L2 German Students' Perceptions of Their Learning Trajectories in Speaking, Writing, Listening, and Reading: Goals, Self-Rated Proficiency, and Definitions of Accuracy

By

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ABSTRACTS

This study examined the perceptions of 31 L2 German students regarding their learning trajectories in speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Specifically, it explored their learning goals, self-rated proficiency, and definitions of accuracy. Combining qualitative and quantitative data analysis, the study found that students considered acquiring four language skills and fulfilling personal interests and development as their primary goals. Students exhibited divergent perspectives on the personal importance and perceived achievability of those goals. While they viewed acquiring all four language skills as both important and achievable, they considered satisfying personal interests and development achievable but less important.

Moreover, the study also revealed a simplified conception of language learning among students. Specifically, they considered communication as the defining criterion for accuracy, which connotes a lack of awareness of which specific language features contribute. Furthermore, the study observed a non-linear development in the students' conception of Speaking, Writing, and Listening.

Unexpectedly, the study found a significant relationship between two measures of students' self-rated proficiency: self-rated proficiency relative to other students in class and relative to educated native speakers (NS). The finding suggests students' disorientation in the evaluation of their self-proficiency.

In conclusion, this exploratory study generates crucial questions for future research to explore.

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Chapter 1. Rationale

As an experienced language learner and a practitioner who has experienced learning and teaching in various contexts with different guiding teaching principles, I reflect on my language practice journey. I studied German as a major at a Chinese university in 2004, where and when language learning was treated as a subject such as mathematics. Exploring all aspects of language with great precision was deemed crucial to achieving accurate language production. The belief was that erroneous language production not only impedes effective communication but also causes unpleasantness for interlocutors. Therefore, ensuring an accurate understanding of language is crucial since it serves as the basis for good language production. Later, when I started teaching in the US, I was introduced to communicative language teaching. At first, I struggled to understand how simply producing language would enable effective communication, but it worked to a certain degree in the classroom.

As more international students appeared in the language classroom, I began to notice the differences between students, not only in their motivation, learning goals, and perceptions about learning a second language but also in their learning outcomes. Some students paid more attention to accuracy in their language productions and other aspects of language, such as differences between vocabulary items. They seemed to notice the differences between language features they saw, and what they produced, while other students exhibited different traits. These made me wonder what could account for their different attitudes and performance in language learning, particularly regarding accuracy.

I started my research design with the question “accuracy”: do students perceive L2 accuracy differently? If so, what could be the variables that contribute to the differences? Drawing from my own learning and teaching experiences and my observations of students, I

decided to use their educational histories as my angle to explore whether their perceptions of L2 accuracy were related to their educational background. However, it was not enough to explore their educational histories to gain a comprehensive understanding of learners' minds. Therefore, in my original research design, I included other factors that might shape their perceptions, such as learning goals due to the connection to motivation and their perceptions of L1 due to possible transfer effects.

After collecting the data, I needed to decide what to start with. And the learning goals were the first thing that I explored. Goal-setting and Goal-orientation are closely connected to motivation. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2010) adopted aspects of goal-setting theory to develop their L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), i.e., the proposition that the conception of the future self should incorporate a set of concrete action plans, including a goal-setting component (p. 132). Goal setting also plays a critical role in self-regulatory processes (Locke & Latham, 1990, Latham & Locke, 1991). Goal-setting also helps in cognitive planning by guiding and monitoring cognition (Pintrich, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000). Goal orientation, on the other hand, relates to behaviors that aim to reach goals. And some researchers concluded that pursing mastery goals has positive effects on learning outcomes (Cheng, 2023; Lee and Bong, 2019). Exploring learners' perceptions of goals could help better understand their motivation and possibly the strategies they employ to reach the goals.

The second factor I explored was the core of my research, namely learners' perception of accuracy. However, accuracy alone was insufficient as it is connected to proficiency and considered a subset of proficiency. The dissertation study focused on learners' minds and factors that shape their perceptions of proficiency. While analyzing participants' responses, the term *communication* emerged as central when students described their L2 learning goals and defined

L2 accuracy. The frequency and prominence with which *communication* was mentioned likely reflect learners' experiences with L2 syllabi, instructional materials, and curriculum descriptions. The core competence of *communicative language teaching* (CLT) is *communicative competence*, which refers to the ability to interact with other speakers and is developed through learner engagement in *communication* (Savignon, 1991, 2007). CLT has inspired several related frameworks or approaches, such as "Content-Based Instruction," "Task-Based Language Teaching," and "Competence-Based language Teaching" (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). The fundamental principles of CLT are widely accepted as self-evident and axiomatic aspects in the field of language learning and teaching (Richard & Rodgers, 2001), and CLT-inspired practices remain the standard for effective teaching and professional leadership (Ritz & Sherf, 2022; 2023). Ties between CLT tenets and accepted professional standards, such as those developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), are clearly evident. ACTFL's 5 Cs have been widely adopted in US language education in K-16 and K-20 (Huhn & Chambless, 2021; Moss& Gambrell, 2023; Ritz & Sherf, 2023).

To sum up, this dissertation explores learners' perceptions of L2 accuracy and the factors that shape the perceptions. This study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how learners perceive accuracy, its connections to the learners' mental construct of learning goals, and self-assessment of proficiency.

Chapter 2. Review of Prior Research

The overarching goal of this research study is to explore second-language (L2) German learners' self-positioning relative to their studies of German. Specifically, I investigate what learning goals they describe for the study of German generally; how they position themselves personally relative to these goals; how they assess their L2 German proficiency; and how they define L2 accuracy. Therefore, in this chapter, I will review theories and previous research related to L2 learning goals and, relatedly, motivations; review tenets of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach to L2 that may contribute to study participants' framing of their learning experience; and discuss research that relates to self-assessment & second-language awareness.

2.1 Learning goals

2.1.1 Goal setting and learning goals

It has been over 30 years since Locke and Latham formally introduced the Goal-Setting Theory of Motivation (1990), which was originally developed in the context of organizational and work settings and aimed to explain the relationship between goal and performance outcomes. The theory suggests that setting specific, challenging, but achievable goals can lead to better performance and greater motivation to achieve desired outcomes. In a recent review of the development of this theory, Locke and Latham (2019) updated some of the terms, i.e., they introduced the concepts of mediators and moderators. Mediators include four factors: "choice/attention," "effort," "persistence," and "having relevant strategies for goal attainment"; they explain how goal setting affects performance outcomes. Moderators also encompass four factors: "feedback," "goal-commitment," "ability" (knowledge or skill), and "situational factors"; they affect the relationship between goal setting and performance outcomes.

Goal-Setting Theory has also been brought into educational settings (Pintrich and Schunk, 2002). Schunk, Meece, and Pintrich (2014), for example, proposed four applications of goal setting in classrooms (2014:162):1) goals should be clear and specific; 2) goals should be challenging and difficult but within students' capabilities, not impossible goals; 3) there should be both short-term ("proximal") and long-term ("distal") goals; 4) feedback should be given on progress toward goals to increase students' self-efficacy in achieving these goals; the agent of goal setting should be the teacher, either to set goals for the students or to help the student with goal setting. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2010) added two more principles that are specific to L2 learning, i.e., goals should be measurable and with a stated completion date. They also adopted aspects of goal-setting theory to develop their L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), i.e., the proposition that the conception of the future self should incorporate a set of concrete action plans, including a goal-setting component (p. 132).

Goal setting also plays a critical role in self-regulatory processes (Locke & Latham, 1990, Latham & Locke, 1991). Self-regulated learning involves managing one's own learning process with the use of various cognitive and metacognitive strategies, such as goal setting and monitoring and adjusting strategies to achieve desired outcomes. Pintrich (2000) and Zimmerman (2000) explained that goal setting helps in cognitive planning by guiding and monitoring cognition. Goal setting occurs mostly in the forethought phase, i.e., before starting a task, but can occur anytime during performance.

In second language acquisition research, goal setting is often treated as a factor or variable to measure self-regulated language learning. For instance, Rose, Briggs, Sergio, & Ivanova-Slavianskaia (2018) and Zheng, Liang, Li, & Tsai (2018) discovered that goals can initiate and monitor the self-regulatory processes involved in L2 learning. Goal setting has been

increasingly utilized as a key component of pedagogical interventions aimed at improving L2 learning outcomes. Recent studies have demonstrated the positive impact of goal-setting activities on L2 learning. For example, studies by He and Loewen (2022) and Lozano Velandia (2015) discovered that goal-setting strategies could promote vocabulary gain. Mikami (2020) and Shih & Reynolds (2018) examined the effects of integrating goal-setting into reading strategy and concluded that effective goal-setting could motivate students and improve their reading proficiency. These findings highlight the importance of goal-setting in curriculum design.

2.1.2 Goal orientation and achievement goals

Locke and Latham (2019) drew a conceptual distinction between goal setting and goal orientation. Specifically, goal setting refers to the establishment of specific and challenging goals; it constitutes the focus of studies on motivation. Goal orientation, in contrast, relates to behaviors that aim to reach these goals. As the name suggests, goal orientations may require further distinctions. Different types of orientations have been described. They include *learning* and *performance goals* (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988), *mastery* and *performance goals* (Ames, 1992; Ames & Archer, 1987, 1988), and *task-focused* and *ability-focused goals* (Maehr & Midgley, 1991).

Mastery goals include mastering a task, developing new skills, and improving competence. *Performance goals* focus on demonstrating ability, particularly "how ability will be judged relative to others" (Schunk et al., 2014:213), such as earning the highest grade, and seeking public recognition. In addition to these goals, other goal orientations have also been studied, including *extrinsic goals*, such as earning a good grade or behaving well to earn rewards and privileges (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Pintrich & Garcia, 1991; Pintrich, Roeser, & De Groot, 1994; Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1993). *Work avoidance goals* aim to

complete a task with minimal effort (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988; Nicholls, 1989; Nicholls, Cheung, Lauer, & Patashnick, 1989).

Elliot and his collaborators developed the so-called 2x2 achievement goal framework (Elliot, 1999; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996; Elliot & McGregor, 2001) by first defining *approach* and *avoidance achievement goals* and then combining each with either mastery or performance goals. *Approach goals* focus on the positive possibility of approaching success, while *avoidance goals* focus on the negative possibility of avoiding failure. In this framework, *mastery approach goals* involve striving for competence and learning, for instance, learning and mastering the content as well as possible, while *mastery avoidance goals* involve avoiding making mistakes and failure, or not learning, for instance, avoiding taking on challenging tasks for fear of making mistakes or forgetting already acquired skills. *Performance approach goals* involve striving for positive judgment of ability – to outperform others, such as public recognition and winning competitions, while *performance avoidance goals* involve avoiding negative judgment of ability – avoid underperforming compared to others, such as losing a competition or being criticized. In recent years, *achievement goals* have evolved from m*astery* and *performance goals* to *task-based*, *self-based,* and *other-based goals*. Therefore, the 2x2 framework expanded to 3x2 (Elliot, Murayama, & Pekrun, 2011).

In recent review papers on achievement goals, Lee and Bong (2019) and Cheng (2023) examined various studies related to achievement goals in L2 learning, and they concluded that pursing mastery goals has positive effects on learning outcomes (Ghavam, Rastegar, & Razmi, 2011, He, 2005; Jahedizadeh, Ghanizadeh, & Ghonsooly, 2016; Juned, Mustafa, Sopian, and Asma'Fauzi, 2021; Koul, Roy, Kaewkuekool, & Ploisawaschai, 2009; Lou and Noels, 2016, 2017; Tercanlioglu, 2004;). Lee and Bong (2019) also found that despite the debate about the

potential benefits of performance goals, in the context of L2 research, pursing performance goals (both approach and avoidance) has negative effects on learning outcomes (Ghavam et al., 2011; Koul et al., 2009). A search of performance goals in the database returned very few results, and a recent study (Macayan, Quinto, Otsuka & Cueto, 2019) showed the opposite finding that students with performance orientation performed better than those with mastery or multiple goal orientations.

2.1.3 The language mindset

Last, I would like to address an area of research that relates to L2 goals but has been under-explored, i.e., the *Language Mindset* (Berg, 2021; Lou & Noels, 2016; Mercer & Ryan, 2009). The term "*mindset*" (i.e., a set of implicit theories) refers to an individual's beliefs about their inherent ability and talent, which was originally developed by psychologist Carol Dweck and her colleagues. There are two types of mindsets - *growth mindset* and *fixed mindset* (Dweck, 2006). An individual with a *growth mindset* follows an *incremental theory*, believing that ability can be improved through time and experience. Someone with a *fixed mindset* pursues a so-called *entity theory* and believes that ability is fixed and cannot be improved. *Mindset* also affects learning (Schunk, et al, 2014) and can be utilized as a predictor in goal orientation. In Dweck's theory, younger children tend to have a growth mindset and are inclined towards adopting a mastery orientation, while older children tend to hold a fixed mindset and are more likely to adopt a performance orientation.

Mercer and Ryan (2009) examined learners' beliefs about their natural talent and discovered that an L2 learner's *language mindset* is domain-specific, i.e., particular to a skills-bound domain, such as speaking and listening, or a language-component domain, such as

grammar and vocabulary. A student might hold a *fixed mindset* in listening but may adhere to an *incremental mindset* in reading.

In 2016, Lou and Noels conducted a study on the relationship between language mindset and goal orientation. They replicated it in 2017. They found in both studies that students with *growth mindsets* (i.e., the belief that language ability can be improved by effort) would likely adopt mastery goals, while students with *fixed mindsets* (i.e., the belief that language ability cannot be improved) would prefer performance goals.

Two recent studies, Sadeghi, Sadighi, and Bagheri (2021) and Zarrinabadi, Rezazadeh, and Shirinbakhsh (2022), explored the effects of the two language mindsets on language learning. They established a positive link between a *growth mindset* and beneficial learning outcomes. Consequently, these researchers proposed that a growth mindset should be promoted among teachers and students.

2.2 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) based language learning and teaching

As will be evident in the reporting of Results, the term *communication* occurred multiple times in the student responses that were analyzed in this dissertation. The term emerged as central when students described their L2 learning goals and when they defined L2 accuracy. The frequency and prominence with which *communication* was mentioned likely reflect students' experiences with L2 syllabi, instructional materials, and curriculum descriptions.

2.2.1 Core tenets of Communicative Language Teaching

It is difficult (perhaps impossible) to provide a universally adequate and comprehensive definition of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and, therefore, difficult to precisely assess whether a language program follows a CLT approach. What is more, since 1988 (Byram), at the latest, there has been talk of moving into a period of 'post-communicative language

teaching.’ Nevertheless, terms such as *communication* and *communicative* have become firmly entrenched in narratives and discourses about L2 learning and teaching and likely have shaped learners’ experiences, perceptions, and articulatory repertoire. A brief review of CLT and some of the practices commonly associated with it seems in order.

Savignon (2007) summarized five competences to be developed under CLT: *communicative competence, grammatical competence, strategic competence, sociolinguistic competence,* and *discourse competence*. Communicative *competence* refers to the ability to interact with other speakers and is to be developed through learner engagement in *communication* (Savignon, 1991, 2007); *grammatical competence* refers to the ability to use grammar, vocabulary, and syntax to produce and comprehend language; *strategic competence* refers to the ability to negotiate meaning using various coping strategies; *sociolinguistic competence* refers to the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts; *discourse competence* refers to the ability to use language in different types of discourse. Some of the core characteristics of CLT include a focus on learner-centeredness, integrated skills, the use of authentic materials, contextualized and experienced learning, and learner autonomy (Hunter and Smith, 2012; Whong, 2013; Butler, 2011; Littlewood, 2014; Graves & Garten, 2017). Contemporary CLT has inspired several related frameworks or approaches. Richards and Rodgers (2014) summarized eight such types, including “Content-Based Instruction,” “Task-Based Language Teaching,” and “Competence-Based language Teaching.”

Regardless of which form of CLT language programs follow, and no matter whether they explicitly refer to doing so at all, most contemporary language teaching practices are indebted to the fundamental principles of CLT. These are now widely accepted as self-evident and axiomatic aspects of language learning and teaching in the field (Richard & Rodgers, 2001).

CLT-inspired practices remain the standard for effective teaching and professional leadership (Ritz & Sherf, 2022; 2023). Ties between CLT tenets and accepted professional standards, such as those developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), are clearly evident. For example, ACTFL's World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages[1] encompass five goals: *Communication*, *Cultures*, *Connections*, *Comparisons,* and *Communities*. Overlap between ACTFL's 5 Cs and some of the key aspects of CLT is reflected in wording, such as *communication* relating to *communicative competence*, as well as in conceptualization, such as *culture* and comparisons relating to *sociolinguistic competence*. ACTFL's 5 Cs have been widely adopted in US language education in K-16 and K-20 (Huhn & Chambless, 2021; Moss & Gambrell, 2023; Ritz & Sherf, 2023).

2.2.2 Misconceptions about Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Despite its wide application in language education, common misconceptions persist. First, it is important to note that CLT is not a fixed method or a specific set of techniques; rather, it is a general approach that orients toward the goal of intercultural communicative competence and can be adapted and applied to various learning contexts (Savignon, 2007). Second, CLT is not limited to oral communication in face-to-face interactions as the skills should be integrated as long as the activities involve the interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning (Burke, 2006; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999; Savignon, 2007; Thompson, 1996; Whong, 2013). Third, while small group or pair work is often used in CLT, it is not a requirement, as the activities should facilitate meaningful interpersonal communication (Burke, 2006; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999; Savignon, 2007; Thompson, 1996). Fourth, it is a misconception that CLT does not involve the teaching of grammar or a focus on metalinguistic awareness of syntax, discourse, and social

[1] ACTFL | World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages

appropriateness (Savignon, 2007; Wu, 2008; Thompson, 1996, Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999; Burke 2006).

2.2.3 Criticisms of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

In addition to misunderstandings and misapplications (e.g., Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005) of CLT, Whong (2013) outlined some outright criticisms. These include linguistic imperialism, i.e., the forced transfer of a teaching method that arose out of western context to other geographic areas with different educational histories. Indeed, research on CLT and its implementation spans from Asia to Africa (e.g., Batardière, Berthaud, Ćatibušić & Flynn, 2013; Schurz, Coumel & Hüttner, 2022; Nguyen & Le, 2020). These studies have documented the instantiation of CLT in modified versions and different ways across different cultures and education settings. However, beyond investigating whether CLT applications outside of so-called Western educational contexts comply with CLT orthodoxy, research has paid little attention to how local or national educational histories make such compliance more or less likely or how they frame compliance with CLT tenets as either a continuation of or a break with educational traditions (e.g., Rao, 2012; Junfei & Peng, 2022). In a similar vein, little is known about encounters between CLT-oriented L2 instruction at US universities and international students from different countries. Due to a low participation rate in this study in the wake of the COVID pandemic, it was impossible to consider learners' national educational traditions and their resulting educational histories as a variable when investigating how learners position themselves within instructed L2 learning. However, going forward, it is recommended that research consider how students from different national backgrounds relate to CLT practices and objectives within the same language-educational context.

Another charge against CLT under discussion by Whong was its uncritical stance toward language, i.e., its failure to treat language as laden with cultural and socio-political messages (e.g., Kumaravadivelu, 2006). A similar position is evident in Angelo (2021), who criticized CLT for its association with neo-liberal ideologies.

Whong's main points – and the ones most relevant to the present study – deal with the concern that CLT's relationship with linguistics, especially psycholinguistics, is too loose. For example, Whong criticizes the separation of language into 'four skills,' a division that in anticipation of the prevailing student perspective, was maintained in this study's instrument and also echoed in participants' unprompted responses. Whong writes, "For cognitive linguists, while there may be some basis to separating language skills from language knowledge, it makes little sense to decompose language into four separate skills" (p.117). Further, she takes issue with how CLT imagines language-learning processes, specifically, the relationship between structural knowledge and meaning in CLT's conception of language processing,

> "Research using […] fMRI and ERP shows that different types of linguistic knowledge lead to activation in different areas of the brain. Specifically, structural aspects of language such as morphosyntax and phonology are processed differently to the more meaning-based domains of semantics and the lexicon (e.g., Friederici et al. 2003, Kuperberg et al. 2003)." (P.118-119)

Other criticisms presented by Whong and pertinent to the present study concern the concept of *fluency*. In reference to Savignon, Whong outlines the futility of the juxtaposition of the concept of *fluency* with that of *accuracy*,

> "As pointed out by Savignon (1991, p. 269), it is a mistake for fluency to be associated with function while accuracy with form, because it is absurd to suggest that there can be a dissociation of form from meaning; both are clearly implicated in any message." (p. 121)

What is more, Whong points to the need to identify aspects of language that simply are not accessible through a meaning-based approach alone, i.e., "Slabakova (2008) argues persuasively that inflectional morphology is a 'bottleneck' for development in a way that meaning-based aspects of language are not" (p. 122). A final point made by Whong that is pertinent to the present study is the notion of 'active.' Following the Input Processing Model (VanPatten 1996, 2002), she emphasizes that language reception relies on active cognitive processes and that learners require guidance to engage in such processes effectively. Without assistance, learners' bias misleads them into a focus on lexical over other meaning-conveying linguistic information,

> "The Input Processing model posits linguistically defined processing strategies. One basic principle, echoing the aforementioned importance of meaning, is that learners are biased to contentful lexical items over more functional or grammatical ones. This is not a conscious decision, but instead a product of processing limitations at early stages of development." (p. 123)

2.2.4 Accuracy and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The role of 'accuracy' in CLT has been debated since CLT first became the dominant approach to L2 instruction (e.g., Allen & Vaugh, 1986; Valette, 1992). True to Whong's criticism (2013), discussions of accuracy in CLT often involve juxtaposition with other concepts, frequently in the form of tension. Fluency, in particular, serves as a contrast to accuracy (e.g., Birjandi & Ahangari, 2008; Mukhrib, 2020). What is more, accuracy typically is taken as synonymous with

grammatical accuracy, an insight that derives from accuracy being assessed alongside other contrastively used criteria, such as syntactic complexity and lexical variety (e.g., Albert & Kormos, 2011; Klaartje, Rob & Hulstijn, 2018). Although, on occasion, pronunciation accuracy, too, is being investigated (e.g., Saeli, Rahmati, & Dalman, 2021), for instance, the relationship between phonemic accuracy, or accentedness and comprehensibility (Crowther, Trofimovich, Saito & Isaacs, 2018; Tabandeh, Moinzadeh & Barati, 2018)

What is most pertinent to the present study is what perceptions learners have of accuracy, i.e., in what regards it can be measured, how much of it is necessary for specific purposes, and how fast and completely they can attain it.

In instructional settings, removed from non-teacher native speakers of the target language who may experience and convey genuine experiences of non-comprehension, learners' perceptions of accuracy are likely shaped by the feedback they receive – when, how much, and what type. Ellis (2015) provides a comprehensive overview of focus-on-form in CLT. Following Long's (1988; 1991) distinction between a focus-on-form (the incidental direction of attention to the occurrence of an inaccuracy) and a focus-on-formS (an explicit and planed focus on forms that contribute to accuracy) contends that in meaning-focused instruction, i.e., instruction without a focus-on-form/S, learners strategically ignore the 'gap' between their own language production and the linguistic norms that they purportedly aspire to. In the terms by Schmidt (1994; 2001), learners fail to 'notice.' As Ellis explains, "Schmidt (1994; 2001) argued that acquisition cannot take place unless learners actually 'notice' linguistic forms in the input - a process that he suggests is necessarily conscious" (p. 3). Returning to the infelicitous juxtaposition of accuracy and fluency, Ellis takes issue with the separation between 'fluency-' and 'accuracy'-focused activities, i.e., between a focus-on-formS (when accuracy-focused

feedback is being offered) and a ‘focus-on-form’ (when incidentally offered feedback may not lead to noticing),

> “These views are based on the assumption that ‘fluency’ and ‘accuracy’ work need to be kept separate. This is, however, a mistaken view. First, the purpose of communicative tasks is not just fluency development. Performing communicate tasks can also contribute to linguistic development. However, this will not occur automatically. It requires focus-on-form.” (p. 9)

Ellis further joins other researchers (Hedge, 2000; Scrivener, 2005) in holding teacher training responsible, “[…] teachers’ notes accompanying course books frequently instruct teachers to leave correction until the end of fluency activities” (p. 9).

Instructional feedback practices, combined with a lack of access to genuine interactions with non-teacher native speakers of the target languages, may leave learners uncertain about the need for accuracy or with views that distinctly deviate from those of teachers and, possibly, that of native speakers. By extension, learners may be unable to judge their own proficiency in the target language. Chavez (2007), in a study of U.S. college learners of L2 German, found that learners held very different views from their teachers about how much accuracy is needed for specific purposes, such as earning a grade of A in the course, comprehensibility and pleasantness, respectively, to native speakers; and personal satisfaction. Relative to teachers, learners overestimated the first and underestimated the other three. Generally, learners believed that the greatest degree of accuracy was required for academic success and the least for their personal satisfaction. In other words, they considered course requirements to be unduly harsh relative to the expectations and needs of native speakers of the target language. Learners were also satisfied with a relatively low degree of accuracy. What is more, learners – for most of

whom English was the first language – appeared to consider accuracy in German inflectional morphology to be of relatively little importance, i.e., their judgments of the need for accuracy in L2 forms were guided by how they perceived forms and functions to be mapped and, in turn, they imagined two form-function connections in the L2 based on how they experiences such connection in their L1. Chavez (2014), in an analysis of the same data set, found that specific student characteristics are associated with a greater concern with accuracy. Specifically, females, students who studied the L2 for the intellectual challenge, and (to a lesser extent) learners who had achieved high grades tended to value accuracy more than their peers.

Chavez (2013), working with a different data set that, however, was derived from a comparable population, uncovered achievement as captured in previous L2 German final course grades, to be a predictor of not just the degree of optimism in terms of language learning outcome but also the area in which acquisition would be particularly successful. As a general rule, less successful learners were also less optimistic. However, middling learners were more likely to believe they would master German pronunciation than were their much-better and their much-worse performing peers. Chavez (2016) further found that first-year learners (beginners) were significantly more optimistic about their final attainment than were their peers in second-year German.

2.3 Language awareness and self-assessment

In a study such as this one, i.e., a study in which learners are to explain the goals and outcomes of their L2 learning, it is important to consider four related concerns: (1) learners' awareness of the language's forms and functions, and the relationship between the two; (2) their ability to articulate linguistic and metalinguistic constructs; (3) the pedagogical practices that foster or distract from language awareness; and (4) the ultimate consequence of being L2-aware or not,

i.e., to know what one knows, does not know, and may have trouble ever knowing; in other words, the ability to self-assess and set appropriate goals.

2.3.1 Language awareness

Usually attributed in its origins to Hawkins (1984), the *Language Awareness* (LA) field encompasses a wide range of topics and domains. The *Association of Language Awareness* (ALA), an organization founded in 1994, defines *language awareness* as "explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use" (Kennedy, 2012: 398). One example of recent scholarship in *Language Awareness* is *The Routledge Handbook of Language Awareness* (Garret & Cots, 2017). It covers a wide range of strands related to LA, from teaching and learning to topics beyond pedagogy. The core contents of the book also pertain to this study are teaching and teachers and learning and learners. The chapter on language teaching and teachers examines topics such as instructed second language acquisition (SLA) with a focus on the impact of LA on L2 learning, teacher language awareness (TLA) related to teacher development and beliefs, the connection between LA and teaching of four language skills, and assessment. In the area of learning and learners, the book covers topics such as learners' metalinguistic constructs, learners' development of L2 awareness, and other factors that may impact LA. Essentially, LA covers a range of cognitive processes and abilities related to an individual's understanding of language structures, functions, and uses.

