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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Wesley Isaac Kennedy entitled "Language Play and Vocabulary Teaching in the Beginning German Classroom." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in German.

Thorsten Huth, Major Professor

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(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

**Language Play and Vocabulary Teaching in
the Beginning German Classroom**

**A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**Wesley Isaac Kennedy
December 2017**

ABSTRACT

Both children and adults naturally play with language, manipulating it for the purpose of enjoyment. A growing body of research in the last twenty years or so demonstrates that such ludic language play entails a variety of benefits for second language learners. I focus in this thesis on the intersection between language play and vocabulary acquisition. Ludic language play entails several processes known to aid in the learning of words, and instructors can implement planned language play tasks in the classroom. In this thesis, I present materials which I designed for beginning language students around the concept of language play, and I demonstrate how these materials elicited language play in my own beginning German class at the University of Tennessee. Based on my research on language play and vocabulary acquisition, I offer a framework for how instructors can design materials which use ludic language play to teach vocabulary.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is the result of the intersection of two issues in language pedagogy. The first is the phenomenon of ‘language play’—a topic which has sparked a growing body of research in the last two decades or so. The second is vocabulary acquisition, a central area of interest for teachers and students of foreign language. My interest in language play began with a course on language pedagogy where the phenomenon was briefly mentioned. This curiosity morphed into an independent study on the topic, wherein the connections between language play and vocabulary acquisition—and the value of language play in fostering vocabulary acquisition—became evident.

Language play is, in short, the manipulation of language at any level. This includes phonological, morphological, and syntactic structures, and it also extends to the manipulation of semantics and pragmatics. At first glance, such a concept seems too broad to be useful. If all language is play, then can the concept be used in any specific ways by teachers and students of language? Yet the literature on this topic has demonstrated that language learners (LLs) often engage in a specific type of language play (called ‘ludic’ language play) where they manipulate language structures in such a way as to have fun or elicit humor. One exciting discovery of the research into this topic is that such ludic play is a natural and widespread aspect of language learning for both adults and children. It is striking how often studies have observed this phenomenon to be present among language learners. Also striking are the benefits which language play appears to have for language acquisition.

In the classroom, vocabulary acquisition is among the most important aspects of learning a language. One way or another, students of language *must* acquire vocabulary to function in a language. Yet the introduction of vocabulary can be a daunting task for instructors, especially in

the beginning stages of language instruction, when students have little previous knowledge on which to build. Should instructors direct students to engage in rote memorization of basic vocabulary, encouraging such methods as flash cards or writing out vocab lists? Or should they dive immediately into more advanced tasks, with the hope that students can learn vocabulary along the way? Both have potential drawbacks: rote memorization tasks, if used too often, may take up valuable class time or become boring. On the other hand, some students may struggle if they are not adequately prepared with vocabulary for a language task.

Many instructors engage in little direct vocabulary instruction and hope that students acquire vocabulary incidentally. Traditionally, language teaching has been organized around grammar instruction rather than vocabulary acquisition. As one author notes, “Language programs might have a grammar class or a reading class, but there is almost never a vocabulary class” (Folse, 2004, p. 23). Cheryl Boyd Zimmerman (1997) similarly concludes that historically, vocabulary has received very little attention in language instruction. Communicative methods, she argues, have not corrected this problem. Despite the emphasis on fluency, many proponents of communicative methods give little explicit attention to vocabulary (Zimmerman, 1997).

The goal of this thesis is not to promote any one theory or approach to vocabulary acquisition. However, I posit that ludic language play can be a beneficial means to foster vocabulary acquisition in the classroom and should be included alongside other instructional methods. Language play may offer a helpful medium for introducing new vocabulary or for reviewing and solidifying previously learned words. On a concrete level, this thesis will present language play materials which the author has developed for the purpose of aiding vocabulary acquisition. These materials were designed for the beginning German classroom but could easily be adapted for other languages.

The thesis proceeds in the following manner. Chapter one considers the current literature on language play as well as important principles for vocabulary acquisition, establishing contact points between the two fields. Chapter two presents instructional materials which are based on the concept of ludic language play and designed to foster vocabulary acquisition. The design of these materials is justified in light of the connection between language play and vocabulary acquisition as discussed in chapter one. Chapter three provides a description of these lessons when I carried them out in my own beginning German class. The conclusion considers the implications of my research and offers suggestions for future research on this topic.

