

**Exploring teaching and learning German as a foreign language at a South African institution of higher education: blended learning and collocations.**

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

of

Rhodes University

in

German Studies



By

Gwyndolen Jeanie Ortner

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6805-6479>

Prepared for:

German Studies, School of Languages and Literatures

Rhodes University

Grahamstown/Makhanda

Supervisor: Dr Undine S. Weber

16 September 2020

---

## ***Abstract***

---

German Studies students at Rhodes University have normally never studied the German language before enrolling for the first-year course and face the challenge of a fairly rapid linguistic advancement, in a context with very limited exposure to the foreign language outside the classroom. Free writing is an area which students find particularly challenging as it requires students to synthesise grammatical and vocabulary knowledge. Furthermore, South African students are often underprepared for the challenges they face at university regarding language, technology and finance, as they try to assimilate to the academic environment and gain epistemological access to their various subjects, in this case, language acquisition and the attendant modules of translation, literature and cultural studies.

The use of technology in teaching and learning, known as blended learning, is said to produce better results than face-to-face teaching alone, through creating opportunities for more autonomous student learning. Scholars of instructed second-language acquisition also suggest using technology to improve language instruction. One particular area which is gaining ground is teaching students collocational structures through exploring large language corpora, to improve students' language competencies such as writing fluency. However, both blended learning practices and corpus-based teaching practices suggested by scholars are often not reported on in a particular teaching and learning context, taking into account factors such as institutional infrastructure, student and staff backgrounds and preparedness, and larger socio-political factors. Thus, it remains unclear how these practices (blended learning and corpus-based teaching of collocations) may be integrated into standard curricula, particularly for languages other than English, which have been severely under-researched.

The purpose of this research is to take a context-based approach to language teaching and thereby investigate current blended learning practices for German Studies at Rhodes University in South Africa and explore through an action research approach how to integrate collocational awareness into the curriculum, within the blended learning model. Insights from corpus linguistics guide an adaptation of teaching practice, helping students develop skills to aid with writing fluency, seeking to make the patterned nature of language salient to our students. This is undertaken in a scaffolded way, within the curriculum, making use firstly of the texts to which students are exposed in the textbook (comprehensible input) as a source of collocational examples, and following this by making use of real-life language data from an online German corpus, DWDS. Findings from the study reveal a number of best practices related to the use of blended learning and teaching collocations in context of the German foreign language curriculum at a South African institution of higher education.

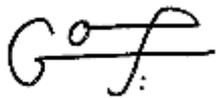


---

## ***Declaration of Academic Integrity***

---

I declare that the dissertation entitled “Exploring teaching and learning German as a foreign language at a South African institution of higher education: blended learning and collocations”, which I hereby submit for the degree Doctor of Philosophy at Rhodes University, is my own work. I also declare that this dissertation has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gortner', with a horizontal line extending from the middle of the letters.

Gwyndolen Ortner

16 September 2020

## Contents

---

<b>Chapter 1 : Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Research goals .....	6
1.2 Organisation of the dissertation .....	7
<b>Chapter 2 : Context of the Research – German as a Foreign Language in South African Higher Education .....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 Disciplinary context.....	9
2.2 Language teaching methods in GFL .....	13
2.3 Foreign languages in South African higher education .....	19
<b>Chapter 3: Literature Review – Collocation in Language Teaching and Learning .....</b>	<b>26</b>
3.1 Usage-based or emergent models of grammar .....	26
3.2 Corpora in language teaching, indirect and direct uses .....	27
3.3 Key concepts: Frequency, co-occurrence, and formulaic language .....	29
3.3.1 Defining Collocation.....	31
3.4 Collocation in German coursebooks, a neglected topic .....	34
3.5 How to teach collocations?.....	36
<b>Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework – Blended Language Learning and Complex Systems..</b>	<b>52</b>
4.1 Blended learning .....	52
4.2 Blended learning and language teaching.....	54
4.3 The development of SLA and CALL and the emergence of blended language learning .....	55
4.4 Complex adaptive systems theory and language learning: ecological perspectives .....	61
4.5 Frameworks of blended learning: What are the main factors in the blended learning system?65	
4.6 Frameworks for designing and evaluating blended language learning activities.....	67
<b>Chapter 5: Methodology – Action Research Case Study.....</b>	<b>71</b>
5.1 Data collection, mixed methods .....	73
5.2 Participants .....	74
5.3 Stages of the action research methodology .....	76
5.4 Ethical considerations .....	79

5.5 Types of data collected .....	83
5.6 Data analysis procedures summarised .....	92
5.7 Addressing issues of validity .....	93
<b>Chapter 6: Presentation of Findings – A Narrative of the Action Research Cycle.....</b>	<b>95</b>
6.1 Institutional role in supporting blended learning .....	97
6.2 Staff profiles and perspectives of the teaching context .....	99
6.3 Exploring technology backgrounds of German Studies and French Studies students at RU....	106
6.4 Student approaches to language learning .....	113
6.5 Planning and implementing 2018 lectures with a focus on collocation .....	119
6.6 Adaptation and reimplementation of lectures, 2019 .....	140
<b>Chapter 7: Analysis and Discussion of the Complex Adaptive Blended Language Learning System .....</b>	<b>154</b>
7.1 Analysis and discussion of the local blended language learning context .....	154
7.2 How effective was teaching collocation as a learning strategy? .....	174
<b>Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>197</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>221</b>
Digest of Results (online) .....	221
<a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QJ8zZsTrF_XCxFjT8cjwUh0KlzNU1LjY/view?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QJ8zZsTrF_XCxFjT8cjwUh0KlzNU1LjY/view?usp=sharing</a> ....	221
Ethical clearance documents (online).....	221
<a href="https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QMvLfdBRXdHcZDhFVEAJtRpHySg5xTjT?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QMvLfdBRXdHcZDhFVEAJtRpHySg5xTjT?usp=sharing</a> .....	221
<b>AA. Student informed-consent form for participation in the action research .....</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>A. Q1. Online and in-class learning for German Studies (Google forms, online, 2017) .....</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>B. Q1. Online language learning questionnaire, (Paper-based, in-class, 2018) .....</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>C. Q1. Online and in-class learning for German Studies (Google forms, online, 2019) .....</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>D. Q2. Approaches to language learning questionnaire (paper-based, in class, August 2018).....</b>	<b>238</b>

<b>E. Q2. Approaches to language learning questionnaire, (paper-based, in class, August 2019)</b>	
	245
<b>F. Q3. Short reflection on text-based collocational exercises (Google forms, online, 2018) ..</b>	250
<b>G. Q3. Short reflection on text-based collocational exercises (Google forms, online, 2019) ..</b>	252
<b>HH. Draft consent form for staff interviews.....</b>	255
<b>H. Pre-drafted questions for semi-structured staff interview 1, 23 August 2017.....</b>	256
<b>I. Pre-drafted questions for semi-structured staff interview 2, 23 February 2017.....</b>	257
<b>J. Pre-drafted questions for semi-structured staff interview 3, 06 December 2018.....</b>	258
<b>K. Pre-drafted questions for semi-structured staff interview 4, 04 June 2019.....</b>	259
<b>L. Pre-drafted questions for semi-structured staff interview 5, 25 October 2019.....</b>	260
<b>M. Q4. German Studies staff external questionnaire, 2018/2019.....</b>	261
<b>N. Examples of lecture materials created in action research (online).....</b>	264
<a href="https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_eZ4BnMskZ2pzJRWEeCMCA7kU1MqcfyQ?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_eZ4BnMskZ2pzJRWEeCMCA7kU1MqcfyQ?usp=sharing</a> g.....	264
<b>O. Learner Corpus, RUDaF (online).....</b>	265
<a href="https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1I58BfI2ElkEV59ezSUZHFL48xRFYdLQw?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1I58BfI2ElkEV59ezSUZHFL48xRFYdLQw?usp=sharing</a>	265

---

## *List of Tables*

---

Table 1: Number of registered students in German Studies, end 2017 - 2019 .....	75
Table 2: Number of registered students in French Studies, end 2017 and 2019 .....	76
Table 3: Summary of data collected 2017-2019 .....	83
Table 4: Responses to questionnaire 4, external staff perspectives .....	89
Table 5: Anderson and Herr's Goals of Action Research and Validity Criteria (2015, p.67) .....	94
Table 6: Participation in Questionnaire 1, online and in-class learning .....	107
Table 7: Age of student respondents and age they report they began using technology, 2017 .....	108
Table 8: "How comfortable do you feel using technology in your personal life?" (GS) 2017 .....	109
Table 9: "How comfortable do you feel using technology for learning purposes?" (GS) 2017 .....	109
Table 10: How comfortable do you feel using technology in your personal life? (FS) 2017 .....	109
Table 11: How comfortable do you feel using technology for learning purposes? (FS) 2017 .....	110
Table 12: German Studies students' rating of most helpful online resources (2017) .....	112
Table 13: Participation in Questionnaire 2 "Approaches to language learning" .....	113
Table 14: GS1-student approaches to writing, 2018 .....	116
Table 15: GS2-student approaches to writing, 2018 .....	117
Table 16: GS3-student approaches to writing, 2018 .....	118
Table 17: GS1 Lectures 2018 .....	127
Table 18: GS2 Lectures 2018 .....	128
Table 19: GS3 lectures 2018 .....	130
Table 20: Participation in Questionnaire 3, "Reflection on text-based collocation exercises", 2018	136
Table 21: GS1 responses 2018, "[...] better at recognising collocations?" .....	137
Table 22: GS2 responses 2018, "[...] better at recognising collocations?" .....	138
Table 23: GS3 responses 2018, "[...] better at recognising collocations?" .....	138
Table 24: GS1 lectures 2019 .....	144
Table 25: GS2 Lectures 2019 .....	147
Table 26: GS3 Lectures 2019 .....	149
Table 27: Participation in Questionnaire 3, reflections on collocation exercises, 2019 .....	151
Table 28: GS1 responses 2019 "[...] better at recognising collocations?" .....	151
Table 29: GS2 responses 2019, "[...] better at recognising collocations?" .....	152
Table 30: GS3 responses 2019, "[...] better at recognising collocations?" .....	153

---

## List of Figures

---

Figure 1: Key words generated using corpus software, presented as a Word Cloud.....	ii
Figure 2: Applications of corpora in language teaching (Römer, 2011, p. 207) .....	28
Figure 3: <i>Lexikalische Einheiten unseres Wortschatzes</i> (Volungevičienė, 2008, p. 295) .....	34
Figure 4: Examples concordances of convince/persuade (Adapted from Johns, 1991, p. 16).....	38
Figure 5: Example of a paper-based exercise for A2 level German (Vyatkina, 2016, p. 225).....	43
Figure 6: Sample exercise from Neary-Sundquist (2015b, p. 211) .....	44
Figure 7: Spectrum of course-delivery modalities (Adapted from Graham, et al., 2013, p. 5) .....	53
Figure 8: Classroom as a complex adaptive system (Burns & Knox, 2011, p. 13).....	64
Figure 9: Khan's Octagonal Framework for Blended Learning (Singh, 2003, p. 52) .....	65
Figure 10: The Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System (Wang et al., 2015, p. 382).....	67
Figure 11: Parameters describing and conceptualizing a blended learning environment for language learning and teaching purposes (Neumeier, 2005, p. 167) .....	68
Figure 12: A Framework for blended language learning (Mishan, 2013, p. 210) .....	69
Figure 13: The cyclical nature of action research (O'Byrne, 2016, online) .....	72
Figure 14: Action research cycles, 2017-2019 .....	96
Figure 15: Menschen A2 Redemittel example (Habersack, et al., 2013, p. 34).....	122
Figure 16: Menschen B1 Bildlexikon (Braun-Podeschwa, et al., 2015, p. 38).....	123
Figure 17: Menschen A2 Bildlexikon (Habersack, et al., 2013, p. 33).....	123
Figure 18: Menschen A1 Bildlexikon (Evans, et al., 201, p. 44) .....	123
Figure 19: Concordance lines for "gibt" GS1, 2018.....	134
Figure 20: Concordance lines for "gefällt" GS1, 2018.....	135
Figure 21: Concordance lines for "essen", part 1, GS2, 2018 .....	135
Figure 22: Concordance lines for "essen" part 2, GS2, 2018 .....	135
Figure 23:GS3, 2019 "Learning Tips" topic on RUconnected.....	141
Figure 24: RUconnected forum for sharing idioms, GS1, 2019.....	141
Figure 25: Example of handout created for introducing formulaic language and collocation (2019) 143	
Figure 26: Revised Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System .....	155
Figure 27: GS1, 2019 "... did you find the online resources helpful?" .....	168
Figure 28: GS2, 2019 "...did you find the online resources helpful" .....	168
Figure 29:GS3 2019 "... did you find the online resources helpful?" .....	168
Figure 30: GS1 responses 2019.....	177
Figure 31: GS2 responses 2019.....	178
Figure 32: GS3 responses 2019.....	178

---

## ***List of Abbreviations and Terms***

---

CALL	Computer assisted language learning
CLT	Communicative language teaching
DaF/ GFL	<i>Deutsch als Fremdsprache</i> / German as a foreign language
DDL	Data-driven learning
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DWDS	<i>Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache</i>
FL	Foreign language
FLT	Foreign language teaching
GS	German Studies
HE	Higher education
ISLA	Instructed second language acquisition
L1	First language (acquired from birth)
L2	Second language/ foreign language (acquired after the first language)
LMS	Learning management system
RU	Rhodes University
RUDaF	Rhodes University <i>Deutsch als Fremdsprache</i> (learner corpus)
SLA	Second language acquisition

---

## ***Acknowledgements***

---

This PhD dissertation would not have been possible without the support and contributions of a vast network of academic colleagues, family, friends and fellow students.

My first thanks are due to the two incredible staff members in German Studies at Rhodes University: Dr Undine Weber, who supervised and guided the development of this dissertation, with an eye for detail and a belief in both the importance of the research and in myself as a researcher; and Ms Natasha Engelbrecht, who shared my enthusiasm for the topic and provided many hours of writing fellowship. Both Dr Weber and Ms Engelbrecht contributed whole heartedly to this project, in the role of advisors and participants. This dissertation would not have been possible without their considerable input and unwavering support.

My second thanks are to all the German Studies students who willingly engaged in my research and entered into many conversations about the nature of language and language learning, and who shared of themselves in their writing and in their questionnaire responses. *Vielen Dank.*

I thank the French Studies Section of the School of Languages and Literatures at Rhodes University, for their willingness to participate in the technological backgrounds' questionnaire.

I would also like to thank the German staff members from higher education institutions across South Africa for their involvement in my staff research questionnaire.

I thank Dr Nompilo Tshuma and Dr Nicola Pallit of 'EdTech' for their technical assistance and guidance, and the Rhodes University Library Staff, in particular Ms Rina Goosen from inter-library loans, for help with acquiring reference materials.

Thank you to Sasha Schaffli and Sisipho Myoyo for help with data transcription, which they performed with care and attention to detail.

I have had the privilege of engagement in this research from many fellow students and academics who have provided advice and critical constructive comments which have contributed to the validity of the research. I thank specifically here:

NIHSS mentors: Prof Paul Maylam, Prof Fred Hendricks, Prof Kishore Raga, Prof Charlene Deyers and Prof Rudolph Botha for their helpful input and guidance during workshops and seminars;

Fellow NIHSS doctoral students, and African Humanities Programme post-doctoral students, for the camaraderie and rigorous academic conversations, in particular Ms Natalia Lourenço and Dr Yvonne Agbetsoamedo for their insightful feedback on the methodology chapter, and Dr Joy Joseph and Mr Amani Karisa for constructive feedback on the literature review;

Rhodes University Centre for Higher Education Research Teaching and Learning (CHERTL) mentors, in particular Dr Sherran Clarence and Dr Caroline van der Mescht for their input on the research, and particularly for reflections on educational research;

Rhodes University Applied Linguistics lecturers Prof Sally Hunt, for her professional insight on corpus linguistics and its role in language teaching, Prof Mark de Vos, for his ideas and insight on research design, and Ms Tracy Probert, for reflections on second language acquisition theory;

Mr Tim van Niekerk from the Dictionary Unit for South African English for his input on dictionary types and uses;

and my special thanks go to Ms Siân Reese, Ms Maxine Schaefer and Ms Sisonke Mawonga (soon to be Drs) for companionship in writing, and discussions on linguistic theory and action research.

The financial assistance of the Ada and Bertie Levenstein Bursary and the National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) Doctoral Scholarship in collaboration with the South African Humanities Deans Association towards this research is hereby acknowledged (and much appreciated). Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to Rhodes University, or the donors (Levenstein, NIHSS and SAHUDA).

Many thanks go to the postgraduate funding office at Rhodes University, in particular Ms Nichole de Vos and Mr John Gillam, who always have students' interests at heart and who embody efficient administration.

Lastly, and most importantly, thank you to my family who have supported me throughout, especially my grandparents, Len Hutchons, Jenny Hutchons, Ré Ortner and my late grandfather Ulrich Ortner, my sister, Sabrina Ortner-Deuchar, my late Mother, Jacqueline-Anne Ortner, my father, Uli Ortner, and finally my partner, Duncan Haynes and our cat, Robin who has been a great support through it all.

Any limitations or shortcomings of the research are due to my own personal limitations and are not a reflection of the contributions of others to this project.

A postscript word of heartfelt thanks must be added to the external examiners, Dr Ursula Renate Riedner, Prof. Janina Wozniak, and Prof. Marianne Zappen-Thompson for their helpful and fruitful critical comments and corrections made during the examination process, which have enriched this dissertation.

---

*This dissertation is dedicated first and foremost to my all wonderful and extensive family, which has grown further strong bonds through my journey of learning German. A second dedication goes to all those students who have begun to learn a foreign language as an adult, and who have found themselves forever changed and enriched by the experience.*

---



## Chapter 1: Introduction

---

It is a goal of foreign language teachers and researchers to ensure that the target language is learnt as well as possible, given the constraints of contextual circumstances (McKay, 2006, p. 1). In the research context of German Studies at Rhodes University, there is a need to develop students' language competencies as shown through a collection of learners' writing in the form of a learner corpus (see Ortner, 2013; Ortner, 2015; Ortner & Weber, 2018). Students who take German at Rhodes University are often beginners with no other prior exposure or contact with the foreign language, i.e. *ab initio* students (Rhodes University, 2019, pp. 102-103).

Language competencies consist of the four modalities of speaking, writing, reading and listening (Council of Europe, 2012). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages categorises learners in three broad levels (A – basic user, B – independent user, and C – proficient user) (Council of Europe, 2012) which can be further divided into six levels describing what a learner should be able to do in each modality. Even basic language competence is difficult to achieve in foreign-language teaching contexts if severe time constraints and almost no real-life access to the foreign language exist. Foreign-language learning is often included under the broader heading of second language (L2) learning<sup>1</sup>. However, there is an important difference between foreign and second language learning: as the foreign language is not present in the students' environment, the teacher has control over the exposure to the foreign language. The teacher chooses the materials and knows what has already been presented and (hopefully) acquired, as well as the pace of progression. In second-language learning, however, the teacher does not have control over all language input, rather there is far more input to be expected in the students' daily environment. The foreign-language classroom must be thus be acknowledged as a fully artificial environment, where there is a unique interplay to achieve learning outcomes between teachers, resources (the primary source of knowledge being the coursebook and accompanying materials) and learners.

The use of technology for teaching and learning purposes is said to extend the walls of the traditional classroom (Bonk & Graham, 2006). In South Africa and globally there has been an increasing use of computer-mediated environments in conjunction with traditional face-to-face teaching, in order to improve or enhance existing teaching and learning practices (Graham, 2006, pp. 5-6; Jaffer, *et al.*, 2007; Bozalek, *et al.*, 2013; Balfour, *et al.*, 2015). This combined system is known as "blended learning"

---

<sup>1</sup> In this thesis I use the term "L2" to mean "second language" including foreign language within this definition. In the research context, the students are L2 German learners, and German is learnt as a foreign language.

(Bonk & Graham, 2006; Halverson, *et al.*, 2013; Mayadas & Picciano, 2007), in contrast to online learning (with no physical interaction) and traditional face-to-face teaching (without online components). This research focuses on the use of Web 2.0 technology rather than earlier Web 1.0 technology which only allowed for simple delivery of information (Motteram & Sharma, 2009, p. 88). Web 2.0 technology is user-generated, allowing people to create, share, collaborate and communicate for teaching and learning purposes (Motteram & Sharma, 2009, p. 88), and is prevalent in Western education environments (Mishan, 2013b, p. 288). Technology can be used for a range of teaching and learning purposes, and this dissertation explores how technology is used in the local research context to address contextual constraints for language teaching and learning. A further specific focus area of this dissertation is on teaching and learning the linguistic concept of collocation (defined briefly below, and more extensively in Chapter 3) to further combat the contextual constraints of a limited amount of language contact, in order to have students notice more clearly the linguistic features of the language input which they are exposed to.

Research from varying disciplines has shown that language is patterned and consists of what is termed “chunks” or “formulaic sequences” of language (Wray, 2000, p. 465) (amongst many other terms) which speakers store (and retrieve) as whole units in the brain’s lexical storage centre (Wray, 2000, p. 465; Conklin & Schmitt, 2012, p. 47). Formulaic sequences have been shown to be difficult for L2 learners to master, as L2 learners often produce grammatical, yet unidiomatic sequences (see Pawley & Syder, 1983; Wray, 2000). With technological advances, language researchers have suggested using corpora to aid language teaching and learning (Johns, 1991; Leech, 1997; Römer, 2011; Godwin-Jones, 2013; Vyatkina & Boulton, 2017; Paquot, 2018). Language corpora are large collections of text which are principally collected and stored electronically (O’Keefe, *et al.*, 2007, p. 1; Paquot, 2018, p. 1). Discoveries from corpus-based studies of language have had implications for teaching language (Paquot, 2018, p. 1; Vyatkina & Boulton, 2017, p. 2), as will be expanded on in Chapter 3. In particular, corpus linguistics has been able to provide evidence of frequently occurring words and statistically significant word patterns which are termed “collocations” (Nesselhauf, 2005, p. 1), a type of formulaic sequence<sup>2</sup>.

Some researchers have suggested that frequency of exposure to frequent word patterns is key to developing L2 learners’ fluency, range of expression and accuracy in the target language (see Boers, *et al.*, 2006 and a short discussion thereof in Chapter 3). Fluency is the ability to process, produce and comprehend language in a mother-tongue-like way, that is with mother-tongue-like “rapidity,

---

<sup>2</sup> Although, as will be shown in Chapter 3, this is a broad definition of collocation, and there are narrower definitions for the concept of collocation (Boers & Webb, 2018, p. 77).

pausing, hesitation, or reformulation” (Housen, *et al.*, 2012, p. 2; Ellis, 2008) and is a measure of L2 proficiency alongside complexity and accuracy (Larsen-Freeman, 2009, p. 581; Council of Europe, 2012). Housen *et al.* (2012, p. 2) define complexity as “the ability to use a wide and varied range of sophisticated structures and vocabulary in the L2” whereas accuracy is “the ability to produce target-like and error-free language” (Housen, *et al.*, 2012, p. 2).

Formulaic sequences provide “islands of reliability” (Dechert, 1983 in Conklin & Schmitt, 2012, p. 47; Boers, *et al.*, 2006, p. 247) for the L2 learner, which helps with the fluency and accuracy of their spoken and written language production (Conklin & Schmitt, 2012, p. 47; Boers, *et al.*, 2006, p. 257) and with their reading comprehension (Park & Warschauer, 2016, p. 287). As foreign language students do not have frequent exposure to the target language, linguistic and foreign language researchers have posited that corpus-based methods focussed on noticing (Schmidt, 2010) frequent words and their collocations can help students develop a repertoire of formulaic language (see Krummes & Ensslin, 2015; Römer, 2011; Reder, 2013; Johns, 1991). However, as will be further discussed in Chapter 3, there are many challenges to introducing corpora within a normal curriculum, including the technological competence needed to use computer-based corpora and the linguistic competence needed to analyse them (Mukherjee, 2004; Breyer, 2009; Vyatkina & Boulton, 2017, p. 2). Chapter 3 therefore explores alternative ways of introducing these concepts within a contextualised curriculum, for example by making use of the texts within a curriculum as a pedagogic corpus (Willis, 1998).

The CEFR implicitly recognises the importance of formulaic language at every level of learning, stating for example with regard to A1 level, the learner: “Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type”, A2: “Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance”, B1: “Can produce simple connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest” (Council of Europe, 2012). However, L2 researchers have shown that despite the evidence of the importance of the concept of formulaic language and collocation for language learners (Lewis, 1997), collocation is in fact a neglected aspect of foreign language didactics (Targońska, 2014; Krummes & Ensslin, 2015).

In this dissertation I seek to bring together these threads to produce a coherent picture of how to improve teaching and learning in German Studies as laid out in the above context, by firstly examining the case of our teaching and learning situation at a South African university in its complexity, and thereafter adapting resources and using a corpus-based deductive approach to teaching collocation, in order to improve students’ writing capability and to induct them into becoming more aware and active language learners, capable of noticing and appreciating the differences between languages, their structures and their use in context. This is undertaken in line with current research on why and

how to teach collocations for German beginner-level learners (Reder, 2013; Targońska, 2014; Vyatkina, 2013). The approach taken is shaped by the context, including local aspects such as the resources at hand, the institutional infrastructure, and the student and lecture backgrounds, as well as the South African socio-political context and so on, as will be expanded on in Chapter 2. A significant factor in the teaching and learning context of German Studies is that there has been an increase in the use of educational technology in teaching and learning German since the student protests of 2015/2016, thus, many aspects of the develop methods in the action research were included online using the institutional learning management system, RUconnected. The dissertation thus also looks at the current teaching and learning practices in German Studies at Rhodes University in contextualising the approach taken, and as part of the context of German Studies at Rhodes University, the increased use of Web 2.0 technology as a teaching and learning medium to address contextual challenges. Perspectives from lecturers, students and the institution are considered in order to provide a holistic picture of the best practices for blended learning emerging from this context. This is reflected in the research questions below.

This research is situated within the discipline of German as a Foreign Language (GFL/DaF) (Helbig, *et al.*, 2001), within the narrower orientation of didactic research (Neuner, 2001, p. 37) and seeks to provide implications for the “optimisation and enhancement of teaching and learning practices” (Jaworska, 2011, p. 7) in German Studies, with a focus on German language acquisition, using applied technologies. The aim of the study is to develop transformational (Vorster, 2016) and reflective (Ashwin, 2015) approaches to teaching German as a foreign language which are suited to the current and future South African context. This is in line with current ideas shared by GFL researchers and practitioners: “successful foreign language teaching must bear in mind the differences between the involved individuals, that is, teachers and learners, as well as varying learning goals or institutional conditions” (DAAD, 2019, online).

This dissertation comes about as a result of my own experience of being a foreign-language learner, arriving at university directly after completing matric with no prior knowledge of German, and undertaking the study of German as a foreign language within the formal tertiary education setting, in a country where natural exposure to the target language is severely limited. As I progressed, I have moved from the role of language student and learner, to teacher, tutor, facilitator, and lecturer. Through my studies in applied linguistics and second and foreign languages I have had reason to reflect on my own process of learning, on my own assumptions underlying the language learning process, and reflect on what the underlying issues of language teaching within my context are (McKay, 2006, p. ix). Out of this personal context, I have reflected academically on what it means to teach and learn German as a foreign language in South Africa, and how best to teach it according to instructed second

language acquisition theory, in the context of transformation, meaning here, in the broadest sense, enabling epistemological access to a diverse body of students (Bouhey & McKenna, 2016), and with an increased use of technology (blended learning). By utilising my own linguistic training, I have been able to identify possible solutions in the research context. Action research methodology is well suited to this type of systematic inquiry aimed at understanding and improving teaching and learning contexts, and is the methodological approach taken in this dissertation, as briefly explained below.

The dissertation follows a traditional action research methodology (Herr & Anderson, 2015), which seeks to improve teaching and learning, and thus lecturers and students are actively involved as participants and co-creators of the knowledge (this is expanded on in Chapter 5). Action research is cyclical in nature, following a progression of: plan, act, observe and reflect, adapt and reimplement (these terms based on Lewin, 1946 in Calvert & Sheen, 2014, p. 227). The action research conducted is reported on in a narrative style (in Chapter 6), presenting data as it follows the progression of the cycle (Heigman & Croker, 2009, p. 123)<sup>3</sup>.

The exercises developed and reported on as part of the action research are based on principles of second language acquisition theory developed for the instruction of languages (see Chapter 3) (Ellis, 2005; Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013; Schmidt, 2010). The instructional approach further seeks to use student knowledge as the point of departure, and scaffold learning with students' own linguistic knowledge as the foundation for the learning, so as to be suited to the context of the research by drawing on socio-cultural theory as applied to second language learning (see Lantolf, 2011; Mitchel, *et al.*, 2013, pp. 220-223). The increasing use of technology in teaching and learning is an important aspect of the context of the research. The use of online modalities for the purposes of language teaching in this research were guided by principles of blended (language) learning (see Chapter 4) (Mishan, 2016; Neumeier, 2005; Singh, 2003).

The success of the exercises implemented is evaluated by bringing together data from multiple sources including lecturer and student reflections, as well as evidence of taught collocations in student writing which is collected and stored as a learner corpus. This is a common strategy in educational research where observation and reflection play an important role in evaluation, and where triangulation seeks to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings so that conclusions and recommendations can be drawn for wider contexts (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 68).

---

<sup>3</sup> As such, the style of narrative writing is often personal and aimed at reflecting the embeddedness of myself as a researcher in the department and didactic processes engaged in for this research. Furthermore, I seek to take a transformative approach to the academic reporting of the foreign language learning process and the engagement with online facilities by softening the technical language and formal rigour of IT texts that frequently intimidate students and lecturers alike.

This project has many potential benefits, for the participants involved, for the discipline of German Studies, and for the research community interested in the scholarship of teaching and learning of second and foreign languages. This project has specific relevance for the communities interested in teaching and learning German as a Foreign Language, those interested blended language learning, and those interested in the application of corpus linguistics to language teaching, in order to add to these worldwide research conversations on what constitutes best practice in these three areas.

A summary of the benefits of this research for participants include:

- guided reflection on their own learning;
- guidance in engaging with blended learning (particularly important as more and more aspects of the university curriculum become 'blended');
- induction into corpus-based learning methods and access to data-driven learning materials which will guide students into becoming autonomous linguistic researchers, developing transferable metalinguistic skills which should enable them to become better language learners;
- as a consequence of the above, empowering participants to take charge of their own learning processes in a guided and formative way;
- an improved ability to read and write in German at designated levels of competency;
- an actual or perceived improved metalinguistic awareness in English and other languages.

Additionally, students have the opportunity to add to the body of knowledge of learner writing for German Studies, through allowing written work to be included in the RUDaF learner corpus. Students may also benefit through having a voice in the evaluation of new teaching and learning methods (Bovill, *et al.*, 2011). Previous students involved in the studies I conducted at Honours and Masters levels found this to be a motivating and enriching factor.

### *1.1 Research goals*

The overarching goal of this research is to examine holistically the use of technology for teaching and learning German as a foreign language in the South African context, particularly at Rhodes University and provide insights as to what constitutes local best practice within this context, specifically looking at the explicit teaching and learning of collocation as a strategy to improve fluency, using both the face-to-face and online modality. This may be divided into two inter-related goals, with related sub-goals:

1. To examine the implementation of a blended learning model (which involves a reduction in face-to-face teaching time) in order to show the interplay between related components of the blended learning ecosystem in a South African higher education foreign language context, through

- 1.1) exploring the readiness for and attitudes towards blended learning among German Studies students;
  - 1.2) exploring teachers' perspectives in implementing blended learning resources for language teaching;
  - 1.3) exploring students' approaches and attitudes/ self-perception to language learning and their use of existing materials;
  - 1.4) exploring the institutional role in implementing blended learning;
2. To create added corpus-based resources for enhancing teaching and learning German in our context (with a focus on vocabulary learning from a collocations perspective), within the blended learning model, and evaluate their effectiveness through
- 2.1) creating and implementing language exercises, drawing on corpus-based methods (with a focus on formulaic language and collocation), for three levels of German Studies, which are aligned with the existing curriculum (following CEFR levels), and which are presented within a blended learning model;
  - 2.2) assessing the attitudes towards, and the success and challenges of, the implementation of corpus-based practices within a contextualised curriculum in the GFL university classroom in South Africa;
  - 2.3) exploring the usefulness of a text-based approach to teaching collocation in enhancing students' language competence in German, and their meta-linguistic awareness (in their mother-tongue and other languages).

### *1.2 Organisation of the dissertation*

This dissertation is divided into eight chapters as follows:

This current chapter, Chapter 1 explores the underpinnings of the research and the approach which this dissertation takes, which is to examine the case study of blended language learning in the context of German Studies at Rhodes University in a holistic and the implementation of teaching collocations within the curriculum through a traditional action research approach.

Chapter 2 expands on the disciplinary context of German as a Foreign Language, and on the historical context of foreign language teaching methodology and second language acquisition research. German Studies is then explored within the context of higher education in South Africa, taking into account the unique challenges presented within this context. This chapter forms part of the planning process for the action research.

Chapter 3, a literature review, expands on how corpus linguistics has informed language teaching, and how the concept of fluency is related to formulaic language. Various approaches to teaching collocations and attending research are examined, showing both why a corpus-based approach has not been popularly undertaken, and how theoretical aspects from corpus-based approaches could be

introduced without using concordancing software. The lacuna of research on teaching and learning German collocations in the foreign language classroom in higher education is of particular concern and is the gap which this research attempts to address through an exploratory approach. This chapter thus also forms part of the planning for the action research.

Chapter 4 explores the theoretical development of blended learning, its relationship to language teaching and CALL, and the subsequent emergence of blended language learning. Blended language learning and second language acquisition theories which inform the teaching approach taken within this context are outlined. Complex systems theory and ecological approaches are expanded upon, as they provide useful theoretical understandings of both blended learning and language teaching.

Chapter 5 outlines the research design following the tenets of traditional action research. Methods of data collection and analysis undertaken for each cycle of action research are presented, as aligned to the research goals. Ethical considerations in the data collection process are taken into account, particularly as this research takes place in an institutional setting where I am an insider. Issues of validity and generalizability in action research are explored.

In Chapter 6, the processes and findings of the research are presented according to a narrative approach, following the two cycles of action research undertaken. Action research necessitates action within the classroom/lecture setting, and thus the design and implementation of the action lectures and materials with a focus on collocation are included within this chapter, as well as findings from questionnaires, interviews and student writing.

In order to analyse the findings from the action research narrative presented in Chapter 6, I return to the theory and theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 4. In Chapter 7 I present a revised Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System diagram and analyse the local blended language learning system from the perspective of complex adaptive systems theory. Examples are drawn from the context of the action research on teaching collocation to exemplify aspects of the system.

Finally, in Chapter 8, instances of best practice in the context of teaching about the concept of collocation and using technology for teaching and learning German in the South African higher education context are outlined. Recommendations for future research and practice are presented in light of the findings discussed and analysed in Chapter 6 and 7.

## ***Chapter 2: Context of the Research – German as a Foreign Language in South African Higher Education***

---

In a context-based approach to language teaching, the local and national context is important in determining the teaching approach (Bax, 2003a), rather than adopting a language teaching methodology with a 'one-size-fits all' attitude. This chapter thus attempts to sketch out the broader research context of German as a Foreign Language (in terms of theoretical developments), as well as the national socio-political context of higher education in South Africa, which plays a role in shaping the local teaching and learning context in German Studies. The local teaching and learning context will be expanded upon in Chapter 6 and 7 as part of the findings and discussion of the research, as situated within the broader disciplinary context and national higher education context laid out in this chapter. As stated by Bax (2003) "context has long been recognized as crucial to language learning, and yet neglected (Bax, 2003, p. 284). Context is central to the action research developed for this dissertation, and all findings are situated in relation to local, national and international contexts in order to develop nuanced local perspectives of teaching and learning German as a foreign language in South African higher education.

### ***2.1 Disciplinary context***

This section outlines what the modern-day discipline of German as a Foreign Language encompasses, both worldwide and in South Africa, and how this aligns with the changing aims of a university, as situated within the historical context of *Germanistik*. *Germanistik* is a general term used to describe "departments and institutes at tertiary educational level that are principally dedicated to the promotion of the German language and culture" (Jaworska, 2009, p. 9; Helbig, *et al.*, 2001). Eventually, the term *Auslandsgermanistik* was used to distinguish it from *Inlandsgermanistik*, which was the *Germanistik* employed in German-speaking countries, and which was regarded as the "model to follow" (Jaworska, 2009, p. 9; Altmayer, 2001). The focus of *Germanistik* was to teach students the German literary canon and culture (thus, grammar was taught only in order to enable students to translate and understand literary texts in the target language – usually by employing the Grammar Translation Method). Thus, historically, in non-German speaking countries (such as South Africa), students were expected to arrive at university with a high level of language competency (in reading and writing) in order to study German literature and implicitly, culture (Weber, *et al.*, 2017, pp. 323-324).

In the 1970s, the type of students studying German abroad and their underlying motivations began to change, with more students enrolling for German from the beginner level. Whether *Auslandsgermanistik* should follow the same method and content as that of *Germanistik* in Germany was questioned by critics regarding its relevance for modern day society (Altmayer, 2001). In response to this, *Auslandsgermanistik* started undergoing changes in the 1970s (Witte, 2003, p. 172; Kussler, 2001). In the language teaching component, there was a shift from the notion of grammatical correctness to communicative competence, emphasising the role of communication as the ultimate goal of foreign language teaching (Dobstadt & Riedner, 2014, pp. 19-20; Kramersch, 2014, p. 301). Gradually, German Studies as an interdisciplinary subject in non-German speaking countries began to materialise (particularly in the US), placing less focus on literature, more focus on language communication and introducing more cultural and social topics with a focus on the 20<sup>th</sup> century, studying German and Germany from an outside perspective (Jaworska, 2009; Ernst Klett Sprachen, 2017; Simon-Pelanda, 2001).

Consequently, many more tertiary educational institutions in South Africa and worldwide now offer German from the beginner (*ab initio*) level, so as to afford more students the opportunity to study German without prior knowledge or schooling (Witte, 2003, p. 172; Kussler, 2001; Annas, 2003, p. 181). This shift was caused by two factors; as described by Mühr (2009, p. 216), on the one hand, the past 20 years saw a shift with far fewer mother-tongue German speakers registering for German at University (Annas, 2003), on the other hand, the number of beginner students with no prior knowledge enrolling for German increased.

This change in the focus of German Studies reflects the changing aims of education in general, which are shifting towards vocational outcomes and ‘employability’, whereas traditionally the university was concerned with the development of critical thinking skills and the pursuit of knowledge “for its own sake” (Sin, *et al.*, 2019, p. 2). In South Africa, as well as globally, this has to do historically with the fact that university education was once reserved for an elite few, whereas now there has been a shift towards making tertiary university education available to all (massification) as an aspect of structural transformation (Le Grange, 2011, p. 5)<sup>4</sup>. Universities now are tasked with catering to the needs of

---

<sup>4</sup> University education in South Africa was under pressure to restructure and reform after the great political changes which occurred in 1994 with the end of apartheid. 2001 to 2004 saw the conversion and re-grouping of smaller institutions into larger ones, and the re-naming of all higher education institutions as ‘universities’ (Annas, 2016). Three types of universities (defined as accredited, degree-granting, post-secondary institutions) arose from this process: firstly, traditional universities which remained as they had been – offering theoretically-oriented university degrees – of which there are now 12; secondly, technical universities, offering vocationally-oriented diplomas and degrees, of which there are now eight; and lastly a third type, the comprehensive university, which offers a combination of the traditional and technical university degree types and of which there are now six (Annas, 2016, p. 106).

students who seek to become employable in the competitive labour market, rather than seeking out personal enlightenment or *Bildung* (Sin, *et al.*, 2019, p. 2). This has meant an increased focus on vocational skills, which has impacted particularly the perceived value of subjects in the Humanities and Social Sciences (Higgins, 2014, p. 77). It is within this context that a pragmatic emphasis on language acquisition in German Studies at the tertiary educational level has emerged, in order to legitimise the place of German as an academic discipline in Higher Education (Weber, *et al.*, 2017, pp. 323-324; Kramersch, 2014, p. 301; Hamann, 2009, p.196), alongside its role in developing intercultural competencies and contributing to research and epistemology (Hamann, 2009, p. 196; Okazaki, 2005). For foreign language disciplines in the age of capitalism, it is now postulated that knowledge of a foreign language “adds value” to students’ prospects (Heller & Duchêne, 2012, p. 2), not only to meet consumer needs through communication, but also affording students “additional symbolic power and prestige” (Kramersch, 2014, p. 301). For academics negotiating the changing role of the university in the highly complex age in which we live, employability is not viewed simply as “getting a job”, but about learning, and above all having students develop critical, reflective abilities, (Okazaki, 2005, p. 174) which empower and enhance the student as a “lifelong learner” (Sin, *et al.*, 2019, p. 2).

Given the historical context described above, German as a foreign language (GFL, or in German *DaF*, *Deutsch als Fremdsprache*), emerging in the 1970s (Wierlacher, 2003, p. 8; Helbig, *et al.*, 2001, p. 1), is a relatively new independent academic discipline which aims to “examine and enhance the theory and practice of teaching and learning German as a foreign language” through research (Jaworska, 2009, p. 7). There are four main areas of research interest within the discipline, which often overlap both practically and theoretically, namely: the linguistic orientation, the didactic orientation, the cultural orientation and the literary orientation (Helbig *et al.*, 2001, p. 4; Jaworska, 2009, p. 7). Research in these four areas of the GFL discipline should provide results which have “implications for the optimisation” of teaching and learning German as a foreign language (Jaworska, 2009, p. 7). This dissertation focusses on the linguistic orientation, (*linguistische Ausrichtung* (Helbig *et al.*, 2001, p. 4)) which involves “the analysis of German language and the use of linguistic models for teaching and learning purposes” and the didactic orientation (*lehr- und lernwissenschaftliche Ausrichtung*), which “is primarily concerned with empirical investigations into the processes of teaching and learning GFL” (Jaworska, 2009, p. 7).

While arguably the German language and the teaching thereof constitutes the core of the discipline, the area of research which seeks to examine and enhance the teaching and learning of the German language seems to have been undervalued by *Germanisten*, which is reflected in research outputs by GFL scholars (see for example Coleman (2004), and Jaworska (2009, p. 86)). The historical focus on the importance of German literature persists today, and Jaworska (2009) shows that GFL scholars and

researchers in Britain who want to make a career for themselves, are only “taken seriously” if they devote their research to the study of literature. Investigations of the research outputs of South African German scholars shows a similar emphasis on literature research<sup>5</sup>. Bauer (2015) writes on German Studies and GFL in the wider African context, stating that “[w]ith regard to research, there is presently a clear emphasis on literature studies and (to a smaller extent) on the intercultural and multilingual classroom” (Bauer, 2015, p. 624). Bauer (2015, p. 624) also notes that “the practice of GFL teaching/learning provides a great deal of further interesting research opportunities”, particularly research that provides results that are suited to the contextual needs of multilingual African classrooms, and which address the growing expansion of computer literacy across the continent<sup>6</sup>.

Thus, Jaworska (2009) argues that research regarding the didactics of teaching and learning German as a foreign language has not received the same prestige as literary studies, and the studies are not as prominent, as scholars do not perceive the same prestige in this type of research. As argued by Jaworska (2009), the lack of focus on didactic research is problematic, as there is a mismatch between what is expected by students on the one hand (novel teaching methods, suited to the context, which will produce excellent results within the set time period of study), and what the lecturers are researching. This was shown in a study undertaken by Jaworska (2009) in Britain where she compared the research interests of German Studies staff across universities in Britain and contrasted these research interests with what the German sections were offering students on their websites. Ideally, one’s teaching should feed into one’s research, and research should support teaching in higher education (Ashwin, 2015). There is however a general attitude in higher education where teaching is seen to be a lesser pursuit than research (Leech, 1997, p. 2). As the goal of the discipline is primarily to help learners acquire German language competence (particularly in the current context of higher education as discussed in the sections above), the study of the German language and the didactics thereof should receive higher prominence (Glück, 2002 cited by Jaworska, 2009). This calls for more research on applied linguistics and GFL (Jaworska, 2009, p. 89), particularly in areas of SLA research which have been well-researched for English but have received little attention for German, for example research on formulaic language and collocations (see Vyatkina, 2016b, p. 159; Krummes &

---

<sup>5</sup> One can see this for example in the outputs of the *Acta Germanica*, the official, accredited journal of the SAGV, the *Germanistenverband im südlichen Afrika*.

<sup>6</sup> Pertinent to note here is that during the time of the Cold War, there was a focus on German linguistic research in African countries that had socialist ties and links to the GDR. The discipline “Linguistik” was prominent in German Studies departments of this era, particularly throughout West Africa as, according to Bauer (2015, p. 626) “Numerous international scholars as well as specialists from various professional fields took training and language courses in East Germany, foremost at the Herder Institute, linked with the Karl-Marx-University in Leipzig [a]nd experts from East Germany assisted in developing curricula at relevant educational institutions in partnering countries”.

Ensslin, 2015, p. 110; Targońska, 2014). Differences between language structures, such as between English and isiXhosa, German or Russian, necessitate research to develop target-language-suited activities (see Vyatkina, 2016b, p. 159; Krummes & Ensslin, 2015) and contrastive language activities suited to the learners' mother-tongue (Bahns, 1993). This research attempts to address this gap for German, particularly for German as a foreign language in South Africa, where students have a variety of mother-tongues, however the institutional language of instruction is English. This research presents instances of best practice of how to address contrastive teaching of collocations in a multilingual African context, summarized in Chapter 8.

## *2.2 Language teaching methods in GFL*

Following on from the above, highlighting the linguistic and didactic orientations of the GFL discipline, it is necessary to situate this research within the historical context of how German as a Foreign Language has been taught, how is it taught now, and what underlying theories of second language acquisition have underpinned different approaches. Language teaching methodology is by necessity interdisciplinary, drawing on theories/ideas of language and culture which influence what to teach and educational theories of how to teach, and including the neurosciences, psychology and cognitive sciences to understand what happens in the mind of the learner (Balboni, 2005). Globally, there have thus been numerous pedagogical approaches which rest on theories of language and of language learning (see Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Ellis, 2005; Long, 2017). According to Balboni (2005, p. 24) the epistemological hierarchy in language teaching methodology follows: approach – method – technique. Balboni (2005, p. 24) defines an approach as “a philosophy of language, of the student (and hence the teacher), and of the syllabus, as well as the context in which we define the scientific premises for ‘methods’ which can render an approach operative”. Methods may lead to techniques which are exercises and activities used to achieve the objectives of the method and approach (Balboni, 2005, p. 24).

As stated above, German as a foreign language in South Africa and elsewhere was usually taught in the grammar translation tradition (Weber, *et al.*, 2017, pp. 323-324), as were many other foreign languages. The focus was on learning grammar and vocabulary, in order to translate and understand literary texts (and texts on culture and history), reflecting the focus on literature of the discipline at that time. The research focus in the 1960s turned to how second languages are acquired, as advances in psychology and linguistics took place (Ellis, 2005, p. 210; Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013; Larsen-Freeman, 2007, p. 774). Theories, particularly in the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), placed an emphasis on communication, leading to approaches to teaching which were radically different from the grammar translation method of the past (Larsen-Freeman, 2007, p. 774),

“die sogenannte kommunikative Wende” (Steinig & Huneke, 2007, p. 63). These approaches<sup>7</sup> were grounded in a behaviourist view of learning, and a structural view of language (Larsen-Freeman, 2007, p. 774). The audio-visual and audio-lingual methods are an example of this, as well as the direct method the silent way (which attempted to mirror childhood language acquisition), where listening and speaking were the key competencies emphasised, rather than reading and writing (Balboni, 2005, p. 25).

In Germany the social context of the 1960s (which saw an influx of *Gastarbeiter* from initially Italy, Spain, Greece and Turkey) also meant there was an increased emphasis on language teaching to help assimilate migrants into Germany (Ernst Klett Sprachen, 2017) – much as in the United States of America, where language teaching was spurred on by the social context of needing to educate soldiers in Foreign language competence for battle in foreign countries (Littlejohn, 2012). For the first time German foreign language (GFL) teaching had to deal with a target audience who had no or little foreign-language learning experience, but for whom the foreign language was existentially important (Ernst Klett Sprachen, 2017). Technology advanced in the 1960s and computers were developed which lent themselves to the stimulus-response didactics of the day (Littlejohn, 2012, p. 286). The approaches and methods developed for English were adopted for teaching German, a trend which has continued in *DaF* history, given that TEFL/TESOL is a much larger field of research because of a larger target audience (Ernst Klett Sprachen, 2017). Within Germany, the Goethe Institute invested in *Sprachlabore* which were called *elektronische Klassenzimmer*, where students could listen to and repeat language segments for basic communicative activities (Ernst Klett Sprachen, 2017). As will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3, these types of activities have been pejoratively termed the “drill and kill” method, as students were often bored with the repetitive exercises (Warschauer & Healey, 1998, p. 57).

In the 1970s independent research for *DaF* began taking place outside of Germany (Helbig *et al.*, 2001, p. 1) (see sections on *Auslandgermanistik*), and methods shifted from drill exercises to communication-focused learner-orientated didactics (including a recognition of varying learning styles). This shift was part of the development of an approach to language teaching termed communicative language teaching (CLT).

CLT appeared to make up for the deficiency of the audiolingual method and the so-called grammatical approach which heavily focused on receptive skills and language structures. The problem was quite evident – after spending many hours learning a language learners fail to

---

<sup>7</sup> As Balboni (2005, p. 25) points out “If we look at the history of LTM in the 20th century we can see that grammar-translation, the direct method, and the reading method (although traditionally called ‘methods’), as well as the audio-lingual, structuralist, communicative and natural approaches, are all in fact ‘approaches’, in the sense that they are full-blown theories of language education”.

communicate which led to ‘communication’ becoming a buzz word in teaching and linguistics in the late 1960s. (Didenko & Pichugova, 2016, p. 1)

CLT attempted to adopt theories and ideas from applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and philosophy to create an approach to language teaching whose aim was “communicative competence” in the target language (Didenko & Pichugova, 2016). However, scholars in the field of CLT failed to agree on many fundamental underlying ideas such as what constituted communicative competence, and while the theoretical development of CLT was still underway, a variety of rather restrictive practices flourished (such as teaching only speaking, or no grammar at all), leading to many failed practices and much criticism of CLT as a teaching approach (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). One criticism for example is that CLT over-emphasises communication, which is simply one aspect of language learning (others being fluency, comprehension, grammatical knowledge etc.), and that it promotes language fossilization (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). CLT’s focus on methodology and communication as a “magic solution for all our pupils”, was thus further criticised as having little or no regard for contextual factors (Bax, 2003a, p. 281). “By focusing our attention on what the teacher should do, it inevitably draws attention away from the context in which the teacher is operating” (Bax, 2003a, p. 281).

Examples of how the philosophy of “teaching aimed at real-life communication” influenced coursebooks of this period for German, can be seen in the attempt to make a shift from what were classified as “realitätsferne, inhaltlich banale [...] blutleere Lehrbuchdialoge” (Ernst Klett Sprachen, 2017) to the inclusion of so called authentic texts, from real life situations (Ruthner, 2013, p. 209). These authentic or genuine texts<sup>8</sup> did however present a challenge to students as they may have contained language above the level of learners’ current competence (which leads to questions about the nature of input in language learning Krashen’s hypothesis of comprehensible input). Textbook publishers reasoned: “Besser partielle Überforderung statt tödlicher Langweile” (Ernst Klett Sprachen, 2017).

The dominance of the communicative approach worldwide also had an effect on the German Foreign Language curriculum of the 1970s and 1980s in South Africa, which had until then followed the traditional grammar-translation approach, with little emphasis on communicative skills. Kussler (2001) expands on this:

1985 brachte ein revidierter Lehrplan Bewegung in den DaF-Unterricht, wie er sich in der ersten Jahrhunderthälfte als Bildungsfach etabliert hatte und seit den fünfziger Jahren im Korsett der sog. „christlich-nationalen Erziehung“ des Apartheidregimes zunehmend erstarrt war. Schon der Lehrplan von 1973 hatte Völkerverständigung zum Leitziel erhoben und

---

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 3 for further discussion on authenticity and genuineness in language learning texts.

kommunikative Ziele gesetzt, aber die entsprechenden inhaltlichen Konsequenzen daraus zog erst der Lehrplan, der 1985 in Kraft trat. Er machte Ernst mit den Konzepten „interkulturelle Kommunikationsfähigkeit“, „Landeskunde“ und „Lernerorientierung“. Methodisch setzte er einen kommunikativen Ansatz voraus. (Kussler, 2001, p. 1612)

The consequence of this was that many teachers felt “verunsichert oder überfordert“ (insecure and overwhelmed) by the methodological guidelines which had the goal of “communication skills”, lamenting the loss of the educational influence of German grammar and the German literary classics (Kussler, 2001, p. 1612). With this change in curriculum however, „überschritt DaF in Südafrika in der Folgezeit allmählich die Schwelle von einem intrakulturellen Bildungsfach zu einem interkulturellen Verständigungsfach“ (Kussler, 2001, p. 1612). German teachers in South Africa looked to German speaking countries and encouraged comparisons with the local situation, which had an emancipatory function, particularly at the so-called coloured schools, as the curriculum had connections with international developments (Kussler, 2001, p. 1612). The secondary school textbooks for the five years of German for beginners , “Deutsch ZA” (Skorge *et al.* 1984), resulted from the extension of German as a school subject at the coloured schools, and put into practice the intercultural and communicative concepts of the new curriculum.

Es tut dies (wie Vf. als Mitautor gern einräumt) stellenweise eher schlecht als recht. Aber nur böswillige Kritiker (wie Welz 1989a) werden grundsätzlich bestreiten wollen, daß es einerseits den neuen Ansatz praktikabel macht, andererseits den Blick auf die fremde Kultur richtet und zum Vergleich mit der eigenen einlädt. (Kussler, 2001, p. 1613)

According to Kussler (2002, p. 1613), the curriculum adopted in 1995 largely smoothed out the unevenness of its predecessor, by accommodating to “outcome-based education”, to which the South African education system has been reorienting itself since then. As highlighted in the introduction, the current dominant ideas worldwide are that one should take an approach to foreign language teaching guided by context, and that there is no one suitable approach or method for foreign language teaching. However, as will be seen below, and highlighted in Chapter 3, language coursebooks often inform, to some extent, a curriculum and teachers are tasked with the responsibility of adapting them to the context.

Despite the turn in the 1970s towards *Auslandsgermanistik* and research produced for German teaching outside of Germany, Germany remains the centre of development for most *DaF* teaching and learning materials, and these are shaped by the language learning needs of students as described above. These materials are then often exported and used in other language-learning contexts, regardless of the fact that they may be not wholly suitable for the new context, and the often-diverse range of foreign language learners. As discussed above, there have been efforts made in the South African context to produce locally relevant materials, for example a range of communicative method textbooks developed in South Africa for South African pupils in the 1980’s (Skorge *et al.* 1984).

However, these have fallen out of use since the 1990s and the survey conducted with university lecturers of German for the purposes of this dissertation revealed a use of primarily imported materials created by German publishers.

Similar to the case of the relatively young field of second language acquisition research, language learning materials, which are the vehicle through which learners receive much or most of their language input and practice, received very little attention in the field of applied linguistics before the 1990s (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 144) whereas now materials development is its own field of study. Guiding principles for materials development have been devised according to second language acquisition theory (see Tomlinson 1998, 2010). Tomlinson (2010) asserts that materials should be “coherent and principled applications of: i) theories of language acquisition and development, ii) principles of teaching, iii) our current knowledge of how the target language is actually used, iv) the results of systematic observation and evaluation of materials in use.” (Tomlinson, 2010, p. 1).

An example of six principles for materials development based on SLA theory can be seen below:

- Expose the learners to language in authentic use;
- Help learners to pay attention to features of authentic input;
- Provide the learners with opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purposes;
- Provide opportunities for outcome feedback;
- Achieve impact in the sense that they arouse and sustain the learners’ curiosity and attention;
- Stimulate intellectual, aesthetic and emotional involvement.

(Tomlinson, 2010, p. 1).

Tomlinson (2010, p. 1) maintains the position that “materials should not be random recreations from repertoire nor crafty clones of previously successful materials”. Nevertheless, commercial materials designers do not always base their materials on current research, preferring to utilise ‘tried and tested’ exercises which users expect, copied for example from best-selling textbooks in an ad hoc fashion (Tomlinson, 2013). Current trends in commercial materials development include increasingly generic content in order to make materials marketable to a wide range of learners, or to the biggest group of learners of that language. Developers continue to “provide users with the materials they expect” and Tomlinson forecasted in 2012 that “institutions and countries will decide that the only way to develop locally appropriate materials is to do it themselves” (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 121). This is however a herculean task to undertake for any teacher or researcher, particularly without the funding and support for such an endeavour. Adaptations and additions to existing materials seem the most practical solutions.

As computer technology has progressed, more materials are delivered electronically through computers and smartphones and are able to be accessed online. This may allow teachers and students more opportunities for agency in finding and adapting resources for their specific needs, or for creating their own materials in collaboration with learners and students. The opportunities for adaptation allowed for by technological advances is thus an important aspect in current discourses of materials development, which will be returned to in the course of this chapter, as it has been suggested that the appropriate and carefully considered use of technology as a tool to facilitate teaching and learning can allow for a positive transformation in pedagogical practice (Neary-Sundquist, 2015, p. 208; Jaffer, *et al.*, 2007).

Thus, there is a need for context-specific research in the discipline of foreign language teaching. Worldwide, foreign language teaching has been affected by the trends of globalisation, marketization and the dominance of English (McGuiness-King, 2003; Kramersch, 2014; Larsen-Freeman, 2018). German as a foreign language is not a homogenous discipline but is influenced by regional factors (such as teachers, access to mother-tongue speakers/culture, language policy, historical and ideological elements in former colonies) which must be examined in context (Neuner, 2001, p. 37). This can be seen in the case of GFL in South Africa (Von Maltzan, 2009) and will be expanded on in the following section. As advocated for by Kramersch (1997, 2014) and Larsen-Freeman (1997, 2018) there is a need for context-specific approaches which advance the theory and practice of teaching German as a foreign language (Neuner, 2001, p. 37). Theory should derive from real-life practice, in order to develop appropriate praxis “constrained and inspired as it is by its own context” (Edge & Richards, 1998, p.572), such as is the aim of this study, situated within a particular South African context.

What stands out in the overview of coursebooks (Ernst Klett Sprachen, 2017), is the move away from (or simply lack of) theory underlying the creation of materials over the passing of time. This observation is mirrored in SLA literature, which notes that while the origins of SLA lie in classroom understanding practice of the 1960s (and addressing issues therewith), SLA soon become its own field of enquiry, with an independent scientific rationale taking many diverse approaches to answering the question of how learners acquire language (Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013). Researchers and applied linguists now ask: “What kind of connections should this now relatively independent research field maintain with its language teaching origins?” (Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013, p. 290). Some areas of theory do interface with language teaching, and the field of instructed second language acquisition in particular (Ellis, 2005), has examined language learning in instructional settings and sought to provide teachers with practical guidance based on empirical research, and stimulate teacher reflection. This will be returned to in Chapter 4 where some general principles for instructed second language acquisition are examined. Some examples of current areas of interest for classroom teaching include: the role of

explicit learning, recasts and negative evidence, scaffolding and microgenesis, and language socialization (see Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013, pp. 290-291).

Many of these topics are addressed in studies with a focus on English as second or foreign language, and far less studies are undertaken globally for other foreign languages, including German, as will be further explored in Chapter 3. As stated in the introduction to this dissertation, the interface of theory and practice is of particular interest in this study. In this dissertation I examine both the role of technology in teaching and learning German as a foreign language in the research context, as well as a neglected aspect of *DaF* didactics, the teaching and learning of collocations and formulaic language.

### *2.3 Foreign languages in South African higher education*

The following section briefly explores German as a Foreign language in the South African context. This is in order to introduce the local (national) context of the dissertation, and some of the underlying issues within this context which contributed to the design of the research project. The teaching and learning of German in South Africa is not neutral. In a postcolonial, multilingual environment such as South Africa, where not all languages have historically had the same prestige (Mesthrie, 2002; Slabbert & Finlayson, 2002, p. 242), one must pay special attention to critically reflecting on why, how, to whom and in what setting a foreign language is taught (Ferreira-Meyers & Horne, 2017; Weber, *et al.*, 2017; Von Maltzan, 2009). South Africa is home to a variety of diverse languages which make up “the modern South African language mosaic” (Mesthrie, 2002, p. 3), including “Khoesan, Bantu, Afrikaans, English, Sign Language, German (as a representative of European languages, other than the two official ones) and Indian languages (as representing some of the changes undergone by multilingual Asian communities that came to South Africa)” (Mesthrie, 2002, p. 3).

South Africa was colonised in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by the British and Dutch as it presented a good stop-over point on long trade routes between Europe and Asia. This of course had a drastic effect on the indigenous languages, as colonisers brought with them their languages of their countries of origin. According to Mesthrie (2002), South Africa presents a different case to that of other colonised countries (such as Australia and Canada for example) in terms of language use and policy. During Apartheid, the white minority government sought to enforce Afrikaans and English as the main official languages, though these were only spoken as an L1 by a minority of speakers. The majority of South Africans spoke, and still speak an indigenous African language as their mother tongue, and bilingualism or multilingualism is common. Many speakers are “plurilingually” competent, meaning that they use their language and corresponding cultural knowledge, to communicate with others in diverse situations (Ferreira-Meyers & Horne, 2017).

In 1994 South Africa adopted a multilingual language policy, which added nine indigenous African languages to the official list which had before then consisted of only Afrikaans and English (Mesthrie, 2002; Von Maltzan, 2009, p. 205). While the majority of South Africans are mother-tongue African language speakers, the indigenous African languages are often not valued as languages of learning by mother-tongue speakers. English is thus currently the dominant medium of instruction in South Africa which mirrors international trends of the dominance of English (Kaschula & Maseko, 2014, p. 14). As stated by McGuinness-King (2003) English has become entrenched worldwide as “the language of choice for academia, business, science and popular culture” (McGuinness-King, 2003, p. 21). There are currently drives for the intellectualisation of the African languages, in order to increase their perceived value as languages of education and business, rather than being limited to being spoken in home environments (Kaschula & Maseko, 2014). Foreign languages such as German and French have maintained a tentative place in the secondary and tertiary education context (Von Maltzan, 2009), as will be expanded upon below.

German as a foreign language in South Africa has thus been shaped by the changing historical socio-political climate (Kussler, 2001; Witte, 2003; Von Maltzan, 2009). According to Kussler (2001, p. 1609) institutionalised German teaching has been present in South Africa from as early as 1830, and became more widespread towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Kussler, 2001, p. 1611). From 1948 to 1991 South Africa was governed under the Nationalist Party apartheid regime which resulted in division of education for the race groups (CHE, 2007). This influenced the way in which university education in South Africa was structured, and this in turn had its effects on the teaching of German, which was offered only at all traditional white-only universities until the 1960s, after which German was offered at University Colleges for ‘non-whites’ (Kussler, 2001, p. 1615).

De Kadt (2002) provides the historical context for this shift in an overview of the demography and social history of German speakers in South Africa, stating that “German settlers featured prominently in white South Africa from the start of the settlement at the Cape: it is estimated that at the end of the eighteenth century more than half of the white population of the Cape was of German descent” (De Kadt, 2002, p. 148). These first settlers readily assimilated into other cultural and language groups, but the later settlers (military, missionary and farmers) of the mid-nineteenth century formed pockets of German communities, which encouraged the formation of German schools (De Kadt, 2002).

Students who matriculate from German schools in South Africa, however do not necessarily enrol for German at university level (Annas, 2003; Mühr, 2009). As described in earlier sections, German is now often learnt at universities in South Africa by *ab initio* students, with varied motivations (Berndt, 2013; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003) (including a perceived added value through knowing a foreign language, or simply a “love of the language and culture” or “because I have a German friend” as some students

reported in 2018 and 2019 (see Chapter 6)). Moreover, the demographics of university students are changing given the structural transformation currently taking place particularly as a result of the “#FeesMustFall” protests in 2016 (see Allais, 2017). This has meant many more socio-economically disadvantaged students now have access to tertiary education. Consequently, the demographics of students learning German as a Foreign Language at institutions of higher education in South Africa are also changing, although little has been reported on these statistics (Annas, 2016). As stated previously, students may see German as a subject which offers useful opportunities either to study abroad or to work at German run companies in South Africa. In Chapter 6 the backgrounds of the students in the local research context are reported on, as well as a brief overview of their motivations for learning German (Ryan & Dörnyei, 2013). This contextual background is important in the South African context as the many challenges to student success are largely attributed to socio-political factors, which are often linked to race and the systemic inequalities in South Africa entrenched during apartheid (Boughey, 2013).

In the South African higher education landscape there are currently 26 universities, which cater to over one million students (DHET, 2013). Presently, German (Studies) is offered at only eight of the 26 universities in South Africa, these are as follows: Rhodes University (RU), Stellenbosch University (SU), University of Cape Town (UCT), University of the Western Cape (UWC), North-West University (NWU), University of the Free State (UFS), University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), and the University of Pretoria (UP) (Annas, 2016, pp. 107-113). Numbers remain small but constant across institutions, and in 2016 there were 969 German undergraduates and 19 German postgraduates in total across South Africa (Annas, 2016, p. 116). In terms of the university structure, German Studies sections have been incorporated into larger language schools and departments offering undergraduate and postgraduate degree qualifications.

Despite the clear scope for teaching German in South Africa (as set out above in terms of historical significance and policy), the teaching and learning of German and other foreign languages (such as French and Portuguese) is often absent from “debates regarding local language ecology and multilingualism in South Africa” (Ferreira-Meyers & Horne, 2017) at both the school and university level (Weber, *et al.*, 2017). As Weber *et al.* (2017, p. 323) highlight, drives for multilingualism in South Africa do not seem to take foreign languages into account, and may in fact be actively hostile towards the teaching of foreign languages. Weber *et al.* (2017, p. 323) draw on Banda’s (2009) explanation of the distinction between African and Western conceptualisations of multilingualism as a possible reason for this misnomer, as “African multilingualism” refers to “related (Bantu) dialects”, while “Western multilingualism” “often involves unrelated languages” (Banda 2009, p. 5). Moreover, because the indigenous African languages have been traditionally undervalued, some may see any

value placed on a colonially-based foreign language as inherently wrong, and a diversion of resources. This is however a very narrow view, which does not take into account current contexts, the wants and needs of students, and the functions of a university at the basic level (Weber, *et al.*, 2017). As Weber *et al.* (2017, p. 323) point out, the functions of the university which are to provide “new applications for existing knowledge ... [validating] knowledge and values through their curricula ... [and providing] opportunities for social mobility” (DHET, 2013, p. 27) show a clear scope for teaching German.

Ferreira-Meyers & Horne (2017) clearly show how a knowledge of multiple languages and cultures can benefit South African learners as they interact with others in different situations, referred to as “plurilingual competence”:

If one is plurilingually and pluriculturally competent, one can link resources in several languages/language varieties to solve problems in less known languages/varieties, one positions oneself as an attentive interlocutor in exolingual exchanges (where interlocutors do not share the same linguistic and cultural repertoires – as is certainly the case in South Africa) and one is able to associate, confront and articulate diverse experiences of plurality to transform them in competence. Finally, this requires a reflexiveness of one’s linguistic and cultural environment. (Ferreira-Meyers & Horne, 2017, pp. 32-33)

Similarly, Weber & Domingo (2011) and Weber (2015) have shown through case studies how learning the German language in South Africa, and thereby gaining an awareness of the German culture (as it is different and similar to our students’ own contexts) heightens students’ intercultural awareness, and thereby their intercultural competence (Weber & Domingo, 2011; Weber, 2015).

Linguistic research also points to the value of learning a second or foreign language in increasing one’s own metalinguistic awareness (Canagarajah, 2011). Metalinguistic skills such as a knowledge of grammatical rules and linguistic concepts can aid students to become life-long language learners, who are also able to critically self-reflect on the structures of their own language in a way in which monolingual speakers are not able to do. This is also part of the reason why grammar is still taught at university level, as it helps to achieve accuracy of language production and helps students to understand language systems in a way that few students would grasp through language input alone (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 251). Metalinguistic awareness is thus an important skill for the life-long language learner and is a focus of the research methodology.

The above sections have shown the role that the teaching and learning of foreign languages can play in the South African context, and this dissertation seeks to contribute to this body of knowledge, seeking to improve on foreign language teaching methods, particularly within the context of South African Higher education. In Chapter 6 and 7 it will be shown how explicitly teaching linguistic concepts in English, to a multilingual class of foreign language German students, and asking students to draw on their own linguistic backgrounds (which are often undervalued) to understand the concept and

apply it to the German language, can play a role in cultivating critically reflective graduates. Direct learning support in terms of how to access and use technology for language learning purposes is also shown to be beneficial.

A further issue that warrants mention here as part of the context of South African higher education is the increased use of technology for teaching and learning purposes, especially at the university level. ICT competence is required of graduates in the current global information society. However, many managers, teachers and learners remain unconfident and uncreative, unable to use technology to achieve personal goals and participate in the global community (Bozalek, *et al.*, 2013). In South Africa, this can be attributed in some ways to the inequality of access to resources, which has been termed the “digital divide” (Fuchs & Horak, 2008), or “digital divides”, where it is seen as more of a continuum, recognising numerous divides “split along multiple technological and social, and value chain divisions” (Heeks, 2018, p. 85). The digital divide is said to exist on a global scale, with the gap between both access to technology and the type of technology used, evident between countries in the ‘Global North’ and countries in the ‘Global South’ (Fuchs & Horak, 2008), and further recognised within countries, often linked to social factors such as income, age, ethnicity, gender, disability, geography and education (Heeks, 2018, pp. 86-87).