2.3.2 Metalinguistic constructs

Simard and Wong (2004), writing in the *Foreign Language Annals,* call *Language Awareness* a 'movement' (p. 96) and explicitly connect it to L2 teaching and learning. Central to their article on multiple ways of using language awareness in L2 classrooms is Donmall's (1985:7) definition

of *language awareness* as "a person's sensitivity *to* and conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life." Simard and Wong explicitly set the primary goal of the *Language Awareness* movement as "to encourage the development of language awareness among L2 learners in order *to* enhance L2 learning as well as *to* foster greater linguistic tolerance and cross-cultural awareness among L2 learners" (p. 96).

More recently, Simard collaborated with Gutiérrez (2017) to focus on metalinguistic constructs, of which they define five types: *metalinguistic knowledge*, *metalinguistic awareness*, *metalinguistic reflection and activity*, *metalinguistic ability*, and *metalanguage*. *Metalinguistic knowledge* refers to *explicit knowledge* of language (Ellis, 2004) or *knowledge about language* (Clapham & Steel, 1997). In SLA, the terms *metalinguistic knowledge* and *explicit knowledge* are often used as synonyms. *Metalinguistic awareness* is related to the ability to focus attention on language. *Metalinguistic reflection and activity* refer to the conscious and intentional reflection about language (Gombert, 1992). *Metalinguistic ability* refers to "the ability to make language (at its different levels: phoneme, word, syntactic and pragmatic) opaque and attend to them in and for themselves" (Cazden, 1976: 603), and it differs from *metalinguistic knowledge* in that the former is typically complete around the age of 11 and 12 (Gombert, 1992; Karmiloff-Smith, 1992), while the latter can be developed throughout one's lifetime. Finally, the *metalanguage*, defined by Berry (2005), refers to the linguistic expressions used to describe language.

Specifically, Simard and Gutiérrez address three topics in their review of research, 1) the relationship between metalinguistic constructs and learning success, 2) the nature and use of metalinguistic constructs, and 3) the development of metalinguistic constructs. Apparently, a majority of the studies examined the relationship between metalinguistic constructs and learning

success and found positive correlations between the constructs and language aspects examined. For instance, Roehr (2008), Correa (2011), and Gutiérrez (2013) found a positive relationship between metalinguistic knowledge and L2 proficiency, though the relationship varies in different language aspects. Some recent studies also confirmed such a positive link between metalinguistic knowledge and learning outcome (Meritan, 2021; Wiechmann & Riedel, 2017).

Simard and Gutiérrez also explained two types of instruments used to measure metalinguistic constructs: performance data and verbalization data. Performance data, such as grammatical tasks, judgments tasks, and correction talks, are used to measure metalinguistic knowledge, ability, and awareness, while verbalization data, such as verbalization of rules, linguistic knowledge, and verbalization about language, are used to measure the above three constructs and metalinguistic reflection and activity. For instance, Hu's (2011) study showed that learners' exposure to detailed and repeated metalinguistic information resulted in the acquisition of explicit knowledge as reflected in their verbalization, and a positive relationship between their metalinguistic knowledge and facility with metalanguage was found. Some other studies have also employed self-reflection as a tool of verbalization and found that it contributes to improved language phonological awareness, which is related to positive learning outcomes (Derwing, 2018; Guion and Pederson, 2007; Kivistö-de Souza, 2017; Meritan, 2021).

Simard and Gutiérrez concluded that many researchers reported positive correlations between metalinguistic knowledge, ability and awareness, and language proficiency. The relationship tends to be stronger for reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary than for listening and speaking. However, no study to-date has demonstrated a relationship between metalinguistic reflection (operationalized through verbalizations about language) and L2 proficiency.

2.3.3 Quantitative and qualitative language awareness

Kennedy (2012), and Kennedy and Trofimovich (2010), in reference to Benson and Lor's (1999) analytical framework, distinguished between quantitative and qualitative language awareness. Kennedy (2012) describes these two types as follows:

> "When learners describe language as a set of items (grammatical concepts, lexical patterns, etc.) which need to be acquired and remembered, they are demonstrating quantitative awareness. Learners show quantitative awareness about language learning when they see learning as the assimilation of various linguistic items, with greater learning linked to greater effort, practice, and time spent learning. In contrast, learners show qualitative awareness when they view language as a carrier of meaning and view language learning as extracting meaning from L2 input and interaction." (p. 401)

Studying sojourners of L2 English for 13 weeks, Kennedy (2012) determined that 1) different from Kennedy and Trofimovich (2010), no relationship was found between L2 use and qualitative LA; this was due to different individuals exhibiting notably different associations between the two measures; 2) the majority of comments reflected qualitative rather than quantitative LA (142 vs. 89); and 3) a smaller number of participants (three out of 10) were responsible for more than half (55% of all comments); in sum, LA differed considerably in extent, type, and consequences within the cohort of learners.

2.3.4. Critical language awareness

In keeping with recent trends in second language acquisition, the sub-field of *Critical Language Awareness* (CLA) has emerged. CLA deals with language as a discourse and has broader aims and more objectives than linguistically orientated LA (Svalberg, 2007). Svalberg explains that researcher in the field focuses on analyzing "how power relationships construct, and are constructed by, discourses." (2007:294). Some of the issues being explored are marginalized

learners, the importance of historical perspectives (Janks & Ivanic 1992), and dialect awareness (Svalberg, 2007). Quan (2020:898) explains CLA as "the understanding of how language use intersects with identity and power (Alim, 2010)", and "how language functions in the maintenance of societal power relations" (p. 899), which "can facilitate resistance to domination enacted through ideology and language" (Leeman, 2014, p. 277). Current research in CLA has focused on learners and teachers. For instance, Adrada-Rafael (2021) explored the CLA of Spanish heritage learners, Damián & Marcin (2022) and Gómez García (2022) examined the impact of implementing critical language pedagogies on learners' CLA, and Chang (2022) and Chang, Torres-Guzmán & Hansun (2022) investigated the effect of training for bilingual pre-service teachers. Although not immediately relevant to the present study, CLA can nevertheless speak to the self-images that L2 learners develop (e.g., as evident in their self-assessment) and the goals they set for themselves through studying a particular L2.

2.3.5 CLT and language awareness

L2 pedagogy holds a tenuous and ambivalent position vis-à-vis language awareness, especially because of the multiple and incoherent perceptions of what CLT entails or 'allows' in terms of explicit instruction about rather than in the language, its forms, functions, and social embeddedness (see the discussion above).

Little (1997) pointed out that the communicative approach "is seriously challenged with regard to language awareness" in that learners are seriously deprived of language awareness in both language learning and language use (p. 100). Yet, established strands of contemporary L2 research and pedagogy, which would not necessarily regard themselves as deviating from CLT principles, have made *language awareness* and related concepts central to their objectives.

One concerns Form-Focused Instruction (FFI). Ranta and Lyster (2017) explained that FFI aims to create opportunities for learners to attend to language features in communicative tasks, and it can be classified into two types: *proactive* and *reactive*. *Proactive* FFI involves planned instruction designed to direct students' attention by noticing and using certain target features, while *reactive* FFI involves responding to students' language production through corrective feedback or other techniques to draw learners' attention to the target language (p. 41). The primary goal of FFI is to enhance students' linguistic accuracy through metalinguistic awareness in classrooms that prioritize meaning and communication (p. 42).

Ranta and Lyster (2017) summarized some of the proactive FFI techniques identified by Ellis (1998), which include *input enhancement* to promote the noticing and processing of targeted forms, *metalinguistic explanations* for the development of explicit knowledge, and *practice* to build automaticity for using grammatical knowledge fluently. Reactive FFI mostly refers to corrective feedback.

Furthermore, Ranta and Lyster (2017) proposed an implementation strategy for FFL in content-based lessons, broadly speaking, communicative language teaching classrooms. The implementation strategy starts with a noticing activity, followed by an awareness activity and guided practice, which eventually leads to autonomous practice. Egi (2010) also determined language awareness is important for learners to benefit from feedback. McManus (2019) found that explicit instruction was required for learners to become aware of verbal English past-tense markings and, further, to be able to understand these correctly.

Another strand of research and accompanying pedagogy that may or may not fit under the CLT umbrella derives from Schmidt's (1990, 1993, 1995, 2001, 2012) *Noticing Hypothesis*. Richard explains "that learners must attend to and notice linguistic features of the input that they

are exposed to if those forms are to become intake for learning" (2012:29). Along the line is a further hypothesis – *noticing the gap* and it is based on the assumption that "in order to overcome errors, learners must make conscious comparisons between their own output and target language input." (P.30)

Simply put, the input does not automatically become intake for language learning unless it is processed via noticing (consciously registered). This hypothesis is based on the theories of conscious and unconscious learning, and Schmidt (1990, 2012) defines consciousness as intention, attention, and awareness. Intention refers to intentional or goal-directed learning; though incidental learning could be effective in some areas, such as vocabulary learning, intentional learning could also be more effective in acquiring features that are being processed differently from their L1 (Ellis, 2006, 2008). Attention involves various mechanisms, including "alertness, orientation, detection with selective attention, facilitation and inhibition" (Schmidt, 2001, 2012; Tomlin & Villa, 1994). However, the requirement for attention in all learning is uncertain, and it is also unclear whether more attention leads to more learning (Baars, 1988). Nevertheless, specific focus rather than global attention is essential to achieve productive learning outcomes. For instance, to acquire pragmatics, attention should be directed to both the linguistic form of utterance and the relevant social and contextual features (Schmidt, 2012, p. 31). Awareness refers to the knowledge of rules, and metalinguistic awareness of all kinds belongs to understanding, a higher level of awareness (p. 32). Schmidt (2012) argues that noticing is a prerequisite to second language acquisition, but understanding is not. Schmidt (2012) explains although most studies support the "noticing" effect for explicit learning, evidence for implicit second language learning without awareness or the ability to express it is limited.

Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis, together with Gass' (1997) work on Input, directly inspired VanPatten and Cadierno's (1993) and VanPatten's (1993) Processing Instruction (PI). VanPatten (2002:757) describes it as such:

> "PI is concerned with how learners derive intake from input regardless of the language being learned and regardless of the context (i.e., instructed, noninstructed). Intake is defined as the linguistic data actually processed from the input and held in working memory for further processing. As such, PI attempts to explain how learners get form from input and how they parse sentences during the act of comprehension while their primary attention is on meaning. Form in this model refers to surface features of language (e.g., functors, inflections), although PI is also relevant to syntax" (VanPatten, 1996, chap. 5).

VanPatten (2002) also characterizes SLA research that has examined the processes involved in and outcomes of PI:

> "To summarize, research on PI attempts to describe which linguistic data in the input get attended to during comprehension and which do not (or which are privileged, and which are not) and what grammatical roles learners assign to nouns. Intake is that subset of filtered input that the learner actually processes and holds in working memory during on-line comprehension. Intake thus contains grammatical information as it relates to the meaning that learners have comprehended (or think they have comprehended)." (p. 761)

DeKeyser, Salaberry, Robinson, and Harrington (2002) are critical of VanPatten's operationalization of terms and the research methodology that VanPatten himself has employed:

> "The issues of noticing, understanding, remembering, and retrieving the relevant knowledge, even considering declarative knowledge alone, are very different depending

> on the transparency of the form-meaning connection, the abstractness of the structure involved, the similarity with the native language, and the nature of the skill required (comprehension versus production). Some complex structures are easy to recognize but hard to produce correctly. Others may be easier to produce correctly when monitored but are harder to perceive, let alone process correctly and speedily. There is room here for a great many studies to investigate the contribution of various kinds of processing activities to the learning and acquisition of various kinds of structures in various languages." (p. 820)

But DeKeyser et al. nevertheless agree that "Bill VanPatten has made a very important contribution to the field by drawing attention to the importance of providing students with activities that engage them in processing crucial form-meaning links, in particular, in comprehension activities." (p. 820)

2.3.6. Teacher language awareness

Apart from the uncertain position of the relationship between language awareness and CLT, what also matters is the extent to which teachers have language awareness, what types they have, and how they can deploy types of awareness in instruction.

First addressed comprehensively in Andrews (2007), teacher language awareness (TLA) has established itself as a major focus in SLA research. Lindahl and Watkins describe Teacher Language Awareness (TLA) as follows:

> "TLA focuses more on what the teacher needs to know about language and how that knowledge is incorporated into pedagogical practice" (Andrews, 2007). It can be conceptualized in three overlapping and dynamic domains: the user domain (the teacher's own command of English and awareness of types of English that are used by culturally

> diverse learners, the analyst domain (the teacher's understanding of general linguistic rules and systems, and the teacher domain (the teacher's ability to plan instruction that will engage and support the culturally diverse English learner in the content areas) (Wright & Bolitho, 1993)." (Lindahl & Watkins, 2015:778)

Komorowska (2022) asserts that teacher language awareness (TLA) encompasses not only knowledge of and about the language but also the ability to utilize strategies to raise learners' language awareness. She mentions two neglected aspects of teacher awareness: *awareness of learners' thinking process* and *awareness of decision-making processes.*

Pinho, Gonçalves, Andrade, and Araujo e Sà (2011) proposed four types of TLA to be developed by pre-service teachers: *sociolinguistic awareness, sociocultural awareness, linguistic culture,* and *self-awareness as speakers, learners and teachers*. The first three types of awareness address various language aspects, ranging from linguistic to cultural. The fourth type of awareness relates to teachers' reflection (or the ability to reflect) on their own knowledge, attitudes, experiences, and skills (Pinho et al. 2011: 43–45).

Although the present study cannot measure the degree to which past and present teachers of learners in this study possessed different types of TLA or whether and how they might have deployed in the classroom, it is important to recognize TLA as an influence on learners' language awareness, including their ability to articulate goals and to assess their own knowledge of the language.

2.3.7. Learners' self-assessment

In pedagogical frameworks, the ability to self-assess is often associated with autonomous learning (Gardner, 2000; Holec, 1981; Thomson, 1996). However, the accuracy of such self-assessment is difficult to determine for a number of reasons. They include difficulties in

designating definitive benchmarks against which to compare self-assessments and uncertainty about pathways, e.g., how proficiency and self-assessment intersect. For example, one could assume that low-proficiency learners are not best positioned to judge their proficiency level. What is more, considerations outside of quantifiable performance measures may play a role, such as self-confidence and the type and extent of feedback that is available.

The relationship between self-assessment and proficiency or performance is particularly relevant to the present study. Edele, Suering, Kristen, and Stanat (2015) reviewed over 30 correlation studies between language self-assessment and language proficiency from the early 1980s to the early 2010s and found that the correlations between the two varied greatly, ranging from zero to very high. Edele et al. (2015) explained that this variation could be due to the differences in the quality of the assessment instruments used for both self-assessment and proficiency measurement. Therefore, self-assessment accuracy could differ across various contexts, such as between learners in the same context, similar learners in different contexts, or within an individual learner over time.

Recent empirical studies have confirmed these findings. Trofimovich, Isaacs, Kennedy, Saito, and Crowther (2016) and Isbell and Lee's conceptual replication study (2022) both examined the relationship between L2 learners' self-assessment of accentedness and speech comprehensibility and found that students with lower proficiency tend to overestimate their performance and vice versa. Isbell and Lee's study further showed that individuals with higher listening proficiency were better able to judge their performance compared to those with lower proficiency. Other studies have shown that learners can accurately judge their proficiency to a certain degree in certain language aspects and different circumstances (Lappin-Fortin & Rye, 2014; Ma & Winkle, 2019).

Several studies investigated whether learners' ability to self-assess can be improved and found that some form of training could be beneficial. For example, Dolosic, Brantmeier, Strube, and Hogrebe (2016) conducted a study on L2 French learners in an immersion camp and discovered that students were initially unable to assess their French abilities before training but showed improvements in their self-assessment skills after completing the program. Similarly, Ma and Winke (2019) used self-assessment tools to track language gains of L2 Chinese learners and found that most learners' proficiency gain was reflected in their improved self-assessment skills. However, it is difficult to determine whether it is training that facilitates learners to better judge their proficiency or if improved self-assessment is simply a result of improved language proficiency.

Finally, the connection between self-assessment and language awareness cannot be ignored. However, despite the importance of this connection, there is a lack of empirical, experimental studies that investigate the impact of self-assessments on raising language awareness, as noted by Figueras (2017). Glover's study in 2011, which employed the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level descriptors to train learners to make them become more aware of their competencies, was referenced by Figueras as an example of how to achieve this. Several studies, including Meritan and Mroz (2019), Inceoglu (2021), Moyer (2017), and Wrembel (2015), have proposed metalinguistic activities, such as self-reflection assessments as effective learning tools for promoting deeper levels of reflection and noticing.

Language awareness has been recognized as a crucial aspect of language learning and is deeply rooted in learners' minds, eventually reflected in their responses. While the present study did not directly explore language awareness, it can be used to interpret the findings.

A review of the scholarship has shown that students might exhibit different goal orientations, including *learning* and *performance goals* (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988), *mastery* and *performance goals* (Ames, 1992; Ames & Archer, 1987, 1988), or *task-focused* and *ability focused goals* (Maehr & Midgley, 1991). Moreover, the goals students set for themselves may also be multi-directional, involving more than just one goal. As goal-setting and goal orientation are closely connected to motivation, it would be beneficial to explore the types of learning goals students set for themselves and how these impact their other perceptions.

The discussion of "post communicative language teaching" has been ongoing since 1988 (Byram, 1988) at the latest, but *Communicative Language Teaching* (CLT) remains one of the most influential approaches in language classrooms, whether being practiced or claimed to be practiced. A review of scholarship has revealed many misconceptions being circulated in the practices of language teaching, such as the belief that communicative tasks are mostly limited to oral communication in face-to-face interactions (Burke, 2006; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999; Savignon, 2007; Thompson, 1996; Whong, 2013), and misunderstandings about the teaching of grammar or a focus on metalinguistic awareness of syntax, discourse and social appropriateness (Savignon, 2007; Wu, 2008; Thompson, 1996, Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999; Burke 2006). It would be beneficial to examine how the practices have shaped learners' experiences, perceptions, and articulatory repertoire.

Finally, research has shown that the accuracy of students' self-assessment of their proficiency could differ across various contexts (Edele et al., 2015), such as between learners and the same learner over time. Their ability of self-assessment also varies depending on language domains such as speaking and writing, and language components, e.g., grammar and vocabulary. Despite that, it is important to take students' self-assessment into consideration when

evaluating their language proficiency, as it provides valuable information on their own perceptions and self-positioning.

2.5 Research questions

To address these issues of learning goals, the impact of teaching practices on students' perceptions, and their self-assessment and its connection to language awareness, the following Research Themes (RTs) were explored in this study, 1) German-learning goals reported and evaluated by college students of German; 2) Self-rated German proficiency as reported by college students of German and its relationship to ratings of importance and achievability of learning goals; 3) Definitions of accuracy reported by college students of German. Each RT was associated with a varying number of Research Questions (RQs), ranging from 3 to 6. The specific RQs will be presented in the Results.

Research Theme 1: German-learning goals reported and evaluated by college students of German

1.1: What learning goals did college students of German recognize among learners of German generally?

1.2: How important did the respondents consider each of the named learning goals to them personally?

1.3: How achievable did respondents consider each of these goals in the context of their formal studies of German?

1.4: How did the perceived personal importance and the perceived achievability for each learning goal compare and relate?

1.5: How did first- and second-year, and post-second-year German students compare in the importance that they assign to the individual learning goals?

1.6: How did first- and second-year, and post-second-year German students compare in the achievability that they attribute to the individual learning goals in their formal studies of German?

Research Theme 2: Self-rated German proficiency in four language skills of *Speaking*, *Writing*, *Listening*, and *Reading* as reported by college students of German and its relationship to ratings of importance and achievability of learning goals related to the same four skills

2.1: How did college students of German rate their current German proficiency in *speaking*, *writing*, *listening*, and *reading*, respectively, when they compared themselves to (a) other students in German class and (b) educated native speakers of German?

2.2: How did first- and second-year (FSY) and post-second-year (PSY) German students compare when they rated their proficiency in each of the four skills (*speaking, writing, listening,* and *reading*) relative to (a) other students in their German class and (b) educated native speakers of German?

2.3: How did first- and second-year (FSY) and post-second-year (PSY) German students compare when they rated learning goals affiliated with each of the four skills (*speaking, writing, listening,* and *reading*) with regard to (1) their personal importance and (2) their achievability within formal students of German.

2.4: How did the perceived personal importance and the perceived achievability of learning goals affiliated with each of the four skills (*speaking, writing, listening,* and *reading*), and the perceived German proficiency for each of the four skills relative to (a) other students in their German class and (b) educated native speakers of German relate?

Research Theme 3: Definitions of accuracy reported by college students of German

3.1 How did college students of German define accuracy in four language skills (*Speaking, Writing, Listening,* and *Reading*), respectively?

3.2 How did college students of German's definitions of accuracy for four language skills (*Speaking, Writing, Listening,* and *Reading*), respectively, compare?

3.3 How did first- and second-year (FSY) and post-second-year (PSY) college students of German compare when they defined accuracy in each of the four language skills (*Speaking, Writing, Listening,* and *Reading*)?

Chapter 3. Methods

This chapter outlines the participants, instruments, and procedures used for data collection. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in September 2020 and has been renewed at the prescribed intervals. Two changes of requests were approved in November 2020 and March 2021, respectively. The Notice of Approval for this study (Protocol 2020-1247) and Acknowledgements of change (2020-1247-CP001, 2020-1247-CP002) are shown in Appendix A.

3.1 Participants

The study was conducted at a large Midwestern research university. Participants were drawn from students enrolled in undergraduate German classes at the university. The recruitment process spanned the course of six semesters - Fall 2020, Spring 2021, Summer 2021, Fall 2021, Spring 2022, and Summer 2022. Participants were given an informed consent form (see Appendix B.1), which explained the purpose of the study, eligibility criteria, potential risks, and incentives, how data would be used, as well as confidentiality measures to ensure the privacy of the participants' information. Participants were also informed of the option to withdraw from the study at any point.

Table 1 (below) shows the number of students who participated in the dissertation study for each of the six semesters, further marked as Fall semester (FA), Spring semester (SP), and Summer semester (SU), and by the level of year of study to reflect grouping principles that were applied in the study itself: First-year (FY), second-year (SY), and post-second-year (PSY). Each semester column is further divided into two sub-columns, with the first (#) indicating the number of students enrolled for the year level, and second (%) indicating the percentage of enrolled students for the given year level relative to all students enrolled in that particular semester. The

bottom row shows the total number of students enrolled in each semester. The far-right column summarizes the total number of participants for each year level, i.e., first year (FY), second year (SY), and post-second-year (PSY).

Table 1
Number of Participants Across Six Semesters of Data Collection by Year

Semester	**FA 2020**		**SP 2021**		**SU 2020**		**FA 2021**		**SP 2022**		**SU 2022**		**Total**	
	#	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**
FY	2	33%	1	20%	0	0%	6	46%	0	0%	3	100%	12	39%
SY	1	17%	1	20%	0	0%	1	8%	1	25%	0	0%	3	13%
PSY	3	50%	3	60%	0	0%	6	46%	3	75%	0	0%	15	48%
TOTAL	6		5		0		13		4		3		31	

Depending on their academic major, students at the university need to complete zero to four semesters of sequential foreign language study. Students with prior experience in a foreign language are advised to take the UW System Placement test to identify the course in the sequence that best suits their preparation. If a student places into a course and passes that course with at least a grade of B, the student simultaneously earns credit for all other courses that come earlier in the sequence, so-called retroactive (‘retro’) credits. Students who wish to pursue a certificate or major in German need to have completed first-year and second-year German language courses (2 units each) as well as three additional language-focused courses, i.e., German 249, Intermediate German, Speaking and Listening; German 258, Intermediate German, Reading; and German 262, Intermediate German, Writing, before they can register for courses with specific topics related to German-language literature and culture (all considered post-second year or PSY in the terminology of this study).

To assess the representativeness of the study participants, data for enrolled students in German courses during the recruitment period were obtained from the Registrar’s office. The data were used to determine the total enrollment in beginner, intermediate, and advanced

German classes for each of the six semesters during which the study was conducted[2]. Whereas reporting conventions for Table 2 mirror those for Table 1, an additional observation is required: the total counts in the far-right column represent enrollments and not the total counts of individual students.

Please note: (a) in the first two years, many students enrolled in a temporal semester sequence and would appear twice in the count (e.g., Fall and Spring) within the same year (e.g., FY or SY) or across years (e.g., from FY to SY or from SY to PSY); and (b) at the PSY level may have taken more than one course in a single semester or a series of semesters.

Table 2

Number of Students Enrolled in Undergraduate German Courses Across Six Semesters by Year

Semester	**FA 2020**		**SP 2021**		**SU 2021**		**FA 2021**		**SP 2022**		**SU 2022**		**Total**	
	#	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**
FY	70	21 %	81	29 %	3	100 %	93	18 %	82	19 %	4	100 %	326	21 %
SY	51	16 %	40	14 %	0	0%	80	15 %	57	13 %	0	0%	228	15 %
PSY	207	63 %	157	56 %	0	0%	354	67 %	284	67 %	0	0%	1002	64 %
TOTAL	328		278		3		527		423		4		1556	

A total of 31 students participated in my dissertation study; 13 of them were first-year students, three were second-year students, and 15 were post-second-year students. The exact participation rate for each level (FY, SY, PSY) is impossible to calculate given the likely multiple counts (i.e., overcounting) of the same students in Table 2. However, even a casual comparison of the two tables reveals that (a) the participation rate was very low; and (b) that the distribution of participants in the study was different from general enrollment patterns, with SY students not just numerically but also proportionally under-represented in the study. This

[2] This does not include students who enrolled in "German for Reading Knowledge" as well as in independent studies.

circumstance will have consequences for the grouping of students in analyses. That is, for most but not all analyses that will be presented in Results, SY students had to be grouped with FY students to compose the group of FSY participants.

Since my dissertation study focuses on students' perceptions of their learning trajectories, including their learning goals, self-rated proficiency, and their understanding of accuracy, it is important to describe the language teaching approach being used in the German program in which the study was conducted. At the time of study, first- and second-year German courses were exclusively taught by graduate-student teachings assistants (TAs) under the supervision of a full-time member of the faculty with particular expertise in foreign language pedagogy, who also set the curriculum, including syllabi, and provided training and guidance in appropriate teaching practices. Among post-second-year courses, German 249, 258, and 262 were taught by a mix of graduate-student TAs and full-time faculty, whereas all other PSY courses were taught by full-time faculty only. Although teaching practices, especially at the PSY-levels varied depending on course content and instructor, in general terms, courses applied principles that are commonly associated with communicative language teaching (CLT), such as a focus on language practice and minimal use of explicit language teaching or overt error correction in class; the employment of student-centered, collaborative activities, a strong preference of the L2 over the L1 in class communication; written work, explanations, and corrective feedback mostly delegated to at-home practice; and syllabi whose stated objectives focused on communication in the broader sense.

Demographic information relevant to participants in this study was collected through the background questionnaire (see Appendix B.5). Out of the 31 participants, seven identified themselves as international students and 24 self-identified as domestic students, while ten

considered countries/areas outside the US as their hometown[3] and 21 self-identified the US as hometown. None of the self-identified international students considered US as hometown, three self-identified domestic students considered Czech, China, and Germany, respectively, as their hometown.

Out of the 31 participants, 25 identified themselves as L1 English speakers, among whom 21 self-identified as monolingual. The remaining four L1 English speakers identified themselves as either bilingual with Czech and German as their second L1, respectively, trilingual with Marathi and Hindy, or Mandarin and Malay as additional L1s. The six participants with an L1 other than English self-identified as monolingual, five as L1 Mandarin, and one as L1 German. The self-identified L1 German speaker belongs to post-second-year group, and given the small participant number, I found it impossible to further subdivide participants by L1. But in further research, it would be useful to distinguish by L2 and educational histories, e.g., Chinese students, as they may influence responses.

