brevity and instead expect longer messages that require greater time commitments.

Tension 2

The second tension addressed social and institutional factors. In many ways, this type of tension cannot be "pre-empted" by using particular instructional strategies, as these factors form the very fodder by which students engage with cross-cultural understanding. Students rely on the discourses available to them in their local and institutional settings to make sense both of what counts as language learning in the classroom, and of what practical and symbolic values the use of technology carry. Teachers can invite them to examine these discourses as they become manifest in the interactions. By examining critically the metaphors that drive talk about communication, for example, teachers can invite students to challenge prevalent utilitarian (Scollon & Scollon, 1995) notions that optimal communication is about a maximum exchange of information with minimal effort. Then, when a student like Cecil declares that he wants online learning to allow him "to get the most bang out of the buck," he and his peers on both sides of the exchange can be invited to explore that comment, to examine what social and institutional factors contribute to his choice of an economic metaphor. Teachers can also encourage students to discuss openly and critically the criteria by which they evaluate their own and others' involvement in the online exchange.

Tension 3

Turning to the third tension, logistical constraints often influence student motivation and time investment in telecollaboration. As with other international (Belz, 2001, 2003) and intranational encounters (Lee, 2004), it is difficult for individuals to commit to a balanced time investment or to avoid concerns about grades, but students can be invited to examine openly these concerns with their peers. Teachers can also provide students with basic discourse analysis tools to show them how certain communicative choices online index various degrees of openness and carry traces of culturally situated views. For example, teachers could invite students to analyze the types of questions they pose (Schiffrin, 1994) to examine how they open up and close down particular interlocutor roles for their online partners.

Such pedagogical turns as these require constant attention to the discursive relationship between text and context (Kramsch, 1993) and to a view of social interaction as a dynamic process of engagement, one in

which the basic rule is to stay in play (Kramsch, 1996). Online writing needs to be viewed as more than just a series of messages sent in an electronic volley for purposes of practicing the target language, but rather as a collage of foreign language texts borne out of an ongoing inquiry among individuals who are situated in both an immediate context of situation and in a larger context of culture. In such a view, each message is viewed as part of a larger semiotic whole, an instantiation of language that has indexical, representational, and symbolic functions (Kern, 2000).

DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Many theorists argue for empirical work that grounds the justification for using particular forms of technology for specific educational and communicative purposes (Barton, 1994; Haas & Neuwirth, 1994; Selfe & Hilligoss, 1994). In foreign language education, studies on telecollaboration like this one are often limited in their generalizability because of the small number of participants, the socially and institutionally situated nature of data collection, and the scheduling difficulties that international collaboration poses. For these reasons, more studies are needed that can extend the work of previous research to provide corroborating evidence for substantiating or challenging findings in the field.

Additionally, research is needed that is longitudinal (O'Dowd, 2003) on the one hand, and that analyzes a greater number of student cohorts using the same study design on the other. As multimedia technologies become more available, researchers will need to expand their investigations from primarily text-based online exchanges to designs that incorporate other technology-mediated modes. These multimedia technologies allow for multiple modes of self- and other-representation in online environments (cf. Beers, 2001; Kramsch & Andersen, 1999; Plass & Chun, 1996; Warschauer, 1999).

Further research could also ask how virtual cross-cultural encounters are woven back into real-time, in-class conversations. Communicating across cultures affords opportunities for personal reflection, which may or may not have an immediate impact during the actual time of the course (cf. Kramsch, 1993; O'Dowd, 2003), but may well leave traces during classroom discussions. The benefit of having a virtual interlocutor can lie not just in the opportunity for online intercultural learning, but also for classroom learning. However momentarily, in response to the social interactions that take place online, students' familiar divisions and affiliations can be rendered unfamiliar long enough to allow them to call into question their previously unexamined assumptions.