Despite the challenges to technology access, distribution and use described above, South African scholars have explored the role of ICTs in higher education in South Africa, as a strategy to address teaching and learning challenges (Jaffer, *et al.*, 2007; Bozalek, *et al.*, 2013). These scholars, similarly to others worldwide, highlight that the effective use of technology should be driven by educational needs, and not simply by a drive to use technology for its own purpose. Jaffer *et al.* (2007, p. 131) argue that the most important facet of effective ICT implementation is that the teaching and learning is *contextualised* (own emphasis). They however remark that “in South Africa, contextualisation of teaching and learning requires a tightrope walk between higher education imperatives and social-cultural context of the educational landscape”. The importance of developing ICT for nationwide benefit is outlined in the 2016 National Integrated ICT Policy White Paper. This White Paper draws on the goals of National Development Plan to be achieved by 2030, which include the development of ICT as contributing to “building a more inclusive society in order to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality in the country” (DTPS, 2016, p. 9). The National Development Plan states that “By 2030, ICT will underpin the development of a dynamic and connected information society and a vibrant knowledge economy that is more inclusive and prosperous” (DTPS, 2016, p. 9). Thus at both the higher education level, as well as the nationwide level, ICT development is seen as a key factor in ensuring positive transformation.

In a rare study which addresses the use of technology for transforming teaching German as a foreign language, De Kock (2015) reports on a case study the use of existing technology for teaching beginner German at the University of the Western Cape in 2013. UWC is a historically coloured university with a diverse range of students who have varying technological abilities (De Kock, 2015, p. 55). De Kock (2015) critically reflects on her attempts as a lecturer to transform a first-year German language acquisition course “by introducing technology as a teaching and learning tool”, thus “making the learning experience more meaningful to the 21st century learner” (De Kock, 2015, p. 54). This was undertaken through using the online university learning management system more frequently as part of the course and encouraging students to use their mobile devices for uploading homework in either text or audio format for feedback.

Ultimately however, De Kock (2015, p. 54) concludes that “[a]lthough both the lecturer and the students invested an enormous amount of effort and time in the project it remains unclear whether the Western concept of the 21st century learner and classroom methodology is equally valuable and meaningful to students from South(ern) Africa, with different cultural values and limited access to advanced technology”. De Kock’s (2015) study points to the ongoing difficulties faced by both students and lecturers in the South African context trying to transform practice with technology, where there are many challenges unheard of in the Global North, such as prolonged power-outages and limited access to advanced technology and technology support. These difficulties are returned to in the analysis of blended learning in the research context in Chapter 7.

In Chapter 4, the use of technology for teaching and learning languages, and its role in the possible transformation of language teaching and learning is explored. Theoretical perspectives on the use of technology in language teaching and learning are explored, combined with second language acquisition theory.

In conclusion, the introduction to this dissertation set out the importance of accounting for context in addressing approaches to language teaching. This chapter has explored the theoretical context of teaching German as a foreign language and unpacked the challenges of teaching German at the higher education level within the South African context including methodological approaches and the use of technology. In Chapter 6, the findings are presented exploring the context of the research site (German Studies at Rhodes University) exploring both the approaches and modes of language teaching employed by the lecturers in the section, as well as the approaches and modes of learning undertaken by students. Developing a nuanced understanding of the research context and perspectives from different key players (staff, students and the institution) allowed for a sensitive approach to introducing the concept of collocation within the curriculum of German Studies at Rhodes University as a language teaching and learning strategy as part of this action research.

Chapter 3 expands on a current area of research in second language acquisition, the role of formulaic language and collocations in developing fluency. This has gathered momentum in research for teaching English to speakers of other languages but remains an under-researched area for teaching German as a foreign language. Potential benefits for students of German in the South African context described above are explored.

## ***Chapter 3: Literature Review – Collocation in Language Teaching and Learning***

---

The following chapter outlines the literature on what is said to be a neglected aspect of foreign language teaching and learning, namely: collocation. A brief introduction into usage-based or emergentist models of grammar is presented, together with a short overview of a corpus-linguistics and its influence on language teaching research and methodology, in order to show how these fields have added to the idea that formulaic language, encompassing collocation, is an important aspect of language learning, and thus should be an aspect of language teaching. Key concepts arising from the field of corpus linguistics are defined in terms of their application to language teaching, including frequency, co-occurrence, formulaic language and collocation. Thereafter, the neglect of collocation as a concept in German coursebooks is discussed and situated in traditional language teaching practice. In order to address this gap, scholars have proposed various methods of teaching about collocations and teaching students how to discover them. I therefore present and critically analyse popular approaches cited in the literature, beginning with a corpus-based approach known as data-driven learning. I show that while scholars are enthusiastic about this approach, it holds little traction with teachers given its many technical challenges. Alternative approaches are discussed, which could be applied within the research context. Finally, methods of assessment of learner uptake of concepts are explored.

### *3.1 Usage-based or emergent models of grammar*

As was set out in Chapter 1, foreign language learners struggle to develop a repertoire of idiomatic formulaic language, given the lack of exposure to the target language (Wray, 2000; Pawley & Syder, 1983). Chapter 2 has shown that there is no one current dominant approach to language teaching, and that methods or techniques based on SLA theory should be investigated and applied in context to improve teaching foreign languages. One current trend in SLA research is of the importance of lexicogrammatical units, as seen in the research timelines created by Mitchell, *et al.* (2013), Wray (2013) and Boers & Webb (2018).

So-called usage-based and emergentist models of language see frequency of occurrence of words and “chunks” of language as important both in determining the language system and how it is acquired (Durant, 2008, Behrens, 2009, p. 383). Linguists who have theorised usage-based models of grammar have argued that language is socially situated and therefore, that which is frequent, idiomatic, natural, or socially acceptable in language is of primary concern to the language learner (Behrens, 2009, p.

383; Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013, p. 99). This follows what is known about first-language acquisition, with the view that “language can be learned from language use itself, by means of social skills like joint attention, and by means of powerful generalization mechanisms” (Behrens, 2009, p. 383). Rather than viewing grammar and lexis as two separate entities, usage-based linguists view grammar and lexis as being on the extreme ends of a spectrum with formulaic language falling between the two (Durant, 2008, p. 36; Wray, 2002).

In light of these theoretical views, calls have been made that the frequent pairings between words are an important part of language teaching (rather than isolated vocabulary items taught in lists) (see for example Nattinger & De Carrico, 1992; Lewis, 1993; Boers, *et al.*, 2006;). As stated in Chapter 1, frequent word pairings are known under varying names within differing disciplines, but in this dissertation, I use the term collocation, and clarify on its definition further on in this chapter. There is evidence in SLA literature to suggest that teaching collocations can increase fluency and promote mother-tongue-like language use. Corpora have provided a new medium through which to investigate language which is appropriate to usage-based ideals.

The development of a usage-based view of language teaching corresponded to the increasing capacity of computer-based language processing. Large language corpora were developed which could be stored on computers, and readily analysed through specialised software called concordancers (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). “Representativeness” became a key issue for corpus linguists, as corpora are not random collections of text, but are created with explicit criteria in mind, so that they may be said to be representative of a language or dialect, or any particular subset of language (Mukherjee, 2006, p. 5). The design of corpora and the methods and tools used for analysis have led to increasingly detailed and accurate language descriptions for a wide variety of languages and language sub-sets, although much corpus research originated with the study of English (Vyatkina & Boulton, 2017, p. 1).

Many applied linguists (such as Paquot (2018, p. 1), Römer (2011, p. 205) and others) have argued that corpora have revolutionised language theory and description. For corpus linguists, this data-driven approach to the study of language influenced previous ideas on the relations between words, and the inseparability of grammar and lexis (Römer, 2009, p. 141). The patterned nature of language has become ever more apparent (Römer, 2009, p. 141). Discoveries from corpus-based studies of language have had implications for teaching language, as well as for the study of language acquisition (both areas of focus in this dissertation, as introduced in Chapter 1) (Paquot, 2018; Vyatkina & Boulton, 2017). This will be expanded upon in the following sections.

### *3.2 Corpora in language teaching, indirect and direct uses*

As stated above, large L1 corpora represent language as it is in use, corresponding to an idea of usage-based grammar descriptions. L1 corpora have been used as a source of so-called authentic data, produced by mother-tongue speakers (the notion of authenticity will be returned to in sections below) to inform and develop materials such as coursebooks, grammars, vocabulary lists, learner dictionaries and language tests (Leech, 1997, p. 6; Römer, 2011). This is said to have led to better grammar descriptions, drawing on real-life language data rather than speaker intuitions (Sinclair, 1997, p. 32-34). L1 corpora have provided insights into what should be taught (vocabulary and grammar/lexis and syntax), and in what order, often using frequency of occurrence as a guide. Researchers have also used frequency to compare textbook language to L1-corpora, to establish if the input which learners receive is similar to the native-like target language (see Römer, 2004). Often the focus is on items which are known to be difficult for learners, based on a contrastive analysis of the learner's mother-tongue and the target language (Granger, 2003). Mostly this type of research has been undertaken for English (ESOL), (interestingly often for German learners of English) (see Mindt (1997), and Römer (2004)), but some studies have been undertaken for German, notably by Jones who compares textbook German with authentic spoken German from an L1 German spoken corpus and has examined, among other items, discourse particles and prepositions (Jones, 1997), modal verbs and the passive voice (Jones, 2000).

The direct uses of corpora include their use ("exploitation" (Leech, 1997, p. 5)) by teachers to provide examples for teaching, teaching students to use ("exploit" (Leech, 1997, p. 5)) corpora in the classroom to discover language patterns themselves (known as data-driven learning (Johns, 1991) see Dodd (1997) for an example of exploiting a corpus of German for advanced language learning), and teaching students about corpora and their uses (Leech, 1997, p. 6).

These two aspects of corpus use and research have been depicted by Römer (2011, p.207) as follows:

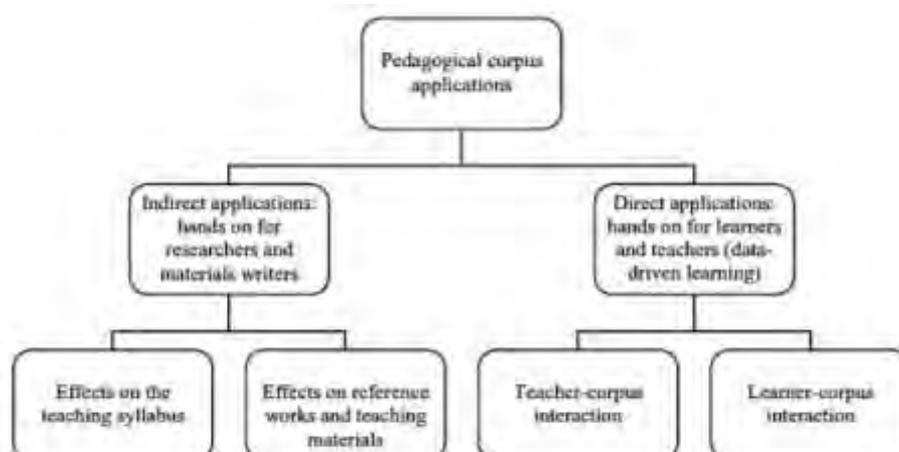


Figure 2: Applications of corpora in language teaching (Römer, 2011, p. 207)

Despite the above research applications and the enthusiasm of the researchers, Römer (2011, p. 206) argues that “much work still remains to be done in bridging the gap between research and practice”, and corpus-based teaching and learning is still not part of mainstream teaching practice (Boulton, 2010, p. 534). Few teachers are aware of corpora and their applications to language teaching and may be reluctant to use them within the classroom especially if divorced from the rest of the (prescribed) teaching materials (Mukherjee, 2004; Breyer, 2009; Römer (2011). Meunier (2011) makes the point that this gap between corpus-based research and practice which exists for English, the most-studied language using corpus methods, “is likely to be even much wider for other languages” (Meunier, 2011, p. 461), as will be shown for the case of German.

The main insights which have been offered by L1 corpora centre around frequency, co-occurrence and authenticity. The following section will explore what corpus linguistics has contributed to the theory and practice of language teaching, and the development of materials, and what types of suggestions researchers offer for improving language teaching practice.

### *3.3 Key concepts: Frequency, co-occurrence, and formulaic language*

As introduced above, frequency information from larger L1 corpora has led to better selection and sequencing of vocabulary for teaching materials (Paquot, 2018, pp. 1-2). Language-teaching approaches which emphasise communicative competence give prominence to those items which language learners are likely to encounter most often (Römer, 2008, pp. 114-115).

Pedagogically orientated lexicography has led to the creation of word lists and dictionaries for language learners, based on large mother-tongue language corpora (Tschirner, 2006, p. 1277). Frequency dictionaries aim to let learners use frequency as a guide for vocabulary learning (see Jones & Tschirner (2006); Sinclair (1987) for examples of frequency dictionaries for German and English). Vocabulary lists may give learners an idea of the vocabulary which they need to know for certain levels of competency. The University of Michigan for example provides such a list (based on the frequency dictionary by Jones & Tschirner (2006)) as a requirement for first-year German students to learn (this is not currently a practice at any of the South African universities, according to personal communication with colleagues in questionnaires conducted for the purposes of this research, see Appendix M).

These lists still largely focus on single words in lexicography and other pedagogic materials such as glossaries (Paquot, 2018, p. 4), although many studies have shown the importance of larger units of language, and the inseparability of lexis and grammar, as was shown in sections above on usage-based and emergentist models of grammar (Pawley & Syder, 1983; Nattinger & De Carrico, 1992; Wray, 2002). Dictionaries also present words on their own (with some examples of application in a phrase),

and coursebook glossaries follow suit, often presenting the translation of a single word and an example of usage (see for example the *Menschen* Glossaries). This is further reflected in the way language is taught traditionally as two separate entities – the grammatical rules on the one hand, and vocabulary (which consists of single words) on the other (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 264). In reality however, researchers have argued that language is an interconnected system with grammar and lexis inextricably linked, with output occurring as lexico-grammatical units (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 264), referred to in the literature by a variety of terms such as “lexical phrases, multiword units, formulas, pre-fabricated chunks, ready-made utterances and so forth” (Boers *et al.*, 2006, p. 246), with many researchers opting for the term “formulaic sequences” as the “overarching term for standardized phraseology” (Boers *et al.*, 2006, p. 246). The multitude of terms points to the difficulty of defining the category.

Formulaic language is defined by Wray (2002, p. 9) as “a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar”. This definition shows the “fuzzy nature” of the category, because, as Boers *et al.* (2006, p. 246) point out, one individual may process a sequence of words differently to another, and while formulaic sequences may be stored holistically in the mental lexicon, they may still be able to be broken down and analysed by the speaker.

Nevertheless, formulaic sequences, as defined above, are believed to be beneficial for language learners for a number of reasons. Because they are believed to be stored holistically, researchers have claimed that they facilitate the fluency of language production (as stated in Chapter 1), by providing “islands of reliability” for the speaker (Conklin & Schmitt, 2012, p. 47). For a language learner they can then offer a “zones of safety” (Boers *et al.*, 2006, p. 247), and reduce the risk of making errors if they are committed to memory “correctly” and used appropriately. Some formulaic sequences are also not predictable from their parts, or grammar, such as idioms. By making use of formulaic sequences, a language learner can sound more idiomatic and thus more like a mother-tongue speaker (Boers *et al.*, 2006, p. 246; Pawley & Syder, 1983). This type of language awareness is important for learners. As stated by Daskalovska (2015) for learners of English as a second or foreign language, there is a subtle difference between ‘making a mistake’ and ‘doing a mistake’, but there is a difference in how the speaker is evaluated, because of their unidiomatic use of the language. Language learning is always as much about power and status as it is about language (Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013), and learners access the power and status of a language through using the correct formulaic sequences in their own language production. Thus, for the foreign-language learner, even though mother-tongue-like competence may

not be their end goal, being able to produce correct idiomatic turns of phrase for even simple communication tasks is of value, as it increases their status as a speaker of the language.

This is not to say that traditional grammar teaching is unimportant; it in fact plays a great role in developing complexity and accuracy of production and is thus a valuable part of language learning (Ellis, 2005). Based on empirical research supporting both of these ideas, Ellis (2005) identified principles for instructed language learning, where the first principle states: “Instruction needs to ensure that learners develop both a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and a rule-based competence” (Ellis, 2005, p. 210).

Wray (2000, p. 463) outlines the difficulty and complexity of the task facing a second language learner:

Gaining full command of a new language requires the learner to become sensitive to the native speakers' preferences for certain sequences of words over others that might appear just as possible. From the bizarre idiom, through the customary collocation, to the turns of phrase that have no other apparent linguistic merit than that 'we just say it that way', the subtleties of a language may floor even the proficient non-native, not so much because of a non-alignment between interlanguage and target language forms, as because the learner lacks the necessary sensitivity and experience that will lead him or her unerringly away from all the grammatical ways of expressing a particular idea except the most idiomatic. (Wray, 2000, p. 463)

Normally, learners will build their repertoire of formulaic sequences, and achieve fluency, through being exposed to enough examples of actual language usage (Ellis & Cadierno, 2009). However, as stated in Chapter 2, there is limited teaching time in FL higher education contexts for language, and thus much of the face-to-face teaching time is devoted to grammar explanations (which are important for accuracy and complexity of learner output (Ellis, 2005, p. 212-213, Larsen-Freeman, 2001)) but cannot provide enough exposure to actual language usage which helps to develop this awareness of the preferred patterns in a given language (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 251). Moreover, research in this research context has shown that students do not engage with much reading on their own outside of the classroom context (Ortner, 2013, 2015, pp. 101-102). Thus, methods are needed to heighten students' awareness of the existence of formulaic language, so that they can both identify formulaic language and make use of it in their language production in order to become more fluent, and sound more idiomatic, thus developing their language intuitions (Gabrielatos, 2005, p. 6).

### *3.3.1 Defining Collocation*

As the above definition of formulaic language is so broad or “fuzzy”, a more concise term is needed for the teaching and learning context to draw teachers and learners' attention to units of language which occur frequently together and which have meanings that are often different to the component parts. The term that I believe is most useful in this context is collocation. As already briefly defined in

Chapter 1, collocation is an aspect of formulaic language and vocabulary knowledge (Wray, 2000, p. 463) and is a common term given to describe “arbitrarily restricted lexeme combinations such as *make a decision* or *fully aware*” (Nesselhauf, 2005, p. 1). Collocation in the simplest sense is co-occurrence, which can be seen in the components of the term: co + location. There have been many suggestions as to how collocation should be defined (Boers & Webb, 2018; Siepmann, 2008; Targońska, 2015), ranging from broad quantitative analysis in corpus linguistics (Sinclair, 1991), to narrow qualitative analysis of meaning in phraseology (Hausmann, 1984). In the following section I review both the broad and the narrow definitions of collocation and the fields from which these definitions arise, to arrive at a definition which I find is useful for the language teaching and learning context.

In the English-speaking world, collocation is most often defined according to a broader definition as first put forward by Firth (1957)<sup>9</sup>, and more recently made popular by corpus linguists, such as Sinclair (1997), who have studied the relations between words in terms of their statistical significance, in a frequency-based approach to analysis (Wray, 2013). Thus, in corpus linguistics, a sequence of words that occurs together more often than would be expected by chance is known as a collocation (Sinclair, 1991, p. 170). A word may have many “collocates”- words that one would expect to find with that word when it occurs in text or speech, which occur in close proximity to the word under investigation (Sinclair, 1991, p. 170). For example, in English it is statistically highly likely that ‘salt’ and ‘pepper’ will occur next to one another, or that the verb ‘ask’ will be followed by the noun ‘question’. Thus, from the corpus-linguistic perspective, collocations are frequent statistically significant pairings of words in close proximity to one another, regardless of the semantic value of these combinations (Boers & Webb, 2018, p. 78). This is a broad view of collocation.

In narrower semantically-based approaches (such as in traditional phraseology) collocation is seen as a stricter grouping between words, where a collocator is linked to a base word (*Kollokator + Basis*), and this creates a new meaning (Targońska, 2015, p. 418; Targońska, 2018, p. 53; Hausmann, 1984). The “base” word is normally used in its literal sense, and determines what the next word will be, which is termed the “collocator”, and which is bound semantically to the base (Firth, 1957; Hausmann, 1984). According to Targońska (2015, p. 417) this definition is most often used in the German-speaking realm, as it was put forward by Hausmann (1984, 1985) as the most suited to foreign language teaching, given that for what he termed true collocations, the collocator cannot be chosen randomly or simply replaced by a synonym. For example: *Zähne putzen* vs. *\*Zähne waschen* (to clean teeth vs. \*to wash teeth) (Targońska, 2015, p. 418); *starker Raucher* vs. *\*kräftiger Raucher* (strong smoker vs. \*powerful

---

<sup>9</sup> Firth is known for popularizing the idea of collocation with the following statement: “You shall know a word by the company it keeps” (Firth, 1957, p. 168 cited in Wray, 2013, p. 320)

smoker); *neue Kartoffeln* vs. *\*junge Kartoffeln* (new potatoes vs. \*young potatoes) (Targońska, 2015, p. 425). In these examples the collocator does not lose its original meaning, but in other examples the meaning of the collocator in the collocation can be different to its original meaning (e.g. *ein Risiko eingehen* (to run the risk of); *eine Entscheidung treffen* (to make a decision)). The collocator can be seen as the "unpredictable" part of the pair (Targońska, 2015, p. 419), which may differ from language to language, and which foreign language learners may have to look up if they do not know it. This is often a source of difficulty for learners as the direct translation of the collocator will not necessarily help a foreign language student to grasp the meaning of the collocation, for example from the examples above one may elicit the following direct translations \*to meet a decision, \*perish/ walk into a risk.

Narrower semantic approaches may not encompass many of the combinations identified by corpus linguists as collocations as true collocations, but would rather refer to these as "free combinations" (as they could possibly be replaced by other synonyms) (Reder, 2013; Targońska, 2015). However, in terms of language learning, researchers have found that so-called free combinations can also pose trouble for learners (Siepmann, 2008, p. 188; Reder, 2013). In a more all-encompassing approach to language theory, Hoey (2005, p. 1) argues for the notion that words (and other units such as morphemes) may be primed for lexical and grammatical collocation, as well as for semantic or pragmatic associations. This approach is in keeping with what is known about the structure of the brain, based on neurological evidence. Siepmann (2008, p.188) shows that learner dictionaries severely neglect semantically transparent formulae which are nevertheless very frequent and argues that this is problematic as research has shown that learners are either not aware of semantically transparent collocations or fail to use them correctly.

Thus, as Targońska (2015, p. 424) argues, in the context of foreign language pedagogy, it is perhaps better to take a more flexible view on collocations, which is orientated toward learners' processes of language learning. The stance taken in this dissertation is specifically tailored to foreign language didactics, and is thus one which is more flexible, recognising collocation as falling between the narrow semantic definition of phraseology and the broad frequency-based definition of corpus linguistics. This is demonstrated in the diagram below. With this definition of collocation in mind, the following sections will further examine why collocations are important for language learners, particularly as an aspect of vocabulary knowledge.

On a scale of fixedness, I take the stance that collocations fall in between idioms which are fixed (and unable to be understood from their component parts) and free combinations, where component parts are interchangeable (following on from Targońska, 2015, p. 424; Siepmann, 2008, p. 188; Reder,

2013). This could be depicted as: Idioms → Collocations → Free combinations, or as in the figure below:

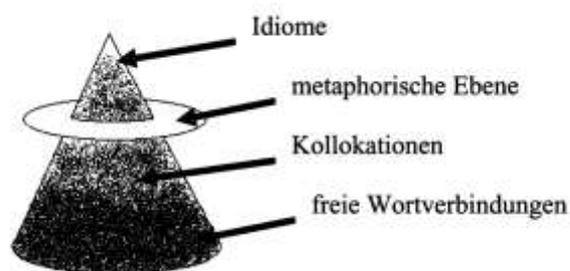


Figure 3: *Lexikalische Einheiten unseres Wortschatzes* (Volungevičienė, 2008, p. 295)

### 3.4 Collocation in German coursebooks, a neglected topic

Knowledge of a word's collocates is an important aspect of vocabulary knowledge (Nation; 2001, p. 27). As stated by Daskalovska (2015), the process of vocabulary acquisition is complex and gradual, as the speaker must develop different types of knowledge about words in order to use them for receptive or productive purposes (Daskalovska, 2015, p. 130). From the point of view of language learning, learning words in isolation and thereafter the rules for how they combine with other words is seen to be inefficient. This method results in interferences from the learner's L1, as they superimpose the single word translations onto the structures of their L1 (Laufer & Girsai, 2008, p. 700), and thus the influence of the learners' L1 plays a role in the types of errors produced by learners, particularly in the production of un-idiomatic phrases. Because of the "pervasive influence that L1 has on the learner lexis and the persistence of L1-based errors at advanced levels of learning" Laufer & Girsai (2008, p. 700) make an argument for contrastive form-focused instruction, "which raises the learners' awareness of the L1–L2 differences and provides practice in the areas of these differences" rather than ignoring cross-linguistic influences.

A growing amount of research shows that second language learners can benefit greatly from learning about collocation as a concept and learning collocations as units (Boers, *et al.*, 2006). However, traditionally there has been a focus on learning single words as vocabulary training, and this trend continues in current textbooks (see Neary-Sundquist, 2015a, Targońska, 2018 expanded on below)<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> In this dissertation I focus on formal teaching and learning contexts, however, there are many opportunistic and informal online offerings for learning German (and many other languages) which make claims that one can learn a language in "hours not years" for example (providing anecdotal evidence to back these claims) (see for example the website "Fluent in 3 Months", 2020). Interestingly, many of these offerings make use of vocabulary trainers with cloze exercises which aim to develop collocational knowledge, although this is not labelled as such. See Chapter 6 and 7 for a further discussion of online resources such as Duolingo and Memrise which were explored during the course of this action research.

This focus on the isolated word does not prepare learners well for looking for the patterns in language (Reder, 2013). Reder (2013), Krummes & Ensslin (2015) and Targońska (2018) are in agreement that teaching German foreign language students about collocations and creating awareness of their ubiquity is an important start to generating fluency.

However, this has still not trickled down to the level of coursebook production and teacher training, particularly for teaching languages other than English<sup>11</sup> (Meunier, 2011). Evidence of this in the case of teaching German as a foreign language can be seen in the work of Targońska (2018), and Neary-Sundquist (2015). Targońska (2018) analysed four German textbooks at the B1 level and showed that collocations are not dealt with effectively, particularly in the case of text-based work where collocation is the most prevalent (Targońska, 2018, pp. 57-58). Targońska (2018) argues that *DaF*-coursebooks should make the topic of collocation in the German language explicit and introduce this for all levels of language learning, even the beginner levels, echoing sentiments expressed by Wray (2002, p. 186-187) and Krummes & Ensslin, (2015, p. 115). Similarly, Neary-Sundquist (2015), who compared vocabulary knowledge in vocabulary activities across five German textbooks, found that there was an overwhelming focus on “form–meaning connections and grammatical functions”, “while ignoring other aspects, such as collocations, word parts, and concept and referents” (Neary-Sundquist, 2015, p. 203). This investigation was based on Nation’s (2001) nine aspects of vocabulary knowledge. In a study of English textbooks, Brown (2011) found similar findings highlighting that across languages, when teaching vocabulary is concerned, there is little focus placed on aspects of vocabulary knowledge such as collocations and constraints on use, whereas form and meaning and grammatical function are consistently addressed (Brown, 2011, p. 83). As summed up by Olexová & Orsolya (2016, p. 107) „Die Lehrbücher behandeln die Kollokationen kaum oder/und nicht bewusst, es fehlen die Übungen und Aufgaben zu dieser Thematik auf allen Sprachstufen“<sup>12</sup>.

There is also a corresponding lack of awareness amongst foreign language teachers of the importance of collocations (Mukherjee, 2004). A possible reason for this, as Targońska, (2014) points out, is that collocations are both syntactically and semantically regular and do not normally violate rules of compatibility, so they do not stand out for the mother-tongue speaker. This means that collocations do not present a problem in terms of language reception (they are easily understood within context), unlike idioms or phrasal verbs which are less transparent (Daskalovska, 2015, p. 130). However,

---

<sup>11</sup> One reason for this is possibly because of the lack of agreement on a concise definition for collocation (with varied approaches adopted in corpus-linguistics and phraseology as described above), and of clear well-defined criteria for identifying collocations.

<sup>12</sup> “The textbooks barely deal with the collocations and / or not consciously, exercises and tasks on this subject are missing at all levels” (Author’s translation).

Daskalovska (2015, p. 130), Targońska (2014, p. 131) and Siepmann (2008, p. 188) highlight that when production rather than comprehension is concerned, collocations form a source of error, as collocations have the potential to be realised differently across different languages. A language learner may choose randomly between synonyms (often based on the L1 structure) leading to errors (Daskalovska, 2015, p. 130; Targońska, 2014, p. 131). The following serve as examples in English: to make a decision, run the risk of, fall in love, and their German equivalents: *eine Entscheidung treffen* (literally: \*to meet a decision, not \**eine Entscheidung machen*), *ein Risiko eingehen* (literally: to take a risk not \**ein Risiko laufen*), *sich verlieben* (literally: to one another love, not \**in Liebe fallen*). Thus, collocations have been neglected in foreign language teaching because they are so normalised and because they can be understood in context (Targońska, 2014, p. 131).

From the above examples one can see that a one-to-one mapping of form does not result in the same meaning. While multilingual speakers (such as our students in South Africa) should be familiar with this concept, they often expect that a one-to-one or word-for-word transfer of meaning from one language to another is possible (Engelbrecht, 2020 in press). This leads to a frequent source of errors (Targońska, 2015, p. 219), and writing in German which may be described as “English dressed as German” (Jaworska, 2011, p. 3), or “Denglisch” in American settings (McDonald, 2007, p. 100). These types of errors were found in the student writing in this research context as part of an honours research project at Rhodes University (see Ortner, 2013).

### 3.5 How to teach collocations?

There is thus a gap between what coursebooks offer in vocabulary training and what research shows are important aspects of vocabulary knowledge (as expanded on above)<sup>13</sup>. The question then arises of how to address this gap and teach vocabulary in a way that then enhances the awareness of collocational patterns for learners.

---

<sup>13</sup> Apart from the exercises in coursebooks which are geared towards the learning of collocations, other scholars are interested in the number and types of collocations/phrases which appear in the texts (both oral and written) in German coursebooks. This is often undertaken by creating a corpus of the texts found in textbooks and comparing it to an L1 corpus (a contrastive analysis). Two examples of such studies which have been undertaken for German coursebooks are Jazbec & Enčeva, (2012) and Zambrana (2017). Jazbec & Enčeva (2012) undertook an analysis of three German textbooks at the B2 level by major publishers, Langenscheidt (Aspekte 2), Klett (Deutsch mit Grippe 2) and Hueber (EM). The authors found that there were minimal phrasemes apparent in the coursebooks (in comparison to the diversity and number of phrasemes found in ‘natural’ language), and that those that were present did not appear to be chosen by materials writers based on a particular logic or theory (Jazbec & Enčeva, 2012, p. 167). Zambrana (2017) on the other hand, found that the A1 level textbook that she examined as a textbook corpus, did comply with the CEFR recommendations for lexical competence and sociolinguistic competence (Zambrana, 2017). This is an area in which more research would be worthwhile, as coursebooks remain at the centre of the language curriculum and are often taken at face-value that they are indeed representative of natural language use.

One way which has been suggested by corpus linguists for teaching and learning collocations (and other language patterns) is the direct consultation of electronic language corpora. This came about in the 1990s, when researchers (mostly in Britain) found that their corpus-linguistic research began to inform their teaching, particularly those who were teaching advanced levels of English and English linguistics (Leech, 1997). Johns is credited as developing an approach known as “data-driven learning”, where advanced students study concordance outputs, in order to inductively discover an aspect of the language of study (Vyatkina & Boulton, 2017), for example to discover collocational patterns. This can be achieved by teaching students to use corpus software and interact with it directly, or by having teachers prepare handouts with lists of concordance outputs. The key underlying language learning principles for DDL are those of “noticing” and “inductive learning” (also known as discovery learning). The noticing hypothesis proposes that “input does not become intake for language learning unless it is noticed, that is, consciously registered” (Schmidt, 2010, p. 721) in other words, that it is beneficial for adult L2 learners to notice or be aware of discrete items of language (Schmidt, 2001). This is a common-sense notion (what you pay attention to, you are more likely to learn) which has been supported by empirical research (Schmidt, 2010). According to Sharwood Smith (1993, p. 176) noticing can be aided through two teaching techniques: input enrichment – which involves repeated exposure to the target structure over a period of time, and input enhancement – which involves emphasizing the target structure by typographical means such as bolding and colour marking) (Sharwood Smith, 1993, p. 176). Vyatkina (2016b, p. 160) highlights that DDL provides both input enrichment and input enhancement. Input enrichment is occurs “as corpora provide teachers and learners access to a large number of target structures in attested language use samples, which are hard to come by in a traditional language classroom, especially in foreign language learning settings” and enhancement is realised through the use of concordancers which provide an output where the search term is easily visible, with context to the left and right which “enhance[s] the visibility of collocational patterns” (Vyatkina, 2016b, p. 160). Concordancing software is able to recover all instances of a word, morpheme or phrase within the context of the corpus and commonly presents these as a key word in context (KWIC) output, with the search word in the middle of a line for each example, and a fixed number of characters to the left and right on either side of the search term. This allows for “rapid scanning and comparison” (Johns, 1991, p. 2).

Johns (1991) provides the following example as an illustration of DDL, in which the above principles can be observed: an advanced (C1/C2) learner of English may wish to know more about the difference between the verbs ‘convince’ and ‘persuade’ (or any other “difference between” type of question, common to language learners, and important when choosing between a list of synonyms from a dictionary search) (Johns, 1991, p. 4). In this approach, according to Johns (1991, p. 2) “we simply

provide the evidence needed to answer the learner's questions and rely on the learner's intelligence to find answers". In the case of this example, Johns created a worksheet for his students which presented many examples of 'convince' and 'persuade' which he had prepared.

#### CONVINCE – PERSUADE

Look carefully at the following examples of the verbs 'convince' and 'persuade' (and words derived from the verbs such as 'convincing' and 'persuasion'/'persuasive'). What similarities and what differences can you find between the two verbs?

- 1) says that universities urgently need to convince academics that popularising research is re
  - 2) views by Professor Ian Fells ought to convince producers elsewhere that talking heads are
  - 3) produce literature detailed enough to convince the prospective buyer. Ivanov's major inte
  - 4) labouring system will find it harder to convince their own establishment that they need new
  - 5) ggling sister or even the queen should convince us that behaviour can seem intelligent in
  - 6) prising that New Scientist should have convinced itself that the nuclear weapons policy of
  - 7) ed the Neolithic revolution and became convinced that it was not a matter of someone havin
  - 8) given. But French nuclear experts are convinced that the "reference accident" (a core mel
  - 9) ating how the British had determinedly convinced themselves they were enjoying themselves
  - 10) s that lead you to think that they are convinced they are doing everyone else a favour, or
- 
- 1) manager for remote sensing will try to persuade different parts of the government to spend
  - 2) in of sense. Incidentally, how did you persuade Michael Heseltine to write it for you? Gal
  - 3) n early stage. Second, it is trying to persuade researchers that it is a good thing to wor
  - 4) t two years trying, unsuccessfully, to persuade the British government to make some contrl
  - 5) ogy, is planning a mission to India to persuade the country to invest in British satellite
  - 6) ely that only a big fire disaster will persuade the government to look harder at fire rese
  - 7) entry to show farmers its work, and to persuade them to "get more out of muck". Scientists
  - 8) likely to survive. So a female who can persuade two males that they each have a stake in t
  - 9) nisation that focuses on that disease, persuaded both the House and Senate that arthritis
  - 10) 's bad image among many scientists has persuaded it to woo the science community more expl

*Figure 4: Examples concordances of convince/persuade (Adapted from Johns, 1991, p. 16)*

This type of data-driven learning, where learners discover patterns for themselves (perhaps including collocational patterns, such as what type of noun typically follows "persuade"), was said to invert the traditional "present, practice, produce" approach, which was why it was said to be rather revolutionary (Vyatkina & Boulton, 2017). This type of approach follows an inductive, discovery-based learning style, which views the student as an autonomous learner (Bernardini, 2002). The representative corpus is said to be a good source of authentic language examples, which scholars such as Sinclair (1997, p. 32-34) claim are far better for language learning purposes than examples which teachers may invent (although this has not been proven).

Mishan (2004) questions the assumption that corpora provide good "authentic" examples. She argues that when corpora are used for language pedagogy by presenting students with a key word in context (KWIC) output (such as the above example from Johns, 1991); the authentic attributes of the text become obscured, such as the communicative intent and socio-cultural purpose of the text, as the context of the larger text is missing (Mishan, 2004, p. 220). As stated by Widdowson (1998, p. 711-712) "Reality [...] does not travel with the text", as the text is stripped of its original formatting.

Nevertheless, Mishan (2004) proposes that corpora can be “authenticated” for language learning purposes. Drawing the contrast made by Widdowson (1978, p. 80) between genuineness and authenticity, Mishan (2004, p. 221) argues that corpus examples are genuine (rather than authentic) and in the pedagogical context “authenticity can be related to the learning activity rather than to the origin of the material involved in the interaction” (Mishan, 2004, p. 221). By examining authentication as a quality of the involvement of the learner with the material via the task (rather than of the authenticity of the source text itself), Mishan (2004, p. 221) argues that data-driven learning can be seen as authentic, as learners engage with language as researchers discovering patterns. In this dissertation I similarly adopt the definition of authenticity espoused by van Lier (1996, p. 128): “Authenticity is the result of acts of authentication, by students and their teacher, of the learning process and the language used in it [...] authentication is basically a personal process of engagement”.

DDL researchers, similar to CALL researchers as discussed in Chapter 2, have wanted to find out and quantify what the effects of the DDL method are on language learning outcomes. Attempts have been made to quantify the effects of DDL in a variety of experimental designs, mostly for the study of advanced English (Yoon, 2008). In a meta-analysis of 64 such quantitative studies, Boulton & Cobb (2017) found that DDL produces significant positive effects on learning outcomes, “for both control/ experimental group comparisons ( $d = 0.95$ ) and for pre/ posttest designs ( $d=1.50$ )” (Boulton & Cobb, 2017, p. 348). Other studies have taken a more qualitative approach, exploring perceptions of students toward DDL, and showing that many students “enjoy DDL as a novel learning approach” (Vyatkina & Boulton, 2017, p. 1). However, as Vyatkina & Boulton (2017, p. 1) point out, “These overall positive results do not imply, however, that all studies have come to uniform conclusions”. Quantitative experimental designs often fail to capture the complexities of context and other qualitative/subjective effects on learning.

In one such study Daskalovska (2015) made use of an experimental design to compare corpus-based exercises for learning verb–adverb collocations with “traditional activities usually found in course books” with English students with eight years prior experience of English learning at the university level in Macedonia. Daskalovska (2015, p. 130) found that corpus-based instruction produced superior results, “the participants who learned the collocations with the help of the online concordancer gained more knowledge and had better results in all parts of the test”. However, upon examining the ‘traditional’ exercise presented (Daskalovska, 2015, pp. 141-144), it is simply a cloze exercise, with no reading text in which the students would have found the correct answer, and no lesson plan or explanation of how the students would be told/taught what the correct combinations are. The experimental group however was tasked to research the words in a corpus and present on their findings in class to peers. There is a large difference then in the task set, which leads one to question

studies which claim to isolate a single construct, when in fact there are many variables at play. Daskalovska (2015, p. 138) does comment that the nature of the task meant that there was an increase in motivation: the novelty factor and the fact that the students had to report back on their corpus-based findings to the class would have had an effect on the learning. The authors also suggest that this sort of effect may wear off if the same method is used too often, and that good teaching draws on a variety of approaches for this reason.

In a similar experimental study for vocabulary acquisition undertaken in Turkey with 48 L3 learners of German, Rets (2017) showed that “the experimental group outperformed the control group in both post-and delayed tests” (Rets, 2017, p. 313). Rets (2017, p. 318-319) states that she made use of the DWDS to present online concordances to the experimental group, who were allowed to search for their own words in the online corpus, whereas the control group were presented with conventional vocabulary worksheets. Rets (2017) however does not give an example of the concordances, or of the traditional vocabulary worksheet. These studies (Rets, 2017 and Daskalovska, 2015) indicate in their absence of such details, the importance of contextualising results and providing information about methodology so that other practitioners may repeat these kinds of exercises. This is often not done in comparative experimental designs which try to minimise contextual factors in order to make broad claims applicable to all settings, but which in so doing lose the richness and nuance which contextual details provide.

DDL can thus have a significant positive impact on language learning, particularly for learning collocations, but there are many limitations to implementing the method as will be expanded upon below. What stands out in the experimental studies which look at measuring gains in proficiency through the use of DDL, is the invisibility of the usual classroom context and the textbook usually in use, and the teachers’ perspectives in preparing for the data-driven learning, and integrating this into the context of the day-to-day curriculum. The lack of discussion pertaining to which collocations are chosen as the focus of experimental enquiry is prominent. This choice should be guided by the learning outcomes, however, this is not often explicitly addressed in DDL experimental designs (see for example Daskalovska 2015). Qualitative studies which look at attitudes and perceptions of teachers and students provide far more nuanced understandings of the context. There are few studies which incorporate both a quantitative as well as a qualitative perspective in exploring the implementation of data-driven learning (Vyatkina, 2016b).

Despite enthusiastic calls for this type of DDL approach by corpus linguists, there has been little uptake of this method in actual classrooms outside the research context, both at the secondary and tertiary education level (Meunier, 2011; Mukherjee, 2004; Breyer, 2009). There are many possible reasons, practical and otherwise for the lack of uptake of direct corpus methods in instructional settings

(Meunier, 2011, p. 461). For a teacher to make use of corpora in language teaching, and guide their students in this, they need to have a sound knowledge of corpus-based theory and methods themselves (Breyer, 2009, Vannestål & Lindquist, 2007). Corpora have been created by corpus linguists for specialists, not for teachers and students, and thus the user-interface is not transparent, “requiring considerable levels of linguistic and technological sophistication” (Vyatkina & Boulton, 2017, p. 2). Teachers and students need to have access to computer technology and concordancing software, and ideally students would also have access to computers in a lab setting for in-class corpus consultation (Neary-Sundquist, 2015b). Yoon (2008) and Vannestål & Lindquist (2007) (who qualitatively examine the implementation of DDL in context) both highlight that DDL may require extensive student support, and that it takes much time, effort and practice on the part of both teachers and learners to use corpora successfully for learning. Vannestål & Lindquist (2007) also note in their study that not all students found the corpus helpful, and that corpus consultation can be found difficult or boring, especially by weaker students (who may find reading concordance lines and discovering patterns challenging). Moreover, FLT settings often have many constraints in terms of time and syllabus which do not allow for the space for students to spend a half hour in a lecture discovering the differences between two words and their respective collocations, and teaching staff may be reluctant to release their authority and rely on learner autonomy to arrive at the learning outcomes (Breyer, 2009), which may be even more so the case in a tightly time-tabled curriculum.

Besides these practical limitations, many language teachers remain unaware of the developments in corpus linguistics and its applications, for example the types of software which one can use to create concordances, and how they may be used such as in the example presented by Johns (1991, p. 16) above. Where teachers are made aware through workshops (such as undertaken by Mukherjee (2004) for English teachers in Germany) they find that a corpus may be useful for themselves as teachers (to check language patterns), but not for the students (as is often suggested in corpus-linguistic literature). In Mukherjee’s (2004) study, scepticism regarding learner-centred activities is attributed to the age of the teacher participants (on average just under 50). If this was the case in Germany, what then can be surmised about the perceptions which South African teachers may have towards learner-centred activities in a country which is still characterised by high power-distance in education. This also seems to indicate that there is an unwillingness or lack of competence regarding engagement with technology on the part of teachers and students, and a perception that the effort put in is not worth the potential gains. Breyer (2011) similarly proposes that corpus-based resources are not used in the classroom, simply *because* they are technology based. The mantra that people “like what they know” (Cross, 2006, p. xvii) which is stated for blended learning (Bonk & Graham, 2006), thus finds a similar ring of truth for language learning using electronic corpora.

Thus, advocates of DDL present their studies enthusiastically showing how DDL learners may autonomously discover patterns (such as collocations) and develop longer-term cognitive skills (such as a greater awareness for lexico-grammatical aspects), and thereby advance independent learning. Yoon (2008, p. 45), in a study which reports on changes in students' writing over a period of time using corpora as a reference material, states for example that "[o]ne especially important benefit of the corpus approach in this course was its focus on collocation patterns and typical contexts of word use. This focus on commonly used language chunks can help L2 learners acquire conventional use and fluency, which is often not achieved by studying structural rules". However, these studies are often from university settings with students at advanced levels, and the suggestions taken from the results of experimental designs are not placed within a normal FL curriculum, taking time and syllabus constraints into account, as well as practical constraints such as teacher knowledge of corpus-linguistics and access to computers. Vyatkina & Boulton (2007, p. 2) thus state that "DDL's effectiveness seems to be considerably moderated by a variety of context-related, participant-related, and linguistic variables, many of which are still underexplored". Vyatkina (2016, p. 211), Neary-Sundquist (2015b) and Boulton (2008, 2010) argue that one way to address these issues above is to create paper-based data driven learning exercises, which can be used to supplement learning of specific target forms in ordinary settings, even where teachers have very little experience with, or knowledge about corpora. However, these types of worksheets are very time-consuming to create (as Boulton, 2010, p. 560 also notes), and there are very few published materials for languages other than English. In the following section, I will expand on the few published corpus-based paper-based exercises which exist for German, across varying levels of competency (Vyatkina, 2016; Neary-Sundquist, 2015b; Krummes *et al.*, 2015).

Vyatkina (2016) explored the use of paper-based activities for teaching beginner level German foreign language students (A2 level) verb-preposition collocations (a sub-type of collocation known as 'grammatical collocation'). Vyatkina (2016) found that this method was as effective as the traditional approach normally taken in their instructional setting, and in some respects had even more positive gains for students in terms of lexical and grammatical competency (Vyatkina, 2016a). The results of this rare study for beginner level German thus support an argument "in favor of integrating brief paper-based DDL interventions into non-DDL syllabi" (Vyatkina, 2016, p. 221).

An example of Vyatkina's (2016, p. 225-226) exercises are as follows:

Example: to wait for

13	1999	GE	...se), und er ist in der Rolle des Schlägers (des batters) und wartet auf den Ball. Da wirft ihm der Werfer (pitcher) den Ball n...
14	1999	ZE	...Publikum fletscht die Zähne, es hat Bock auf bösen Humor und wartet auf Beledung. Man weiß das in den Sendern und sucht na...
15	1999	ZE	...m? Die vielen Antworten, die unsere Sammlungen enthalten, warten auf die richtigen Fragen. Die besondere und wahrhaft in...
16	1999	BE	...er wird in eine dunkelblaue Kontrolleuruniform gesteckt und wartet auf seine Rente. Wenn er einen Waggon entert, ruft er, ...
17	1999	BE	...er Stadtteil Berlins. Ich stehe an der Bushaltestelle und warte auf den 180er nach Lichterfelde Ost, 20 Minuten lang, denn...
18	1998	BE	... von unten einen großen Pfiff. Mein Vater, sagte sie, er wartet auf seine Zigaretten. Und hielt die R 6-Packung in die ...
19	1998	BE	...en, Alfred hatte schon einen Hof in Höhenreute gepachtet und wartete auf sie. Johann hatte auf der Continental schon das Zeu...

Verb-preposition-case combination: *warten* + *auf* + acc. (accusative)

Write an example sentence about yourself: *Ich warte auf die Frühlingsferien.*

Tasks:1. to be interested in

21	1989	ZE	...spielsweise den Flüchtling Mehmet Naim Sakir,* aber niemand interessiert sich für uns. Keiner kennt uns, keiner gibt uns Arbei...
22	1985	ZE	...aus Meinersdorf, Michael (15) aus Magdeburg und viele andere interessieren sich für den Beruf = Sänger = bzw. = Sängerin = und möch...
23	1984	WI	...als Differenz von Anzeichen und Ausdruck. Wir interessieren uns für den Unterschied dieser begrifflichen Disposition...
24	1984	ZE	...n Teilen Deutschlands hat gemeinsame Ideen und Ziele. Sie interessieren sich für das Leben und die Kultur ihrer Generation im an...
25	1981	WI	...dingungen der Rationalität der Wissenschaft, aufzuklären; er interessiert sich für das, was Max Weber die = Kulturbedeutung = der ...
26	1981	WI	...tündigung, sie bezieht sich auf kommunikatives Handeln; Mead interessiert sich für sprachliche und sprachförmige Symbole nur insow...

Verb-preposition-case combination: \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ +

Write your example sentence:

---

Figure 5: Example of a paper-based exercise for A2 level German (Vyatkina, 2016, p. 225)

Vyatkina's small study shows that if there were more ready-made DDL materials, they could be more widely implemented in mainstream language teaching, as quick supplements to the traditional coursebook materials. However, as previously noted by Boulton (2010, p. 560), "DDL materials are extremely time-consuming to prepare" and "published materials are virtually nonexistent", which is "especially true for languages other than English" (Vyatkina, 2016a, p. 221).

Another rare study for beginner German (A1 and A2) was undertaken by Neary-Sundquist (2015b) who looked at creating paper-based exercises for frequent vocabulary items (such as *Kaffee* and *Pizza*) using the Kernkorpus, a subcorpus of the DWDS corpus, to generate word clouds (Neary-Sundquist, 2015b, pp. 211-215). This rather simple type of exercise can help to enhance students' vocabulary awareness and intercultural awareness even at early beginner levels.

**Example 1: Kaffee**

Below you will find a word cloud for the word *Kaffee* in German. A word cloud shows the words that commonly occur with the word *Kaffee*. The larger the word in the box is, the more often it occurs with *Kaffee*. The data used to make this list comes from a collection of German language, Das Digitale Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache. The DWDS is composed of over 1.8 billion words. A large collection of natural language like this is referred to as a corpus.



Now we will do some exercises to learn more about the word *Kaffee* in German.

A. Look at the words in the box. Write three of the biggest (=most frequent) words or phrases below:

---

Figure 6: Sample exercise from Neary-Sundquist (2015b, p. 211)

Both Vyatkina (2016) and Neary-Sundquist (2015) make use of the DWDS as a source for these paper-based exercises. The DWDS is an impressive open educational resource for German which can be made use of for various levels of competence (Vyatkina, 2020).

Perhaps one reason why there are few published resources for teaching German collocations is because there are so many collocations in a language. As Bahns (1993) points out, there are tens of thousands of possible collocational patterns in any given language. The question arises as to which of those should then be taught, as this amounts to an enormous teaching and learning load (Bahns, 1993; Nizonkiza & Van de Poel, 2019). Bahns posits that a solution may be found if one looks at collocations “from a contrastive point of view” (1993, p. 59). Difficulties in learning word combinations and errors in student production are said to be caused when there is no one-to-one translational equivalence between corresponding syntagmas. Bahns thus argues for the creation of workbooks which present a selection of collocations that are “geared to the specific difficulties of learners with a particular L1 background” (1993, p.62). Bahns (1993, p. 62) argues that this would create a short cut to developing the type of collocational competence which normally requires many years of reading, studying and observing a language. However, to date, very few such resources exist (see Autelli & Konecny, 2015;

Konecny, C. & Autelli, E., 2019 for examples of bilingual learners' dictionaries of German-Italian collocations; see Buhofer *et al.* 2014; Quasthof, 2011 for examples of monolingual German collocation dictionaries). In South Africa, it would also be difficult to create contrastive resources geared to the diverse mother-tongues of our learners, and thus it would probably be best to develop resources for the foreign language which contrast to the language of teaching and learning (often English) and ask students to individually reflect on the corresponding patterns in their own mother-tongue<sup>14</sup>. This approach is reported on in Chapter 7.

Given the absence of ready-made, corpus-based, published, paper-based DDL exercises (particularly for languages other than English), and the difficulties of accessing and using online corpora in the classroom, it remains to ask what resources one can use which are at hand within the ordinary context, which can be drafted to the purpose of enhancing awareness of collocations and formulaic language. The language coursebook, also problematized in many respects, remains ubiquitously used for language teaching purposes worldwide (Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013). Taking a context approach, this is important to acknowledge, as coursebooks are central to the language learning ecosystem. Coursebooks may suggest ways in which teachers can use them, however they do not do any teaching on their own. Nowadays, most coursebooks (such as *Menschen* and *Schritte* by Hueber and *Linie 1* and *Aspekte* by Klett) also come with ready-made online components which students can utilise for language practice, and some have made great strides in trying to provide "authentic" examples of language.

Targońska (2018) suggests that in German as a Foreign Language, the coursebook should be the starting point for teaching and learning collocations (particularly, Targońska (2018, p. 58) notes as GFL teachers who are not mother-tongue speakers of German (such as myself) also do not know all German collocations, and they themselves may make mistakes in this area). The coursebook is central to the curriculum, and the texts which it presents are thus central to the language learning which occurs (even though they may not be authentic). Targonska (2018, p. 58) states, „Das Lehrwerk steuert das Unterrichtsgeschehen oft am stärksten und somit kann es eine Hilfe bzw. einen Ausgangspunkt zur Förderung der Kollokationskompetenz darstellen“.

This argument is not a new one but rather follows on from others such as Hausmann (1984, p. 406) who suggests that there are 2 types of collocation work, 1) text based; 2) bilingual-dictionary based. Siepmann (2004, p. 13) asserts that in the aid of life-long learning, it is preferable to guide students in

---

<sup>14</sup> There are no current South African studies which present methods of teaching collocations contrastively. See Nizonkiza (2017) for an example of teaching English academic collocations to improve academic literacy in the African context, and Nizonkiza & Van de Poel (2019) for a computational approach to deciding which collocations to present to learners based on the most frequent types of collocations evident in large L1 language corpora.

searching for and learning to recognise collocations in spoken/written texts rather than having them learn lists off by heart. Zaabalwi & Gould (2017) similarly advocate for text-based work in teaching collocations based on their study of implementing an approach with university-level intermediate EFL learners. Zaabalwi & Gould (2017) found that EFL learners who were introduced to collocation as a concept, and taught to find collocations in reading texts, were more likely to naturally and appropriately use them in subsequent novel contexts than students in a control group where the notion of collocation was deemphasized, and single words and their definitions (including synonyms and antonyms) were focussed on in teaching the same texts (Zaabalwi & Gould, 2017, p. 24).

Reder (2006) puts forward a three-phase approach to teaching collocations in German as a Foreign Language, which echoes some of the principles of data-driven learning expanded upon above: „(1) Entdecken der Kollokationen als Einheiten, (2) Einüben der Kollokationen als Einheiten und (3) Anwenden der Kollokationen als Einheiten.“ (Reder, 2006, p. 203)

Reder (2006) unfortunately does not provide examples of how this has been undertaken, or may be undertaken in a commonplace GFL context using prescribed materials, but states that the explicit teaching of what collocations are and how to find them, coupled with opportunities for students to practice these in their own output, is an important step to addressing the current gap in GFL teaching regarding collocations.

Maes (2017) outlines a similar teaching method which she has termed the “ARC (Awareness-raising, Recognizing, and Constructing) teaching method”, which has been used for teaching verb-noun collocations to German for Specific Purposes students at Raboud University in the Netherlands (Maes, 2017, p. 39). This takes place in the form of short intensive courses of five days, with professionals hoping to improve their language competency for the workplace, thus their learning motivation is high<sup>15</sup>. The ‘ARC’ teaching method outlined by Maes (2017) proceeds as follows:

- 1) Awareness-raising
- 2) Recognizing verb + noun collocations in authentic texts
- 3) Constructing sentences

Firstly, students are made aware of the purpose of the method, which is to enhance the learners' vocabulary knowledge, “particularly (technical) terms”. Maes (2017, p. 41) also provides the learners with an outcome for the method, which is to enhance the learner’s vocabulary knowledge, particularly of technical terms, focussing on ‘combinations’ rather than single words. The learners are then inducted in noun + verb collocations through “awareness raising exercises” such as those suggested

---

<sup>15</sup> A brief overview of the Raboud University website reveals that a five-day course of this nature costs €3,835.00, perhaps another reason for high motivation on the part of the students.

by Lewis (1997), and encouraged to reflect on similar ‘combinations’ in their home language (often Dutch), using this as an entry point to help learners become aware of non-congruent collocations which are more difficult to learn (as argued by Nesselhauf, 2003, p. 236). Maes (2017) avoids using any technical linguistic terms with the adult learners, referring to collocations simply as “combinations”.

The second step is then to assist learners to recognize verb + noun collocations in specialist texts from their own disciplines (which learners supply themselves) (Maes, 2017, p. 43). In order to guide the learner to notice the collocations and not just single words, the teacher makes the collocations visible in the first part of the learner's text by “underlining them and using bold typeface” (Maes, 2017, p. 43). This emphasises the crucial role of the teacher in this type of method, which would not succeed without teacher guidance. Maes (2017, p. 43) reports that some students easily grasp the concept of looking for collocations in the rest of the text, and others need further help and guidance from the teacher and prompts as to which words and combinations it may be useful to focus on. Maes (2017) then encourages students to list the collocations learnt, with translations in their home language. The last step is to encourage students to construct their own sentences using the identified collocations. Maes (2017, p. 44) reports anecdotally that students then use these in their oral role-play activities where learner's simulate working environment conditions.

While Maes (2017) provides a comprehensive overview of the method in context and reflects on the role of the teacher and the autonomous learner within these conditions, she does not provide any data to support her subjective impressions of learner improvement. Maes (2017) is aware of these limitations and puts forward suggestions for further research in this field. In particular, Maes (2017) remains aware that the context of her study on teaching German collocations is with a highly motivated group of teachers and learners. Maes (2017, p. 46) poses the question: “Could less motivated learners in group courses also benefit from this teaching method? Or do they need a different approach?”.

The method outlined by Maes (2017) corresponds to Reder's (2006) three steps outlined above, and has further resonance with a method put forward by Willis in 1998, who suggests using the coursebook as a pedagogic corpus with university level students, getting students to notice patterns by finding all examples of a word under investigation in the texts which they have access to, and then investigating patterns of co-occurrence. According to Willis (1998, p. 46-47), “it is preferable to base language analysis activities on texts familiar to learners, i.e. ones they have already read or listened to for some communicative purpose. Having already processed the texts for meaning, students stand to gain more from the study of forms that carry those meanings” (Willis, 1998, pp. 46-47). Willis (1998) thus advocates an approach focussed on frequency, and of using established frequency lists to help

teachers point out “words worth looking for” (Willis, 1998, p. 47). Frequency, as addressed in sections above, is a core tenet of the corpus research process, allowing for the isolation of a linguistic feature and then the organised study of a word or pattern, allowing one to study the feature in detail (Willis, 1998, p. 45). According to Willis (1998), there is only a ‘short step’ to take from viewing language in this way, to applying this process to pedagogy. “Teachers want to make language description accessible to students. Students need to discover and internalise regularities in the language they are studying. If we can place students in the position of researchers this will accomplish these goals neatly and economically” (Willis, 1998, p. 45). This approach is very similar to that which Johns (1991) advocated for, namely data-driven learning, however it relies on the coursebook and related materials as the base for what can be called a ‘pedagogic corpus’, which could then be supplemented with further examples taken from online corpora if teachers have the time and expertise to prepare such extra worksheets. This is well suited to the context of university level language courses guided by a set curriculum which follows a prescribed language learning coursebook, such as is the case in this research context.

Boers *et al.*, (2006) conducted an experimental design to examine the effect of guided noticing of formulaic sequences and collocations (what they call phrase-noticing (Boers *et al.*, 2006, p. 248)) with two groups of students who were exposed to the same course materials, for the same duration of time, taught by the same teacher. The experimental group was directed towards noticing the co-text of words, thus whole formulaic sequences were highlighted. In the control group, a more traditional approach to analysis was taken, highlighting single words, and the “distinction between grammar and vocabulary (to which the learners were accustomed) was upheld” (Boers *et al.*, 2006, p. 249). Boers *et al.*, (2006, p. 256) found that the experimental group (L2 learners guided to noticing formulaic sequences in a text) showed significantly correlating scores for fluency and range of expression in a subsequent oral test, as compared to peers in the control group who had received no such instruction. Scores for accuracy were however not significantly different from the control group. Finally, Boers *et al.*, (2006, p. 256) noted that “the experimental instructional method appeared much more beneficial to some participants than to others”, showing that this approach may have appealed more to some learners than to others, however no reason for this is discussed by the authors.

The approach of text-based work in which students’ attention is drawn to linguistic features in context, shows many similarities to a type of language instruction termed “focus on form” approach (Long, 1998). Long (1998, p. 36) identified this as a so-called “third option” between instructional approaches which focus solely on grammar (“focus on forms”), and those which focus solely on meaning (“focus on meaning”). Long (1998, pp. 36-37) argues that in a purely grammar-based approach, communicative needs are often not considered. In contrast, when communication is the only focus,

then students may not learn what is grammatically “correct”, leading to fossilisation of incorrect language forms which still achieve communication.

Focus on form refers to how attentional resources are allocated, and involves briefly drawing students’ attention to linguistic elements (words, collocations, grammatical structures, pragmatic structures and so on), *in context* [original emphasis], as they arise incidentally in lessons whose over-riding focus is on meaning, or communication, the temporary shifts in focal attention being triggered by students’ comprehension or production problems. (Long, 1998, p. 40)

Thus, there is an emphasis on noticing (see Schmidt, 2010, as discussed above), and provision is made for “attention to language as object” (Long, 1998, p. 41). This also allows for a more learner-centred approach in the psycholinguistic sense (Long, 1998, p. 41).

Thus, in summary of the above, a focus on collocation as an aspect of vocabulary knowledge has been noted as important by various SLA researchers in instruction. However, how to go about introducing or teaching collocations as a part of an existing syllabus is unclear, as well as which collocations in particular should be introduced, especially for languages other than English, and for beginner levels of competency. There also arises the question of testing collocational competence. While cloze activities are traditionally used as diagnostic tests in experimental designs (Szudarski & Carter, 2016; Webb & Kagimoto, 2009), this is not reflective of free writing.

The concept of “comprehensible output” (Swain, 1985, 1995, 2005 cited in Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013, p. 175) has been put forward as an important aspect of second language acquisition which mirrors that of “comprehensible input” (Krashen, 1985 cited in Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013, p. 44). According to Swain (1995, p.128) the activity of producing language is important because it allows learners opportunities to experiment with new structures and forms and to notice gaps in their L2 knowledge (often with help from a teacher), and reflect on and analyse these problems explicitly (Swain, 1995).

Free writing can be collected and stored in the form of a learner corpus (Granger, 1998, 2002, 2004). The creation of learner corpora has facilitated a “much closer attention to L2 lexis and lexico-grammar and to the role of pre-fabricated chunks and routines in L2 use and L2 learning” (Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013, p. 288). A learner corpus can be of aid to researchers looking at learner production of collocations, such as seen for the teaching of academic German collocations (Ortner & Weber, 2018), and academic verb-preposition collocation in English (Li, 2017) where writing before and writing after instruction was compared with regard to the use of collocations.

### *Conclusions*

Although there are now “a wide range of fully corpus-based reference works (including dictionaries and grammars) available to learners, and a number of dedicated researchers and teachers have made

concrete suggestions on how concordances and exercises directly derived from corpora could be used in the second language (L2) classroom”, there is still much work that remains to be done in “bridging the gap between research and practice” (Römer, 2011, p. 206), particularly for languages other than English. This is because often the researchers are not the practitioners, and the practitioners/language lecturers rely on tried and tested methods and worksheets/coursebooks, particularly as foreign language classes are severely limited by time constraints, which leaves little time for simply trying out new innovations, particularly those which are technology based, as was reported on in Meunier’s (2005) study. As stated in Chapter 2, foreign language lecturers often have research interests which lie outside of foreign language didactics, and may not have the time or the motivation to critically reflect on language teaching, which is an aspect of the curriculum which they may feel is ‘taken care of’ by the coursebook in use (see Chapter 7 for more on this discussion). In this dissertation, I take the position of a reflective practitioner and move between insider and outsider positions, using the insights gained through research of the literature above to explore what it may mean to improve on practice in my own context, in a traditional action research approach, in dialogue with lecturers and students.

I propose, in planning for this action research, based on the evidence suggested in the literature expanded on above, that explicitly teaching about formulaic language and collocations and preparing collocational exercises for students as a part of their curriculum (focussing on text-based work) and explicitly providing access to online corpus-based resources, may help them to become more aware of these formulaic patterns in language, which may increase the use of these sequences in their language output. Teaching collocation as a learning strategy aligns well to the goals of the foreign language curriculum guided by the CEFR, as well as the goals of the university, as discussed in Chapter 2. There has been much research undertaken for English in this regard (Lewis, 1997), and very little research undertaken for German worldwide (Krummes & Ensslin, 2012; Jaworska, *et al.*, 2015; Targońska, 2014). In fact, Targońska argues that “collocations are in fact a neglected or even unrecognised aspect of teaching German as a foreign language” (2014, p. 127), but this should not remain the case, and this research seeks to begin to fill this gap. Moreover, this chapter has shown that there are very few descriptive case studies available which report on the qualitative nature of such an approach in context, as well as the quantitative gains in performance (particularly for languages other than English). This is particularly the case for South Africa, which is worrisome, as foreign language departments are declining, and research into context-based teaching approaches may provide good arguments in their favour, and avenues to pursue to improve on teaching practice. Qualitative accounts of context-based approaches are needed in language teaching, where while such results cannot be widely generalized, they can provide insights for others by means of analogy

(Kramsch & Steffensen, 2008, p. 27). In this dissertation, I seek to expand on both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the experiences of students and lecturers in teaching and learning German collocations within a blended learning model. In this I follow a current development in second-language acquisition research which is to examine the complexity of a language learning system (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2007), rather than to simply measure one construct, and to attempt to achieve understanding of the system as a whole. Complexity theory and its relation to SLA research will be expanded on in Chapter 4, as well as the development of blended learning in relation to language teaching. In this way I seek to draw together two areas for potential growth in teaching German as a Foreign Language: collocations and blended learning.

## ***Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework – Blended Language Learning and Complex Systems***

---

In this chapter, the theoretical framework for analysis of the language teaching and learning context is presented. Firstly, an overview of blended learning is presented and its theoretical relevance to the language teaching context is expanded upon. It is shown how second language acquisition theory has impacted on the development of computer assisted language learning historically, and how blended language learning research is undertaken today, in order to provide a theoretical basis for the approach taken in this dissertation. Thereafter, relevant frameworks for examining language teaching and learning and blended learning are presented, as they will be used in Chapter 7 to analyse and discuss the research findings.

### ***4.1 Blended learning***

The context of South African higher education was described in Chapter 2, presenting a number of significant teaching and learning challenges. In this context there has been an increasing use of blended learning in order to improve or enhance existing teaching and learning practices, and bring about transformation of teaching and learning practices (Jaffer, *et al.*, 2007; Bozalek, *et al.*, 2013; Balfour, *et al.*, 2015; du Preez, *et al.*, 2016). Large scale meta-analyses of comparative studies have shown that blended learning produces better effects than traditional face-to-face teaching, or online instruction, both across higher education (Means, *et al.*, 2009) as well as specifically for language teaching (Grgurović, *et al.*, 2013).

Optimization is a key driver of blended learning, which may take different forms depending on the context (Hockly, 2018, p. 98; Mishan, 2013a, p. 207). The three main motives for choosing blended learning as opposed to exclusively online learning or purely face-to-face instruction are outlined by Graham (2006) as improved pedagogy, increased access and flexibility, and increased cost-effectiveness (Graham, 2006, pp. 9-10). Studies which have examined the use of blended learning for language teaching have listed specific contextual factors such as large class sizes or a large number of students (see Bañados, 2006), as well as a lack of classroom space and few resources (see Aborisade, 2013) and teachers' frustration with the limited exposure to the target language in timetabled classes (Hockly, 2018, p. 98). The simple novelty of new technology is also listed as a motivating factor for its use, especially in well-resourced contexts, for example in Germany (Strack, 2007) or the US (Grgurović, 2011).

While the term blended learning is widely used, it is not without contention, and thus some discussion is needed on why it remains useful for this study. In the early 2000s some scholars argued that the term blended learning was “ill-defined” (Oliver & Trigwell, 2005, p. 17) or even “a useless concept” (Cross, 2006, p. xvii). It was argued that blending “relies on the idea of dichotomies which are suspect within the context of learning with technology or else becomes ineffective as a discriminating concept and is thus without purpose” (Oliver & Trigwell, 2005, p. 17). Many argued that all learning is a product of a blend of methods and techniques (Cross, 2006; Mayadas & Picciano, 2007). Cross (2006, p. xvii) maintained that he could not imagine “unblended” learning. There was, and is still not, a clear-cut answer as to how much technology use constitutes a ‘blend’, and more recently some scholars have narrowed the definition to state that for a course to have blended learning elements, some of the face-to-face time must be replaced by learning time through an online modality, away from the classroom (Mayadas & Picciano, 2007; Graham, *et al.*, 2013).

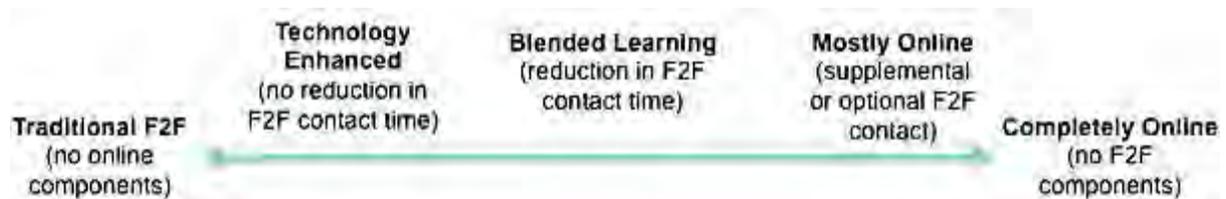


Figure 7: Spectrum of course-delivery modalities (Adapted from Graham, *et al.*, 2013, p. 5)

The above distinction is a useful one, as many teaching approaches in higher education make use of technology to provide supplementary materials, but perhaps do not consider these materials a core component of their teaching curricula. This has for example been a criticism of computer-assisted language learning (CALL), as the acronym “computer-assisted” conceptualises the computer as outside of the classroom, rather than as a part of the “ecology of language use” (Blyth, 2009, p. 175; Kussler, 2000). Blyth argues that “While computers in foreign-language learning have not reached the level of invisibility or ‘givenness’ that textbooks have achieved, it is generally accepted that computers are becoming ‘normalised’” (Blyth, 2009, p. 175; Bax, 2003b). In order to conceptualise what this means, Blyth (2009) points out that using the term ‘book assisted language learning’, BALL (as playfully coined by Warschauer (1999)) would be absurd, as books are a normalised part of teaching and learning (Blyth, 2009, p. 175). The field of CALL will be returned to in due course, as it was a precursor to the current sub-field of blended learning, blended *language* learning.