CHAPTER ONE

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE PLAY AND VOCABULARY ACQUISITION

As the term ‘play’ indicates, language play is most often an enjoyable activity. Yet teachers know that not everything which is *enjoyable* is also *beneficial* in the classroom. If language play is to be implemented by language instructors, it is necessary to understand what this phenomenon entails. Moreover, it is necessary to establish the ways in which it may foster language acquisition. This chapter therefore reviews existing literature on language play, defining the term and exploring its benefits for language acquisition. The second part of the chapter focuses on vocabulary acquisition and considers processes which have been shown to help L2 learners acquire vocabulary. The final section links language play to vocabulary acquisition by exploring the ways in which the two phenomena intersect. The existing literature suggests that ludic language play often brings about several processes which are also beneficial for learning vocabulary, including noticing, creative language use, and repetition. Ludic language play also can result in affective benefits which may aid vocabulary acquisition.

1.1 Language Play

Each language involves complex systems of rules which govern communication for its speakers. Language users are confronted with an infinite number of options for combining and manipulating elements of language; linguistic structures can be manipulated at the phonemic, morphological, lexical, syntactic, or pragmatic level. Humans appear to have a drive to manipulate (or ‘play’) with language. As Ludwig Wittgenstein notes, language itself can be described as a game (Wittgenstein, 2001). At times, the manipulation of language serves an obviously practical purpose, as is the case for toddlers who practice vocabulary and grammar structures as they talk themselves to sleep. At other times, its only purpose—at least at first

glance—seems to be the enjoyment of those producing language and/or their audience.

Increasing understanding of how integral such play is to human language has led to a growing body of literature on this topic in the last 20 or so years.

For some time, linguists have observed that children play with language constantly when learning their L1. In a seminal study, Ruth Weir (1962) recorded the soliloquies which her 28-30-month-old son would recite to himself before bed. Weir tracked the many ways in which he would manipulate language when talking to himself. For example, he played with phonemes and words by repeating similar sounds. Further, he often repeated an utterance and substituted a word of the same form or class, demonstrating the ability to manipulate syntax. At the level of the paragraph, he was observed to connect utterances through the use of alliteration. At the discourse level, he showed the ability to take on varying roles while talking back and forth with himself.

Children also engage in language play when they interact with one another. In a study carried out by Catherine Garvey (1977), children between ages two and five were paired with a partner and placed in a room furnished with objects with which they could play. The researchers observed three forms of social play with language among the children. First, they engaged in spontaneous rhyming and word play. They experimented with lexical variants of words (e.g. ‘mother,’ ‘momma,’ and ‘mommy’), and they repeated words uttered by other children but changed their form or stress pattern. Second, children were observed to play with fantasy and nonsense. They showed a propensity for inventing humorous nonsense names; one girl wrote a letter to “Uncle Poop” and signed by “Mrs. Fingernail.” Another child pretended to make new friends named “Dool,” “Sol,” and “Ta.” They also would tell stories which weaved fantasy and reality together to their mutual enjoyment. Third, the children played with pragmatic aspects of language. They purposely misnamed objects for humorous purposes, for example, by referring to

a girl named Lisa as a boy. Another example of pragmatic play was engaging in conditional, non-serious threats which resulted in laughter. Language was thus used to create humor in their social interactions with one another.

It is clear that children naturally play with many aspects of language, both when alone and in social contexts. But what about adults? Until recently, adult language play has been largely ignored by linguists. As one author notes, ludic language has been “at best treated as a topic of marginal interest, at worst never mentioned at all” (Crystal, 1998, p. 1). However, linguists increasingly recognize that play is integral to the way adults use their L1, and that language play can also be beneficial for adult second language acquisition (SLA). The work which perhaps more than any other has initiated discussion on the importance of language play is *Language Play, Language Learning* by Guy Cook (2000). Cook argues that language play is a fundamental feature of human language. He identifies numerous uses of language play in human societies. Cook notes that rhyme and repetition are not relegated to the language of children; they are also key elements of many liturgies, songs, prayers, poems, and even advertisements. Adults, as well as children, use language to create fictional worlds. Popular television genres such as soap operas and comedies demonstrate that adults are preoccupied with using language for creative and imaginary purposes as well as apparently practical ones. Moreover, riddles, puns, and verbal dueling have traditionally been common among human societies, and in some cases served important social functions. Language play is a natural part of language use for people of all ages. As will become clear below, the importance of language play for adolescents and adults does not diminish when they learn a second language.