Finally, more linguistically grounded research is needed that documents how students position themselves and their partners in online discourse (cf. Belz, 2003; Ware & Kramsch, in press), and how these discursive moves are both products of and producers of students' locally and culturally situated perspectives. An intercultural stance online must be seen as a joint responsibility (Jacoby & Ochs, 1995), in which individuals agree to stay engaged in the interaction even in the face of miscommunication. Ultimately, educators need to uncover more ways of creating learning environments that promote sustained engagement in online writing so that students can benefit from the kinds of intercultural encounters that technology has the potential to provide.

NOTES

1. I had taught an Intensive English course at the university in northeastern Germany during the previous academic winter intersession in March. The following year, this site served as a sister class for developing an online exchange for a group of students learning German at a large state university in the southwest of the United States.

2. It is easy to assume, as did the participants in the online exchange, that residence abroad would be advantageous. Research on study abroad, however, offers evidence that this is not always the case (see Kinginger & Farrell, 2004; Polanyi, 1995).

3. The range of the discourse analytic tools used to examine this notion is beyond the scope of this paper. Written transcripts were coded and analyzed using a) topic analysis (Chafe, 2001); b) turn-taking structures, repetition, repair, and coherence for conversational flow (Markee, 2000); c) epistemic, boulomaic, and deontic modality (Simpson, 1993; Belz, 2003); d) the function of questions and question uptake (Schiffrin, 1994); and e) formulaic language as a contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982).

4. One student canceled his interview in the follow-up stage.

5. Differences in how instructors present telecollaborative projects and how differences in instructional goals and assessment present an interesting area of research in this field. In this study, we attempted to control for presentation of the assignments and therefore for students' understanding of what was expected of them by having me introduce the project and the assignments to students on both sides of the exchange. Grades presented a more difficult problem, since the German students were voluntarily taking the course. They could only receive an overall participation certificate. We therefore decided that students in the American class would also only receive a participation grade for the three-week period of the exchange. As is discussed in the findings, the lack of explicit grading criteria proved problematic for American students, who were accustomed to what Belz (2001) has previously explored using Hatch's (1992) notion of classroom scripts.

6. All participant names are pseudonyms.

7. I am grateful to a reviewer for pointing out alternative explanations for the differences in use of second person pronouns between the Americans and Germans. American students, in particular, might find it difficult to understand and subsequently use the various forms of the second person pronouns in German, which have a wider range of sociopragmatic meanings than in English. There is recent research that deals more specifically with the use of addressive pronouns in telecollaboration (see Belz & Kinginger, 2002, 2003; Kinginger, 2000).

8. The findings from two recent survey studies of foreign language students at the post-secondary level (Chavez, 2002; Kubota, Austin, & Saito-Abbott, 2003) suggest that this detachment may well be linked to some students' preference for keeping culture out of the formal classroom. Chavez surveyed 200 first, second, and third year students of German and found three major concerns voiced by foreign language students: a) the real purpose of instruction should be the language itself, not culture; b) culture is often taught as superficial knowledge; and c) the teaching of culture is politicized. Kubota et al. (2003) surveyed 244 beginning learners of Japanese, Spanish, and Swahili, and advanced learners of Spanish, and asked if foreign language learning invited them to reflect on issues of race, gender, class, and social justice. Their results showed that some, particularly male students in beginning-level classes, resist engaging in sociopolitical issues.

9. Students in this project began English instruction in fifth grade, but in many states in Germany, instruction now begins as early as first grade.