Figure 1 (below) breaks down the participants' prior German learning experience at the time of the study. The orange area represents the number of students without prior German learning experience, while the blue area represents those with prior German learning experience. The outer circle in blue is further broken down by types of their most recent learning experience: i.e., at university, in high school, and other. Figure 2 shows participants distinguished by their level of academic progression, with first-year students represented in blue, sophomore students in orange, junior students in gray, senior students in yellow, and graduate students in light blue.

[3] Please note that in the questionnaire, students were asked to name their hometown. Some students mentioned states or cities in the responses, while others mentioned countries. In this report, I used the word "hometown" instead of "home countries" to reflect the original wording of the question. However, I summarized the responses by grouping them as home countries.

Figure 1
Number of Participants by Prior Experience Learning German

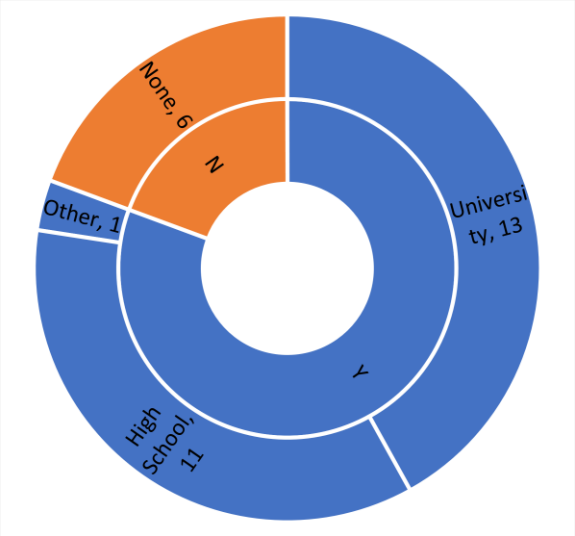
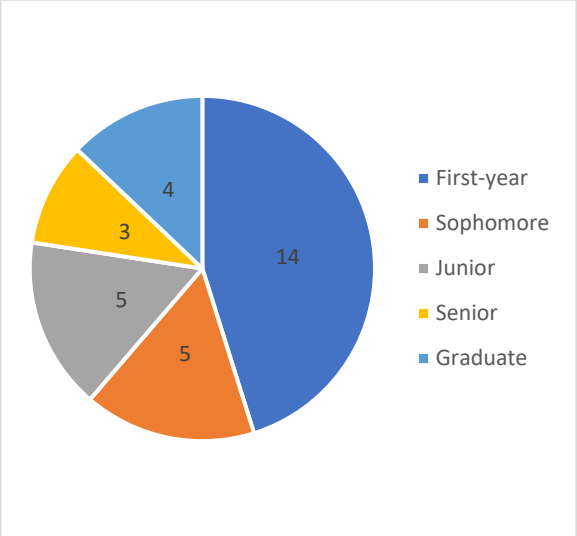


Figure 2
Number of Participants by Level of Academic Progression



As Figure 1 shows, most of the participants had prior experience in learning German, with only six out of 31 (two-fifths) never having learned German before. Among the 25 experienced German learners, 13 (over one-half) had taken their most recent German course at the university; 11 (close to one-half) had done the same in high school German; one participant's most recent German learning experience was elsewhere.

As visible in Figure 2, 14 (close to one-half) of the participants were First Year students, with the remainder distributed over the categories of Sophomore, Junior, Senior, and graduate students.

Figure 3 (below) displays the distribution of participants based on their academic objectives. Please note that while most reported having only one academic objective, a few reported having more than one. Respondents could indicate any of the following six academic objectives: pursuing a major in German, pursuing a certificate in German, obtaining retro credits, fulfilling a language requirement, pursuing a degree other than German, and other academic objectives. Each bar represents an academic objective, with the orange section of each bar

representing the number of participants who reported a given academic objective, while the blue bars represent those who did not.

Figure 3
Distribution of Participants by Academic Objectives

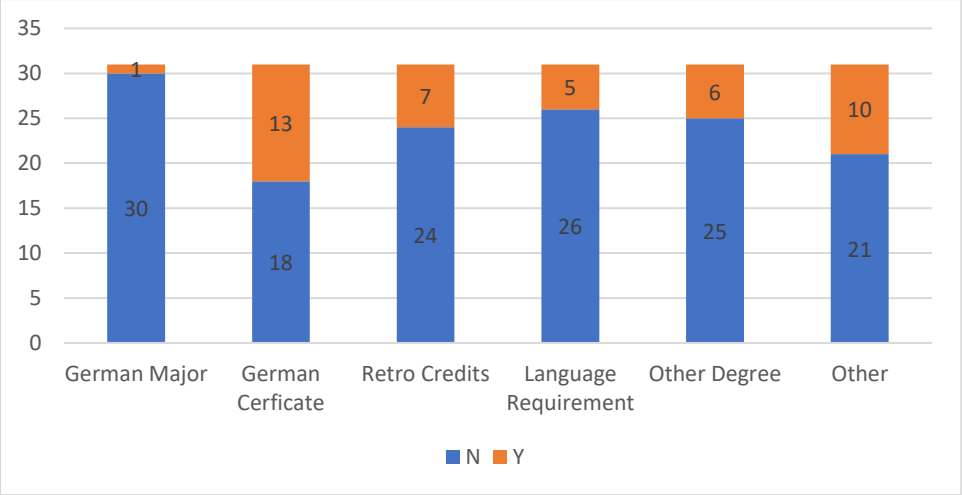


Figure 3 shows that the most frequently mentioned academic objective among study participants (13) was to pursue a certificate in German, followed by other (non-specified) objectives.

3.2 Instrument

Data for the dissertation study were derived from a larger research project that aimed to give a detailed account of students' self-situation in the formal process of learning German as an L2. The research instrument in its entirely contained four parts:1) Questionnaire Part I, which collected information on students' demographics, educational histories, and self-situation in the formal study of German as an L2; 2) Questionnaire Part II, which focused on writing accuracy, exploring students' opinions on different aspects of writing accuracy and its perceived impact; 3) Questionnaire Part III – a mirroring questionnaire to Part II in format but centered on speaking accuracy; and 4) Questionnaire Part IV, which included descriptive tasks for a focal group. Questionnaire Part I, II, and III were distributed together. After completing these first three parts,

a select group of students were invited to complete Questionnaire Part IV. Section 3.3 on Procedure provides more detail on the process. Each part had several components, all of which are named for the overview in Table 4 (below). As will be described in Procedure (section 3.3.), participants did not have to complete all parts of the questionnaire for their responses to be included in analyses. Of the four parts, items from three components of the first part (shaded in gray) were included for analysis of the dissertation study.

Table 3
Overview of the Instrument in its Entirety: Four Parts and Their Components

The research instrument in its entirety	
Parts	**Instrument components**
Part I Demographics, educational history, and self-situation in the formal study of German as an L2	(1) Educational background
	(2) L2 German learning experiences
	(3) Perceptions of learning L2 German
	(4) Use of first language/s and L2 German
	(5) Self-assessed proficiency in L2 German and other languages *(Definition of accuracy comes from this component)*
	(6) Perceptions of using German in L2 class
Part II Questionnaire on Accuracy in Writing (Quantitative)	(1) Objectives of writing L2 German
	(2) Perceptions that others have of you as a writer of L2 German
	(3) Current abilities in writing L2 German and their impact
	(4) Perceptions of writing in L2 German and its connection to language learning
Part III Questionnaire On Accuracy in Speaking (Quantitative)	(1) Objectives of speaking L2 German
	(2) Perceptions that others have of you as a speaker of L2 German
	(3) Current German abilities in speaking L2 German and their impact
	(4) Perceptions of speaking in L2 German and its connection to language learning
Part IV Descriptive Tasks (Qualitative)	(1) Mindset of using L2 German
	(2) Perception of aspects of the L2 German language and other past learning experiences
	(3) Perceptions of L2 German as a language
	(4) Perceptions of L2 German classroom (learning) experiences

	(5) Perception of successful and failed L2 German learners

As shown in Table 4, three components of the research instrument contributed data to the analyses presented in the dissertation, 1) Educational background, specifically Items 1-6 in the *Background Questionnaire* (Appendix B.5); 2) perceptions of learning L2 German, specifically, Question # 1 in the *Perception of Learning German Questionnaire* (Appendix B.6); 3) self-assessed proficiency in L2 German; specifically, Question # 2, Items 1-24 in the *German Proficiency Questionnaire* (Appendix B.7); and 4) Question #1, Items 1-4 in the *German Proficiency Questionnaire* (Appendix B.7). Please note, that Appendices only included items that are relevant to the dissertation study.

Of the three components that generated data for the present study, one - the *Background Questionnaire* was used in the description of participants (this chapter; Items 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6) and provided a basis for grouping respondents in Results (Item 2). Table 5 shows what each item was asking about.

Table 4
Overview of Contents, Background Questionnaire

Item #	Content	Item #	Content
1	Last German course	4	Hometown
2	Current enrollment status	5	Domestic / International student
3	Academic objectives	6	First languages

Table 6 presents information on the source, contents, and format of the three instrument components that provided data for analyses (see Results chapter).

Table 5
Overview of Three Instrument Components Used in Analysis (Results)

Source	Name of Component	Topic	# of items	Question type
Part I	Perceptions of Learning German Questionnaire	Learning goals	1	• Name possible goals for learning L2 German open-ended question.

				• Ratings of (a) personal importance and (b) perceived achievability of named goals, scale from 0-100
Part I	German Proficiency Questionnaire Question #2 item 1-24	Self-rated German proficiency	24	• Ratings of proficiency relative to (a) other learners in class and (b)educated native speakers, respectively scaled from 0-100
Part I	German Proficiency Questionnaire Question # 1, items 1- 4	Understanding of accuracy in four language skills	4	• Define accuracy in, respectively, listening, speaking, writing, and reading open-ended questions.

Each of these three components corresponds in sequence to one of the three Research Themes (RTs) described at the end of the previous chapter.

In the research instrument, specifically in the component *Perception of Learning German Questionnaire*, the term "learning objectives" was used without further clarification between "learning objectives" and "learning goals." In research, "learning objectives" and "learning goals" refer to distinct terms. The former denotes specific, detailed, and measurable learning outcomes to be achieved at the end of a learning process, while the latter refers to broader and overall desired outcomes of a learning experience. In the questionnaire, I did not use the term "learning goals" in its narrow sense, as students are unlikely to be familiar with the distinction and are more familiar with the term "objective" based on the way that syllabi must be prepared to comply with university standards. Students' responses pertaining to "learning objectives" also confirmed their lack of differentiation between "objectives" and "goals," resulting in more generalized and border and less specific responses. In light of this, I used "learning goals" instead of "learning objectives" to describe the related terms in the results.

3.3 Procedure

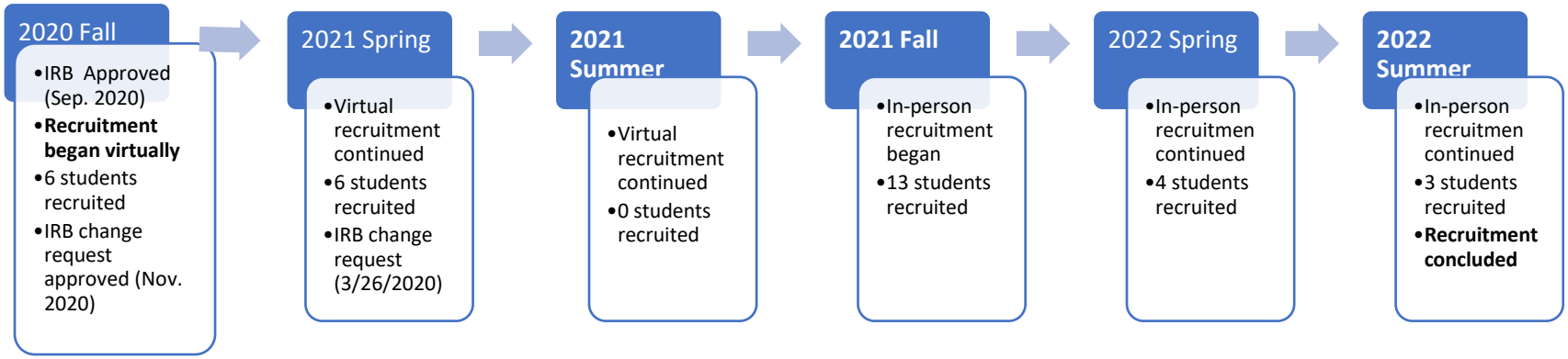
The study aimed to recruit students enrolled in all undergraduate German courses at a large Midwestern research university. The recruitment process spanned six academic semesters, of

which the first three (Fall 2020, Spring 2021, Summer 2021) corresponded with Covid-related restrictions in the format of instructional delivery. Concomitant with the only or preferred medium of instruction at the time, recruitment during these three semesters was virtual, and changes to the original pre-pandemic IRB protocol (Appendix A, protocol number 2020-1247) had to be requested so as to provide for remote communication between researcher and study participants (Appendix 2020-1247-CP001). Later, another change to the protocol, i.e., to again allow in-person recruitment, was requested and granted (Appendix A, protocol number 2020-1247-CP002).

Figure 4 provides an overview of the recruitment process (see next page).

Figure 4

Recruitment Process over the Course of Six Academic Semesters



To comply with the guidelines of the Institution Review Board, all potential participants were provided with an informed consent form (Appendix B.1) that explained the scope, risks, and benefits of the study. The letter also indicated that participation in the study was voluntary and independent of any evaluations, such as grades, in their German classes. Participants were told that they would first receive three parts of the research instrument (Questionnaire Parts I, II, and III), of which Part III would be optional, and that upon completion of at least Parts I and II, they could choose to complete the fourth part (Part IV). To qualify for an incentive, participants had to complete Questionnaire Part I and II. For this activity, they were offered a $5 gift card and one entry into a raffle for a chance to win one of the following 15 prizes: one $50, two $30, three $20, four $10, and five $5 gift cards at outlets of their choice. Upon completion of Questionnaire Part III, participants earned another $5 gift card and another entry into the raffle described above. All who also participated in Part IV of the study received an additional $15 gift card at the outlet of their choice as compensation.

Those who were recruited in person, were given a hard-copy flyer with a link to an online dropbox. The dropbox contained a Word document that included instructions on how to complete and return the document (informed consent letter, Appendix B.1); instructions to establish a personal code (Appendix B.2) to ensure participants the confidentiality of their responses; and the research materials themselves, i.e., Questionnaires Part I, Part II and optional Part III, instructions to request compensations and a form with which to express interest in participating in Part IV (Appendix B.3). A physical copy of the Word documents was available at the participants' requests. For virtual recruitment, an email with the same Word document was sent out after each class visit. Participants could work on Questionnaire Part I, II, and III at their

own pace, interrupting and resuming work needed, so long as they completed the questionnaire pages in the correct sequence.

Participants could return the completed questionnaire via email to the investigator or drop it off anonymously in an online dropbox. On the payment instruction page, participants were requested to indicate whether they wished to be entered into the raffle and which parts of the study (Questionnaires Part I, II and/or III) they completed. As the surveys were anonymous, the researcher could not verify the veracity of these responses, and participants were entered into the raffle based on their own reports.

31 questionnaires were received by the end of the summer semester of 2022. All 31 participants completed the majority of Part I and II components, and 16 out of the 31 completed the optional Part III. Additionally, seven students were invited to participate in the focal group study, and four of them completed and returned the focal group questionnaire, Part IV. Components that were completed by all 31 participants were considered for inclusion in the analysis for the dissertation study.

Chapter 4. Results

The presentation of results in this chapter follows the three research themes (RTs) outlined in the chapter Review of Literature. Each of the three research themes encompassed multiple research questions (RQs) to develop each overarching theme. RT 1 investigated German learning goals reported by college students of German and included six specific research questions (RQs 1.1-1.6); RT 2 explored German proficiency in four language skills (*Speaking*, *Writing*, *Listening*, and *Reading*) reported by college students of German (RQ 2.1) and examined how self-ratings of proficiency in these four skills compared with ratings of importance and achievability as they related to these same skills (RQs 2.2-2.3); RT3 explored definitions of accuracy in four language skills reported by college students of German. All RQs under an RT are approached via analyses of identical or related research data. Each RT will be introduced by the description of relevant data collection as well as analytic procedures.

4.1 Research Theme 1: German-learning goals reported and evaluated by college students of German

Research Theme 1 (RT 1) dealt with German learning goals reported by college students of German and encompassed six specific research questions (RQs). The first RQ (RQ 1.1) explored what types of learning goals respondents recognized among learners of German generally. The next two RQs discussed students' evaluation of how important to them personally each of the named goals was (RQ 1.2) and how achievable each of these goals seemed to them within their formal studies of German (RQ 1.3). The fourth RQ (RQ 1.4) compared assessments of personal importance and achievability. The final two RQs again asked about perceptions of personal importance (RQ 1.5) and achievability (RQ 1.6) of reported German-learning goals, but this time, the focus in each RQ was on how two student populations compare in their responses.

Specifically, assessments given by first- and second-year students of German (FSY) will be juxtaposed with those given by post-second-year students of German (PSY).

RQs 1.1-1.6 were all addressed through analysis of students' responses to the same question (Question #1) in the research instrument *Perceptions of Learning German* (see Appendix B.6), in which respondents were asked to name five to eight learning goals that people might have when they learn German; to then rate how important each of the goals is for them personally on a percentage scale from 0% (not important at all for me) to 100% (absolutely essential for me); and finally, to rate each named objective in terms of how achievable it is for them in the context of their formal studies of German using a percentage scale from 0 % (not achievable at all) to 100% (absolutely achievable).

RQ 1.1: What learning goals did college students of German recognize among learners of German generally?

I entered all responses that the 31 respondents had given in response to the question about possible goals for learning German, i.e., a total of 195 responses, into NVivo 12, a software application for qualitative data analysis. I used Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2014) to code and, subsequently, determine viable categories.

Six main response categories emerged: (1) *Communication Skills,* (2) *Discrete Language Skills,* (3) *Language Performance,* (4) *Language and Culture Knowledge,* (5) *Personal Interest and Development,* and (6) *Globalism*. The six main categories were further divided into a total of 25 discrete subcategories. Based on the analysis of a single respondent's written answer (the entirety of what they wrote), multiple discrete types of categorizable responses could be – and often were – discerned within that answer. Each response was assigned to exactly one of the subcategories and, by extension, to exactly one of the main categories also. Conversely, a single

respondent's answer could produce more than one response for entry into the same subcategory. Overall, whereas the maximum number of respondents per subcategory was always 31, there was no limit to the number of responses that could be assigned to any one subcategory. To account for both the prevalence of a given subcategory in the population as a whole and the intensity with which a given subcategory was represented among all responses, subsequent analyses will take into account two measures: (1) The percentage of total respondents with at least one answer recorded in a given subcategory and main category; and (2) the percentage of total responses that fell into a given subcategory and main category.

Table 6 (below) provides an overview of the six main categories of students' learning goals together with their respective subcategories. The table further specifies how many subcategories emerged for each main category; the names of the subcategories that were given based on the nature of their respective entries; the number of respondents in each subcategory; the number of responses in each subcategory; and up to four verbatim examples of responses for each subcategory that are shown without corrections of original misspellings made by respondents. Examples from different respondents are separated by double pipe "||". The bottom row of Table 6 shows the total counts of categories, subcategories, respondents, and responses.

Table 6

Categories and Subcategories of Student-Reported Learning Goals with Examples

Categories	Subcategories				Verbatim Examples of Responses
	# of Subcategories in Category	**Name**	**# of Respondents**	**# of Responses**	
Communication Skills	2	Communication with native speakers	11	12	Speaking German to Germans || Having a conversation with German-speaking people || To talk with or understand native speakers || Communicate with other German speakers || etc.
		Communication with others (Unspecified or non-NSs)	7	7	Writing emails/ formally in German || Communication || Communicate with non-native English-speaking family and/or friends || Communicate with others in German || etc.
Discrete Language Skills	4	Listening	5	6	Understanding spoken German- at a train station, for e.g. || Listening || Listening comprehension || Listen || etc.
		Reading	14	15	Understanding written German locally (on Menus and at the airport, etc.) || Learning how to read || Read German literature || Reading || etc.
		Speaking	13	16	To learn how to speak German || Talk fluently with friends || Speaking || Speaking a second language || etc.
		Writing	7	8	Writing emails/ formally in German || Spelling || Writing || To write novels and check its German translation || etc.
Language Performance	7	Being understood	1	1	Able to be understood
		Understanding texts and people	6	8	Understanding written German locally (on Menus and at the airport, etc.) || Understand german speakers || Watch German films or TV series ||Able to understand others || etc.
		Impressing German speakers	1	1	Have German speakers call your German good.
		Being perceived as having a good accent	1	1	Good Accent
		Being fluent	9	9	Being fluent in another language || Talk fluently with friends. || Fluency || Ability to hold conversation (fluency) || etc.
		Having confidence	2	2	Confidence in speaking ability || Speaking with confidence with Germans or local people
		Overall/Unspecified	1	1	Want to enhance their communication and language capability

Categories	Subcategories				Verbatim Examples of Responses
	# of Subcategories in Category	Name	# of Respondents	# of Responses	
Language and Culture Knowledge	4	Culture and history	11	11	Being able to consume local German culture (movies, music, memes, etc.) || Understand German culture/history || Cultural Understanding || Learn about culture ||, etc.
		Language in general	3	3	To learn more about language as a whole (grammar, etc.) || Become more knowledgeable about German language || Want to know the language
		Grammar	4	4	Correct grammar || Grammar || Rules of Grammar || etc.
		Vocabulary	4	6	Know vocab that german speakers use || Vocabulary || Slang || Expand vocabulary || etc.
Personal Interest and Development	4	Academic progress	8	13	Learn for language requirement || Earn credit to graduate || Good Grade in the Class || Earn retro credits || etc.
		Personal development	14	22	Another Foreign language learning || Acquire language skill for personal interest || Learning about a new culture || For fun || etc.
		Professional development	11	15	Communicating with Clients || Make a career (translating or other) || Science and Research (2nd most common language for that) || Build resume || etc.
		Social activities	5	6	Make new friends || Friends are also learning the language || Learn to connect with family/friends || meet Germans || etc.
Globalism	4	Abroad experience	15	20	Learn for future travel || Travel to German Countries || Want to live in Germany|| Travel || etc.
		Bi- and Multilingualism	1	1	Bilingualism
		Cross-cultural perspectives	2	2	Observing cultural differences || To avoid culture misunderstanding
		Global perspective and connections	5	5	Learning global perspectives || Make international connections || To broaden one's horizons (understand German perspectives) || Gain insight into global ways of doing business through language understanding || etc.

Grand Total	Categories	Subcategories	Respondents	Responses
	6	25	31	195

As Table 6 shows and as mentioned earlier, there were a total of six main categories, 25 subcategories, 31 respondents, and 195 responses. The main category *Language Performance* was associated with the greatest number of subcategories, i.e., seven, while the category *Communication Skills* was associated with the smallest number of subcategories, i.e., two. The remaining four main categories were comprised of four subcategories each.

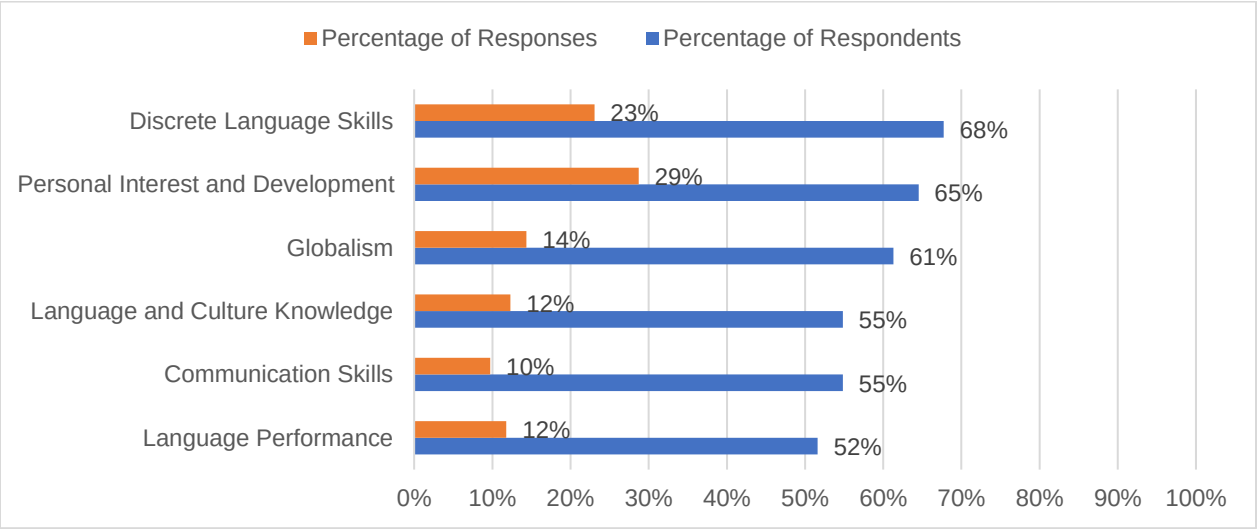
It also needs to be noted that two of the main categories, *Language Performance* and *Globalism*, comprised subcategories that each consisted of a single (unique) response. For the main category *Language Performance*, four out of a total of its seven subcategories contained only one response. The overall relatively high number of subcategories (i.e., seven) and the high proportion of subcategories with unique responses together suggest that respondents envisioned this objective (main category) to take multiple and often very individual shapes.

To illustrate patterns more thoroughly**,** Figure 5 shows the percentage of respondents with at least one response and the percentage of total responses in each of the six main categories of learning goals. These distributions were calculated relative to the total number of respondents (31) and of responses (195), respectively.[4] When calculating the percentage of respondents, I considered how many respondents had given at least one response in a given category or subcategory. When calculating the percentage of responses in each category or subcategory[5]**,** I considered 100% as the total number of responses given (195). Figure 5 displays the percentages of respondents in blue and of responses in orange for each main category, with categories organized by the percentage of respondents in descending order.

4 A more detailed account of distributions of respondents and responses across subcategories can be found in Appendix C -Table 19.
5 The same calculations broken down by all 25 subcategories can be seen in Appendix C -Table 19.

Figure 5

Main Categories of Learning Goals, Expressed in Percentages of Respondents with at Least One Response in a Category and Percentages of Responses Relative to Total Assigned to a Category (n, respondents = 31; n, responses = 195)



Over 50% of participants mentioned at least one learning goal in each of the six main categories. Three main categories (one half) were associated with percentages of respondents above 60%: of these, *Discrete Language Skills* drew the highest percentage of respondents, namely, 68%; *Personal Interest and Development* and *Globalism* followed as the second and third largest categories, with 65% and 61% respectively. The remaining three main categories were associated with percentages of respondents above 50%: *Communication Skills* and *Language and Culture Knowledge* with 55%, respectively, and *Language Performance* as the category mentioned by the fewest participants at 52%.

A different pattern emerged when the distribution of responses rather than of respondents was examined. *Personal Interest and Development* was associated with the greatest single proportion of responses, namely 29% of total responses, and d*iscrete Language Skills*, with 22%, came in second. The remaining four categories each fell under 15% of responses: *Globalism* with

14%, *Language Performance* and *Language and Culture Knowledge* with 12%, respectively, and *Communication Skills* with 10%.

Based on results shown in Figure 5, *Discrete Language Skills* and *Personal Interest and Development* were present prominently in respondents' minds; they counted among the most mentioned categories not only in terms of their respective percentages of respondents but also their respective percentages of responses.