Two prominent understandings of language play have taken root in the literature, one of which sees language play as a ludic activity, the other as private speech (Bell, 2012a; Bell,

2012b; Broner & Tarone, 2001; Waring, 2013; Bushnell, 2008). These definitions are not entirely mutually exclusive, but they do approach language play from largely differing viewpoints. Cook's approach has been described as "ludic" language play (Broner & Tarone, 2001). For Cook, users of language derive pleasure from language in many different ways. He describes language play as occurring at three levels: linguistic form, semantics, and use (or pragmatics). At the level of linguistic form, Cook describes features of language play as including the patterning of rhythms, as well as phonological and grammatical parallels. Semantic language play includes features such as indeterminate meaning, use of fiction, inversion of the relationship between language and reality, and the discussion of vital subject matter such as death and sex. The third level of language play, pragmatics, includes features which involve how language is employed. Pragmatic features of language play include the use of language for communal or intimate purposes. Another pragmatic feature of language play is to create solidarity or competition. At other times, such language play may have "no direct usefulness", but can be a source of "enjoyment and/or value" (Cook, 2000, p. 123).

A somewhat different view of language play has been popularized and applied to second language acquisition by James P. Lantolf (1997). Relying on a Vygotskian framework, Lantolf understands language play as "private speech" which is directed at one's self. He suggests that children often engage in audible private speech, while adults will likely engage in private speech through writing and note-taking. Through private speech, the learner enhances his or her language abilities in a low-pressure, individual setting, and can thus experiment with language which may not yet be ready for public use. This process aids learners in "appropriating and consolidating" linguistic input as well as elements of their own output (Lantolf, 1997, p. 5). Such private speech may involve repetition, imitation, or the manipulation of linguistic structures.

The ludic and Lantolfian approaches to language play are not equivalent, but they are similar in that they both involve the manipulation of linguistic structures. Both types of language play are addressed in this thesis, although more focus will be placed on Cook's ludic understanding of the phenomenon. This is the case because '*private* speech' is individualized and thus difficult to tie to language pedagogy, while ludic language play can more easily be implemented in the classroom, because it has an interactive dimension.

1.2 Benefits of Language Play

If language play is so universal among children and adult language users, it is worth considering whether the phenomenon is of benefit for L2 acquisition. A growing body of research suggests that language play holds potential benefits for learning a variety of elements of language, including phonemes and lexemes, grammar, and pragmatics. Furthermore, language play appears to be instrumental in the formation of individual and communal identities and has been observed to result in affective benefits. I review these topics in this chapter below.

Lexemes are among the most obvious objects of language play. Children play with words in their first language by substituting one word for another, making up names, playing with variants of words, and spontaneously constructing rhymes (Garvey, 1977). Adults also play with words in a variety of ways. Puns are a common source of play; for example, a "confrontation" between cats might be described as a "catfrontation," or a "cat-astrophe" (Crystal, 1998). Lexical language play sometimes overlaps with phonemic language play when words are substituted with or compared to other words which sound similar. Cade Bushnell (2008) gives an example of a beginning Japanese as a foreign language class playing with the word "*keego*" ("honorifics"). The similarity to the English word "keg" strikes the students as funny and, the conversation morphs into a series of statements in Japanese on kegs. Meanwhile, the instructor explains the

slight difference in pronunciation between the two words. In such an example, students are experimenting with Japanese and English phonetics while also enjoying the semantic difference between two similar sounding words. The literature suggests that playing with words entails a variety of benefits: lexical language play fosters lexical development by focusing the learner's attention on word structure, strengthening recall, and deepening semantic knowledge of words.

One potential benefit of language play is that it provides opportunities to raise phonemic and morphological awareness, and ultimately to increase understanding or mastery of word structure. A study by Asta Cekaite and Karin Aronsson (2005) observed children from ages seven to ten in the classroom who were recent immigrants to Sweden from a variety of countries and language backgrounds. The children mislabeled words, manipulated morphemes and phonemes, played with word substitutions and word order, and used rudimentary puns. These forms of lexical and phonemic word play were sources of humor for the children. The authors believe that one result of this language play is that the language learners could grow in their morphological and phonemic awareness (Cekaite & Aronsson, 2005). Other studies have also found that language play offers opportunities to practice or increase attention to phonemes, morphemes, and lexemes (Lucas, 2005; Broner & Tarone, 2001).