APPENDIX A
Summary of Small Group Discussion Prompts

Assignment A
1) Respond to the survey "What is Culture?/Was heisst Kultur?" Fill out the blanks as quickly as you can. Answer in your native language. 2) This survey is designed to help you think about the link between language and culture. The prompts will be in English for the students in the American class and in German for students in the German class. Your first assignment will be to discover and report the similarities and differences of your word associations and sentence completions. Include a short analysis of potential reasons for the similarities and differences. Write in German.
Assignment B
1) Read the articles from *Der Spiegel* and *Time* magazines about public reactions to 9/11/2001. Create a list of the "Top Ten Consequences" as reported in these two articles. Include in your analysis not just what **you** think, but what you learn from the readings and from your interactions with others in your group. Write in English. Morse, J., Corliss, R., Ripley, A., Stein, J., & Tyrangiel, J. "Tending the Wounds." *Time*. 10/1/01. Deggerich, Markus. "Die hilflose Frage 'Warum?'" *Der Spiegel Online*. 9/12/01.
Assignment C
1) Read two parallel articles about Muslims in the United States from *Der Spiegel* and *Time* magazines. Make a list of the top ten similarities: five in content and five in language. Include a commentary on what you know (or have learned) about similarities (or differences) in German and American news reporting. Where do you think the differences or similarities originate? Write in German. Patalong, Frank. "Droht nun die Hexenjagd?" *Der Spiegel Online*. 9/12/01. van Biema, David. "As American As. . ." *Time*. 10/1/01.
Assignment D
1) Respond to the German students' messages about language and humor. Read and comment on any other topics initiated. Be sure to give yourself plenty of time to read carefully and to give lengthy responses to their questions. Write in German.
Assignment E
1) Summarize the class discussion on Monday. Follow up on any questions that came up. Write in English. 2) Visit at least two news websites in German and in English. Contrast the German and American styles in online news reporting. Find the top ten differences: five in content and five in language use. Include a commentary on what you know (or have learned) about similarities (or differences) in German and American news reporting. Where do you think the differences or similarities originate? Write in English.
Assignment F
1) Follow up on any questions that came up. Answer the following questions in your groups: Knowing what you have learned about your small group, how would you characterize the ways in which different participants address issues? Beyond the personal level, what suggestions can you make about ways to get an "insider's perspective" on another culture through the media. Which media is effective? Which viewpoints are missing in mainstream media? Write in the language of your choice.

APPENDIX B
Interview Protocol

Thank you for coming. I appreciate the time you've taken to come in for this talk. The purpose of it, other than giving me a chance to know each of you a little better, is also to find out how more about English teaching in Germany, which helps my research project. It's not often that educators ask students their perspective, and that's partly what my project is about. So, first off, would you prefer that we speak in English or in German? And second, do you mind if I have the tape recorder running?

If you see me writing, it is simply that I want to remember to follow-up on something you say.

Background	Tell me a little about what brought you to the BA program. What role does the English course play? Tell me a little about what brought you to this particular section of the intensive English course.
English experience	Describe your English classes here at the university. What differences or similarities do you see between English instruction here and in your high school? What are some of the ways you enjoy learning English? What is your opinion about English as the "world language" or "international language"? Why do people learn foreign languages? What role does English play in the European Union? How might that affect you personally?
Technology	Tell me about any experiences you have had using technology in your language courses? In any courses? Think back to the beginning of this Intensive course and describe the path of your thoughts about it. First, before the class started, what did you expect, then in the first week, what did you experience, and finally now what do you hope we will still do/experience?
Attitudes toward writing in a foreign language	Can you highlight any particular part of the email/SG writing that you found surprising or interesting? Show me in these transcripts [provide artifacts of student's writing]. What interests you about this excerpt? Compare the experience of writing to the American students online with that of writing to your peers in this class.
Improvement	In your opinion, what could improve an exchange with American students?
Expansion	Is there anything that I have not addressed that you would like to contribute? Is there anything you would like to ask me?

APPENDIX C
Pre-Questionnaire of Language Background

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. Your answers will be helpful for giving a sense of your abilities and interests related to the learning of German.

1. How long have you been learning or studying German? _____

2. What other languages do you know besides German and English? _____

3. Have you spent any time in a German-speaking country? Yes No

   If so, please note how much time you spent there and the nature of your stay (travel, study, living with family, etc.)

4. Why are you learning German?

5. Will you be spending any time in a German-speaking country this year? Yes No

   If so, please note how much time you will spend there and the nature of your stay (travel, study, living with family, etc.)