With regard to the second half of the term “blended learning”, Oliver & Trigwell (2005, p. 17) argue that “learning, from the perspective of the learner, is rarely, if ever, the subject of blended learning”, and “what is actually being addressed are forms of instruction, teaching, or at best, pedagogies” (Oliver & Trigwell, 2005, p. 17). There are, thus, calls that both elements of the term should be abandoned and re-conceived.

Despite these voices of dissent and a lack of consensus on a definition, blended learning (whether good terminology or not) is a popular and widely recognised expression, with a diverse body of scholarship to support it (Mayadas & Picciano, 2007; Halverson, *et al.*, 2014). Having a common term enhances the conversations that scholars can have on the topic, and there are indeed many conversations being had on the topic of blended learning (see Drysdale *et al.* 2013; Halverson *et al.* 2014; Wang *et al.* 2015). This is noted by Halverson *et al.* (2014, p.26) who remark that although there is a significant amount of research conducted on blended learning internationally outside of the North American context, it is not highly cited, perhaps because there is a lack of unified terminology used by these international scholars (Halverson *et al.*, 2014). This dissertation, which reports on a case study (Duff, 2008) of blended learning for German language teaching in South Africa, makes use of the term blended learning as clarified above: i.e a combination of face-to-face and online components, with a reduction in face-to-face teaching time. The main mode of teaching in German Studies in the local context is face-to-face, with one hour a week of teaching time replaced by an online lecture and accompanying activities. This dissertation thus makes use of the term blended learning (BL) throughout, in order to add to the body of knowledge currently supporting this term on an international level.

#### *4.2 Blended learning and language teaching*

The rapid development of technology in the last century has had an indelible effect on how we teach language, as well as on the content we teach, and has taken place alongside theoretical developments in the field of second language acquisition. Language teaching has benefited from insights gained through the applied use of technology, both practically and theoretically. The following section will expand on the development of the use of technology for teaching language, originally popularised under the term computer-assisted language learning (CALL), sometimes labelled technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) (Brett & González-Lloret, 2009, p. 351) and now often theorised under the term “blended language learning” (BLL) (Stracke, 2007, p. 57; Hinkelman & Gruba, 2012, p. 46) or simply aligning itself with larger discourses by using the term “blended learning” (Hockly, 2018, p. 97).

The term blended learning has been applied specifically to language teaching since at least 2005 (see Neumeier, 2005). Blended learning research for language teaching, as with traditional blended learning, examines two modes of teaching, traditional face-to-face in the classroom, and online computer-mediated environments, which have been known as CALL (computer-assisted language learning) (Neumeier, 2005). CALL has been a field of study in its own right since the 1970s (see earlier sections on the development of *DaF* and the use of technology for teaching German in the 1970s), and is now considered a sub-section of applied linguistics (Chapelle, 2016). The development of the field

of CALL highlights important changes in how technology has been used to support language teaching, and the importance of second language acquisition theory in guiding the implementation of any new methods in the language learning classroom. Particularly, CALL research serves to illustrate that the use of technology is not a method in itself, but rather just one means through which to deliver materials which in themselves should be based on sound principles, and in the case of language teaching, the principles of second language acquisition (SLA) (Garrett, 1991). In this way, the theoretical development of blended language learning can be seen to be more robust than that for the more generalised field of blended learning, which has lacked theoretical development (Halverson, *et al.*, 2014, p. 22).

The overarching concern in the field of CALL has been one of efficacy: to what degree is technology effective in improving language learning? Researchers of CALL can be said to share a common pragmatic goal, which is to create and evaluate language learning opportunities (Chapelle, 2016). Mishan (2013a) puts forward the idea that blended language learning can be seen as the “latest ‘stage’ in the development of CALL” (Mishan, 2013a, p. 207). According to Mishan (2013, p. 207), blended language learning can be seen as the “culmination of the aspirations” of CALL all along, for “seamless integration of technology into language learning environments achieving the optimum ‘balance’ and coherence and retaining sound language pedagogy” (Mishan, 2013a, p. 207).

#### *4.3 The development of SLA and CALL and the emergence of blended language learning*

This section aims to provide a short overview of the development of second language learning theories and how they have shaped CALL research, which has shaped how blended language learning research is undertaken today. Research in the field of CALL has been undertaken primarily in western contexts / the Global North, with adult learners in the university context, mainly for L2 English, with much less research undertaken for other modern foreign languages (Zhao, 2003). These limitations reflect how foreign language teaching materials (in this case, technology-assisted and computer-based) are artefacts of cultural practice, both socially and spatially/temporally located (Littlejohn, 2012, p. 284). The research development discussed below focusses on the major discourses which are rooted in the Global North (Kussler, 2000).

Warschauer & Healey (1998) and Gruba (2004) divide CALL research into three broad categories based on theoretical perspectives from SLA: structural CALL, communicative CALL, and integrative CALL, which broadly mirror the development of GFL theory expanded upon in Chapter 2. This provides one useful way of categorising the research in the field of second language learning theory, and also broadly coincides with the historical development of CALL and other applied linguistic approaches.

Although these categories are critiqued by Bax (2003b) for inconsistencies across publications in terms of chronology and criteria, they remain a useful classification.

In the behaviourist model of learning, learning is viewed as the formation of habits, stemming from the work of psychologists such as Bloomfield, Skinner, Thorndike and Watson, who observed that behaviour is learnt through a repeated reinforcement of a response elicited by a particular stimulus (Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013, p. 28). Behaviourists viewed language learning to be similar to all other forms of learning (Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013, p. 28), with certain communicative situations calling for certain responses, which could be reinforced based on the rationale of repeated exposure to the same materials. The computer was ideally suited to repeated stimulus and response activities (Evans, 2009, p. 19), leading to the idea of the “computer as tutor” (Warschauer, 1996). This type of computer assisted language learning has thus been termed “structural CALL” (Gruba, 2004) or “behavioural CALL” (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). CALL was thus originally associated with behaviourism and “drill and skill” practice exercises (also pejoratively known as “drill and kill” exercises), which originated in the USA with the mainframe computer in the 1960s (Warschauer & Healey, 1998, p. 57), and remained popular throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Liu, *et al.*, 2002). This type of CALL was grammar focussed, aiming to increase accuracy in student production (Gruba, 2004).

Behaviourism as applied to language learning came under attack from generative linguists such as Chomsky in the 1950s and 1960s, who asserted that language learning is not the same as other forms of learning, that there are innate language learning structures in the brain which support the learning of a first language, in a particular order of acquisition, regardless of instruction, and that once a first language is ‘programmed’ it interferes with the acquisition of a second language (Cook, 1895; Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013, p. 30). Despite this, Evans (2009) asserts that “The rationale behind drill and practice was not totally spurious, which explains in part the fact that CALL drills are still used today”. The rationale is stated by Warschauer as follows:

Repeated exposure to the same material is beneficial or even essential to learning.

A computer is ideal for carrying out repeated drills, since the machine does not get bored with presenting the same material and since it can provide immediate non-judgemental feedback.

A computer can present such material on an individual basis, allowing students to proceed at their own pace and freeing up class time for other activities. (Warschauer, 1996, p. 4)

In the 1980s there was a shift from behaviourism and cognitivism to socio-cultural theories of learning where learning was seen as a social act (Larsen-Freeman, 2007). Parallel developments in language teaching theory saw a move away from a cognitivism, toward social views which emphasised the use of language within “authentic social contexts” (Warschauer & Healey, 1998, p. 58). This saw an abundance of communicative language learning approaches such as the audio-lingual method (Ernst

Klett Sprachen, 2017). A greater understanding of the potential of CALL was seen as computer technology became more accessible to individuals and schools in the Global North in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This encouraged a “shift in emphasis from computer technology to its applications” (Liu, *et al.*, 2002, p. 250). Various media became integrated into the computer system, and more interactive uses of CALL began to emerge, for communicative purposes, and a new era of CALL emerged – ‘communicative CALL’ (Warschauer & Healey, 1998, p. 57). There was a shift away from practice drills, and rather an emphasis on using technology to guide “meaningful peer interactions”, and in this way develop learners’ mental models of language (Gruba, 2004, p. 628). Critics pointed out that the computer was not an integrated part of teaching, but rather that it was still used “in an ad hoc and disconnected fashion”, outside of the classroom (Warschauer & Healey, 1998, p. 58). The focus on communication as the central tenet to language teaching is again evident in this era, located in European settings. However, a notable and exceptional South African contribution during this time was the MPhil project in “Hypermedia” for foreign language teaching and learning developed at Stellenbosch University by Kussler (Kussler, 2002). This allowed “successful candidates to design, develop and to critically evaluate professional state-of-the-art hypermedia applications, incorporating graphics, sound and video, for delivery either on the Internet or on stand-alone systems” (Kussler, 2002, p. 4), which saw the creation of specialized CALL programmes developed such as “Deutsch für Tourismusstudenten” by Renate Du Toit (Kussler, 2002, p. 5).

These early days of CALL research were characterised by studies in educational research which focussed on measuring patterns of how technology was used generically in the classroom and measuring how the use of technology impacted learning (Evans, 2009, p. 27) as not all were convinced of the benefits of investing in computer technologies for language learning. As shown and summarised by Evans (2009), early CALL studies were characterized by a “narrowly focused, clinical examination of the impact of CALL activities and resources on improvement of language proficiency” (Evans, 2009, p. 27). The initial failure to take into account theories of second language acquisition as a basis for design of CALL materials, led to “product-oriented comparison studies about learning outcomes with no theoretical explanatory basis as well as studies investigating aspects of software performance, communication patterns, and community formation with unspecified links to language learning” (Chapelle, 2016, p. 160).

Given the lack of conclusive studies showing the positive effects of technology on language learning outcomes, one can understand the reluctance of teachers to make a move from traditional textbook-based methods. Garrett however, argued in 1991 that it was unreasonable and impractical to demand that the computer works for the purposes of teaching language, before becoming interested in using it for those purposes. Garrett (1991) rather seems to advocate for qualitative action research-based

approaches to understanding the impacts of technology within specific contexts of language learning, a call echoed by Evans (2009, p. 3). This is the approach taken in this dissertation.

At that time, Garrett (1991, p. 75) offered a set of more reasonable research queries which was based on clear variables: “what kind of software, integrated how into what kind of syllabus, at what level of language learning, for what kind of language learners, is likely to be effective for what specific learning purposes?”. This research agenda, revolutionary in the thinking of the era, would become one which later and current CALL and blended learning researchers still strive to answer (Chapelle, 2009; Mishan, 2013a; Hockly, 2018). Garrett (1991, p. 75) asserted that one should start this journey with “small research steps by using software which is designed to support significant learning and investigating its efficacy in local and carefully specified contexts”, and these are indeed the types of research which have significantly furthered the field (Evans, 2009, p. 27), and the type of research which this dissertation emulates. CALL researchers have thus become concerned with the pragmatic goal of enhancing teaching and learning through specific applications of technology, and evaluating these approaches based on SLA theory (Chapelle, 2009, p. 741).

The question then arises of which SLA theories one should use to design and evaluate language learning software or materials. Before the 1990s, the field of second language acquisition had seen a dichotomy between cognitive and social perspectives of language learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2007), and a great diversity in objectives and approaches to investigating second language development. Moreover, not all SLA research has had an interface with actual classroom teaching practice (Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013, p. 290). Cognitive approaches to language learning examine what happens in the mind of the language learner (the cognition) and scholars who take this approach are interested in the emergence of grammar, taking research approaches based on measuring input and output in language learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2007; Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013). Social perspectives on the other hand examine factors related to the environment of language learning, including motivation and the supportive nature of classroom interactions as significant to language learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2007; Berndt, 2013).

Chapelle (1998) claimed that because of the diversity of approaches in SLA, “[h]istorically, many applied linguists and teachers have been reluctant to make *any* [original emphasis] application of research to second language teaching” (Chapelle, 1998, p. 22). Mitchell *et al.* (2013, p. 290) argue that in fact, even as SLA has become its own field of study, there is still little interface between SLA research and actual classroom practice (Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013, p. 290). However, in the 1990s a new age of “complementary” SLA research was gaining ground, where researchers selected and developed “theoretically grounded learning materials and strategies to facilitate L2 learning” (Pica, 1997, p. 54) and then worked with teachers to implement these strategies in the classroom, “followed by

classroom research on their impact on students' learning" (Pica, 1997, p. 54). This has become known as instructed second language acquisition research (ISLA) (Ellis, 2005; Long, 2017).

While from the 1970s researchers had followed either cognitive or social approaches in second language acquisition research, and therefore in CALL research, in the late 1990s and early 2000s "integration" and "authentic environments" had become key concepts of language teaching pedagogies, with researchers now borrowing theories from both social and cognitive perspectives. In the late 1990s "integrative CALL" was born (Warschauer, 1996, p. 3). This saw the key move to integrating various teaching methods and various technologies into the process of language learning, as an "ongoing process of language learning and use, rather than visiting the computer lab on a once a week basis for isolated exercises" (Warschauer & Healey, 1998, p. 58). The advent of the World Wide Web and the development of Web 2.0 technologies have provided a host of new opportunities for teaching and learning (Chapelle, 2016, p. 159). During the 2000's researchers moved away from using the term CALL and began to use the term blended learning (Hockly, 2018) or blended language learning (Neumeier, 2005; Hinkelman & Gruba, 2012), as defined above. This shows a move away from the idea of computers and software use as "outside" of the classroom, and a move to more integrated environments as described above.

Thus, through the above historical development of CALL and recent development of blended language learning, it has become critical that data gathered on the effects of technology for language learning can be interpreted from SLA perspectives which have interface with classroom research (Thornbury, 2016). Instructed second language acquisition research has produced a wide range of findings (see Ellis, 2005). However, there is contention as to how these findings should be interpreted, given the huge range of variables which SLA embraces such as, "different languages, different aspects of language, different learners, different learning contexts, different learning needs, different learning outcomes, different instructional materials and so on" (Thornbury, 2016, p. 27). Generalising from research context to classroom context is thus cautioned (Spada, 2015). Nevertheless, a number of scholars, (including Lightbrown, 2003; Long, 2011; van Patten & Williams, 2007) have attempted to "infer pedagogical principles from research findings" (Thornbury, 2016, p. 27). These principles can be seen as a guide to best practice in second language teaching, which must then be carefully considered in the context of foreign language teaching. Moreover, the principles can be used to guide the selection of appropriate technologies for language learning, as is appropriate in the teaching and learning context (Thornbury, 2016).

Ellis (2005) for example highlights general principles which have been identified in the literature as being based on empirical evidence (Ellis, 2005, pp. 210-221).

Principle 1: Instruction needs to ensure that learners develop both a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and a rule-based competence.

Principle 2: Instruction needs to ensure that learners focus predominantly on meaning.

Principle 3: Instruction needs to ensure that learners also focus on form.

Principle 4: Instruction needs to be predominantly directed at developing implicit knowledge of the L2 while not neglecting explicit knowledge.

Principle 5: Instruction needs to take into account learners' 'built-in syllabus'.

Principle 6: Successful instructed language learning requires extensive L2 input.

Principle 7: Successful instructed language learning also requires opportunities for output.

Principle 8: The opportunity to interact in the L2 is central to developing L2 proficiency.

Principle 9: Instruction needs to take account of individual differences in learners.

Principle 10: In assessing learners' L2 proficiency it is important to examine free as well as controlled production.

A list of guiding principles such as the above is useful, however it must be kept in mind that as Thornbury (2016, p. 27) points out, no checklist can claim to be definitive, and the need for "revised criteria of assessment drawn from an eclectic theoretical base is ongoing". How thus to "anchor the educational uses of technology to a bedrock of empirically-based theory" is no easy task, given that technology is constantly developing and so is learning theory (Thornbury, 2016, p. 27). Thornbury (2016, pp. 27-31) provides his own set of 12 "observations" about the nature of second language learning as derived from SLA research (which reflect the principles of language learning by Ellis (2005) above), drawing on both cognitive and social instructed SLA research:

1. The acquisition of an L2 grammar follows a 'natural [non-linear] order'.
2. The learner's task is enormous because language learning is enormously complex.
3. Exposure to input is necessary.
4. Language learners can benefit from noticing salient features of the input.
5. Learners benefit when their linguistic resources are stretched to meet their communicative needs.
6. Learning is a mediated, jointly constructed process, enhanced when interventions are sensitive to, and aligned with, the learners current stage of development.
7. There is clear evidence that corrective feedback contributes to learning.
8. Learners can learn from each other during communicative interaction.
9. Automaticity in language processing is a function of 'massive repetition experiences and consistent practice.
10. A precondition to fluency is having easy access to a large store of memorised sequences or chunks.
11. Learning, particularly of words, is aided when the learner makes strong associations with the new material.

12. The more time (and the more intensive time) spent on learning tasks, the better.

From these observations derives 12 questions “which can be asked of any teaching aid (tool, device program or whatever) in order to calculate its capacity for facilitating learning” (Thornbury, 2016, p.27), in other words, to help one to make a decision about whether or not to use a tool for language learning. While Thornbury cautions that the list is not sensitive to local contexts, I found this list to be helpful in thinking about introducing students to online corpora and dictionary tools, and to evaluating the approach taken to teaching collocations within the context of the existing curriculum. The twelve principles that tools implemented should address are: adaptivity, complexity, input, noticing, output, scaffolding, feedback, interaction, automaticity, chunks, personalisation and flow (Thornbury, 2016, p.27). These points will thus be returned to in Chapter 7 where findings of the action research on blended learning and collocations in the local research context are discussed and analysed.

#### *4.4 Complex adaptive systems theory and language learning: ecological perspectives*

As explored in the sections above, language teaching has become more complex than ever before. The development of information technologies has added to this complexity, as teachers are continuously prompted towards innovation and versatility by making use of technology (Kramsch, 2014, p. 296). In German FLT, as with other language teaching, there has been a great increase in the use of technology for language teaching (Kussler, 2000; Steinig & Huneke, 2007, p. 37), to either support or supplement traditional paper-based coursebook methods (Hockly, 2018). There has been an increase in multimedia teaching materials which accompany traditional coursebook materials, including the development of videos and mobile applications which claim to “meet the students where they are at” (“Wir müssen die Lerner da abholen, wo sie stehen”) (Ernst Klett Sprachen, 2017, online).

This quote speaks to the idea that students have come to expect some form of technology in teaching and learning in the digital age, and that students are “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001). While this may be true in the Global North, and in South Africa might apply to students from well-resourced (usually private) schools, many students in the Global South have a poor prior education before arriving at university and may not have ever dealt with using technology for learning purposes. This means that they need to work hard to develop even the most basic computer literacies as well as academic literacies upon arriving at university, which may feel rather alienating (Boughey & McKenna, 2016, p. 4). This relates back to the digital divide/s expanded on in Chapter 2 (Fuchs & Horak, 2008; Heeks, 2018, pp. 86-87), where social inequalities are reinforced in the access and use of digital technologies (see Hinkelman & Gruba, 2012).

Thus, the wide inclusion CD-ROM accompanying materials and mobile applications as part of language textbooks can again be critiqued for their lack of suitability to contextualised learners – in trying to be

suitable for all learners, they are not suited to any specific learners in any specific contexts (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 121). Moreover, if their use is not well-supported and explained, this may cause a further sense of distress and alienation for both teachers and students (Boughey & McKenna, 2016, p. 4). The inclusion of online modes and digital language-learning materials in the research context is thus carefully examined in this dissertation (Chapter 6 and 7), taking perspectives from students and lecturers into account, as well as examining the role of institutional structures and the prescribed textbook in enabling the inclusion of technologies.

Wang *et al.* (2015, p. 382) argue that a complex systems approach is required to effectively address the “complexity and the reciprocal changes” brought about through the integration of technology-mediated learning with campus-based learning, which has “made learning more complex than ever before”. This is important as “[t]he complexity lies not only in the emergence of new elements in teaching and learning, but also in the changes brought about by the interaction between these new elements. The technology as a new element and its impact on learning can serve as a prime example”. Lim (2002, p. 412) points out that technology “may trigger changes in the activities, curriculum, and interpersonal relationships in the learning environment, and is reciprocally affected by the very changes it causes”. Little is known about how the changing and diverse student body in South Africa is equipped for this change, and how they perceive the use of technology which is implemented to improve their experience of learning, and whether the support given is adequate. There is also an absence in the literature with respect to considering the voice of teachers and lecturers in implementing these changes to practice, and how they experience the increased use of technology, particularly in the South African context where teachers/lecturers can be considered “digital immigrants” (Prensky, 2001, pp. 1-2).

Complex systems theory originated in the sciences (mathematics, chemistry, physics) and its application expanded to other complex systems such as galaxies, ecologies and social systems (Wang, *et al.*, 2015, p. 382; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2007). Complex systems theory has been applied to understand many non-linear systems, including second language acquisition (Larsen-Freeman, 1997), embracing as much of the complexity as possible, viewing context as part of the system, rather than outside of it. As Larsen-Freeman (2011, p. 208) points out, one of the general principles of process and change which underpin complexity theory and dynamic systems is that “the environment in which complex systems operate is part of a complex system. Context is all important”. Complexity theory and dynamic systems theory have been applied to the classroom setting (see Larsen Freeman, 1997; Burns, 2011) and are helpful to understand the varying components which need to be considered as affecting the context of language teaching (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2007).

Complexity theory is thus used a metatheory in this dissertation in order to unpack and understand relations between multiple components of the complex system of German language teaching in the South African context. Echoing Bax (2003, p. 280) who argues that methodology has received too much focus, and who thus calls for context approaches to language teaching, Larsen-Freeman (2011, p. 208) writes that “it is not uncommon for researchers to discuss the context as if it were a backdrop to what is of focal interest. However, CT/DST challenges the idea that context is background to the main action. It sees the context as part of the complex system”.

In relation to complexity theory as described above is the notion of classrooms as “ecosystems” (Morgan & Martin, 2014, p. 667), a recent metaphor which has been used to understand and reconceptualise language classrooms, rather than a “factory” metaphor which conceptualises teaching and learning in terms of marketplace utility. (Morgan & Martin, 2014, p. 667; Kramersch & Steffensen, 2008). In line with this conceptualisation, already in 1999, Horn pointed out the effects of globalisation and commercialisation on higher education in the world, and in South Africa: “The contemporary university does not only resemble an industrial enterprise, it has become just such an enterprise; its students do not resemble customers, they are customers” (Horn, 1999, p. 85). In this dissertation however I move away from the metaphor of factory and towards the metaphor of ecosystem in exploring the local research context, so as to include multiple and dynamic perspectives of the context of teaching and learning German as a foreign language with an increased use of technological tools. I understand this to be important for understanding the use of teaching tools and methods holistically:

From an ecological view, teaching tools are not at the center, nor mere aids, but rather a small part of complex classroom/online ecologies that are locally configured. Learning designs, then, are often created on-the-fly as bricolage (Berggren *et al.*, 2005), driven by context (Kern & Warschauer, 2000), embedded in small cultures (Holliday, 1999) and enacted as local practice (Pennycook, 2010). Conceptually, ecological perspectives situate the uses of tools within local pedagogic processes. (Hinkelman & Gruba, 2012, p. 48)

Ecological perspectives in language teaching thus aim to articulate local and particular experiences, in the hope that these “might lead to global changes, not by way of generalizability, but by way of analogy, because dialogue implies the emergence of shared experiences” (Kramersch & Steffensen, 2008, p. 27). Ecological perspectives for CALL or blended language learning are useful as they are critical and can be easily and quickly adapted to new situations and needs. They proved useful in this dissertation for example for understanding changes in teaching practice that were driven by urgent needs as a result of contextual factors such as the student protests of 2016 and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, as expanded on in Chapter 7.

Burns & Knox (2011) apply the principles of complex dynamic systems theory to their context of language teaching in the classroom setting in Australia. They developed the model below to describe the interactions between factors in their context. Such an approach would be a useful way to understand the complex nature of teaching and learning German as a foreign language in the South African higher education context, and to identify key factors within the system and how they interact over time. Burns & Knox (2011) do not consider the role of technology in their context, however, such a conceptualisation could be useful for considering a blended language learning context.

Burns & Knox (2011, p. 13) further expand on each of the players identified, examining the various influenced which each player in the system has surrounding themselves in turn:

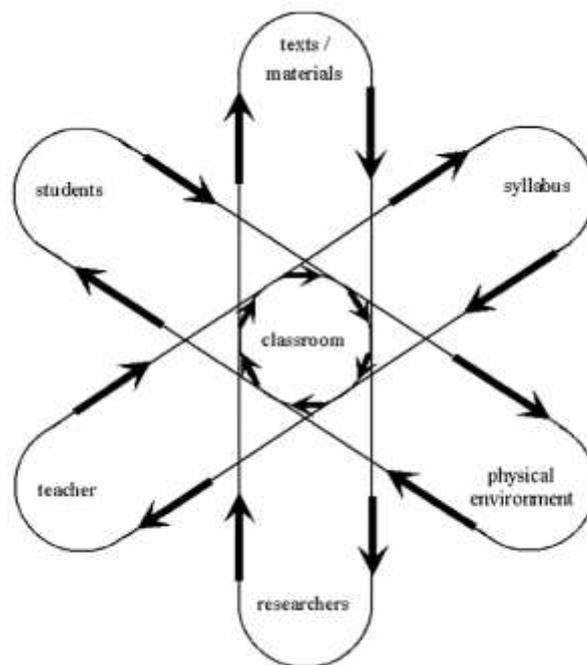


Figure 8: Classroom as a complex adaptive system (Burns & Knox, 2011, p. 13)

The above diagram is helpful in conceptualising what a complex adaptive language classroom may look like, as it shows the interconnectedness of the various elements involved in a classroom, and places the physical classroom at the centre of these interactions, as the space where these interactions take place. However, it is not wholly relevant to the research context as it involves a traditional classroom setting rather than a blended environment and thus does not take into account the role of technology or online classroom spaces. In the next section two frameworks developed for blended classrooms are considered.

#### 4.5 Frameworks of blended learning: What are the main factors in the blended learning system?

Khan developed an Octagonal Framework for Blended Learning, originally called “A Framework for E-Learning” which has been reported on by Singh (2003). Following Khan’s design, Singh (2003, p.52) describes eight elements of consideration which are necessary to consider when implementing or evaluating a blended course, namely: institutional, pedagogical, technological, interface design, evaluation, management, resource support, and ethical elements (see Figure below). Singh (2003, p. 51) claims that Khan’s Octagonal Framework has been used for many courses, and further claims that it “serves as a guide to plan, develop, deliver, manage, and evaluate blended learning programs” (Singh, 2003, p. 52), an ambitious goal given the one-dimensional nature of this framework. More suitable perhaps is the classification title “a framework to guide design” assigned to Khan’s Octagonal Framework by Halverson, *et al.* (2014, p. 28). While the necessary elements of blended learning are identified, Khan’s Octagonal Framework does not describe or explain how these elements relate to one another and interact dynamically.

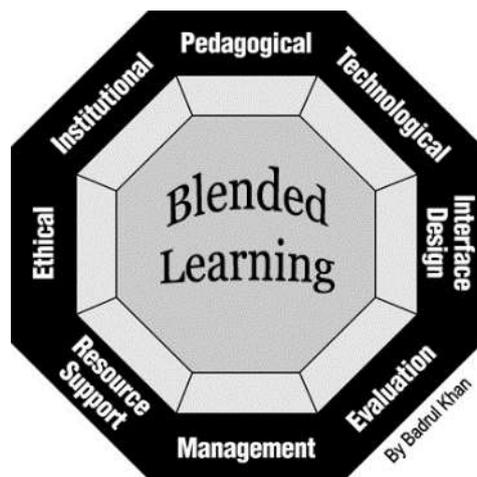


Figure 9: Khan’s Octagonal Framework for Blended Learning (Singh, 2003, p. 52)

Drawing on Singh (2003), Wang *et al.* (2015) developed a framework using complex systems theory to analyse research undertaken on blended learning systems. The Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System (CABLS) framework developed by Wang *et al.* (2015, p. 383) is far more comprehensive than that of Singh (2003) as it considers the major players in a complex blended learning system, and the connections between these. As stated above, this framework has been used to identify trends and gaps in other blended learning research, but could also be used as a tool to analyse an individual blended learning system so as to be sure to consider all inter-related factors of the system, which is how it is used for this research.

Of the 87 articles on blended learning examined by Wang *et al.* (2015) using the framework, they found that 95% had a focus on the learner, 79% on the content of the course, and 54% on the

technology used (some articles had more than one focus, which is why these percentages exceed an overall total of 100). Moreover, they found that there was far less emphasis on the teacher (32%), the institution (17%) and the learning support (15%) (Wang, *et al.*, 2015) than on the learner. A learner-centred approach to understanding blended learning is hardly surprising, if, following on from the metaphor of a classroom as a factory, students are the customer for whom courses are tailored, so that they may achieve success (Horn, 1999, p. 85).

In line with this, the most common relationship identified by Wang *et al.* (2015) in the literature was between learner and content. However, by not focussing on the more complex relationships one may lose a nuanced understanding of the whole system of blended learning in a research context, and how the feedback loops operate to cause small, significant effects (Wang, *et al.*, 2015, p. 386). For example, learning support – encompassing both technical support such as teaching students how to use certain new teaching technologies, and academic support, such as teaching students effective time-management strategies and study skills – has been of the least focus in the research examined by Wang *et al.* (2015). This can be seen as a serious oversight, as the amount and quality of learning support offered could determine the success of a blended learning experience. Stracke's (2007) study showed that students dropped out of blended learning courses for one of three reasons: "a perceived lack of support and connection/complementarity between the face-to-face and computer-assisted components of the 'blend'; a perceived lack of usage of the paper medium for reading and writing; and the rejection of the computer as a medium of language learning" (Strack, 2007, p. 57). Wang *et al.* (2015, p. 389) emphasise the need to look at the more complex, non-linear relationships between the dimensions to see how they impact on blended learning, and to avoid one-way interpretations of causality. The model created by Wang *et al.* (2015, p. 383) (depicted below) does not identify the inter-related effects of each dimension (shown in a sphere), it merely maps them as contributing to the learning process.

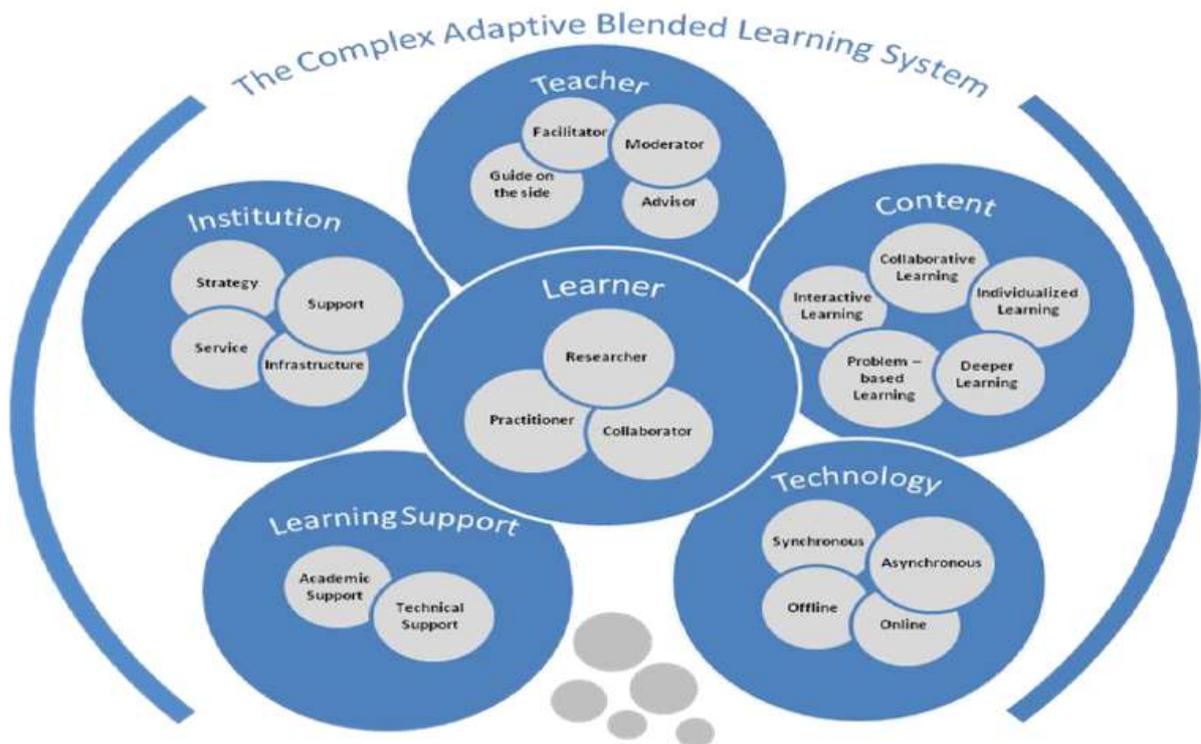


Figure 10: *The Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System* (Wang et al., 2015, p. 382)

While the above frameworks are useful for conceptualising elements within the blended learning system, they are general frameworks for blended learning and are not tailored specifically to language learning. Underlying theories of learning are not referred to directly in these frameworks, although arguably could fall under “pedagogical” elements in Khan’s Octagonal Framework (Singh, 2003) and under “content” in the CABLS framework (Wang et al., 2015, p. 383).

#### 4.6 Frameworks for designing and evaluating blended language learning activities

The following two frameworks were developed specifically for designing or evaluating blended language learning activities, and rest on the notion that any application of technology within the classroom (or outside of it) for the purposes of language teaching and learning should be based on sound principles of (instructed) second language acquisition. As discussed above, the development of second language acquisition theories shaped CALL research, and fed into later blended learning research so that there is now agreement that “[a] programme of blended learning can provide effective learning and teaching if built on a sound understanding of what constitutes best practise in language learning and teaching in general” (McCarthy, 2016, p. 5).

The first framework for blended language learning was developed by Neumeier (2005) who used this to examine a case study of English language teaching in Germany. Parameter number 4 involves a consideration of the language teaching methods used in each 'mode' (online or face-to-face).

Parameter	Individual descriptors
1. Mode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on mode</li> <li>• Distribution of modes</li> <li>• Choice of modes</li> </ul>
2. Model of integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sequencing of individual modes</li> <li>• Level of integration</li> </ul>
3. Distribution of learning content and objectives and assignment of purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parallel or isolated</li> </ul>
4. Language teaching methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of teaching methods in each of the modes employed</li> </ul>
5. Involvement of learning subjects (students, tutors and teachers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactional patterns: individual vs. collaborative language learning activity</li> <li>• Variety of teacher and learner roles</li> <li>• Level of autonomy</li> </ul>
6. Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom, home, outdoors, computer room, institutional settings</li> </ul>

Figure 11: Parameters describing and conceptualizing a blended learning environment for language learning and teaching purposes (Neumeier, 2005, p. 167)

Mishan (2013, p. 210) developed a framework which draws on Neumeier's parameters. Mishan's (2013) schema seeks to normalise the use of technology in everyday teaching and learning practices, drawing on arguments by Gruba & Hinkelman (2012). This is shown for example in the "materials" dimension: by classifying how materials are presented to learners, on a scale of static to dynamic (where static would be a paper-based print out or a file upload for example, and dynamic would be a real life chat or a mobile chat), rather than classifying materials based on whether they were created with or without technology. Mishan identifies the "core dimension" of this framework as the "model of integration" which gives "coherence to the blended learning task, and by extension, the curriculum in general" (2013, p. 211). If one of the blended elements is not well integrated, for example if it does not count for marks, students may not participate.

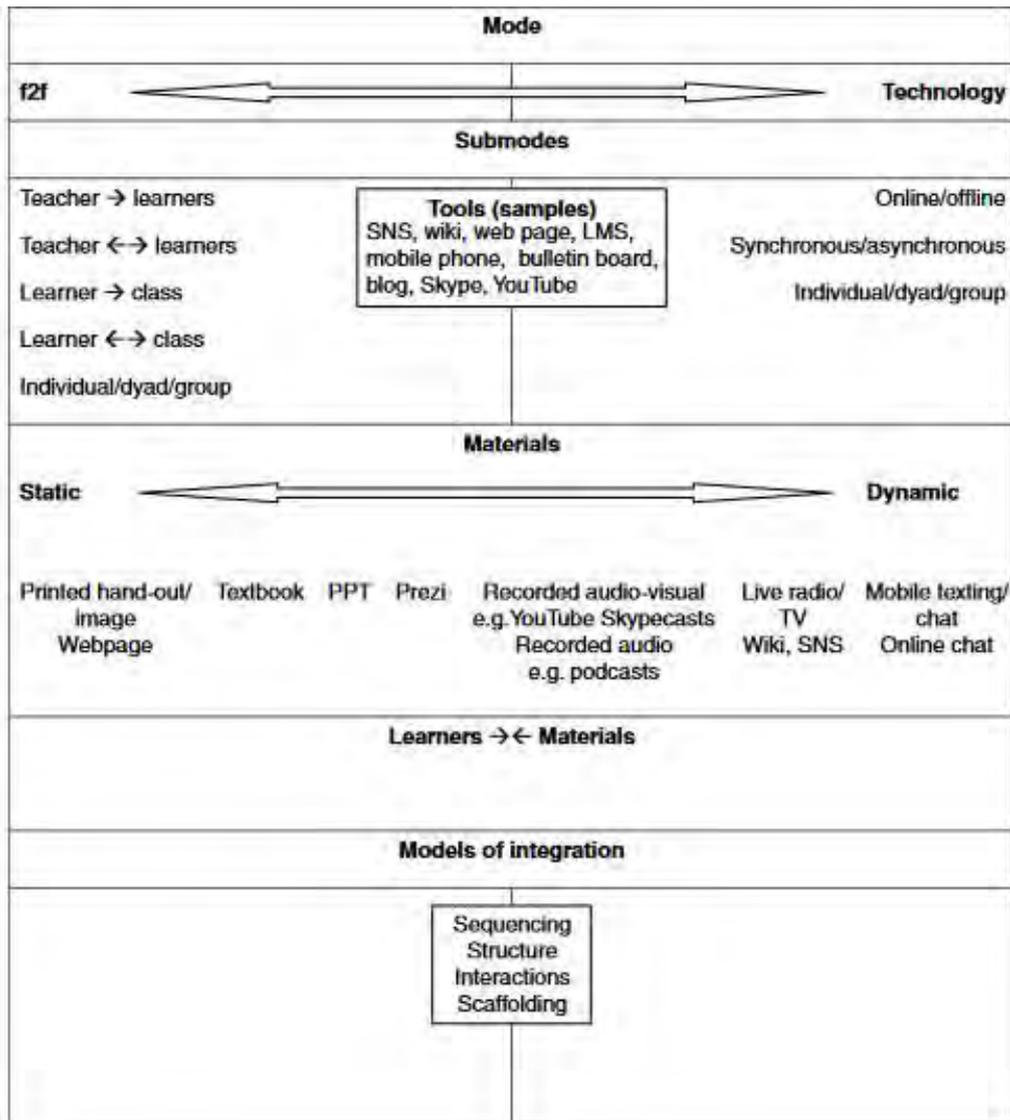


Figure 12: A Framework for blended language learning (Mishan, 2013, p. 210)

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the historical background and definitions of CALL, blended learning and blended language learning. It has shown that there is a wide scope of international research on blended learning (Bonk & Graham, 2006), however, trends in large comparative studies show that research undertaken has been learner-centred, and has not adequately addressed all the aspects of what has been termed the “blended learning ecosystem” (Halverson, *et al.*, 2014, p. 97) or the “complex adaptive blended learning system” (Wang, *et al.*, 2015, p. 380). The role of the teacher and the institution in ensuring the success of blended learning systems requires further investigation (Bax, 2003b; Halverson, *et al.*, 2014). There is also a need for investigations into the role of learning support (or the lack of learning support) in ensuring students success with using technology for learning purposes (Halverson, *et al.*, 2014). These two areas are addressed in this dissertation.

It has been shown how classrooms may be considered as complex adaptive systems, and how with the advent of globalisation, classrooms have become even more complex. Various frameworks developed for conceptualising blended learning and blended language learning have been presented. This dissertation thus addresses these gaps in the research identified above, drawing on the theories of blended (language) learning and complexity theory, as discussed in the chapter above, to analyse the research findings of the local blended language learning system, looking at the relationships between multiple factors. In Chapter 7, I draw on the design of the frameworks discussed in this chapter to design a framework of the complex adaptive blended learning system suited to the research context.

Context-based approaches (Bax, 2003a) are once again seen to be of importance, and case studies which examine many inter-related factors are those which have added most to the conversations on best practice in blended learning: “A comprehensive understanding of the project of language teaching and learning (and the role of digital technology within that project) is only possible if we look at all the parts that make up the whole” (Evans, 2009, p. 3). This is the premise upon which this dissertation is designed.

## ***Chapter 5: Methodology – Action Research Case Study***

---

Improvement in practice is a common goal of language teachers as discussed in previous sections, and action research is commonly adopted by applied linguistic researchers in language learning contexts (Heigman & Croker, 2009, p. 116), although often this type of research is not formally reported on but rather is used by teachers to reflect on and improve teaching and learning within their own context (Edwards & Burns, 2015, p. 6). Practitioners may be reluctant to report on findings of a context-based action research project, as they may not be widely generalizable (Edwards & Burns, 2015, p. 7). However, the findings of an action research project such as this one can provide valuable insights for other researchers and practitioners, who may find value in comparing their own contexts to the reported context through analogy (Kramsch & Steffensen, 2008, p. 27).

The research design for this project followed the convention of traditional action research from an insider perspective, as I am an insider to the research context having been both a student and teacher in the study context (although as I will discuss in later sections, this positionality was not clear cut, as I am not a full time staff member, and so at times I assumed the position of an outsider). Action research provides a rigorous framework for empirical research that embraces principles of “participation”, “reflection” and “empowerment” (Berg, 2004, pp. 195-196), seeking to firstly uncover and produce knowledge relevant to a group of people (in this case the Rhodes University German Studies Section, staff and students), and secondly to motivate group members to “take up and use” information produced in the research (Berg, 2004, p. 197) (in this case a better understanding of the blended learning approach in use, and an understanding of the importance of collocation in language teaching). All action research has at its heart a common goal to improve social problems through an integration of research and existing practice upon which remedial action is then based, however, there are many different varieties of action research which are often defined by the researcher’s positionality (as an insider or an outsider to the research context), the role of the participants, and the focus of the action (Herr & Anderson, 2015, pp. 11-12). In this study, a traditional action research approach is employed (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 18). In traditional action research there is a focus on “individual or group level of analysis of problems”, combined with an emphasis on “issues of efficiency and improvement of practices” (Brown & Tandon, 1983 in Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 18) (in this case language teaching practices, in a time-constrained curriculum). Research of this kind is often undertaken in educational contexts by practitioner researchers who are ‘insiders’ to the research context, meaning that the processes of research and action are integrated so that practitioners can bring about improvements in practice (Somekh, 1995, p. 340; Stringer, 2014; Herr & Anderson, 2015).

This study arises as a result of the insights gained during my role as an insider in the language learning context – having been a language student myself, and now finding myself in the role of researcher and (part-time) teacher within this same context. This type of approach is common to action research is underpinned by the idea that “understanding develops through the practical situations in which we are placed and the way in which we engage with those situations” (Foreman-Peck & Heilbronn, 2018, p. 130). Research undertaken by teachers is prompted by questions that arise from a critical reflection of theory and practice (Foreman-Peck & Heilbronn, 2018, p. 130), in my case a critical reflection of second language acquisition theory and language teaching practice in context. As put forward by Calvert & Sheen (2014, p. 227), “The goal of action research for language teachers is to improve their pedagogical practices by deepening their understanding of students’ learning processes, experimenting with a variety of methodological options, and critically examining and reflecting on their lessons and activities with a view to taking initiatives”. This statement embodies the four steps of action research as first set out by Lewin (1946) which are as follows: (1) identify a problem or question; (2) carry out an action; (3) observe and reflect on the outcome; and (4) plan another action (Lewin, 1946 in Calvert & Sheen, 2014, p. 227). These stages can be labelled: 1) plan, 2) act, 3) observe and reflect and 4) plan and re-implement, as shown in the figure below. This study follows these stages as outlined within this chapter, and reported on in narrative format in Chapter 6.

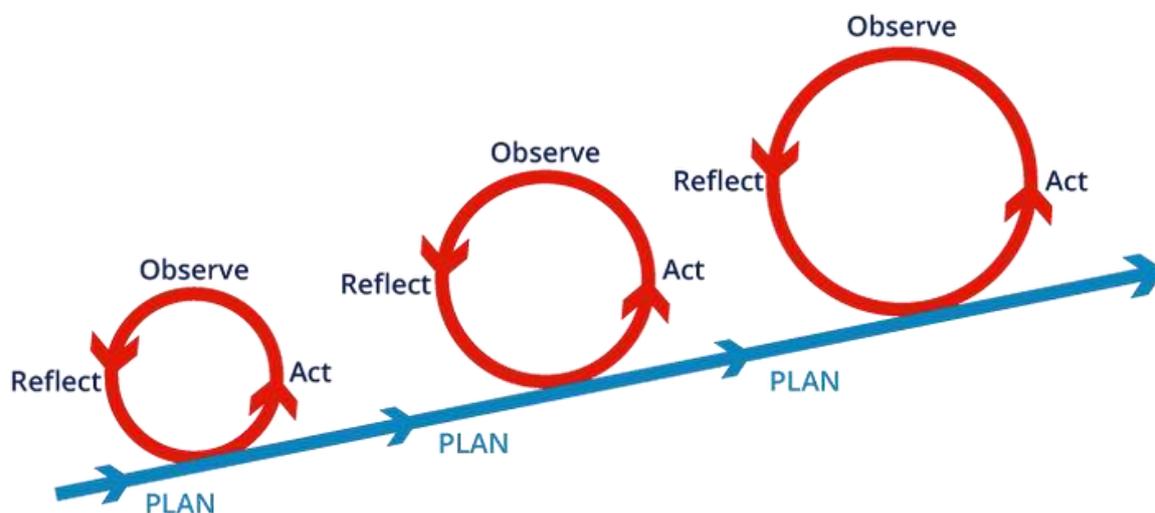


Figure 13: The cyclical nature of action research (O'Byrne, 2016, online)

### *5.1 Data collection, mixed methods*

Within the parameters of this case study, which takes an action research approach, mixed-methods are employed to integrate meaningfully both quantitative and qualitative data (Ivankova & Cresswell, 2009, p. 136; Bryman, 2012; Mertens, 2007). A mixed-methods approach such as this “can often provide a breadth and depth that a single approach may lack by itself” (Ivankova & Cresswell, 2009, p. 136), and as such is useful to provide rich layers of evidence in the exploration of the case-study in question. Mixed methods are thus appropriate to action research designs within educational contexts where there is a cyclical process of finding out, implementing action, reflecting on the action (and evaluating or exploring the effects of the action) and re-implementing action (taking reflections into consideration) (Riazi & Candlin, 2014, p. 141).

Data collection followed a non-observational approach (Heigman & Croker, 2009, p. 117). The main body of data includes qualitative data such as: questionnaires, interviews, and journal reflections. Additional quantitative data includes student records (e.g. marks, class attendance, and participation in online learning platforms) as well as learner writing (from class exercises, homework tasks, tests and exams) collated in the form of a diachronic learner corpus. Classroom documents including the handouts on collocations produced are also included (see Appendix of Materials). These multiple sources of data listed above help to ensure that there is triangulation of the data (Heigman & Croker, 2009, p. 127) and thus validity and reliability in this research, as findings are accounted for from several perspectives.

Member checks, the process of confirming results with participants in a study (Duff, 2012, p. 420), were also undertaken as a form of ensuring the validity of qualitative data collected during interviews and questionnaires. This was performed with both staff and students and is further discussed under the section on ethical considerations below. In addition to support from my research supervisor, I sought more informal advice from “critical friends” involved in language teaching and linguistics in order to improve the quality of the research, as is a recognised measure of ensuring validity in action research (Herr & Anderson, 2015, pp. 98-99). This allowed for ongoing critical reflection on many aspects of the research, including the design and implementation of the lectures and the collection and analysis of the data.

While this type of research which is focused on a specific local context cannot necessarily produce results which are able to be generalised to all other contexts, it does allow for the deep understanding of localised context, and can inform other contexts through analogy, as argued by Kramsch & Steffensen (2008, p. 27). This type of understanding is key to ecological perspectives of second language learning.

As stated in Chapter 1, the overarching goal of this research is to examine holistically the use of technology for teaching and learning German as a foreign language in the South African context, particularly at Rhodes University (where I am an ‘insider’), and provide insights as to what constitutes local best practice within this context of higher education, specifically looking at the explicit teaching and learning of collocation as a strategy to improve free writing, using both the face-to-face and online modality. This may be divided into two inter-related goals, with related sub-goals (repeated here from Chapter 1):

1. To examine the implementation of a blended learning model (which involves a reduction in face-to-face teaching time) in order to show the interplay between related components of the blended learning ecosystem in a South African higher education foreign language context, through
  - 1.1) exploring the readiness for and attitudes towards blended learning among German Studies students;
  - 1.2) exploring teachers’ perspectives in implementing blended learning resources for language teaching;
  - 1.3) exploring students’ approaches and attitudes/ self-perception to language learning and their use of existing materials;
  - 1.4) exploring the institutional role in implementing blended learning.
  
2. To create added corpus-based resources for enhancing teaching and learning German in our context (with a focus on vocabulary learning from a collocations perspective), within the blended learning model, and evaluate their effectiveness through
  - 2.1) creating and implementing language exercises, drawing on corpus-based methods (with a focus on formulaic language and collocation), for three levels of German Studies, which are aligned with the existing curriculum (following CEFR levels), and which are presented within a blended learning model;
  - 2.2) assessing the attitudes towards, and the success and challenges of, the implementation of corpus-based practices within a contextualised curriculum in the GFL university classroom in South Africa;
  - 2.3) exploring the usefulness of a text-based approach to teaching collocation in enhancing students’ language competence in German, and their meta-linguistic awareness (in their mother-tongue and other languages).

## *5.2 Participants*

German Studies at Rhodes University is one of eight German sections across the country (as discussed in Chapter 1) and has maintained steady staff and student numbers since 1994 - that is 2 permanent full-time staff members, and an average of about 70 students overall per year. The main cohort of participants included (with their consent, see Appendix AA and HH for examples of consent forms) staff members and students of German Studies.

Staff participants include German Studies lecturers at Rhodes University, as well as other German Studies lecturers at the six other higher education institutions offering German in South Africa. For the duration of the research project there were two full-time staff members in German Studies in the School of Languages and Literatures at Rhodes University, who will be referred to by the pseudonyms Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 in the discussion.

In my role as a PhD student and teacher/tutor within the department, I was also an active participant, and the research takes the form of reflective practice, with myself placed as a reflective practitioner and researcher (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 37).

Student participants included all students taking German Studies at Rhodes University, who had begun learning German with no prior knowledge of the German language (*ab initio* students) and who were registered for German Studies in the time period of 2017-2019. This included students in GS1, GS2 and GS3. The study was thus limited in size by the number of registered students for German Studies (an average of 67 students per year in total). There is a natural attrition of students within each year, and thus the number of participants at the outset of the project may decrease as the year progresses. I note the participation rates for each questionnaire (reported in Chapter 6) as a figure of students who participated divided by the total number of registered students in the academic year. The table below shows the number of registered students at the end of each academic year throughout the research project.

*Table 1: Number of registered students in German Studies, end 2017 - 2019*

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>GS1</b>	<b>GS2</b>	<b>GS3</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>2017</b>	39	14	9	62
<b>2018</b>	42	22	7	71
<b>2019</b>	47	17	5	69
				202

Additionally, French 1P, 1A ,2 ,3 students were included as participants for the 'online and in-class learning' questionnaire of 2017, and 2019 in order to draw on a larger base of participants to assess technological backgrounds/ readiness for blended learning in the modern foreign languages at Rhodes University. The table below shows the total number of registered students in French Studies at the end of 2017 and 2019 (the years in which data was collected from French Studies students).

*Table 2: Number of registered students in French Studies, end 2017 and 2019*

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>F1P</b>	<b>FS1</b>	<b>FS2</b>	<b>FS3</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>2017</b>	63	5	6	3	77
<b>2019</b>	44	6	4	4	58
					135

The staff and students involved in the study had diverse backgrounds, as will be expanded upon in the discussion in Chapter 6.

### *5.3 Stages of the action research methodology*

The following section provides a brief overview of the stages of the research methodology following the steps of action research design. This will be followed by a detailed description of the methods undertaken to collect data.

#### Stage 1, 2017/2018: Plan

The first stage of the action research sought to investigate the current blended learning practices taking place in German Studies at Rhodes University, and in German Studies at other South African institutions, and to identify the strengths and potential problems which existed for staff and students, both in terms of the use of technology and in terms of language teaching and learning. The main methods of data collection were as follows:

- Semi-structured interviews with lecturers in the German Studies Section at RU.
- Online questionnaires with representatives from other German Sections in SA.
- Overview of “blended” courses, and what aspects have been blended.
- Questionnaires for students: language background and technological access/ ability/ attitudes.
- Preliminary data collection of short texts to add to the RUDaF learner corpus.

In 2017 a preliminary investigation of the types of blended learning taking place in German Studies was undertaken. This followed two in-depth semi-structured interviews with the German Studies lecturers, and a practical investigation of the online learning platform, RUconnected.

A questionnaire on students’ technological backgrounds and general attitudes to using technology for learning was issued (with GS1, GS2, GS3, French 1, 2, 3).

In 2018 learner texts were collected and added to the German learner corpus, RUDaF, in order to undertake an examination of our learner writing, with a focus on the use of formulaic phrases and collocations which are present in the coursebook. I also explored how others had approached teaching formulaic phrases and collocations, as discussed in Chapter 3, and what types of underlying learning theory I thought were suitable for our context (Chapter 4).

Stage 2, 2018: Act

The second stage of the action research was to implement lectures based on insights gained from participants in the first stage described above. As formulaic language and collocations were identified as a problem in writing by current literature (Reder, 2013; Targońska, 2014), and as this was confirmed in the case of Rhodes University by lecturers and corroborated further by evidence from learner writing, it became an aim to provide explicit collocational instruction within the existing language curriculum. This was undertaken through a combination of blended learning and corpus-based methodology guided by Khan's Octagonal Framework (Singh, 2003, p. 52), Neumeier's Framework for Blended Language Learning (Neumeier, 2005, p. 167), and Mishan's Framework Blended Language Learning (Mishan, 2013, p. 210) as discussed in Chapter 4, to create lectures to help our students improve their awareness of the patterned nature of language.

In this stage of the research, the following methods were employed:

- Creation and documentation of lectures and exercises with the focus of action being formulaic phrases/collocations (Based on pedagogic corpus, created from texts they have been exposed to, compare with the glossary, and following the syllabus).

Aim: to increase fluency in learner language production, awareness-raising of the patterned nature of language/ language "chunks". Participants: GS1, GS2 and GS3 students 2018.

- Implementation of regular homework writing exercises in conjunction with the corpus-based blended learning activities to ensure that learning is put into practice.
- Addition of written work to the ongoing learner corpus, RUDaF.

An important consideration as part of this design was that the lectures and exercises created should complement the existing curriculum, rather than exist alongside it, or be a completely separate and decontextualized set of learning activities (as often is the case in reports of corpus-based instruction at the tertiary education level). As the main driver of the language curriculum is the language coursebook, exercises were developed to complement this and improve on what the coursebook (in this case *Menschen* A1, A2 and B1) offers. Details of the lectures are provided in Chapter 6. Materials created can be found in Appendix N.

Participation in class and on the intranet platform RUconnected was observed and documented. Participants were asked to evaluate their experiences of a blended course for language learning. The lecturers/facilitators of the course also self-reflected on the process during recorded interviews in order to identify areas of strength and weakness in the approach. Quantitative data of language usage and the implementation of collocations taught were identified within the learner corpus to show how often participants implemented taught concepts in their own writing.

These different methods of analysis (through documenting of participation and evaluation, and the quantitative investigation of usage within the learner corpus) were undertaken in order to triangulate the data and provide a holistic view of results of the implementation of the blended language lectures with a focus on collocation. This enabled me to make observations about efficacy of the methods in context, the attitudes towards the methods, and whether or not they aid enhancement of teaching practice.

#### Stage 3, 2018: Observe and reflect

Reflection is a core component of practical action research, where one seeks to understand and interpret social situations (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 25), such as the language learning lectures and exercises implemented in this study, with a view to their improvement. In this third stage I sought to evaluate the usefulness of the approach to improving collocational awareness by means of:

- a reflective questionnaire,
- examination of learner corpus data,
- observation of students' interactions within the classroom and with online components of the lectures (evidence of online activity logged on Moodle software, RUconnected),
- and self-reflection by the lecturers in interviews of the experience of teaching and assessing.

Interviews with lecturers were held again to determine any changes/reflections since the previous year, and to engage with their comments and responses to the implemented lectures.

I kept a factual and descriptive journal of the lectures implemented, as is a common strategy in action research, and used this as a base for further reflection on the process (Heigman & Croker, 2009, p. 118).

#### Stage 4, 2018/2019: Adapt and re-implement

As action research is a cyclical process, and seeks to improve and transform practice, it is necessary to make use of reflection and evaluation to make practical improvements which engage with the input of participants (Calvert & Sheen; 2014, p. 227). This means that one then makes use of insights to

adapt and re-implement practices. In this fourth stage, changes were made and the approach and lectures were adapted based on the above evaluation, and then re-implement in 2019.

This was accompanied by a re-evaluation of the usefulness of this approach to improving collocational awareness by means of:

- a reflective questionnaire,
- examination of learner corpus data,
- observation of students' interactions within the classroom and with online components of the lectures (evidence of online activity logged on Moodle software, RUconnected),
- self-reflection (by lecturers) of the experience of teaching and assessing.

#### *5.4 Ethical considerations*

Care was taken in designing this study, to do so in an ethically principled way, and guidance was taken from the Rhodes University Ethics Standards Committee (RUESC) Handbook (RUESC, 2014). Ethical clearance for data collection from students and staff was applied for in June 2017 through the Joint School of Languages and Literatures and Linguistics Ethics Committee and obtained in September 2017 (tracking number SOLLING17/83488<sup>16</sup>). These ethical considerations are particularly important when undertaking research with student participants who are considered a 'vulnerable group' due to the hierarchical nature of the education system, and the potential for manipulation or harm that exists in institutional settings with power distance. Action research, the approach taken in this design, is an ethically grounded methodology which seeks to create a participatory research environment to bring about empowerment and positive transformation (Berg, 2004). Action research necessitates involvement from both lecturers and students as participants in the research. As such, gatekeeper permission was sought from the relevant authorities within the institution, after explaining the purposes of the research and the anticipated risks posed to participants – for staff, the gatekeeper contacted was the Director of Human Resources at Rhodes University, Loshni Govender (permission granted 05 October 2017), and for students, the gatekeeper contacted was the Rhodes University Registrar, Dr Stephen Fourie (permission granted 24 August 2017). For access to all ethical clearance documentation for this project SOLLING17/83488, please see the following link which is also available in the Appendix:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QMvLfdBRXdHcZDhFVEAJtRpHySg5xTjT?usp=sharing>

---

<sup>16</sup> For access to all ethical clearance documents please see the link in the Appendix.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QMvLfdBRXdHcZDhFVEAJtRpHySg5xTjT?usp=sharing>

I explained the purpose of the research to student participants at the outset of the academic years of 2018 and 2019 during lecture time, and student participants were asked to fill in informed consent forms (see Appendix AA), acknowledging their role in the research, and indicating whether or not they would be happy for their writing to be collected over the course of the year.

As clearly stated in the informed consent document, the participation in the instituted language lectures was mandatory as they formed part of the German Studies curriculum; however, participation in the research was optional for all students, and it was emphasised that no negative consequences would arise from non-participation in the research (they would still benefit from the teaching and feedback provided as part of the research). Students were informed that consent could be withdrawn at any time during the study, with work submitted and recorded class participation up to that point eligible to be included in the study and research findings. As stated above, student participants were considered 'vulnerable' individuals, who were in a subordinate relationship to lecturers of the course. They may have felt compelled to participate in the research because of this, or that they would be negatively perceived if they did not consent to taking part in the research. I was aware of this potential problem, and participants were encouraged to voice any concerns through the class representative, or directly to the Head of Section and supervisor of this dissertation. As an alternative, I also included an email address for a member of the ethics committee, should any student have wanted to address any concerns through that channel.

Informed consent was obtained separately for each research questionnaire issued (See Appendices) All German Studies students were assigned a random participant number in order to ensure their anonymity within the study. Data obtained (for example student writing and questionnaires) was coded according to participant number, so that correlations could be drawn between their writing, their responses, and their physical and online presence.

The first questionnaire in 2017 was completely anonymous. Anonymity is "a frequent method used to diffuse sensitive items" (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 17). However, there is contention as to whether anonymity actually does encourage "honesty and willingness to disclose", as participants may not be any more willing to disclose their information simply because they are anonymous, and may actually be less likely to provide information as they may feel that information provided is not valued if not attributed to them personally (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 17). Moreover, anonymity does not always serve the purposes of the research, as one cannot then correlate research data. The decision was then taken to ensure confidentiality rather than anonymity in further research questionnaires, so as to be

able to correlate students' responses and outputs, and which was made clear in the informed consent sections of the questionnaires.

The exercises developed with a focus on collocations were designed to address the same grammar content which is taught in traditional methods, aligned with the coursebook. Given the student diversity and backgrounds, I had to take into account that some students/participants may have been uncomfortable with the 'blended' components in the language course. As stated elsewhere, RUconnected is the learning management system (LMS) in use at Rhodes University, and as such all students should know how to use and navigate this system. I however anticipated that this might not be the case for all students who come from varied backgrounds and have varying levels of computer literacy. As student support is often neglected in blended learning studies, I aimed to provide clear and concise instruction of all new technology used, and to model the use of this technology in class. This type of explicit support for the use of technology has become common in German Studies and is one aspect of 'best practice' in the section which has arisen during the course of the research (see Chapter 8 for further examples of best practice).

Research with staff participants was also considered carefully in terms of its ethical implications. Much research in blended learning and corpus-based studies neglects the teachers' voice, and to relate their opinions, attitudes and beliefs (Tshuma, 2018). I specifically aimed to include our lecturers' perspectives in the study, as they are important agents in the teaching and learning system and as their voices are usually not considered enough in the process of assessing the value of implementing educational technology or corpus-based methods. I included both myself as well as the two permanent German Studies lecturers in this research. This was undertaken with their consent and support. They were fully aware of the nature of the research project, and their perspectives proved very valuable throughout the research. As Alvesson (2003, p. 167) highlights, researching one's own context can be difficult, and it is thus rare for academics to study the "lived realities of their own organisations" where they are heavily involved. There are both advantages and disadvantages to being an insider within a research context. On the one hand, "There may be anticipations of those targeted for study to experience breaks of trust" and certain ideas on organisational loyalty may lead to a wish to have certain "backstage conditions" remain unexposed. On the other hand, personal involvement is a rich resource, offering in-depth insights into the context at hand, which is often the goal of qualitative research (Alvesson, 2003, p. 167). My position as an insider researcher may also have influenced my views of the research context. I tried to maintain objectivity through having "critical friends" who help perform the role of a "validation team" for my own reflections (Herr & Anderson, 2015, pp. 98-99). This team consists of peers and colleagues rather than "dissertation committee

members” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, pp. 98-99). Valuable insights were gained through these consultations, which have increased the validity of the research methods.

In 2018, I amended my project to include a short electronic questionnaire with staff participants at other South African Universities offering German, in order to better contextualise my own case study. There were minimal anticipated risks to the lecturers, as they are not high-risk participants (they are in a position of power). I anticipated that some lecturers may feel that they were being judged on their approach to teaching. This is why the sentence “No institution will be singled out as being lacking in a particular way” was included in the informed consent form. I proposed to use these results to provide a more holistic overview/contextualisation of approaches to teaching German as a Foreign Language in South Africa, rather than to critique any specific universities/sections. Participation in the questionnaire was voluntary, and participants reserved the right to not answer the questionnaire, or to not answer all of the questions. The participants were not guaranteed anonymity as they could potentially be linked to their institution. This was highlighted in the informed consent form: “Responses to this questionnaire will not be anonymous in that the institution might be named, but not the person filling in the form.” (See Appendix M)

Gatekeeper permission was requested from each HE institution (Stellenbosch University (SU), University of Cape Town (UCT), University of the Western Cape (UWC), the North West University (NWU), University of the Free State (UFS), University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), and the University of Pretoria (UP)). This process was not easy as there do not seem to be standardised guidelines for obtaining gatekeeper permission from staff participants across institutions, rather, each institution has its own system.

Gatekeeper permission was obtained from:

University of the Free State:	29 August 2018, Prof RC Witthuhn, Chair Senate research ethics committee.
Stellenbosch University:	02 October 2018, Prof C von Maltzan, Professor & Head of German Dept. of Modern Foreign Languages / Stellenbosch University
University of Pretoria:	01 August 2018, Carlien Nell, Bureau for Institutional Research & Planning (BIRAP)
Wits:	04 October 2018, Prof D Ojwang, Head of School of Literature, Language and Media (SLLM) University of the Witwatersrand
NWU:	12 November 2018, Prof Marlene Verhoef, Chairperson NWU Research Data Gatekeeper Committee

All these documents may be located in the appendix of ethical clearance documents:  
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QMvLfdBRXdHcZDhFVEAJtRpHySg5xTJT?usp=sharing>

### 5.5 Types of data collected

As seen in the table below, data collected was in the form of 1. questionnaires, 2. interviews, 3. learner corpus data, 4. pedagogic corpus data, 5. participant participation records and 6. action research factual/descriptive journal. In the section below the table, each data collection method is expanded upon. Data collected from questionnaires and interviews is available to be viewed through an open access google drive link which leads to a Digest of Results (268 pages). The link to the Digest of Results: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QJ8zZsTrF\\_XCxFjT8cjwUh0KlZNU1LjY/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QJ8zZsTrF_XCxFjT8cjwUh0KlZNU1LjY/view?usp=sharing) can also be located in the Appendix.

Access to learner corpus data is also available via a google drive link in Appendix O

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1I58BfI2ElkEV59ezSUZHFL48xRFYdLQw?usp=sharing>.

All data will be accessible to external viewers for five years from date of publication as stipulated in the ethics clearance agreement.

*Table 3: Summary of data collected 2017-2019*

Type of Data	Method of collection	Collected from	Timeline
Self-reporting on blended learning in the GS Section	Semi-structured interview	Staff in German Studies	2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester 2017 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester 2018 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester 2018 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester 2019 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester 2019
Self-reporting on participant's background, comfort with technology and computer use.	Questionnaire 1	All consenting students registered for GS1, GS2, GS3  All consenting students registered for French 1P <sup>17</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester 2017 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester 2018 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester 2019

---

<sup>17</sup> In 2018 the questionnaire was adapted to address online learning in German Studies and was administered in paper-based format (see Appendix B) which I then typed into google forms for analysis. This is an extremely time-consuming process and meant that I did not elicit data from French Studies in 2018 due to time constraints. In 2019 the original questionnaire was slightly adapted (see Appendix C) and administered to German and French Studies students online, as in 2017, in order to capture the data more efficiently.

Student writing pieces. Homework writing topics linked to subject matter in the curriculum, writing in German to put into practice concepts taught in language lectures.	Electronic submission, saved to an ongoing learner corpus, RUDaF (Rhodes University <i>Deutsch als Fremdsprache</i> )	All consenting students registered for GS1, GS2, GS3	2 to 4 writing pieces per student, collected in 2 <sup>nd</sup> semester 2018 and 2019
Explorative questionnaire on students' approaches to language learning	Questionnaire 2	All consenting students registered for GS1, GS2, GS3	2018 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester 2019 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester
Reflective questionnaire pertaining to the lecture series on collocations	Questionnaire 3	All consenting students registered for GS1, GS2, GS3	4 <sup>th</sup> Term 2018 4 <sup>th</sup> Term 2019
Interaction with the language course content	Observation of in-class participation, and online participation on the RUconnected platform.	All consenting students registered for GS1, GS2, GS3	2017 (4 <sup>th</sup> term) 2018 2019
Report of other German Departments on language teaching methods	Questionnaire 4	A German staff representative from each Stellenbosch University (SU), University of Cape Town (UCT), University of the Western Cape (UWC), the North West University (NWU), University of the Free State (UFS), University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), and the University of Pretoria (UP).	2018/2019
Record of and reflection on the lectures implemented	Factual/descriptive journal	Myself as insider researcher	2018/2019

The numbers of consenting student participants for all questionnaires are represented in table form in Chapter 6.

### 5.7.1 Questionnaires

As seen in the table above, questionnaires were used as a major data collection method with student participants. Questionnaires were designed according to common principles and theory for questionnaire design in second language research (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Questionnaires are a common data collection method in second language research (surpassed only by language proficiency tests (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. xiii), given their ease of construction, low cost, versatility and ability to obtain data from a large group in a short amount of time, which can be analysed in valid and reliable ways (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 6). Questionnaires are often used in action research, alongside interviews and focus groups, which were also used in this study.

An important aspect of questionnaire design is that of pre-testing the instruments, commonly referred to as “piloting” questionnaires (Heigman & Croker, 2009, p. 49). All questionnaires were piloted with a German Studies Honours student from 2017, who was excluded from the main study. This student was thought to be representative of the participant cohort, as he had completed his undergraduate degree in German Studies from first year through to third year in the German Studies section at Rhodes University, and was a beginner level student with no prior experience of learning German formally. The process of piloting allows the researcher to ensure that the questions asked are comprehensible, and that the data received is what the researcher intends. As a previous German Studies student, he was able to give insightful feedback both about the nature of the questions asked, as well as the content. Draft questionnaires were updated accordingly, and issued either in class, or online (please see the overview of the questionnaire design below).