Another potential benefit of lexical language play is that it can help the learner acquire and retain new vocabulary. Nancy Bell (2011) recorded and observed an eight-week adult ESL course. Spontaneous language related episodes (LREs) were identified as well as playful language related episodes (PLREs). Every third class, students were given an individualized test over lexical items which had been the focus of a PLRE or LRE which they had initiated or in which they played an active role. When a group of students who joined the class late was removed from the test data, the results were statistically significant. Students recalled 52.9% of

PLREs compared to just 33.3% of LREs. Further analysis revealed that results were not significant in episodes relating to word form, but that they were significant when meaning was the focus. Participants correctly identified 41.7% of meaning PLREs as opposed to just 21.9% of meaning LREs. These results led Bell to suggest that playful attention may contribute more to retention of word *meaning* than word *form*.

Another intriguing study involving the relationship between language play and recall of words was carried out by Teresa Lucas (2005). In this study, participants in a university course read comic strips containing puns with a partner. The students discussed the puns with each other and sometimes also with an instructor. Before discussing the comics, the participants understood just 28.5% of the puns, whereas after discussion they understood 77.5%. Interestingly, in a follow-up interview one day later, students understood 91.25% of the puns. Lucas also recorded when an LRE occurred during discussion of a pun, and reports that LREs significantly increased the likelihood of understanding a given pun. When neither participant understood the pun at the outset, understanding was achieved only 20% of the time if no LRE occurred. In contrast, understanding was achieved 74% of the time in instances when an LRE did occur. Obviously, Lucas's study does not only concern lexical language play, since puns also have syntactic and pragmatic elements. Nevertheless, since puns often rely on word meaning, the results suggest that recall of vocabulary can be heightened through wordplay. Lucas concludes that the creative nature of puns and the way in which they force the reader to focus on aspects of language such as lexical, phonological, morphological, and syntactic elements, led to greater comprehension.

A further benefit of playing with words is that deeper understanding of the semantic properties of those words can be achieved. Sometimes a word is appropriate in one context but not in another, or a word may have multiple meanings, not all of which are known to a language

learner. This issue comes to the fore in another study by Nancy Bell (2005). Over a one to two-year period, the interactions of non-native English speakers with native English speakers were recorded and examples of humorous interaction noted. In some humorous interactions, nonnative speakers experimented with word meanings or learned alternate ways to express a given idea. Bell (2005) suggests that humorous situations can bring about learning for several reasons: the noticeability of a lexeme can increase with humor, the repetition which often occurs during language play may lead to more opportunities for processing, and interaction in humorous situations is often rich, meaning that the quality of attention paid to vocabulary increases.

Other studies have similarly determined that language play can result in deeper understanding of word meanings. Anne Pomerantz and Nancy Bell (2007) have shown how students engage in semantic word play. They conclude that apparently off-task behavior and code-switching may actually lead students to feel more freedom to experiment with the language. Agustina Tocalli-Beller and Merrill Swain (2007) observed an ESL course in which riddles and puns were used in instruction. One result of the instruction was that students were likely to learn a second meaning for words. In interviews with the students, some expressed the feeling that understanding the puns and riddles led them to a deeper understanding of words.

The Lantolfian approach also applies lexical language play. Private speech can involve stringing different words together, substituting words in an utterance, and playing with various meanings of words. Søren Eskildsen (2017) provides an example of an ESL student who repeated sentences using the verb “need to” as private speech. This student was learning that sometimes the verb ‘need’ requires that ‘to’ be used after it. It thus appears that he was learning how to use this word in various contexts. This would be an example of how private speech can help in mastering different forms or uses of a given lexeme.

In summary, the literature suggests that language play can benefit lexical development in several ways. First, language learners may play with phonemes, morphemes, or entire words, thereby increasing their attention to word structure. Second, there is evidence that playing with words or encountering words in a playful context makes the language learner more likely to recall those words. Hence, language play can be instrumental in acquiring or solidifying vocabulary. Finally, language play provides opportunities to gain deeper semantic understanding of words. In some cases, language learners may encounter new meanings for words they already know. In other cases, they may use or encounter a word in new contexts.