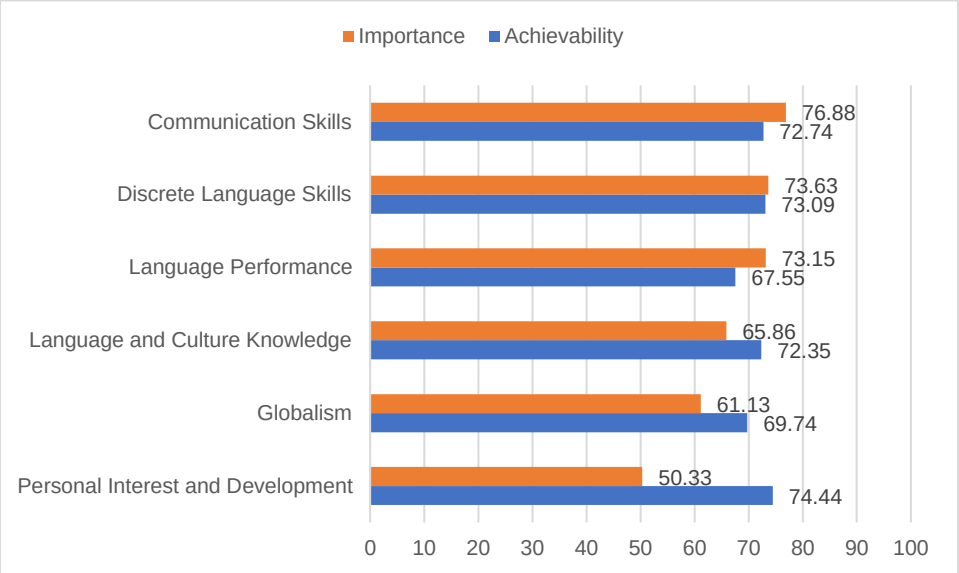
RQ 1.2: How important did the respondents consider each of the named learning goals to them personally?

RQ 1.3: How achievable did respondents consider each of these goals in the context of their formal studies of German?

Results obtained in answer to RQs 1.2 and 1.3 will be reported together as they reference related data. Specifically, respondents were asked to rate each learning goal that they had reported previously on a 0-100% scale to indicate its importance to them personally and its perceived achievability within their formal studies of German. To answer RQs 1.2 and 1.3, average scores were calculated for each of the two measures (personal importance and achievability) for each of the six main categories. More precisely, a respondent's scores of personal importance and achievability for each mention of an objective within a subcategory were added up, and then divided by the number of entries to obtain the subcategory's average score. The average scores for personal importance and achievability of all relevant subcategories within a main category were added up and divided by the number of applicable subcategories to derive an overall personal average score for that main category. Finally, each respondent's average scores for personal importance and achievability for each of the given main category were summed up and divided by the total number of respondents to derive an overall average score for each measure.

Figure 6 (below) provides an overview of the results for the six main categories of learning goals for German. Categories were organized in descending order of average importance ratings**.** Since not all respondents had mentioned goals under each main category, respondent numbers varied. Moreover, since respondents gave different numbers of responses under a main category, response numbers also varied. Averages for the category *Language Performance* were calculated based on 16 respondents and 23 responses; averages for the category *Communications Skills* were calculated based on 17 respondents and 19 responses; averages for the category *Discrete Language Skill* were calculated based on 21 respondents and 45 responses; averages for the category *Globalism* were calculated based on and 19 respondents and 28 responses; averages for the category *Language Culture and Knowledge* were calculated based on 17 respondents and 24 responses; averages for the category *Personal Interest and Development* were calculated based on 20 respondents and 56 responses. Average ratings of personal importance are shown in orange, and average ratings of achievability are in blue.

Figure 6
Average Percentage Ratings of Personal Importance and Achievability of Six Main Categories of Learning Goals



Participants, on average, considered each of the learning goals they had reported to be important to them personally, with all average ratings exceeding 50. Categories related to language skills and performance ranked as the most important categories with ratings over 70: *Communication Skills*, 76.88; *Discrete Language Skills*, 73.63; and *Language Performance*, 73.15. In contrast, the category that was rated the least important was *Personal Interest and Development* at 50.33.

Further, on average, participants considered each of the learning goals they had reported to be achievable for them within their formal studies of German, as reflected in all average ratings exceeding 65. The average achievability ratings even exceeded 70 for four (two-thirds of) goals: *Personal Interest and Development*, 74.44; *Discrete Language Skills*, 73.09; *Communication Skills*, 72.74; and *Language and Culture Knowledge*, 72.35. *Language Performance* was considered to be the least achievable objective, with an average rating of 67.55.

RQ 1.4: How did the perceived personal importance and the perceived achievability for each learning goal compare and relate?

To answer RQ 1.4., I conducted further analyses on results that were reported earlier under RQs 1.2 and 1.3 (main categories, as reported in Table 7; subcategories, as reported in Table 8) and shown in Appendix C. The data pool used for analysis included ratings provided by the respondents for both personal importance and achievability of the named learning goals. Both correlations and t-tests were conducted on the same data pool, with averages per person used to avoid uneven contributions made by each person in a given (sub)categories. Specifically, each respondent had a personal average for each of the 25 categories (if applicable), and a separate

average score for each of the six main categories (if applicable), all of which were calculated in Excel.

Table 7 (pertaining to main categories) and Table 8 (pertaining to subcategories) both follow the same reporting conventions. First, the average achievability rating of each category or subcategory was subtracted from the average personal importance rating for the same category or subcategory. The results of this type of analysis can therefore be expressed in either positive or negative numbers. Negative numbers indicate a higher average achievability than the personal importance rating in a given category and are shown in orange; conversely, positive numbers indicate a higher average personal importance than the achievability rating and are shown in blue. These differences were captured in descriptive and inferential statistics**.** Table 7 shows the main categories along with the actual number of respondents in ranked order from greatest to smallest absolute difference. Table 8 follows the same organizing principle for subcategories.

Table 7 and Table 8 also display the results of inferential tests of difference, i.e., t-scores derived from two-tailed t-tests, and results of inferential tests of correlations, i.e., Pearson's coefficients (r). For all tests, the alpha level of statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$. Statistically significant t-scores and coefficients are marked with one asterisk ($p < 0.05$) or two asterisks ($p < 0.01$) [6]. In addition, to uncover patterns that may be relevant to future research despite the overall low number of study participants, marginally significant findings ($p < 0.1$) were also marked, i.e., with an asterisk in parentheses. Coefficients that fall into the range of $0 \leq |r| < 0.40$ will be interpreted as a weak correlation, coefficients that fall into the range of $0.40 \leq |r| < 0.60$ as a moderate correlation, and coefficients that fall into the range of $|r| \geq 0.60$ as a strong correlation. T-scores and coefficients with statistical or marginal significance are shown in red.

[6] The alpha level of $p < 0.05$ was not reduced in a Bonferroni adjustment due to the small number of study participant number and the exploratory nature of the study.

The main categories listed in Table 7 (just below) are labeled by distinctive colors, with *Personal Interest and Development* represented by light green, *Globalism* by light blue, *Language and Culture Knowledge* by gray, *Language Performance* by green, *Communication Skills* by yellow, and *Discrete Language Skills* by orange. In Table 8 (further below), the corresponding subcategories under each main category also follow the same color scheme.

Table 7
Differences and Relationships Between Average Percentage Ratings of Personal Importance and Achievability of Six Main Categories of Learning Goals

Categories	Importance	Achievability	Difference	Rank Order of Difference	T-score	Correlation
Personal Interest and Development (n=20)	50.33	74.44	-24.11	1	-2.97**	0.46*
Globalism (n=19)	61.13	69.74	-8.61	2	-0.95	0.38
Language and Culture Knowledge (n=17)	65.86	72.35	-6.49	3	-0.67	0.64**
Language Performance (n=17)	73.15	67.55	5.59	4	0.59	0.43(*)
Communication Skills (n=16)	76.88	72.74	4.15	5	0.45	0.68**
Discrete Language Skills (n=21)	73.63	73.09	0.55	6	0.08	0.46*

For non-skills-related categories, namely, *Personal Interest and Development*, *Globalism,* and *Language and Culture Knowledge,* students generally assigned higher ratings for achievability than for importance. Conversely, for skills and performance-related categories, such as *Language Performance, Communication Skills*, and to a lesser extent, *Discrete Language Skills,* students generally assigned higher ratings for importance than for achievability.

When differences were explored via t-tests, *Personal Interest and Development* was the only category that showed statistical significance. Specifically, respondents found learning goals in this category to be significantly more achievable than important to them.

Of the six categories, only one (*Globalism*) failed to show at least a marginally significant positive correlation between importance and achievability. The strongest and most significant correlations were found for *Communication Skills* (r= 0.68**) and *Language and Culture Knowledge* (r = 0.64**).

Table 8

Differences and Relationships Between Average Percentage Ratings of Personal Importance and Achievability of 25 Subcategories of Learning Goals

Subcategories	Importance	Achievability	Difference	Rank Order of Difference	T-score	Correlation
Aademic progress (n=8)	24.58	72.92	-48.33	1	-2.68*	0.1
Personal development (n=14)	61.49	89.29	-27.80	2	-3.11**	0
Having confidence (n=2)	97.50	75.00	22.50	3	0.9	N/A
Being perceived as having a good accent (n=1)	90.00	70.00	20.00	4	N/A	N/A
Listening (n=5)	73.00	56.50	16.50	5	1.11	0.42
Abroad experience (n=15)	55.27	70.33	-15.07	6	-1.4	0.4
Bi- and multilingualism (n=1)	95.00	80.00	15.00	7	N/A	N/A
Overall/Unspecified (n=1)	87.00	100.00	-13.00	8	N/A	N/A
Culture and history (n=11)	52.27	64.09	-11.82	9	-0.95	0.61*
Social activities (n=5)	56.00	67.00	-11.00	10	-0.58	0.45
Language in general (n=3)	82.67	93.33	-10.67	11	-1.01	-0.94
Being understood (n=1)	100.00	90.00	10.00	12a	N/A	N/A
Communication with native speakers (n=11)	73.64	63.64	10.00	12b	0.8	0.64*
Cross-cultural perspectives (n=2)	70.00	60.00	10.00	12c	0.33	N/A
Being fluent (n=9)	76.67	68.33	8.33	13	0.56	0.77*
Vocabulary (n=4)	81.11	73.33	7.78	14	0.33	0.11
Grammar (n=4)	80.00	86.25	-6.25	15	-0.51	0.97*
Reading (n=14)	87.14	81.43	5.71	16	0.92	0.36
Understanding text and people (n=6)	70.00	72.50	-2.50	17	-0.16	0.09
Professional development (n=11)	58.18	60.32	-2.14	18	-0.18	0.32
Writing (n=7)	76.07	74.29	1.79	19	0.16	0.93**
Communication with others (Unspecified and non-NSs) (n=7)	80.29	81.29	-1.00	20	-0.08	0.74(*)
Speaking (n=13)	70.00	70.77	-0.77	21	-0.07	0.47
Global perspectives and connections (n=5)	76.00	76.00	0.00	22a	0	0.12
Impressing German speakers (n=1)	50.00	50.00	0.00	22b	N/A	N/A

When examining the differences between importance and achievability ratings, all subcategories under *Personal Interest and Development* (light green) aligned with its main category in the directionally of difference, i.e., average achievability ratings consistently exceeded average importance ratings. The remaining five main categories were associated with discrepancies in the directionality of differences between the main category and some of its subcategories. As shown in Table 7, when importance and achievability ratings were compared by main categories, the category *Personal Interest and Development* yielded the greatest differential. This was further reflected in the two highest-ranked subcategories, (also two of its four subcategories) *Academic progress*, -48.33, and *Personal development*, -27.80. In both instances, average ratings of achievability exceeded those of personal importance. These two subcategories were also the only ones among the 25 for which the difference between importance and achievability ratings proved to be statistically significant.

For 18 of the 25 subcategories, correlations between achievability and personal importance could be calculated. Five of these 18 correlations turned out to be statistically significant and one marginally significant, with all six proving to be positive. Correlations calculated for the subcategories represented four main categories yielding a significant correlation, with none of the subcategories pertaining to *Personal Interest and Development* and *Globalism*. Both subcategories under *Communication Skills (Communication with native speakers*; *Communication with unspecified and non-NS)*) exhibited a strong (r = 64* and r = .74(*), respectively) and significant or marginally significant correlation between importance and achievability ratings. Two subcategories under *Language and Culture Knowledge* (*Grammar*, r=0.97*; *Culture and History*, r=0.61*), one subcategory under *Discrete Language Skills*

(Writing, r=0.93**), and one subcategory in *Language Performance* (*Being fluent*, r=0.77**) also exhibited significant correlations between importance and achievability ratings.

RQ 1.5: How did first- and second-year, and post-second-year German students compare in the importance that they assign to the individual learning goals?

RQ 1.6: How did first- and second-year, and post-second-year German students compare in the achievability that they attribute to the individual learning goals in their formal studies of German?

To answer RQ 1.5 and RQ 1.6., I conducted further analyses on the results reported under RQs 1.2 and 1.3 (main categories; reported in Table 7) and shown in Appendix C, but this time with the two groups of respondents separated: first- and second-year college students of German (FSY) and post-second-year college students of German (PSY).

Table 9 (importance ratings) and Table 10 (achievability ratings) both follow the same reporting conventions. First, the respondents' personal importance and achievability averages for each of the main categories were calculated. Then, the group averages were calculated based on the number of respondents in each group for each of the main categories. The average achievability rating of each main category was subtracted from the average personal importance rating for the same category. Therefore, the results of this type of analysis can be expressed in either positive or negative numbers. Negative numbers indicate a higher average importance or achievability ratings by the PSY group than FSY in a given category and are shown in orange; conversely, positive numbers indicate a higher average importance or achievability rating by the FSY group than PSY and are shown in blue. These differences were captured in descriptive and inferential statistics. Both tables show the main categories along with the actual number of

respondents in each of the groups, FSY and PSY, respectively, in ranked order from greatest to smallest absolute difference.

Table 9 and Table 10 also display the results of inferential tests of difference, i.e., t-scores derived from two-tailed t-tests; the same alpha level ($p < .05$) was set, and the same marking conventions of statistically significant were used as in earlier tables, including a marking of marginally statistical difference ($p < .01$). Again, T-scores with statistical or marginal statistical significance are shown in red.

Table 9

Differences in Average Percentage Ratings of Personal Importance for Six Main Categories of Learning Goals Between FSY and PSY Groups

Main Categories	Importance Average			
	FSY	PSY	FSY vs. PSY Difference	T-score
Discrete Language Skills (n=12, 9)	84.13	59.63	24.50	2.35*
Language and Culture Knowledge (n=10, 7)	57.17	78.29	-21.12	-1.49
Globalism (n=8, 11)	52.00	67.77	-15.77	-1.12
Language Performance (n=8, 8)	77.92	68.38	9.54	0.67
Communication Skills (n=7, 10)	82.14	73.20	8.94	0.68
Personal Interest and Development (n=8, 12)	48.85	51.32	-2.47	-0.19

For skills- and performance-related categories, such as *Discrete Language Skills*, *Language Performance*, and *Communication Skills*, FSY students generally assigned higher ratings for importance than PSY students. Conversely, for non-skills-related categories, namely, *Language and Culture Knowledge*, *Globalism*, and to a lesser extent, *Personal Interest and Development*, PSY students generally assigned higher ratings for personal importance than FSY students.

When differences were explored via t-tests, *Discrete Language Skills* was the only category that showed statistical significance. Specifically, FSY students found learning goals in this category to be significantly more important than PSY students.

Table 10

Differences in Average Percentage Ratings of Achievability for Six Main Categories of Learning Goals Between FSY and PSY Groups

Main Categories	Achievability Average			
	FSY	PSY	FSY vs. PSY Difference	T-score
Globalism (n=8, 11)	54.38	80.91	-26.53	-2.66*
Language and Culture Knowledge (n=10, 7)	64.00	84.29	-20.29	-1.64
Communication Skills (n=7, 10)	66.79	76.90	-10.11	-0.75
Discrete Language Skills (n=12, 9)	77.20	67.59	9.61	1.11
Personal Interest and Development (n=8, 12)	68.85	78.17	-9.31	-0.86
Language Performance (n=8, 8)	66.35	68.75	-2.40	-0.18

For five out of the six main categories of learning goals, PSY students generally assigned higher achievability ratings than FSY students. The only exception was *Discrete Language Skills*, FSY students, on average, assigned higher achievability ratings than PSY students by 9.61.

When differences were explored via t-tests, *Globalism* was the only category that showed statistical significance. Specifically, PSY students found learning goals in this category to be significantly more achievable than FSY students.

4.2 Research Theme 2: Self-rated German proficiency in four language skills of *Speaking*, *Writing*, *Listening*, and *Reading* as reported by college students of German and its relationship to ratings of importance and achievability of learning goals related to the same four skills

Research Theme 2 (RT 2) encompassed four research questions (RQs) and dealt, firstly, with German proficiency in four language skills of *Speaking*, *Writing*, *Listening*, and *Reading* reported by college students of German. Secondly, RT 2 examined how self-ratings of proficiency in these four skills compared with ratings of importance and achievability as they related to these same skills. Analyses were conducted in two ways: (a) for all respondents taken

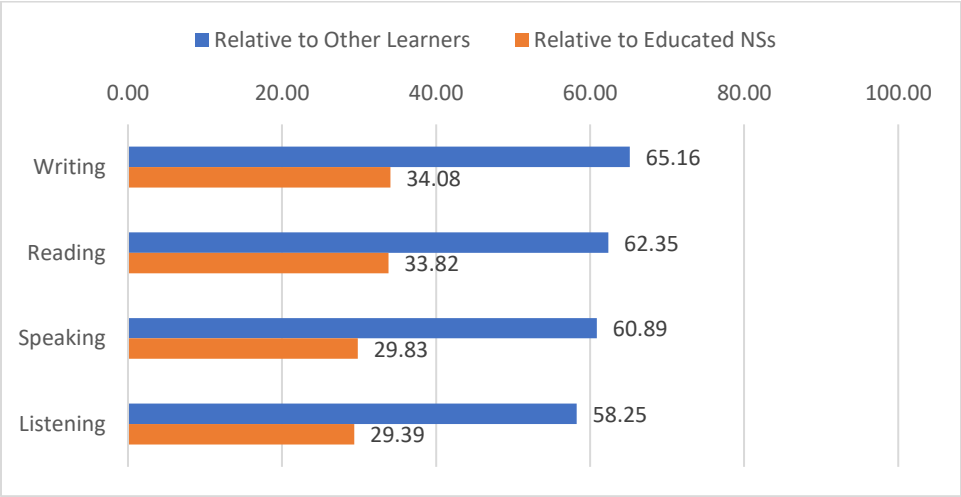
together; and (b) by respondents divided into two groups: first- and second-year (FSY) learners of German and their peers enrolled in post-second-year (PSY) German courses. To inform parts of RQs 2.2 and 2.3, data from RQ 1.4 (Table 8) were reiterated, i.e., the importance and achievability of learning goals that relate to the four language skills as rated by all respondents taken together.

RQ 2.1: How did college students of German rate their current German proficiency in Speaking, Writing, Listening, and Reading, respectively, when they compared themselves to (a) other students in German class and (b) educated native speakers of German?

RQ 2.1 was addressed through analysis of 31 students' responses to Items 1-24 in Question #2 in the research instrument *German Proficiency Questionnaire* (see Appendix B.7), in which respondents had been asked to rate their current German proficiency in six specific German features pertaining to each skill, *Speaking*, *Writing*, *Listening*, and *Reading* on a percentage scale from 0% (Nobody is worse than me, and I am the absolute worst.) to 50% (I am in the middle.) to 100% (All are worse than me, and I am the absolute best.) and relative to two measures, (a) self-proficiency compared to that of learners in their German class; (b) self-proficiency compared to that of educated native speakers (NSs) of German.

To answer RQ 2.1, I computed average scores for each of the two proficiency measures broken down by the four groups (each corresponding to a skill) of six items. Figure 7 (below) provides an overview of the results. Averages for each skill were organized in descending order of average German proficiency rating compared to that of other learners in their German class. Average German proficiency ratings relative to other learners in German class are shown in blue, and average German proficiency ratings relative to educated native speakers (NSs) are shown in orange.

Figure 7
Average Scores of Self-Rated German Proficiency Relative to Other Learners in Class and to Educated Native Speakers, Respectively, by the Skills of Speaking, Writing, Listening, and Reading (n = 31)



Participants, on average, considered themselves better than other learners in their German class in all skills, as Figure 7 shows all pertinent average scores to exceed the middle point ('same') of 50. This trend was most notable in *Writing* (65.16), *Reading* (62.35), and *Speaking* (60.89), for which all average scores were greater than 60.

Average scores of self-rated German proficiency relative to educated native speakers (NSs) exhibited a rank order of skills that resembled that of self-rated proficiency relative to that of other learners in their German class, although the latter type of scores was notably lower than the former. Specifically, average scores for *Reading (*33.82) and *Writing (*34.08) showed the greatest degree of self-confidence and *Speaking* (29.83) and *Listening* (29.31) the least. As will later be shown in Table 12 (*Speaking*), 13 (*Writing*), 14 (*Listening*), and 15 (*Reading*) under RQ 2.4, in all four language skills, the two proficiency measures correlated significantly and positively for ALL students.

RQ 2.2: How did first- and second-year (FSY) and post-second-year (PSY) German students compare when they rated their proficiency in each of the four skills (Speaking, Writing,

Listening, and Reading) relative to (a) other students in their German class and (b) educated native speakers of German?

RQ 2.3: How did first- and second-year (FSY) and post-second-year (PSY) German students compare when they rated learning goals affiliated with each of the four skills (Speaking, Writing, Listening, and Reading) with regard to (1) their personal importance and (2) their achievability within formal students of German.

These two RQs (2.2. and 2.3) will be discussed together as they grouped respondents in the same manner, i.e., into first- and second-year (FSY) and post-second-year (PSY) students of German, and utilized the same analytic procedures (two-tailed t-tests) to compare these two groups. To answer RQ 2.3 (ratings of the importance and achievability of learning goals related to each of the four skills of *Speaking, Writing, Listening,* and *Reading*), I drew on the same data already presented under RT1, but this time, I broke them down by student group (FSY; PSY).

Table 11 shows results that pertain to RQs 2.2 and 2.3. As a reminder, based on the analytical procedure described earlier, the number of respondents who reported a learning goal assigned to one of the subcategories of *Speaking, Writing, Listening,* or *Reading* varied. Hence, the maximum number of respondents who rated personal importance and achievability differed across subcategories (skills). In contrast, questions about their self-perceived proficiency in a given skill were asked of all participants and were independent of whether respondents had also reported this skill as a learning goal.

In Table 11, the far-left column displays the number of respondents within a group (FSY; PSY) that were considered when calculating the averages shown in the same row in each

of the subsequent four columns[7]. In addition to average scores, Table 11 also displays score differentials between the two groups and t-scores derived from two-tailed t-tests. The same alpha level of statistical significance was set as in the previous analyses, and the same marking conventions were used. Differentials were calculated based on the subtraction of PSY-group scores from FSY-group scores so that positive scores mean that FSY scores exceeded PSY scores, and negative scores indicate the opposite. Turquoise and yellow highlights show positive and negative differentials, respectively.

Table 11

Differentials between Average Scores of Personal Importance & Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German and Average Scores of Self-Assessed German Proficiency Relative to Other Learners in Class and Relative to Educated Native Speakers, Respectively, as Reported by First & Second Year (FSY) as Compared to Post-Second Year (PSY) College Students of German and Broken Down by the Skills of Speaking, Writing, Listening, and Reading

Participant Numbers by Group and Rating Criterion	**Personal Importance of Learning Goals**	**Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs**
Related to Speaking				
FSY(n=8,8,16,16)	84.38	72.81	58.40	24.66
PSY (n=5,5,15,15)	47.00	67.50	63.54	35.34
Diff.	**37.38**	**5.31**	**-5.15**	**-10.69**
T-score	2.54*	0.36	-0.80	-1.43
Related to Writing				
FSY (n=5,5,16,16)	80.50	78.00	63.02	28.41
PSY (n=2,2,15,15)	65.00	65.00	67.43	40.12
Diff.	**15.50**	**13.00**	**-4.41**	**-11.72**
T-score	0.97	0.63	-0.89	-1.61
Related to Listening				
FSY (n=3,3,16,16)	85.00	58.33	56.68	25.70
PSY (n=2,2,15,15)	55.00	53.75	59.27	33.99
Diff.	**30.00**	**4.58**	**-2.59**	**-8.29**
T-score	1.08	0.37	-0.37	-1.03
Related to Reading				
FSY (n=9,9,16,16)	87.78	83.33	62.88	29.56
PSY (n=5,5,15,15)	86.00	78.00	64.43	39.25
Diff.	**1.78**	**5.33**	**-1.55**	**-9.69**
T-score	0.22	0.51	-0.25	-1.19

[7] Given the small number of participants in this study, when calculating averages for respondents, I included all respondents here rather than only of those respondents who also had named this skill as a learning goal to reflect previous Figure 7 and to include the largest numbers of participants possible.

When examining descriptive statistics for differences between the two groups, FSY students generally assigned higher ratings for both personal importance and achievability. Conversely, when evaluating their German proficiency, PSY students tended to rate their proficiency more highly than FSY students relative to both other students in the class and educated NSs of German, although the difference was more discernible in the latter regard.

These trends held true for all four skills, i.e., *Speaking*, *Writing*, *Listening*, and *Reading*. However, the only significant difference[8] between the two groups out of 16 calculations occurred for ratings of the personal importance of learning goals in skill *Speaking* when FSY students' average score (84.38) significantly exceeded the average score of PSY students (47.0). It is unclear whether the lack of significance in other comparisons is attributable to low participant numbers since the remaining three comparisons for *Speaking* – sometimes with even higher respondent numbers – failed to produce significant findings. Similarly, comparisons for *Reading* all involved respondent numbers that were identical to or even exceeded those related to Speaking and nevertheless failed to yield even a single significant difference.

RQ 2.4: How did the perceived personal importance and the perceived achievability of learning goals affiliated with each of the four skills (Speaking, Writing, Listening, and Reading), and the perceived German proficiency for each of the four skills relative to (a) other students in their German class and (b) educated native speakers of German relate?

To answer RQ 3.4, four separate correlation matrices, one for each skill, were calculated via Pearson correlation coefficients for each of three different respondent groupings: (1) all respondents; (2) first- and second-year students of German (FSY); and (3) post-second year

[8] The alpha level of $p < 0.05$ was not reduced in a Bonferroni adjustment due to the small participant numbers and the exploratory nature of the study.

students of German (PSY). Tables 12 (*Speaking*), 13 (*Writing*), 14 (*Listening*), and 15 (*Reading*), all below, each show such a matrix. For each matrix, six correlations were computed (1) personal importance of learning goals with the achievability of learning goals, (2) personal importance of learning goals with self-assessed proficiency in German relative to other learners in class, (3) personal importance of learning goals with self-assessed proficiency in German relative to educated NSs, (4) achievability of learning goals with self-assessed proficiency in German relative to other learners in class, (5) achievability of learning goals with self-assessed proficiency in German relative to educated NSs, and (6) self-assessed proficiency in German relative to other learners in class with self-assessed proficiency in German relative to educated NSs.

The same alpha level of statistical significance and marking conventions were used as in previous analyses of correlations. Again, coefficients with statistical or marginal statistical significance are shown in red. Given the visual display conventions of matrices, results are shown in duplicate. To focus the reader's attention, I have shaded the set of results under discussion in gray.