*Questionnaire 1: “Online and in-class learning”*

Questionnaire 1 (see Appendix A) was designed to investigate students’ experience of blended learning materials in the German Studies curriculum in 2017, to assess whether the methods were aligned with student needs, and how these methods were being received and perceived. Evaluation is an integral aspect of reflective teaching, which seeks to monitor and enhance teaching practice (Ashwin, 2015). The questionnaire design was based on previous research undertaken by the University of London (Jara, *et al.*, 2008) for the evaluation of blended learning, and was titled “Online and in-class learning for German Studies”. Recognising the importance of using “simple and natural language” (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 41), particularly with a diverse student body (see chapter 1) the term “blended learning” was not used in the questionnaire, so as not to cause the students any confusion. The first section of 2017 blended learning questionnaire captures the learning profile of the cohort, and the second section captures the reception and use of online learning materials and their contribution to learning for the course. This questionnaire was used to answer research goal 1.1. “exploring the readiness for and attitudes towards blended learning among German Studies students”.

The questionnaire was created online through the Google Forms interface, which is freely accessible, an advantage for all teachers wishing to create and implement surveys or questionnaires with their students. The Google Forms interface is well suited for “small, classroom-based projects with basic questions” (Hellmich, 2015) and is rather straight forward and user-friendly. One disadvantage is that there are limited question-types and advanced features (for example in the creation of likert-scale type questions, where one may want to have a series of questions with the same response headings, as was done in the paper-based questionnaires below, addressing approaches to language learning). Questions aimed at gauging opinions were issued with a likert-scale question, followed by a longer open-response item which aimed to further explore the students’ attitudes in a more qualitative way (Brown, 2009). While open-response questions are time consuming to analyse, they provide a depth to understanding participant responses which purely quantitative likert-scale questions lack.

Questionnaires were initially issued to all German Studies students online, anonymously. I reflected in hindsight that while the questionnaire was issued online in order to ensure anonymity and to capture data more effectively, it may have skewed the responses towards selecting for those who were more technologically literate, and therefore able and comfortable to answer an online questionnaire. However, it must be noted that no students e-mailed with any queries, or issued any queries, or asked whether they could complete a paper-based questionnaire (which was offered). Instructions were issued in-class as to how to open the link and complete the questionnaire.

Questionnaire 1 on online and in-class learning was adapted for French Studies in order to draw on a larger database of students in the modern foreign languages and thus better ensure reliability of the results. French Studies staff requested in 2017 that the questionnaire should be issued in paper-based rather than online format with their students, in order to ensure participation. This is revealing of an attitude of distrust towards online resources, which is commonly to be found across the university sector, where lecturers feel a lack of control over what happens in online spaces, perhaps also a fear that students will not engage with resources or activities which are issued online – this fear was proven to be well-founded if one examines the response rates of the in-class (2017) vs. the online (2019) issued questionnaires. Questionnaires were thus issued in class for French Studies, for each year group, in a lecture which had been designated for evaluation purposes in 2017; and then in 2019 French Studies staff were happy for the questionnaire to be issued online through RUconnected. I was added as a participant to the French Studies online courses and e-mailed students through this platform.

*Questionnaire 2: “Approaches to language learning”*

The second questionnaire (see Appendix D) was designed to explore students’ approaches to language learning. This questionnaire was based on a similar questionnaire issued in 2015 as part of my Masters research project, and sought to provide insights into the language learning habits of the currently registered students. As my research projects (Master’s and PhD) have spanned six years within the same setting, this allowed for insightful comparisons to be drawn between the 2015 and 2018, 2019 cohorts, and was instrumental in answering research question 1.3) “exploring students’ approaches and attitudes/ self-perception to language learning and their use of existing materials”. This helped to lay the foundations for the design of the collocations lectures to address student needs. The questionnaire addresses participant language learning backgrounds, followed by a series of likert-scale questions (on a “never” to “always” scale addressing aspects of writing approaches and reading approaches adopted by our students, which were followed by longer open-response items. The questionnaire from 2018 was adapted in 2019 (see Appendix E) to include an open-ended question addressing vocabulary learning strategies employed by the students, following on from in-class discussions relating to language learning approaches and strategies.

Although self-reporting on the part of participants is subjective and therefore subject to error, as Chamot (2004, p. 113) points out, “no better way has yet been devised for identifying learners’ mental processes and techniques for completing a learning task” (Chamot, 2004, p. 113). As this was not the main focus of the study, it was deemed that a combination of in-class discussion and the issue of this questionnaire would be sufficient to report on students’ learning strategies. However, it is a limitation of the study that the in-class discussion and questionnaire were not followed up by individual interviews in which themes emerging could be expanded upon, as has been undertaken in other studies with a refined focus on learning approaches strategies as linked to student success (see Oxford, 2017).

This questionnaire was paper-based and issued in class, at the end of a language learning lecture. This was deemed appropriate as reflecting on one’s approaches to learning forms an important aspect of becoming a reflective learner.

*Questionnaire 3: “Reflection on collocational exercises”*

The final questionnaire for students was a reflective questionnaire which aimed to have participants reflect upon their experience of the instituted lectures and online resources with a focus on collocation. This questionnaire was issued at the end of the fourth term in 2018 (see Appendix F) and 2019 (see Appendix G), and was delivered online, so as to allow participants the opportunity to reflect

in their own private space, in their own time, and to avoid them giving responses which were simply to please me (the lecturer for those particular exercises), or to feel under pressure to do so.

*Questionnaire 4: "External staff perspectives"*

In order to better contextualise the research project, and to provide a more holistic view of how German as a foreign language is taught at university level across South Africa (with a specific focus on the use of materials such as language coursebooks and online materials), a questionnaire was issued with German Studies lecturers at external universities (see Appendix M).

The table below summarises the participation of lecturers from various institutes in this questionnaire, which was issued via email or hard copy. A total of seven responses were received from four of the seven external universities offering German Studies. Data is combined in the discussion in order to ensure anonymity of the respondents.

Table 4: Responses to questionnaire 4, external staff perspectives

INSTITUTION	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE	1
NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY	2
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN	0
UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE	0
STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY	0
UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND	2
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA	2
TOTAL	7

### 5.7.2 Interviews

Interviews were undertaken with German Studies Staff members in order to gain insights into the teachers' perspectives of teaching with technology for German Studies at Rhodes University. This was an important facet of the research as there has been a focus on learner-centred research in the field of blended learning and this has the consequence that teachers' perspectives are often neglected, as shown by Wang *et al.* (2015, p. 385) (discussed in Chapter 4).

Open-ended interviews are a popular method used in educational research (Brenner, 2006) as they allow for more in-depth qualitative questioning than surveys or questionnaires, and allow the researcher to "understand informants on their own terms, and how they make meaning of their own lives, experiences and cognitive processes" (Brenner, 2006, p. 357). Open-ended interviews are however both time and labour intensive, making them more suited to research with a small number of participants. As there are only two lecturers in German Studies at Rhodes University, interviews were a suitable choice, whereas questionnaires were used with student participants as described above.

Interviews were thus used as the primary method to explore teachers' perspectives in implementing blended learning resources for language teaching, a specific aim of the research. Five interviews took place with Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 on the 23rd of August 2017, 23 February 2018, 29 November 2018, 04 June 2019 and 25 October 2019 respectively, with their informed consent, and were recorded. The interviews were scheduled and held in School of Languages and Literatures building, in each respective lecturer's office (in order to place them at ease in familiar surroundings where they are in a position of power). I adopted a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendices H, I, J, K and L for an overview of the guiding questions), to allow for flexibility to ask follow-up questions and probe for deeper answers where necessary. The interviews took the form of a discussion on the topic of teaching and learning using a combination of online and face-to-face methods for German Studies,

where I aimed to encourage the participants to open up and expand on their points of view (as is different to a normal conversation) guided by the pre-drafted questions.

As I have been both an undergraduate and postgraduate student in the German Studies section, I was aware of being an 'insider' in the research context, rather than adopting the stance of a cultural 'outsider', as is common in ethnographic research (Brenner, 2006, p. 363). Alevsson (2003) highlights how such an approach, where there is close personal contact with respondents can be desirable, as respondents are then closer to the role of participants in the research, and may be able to provide more open and honest answers. As an insider within the research context in my role as post-graduate student, tutor and co-teacher on some modules, I had a good established rapport with the two lecturers within the department. This also allowed me to ask some questions based on previous knowledge gained through many informal conversations on these topics, to ask questions that were meaningful to the informants and thereby gain a deeper understanding of the context at hand (Brenner, 2006, p. 365) (i.e. the current approach to blended learning in the section, and the particular successes and challenges faced by these two lecturers thus far).

Although, with both interviews and questionnaires, there are always questions of how a participant would like to portray themselves:

To appear "honest" - and not socially incompetent or odd - is a social accomplishment and calls for impression management. Interviewees are frequently politically conscious actors. It seems reasonable to expect that interview accounts at least to some extent are driven by interests to held up specific versions of how social reality preferably should be understood as much as a neutral wish to tell the truth, as known by the interviewee (Alevsson, 2003, p. 170).

In analysing and interpreting my data, I have tried where possible, to triangulate findings, and corroborate qualitative participant responses with quantitative evidence. As qualitative interviews aim to "understand an informant's creation of meaning", it is often useful to invite the participants themselves check/reflect on what has been reported from interviews (Brenner, 2006, p. 368). My insider position allowed me to perform "member checks" (Duff, 2012, p. 420) with the staff participants, who were kept informed of the outcomes of the research interviews and were then able to discuss and reflect on these, forming an integral part of my "validation team" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, pp. 98-99). Both staff members were present when outcomes from the interviews were discussed and reported on at the CHERTL "teaching with technology showcase" held at Rhodes University in October 2018. This led to interesting reflective learning experiences for the staff themselves, who had the opportunity to reflect on their own practice, which is normalised for them within their context. Lecturer 2 reported that she had not yet herself reflected on, for instance, how blended learning is 'scaffolded' across the year groups, until this was reported at the showcase. This was simply part of the normalised practice.

### 5.7.3 Learner corpus

Learner writing produced for *freies Schreiben* during the course of the semesters in which action was taken (2018, 2019) was collected, and used as a diagnostic tool to determine which of the formulaic phrases and collocations introduced during the lecture series were used by the students in their homework writing pieces (where they had access to all resources, both paper-based and online) and which were used correctly in exam and test writing pieces where students have no access to resources at hand (see Appendix O).

Writing pieces were often handwritten and so were scanned and typed up in text format (UTF-8) by a research assistant (German Masters), taking care to ensure that learner errors were not corrected. File names were allocated showing metadata such as participant number, topic abbreviation and year, as in the following example: P01\_essgewohnheiten\_2019 (Granger, 1998: 12). Participants' numbers allow for the correlation of questionnaire data with writing data. This followed on from the design of the learner corpus as reported on in Ortner & Weber (2018, p. 73).

Thus, the following criteria (following on from Granger, 1998: 7) were controlled for in the updated RUDaF learner corpus (2018-2019) design and recorded:

Factors pertaining to the learner:

- Learning context: German as a Foreign Language in South Africa;
- level: three sub-corpora each corresponding to a CEFR level: A1, A2, B1. Beginner to intermediate foreign language learners of German from Southern Africa.
- age: early 20s;
- sex: male and female;
- mother tongues: English; Afrikaans; African languages (mainly Nguni languages);
- region: Southern Africa;
- other foreign and second languages: French; Afrikaans; African languages;
- time frame: 2018-2019.

Factors pertaining to the task setting: (Homework and test questions saved separately)

- Type-written or handwritten texts of a maximum of 300 words each. No spoken data;
- argumentative and opinion-based topics and creative writing pieces;
- written at home, the use of dictionaries and web-based sources and resources permissible; OR
- written in class in test/exam situation, no access to dictionaries and other resources;
- files saved as UTF 8 text format;
- no annotation;

- diachronic data collection: text collection covers a period of time with multiple sets of data collected from the same learner over the course of a year, allowing for the comparison of writing.

The freely downloadable concordancing software “Antconc” (Anthony, 2019) was used for analysis of this data, as set out in Chapter 6.

#### *5.7.4 Pedagogic corpus*

The *Menschen* coursebook was used in the course of the research as a pedagogic corpus, as students were guided to noticing collocations in-text within the coursebook, and within print-outs of audio transcriptions from listening exercises already covered in class. The most important aspect of a pedagogic corpus is that it provides “sufficient illustrative examples of the type of language we want our students to learn” (Willis, 1998, p. 46). The coursebook texts were chosen as they are already an integral part of the curriculum.

#### *5.7.5 Participant participation records*

Records were kept of student in-class attendance as well as logs of student activity on RUconnected. These records were helpful in ascertaining the difference between attendance rates for in-class and online activities.

#### *5.7.6 Action research factual/descriptive journal (record of the lectures and activities developed)*

Journals are commonly used in action research methodologies for applied linguistics as they allow one to keep a record and reflection of learning activities in language classrooms (Heigman & Croker, 2009, p. 118). I kept a factual journal in which recorded my observations of the events from the lectures which were instituted on collocations as a part of the dissertation. I recorded my observations directly after the end of each lecture initially in a paper-based journal, which I later typed into a word document, and later by typing directly into a word document to save time. I included reflections and perceptions of the events in my write up at a later stage as I attempted to interpret what had taken place and thus the journal contains reflective elements. The journal is thus also auto-ethnographic, recording my own thoughts and personal developments throughout the PhD process, particularly during the times of action, when I assumed a teaching role and attempted to implement learning activities based on theory and data collected in our own localised setting.

#### *5.6 Data analysis procedures summarised*

The discussion sections which follow will present the findings of the data captured according to the procedures outlined above. As this is an action research project, the data analysis follows a narrative approach which is chronological, selective, particular, and conceptual (Heigman & Croker, 2009, p.

123) and which mirrors the cycles of the research as laid out above: plan, act, observe and reflect, adapt and re-implement. As this project was longitudinal, there was a wealth of data collected (some of which was very interesting, but not relevant to answering the research questions). Relevant data is presented, quantified and summarised according to quantitative analysis using descriptive statistics. Longer answer questions and interview data are analysed using qualitative approaches, such as identifying categories, themes and concepts, which are then compared to themes in existing literature for foreign language teaching in the higher education sector. All data has been transcribed faithfully. The student questionnaire responses contain many spelling and grammatical errors, however these have not been earmarked or corrected, in order to order to maintain the authenticity of the student voice.

In answering research goal 1 (exploring the blended learning ecosystem in context), complexity theory is drawn on to interpret the connections between perspectives from different key players in the blended language learning ecosystem (as outlined in Chapter 4). In answering research goal 2 (introducing collocation as a concept within the existing curriculum), second language acquisition theory is drawn on to support the approach taken to introducing collocation within the curriculum (as discussed in Chapter 3), and the evaluation of the success of the lectures implemented as gauged by student responses to the evaluative questionnaire, staff responses during interviews and personal reflections recorded during the course of the research. Thus, the analysis takes multiple perspectives into account throughout the narrative, including the subjective reflections of the German Studies lecturers and myself as reflective practitioner in this case, and the students as reflective learners, as well as quantitative evidence from students' self-reporting, classroom records, and evidence of taught collocations from written work.

### *5.7 Addressing issues of validity*

As discussed above, where possible I have tried to ensure triangulation of the data (Heigman & Croker, 2009, p. 127), which involves cross referencing results from different sources, for example to check student responses against staff perceptions, and to corroborate the self-reporting of students with recorded data of their actual performance and participation. In this way, through the process of triangulation, I have tried to ensure that the data presented is valid; that is to say that the findings presented are accurate and supported by the data, and are not based on my own personal assumptions or biases (Heigman & Croker, 2009, p. 127). I have also tried to remain aware of my own personal position and to reflect on this throughout the course of the research.

Herr & Anderson (2015, p. 67) outline a set of validity criteria which are linked to the goals of action research. These are outlined in the table below:

*Table 5: Anderson and Herr's Goals of Action Research and Validity Criteria (2015, p.67)*

	<b>Goals of action research</b>	<b>Validity criteria</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1	The generation of new knowledge	Dialogic and process validity	The determination of the 'goodness' of research through peer review.
2	The achievement of action-oriented outcomes	Outcome validity	The extent objectives of study were met and the problems resolved.
3	The education of both researchers and participants	Catalytic validity	The understanding of all who were involved in the research was increased and they were moved to some action of change.
4	Results that are relevant to the local setting	Democratic validity	The accounting of multiple perspectives and interests.
5	A sound and appropriate research methodology	Process validity	The inclusion of multiple perspectives and the determination of what constituted as suitable evidence of the study's assertions.

As the research was constrained by the number of students registered for German Studies at Rhodes University, the results from this small case study cannot be said to be widely generalizable, as is a common limitation of action research. However, it is hoped that other researchers and language teachers may find applicable congruencies through the rich description of the context and the decisions taken to improving on teaching within the context that they may then apply to their own contexts. In this way, I hope to contribute to knowledge building through "analogy" (Kramsch & Steffensen, 2008, p. 27) and a recognition of contextual factors as playing a great role in shaping teaching and learning practices. This is in keeping with how action research conceptualises external validity, drawing on the concept of transferability rather than generalizability (Herr & Anderson, 2015, pp. 74-75).

## ***Chapter 6: Presentation of Findings – A Narrative of the Action Research Cycle***

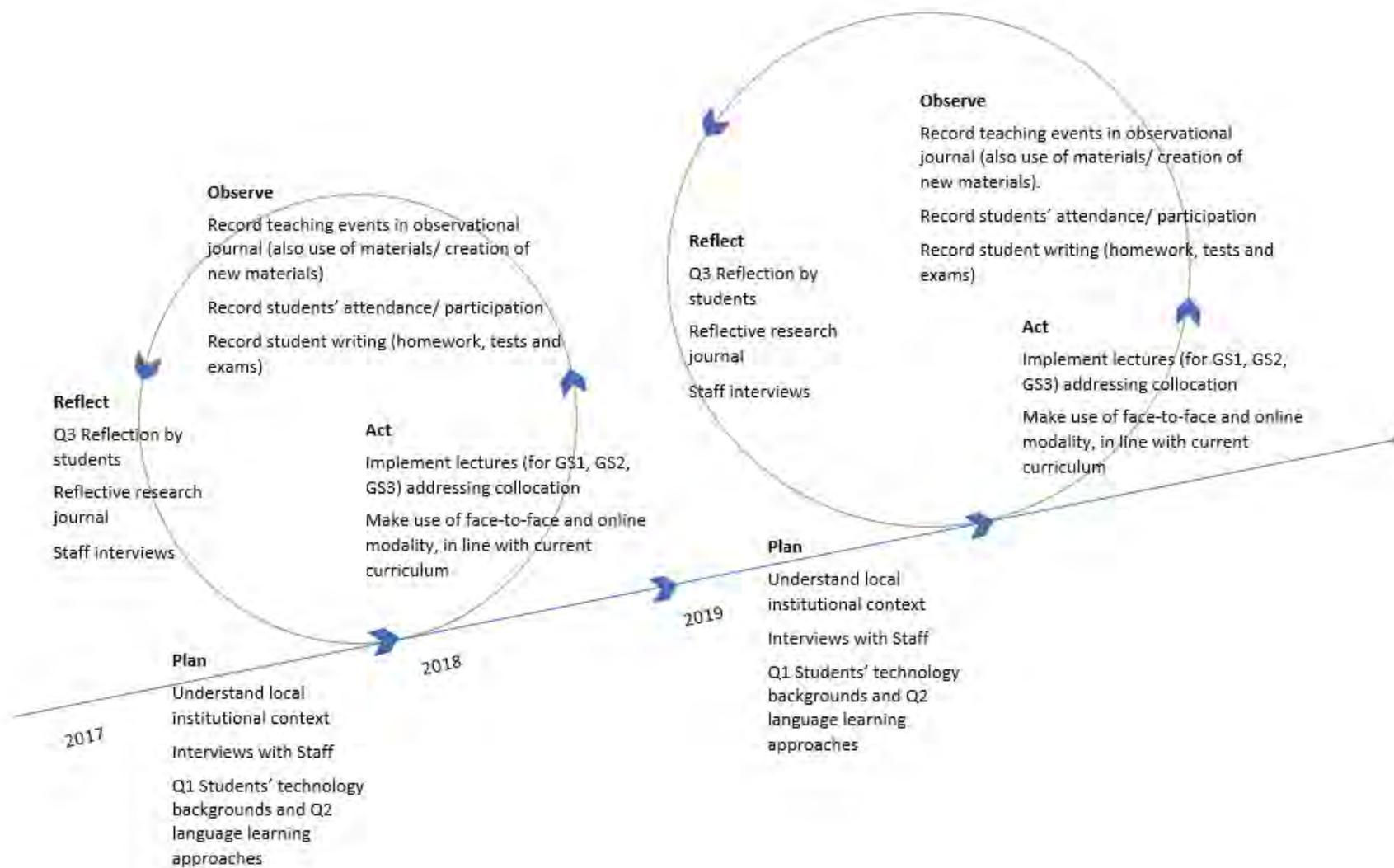
---

This chapter presents the processes and findings of the research, following a narrative approach (Heigman & Croker, 2009, pp. 122-129). Narrative approaches are useful in action research as each stage of the research builds understandings of the research area and recorded observation and reflection leads to changes and re-implementation of research methods in a cyclical procedure (Heigman & Croker, 2009, pp. 122-129). As outlined in the methodology chapter above, the research was carried out in four stages: plan, act, observe and reflect, adapt and re-implement. Thus, there are two research cycles which are reported on, the first having taken place in 2017-2018 and the second in 2019. While these findings are particularly important for developing nuanced understandings of the local context in which the research was undertaken, they may also be useful for foreign language teachers in higher education elsewhere. Interpretation and analysis of the findings thus takes place in Chapter 7, where findings are related back to literature and theoretical concepts which were discussed in Chapter 3 and 4.

The first three sections of this chapter address the findings pertaining to initial planning for action research. The nature of the setting is sketched out first, expanding on the institutional infrastructure and available technical resources (see Engler, 2001, p. 3) and following this, the lecturers' backgrounds and experience of teaching German language in the blended learning model are explored, drawing on interview data. Students' technological backgrounds and experience of blended learning practices are explored thereafter, as well as their attitudes and approaches towards language learning. In the following sections, action implemented regarding the explicit teaching of collocations is presented. Observations and reflections from both students and lecturers are drawn on in evaluating the approach. Student responses from all questionnaires are reported as written by the students themselves. Student responses often contain spelling mistakes and syntactic errors; however, these have been faithfully transcribed and left unedited, and unmarked for both spelling and grammatical errors, in order to afford agency to the student voices in this research. In the final sections, findings from the second cycle of the action research are presented where methods were adapted and re-implemented based on findings from the first cycle.

The figure below presents a visual representation and summary of processes undertaken for each of the action research cycles, based on the diagram in Chapter 5 "The cyclical nature of action research" (O'Byrne, 2016). The narrative of the chapter thus presents findings following these cycles.

Figure 14: Action research cycles, 2017-2019



### *6.1 Institutional role in supporting blended learning*

In Chapter 2, the macro-level of the context of German Studies in South African education was outlined, as well as the broader contextual issues impacting higher education including (but not restricted to) massification, commodification, and globalisation and the push by the national department of higher education towards technology to ameliorate challenges brought about within the context of the transformation agenda (Jaffer, *et al.*, 2007; Bozalek, *et al.*, 2013). Rhodes University faces many of the same challenges as other South African institutions (such as lower subsidies relative to the increased number of students, and trying to prepare students for a global market and at the same time address transformation imperatives (Mostert & Quinn, 2009, p. 72)), but has been historically advantaged (Snowball, 2014, p. 28) and thus remains in a more privileged position when considering the structural resources available on campus, as compared to historically disadvantaged universities, as will be shown below drawing on the example of the School of Languages and Literatures. The smallest of the universities in South Africa, Rhodes University also has comparatively low staff-to-student ratios which results in a greater degree of personal contact between staff and students in many subjects (Rhodes University, 2017). While this degree of personal contact is certainly beneficial for students, the expected availability of staff for students is at times unsustainable for staff (Snowball & Mostert, 2010). Technology has been suggested by the institution as one way of alleviating these burdens for staff and maintaining or even improving upon student experiences of learning (Snowball & Mostert, 2010; Snowball, 2014; Tshuma, 2018b). In 2004 Rhodes University adopted a Moodle-based learning management system (LMS) (Mostert & Quinn, 2009, p. 75), named “RUconnected” (Mostert & Quinn, 2009, p. 75). This was promoted by the university’s Educational Technology Unit (EdTech) which forms part of the Centre for Higher Education Research Teaching and Learning (CHERTL) at Rhodes University. RUconnected in its infancy at Rhodes University was used sporadically by lecturers as a repository for information pertaining to various modules, including PowerPoint slides and course handouts (Snowball & Mostert, 2010; Mostert & Quinn, 2009). Indeed, interviews with staff in German Studies show that prior to 2015 this was how RUconnected was used for German Studies.

There has been a collection of case studies on departments which were using technology in innovative ways in their teaching and learning (see for example a collection of case studies edited by Tshuma, 2016); however, before 2018 there was no official strategy in place regarding the use of educational technology.

The Rhodes University Educational Technology Strategy drafted in 2018 states:

In line with the university’s mission to promote a more socially just higher education that seeks to redress past inequalities, our vision for enabling a teaching and learning with

technology culture in the university recognises that technology is not neutral; that access to technology is not evenly distributed; and that technology can be used either to reproduce the current conditions that constrain teaching and learning, or to contribute to their transformation. Learning and teaching with technology are processes that play out in contextualised and contested disciplinary spaces, and as such, they should be open to change in accordance with shifting contexts, including a changing staff and student body. (Tshuma, 2018a, p. 4)

What is evident in the statement above, is that the overarching goal of the Educational Technology Strategy is one which “is sensitive to the transformation needs of South African higher education” and which promotes a scholarly approach to technology in teaching and learning (Tshuma, 2018, p. 2). The Rhodes University Educational Technology Strategy shows an emphasis on implementing, researching and reporting on contextualised disciplinary practices, through which one can share and learn by analogy (Kramsch & Steffensen, 2008, p. 27), rather than taking a one-size-fits-all generalised approach to the integration of technology in teaching and learning. Thus, it can be seen that there is room for the type of (action) research which this dissertation represents, which is a contextualised approach to exploring blended learning practices. This was embodied in the 2018 “Teaching with Technology Showcase” hosted by the Centre for Higher Education Research Teaching and Learning at Rhodes University, at which preliminary results from this research were presented.

There is also institutional-level support available for staff members to expand their competencies in using educational technology, particularly the online learning management system, RUconnected. The educational technology unit (EdTech) employs two full-time staff members who offer support with any educational technology queries, and who also organise training workshops and events. For example, in February 2018 a staff workshop on how to use RUconnected and set up course sites and upload content was offered. This is usually aimed at new staff members, although all staff receive notification through the institution-wide mailing list for staff. In 2019 I was able to take part in an online short course offered through EdTech (facilitated by Emerge Africa and UCT), to develop competencies in online facilitation.

Rhodes University has also provided adequate infrastructure for foreign language learning in the age of Web 2.0 technology. The School of Languages and Literatures at Rhodes University was re-housed in 2016 in a new building on Somerset Street (Rhodes University, 2018b)<sup>18</sup>. Lecture venues are equipped with a whiteboard, a projector and a screen, and lecturers can connect laptops to the

---

<sup>18</sup> According to the Campus Infrastructure Status report of 2018, the new building cost R24 715 291 (see Rhodes University, 2018). The report also outlines the vast deferred maintenance backlog currently faced by the university (in 2018 a figure of R1,73 billion, as the maintenance budget has been cut each year for the past 20-30 years in order to balance the yearly budget). This has a serious impact on the university infrastructure, and thus on the physical teaching and learning spaces.

projector system via an HDMI cable. As stated in Chapter 2, there is university-wide access to the internet through the “Eduroam” (<https://www.eduroam.org/>) roaming access service and this is a service which is free for all staff and students. The university library is well-equipped to provide access to subject specific academic resources. The library also plays an important role in supporting students by offering workshops in information literacy. All of this shows that the problem of using technology for learning purposes for staff and students is not a technical one, or one concerning infrastructure in our context.

### *6.2 Staff profiles and perspectives of the teaching context*

The staff of German Studies at Rhodes University have a strong focus on teaching and learning, fostering a critical reflection of teaching and learning practices. I provide a brief overview of each lecturer in the following section, as their own backgrounds are important in understanding their engagement with educational technology for language teaching, within the complex system of teaching and learning<sup>19</sup>. Blended learning cannot take place without support from lecturers who are tasked with learning how to make use of new technologies and who are responsible for the design and implementation of the curriculum in context.

Lecturer 1 is a German mother-tongue speaker who emigrated to South Africa in 1996, which was when she began teaching German as a Foreign Language at Rhodes University. She holds the equivalent of a Masters’ degree (Staatsexamen I (Bonn)) and a doctoral degree in German Literature (Rhodes University). Lecturer 1 is thus an experienced lecturer (with 20+ years teaching experience), who continues to develop her teaching, as evidenced for example through taking part in the first Teaching Advancement at University (TAU) Fellowship Programme (2014-2016) in South Africa (run by the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa, HELTASA). Lecturer 1 has been an accredited examiner for the Goethe Institute since 2000 (levels B1-C1). The commitment which Lecturer 1 has to her teaching is evidenced in her reception of the Vice Chancellor’s Senior Distinguished Teaching Award for 2013. Her research interests are varied but have reflected an interest in the scholarship of teaching and learning in recent years (Rhodes University, 2019).

Lecturer 2 is a South African Afrikaans mother-tongue speaker, who has been teaching German Studies at Rhodes since 2015, her first permanent academic post. Lecturer 2 undertook her Master’s in teaching German as Foreign Language through the universities of Stellenbosch and Leipzig. Before

---

<sup>19</sup> This focus on teaching and learning naturally has fed into my own research interests, as well as the interests of other post-graduates in the section, which I believe has created a good environment for scholarly engagement with the subject as a whole, which is beneficial to a transformative agenda, and which furthers German Studies as an academic discipline in the South African context.

coming to Rhodes University (2015), Lecturer 2 gave private lessons to German students in Cape Town and worked part-time at the Goethe Centre there. The research interests of lecturer 2 lie with “foreign language teaching in adult learner groups, specifically language acquisition, curriculum design, and translation in foreign language courses” (Rhodes University, 2019). In 2017 Lecturer 2 completed a Post-Graduate Diploma in Higher Education at Rhodes University, and she is currently also undertaking a doctoral degree with a focus on teaching and learning German in higher education (Rhodes University, 2019). In 2018 she was one of the nominees for the VC’s Distinguished Teaching Award, and has also been a Goethe Institute accredited examiner (levels B1-C1) since the end of 2015.

Both lecturers have a strong focus on teaching but face structural pressures to balance the “urgency of teaching” with the “valued research function”, echoing findings from Tshuma’s (2018b) study undertaken with eight female academics at Rhodes University. Particularly in the case of language teaching modules, both lecturers report that there is often little time for innovation, and that they rely on the chosen coursebook series (*Menschen*) as it comes closest to the curriculum as both lecturers see as ideal for the context of German Studies at Rhodes University; although, as will be shown, the lecturers do not follow the coursebook religiously (recognising that no coursebook can be wholly suited to the context) and use the online space particularly to provide additional resources and to expand on grammatical concepts which they feel have not been adequately dealt with in the prescribed coursebook series.

Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 divide the teaching of German Studies between them, but both teach face-to-face lectures for an average of 8-10 hours a week for the entire academic year. Modules taught include the language, literature, cultural studies and translation components for GS1, GS2 (El. 1 and 2), GS3 (El. 1 and 2) and Honours, as well two modules for the interdisciplinary courses Cultures and Languages in Africa (8 contact periods per lecturer per year) and two modules for Modern Fiction (4 contact periods per lecturer per year). While the student numbers are small in comparison to larger departments, thus not warranting (financially) a third staff member in the department, the teaching load is thus comparatively much higher than in other departments where it is common for a lecturer to only have three teaching terms (out of four). Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 also try to rotate and update content in the translation, literature and cultural studies each year, so as to keep the curriculum up to date with current topics. By comparison, the language teaching curriculum stays rather constant (except for in the years where there was a change in coursebook), with set learning outcomes for each year, thus as stated by Lecturer 2: “Language teaching is the one area where we can relax a bit” (Lecturer 2, interview).

Both Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 relate that they employ a variety of approaches to teaching language, recognising that, as Lecturer 2 states: “Language learning has so many different facets, so the different

approaches will be relevant or more appropriate depending on the outcome” (Interview 1, 2017). Lecturer 2 makes example of the Grammar Translation method used in Language Lectures when dealing with new vocabulary, and the Communicative Approach in language tutorials (Interview 1, 2017). The methodological approaches taken are shaped by the context of teaching a foreign language in higher education, and thus there is more of a focus on grammar and structure in the university setting than one may find outside higher education. Lecturer 2 notes that time constraints in the university setting also favour a more structural approach, and so while her training at the Goethe Institute favoured a communicative approach which is conducive to training students in the practicalities of speaking German, such an approach cannot be fully realised within the university setting. Lecturer 2 also makes the point that the assessment guides the teaching, and that the ultimate assessment is a written language exam. Lecturer 1 also spoke to the importance of a mix of approaches “so you reach as many learner types as possible” (Interview 1, 2017), but noted that research has also shown that “while there are different learner types out there, just because certain people prefer learning in a particular way, does not mean they cannot learn in another way”. (Interview 1, 2017). The above shows that Lecturer 1 and 2 have a critical awareness of the context in which they are teaching, and do not take a one-size-fits all approach to employing language teaching methodology as shown by some language practitioners (see Bax, 2003a). Rather, Lecturer 1 and 2 try to account for individual differences in learning and motivation, and the local context of university-level assessment and outcomes (Ryan & Dörnyei, 2013, pp. 90-91).

In terms of modes of teaching, as stated in Chapter 1, there has been an increase in the use of blended learning within the German Studies section in the past five years (since 2014), particularly in the use of online pre-recorded lectures and the provision of additional online content and activities for language teaching as well as for other modules. Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 reported in interview 1 in 2017 that at the end of 2015 and during 2016 however, student protests (#FeesMustFall and #RUReferenceList) necessitated the increased use of RUconnected as a platform to share educational material as students were unable to attend physical lectures either because they were involved in the protests themselves, or because the very act of attending lectures and tutorials was seen as strike-breaking, and thus fewer teaching activities took place on campus (see news reports by Molander, 2016 and Brandt, 2016). Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 thus made the decision to record lectures using Camtasia studio, which they had begun learning to use in 2015, as this software was advertised by the EdTech unit at Rhodes University who then issued interested academics with a licence for the software. This decision was thus shaped by national and local context of student protests.

Learning to use new technology requires an investment of time and energy for lecturers, and both Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 report that learning to use Camtasia studio, a sophisticated recording

software, involved many hours of trial and error. Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 relied on using the most basic function, which is to record a computer screen, with the lecturer's voice enabled.

Lecturer 1: So an online lecture always in our context [...] always consists of me talking, usually never my face, I am behind the microphone with sticky-out hair and in a dressing gown [...], and then students will see, with the help of recording software like Camtasia, what is happening on my computer screen. I find that very convenient because I can then call up book pages, show them in their actual textbooks something which is happening, then quickly switch to my own slides [for a grammatical explanation]. Then I can show them a page from a novel, and show them how this occurs [...], and I can insert YouTube clips. (Interview 1, 2017)

Lecturers learnt to be well prepared before recording, having all necessary tabs open, as editing the videos can be very time consuming. In the cases where a slight mistake was made, the lecturer simply apologises and moves on. In this way, they were able to utilise the technology to address the urgent situational needs. There were however misgivings about the effectiveness of the exclusively online approach which had to be adopted for a few weeks in 2015 and 2016, as well as the loss of face-to-face contact with students, as seen in the following excerpt:

Lecturer 2: We really had to start engaging with online lectures last year. [...] In 2016 the online lectures replaced the physical lectures to a large extent [during the student protests]. And I think that was difficult. Because that also isn't really *blended* learning, that's just like, online learning.

GO: So there was a loss of face-to-face contact because people weren't here.

Lecturer 2: Yes, and it was also a difficult situation because some people just removed themselves from academics, because they participated in the protests [...] or just left and went home. So that's also difficult because you can put it online, but you can't make people watch it or engage with it. There I also felt a bit, I guess, powerless because I can't make people watch it. I also didn't feel like 'well I did my job and now I can wash my hands of it, there is an online lecture'. (Interview 1, 2017)

Both Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 value the face-to-face contact time with students and felt that an online approach consisting solely of online contact (such as that necessitated during protests) was not effective. Poor attendance and feeling a lack of control over whether students were engaging with content was a theme that emerged from the interviews with both lecturers. Lecturer 1 stated that in protest years there was a lack of accountability as there were no requirements for attendance. Lecturer 1 noted that this situation seemed to "affirm the status quo" that "those who were motivated students did engage, and those who were not, did not", adding that it was "very frustrating" (Interview 1, 2017).

However, they both found the recording software useful. As stated previously, teaching and learning technologies were being used in other departments and reported on as case studies, which provided

inspiration for their more integrated use in German Studies. This model of pre-recording lectures, (often content-based) followed by face-to-face class time (often then allowing for more interactive exercises as content has been covered) has become known as “flipping the classroom” (Johnson & Marsh, 2016, p. 60). The “flipped classroom model” is becoming more widely used in language teaching contexts with many benefits reported (see for example Johnson & Marsh, 2016), providing further motivation for their use in the study context.

In 2017 and 2018 Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 designed an RUconnected site to complement each language learning year group (GS1, GS2, GS3). They did this intuitively, according to their needs, adding resources and activities to keep track of student activity on the site. One face-to-face language lecture per week was replaced by an online lecture for GS2 (by Lecturer 2), and GS3 (by Lecturer 1)<sup>20</sup>. Occasional online lectures were posted for GS1 students, according to the needs of the lecturers and students (for example, professional obligations such as faculty board meetings or when Lecturer 2 travelled to Germany in 2016 for a Goethe Institute skills-development programme).

This design led to a scaffolding of the online environment across the year groups. Students are introduced “gently” (Lecturer 1, Interview 1 2017) to the concept of online lectures for specific grammatical concepts at first-year level. From 2018 onwards at both second-year and third-year level, there is one online lecture per week which takes place instead of a face-to-face language lecture. For Second-year level this constitutes one of three (1/3) language lectures, and for third-year level one of two (1/2) of the language lectures. Both lecturers put measures in place to record attendance for first and second years.

Lecturer 1: If you have administrative rights you can see who has clicked on what how often and when. To the horror of my students I can say “according to this you have never been on this site”. [...] I cannot check whether they really really listened. I can only see that the report says view of resource. But I know that at least somebody clicked on it. Whether they now click on it, because they know that I check, click on it and let it play in the background, or never let it finish playing I don’t know. (Interview 1, 2017)

Lecturer 2: I have told them [GS2 students] that we will be taking attendance early on Friday morning, so I do give them that leeway but because we do have a physical lecture on a Friday, I want to help them help themselves I guess. So, I need to put some measures in place I feel to make them understand that an online lecture has the same significance, it is the same thing it is just that we don’t meet physically we meet online. I will take attendance on a Friday morning because they need to have watched it by then otherwise they will be lost in the next lecture. (Interview 2, 2018)

---

<sup>20</sup> There are also the occasional literature and cultural studies online lectures, but the focus here is on language lectures.

Second-year online lectures are further accompanied by an attendance exercise (with a journal hand-in on RUconnected), but third-year online lectures are not; the rationale being that by third-year there should be no need to take attendance as third-year students should now have the autonomy to take charge of their own learning (as stated by Lecturer 1, Interview 1, 2017). However, in 2018 and 2019 the GS3 students did not engage on a weekly basis with the online lecturers, and attendance in face-to-face lectures was likewise poor. As stated by Lecturer 1: “with our negative experiences in 2018 and 2019, we are going to revert to taking attendance [for third-year students] from 2020 on again” (Interview 5, 2019); an attendance exercise has also been established for the third years of 2020.

However, the addition of an attendance exercise and monitoring student responses also takes time, and adds to the teaching load:

Lecturer 2:        So that means I am not only using my time to just prepare for the online lecture and then to record, edit, publish, save because it has to render and then I save all of those files in a specific order so it's organised then I have to upload it, name it, create a journal entry. I also have to go back and give them feedback on what they've done, nobody has asked any questions yet, but they probably will come and I will have to answer those, so all of that could've happened in minutes [in a face-to-face lecture]. (Interview 2, 2018)

Both Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 reported following a very explicit model of integrating RUconnected into the face-to-face lectures in 2017 and 2018 (particularly for the first-year lectures): they projected the RUconnected page onto the screen during a lecture and showed students exactly where to find content, how to click on it to open and download it, etc. In addition to the online lectures, the lecturers frequently posted extra materials such as materials used in class (handouts, PowerPoint slides) and made use of the journal entry activity for homework hand-ins. They also provided links to websites which provide useful language learning information.

In addition to the above, RUconnected became used as a central site for communication with students, where previously email had been the main mode of communication outside of class. This was so that students can access a record of important emails, and likewise, so that lecturers would have a record of all communication in one central platform.

At the end of 2018, as part of the background research undertaken for this dissertation, I discovered that Hueber (the publisher of *Menschen*) offers a Moodle pre-set which complements the language learning modules available for free download from their website (Hueber, 2020). With the help of the educational technology specialist at Rhodes, I was able to upload the pre-sets onto RUconnected. What was striking was the similarity between how the pre-sets were set up and laid out and how Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 had set out previous self-designed RUconnected sites. Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 had been led by the structure of the coursebooks in dividing up content, and thus had

created a page much like that available in the pre-set. This may reveal that the Moodle pre-set is well suited to teacher needs and aligns with teacher intuitions, or conversely, that lecturers' conceptions are well aligned to the coursebook, and that lecturers are familiar and adept at making use of the online platform and creating courses. The Moodle pre-set for *Menschen* contains a far greater variety of activities making use of the range of tools offered by Moodle such as Wiki pages, glossaries, forums, databases and choices. In practice, very few of these pre-set activities were used by the lecturers, as each new activity requires both lecturers' and students' time and practice to get to grips with the new technology or vocabulary (in the students' case, as all instructions are exclusively in German), which is not always straight forward. Both lecturers commented on the frustrations of learning to use new technology:

Lecturer 1: Blended teaching - you can extend this into assessment – [...] this was one of our ways of dealing with protests. Last year [Lecturer 2] and I set tests online. It took a hell of a lot of time to just get our heads around the technology. Because like many of those platforms, it looks like you have a Microsoft interface in front of you [...] but [...] you have to click until your wrist gives in [...] [because] in the background you are actually programming. It gives you option 1, option 2, [...] option 3, option 4. And then obviously a script is programming in the background. Online tests – to work that out by yourself is hell. (Interview 1, 2017)

Thus, a main disadvantage expanded on by both Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 was the initial time investment needed, contrary to the discourses that blended learning will save time.

Lecturer 1: Time management really, because you still give regular lectures and then you create one online, so you have for a while double the work. And people tell you that blended learning takes some weight off your shoulders with regard to time spent in the classroom, but that is a fallacy at the beginning. It is not true because at the beginning you spend a lot of time just making these things and teaching yourself to a great extent or learning through experts like EdTech and Chertl how to do it. I spent a lot of time on that. And then its not right. It's not perfect or its not like you want it, and you have to edit it, not that I do, my students have to suffer through all my "ugh" [...] at the same time they know that this is not a YouTube perfectly put together thing. [...] I've taught myself to edit a little bit. (Interview 1, 2017)

Despite these challenges however, lecturers became confident with using certain tools and reported on the positive feedback from students as very motivating, and the flexibility afforded as relieving so that they could better manage the workload of the academic.

Lecturer 1: The best thing is when someone comes galloping into your office afterwards having just watched a lecture and says 'this ties in with what we're doing in [...]' and they send you links and when they actually feed back into what you hoped you started as a discussion. [...] best things are now also that I don't feel horrifyingly guilty when I have more and more administrative obligations [...] So: flexibility. But this is something that comes with a bit of experience.

At the beginning I spent half an hour just putting together 3 PowerPoint slides.  
[...] (Interview 1, 2017)

### *6.3 Exploring technology backgrounds of German Studies and French Studies students at RU*

With the context and staff perspectives in mind, this section presents data collected from students in order to explore the approaches and attitudes towards blended language learning among German Studies students. Data is presented using simple descriptive statistics and is discussed and analysed thematically as it relates to the contextual background of the study. Overarching trends are analysed and presented in Chapter 7.

The first student questionnaire (see Appendix A<sup>21</sup>) issued in 2017, and then again in 2018 and 2019 (with slight adaptations) aimed to explore participants' technological backgrounds and their comfort with the use of computer technology for everyday use and for language learning. French Studies students were included alongside German Studies students to provide a control group with respect to student's backgrounds regarding the use and ease of technology, representative of the modern foreign languages at Rhodes. Participation in the online and in-class learning questionnaire is summarised in the table below. The number of participants who completed the questionnaire, divided by the number of students registered for the course, gives a figure which represents the percentage of students who responded. The total number of participant responses in the year cohort is also represented and summarised as a percentage.

---

<sup>21</sup> This 2017 questionnaire did not elicit any information about the students' language backgrounds. While I had access to this data for the group as a whole, as this questionnaire was anonymous, I had no way of linking the two data sets. This limited the findings to being rather generalised and language backgrounds were thus included in the 2019 questionnaire (see sections below).

Table 6: Participation in Questionnaire 1, online and in-class learning

	2017	2018	2019
<b>GS1</b>	26 /39 (67%)	23 /42 (56%)	33 /47 (70%)
<b>GS2</b>	11 /14 (79%)	12 /22 (55%)	16 /17 (94%)
<b>GS3</b>	4 /9 (44%)	4 /7 (57%)	3 /5 (60%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	41 /62 (66%)	39 /71 (55%)	52 /69 (75%)
<b>FRE 1P<sup>22</sup></b>	43 /63 (70%)		12 /44 (27%)
<b>FRE 1</b>	5 /5 (100%)		3 /6 (50%)
<b>FRE 2</b>	4 /6 (67%)		2 /4 (50%)
<b>FRE 3</b>	3 /3 (100%)		1 /4 (25%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	55 /77 (71%)		18 /58 (31%)

The 2017 questionnaire for German Studies was online and anonymous. There were 11 male and 30 female respondents. The French Studies questionnaire was in-class and anonymous, eight male and 47 female students of French Studies responded. In 2019 a similar picture of the cohort was recorded, with 42 female and 10 male respondents for German Studies and 14 female and 4 male respondents for French Studies. Both German Studies and French Studies students participated online. As can be seen in the table above, French Studies students had a much lower response rate in 2019 with the online issue of the questionnaire sent via email through their online learning platforms. Possible reasons for this lower rate of participation will be returned to in Chapter 7.

Of those who responded (n=41), the results for 2017 German Studies cohort technology backgrounds were as follows: in terms of physical access to resources, the 2017 questionnaire revealed that almost every German Studies student respondent (40/41, 98%) owned a smartphone, and 90% (37/41) owned a laptop. Students were equally divided (20/41 vs. 21/41) between living in off-campus accommodation (known as “digs”) and University Residence. 83% (34/41) reported having access to internet where they live in Grahamstown.

The French Studies cohort (n=55) reported very similar backgrounds. 96% (53/55) reported owning a smartphone and 94% (52/55) reported owning a laptop. 71% (39/55) reported living in university residence, and 29% (16/55) living in “digs” (off-campus accommodation). The high number of French

---

<sup>22</sup> French follows a slightly different structure to German Studies at Rhodes University. Those who have taken French at High School may join French 1, but those who have never had exposure to French before take French 1 Preliminary (French 1P). For the true *ab initio* learner of French, the degree thus takes four years to complete.

Studies students living in university residence may contribute to the fact that 51/55 (93%) reported having access to the internet at home.

The median age of the German Studies students was 20 years. The mean age of the student respondents was 22, influenced slightly by two older students in third year (46 and 47-years old respectively; both professionals with MA degrees). For French Studies the median age of respondents was also 20 years, as was the mean. The range of student ages shows that they had no outlier older students as were present in German Studies.

Most students were not novice users of technology, reporting that they started using computers at an early age (most between 4 and 13), two participants even stating, “as early as I can remember” or “too young to remember”. Descriptive statistics of participants’ ages are presented in the table below. In German Studies, one older student reported started using computers at age 20, whereas there was only one 21-year-old student who stated that she had started using computers at age 18. This student surprisingly reported feeling very comfortable using technology in her everyday life (5/5) and (4/5) comfortable using technology for learning purposes.

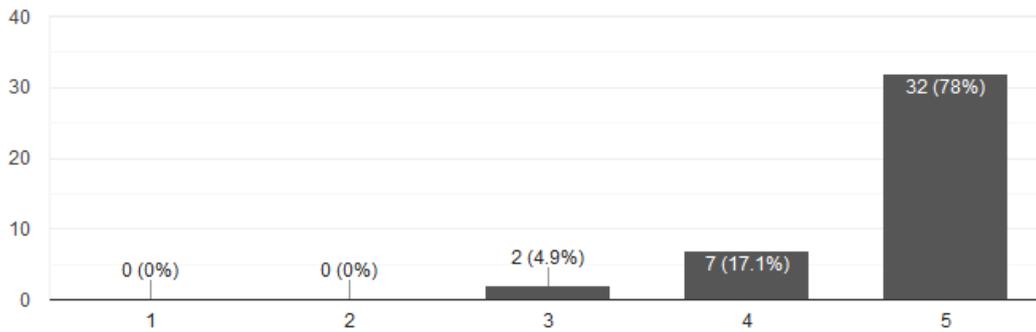
*Table 7: Age of student respondents and age they report they began using technology, 2017*

	<b>GERMAN STUDIES</b>		<b>FRENCH STUDIES</b>	
	Reported age	Reported age started using computers	Reported age	Reported age started using computers
<b>AVERAGE AGE</b>	22,1	9,6	19,9	9,2
<b>MEDIAN</b>	20	9,5	20	8
<b>MODE</b>	20	10	19	6
<b>MIN</b>	18	4	18	3
<b>MAX</b>	47	20	25	19
<b>RANGE</b>	29	16	7	16

German Studies students reported that they felt “comfortable” with using technology on a day-to-day basis in their personal lives (median=5), as well as with using technology for learning purposes (median=5), although the scores for the latter were slightly lower (see tables representing likert data below). For each question technology was defined as “computers, the internet, email, cell phones and the like”. The scale for the below responses was 1 = Uncomfortable. I do not enjoy using technology in my personal life. 5 = Comfortable. I enjoy using technology and engaging with it to assist in everyday life.

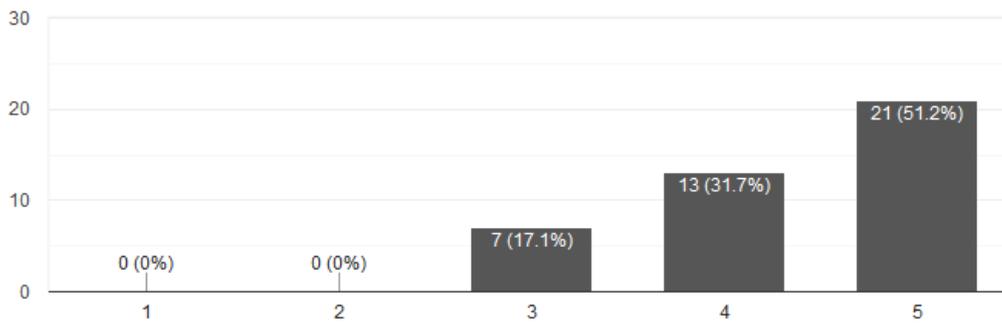
**Table 8: “How comfortable do you feel using technology in your personal life?” (GS) 2017**

41 responses



**Table 9: “How comfortable do you feel using technology for learning purposes?” (GS) 2017**

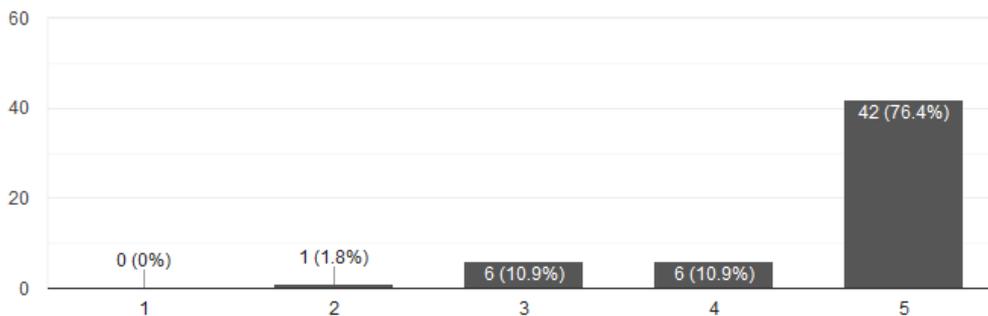
41 responses

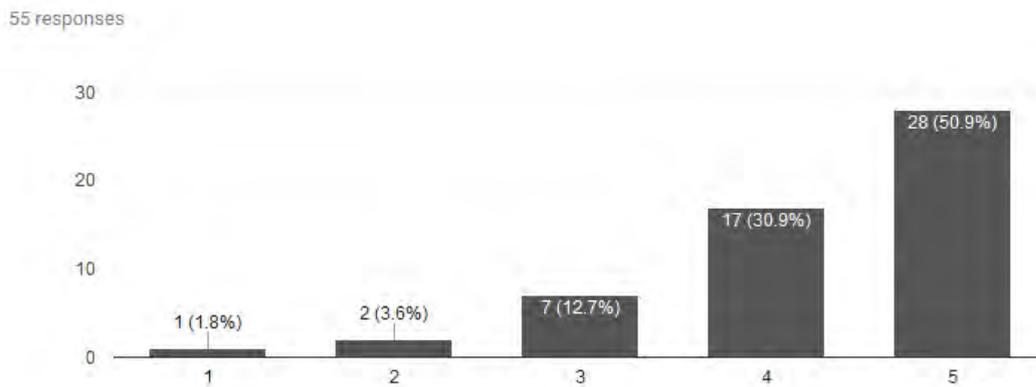


The Likert data for French Studies in the tables below presents similar findings to the German Studies section (see Appendix, Digest of Results A.1/A.2). Participants report being comfortable with technology for personal use (median=5) and a little less comfortable with using technology for learning purposes (median=4) as shown in the tables below.

**Table 10: How comfortable do you feel using technology in your personal life? (FS) 2017**

55 responses



*Table 11: How comfortable do you feel using technology for learning purposes? (FS) 2017*

The longer answer responses from both French and German Studies students reveal this ambiguity when using technology for learning rather than for the students' personal lives. While some noted the ease, speed and convenience of using technology for learning purposes (e.g. "I can do it in the comfort of my own home so it's amazing", "Sometimes you don't get the concept in class so the online course helps to understand"), others noted that they preferred "older methods of learning" and that technology "takes time to learn" and that one can "get very distracted with other things online".

FS Student: I feel like I don't learn better without paper. Also, time is taken by so quickly when looking on the screen. Sometimes with too much buttons + sites technology gets overwhely + complicated.

FS Student: I am comfortable using technology for learning although in some aspects I am not certain the correct ways to use technology as I have ADHD and being on a device while studying, I get distracted by things such as Youtube and Facebook.<sup>23</sup>

However, as (Cross, 2006, p. xvii) maintains, many of the students may simply state that they like a certain method of learning, whether paper-based or online, because they are used to it. As one German Studies student noted: "I've gotten used to it [technology]. I think I'm close to being dependent".

The 2018 results further revealed a trend that German Studies and French Studies students were more comfortable with technology for learning purposes in the higher year-groups, perhaps due to prior exposure to technology for learning purposes (see Appendix, Digest of Results B.1/B.2).

On the other side of the spectrum, another German Studies student commented that they felt that "it's less" [comfortable] as they had taught themselves with technology through correspondence

---

<sup>23</sup> These student responses, and many other student responses cited throughout the thesis, contain spelling and grammatical errors, which I am aware of. However, as stated at the beginning of this chapter I have not corrected student writing in order to maintain the authenticity of the student voice.

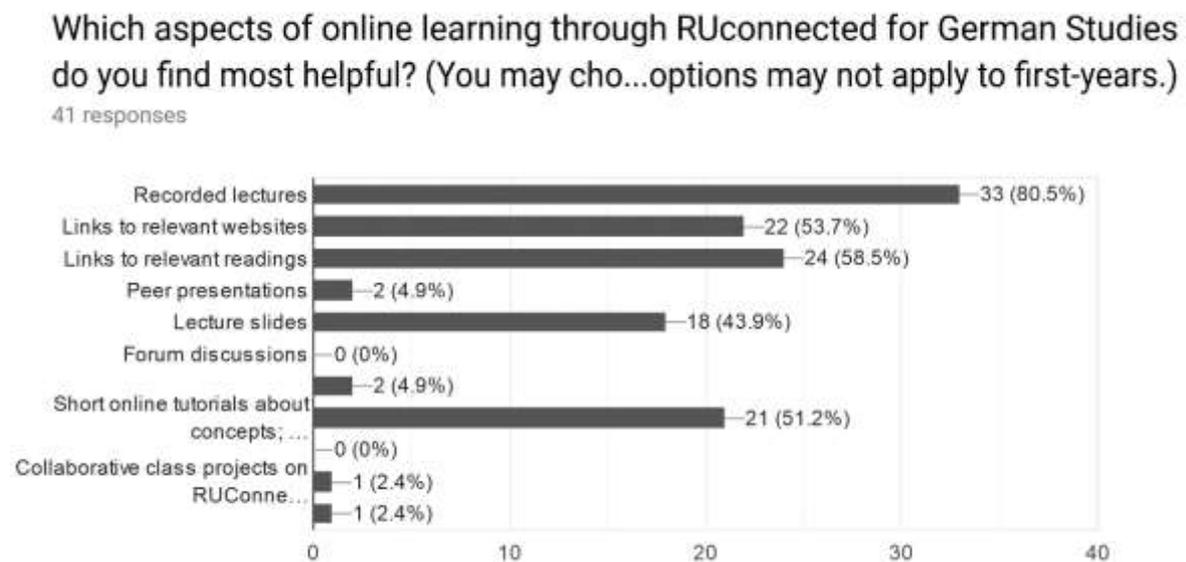
before university, reflecting from this experience that “technology cannot replace the contact with a teacher in most cases”. One French Studies student who reported being uncomfortable with technology stated: “This is because as students we don't come from similar backgrounds hence it is uncomfortable to start using a computer for learning purposes especially if you have never used it before as we live in a very judgemental society”. This response talks to the challenges associated with structural inequalities in access to education and technology in South Africa as discussed in Chapter 2 termed the “digital divide” (Fuchs & Horak, 2008; Heeks, 2018, pp. 86-87), experienced by many students at Rhodes University.

This is reflected in the 19% (8/42) of German Studies students who felt that there were barriers to their access of learning. While three students mentioned their problems with internet connectivity, and one student stated simply: “English. English. Academic English. English as an academic language”. Three students mentioned journal access/paywalls as a barrier to access (“Most of the reputed journals do not provide free access”), showing a lack of understanding of the Rhodes University library log-in system, through which most journals can be freely accessed. Similarly, 19% (10/54) of French Studies students report facing barriers to access including six mentions of Wi-Fi connectivity and three mentions of paywalls for journals. One French Studies student reflects: “It is only a problem if one does not have access to wifi, however one can always download what you need before leaving wifi (university always has)”. This response reveals the importance of university-provided internet connectivity as a contextual factor in enabling access to online resources on campus. Moreover, as stated above, the university library plays an important role in providing student support and education about digital literacy. Compulsory introductory information-literacy workshops are given during orientation week for first-year students, and regular additional courses are on offer for all students. Departments can also organise subject-specific library workshops with a librarian. German Studies organises a tailored library workshop for second- and third-year students. 61% of German Studies respondents and only 37.7% of French Studies Students reporting having attended a library workshop additional to their O-Week workshop. Those who did reported that they found it helpful, particularly with accessing resources. GS Student: “It was helpful. It instructed me on how to get full access to resources through various portals, such as Google Scholar”. Thus, the institution proved a means for support, however responses from students suggest that they may not be making full use of the support mechanisms in place, as one French Studies student wrote: “I did not know about them”. Individual departments and departmental sections can thus play a role in linking students to appropriate support services.

### *Students perceptions of pre-recorded lectures*

The use of pre-recorded lectures was commented on in both staff interviews as well as German Studies student questionnaires in 2017 (and again in 2018 and 2019) as the regular use of the flipped-classroom model (Johnson & Marsh, 2016, p. 60) proved a quite significant change within the teaching and learning context of German Studies at Rhodes University. German Studies students regarded the pre-recorded language lectures as the most helpful resource available on RUconnected in 2017, 2018 and 2019 (See Appendix, Digest of Results). French Studies did not make use of pre-recorded lectures, hence this was not commented on by students.

*Table 12: German Studies students' rating of most helpful online resources (2017)*



Most German Studies students in 2017 and 2018 reported that they found pre-recorded lectures helpful and enabling of learning, noting the ease of access through the learning management system, the ability to replay and pause lectures, and the quality of the content of the lectures.

However, some German Studies students voiced concerns about the reduction of face-to-face teaching time:

While an RUConnected course is always helpful and pairs well with the lecture, the recorded lectures are something very different to a normal lecture where one has the ability to ask questions and engage more with the material (also being able to speak the language more, which is vital in a language course). Too much replacement with recorded lectures instead of face-to-face would definitely impact how the student learns.

I like the online lectures because if I don't understand something I can look it up or rewind and fast forward, but sometimes I prefer in-class lectures so that the lecturer can provide an explanation in context and can alter the teaching method according to my learning capabilities. You can't get that right online.

### *Student use of dictionary and language-learning Apps*

Students reported using various types of Web 2.0 technologies for additional language learning in 2017-2018. Most prominently featured in 2017 were YouTube videos and thereafter the online or mobile dictionary resources which they make use of, the top three being Leo.org, Linguee and Dict.cc. (cf. Rahimi & Miri, 2014). There was an unexpected finding of students reporting the use of language learning app, Duolingo (see Krauß, 2015, p. 53). This is a popular app for learning German vocabulary (Krauß, 2015), although its use for German language learning has not been published on in the South African context. How often the students independently accessed this app is unknown and may be an interesting avenue for future research into mobile language learning resources in South Africa.

### *6.4 Student approaches to language learning*

This section further explores students' perspectives, students' approaches and attitudes towards language learning and their use of existing materials. This data was crucial for informing the action taken in teaching collocations. The table below shows how many German Studies students answered the questionnaire on "approaches to language learning" (see Appendix D). This was not undertaken in 2017 due to time constraints, as ethical clearance was only granted in late August of that year.

*Table 13: Participation in Questionnaire 2 "Approaches to language learning"*

	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>GS1</b>	39 /42 (92%)	47 /47 (100%)
<b>GS2</b>	20 /22 (91%)	15 /17 (93%)
<b>GS3</b>	6 /7 (86%)	5 /5 (100%)

Data presented below are divided between each year group, as there were differences in how first-second- and third-year students approached writing and reading in German Studies. Writing strategies were focussed on, as student writing was collected for the purposes of this dissertation. Reading approaches were collected as reading is a main mode through which foreign language learners are exposed to the target language and individual reading engagement is important for vocabulary development (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Previous research in this research context showed that there was very little engagement in the reading of any German text outside of the classroom amongst students (Ortner, 2013, 2015; Ortner & Weber, in press).

This section begins with student writing approaches. As can be seen in the tables below, most students reported that they try to write their work directly in German, a heartening result which shows improvement from Ortner (2013) and (2015) findings where the majority of students reported writing

in English first and then translating into German. This point will be returned to in Chapter 7, as it can be correlated to a change in the teaching approach in the German section since 2015.

Nevertheless, students also report often using google translate as a tool for writing (see Table 14: GS1-student approaches to writing, 2018, below), despite discouragement from lecturers for the use of that strategy. Although there was a reliance on translation from English, very few students reported writing their work in a language other than English, although English is not a mother-tongue for many students (See Appendix, Digest of Results), and then translating this into German. This is further discussed in Chapter 7, as it formed an important consideration for the design of the lectures on collocations.

Longer-answer responses, faithfully transcribed, reflect the variety of strategies (Oxford, 2017, p. i) employed by students:

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| P32 | I think if you try and write it in German directly instead of in English first, it makes you think more and helps you to remember the work faster and more clearly.   |
| P55 | I like using the phrases in the book as a starting place because it makes me feel more secure. From that point I branch out and fill in my own words because that feels more innovative.  |
| P62 | Translating from English never comes out right, I want to learn how to think in that language.  |
| P74 | [...] I also try to write my work in German from the start to ensure that I really understand what I'm writing and to check if I'm able to do it independently.   |
| P59 | I do most of my writing (homework) electronically. Therefore, I find it easier to make use of online sources. Online sources also grant me access to new vocabulary.  |
| P33 | English is my first language so it is natural for me to formulate what to say and then use reliable sources (Linguee, the textbook) to properly write what I want to say.   |
| P37 | Initially I tried google translate with inaccurate, hilarious results. I'm trying to think in the language. I'm learning so I use the direct method of writing. It's still often hilarious and frustrating because I can't express myself fluently. |

The dominant use of electronic dictionary applications (referred to above) rather than traditional paper-based dictionaries was further confirmed in this data set in 2018. As can be seen in the above longer answers, students experience frustration and a lack of confidence when writing in the target languages and look for ways to feel more "secure" in their language use. This includes using phrases as a starting point (employed by and making use of electronic translation software. As P37 noted at the end of their questionnaire:

P37

I'm enjoying the course but the gradient has suddenly become very steep! I'd like more examples of idiomatic phrases/expressions so that I can improve my overall fluency. At the moment I speak like a four year old!

These initial stages of competency can provide a challenge to adult learners who have high expectations for the development of their own competence in the foreign language. It was with this in mind that the lectures on collocations were developed, seeking to provide more direct instruction to students as to how to identify collocations and other set phrases in written texts in German, and then to guide students to replicate these collocations in their own writing. It was hoped that direct instruction on identifying and using collocations may provide students with another learning strategy to use for writing. As can be seen in the tables below, first-year students report frequently using phrases from the *Menschen* textbook as a starting point for their own writing (23% "often", 49% "very often", and 18% "always"). This declines for second-year students (30% "often", 25% "very often", and 25% "always") and by third year, students report using the phrases in *Menschen* as a starting point for their writing only "often" (50%) and very often (17%), reporting that they come up with their own phrases with the same frequency that they use the phrases in *Menschen*.

This trend reflects what research says about second language learning, that formulaic language such as phrases play a large role in beginner stages of language learning (Wray, 2002, p. 186). However, as has been shown by Krummes & Ensslin (2015) for example, and Wray (2000, 2002) formulaic language is even more important for higher level students than for beginner students in order to speak and write in a mother-tongue like way. These researchers show that students at higher levels of competency may have a good grasp of grammar but produce directly translated strings of words which are unidiomatic. Thus, the creative strategy of coming up with ones' own phrases, as reported by the third-year German Studies students, is not unusual for B1 level students (Council of Europe, 2012), but could be a stumbling block to achieving fluency and mother-tongue like language use.

Table 14: GS1-student approaches to writing, 2018

	never	seldom	often	very often	always
■ 2.1.1 I write my work in English first, and then translate this into German	33%	38%	10%	10%	8%
■ 2.1.2 I write my work in a language other than English, and then translate this into German	82%	13%	3%	0%	3%
■ 2.1.3 I use google translate to help me formulate my writing	21%	23%	31%	21%	5%
■ 2.1.4 I try to write my work directly in German	3%	21%	18%	41%	18%
■ 2.1.5 I use phrases from the Menschen textbook as a starting point for my writing	3%	8%	23%	49%	18%
■ 2.1.6 I come up with my own phrases	28%	31%	26%	13%	3%
■ 2.1.7 I only use the words I have learnt in class in my writing.	5%	26%	36%	18%	15%
■ 2.1.8 I use a print dictionary to look up new words I don't know, but want to use in German	59%	31%	8%	3%	0%
■ 2.1.9 I use an electronic dictionary to look up new words I don't know, but want to use in German	0%	3%	5%	33%	59%
■ 2.1.10 I use the Menschen glossary to find new words to use in my writing.	10%	31%	36%	15%	8%

Table 15: GS2-student approaches to writing, 2018

	never	seldom	often	very often	always
■ 2.1.1 I write my work in English first, and then translate this into German	50%	15%	15%	15%	5%
■ 2.1.2 I write my work in a language other than English, and then translate this into German	95%	5%	0%	0%	0%
■ 2.1.3 I use google translate to help me formulate my writing	20%	20%	30%	25%	5%
■ 2.1.4 I try to write my work directly in German	5%	5%	15%	35%	40%
■ 2.1.5 I use phrases from the Menschen textbook as a starting point for my writing	0%	20%	30%	25%	25%
■ 2.1.6 I come up with my own phrases	15%	30%	40%	10%	5%
■ 2.1.7 I only use the words I have learnt in class in my writing.	15%	10%	35%	20%	20%
■ 2.1.8 I use a print dictionary to look up new words I don't know, but want to use in German	63%	26%	0%	11%	0%
■ 2.1.9 I use an electronic dictionary to look up new words I don't know, but want to use in German	0%	0%	0%	35%	65%
■ 2.1.10 I use the Menschen glossary to find new words to use in my writing.	10%	40%	20%	10%	20%

Table 16: GS3-student approaches to writing, 2018

	never	seldom	often	very often	always
■ 2.1.1 I write my work in English first, and then translate this into German	67%	17%	0%	0%	17%
■ 2.1.2 I write my work in a language other than English, and then translate this into German	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
■ 2.1.3 I use google translate to help me formulate my writing	33%	33%	33%	0%	0%
■ 2.1.4 I try to write my work directly in German	0%	17%	17%	0%	67%
■ 2.1.5 I use phrases from the Menschen textbook as a starting point for my writing	33%	0%	50%	17%	0%
■ 2.1.6 I come up with my own phrases	0%	33%	50%	17%	0%
■ 2.1.7 I only use the words I have learnt in class in my writing.	17%	67%	0%	17%	0%
■ 2.1.8 I use a print dictionary to look up new words I don't know, but want to use in German	50%	33%	17%	0%	0%
■ 2.1.9 I use an electronic dictionary to look up new words I don't know, but want to use in German	0%	0%	0%	17%	83%
■ 2.1.10 I use the Menschen glossary to find new words to use in my writing.	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%

2018 questionnaires also confirmed previous findings (Ortner, 2013, 2015) that students do not engage widely with reading German texts outside of class. Of the GS1 student respondents (n=39), 59% (23) reported no engagement with reading German texts outside of class, although 71% (28) did report engaging with German in non-textual forms such as through listening to music or watching YouTube videos. Similarly, of the GS2 respondents (n=19), only 26% (5) reported reading German privately, while 79% (15) reported engaging with German through non-written media such as movies and music. GS3 student respondents (n=5) on the other hand, reported reading German outside of class (90%) as well as engaging with other types of German media (90%) such as music or movies.