Another potential benefit of language play is its ability to help learners acquire or practice L2 grammar structures and syntax. Experimentation with grammar is a crucial aspect of L1 acquisition in children (Peck, 1980; Weir, 1962; Garvey, 1977). Adults also naturally play with grammar structures in the L1 and L2 (Cook, 2000). Discussion on language play involving grammar is often framed within the context of the interlanguage rule system. Specifically, it has been noted that language play can help learners improve their knowledge and usage of the L2 by destabilizing the interlanguage rule system (Broner & Tarone, 2001; Tarone, 2000; Bushnell, 2008) or helping learners recover equilibrium once the interlanguage has been destabilized (Lantolf, 1997). The interlanguage includes all aspects of the L2 and is thus not restricted to grammar. However, grammar is one important aspect of the interlanguage with which L2 users experiment when such destabilization takes place.

Lantolf (1997) suggests in reliance on Brian MacWhinney (1985) that language acquisition follows a dialectic process. When learners receive input, it serves as an antithesis to their current understanding of the language (thesis). Such input forces the learner to reconsider his or her thesis, resulting in a synthesis. Lantolf posits that language users often find it difficult

to attend to content and form simultaneously, resulting in disequilibrium. When this occurs, language play serves as a means to regain equilibrium. Adult L2 learners engage in a “comparison of the old system with the new evidence, as represented by what transpired during a conversation . . . The individual reflects on how well he or she coped with the problem and then tries to make necessary changes to avoid similar problems in the future” (Lantolf, 1997, p. 17). Language play—which Lantolf understands as speaking, writing, or thinking to one’s self in the L2—is therefore a process in which reflection, experimentation, and practice occur. Through these means the interlanguage develops and learners prepare themselves for future conversations.

Ludic language play can also contribute to development of the interlanguage grammar system. A study by Pomerantz and Bell (2007) observed an advanced Spanish conversation course at an American university. Instruction time generally consisted of students meeting in small groups to discuss controversial topics. Analysis of sanctioned conversation reveals that “‘successful’ completion of the activity requires a fairly limited and conventionalized communicative repertoire. Learners need not test the boundaries of their linguistic knowledge in order to do what is expected of them” (Pomerantz & Bell, 2007, p. 565). By way of contrast, “‘unsanctioned’ language play involving off-task talk and code-switching resulted in rich linguistic experimentation. In one example, students were supposed to determine the best form of government. One student subverted the topic by asking in English what the *worst* form of government in the world is. Responses included “fascism,” “Stalin,” and “military dictatorships.” The conversation then morphed into a humorous discussion of benefits to dictatorships. Most of the conversation occurred in Spanish, but the question which sparked the ludic conversation was in English. Thus, the conversation involved some code-switching and was also off-topic. However, Pomerantz and Bell detected a much larger amount of grammatical errors in this

conversation than were apparent in on-task conversations. For them, this was indicative of students experimenting with the language. They conclude that such grammatical experimentation was made possible by the ludic, unsanctioned nature of the conversation.

Despite some positive indications regarding the potential of grammatical language play to benefit second language acquisition, this is still an area in need of further research. Perhaps wordplay is simply more likely to elicit humor than the manipulation of grammatical forms, making play with words easier to study and document. Nevertheless, private speech provides a medium for L2 learners to play with grammar structures and syntax, much as children do when learning their L1. Ludic language play also holds potential for contributing to the development of grammar; the study by Pomerantz and Bell (2007) found that playful conversation resulted in more experimentation with grammar than conversation which simply fulfilled the class assignment (see also Bushnell, 2008). Hence, both private speech and ludic language play may provide a means for destabilization of the interlanguage rule system, thereby preventing fossilization and providing the impetus for further grammatical development.

A third area in which the relationship between language play and SLA has been investigated is pragmatics. Much of the language play literature on pragmatics centers around the ability of language users to play with identity or voices when using their L2. A second understanding of how language play relates to pragmatics involves the joint manipulation of interaction patterns in conversation (Huth, 2017). This understanding of language play shows that learners can play with large units of language so that the patterning of conversation itself becomes a game.

Numerous authors have suggested that language play may aid learners in mastering different voices or registers (Tarone, 2000; Broner & Tarone, 2001; Waring, 2013; Hann, 2017;

Cekaite & Aronsson, 2004). The idea is that language users can assume alternate roles when speaking and in doing so develop sociolinguistic competence. For example, a language user may imitate the role of a teacher or a parent, or the language user may use various registers depending on the situation. Pragmatics overlaps with semantics in such situations, and the use of different registers has been described as semantic language play since speakers are creating an imaginary world with language (Tarone, 2000; Broner & Tarone, 2001).