Table 12

Correlation Matrix for Speaking: Relationships between Ratings of Personal Importance, the Achievability within Formal Studies of German, Self-Assessed German Proficiency Relative to Other Learners in Class, and Self-Assessed German Proficiency Relative to Educated Native Speakers

Speaking				
All Students	**Personal Importance of Learning Goals (n=13)**	**Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German (n=13)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class (n=31))**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs (n=31)**
Personal Importance of Learning Goals	1	0.47	0.26	0.37
Achievability of Learning Goals	0.47	1	-0.04	0.12

Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class	0.26	-0.04	1	0.75***
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs	0.37	0.12	0.75***	1
FSY Students	**Personal Importance of Learning Goals (n=8)**	**Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German (n=8)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class (n=16)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs (n=16)**
Personal Importance of Learning Goals	1	0.63	0.13	0.29
Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German	0.63	1	-0.28	-0.28
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class	0.13	-0.28	1	0.65**
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs	0.29	-0.28	0.65**	1
PSY Students	**Personal Importance of Learning Goals (n=5)**	**Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German (n=5)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class (n=15)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs (n=15)**
Personal Importance of Learning Goals	1	0.49	0.68	0.76
Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German	0.49	1	0.5	0.88*
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class	0.68	0.5	1	0.82***
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs	0.76	0.88*	0.82***	1

As shown in Table 12, with regard to *Speaking*, the two proficiency measures, namely, self-assessed proficiency in German relative to other learners in class and relative to educated

NSs, showed significant, strong, and positive correlations in all three participant groupings, i.e., all students (r= 0.75***); FSY students (r=0.65**), and PSY Students (r=0.82***). Additionally, among PSY students only, a significant, strong, and positive correlation was found between the achievability of learning goals within formal studies of German and self-assessed proficiency in German relative to educated NSs.

Table 13

Correlation Matrix for Writing: Relationships between Ratings of the Importance of Learning Goals, the Achievability of Learning Goals within Formal Studies of German, Self-Assessed German Proficiency Relative to Other Learners in Class, and Self-Assessed German Proficiency Relative to Educated Native Speakers.

Writing				
All Students	**Personal Importance of Learning Goals (n=7)**	**Achievability of Learning Goals within Formal Studies of German (n=7)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class (n=31)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs (n=31)**
Personal Importance of Learning Goals	1	0.93**	0.08	-0.41
Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German	0.93**	1	0.22	-0.34
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class	0.08	0.22	1	0.64***
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs	-0.41	-0.34	0.64***	1
FSY Students	**Personal Importance of Learning Goals (n=5)**	**Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German (n=5)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class (n=16)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs (n=16)**
Personal Importance of Learning Goals	1	0.94*	0.09	-0.36
Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German	0.94*	1	0.28	-0.4
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class	0.09	0.28	1	0.44

Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs	-0.36	-0.4	0.44	1
PSY Students	**Personal Importance of Learning Goals (n=2)**	**Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German (n=2)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class (n=15)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs (n=15)**
Personal Importance of Learning Goals	1	1	1	1
Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German	1	1	1	1
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class	1	1	1	0.76***
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs	1	1	0.76***	1

As shown in Table 13, with regard to *Writing*, the two proficiency measures, namely, self-assessed proficiency in German relative to other learners in class and relative to educated NSs, showed significant, strong, and positive correlations in the groupings of all students (r= 0.64***) and of PSY students (r=0.76***) but not for FSY students.

In contrast, although significant, strong, and positive correlations between personal importance and achievability within their formal studies of German were found for the groupings of all students (r=0.93**) and FSY students (r=0.94*), no such significant correlation was found for PSY students.

In summary, when respondents were separated into FSY and PSY students, some significant correlations that had been found for ALL students disappeared.

Table 14

Correlation Matrix for Listening: Relationships between Ratings of the Personal Importance of Learning Goals, the Achievability of Learning Goals within Formal Studies of German, Self-Assessed German Proficiency Relative to Other Learners in Class, and Self-Assessed German Proficiency Relative to Educated Native Speakers.

Listening				
All Students	**Personal Importance of Learning Goals (n=5)**	**Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German (n=5)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class (n=31)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs (n=31)**
Personal Importance of Learning Goals	1	0.42	0.66	0.44
Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German	0.42	1	0.36	0.06
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class	0.66	0.36	1	0.72***
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs	0.44	0.06	0.72***	1
FSY Students	**Personal Importance of Learning Goals (n=3)**	**Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German (n=3)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class (n=16)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs (n=16)**
Personal Importance of Learning Goals	1	0.47	1*	-1*
Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German	0.47	1	0.44	-0.41
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class	1*	0.44	1	0.62**
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs	-1*	-0.41	0.62**	1
PSY Students	**Personal Importance of Learning Goals (n=2)**	**Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German (n=2)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class (n=15)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs (n=15)**
Personal Importance of Learning Goals	1	1	1	1

Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German	1	1	1	1
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class	1	1	1	0.79***
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs	1	1	0.79***	1

As shown in Table 14, with regard to *Listening*, the two proficiency measures, namely, self-assessed proficiency in German relative to other learners in class and relative to educated NSs, showed significant, strong, and positive correlations in all participant groupings, i.e., all students (r= 0.72**), FSY students (r=0.62**), and PSY students (r=0.79***). Additionally, among PSY students, significant and strong correlations were found between the personal importance of learning goals and self-assessed proficiency. However, the two measures of self-rated proficiency showed opposite directionality among FSY students. While the relationship between proficiency in German relative to other learners in class with the personal importance of *Listening* as a learning goal was positive (r=1*), the relationship between the personal importance of *Listenin*g and self-assessed proficiency in German relative to educated NSs was negative(r=-1*). However, the small size of this group (only three) makes it unclear whether this was a coincidence. It's possible that the three FSY respondents were not representative enough, at least with regard to listening.

Table 15

Correlation Matrix for Reading: Relationships between Ratings of the Personal Importance of Learning Goals, the Achievability of Learning Goals within Formal Studies of German, Self-Assessed German Proficiency Relative to Other Learners in Class, and Self-Assessed German Proficiency Relative to Educated Native Speakers.

Reading				
All Students	**Personal Importance of**	**Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative**

	Learning Goals (n=14)	**Studies of German (n=14)**	**Other Learners in Class (n=31)**	**to Educated NSs (n=31)**
Personal Importance of Learning Goals	1	0.36	-0.15	0.22
Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German	0.36	1	0.31	0.38
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class	-0.15	0.31	1	0.69***
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs	0.22	0.38	0.69***	1
FSY Students	**Personal Importance of Learning Goals (n=9)**	**Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German (n=9)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class (n=16)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs (n=16)**
Personal Importance of Learning Goals	1	0.65	-0.21	0.47
Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German	0.65	1	0	0.42
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class	-0.21	0	1	0.56*
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs	0.47	0.42	0.56*	1
PSY Students	**Personal Importance of Learning Goals (n=5)**	**Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German (n=5)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class (n=15)**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs (n=15)**
Personal Importance of Learning Goals	1	-0.11	-0.06	0.02
Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German	-0.11	1	0.71	0.6
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class	-0.06	0.71	1	0.83***

Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs	0.02	0.6	0.83***	1

As shown in Table 15, with regard to *Reading*, the two proficiency measures, namely, self-assessed proficiency in German relative to other learners in class and relative to educated NSs, showed significant, strong, and positive correlations for all participant groups, i.e., all students (r= 0.69**), FSY students (r=0.56*), and PSY students (r=0.83***).

To summarize the results of the previous four tables, Table 16 shows an overview of significant correlations established for all 16 measures for all three participant groupings. While similar in format to tables 12, 13, 14, and 15 instead of coefficients, the cells in Table 16 display the skills that exhibited significant correlations. All entries reflect positive correlations unless marked otherwise. As before, the cells under discussion are shaded in gray.

Table 16

Overview of Significant Correlations: Relationships between Ratings of the Personal Importance of Learning Goals, the Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German, Self-Assessed German Proficiency Relative to Other Learners in Class, and Self-Assessed German Proficiency Relative to Educated Native Speakers.

Overview of Significant Correlations				
All Students	**Personal Importance of Learning Goals**	**Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs**
Personal Importance of Learning Goals		Writing		
Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German	Writing			
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class				Speaking Writing Listening Reading
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs			Speaking Writing Listening Reading	
FSY Students	**Personal Importance of Learning Goals**	**Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs**

Personal Importance of Learning Goals		Writing	Listening	Listening (negative)
Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German	Writing			
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class	Listening			Speaking Listening Reading
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs	Listening (negative)		Speaking Listening Reading	
PSY Students	**Personal Importance of Learning Goals**	**Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class**	**Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs**
Personal Importance of Learning Goals				
Achievability of Learning Goals Within Formal Studies of German				Speaking
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Other Learners in Class				Speaking Writing Listening Reading
Self-Assessed Proficiency in German Relative to Educated NSs		Speaking	Speaking Writing Listening Reading	

As demonstrated in Table 16, almost all (15 out of 16) significant correlations were strong and positive, except for a negative correlation observed among FSY students in *Listening*. And this correlation was between the personal importance of learning goals and self-assessed proficiency in German relative to educated NSs, possibly due to the small data size.

Significant, strong, and positive correlations occurred between the two proficiency measures with regard to all four skills, namely, self-assessed proficiency in German relative to other learners in class and relative to educated NSs, for all three participating groups, except for FSY students in skill *Writing*.

In contrast, correlations between the two learning goal measures, namely personal importance and achievability within their formal studies of German, were found to be significant

(and positive) only with regard to two participant groupings (all students and FSY) and only for *Writing*.

Moreover, for FSY students, two significant correlations were observed with regard to *Listening*; both are related to the personal importance of learning goals. The first correlation was a strong and positive correlation between personal importance and self-assessed proficiency in German relative to other students in class. The second was a negative and strong correlation between personal importance and self-assessed proficiency in German relative to educated NSs.

Finally, a positive and strong correlation was found for the group PSY students with regard to *Speaking* between the achievability of learning goals within formal studies of German and self-assessed proficiency in German relative to educated NSs.

4.3 Research Theme 3: Definitions of accuracy reported by college students of German

Research Theme 3 (RT 3) dealt with definitions of accuracy in four language skills: *Speaking, Writing, Listening,* and *Reading,* as reported by college students of German. It encompassed three specific research questions (RQs). The first RQ (RQ 3.1) explored what types (categories) of definitions respondents articulated for each of the four language skills generally. The next RQ (RQ 3.2) investigated how students' definitions of accuracy compared across the four language skills. The final RQ (RQ 3.3) examined how the definitions of accuracy in the four skills compared between two student populations, i.e., between first- and second-year students of German (FSY) on the one hand and post-second-year students of German (PSY) on the other.

RQs 3.1- 3.3 were all addressed through analysis of students' responses to each of the four items under Question #1, in the research instrument *German Proficiency Questionnaire* (see Appendix B.7). The four items read: What does it mean to speak accurately in German (Item 1);

write accurately in German (Item 2); comprehend accurately when listening in German (Item 3); and comprehend accurately when reading in German (Item 4)?

RQ 3.1 How did college students of German define accuracy in four language skills (Speaking, Writing, Listening, and Reading), respectively?

RQ 3.2 How did college students of German's definitions of accuracy for four language skills (Speaking, Writing, Listening, and Reading), respectively, compare?

Results obtained to answer RQs 3.1 and 3.2 will be reported together as they reference the same data. I entered all responses that the 31 respondents had given to the question about their description of the definition of accuracy, i.e., a total of 259 responses, into NVivo 12, a software application for qualitative data analysis. I used Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2014) to code responses and, subsequently, to determine viable response categories.

Specifically, based on respondents' short definitions of accuracy in each of the four language skills, *Speaking, Writing, Listening,* and *Speaking.* Six main response categories emerged: (1) *Communication,* (2) *Grammar*, (3) *Vocabulary*, (4) *Pragmatics*, (5) *Flow*, and (6) *Other*. The six main categories were further divided into a total of 39 discrete subcategories. Based on the analysis of a single respondent's written answer (the entirety of what they wrote), multiple discrete types of categorizable responses could be – and often were – discerned within that answer. Each response was assigned to exactly one of the subcategories, and by extension, to exactly one of the main categories also. Conversely, a single respondent's answer could produce more than one response for entry into the same subcategory. Overall, whereas the maximum number of respondents per subcategory was always 31, there was no limit to the number of responses that could be assigned to any one subcategory (or category).

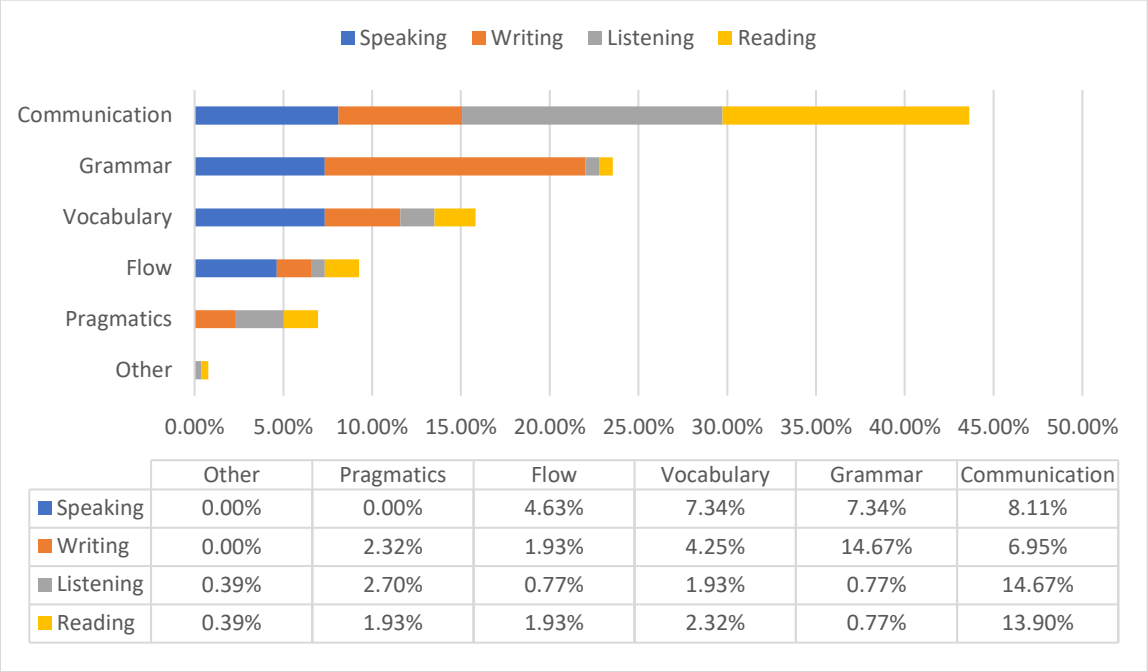
Figure 8 illustrates the distribution of 259 responses across the six categories of descriptions of accuracy for each of the four language skills, *Speaking*, *Writing*, *Listening*, and *Reading*[9]. Each stacked bar in the chart displays the aggregated total percentage for a given category, with percentages for each of the four skills shown in a different color: blue for *Speaking*, orange for *Writing*, gray for *Listening*, and yellow for *Reading*. The categories have been arranged in descending order based on their aggregated total percentages. The x-axis maximum is set to 50% to show clearer results since the maximum aggregated total percentage was less than 50%.

In addition to the stacked bar chart, a legend table is also provided in the bottom of the figure to present the exact percentages of each category for each language skill. Please note that a percentage of 0.00% indicates zero response, and a percentage of 0.39% represents one response.

The percentage was calculated based on the total number of responses, 259. The percentages of responses in each category and for each of the four skills add up to approximately 100, allowing for a rounding error of up to 1%.

[9] Distribution of respondents in categories for *Speaking* and *Writing*, see Appendix C - Figure 14; Distribution of respondents in categories for *Listening* and *Reading*, see Appendix C - Figure 15.

Figure 8
Categories of Accuracy, Expressed in Percentage of Responses in Categories in each of the Language Skills, Speaking, Writing, Listening, and Reading (n, responses =259)



	Other	Pragmatics	Flow	Vocabulary	Grammar	Communication
Speaking	0.00%	0.00%	4.63%	7.34%	7.34%	8.11%
Writing	0.00%	2.32%	1.93%	4.25%	14.67%	6.95%
Listening	0.39%	2.70%	0.77%	1.93%	0.77%	14.67%
Reading	0.39%	1.93%	1.93%	2.32%	0.77%	13.90%

As Figure 8 shows, *Communication* stood out as the biggest category, with an aggregated total percentage of 43.63%, while *Grammar* and *Vocabulary* were less prominent categories, with aggregated total percentages between 15% and 25%. The remaining three categories comprised less than 10% of the responses each.

The aggregated total percentages of productive skills (*Speaking and Writing*) across all six categories received 57.54% of all responses, while the aggregated total of receptive skills (*Listening* and *Reading*) received 42.47% - 15% lower than productive skills. The categories *Grammar*, *Vocabulary*, and *Flow* received more responses in the productive than in the receptive language skills. And G*rammar*, in particular, was strongly associated with the skill of *Writing*. In contrast, the aggregated total percentages of receptive skills exceeded productive skills in the categories of *Communication*, *Pragmatics*, and *Other*.

Different patterns emerged when examining the distribution of responses across categories for each language skill. Percentages that relate to Speaking were fairly evenly distributed across three categories (*Communication*, *Grammar*, and *Vocabulary*), whereas *Writing* (*Grammar*) and *Listening* and *Reading* (*Communication*) had much clearer favorites. To account for the pervasiveness of categories and subcategories in the sample of responses, Table 17 (below) shows categories and subcategories with at least one mention in each of the four skills. To capture the intensity with which a given subcategory was represented among all responses, Table 18 (further below) displays the rank orders of categories and subcategories based on their respective counts of responses.

Table 17 (below) provides a summary overview of the six main categories for students' descriptions of accuracy in each language skill, along with their respective subcategories. The subcategories that were mentioned by at least one respondent in any of the four learning skills are indicated by the letter Y. Gray-shaded cells indicate that no responses were provided in the given subcategory for the given skill. The maximum number of columns (one per skill) in which a Y may occur is four, and the minimum is one. The table further specifies the names of the subcategories that were given based on the nature of their respective entries. The categories are arranged by the number of their respective subcategories in descending order, and the subcategories are arranged by the number of total Ys that they have, also in descending order. Subcategories with an equal number of Ys are ordered alphabetically. The bottom rows of the table display the total number of subcategories, the number of subcategories in each of the skills, *Speaking*, *Writing*, *Listening*, and *Reading*, as well as the number of subcategories with four, three, and two Ys as well as one Y.

Table 17

Categories of Descriptions of Accuracy When Students Defined Accuracy in Each of Four Language Skills (n, respondents =31, n, responses =259)

Categories	**Subcategories**		***Speaking***	***Writing***	***Listening***	***Reading***
	Name	**# of Ys**				
Communication	Understanding/Being understood	4	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Being clear	2	Y	Y		
	Communicating well	2	Y	Y		
	Expressing ideas and conveying meaning accurately	2	Y	Y		
	Making minimal mistakes	2	Y	Y		
	Being able to converse	2	Y		Y	
	Making a good reading experience for the reader	1		Y		
	Using good style	1		Y		
	Enjoying	1			Y	
	Reflecting and connecting to other ideas	1				Y
	Summarizing and retelling	1				Y
Grammar	Grammar, in General / Identifying grammar / Understanding grammar	4	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Syntax, sentence structure, and word order	3	Y	Y		Y
	Conjugations	2	Y	Y		
	Minimal mistakes	2	Y	Y		
	Genders	1	Y			
	Pronouns	1		Y		
	Proper endings	1		Y		
	Punctuation	1		Y		
	Tenses	1		Y		
Pragmatics	Intended purpose	2			Y	Y
	Mood, emotion, and tone	2			Y	Y
	Audience awareness	1		Y		
	Appropriateness	1		Y		
	Politeness	1		Y		
	Register	1		Y		
	Word connotation	1		Y		
	Context	1			Y	
Flow	Smoothness	3	Y	Y	Y	
	Speed	3		Y	Y	Y
	Continuation without recourse to secondary sources	2		Y		Y
	Delivery	1	Y			
	No anxiety	1				Y
Vocabulary	Vocabulary knowledge	4	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Word choice precision	2	Y	Y		
	Pronunciation	1	Y			
	Correct spelling and minimal spelling errors	1		Y		
Other	Listen with the intent to learn	1			Y	
	Look for literary techniques	1				Y

Total # of subcategories	**# in Speaking**	**# in Writing**	**# in Listening**	**# in Reading**
	16	**26**	**11**	**11**
39	**# of 4 Ys**	**# with 3 Ys**	**# with 2 Ys**	**# with 1 Y**
	3	**3**	**11**	**22**

As Table 17 shows, when describing accuracy, the greatest number of subcategories (11) emerged in *Communication,* followed by *Grammar* (9) and *Pragmatics* (8), while the category *Other* had the smallest number of subcategories (2). What is more, students' responses primarily focused on language production, with 26 out of 39 subcategories occurring in the context of *Writing* and 16 out of 39 subcategories in connection with Speaking. In contrast, definitions of accuracy in language reception were less detailed, with only 11 out of 39 subcategories in both *Listening* and *Reading* respectively.

Most subcategories were only mentioned for one or two skills, with 11 out of 39 and 22 out of 39, respectively. Only three subcategories were mentioned across all four language skills when defining accuracy, one each from the categories *Communication (Understanding or being understood), Grammar (Grammar, in general/Identifying grammar/Understanding grammar),* and *Vocabulary (Vocabulary knowledge)*. It is worth mentioning that the above-mentioned three subcategories were generic terms of their respective categories. Further, another three subcategories were mentioned for three language skills, with one in *Grammar* (*Syntax, sentence structure, and word order)* for *Speaking*, *Writing,* and *Reading*, and two in *Flow*: *Smoothness* for *Speaking*, *Writing,* and *Listening*, and *Speed* for *Writing*, *Listening,* and *Reading*.

All categories except for *Other* were mentioned for *Writing.* And *Grammar* featured particularly prominent with regard to that skill, with eight out of nine subcategories receiving at least one mention. It is also worth noting that the category *Pragmatics* was not mentioned in the context of *Speaking*; even though five out of eight subcategories in *Pragmatics* appeared in descriptions of accuracy for *Writing*.

Table 18 (below) shows two rank orders of the relative frequency of responses[10] for each of the subcategories in each of the language skills. The columns labeled ‘all’ show the rank order of a given subcategory relative to all subcategories (across all categories) under a given language skill; the columns marked ‘within’ show the rank orders of subcategories within a specific category under a given language skill. The rank order is marked in Arabic numbers, and shared ranks are indicated by the addition of letters to the Arabic numerals. The table also shows the number of subcategories in each category for each language skill, the total number of subcategories in each language skill, as well as the total number of subcategories taken together. The categories and subcategories are arranged in the same order as in Table 17, and gray-shaded cells indicate that no responses were provided in the given subcategory for the given skill.

[10] A more detailed account of number of respondents and responses across subcategories can be found in Appendix C - Table 20.

Table 18

Categories of Descriptions of Accuracy When Students Defined Accuracy in Each of the Four Language Skills, Shown in Rank Order of Frequency of Responses (n, responses =259)

Categories	**Subcategories**	**Rank Orders by Language Skills**							
		Language Production				**Language Reception**			
		Speaking		***Writing***		***Listening***		***Reading***	
		All	**Within**	**All**	**Within**	**All**	**Within**	**All**	**Within**
Communication	Being understood / Understanding	1	1	3a	1	1	1	1	1
	Being clear	5a	2	4	2				
	Communicating well	8a	5a	6	3				
	Expressing ideas and conveying meaning accurately	7a	4	8a	5a				
	Making minimal mistakes	8b	5b	8b	5b				
	Being able to converse	6	3			3	2		
	Making a good reading experience for the reader			8c	5c				
	Using good Style			7a	4				
	Enjoying					5a	3		
	Reflecting and connecting to other ideas							4a	2
	Summarizing and retelling							5a	3
# of subcategories	**11**	**6**		**7**		**3**		**3**	
Grammar	Grammar, in general / Identifying or understanding Grammar	3a	1	1	1	4a	1	5b	1a
	Syntax, sentence structure, and word order	4	2	2	2			5c	1b
	Conjugations	7b	3a	5a	3a				
	Minimal mistakes	7c	3b	5b	3b				
	Genders	8c	4						
	Pronouns			8d	5a				
	Proper endings			8e	5b				
	Punctuation			7b	4a				
	Tenses			7c	4b				
# of subcategories	**9**	**5**		**8**		**1**		**1**	
Pragmatics	Intended purpose					5b	2a	4b	2
	Mood, emotion, and tone					4b	1	3a	1
	Audience awareness			8f	2a				
	Appropriateness			8g	2b				
	Politeness			7d	1				
	Register			8h	2c				

	Word connotation			8i	2d				
	Context					5c	2b		
# of subcategories	**8**	**0**		**5**		**3**		**2**	
Flow	Smoothness	3b	1	7e	1a	5d	1a		
	Speed			8j	2	5e	1b	5d	2a
	Continuation without recourse to secondary sources			7f	1b			3b	1
	Delivery	5b	2						
	No Anxiety							5e	2b
# of subcategories	**5**	**2**		**3**		**2**		**3**	
Vocabulary	Vocabulary knowledge	8d	2	8k	2	2	1	2	1
	Word choice precision	2a	1a	3b	1a				
	Pronunciation	2b	1b						
	Correct spelling and minimal spelling errors			3c	1b				
# of subcategories	**4**	**3**		**3**		**1**		**1**	
Other	*Listening* with intent to learn					5f	1		
	Looking for Literary Techniques							5f	1
# of subcategories	**2**	**0**		**0**		**1**		**1**	
Total # of subcategories	**39**	**16**		**26**		**11**		**11**	

No discernible patterns were observed when examining the rank orders of subcategories in columns labeled all, which indicates the intensity of responses among all applicable subcategories for a given language skill. However, a closer look at the columns labeled within, which shows the intensity of subcategories within each category, revealed that two skills in productive and receptive skills, respectively, exhibited similar patterns. Specifically, the subcategory that ranked top in a given category for *Speaking* also ranked top in that regard in *Writing,* and the same for *Listening* and *Reading*.

The subcategory *Being understood / Understanding* in category *Communication* stood out as the most frequently mentioned subcategory in *Speaking*, *Listening,* and *Reading* and the third most frequently mentioned in *Writing*. Furthermore, it was also the top one subcategory in *Communication* for all four skills.

Despite the lack of consistent patterns in the rank orders of subcategories, the category *Vocabulary* stood out as a top-ranked category, with the greatest number of top-ranked subcategories for productive language skills. Specifically, in *Speaking*, two out of three subcategories pertaining to *Vocabulary* were ranked as second in *Writing* and two out of three *Vocabulary* subcategories were ranked third in *Speaking*. Additionally, the one and only subcategory in *Vocabulary* for *Listening* and *Reading* also ranked second in both skills.

It is also noteworthy that the category *Grammar* was associated with top-ranked subcategories in *Writing*, with one related subcategory ranked first, and another one ranked second, namely, *Grammar, in general / Identifying or understanding Grammar* and *Syntax, sentence structure, and word order*, respectively. In *Speaking*, these two subcategories ranked third and fourth, respectively. Although these two were not ranked top among all *Listening* and *Reading* subcategories, they were all ranked top within the category *Grammar* for all four skills.

RQ 3.3 How did first- and second-year (FSY) and post-second-year (PSY) college students of German compare when they defined accuracy in each of the four language skills (Speaking, Writing, Listening, and Reading)?