Thus, in 2018 the results from the responses from the student questionnaire revealed that the students were employing a variety of writing and reading strategies. Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 also reporting having taken time in class to directly teach reading and writing strategies. I thus designed a series of lectures to take place in the second semester of 2018 (three lectures for GS1, see Table 17, four lectures for GS2, see Table 18 and three lectures for GS3, see Table 19). The lectures for each year group were planned to complement and take advantage of the existing good practices, and induct students into the practice of identifying collocations in the texts within *Menschen*, and use these as

building blocks for their own writing, alongside the other formulaic phrases presented by *Menschen* so as to complement students existing strategies for writing in German.

#### *6.5 Planning and implementing 2018 lectures with a focus on collocation*

In the planning stage of the research, I decided to focus on formulaic phrases and collocations, based on my MA research findings about the approach which students take to writing, and a seeming lack of awareness of the patterned nature of language and how to go about writing texts without translating word-for-word from English (Ortner, 2015; Ortner & Weber, 2018). However, unlike for my MA research where I adapted ready-made resources for academic writing and implemented these with third-year students separately to the usual coursebook-led curriculum, I was interested in exploring how an awareness of the patterned nature of language could be fostered within the curriculum and how students could be guided towards an improved approach which may enhance their own metalinguistic abilities as life-long language learners, through introducing them to two concepts from corpus-linguistics namely formulaic language and collocation (derived from frequency and co-occurrence, as discussed in Chapter 3). This is not a completely novel idea, as shown in the literature review; however, it is novel to our context and within the broader context of South Africa where there does not appear to be much attention paid to the role of collocation in German foreign language teaching at present (aside from Ortner & Weber, 2018), despite recent surges of research in this area (Targońska, 2018; Vyatkina, 2016a; Neary-Sundquist, 2015b; Krummes & Ensslin, 2015).

As outlined in Chapter 1, explicitly teaching about formulaic language and collocation fits in well with the goals of the German foreign language teaching curriculum at Rhodes University which is guided by CEFR principles (Rhodes University, 2019b, pp. 102-103; Council of Europe, 2012). While one may assume that all university students have learnt a second language at school and thus are familiar with second-language learning and that they have well-developed strategies in place for learning, the evidence provided by reports on South African primary and secondary schooling cautions against this type of thinking (see also Weber, 2015, p. 231). Making time within the curriculum for the explicit teaching of learning strategies is advocated for by academics seeking to transform teaching practices in Higher Education in South Africa, as this allows students to gain access to the epistemology of the discipline, as well as to develop ontologically- that is to say, develop an awareness of what it means to be a “good” language learner (Boughey & McKenna, 2016; Gee, 2012).

In designing the first set of lectures for the 2018 cohort, with due regard for the 2017 findings, I thus drew on the literature available for language teaching and teaching collocation as reviewed in Chapter 3 and analysed how best to introduce collocations within the existing curriculum in German Studies language at Rhodes University, taking into account the nature of the context with an increased use of

the online modality (particularly the learning management system, RUconnected) as described above. As reading texts were already a part of the curriculum, and as text-based work is a well-recognised method for collocation work (Hausmann, 1984; Willis, 1998, pp. 46-47; Targońska, 2018, p. 58) it was decided that texts from the coursebook *Menschen* which were already in use in the classroom would be a good starting point for heightening students awareness to the patterned nature of language. Other scholars have suggested the use of literary texts (Weber, 2018) or internet short texts (McDonald, 2007) as examples of “authentic” texts which can be used in the classroom, and on which students can model their writing. However, as stated in Chapter 3, I concur with Widdowson’s (1978, p. 80) notion of authenticity in this dissertation, seeing authenticity as a product of the interaction of the learner with the task (Mishan, 2004, p. 221), and recognising the value of texts created for pedagogic purposes as they allow for comprehensible input.

I attempted to adopt the “three phase model” as put forward by Reder (2013) and Ďurčo & Vajičková (2018) as a guide: „(1) Entdecken der Kollokationen als Einheiten, (2) Einüben der Kollokationen als Einheiten und (3) Anwenden der Kollokationen als Einheiten.“ (Reder, 2006, p. 172).

The underlying theory of an emergentist (Larsen-Freeman, 1997, p. 154) or usage-based model of grammar (Durant, 2008, p. 36) is taken in this dissertation, viewing language as a complex linguistic system which emerges and adapts with use. I sought to adopt the principles of frequency and co-occurrence from corpus-linguistics to guide the selection of vocabulary (including formulaic phrases and collocations as defined in Chapter 3) on which to focus. Instructed second-language acquisition concepts of “input” “noticing” and “output” (Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013, pp. 298-301) are drawn on, as well as the sociocultural theory of “scaffolding” (Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013, p. 304) in the design of the lectures. The frameworks for blended language learning put forward by Neumeier (2015, p. 167) and Mishan (2013a, p. 210) (described in Chapter 4) are used to describe the approach taken and the division of classroom and online practice.

This section begins with an orientation to the coursebook (*Lehrwerk*) in use, *Menschen*, as it is central to the local context (Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013). *Menschen* is not only used at this institution, and is a popular choice at other institutions as well, alongside *Aspekte* and *Deutsch na Klar* (see Appendix M, external staff responses). In the exploratory phase, the types of exercises and activities which the coursebook in use offers were investigated. *Menschen* is a German coursebook series published by Hueber (Hueber, 2017). It follows the CEFR guidelines, which describes levels in terms of speaking, reading, writing and listening, (the core components of language learning) and is available for A1, A2 and B1 level (it is also available in six parts for use in short intensive courses) (Hueber, 2017). As is characteristic of many foreign language textbooks, it attempts to be relevant to a diverse range of learners. The target audience is described as adults and young adults (Hueber, 2017). The books for

each level are divided between a coursebook (*Kursbuch*) (A1: Evans, *et al.*, 2012; A2: Habersack, *et al.*, 2013; B1: Braun-Podeschwa, *et al.*, 2015) and a workbook (*Arbeitsbuch*) (A1: Glas-Peters, *et al.*, 2012; A2: Breitsameter, *et al.*, 2013; B1: Breitsameter, *et al.*, 2015) and a glossary (Ozorowska & Schwingshackl, 2014; Guse, *et al.*, 2015). The coursebook and workbook are written entirely in German (perhaps a further attempt to be relevant within any language setting – or to avoid costs for the publisher in having editions in various languages). The glossary provides lists of the vocabulary covered in each chapter, and includes some grammar explanations in English as well as some explorations of ‘German culture’/ *Landeskunde* in English. The vocabulary lists consist of a left-hand column of German words (single words) an example sentence in German (from the coursebook) in the middle column and an English translation of the German word in a right-hand column.

Hueber has published other successful coursebook series such as *Themen* and *Schritte*; however, they state that *Menschen* attempts to provide a more modern interface and that its main angle is that it is based on underlying theories of psychology and neuro-didactics (Hueber, 2017).

Drei Erkenntnisse der Lernpsychologie und Neurodidaktik sind für das Sprachenlernen besonders wichtig: 1. Interesse und Emotionen weckt man am besten durch Geschichten. 2. Unser Gedächtnis arbeitet mit Bildern. 3. Wiederholungen festigen und motivieren. (Hueber, 2017).

The 24 chapters in each book are thus organised according to a story-telling format. The first page of each chapter of the *Kursbuch* contains a picture (a scene-setting situation), accompanied by a short listening text and exercise. Each chapter also contains a picture dictionary (*Bildlexikon*) along with various other exercises, sometimes based on a reading text, or a longer listening text. Various other forms such as songs, movement exercises, games and pedagogic videos are used in an attempt to account for varying learner types (Hueber, 2017). Each chapter closes with writing practice and speaking exercises or a mini-project to round off the topic. A block of relevant phrases (*Redemittel*) from the chapter can be found at the end of every chapter. A learner DVD-Rom is included which offers extra exercises to expand and revise class work and activities for self-study. This was attractive to the lecturers when deciding which resource to use, but has not been much used by students (as students reported in the language learning approaches questionnaire)<sup>24</sup>.

The teacher handbook (*Lehrerhandbuch*) (Kalender & Pude, 2013, 2014, 2015) provides information and suggestions to teachers about how to use the accompanying coursebook and workbook. An overview of teacher handbooks for the A1-level (Kalender & Pude, 2013), A2-level (Kalender & Pude,

---

<sup>24</sup> This may be because hardly any laptops are equipped nowadays with a DVD-rom drive.

2014) and B1-level (Kalender & Pude, 2015) confirms findings by Reder (2006), that collocations are a neglected topic in teacher handbooks, receiving no explicit mention and little implicit attention either. The *Redemittel* blocks at the end of each chapter in the *Menschen* coursebooks present common communicative phrases, which may include collocations, presenting more general items of formulaic language for students to make use of in their own speech or writing. For example:

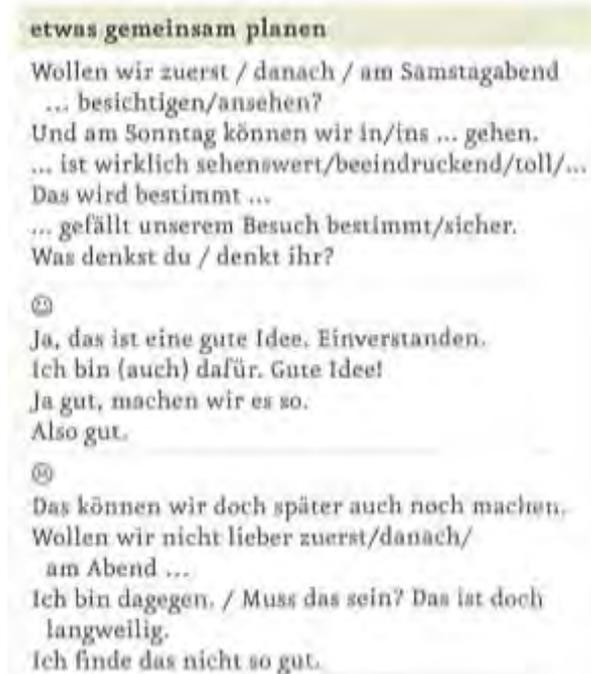


Figure 15: Menschen A2 Redemittel example (Habersack, et al., 2013, p. 34)

For each level (in our case, A1, A2 and B1, which correspond to our undergraduate *ab initio* teaching) the teacher handbook presents some examples of how teachers can have students interact with the *Redemittel* other than reading them as a list (which is how they are presented). These are presented under the heading „2.3 Die Arbeit mit den Grammatik- und Redemittelübersichten“ (Kalender & Pude, 2013, 2014, 2015, p. 9).

The teacher handbook, with reference to *Redemittelübungen*, states: „Die TN erarbeiten ihre eigenen Übersichten. Sie sammeln die wichtigen Redemittel und Grammatikthemen der Lektion und vergleichen ihr Resultat anschließend mit der Übersichtseite. Die Ergebnisse können die TN im Portfolio aufbewahren“ (Kalender & Pude, 2014, p. 9). This takes for granted that students know what *Redemittel* are, and how to find them or identify them, or, indeed, that there is time for the production of portfolios in the undergraduate curriculum in South Africa.

In some chapters, the *Bildlexikon* also presents selected verb-noun pairs (collocates) rather than only single words (although single-word referential items are most commonly presented, as is usual in German textbooks (Augustyn, 2013, p. 27)), as for example in the figures below *einen Platz anbieten*,

*Geld wechseln; Freunde treffen, im Internet surfen.* However, the overwhelming majority of *Bildlexikon* terms are single item form-meaning connections, often for nouns at the first-year level, with the example below the first instance of verbs.



Figure 16: Menschen B1 Bildlexikon (Braun-Podeschwa, et al., 2015, p. 38)



Figure 17: Menschen A2 Bildlexikon (Habersack, et al., 2013, p. 33)



Figure 18: Menschen A1 Bildlexikon (Evans, et al., 201, p. 44)

Communicative phrases and collocations are also to be found in the reading texts within each chapter, which are then expected to be acquired incidentally, unless the lecturer points out the phrase or collocation in reading through the text.

This is not to say that the *Menschen* textbook series neglects vocabulary learning. There are vocabulary learning exercises present in the workbook which accompanies the coursebook, some of which do touch on collocations where word combinations are presented such as those from the *Bildlexikon* exemplified above (although not explicitly referred to as such). The most explicit reference is in the A1 glossary (Ozorowska & Schwingshackl, 2014, p. 43) where a learning “tip” makes the suggestion to learn nouns and verbs together. Similarly, the glossary for each level provides an example sentence for each word, where often the example sentence contains a collocation (Ozorowska & Schwingshackl, 2014; Guse, et al., 2015). However, these are not typographically marked to encourage “noticing” of the patterns, as is suggested in the literature (see Chapter 3, (Schmidt, 2010)). Because of time constraints, new vocabulary is often presented (in German Studies at Rhodes University) at the beginning of a new chapter by way of going through and translating words in the *Bildlexikon*, and vocabulary learning exercises are expected to be completed by students in their own time, sometimes included as aspects of the weekly homework assignments.

I aligned my approach to introducing collocation to the *Menschen* textbook series (A1, A2, B1). This is as the coursebooks and the curriculum are closely aligned and form the basis for the formal assessment which takes place. Formal assessment influences what is taught and learnt in German Studies at Rhodes University. Lectures on collocations took place in the second semester of 2018 and 2019. The rationale for introducing these topics in the second semester was that students would already be familiar with language-learning and metalinguistic concepts, particularly at the first-year level.

In designing the activities, I met with Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 and we planned which sections would be covered in each lecture in the semester ahead. This was useful for my research as I could ascertain which texts would be covered and what exercises undertaken so that the text-based collocations work which was part of my action research could be fully integrated within the usual curriculum structure. Lecturer 1, Lecturer 2 and myself made note of which texts would be best suited to the approach of a guided discovery of collocations, and it was decided that I would teach the lectures during which these texts would ordinarily be discussed. Thus, the lectures which I designed and presented were not all in one block, but rather were dispersed throughout the second semester (see dates in Tables 17, 18 and 19) following the natural progression of the curriculum. I wanted to follow a text-based approach, thus the texts chosen guided which collocations were taught and focussed on, as I wanted the students to discover collocations within the texts that were already a part of the curriculum, rather than learning collocations as lists of words (following on from the review of literature in Chapter 3). For GS1 the texts chosen in the *Kursbuch* were were: „*In Giesing wohnt das Leben*“ (S. 84, *Kursbuch*), „*Wünschbäume*“ (S. 105), and „*Wir haben hier ein Problem. Was kann ich für Sie tun?*“ (S. 92). For GS2, the texts chosen were „*Das Lebensmittelkonsum in Deutschland*“ (S. 68), „*Deine Geschenke haben mich sehr gefreut*“ (S. 82), „*Unsere Reise nach Rumänien*“ (S. 96) and „*Wind und Wetter in den deutschsprachige Ländern*“ ( S. 101). For GS3 „*Dazu lade ich Sie Herzlich ein*“ (S. 74) „*Vielen Dank für ihre Einladung zu...*“ (S. 76), „*Ein Bewerbungsschreiben*“ (S. 93), „*Ach, das war eine herrliche Zeit!*“ (S. 102).

For many of the lectures I developed additional resources which complemented the text and had a focus on discovering collocations within the text. All additional worksheets and materials created may be found in a Google Drive folder by following the link in Appendix N, included here for ease of access. A table of contents for this content may also be found in Appendix N.

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1\\_eZ4BnMskZ2pzJRWEeCMCA7kU1MqcfyQ?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_eZ4BnMskZ2pzJRWEeCMCA7kU1MqcfyQ?usp=sharing)

In preparing for my lectures I also sat in and observed some of the usual language lectures, paying attention to the way new vocabulary was introduced in-class (as briefly outlined above). This allowed

for insights into the way in which language lectures in the section are structured, and how new vocabulary and texts are introduced and ensured that the lectures that I designed corresponded to the traditional format, in order to have students feel at ease.

Taking into account the theory and literature discussed in sections above, I decided to begin my “action” with a lecture which introduced the topic of formulaic language and collocation and its relevance to language learning explicitly, drawing on examples which the students of each year group would be familiar with from their previous language learning experience. I developed a printable hand-out for this purpose, which I distributed in class (see Appendix N of material developed, link in section above). In 2018 I also created an online lecture which recapped this concept explained in class, and this was posted on RUconnected<sup>25</sup>. This was informed by the literature which states that teaching about collocation is an important first step to developing metalinguistic awareness of this concept (Reder, 2006, p. 172).

I then followed up on this with two or three lectures per year group (See Tables 17, 18 and 19) where I presented activities designed to heighten the students’ awareness of formulaic language, particularly collocations, which they could then use in their own writing. Homework writing tasks were designed to encourage students to use the collocations identified in their own writing, on topics which were personally relevant and thus emotionally engaging and motivating (Hueber, 2017). The lectures in 2018 were thus exploratory in nature, and evolved in constant conversation with colleagues and students, informing the second round of lectures in 2019. To reiterate, there was thus not a lecture every week for each year group, but rather the lectures were structured to fit the coursebook setup, and particularly the sections which present longer texts and which also necessitate written production from students, thus they were interspersed throughout the second semester.

An overview of the lectures presented in 2018 as part of the second stage of the first cycle of the action research (Calvert & Sheen, 2014, p. 227) is presented in the tables below, and the text following thereafter. In the tables below starting from the left, the first column presents the date the lecture took place, the second column, the specific section of the coursebook *Menschen* within which the lecture took place. The topics for each section of the *Menschen* chapters are orientated towards language competencies listening (*hören*), speaking (*sprechen*), reading (*lesen*) and writing (*schreiben*) as described in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2012). In the tables below, I have highlighted topics with a focus on production and communication, thus *sprechen* and *schreiben*, for each section. The third column presents the text from the coursebook chapter which was chosen as a focus text for teaching

---

<sup>25</sup> This lecture is unlisted, but can be accessed on YouTube via the following link for GS1: <https://youtu.be/7mFwX3YdD2U> and for GS2: <https://youtu.be/HZt9DlexrZQ>

and learning, and which had normally already been introduced to students in a previous lecture. The fourth column identifies the collocations and formulaic sequences which were highlighted in the text as units to focus on, as directed by the *Menschen Lektion* topics and lexical fields (*Wortfelder*). In column five, any additional resources created (such as lecture handouts, or online components) are outlined. Examples of lecture handouts are included in the Appendix. Lastly, in the sixth column the homework issued is presented, which sought to provide a stimulus for the students to practice the collocations identified in class.

Table 17: GS1 Lectures 2018

Lecture	Section in <i>Menschen</i> , topics and lexical field	Focus text/s	Activity, formulaic sequences and collocations found in text	Additional resources created by the researcher	Writing exercise <sup>26</sup>
Lecture 1 31.07.2018  Introduction to formulaic language and collocation	15. <i>In der Stadt</i>  Topics: <i>Einen Ort bewerten; nach Einrichtungen fragen</i>  Lexical field: <i>Einrichtungen und Orte in der Stadt</i>	S. 84 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>In Giesing wohnt das Leben</i> (Blog)	Highlighting in the text phrases which show that the author is pleased, and highlighting other set collocations:  <i>das gefällt mir</i> <i>es gibt ...</i> <i>zu Fuß</i>	Introduction to collocation worksheet (distributed in class, uploaded to RUconnected)  Online lecture to consolidate 07.08.2018  Glossary created on RUconnected	For homework: S. 85, Nr. 7. <i>Was ist Ihr Lieblingsviertel?</i>
Lecture 2 23.08.2018  Expressing wishes and talking about plans	17. <i>Pläne und Wünsche</i>  Topics: <i>Wünsche äußern und über Pläne sprechen.</i>  Lexical field: <i>Pläne und Wünsche</i>	S. 105 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>Wunschbäume</i>	Highlighting collocations in text which display a wish:  <i>Ich wünsche mir ...</i> <i>Ich möchte gern ...</i> <i>Ich will ... werden</i>	Glossary entries added on RUconnected	For homework: S. 105, Nr. 3. <i>Welche Wünsche haben Sie?</i>
Lecture 3 03.09.2018  Asking for help and apologizing	16. <i>Termine</i>  Topics: <i>Hilfe anbieten; um Hilfe bitten; auf Entschuldigungen reagieren.</i> Lexical field: <i>Im Hotel</i>	S. 92 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>Wir haben hier ein Problem. Was kann ich für Sie tun?</i> (Hörtext)	Highlighting collocations in text for apologies:  <i>[es] tut mir leid</i> <i>entschuldigen Sie</i>	Glossary entries added on RUconnected	For homework: S. 94, Nr. 9. <i>Sie sind zum Essen eingeladen und kommen eine halbe Stunde zu spät. Schreiben Sie drei Entschuldigungen.</i>

<sup>26</sup> Writing for these topics was collected where possible, transcribed, and included in the learner corpus, RUDaF

Table 18: GS2 Lectures 2018

Lecture	Section in <i>Menschen</i> , topics and lexical field	Focus text/s	Activity, formulaic sequences and collocations found in text	Additional resources created by the researcher	Writing exercise
Lecture 1 27.07.2018  Introduction to formulaic language and collocation	12. <i>Ernährung</i>  Topics: <i>Überraschung ausdrücken; etwas vergleichen</i>  Lexical field: <i>Lebensmittel</i>	S. 68 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>Der Lebensmittel-Konsum in Deutschland (Sachtext)</i>	Highlighted every instance of the high-frequency verb <i>essen</i> in the text and noticed its partners to the left and right.  E.g.: <i>essen</i> + (noun) <i>Brot und Getreideprodukte</i> <i>Fleisch und Wurstwaren</i> <i>Obst und Gemüse</i>  <i>essen</i> + (adverb) <i>am häufigsten; doppelt so viel...wie; am meisten; mehr als; durchschnittlich; durchschnittlich mehr; pro Tag; kaum; zu wenig</i>	Introduction to collocation worksheet (distributed in class, uploaded to RUconnected)  Online lecture to consolidate on RUconnected.  Glossary entry to show the differences in these collocations for <i>essen</i> from the text, presented as KWIC lines, with an explanation in English.	For homework: S. 69, Nr. 4 <i>Die Essgewohnheiten der Deutschen.</i> <i>Was überrascht Sie? Was nicht? Wählen Sie drei Satzanfänge und ergänzen Sie.</i>  Test question: <i>Was essen die Leute in Ihrem Land?</i>
Lecture 2 07.09.2018  Writing thank you emails expressing joy, gratitude and thanks	14. <i>Post und Telekommunikation</i>  Topics: <i>Freude ausdrücken.</i>  Lexical field: <i>Post</i>	S. 82 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>Deine Geschenke haben mich sehr gefreut</i>	Highlighted in texts the gifts received (nouns), and thereafter the phrases expressing pleasure and gratitude. <i>... haben mich sehr gefreut;</i> <i>Schön, dass du an mich gedacht hast;</i> <i>Ich liebe ...;</i> <i>... ist super;</i> <i>... war eine tolle Idee.</i> <i>Ich freue mich [schon sehr] auf ...; ... mag ich besonders gern; ... ist eine super Idee; ... kann ich wirklich gut gebrauchen.</i>	Created handout making use of the coursebook text as well as an additional text from S. 112. in the workbook.  Students documented underlined collocations and corresponding English translations on the worksheet.  As a pre-exercise, students were supposed to email gifts	For homework: S. 82 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) Nr. 7b <i>Bedanken Sie sich nun für Ihre Geschenke.</i>

				to each other based on an in-class exercise.	
Lecture 3 20.09.2018  Commenting on travel blogs and social media (Online recorded lecture <sup>27</sup> )	17. <i>Reisen und Verkehr</i>  Topics: <i>Über Reisegewohnheiten sprechen; etwas kommentieren</i>  Lexical field: <i>Reise und Verkehr</i>	S. 96 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>Unsere Reise nach Rumänien (Reisetagebuch im Internet)</i>	Focus on comments in text, highlighting formulaic sequences:  <i>Nicht zu glauben! So ein Pech! So ein Zufall! Das hat sicher Spaß gemacht. ... sieht toll aus.</i>	Word document: Adapted texts from AB S.136 to make complete texts matching the images. Supplemented with authentic comments on Facebook photos. Looked at contrastive English translations for these collocations.	Attendance exercise handed in online on RUconnected:  <i>Für Ihre Anwesenheit bitte schreiben Sie drei Kommentare (als Word-Dokument). Sie können entweder die Bilder im Arbeitsbuch S. 136 kommentieren, oder Sie können Ihre eigene Fotos hinzufügen und kommentieren.</i> Based on activities: S. 97 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) Nr. 5. S.136 ( <i>Arbeitsbuch</i> ) Nr. 8
Lecture 4 28.09.2018  Reporting on weather and the climate	18. <i>Wetter und Klima</i>  Topics: <i>Über das Wetter sprechen</i>  Lexical field: <i>Wetter</i>	S. 101 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>Wind und Wetter in den deutschsprachigen Ländern (Sachtext)</i>	Example collocations found using DWDS: (adjective) + <i>Wetter</i> <i>schlecht/schön/ wechselhaft/ sonnig/ mild/ kühl</i>  <i>Wind</i> + (verb) <i>wehen/blasen/pfeifen</i>  (adjective) + <i>Temperatur</i> <i>sommerlich/eisig/tropisch/mild, usw.</i>	Supplemented by word cloud handout created using DWDS (worksheet adapted from Neary-Sundquist, 2015). Projected in class and worksheet uploaded onto RUconnected, 29.09.2018	Completed in class: S. 101 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) Nr. 6a <i>Wie ist das Wetter heute?</i> Nr. 6b <i>Ist es typisch für die Jahreszeit? Wie ist es sonst zu dieser Jahreszeit?</i>

<sup>27</sup> This lecture is unlisted, but can be viewed on YouTube through the following link: <https://youtu.be/JLMohoc1qFE>

Table 19: GS3 lectures 2018

Lecture	Section in <i>Menschen</i> , topics and lexical field	Focus text/s	Activity, collocations found in text	Additional resources created by the researcher	Writing exercise
Lecture 1 30.07.2018  Introduction to formulaic language and collocation (In tutorial session)	12. <i>Ferien im Betrieb</i>  Topics: <i>Briefe und E-Mails; Einladungen, Absagen, Zusagen</i>  Lexical field: <i>Veranstaltungen in Betrieben</i>	S. 74 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>Dazu lade ich Sie ganz herzlich ein;</i> S. 76 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>Vielen Dank für Ihre Einladung zu...</i>	Collocations highlighted in each section of the text: E.g.: <i>Anrede: Sehr geehrte/r; liebe/r ...;</i> <i>Hallo, liebes Team;</i> <i>Einleitung: Ich möchte Sie zu ... einladen</i> <i>Zusage/Absage: ich komme gern/ich muss leider absagen</i> <i>Schluss: Herzlichen Dank im Voraus!</i> <i>Grußformel: Herzlichst; Mit den besten Wünschen; Schöne Grüße</i>	Worksheet created with headings for <i>Anrede, Einleitung, Schluss, Grußformel</i> under which students could fill in the phrases/collocations identified.	Students wrote an invitation in class, S. 77 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) Nr. 6a <i>Wählen Sie eine Situation aus dem Bildlexikon und schreiben Sie eine Einladung an Ihre Kollegen/Mitarbeiter.</i> They then swapped, and homework was to write a reply: S. 77 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) Nr. 6b <i>Tauschen Sie Ihre Einladung mit Ihrer Partnerin / Ihrem Partner und schreiben Sie eine Zusage oder eine Absage.</i>
Lecture 2 17.09.2018  Writing applications (20 mins after test)	15. <i>Bewerbungen</i>  Topics: <i>Bewerbungen schreiben</i>  Lexical field: <i>Bewerbung</i>	S. 93 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>Ein Bewerbungsschreiben</i>	Highlighted collocations in text S. 93 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) as noticed in exercise S. 126 ( <i>Arbeitsbuch</i> ) Nr. 6 (matching the phrase exercise). These collocations were used to improve the register of the text S. 126 ( <i>Arbeitsbuch</i> ) Nr. 7.  <i>E.g. Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren;</i> <i>Es fällt mir leicht; ... Anzeige (mit großem Interesse) gelesen;</i> <i>ich bewerbe mich um die Stelle; ich kann mir gut vorstellen..., usw.</i>	N/A	For homework: S.94 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) Nr. 5 <i>Schreiben Sie nun ein Bewerbungsschreiben mit Ihren Sätzen aus B.</i>

<p>Lecture 3 08.10.2018</p> <p>Reacting to information and expressing importance</p>	<p>16. <i>Jugend und Erinnerungen</i></p> <p>Topics: <i>Jugenderlebnisse, Wichtigkeit ausdrücken, auf Erzählungen reagieren</i></p> <p>Lexical field: <i>Erinnerungen und Beziehungen</i></p>	<p>S. 102 (<i>Kursbuch</i>) <i>Ach, das war eine herrliche Zeit!</i> (<i>Hörtext Transkription</i>)</p>	<p>Highlighted on printouts of the transcribed audio:</p> <p>1. <i>Wie reagieren die Personen auf die Erzählungen? Markieren Sie.</i> 2. <i>Wie drücken die Personen Wichtigkeit aus? Markieren Sie.</i></p> <p>The formulaic sequences and collocations highlighted correspond to the content in the <i>Kommunikation</i> blocks on S. 103/104 (<i>Kursbuch</i>)</p> <p><i>Was meinen Sie?; Das können wir uns heute wirklich gar nicht mehr vorstellen; Ja, das stimmt ...; das kann ich ehrlich gesagt nicht verstehen; das war bei uns natürlich nicht vorstellbar; das werde ich nie verstehen; bei uns kam das damals gar nicht infrage; da haben Sie schon recht.</i></p>	<p>Photocopied handout of the audio transcription (in <i>Lehrerhandbuch</i>, S.141-142). The students had already listened to the audio text in class the lecture before, and thus were familiar with the text.</p>	<p>For homework: S.103 (<i>Kursbuch</i>) Nr. 7b <i>Wie finden Sie die Aussagen in Nr. 7a? Vergleichen Sie sie auch mit Ihren Erfahrungen. Was war Ihnen in Ihrer Jugend wichtig?</i></p>
--	---	---	--	---	--

This section includes a reflective write-up of what worked well and what did not as part of the third stage of action research, “observe and reflect” (Calvert & Sheen, 2014, p. 227). The students’ perceptions of both the helpfulness of the lectures and activities in heightening their awareness of collocations, and their use of collocations in their own writing, are presented together with this, as data gathered by means of anonymous online questionnaires are discussed. These reflective evaluations on the part of myself as insider-researcher and the students as active participants, were integral in the fourth stage of the research which was to adapt and re-implement the lectures in 2019, which is discussed thereafter.

Thus, in summary of the information presented in the tables above, in 2018 I undertook 10 lectures in total, three with GS1, four with GS2 and three with GS3. My approach for developing lectures aimed at enhancing the noticing of collocational patterns and formulaic phrases within the textbook proceeded as follows:

- Identify the theme or subject of the lecture. What are the grammatical and communicative outcomes?
- Identify key vocabulary areas and grammatical patterns (often the textbook will explicitly state these).
- Identify what ‘input’ is available (either text or audio or video).
- Identify frequent vocabulary items.
- Identify which vocabulary is also relevant to the students and their own context and needs.
- Prepare for how to link new forms encountered in the first reading/listening of the text to meaning (traditionally this is through providing a translation in the English). Will the teacher provide this information, or will the students be tasked with looking it up themselves? (The main tool to which students have access in class are their mobile phones, which they use to look up new vocabulary on Leo.org, Dict.cc, Linguee.de. These are mostly ‘wordlists’ rather than dictionaries which provide an explanation, and thus dictionary skills are necessary for students.)
- Draw students’ attention to collocations and other formulaic phrases in the text, particularly to those which are necessary for the communication task in the chapter (much like in “focus on form” approaches (Long, 1998, p. 36)). Lecturers can ask students to identify the phrases which express an opinion, which express surprise, or gratitude. Often these communicative phrases are presented in a block at the end of the *Menschen Lektion*, but are rather static, and not fully engaged with. Where there are particularly frequent verbs or nouns, one can look at their collocational pairings to the left and right in the text. Further examples can be found using online resources. For German, this would be the DWDS and Linguee.de.
- Lecturer and students can then create a list of collocations which are of significance for that chapter.
- Issue a homework task which links to the topic of the text, and which may be emotionally engaging or personally relevant for students. Students can then use the identified collocations in their own writing.

The first cycle of lectures in 2018 was spread out through the second semester, rather than taking place back-to-back. I felt that this was important to instil the idea that collocation is a concept which can be applied throughout the curriculum and is not simply a “once-off” supplementary activity. Teaching took place in the face-to-face format; however, I sought to develop complementary online components such as glossary items of the collocations identified in class which could be collaboratively added to be the class on RUconnected. These were not accessed or used by the majority of students, though, according to the activity logs on the internal LMS RUconnected, although I took care to show these to students in class and email students about this function. In reflecting on this cycle of action research, I am able to see that these glossary entries were not well integrated into the course as they did not carry an assessment value (Mishan, 2013, p. 211). This point of integration will be returned to, as it emerged as an important finding regarding best practice in blended learning. Broad themes which emerged from my analysis of the observational and reflective teaching journals and the student reflective questionnaires in 2018 were those of students’ use of taught collocations in their homework and tests; student participation (in-class and online, and with hand-ins); the grasping of concepts; trust in lecturer and resources, and the role of the lecturer and students in negotiating curriculum and adapting and making changes to content.

Evidence from collected student writing stored in the form of the RUDaF learner corpus (See Appendix O) shows a varied use of the taught collocations in student writing as evidenced in their homework writing pieces during the action lectures, as will be expanded upon below. It was evident that not all students were able to reproduce the identified collocations in their writing and some still relied on simple one-to-one translation from their mother-tongue, and some were not able to adapt the collocation to a different sentence structure. Nevertheless, the first results seen in the homework writing were positive. The first-year students for example were mostly able to use the collocations *es gibt* and *das gefällt mir* (see concordance outputs below) in their writing rather than the typical errors of *\*da ist* (there are) or *\*ich gefalle* (supposedly meaning I like) which first-year students are prone to produce based on direct translations from English. P62 tried out an alternative word order by beginning with a place adverbial, which led to an error in word order (*\*In Grahamstown es gibt*), and p57 tried to change the word order by beginning with the subject, which led to their error (*\*ich gefällt alles in meinem Lieblingsviertel*). Selected screen shots of student writing as compiled with the concordancer AntConc (Anthony, 2019) are presented below, showing a key word in context view (KWIC concordance) with neighbouring words sorted to the left or right according to the researchers preference, and indicated in the KWIC sort level bar. This allows one to see at a glance to collocations

used by students within their own writing.

AntConc 3.5.7 (Windows) 2018

File Global Settings Tool Preferences Help

Corpus Files

P32\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P33\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P36\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P37\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P38\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P42\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P44\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P51\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P52\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P53\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P54\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P57\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P58\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P59\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P60\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P62\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P67\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P71\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P72\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P73\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P74\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P75\_Stadviertel\_2018.t

Total No. 22  
Files Processed

Concordance Concordance Plot File View Clusters/N-Grams Collocates Word List Keyword List

Concordance Hits 20

Hit	KWIC	File
6	te und Junge zusammen. <b>Es gibt hier einen</b> schönen Meer mit ersta	P32_Stadvie
7	und finden wir auch alles. <b>Es gibt Läden, Strand,</b> Viele Kneipen und S	P44_Stadvie
8	hier finden wir auch ales: <b>Es gibt Läden, Schulen,</b> eine Universität, v	P38_Stadvie
9	ch lebe gern in der Stadt. <b>Es gibt Läden, viele</b> Kindergarten und Res	P51_Stadvie
10	hier finden wir auch alles: <b>es gibt Läden, viele</b> Restaurants, ein Fußb	P71_Stadvie
11	au das gefällt mir so gut. <b>Es gibt läden, viele</b> Kneipe und Restaura	P72_Stadvie
12	mit erstaunlichen Wellen. <b>Es gibt Läden, Werkstätten,</b> viele Kneipen	P32_Stadvie
13	arentia habe viele Bäume <b>Es gibt Schulen, Einkaufszentren</b> und Park	P73_Stadvie
14	endlich! In Grahamstown <b>es gibt viele Baume</b> und Bilbiotheken, me	P62_Stadvie
15	tät Stadt mit viele Schule. <b>Es gibt viele Kneipen</b> und Restaurants.	P54_Stadvie
16	lein, das gefällt mir nicht. <b>Es gibt viele Leute</b> aber es ist sehr schön.	P74_Stadvie
17	rive. Die Ruhe gefällt mir. <b>Es gibt viele schöne</b> Ausblicke. Es ist groß	P53_Stadvie
18	, die Stadt hätte ein Kino. <b>Es gibt vor allem</b> Restaurants, die Hausma	P60_Stadvie
19	nd Familie. In <b>Grahamstown gibt es viele</b> Kneipen, Restaurants, Pizz	P37_Stadvie

Search Term  Words  Case  Regex Search Window Size 50

Advanced

Start Stop Sort Show Every Nth Row 1

Kwic Sort  Level 1 1L  Level 2 1R  Level 3 2R Clone Results

Figure 19: Concordance lines for "gibt" GS1, 2018

AntConc 3.5.7 (Windows) 2018

File Global Settings Tool Preferences Help

Corpus Files

P32\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P33\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P36\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P37\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P38\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P42\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P44\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P51\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P52\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P53\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P54\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P57\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P58\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P59\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P60\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P62\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P67\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P71\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P72\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P73\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P74\_Stadviertel\_2018.t  
P75\_Stadviertel\_2018.t

Total No. 22  
Files Processed

Concordance Concordance Plot File View Clusters/N-Grams Collocates Word List Keyword List

Concordance Hits 14

Hit	KWIC	File
1	. Aber die Stadt ist sehr klein, <b>das gefällt mir nicht.</b> Es gibt viele Leut	P74_Stadvie
2	ch und hilfsbereit und genau <b>das gefällt mir so gut.</b> Jeffreys Bay ist	P32_Stadvie
3	n schönen Strand, und genau <b>das gefällt mir so gut.</b> Heir leben Alte	P52_Stadvie
4	liebe: es ist ruhig, und genau <b>das gefällt mir so gut.</b> Alte und Junge	P59_Stadvie
5	eile Freunde hier. Und genau <b>das gefällt mir so gut.</b> Es gibt läden, vi	P72_Stadvie
6	ehr schön. Der Strand an <b>Durban gefällt mir.</b> Hier leben Alte und Ju	P71_Stadvie
7	mmarentia ist ganz ruhig aber <b>es gefällt mir.</b> Emmarentia habe viele	P73_Stadvie
8	e viele restaurants gefällt mir. <b>Ich gefällt alles in</b> meinem Lieblingsvi	P57_Stadvie
9	ehr freidlich. Die viele <b>restaurants gefällt mir.</b> Ich gefällt alles in meir	P57_Stadvie
10	viertel Templeton drive. Die <b>Ruhe gefällt mir.</b> Es gibt viele schöne Au	P53_Stadvie
11	t und die Stadt und die <b>Stadtmitte gefällt mir.</b> Es gibt einen Dom, die	P58_Stadvie
12	bieten hat, finden kann. Die <b>Stadt gefällt mir sehr</b> gut und bisher ha	P67_Stadvie
13	. Das ist nicht toll aber das <b>Volk gefällt mir.</b> Hier leben alte und Ju	P62_Stadvie
14	<b>Was gefällt Ihenn and</b> dem viertel. Hai	P51_Stadvie

Search Term  Words  Case  Regex Search Window Size 50

Advanced

Start Stop Sort Show Every Nth Row 1

Kwic Sort  Level 1 1L  Level 2 1R  Level 3 2R Clone Results

Figure 20: Concordance lines for "gefällt" GS1, 2018

The GS2 students similarly were able to reproduce adverbial collocations identified with *essen* in the reading text in their own writing, including, *am häufigsten; doppelt so viel...wie; am meisten; mehr als; durchschnittlich; pro Tag; kaum; zu wenig*

Hit	KWIC	File
11	iten interessant. Am häufigsten essen eine Familie Maisemehl mit Fleisch	P19_T04_2018.txt
12	r Milchprodukte. Am häufigsten essen wir Brot mit Tee, Männer essen dop	P11_T04_2018.txt
13	en nie Fisch. Wenn es warm ist, essen wir Milchprodukte. Am häufigsten e	P11_T04_2018.txt
14	Hause essen esse ich Italienisch Essen. Meine Eltern Diät sind, deshalb, ges	P30_T04_2018.txt
15	viel Getreideprodukte. Kinders essen zu wenig Obst aber mit Getreidepre	P21_T04_2018.txt
16	In meiner Kultur essen wir viel Fleisch. Wir essen auch so	P11_T04_2018.txt
17	In meiner Kultur, essen wir viele Getreideprodukte und Bro	P22_T04_2018.txt
18	r am meistens. In meinem Land essen alle Leute Getreideprodukte immer	P14_T04_2018.txt
19	r Wein als Bier. In meinem Land essen die Leute kaum Gemüse und Obst.	P14_T04_2018.txt
20	Im meinem Land essen wir mit Messer und Gabel. Wir esse	P9_T04_2018.txt
21	In meinem Land essen wir viel Biltong. In meinem Land ess	P18_T04_2018.txt
22	Wir viel Biltong, In meinem Land essen wir viel Fleisch und Getreideproduk	P18_T04_2018.txt
23	änner trinkt er. In meinem Land essen wir viele Orangen, wenn es Kalt ist.	P18_T04_2018.txt
24	deshalb, gesunde Lebensmittel essen. Oft wir essen weiß Fleisch und viel	P30_T04_2018.txt

Figure 21: Concordance lines for "essen", part 1, GS2, 2018

Hit	KWIC	File
30	in trinken viel Alcohol, Menschen essen kaum fish. Wir essen zu wenig gem	P25_T04_2018.txt
31	in meiner Kultur Milchprodukte essen oder trinken, weil die Weltmeinun	P22_T04_2018.txt
32	ht auf einem Tisch. Am Morgen essen wir Frühstück, Mittagessen am Mita	P9_T04_2018.txt
33	Männer essen Am häufigsten fleisch als Frauens. Fr	P25_T04_2018.txt
34	essen wir Brot mit Tee. Männer essen doppelt so viel Brot als Frauen. Die	P11_T04_2018.txt
35	d kaum Mineralwasser. Männer essen doppelt so viel wie Frauen. Hälfte di	P19_T04_2018.txt
36	In meine Land Männer essen doppelt zu viel Rind als Frauen. Zim	P21_T04_2018.txt
37	und essen zu viel obst. Männer essen nicht so viel salat. Frauens trinken s	P25_T04_2018.txt
38	viel wasse also Männer. Männer essen so viel wurst als Frauens.	P25_T04_2018.txt
39	el. Wir mögen Milkprodukte oft essen. Wir mögen viel fleisch zu viel essen	P15_T04_2018.txt
40	nein Kultur wir essen viel sharfe essen. Menschen von meinem Kultur isst	P16_T04_2018.txt
41	Wir essen zu wenig gemüse und essen zu viel obst. Männer essen nicht so	P25_T04_2018.txt
42	. Wir trinken Wein mit unserem Essen.	P24_T04_2018.txt
43	Fleisch. Hier essen wir auch viel essen mit Pasta! Ansonsten isst Männe	P14_T04_2018.txt

Figure 22: Concordance lines for "essen" part 2, GS2, 2018

Further examples of concordance outputs may be found in Appendix O. As with any teaching intervention, it is difficult to measure the quantitative effects of a single construct in a larger and complex system of teaching and learning and imply causality, and it may in fact be unwise to do so (Larsen-Freeman, 2009). As stated in Chapter 5, this dissertation does not follow a comparative experimental design, as has been performed in other research (see Boers, *et al.*, 2006 for example), although such studies have been helpful in showing that directly teaching students to identify collocations as opposed to single words in reading texts positively affects students oral and written fluency (by comparing a control group and an experimental group who experience different teaching approaches). An experimental design approach is not suited to the context of this study due to the small class sizes. Rather, I have provided some examples of successful use of collocations from student writing and follow up on this by exploring student perceptions of the helpfulness of this approach and its influence on their own development. This is useful in exploring the teaching and learning of collocations as a learning strategy (Chamot, 2004) which may be helpful in the context of foreign language learning in the higher education setting.

As stated in Chapter 4, a short, anonymous reflective questionnaire (Appendix F) was created by using Google forms and sent to students through RUconnected in order to explore whether students had found the approach taken to teaching and learning collocations helpful to their learning. The table below reflects student participation in the reflective questionnaire in the first cycle of action research in 2018.

*Table 20: Participation in Questionnaire 3, "Reflection on text-based collocation exercises", 2018*

**2018**

<b>GS1</b>	10 /42 (24%)
<b>GS2</b>	2 /22 (9%)
<b>GS3</b>	3 /7 (43%)

As can be seen above, there was a very low response rate to the reflective questionnaire in 2018. This was perhaps due to a number of factors, such as the time of the year at which the online questionnaire was issued (end of the academic year, shortly before exam time), the fact that there had been other evaluative questionnaires issued at this time of the year, which may have led to questionnaire fatigue (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010), and the fact that it was online rather than an in-class activity. Students may have also simply not seen a personal benefit to participating in an evaluative questionnaire, and thus lacked motivation to participate (Ryan & Dörnyei, 2013). Nevertheless, some insights can be gained

even from this small data set in 2018, which give voice to how the students' perceived the action implemented in 2018 for the noticing and learning of collocations.

Student participation in in-class and online activities was also varied across the year groups. A trend observed in my honour's thesis (Ortner, 2013) was found again in this research: students appear far more likely to participate in an activity if it is for assessment purposes, even if they see the value in a non-assessed activity. This is perhaps part of the strategic decisions made on the part of students juggling four subjects and a tight timetable, but which then necessitates lecturers to perform extra assessment and administration duties to ensure a minimum of student participation (Ryan & Dörnyei, 2013). This is a contextual issue which has implications for teaching, learning and research particularly in small departments or sections where there is a large teaching load and thus a large load of corresponding administrative duties for the lecturers. This finding relates to the "model of integration" in Mishan's (2013) framework for blended language learning. Mishan (2013, p. 211) identified that there may be low participation if a task is not well integrated into a curriculum. Assessment seems to form a key aspect of integration, assigning a value to completing a task or activity. This point will be returned to in Chapter 7.

The reflective questionnaire was used as a tool to assess whether students had felt they had grasped the concepts of formulaic language and collocation and were able to use the as a strategy for language learning. Students had mixed responses to the initial question of "Do you feel that you have become better at recognising language patterns in the texts that you read in language lectures (as a result of the exercises done in class with Gwyn)?"

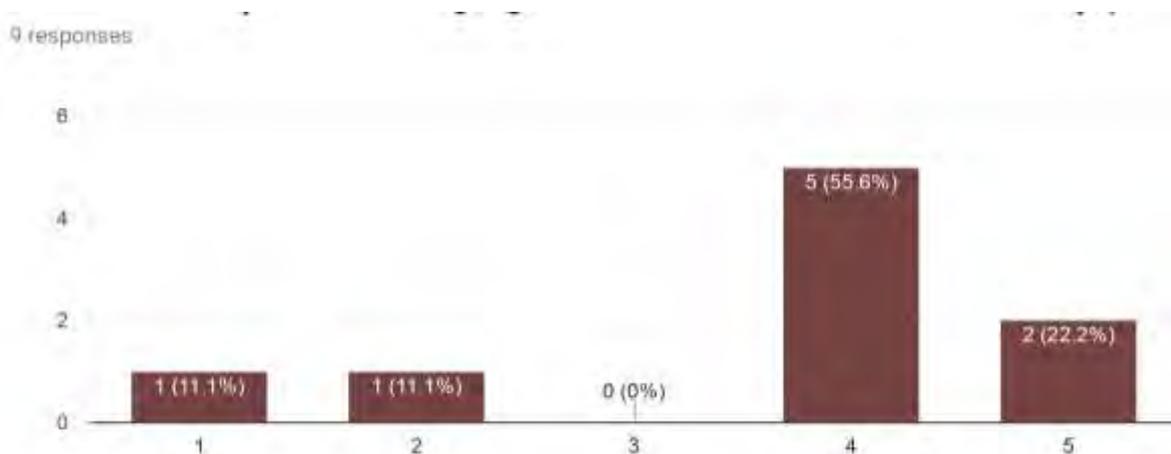
The measuring scale was as follows:

Mark only one oval. 1 2 3 4 5

1=no, not at all

5=yes, definitely

Table 21: GS1 responses 2018, "[...] better at recognising collocations?"



First years who felt that they had become better noted in the longer answer questions for example:

“Once we were taught how to spot the collocations, it became easier to identify them on my own”.

“It is easy to recognize certain standard phrases that give an idea of what is being said in texts”.

“The exercises with Gwyn have helped as she is very understandable and explains every concept clearly and takes the process at a reasonable pace”.

Table 22: GS2 responses 2018, “[...] better at recognising collocations?”

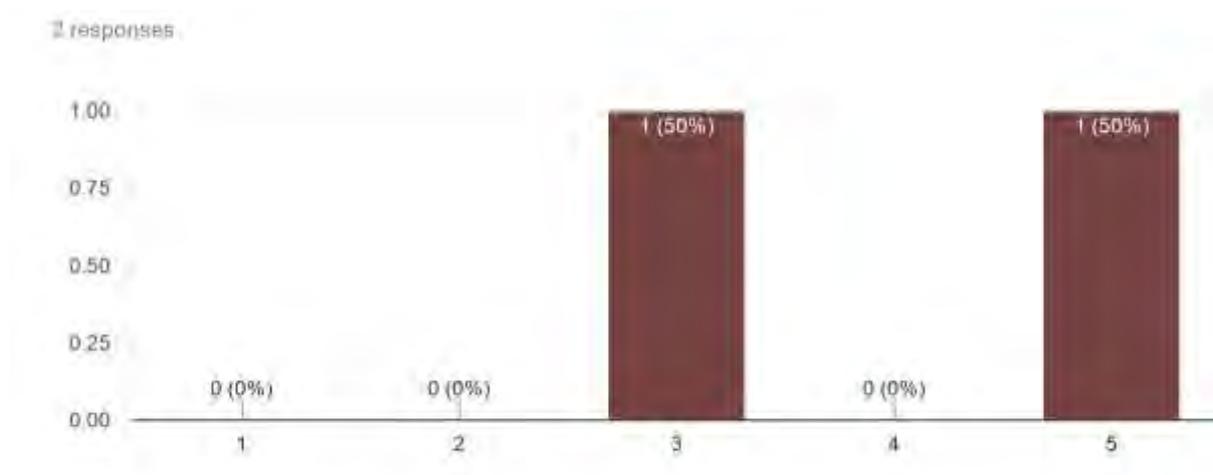
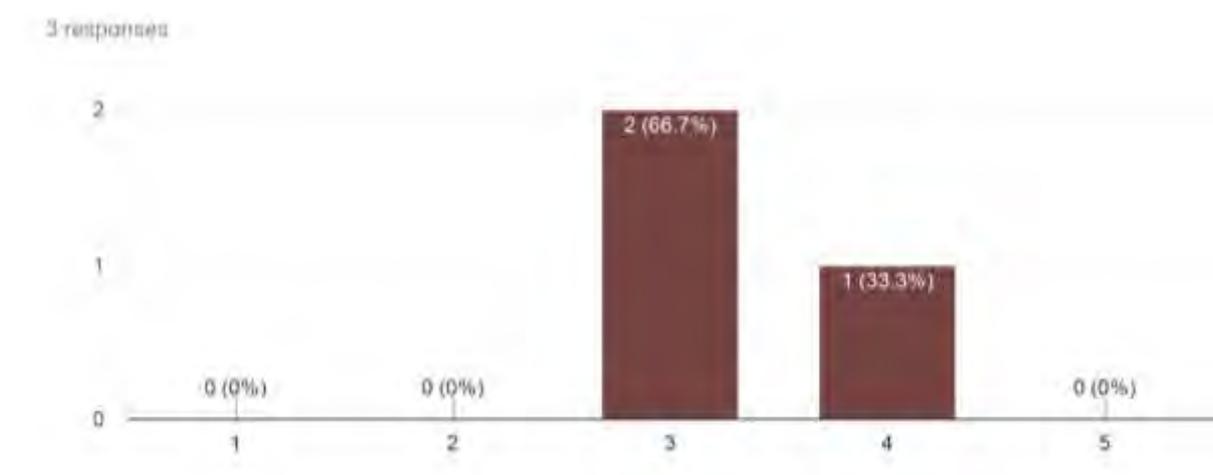


Table 23: GS3 responses 2018, “[...] better at recognising collocations?”



Identifying collocations in the texts themselves was evaluated as useful by students, who reported feeling more confident recognising and using collocations:

“By identifying the patterns myself, it remained stuck in my brain as it is a new 'skill' that was taught to me”, another stated “It allowed me to fully submerge myself into the language and enabled me to figure these patterns myself, it[']s almost like a puzzle”, “It makes the text more familiar”.

However, some students felt that “It is still difficult sometimes”. As one GS1 student put it: “Well, it's one thing to understand something at a glance and [another] to remember what that something is when not looking at it”. This speaks to the difficulty of reproducing the found collocations in one's own writing.

Most students across the year groups agreed that seeing how a phrase is used in context, rather than in a vocabulary list, helped them to better formulate their own writing. This points to the value of contextualised vocabulary, rather than single-word vocabulary lists for learners, and to the value of teaching students to identify collocations in texts which they encounter as part of their curriculum.

GS1

Real world examples

By seeing the phrase in context, makes you understand it more and it makes the meaning of the word seem more apparent than just reading it off the vocab list.

having a physical example is more helpful than having a vocab list.

Context gives one more insight on how to use the phrase appropriately.

It's easier to remember something when I know how it's generally used.

This helped me with sentence structure, for example the separable verbs cannot just be learned in a vocab list, it helps to see what piece of the word goes where.

GS2

It's better to see it in context to see how the words around it are placed or conjugated

It always helps me to know the meaning of the word itself

GS3

It's important not just to know the meaning of a word, but also to know how it is used.

Because I am often unsure of what word to use, appropriately and based on context, when there are several options

While the *Menschen* glossary provides an example sentence for each word, having only one example sentence is rather limited, as students pointed out in the responses to Questionnaire 2 (language attitudes and approaches) discussed in previous sections.

A GS2 student noted in their questionnaire:

I've learnt how to highlight phrases that keep coming up or phrases that express the same thing in different ways.

I sometimes make lists of those patterns and that helps when writing because it's a group of set phrases one can fall back on and always use.

Really enjoyed the exercise and found it help full. Perhaps it should be incorporated into every Sprache course next year.

### *6.6 Adaptation and reimplementation of lectures, 2019*

In 2019 I adapted and re-implemented the above lecture series, seeking to improve on the design and methods used, drawing on insights from student and lecturer reflections. In order to be able to draw parallels between the 2018 and 2019 cycles of action, I chose to repeat the lectures covering the same material as in 2019, which took place in the second semester of 2019.

In the first semester of 2019 I incorporated a lecture on various dictionary resources into the second-year translation module, a “translators’ toolkit” (see Appendix), as translation is also a site in the curriculum where an awareness of the patterned and idiomatic nature of language is of utmost importance in producing successful translations (Engelbrecht, 2020 in press; Augustyn, 2013, p. 28). The 2018 answers to the questionnaire had revealed students’ reliance on online translation tools, thus it was deemed appropriate to educate students about the differences between various online translation and dictionary resources for German.

In 2019 I adapted the initial approach to teaching the concept of collocation, following up on the in-class lecture by posting links on the RUconnected *Menschen* site to short YouTube videos explaining the concept of collocation with examples. For this purpose, I created an additional section at the top of each *Menschen* RUconnected course page titled “learning tips and strategies” and used this as a place to post information to help students learn more about how to learn a language (learning strategies). It was my perception in the previous year that many students lost track of the resources for learning collocation when they were included under the weekly header in 2018, and that it would be advantageous to group all learning resources together in one section. This learning strategies section proved a very successful addition<sup>28</sup> and was remarked on by students in the final reflective questionnaires in 2019, as will be returned to in Chapter 7. A particularly helpful resource for students in this section was the link to a vocabulary learning software “Quizlet” which I introduced during the introductory action lectures. This will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

---

<sup>28</sup> The learning strategies section has since been incorporated into the language modules in RUconnected for 2020.

## Learning Tips

Reading tips and strategies

"What's hard in German" Handouts for academic writing

Formulaic language and collocations handout

Collocations explained in English

In this short 5 minute video, Vladimir explains why collocations are the smallest building block of language learning and provides some examples in English. Try to think of the corresponding patterns in German.

Quizlet Vocabulary Learning tool

Click on the link, sign up and join our German Studies B1 classroom where all the vocabulary sets from your Menschen Glossary are available for study and learning in a fun flashcard format.

Tips for writing in German without thinking in English

Learning German - tips and strategies

Figure 23:GS3, 2019 "Learning Tips" topic on RUconnected

An additional change made was the use of the forum tool on RUconnected to have first-year students share examples of set phrases, idioms or sayings (and their meanings) from their own home languages as a part for the introductory phase to formulaic language. These idioms and saying were discussed in class and used as examples on the spectrum of formulaic language.

RUconnected

Home Dashboard My Courses This course RU Library ROSS Turnitin Instructions Password

School of Languages > German Studies > 2019-GS1-Menschen A1 > Lektion 15: In Giesing wohnt das Leben! > Idioms (Sprichwörter) and set phrases across langu...

### Idioms (Sprichwörter) and set phrases across languages

In this forum, feel free to share the sayings and phrases that delight you in German, in your own language or other languages, and what these mean in English (literally and figuratively).

Add a new discussion topic

Figure 24: RUconnected forum for sharing idioms, GS1, 2019

I also adapted the 2019 handout (see Figure 25) for formulaic language and collocation to include a short contrastive activity, in order to better introduce the topic. An example of the handout shared with GS2 students in 2019 is included below (there were different examples used for each year group, aligned to their level of learning). For further examples of the learning materials developed during the action research as summarized in the table below, please see Appendix N. Where appropriate, these resources include both the worksheet handout which was distributed as a paper-based copy in class (often including the text focussed on, so that students would not worry about making marks and underlining/highlighting in their coursebooks) , as well as a model answer version of the worksheet which I later uploaded to RUconnected. The model-answer versions served as a recap for students, and were particularly useful for students who were not able to attend the lecture. The model answers may also provide other German foreign language practitioners with ideas for developing similar materials and methods in their own contexts.



## FORMULAIC LANGUAGE AND COLLOCATION

German Studies | School of Languages and Literatures | RHODES UNIVERSITY

**What are formulaic phrases and collocations?**

Formulaic phrases are the sequences of language which occur very often in recognisable patterns. They are usually two or more words, which are linked together in form (grammar) and meaning (semantics). Formulaic phrases also include collocations, which are strongly bonded pairs of words. The basic idea is that words don't exist in isolation (on their own), they exist in relationships or networks with other words. **The more we are exposed to the patterns, the easier they are to process.**

On a scale of word relationships, collocations exist between the realm of idiom (fixed expressions with an often metaphorical meaning e.g. to put someone's leg) and loose connections between words.

**Free combinations → collocations → idioms**

**Why are formulaic phrases and collocations important?**

They can be seen as the "building blocks" of language, as research has shown that collocations are stored as **single units in the long term memory** of mother-tongue speakers. This compensates for limitations in the working memory. Researchers have also shown that a half to a third of all spoken and written language is formulaic!

This means that learning collocations can **help you to become more fluent**, as you access whole word strings in your mind ("chunks"), rather than single words. Just by being aware that so much language consists of prefabricated "chunks" will help you to look out for the patterns, so that you can recognise and use them to your advantage.

Collocation is one of the answers to why you may ask: "why do we say it like this, and not like that?". You might hear mother tongue speakers say that "that's just the way we say it".

Often, because collocations are such normal parts of the language, and because their meaning is often easy to see from the context, **collocations go unnoticed** (even by mother-tongue speakers). However, the word combinations are often different across languages.

This means that they are **often a source of error** in student production, as students often write or speak by directly translating "chunks" from their mother tongue, word for word.

**Becoming aware of collocations will improve both your speaking and writing of German** (and hopefully, help you to recognise patterns in the other languages you speak)

**How do I recognise a formulaic phrase or a collocation?**

Good question. Basically, when a words occur together **frequently**, in a fixed sequence, they can be considered a **formulaic phrase**. Menschen provides you with a list of these types of phrases, or "Redemittel" in the "Kommunikation" blocks at the end of each chapter.

For example, the following formulaic phrases can be used to express your opinion:

ich finde es.../ Das finde ich...  
 ich denke, dass...  
 Meiner Meinung nach...

Often, these patterns can be found in your reading texts, and you can use them as **building blocks for your own writing**. The more you practice using these, the more fluent you will become!

**Collocations** are a type of formulaic language where the bonds between types of words are looked at, based on their frequency and their meaning. For example:

noun + noun   adjective + noun   noun + verb   verb + noun   verb + preposition

This is a **good way to learn your vocabulary**, as you begin to group words together and anticipate what words go together. Especially the ones which are different in German and English:

Consider for example, noun + verb patterns:

Deutsch	English	Another language you know
Zähne putzen		
Fahrrad fahren		
Geld ausgeben		
Entscheidung treffen		
Angst haben		
Kaffee kochen		

Figure 25: Example of handout created for introducing formulaic language and collocation (2019)

Table 24: GS1 lectures 2019

Lecture	Section in <i>Menschen</i> , topics and lexical field	Focus text/s	Activity, formulaic sequences and collocations found in text	Additional resources created by the researcher	Writing exercise
Lecture 1 06.08.2019  Introduction to formulaic sequences and collocation	15. <i>In der Stadt</i>  Topics: <i>Einen Ort bewerten; nach Einrichtungen fragen</i>  Lexical field: <i>Bewertungen</i>	S. 84 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>In Giesing wohnt das Leben</i> (Blog)	Introduce topic of formulaic language and collocation.  Highlighted in text: <i>Lieblingsviertel; ... gehört uns; ... gefällt mir; es gibt ...; zu Fuß; um die Ecke; nicht weit; das finde ich super; ich finde</i>	Introduction handout and worksheet  Worksheet for finding examples of phrases with <i>es gefällt mir, es gibt, and ich finde</i> in the text  (Handouts uploaded to RUconnected)	For homework (hand in on RUconnected): S. 85 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) Nr. 7 <i>Was ist Ihr Lieblingsviertel?</i>  Create a forum post with an idiom or saying from your mother-tongue and an explanation thereof.  (Preceded by discussion of word chunks in the previous lecture 01.08.2019, where we looked at phrases for apologising e.g. <i>es tut mir leid</i> , and a discussion of Quizlet for vocabulary learning)
Lecture 2 07.08.2019  Grammatical collocations	15. <i>In der Stadt</i>	Completed exercises on S. 85 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ), S. 117-118 ( <i>Arbeitsbuch</i> ) Nr. 6, Nr. 7, Nr. 8 and Nr. 9.	Focus on grammatical collocations, in this case verbs with dative pronouns, e.g. <i>gefallen</i> <i>helfen</i> <i>gehören</i> <i>danken</i> <i>schmecken</i>	Online forum post about idioms/sayings in the students' mother-tongues  Online explanatory YouTube video for collocations	For homework: Find three example sentences for each verb ( <i>gefallen, helfen, gehören, danken, schmecken</i> ) in the texts in the <i>Kursbuch</i> and <i>Arbeitsbuch</i> and write these down.  Create a forum post with an idiom or saying from your mother-tongue and an explanation thereof.

<p>Lecture 3 19.08.2019</p> <p>Asking for help, offering help, and apologizing</p>	<p>16. Termine</p> <p>Topics: <i>Hilfe anbieten; um Hilfe bitten; auf Entschuldigungen reagieren; E-Mail: Termine vereinbaren und verschieben</i></p> <p>Lexical field: <i>im Hotel</i></p>	<p>S. 92 (Kursbuch) <i>Wir haben hier ein Problem. Was kann ich für Sie tun? (Hörtex)</i></p>	<p>Two columns for collocations for: <i>um Hilfe bitten/Hilfe anbieten</i></p> <p>E.g. <i>Es tut mir leid; Entschuldigen Sie</i></p> <p><i>Wie kann ich Ihnen helfen?; Was kann ich für Sie tun?</i></p>	<p>Handout made by lecturer 2 in the week before with translations of phrases, shown on overhead projector.</p>	<p>Completed in the tutorials: S. 169 (Kursbuch) Nr. 8b <i>Sie möchten den Termin mit Steffi verschieben. Schreiben Sie gemeinsam eine E-Mail.</i></p>
<p>Lecture 4 20.08.2019</p> <p>Making and breaking appointments</p>	<p>16. Termine</p> <p>Topics: <i>E-Mail: Termine vereinbaren und verschieben</i></p> <p>Lexical field: <i>Im Hotel</i></p>	<p>S. 93 (Kursbuch) <i>Termine</i></p>	<p>Read texts, and highlight collocations with <i>Termin + (verb) absagen/vereinbaren/verschieben</i></p> <p>Practice filling in an apologetic email, with help from text in coursebook to notice collocations. S. 130 (Arbeitsbuch) Nr. 9a Ergänzen Sie die E-Mail.</p>	<p>Photocopied handout of the workbook exercise.</p> <p><i>Linguee.de</i> as a resource to look up collocations. This is shown on overhead projector.</p>	<p>For homework: S. 130 (Arbeitsbuch) Nr. 9b <i>Antworten Sie auf die E-Mail in Nr. 9a.</i></p>

<p>Lecture 5 03.09.2019</p> <p>Plans and wishes</p>	<p>17. <i>Pläne und Wünsche</i></p> <p>Topics: <i>Wünsche äußern und über Pläne sprechen</i></p> <p>Lexical field: <i>Pläne und Wünsche</i></p>	<p>S. 96, (<i>Kursbuch</i>). <i>Hallo! Wer will Popstar werden?</i></p> <p>S. 97. <i>Warum wollen Sie hier studieren? (Kursbuch)</i></p>	<p>Partner work to find which words belong together/collocate, as noticed in the text.</p> <p><i>Einen Studienplatz + bekommen eine Aufnahmeprüfung + schaffen eine Anzeige + lesen sich an einer Schule + anmelden eine Berufsausbildung + abschließen</i></p>	<p>Handout created with excerpts from coursebook, workbook and teacher handbook for this section. Uploaded to RUconnected with model answers. (See Appendix ...)</p>	<p>For homework: Write these word combinations/collocations up into your notebook, along with the corresponding English translations. Then make use of these combinations in your own speaking and writing to practice them.</p>
<p>Lecture 6 04.09.2019</p> <p>Plans and wishes</p>	<p>17. <i>Pläne und Wünsche</i></p> <p>Topics: <i>Wünsche äußern und über Pläne sprechen</i></p> <p>Lexical field: <i>Pläne und Wünsche</i></p>	<p>S. 105 (<i>Kursbuch</i>) <i>Wunschbäume</i></p> <p>S. 136 (<i>Arbeitsbuch</i>) 50 <i>plus – Krise oder Chance?</i></p>	<p>S. 105 Highlighting collocations in text which display a wish:</p> <p><i>Ich wünsche mir ... Ich möchte gern ... Ich will ... werden</i></p> <p>S. 136 Highlight: <i>Was möchten die Leute machen?</i></p> <p><i>An die Universität gehen Urlaub machen Im Ausland leben</i></p>	<p>Handout created with excerpts from coursebook, workbook and teacher handbook for this section. Uploaded to RUconnected with model answers. (See Appendix of Materials)</p>	<p>For homework: Write a text about your own plans and wishes for your life and submit this on RUconnected. Try to make use of the collocations (word combinations) that we have learnt during this chapter.</p>

Table 25: GS2 Lectures 2019

Lecture	Section in <i>Menschen</i> , topics and lexical field	Focus text/s	Activity/ Focus phrases and collocations	Additional resources created by the researcher	Writing exercise
Lecture 1 18.07.2019  Introduction to collocation	12. <i>Ernährung</i>  Topics: <i>Überraschung ausdrücken; etwas vergleichen</i>  Lexical field: <i>Lebensmittel</i>	S. 68 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>Der Lebensmittel-Konsum in Deutschland (Sachtext)</i>	Highlighted every instance of the high-frequency verb <i>essen</i> in the text and noticed its partners to the left and right.  E.g.: <i>essen</i> + (noun) <i>Brot und Getreideprodukte</i> <i>Fleisch und Wurstwaren</i> <i>Obst und Gemüse</i>  <i>essen</i> + (adverb) <i>am häufigsten; doppelt so viel...wie; am meisten; mehr als; durchschnittlich; durchschnittlich mehr; pro Tag; kaum; zu wenig</i>	Introduction to collocation worksheet (updated) (distributed in class, uploaded to RUconnected)  Glossary entry to show the differences in these collocations for <i>essen</i> from the text, presented as KWIC lines, with an explanation in English.	S. 69, Nr. 4 <i>Die Essgewohnheiten der Deutschen. Was überrascht Sie? Was nicht?</i> (online hand-in)  Test question: <i>Was sind Ihre Essgewohnheiten?</i>
Lecture 2 25.07.2019  Vocabulary learning and extra online tools	13. <i>Sprachen Lernen</i>  Topics: <i>Von Sprachlernerfahrungen berichten</i>  Lexical field: <i>Lerntipps</i>	S. 77 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>Wie lerne ich am besten Fremdsprachen?</i>	Class discussion on vocabulary learning, and students provide examples of formulaic sequences and collocations which they have come across and noticed in texts or speech while learning German.	Worksheet created, students to record phrases and collocations which they have noticed are set in German and on the reverse of the handout they write about their own writing strategies  Introduce <i>DWDS</i> and <i>Kollokationen Wörterbuch</i> as resources	Complete worksheet and return  2-3 Sätze: <i>Wie lernen Sie Deutsch?</i> (You can use the <i>Bildlexikon</i> in <i>Lektion 13</i> . S. 76-77)
Lecture 3 08.08.2019	14. <i>Post und Telekommunikation</i>	S. 82. ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>Deine Geschenke haben mich sehr</i>	Highlighted in texts the gifts received (nouns), and thereafter the phrases	Adapted 2018 worksheet to include partner work in class to gift each other a gift based on	In-class activity to be typed up for homework S. 82. Nr. 7b <i>Schreiben Sie eine E-Mail und</i>

Writing thank you emails expressing joy, gratitude and thanks	Topics: <i>Freude ausdrücken</i>  Lexical field: <i>Post</i>	<i>gefremt</i> ; additional text from S. 112. ( <i>Arbeitsbuch</i> )	expressing pleasure and gratitude. Collocations found for topics: <i>Freude ausdrücken (see 2018 list)</i> <i>Dankeschön sagen</i> e.g. <i>herzlichen Dank; vielen Dank</i>	hobbies and interests (recap GS1 activity collocations)	<i>bedanken Sie sich nun für Ihre Geschenke.</i>
Lecture 4 05.09.2019  Writing comments, online lecture	17. <i>Reisen und Verkehr</i>  Topics: <i>über Reisegewohnheiten sprechen; Reisetagebuch im Internet lesen; etwas kommentieren</i>  Lexical field: <i>Reise und Verkehr</i>	S. 96 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>Unsere Reise nach Rumänien</i>	Focus on comments in text, highlighting formulaic sequences:  <i>Nicht zu glauben!</i> <i>So ein Pech!</i> <i>So ein Zufall!</i> <i>Das hat sicher Spaß gemacht.</i> <i>... sieht toll aus.</i>	Word document: Adapted texts from AB S.136 to make complete texts matching the images. Supplemented with genuine <i>Kommentare</i> on Facebook photos.	Attendance exercise handed in online on RUconnected. S. 97, Nr. 5. ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) / S.136, Nr. 8 ( <i>Arbeitsbuch</i> ) Word doc. with three photo comments (either on the photos I provided or on the students' own choice of photos)
Lecture 5 23.09.2019  Wind and weather	18. <i>Wetter und Klima</i>  Topics: <i>über das Wetter sprechen; Sachtext lesen</i>  Lexical field: <i>Wetter</i>	S. 101 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>Wind und Wetter in den deutschsprachigen Ländern (Sachtext)</i>	Example collocations found using DWDS:  (adjective) + <i>Wetter schlecht/schön/wechselhaft/sonnig/ mild/ kühl</i> <i>Wind + (verb) Wehen/blasen/pfeifen den Wind aus den Segeln nehmen</i> (adjective) + <i>Temperatur sommerlich/eisig/tropisch/mild, usw.</i>	Supplemented by word cloud handout created using DWDS (worksheet adapted from Neary-Sundquist, 2015). Distributed in class and uploaded to RUconnected.	Completed in class: S. 101 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) Nr. 6a <i>Wie ist das Wetter heute?</i> Nr. 6b <i>Ist es typisch für die Jahreszeit? Wie ist es sonst zu dieser Jahreszeit?</i>  Exam question: Schreiben Sie über Ihren Traumurlaub. Wohin gehen Sie und mit wem? Was machen Sie dort? Wie ist das Wetter?