6. In what ways do you practice or use German *outside of university classes*?

Please circle the word that describes your activities in the six choices below. If you choose "other(s)," please write the specific activity/ies to which you are referring.

a.	Talking in German with friends or relatives	never	once/month	once/week	other:
b.	Reading German books or magazines	never	once/month	once/week	other:
c.	Watching movies or TV programs in German	never	once/month	once/week	other:
d.	Using the Internet to find German websites	never	once/month	once/week	other:
e.	Participating in German clubs	never	once/month	once/week	other:
f.	Other(s):	never	once/month	once/week	other:

7. Please rate yourself as best you can in these language areas:

a.	Grammar	intermediate	advanced	near-native
b.	Listening	intermediate	advanced	near-native
c.	Speaking	intermediate	advanced	near-native
d.	Reading	intermediate	advanced	near-native
e.	Writing	intermediate	advanced	near-native
f.	Cultural knowledge	intermediate	advanced	near-native
g.	Other:	intermediate	advanced	near-native

8. In your experience, which of the above categories are emphasized the **most** in the language classroom?

9. Which of the categories (grammar, listening, speaking, reading, writing, cultural knowledge, other) do ***you*** most want to improve?

10. Why is it/are they important to you?

Please rank the following *personal reasons for learning German* from 1-7, with the number "1" as the most important reason and number "7" as the least important. If you do not have an item for "other," rate it as a seven.

____	For fulfilling a foreign language requirement	____	For communicating with relatives or friends
____	For traveling to German-speaking countries	____	For better job opportunities
____	For enjoyment	____	For continuing something you started
____	Other		

11. What plans or hopes do you have, if any, for your future use of German (e.g. study abroad, career, graduate study)?

Course-Specific Questions

This course emphasizes language learning through reading and writing in tandem with German students online.

12. How often do you *write* in the following modes (*in any language)*? Please circle the word that describes the amount of time you spend in the four activities below. If you choose "other," please write the specific time frame.

a.	Email	never	once/month	once/week	other:
b.	Online "chatting"	never	once/month	once/week	other:
c.	Personal (creative, letters)	never	once/month	once/week	other:
d.	Academic essays/writing	never	once/month	once/week	other:
e.	Other:	never	once/month	once/week	other:

13. What problems do you have, if any, with accessing the Web? (e.g., inconvenience, technical difficulties, no home computer, time commitment)

14. Circle the best description of your typing ability:

very slow (I have to look at the keys)
slow (I have to look at the keys some of the time)
intermediate (ten-finger typing)
fast (I can ten-finger type without looking)

15. Have you ever participated in an email language exchange or Blackboard-type online group discussion? Yes No

If so, please indicate what type of exchange: (e.g., classroom language courses -- college or high school, other credit courses, independent study, personal interest in listserves, etc.)

16. Please rank the following from 1-6 to describe what you would like to practice during the language exchange with native speakers of German. Use "1" for the area you are most interested in and "6" for the area you are least interested in. If you do not have an item for "other," rank it with a six.

____	Developing correctness/complexity (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, syntax)	____	Using everyday language (e.g. slang, idioms, jokes)
____	Gaining "insider" knowledge about others	____	Giving me good tips about other cultural information
____	Providing an opportunity to practice regularly with a native speaker (no particular focus on any skill or topic)	____	Other:

17. List several *topics* you think would be interesting or important to write about in this language exchange:

18. In your opinion, what might be the *benefits* of writing to a native speaking exchange partner over the Internet?

19. In your opinion, what might be the potential *drawbacks* of writing to a native speaking language partner over the Internet?

20. Which types of texts do you prefer using in a foreign language class? Please rank the following types of texts in order of preference. Use "1" for the type you most prefer and "8" for the type you least prefer:

____	Textbook	____	Handouts from teacher
____	Course handbook (with articles, etc.)	____	Instructor-selected websites
____	Self-selected websites/articles	____	Films/TV programs
____	Online discussions with classmates	____	Online discussions with native speakers
____	Real-time chat		

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