To answer RQ 3.3, I drew on the same data already presented in RQ 3.1 and 3.2. However, this time I broke down data according to student population group, i.e., foremost by first and second year (FSY) as compared to post-second year (PSY), but also (to gain a more fine-grained understanding of where shifts in attitudes may occur) by individual year, i.e., first (FY), represented by 12 respondents and 85 responses; second (SY), represented by four respondents and 24 responses; and post-second (PSY), represented by 15 respondents and 150 responses. It is worth noting that this study was not longitudinal and that the number of SY respondents was very limited[11].

Figure 9 illustrates how responses that defined accuracy were distributed across the four skills by population group (FSY; PSY), i.e., Version A, and by year (FY; SY; PSY), i.e., Version B. The relative percentages suggest relative emphases, i.e., which of the four skills was more or less prevalent in the minds of a given respondent group when they were asked to describe accuracy. To provide a more focused view, the graph's minimum and maximum percentages on the y-axis were set at 15% and 35%, respectively, corresponding with the lowest and highest percentages recorded in this dataset. Due to the limited space on the graph, the percentage in the data label was rounded to the nearest whole number. The percentages of responses for *Speaking*, *Writing*, *Listening,* and *Reading* are represented in blue, orange, gray, and yellow, respectively. For each

[11] A more detailed account of counts and percentages of responses across subcategories can be found in Appendix C - Table 21.

respondent group, the percentages of responses for each of the four skills add up to approximately 100, allowing for a rounding error of 1%.

Figure 9 Version A

Distribution of Responses When Students Defined Accuracy in Four Language Skills by Population Group, Expressed in Percentage of Responses by Group, First- and Second-Year Students (FSY) and Post-Second-Year Students (PSY)

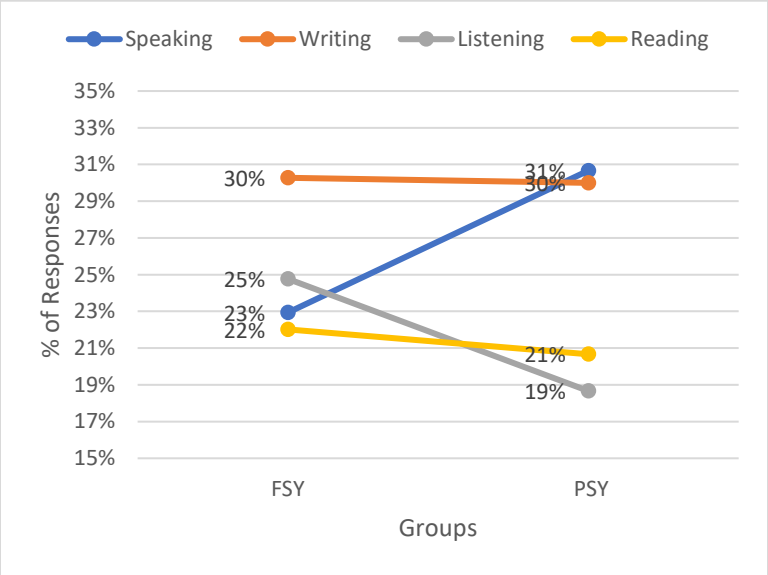
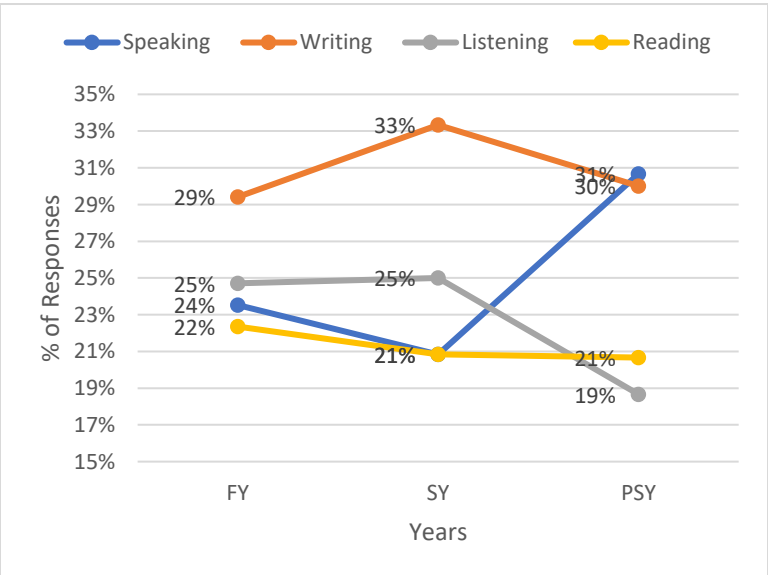


Figure 9 Version B

Distribution of Responses When Students Defined Accuracy in Four Language Skills by Year, Expressed in Percentage of Responses for Students by Year, First-Year (FY), Second-Year Students (SY) and Post-Second-Year Students (PSY)



As Figure 9 Version A shows, in the distribution of responses among the four skills, *Speaking* was the clear leader (30%), with the remaining three skills (*Writing, Listening,* and *Reading*) following in a cluster that ranged from 22-25%. In the PSY group, *Speaking* remained toward the top but was now joined by the other productive skill, *Writing*. Combined, with lower percentages noted for the receptive skills (especially *Listening*) among the PSY than the FSY group, a clear distinction established itself between productive and receptive skills in the PSY group, with the latter playing a much less defined role (i.e., fewer responses) in descriptions of accuracy.

A further breakdown by year (Figure 9, Version B) shows, with the caveats that SY consisted only of four participants and that the study was not longitudinal (i.e., did not track the same participants across time), that when it came to the prevalence of skills in conceptions of accuracy, neither the relative rise of *Writing* and the relative decline in *Listening* was linear and that the apparent stability of *Speaking* was interrupted by a temporary peak among SY respondents. In the Discussion, I will return to these insights when describing suggestions for future research.

Figures 10 (*Speaking*), 11 (*Writing*), 12 (*Listening*), and 13 (*Reading*) break down responses recorded in Figure 9 by skill and the six response categories, although not all categories occurred in each dataset and its corresponding Figures. These graphs follow similar reporting conventions as Figure 9. Again, each figure is rendered in two versions, with Version A representing the response rate by population group (FSY; PSY) and Version B representing the response rate by year group (FY; SY; PSY). As before, the minimum and maximum percentages shown on the y-axis were adjusted based on the lowest and highest percentage recorded in a given dataset. When adding up percentages for a given year, a rounding error of up to 1% was allowed. Categories of

Communication, *Grammar*, *Vocabulary*, *Flow*, *Pragmatics*, and *Others* are shown in blue, orange, gray, yellow, light blue, and green, respectively.

Figure 10 Version A

Distribution of Responses across Categories of Accuracy in Speaking by Population Group, Expressed in Percentage of Responses by Group, First- and Second-Year Students (FSY) and Post-Second-Year Students (PSY)

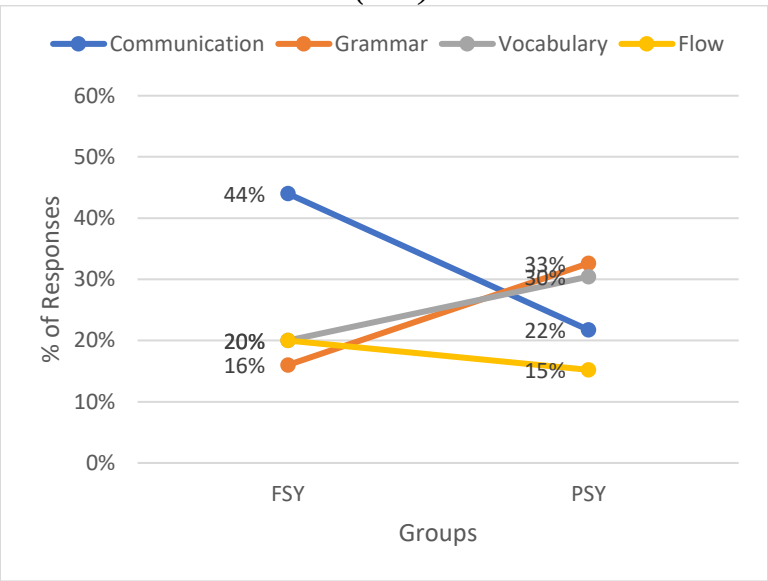


Figure 10 Version B

Distribution of Responses across Categories of Accuracy in Speaking by Year, Expressed in Percentage of Responses for Students by Year, First-Year (FY), Second-Year Students (SY), and Post-Second-Year Students (PSY)

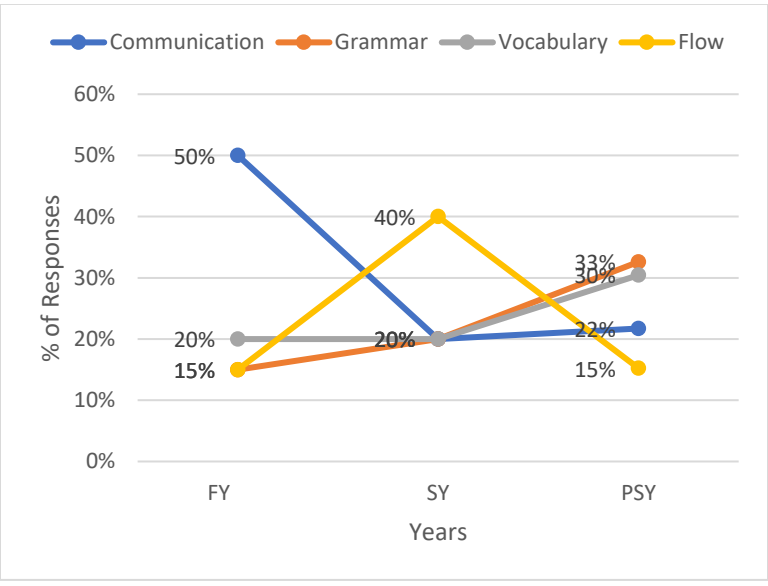


Figure 10 Version A shows that only four categories (*Communication*, *Grammar*, *Vocabulary*, and *Flow*) were mentioned in *Speaking*. Responses were distributed over a larger range (16-44%) among FSY than PSY (15-33%) respondents. Whereas *Communication* was the clear focus of FSY group, *Grammar* and *Vocabulary* were more prominent in the mentions of PSY group. Figure 10 B yields insights into the response patterns of the SY group specifically and shows that (a) among SY students, there was a surge in the relative prominence of *Flow* that was not apparent when comparing FSY and PSY groups (Figure 10 A); and (b) that the diminution of *Communication*, observed for PSY students in Figure 10 A, already manifested itself among SY respondents.

Figure 11 Version A

Distribution of Responses across Categories of Accuracy in Writing by Population Group, Expressed in Percentage of Responses by Group, First- and Second-Year Students (FSY) and Post-Second-Year Students (PSY)

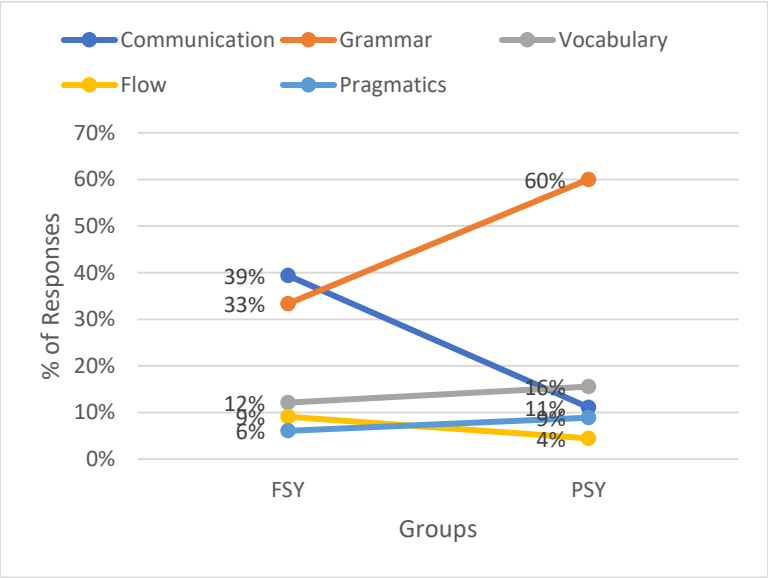
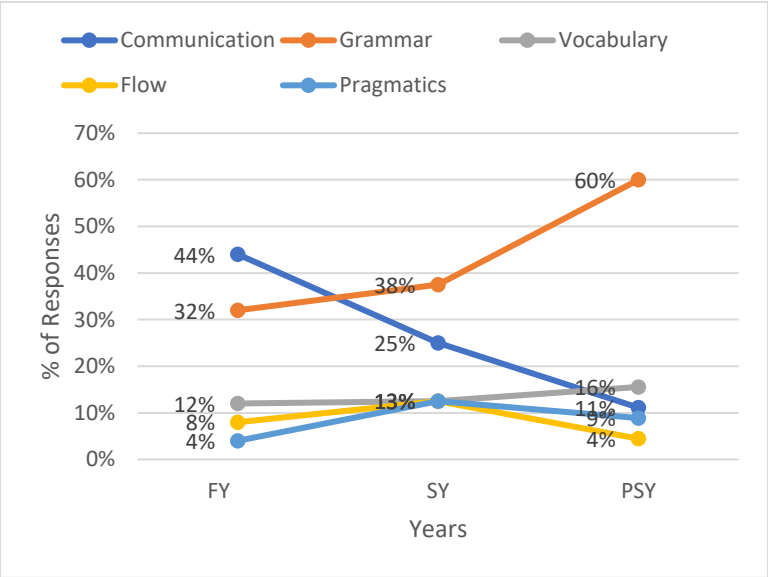


Figure 11 Version B

Distribution of Responses across Categories of Accuracy in Writing by Year, Expressed in Percentage of Responses for Students by Year, First-Year (FY), Second-Year Students (SY), and Post-Second-Year Students (PSY)



Figures 11 Version A and B show that when compared to definitions of accuracy in *Speaking*, learners drew on an additional category, i.e., *Pragmatics*, when describing accuracy in

Writing. However, that category played a minor role. As seen in Figure 11 Version A, distinct differences emerged between the FSY and PSY groups, particularly with regard to *Communication* and *Grammar*. As was true for *Speaking*, the emphasis on *Communication* seen in FSY respondents was notably absent in the PSY group. In contrast, *Grammar* nearly doubled in prominence when comparing definitions of accuracy in *Writing* among PSY respondents (60%) to those provided by FSY students (33%). Based on Figure 11 B, it seems that the lessened emphasis on *Communication* already manifested among SY respondents (25% as compared to 44% among FY students) though not as strongly as among PSY students (16%). Similarly, the increased emphasis on *Grammar* in definitions of accuracy in *Writing* noted for PSY students (60%) already began showing among SY students (38% as compared to 32% among FY respondents). Unique to PSY students, *Grammar* was the by far largest category when they defined accuracy in *Writing*, i.e., 60% as compared to the remaining four categories, which ranged between 4% (*Flow*) and 16% (*Vocabulary*).

Figure 12 Version A

Distribution of Responses across Categories of Accuracy in Listening by Population Group, Expressed in Percentage of Responses for Students by Group, First- and Second-Year Students (FSY) and Post-Second-Year Students (PSY)

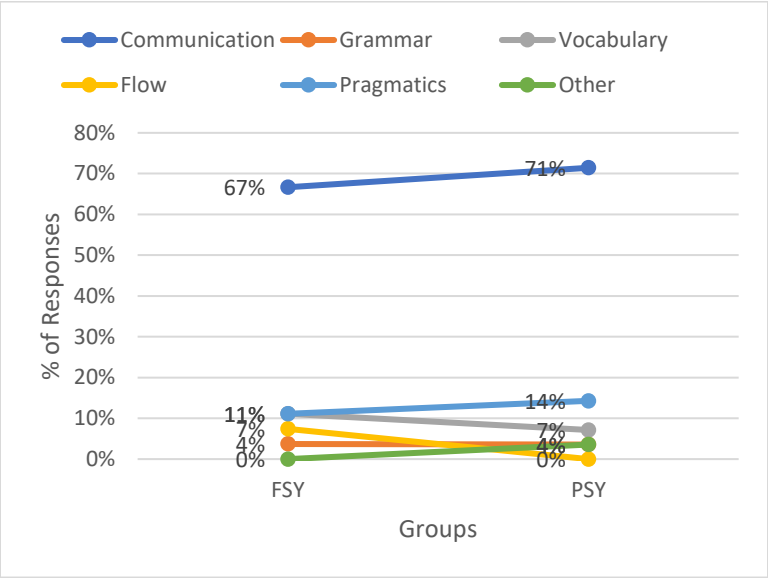
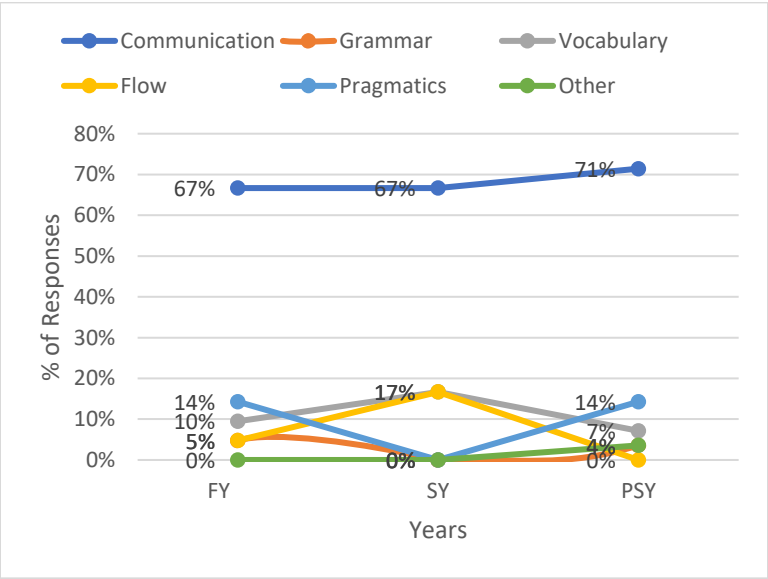


Figure 12 Version B

Distribution of Responses across Categories of Accuracy in Listening by Year, Expressed in Percentage of Responses for Students by Year, First-Year (FY), Second-Year Students (SY), and Post-Second-Year Students (PSY)



As Figures 12 Version A and B show, all six categories (*Communication*, *Grammar*, *Vocabulary*, *Flow*, *Pragmatics*, and *Other*) were mentioned when respondents defined accuracy

in *Listening*. Different from definitions of accuracy in *Speaking* or *Writing*, however, there were no notable differences across groups, neither in Version A nor in Version B, with the possible exception of SY respondents not mentioning *Pragmatics* and *Grammar* at all. The dominant presence of the category *Communication* (ranging from 67% to 71%) was shared by all respondent groupings.

Figure 13 Version A
Distribution of Responses across Categories of Accuracy in Reading by Population Group, Expressed in Percentage of Responses by Group, First- and Second-Year Students (FSY) and Post-Second-Year Students (PSY)

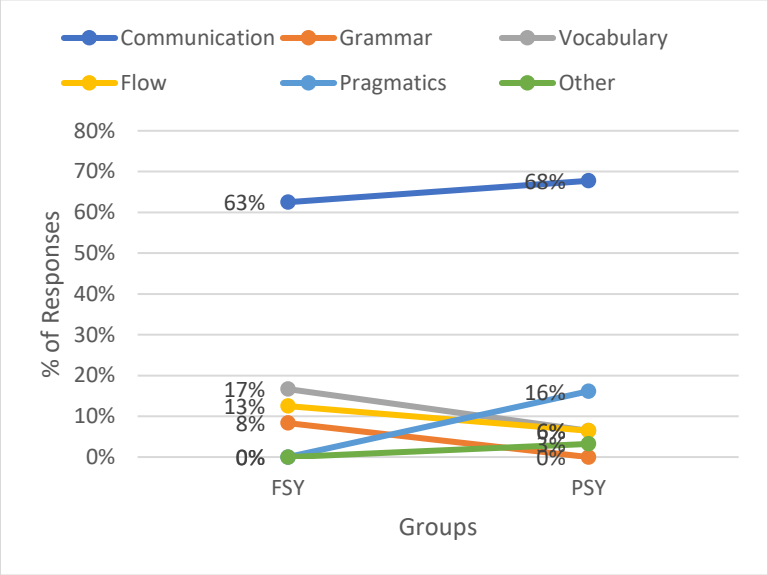
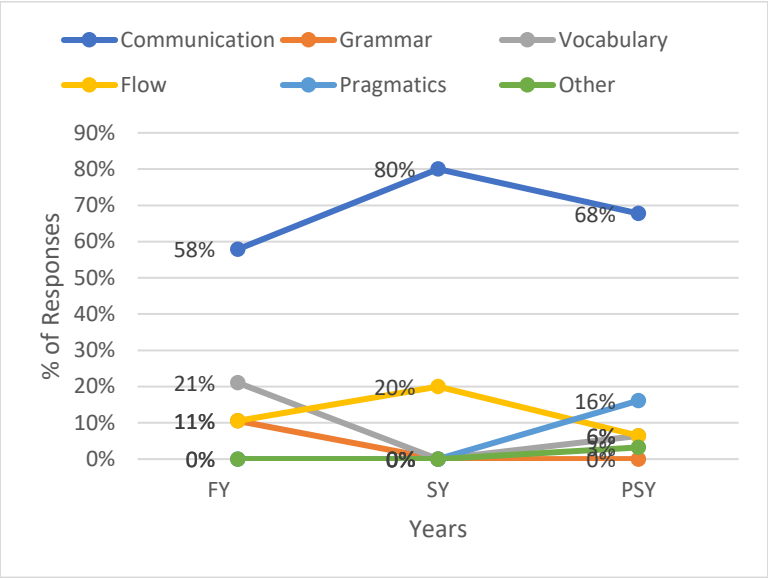


Figure 13 Version B

Distribution of Responses across Categories of Accuracy in Reading by Year, Expressed in Percentage of Responses for Students by Year, First-Year (FY), Second-Year Students (SY), and Post-Second-Year Students (PSY)



With some differences, patterns observed for definitions of accuracy in *Reading* overall resembled those described for definitions of accuracy in *Listening*: all six response categories were represented, and *Communication* was the dominant category in all respondent groupings, ranging from 58% to 80%. Different from definitions of accuracy in *Listening*, when respondents described accuracy in *Reading*, the shape of curves differed between Versions A and B of the same Figure (13). While SY respondents (shown in Version B) showed the same strong preference for *Communication* – as a matter of fact, the strongest preference of all three groupings shown in Version B at 80%, they also placed stronger emphasis on *Flow* (20% when compared to 11% of FY and 6% for PSY respondents). Overall, several types of SY students' responses interrupted the seeming linearity implied in 13 Version A.

In summary, Figures 9, 10, 11, and 13 together with Figure 8 show that (a) in the categories that respondents deployed when describing accuracy, receptive skills stood clearly apart from productive skills and that further, within productive skills, definitions of accuracy in *Writing*

differed notably from those of accuracy in *Speaking* even as definitions of accuracy in *Reading* and *Listening* were quite similar; (2) the categories of *Grammar* and *Communication* played the most prominent roles in distinguishing definitions of accuracy in receptive skills from those of accuracy in productive skills (and to a lesser extent, between definitions of accuracy in *Speaking* and *Writing*) as well as across different student groupings that, in turn, were distinguished by year of enrollment; (3) the category *Communication* typically was more prominent in definitions of accuracy that pertained to receptive skills as well as definitions of accuracy provided by students enrolled in earlier semesters (first year or first and second year). As will be further explored in the Discussion chapter, an emphasis on *Communication* as a defining criterion of accuracy may connote a lack of precise awareness of which specific language features really contribute.

Chapter 5. Discussion

In this chapter, I will place the results presented in the previous chapter into context and will discuss conclusions. Three main topics of particular interest emerged across Research Themes (RT) 1 – 3, 1) Students' self-positioning toward two major categories of learning goals; 2) simplified conceptions of accuracy in language learning; and 3) students' orientation and disorientation in the self-evaluation of proficiency.

5.1 Students' self-positioning toward two major categories of learning goals

The present study revealed that two major categories of learning goals were present prominently in students' mind not only in terms of their respective percentages of respondents but also their respective percentages of responses (see Figure 5), *i.e.*, *Discrete Language Skills* (23% of total responses, 68% of total respondents), *Personal Interest and Development* (29% of total responses, 65% of total respondents) categories. Please note that the goals reported in the present study include not only goals students might have for themselves, but also goals they think other students might have. In line with previous research on language learning goals, the goal *Discrete Language Skills* falls under the category of mastery goals (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010; Elliot & McGregor, 2001), while *Personal Interest and Development* is to be understood as a combination of different types of intrinsically and extrinsically motivated goals (Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2000).

5.1.1. Discrete language skills

One of the two most prominent categories of learning goals that participants in this study mentioned was that of *Discrete Language Skills*, which entailed the canonical 'four skills' of

speaking, writing, listening, and reading[12], i.e., a very traditional view of the scope of L2 learning (see below). According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), mastery orientation (Ames, 1992) involves "the pursuit of 'mastery goals' with the focus on learning the content" (p. 21), and specific language skills are generally considered the core content of a language class. The four language skills have not been emphasized as such (i.e., not in terms of their conceptualization as 'skills') in theories of L2 motivation even as they continue to play a role in research (e.g., Dhaene & Woumans, 2023; Borden, 2022; Spino, Echevarría, & Wu, 2022; Foltz, Martín-Gascón, Marytsch, Olloqui-Redondo, & Tenbrink, 2022; Graves, 2023; Roehr-Brackin, 2022) and, of course, act as central organizer to the proficiency guidelines published by the most influential professional organization in L2 teaching within the US, The American Council on The Teaching of Foreign Languages. Not surprisingly, language curricula, too, are articulated in terms of the 'four skills' (e.g., Borden, 2021; Graves, 2023). Therefore, it is understandable that when students were asked to articulate learning goals, they described them in terms of the canonical 'four language skills.'

5.1.2. Personal interest and development

Another prominent category of learning goals was that of *Personal Interest and Development,* which comprised four sub-categories: *academic progress*, *personal development*, *professional development,* and *social activities*. This learning goal, however, cannot be classified under achievement goals, mastery goals, or performance goals. Rather it is a combination of intrinsically and extrinsically motivated goals. To wit, examples of students' verbatim responses in Table 6 explained that *academic progress* (e.g., learn for language requirement; earn credit to

[12] In the instrument, the *German Proficiency questionnaire* explicitly mentioned the "four skills". However, the question concerning learning goals preceded any explicit mentions of the "four skills" later in the questionnaire. As a results, students' responses to their learning goals, specifically the mention of "four skills" – speaking, writing, listening, and reading - would not have been directly influenced by the instrument.

graduate; good grade in the class; earn retro credits) and *professional development* (e.g., communicating with clients; make a career; science and research; build resume) suggest extrinsic goals, since they refer to external and instrumental rewards. In contrast, *personal development* (another foreign language learning; acquire language skill for personal interest; learning about a new culture; for fun) and *social activities* (make new friends; friends are also learning the language; learn to connect with family/friends; meet Germans) align with intrinsic goals that are inherently enjoyable and satisfying to the individual. Nevertheless, in analysis, there was compelling evidence to group these sub-types under the same umbrella category with the uniting consideration being the predicate 'personal.' Together with the less prominently represented umbrella category of *Globalism* (14% of responses; 61% of respondents), it was the only one to clearly point to learning goals beyond the classroom. Different from the category *Globalism*, the category *Personal Interest and Development* took a narrower and more immediate perspective. The concurrence of extrinsic and intrinsic goals under the same umbrella category aligns with Dörnyei and Ushioda's observation (2011, p. 24) that the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic goals is not fixed and unchanging and that fully internalized extrinsic goals may "coexist with intrinsic regulation of motivation."