Table 26: GS3 Lectures 2019

Lecture	Section in <i>Menschen</i> , topics and lexical field	Focus text	Activity/ Focus phrases and collocations	Additional resources created by the researcher	Homework exercise
Lecture 1 29.07.2019  After test: Introduction discussion on vocabulary learning, and introduction to formulaic language and collocation	10. <i>Verpasste Gelegenheiten</i>  Topics: <i>Enttäuschung ausdrücken; auf Enttäuschung reagieren; Kommentar schreiben</i>  Lexical field: <i>Pannen im Alltag</i>	S. 67 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>Sorgentelefon im Radio</i> ( <i>Hörtext</i> with transcription)	Noticing the collocations in the <i>Bildlexikon</i> and thinking of the equivalent translations in English or other languages, paying attention to contrasts.  <i>den Bus verpassen</i> <i>den Schlüssel stecken lassen</i> <i>im Stau stehen</i> <i>geblitzt werden</i>	Introduction Handout, Formulaic Language and Collocations  Collocations and vocabulary worksheet	To complete the worksheet on vocabulary and collocations contrastively different across languages.
Lecture 2 05.08.2019 (in tutorial)  Expressing frustration	10. <i>Verpasste Gelegenheiten</i>  Topics: <i>Enttäuschung ausdrücken; auf Enttäuschung reagieren; Kommentar schreiben</i>  Lexical field: <i>Pannen im Alltag</i>	S. 67 ( <i>Kursbuch</i> ) <i>Sorgentelefon im Radio</i> ( <i>Hörtext</i> with transcription)	Discussed worksheet and word combinations they had found.  Also looked at combinations with:  <i>hätte(n)/wäre(n)/würde(n)</i>	Collocations and vocabulary worksheet	

<p>Lecture 3 09.09.2019</p> <p>Writing and replying to an invitation</p>	<p>12. <i>Ferien im Betrieb</i></p> <p>Topics: <i>Briefe und E-Mails; Einladungen, Absagen, Zusagen</i></p> <p>Lexical field: <i>Veranstaltungen in Betrieben</i></p>	<p>S. 76 (<i>Kursbuch</i>) <i>Einladung/Antworten</i></p>	<p>Found all collocations used for the sections of a letter, divided between:</p> <p>Anrede, Einleitung, Zusage/Absage, Schluss, Grußformel.</p>	<p>Worksheet created for students to record found collocations.</p> <p>Extra resources from <i>Kollokationen Wörterbuch Beiheft, Kommunikation</i></p>	<p>Write an invite and reply to your colleagues invite on the online forum on RUconnected.</p>
<p>Lecture 4 23.09.2019</p>	<p>Preparation for oral presentation and argumentative writing, introduction to the WHiG resources</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>Focussed on collocations with <i>Zweck</i></p>	<p>WHiG handouts</p>	<p>Write an opening sentence about an argumentative topic of your choice.</p>

Student writing again showed that students were able to use the identified collocations in their own writing. See examples in Appendix O. Students were again asked to reflect on the lectures which focussed on collocation in an anonymous online questionnaire (see Appendix G) in October 2019. Participation in the questionnaire is represented in the table below. I was able to issue the 2019 questionnaire much earlier, and issue multiple follow-up requests via email, and this resulted in a far better participation rate than in 2018 (see sections above).

Table 27: Participation in Questionnaire 3, reflections on collocation exercises, 2019

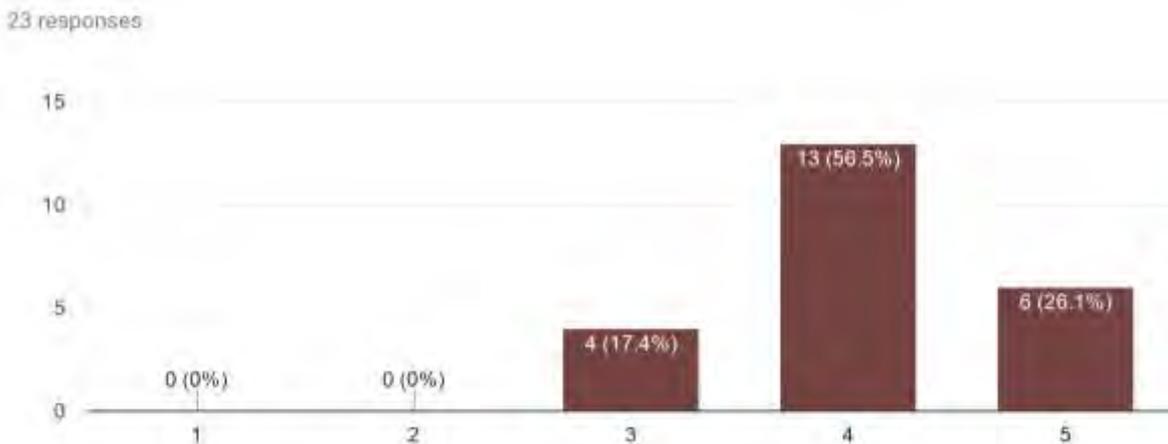
2019	
<b>GS1</b>	24 /47 (51%)
<b>GS2</b>	16 /17 (94%)
<b>GS3</b>	3 /5 (60%)

The measuring scale for the following tables is as follows: Mark only one oval. 1 2 3 4 5

1=no, not at all

5=yes, definitely

Table 28: GS1 responses 2019 "[...] better at recognising collocations?"



The reminder that there are language patterns made me look for them more attentively in texts as I read them.

I feel that reading with Gwyn has really improved my understanding of German

I am gradually getting better at it because Frau Gwyn comes up with cool ways of picking it up and remembering it and as it result, it sticks.

We have been taught not only about the meaning of individual words, but also to recognise their meaning in specific contexts and paired with other words.

i have learned to pick up phrases rather than just words.

Gwyn has broken the understanding of patterns down into smaller steps that lead to a complete, logical understanding.

the exercises definately helped me to recognise and also be out on the look for more language patterns especially in regards to collocations. it also helped me integrate some of these collocations into german conversations (although very basic) with friends of mine in germany.

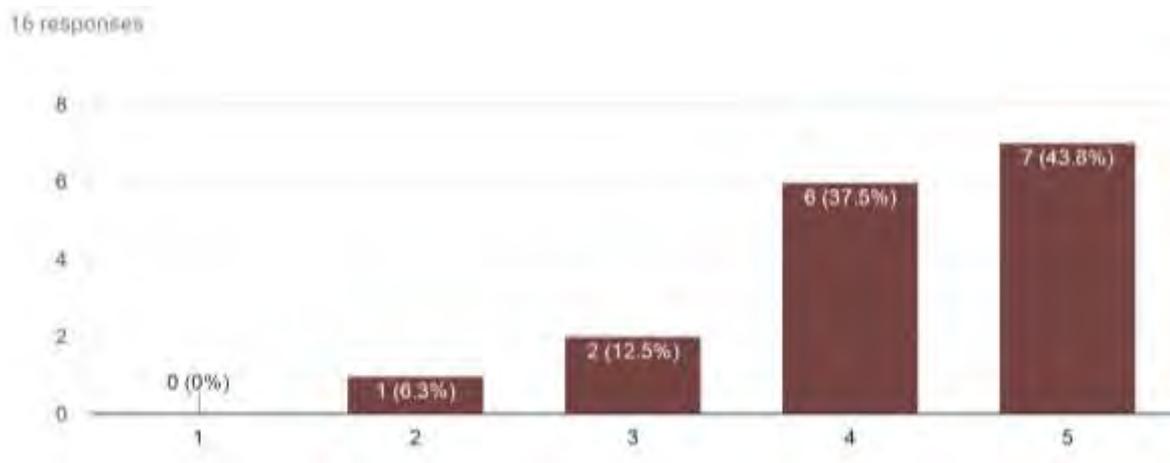
I now know which patterns to look out for.

I wasn't taught about collocations before and learning about them now has made me notice how words often pair up in language.

After reading the text in class with Gwyn I understood the pattern

It wasn't something I had taken note of before.

Table 29: GS2 responses 2019, "[...] better at recognising collocations?"



Longer responses included below reveal that students felt more confident recognising collocations in texts on their own after receiving guided instruction, and show that students became more aware of the patterned nature of language:

It's easier to identify set phrases which we have learnt and identified.

I am able to see and remember more collocations since I learnt about the existence of the patterns

The way the patterns are explained to us makes it easier to recognise and learn from it.

At times I am able to recognize certain patterns when reading and writing German

It assists with recognizing certain words that go together .

Going through the texts in class is really helpful because some of the sentences can't be translated nicely into English and actually make more sense when you leave them in German.

I am always watching for them.

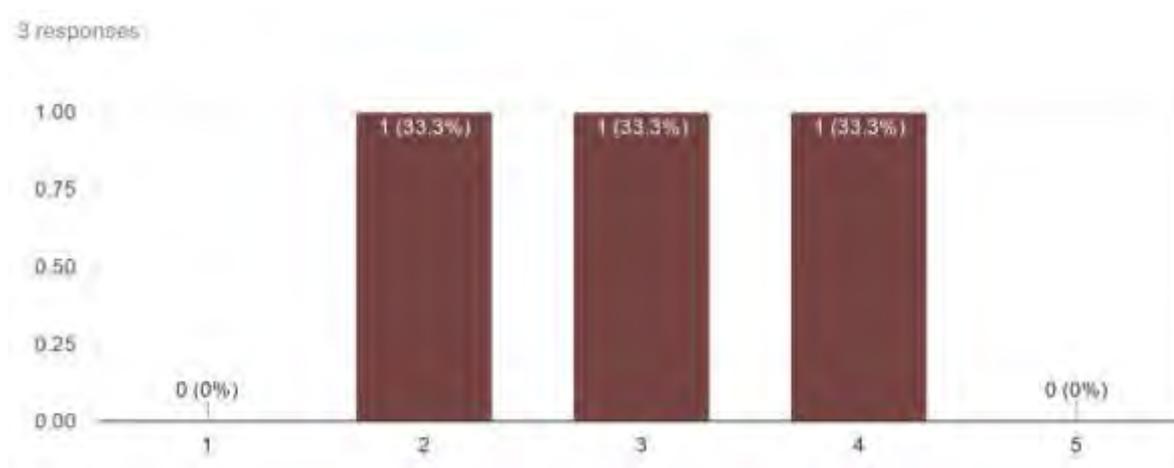
i recognize words and their meanings much quicker now where as before i'd have to google translate a lot

A lot of attention was given to the different language patterns and how they differ between specifically German and English

The collocations help understand patterns.

One GS2 student who felt they had not improved notes: "We only saw Gwyn a couple of times". This shows that for this student, more practice in class may have been beneficial. The more one undertakes the type of collocation identification activities developed during this action research, the better one is likely to become at identifying collocations on ones own. I have found that to be the case personally in my language learning journey, and now that I have an awareness of collocations and their importance, I actively look out for them when reading new texts.

Table 30: GS3 responses 2019, "[...] better at recognising collocations?"



It has helped especially with structured texts like absage & zusage letters

I can identify some of the phrases we learnt off the top of my head in a text.

The above three tables and corresponding longer answer responses show that the 2019 cohort perceived that learning about collocation, and practicing identifying collocation in the texts was helpful, and they felt on average that they were better at recognising collocation as a result of the exercises done in class. These qualitative responses are valuable in assessing the usefulness of teaching collocation as a concept that can be used as a learning strategy. The methods of teaching will be returned to in the following chapter where the complex adaptive system of blended language teaching and learning is discussed and analysed drawing on examples from the action research presented in the chapter.

## ***Chapter 7: Analysis and Discussion of the Complex Adaptive Blended Language Learning System***

---

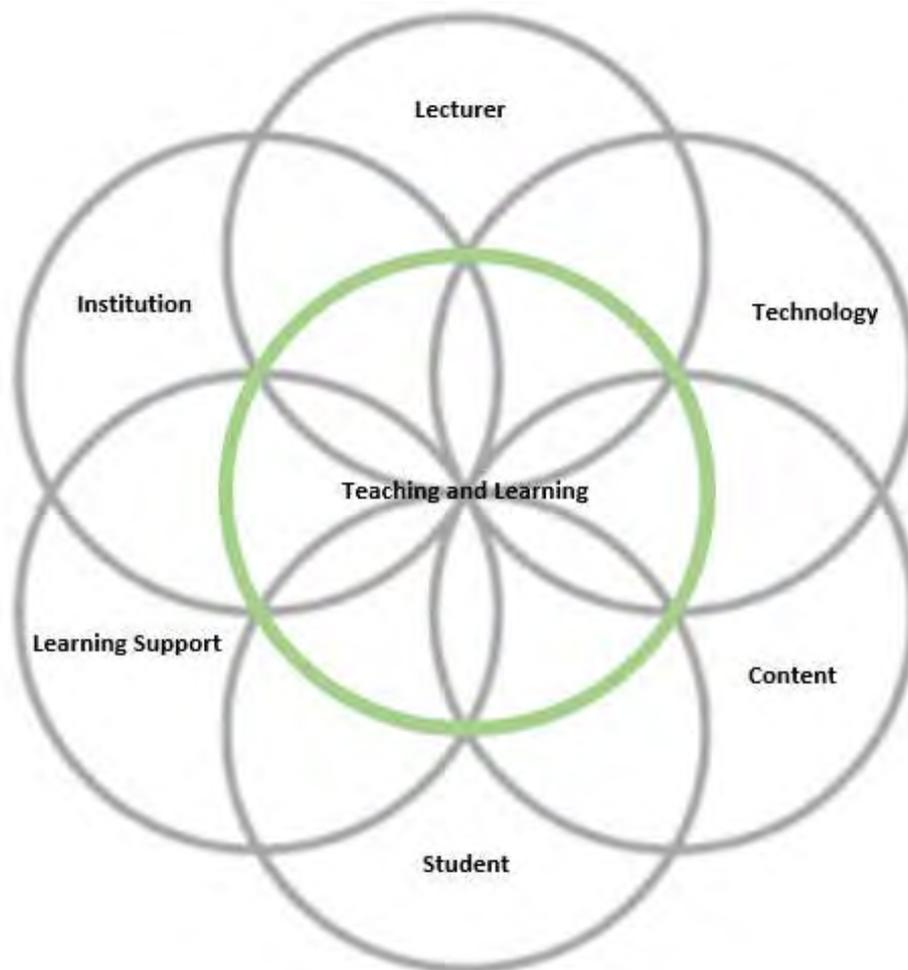
This chapter begins by drawing on complexity theory to revise the Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System introduced in Chapter 4. A complex system view provides a lens to analyse the teaching and learning of German as a Foreign Language in the South African context at an institution of higher education, as it takes multiple components involved in the teaching and learning experience into account. The larger system of blended learning is discussed and analysed, taking into account the perspectives from staff and students presented in Chapter 6. Specific examples from the action research with a focus on teaching and learning collocations within the blended learning model are drawn upon to illustrate best practice arising from the context. As in Chapter 6, examples of student responses have been faithfully transcribed. While there are many grammatical and syntactic errors present in the student writing, I feel that it is important not to edit these out, in order to maintain the authenticity of these responses which represent the student voice.

As set out in Chapter 1, the overarching goal of this research is to examine holistically the use of technology for teaching and learning German as a foreign language in the South African context, particularly at Rhodes University (where I am an ‘insider’), and provide insights as to what constitutes local best practice within this context, and the context of transformation of higher education, specifically looking at the explicit teaching and learning of collocation as a strategy to improve fluency, using both the face-to-face and online modality. This chapter thus provides insights into the local best practices with regard to blended learning and teaching collocation, which will be returned to in Chapter 8.

### ***7.1 Analysis and discussion of the local blended language learning context***

In order to analyse the blended language learning system for German Studies at Rhodes University, I draw on the Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System (CABLS) framework developed by Wang *et al.* (2015, p. 383) as it depicts all main participants in a blended learning system. However, I feel that the diagram by Wang *et al.* (2015), while showing all participants, does not adequately show the connected nature of a complex system (Larsen-Freeman, 2011, p. 202). I thus revised the framework and created the diagram depicted below – the “Revised Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System”. I have kept the main participants as identified by Wang *et al.* (2015, p. 383) (namely: the learner, the teacher, the technology, the content, the learning support, and the institution) and re-arranged these

onto a grid of overlapping circles<sup>29</sup>. The revised framework draws on the interwoven geometric design used by Burns & Knox (2011, p. 13) which depicts the language classroom as a complex adaptive system.



*Figure 26: Revised Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System*

This depiction allows for a better understanding of the nature of complex adaptive systems than the diagram originally developed by Wang *et al.* (2015, p.383). The original CABLS framework (see Chapter 4) by Wang *et al.* (2015, p.383) situates the participants as subsystems, contained in egg-shaped spheres; the learner is placed in a central position with the remaining subsystems grouped around the learner. This is in keeping with fact that most blended learning research identified and investigated by Wang *et al.* (2015) is learner-centred. Wang *et al.* (2015, p.383) draw on the key tenets of complexity theory to explain that each player is a subsystem which acts and interacts individually and collectively:

Similarly to any complex system, the six subsystems act within themselves and upon one another in a dynamic and non-linear fashion. At the same time, each of these subsystems has its own characteristics and internal driving forces, depending on surrounding subsystems, to

<sup>29</sup> This geometric design is known as “the Flower of Life” (Bartfeld, 2005, p. 35).

maintain its vitality. Furthermore, each subsystem also has its own subsystems, and all interact with one another to form a system of blended learning. Wang *et al.* (2015, p.383)

In my revised CABLS framework I similarly view each participant as a subsystem in the larger system of blended learning, in keeping with the tenets of complexity theory. Each participant/subsystem is interlinked with the other participants/subsystems in a non-linear fashion. The revised CABLS framework does not place the learner at the centre of the diagram however, but rather depicts the centre of system as the point where the interaction of the subsystems come together. In my revised CABLS framework this is labelled “teaching and learning”, and in the context of this study this could be more specifically labelled “German language teaching and learning”. In terms of complexity theory, this nexus (outlined in green) can be described as “the balancing point” or “the edge of chaos” (Waldrop, 1992, p. 12) within the Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System. Complexity theorists describe and define chaos as a “process rather than state, of becoming rather than being” Gleick (1987, p. 5). Chaos is the state of flux in which all complex systems exist (Ryan & Dörnyei, 2013, p. 97). Complex systems are termed “complex” for two reasons, as set out by Larsen-Freeman (1997, p. 143): 1. they normally contain multiple players or components, and 2. the way a complex system behaves arises from the interactions between the players, rather than being set in any one player or component; “[t]hus, the traditional approach to science which attempts to understand the behaviour of the whole by examining its parts piecemeal is inadequate for studying complex systems” (Larsen-Freeman, 1997, p. 143).

According to Wang *et al.* (2015, p. 382), “complex adaptive systems are dynamic and open, and have the innate ability to self-organize, adapt to, and evolve with their environment.” Waldrop (1992, p. 12) explains that order and chaos are brought into balance in complex systems, and “[t]he edge of chaos is where new ideas and innovative genotypes are forever nibbling away at the edges of the status quo, and where even the most entrenched old guard will eventually be overthrown” (Waldrop, 1992, p. 12). System interactions can fall into stable states known as “basins” when equilibrium is reached, seeing long periods with few changes in the interactions between components (Ryan & Dörnyei, 2013, pp. 97-98). Periods of change often come about when there is an event of chaos which disrupts this equilibrium.

Achieving balance between order and chaos in the teaching and learning system has shown be an important driving factor for the increased use of technology in German Studies at Rhodes University. Situations of chaos, that is to say flux, in the context in which the subsystems operate, for example the student protests of 2015/2016 (#FeesMustFall and #RUReferenceList) ignited changes within the

system, in particular the partial change of mode of delivery from face-to-face to online teaching and learning.

The injection of chaos in the form of student protests caused a shift in equilibrium and long-lasting changes in the teaching and learning system. The sudden shift from almost exclusive face-to-face to online teaching and learning was not easy for both lecturers and students, however, as equilibrium was regained in the teaching and learning context, long lasting changes have taken place in ordinary teaching and learning practice as described in Chapter 6. This has also meant that both lecturers and students in German Studies have become more resilient and better prepared for future events of chaos. This was noted in 2019 by the lecturers (Interviews 4 and 5) with regard to managing their teaching commitments with their other academic responsibilities such as sitting on committees and conducting research, and by students (Questionnaire 1) who appreciated being able to re-watch lectures before tests and exams.

However, at the time of writing up this dissertation, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, a true measure of the resilience afforded by the prior investment of time and trial and error in the creation of online learning environments and scaffolding of student support can be seen. The gradual and well-supported introduction of pre-recorded lectures along with the design and structure of the *Menschen* course pages on the learning management system RUconnected will hopefully mean that students of German Studies at Rhodes University may be better prepared for the ensuing chaos which will see a dramatic shift from face-to-face learning to online remote learning for most students in the country (Shay, 2020; Mnguni, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic is sure to ignite even more drastic changes in the Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System, as direct personal contact is only possible through video conferencing (which is rarely a possibility as it uses a lot of internet data<sup>30</sup>), and university courses which had few or no online components must transition to online course with no face-to-face contact in a matter of weeks. This situation is far from ideal, as the literature has shown (McCarthy, 2016; Graham, *et al.*, 2013), it takes much careful planning and scaffolding to ensure the success of online instructional materials. Moreover, few lecturers from non-distance learning institutions have the necessary know-how to tackle the challenges of transitioning to online remote learning. The coming months are sure to see much frustration on the part of lecturers, students and the institution as they struggle to find balance between order and chaos in the un-prepared for and

---

<sup>30</sup> As stated in Chapter 2, a digital divide in terms of access to resources such as internet data exists in South Africa. Aside from the high cost of data, coverage simply does not reach more rural areas where many students and staff live.

novel context brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>31</sup>. Nevertheless, German Studies at least seems well placed to enter the realm of online learning as both students and lecturers have had experience of using online components, and have developed strategies of communication and student support. This will be expanded upon in this section as I analyse the results presented in chapter 6.

Thus, as expanded on in Chapter 6, the lecturers in this case study have made an increased use of technology for teaching German over the past five years. Although changes have been seen across the curriculum, the focus of this dissertation has been on the language component of German Studies, and in the latter part of this chapter I will return to the analysis of a specific aspect of language teaching and learning, namely the identification and use of collocations. The development of a complementary online environment, and particularly the development of pre-recorded lectures which can be posted in the online environment in lieu of a face-to-face lecture, required much initial input from the lecturers in this case study. Lecturer 1 and 2 reported on the one hand the difficulty of acquiring the necessary technological skills, and on the other hand the thrill of perceived potential benefits for student learning, as well as potential long-term benefits for themselves and the section in terms of managing time and resources. This mirrors findings from Aborisade (2013, pp. 39-40) on developing blended learning practices for an English for academic purposes course in Nigeria, who writes on the one hand that “teacher workload increased rather than decreased as time was required for professional development in IT and pedagogy, for course design, VLE management and course facilitation” (Aborisade, 2013, p. 39) and on the other had “[n]ow work has more meaning and purpose and students’ motivation gives us satisfaction” (Aborisade, 2013, p. 39).

As often happens, shut-downs of universities by government, staff or students disrupt academic programmes. The VLE [virtual learning environment] enables students to access materials and keep discussions going during such disruptions. Teachers are also able to continue the facilitation of learning, cover the curriculum in depth, check students’ understanding of ideas and concepts, and provide feedback. We have learned that teacher roles are changing, as learners’ engagement is enhanced by the creation of new learning environments and as they take more decisions in the process. On the downside, however, poor technology infrastructure and inadequate facilities exert great pressure on the most willing students and staff, in terms of effort, time and finance. (Aborisade, 2013, pp. 39-40)

Although, as mentioned above, the German Studies academics at Rhodes started recording lectures out of necessity in 2015 and 2016, the chaos of the student protests was not the sole underlying factor motivating for the further inclusion of teaching and learning technologies in the curriculum. German

---

<sup>31</sup> Ironically, the online components of blended learning which have promised to assist students from underprivileged backgrounds (e.g by giving them the option of watching and re-watching lectures in a language that is not their mother tongue in their own time and with the possibility of looking things up) when used on their own are now seen as an impediment to learning due to socio-economic factors and limited access to resources such as laptops and internet data.

Studies was a forerunner in terms of the use of RUconnected, creating complementary course pages for German Studies modules from as early as 2012 on and exploring the use of various functions, although mostly using this as a repository for content. The Rhodes University German Studies lecturers' early adoption of online modes is due to many factors. Certainly, the lecturers felt the need to 'keep up with the times' and the ever-increasing use of technology in all spheres of life, as reported by Lecturer 1, Interview 2. As stated in Chapter 6, the German Studies lectures have a strong focus on teaching and learning and strive to keep abreast of new developments in the field. This has become increasingly more difficult as Mostert & Quinn argue already in 2009, the "way in which higher education is conceptualised is changing" both internationally and in South Africa:

Globalisation, massification, shrinking resources, the proliferation of information and communication technologies (ICTs), increased demands for quality assurance and greater public accountability, and increasing competition among higher education institutions have all contributed towards changing the traditional role of academics. Academics now operate in what Barnett (2000) terms "a world of supercomplexity", where the very frameworks on which their professions are based are continuously in a state of flux. Technological and economic changes, for example, have resulted in a reorganisation of time and space (Giddens 1984, cited in Unwin, 2007). Furthermore, the supercomplexity and uncertainty of the postmodern world have caused people to be more reflexive, which, in turn, has led to a heightened sense of ontological insecurity for academics. (Mostert & Quinn, 2009, pp. 72-73)

The excerpt above shows that the changing context of higher education presents new challenges for lecturers, particularly with regard to the application of technology to teaching and learning – a major and ubiquitous change, which has only grown in strength over the last decade. Already over 10 years ago, Mostert & Quinn (2009) stated that more and more, staff are pushed towards the use of ICTs to solve teaching and learning challenges "brought about by the new HE landscape" (Mostert & Quinn, 2009, p. 73). However, support and incentive for doing so may be lacking from the institutional level, and academic staff may find integrating ICTs in teaching and learning to be an "insurmountable obstacle" (Mostert & Quinn, 2009, p. 73), a notion which Tshuma (2018b) further discusses.

In her case study undertaken at Rhodes University with a focus on academics, Tshuma (2018b) explores the so-called "culture of resistance" towards the use of technology in teaching and learning with eight female academic staff members. Tshuma (2018b) finds that contrary to what is often lamented in education technology literature, the participants are not "resisting technology", but "resisting with technology". That is to say that participants are making use of technology to resist structural forces. Tshuma (2018b, p. iv) identifies two significant "structural forces" in the socio-political context of South African higher education which impact on female academics' use of technology in her study, and which are relevant to findings of this study: the first is the tension between teaching and research with regard to how to manage both of these in the time available, and

the second is the elevation of one dominant culture in the university setting, which favours middle-class, English mother-tongue, white male staff and students.

In line with the above, Tshuma (2018b, p. iv) finds that the academics in her study struggle to find a balance in their academic careers between the urgency of teaching and the more valued and thus prestigious function of research, because of “ambiguous messages from different structures, their passion for teaching, oppressive departmental dynamics and the pressures of their career trajectory” (2018b, p. iv). As expanded on throughout this dissertation, German Studies is a very small section with only two full-time staff members who have a very high teaching load (as compared with other academics in larger departments). In this context, Lecturer 1 reports being given advice by a colleague in the university management in 2014 that she should record lectures in order to have more time for research. Following this, Lecturer 1 approached the CHERTL office in 2014 to acquire a license for CAMTASIA recording software and set aside time each week to learn how to use the software, which helped to prepare the groundwork for the use of online lectures during the 2015 and 2016 protests to “put out fires”. From 2017 onwards the use of pre-recorded lectures was cemented in the curriculum and enabled, after the initial work, the desired flexibility for research and other academic responsibilities.

This research similarly shows how the German Studies lecturers also resist structural forces of the historically dominant university culture (middle class, English, white, male) by using technology to create safe and responsive learning spaces. While Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 are both white female academics, (and have not reported facing the types of racial discrimination and oppression within the university space as some lecturers in Tshuma’s (2018b) study), they are not mother-tongue English speakers. Both lecturers recognise that in teaching a language and a culture they should be sensitive to the diversity of cultures of their students and efforts are made to bring other cultures and languages into the language learning classroom, rather than ignoring or discrediting these cultures. Both lecturers are aware of and sensitive to the difficulties faced by the changing and diverse student population (see for example Weber, 2016 and Engelbrecht, 2020 in press) and show reflexivity and awareness of this in their approach to teaching in general, as well as to implementing online resources (this will be expanded on in the following section on learning support).

In my action research, where I implemented lectures explaining the concept of collocation, Lecturer 1 suggested that I draw on the students’ own language and cultural backgrounds in explaining the concept, by asking them to contribute idioms or sayings from their own languages. I was thus able to improve the approach to introducing collocation by drawing on cross-language examples in class. I began with the phrase *es tut mir Leid*, explaining the direct translation in English (it does harm to me), and the figurative meaning (I’m sorry), thereafter asking students to reflect on the ways that they

know of how to say sorry in other languages. A forum discussion was set up on RUconnected following the lecture to which students enthusiastically contributed examples from their mother-tongues. This small change was in fact quite significant in changing the way students viewed collocation, as they were able to bring their own linguistic and metalinguistic skills into the classroom. Two anonymous participants particularly noted that their writing had improved after the lectures on collocations stating:

Anon.1: I feel that the comparison of our own cultures phrases really helped especially since I'm confident about my language and I studied it in high school. I become more confident about German.

Anon.2: It helps [seeing a phrase in context] since I can easily remember it, especially since Gwyn encouraged us to use our languages to understand better. I studied my own language/ mothertongue in high school and it's made me to be more observant and critical in languages.

This was significant as most students with an African mother-tongue had reported in Questionnaire 2 in 2018 that they seldom or never translated from their home-language into German, and that they did not feel that knowledge of their home language and helped them to learn German; whereas many noted that they did feel that a knowledge of English, Afrikaans and/or other foreign languages such as French helped them with learning German. In 2018 P15 for example, a Sesotho mother-tongue speaker, wrote "My home language: No, Spanish: No, English: Yes". P18 an isiZulu speaker wrote "My home language has no similarities with German that help my German learning. English on the other hand, does help.". P19, a Tshivenda speaker responded: "Überhaupt nicht [...]". Similarly, P20, a Shona speaker writes "No, I don't think so because Shona is far off".

Thus, while lecturers may not be speakers of any African languages themselves, this direct knowledge may not be needed in enhancing awareness of linguistic concepts which are common across languages, such as the fact that all languages have collocations and figurative speech. Lecturers can bridge the gap between German, English and the variety of mother-tongues present in the South African classroom, if one invites the students to bring forward their linguistic and cultural knowledge and become co-teachers in the classroom, a notion also expressed by Baker (2007). Some students may find this uncomfortable or difficult as it challenges the dominant culture (as defined by Tshuma, 2018b, p. 15), however this might lead to many positive and transformational learning experiences within the context of teaching a foreign language at a South African institution of higher education. For example, when undertaking the first year of my PhD I also took an isiXhosa 1 language course and drew up a simple table of contrastive pronouns between English, German and IsiXhosa. This has been uploaded onto RUconnected as an additional resource for isiXhosa students, some of whom who did not have the opportunity to study their home language at school are amazed to learn that there are 15 "noun classes" in their home language. In this regard, learning German as a foreign language affords

students with an opportunity to reflect on the complexity and nuance of their home language grammar, and supplies life-long metalinguistic tools for analysing languages in general.

In line with the example above, the conclusion can also be drawn that in this research context, lecturers have used the online components of blended learning to provide students with access to adapted and additional resources which resist the dominant culture of the *Menschen* coursebook. As set out in Chapter 2, coursebooks are developed by large publishers and aim to be relevant to all learners, and in doing so lose relevance for any specific learner. The *Menschen* coursebook, although chosen because of fitness to the purposes of the current German Studies curriculum (as described in Chapter 6) in terms of presenting a more modern and up-to-date interface for learning, takes a largely communicative approach to language learning. The coursebook is entirely in German and the grammar explanations are in English in a separate glossary. Lecturer 1 reported (Interview 3, 2018) feeling frustrated that students are often presented language examples without being given adequate introduction to grammar explanations in certain instances. It is for these instances that the online environment becomes particularly important as the pre-recorded lectures focus on presenting grammar explanations, leaving more in-class time for practical communicative activities. These findings echo those of the case study of lecturers' experiences using the flipped-classroom model by Johnson & Marsh (2016, p. 61). Johnson & Marsh (2016, p. 61) found that flipping the classroom had a positive impact on lecturers' teaching as well as their experience of teaching. In their study they noted that the model could make lesson planning easier, reduce planning time and provide more flexibility in face-to-face class sessions and "allow them [lecturers] to focus on student needs" by (Johnson & Marsh, 2016, p. 61)<sup>32</sup>. Additional YouTube videos and explanations of grammatical concepts are also uploaded under the relevant chapter heading.

While arguably students could access these videos on their own, given that they have free unlimited internet access when on campus, questionnaires, interviews and informal discussions in the language classroom reveal that students are either unwilling or ill-equipped to navigate the internet to retrieve trustworthy learning sources. German Studies Students for the most part report trusting and relying on those resources (including YouTube videos) which have been shared (and vetted) by lecturers. This was seen particularly in the students' reported choice and use of dictionary apps. The top three dictionary apps used by students in the period 2017-2019 were Linguee.de (94 mentions), Leo.org (78

---

<sup>32</sup> However, Johnson & Marsh (2016) do not comment on the initial investment of time and planning which is needed in order to make pre-recorded online lectures, forum discussions, quizzes etc. successful. Indeed, Johnson & Marsh note that for their participants the challenges were "not related to the technology, in fact this was seen as the 'easy' part" (Johnson & Marsh, 2016, p. 61). This was not quite the case in this case study, where lecturers noted that they had to invest time in learning to use the technology, and where other colleagues refrain from using technology because of the difficulties and fears associated with learning to use it.

mentions) and Dict.cc. (50 mentions). In fact, these were almost the only dictionaries which were reported as being used by students, as a participant in 2017 says: “I use Linguee the dictionary. You can actually download the app off of the app store which is really handy”. This is despite there being hundreds of German-English dictionary apps available for both online/offline use, both free and for subscription, in the Google Play app store<sup>33</sup>. There are also a variety of print edition dictionaries available to buy online for personal use, and departmental dictionaries available for use in class.

All three of the most used dictionary apps are introduced to students in class as potential additional resources, and their use is demonstrated by lecturers on the projected screen. Linguee.de, which gives both a definition as well as examples highlighted in concordances lines generated from online parallel corpora, has been introduced to students since 2014 when I undertook my MA research focussed on developing students’ use of academic collocations (Ortner, 2015, p. 101). In 2018 and 2019 in particular I introduced a variety of dictionary apps to first and second-year students during a dedicated lecture for translation studies, expanding on the pros and cons of each and their various functions, and showing students alternative options including subscription options such as the Collins and Oxford dictionary apps. These lectures were developed during this action research project, as it was evident that none of our students were using paper-based dictionaries anymore. During the first round of action research (2017-2018), I came to understand the need to inform our students explicitly of the available online resources and how to access them, as well as how to identify which tools have the best fit for which purposes, as this is not so-called common knowledge which we can expect students to have. The use of online dictionary tools and translation software is becoming ubiquitous – for those who have the means to access them. Developing a critical use of these softwares is becoming an increasingly important learning outcome for the university-level foreign language student who wishes to become a proficient foreign-language user and perhaps even a language practitioner.

The exception to the finding above related to students’ use of vetted resources is in our students reported use of apps such as Duolingo, which have not been advocated in class and which a large portion of students reported using, some even before enrolling for German Studies. Perhaps the true success of Duolingo is that it presents itself in a gaming format, and thus may be perceived as play rather than learning. This is enhanced by the fact that players appear on a “leaderboard” and can compare scores while using the app (Krauß, 2015, p. 44). This finding ties in with my findings that students report being far more comfortable using technology for personal use such as social

---

<sup>33</sup> See for example: <https://play.google.com/store/search?q=german%20english%20dictionary>

networking and gaming<sup>34</sup> (See Chapter 6). Other apps which receive mention by students are Memrise (8 mentions) and Babble (7 mentions), though, as can be seen in questionnaire responses, with far less frequency than Duolingo (88 mentions). The Duolingo app does not present any grammatical information, but rather a mix of about five simple activities “largely based on translation” (Krashen, 2014, p. 13). Munday (2016) explores the idea of using Duolingo within a traditional university level foreign language course, by including time spent on Duolingo as a homework activity to which a small percentage of the class mark is allocated; Munday (2016, p. 97) suggests 15%. However, as pointed out by Krauß (2015, p. 44), the set learning path on the app “limit[s] the possibilities to select content that is relevant to the learner’s current learning needs”. Nevertheless, as a large number of students report already using Duolingo in the research context, it may be worthwhile to consider integrating this more actively into the curriculum in the future.

Thus, the 2018 questionnaires in the first cycle of action research revealed that students were engaging with learning apps which were gamified (such as Duolingo) even though these had not been introduced in class and were not aligned with the progression of the curriculum. This led me to consider the availability of gamified apps which could be better aligned to the curriculum, which could be presented as an option to students to support their learning. Upon researching popular language learning software and applications, I came across Quizlet, a free online learning software which allows users to create flashcards for study purposes (Barr, 2016; Benaissa, 2020; Quizlet, 2020), which had briefly been in use for German Studies in 2015 (Interview 4, Lecturer 1, 2019). These can be used online in the digital format or printed out for use as paper-based flashcards. As shown in a recent study with first year university students (Benaissa, 2020), the use of digital flashcards can be beneficial for developing vocabulary. This software had been reported as a resource used by one third-year German Studies student in 2017. As this student had continued her postgraduate studies in German Studies, I was able to interview her on her use of the application for vocabulary learning purposes. While the student reported that she had found the application helpful, she had tried to create her own learning sets using the *Menschen* glossary as a guide. This proved very time-consuming, with the result that she did not continue using the app for learning in the latter half of her third year. Upon my own investigation of the Quizlet application however, I found learning sets for each of the *Menschen* chapters A1-B1 (based on glossary items) already created by German teachers<sup>35</sup> in other countries who make use of the *Menschen* series. This is a very useful aspect of Quizlet, as it allows one to freely

---

<sup>34</sup> Students similarly mention joining groups on Facebook and interacting with German memes or watching YouTube videos as some of their self-directed exposure to the German language, rather than reading books.

<sup>35</sup> The learning sets which I found for *Menschen* A1-B1 are created by Nadine Brantschen, a teacher at the *VOX-Sprachschule* in Switzerland.

access all learning sets created by other teachers and add chosen learning sets to a “classroom” online. The teacher can then share the link to the classroom with students. This allows students the comfort of knowing that the resource has been vetted by the lecturer and saves them the trouble of having to find or create these learning sets themselves. I also found pre-made learning sets using the search term “German collocations”, mostly for noun-verb collocations (Quizlet, 2020). While some of the pre-sets of German collocations were not well-made or suited to the students’ level of learning, some were well suited to the lexical fields addressed in *Menschen*, and the level of our students. I included learning sets for German collocations in the Quizlet classroom for Rhodes University German Studies which I introduced to students in the second cycle of action research in 2019. The Quizlet classroom for German Studies can be accessed via the following link: <https://quizlet.com/join/VGXVxMY59> .

The folder of learning sets for collocations which I assembled is accessible via the following link: [https://quizlet.com/Gwyndolen\\_Ortner/folders/kollokationen-sets?x=1xqt&i=26aeqr](https://quizlet.com/Gwyndolen_Ortner/folders/kollokationen-sets?x=1xqt&i=26aeqr)

Following the lead of Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2, I used the projected screen in the lecture venue to model explicitly how to access the application through RUconnected and how to use the flashcard function. Students at all levels expressed interest in using the app as the learning sets complemented the curriculum. 14 GS1, four GS2 and two GS3 students joined the respective online Quizlet classrooms in 2019. As will be shown in later sections of this chapter, students also commented on their use of this app in their final questionnaires. An example is included here from a third-year student who felt that there had been a change in her approach to learning in 2019:

Yes there has been a change in my approach. Lately I have been taking a few minutes going over flashcards on Quizlet and doing short exercises. These exercises are very fun for me and I find I remember more from them than when I re-write the *Menschen* Glossary in my own way, in my vocabulary book. I also feel that words/phrases in Quizlet are more precise and relevant as compared to the *Menschen* glossary which has a lot more words that we hardly use. I also make my own vocabulary list and even though my friends and the people I hang around with do not speak German I try to make sentences to either respond to what they have asked me or any other thing I would like to say. Sometimes I even try to speak to myself in German.

Learning support and integration has proven to be a key factor in the success of blended learning activities for German Studies. Lecturers reported during their interviews developing their strategies to support and integrate the online components for language learning with the face-to-face components in various ways, often through the process of trial and error. Their efforts have borne fruit, as in 2017, 48.8% of German Studies students reported that they felt that online and in-class learning enhance each other, whereas in 2019 this increased to 59.6% (31/52). Longer answer comments from students showed that they valued the online support given. This was seen in response to the question: “Do you feel that you have received adequate support in using online language

learning resources for German Studies?”. 96% (50/52) of student respondents answered “yes” and elaborated, or as two students stated: “Definitely. It is one of the most organised and well run courses in the university”; “Absolutely. Far more than any other of my other subjects”.

In the longer responses can be seen that some students interpreted the question differently. While some students commented on the learning support mentioning the demonstrations of how to access and navigate online language learning components, others mentioned that they found the online resources a great support to their learning. I have thus provided examples into two categories, “learning support” and “supporting learning”.

#### Learning support:

Yes. The lecturers have been very informative and have shown the class how to access certain online resources on multiple occasions.

yes, all the lecturers have shown us how to access the content and sent emails with extra explanations

Yes. We were taught about the different sites that we can use online and our tutors also taught us about more sites

Yes, it's more so than in any other subject, it's nice that it's so up to date as the course progresses

Yes, I have received adequate support. I have no issues

Yes, both lecturers have gone through the Web page with us and have verbalized their willingness to help with any queries.

Yes, the course is set out very clearly on Ruconnected and resources are accessible. Lecturers always ask if we managed to watch the lectures and if there were any technical problems, e.g. volume too low in recording

#### Supporting learning:

Yes. The online lectures that we have to do are extremely well put together, to the extent where it feels like I have a face to face lecture. The resources posted on RUConnected is also helpful as they enhance my understanding of the foreign language that I am attempting to master.

Yes. The combination of physical and online lectures makes concepts more understandable.

Yes. On the online German ruconnected page we have been provided with many other online learning resources to help us learn. Learning resources such as YouTube channels teaching German, Web pages that are in German and have German articles and German dictionaries.

Yes, there are multiple platforms off and on RUconnected that are huge help within the learning process

The structure of the course also emerges in the above comments as an important supporting factor: clear course structure allows for ease of use and less “clicking around” and frustration – a negative aspect of technology use which will be returned to in the course of this chapter.

The only unsatisfied comments were as follows:

I don't think the online support is used for the purpose of memorising vocabulary. Which is where I think it is the most useful.

Not really. They touch on it here and there. Besides Frau Dr. Weber's comprehensive tutorial on how to open and view an online lecture (which is fantastic by the way, much better than class because I can pause the video and take down what she is saying without losing track of her), not much else was there.

No, I'm not saying I have not received any tips and resources, but I can bet not all resources have been given

The last comment here is of course true. Lecturers do not share all possible resources with students as that would be overwhelming. Students who would like more resources are encouraged to search for these themselves and to share the resources found with the class. Building on the first two comments, in my second cycle of action research in 2019, I adapted the RUconnected language pages to include a specific section at the top of each page titled “learning tips and strategies” in order to enhance explicit support for how to learn German and how to go about writing and in German as a foreign language speaker (see the example in Chapter 6). Here I posted links to the resources on collocations, including the handout I created as well as a link to a short YouTube video explaining collocations in English. This is also where I posted the vocabulary learning software Quizlet (discussed in the sections above), including the link to the online classrooms which I set up for German Studies at Rhodes University. The addition of the “learning tips” block was successful, showing many more hits in the logs on RUconnected than the resources posted for collocation in the first cycle of action research in 2018. Students who reported using these resources (GS1: 19/22; GS2, 13/16; GS3; 3/3) in the final reflective questionnaire found them to be helpful, as seen in the figures below.

The measuring scale was as follows: Mark only one oval. 1 2 3 4 5

1=no, not at all

5=yes, definitely

If yes, did you find the online resources helpful?

19 responses

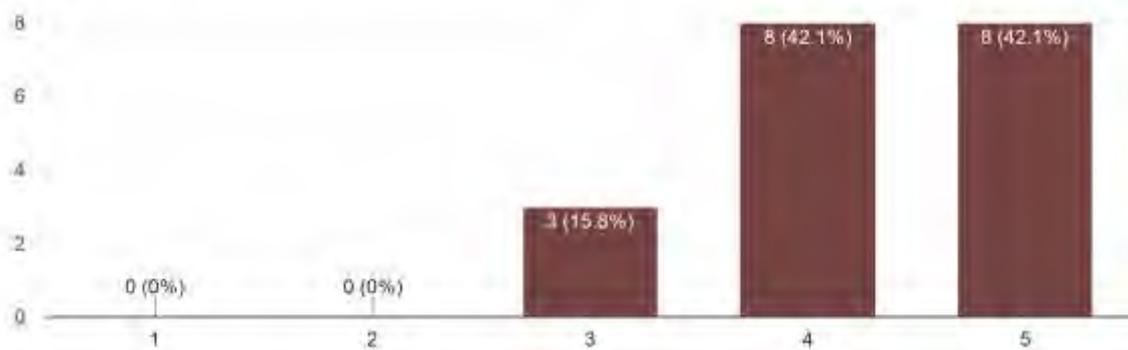


Figure 27: GS1, 2019 "... did you find the online resources helpful?"

If yes, did you find the online resources helpful?

13 responses

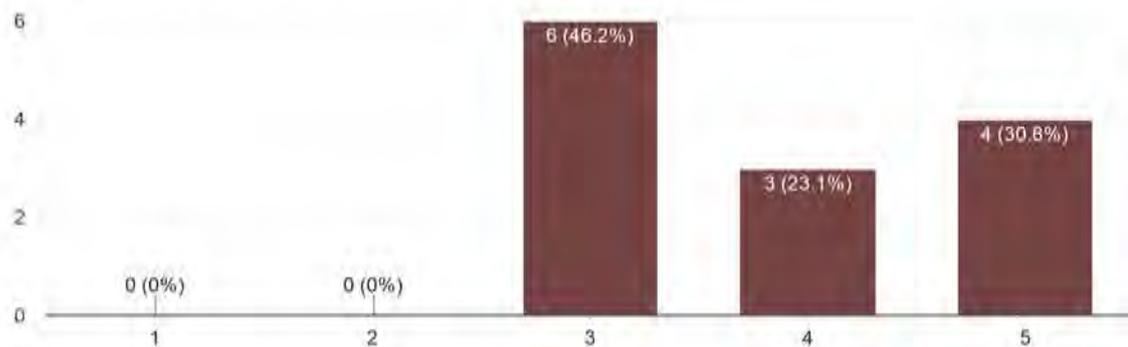


Figure 28: GS2, 2019 "...did you find the online resources helpful"

If yes, did you find the online resources helpful?

3 responses

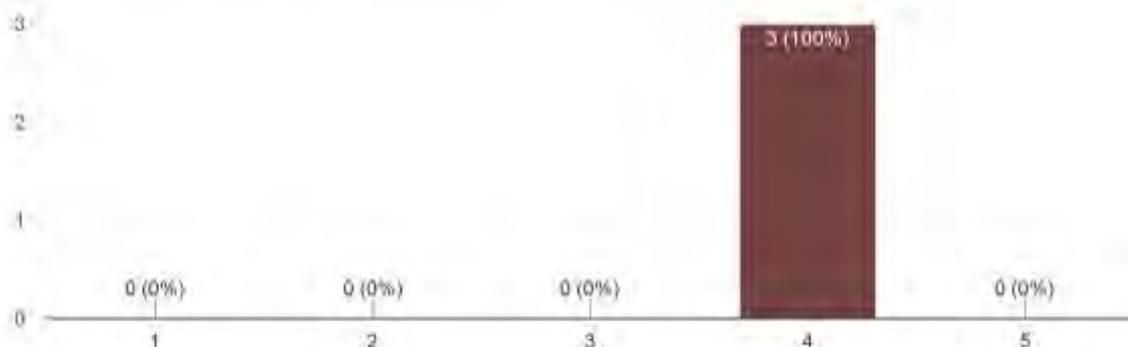


Figure 29:GS3 2019 "... did you find the online resources helpful?"

Comments on particularly helpful aspects show that students make mention of a variety of resources from the learning tips section, and have personal preferences, revealing that one resource may have worked for one student more successfully than another:

The reading tips and strategies text was helpful in making me realize what exactly I should focus on and look out for when reading German texts and how to guess meanings of words I don't know (2019, GS3)

The explanations and the exercises are very useful. Online handouts, linguee, quizlet (2019, GS3)

Linguee helps with meanings of phrases as well as collocations. The short collocations video help a bunch as well. (2019, GS2)

I really liked the visual aspect of the DWDS. (2019, GS2)

Unfortunately I didn't have time to engage in the forum, but the quizlet vocabulary was great for drilling. (2019, GS1)

Quizlet has been helpful. It has helped me in understanding and remembering phrases

the video was a nice explanation (and not too long) and I LOVE Linguee because of all the extra information that comes with a translation. (2019, GS1)

The 2019 questionnaires for online learning thus revealed the development in blended learning that had taken place in German Studies since 2017. While in previous years (2017-2018) students had shown more signs of misgivings of the online context and a loss of face-to-face contact, as indicated in the longer answer questions, in 2019 there were many more positive comments regarding the use of online resources for learning, perhaps showing that students were more used to this approach, or perhaps showing that the approach itself had improved. Some of the positive acclaims for blended learning included for example the following:

As someone who suffers from depression and some days can be extremely difficult to tackle physically, I find it incredibly accommodating that I can have a lecture where I don't have to be physically present and I can do it in my own time. Online lectures also enhance my learning of German because I am able to go back to previous lectures if I did not understand something, or simply want to revise before a test or exam. (2019, GS)

I like variation in general and it helps with the learning experience when you aren't just learning in one specific environment. (2019, GS)

While the in-class learning may help me understand German the online lets me repeat what I have not understood. (2019, GS)

It helps to see concepts explained in class elaborated on online (2019, GS)

I feel as though the one supports the other. (2019, GS)

i can constantly go back to the online content and revise what i may missed in class, besides from that there is only so much that can be learn within 40 mins so the content online sometimes cover the luittle bits that are not covered in class. (2019, GS)

It is best to learn it in different ways (2019, GS)

Online tools appear to be seen as a good complement to face-to-face resources, particularly for concepts which can then be returned to, but few students indicate that they would enjoy a fully online course. The immediacy of face-to-face contact and the ability to engage physically in a social environment was commented on by many students as an aspect of the curriculum which they particularly value, this can be summed up in the following participant responses:

While an RUConnected course is always helpful and pairs well with the lecture, the recorded lectures are something very different to a normal lecture where one has the ability to ask questions and engage more with the material (also being able to speak the language more, which is vital in a language course). Too much replacement with recorded lectures instead of face-to-face would definitely impact how the student learns. (2017, GS)

While the online learning is very adequate it it only with in-class learning that one gets an opportunity to interact with one's teachers. (2019, GS)

Online lecture is straight to the point with a few different explanations and examples but the in-class learning with the help of class interaction further expands on the online lecture and gives more information. (2019, GS)

The online class would explain a section and then the class would discuss it further and clarify any questions that I may have after watching the video (2019, GS)

The far lower response rates to questionnaires issued online in the study in itself is revealing of the nature of online materials versus those delivered in class. Students appear much less likely to engage with something which reaches them through email than if it occurs face-to-face in class, particularly if they do not perceive direct benefits or, conversely negative consequences, for not participating.

This can be related back to the frameworks for blended language learning introduced in Chapter 4, developed by Neumeier (2005) and Mishan (2013). As Mishan (2013, p. 211) states, "integration is the key to the success of the truly blended learning curriculum". Mishan (2013, p. 211) found at her own institution that where one of the blended elements was perceived as an "add-on", "perhaps, quite simply, in terms of participating in it not being assessed" – students eschewed participation.

Instances of this can be cited from experiences at the author's own institution, the University of Limerick, Ireland. In the first example, an undergraduate module in French language and society, weekly blog writing tasks (in French) were included with the intention of promoting critical reflection, collaboration, and target language output, but participation could only be 'enforced' by including a minimum blog word count ('words per posting' or WPP) in the module grade. Similarly, a postgraduate language teaching practice module which piloted a blog for group interaction and reflection, ended up 'dead in the water' until, subsequently, it was factored into the module grade. (Mishan, 2013, p. 211)

As Stracke (2007) similarly asserts, the model of integration needs to be made overt to the learners; and the interrelationship between the components of blended learning must be transparent (Stracke, 2007). In Stracke's study of students who dropped out of blended language learning courses, a lack of

overt integration was a factor which influenced the students' decisions to drop out of the course. Recent theory on motivation in language learning emphasise context and understanding the inter-relationships between context (such as the implementation of online components) and the individual (Ryan & Dörnyei, 2013, p. 91; Berndt, 2013, p. 54). By viewing the language learner as a whole person in a complex systems approach (Ryan & Dörnyei, 2013, p. 97; Berndt, 2013, p. 54) one could make the link that learners who are less motivated and who are not as autonomous in their learning styles may struggle with the online components of blended learning, particularly if the online components have not been scaffolded into a curriculum, and if the integration of the online learning components is not apparent.

Finally, increased use of technology for learning purposes may have many benefits for students, staff and the institution; however, not all technology use has a positive impact on learning, and some types of technology use are found to be particularly unhelpful by students and staff. Selwyn (2016) developed four categories to classify the negative aspects of technology use for academic work, based on a large survey with Australian university students, namely: distraction, disruption, difficulty, and detriment (Selwyn, 2016, p. 1010). Selwyn's four categories are helpful in grouping and analysing the difficulties cited by the students and staff in this study at a South African higher education institution, thus are drawn on in this section of analysis, in the order listed above.

The category of distraction (Selwyn, 2016, p. 1010) refers to the fact that digital technology, in particular social media technologies such as Facebook (Zaremohzzabieh *et al.*, 2014), can be very distracting, diverting students' attention away from academic work and serving as a source of procrastination. This is mentioned by participants in this study in their questionnaire responses (2017-2019):

I find that if I have to use any device that, connects to the internet, to do learn, I usually forget about it or I get very distracted with other things online. I prefer not using devices for learning. (2017, GS)

Its very distractive & I still prefer the book but I really don't mind technology (2017, FS)

I am comfortable using technology for learning although in some aspects I am not certain the correct ways to use technology as I have ADHD and being on a device while studying, I get distracted by things such as Youtube and Facebook (2017, FS)

It is a bit easy to get distracted using online lectures, so I always prefer actually being in class and interacting with the lecturer. (2018, GS1)

The only thing I will say is that it is difficult to concentrate with the online classes (2019, GS2)

Zaremohzzabieh *et al.* (2014) identified compulsion to check Facebook, high-frequency use, and using Facebook to avoid offline responsibility as three main themes in their study on addictive behaviour

associated with Facebook. In this study, as can be seen in the comments above, Facebook serves not only as a distraction from offline responsibilities, but from online responsibilities as well, particularly as there is a temptation to multitask online when already using a digital device for academic work. Karpinski *et al.* (2012, p. 1182) caution against multitasking with technology, as results from studies in the US and Europe show that multitasking (specifically using social networking sites) can reduce efficiency and productivity as well as overall achievement scores for university students. Moreover, while students are allowed to use their dictionary apps in class in the research context, the lecturers in this context commented on students' use of their mobile phones for other uses (such as checking social networking sites) in the face-to-face classroom as particularly distracting, both for the lecturer as well as other students.

Selwyn's second category is that of "disruption", thus named as technology does not always work as intended, causing disruption and frustration for staff and students. These instances prevent teaching and learning from taking place. In the South African context, aside from the ordinary technological malfunctions, the most prominent cause of technological disruption is load shedding or power outages. Load shedding is a phenomenon in which there are country-wide power cuts in order to reduce the load on the power system (Eskom, 2020). Scheduled load shedding results in loss of power to sections of the power grid nationwide according to various stages, and can be up to "12 times over a four day period for two hours at a time, or 12 times over an eight day period for four hours at a time" in Stage 4 (Eskom, 2020), which was experienced in 2019. Student responses regarding challenges to access of online content reflect this:

When there is load shedding you can't use the WiFi in Res and thus you cannot access your learning materials (2019, GS)

Whilst living in residence where there is internet access their is poor connections and load shedding (2019, GS)

Loadshedding causes immense issues as I am unable to do work without internet access (2019, GS)

Damn Loadshedding (2019, GS)

Load shedding severely disrupts any academic work which is scheduled to take place using digital technologies, whether this be a face-to-face lecture in which a lecturer had a planned PowerPoint presentation, or an online lecture or submission. On the Rhodes University campus, the library and academic administration buildings have power generators, and students (and staff) are able to work in these designated computer laboratories during load shedding, although there is very limited space and thus this is not an option which is available to all staff and students. Other related aspects of technological disruption in the South African context include weak internet connectivity:

From home my online access isn't reliably strong enough to access online video material. Sometimes links on RUConnected are unavailable and I don't know if it has to do with the url or with my connection. There was a problem with my sign-in name for the library that took long to solve as well. (2017, GS)

Sometimes the internet sticks and when your hand it in it doesn't work. (2017, GS)

As briefly discussed in Chapter 2, the cost of data in South Africa is well above the world average and some parts of South Africa have limited or no access to the internet. While this is not a problem on campus, it can be a problem for students living off campus. This has become a pressing issue with the event of COVID-19, and universities have had to make a plan to provide students with data bundles in order to access online work at home (Monnapula-Mapesela, 2020).

There are additional ongoing difficulties and inconveniences encountered by students and staff when using technology which make it difficult to complete academic work. Selwyn (2016, p. 1010) identifies in this category difficulties associated with software such as inconsistently designed LMS pages, as well as health difficulties such as the physical strain of too much screen time. Some students for example commented on general concerns and anxieties around increased technology use:

I really enjoy using Technology to assist in my studies, however I wish I spent more time in Nature.

I don't really like sitting in front of a computer.

Its good and helpful but it make people distant from each other. Communication as in direct conversation are suffering when it comes to social networks. (2017, FS)

They're watching us through these things.

Moreover, there were mixed responses to questionnaire items which elicited responses from German Studies students on their use of general Rhodes University online resources such as RUconnected and the library. It is apparent that while students are for the most part comfortable with university online resources, commenting for example that they provide a "sense of direction", "the sites are organised enough and navigatable" and that "they conveniently provide everything I need on one platform, helping me to be more organised", some students also noted that it takes time to learn how to navigate online resources. In the following responses, one can sense the frustration of "clicking around" until something works on the learning management system, which echoes the lecturers' responses in the beginning sections of Chapter 6:

Most of the time I am good with using the university's online resources. However, I do struggle with some e.g. library website and finding certain things. However, I learnt through clicking around on different options and pages, I will eventually find my way. (2019, GS)

RU Connected is not always user friendly and it only became easier to use after using it most of the time. (2019, GS)

Sometimes the OPAC Seals can be a bit non-linear in its logic (2019, GS)

Other student responses indicate frustration because of a lack of a common approach to online components of learning across the institution:

Generally lectures will give clear instructions on what we should be accessing on RUconnected, however it is sometimes challenging to find tasks when clear instructions haven't been given or if documents have different titles to the one's provided by the lectures. I haven't had any issues with German studies only with other subjects. (2019, GS)

not all the lectures use ruconnected and it is hard to figure some of the ways to get to the information needed if one isn't a computer genius. (2019, GS)

The comments above are in the category of “difficulty” can be linked to the category of “detriment”, identified by Selwyn (2016, p. 1010) as the phenomenon where the use of technology leads to “diminished forms of higher education”. In the context of the research in German Studies, no student reported feeling that their teaching and learning experience had been reduced by the use of technology. However, as has been reported on in Chapter 6, the use of technology in the teaching and learning context for German Studies at Rhodes University has been carefully thought out and planned over a number of years to support learning. Technology, for example pre-recorded lectures and links to dictionary applications, has been introduced in the research context from 2017 because it is pedagogically sound, and the staff have shown care and reflexivity in their approach, always mindful of the student experience and difficulties which may arise.

In the emerging teaching and learning context in 2020, there has been much concern expressed that the sudden move to online learning will lead to a detriment in the quality of education, as lecturers may be ill equipped to provide quality online courses for which they have had little to no training (Shay, 2020).

The above analysis and discussion has thus shown how blended learning may be viewed as part of a complex system. The context in which teaching and learning occurs is of utmost importance in designing, implementing and evaluating the use of technology for teaching and learning. As this research has a focus on blended learning for teaching and learning German as a foreign language, specific examples have been drawn on from the action research where the blended learning model was used to introduce the concept of collocation within the curriculum. In the next section, I evaluate the usefulness of teaching collocation as a learning strategy within the context of the existing German foreign language curriculum at Rhodes University in South Africa.

### *7.2 How effective was teaching collocation as a learning strategy?*

Teaching collocation as a learning strategy, in other words: teaching students the concept of collocation and using the concept to identify collocations in written texts, was on the whole a

successful exploratory endeavour in this teaching and learning context of a foreign language – in the higher education context in South Africa. In this teaching and learning context, students and staff consistently report (2017-2019) the difficulty of learning to speak and write in a mother-tongue-like way in German in a context where there is very limited access to the target language in the day-to-day environment. The students of German Studies are diverse and have a variety of language and schooling backgrounds; not all students arrive with the tools to know how to learn a foreign language. As stated in Chapter 1, a great diversity of students calls for a diversity of teaching and learning approaches. Within the transformation initiative in South African higher education there are calls for lecturers to work at making the ontology and epistemology (or ways of knowing and being) of a discipline transparent for students within the context of teaching and learning, arguing that this is as important as the content which is taught (Morrow, 1993; Boughey & McKenna, 2016; Gee, 2012). Teaching students language learning strategies is thus an important part of teaching a language, as students cannot be expected to know what good language learning practice is, given the poor levels of language education which can be expected in public schooling in South Africa, as shown in international literacy research (Howie, *et al.*, 2011). Lecturers in German Studies at Rhodes University report changing their approach to teaching and learning in the past five years, including more and more aspects of direct instruction into learning strategies. For example, Lecturer 1 who is in charge of co-ordinating first-year tutorials has devoted a first-year tutorial to “how to learn for German Studies” including aspects such as note-taking in class, and reading ahead in the book before lectures.

The action research undertaken in this research context thus focussed on teaching the concept of collocation as a teaching and learning strategy with the goal of improving language learning for German Studies students. As set out in Chapter 3, collocation is not a new concept, but has been neglected in foreign language teaching and learning (Targońska, 2014). Traditionally, in the grammar translation teaching method, there has been more of a focus on teaching grammar and single items of vocabulary. In the communicative approach to language teaching there is a hesitancy to teach any grammar or concepts at all, rather focussing on communicative competence (Didenko & Pichugova, 2016). More recently, instructed second language researchers have indicated that both a knowledge of grammar as well as of formulaic language is important – grammar for accuracy and formulaic language for fluency (Ellis, 2005; Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 264), as set out in Chapter 3 and 4. Moreover, linguistic researchers have come to realise that grammar and lexis are inseparable, and have argued that language consists of lexico-grammatical units (see Römer, 2009), which are also known as formulaic language (see Wray, 2002), a concept which includes that of collocation (see Chapter 3 for definitions of these concepts).

In this research context, collocation as a concept had been taught to third-year students in 2015 in a series of lectures which were additional to the traditional curriculum, and which required all students to bring their laptops to class (following a corpus-based methodology). This was only possible because of the small group of students and required much time teaching students to use concordancing software (Ortner, 2015, p. 120). The 2018 and 2019 lectures series revealed that it was possible to teach about collocation as a concept (Laurillard, 1997, p. 173) and introduce concepts from corpus linguistics as a teaching and learning tools within the existing curriculum. Although it did require careful thought and planning, this was accomplished for the most part by working with the resources at hand (the *Menschen* textbook series), which meant that students (and lecturers) did not have to become adept at using corpus linguistic software or become overwhelmed by too many additional resources, issues which others had pointed to in teaching collocations through a corpus-based approach (Breyer, 2009; Mukherjee, 2004; Vyatkina & Boulton, 2017, p. 2; Meunier, 2011). The additional resources that were used were chosen as they complemented the curriculum, and care was taken to show the connections between the additional resource and the coursebook content so that the links were explicit.

The introductory lecture proved to be important, linking the concept of collocation in German to students' prior knowledge, particularly to their knowledge of their own mother-tongue. In 2019 I was able to improve upon the approach in 2018 and tailor the introductory lectures to each year group. This worked particularly well with first-year students, who engaged with the online forum posting examples from sayings and idioms in their home languages, as described in previous sections of this chapter. Thus, teaching the concept and strategy of collocation identification may be seen, in a small but important way, as a transformative act in the context of the study, as students were able to draw on their own linguistic backgrounds (which are often undervalued) to understand the concept and apply it to the German language. In this way, foreign language learning can be seen to play a role in cultivating critically reflective graduates.

The following figures reflect this:

Do you feel that dealing with collocations has made you more aware of language patterns in any of the following languages? (You may tick more than one answer)

23 responses

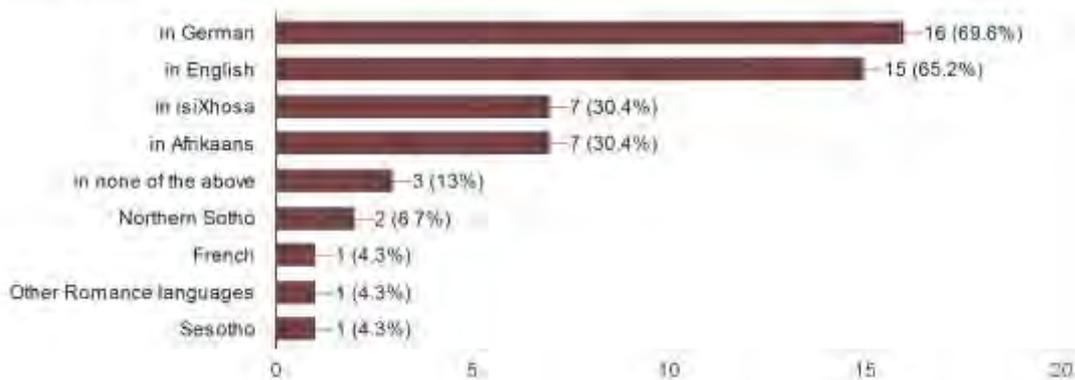


Figure 30: GS1 responses 2019

In the figure above, it can be seen that the German Studies 1 students experienced not only a greater awareness of collocations in German, but also for other languages spoken by those students, and the official languages of the Eastern Cape in which Rhodes University is situated. Almost equal to the number of students experiencing a greater awareness of collocations on German is the number of students who experienced a greater awareness of collocations in English. This reflects findings from my MA research which revealed that, especially for weaker students, learning about a concept for writing in German helped them to be aware of their writing in English (Ortner, 2015, p. 112; (Ortner, 2020, [accepted, in press])). The next two highest scores are for a recognition of collocation in Afrikaans and isiXhosa, which are the official languages of the Eastern Cape, and are reported as mother-tongue languages for a number of first-year students (see Appendix D & E). Northern Sotho, French, Sesotho and other romance languages are also reported as spoken by GS1 students as mother-tongue languages.