Studies have shown that L2 learners naturally engage in language play in which they practice diverse voices or registers. A study by Cekaite and Aronsson (2004) involving L2 learners of Swedish from ages 7-10 identified role appropriations as a main source of humor. Such role appropriations included children acting playfully towards the teacher or taking on a teacher role towards other students. Cekaite and Aronsson (2004) view the students' taking on of the teacher role as a way for them to subvert classroom hierarchies and argue that such behavior indicates knowledge of social norms. Similarly, Waring (2013) observed how ESL learners play with identities in the classroom. The subversive element present in the study by Cekaite and Aronsson (2004) was also evident in Waring's data. She concluded that pragmatic play works "to level, to some extent, the otherwise asymmetrical playing field" (Waring, 2013, p. 206).

A second pragmatic understanding of language play has been advanced by Huth (2017). Huth notes that conversation involves the taking of turns by conversation partners, and that these turns in interaction can become objects of language play. Since language is a patterned system in which social norms determine expectations regarding interaction patterns, speakers manipulate these patterns as they co-construct a conversation. Huth argues that "play" can be understood in two different ways: it may be broadly understood as "a basic condition of social interaction" or may appear more narrowly as a "marked activity" (Huth, 2017, p. 47). Huth's analysis reveals

that speakers may *consciously* take turns and manipulate patterns in conversation, and that they can be aware of what is expected in the L2 (Huth, 2017).

Pragmatic abilities are fundamental to overall communicative competence; L1 speakers regularly take on different social roles and switch registers easily. They also have an implicit knowledge of norms for interaction patterns. The research suggests that language play can serve as a resource for language learners to practice and develop these pragmatic abilities in their L2.

Besides fostering the development of vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatic abilities, language play may also result in significant affective benefits. It can motivate language learners (Broner & Tarone, 2001; Tarone, 2000; Waring, 2013; Lucas, 2005), contribute to community formation (Carter, 2004; Hann, 2017; Cekaite & Aronsson, 2004), lead to increased communicative confidence (Lantolf, 1997), and lower affective barriers (Bushnell, 2008; Pomerantz & Bell, 2011; Tarone, 2000).

The motivational potential of language play lies largely in the fact that it can be a source of enjoyment. Broner and Tarone (2001) observe that “One plays with language because it gives pleasure or some other kind of emotional excitement. . . ludic language play is affectively charged” (Broner & Tarone, 2001, p. 375). Broner and Tarone (2001) surmise that the affectively charged nature of language play may also contribute to noticing and therefore to memory of language (see also Tarone, 2000). Similarly, Hansun Zhang Waring (2013) suggests that language play may contribute to *intrinsic motivation*. Such motivation furthers learning since students enjoy the process itself rather than relying on extrinsic rewards. The aforementioned study by Lucas (2005) appears to support these suggestions. In Lucas’s study, participants discussed puns from comics with a partner. Lucas quotes one student as saying that “It’s better with cartoons, because you laugh, you learn, you get the point quicker. Have they tried to teach

with cartoons?” (Lucas, 2005, p. 235). It thus appears that the interesting and humorous nature of this task was a factor in motivating students as they discussed the cartoons.

Besides potentially contributing to the (intrinsic) motivation of learners, language play can help to create a sense of community among a group of language students. David Hann (2017) found that language play built rapport among his adult L2 students and contributed to their sense of communal identity. Their language limitations led to the use of the term “OK” as well as similar utterances such as “yeah” and “mmm-hmm” in role-play situations where such terms were not appropriate (e.g. where condolences should have been expressed for a business partner being ill). Such terse responses were recycled intentionally by the students in various role plays and conversations to a humorous effect. Hann observes that their use of the term “OK” demonstrates “how allusions to shared experience can be ritualized with their repetition. As such, they begin to symbolize a common history and sense of community” (Hann, 2017, p. 239). For these particular students, the humor that resulted from their potentially embarrassing L2 limitations became positive, communal experiences.