5.1.3. Learners' self-positioning relative to the two categories of Discrete Language Skills and Personal Interest and Development

Relevant observations on learners' self-positioning vis-à-vis these two categories of learning goals concerned (a) importance and achievability ratings; and (b) differences between the two student groups, first- and second-year students (FSY) on the one hand and post-second-year students (PSY) on the other.

5.1.3.1 Importance and achievability ratings

Participants in this study considered the goal category *Discrete Language Skills* to be *rather* important with an average rating of 73.63 (see Figure 6). In contrast, although the average importance score assigned to the goal category *Personal Interest and Development* (50.33) placed it into the arithmetic middle, when compared to the average importance scores of other goals, *Personal Interest and Development* figured at the lowest rank. It is perhaps telling that the only other goal category that pointed outside the classroom context, *Globalism*, was also ranked as the next-lowest in importance (61.13). As a matter of fact, the closer that a category came to the core of language instruction, the higher its importance rating was. In fact, the 73.63 assigned to *Discrete Language Skills* was the second highest importance score among all, exceeded only by *Communication Skills* (76.88), which perhaps encapsulates most essentially what students believe their language classes to teach.

The picture looks quite different when reviewing achievability ratings. First, there the range between highest and lowest score was smaller (6.89) than for importance ratings (23.3), which may suggest that learners had some difficulty in assessing this criterion. Then, a reversal in rank order was evident. The goal category *Personal Interest and Development* received the highest average achievability ratings (74.44) even as it had also been rated the lowest in importance (50.33). These findings indicate a strong sense of self-efficacy of this learning goal amongst the students. It is unclear where this high self-efficacy stemmed from or how it relates to actual proficiency. According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) self-efficacy beliefs do not necessarily provide an accurate measurement of competence and abilities, rather they are “the product of a complex process of self-persuasion that is based on congnitive processing of diverse souces (p. 16)”.

In addition, the goal category *Personal Interest and Development* was the only one for which a significant difference between importance and achievability ratings had been recorded (t = -2.97**). This finding supports Noels, Pelletier, Clément, and Vallerand's (2000) conclusion that students' enjoyment of "the feeling of learning an L2" (p. 75) might not lead to their involvement in the learning process; instrisic goals, therefore, may not foster sustained learning. At the same time,the high achievability indicated a strong sense of self-efficacy of this goal, despite a relatively low level of motivation.

Despite the significant difference between importance and achievability ratings for the goal *Personal Interest and Development,* a positive and significant correlation between the two measures was established (0.46*; see Table 7). A same-size positive correlation (0.46*) between these two measures was also found for the goal category *Discrete Language Skills.*

As a matter of fact, significant positive correlations between importance and achievability ratings were established for all goal categories, with the exception of *Globalism*. Please note that these findings did not reveal the causal interplay between the two, i.e., whether motivational goals drive self-efficacy or vice versa. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) explained a growing interest in research to explore "the importance of the unitily value of tasks" – "the extent to which students are able to perceive a clear instrumental relationship between current academic tasks and the attainment of personally valued long-term goals" (p. 19). Miller and Brickman (2004) explored the influence of personal valued future goals on proximal self-regulation and discvered that creating a system of short-term subgoals helps individual perceive proximal tasks as instrumental in achieving their furture goals. Consequently, this perception increases task engagement. Specifically, when individuals view proximal task as necessary steps towards achieving the future goals, they are more motivated and engaged in completing these tasks.

The lack of correlation between importance and achievability ratings for the goal category *Globalism* cannot yet be explained; whereas this category was not prominently represented among respondents and responses, it also was not under-represented in relative terms, i.e., the distribution of data points alone is unlikely to be responsible for the lack of correlation. As of now, the importance and perceived achievability of goals under the umbrella category *Globalism*, of which the largest subcategory was that of 'abroad experience,' seemed to bear no relation to each other.

5.1.3.2 Differences between first- and second-year students (FSY) and post-second-year students (PSY)

Analyses by student group showed a significant difference between FSY (84.13) and PSY (59.63) in terms of the importance that each assigned to the goal of *Discrete Language Skills* (t=2.35*) (see Table 9). Although no such significant difference between these two groups was found for perceived achievability, the positive correlation between importance and perceived achievability measured for all study participants taken together (see above), suggests that the relatively stronger enthusiasm of beginning learners (their higher importance ratings) for *Discrete Language Skills* may be connected to their optimism with regard to outcome in this goal category. In a seminal study, Horwitz (1988:286) determined that beginning college L2 learners were particularly likely to believe that they could reach fluency in the L2 within two years of study. Similarly, Munoz (2017) found that motivation waned over time in elementary-school L2 learners. Parallel insights come from Saito (1996), who found that language-learning anxiety was lowest among beginners and increases thereafter; and Chavez (2013:82), who concluded that first-year college of learners were less likely to distinguish between difficult and less difficult forms of German grammar and were more optimistic than their advanced peers that they would

eventually acquire even forms that were considered rather challenging by their more progressed peers. Chavez (2017) provides context for beginning students' high expectations of their eventual attainment: First-year students were less able than students in successive years of study to explain the reason/s why a form was difficult (p. 9) and attributed learning challenges mostly to a learner's inability to memorize (p. 13).

It may be meaningful that a significant difference in importance ratings between the FSY and PSY was not measured for any of the other goal categories. That is, shifts in perspectives on importance that were associated with the degree of learners' progression, in this study concentrated on the most iconic depiction of language instruction, the 'four skills', and it was the group of early learners that emphasized this learning goal (FSY, 84.13 vs. PSY, 59.63). In this context, it may also be relevant to observe that the only measured significant difference (t = -2.66*) between the groups in perceived achievability, concerned the goal category of *Globalism*, i.e., the type of goal that was most strongly oriented outside the classroom and for which learners may have least been able to gather concrete evidence inside the classroom. In this regard, however, and different from some of the observations made above, it was the more advanced learners who showed a greater degree of optimism (PSY, 80.91 vs. FSY, 54.38).

What is more, although a positive and significant correlation was established between ratings of importance and perceived achievability (74.44) for this goal (r = 0.46*), it was also found that perceived achievability was significantly greater than attributed importance (t = 2.97**).

5.2 Simplified conceptions of accuracy in language learning

An analysis of students' definitions of accuracy yielded several overarching insights. First, among the emerged umbrella categories, *Communication* predominated, followed at a distance

by *Grammar* and *Vocabulary.* Second, students perceived productive skills (speaking and writing) and receptive skills (listening and reading) differently. Third, a closer examination of the frequency and articulation of sub-categories that respondents evoked when they described accuracy, revealed a notable degree of imprecision and recourse to generic wording. Finally, when respondents were broken down by year of study, the conceptual development of accuracy in speaking, writing and listening emerged as uneven across these four skills.

5.2.1. Predominant categories in descriptions of accuracy: Communication above all else (nearly)

Although six umbrella categories, including the category *Other* emerged from students' descriptions of accuracy (see Table 18), one clearly prevailed, i.e., *Communication*. Overall, 43.63% of all 259 categorized responses were assigned to this category. Further, when respondents described accuracy in listening, 90% of respondents gave at least one response in *Communication,* as did 81% of respondents when they referred to accuracy in reading, 61% for speaking, and 48% for writing (see Figure 14). With regard to the latter two, *Communication*, however, was not the response category that drew the largest percentage of respondents. Instead, when respondents described accuracy in writing, the largest percentage (77%) mentioned *Grammar* and when students gave an account of accuracy in speaking, the largest percentages (45%) were associated with the categories *Grammar* and *Vocabulary*, respectively (see Figure 15). These two categories were the next largest in terms of the overall percentage of responses at 23.55% and 15.84%, respectively. The prevalence of references to *Communication* as well as the distinctions between definitions of accuracy between receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills will be thematized in subsequent sections.

Generally, the finding that students referred primarily to Communication when they defined L2 accuracy, is not surprising. Although Byram (1988) already imagined "post-communicative language teaching" and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as an approach has come under scrutiny through its perceived association with neoliberal ideologies (Angelo, 2021), it still prevails as a yardstick of good teaching and professional leadership (e.g., Ritz & Sherf, 2022; 2023). Further, in its ties to the professional standards that have been articulated by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), CLT continues to serve as a backdrop to research design (e.g., Hurst, 2022; Issa, Korononkiewicz, & Faretta-Stutzenberg, 2002). What is more, the theoretical concept of Willingness to Communicate (WTC), originally adopted from L1 settings (McCroskey, 1992) into L2 teaching contexts by Peter MacIntyre and collaborators (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clement, and Noels, 1998; MacIntyre, 2007) has inspired an entire strand of L2 research (e.g., Khajavy, MacIntyre, & Barabadi, 2018; Taherkhani & Moradi, 2022; Shirvan, Khajavy, MacIntyre, Taherian, 2019)

5.2.2. Productive skills vs. receptive skills

In the present study, participants gave more nuanced accounts of accuracy in productive skills in those of receptive skills as is evident in the number of sub-categories that were found to apply to respective responses.

A total of 39 subcategories emerged from students' descriptions of accuracy in the four language skills, 26/39 (two thirds) were applicable for writing and 16/29 (one fourth) pertained speaking. In contrast, only 11/29 (less than one third) were mentioned among descriptions for listening and reading, respectively (see Table 17). This finding likely reflects current teaching practices and, by extension, students' learning experiences, which can emphasize 'communication'.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) centers on the notion that "meaningful communication is considered to be both the means as well as the goal in CLT" (Butler, 2011). Regardless of whether one pursues a strong ("use language to learn it") or a weak ("learn language to use it" version of CLT (Howatt, 1984), the core of instruction is found in "communicative activities" (Butler, 2011; Littlewood, 2014; Graves & Garten, 2017). How exactly 'communication' is defined in research and teacher training varies greatly. Although Nunan (2014) discussed all 'four language skills' in the context of CLT, a sample of CLT curriculum, as provided in Richards Rodgers (2014: 92), described learning outcomes that clearly are focused on "ask," "talk," "say," and "describe," which implies a focus on productive skills, especially speaking. What is more, CLT pursues what is generally referred to as a 'learner-centered approach' (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Hunter & Smith, 2012; Holec, 1980; Nunan, 1993; Thein, 1994; Thomson, 1992). In this vein, Toro et al. (2019:111) referred to Moss and Ross-Feldman (2003) when they concluded that "Activities with communicative purposes are helpful for breaking down barriers, finding information, expressing ideas about oneself and learning about culture." Although the pedagogical intentions pursued through CLT may be more nuanced, simplifications and misperceptions of what CLT entails are common among both teachers and learners (e.g., Stanley, 1993; Littlewood, 2014). It is conceivable that to learners, most of whom are oblivious to the theorization of CLT, its orthodox tenets, and the criticisms leveled against it, 'learner-centered' instruction may not be a counter-concept to 'teacher-driven' learning but rather constitute an encouragement to focus on their own language production. In this light, it does not seem surprising that participants in this study referenced their own language production rather than their reception of language by others when they were asked to define L2 accuracy. Similarly, the feedback that learners receive on language production may be more

frequent or more explicit than that on language reception and hence, more noticeable to learners. Although I was not able to locate research that compares corrective feedback across language skills directly, a review of available literature does seem to indicate that detailed or localized feedback tends to be mostly associated with language production (e.g., Ahmed & Shakir, 2019; Payne, 2020) rather than reception. Plonsky and Brown (2015) provide a comprehensive meta-analysis of research on corrective feedback and tellingly, were able to only include studies on writing and speaking.

What is more, within the categories of *Writing* and *Speaking*, respectively (see Table 17), participants proposed a larger variety of sub-categories within umbrella categories, i.e., gave more varied or detailed responses for the former. The difference was particularly notable for the categories (a) *Grammar* with nine subcategories, of which all but one were mentioned in descriptions of accuracy in writing and five in descriptions of accuracy in speaking (by comparison, two in reading; and only a single one in listening); and (b) *Pragmatics* with eight subcategories, of which five were mentioned in accounts of accuracy in writing, and none in accounts of accuracy in speaking. This difference is further echoed in a search of relevant research databases, which yielded 1,838 entries for the combination of search terms ‘feedback’ and ‘L2 writing’ as compared to 342 results for the combination of ‘feedback’ and ‘L2 speaking’. Indeed, similar to the distinction between productive and receptive skills, writing may be a more frequent or more explicit target for corrective feedback than speaking. As Hasan and Marzuki (2017) determined, greater emphasis is placed on accuracy in learners’ written than oral production. What is more, feedback experiences may then contribute to the development of greater language awareness and the ability to articulate a more detailed account of what

constitutes accuracy in L2 use. Several studies point to such a connection (Loo, 2020; Sato & Ballinger, 2012; Simard & Wong, 2004).

5.2.3 Generic language and imprecision in defining L2 accuracy

Results presented in Table 17 showed that some of the sub-categories in definitions of accuracy, all named on the basis of verbatim responses by participants, were imprecise. Examples include 'making minimal mistakes' under the umbrella category of *Communication* and used to describe accuracy in both writing and speaking (though pertinently, not reading or listening); and the same subcategory in the somewhat more narrow context of *Grammar* and again only applied to writing and speaking. The most common deployment of generic subcategories, however, occurred when participants described accuracy in listening or reading, e.g., *understanding/being understood*, *identifying grammar* / *understanding grammar*, *vocabulary knowledge.*

Attention should also be paid to the specific subcategories that comprised different umbrella categories. The category *Communication* contained the most subcategories that connoted outcomes or other-perceptions of L2 use rather than described actual L2 qualities. Examples include "communicating well", "being understood", "being clear," or "enjoying." In other words, the category *Communication* contained many entries that were non-descript in terms of what truly makes L2 accurate. In line with previous observations, the rather vague category of *Communication* drew a greater percentage of responses in association with receptive rather than productive skills. Looking at the distribution of all 259 responses with regard to descriptions of accuracy (Figure 8), 14.67% were attributed to *Communication* x listening; 13.9% to *Communication* x reading; 8.11% to *Communication* x speaking; and 6.95% to *Communication* x writing.

In summary, descriptions of accuracy differed notably between productive and receptive skills as well as within productive skills, between speaking and writing. Generally, accuracy was most well defined in writing, followed by speaking, and much less so in both receptive skills. Precision or a lack thereof were evident in the relative number of sub-categories that were applied and the types of sub-categories (generic or specific) that were named. Such differences appeared across all umbrella categories but especially in the category of *Grammar* and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the category of *Pragmatics*. The degree to which the category *Communication* was relied upon also distinguished between receptive and productive skills, with the greater degree of reliance exhibited by the former coinciding with a lesser ability to articulate accuracy with precision.

Students' difficulties in articulating clear criteria for capturing L2 accuracy generally and particularly in receptive skills, may go toward an explanation of Swan's observation (2018:225) that in current CLT, there is a "difficulty of achieving fluent and accurate spontaneous production of what is taught, and especially of grammar."

5.2.4. Breaks in definitions of L2 accuracy by level of enrollment

The category of *Communication,* as discussed above, represented subcategories and responses that were rather vague. It is therefore to be expected that further progressed students would rely less on this category than their beginner peers. Indeed, when first- and second-year students (FSY) were compared to post-second-year students (PSY), that turned out to be true for the productive skills. The percentages of responses for *Communication* in each population group showed that *Communication* in *Speaking* dropped from 44% (FSY) to 22% (PSY) and in *Writing* from 39% (FSY) to11% (PSY group). But percentages of responses in *Communication* hardly differed between FSY and PSY with regard to receptive skills, i.e., for *Listening* were *67*%

(FSY) as compared to 71% (PSY), for *Reading*. Reading from 63% (FSY) to 68% (PSY). Circling back to previous explanations, this finding may indicate that students with time develop greater sensitivity, language awareness, and precision with regard to definitions of accuracy in language production while these same abilities fail to progress in the context of language reception.

When definitions of accuracy for *Speaking*, *Writing*, *Reading*, and *Listening* (Figure 10, 11, 12, 13) were broken down by students enrolled in first-year (FY), second-year (SY), and post-second-year (PSY) German, it became apparent that the reliance on certain response categories did not universally unfold in a linear (i.e., steadily falling or rising) pattern. In certain instances, SY and PSY favored or disfavored the same categories (though usually to somewhat different extents) and FY behaved very differently to both other groups. At the example of the category *Communication*, the curves for *Speaking* (Figure 10) indicated a steep drop from FY to SY, followed by a slight rise in the PSY; and a modified mirror-image emerged for *Reading* (Figure 13), with a slight rise from FY to SY and subsequent drop to near-FY levels for PSY. The curves for *Listening* (Figure 12) and *Writing* (Figure 11), in contrast, traced a decline from FY to SY to PSY. The decline was steady (a similar decline between FY/SY and SY/PSY) for *Writing* but less consistent for *Listening*, where FY/SY marked only a small decline and a much bigger decline happened between SY/PSY.

At the moment, there is no clear explanation for these findings. They may indicate developmental phenomena or a dependence on undetermined environmental influences, including exposure to certain instructional practices or curricula.

5.3 Students' orientation and disorientation in their self-evaluation of L2 proficiency

Results (specifically, Figure 7) indicated that when participants were asked to rate their German Proficiency in each of the four skills relative to two measures, i.e., other learners in class and to educated native speakers, on a scale from 0-100%, all four average scores fell above 50 (above 'average') relative to other students and remained below 40 relative to educated native speakers (with 100 indicating skills identical to those of an educated native speaker).

The first dissonance, i.e., the fact that all respondents considered themselves above average in class falls in line with the so-called *Lake Waubegon* effect (named after Garrison Keillor's tongue-in-cheek observation of local superiority in the face of statistical possibilities) that also has been well documented in other research, such as Zuckerman and Jost's (2001) study of undergraduates at the University of Chicago that found that most students rated themselves 'more popular than average.'

There was, however, a consistency in that although the two scales produced very different averages, in both instances, respondents observed the sequence of imaging *Writing* to be their best, *Reading* their next best, *Speaking* the next best after, and *Listening* the worst skill. One possible explanation could be that, given the current CLT practice, lots of class activities heavily focused on speaking, leaving less attention to listening skills. As a result, students may not have enough practice or confidence to evaluate their listening skills, which could contribute to the lower ratings. This supposition, however, does not account for why students would feel in a better position to judge other students' *Writing* or *Reading* skills; whether they are confident that they can use available evidence about their peers' *Speaking* for accurate evaluative judgment; and – in another finding (table 12, 13, 14, 15, 16) - why the two measures turned out to correlate with each other positively and significantly in each of the four skills and when breaking down participants in enrollment groups as well as taking them as a whole group. It is

illogical for students to anchor evaluations of their proficiency relative to same-level learners equally to evaluations of NSs. There is no reason to believe that fellow learners get better/worse than oneself just because one measures up/more less well to NSs. Yet, students mentally constructed a relationship between these two, which – in turn – might indicate a lack of orientation or baseline for evaluating their L2 proficiency.

Also of relevance, as shown in Figure 7, and different from patterns found in analyses of the naming of goals and definitions of L2 accuracy, when students assessed their L2 proficiency relative to their peers as well as relative to educated native speakers, their responses did not group by receptive versus productive skills but rather by medium, i.e., *Speaking* and *Listening* on the one hand and *Reading* and *Writing* on the other, with the latter rated more highly than the former.

Ultimately, without actual performance or proficiency measures, it is difficult to assess whether learners' self-perceptions are, in fact, grounded in reality. Whereas certain claims can be dismissed as impossible (for the statistical average exceeding 50% in a self-comparison with peers); others raise interesting questions. For example, when students imagine that there is a direct correspondence between their (perhaps inflated) perceptions of their proficiency relative to their peers on the one hand and, on the other, their proficiency relative to educated native speakers, this leads them to believe that successful interactions with peers in the classroom mirror quality interactions with native speakers in the real world, they seem to take the classroom as a true reflection of authentic L2 environments. Taken together with the finding, described earlier, that goal categories that point outside the classroom, such as *Personal Interest and Development* and *Globalism* were rated lower on importance, students' 'L2 mind' may really be mostly focused on the immediate classroom environment. The fact that students among all goal

categories, students were most confident about the achievability of *Personal Interest and Development,* adds credence to the idea that participants considered themselves capable of transitioning from the classroom to authentic environments.

The finding that students had exhibited difficulties in defining L2 accuracy in receptive skills and particularly, in *Listening*, suggest interesting connections when one also considers that they seemed to identify *Listening* as their weakest skill. Perhaps, unable to perform an assessment based on concrete criteria, students tended toward a perception of underperformance. Such a conclusion would be paralleled by the findings that (a) *Writing* was the skill for which participants were able to give the most precise definition of accuracy; and (b) *Writing* was the skill in which students expressed the most confidence. This interpretation, however, does not account for *Speaking,* another skill for which learners felt they could capture accuracy in some detail, following close behind *Listening* as a skill that learners did not believe to be very well developed.

Chapter 6. Implications and Limitations

6.1 Implications for future research

The findings in this study suggest that overall, students have a limited ability to verbalize their thoughts regarding language and language learning. Specifically, students struggle to articulate their learning goals and define L2 accuracy in the areas of speaking, writing, listening, and reading. It is difficult to pinpoint the cause of this limited ability, but very likely due to a lack of language awareness.

Furthermore, the most named categories for German learning goals were *Discrete Language Skills* (23% of total responses, 68% of total respondents), and *Personal Interest and Development* (29% of total responses, 65% of total respondents). However, their personal importance and achievability ratings showed intriguing patterns. Students generally assigned higher personal importance ratings to categories related to core of language instruction, and those outside of classroom context are deemed as less important, which implies what student believe the language classes to teach. Despite the lowest average personal importance rating for *Personal Interest and Development*, this learning goal received the highest achievability rating, which indicates a strong sense of self-efficacy of this learning goal amongst the students. It is unclear where this high self-efficacy stemmed from or how it relates to actual proficiency.

Moreover, the correlation between the two self-rated proficiency measures – self-rated German proficiency relative to other students in class and relative to educated native speakers - suggest that students have constructed a mental relationship between these two, potentially indicating a lack of orientation or baseline for evaluating their L2 proficiency. Additionally, students seem to be disoriented not only when judging their proficiency but also when naming

learning goals and defining L2 accuracy. Therefore, it is relevant to investigate the students' perception to gain more understanding of the L2 learners' mind.

First and foremost, it is crucial to explore the process and products of students' goals-setting and self-assessment of their proficiency and the relationship between these two constructs. How do students form and articulate goals? What roles does the ability to articulate precise and clear goals play in maintaining the goals, in the process of working towards the goals, and finally, in the attainment of the goals? How and how well do students self-assess relative to different standards (peers; NSs)? What role does students' self-assessment of their proficiency play when they set their learning goals?

Second, further research should investigate the role of instructional practices, such as feedback and focus on communication, in shaping students' ability to articulate learning goals, in self-assessment, and in the construction of mental relationships between the classroom and authentic environments. It is worth noting that when students were asked to name German learning goals, *communication skills* was the least frequently named category. Yet, it received the highest average personal ratings and second highest average achievability ratings, and it was also the determining criterion to define L2 accuracy. Therefore, it is relevant to investigate what impact does a focus on communication in instructional practices contributes to students' mental construct of communication. How do students perceive communication? Why do students include or exclude communication as their learning goal?

Lastly, it is essential to investigate how students construct relationships in their minds between the classroom and "authentic environments" and whether these mental constructions need to be checked or modified to better align with their actual proficiency and goals. How do their mentally constructed "authentic environments" look like? What goals should they set for

themselves in the language classroom to survive in their imagined authentic environments? When they enter authentic environments, what will students think (of their proficiency, originally set goals, etc.)?

In conclusion, the study highlights the need for further research to gain a better understanding of the L2 learners' minds. Such understanding will enable educators to design more effective instructional practices that help students better position themselves in language learning, ultimately leading to better and improved learning outcomes.

6.2 Implications for teaching

The current study found that students have a limited ability to verbalize their thoughts about language and language learning, which is closely associated with language awareness, since self-reflection through verbalization is an important tool to engage in language awareness training. To address this, teachers should encourage students to take a critical stance toward instructional practices and feedback, engaging them in deep reflection to promote a better understanding of the larger schema of things, such as their proficiency relative to different standards, the perception of others, and the realistic nature of their goals. This may require additional teacher training to facilitate the students' better self-positioning and to promote their language awareness.

Learners should also be encouraged to develop realistic expectations and self-assessments that may not be well supported outside the immediate instruction context. Professionals should also take a stance to exam the impact of lacking support and its implications for motivation.

Furthermore, the poorly defined concepts of communication were well reflected in the students' minds, which also require attention. There is a need to foster professional dialogues to avoid misinterpretation by practitioners and learners. Dialogues among professionals (e.g.,

ACTFL) need to be fostered to promote a shared understanding of good language teaching practices, which can then be transmitted to practitioners and learners with greater accuracy and consistency.

6.3 Limitations

The primary limitation of this study was the small participant size, which was largely due to unexpected circumstances related to the COIVD-19 pandemic. The study was originally designed to explore differential positioning toward language learning goals and outcomes, as well as learner's perception of L2 accuracy in relation to their different educational histories. However, due to the limited number of participants, it was not possible to explore these factors fully. Nonetheless, I do believe that educational histories and other variables may still play a role in understanding the differences observed. What's more, further analysis of the data I collected, those I have not included in this study, might provide alternative explanations.

While designing the study, I included student's L1 as an important variable. I anticipated students with various L1s, except for German, which was the target language of the course instruction. However, while analyzing the data, one student self-identified German as L1. And due to the small sample size, it was difficult to further subdivide participants by L1. While the study included an L1 German speaker, the level of proficiency was not specified.

Another limitation of the study is the lack of teacher perception. While the study focused on the students' perspectives, it would have been beneficial to also collect data from teachers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the instructional practices and feedbacks that may have influenced the students' perceptions and positioning.

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Appendix A – IRB Approval

Appendix A.1 -IRB Exempt Letter for 2020-1247

THE UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN MADISON

Education and Social/Behavioral Science IRB
9/28/2020

Submission ID number:	2020-1247
Title:	German learners' beliefs on accuracy through different lenses
Principal Investigator:	Monika Chavez
Point-of-contact:	Monika Chavez, Chen Chen
IRB Staff Reviewer:	Laura Conger

The ED/SBS IRB conducted a review of the above referenced initial application. The study was determined to meet the criteria for exempt human subjects in accordance with the following category(ies) as defined under 45 CFR 46:

Category 2: Research involving the use of educational tests, surveys, interviews [NOTE: If children are involved in the research it can only be determined to be exempt under this category if the research is limited to educational tests or observation of public behavior, the investigator(s) cannot participate in the activities being observed, and the identities of the subjects either cannot be readily ascertained or the disclosure of the subjects' responses would not put them at risk.]

You have identified the following financial sources to support the research activities in this IRB application:

None.

If this information is incorrect, please submit a change to modify your application as appropriate.

To access the materials the IRB reviewed and accepted as part of the exemption determination, please log in to your ARROW account and view the documents tab in the submission's workspace.

Although the human subjects research described in the ARROW application referenced above was determined to meet the federal criteria for exemption and thus does not require continuing review, please be aware of your responsibilities related to the conduct of the research and when additional IRB review is required. Prior to starting research activities, please review the Investigator Responsibilities for Exempt Human Subjects Research guidance (https://kb.wisc.edu/images/group99/shared/BSIR_Exempt.pdf) which includes a description of the types of changes that must be submitted to ensure the research continues to comply with the

conditions of the exemption and/or category(ies) of exemption.

If you have general questions, please contact the Education and Social/Behavioral Science IRB at 608-263-2320. For questions related to this submission, contact the assigned staff reviewer.

Appendix A.2 – IRB Change of Protocol Letter for 2020-1247-CP001

Education and Social/Behavioral Science IRB
11/2/2020

Submission ID number:	2020-1247-CP001
Title:	German learners' beliefs on accuracy through different lenses
Principal Investigator:	Monika Chavez
Point-of-Contact:	Monika Chavez, Chen Chen
IRB Staff Reviewer:	Laura Conger

The ED/SBS IRB conducted a review of the change of protocol to the above referenced application. The study was determined to continue to qualify for exemption.