Do you feel that dealing with collocations has made you more aware of language patterns in any of the following languages? (You may tick more than one answer)

16 responses

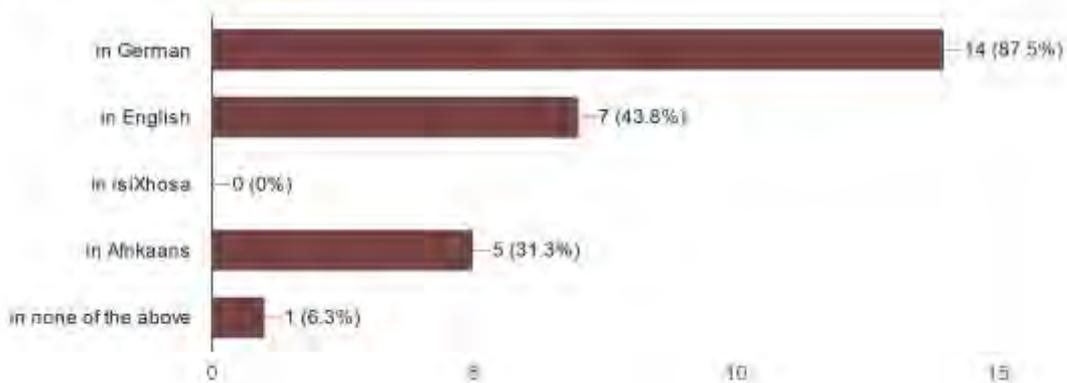


Figure 31: GS2 responses 2019

As can be seen in the figure above, almost all GS2 students reported becoming aware of collocations in German. Half as many were also more aware of collocation in English and in Afrikaans (again, the languages of the Eastern Cape). Only one student reported that learning about collocations had not made them more aware of the patterns in German or other languages.

Do you feel that dealing with collocations has made you more aware of language patterns in any of the following languages? (You may tick more than one answer)

3 responses

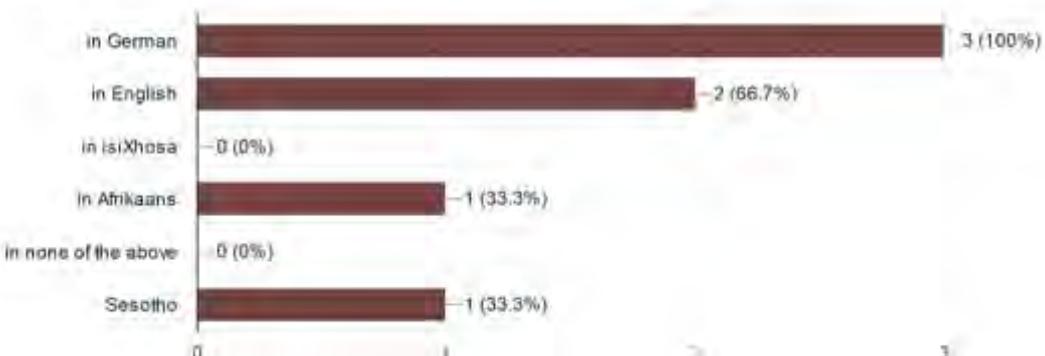


Figure 32: GS3 responses 2019

Lastly, the three GS3 respondents all felt more aware of collocations in German, as well as English (two students) and Afrikaans and Sesotho, again reflecting the demographic background of the students' reported mother-tongue languages in this group.

In keeping with what other researchers have found in foreign language textbooks, the *Menschen* coursebook(s) present/s many formulaic phrases and collocations, both in text and sometimes within the picture dictionary in each chapter; however, these are not explicitly marked as such and no instruction is given in the glossary (where other grammatical explanations are given) as to the importance of learning words in patterns, and certainly no mention is made of the terms “formulaic language” or “collocation”. This may be because, as was shown in Chapter 3, there is no tradition of the teaching of collocations in the foreign language classroom other than in the form of idioms or proverbs (Targońska, 2014, p. 131). As collocations do not violate the rules of the target language, but rather are regular, or follow the norms of grammar rules and rules of semantics, they do not present a challenge for reception and do stand out for the mother-tongue speaker in the same way that less transparent idioms do, for example (Daskalovska, 2015, p. 130). However, when producing collocations, the foreign-language student may make mistakes as they translate directly from one language into another (Daskalovska, 2015, p. 130; Siepmann, 2008, p. 188).

Examples of this can be seen in our own students' writing collected for RUDaF as they translate from English into German, and also often from Afrikaans which they perceive as being “closer” to German than other languages. For example, p46, a mother-tongue Sesotho speaker reports in Questionnaire 2, 2018: “English and Afrikaans are a bit closer to German language because most of the words and things we describe are sort of the same in value as their in other languages”. Nevertheless, Afrikaans and German present many contrastive collocations, and many errors are present in student writing which may be described as “Afrikaans dressed as German” (Drawing on the Jaworska's phrase “English dressed as German” which is used to describe British learners writing (Jaworska, 2011, p. 3)). P41 for example writes in 2019: *\*Ich sehe aus* instead of *ich freue mich auf*, based on the Afrikaans equivalent *ek sien uit* in his writing piece thanking a friend for gifts received.<sup>36</sup>

Those students who pick up collocations instinctively or more easily may avoid these types of errors and might just be labelled as “talented”, or at least “aware”, due to their more idiomatic use of the foreign language. By teaching about the concept of collocation explicitly and providing explicit instruction as to how to identify collocations within the coursebook texts, students are afforded one

---

<sup>36</sup> Lecturer 1 also notes: “First years, sometimes people you would never expect it from, i.e. non-mother tongue speakers of Afrikaans but second language or third language learners of Afrikaans actually now try Afrikaans in German 1. I see this especially in the tests when I suppose there is a bit of panic and time pressure and I had a student actually write a whole sentence in Afrikaans in their exercise” (Interview 4, 2019)

more strategy to use when reading and writing German. For some students, this was perceived as more helpful than for others; nevertheless, the final reflective questionnaires in 2019 were indicative of the fact that all students who responded (n=23) perceived some benefit from learning to notice words within context. Some individual responses have been presented in Chapter 6, and further examples are included here:

the exercises definitely helped me to recognise and also be out on the look for more language patterns especially in regards to collocations. it also helped me integrate some of these collocations into german conversations (although very basic) with friends of mine in germany. (2019, GS1)

because it has helped even though my marks don't show it( irrelevant issues from German) but i really believed it helped. (GS2, 2019)

It made sense. The difficult part was to overcome my resistance to learning blocks of text off by heart - which we had to do for school German, simply because we were required to write sentences way above our level of competence. But it is a helpful thing in terms of expressions and shaping sentences. Maybe if I started learning by phrases much earlier it would have been easier. It is hard to not fall over anxiety about learning the articles. (GS3, 2018)

All levels of German Studies students reported that learning collocations had helped to improve their understanding of German and had improved their writing in German to a greater or lesser extent. Learning about collocation also heightened students' awareness to the difficulties of translation, and piqued students' interest in cross-language differences and similarities:

I enjoyed looking out for them and using them in my own writing. I didn't enjoy translating them into other languages but acknowledged the difficulty this can sometimes cause because collocations can't always be translated easily (2019, GS3)

I found them helpful, and insightful into what phrases have fixed meanings in German as in English. And therefore it was an interesting way to look at a language. (2018, GS3)

As stated in Chapter 1, even though our students are multilingual speakers, and should be aware of the complexities of language, they still often expect that a one-to-one translation between languages is possible (Engelbrecht, 2020 in press). In Chapter 3, research by Wray (2000, 2002) was outlined stating that formulaic language is important not only for beginner students, but also for higher level students. Wray outlines that there is a perception held by teachers and textbooks that "the phrase" is a "crutch" for beginner-level students, who will then move away from phrases to creating more creative word outputs. Krummes & Ensslin (2015) caution against this type of thinking, as they note that collocations are even more important at advanced levels of learning in order to speak and write in an idiomatic way. A GS3 student in 2019 made the following comment:

Finding these set phrases was fun for me. It also made me feel better with my german because I could use set phrases and not try and express myself by trying to formulate a sentence and it doesn't really make sense or come together. For example saying your welcome or dont sweat it. (2019, GS3)

Through teaching about the concept of collocation, students can be taught to understand that it is not “wrong” to reproduce segments of language that one has read or heard in context, that this is in fact a good learning strategy. Students do not necessarily have to produce “novel” language strings which are unidiomatic. Rather, they can use collocations and other types of formulaic language to assist with developing their fluency, using these as “islands of reliability” (Dechert, 1983 in Conklin & Schmitt, 2012, p. 47; Boers, *et al.*, 2006, p. 247) or “boilerplate” (Krummes & Ensslin, 2015, p. 125) as suggested in the literature.

Another GS3 student wrote that learning identifying collocations in text “helped me remember specific phrases in the writing sections of tests”. The identification of collocations in the context of the written texts thus helped students to “notice” (Schmidt, 2010) and remember the collocations better than they might have remembered these collocations had they simply seen them in a list.

All students who responded to the final questionnaire were able to define collocation in their own words, showing an understanding of the concept as “words that often go together”.

GS1, 2019:

groups of words which are commonly used together in a language and which often have a meaning which differs slightly from the meaning of the individual words.

The grouping of some words that are often used as a phrase  
joint phrases or sayings.

A group or set of words which are combined to create a certain meaning, and when separated do not have the same effect.

Words that are usually paired together to create a well known phrase

I guess it's words that are usually go together

The use of language to convey out a different point other than its literal meaning  
words that go together

That it is a sequence of words

Words that, depending on the context, are fixed together.

A set phrase that is not directly translatable but holds more lexical meaning than it suggests.

collocations are a grouping or pairing of words that are frequently used together. such as deep sleep or heavy traffic. they are used to excentuate or add description to a verb/noun with the use of an adverb/adjective.

Placing the German word close to another language  
words that always go together.

Words that are habitually placed in a certain position  
words that often go together.

Sets of words that frequently appear in a set and have recognizable meanings and associations. This also intersects with the particular cultural conventions of that language and people. For instance you do not adorn yourself with socks you wear them. 'Wear a sock' is a collocation.

It means that some words and phrases go together every time they are used in a sentence

It is the positioning of certain words in sentence structure

Grouping patterns of words in a language.

phrases that are generally used in a language. words that are normally put together.

GS2, 2019:

It is a set phrase which exists as a unit in language.

Sets of words that accompany each other in any grammatical text.

Words that flow together that forms a set phrase that can be used in different contexts.

placing words side by side

Groups of words and single words which often go together almost forming patterns or habits

Set phrases and ways of speaking in a certain language

Definitely

Placing words next to each other more often than usual to make a new meaning

A group of words used together to create meaning or set a phrase

A formulaic phrase used in speech used to convey ideas.

Language patterns; set phrases.

its almost the same idea as idioms in other languages

A collocation is a group of words that are often used together to express something and the order of the words never changes, like bacon and eggs

That it is a collection of words put together to have a particular meaning.

A group of words or set phrases in a language.

In light of the student comments in 2018 and 2019 it can be concluded that making the patterned nature of language explicit, instructing students in how to spot patterns, teaching them the necessary terminology (collocations) and asking them to bring collocations of other languages they know to the fore was helpful for enhancing teaching in German Studies. The action lectures developed helped to induct students into what it means to be a good language learner – i.e. one who is aware of language patterns in general, but also of chunks of language, and who actively reproduces these in their own writing, as found in their resources, possibly with the help of electronic reference resources such as dictionaries and word lists. However, as a GS3 student pointed out in 2018 (Q3) "The exercises were indeed good practice, but to properly recognise language patterns would require a great deal more of

just pure reading". This cannot be undertaken in class, and it is then up to the student to pursue further reading in their own time.

In the second cycle of action research I was also able to further improve the method by creating worksheets based on the *Menschen* textbook. This was also helpful during times of load shedding as I did not have to rely on the projector. Worksheets were later uploaded to RUconnected together with model answers. While I relied mostly on the texts in the *Menschen* coursebook as a pedagogic corpus to illustrate collocations, I also drew on existing online resources which illustrate German collocations such as Linguee.de, the DWDS and the *Kollokationenwörterbuch*. These resources are freely available and are valuable assets for a German foreign language teacher to draw on, particularly if one is not a mother-tongue German speaker oneself. Linguee.de also proved helpful in showing further examples of collocations from the coursebook.

Lecturer 2 reported in Interview 5, 2019, that she felt that collocation as a concept had been more helpful for some students than for others:

Lecturer 2: I think the ones that are interested in sounding or using German that is natural and idiomatic. Some people care more than others like 'would a German say it like this? Can one say it like this? Does this matter? Does it sound weird?' Others are just like 'I just want to get the meaning across, I'll just do my homework'. So it depends what your aims are, but then definitely with the second years I would say their writing has become more idiomatic. Even when we did translation now, I basically did practical translations in every lecture and they use Linguee much more and they were like 'how do you say, once upon a time?' so that was quite interesting. (Interview 5, 2019)

As Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 pointed out in their final interviews, perhaps the most valuable aspect of the endeavour was having the term "collocation" as a metalinguistic concept available to use with students across the curriculum. They themselves had not been unfamiliar with the concept before the action research, however, they had not used this term in class with students as they did not want to create confusion by using unfamiliar terminology.

A thus unexpected finding which emerged was the influence on the teaching practice of Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 that occurred through the process of my research into defining collocations and formulaic language, and into investigating their absence in the glossary and in the coursebook in general. Rather than the focus on collocations being limited to the lecture series described above, it seemed to permeate other aspects of the curriculum and the way in which the lecturers approached vocabulary and language patterning. Collocation became part of their own active teaching lexicon through this process. This was possible during 2018 and 2019 as collocation had been introduced as concept and fully explained in class, and thus was also part of the students' lexicons. This was reflected

by the lecturers during informal conversations, and I recorded these observations in my research journal at the time.

Monday, 10.09.2018 Lecturer 1 reflected after the GS1 language lecture that she became aware of the collocational/formulaic nature of the phrases/interjections in the Audio clip which was the focus of the lesson (Lektion 19: Er hatte doch keinen Bauch). We discussed how audio clips are also important texts which are an integral part of the course (I reflected how in the previous week's lecture, the audio text introduced some of the collocations which were then focussed on later in the lesson: Entschuldigung/tut mir leid).

Lecturer 1 drew students' attention to interjections such as "Ach was!" and "ach du liebe Zeit!". Lecturer 1 drew students' attention to the fact that these phrases are set patterns, i.e. collocations. Lecturer 1 stated that before my project, she may not have focussed on this, but now she is more often reflecting on collocations in the coursebook, and furthermore, on the register which these types of interjections embody for example, and making these overt in class.

In Lecturer 2's literature lecture on Thursday 13.09.2018, she divided students into groups, and allocated each group a section of the text (*Aschenputtel*) which they had to read and engage with, and then present back to the class (so that they could all get the full story). This fosters engagement and responsibility for building knowledge as a class. Students were also tasked with identifying which words were key to understanding the text, and they had to find a good translation. Students made use of their electronic resources/mobile apps, and only one student requested a print dictionary. Lecturer 2 recorded the words and translations on the whiteboard. Lecturer 2 photographed the board and was going to put up this photograph on RUconnected as a resource for students. She however reflected that these words, without their context, held little meaning. Lecturer 2 reflected that my project had made her think of the importance of language in the context of use, and thus she devised a handout showing the words highlighted in their context, with a corresponding translation. Both single words and formulaic phrases were highlighted as they correspond across languages, much as appears on [Linguee.de](http://Linguee.de) in the parallel translations examples section. This resource was uploaded to RUconnected for the students to make use of.

Lecturer 2 also made mention of this in Interview 3, 2018:

Lecturer 2      I think it's really important to make them aware of that to kind of learn to accept the messiness and ambiguity of language because they know that's how their own language works. I think we also focus so much on grammar and individual building blocks of the language, that's kind of the image of how a language works, that's what we project. We need the balance, because what we teach them is true, but we need the full picture, so I definitely think it's [teaching collocations] valuable. I mean we have all these things in the textbook, the phrases and they don't learn them and then they learn the individual words and they put them wrong.

This awareness carried over to 2019, and both Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 again made mention of how the insights from the project had caused them to highlight certain word patterns, particularly those which are contrastively different to English.

In the final interview, Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 spoke to how collocation had become a word used frequently in their own teaching vocabulary, as well as in the students' own vocabulary.

Lecturer 1: Yes, it is part of my teaching vocabulary, whenever I see one I immediately point it out to students I say ‘this is a collocation, you know now what a collocation is. You have been sensitized to it, so if you are writing it down in your vocabulary, in your rather virtual vocabulary exercise book, then write it down as a collocation and not as an individual word’. And it was quite gratifying to see quite a number of them nodded when I say ‘it’s a collocation, so this goes together’ and they would say ‘oh yes’.<sup>37</sup>

I do this for all of them because they all have had this awareness at a different level, but they all ought to know now. So I do this for all the year groups to ensure that this is a further didactic approach to ensure that they see that all of these things do not stand in isolation. That this is not something that we teach and then forget about it but that this actually has an impact for the rest of their language learning all the time, it’s always there. (Interview 5, 2019)

Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 further reported specific examples from teaching literature and translation, where students themselves had noticed that a phrase was a collocation, and how they had found this a gratifying experience (See Appendix, L).

One may view the above findings through an “ecological” lens, as discussed in Chapter 4 (Hinkelman & Gruba, 2012, p. 48). By undertaking my PhD, the effect has not been limited to the teaching and learning of single constructs, but rather has effects for the ontological development of students within the local context, and to some extent the staff as well. While I had set out to find ways of improving language learning (in particular writing fluency) within the curriculum, I had not anticipated the larger knock-on effects which the process would have. A transformative curriculum is one which is in a state of flux, and in which students and teachers remain critically aware of their own practice and adaptable to change (as evidenced in the case studies presented by Vorster, 2016). Action research is well suited to this type of critically reflective teaching practice (Edwards & Burns, 2015).

As has been discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, the application of second-language acquisition theory to actual classroom practice remains “sketchy” (Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013, p. 290), particularly as it is so difficult to measure the effects of one construct in isolation (Larsen-Freeman, 2018). Local context drives classroom practice, and it is not easy to generalise from the local and context specific, to the global (Kramsch, 2014). I have not attempted to make such generalisations here, but rather to reflect critically on the practices (based on theory) that have been particularly effective in this context. A complex systems approach has proved beneficial in analysing the local blended language learning context, as it allows for a holistic approach – one could also say ecological approach – to identifying

---

<sup>37</sup> Lecturer 1 made the additional comment in the process of our member checks: “I would like to point out that I previously avoided it – when I had used it previously, most students did not know what it meant, when I explained it, most students did not retain it until the next time when I used it, nobody took notes. So it isn’t as if I suddenly had discovered it, but I could now use it because you had prepared students for it”.

relationships between participants in the teaching and learning system. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, language teaching and learning occurs “at the edge of chaos”. In the South African higher education context, there are many factors which lead to particular difficulties in teaching and learning German as a foreign language, particularly in the blended learning model. It remains to be seen how the drastic changes in this context in 2020 as the result of the Covid-19 pandemic will affect teaching and learning in the coming months and years. Certainly, technology will have a role to play, and there will be much trial and error. In this climate, action research provides a solid foundation from which to proceed with exploring, understanding and transforming teaching practices in a way that is inclusive of local and particular experiences.

## ***Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations***

---

The goal of this research dissertation, as set out in Chapter 1, is to provide insights as to what constitutes best practice for foreign language teaching in South African higher education. This action research (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 18) specifically explored how to teach collocation as a vocabulary learning strategy, in a blended learning context. In this final chapter, I reflect on the lessons learned from the process of undertaking action research which sought to improve existing practices in teaching and learning German as a foreign language at a South African institution of higher education. In so doing, I explore the extent to which the research has met the validity criteria for successful action research. Best practices developed during the process of the two implemented action research cycles are outlined, and recommendations are put forward for foreign language teaching and learning practice in the South African higher education context, as well as for future research.

Neuner (2001, p. 37) highlights that teaching and learning German as a foreign language is always dynamic and complex, with many internal and external factors at play, such that it is impossible to generalise one single method suited to every context. Accordingly, in the social sciences, researchers place far more value on transferability than on generalisability (Herr & Anderson, 2015, pp. 74-75). As Kramsch & Steffensen (2008, p. 27) point out, “The articulation of local and particular experiences might lead to global changes, not by way of generalizability, but by way of analogy, because dialogue implies the emergence of shared experiences”. Through the rich description (Pine, 2009, p. 91) of this context gained through longitudinal mixed methods action research, other German Studies departments or sections may be able to identify with situations of blended learning and teaching collocation through analogy. The findings of this research thus have value for teaching German as a foreign language in the South African context particularly, but are not limited to this context, and can extend further in the Global South where there are related contextual factors, and to teaching other foreign or second languages in the South African higher education context, as will be expanded upon in this chapter.

Through the action research cycles I have come to appreciate that a context-specific approach (Bax, 2003a) is important in attempting to understand the complexity of a teaching and learning system and what might be best practice at the local level, as shaped by the contextual factors. In the discussion and analysis in previous chapters, I have sought to explore the complexity of the local foreign language-teaching context by taking student and lecturer perspectives into account, in light of institutional and national conditions. This has led to the further development of theory, as I adapted the Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System developed by Wang *et al.* (2015) in Chapter 7. This

allowed for a holistic analysis of the blended teaching and learning system in context, as discussed in Chapter 6 and 7.

The longitudinal nature of the study and my insider-outsider position (Herr & Anderson, 2015, pp. 40-41) has allowed for deep, nuanced understandings of the research context: I have been fortunate to have insider insights into the research context, as a previous student, tutor, and teaching assistant in German Studies at Rhodes University. I have also been fortunate to have outsider insights, experiencing the teaching and learning context as a PhD student who lectures part-time. I have been able to develop personally as a researcher and academic and become a more responsive teacher through the process of undertaking this PhD research.

This research has revealed the importance of explicit instruction and modelling of new concepts, in order to better support students' epistemological access to the discipline and ontological development within the discipline. What has emerged as particularly important for my own development as a language teacher is an understanding that we as teachers and lecturers in the South African higher education context cannot expect students to know what it means to be a good learner, and in particular, a good *language* learner. Coming from a privileged background myself, as a white, English-mother tongue, and what many would consider middle-class student (despite at times severe economic challenges) who attended a former model-C<sup>38</sup> school, I have mostly found the tertiary education spaces of teaching and learning to be comfortable, and accessible. At the outset of this study in 2017 I enrolled in a first-year isiXhosa course at my current institution, and this allowed me to experience again with a fresh perspective learning a new language in the tertiary education setting, and to draw parallels to my experience of learning German as a Foreign Language. While isiXhosa is an official language of the Eastern Cape, my learning experience was much like that of learning a foreign language. IsiXhosa is in the Nguni cluster of the Bantu language family (Mesthrie, 2002, p. 11), and is not related to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family to which English, Afrikaans and German all belong (Mesthrie, p. 11). Moreover, isiXhosa is absent in my personal linguistic landscape as most mother-tongue isiXhosa speakers also speak English and, as English is the language of prestige (Slabbert & Finlayson, 2002, p. 242; Wolff, 2017, p. 8), switch to English when engaged in conversation with a speaker of English (Slabbert & Finlayson, 2002, p. 242). Furthermore, isiXhosa is an agglutinative language, which means that formulaic language plays an important role in learning, particularly in the beginner stages, before one learns to break longer words down into

---

<sup>38</sup> "Former 'Model C' schools are those schools that were reserved for white pupils under apartheid. The term is not officially used by the Department of Basic Education, but is widely used to refer to former whites-only schools" (Roodt, 2011, online).

individual morphemes. Ellis' (2005) findings resonated with me personally while learning isiXhosa, as Ellis has suggested that formulaic expressions help with the later development of a rule-based competence as learners "bootstrap their way to grammar by first internalizing and then analyzing fixed sequences" (Ellis, 2005, p. 211). This experience, as well as my engagement with students of German, particularly in my role as graduate assistant where I provided help to students who were struggling with language learning components, helped me to reflect anew on the inherent difficulties of learning both systems of grammar, as well as acquiring sufficient vocabulary to facilitate understanding in the foreign language. These insights were instrumental in planning and executing the action research in this setting, with a view to improve upon existing good practices, and heightening students' awareness of collocation. Developing recommendations for research further along in this chapter is with the hope that this research will not only inform the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the South African higher education context, but teaching and learning of local indigenous languages to second language learners as well, due to the shared institutional context (including infrastructure and resources) and likely similarities in student body experience and perceptions.

I have been able to build my understandings of the research context (German Studies at Rhodes University) over time, first as an undergraduate and thereafter as a postgraduate student. In 2013, I researched the formal writing skills of German 3 students, using corpus linguistics, to uncover common lexical and morphosyntactic errors in student writing (Ortner, 2013). In 2014-2015 I explored the use of corpus linguistics as a method for students to use to identify formulaic academic phrases to help them improve their writing (Ortner, 2015; Ortner & Weber, 2018). My Master's research revealed that corpus linguistics is useful, but limited in applicability in the South African foreign language classroom due to time, skills and resource constraints. Returning to the same context, this doctoral research has allowed for the opportunity to explore the modification of corpus linguistic practices for use in the everyday classroom, within the traditional curriculum rather than alongside it. This doctoral research has shown that a modified inclusion of corpus linguistic practices (identifying frequent words, and their collocations in coursebook texts) is even more useful and definitely user-friendly and thus applicable to the context, as will be expanded upon in sections outlining best practices below.

In my role as researcher, teacher and reflexive practitioner, I have become aware of opportunities to make use of our students' social resources and their ways of being (Boughey & McKenna, 2016; Gee, 2012) to scaffold the transition to acquiring a foreign language in a context where one has very little opportunity for contact with mother-tongue speakers. This has only been possible through collaboration with the lecturers and students in the research context. In collaborating with staff and students I have strived for democratic validity (also known as ecological validity) (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 69) in this action research, creating and identifying solutions which are relevant to the

participating group. I foresee that the cycles of action research will continue in this context, as students and lecturers continue adapting and developing blended language learning practices, particularly for teaching collocations, building on understandings developed in this local context. Indeed, new lectures developed in 2020 by Lecturer 1 show the continued influence of this research on teaching and learning practices<sup>39</sup>. Through publishing and sharing these findings with the wider academic community, this research may achieve dialogic validity (Herr & Anderson, 2015, pp. 69-70)<sup>40</sup>, as has been possible for my Master's research (see Ortner & Weber, 2018; Ortner & Weber, 2020 in press).

The action research undertaken for this dissertation has shown that blended learning provides opportunities to adapt a curriculum and to resist dominant culture, creating safe and responsive teaching and learning spaces (see Chapter 7 for the examples of this in context). However, it has also highlighted the challenges of using technology in this context. Student and staff responses have indicated that the use of technology may lead to distraction, disruption, difficulty, and detriment of academic work (as categorised by Selwyn, 2016, p. 1010). The increasing diversity of students at university level is apparent, and responsiveness to this diversity of backgrounds and experiences is needed in order to develop transformative teaching and learning practices (Bozalek, *et al.*, 2013).

As stated in Chapter 3, technology should never be applied simply because it is available or seems to be cutting-edge; rather, it should be used only when it is the best tool to solve a pedagogical problem (Neary-Sundquist, 2015, p. 208). This philosophy has guided the development of the research and is indeed the underlying philosophy of blended language learning, which advocates that technology should be guided by an idea of what constitutes good language teaching practice. This idea is mirrored in the work of South African researchers such as Jaffer *et al.* who state that "it is the contextualised teaching and learning needs that ought to drive the ICT intervention, rather than the technology itself" (Jaffer *et al.*, 2007, p. 131).

Adapting and responding to student diversity has become even more apparent in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as researchers lament that many students will be left behind in the new online learning setting, without access to essential resources such as laptops and internet connectivity. However, on the other hand, Shay (2020) argues that:

[T]he bigger reality is that we have been leaving students behind for decades. We are characterised as a sector [higher education] by high drop-out and low throughput [...]. Since

---

<sup>39</sup> Personal correspondence with Lecturer 1. Examples available upon request.

<sup>40</sup> See for example a short video I produced for the educational technology unit at Rhodes University on blended learning for German Studies, which serves as an example for lecturers across the institution: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDiwqTX36Ko&list=PLe454\\_IXjIKRoPRgCxbDFF0\\_UZJggLnSP](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDiwqTX36Ko&list=PLe454_IXjIKRoPRgCxbDFF0_UZJggLnSP) (Ortner, 2019)

1994 equity of access has improved significantly, equity of outcomes has not. We have been leaving 30-50% of our students behind for decades now. (Shay, 2020)

This problem of high drop-out and low throughput in higher education in general stems from many contextual factors, including the poor quality of primary and secondary education in South Africa, as outlined in Chapter 2 (see also Scott, 2009). As this research has shown, individual sections and departments can do much to ensure that learning support is in place, as will be reflected in the best practices outlined below. However, as Shay (2020) above indicates, there is a limit to what higher education in South Africa can mend where previous schooling has already failed.

Action research is process-orientated and has been described as “building the plane while flying it” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 83). This type of research orientation is well suited to the current situation where contextual changes on the global scale affect local practice in unprecedented ways. There may be many mistakes made, as well as many instances of best practices which emerge in the coming months and years as universities transition to a greater integration of online learning. The action research orientation may provide academics with a useful methodological framework in which to plan, act, reflect and adapt their practice in collaboration with students and colleagues (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Pine, 2009). A complex adaptive systems view (Larsen-Freeman, 2011) of the teaching and learning system (see Chapter 7 for my revised framework) may also prove useful in holistically conceptualising the way in which a rapid increase in the use of technology affects various participants in the system, and their relationships to one another.

A number of best practices have been identified from the implemented action research with regard to the implementation of blended learning and teaching about collocations in the South African higher education context. In terms of blended learning, as stated above, explicit instruction is of utmost importance in terms of building basic skills such as how to access the course, how to download materials, and where to find them in the course structure. This is best established in the face-to-face setting, where students are able to ask questions and raise concerns. In fact, a practical setting in a computer lab where every student can do their own trial run would be ideal for induction purposes. In this research context, scaffolding the introduction and importance of online components of the class across the year groups from first year (online components including online hand-in, forum discussions and recorded lectures) was helpful in allowing students to develop their own skills and abilities with regard to learning online.

The lecturers in this context choose to use the institutional learning management system RUconnected as a platform for online components, rather than another commercial learning platform. This is identified as best practice, as lecturers are able to take advantage of institutional infrastructure and support structures, such as the Rhodes University library which provides training for students in

how to use this platform, and the educational technology unit, who provide training for staff members and who are available to answer queries and assist with aspects of course design which lecturers are struggling with. Furthermore, as explained previously (Chapter 6), the RUconnected pages for the German language modules (A1-B1) are based on the Moodle pre-sets developed by the *Menschen* publishers, Hueber. The lecturers in this way again align with existing external structures, enabling cohesion between the physical and the online learning environments. Each online learning page for the language modules closely follows the coursebook structure and provides a bank of teacher-approved resources. Lecturers have not made use of every one of the pre-set activities, preferring activities which they know, and which are simple, straightforward and user-friendly.

Therefore, although the *Menschen* pages are pre-sets, the nature of the learning management system means that the lecturer has ultimate agency over the course, and can choose what to include, what to discard, and what to add. The pre-set can thus be seen as a skeleton which the lecturer can flesh out and is thus far more flexible than the coursebook itself, which is static and unmalleable. Lecturers have added substantially to the pre-set page, reconfiguring both the outline and structure of the pages, by presenting the most recent topic first for example, to prevent unnecessary scrolling to reach the most relevant content (see interview 5, Lecturer 2), and by creating added sections for learning tips and resources for example, as was undertaken as part of my action research (see Chapter 6). Consequently, as has been shown in Chapter 7, lecturers use the online space to resist the dominant culture of the *Menschen* coursebook. This is seen particularly in the pre-recorded lectures. Lecturers focus on presenting grammatical concepts and explanations in the pre-recorded lectures, and then follow up on these explanations with activities in class. Presenting concepts outside of face-to-face class time and using in class time for engaging in activities corresponds to an idea of the flipped classroom (Johnson & Marsh, 2016). Students reported finding this particularly helpful, as they could revise grammatical concepts by re-watching the online lectures, particularly before tests and exams (evidence of which was seen in the logs of student activity on RUconnected, as reported by lecturers). In terms of integration of online components (see Mishan, 2016; Strack, 2007), including an attendance exercise after an online lecture proved a good way of ensuring students watched the online lecture in the required time period, although this created additional administrative burdens for lecturers. Assessment can be seen to produce equilibrium in the complex adaptive blended teaching and learning system (see Chapter 7), as students are more likely to engage if it is for marks.

In this local context, a “pedagogy first, technology second” approach has been followed for the most part, where a “pedagogical problem is identified, and then a solution is sought that may or may not involve technology” (Neary-Sundquist, 2015, p. 208). This can be seen particularly in the action implemented for teaching and learning collocations. Best practices for teaching and learning

collocation as an aspect of formulaic language included first and foremost explicit instruction in class on the concept, showing why it is important and how it may benefit learners, paired with “noticing” activities to find patterns in texts they already read for meaning within their *Menschen* coursebook (following on from Willis, 1998; Reder, 2006; ). This is best paired with vocabulary learning activities, such as practicing matching the noun to the correct verb, and then creating vocabulary lists which include the identified collocations together with the students, which they can use for learning purposes. Interactive glossaries were created on RUconnected for this purpose, but were not widely used by students. A better solution was the use of the online vocabulary learning software, Quizlet, which offers students a gamified setting in which to practice single word vocabulary as well as collocations (see Chapter 7). Students and teachers can create learning sets or download existing learning sets created by teachers and students elsewhere, thus requiring little additional input if learning sets already exist for the prescribed coursebook, such as for *Menschen*, the coursebook in use at Rhodes University. Lastly, of great importance in ensuring that students make active use of identified collocations, is giving students writing tasks on personally relevant topics. An exploration of student writing (see Chapter 6) showed a presence of taught collocations in both their homework writing, as well as in tests and exams where students do not have access to external resources.

By teaching about collocation as a concept (Laurillard, 1997, p. 173) from the first-year level onwards, students may develop a heightened awareness for language patterns from early on (Lewis, 1997), which is a desirable outcome according to the CEFR framework (Council of Europe, 2012). By making use of collocations in their own language output (spoken and written) students may appear more fluent, and may feel more confident as they can make use of the collocations as “islands of reliability” (Dechert, 1983 in Conklin & Schmitt, 2012, p. 47; Boers, *et al.*, 2006, p. 247). Furthermore, this action research has shown that by learning about collocation as a concept for German foreign language learning, students develop their metalinguistic awareness, and may become more reflective lifelong language learners (Berndt, 2013, p. 9), more aware of collocations in the target language, as well as other languages (such as English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa, as reported by students in 2019) helping them to develop their fluency and writing skills as multilingual language users. As shown in Chapter 7, this reflects findings from the 2015 MA dissertation where weaker students in particular reported that developing their an awareness of everyday-academic formulaic language in German as a foreign language helped them to develop their academic writing skills in English, and reflect on the conventions of academic writing across languages (Ortner & Weber, 2020 in press). No one particular year group seemed to benefit more from this instruction than others (although there were varied levels of participation in hand-ins and attendance of in-class and online activities, see Chapter 6); students from each year group reported positive gains in the reflective questionnaires, and showed

evidence of taught collocations in their writing in 2018 and 2019. Student questionnaire responses reflected that even in the small sample group, there were varied individual learning approaches, preferences, and motivations. Learning about collocations and how to identify them was more helpful for some students than for others, but ultimately provided students with one more strategy or tool to use, particularly for free writing, which is an aspect of the curriculum which students find to be challenging.

Thus, teaching and learning about the concept of collocation taking a text-based approach followed with writing exercises was well suited to the context of the research: a university-level foreign language course in South Africa. Having appropriate terminology to use in the university-level language learning classroom allowed for inclusion of this concept across the curriculum, as shown in Chapter 7. At the university level, it is necessary to equip students with concepts which they can apply to investigating the language at hand. This is why teaching grammar remains relevant in the university level language course, as it corresponds to the outcomes of tertiary education (Weber, *et al.*, 2017), equipping students with metalinguistic tools for critical engagement with the target language (and for language learning in general), and for developing accuracy as well as fluency in the target language (Ellis, 2005). Thus, teaching about the concept of collocation was identified as best practice in the local setting, and is recommended for other tertiary language learning contexts. The handout developed in this research (see Chapter 6) for formulaic language and collocation can be adapted and used in other contexts, and short YouTube videos used to supplement student learning where online access is possible, such as was undertaken in the research context.

This study took place at one institution of higher education in the South African context, with two German Studies lecturers and 202 German Studies students (of whom 132 participated in questionnaires) over the period 2017 to 2019. In order to contextualise the local findings, I drew on data from seven German lecturers at other institutions, and 73 French Studies students from Rhodes University. While I endeavoured to collect as much rich participant data as possible, student data was limited to questionnaires and my own reporting of in-class interactions, due to time constraints. A recommendation for further research would be to hold focus group interviews with smaller groups of students in order to gather further rich qualitative data related to the themes of blended learning and identifying collocations as a learning strategy. Focus group interviews (Heigman & Croker, 2009) could follow up on themes identified in the first two rounds of action research, for example the aspects of blended learning perceived as negative by students and lecturers, in order to develop further responsive action in context (Pine, 2009, p. 88). Recordings of in-class interactions (Heigman & Croker, 2009) would also be a potentially useful methodology to further uncover best practices in the delivery of student support and the explanation of concepts such as collocation. There are thus avenues for

further development of the action research in this research context. This is of course part of the nature of action research, which is never “completed”, but rather which at best continues to cycle and improve on practice in context (Foreman-Peck & Heilbronn, 2018; Herr & Anderson, 2015). This offers opportunities for continuous professional and pedagogic development (Edwards & Burns, 2015, p. 6).

The results of this research have specific relevance for the communities interested in teaching and learning German as a Foreign Language, those interested in blended language learning, and those interested in the application of corpus-based methodology to language teaching, in order to add to these worldwide research conversations on what constitutes best practice in these three areas.

- Local practice has shown that students are more likely to engage with resources (both technology-based and otherwise) when their use and function within the language learning process has been dealt with and explained in class.
- Students need guidance as to the best and most appropriate resources to use for learning. Lecturers should not assume that students know how learn, and how to find appropriate resources. On the other hand, lecturers can also learn from students and explore the resources they have come across in independent study (e.g. Duolingo, Quizlet etc.)
- The careful and considered use of technology can enhance students’ experience of language learning, but may also lead to many unforeseen consequences (such as frustration in learning to use new software) for both lecturers and students.
- Students are more likely to engage with online components (and other types of tasks) if there is a mark allocation attached to engagement.
- Collocation is a useful concept for language learning and could be taught by adapting the materials developed for this dissertation in most foreign-language and second-language learning settings in the South African higher education context.
- Concepts from corpus linguistics such as the identification of frequent words in a text, and the identification of their collocations, can be applied within a traditional language learning curriculum without any further application of technology. Where time and resources allow, teachers/lecturers can supplement traditional materials with examples from external corpora (e.g. for German, examples from Linguee.de or word clouds generated on DWDS).
- Integration of students’ knowledge of collocations in their own mother-tongues is useful and may impact on motivation to spot them in other languages, particularly where the collocations are contrastive across languages. This may aid the development of students as lifelong language learners (Berndt, 2013), by enhancing their metalanguage awareness.

In line with the above, this research contributes not only to the development of the discipline German as a foreign language, but also to the larger discipline of foreign language teaching and learning. The results from this study have shown that explicitly teaching about collocations and how to spot them in reading texts and encouraging students to make use of these in their own writing is a useful teaching and learning strategy in the university context. A small intervention such as that described in Chapter

6 can have an impact on the foreign language teaching and learning curriculum in context and does not necessarily require a radical change in practice, as with the case of computer-based data driven learning. This small intervention has had important implications for students in terms of their actual and perceived acquisition of metalinguistic vocabulary and ideas, as shown in their responses to the final reflective questionnaire (reported in Chapter 6 and 7 and included in Appendix F and G). All student respondents were able to define collocation in their own words. Some students reported being more confident both at identifying collocations in reading texts and at using them in their own writing, and reported being more aware of collocations not only in German, but in English, Afrikaans, and isiXhosa (the official languages of the Eastern Cape) amongst other languages both indigenous and foreign. The action research also had implications for students in terms of developing the technological skills needed to participate in the global economy through the use of carefully considered online learning components. In particular this was seen in their choice and use of online dictionary applications such as Linguee.de. Through collaborating in this action research, participants also had the opportunity to add their voices from the Global South to conversations on best practices in teaching and learning German as a foreign language. The enthusiasm demonstrated by students in actively collaborating in the research shows that they found this experience to be motivating and enriching. It is my hope that through undertaking this research some students may be inspired to continue their own language studies, completing postgraduate research in German Studies themselves, bringing new insights and fresh perspectives to the GFL discipline situated in the South African context.

## References

---

- Aborisade, P. A., 2013. Blended learning in English for academic purposes: a Nigerian case study. In: B. Tomlinson & C. Whittaker, eds. *Blended Learning in English Language Teaching : Course Design and Implementation*. London: British Council, pp. 35-42.
- Alevsson, M., 2003. Methodology for close up studies: struggling with closeness and closure. *Higher Education*, 46(2), pp. 167-193.
- Altmayer, C., 2001. Entwicklung des Faches Deutsch als Fremdsprache in nichtdeutschsprachigen Ländern: Europäische Perspektive. In: G. Helbig, L. Götze, G. Henrici & H. J. Krumm, eds. *Deutsch als Fremdsprache. Ein internationales Handbuch. 1*. Berlin / New York: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 124-140.
- Annas, R., 2003. Zur Situation des Faches Deutsch an südafrikanischen Universitäten. *Acta Germanica*, Volume 30/31, pp. 181-192.
- Annas, R., 2016. Deutsch an Universitäten im südlichen Afrika. Zur Entwicklung des Fachs seit 2003. *Acta Germanica*, Volume 44, pp. 105-118.
- Anthony, L., 2019. *AntConc (Version 3.5.8) [Computer Software]*, Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University. Available from <https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software>.
- Ashwin, P., 2015. *Reflective Teaching in Higher Education*. 1st ed. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Augustyn, P., 2013. Translation and bilingual practice for German vocabulary teaching and learning. *Die Unterrichtspraxis / Teaching German*, 46(1), pp. 27-43.
- Autelli, A. & Konecny, C., 2015. Combining lexicography with second-language didactics: The case of a bilingual collocations dictionary Kollokationen Italienisch-Deutsch. In: O. M. Karpova & F. I. Kartashkova, eds. *Beyond Dictionaries*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 185-198.
- Bahns, J., 1993. Lexical collocations: a contrastive view. *ELT Journal Volume*, 47(1), pp. 56-63.
- Baker, A., 2007. Teaching German as a foreign language in a multilingual South African context. *Per Linguam*, 23(1), pp. 30-44.
- Balboni, P. E., 2005. *The epistemological nature of language teaching methodology*, Venice: Language Acquisition and Learning: Document 1, Department of Language Sciences, Ca' Foscari University.
- Balfour, R. J., van der Walt, J. L., Spamer, E. J. & Tshivhase, A. C., 2015. Blended learning, and open and distance learning: Implications for best practice in higher education. *Progressio: South African Journal for Open and Distance Learning Practice*, 37(1), pp. 1-23.

- Bañados, E., 2006. A blended-learning pedagogical model for teaching and learning EFL successfully through an online interactive multimedia environment. *CALICO Journal*, 23(3), pp. 533-550.
- Barr, B. W. B., 2016. Checking the effectiveness of Quizlet as a tool for vocabulary learning. *The Center for ELF Journal*, 2(1), pp. 36-48.
- Bartfeld, M., 2005. *How to Create Sacred Geometry Mandalas*. Santa Fe: NM: Mandalart Creations.
- Bauer, G. U., 2015. Caught between foreign cultural and development policies perspectives of German Studies and German as a foreign language in Africa. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 22(4), pp. 611-630, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2015.1018198>.
- Bax, S., 2003a. The end of CLT: a context approach to language teaching. *ELT Journal*, 57(3), pp. 278-287.
- Bax, S., 2003b. CALL – past, present and future. *System*, Volume 31, p. 13–28.
- Behrens, H., 2009. Usage-based and emergentist approaches to language acquisition. *Linguistics*, 47(2), pp. 383-411.
- Benaissa, A., 2020. Chapter 6: The use of online quizlets and digital flashcards to enhance students' cognitive skills of attention and memorisation of vocabulary. In: S. Balkhir, ed. *Cognition and Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 73-92.
- Berg, B. L., 2004. Chapter 7: Action research. In: B. L. Berg, ed. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Boston: Pearson, pp. 195-208.
- Bernardini, S., 2002. Exploring new directions for discovery learning. In: B. K. & G. Marko, ed. *Teaching and Learning by Doing Corpus Analysis*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, p. 165–182.
- Berndt, A., 2013. Die Entwicklung fremdsprachlicher Kompetenz in lebenslanger Sicht: Ein Zugang über die Theorie dynamischer Systeme. In: A. Berndt, ed. *Fremdsprachen in der Perspektive lebenslangen Lernens*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, pp. 46-60.
- Berndt, A., 2013. *Fremdsprachen in der Perspektive lebenslangen Lernens*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Blyth, C., 2009. From textbook to online materials: the changing ecology of foreign language publishing in the era of ICT. In: M. J. Evans, ed. *Foreign Language Learning with Digital Technology*. London/New York: Continuum, pp. 174-203.
- Boers, F.; Eyckmans, J.; Kappel, J.; Stengers, H.; Demelcheleer, M., 2006. Formulaic sequences and perceived oral proficiency: Putting a Lexical Approach to the test. *Language Teaching Research*, 10(3), pp. 245-261.

- Boers, F. & Webb, S., 2018. Teaching and learning collocation in adult second and foreign language learning. *Language Teaching*, 51(1), pp. 7-89.
- Bonk, C. J. & Graham, C. R., 2006. *The Handbook of Blended Learning*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Pfeiffer.
- Boughey, C., 2013. What are we thinking of? A critical overview of approaches to developing academic literacy in South African higher education. *Journal for Language Teaching*, 47(2), pp. 25-42.
- Boughey, C. & McKenna, S., 2016. Academic literacy and the decontextualized learner. *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning*, 4(2), pp. 1-9.
- Boulton, A., 2008. DDL: Reaching the parts that other teaching can't reach?. *Teaching and language corpora*, Volume 8, pp. 38-44.
- Boulton, A., 2010. Data-driven learning: Taking the computer out of the equation. *Language Learning*, 60(3), pp. 534-572.
- Boulton, A. & Cobb, T., 2017. Corpus use in language learning: A meta analysis. *Language Learning*, 67(2), pp. 348-393.
- Bovill, C., Cook-Sather, A. & Felten, P., 2011. Students as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design and curricula: implications for academic developers. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 16(2), pp. 133-145.
- Bozalek, V., Ng'ambi, D. & Gachago, D., 2013. Transforming teaching with emerging technologies: Implications for higher education institutions. *South African Journal of Higher Education: Special Issue: 2011 Forum of the Southern African Association of Institutional Research*, 27(2), pp. 419-436.
- Brandt, K., 2016. Rhodes University students vow to continue with protests. *Eyewitness News*, 29 September, pp. <https://ewn.co.za/2016/09/29/Rhodes-University-students-vow-to-continue-with-protests>.
- Braun-Podeschwa, J., Habersack, C. & Pude, A., 2015. *Menschen Deutsch als Fremdsprache Kursbuch B1*. München: Hueber.
- Breitsameter, A., Glas-Peters, S. & Pude, A., 2013. *Menschen Deutsch als Fremdsprache Arbeitsbuch A2*. München: Hueber.
- Breitsameter, A., Glas-Peters, S. & Pude, A., 2015. *Menschen Deutsch als Fremdsprache Arbeitsbuch B1*. München: Hueber.
- Brenner, M. E., 2006. Interviewing in Educational Research. In: J. L. Green, G. Camilli & P. B. Elmore, eds. *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education*. New York: Routledge, pp. 357-370.

- Brett, D. & González-Lloret, M., 2009. Technology-enhanced materials. In: M. H. Long & C. J. Doughty, eds. *The Handbook of Language Teaching*. United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 351-370.
- Breyer, Y., 2009. Learning and teaching with corpora: reflections by student teachers. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 22(2), pp. 153-172.
- Brown, D., 2011. What aspects of vocabulary knowledge do textbooks give attention to?. *Language Teaching Research*, Volume 15, p. 83–97.
- Brown, J. D., 2009. Open-response items in questionnaires. In: J. Heigham & R. A. Croker, eds. *Qualitative Research in Applied Linguistics: A Practical Introduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 200-219.
- Brudermann, C., 2010. From action research to the implementation of ICT pedagogical tools: taking into account students' needs to propose adjusted online tutorial practice. *ReCALL*, 22(2), pp. 172-190.
- Bryman, A., 2012. *Social Research Methods*. 4th ed. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Buhofer, H., Dräger, A. M., Meier, S. & Roth, T., 2014. *Feste Wortverbindungen des Deutschen. Kollokationenwörterbuch für den Alltag*. Tübingen: Francke.
- Burns, A., 2011. Classrooms as complex adaptive systems: A relational model. *TESL - EJ*, 15(1), pp. 1-25.
- Calvert, M. & Sheen, Y., 2014. Task-based language learning and teaching: An action-research study. *Language Teaching Research*, 19(2), pp. 226-244.
- Canagarajah, S., 2011. Writing to learn and learning to write by shuttling between languages. In: R. M. Manchón, ed. *Learning-to-Write and Writing to Learn in an Additional Language*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 111-132.
- Chamot, A., 2004. Issues in language learning strategy research and teaching. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 1(1), pp. 14-26.
- Chapelle, C., 1997. CALL in the year 2000: still in search of research paradigms?. *Language Learning & Technology*, 9(9), pp. 19-43.
- Chapelle, C., 1998. Multimedia CALL: lessons to be learned from research on instructed SLA. *Language Learning and Technology*, 2(1), pp. 22-34.
- Chapelle, C., 1999. Research questions for a CALL research agenda. *Language Learning & Technology*, 3(1), pp. 96-104.

- Chapelle, C., 2009. The relationship between second language acquisition theory and computer-assisted language learning. *The Modern Language Journal. Focus Issue: Technology in the Service of Language Learning*, Volume 93, pp. 741-753.
- Chapelle, C., 2016. Call in the year 2000: a look back from 2016. *Language Learning & Technology*, 20(2), pp. 159-161.
- CHE, 2007. *Review of Higher Education: Selected Themes*. [Online] Available at: [http://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/Review\\_HE\\_SA\\_2007\\_Complete\\_0.pdf](http://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/Review_HE_SA_2007_Complete_0.pdf) [Accessed 08 March 2018].
- Conklin, K. & Schmitt, N., 2012. The Processing of Formulaic Language. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, Volume 32, p. 45–61.
- Cook, V. J., 1985. Chomsky's universal grammar and second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 6(1), pp. 2-18.
- Council of Europe, 2012. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR)*. [Online] Available at: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp) [Accessed 14 June 2013].
- Cross, J., 2006. Foreword. In: C. J. Bonk & C. R. Graham, eds. *The Handbook of Blended Learning*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer, pp. xvii-xxiii.
- DAAD, 2019. *Das Projekt DHoch3*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.daad.de/en/the-daad/what-we-do/promoting-the-german-language/the-dhoch3-project/> [Accessed 15 05 2019].
- Daskalovska, N., 2015. Corpus-based versus traditional learning of collocations. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 28(2), pp. 130-144.
- De Kadt, E., 2002. German speakers in South Africa. In: J. Mesthrie, ed. *Language in South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 148-160.
- De Kock, S., 2015. Transforming GER101 for the 21st century learner: Reflections on introducing technology as a teaching and learning tool to first year German students at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. *EDUSA - Deutschunterricht im Südlichen Afrika*, Volume 10, pp. 54-68.

- Dechert, H., 1983. How a story is done in a second language. In: C. Faerch & G. Kasper, eds. *Strategies in Interlanguage Communication*. London: Longman, pp. 175-195.
- Didenko, A. V. & Pichugova, I. L., 2016. Post CLT or Post-Method: major criticisms of the communicative. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 28(01028), pp. 1-4, DOI: 10.1051/shsconf/20162801028.
- Dobstadt, M. & Riedner, R., 2014. „Dann machen Sie doch mal etwas anderes“ - Das Literarische im Deutsch als Fremdsprache-Unterricht und die Kompetenzdiskussion. In: N. Bernstein & C. Lerchner, eds. *Ästhetisches Lernen im DaF-/DaZ-Unterricht: Musik–Kunst–Film–Theater–Literatur. Materialien Deutsch als Fremdsprache*. Göttingen: Göttinger Universitätsverlag, pp. 17-31.
- Dodd, B., 1997. Exploiting a Corpus of Written German for Advanced Language Learning. In: W. e. al., ed. *Teaching and Language Corpora*. London: Longman, pp. 131-145.
- Dörnyei, Z., 2014. Researching complex dynamic systems: 'Retrodictive qualitative modelling' in the language classroom. *Language Teaching*, 47(1), pp. 80-91.
- Dörnyei, Z. & Taguchi, T., 2010. *Questionnaires in Second Language Research*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.
- Drysdale, J. S., Graham, C. R., Spring, K. J. & Halverson, L. R., 2013. An analysis of research trends in dissertations and theses studying blended learning. *Internet and Higher Education*, Volume 17, pp. 90-100.
- du Preez, P., Simmonds, S. & Verhoef, A. H., 2016. Rethinking and researching transformation in higher education: a meta-study of South African trends. *Transformation in Higher Education*, 1(1), pp. 1-7.
- Duff, P. A., 2008. *Case Study Research in Applied Linguistics*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Duff, P. A., 2012. Identity, agency, and second language acquisition. In: S. M. Gass & A. Mackey, eds. *Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition*. London/ New York: Routledge, pp. 410-426.
- Durant, P. L., 2008. *High frequency collocations and second language learning*, University of Nottingham: PhD thesis, [http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/10622/1/final\\_thesis.pdf](http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/10622/1/final_thesis.pdf).
- Řurčo, P. & Vajičková, M., 2018. *Kollokationen im Unterricht: Ein Übungsbuch*. Nümbrecht, Germany: Kirsch Verlag.
- Edwards, E. & Burns, A., 2015. Language teacher action research: achieving sustainability. *English Language Teaching*, 70(1), pp. 6-15, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccv060>.
- Ellis, N. C. & Cadierno, T., 2009. Constructing a second language. *Annual Review of Cognitive Linguistics*, Volume 7, pp. 111-139.

- Ellis, R., 2005. Principles of instructed language learning. *System*, Volume 33, pp. 209-224.
- Ellis, R., 2008. *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University.
- Engelbrecht, N., 2020 in press. Chapter 18: Translation in foreign language teaching – cultivating critical reflection and symbolic competence. In: R. H. Kaschula & E. H. Wolff, eds. *Report on 'The Transformative Power of Language: From postcolonial to knowledge society'*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Engler, L.-R., 2001. Problems of a distance course in German as a foreign language. *Linköping University Interdisciplinary Studies*, Volume 1, pp. 1-13.
- Ernst Klett Sprachen, 2017. *50 Jahre DaF: 1967 bis 2017*. [Online] Available at: [www.daf50.de](http://www.daf50.de) [Accessed 09 March 2018].
- Eskom, 2020. *Eskom: What is load shedding?*. [Online] Available at: <http://loadshedding.eskom.co.za/LoadShedding/Description> [Accessed 24 04 2020].
- Evans, M., 2009. *Foreign Language Learning with Digital Technology*. [https://books.google.co.za/books?id=hC8SBwAAQBAJ&lpg=PA6&ots=SQhhG8nB\\_D&dq=blythe%20from%20textbook%20to%20online%20materials%3A%20the%20changing%20ecology&pg=PA3#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.za/books?id=hC8SBwAAQBAJ&lpg=PA6&ots=SQhhG8nB_D&dq=blythe%20from%20textbook%20to%20online%20materials%3A%20the%20changing%20ecology&pg=PA3#v=onepage&q&f=false) ed. London/New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Evans, S., Pude, A. & Specht, F., 2012. *Menschen: Deutsch als Fremdsprache Kursbuch A1*. München: Hueber.
- Ferreira-Meyers, K. L. F. & Horne, F., 2017. Multilingualism and the language curriculum in South Africa: contextualising French within the local language ecology. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus*, Volume 51, pp. 23-40.
- Fluent in 3 Months, 2020. *Fluent in 3 Months*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.fluentin3months.com/start-here/> [Accessed 14 09 2020].
- Foreman-Peck, L. & Heilbronn, R., 2018. Does action research have a future? A reply to Higgins. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 52(1), pp. 126-143.
- Gabrielatos, C., 2005. Corpora and language teaching: just a fling, or wedding bells?. *TESL-EJ*, 8(4), pp. 1-35.

- Garrett, N., 1991. Technology in the service of language learning: trends and issues. *The Modern Language Journal*, 75(1), pp. 74-101.
- Gee, J. P., 2012. *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in Discourses*. Fourth ed. London: Routledge.
- Glas-Peters, S., Pude, A. & Reimann, M., 2012. *Menschen Deutsch ald Fremdsprache Arbeitsbuch A1*. München: Hueber.
- Godwin-Jones, R., 2013. Emerging technologies: The technological imperative in teaching and learning less commonly taught languages. *Language Learning & Technology*, 17(1), pp. 7-19.
- Goossens, D. & Granger, S., 2017. *Learner Corpora Around the World*. [Online] Available at: <https://uclouvain.be/en/research-institutes/ilc/cecl/learner-corpora-around-the-world.html> [Accessed 11 09 2017].
- Graham, C. R., 2006. Blended learning systems: definition, current trends, and future directions. In: C. J. Bonk & C. R. Graham, eds. *The Handbook of Blended Learning*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer, pp. 3-21.
- Graham, C. R., Woodfield, W. & Harrison, J. B., 2013. A framework for institutional adoption and implementation of blended learning in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, Volume 18, pp. 4-14.
- Granger, S., 1998. The computer learner corpus: a versatile new source of data for SLA research. In: S. Granger, ed. *Learner English on Computer*. London: Addison Wesley, pp. 3-18.
- Granger, S., 2002. A birds-eye view of learner corpus research. In: S. Granger, J. Hung & S. Petch-Tyson, eds. *Computer Learner Corpora, Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Teaching*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 3-33.
- Granger, S., 2003. The international corpus of learner English: a new resource for foreign language learning and teaching and second language acquisition research. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(3), pp. 538-546.
- Granger, S., 2004. Computer learner corpus research: current status and future prospects. *Language and Computers*, 52(1), pp. 124-145.
- Granger, S. & Meunier, F., 2008. Phraseology in language learning and teaching. Where to from here?. In: S. Granger & F. Meunier, eds. *Phraseology in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*. Amsterdam: Philadelphia, pp. 247-252.
- Grgurović, M., 2011. Blended Learning in an ESL Class: A Case Study. *CALICO Journal*, 29(1), pp. 100-117.

- Grgurović, M., Chappelle, C. A. & Shelley, M. C., 2013. A meta-analysis of effectiveness studies on computer technology-supported language learning. *ReCALL*, 25(2), pp. 165-198.
- Gruba, P., 2004. Computer assisted language learning (CALL). In: A. Davies & C. Elder, eds. *The Handbook of Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 623-648.
- Guerrettaz, A. M. & Johnston, B., 2013. Materials in the classroom ecology. *The Modern Language Journal*, 97(3), pp. 779-796, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2013.12027>.
- Guse, A., Ozorowska, M. & Schwingshackl, A., 2015. *Menschen A2.1/A2.2 Glossary*. München: Hueber.
- Habersack, C., Pude, A. & Specht, F., 2013. *Menschen Deutsch als Fremdsprache Kursbuch A2*. München: Hueber.
- Halverson, L. R.; Graham, C. R.; Spring, K. J.; Drysdale, J. S.; Henrie, C. R., 2014. A thematic analysis of the most highly cited scholarship in the first decade of blended learning research. *Internet and Higher Education*, Volume 20, pp. 20-34.
- Hamann, E., 2009. Nach dem Deutschstudium in Afrika wird man – was? Eine Überprüfung der Zielsetzungen der Deutschabteilung der Universität Lomé anhand einer Verbleibstudie. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics PLUS*, Volume 38, pp. 195-204.
- Hausmann, F. J., 1984. Wortschatzlernen ist Kollokationslernen. Zum Lehren und Lernen französischer Wortverbindungen. *Praxis des neusprachlichen Unterrichts*, 3(4), pp. 395-406.
- Hausmann, F. J., 2007. Die Kollokationen im Rahmen der Phraseologie: Systematische und historische Darstellung. *ZAA*, 55(3), pp. 217-234.
- Heeks, R., 2018. *Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D)*. New York: Routledge.
- Heigman, J. & Croker, R. A., 2009. *Qualitative Research in Applied Linguistics: A Practical Introduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Helbig, G., Götze, L., Henrici, G. & Krumm, H. J., 2001. *Deutsch als Fremdsprache: 1. Halbband*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Heller, M. & Duchêne, A., 2012. Pride and profit: Changing discourses of language, capital and nation-state. In: M. Heller & A. Duchêne, eds. *Language in Late Capitalism*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-21.
- Hellmich, E., 2015. *Survey Resources: Survey Platform Analysis*. [Online] Available at: <http://blc.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/BLC-Fellow-Hellmich-handout.pdf>
- [Accessed 02 October 2017].

- Herr, K. & Anderson, G., 2015. *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty*. 2nd ed. USA: SAGE Publications.
- Higgins, J., 2014. Academic freedom, critique and the Humanities: some current challenges. *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning*, 2(2), pp. 68-84.
- Hinkelman, D. & Gruba, P., 2012. Power within Blended Programs in Japan. *Language Learning & Technology*, 16(2), pp. 46-64.
- Hockly, N., 2018. Technology for the language teacher: blended learning. *ELT Journal*, 72(1), pp. 97-101.
- Hoey, M., 2005. *Lexical Priming: A New Theory of Words and Language*. London: Routledge.
- Horn, P., 1999. An untimely question: What is and to what end do we study literature at a university?. *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies*, 8(1), pp. 81-88.
- Housen, A., Kuiken, F. & Vedder, I., 2012. Complexity, accuracy and fluency: Definitions, measurement and research. In: A. Housen, F. Kuiken & I. Vedder, eds. *Dimensions of L2 Performance and Proficiency: Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency in SLA*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 1-20.
- Howie, S.; Van Staaden, S.; Tshela, M.; Dowse, C.; Zimmerman, L., 2011. *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study: South African Children's Reading Literacy Achievement*, Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
- Hueber, 2017. *Menschen Info: Konzeption, Bewegende Themen, neurodidaktisch fundiert*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.hueber.de/menschen/info> [Accessed 01 May 2017].
- Hueber, 2020. *Moodle Kursräume: Die ideale Ergänzung zum Präsenzkurs*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.hueber.de/menschen/moodle> [Accessed 14 09 2020].
- Ivankova, N. V. & Cresswell, J. W., 2009. Mixed methods. In: J. Heigman & R. A. Croker, eds. *Qualitative Research in Applied Linguistics: A Practical Introduction*. New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, pp. 135-161.
- Jaffer, S., Ng'ambi, D. & Czerniewicz, L., 2007. The role of ICTs in higher education in South Africa: One strategy for addressing teaching and learning challenges. *International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology (IJEDICT)*, 3(4), pp. 131-142..
- Jara, M., Mohammed, F. & Cranmer, S., 2008. *Evaluation of e-learning courses*, WLE Centre Occasional Paper 4: Institute of Education, University of London.

- Jaworska, S., 2009. *The German Language in British Higher Education: Problems, challenges, teaching and learning perspectives*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.
- Jaworska, S., Krummes, C. & Ensslin, A., 2015. Formulaic sequences in native and non-native argumentative writing in German: a corpus-driven comparison. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 20(4).
- Jazbec, S. & Enčeva, M., 2012. Aktuelle Lehrwerke für den DaF-Unterricht unter dem Aspekt der Phraseodidaktik. *Porta Linguarum*, Volume 17, pp. 153-171.
- Johnson, C. & Marsh, D., 2016. The flipped classroom. In: M. McCarthy, ed. *The Cambridge Guide to Blended Learning for Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 55-67.
- Johns, T., 1991. Should you be persuaded: two examples of data-driven learning. In: T. Johns & P. King, eds. *Classroom Concordancing*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham, pp. 1-16.
- Jones, R. L., 1997. Creating and using a corpus of spoken German. In: A. Wichmann, S. Fligelstone, T. McEnery & G. Knowles, eds. *Teaching and Language Corpora*. London: Longman, p. 146–156.
- Jones, R. L., 2000. Textbook German and authentic spoken German: A corpus-based comparison. In: B. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk & P. J. Melia, eds. *Practical Applications in Language Corpora*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, pp. 501-516.
- Jones, R. L. & Tschirner, E., 2006. *A Frequency Dictionary of German*. USA/Canada: Routledge.
- Kalender, S. & Pude, A., 2013. *Menschen Deutsch als Fremdsprache Lehrerhandbuch A1.1*. München: Hueber.
- Kalender, S. & Pude, A., 2014. *Menschen Deutsch als Fremdsprache Lehrerhandbuch A2.1*. München: Hueber.
- Kalender, S. & Pude, A., 2015. *Menschen Deutsch als Fremdsprache Lehrerhandbuch B1.1*. München: Hueber.
- Kamper, G. D., 2004. Reflections on educational research in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 24(3), p. 233–238.
- Kaschula, R. H. & Maseko, P., 2014. The Intellectualisation of African languages, multilingualism and education: a research-based approach. *Alternation, Special Edition*, Volume 13, pp. 8-35.
- Konecny, C. & Autelli, E., 2019. *Kollokationen Italienisch - Deutsch*. Hamburg: H. Buske.
- Kramersch, C., 2014. Teaching foreign languages in an era of globalization: introduction. *The Modern Language Journal*, 98(1), pp. 296-311.

- Kramersch, C. & Steffensen, S. V., 2008. Ecological Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition and Socialization. In: P. A. Duff & N. H. Hornberger, eds. *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*. 2nd Edition, Volume 8: Springer Science+Business Media LLC, pp. 17-28.
- Krashen, S., 2014. Does Duolingo "trump" university level language learning?. *The International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 9(1), pp. 13-15.
- Krauß, S., 2015. Apps for learning German vocabulary: What does the digital landscape look like?. *German as a Foreign Language*, Volume 2, pp. 32-57.
- Krummes, C. & Ensslin, A., 2014. What's Hard in German? (WHiG): a British learner corpus of German. *Corpora*, 9(2), pp. 191-205.
- Krummes, C. & Ensslin, A., 2015. Formulaic language and collocations in German essays: from corpus-driven data to corpus-based learning materials. *Language Learning*, 43(1), pp. 110-127.
- Kussler, R., 2000. Computerunterstützter Fremdsprachenunterricht: Entwicklung und gegenwärtiger Stand. *Acta Germanica*, 28(1), pp. 133-145.
- Kussler, R., 2001. Deutschunterricht und Germanistikstudium in Südafrika. In: G. Helbig, L. Götze, G. Henrici & H. J. Krumm, eds. *Deutsch als Fremdsprache. Ein internationales Handbuch*. 2. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 1609-1618.
- Kussler, R., 2002. 5 Years on the "HyLL": The MPhil Programme in Hypermedia for Language Learning at Stellenbosch University in critical retrospect. Jyväskylä, EuroCALL 2002 Conference Proceedings.
- Kussler, R., 2003. Zur Darstellung fremder Kulturen in Sprachlernsoftware. In: A. Wierlacher & A. Bogner, eds. *Handbuch interkulturelle Germanistik*. Stuttgart: Verlag J. B. Metzler, pp. 425-433.
- Lantolf, J., 2011. The sociocultural approach to second language acquisition: Sociocultural theory, second language acquisition, and artificial L2 development. In: D. Atkinson, ed. *Alternative Approaches to Second Language Acquisition*. London/New York: Routledge, pp. 24-48.
- Larsen-Freeman, D., 1997. Chaos/Complexity Science and Second Language Acquisition. *Applied Linguistics*, 18(2), pp. 141-165.
- Larsen-Freeman, D., 2001. Teaching grammar. In: M. Celce-Murcia, ed. *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* 3. Boston: Thomson/ Heinle, pp. 251-266.
- Larsen-Freeman, D., 2007. Reflecting on the cognitive-social debate in second language acquisition. *The Modern Language Journal*, Volume 91, pp. 773-787.
- Larsen-Freeman, D., 2009. Adjusting expectations: The study of complexity, accuracy, and fluency in second language acquisition. *Applied Linguistics*, 30(4), pp. 579-589.

- Larsen-Freeman, D., 2011. Complex, dynamic systems: A new transdisciplinary theme for applied linguistics. *Language Teaching, Cambridge University Press*, 45(2), pp. 202-214.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. & Cameron, L., 2007. Complex systems and applied linguistics. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 17(2), p. 226–239.
- Laufer, B. & Girsai, N., 2008. Form-focused instruction in second language vocabulary learning: a case for contrastive analysis and translation. *Applied Linguistics*, 29(4), pp. 694-716.
- Laurillard, D., 1997. Learning formal representations through multimedia. In: F. Marton, D. Hounsell & N. J. Entwistle, eds. *The Experience of Learning: Implications for Teaching and Studying in Higher Education*. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, pp. 172-183.
- Le Grange, L., 2011. Rethinking transformation in South African higher education. *Perspectives in Education*, 29(2), pp. 1-9.
- Leech, G., 1997. Teaching and language corpora: a convergence. In: A. Wichmann, S. Fligelstone, T. McEnery & G. Knowles, eds. *Teaching and Language Corpora*. London: Addison Wesley Longman, pp. 1-23.
- Lewis, M., 1997. *Implementing the Lexical Approach*. Hove: Language Teaching Publications.
- Li, S., 2017. Using corpora to develop learners' collocational competence. *Language Learning & Technology*, 21(3), pp. 153-171.
- Littlejohn, A., 2012. Language teaching materials and the (very) big picture. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 9(1), p. 283–297 .
- Liu, M., Moore, Z., Graham, L. & Lee, S., 2002. A look at the research on computer-based technology use in second language learning. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 34(3), pp. 250-273.
- Long, M., 2017. Instructed second language acquisition (ISLA): geopolitics, methodological issues, and some major research questions. *ISLA*, 1(1), pp. 7-44.
- Long, M. H., 1998. Focus on form in task-based language teaching. *University of Hawai'i Working Papers in ESL*, 16(2), pp. 35-49.
- Lüdeling, A.; Doolittle, S.; Hirschmann, H.; Schmidt, K.; Walter, M., 2008. Das Lernerkorpus Falko. *Deutsch als Fremdsprache*, Volume 2, pp. 67-73.
- Maes, K., 2017. *Using verb + noun collocations to facilitate language production in GSP courses*. University of Leiden, Proceedings: Van Schools tot Scriptie III, Een colloquium over universitair taalvaardigheidsonderwijs. December 2016. pp. 39 - 48.