You have identified the following financial sources to support the research activities in this IRB application:

None.

If this information is incorrect, please submit a change to modify your application as appropriate.

To access the materials the IRB reviewed and accepted as part of the change of protocol exemption determination, please log in to your ARROW account and view the documents tab in the submission's workspace.

Although the human subjects research described in the ARROW application referenced above was determined to meet the federal criteria for exemption and thus does not require continuing review, please be aware of your responsibilities related to the conduct of the research and when additional IRB review is required. Prior to starting research activities, please review the Investigator Responsibilities for Exempt Human Subjects Research guidance (https://kb.wisc.edu/images/group99/shared/BSIR_Exempt.pdf) which includes a description of the types of changes that must be submitted to ensure the research continues to comply with the conditions of the exemption and/or category(ies) of exemption.

If you have general questions, please contact the Education and Social/Behavioral Science IRB at 608-263-2320. For questions related to this submission, contact the assigned staff reviewer.

Appendix A.3 – IRB Change of Protocol Letter for 2020-1247-CP002

THE UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN MADISON

Education and Social/Behavioral Science IRB
3/26/2021

Submission ID number:	2020-1247-CP002
Title:	German learners' beliefs on accuracy through different lenses
Principal Investigator:	Monika Chavez
Point-of-Contact:	Monika Chavez, Chen Chen
IRB Staff Reviewer:	Laura Conger

The ED/SBS IRB conducted a review of the change of protocol to the above referenced application. The study was determined to continue to qualify for exemption.

You have identified the following financial sources to support the research activities in this IRB application:

None.

If this information is incorrect, please submit a change to modify your application as appropriate.

To access the materials the IRB reviewed and accepted as part of the change of protocol exemption determination, please log in to your ARROW account and view the documents tab in the submission's workspace.

Although the human subjects research described in the ARROW application referenced above was determined to meet the federal criteria for exemption and thus does not require continuing review, please be aware of your responsibilities related to the conduct of the research and when additional IRB review is required. Prior to starting research activities, please review the Investigator Responsibilities for Exempt Human Subjects Research guidance (https://kb.wisc.edu/images/group99/shared/BSIR_Exempt.pdf) which includes a description of the types of changes that must be submitted to ensure the research continues to comply with the conditions of the exemption and/or category(ies) of exemption.

If you have general questions, please contact the Education and Social/Behavioral Science IRB at 608-263-2320. For questions related to this submission, contact the assigned staff reviewer.

Appendix B - Main Questionnaire

Appendix B.1 - **Informed Consent Form**

German learners' beliefs on accuracy
Consent Form

Dear German language students,

My name is Chen Chen and I am a doctoral student in the Department of German, Nordic, & Slavic. My area of specialization is second language acquisition. That is, I study how and why people learn a language other than their native language/s. To complete my degree and to train for my future career, I need to conduct an empirical research study. I am requesting your participation. The study explores what goals learners of German set for themselves and what expectations they have of their language development.

Your participation would involve the completion of a survey – which is this document. Completion of the survey will take about 60-80 minutes. Please answer these questions as precisely and honestly as you can. There are no correct or incorrect answers and your responses will remain confidential. The questionnaire also requests some background information, which will not be used to identify individuals but rather helps group responses by background variables that respondents share in common. You will also be asked to create a personal code. This code does not reveal your identity but helps connect your responses to the survey with any responses you might give on other components of the study (more on that below). In addition, this code will allow me to distinguish individuals' responses from each other. In data processing (such as entering responses into a spreadsheet), you will be referred to by your code.

If you choose to complete the survey, you will receive $5 Amazon or Target gift card for your participation, additionally you qualify for a cash prize drawing. 1x$50, 2x$30, 3x$20, 4x$10, and 10x$5, all prizes will be distributed as Amazon or Target gift card. Winners will be determined via the drawing of names. The drawing will be administered by my doctoral advisor, Professor Monika Chavez and witnessed by me through video camera. If you would like to be included in the drawing, you would need to give your name and email address at the end of the survey. Your information as well as your participation will remain entirely confidential, i.e., your name/email and responses will never be connected. Only I and my doctoral advisor, Professor Monika Chavez, will have access to the names & emails themselves.

At the end of the questionnaire, you will also be asked whether you are interested in participating in additional components of the study. They are described below. The first additional component is a survey very similar to the initial survey and will take about 20-30 minutes. Your completion of this survey in no way obliges you to participate in other study components. However, if you do, you will qualify for additional $5 Amazon or Target gift card and also for an additional cash prize drawing, as described below. Although there is no direct benefit to you to participate in the study, the research helps us plan more effective curricula and accommodate more diverse learners' goals.

If you are in possession of this survey, it means that your instructor has allowed me to distribute it to you. Your instructor, however, will never have access to your survey responses. Your participation is voluntary and has no bearing on your grade or standing in this course, you can withdraw from this study any time. If you have any questions, please email me (cchen476@wisc.edu), or the principal investigator of the study, my dissertation advisor,

Professor Monika Chavez (mmchavez@wisc.edu). If you are not satisfied with the response of the research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education and Social/Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-265-4312.

If you want to proceed with participation, please type your responses right into this electronic copy of the questionnaire. There are several ways to return the completed document, each offers different degrees of anonymity. All responses will remain confidential, i.e., will be read only by approved researchers.

You could either email your completed questionnaire to me (cchen476@wisc.edu) or drop it off in a Box Folder using the link in the bracket (https://uwmadison.app.box.com/f/6f67ceb552f14f9cbd28bec89ccea9b5). This link will direct you to the drop off folder on Box, no additional sign-in required. You can drag and drop your document directly in the folder without providing additional information.

Please keep this information for your records.

Please note: You must **be 18 years or older to participate** in this study. You must **not have participated in the study before.**

Are there any risks to me?

There is a risk for breach of confidentiality. Although the research team will minimize this risk by storing the data securely and only approved researchers will have access to the data, it may still be possible for someone to identify you based on your responses.

Furthermore, the last section of this survey asks for directly identifiable information (your name and email address) if you decide to participate in further components of the study and/or a cash prize drawing. However, in order to protect your privacy, the last two sections of this survey with your name and email address will be destroyed once all components of this study have been conducted, ensuring that your data is not linked with that name and email address.

Are there any direct benefits to me?

There are no direct benefits to you. However, the research helps us understand student's goals and needs better, thus can help us plan more effective curricula and accommodate more diverse learners' goals.

Will I be compensated for participating in this study?

Yes! You will receive ***$5 Amazon or Target gift card for completion of the first survey***. Furthermore, all participating students can enter at least one drawing for cash prizes of ***1x$50, 2x$30, 3x$20, 4x$10, and 10x$5***. If you choose to complete **the first additional component (section 11-14)**, you will receive ***an additional $5 gift card*** and can enter for an additional drawing for cash price and receive ***up to $80*** for the drawings. There will also be an opportunity to participate in a further component of the study (for ***$15***) later this semester if you provide your contact information at the end of this survey. The further component of the study - written descriptive tasks - is explained in greater detail at the end of this form.

At the end of this survey, you can provide your contact information if you are interested in participating in further component of the study and/or the drawing.

Please also indicate at the end of the survey, how you wish to receive your payment. You could either provide an email address to receive the electronic gift card or a mailing address to receive a physical gift card. Payments will be made within 1 week after your submission.

Until what date can I return this survey?

You will have **until THE END OF THE SEMESTER** to complete the survey.

How can I return the survey?

If you agree to complete this survey, you can choose OPTION 1or 2 to return the completed survey to me:

- OPTION 1: Email me (cchen476@wisc.edu) your completed questionnaire.
- OPTION 2: Click the link https://uwmadison.app.box.com/f/6f67ceb552f14f9cbd28bec89ccea9b5 , and drop off your completed questionnaire directly in the folder without revealing any additional information.

Please contact me with any questions at cchen476@wisc.edu.
Thank you very much for your participation.
Chen Chen

Appendix B.2 - Personal Code

Personal code

Your personal code: Please create your unique 10-digit code following the instructions below. The code will help connect all parts of the research project in which you choose to participate. It also helps with keeping your responses separate from those of other participants without referring to your actual identity. The construction of the code allows you to recreate the code at a later time (should it become relevant) by following the same steps. At the same time, since only you know the information that goes into the code, your identity will remain confidential.

a. For the **first three** digits, list the course **number of your current German** course 101, 203, etc.
b. The **4th and 5th digits** are the **last two digits of your phone number**.
c. The **6th and 7th digits** are the **last two digits of your university student ID**.
d. The **8th, 9th and 10th digits** shows the **first three letters or digits of your NETID.**

Here is an example: A student is taking German **101**. The student's phone number is 608-888-66**66**. The student's university ID number is 907 888 52**68**. The student's NETID **abc**de123
The code will be:

	a	b	c	d
Code	101	66	68	abc

Please insert yours just below.

YOUR CODE

	a	b	c	d
Code				

Appendix B.3 - **Incentives and Interest Form for Focal Group Study**

Payment Instruction, Further Study Component, and Cash Prize Drawing

Payment Instruction

- For completion of the survey only, you will receive $5 Amazon or Target gift card.
- For completion of the survey and the additional component (section 11-14; question 23-26), you will receive $10 Amazon or Target gift card in total.

☐I have completed the survey only (**$5**). ☐I have completed both the survey and the additional component (**$10**).	☐Please send me the payment via email. ***Valid email address:***
☐Please send me Amazon gift card. ☐Please send me Target gift card.	☐Please send me the payment in the mail. ***Valid mailing address:***

Please note: In order to protect your privacy, this section ("Payment Instruction") of this survey with your email address will be destroyed once all payment have been distributed, ensuring that your data is not linked with that email address.

Further component of the study

- I am looking for up to 10 people to participate in a **written descriptive task** (in November) about German and German learning experiences and it will take 45 to 60 minutes to complete.
- Participants will receive a $ 15 Amazon or Target gift card if they decide to participate.
- I will contact everyone who responds. However, participation will be limited, and I cannot guarantee that everyone who wishes to participate in this component will be able to do so.

☐ ***Yes***, ***I am interested*** in participating in further component of this study**.** Please provide your ***contact information*** (name and valid email address) below: ***Name:*** ***Valid Email address:***
☐***No, I am not interested in further component of this study.***

Please note: In order to protect your privacy, this section ("Further component of the study") of this survey with your name and email address will be destroyed once all components of the study have been conducted, ensuring that your data is not linked with that name and email address.

Cash Prize Drawing (1x$50, 2x$30, 3x$20, 4x$10, 10x$5)

At the end of the semester, I will have a cash prize drawing for cash prizes of ***1x$50, 2x$30, 3x$20, 4x$10, 10x$5 for all participating students*****!** Participants who have completed the survey will qualify for one drawing and participants who have completed both the survey and the additional component will qualify for one more drawing, with total of two.

Yes, I am interested in entering the drawing for one or two of the cash prizes listed above and have read the guidelines below. By providing my name and valid email address or by emailing my contact information to cchen476@wisc.edu by THE END OF THE SEMESTER, I am entering the drawing.
Name:
Valid Email address:

Guidelines for cash prize drawing: The name of the participants who indicated interests in the large prize drawings will be printed out on a paper and cut to small paper slips. Those who quality for two drawings, their names will be printed twice. At the end of the study period, my doctoral advisor professor Monika Chavez will administer the drawing by picking out paper slips from a jar and the live scene will be witnessed by me and. I will contact the winners after the drawings. If the winner(s) cannot be contacted (for example, if an invalid email address was provided), an/other winner(s) will be chosen. If the winner(s) do not reply to me and make arrangements for delivery of payment within fourteen (14) days of contact, the winner forfeits the prize, and the researcher will select another name. The odds of winning depend on the number of participating people in the drawing. ***Please note***: To protect your privacy, this section ("Cash Prize Drawing") of this survey with your name and email address will be destroyed once all prizes have been distributed, ensuring that your data is not linked with that name and email address.

Appendix B.5 - The Background Questionnaire

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Please mark your answers by clicking on the corresponding boxes ☐ and insert your answers in the blanks.

1. What was your latest German course **before your current one**?
   a. ☐ None
   b. ☐ Middle School, Level/Year_____
   c. ☐ High School, Level/Year _____
   d. UW-Madison [please mark all that apply],
      ☐ Ger 101; ☐ Ger 102;
      ☐ Ger 203 (third semester); ☐ Ger 204 (fourth semester);
      ☐ Ger 249 (listening & speaking) ☐ 258 (reading) ☐ 262 (writing)
   e. ☐ Other: _____

2. What is your current enrollment status at the university?
   a. ☐ First-year student
   b. ☐ Sophomore
   c. ☐ Junior
   d. ☐ Senior
   e. ☐ Graduate student
   f. ☐ Other: _____

3. What are your academic objectives for your German studies at the university? Please mark all that apply.
   a. ☐ Fulfill a language requirement
   b. ☐ Earn retro credits
   c. ☐ Earn elective credits toward a degree other than in German
   d. ☐ Obtain a certificate in German
   e. ☐ Obtain a major in German
   f. ☐ Other: _____

4. What is your hometown & in what state/province and country is it located?
   a. Name of hometown: _____
   b. State/province and country: _____

5. What is your student status at the university?
   a. ☐ Domestic student
   b. ☐ International student
   c. ☐ Other: _____

6. Please name your first (childhood) language(s), _____

Appendix B.6 - Perceptions of Learning German Questionnaire

1. Please consider what **objectives people might have when they learn German**.

    a. List 5-8 objectives in the left column (one per row).

    b. Then, consider **how important** each of these objectives is **for you personally**. Assign a percentage (0-100%) on a scale from 0% (*not important at all for me)* to 100% (*absolutely essential for me)*

    c. Last, consider **how achievable** each of these objectives is **within the total of your formal studies of German** (at UW and beyond). Again, use a percentage scale from 0 % *(not achievable at all)* to 100% *(absolutely achievable).*

OBJECTIVES	**IMPORTANCE FOR YOU PERSONALLY** (0 – 100%)	**ACHIEVABILITY WITHIN YOUR FORMAL STUDIES OF GERMAN** (0-100%)
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

Appendix B.7 - German Proficiency Questionnaire

1. **Definition of Accuracy -** Please consider what it means to **speak, write, listen, and read <u>accurately</u> in German**. Please provide short descriptions of each. Key words or short phrases are fine.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO …	**YOUR BRIEF EXPLANATIONS**
1) … speak accurately in German?	
2) …write accurately in German?	
3) …comprehend accurately when listening to German?	
4) …comprehend accurately when reading German?	

2. **Self-rated German Proficiency** - Please rate your current proficiency in German in each of 24 features in two ways**: Your proficiency compared to that of other learners in your German class;** and **your proficiency compared to that of educated native speakers (NSs) of German.** Assign a percentage (0-100%) to indicate what percentage of people are WORSE than you in this feature on a scale from 0% (*Nobody is worse than me and I am the absolute worst.)* to 50% (*I am in the middle.*) to 100% (*All are worse than me and I am the absolute best.)*

FEATURES OF GERMAN	*Please **assign a percentage** on a scale from 0% (Nobody is worse than me and I am the absolute worst.) to 50% (I am in the middle.) to 100% (All are worse than me and I am the absolute best.)*	
	YOUR PROFICIENCY COMPARED TO OTHER LEARNERS	**YOUR PROFICIENCY COMPARED TO EDUCATED NATIVE SPEAKERS**
1) Using complex and precise *vocabulary* when speaking.		
2) Using complex and precise *vocabulary* when writing.		
3) Understanding complex and precise *vocabulary* when listening.		
4) Understanding complex and precise *vocabulary* when reading.		
5) Applying *grammar* rules when speaking.		
6) Applying *grammar* rules when writing.		
7) Using *grammar* rules to comprehend when listening.		
8) Using *grammar* rules to comprehend when reading.		
9) Pronouncing *sounds* accurately when speaking.		
10) Being able to tell apart individual or similar *sounds* when listening.		
11) Using appropriate word *stress* and sentence *melody* when speaking.		
12) Inferring meaning from word *stress* and sentence *melody* when listening.		
13) Using accurate *spelling* when writing.		

14) Distinguishing words from similar words based on *spelling* when reading.		
15) Using accurate *punctuation* when writing.		
16) Inferring meaning from *punctuation* when reading.		
17) Speaking easily and quickly.		
18) Writing easily and quickly.		
19) Comprehending easily and quickly when listening.		
20) Comprehending easily and quickly when reading.		
21) Holding a listener's interest and conveying intended social messages when speaking.		
22) Holding a reader's interest and conveying intended social messages when writing.		
23) Understanding intent, emphasis, and social messages when listening.		
24) Understanding intent, emphasis, and social messages when reading.		

Appendix C – Tables in Appendix

Table 19

Main Categories of Learning Goals, Expressed in Counts and Percentages of Respondents With at Least One Response in a Category, and Count and Percentages of Responses Relative to Total Assigned to a Category (n, respondents = 31; n, responses = 195

Categories	Subcategories	Respondents		Responses	
		Count	Percentage %	Count	Percentage %
Communication Skills	***Subtotal***	***17***	***55***	***19***	***10***
	Communication with native speakers	11	35	12	6
	Communication with others (Unspecified or non-NSs)	7	23	7	4
Language Discrete Skills	***Subtotal***	***21***	***68***	***45***	***23***
	Listening	5	16	6	3
	Reading	14	45	15	8
	Speaking	13	42	16	8
	Writing	7	23	8	4
Language Performance	***Subtotal***	***16***	***52***	***23***	***12***
	Being understood*	1	3	1	1
	Understanding texts and people	6	19	8	4
	Impressing German speakers*	1	3	1	1
	Being perceived as having a good accent*	1	3	1	1
	Being fluent	9	29	9	5
	Having confidence	2	6	2	1
	Overall/Unspecified*	1	3	1	1
Language and Culture Knowledge	***Subtotal***	***17***	***55***	***24***	***12***
	Culture and history	11	35	11	6
	Language in general	3	10	3	2
	Grammar	4	13	4	2
	Vocabulary	4	13	6	3
Personal Interest and Development	***Subtotal***	***20***	***65***	***56***	***29***
	Academic progress	8	26	13	7
	Personal development	14	45	22	11
	Professional development	11	35	15	8
	Social activities	5	16	6	3
Globalism	***Subtotal***	**19**	***61***	***28***	***14***
	Abroad experience	15	48	20	10
	Bi- and Multilingualism*	1	3	1	1
	Cross-cultural perspectives	2	6	2	1
	Global perspective and connections	5	16	5	3
Total		**31**	**100**	**195**	**100**

Note: * Subcategories with a * indicate a single response.

Table 20

Categories of Descriptions of Accuracy When Students Defined Accuracy in Each of Four Language Skills, Shown in Counts of Responses and Respondents (n, respondents= 31, n, responses=259)

Categories	Subcategories	# of Respondents (RTs) and Responses (RSs)							
		Speaking		Writing		Listening		Reading	
		RTs	RSs	RTs	RSs	RTs	RSs	RTs	RSs
Communication	Being understood / Understanding	10	10	5	5	26	33	24	32
	Being clear	4	4	4	4				
	Communicating well	1	1	3	3				
	Expressing ideas and conveying meaning accurately	2	2	1	1				
	Making minimal mistakes	1	1	1	1				
	Being able to converse	3	3			4	4		
	Making a good reading experience for the reader			1	1				
	Using good Style			2	2				
	Enjoying					1	1		
	Reflecting and connecting to other ideas							2	2
	Summarizing and retelling							1	1
Grammar	Grammar, in general / Identifying or understanding Grammar	8	8	17	17	2	2	1	1
	Syntax, sentence structure, and word order	6	6	9	9			1	1
	Conjugations	2	2	3	3				
	Minimal mistakes	2	2	3	3				
	Genders	1	1						
	Pronouns			1	1				
	Proper endings			1	1				
	Punctuation			2	2				
	Tenses			2	2				
Pragmatics	Intended purpose					1	1	2	2
	Mood, emotion, and tone					2	2	3	3
	Audience awareness			1	1				
	Appropriateness			1	1				
	Politeness			2	2				
	Register			1	1				
	Word connotation			1	1				
	Context					1	1		
Flow	Smoothness	8	8	2	2	1	1		
	Speed			1	1	1	1	1	1
	Continuation without recourse to secondary sources			2	2			3	3
	Delivery	4	4						
	No Anxiety							1	1
Vocabulary	Vocabulary knowledge	1	1	1	1	5	5	6	6
	Word choice precision	9	9	5	5				
	Pronunciation	9	9						
	Correct spelling and minimal spelling errors			5	5				
Other	Listening with intent to learn					1	1		
	Looking for Literary Techniques							1	1
Total		31	71	31	78	31	55	31	55

Figure 14

Categories of Descriptions of Accuracy, Expressed in Percentages of Respondents in Categories, Speaking and Writing (n, respondents=31)

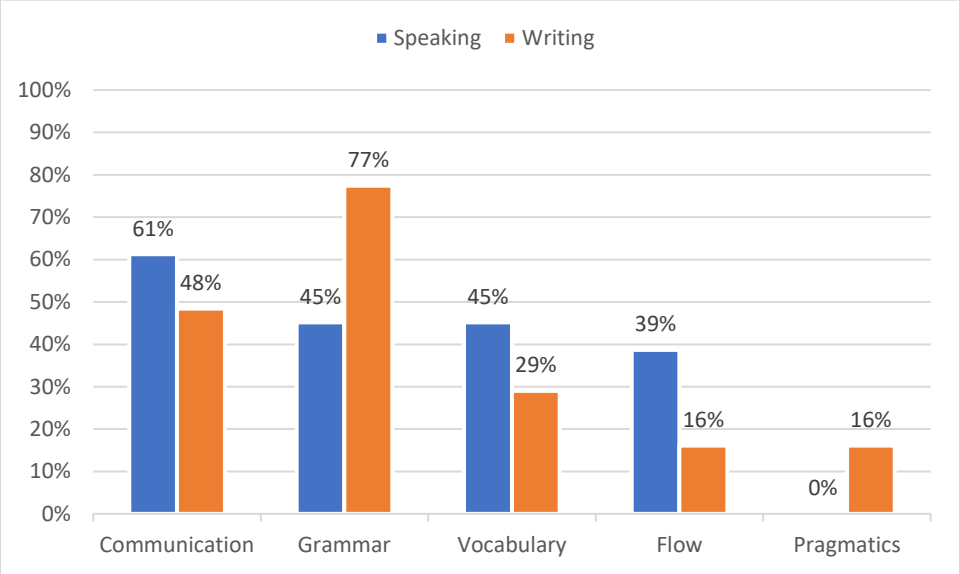

Figure 15

Categories of Descriptions of Accuracy, Expressed in Percentages of Respondents in Categories, Listening and Reading (n, respondents=31)

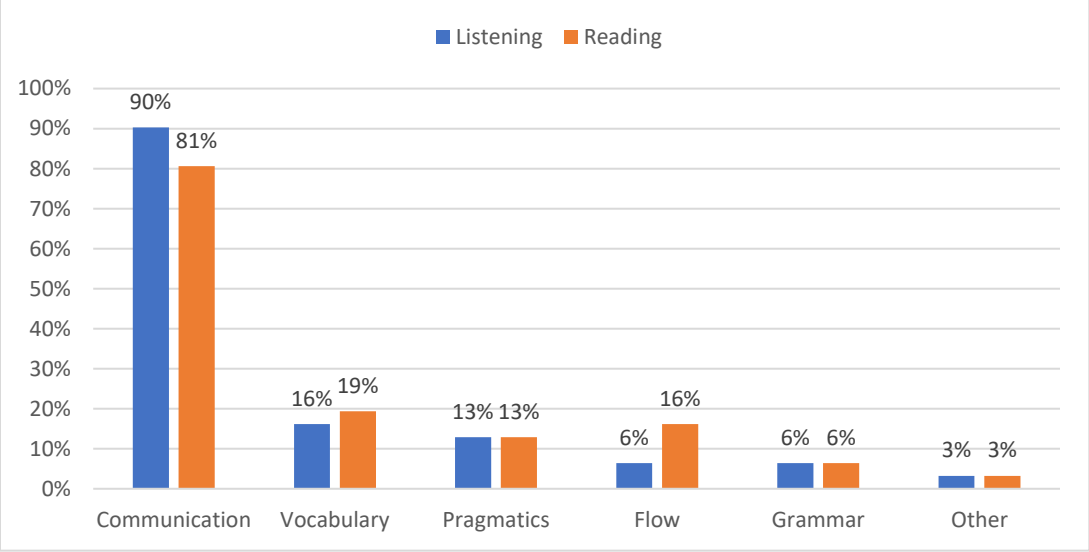

Table 21

Categories of Descriptions of Accuracy, Expressed in Number of Response & Percentages of Responses for Each Year and Group, First-Year (FY), Second-Year (SY), First- and Second-Year (FSY), and Post-Second-Year (PSY)

Skills	Year & Group	First Year (FY)			Second Year (SY)			First- and Second-Year (FSY)			Post Second Year (PSY)		
	Categories	***Count***	***% for Each Skill***	***% in FY***	***Count***	***% for Each Skill***	***% in SY***	***Count***	***% for Each Skill***	***% in FSY***	***Count***	***% for Each Skill***	***% in PSY***
Speaking	Communication	10	50	12	1	20	4	11	44	10	10	22	7
	Grammar	3	15	4	1	20	4	4	16	4	15	33	10
	Vocabulary	4	20	5	1	20	4	5	20	5	14	30	9
	Flow	3	15	4	2	40	8	5	20	5	7	15	5
	Pragmatics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Subtotal	**20**	**100**	**24**	**5**	**100**	**21**	**25**	**100**	**23**	**46**	**100**	**31**
Writing	Communication	11	44	13	2	25	8	13	39	12	5	11	3
	Grammar	8	32	9	3	38	13	11	33	10	27	60	18
	Vocabulary	3	12	4	1	13	4	4	12	4	7	16	5
	Flow	2	8	2	1	13	4	3	9	3	2	4	1
	Pragmatics	1	4	1	1	13	4	2	6	2	4	9	3
	Subtotal	**25**	**100**	**29**	**8**	**100**	**33**	**33**	**100**	**30**	**45**	**100**	**30**
Listening	Communication	14	67	16	4	67	17	18	67	17	20	71	13
	Grammar	1	5	1	0	0	0	1	4	1	1	4	1
	Vocabulary	2	10	2	1	17	4	3	11	3	2	7	1
	Flow	1	5	1	1	17	4	2	7	2	0	0	0
	Pragmatics	3	14	4	0	0	0	3	11	3	4	14	3
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	1
	Subtotal	**21**	**100**	**25**	**6**	**100**	**25**	**27**	**100**	**25**	**28**	**100**	**19**
Reading	Communication	11	58	13	4	80	17	15	63	14	21	68	14
	Vocabulary	4	21	5	0	0	0	4	17	4	2	6	1
	Grammar	2	11	2	0	0	0	2	8	2	0	0	0
	Flow	2	11	2	1	20	4	3	13	3	2	6	1
	Pragmatics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	16	3
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	1
	Subtotal	**19**	**100**	**22**	**5**	**100**	**21**	**24**	**100**	**22**	**31**	**100**	**21**
Grand Total		**85**	**N/A**	**100**	**24**	**N/A**	**100**	**109**	**N/A**	**100**	**150**	**N/A**	**100**

Note: There are three columns under each year and population group (FY, SY, FSY, and PSY), from left to right are number of responses of each group for each category in each language skill, percentage of responses of each group for each category within each language skill (only responses in this language skill groups were considered), and percentage of responses of each group for each category (all responses of this group were considered, all four skills combined)