- Masgoret, A. M. & Gardner, R. C., 2003. Attitudes, motivation and second language learning: a meta-analysis of studies conducted by Gardner and associates. *Language Learning*, 53(1), pp. 123-163.
- Mayadas, A. & Picciano, A., 2007. Blended learning and localness: The means and the end. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 11(1), pp. 3-7.
- McCarthy, M., 2016. *Blended Learning for Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McDonald, W. C., 2007. Redacting internet short-texts (IST) to improve second-language German writing skills. *German as a Foreign Language*, Volume 3, pp. 90-118.
- McEney, T. & Hardie, A., 2012. What is corpus linguistics?. In: *Corpus Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-24.
- McGuinness-King, K., 2003. Developments in German Studies in the Asia-Pacific Region. *GFL-journal*, Volume 3, pp. 20-55.
- McKay, S. L., 2006. *Researching Second Language Classrooms*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Mertens, D., 2007. Transformative paradigm: Mixed methods and social justice. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(3), pp. 212-225.
- Mesthrie, R., 2002. *Language in South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meunier, F., 2002. The pedagogical value of native and learner corpora. In: S. Granger, J. Hung & S. Petch-Tyson, eds. *Computer Learner Corpora, Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Teaching*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 119-142.
- Meunier, F., 2011. Corpus linguistics and second/foreign language learning: exploring multiple paths. *RBLA, Belo Horizonte*, 11(2), pp. 459-477.
- Mindt, D., 1997. Corpora and the teaching of English in Germany. In: A. Wichmann, S. Fligelstone, T. McEney & G. Knowles, eds. *Teaching and Language Corpora*. London: Addison Wesley Longman, pp. 40-50.
- Mishan, F., 2004. Authenticating corpora for language learning: a problem and its resolution. *ELT Journal*, 58(3), pp. 219-227.
- Mishan, F., 2013a. Demystifying Blended Learning. In: B. Tomlinson, ed. *Developing Materials for Language Teaching*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 207-224.

- Mishan, F., 2013b. Modes of delivery. In: B. Tomlinson, ed. *Applied Linguistics and Materials Development*. London: Bloomsbury, pp. 287-301.
- Mishan, F., 2016. Re-conceptualising materials for the blended language learning environment . In: M. McCarthy, ed. *The Cambridge Guide to Blended Learning for Language Teaching* . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 123-138.
- Mitchell, R., Myles, F. & Marsden, E., 2013. *Second Language Learning Theories*. 3rd ed. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Mnguni, L., 2020. *Online learning in lockdown is far from ideal*. [Online] Available at: <https://mg.co.za/article/2020-04-08-online-learning-in-lockdown-is-far-from-ideal/> [Accessed 10 May 2020].
- Molander, K., 2016. *Students protesting over list of alleged rapists arrested at Rhodes University*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2016-04-20-students-protesting-over-list-of-alleged-rapists-arrested-at-rhodes-university/> [Accessed 14 09 2019].
- Monnapula-Mapesela, M., 2020. *Mobile data bundles for Rhodes University students*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.ru.ac.za/cvrtt/latestnews/28aprilmobiledatabundlesforrhodesuniversitystudents.html> [Accessed 28 April 2020].
- Morgan, B. & Martin, I., 2014. Toward a research agenda for classroom as ecosystem. *The Modern Language Journal*, Volume 98, pp. 667-670.
- Morrow, W., 1993. Epistemological access in the university. *AD Issues*, 1(1), pp. 3-5.
- Mostert, M. & Quinn, L., 2009. Using ICTs in teaching and learning: Reflections on professional development of academic staff. *International Journal of Education and Development using ICT*, 5(5), pp. 72-84.
- Motteram, G. & Sharma, P., 2009. Blended learning in a Web 2.0 world. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies & Society*, 7(2), pp. 83-96.
- Mühr, S., 2009. Authenticity and originarity in foreign language learning in the diaspora. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics*, Volume 38, pp. 215-231.
- Mukherjee, J., 2004. Bridging the gap between applied corpus linguistics and the reality of English language teaching in Germany. *Language and Computers*, Volume 52, pp. 239-249.

- Mukherjee, J., 2006. Corpus linguistics and language pedagogy: The state of the art - and beyond. In: S. Braun, K. Kohn & J. Mukherjee, eds. *Corpus technology and language pedagogy: New resources, new tools, new methods*. New York: Peter Lang, pp. 5-24.
- Nation, I. S. P., 2001. *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nattinger, J. R. & De Carrico, J. S., 1992. *Lexical Phrases and Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Neary-Sundquist, C., 2015b. A corpus-based pedagogy for German vocabulary. *Selected conference papers: Learn languages, explore cultures, transform lives*, pp. 201-215.
- Neary-Sundquist, C. A., 2015a. Aspects of vocabulary knowledge in German textbooks. *Foreign Language Annals*, 48(1), pp. 68-81.
- Nesselhauf, N., 2005. *Collocations in a Learner Corpus*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Neumeier, P., 2005. A closer look at blended learning - parameters for designing a blended learning environment for language teaching and learning. *ReCALL*, 17(2), pp. 163-178.
- Neuner, G., 2001. 3. Didaktisch-methodischer Ansatz: Die lehr- und lernwissenschaftliche Perspektive. In: G. Helbig, L. Götze, G. Henrici & H. J. Krumm, eds. *Deutsch als Fremdsprache: 1. Halbband*. Berlin/ New York: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 31-41.
- Nizonkiza, D., 2017. Improving academic literacy by teaching collocations. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics*, Volume 47, pp. 153-179, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5774/47-0-267>.
- Nizonkiza, D. & Van de Poel, K., 2019. Mind the gap: Towards determining which collocations to teach. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics*, Volume 56, pp. 13-30, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5842/56-0-775>.
- O'Byrne, W. I., 2016. *Four steps to conducting action research in the classroom*. [Online] Available at: <https://wiobyrne.com/action-research/> [Accessed 17 July 2019].
- Okazaki, T., 2005. Critical consciousness and critical language teaching. *Second Language Studies*, 23(2), pp. 174-202.
- O'Keefe, A., McCarthy, M. & Carter, R., 2007. *From Corpus to Classroom: Language Use and Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Olexová, N. & Orsolya, G., 2016. Verbale Kollokationen kontrastiv. In: P. Ďurčo, ed. *Kollokationsforschung und Kollokationsdidaktik*. Wien: Lit Verlag, pp. 103-120.

- Oliver, M. & Trigwell, K., 2005. Can 'Blended Learning' be redeemed?. *E-Learning*, 2(1), pp. 17-26.
- Ortner, G. J., 2013. *A pilot study for the proposed Masters Dissertation, 2014. Examining the formal writing skills of German 3 students, using corpus linguistics, to uncover common lexical and morphosyntactic errors in student writing*, Rhodes University, Grahamstown: Unpublished Honours Thesis.
- Ortner, G. J., 2015. *A corpus-based approach to writing in German as a Foreign Language in the South African Tertiary Context*, Rhodes University, Grahamstown: Unpublished Master's Research Thesis.
- Ortner, G. J., 2019. *Blended Learning for Undergraduate German Studies*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDiwqTX36Ko&list=PLe454 IXjIKRoPRgCxbDFF0 UZJqgLnSP> [Accessed 10 May 2020].
- Ortner, G. J. & Weber, U. S., 2018. Using corpora to inform teaching practice in German Studies. *Per Linguam*, 34(2), pp. 69-83, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5785/34-2-789>.
- Ortner, G. J. & Weber, U. S., 2020, in press. Student approaches and attitudes towards writing in German as a foreign language, using corpus-linguistic tools. *SAALT*, 53(2).
- Oxford, R. L., 2017. *Teaching and researching language learning strategies*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.
- Ozorowska, M. & Schwingshackl, A., 2014. *Menschen A1.1/A1.2 Glossary*. München: Hueber.
- Paquot, M., 2018. Corpus research for language learning and teaching. In: A. Phakiti, P. De Costa, L. Plonsky & S. Starfield, eds. *Palgrave Handbook of Applied Linguistics Research Methodology*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-22.
- Park, Y. & Warschauer, M., 2016. Reading instruction in a technological age. In: X. Chen, V. Dronjic & R. Helms-Park, eds. *Reading in a second language: Cognitive and psycholinguistic issues*. New York: Routledge, pp. 282-302.
- Pawley, A. & Syder, F. H., 1983. Two puzzles for linguistic theory: nativelike selection and nativelike fluency. In: J. C. Richards, ed. *Language and Communication*. New York: Longman, pp. 191-126.
- Pine, G. J., 2009. *Teacher action research: Building knowledge democracies*. 2009 ed. California: Sage.
- Prensky, M., 2001. Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon (MCB University Press)*, 9(5), pp. 1-6.
- Quasthoff, U., 2011. *Wörterbuch der Kollokationen im Deutschen*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Quizlet, 2020. *Quizlet: Home.* [Online] Available at: <https://quizlet.com/latest> [Accessed 14 09 2020].

Rahimi, M. & Miri, S. S., 2014. The impact of mobile dictionary use on language learning. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 98, pp. 1469-1474.

Reder, A., 2011. Zur Auffindbarkeit von Kollokationen in Lernwörterbüchern. *Jahrbuch der ungarischen Germanistik*, pp. 290-310.

Reder, A., 2013. Kommen Kollokationen in Mode? Kollokationskonzepte und ihre mögliche Umsetzung in der Didaktik. *Linguistik online*, 47(3/11), pp. 131-140.

Rets, I., 2017. Vocabulary Retention and Concordance-based Learning in L3 Acquisition. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 3(2), pp. 313–324, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.32601/ejal.461029>.

Rhodes University, 2017. *Why choose Rhodes.* [Online] Available at: <https://www.ru.ac.za/introducingrhodes/whychooserrhodes/> [Accessed 01 10 2019].

Rhodes University, 2018a. *Student Networking Costs.* [Online] Available at: <https://www.ru.ac.za/studentnetworking/costs/> [Accessed 10 April 2018].

Rhodes University, 2018b. *Campus Infrastructure Status Report.* [Online] Available at: <https://www.ru.ac.za/?ss360Query=school%20of%20langauges> [Accessed 02 10 2019].

Rhodes University, 2019a. *German Studies: Staff.* [Online] Available at: <https://www.ru.ac.za/german/staff/undineweber/> [Accessed 05 06 2019].

Rhodes University, 2019b. *Rhodes University Calendar.* [Online] Available at: [https://www.ru.ac.za/media/Rhodes\\_University\\_Calendar\\_2019.pdf](https://www.ru.ac.za/media/Rhodes_University_Calendar_2019.pdf) [Accessed 29 January 2020].

Riazi, A. M. & Candlin, C. N., 2014. Mixed-methods research in language teaching and learning: Opportunities, issues and challenges. *Language Teaching*, 47(2), pp. 135-173.

Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. S., 1986. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching: A Description and Analysis.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Römer, U., 2004. Comparing real and ideal language learner input: the use of an EFL textbook corpus in corpus linguistics and language teaching. In: G. Aston & S. Bernardini, eds. *Corpora and language learners*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 151-168.
- Römer, U., 2009. The inseparability of lexis and grammar: Corpus linguistic perspectives. *Annual Review of Cognitive Linguistics*, 7(1), pp. 140-162.
- Römer, U., 2011. Corpus research applications in second language teaching. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, Volume 31, pp. 205-225.
- Roodt, M., 2011. *Research and Policy Brief: 'Model C' is the model to emulate*. [Online] Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20140221235521/http://www.sairr.org.za/sairr-today-1/research-and-policy-brief-model-c-is-the-model-to-emulate-1-february-2011> [Accessed 10 May 2020].
- RUESC, 2014. *Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee Handbook*. [Online] Available at: [www.ru.ac.za/research/ethics/](http://www.ru.ac.za/research/ethics/) [Accessed 14 November 2018].
- Ruthner, A. R., 2013. Der Einsatz authentischer Texte zur Vermittlung interkultureller Kompetenz im DaF-Unterricht. *Temeswarer Beiträge zur Germanistik*, Volume 10, pp. 209-220.
- Ryan, S. & Dörnyei, Z., 2013. The long term evolution of language motivation and the L2 self. In: A. Berndt, ed. *Fremdsprachen in der Perspektive lebenslangen Lernens*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, pp. 89-100.
- Schmidt, R., 2001. Attention. In: P. Robinson, ed. *Cognition and Second Language Instruction*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, p. 3–32.
- Schmidt, R., 2010. *Attention, awareness, and individual differences in language learning*. Singapore, Proceedings of CLaSIC 2010, National University of Singapore, Centre for Language Studies.
- Scott, I., 2009. First-Year experience as terrain of failure or platform for development? Critical choices for higher education. In: B. Leibowitz, A. Van der Merwe & S. Van Schalkwyk, eds. *Focus on First-Year Success: Perspectives Emerging from South Africa*. Stellenbosch: SUN PReSS, pp. 17-36.
- Selwyn, N., 2016. Digital downsides: Exploring university students' negative engagements with digital technology. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 21(8), pp. 1006-1021.
- Sharwood Smith, M., 1993. Input enhancement in instructed SLA: theoretical bases. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 15(2), pp. 165-179.

- Shay, S., 2020. *Daily Maverick: Online remote teaching in higher education is not the problem*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-05-03-online-remote-teaching-in-higher-education-is-not-the-problem/?fbclid=IwAR0Y1F46nWoYgNhQ1JZsmqL3ApKoUSKWYX0w6loEsNJSejigowH2XtHcuCQ> [Accessed 07 May 2020].
- Siepmann, D., 2008. Phraseology in learners' dictionaries: What, where and how?. In: F. Meunier & S. Granger, eds. *Phraseology in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, pp. 185-202.
- Simon-Pelanda, H., 2001. Landeskundlicher Ansatz. In: G. Helbig, L. Götze, G. Henrici & H. Krumm, eds. *Deutsch als Fremdsprache – ein internationales Handbuch. 1. Halbband*. Berlin: de Gruyter, pp. 41-55.
- Sinclair, J., 1991. *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sinclair, J., 1997. Corpus evidence in language description. In: A. Wichmann, S. Fligelstone, T. McEnery & G. Knowles, eds. *Teaching and Language Corpora*. London: Addison Wesley Longman, pp. 27-39.
- Sin, C., Tavares, O. & Amaral, A., 2019. Accepting employability as a purpose of higher education? Academics' perceptions and practices. *Studies in Higher Education*, 44(6), pp. 920-931.
- Singh, H., 2003. Building effective blended learning programs. *Educational Technology*, 43(6), pp. 51-54.
- Skorge, S., Kussler, R. & Rode, R., 1984. *Deutsch ZA 6&7*. Stellenbosch: Maskew Miller Longman.
- Slabbert, S. & Finlayson, R., 2002. Code-switching in South African townships. In: R. Mesthrie, ed. *Language in South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 235-257.
- Snowball, J., 2014. Using interactive content and online activities to accommodate diversity in a large first year class. *Higher education*, 67(6), pp. 823-838.
- Snowball, J. & Mostert, M., 2010. Introducing a Learning Management System in a large first year class: Impact on lecturers and students. *SAJHE*, 24(5), pp. 818-831.
- Somekh, B., 1995. The contribution of action research to development in social endeavours: A position paper on action research methodology. *British Educational Research Journal*, 21(3), pp. 339-355.
- Spada, N., 2015. SLA research and L2 pedagogy: Misapplications and questions. *Language teaching*, 48(1), pp. 69-81.
- Steinig, W. & Huneke, H.-W., 2007. *Sprachdidaktik Deutsch: eine Einführung*. 3rd ed. Neuburg a. d. Donau: Erich Schmidt Verlag.

- Strack, E., 2007. A road to understanding: why learners drop out of a blended language learning (BLL) environment. *ReCALL*, 19(1), pp. 57-78.
- Stringer, E. T., 2014. *Action Research*. 4 ed. London: Sage.
- Swain, M., 1995. Three functions of output in second language learning. In: G. Cook & B. Seidlhofer, eds. *Principle and Practice in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 125-144.
- Swales, J. M. & Feak, C. B., 1994. *Academic Writing for Graduate Students: A Course for Non-native Speakers of English*. 4 ed. United States of America: University of Michigan Press.
- Szudarski, P. & Carter, R., 2016. The role of input flood and input enhancement in EFL learners' acquisition of collocations. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 26(2), pp. 245-265, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12092>.
- Targońska, J., 2014. Kollokationen - ein vernachlässigstes Gebiet der DaF-Didaktik. *Linguistik online*, 68(6/14), pp. 127-149.
- Targońska, J., 2015. Welchen Kollokationsbegriff braucht die Fremdsprachendidaktik? Anregungen zu einer Fremdsprachendidaktisch orientierten Auffassung des Kollokationsbegriffs. *Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny*, LXII(3), pp. 415-434.
- Targońska, J., 2018. Vom Text zur Übung. Kollokationen in Lesetexten und ihre Widerspiegelung in Übungen (am Beispiel ausgewählter DaF-Lehrwerke). *Linguistik online*, 89(2/18), pp. 51-81.
- Thornbury, S., 2016. Educational technology: Assessing its fitness for purpose. In: M. McCarthy, ed. *The Cambridge Guide to Blended Learning for Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 25-35.
- Tomlinson, B., 2010. Principles and procedures of materials development for language learning. In: N. Harwood, ed. *Materials in ELT: Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tomlinson, B., 2012. Materials development for language learning and teaching. *Language Teaching*, 45(2), p. 143–179.
- Tomlinson, B., 2013. *Developing materials for language teaching*. 2nd ed. London / New York: Bloomsbury.
- Tschirner, E., 2006. Häufigkeitsverteilungen im Deutschen und ihr Einfluss auf den Erwerb des Deutschen als Fremdsprache. *Vortragsmanuskript EURALEXO 6.09.09 (2006)*, pp. 1278-1288.
- Tshuma, N., 2016. *Teaching and Learning with Technology: Reframing traditional understandings and practices*. [Online]

Available at: <http://heltasa.org.za/ru-teaching-technology-booklet/>  
[Accessed 01 09 2018].

Tshuma, N., 2018a. *Educational Technology Strategy & Programme*, Rhodes University, Grahamstown: Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning.

Tshuma, N., 2018b. *A critical realist exploration of the culture of resistance in educational technology integration practices at a South African university*. Grahamstown: Rhodes University, Unpublished PhD Thesis.

van Lier, L., 1996. *Interaction in the Language Curriculum: Awareness, Autonomy and Authenticity*. Harlow: Longman.

Vannestål, M. E. & Lindquist, H., 2007. Learning English grammar with a corpus: Experimenting with concordancing in a university grammar course. *ReCALL*, 19(3), pp. 329-350.

Von Maltzan, C., 2009. Sprachenpolitik und die Rolle der Fremdsprachen (Deutsch) in Südafrika. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics PLUS*, Volume 38, pp. 205-214.

Vorster, J., 2016. *Curriculum in the Context of Transformation: Reframing traditional understanding and practices*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/chertl/documents/Curriculum%20in%20the%20Context%20of%20Transformation%20Final.pdf>

[Accessed 09 March 2018].

Vyatkina, N., 2013. Discovery learning and teaching with electronic corpora in an advanced German grammar course. *Die Unterrichtspraxis / Teaching German*, 46(1), pp. 44-61.

Vyatkina, N., 2016a. Data-driven learning for beginners: The case of German verb-preposition collocations. *ReCALL*, 28(2), p. 207–226.

Vyatkina, N., 2016b. Data-driven learning of collocations: Learner performance, proficiency, and perceptions. *Language Learning & Technology*, 20(3), pp. 159-179.

Vyatkina, N., 2020. Corpora as open educational resources for language teaching. *Foreign Language Annals*, Volume 53, pp. 359-370, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/flan.12464>.

Vyatkina, N. & Boulton, A., 2017. Corpora in language teaching and learning. *Language Learning and Technology*, 21(3), pp. 1-8.

Waldrop, M. M., 1992. *Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos*. London: Viking Publication.

- Wang, Y., Han, X. & Yang, J., 2015. Revisiting the blended learning literature: using a complex adaptive systems framework. *Educational Technology & Society*, 18(2), p. 380–393.
- Warschauer, M., 1996. Computer-assisted language learning: an introduction. In: S. Fotos, ed. *Multimedia Language Teaching*. Tokyo: Logos, pp. 3-20.
- Warschauer, M., 2002. Reconceptualizing the Digital Divide. *First Monday*, 7(7), pp. 1-13.
- Warschauer, M. & Healey, D., 1998. Computers and language learning: an overview. *Language Teaching*, 31(2), pp. 57-71.
- Webb, S. & Kagimoto, E., 2009. The effects of vocabulary learning on collocation and meaning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43(1), pp. 55-77.
- Weber, A., 2018. Teaching grammar through literature in foreign language learning with German as an example. *Per Linguam*, 34(1), pp. 78-89.
- Weber, U., 2017. *School of Languages and Literatures Curriculum Review*, Grahamstown: Unpublished report submitted to the Deputy Dean of Humanities, Prof Mark de Vos.
- Weber, U. S., 2015. Can studying a foreign language build or improve (inter-) cultural competence? A preliminary case study of students' subjective impressions. In: A. Witte & T. Harden, eds. *Foreign Language Learning as Intercultural Experience*. Oxford: Peter Lang, pp. 231-242.
- Weber, U. S., 2016. *TAU Fellowships Programme, Progress Report on project: "Cultures and Languages in Africa and the Culture of Teaching in the School of Languages and Literatures at Rhodes University. A Case Study."*, Grahamstown/Makhanda: Unpublished Report for Teaching Advancement at Universities.
- Weber, U. S. & Domingo, R. S. C., 2011. Adding another colour to the rainbow: an attempt at imparting German cultural competence in a South African University context. In: A. Witte & T. Harden, eds. *Intercultural Competence: Concepts, Challenges, Evaluations*. Bern: Peter Lang, pp. 177-191.
- Weber, U. S., Domingo, R. S. C. & Fourie, R. B., 2017. Beyond language: German Studies in a South African University context. In: R. H. Kaschula, P. Maseko & H. E. Wolff, eds. *Multilingualism and Intercultural Communication: A South African Perspective*. Pretoria: Wits University Press, pp. 323-335.
- Widdowson, H. G., 1978. *Teaching Language as Communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Widdowson, H. G., 1998. Context, community and authentic language. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(4), pp. 705-716.

- Willis, J., 1998. Concordances in the classroom without a computer: assembling and exploiting concordances of common words. In: B. Tomlinson, ed. *Materials Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 44-66.
- Witte, A., 2003. Germanistik und Daf in Afrika (Subsahara) - Geschichte, Bestandsaufnahme, Aussichten. *Acta Germanica*, Volume 30/31, pp. 169-179.
- Wolff, H. E., 2017. Language ideologies and the politics of language in post-colonial South Africa. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus*, Volume 51, pp. 1-22 .
- Wray, A., 2000. Formulaic Sequences in Second Language Teaching: Principle and Practice. *Applied Linguistics*, 21(4), pp. 463-489.
- Wray, A., 2002. *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wray, A., 2013. Research timeline: formulaic language. *Language Teaching*, 46(3), pp. 316-334.
- Yoon, H., 2008. More than a linguistic reference: the influence of corpus technology on L2 academic writing. *Language Learning & Technology*, 12(2), pp. 31-48.
- Zaalbalwi, R. S. & Gould, A. M., 2017. English collocations: A novel approach to teaching the language's last bastion. *Ampersand*, Volume 4, pp. 21-29.
- Zambrana, M. R. B., 2017. Corpus analysis of phraseology in an A1 level textbook of German as a foreign language. *Quaderns de Filologia: Estudis Lingüistics*, Volume 22, pp. 13-32.
- Zaremohzzabieh, Z.; Samah, B. A.; Omar, S. Z.; Bolong, J.; Akhtar, N., 2014. Addictive Facebook use among university students. *Asian Social Science.*, 10(6), pp. 107-116, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v10n6p107>.
- Zhao, Y., 2003. Recent developments in technology and language learning: a literature review and meta-analysis. *CALICO Journal*, 21(1), pp. 7-27.

## Appendices

This appendix lists all questionnaire items and interview schedules. Links to additional appendices are also provided.

### *Digest of Results (online)*

For access to all questionnaire responses and interview transcripts please access the “Digest of Results” at the following link:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QJ8zZsTrF\\_XCxFjT8cjwUh0KlzNU1LjY/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QJ8zZsTrF_XCxFjT8cjwUh0KlzNU1LjY/view?usp=sharing)

### *Ethical clearance documents (online)*

For access to ethical clearance documents please follow this link:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QMvLfdBRXdHcZDhFVEAJtRpHySq5xTjT?usp=sharing>



**AA. Student informed-consent form for participation in the action research****Informed-Consent Form**

Dear Participant,

My name is Gwyndolen Ortner (g10o1092). I am a PhD candidate studying at Rhodes University, supervised by Dr Undine Weber. The title of my research is “Using Blended Learning and Corpora as Tools to aid the Transformation of Teaching and Learning of German as a Foreign Language: Action Research Conducted at Rhodes University”.

Blended learning involves a combination of traditional face-to-face teaching methods, and interactive online components. There are many purported benefits to using this approach, such as increased access for a variety of learners, and increased learning success. We will be undertaking a language module in the course of the year which has been designed to enhance your study of the German Language. The content of this language course, and the course outcomes, remains unchanged from previous years, but there will be added computer-mediated components.

With your consent, writing submitted during the course of the year will be added to the RUDaF (Rhodes University *Deutsch als Fremdsprache*) learner corpus. This is a collection of texts written by learners of German at Rhodes University. This is the only learner corpus for German in South Africa, and is a valuable resource for teaching and learning German, as patterns in learner writing can be identified.

There are minimal anticipated risks to taking part in this research. Ethical clearance has been obtained for this project by the Joint SOLL and Linguistics Research Ethics Committee (SOLLING17/83488).

Please take note of the following:

- Your participation in all activities is mandatory as it is part of the German Studies curriculum, however participation in the research is optional.
- If you agree to participate using this consent form, it means that your participation and any work that you submit can be used for the purposes of the research. Your work and participation will be represented anonymously in the research.
- You may however not want to have your work and participation included in the research findings, for personal reasons. This will not negatively affect you in any way.
- You can withdraw your consent to have any work or participation used for research purposes at any time during the data collection phase, but any work and participation recorded up until that point will be included in the research findings.

- We value your contributions to this research and undertake to inform you of the outcomes of the research findings, which should aid in the understanding and use of Blended Learning and corpora for language teaching, aiming to improve teaching methods.

I ..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and **I consent / I do not consent** to participating in the research project.

**I consent/ I do not consent** to have my writing included **anonymously** (under an assigned participant number) in the RUDaF learner corpus, and to be used for further research purposes.

**(Please circle your desired consent options above)**

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time should I so desire, but that my participation in and submissions for the course up until that point will remain a part of the study.

I understand that my participation in the course as a whole is for the benefit of my degree.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Place

**A. Q1. Online and in-class learning for German Studies (Google forms, online, 2017)**

Note: The following is the text which was used to create the online questionnaire. To see the online formatting of the questionnaire, please follow the link below, or see the PDF files in the CD attachment. This questionnaire was adapted for use with French Studies by changing the word 'German' to 'French' throughout.

Links to the questionnaires:

German Studies Questionnaire: <https://forms.gle/6KiXqDxzqZJHcU9o7>

French Studies Questionnaire: <https://forms.gle/fgSoMNimKsxFMtq7>

*Dear participant,*

*This questionnaire aims to form an overview of how you as a student experience the use of technology for learning. This is part of an overarching research project in the German Studies Section of the School of Languages and Literatures which examines the use of Blended Learning (a combination of in-class and online components) for language teaching, and which aims to make the online resources for German Studies more accessible and effective.*

*Completion of the survey indicates your consent for your answers being used for research purposes. Your responses are anonymous and will remain anonymous in any research published as a result of this study. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, you may stop the questionnaire. This will not negatively impact you in any way. This survey and the entire research project have been vetted by the School of Languages and Literatures and Linguistics Ethics Committee (ETHICAL CLEARANCE OF PROJECT SOLLING17/83488).*

*\* Required*

*Learner Background and Access*

1. What year of German Studies are you currently registered for? \*

Mark only one oval.

German Studies 1

German Studies 2

German Studies 3

German Studies Honours

Other:

2. What year of study are you in overall? \*

Mark only one oval.

1st

2nd

3rd

4th

5th

6th

Other:

3. What is your gender?
4. How old are you?
5. At what age did you first start using computers? \*
6. How comfortable do you feel using technology on a day to day basis in your personal life? (Computers, the internet, e-mail, cellphones and the like) \*

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

1= Uncomfortable. I do not enjoy using technology in my personal life.

5= Comfortable. I enjoy using technology, and engaging with it to assist in everyday life.

7. Any comments regarding the above? (Why do you feel this way?)
8. How comfortable do you feel using technology for learning purposes? (Computers, the internet, e-mail, cellphones and the like) \*

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

1= Uncomfortable. I do not enjoy engaging with technology.

5= Comfortable. I enjoy using technology, and engaging with it to assist in all aspects of learning.

9. Any comments regarding the above? (Why do you feel this way?)
10. Do you own any of the following devices? (You may check more than one option) \*

Check all that apply.

Computer

Laptop

Tablet

Smartphone

None of the above

Other:

11. Do you live in university residence or do you live elsewhere in Grahamstown? \*

Mark only one oval.

University residence

Elsewhere in Grahamstown

Other:

12. Do you have access to the internet where you live in Grahamstown? \*

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Other:

13. Do you feel that there are any barriers or problems regarding your access of online learning materials? \*

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

14. If yes, please elaborate on what you feel those barriers/ problems are.

*My experience of learning in German Studies*

*German Studies makes use of online resources (such as online lectures, short clips, links to relevant websites and readings) to supplement in-class learning. This section aims to find out how you experience this use of technology for learning in German Studies.*

15. How would you describe the relationship between the online and in-class learning in German Studies? \*

Mark only one oval.

Online and in-class learning enhance each other.

Online and in-class learning are relevant to each other.

The connection between the two is not always clear.

There is little or no connection between the two.

I never do any learning online.

Other:

16. Any comments regarding the above? (Why do you feel this way?)

17. Which aspects of online learning through RUconnected for German Studies do you find most helpful? (You may choose more than one option. Some of these options may not apply to first years.)

\*Check all that apply.

Recorded lectures

Links to relevant websites

Links to relevant readings

Peer presentations

Lecture slides

Forum discussions

Collaborative class projects (where all contribute to what information is on the webpage)

Short online tutorials about concepts; not related to particular chapters in the textbook

None of the above

Other:

18. Any comments regarding the above? (Why do you feel this way?)
19. Which online components for German Studies did you not enjoy, or find unhelpful?
20. How often do you log on to RUconnected? \*
- Mark only one oval.
- Every day
  - A few times a week
  - Once a week
  - Once a month
  - Never
  - Other:
21. How comfortable do you feel in general with using the university's online resources? (Such as RUconnected, the online Library website, and ROSS) \*
- Mark only one oval.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 1= Uncomfortable: I am confused, and unable to access the RU online resources listed above
  - 5= Comfortable: I am a confident user, able to navigate the RU online platforms with ease
22. Any comments regarding the above? (Why do you feel this way?)
23. Have you attended one of the library's information literacy workshops apart from your O- Week library workshop? \*
- Mark only one oval.
- Yes
  - No
24. If yes, did you find the workshop helpful, and why/why not?
25. Do you make private use of any other online resources to supplement your learning of German?\*
- Mark only one oval.
- Yes
  - No
26. If yes, which resources do you find most helpful? (If you have the links to any websites, you are welcome to share them here)
27. To what degree would you agree with the following statement: Technology enables me to take charge of my own learning. \*
- Mark only one oval.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

28. I would like to learn more about how I can use technology for improving my own learning.\*

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

1= Not at all.

5= Yes, definitely!

29. Any last questions or comments relating to this questionnaire?

*Thank you for your participation. It is a valuable contribution to our research on teaching and learning in German Studies.*

*If you have any queries or comments, or would like to know more about the research project, feel free to email [g.ortner@ru.ac.za](mailto:g.ortner@ru.ac.za) or [u.weber@ru.ac.za](mailto:u.weber@ru.ac.za) or [n.engelbrecht@ru.ac.za](mailto:n.engelbrecht@ru.ac.za)*

**B. Q1. Online language learning questionnaire, (Paper-based, in-class, 2018)**

The following questionnaire was paper based rather than online and delivered in class.

*Dear participant,*

*This questionnaire aims to form an overview of how you as a student approach online learning in German, and is part of the PhD project: “Using Blended Learning and Corpora as Tools to aid the Transformation of Teaching and Learning of German as a Foreign Language: Action Research Conducted at Rhodes University”.*

*Your participation in this questionnaire is optional and has the approval of the RU SOLL/Ling Ethics Committee (SOLLING17/83488).*

*Completion of the questionnaire indicates your consent to participate, and for your answers to be used for research purposes. Be assured that your responses will be kept confidential and you will never be individually identified. Data will be combined with other respondents' data. You may omit any question you are not comfortable answering, and you may discontinue the questionnaire at any time.*

*The questionnaire should not take more than 15 minutes to complete. Please give me your honest opinions and answers. There are no anticipated risks for participating in this questionnaire.*

*Thank you for taking the time and effort to complete this questionnaire. I really appreciate your willingness to participate, and I value your contributions to this research.*

*Participant student number:* \_\_\_\_\_

1 Online Language Learning

1.1 How do you feel about the online language section for German? Please circle your choice.

1=strongly disagree    2= disagree    3=neutral    4= agree    5=strongly agree

1.1.1 I feel confident using RUconnected as a learning platform for German Studies.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

1.1.2 I feel comfortable navigating the “2018 German Studies 2 – SPRACHE” page on RUconnected, to find the information that I need.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

1.1.3 I received sufficient instruction on how to use RUconnected for this German course.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

1.2 Why do you feel this way about RUconnected?

---



---



---



---



---

1.3 How often do you log on to RUconnected to access the “2018 German Studies 2 – SPRACHE” page?

---

1.4 How would you describe the relationship between online and in-class learning for the language component of German Studies? (Please tick one option).

- Online and in-class learning enhance each other.
- Online and in-class learning are relevant to each other.
- The connection between the two is not always clear.
- There is little or no connection between the two.

1.5 Why do you feel this way about the relationship between the two components of the course?

---



---



---



---

1.6 Please rate the following computer-mediated tools which are used as a part of your language module, in terms of their usefulness. Please circle your choice.

1=not useful    2= sometimes useful    3= often useful    4=very useful

1.6.1 Email

1                      2                      3                      4

1.6.2 Forum discussions

1                      2                      3                      4

1.6.3 Recorded lectures

1                      2                      3                      4

1.6.4 Links to relevant websites for language learning materials

1                      2                      3                      4

1.6.5 The online *Menschen* interactive textbook

1                      2                      3                      4

1.6.6 Short online tutorials (about concepts, not related to particular chapters in the textbook)

1                      2                      3                      4

1.7 Why do you feel this way about the above tools?

---



---



---

1.8 How do you approach engaging with the online language lectures? Please circle your choice.

1=strongly disagree    2= disagree    3=neutral    4= agree    5=strongly agree

1.8.1 I watch the whole lecture.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

1.8.2 I take notes during the lecture.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

1.8.3 I watch the lectures more than once.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

1.8.4 I watch the online lectures as regularly as I attend the physical lectures.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

1.8.5 I prefer watching the online lectures to attending a physical lecture.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

1.8.6 I am able to ask questions if I don't understand something in an online lecture.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

1.9 Why do you feel you approach the online lectures in this way?

---



---



---



---

1.10 Overall, what online components of the language module do you most enjoy?

---



---



---



---

1.11 Overall, which online components of the language module do you not enjoy/find unhelpful?

---



---



---



---

1.12 Do you have any comments or suggestions for the online components of your language course?

*Thank you so much for participating in this questionnaire. It is a valuable contribution to our research on teaching and learning in German Studies. Please contact [g.ortner@ru.ac.za](mailto:g.ortner@ru.ac.za) if you have any questions or queries regarding the questionnaire or the research project.*

**C. Q1. Online and in-class learning for German Studies (Google forms, online, 2019)**

Note: The following is the text which was used to create the online questionnaire. To see the online formatting of the questionnaire, please follow the links below, or see the PDF files in the CD attachment. This questionnaire was adapted for use with French Studies by changing the word 'German' to 'French' throughout. Minor changes were made from the 2017 questionnaire, including the addition of five questions (numbered in this form: 1, 6, 7, 18, and 27).

Links to the questionnaires:

German Studies Questionnaire: <https://forms.gle/GZLvXjLuYktwViZ67>

French Studies Questionnaire: <https://forms.gle/67Krn8betGphYtjB9>

*Dear participant,*

*This questionnaire aims to form an overview of how you as a student experience the use of technology for German language learning. This is part of an overarching PhD research project in the German Studies Section of the School of Languages and Literatures which examines the use of Blended Learning (a combination of in-class and online components) for language teaching, and which aims to make the online resources for German Studies more accessible and effective.*

*Completion of the survey indicates your consent for your answers being used for research purposes. Your responses will be confidential, and you will be assigned a random participant number which will be used for all your data within this research project and for any research published as a result of this study. You will never be individually identified in the research. Your responses will be pooled with the responses from other participants. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, you may stop the questionnaire. This will not negatively impact you in any way. This survey and the entire research project have been vetted by the School of Languages and Literatures and Linguistics Joint Ethics Committee (ETHICAL CLEARANCE OF PROJECT SOLLING17/83488). Your participation is highly appreciated.*

*If you have any queries, you may contact [g.ortner@ru.ac.za](mailto:g.ortner@ru.ac.za) or [u.weber@ru.ac.za](mailto:u.weber@ru.ac.za) or [p.mwepu@ru.ac.za](mailto:p.mwepu@ru.ac.za)*

\* Required

1. Student Number (Will be kept confidential, and used to assign you a participant number) \*

*Learner Background and Access*

2. What year of German Studies are you currently registered for? \*

Mark only one oval.

German Studies 1

German Studies 2

German Studies 3

German Studies Honours

Other:

3. What year of study are you in overall? \*

Mark only one oval.

1st

2nd

3rd

4th

5th

6th

Other:

4. What is your gender?

Mark only one oval.

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Other:

5. How old are you? (just the number) \*

6. What language do you speak at home most of the time? \*

Mark only one oval.

English

isiXhosa

Afrikaans

isiZulu

Other:

7. What are all the languages which you speak? Please list them in order of proficiency (most to least proficient) and include your home language and German in your list. \*

8. At what age did you first start using computers? \*

9. How comfortable do you feel using technology on a day-to-day basis in your personal life? (Computers, the internet, e-mail, cellphones and the like) \*

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

1= Uncomfortable. I do not enjoy using technology in my personal life.

5= Comfortable. I enjoy using technology, and engaging with it to assist in everyday life.

10. Any comments regarding the above? (Why do you feel this way?)

11. How comfortable do you feel using technology for learning purposes? (Computers, the internet, e-mail, cellphones and the like) \*

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

1= Uncomfortable. I do not enjoy engaging with technology.

- 5= Comfortable. I enjoy using technology, and engaging with it to assist in all aspects of learning.
12. Any comments regarding the above? (Why do you feel this way?)
13. Do you own any of the following devices? (You may check more than one option) \*  
Check all that apply.
- Computer
  - Laptop
  - Tablet
  - Smartphone
  - None of the above
  - Other:
14. Do you live in university residence or do you live elsewhere in Grahamstown? \*  
Mark only one oval.
- University residence
  - Elsewhere in Grahamstown
  - Other:
15. Do you have access to the internet where you live in Grahamstown? \*  
Mark only one oval.
- Yes
  - No
  - Other:
16. Do you feel that there are any barriers or problems regarding your access of online learning materials? \*  
Mark only one oval.
- Yes
  - No
17. If yes, please elaborate on what you feel those barriers/problems are.

*My experience of online learning resources*

*German Studies makes use of online resources (such as online lectures, short clips, links to relevant websites and readings) to supplement in-class learning. This section aims to find out how you experience this use of technology for learning in German Studies.*

18. Do you feel that you have received adequate support in using online language learning resources for German Studies? Please elaborate. \*
19. How would you describe the relationship between the online and in-class learning in German Studies? \*  
Mark only one oval.
- Online and in-class learning enhance each other.

Online and in-class learning are relevant to each other.

The connection between the two is not always clear.

There is little or no connection between the two.

I never do any learning online.

Other:

20. Any comments regarding the above? (Why do you feel this way?)

21. Which aspects of online learning through RUconnected for German Studies do you find most helpful? (You may choose more than one option. Some of these options may not apply to first-years.) \* Check all that apply.

Links to relevant websites and resources

Links to relevant readings

Recorded lectures

Peer presentations

Lecture slides

Short online tutorials about concepts; not related to particular chapters in the textbook

Forum discussions

Collaborative class projects (where all contribute to what information is on the webpage)

None of the above

Other:

22. Any comments regarding the above? (Why do you feel this way?)

23. Which online components for German Studies did you not enjoy, or find unhelpful?

24. How often do you log on to RUconnected for German Studies? \*

Mark only one oval.

Every day

A few times a week

Once a week

Once a month

Never

Other:

25. How comfortable do you feel in general with using the university's online resources? (Such as RUconnected, the online Library website, and ROSS) \*

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

1= Uncomfortable: I am confused, and unable to access the RU online resources listed above

5= Comfortable: I am a confident user, able to navigate the RU online platforms with ease

26. Any comments regarding the above? (Why do you feel this way?)
27. Have you attended one of the library's information literacy workshops in O Week? \*
- Mark only one oval.
- Yes
- No
28. Have you attended one of the library's information literacy workshops apart from your O-Week library workshop?
- Mark only one oval.
- Yes
- No
29. If yes, did you find the workshop/s helpful, and why/why not?
30. Do you make private use of any other online resources to supplement your learning of German? \*
- Mark only one oval.
- Yes
- No
31. If yes, which resources do you find most helpful? (If you have the links to any websites, you are welcome to share them here).
32. To what degree would you agree with the following statement: Technology enables me to take charge of my own learning. \*
- Mark only one oval.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
33. I would like to learn more about how I can use technology for improving my own learning in German Studies. \*
- Mark only one oval.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 1= Not at all.
- 5= Yes, definitely!
34. Any last questions or comments relating to this questionnaire?

*Thank you for your participation. It is a valuable contribution to our research on teaching and learning in German Studies. If you have any queries or comments, or would like to know more about the research project, feel free to email [g.ortner@ru.ac.za](mailto:g.ortner@ru.ac.za) or [u.weber@ru.ac.za](mailto:u.weber@ru.ac.za) or [n.engelbrecht@ru.ac.za](mailto:n.engelbrecht@ru.ac.za) or [p.mwepu@ru.ac.za](mailto:p.mwepu@ru.ac.za)*

**D. Q2. Approaches to language learning questionnaire (paper-based, in class, August 2018)**

Dear participant,

*This questionnaire aims to form an overview of how you as a student approach writing and reading in German, and is part of the PhD project: "Using Blended Learning and Corpora as Tools to aid the Transformation of Teaching and Learning of German as a Foreign Language: Action Research Conducted at Rhodes University".*

*Your participation in this questionnaire is optional and has the approval of the RU SOLL/Ling Ethics Committee (SOLLING17/83488).*

*Completion of the questionnaire indicates your consent to participate, and for your answers to be used for research purposes. Be assured that your responses will be kept confidential and you will never be individually identified. Data will be combined with other respondents' data. You may omit any question you are not comfortable answering, and you may discontinue the questionnaire at any time.*

*The questionnaire should not take more than 15 minutes to complete. Please give me your honest opinions and answers. There are no anticipated risks for participating in this questionnaire.*

*Thank you for taking the time and effort to complete this questionnaire. I really appreciate your willingness to participate, and I value your contributions to this research.*

Participant student number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1 *Language Background*

1.1 What language do you speak at home?

\_\_\_\_\_

1.2 What languages do you speak, in order of language proficiency?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1.3 When did you begin to learn to speak and write German? (Year: e.g. 2011)

\_\_\_\_\_

1.4 In what context? (I.e. formally at school or university, or informally in the home or in a German speaking environment?)

\_\_\_\_\_

1.5 Why did you decide to learn German?

---



---



---

1.6 Do you feel that your knowledge of your home language and other languages assists you in learning German?

---



---



---

1.7 Which aspects of German Studies do you particularly enjoy, or find particularly interesting? (Please be as specific as possible)

---



---



---

1.8 Which aspects of German Studies do you not enjoy, or find particularly challenging? (Please be as specific as possible)

---



---



---

1.9 Other than the *Menschen* course book and accompanying resources, and the resources provided to you online through RUconnected, are there any other resources which you use for learning German?

Yes/no \_\_\_\_\_

1.10 Please could you elaborate on the type of resources which you use? (Examples may include: Duolingo, Memrise, Babble, YouTube, a German friend, Skype etc.)

---



---



---

2 *How do you approach writing in German?*

2.1 How do you go about writing in German, specifically when writing the longer pieces for *freier Ausdruck* (free writing) as part of your homework tasks?

Please circle your choice:

1 = never      2 = seldom      3 = often      4 = very often      5 = always

2.1.1 I write my work in English first, and then translate this into German.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2.1.2 I write my work in a language other than English, and then translate this into German.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2.1.3 I use google translate to help me formulate my writing.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2.1.4 I try to write my work directly in German.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2.1.5 I use the phrases from the *Menschen* textbook as a starting point for my writing.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2.1.6 I come up with my own phrases.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2.1.7 I only use words I have learnt in class in my writing.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2.1.8 I use a print dictionary to look up new words I don't know, but want to use in German.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2.1.9 I use an electronic dictionary to search for new words I don't know, but want to use in German.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2.1.10 I use the *Menschen* glossary to find words to use in my writing.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2.2 Why do you approach writing in these ways?

---



---



---



---

2.3 Do you prefer to handwrite or to type your written work?

---

2.4 Why do you prefer this?

---



---

2.5 Do you have any difficulty typing the German characters? ü/ ä/ö /ß Yes/no  
\_\_\_\_\_

2.6 What method do you use at present to insert these characters? (Please tick your choice)

Copy paste from doc/internet, Ctrl+ number code, Ctrl+letter key, insert symbol, other: \_\_\_\_\_

2.7 Do you find the *Menschen* glossary a helpful resource? Yes/ no \_\_\_\_\_

2.7.1 Why/why not?

---



---



---

2.8 What type of dictionary do you use? (Please tick all that apply, and list the ones you use)

2.8.1 Online

---

2.8.2 Print

---

2.8.3 Mobile App

---

2.8.4 I don't often use a dictionary

---

2.8.5 Which option do you most prefer? Why do you prefer this option?

---



---

2.9 Do you cross-check the words you look up? (I.e. when unsure of a selected word, do you search for that word in a monolingual dictionary, or translate the word back into the source language in order to check that the selected word matches the meaning)

Yes/no \_\_\_\_\_

2.10 Do you only look for single words, or whole phrases, or both?

---

2.11 What problems or limitations have you experienced when working with a dictionary, or with the *Menschen* glossary?

---



---



---



---

2.12 Do you use other resources to help you with your writing pieces? If yes please list these. (e.g. German spellcheck on Word, friend to proofread work, translation software, Linguee etc.)

---



---

2.13 The following statements regard how you go about approaching the feedback which you receive for your writing pieces. Please circle your choice.

1 = never      2 = seldom      3 = often      4 = very often      5 = always

2.13.1 I read the feedback on my writing.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2.13.2 I find the feedback on my writing very helpful.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2.13.3 I understand the feedback on my writing.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2.13.4 Seeing where I have made a mistake helps me learn where to correct it.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2.14 Regarding the above statements, why do you feel this way?

---



---



---



---

3 How do you approach reading in German?

3.1 When reading texts in your *Menschen* book, how do you go about reading the texts?

Please circle your choice:

1 = never      2 = seldom      3 = often      4 = very often      5 = always

3.1.1 I read through the whole text to get a sense of the overall meaning.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3.1.2 I read though and try to understand each sentence as a whole.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3.1.3 I read through and try to understand every word.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3.1.4 I skim read to find the information to answer the questions at the end.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3.2 Why do you approach reading in this way?

---



---



---

3.3 When you come across a word or phrase that you don't understand, how do you approach it?

---



---

3.4 Do you engage in German reading privately?

Yes/no      \_\_\_\_\_

3.5 If yes, what type of reading do you do? (Novels, recipes, academic texts, news articles, etc.)

---



---



---



---

3.6 How often?

Daily/weekly/monthly/yearly \_\_\_\_\_

3.7 Do you engage with German outside of class via other sources (movies, radio-podcasts, audio books, etc.)?

Yes/no \_\_\_\_\_

3.8 If yes, what type of engagement do you do? (Movies, radio-podcasts, audio books, etc.)

---

---

---

3.9 How often?

Daily/weekly/monthly/yearly \_\_\_\_\_

3.10 Any additional comments related to your experience of learning, reading and writing in German?

---

---

---

---

---

Thank you so much for participating in this questionnaire.

It is a valuable contribution to our research on teaching and learning in German Studies.

Please contact [g.ortner@ru.ac.za](mailto:g.ortner@ru.ac.za) if you have any questions or queries regarding the questionnaire or the research project.

**E. Q2. Approaches to language learning questionnaire, (paper-based, in class, August 2019)**

(Minor changes were made from the 2017 questionnaire)

Approaches to language learning questionnaire, 2019

*Dear participant,*

*This questionnaire aims to form an overview of how you as a student approach writing and reading in German, and is part of the PhD project: "Using Blended Learning and Corpora as Tools to aid the Transformation of Teaching and Learning of German as a Foreign Language: Action Research Conducted at Rhodes University".*

*Your participation in this questionnaire is optional and has the approval of the RU SOLL/Ling Ethics Committee (SOLLING17/83488).*

*Completion of the questionnaire indicates your consent to participate, and for your answers to be used for research purposes. Be assured that your responses will be kept confidential and you will never be individually identified. Data will be combined with other respondents' data. You may omit any question you are not comfortable answering, and you may discontinue the questionnaire at any time.*

*The questionnaire should not take more than 15 minutes to complete. There are no anticipated risks for participating in this questionnaire. There are no right or wrong answers. Please give me your honest opinions and answers.*

*Thank you for taking the time and effort to complete this questionnaire. I really appreciate your willingness to participate, and I value your contributions to this research.*

Participant student number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. *Language Background*

1.1 When did you begin to learn to speak and write German? (Year: e.g. 2011)

\_\_\_\_\_

1.2 In what context? (I.e. formally at school or university, or informally in the home or in a German speaking environment?)

\_\_\_\_\_

1.3 Why did you decide to study German?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1.4 Have you learnt another foreign language? Yes/no \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, in what context?

\_\_\_\_\_

1.5 Do you feel your knowledge of your home language and other languages assists you in learning German?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1.6 Other than the *Menschen* course book and accompanying resources, and the resources provided to you online through RUconnected, are there any other



1 = never      2 = seldom      3 = often      4 = very often      5 = always

- 2.4.1 I write my work in English first, and then translate this into German.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 2.4.2 I write my work in a language other than English, and then translate this into German.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 2.4.3 I write my work directly in German.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 2.4.4 I use google translate to help me formulate my writing.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 2.4.5 I use the phrases from the *Menschen* textbook as a starting point for my writing.  
                    1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 2.4.6 I come up with my own phrases.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 2.4.7 I only use words I have learnt in class in my writing.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 2.4.8 I use a print dictionary to look up new words I don't know, but want to use in German.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 2.4.9 I use an electronic dictionary to search for new words I don't know, but want to use in German.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 2.4.10 I use the *Menschen* glossary to find words to use in my writing.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2.5 Please state the degree to which you agree that the follow statements are true of you:

1 = never      2 = seldom      3 = often      4 = very often      5 = always

- 2.5.1 I am confident when writing in German  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 2.5.2 I feel my approach to writing is effective  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 2.5.3 I find the *Menschen* glossary a helpful resource  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 2.5.4 I prefer to type my work  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 2.5.5 I look for opportunities to write in German.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2.6 What type of dictionary/s do you use? Please list all the dictionary resources you make use of.

---



---

2.7 Do you cross-check the words you look up? (I.e. when unsure of a selected German word from a list of translations from English, do you check in another dictionary to see what the selected German word means?)

Yes/no

2.8 Do you only look for single words, or whole phrases, or both?

---

2.9 What problems or limitations have you experienced when working with a dictionary, or with the *Menschen* glossary?

---



---



---

2.10 Do you use other resources to help you with your writing pieces? If yes please list these. (e.g. German spellcheck on Word, friend to proofread work, translation software, etc.)

---



---

3 *How do you approach reading in German?*

3.1 How do you approach reading German texts in the *Menschen* coursebook?

---



---



---

3.2 When you come across a word or phrase that you don't understand, how do you approach it?

---



---

3.3 Do you engage in German reading privately? Yes/no

\_\_\_\_\_

3.4 If yes, what type of reading do you do? (Novels, recipes, academic texts, news articles, social media posts, etc.)

---



---



---

3.5 How often? Daily/weekly/monthly/yearly

---

Please state the degree to which you agree that the follow statements are true of you:

Please circle your choice.

1 = never      2 = seldom      3 = often      4 = very often      5 = always

3.6 I read through the whole text to get a sense of the overall meaning.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3.6.1 I look up words I don't understand in the text in a dictionary.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3.6.2 I try to find patterns in a German text.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3.6.3 To understand unfamiliar German words, I make guesses from the context of the text.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3.6.4 I read German without looking up every new word.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

3.6.5 I look for opportunities to read in German.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

3.7 Do you engage with German outside of class via other sources (movies, radio-podcasts, audio books, etc.)?

Yes/no \_\_\_\_\_

3.8 If yes, what type of engagement do you do? (Movies, radio-podcasts, audio books, etc.)

---



---

3.9 How often?

Daily/weekly/monthly/yearly \_\_\_\_\_

4. Any additional comments related to your experience of learning, reading and writing in German?

---



---



---

*Thank you so much for participating in this questionnaire.  
It is a valuable contribution to research on teaching and learning in German Studies.  
Please contact [g.ortner@ru.ac.za](mailto:g.ortner@ru.ac.za) if you have any questions or queries regarding the  
questionnaire or the research project.*

**F. Q3. Short reflection on text-based collocational exercises (Google forms, online, 2018)**

Note: The following is the text which was used to create the online questionnaire. To see the online formatting of the questionnaire, please follow the online link, or see the PDF files in the CD attachment.

Separate forms issued via e-mail link to each year group:

GS1: <https://forms.gle/CgisK8gkLka5DXc88>

GS2: <https://forms.gle/TiWuEFT5JReHe8gJ8>

GS3: <https://forms.gle/AjCZXjfoHgMVDAsCA>

Short reflection on text-based collocational exercises

Dear participant,

This short reflective questionnaire is part of the PhD project: "Using Blended Learning and Corpora as Tools to aid the Transformation of Teaching and Learning of German as a Foreign Language: Action Research Conducted at Rhodes University". The questions are related to the text-based collocational exercises which were done in class with Gwyn.

Your participation in this questionnaire is optional and has the approval of the RU SOLL/Ling Ethics Committee (SOLLING17/83488). Completion of the questionnaire indicates your consent to participate, and for your answers to be used for research purposes. Be assured that your responses will be kept confidential and you will never be individually identified. Data will be combined with other respondents' data. You may omit any question you are not comfortable answering, and you may discontinue the questionnaire at any time.

The questionnaire should not take more than 10 minutes to complete. Please give me your honest opinions and answers. There are no anticipated risks for participating in this questionnaire.

Thank you for taking the time and effort to complete this questionnaire. I really appreciate your willingness to participate, and I value your contributions to this research.

1. Do you feel that you have become better at recognising language patterns in the texts that you read in language lectures (as a result of the exercises done in class with Gwyn)?

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

no, not at all yes, definitely

2. Why do you feel this way?

3. Do you feel that finding the patterns for yourself in a text helped you to remember them better?

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

1=no, not at all

5=yes, definitely

4. Why you feel this way?

5. Do you feel that seeing how a phrase is used in context, rather than in a vocab list, helped you to better formulate your own writing?

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

no, not at all yes, definitely

6. Why do you feel this way?

7. Did you look at the online collocations glossary on your RUconnected course for German Studies Language/Sprache?

Mark only one oval.

Yes, a few times

Yes, once

No

8. If yes, did you find the online glossary helpful where the patterns we identified in class were shown in context?

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

not at all helpful extremely helpful

9. Why did you find it (not) helpful?

10. Do you feel that dealing with collocations has made you more aware of language patterns in any of the following languages? (You may tick more than one answer)

Check all that apply.

in German

in English

in isiXhosa

in Afrikaans

in none of the above

Other:

11. Do you have any additional comments relating to the collocational exercises? Are there aspects which you particularly enjoyed, or did not enjoy about it?

12. Student number (will be kept confidential and would be helpful for this research, but is optional)

Thank you very much for your participation! Danke für Ihre Teilnahme!

**G. Q3. Short reflection on text-based collocational exercises (Google forms, online, 2019)**

Note: The following is the text which was used to create the online questionnaire. To see the online formatting of the questionnaire, please follow the links below, or see the PDF files in the CD attachment.

Separate forms issued via e-mail link to each year group:

GS1: <https://forms.gle/pMzBYssHhWRZVHgx9>

GS2: <https://forms.gle/sRiXQLQkhxghHjuQA>

GS3: <https://forms.gle/VpLZgi1F52sVbjpE9>

Short reflection on text-based collocation exercises

Dear participant,

This short reflective questionnaire is part of the PhD project: “Using Blended Learning and Corpora as Tools to aid the Transformation of Teaching and Learning of German as a Foreign Language: Action Research Conducted at Rhodes University”. The questions are related to the text-based collocation exercises which were done in class with Gwyn. Your participation in this questionnaire is optional and has the approval of the RU SOLL/Ling Ethics Committee (SOLLING17/83488).

Completion of the questionnaire indicates your consent to participate, and for your answers to be used for research purposes. Be assured that your responses will be kept confidential and you will never be individually identified. Data will be combined with other respondents' data. You may omit any question you are not comfortable answering, and you may discontinue the questionnaire at any time (although this will affect the quality of the results).

The questionnaire should not take more than 15 minutes to complete. Please provide your honest opinions and answers. There are no anticipated risks for participating in this questionnaire. Thank you for taking the time and effort to complete this questionnaire. I really appreciate your willingness to participate, and I value your contributions to this research.

1. Do you feel that you have become better at recognising language patterns in the texts that you read in language lectures (as a result of the exercises done in class with Gwyn)?

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

1=no, not at all

5=yes, definitely

2. Why do you feel this way?

3. Do you feel that finding the patterns for yourself in a text helped you to remember them better?

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

1=no, not at all

5=yes, definitely

4. Why do you feel this way?

5. Do you feel that seeing how a phrase is used in context, rather than in a vocabulary list, helped you to better formulate your own writing?

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

1=no, not at all

5=yes, definitely

6. Why do you feel this way?

7. Do you feel that your writing in German has improved, as a result of the exercises done with Gwyn?

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

1=no, not at all

5=yes, definitely

8. Why do you feel this way?

9. Did you engage with the online collocations resources on your RUconnected course for German Studies Language/Sprache? (e.g. Short collocations explanation video, lecture handouts with notes, Linguee online dictionary link, forum posts etc.)

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

1=no, not at all

5=yes, definitely

10. If yes, did you find the online resources helpful?

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

1=no, not at all

5=yes, definitely

11. Why did you find them helpful or not helpful? (Please name the resources you found helpful/unhelpful)

12. Do you feel that dealing with collocations has made you more aware of language patterns in any of the following languages? (You may tick more than one answer)

Check all that apply.

in German

in English

in isiXhosa

in Afrikaans

in none of the above

Other:

13. What do you now understand the term "collocation" to mean?
14. Do you have any additional comments relating to the collocation exercises? Are there aspects about it which you particularly enjoyed, or did not enjoy?
15. Student number (will be kept confidential and would be helpful for this research, but is optional)

Thank you very much for your participation! Danke für Ihre Teilnahme!

**HH. Draft consent form for staff interviews**

This consent form was re-issued before each interview

Dear [Lecturer],

23.08.2017, Grahamstown

In this semi-structured interview we will be discussing teaching and learning using a combination of online and face-to face methods, particularly for German Studies.

This is part of my (Gwyndolen Ortner) PhD research project in the German Studies Section of the School of Languages and Literatures which examines the use of Blended Learning (a combination of face-to-face and online components) for language teaching. The title of the project is Using Blended Learning and Corpora as Tools to aid the Transformation of Teaching and Learning of German as a Foreign Language: Action Research conducted at Rhodes University.

A blended course for language learning will be put into practice during the course of the year. This interview will help us tailor the course to the needs of the section and the students.

Your responses will not be anonymous (due to the small size of our department) and may be published as a result of this study. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, you may stop the questionnaire. Please feel free to ask any questions.

This research has received ethical approval from the Joint SOLL and Linguistics Research Ethics Committee (SOLLING17/83488).

I have read and understood the above content and consent to participate in this research.

---

***H. Pre-drafted questions for semi-structured staff interview 1, 23 August 2017***

1. How long have you been teaching German Studies?
2. What would you say is the overarching approach which is undertaken in teaching GS at Rhodes?
3. What do you consider blended learning to be?
4. What types of blended learning activities have you instituted for German Studies?
5. What was your motivation for doing so?
6. Which ones were the most successful?
7. What challenges did you face using these blended methods?
8. Do you think that the students were capable of coping with the “blend”?
9. If you could go back in time, what would you have changed (if anything) in the set-up/structure of the exercises last year?

**I. Pre-drafted questions for semi-structured staff interview 2, 23 February 2017**

1. Would you agree that true blended learning means a replacement of some of the face-to-face teaching time with online teaching and activities? How do you feel about that?
2. What type of blended learning did you engage with last year?
3. You are planning on replacing a second-year language lecture with one online lecture, what has prompted this change?
4. How do you plan on executing this change?
5. How do you plan to ensure that students participate in this online learning environment? (and that they participate together as a class?)
6. What challenges do you foresee?
7. What are the perceived benefits to this approach?
8. What other types of blended learning are you planning on delivering this term?
9. Do you feel that the university has provided adequate technical training and support you as a lecturer to support your endeavours in Blended Learning?
10. What do you perceive is the institution's position regarding blended learning?

**J. Pre-drafted questions for semi-structured staff interview 3, 06 December 2018**

1. What blended learning activities have you undertaken this year (particularly for language teaching)?
2. What have been the particular challenges to implementing one lecture a week online for the second years/third years?
3. What have been the particular successes?
4. What informs your decisions of what to put online, vs. what to do in class?
5. What are your perceptions of the students' engagement in class, versus online?
6. Do you feel that students from different backgrounds engage differently with online and face-to-face teaching methods?
7. Is it important for you to be able to assess/check whether students are engaging with online resources?
8. Do you assess/check students' engagement?
9. If yes, how do you assess/check? And how often?
10. Do you do anything to ensure that your students know how to access and use the resources online?
12. Do you have any reflections regarding this?
13. Have there been any changes to your approach regarding online learning through the year? Is there anything that you will change for next year?
14. I know from my own experience that when first starting out, using educational technology like Camtasia or RUconnected can be challenging. Has using the technology become easier? How have you experienced the increased use of educational technologies?
15. How do you think students best learn a foreign language?
16. Have you seen a change in the student body during your time teaching?
17. Do you feel there has been a change in the 'types' of students learning German at Rhodes?
18. Do you feel there has been a change in students' motivations for learning German at Rhodes?
19. Can you reflect on how you have experienced the use of Blended Learning this year within the section overall as compared to previous years?
20. Could you reflect on the exercises in which I sought to introduce students to the concept of collocation this year?

**K. Pre-drafted questions for semi-structured staff interview 4, 04 June 2019**

1. Reflecting back on language teaching in the first semester, how do you feel about the current students (their motivation and backgrounds) and their progress with regards to language learning?
2. Have there been any changes/new methods or techniques which you have employed this year as compared to years before? (We can talk to the blended learning components here briefly)
3. How have you found the students' writing?
4. Have you noticed any common errors in their writing?
5. Do you think that the students are writing at the appropriate level?
6. How do you think students' approach writing in German?
7. Natasha has said that she has noticed that students rely much more heavily on using their phones in class to look up new vocabulary, let's speak to that point.
8. Using translation software also speaks to the role of translation in class and shuttling between languages. Do you think that there is an influence from the students' mother-tongues in their writing?
9. What do you tell them in class about how to approach free writing?
10. What do you tell them in class about vocabulary learning?
11. How do you feel their writing may be improved?

**L. Pre-drafted questions for semi-structured staff interview 5, 25 October 2019**

1. What do you think is the best thing to emerge from the blended learning model for you as a lecturer?
2. On the other hand, what is the worst thing to emerge from blended learning?
3. What changes have you made this year in your approach (if any)?
4. What changes do you plan to make in the future (if any)?
5. How have you found the Moodle pre-set for *Menschen*? What type of pre-made exercises have you found useful, or not useful?
6. In previous conversation you have expressed that the language teaching module is an area in which you feel that you are able to relax a little. Would you like to reflect on that? How do you feel the language teaching module is different to the other modules which you teach?
7. How does the use of the coursebook influence your teaching?
8. With regard to my research on collocations – do you think that it has impacted on your own teaching?
9. Have you noticed a difference in how the students approach the reading texts and learning new vocabulary?

**M. Q4. German Studies staff external questionnaire, 2018/2019**

Covering Letter

October 2018, Grahamstown

Dear German Studies Staff Member,

The attached research questionnaire is part of an ongoing PhD research project in German Studies at Rhodes University, undertaken by Gwyndolen Ortner (g10o1092), supervised by Dr Undine S. Weber. The title of the research is "Using Blended Learning and Corpora as Tools to aid the Transformation of Teaching and Learning of German as a Foreign Language: Action Research Conducted at Rhodes University".

The questionnaire aims to explore approaches and methods to language teaching in German sections around the country, in order to provide a more holistic overview of how German as a Foreign Language is taught at university level in South Africa.

I would be much obliged if you would spend 10 to 15 minutes of your time filling out the questionnaire in the attached Word document about language teaching in your section. If you are willing to participate, could you please save and email the responses to [g.ortner@ru.ac.za](mailto:g.ortner@ru.ac.za)

Your contribution will be most valued, and any questions, comments and feedback which you may have are welcomed.

Kind regards,

Gwyndolen Ortner

PhD candidate, German Studies

School of Languages and Literatures

Rhodes University

Grahamstown

German staff external questionnaire, informed consent

Your participation in this questionnaire is optional and has the approval of the RU SOLL/Ling Ethics Committee (SOLLING17/83488), and the approval of your institution.

Completion and return of the questionnaire indicates your consent to participate, and for your answers to be used for research purposes. Be assured that although responses to this questionnaire will not be anonymous in that the institution might be identified, individuals who fill out the questionnaire will not be named in the research. No institution will be singled out as lacking in any way. Data will be combined with other respondents' data. Results from this questionnaire will be used for research purposes.

You may omit any question you are not comfortable answering, and you may discontinue the questionnaire at any time.

The questionnaire should not take more than 20 minutes to complete. Please give me your honest opinions and answers. There are no anticipated risks for participating in this questionnaire.

Please fill in the following:

Name:

Institution:

I consent to participate in the research: Yes / No (please choose one)

Signature:

Date:

Thank you for taking the time and effort to complete this questionnaire. I really appreciate your willingness to participate, and I value your contributions to this research.

#### Questionnaire for German Studies lecturers

1. How would you describe your language teaching approach? Feel free to mention anything that informs your teaching methods or 'philosophy'.
2. How many contact hours per week do you have for language teaching with each undergraduate year group and Honours?
  - 2.1. Do you have any non-contact hours for language teaching (e.g. facilitated online)? (yes/no)
  - 2.2. If yes, how many non-contact hours per week, per year group?
3. What textbook do you currently use for language teaching at undergraduate level?
4. Do you make use of any supplementary resources for teaching language (e.g. additional print or electronic materials; websites, teacher-produced handouts, online lectures, PowerPoint slides with voice, voice recordings, or similar?) (yes/no)
  - 4.1. If yes, could please you elaborate on these.
5. Does your university have an online learning management system (intranet for learning purposes)? (yes/no)
  - 5.1. If yes, do you make use of this? (yes/no)
  - 5.2. If yes, how do you make use of it?

5.3. If no, why not?

6. Would you like more support from your institution with regard to enhancing your use of the computer-mediated teaching resources? (yes/no)

6.1. If yes, what type of support would you find helpful?

*Vielen Dank für Ihre Teilnahme.* Thank you very much for your participation.

Your contribution is valued, and any questions, comments and feedback which you may have are welcomed.

If you would like to receive an electronic copy of the dissertation once it has been submitted, please state so here: (yes/no)

**N. Examples of lecture materials created in action research (online)**

Please find worksheets in the open google drive folder by following this link:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1\\_eZ4BnMskZ2pzJRWEeCMCA7kU1MqcfyQ?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_eZ4BnMskZ2pzJRWEeCMCA7kU1MqcfyQ?usp=sharing)

Where appropriate I have included both the empty worksheet, as well as a possible version with “model answers”. The first version was used in class and the second version was uploaded to RUconnected to help students who had not attended the lecture, and those who wanted to recap model answers. These worksheets could be adapted for use in other GFL teaching contexts in higher education.

**GS1:**

1. Handout for introduction to formulaic language and collocation
2. Worksheet of “gefällt mir” and “es gibt“/model answer worksheet
3. Idioms forum on RUconnected
4. Worksheet based on coursebook text p. 96, “Wer will Popstar werden” /model answer worksheet
5. Worksheet based on coursebook text p. 97, “Pläne und Wünsche” /model answer worksheet

**GS2:**

1. GS2 Handout for introduction to formulaic language and collocation
2. Table for filling in collocations
3. Glossary for “Essgewohnheiten” collocations, based on coursebook text, p. 68
4. Worksheet based on coursebook text p. 112 “Kleine Geschenke”
5. Online lecture and worksheet based on workbook text p. 136 “Kommentare Schreiben”
6. Worksheet based on coursebook text p. 101, “Das Wetter” presenting word clouds from DWDS /model answer

**GS3**

1. Introduction to collocation handout
2. Table for filling in collocations
3. Worksheet for identifying collocations in invitation based on coursebook texts p. 76/ model answer worksheet

***O. Learner Corpus, RUDaF (online)***

For access to learner writing in text file format, please follow this link to the google drive folder “Student writing for RUDaF 2018-2019”.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1158Bf12ElkEV59ezSUZHFL48xRFYdLQw?usp=sharing>