Several scholars also note that language play has the potential of lowering the affective barriers of L2 learners (Bushnell, 2008; Pomerantz & Bell, 2011; Tarone, 2000). Pomerantz and Bell (2011) have described humor as creating a “safe house” for foreign language learners. Through humor, students “can experiment with particular classroom identities, critique institutional/instructional norms, and engage in more complex and creative acts of language use” (p. 149). Pomerantz and Bell (2011) provide examples from a university Spanish course demonstrating that students feel comfortable saying things in a humorous context (such as offering criticisms) which they might not voice in more serious conversations. Role plays seem

ideal for producing a creative atmosphere in which students experiment with language (see Pomerantz & Bell, 2007; Hann, 2017).

Most of the affective benefits of language play have to do with the humor which it elicits. However, language play as private speech may also contain affective benefits by increasing the confidence of language learners and reducing their anxiety. Lantolf (1997) notes how students rehearse and practice privately after a conversation to prepare themselves for future conversations. Lantolf argues that it can be difficult to pay attention to meaning and form simultaneously in real-time conversation, and private rehearsal helps in preventing future communication breakdowns. Practice through private speech may contribute to the learner's confidence when future conversations arise. This conclusion is supported by Lantolf's finding that of students who engaged in private speech often or very often, 49% reported feeling "less shy" about using Spanish when they play with the language. The same was true for just 19% of students who never or rarely engaged in private speech. Private rehearsal may therefore join ludic language play in providing affective benefits to L2 learners.

In summary, the literature on language play suggests that it can provide extensive benefits to L2 learners at a variety of levels. Language play may contribute to a number of linguistic skills, including phonemic, lexical, grammatical, and syntactic abilities. L2 learners may also develop pragmatic skills through language play, and significant affective benefits seem to accompany this phenomenon. These benefits suggest that language play has great potential for application in the classroom. It will be the task of this thesis to consider how language tasks can be designed around this phenomenon, and to design and implement these units in the beginning German classroom.

1.3 Vocabulary Acquisition

We know that vocabulary **is** important. One of the myths that I heard over and over in my many years of teaching is that vocabulary is not a big deal . . . Students were told to read "gist," to listen for the overall idea, and not to worry about "the details" too much. The problem was that the students themselves recognized that they could not really understand a large number of the words in the reading or listening passage, and, hence, the meaning of the actual passage (Folse, 2004, p. v).

The introduction of new vocabulary is a daunting aspect of foreign language learning and teaching. On the one hand, rote memorization of vocabulary can be both difficult and boring for students. On the other hand, some explicit attention to vocabulary is often necessary so as to scaffold the difficulty of tasks. Language learning resources tend to focus more on syntax or general communication without explicit attention to vocabulary (Folse, 2004). Even communicative approaches have been criticized for often neglecting explicit instruction of vocabulary (Zimmerman, 1997). The result can be frustration for students and teachers, since language learners may be overwhelmed by the amount of unknown vocabulary in a given task. I have encountered this frustration many times in my own experience teaching German.

The difficulties involved with introducing vocabulary led me to question: what if language play can serve as an enjoyable, memorable means to introduce new vocabulary and focus on it explicitly? At the same time, such tasks could be designed to involve communicative components so as to be more interesting and memorable than rote memorization. It is my opinion that there is a need for such resources in the classroom, particularly at the beginning level. I therefore began to explore resources which address vocabulary acquisition.

Here, I review the literature on vocabulary acquisition to determine whether language play may be helpful in learning or solidifying new words. The literature on language play suggests that language learners naturally play with language, and that a number of benefits can result from this play. But do these findings correspond to what we know about acquiring

vocabulary? If language play is to be used in the classroom to foster the learning of words, it will be necessary to demonstrate that what is known about language play intersects with the field of vocabulary acquisition.

1.3.1 Vocabulary Acquisition: What Do We Know?

Providing a description of the current state of literature on vocabulary acquisition seems a difficult, if not impossible task. Countless pedagogical and theoretical approaches to vocabulary acquisition exist. Space will not permit a thorough investigation of all of these approaches. Instead, I describe here trends which have emerged in the literature on this topic, with a focus on several large-scale analyses of research on vocabulary acquisition.

Steven A. Stahl and Marilyn M. Fairbanks (1987) conducted a meta-analysis of studies on vocabulary instruction and comprehension. The studies dealt with students from elementary school through college. Stahl and Fairbanks (1987) conclude that several instructional methods are particularly effective in leading to comprehension of words and retention of word meanings. First, vocabulary instruction is most successful when both definition and context are addressed. Language learners can benefit from having a word defined, but their understanding of a word is deepened by seeing how it is used in actual speech or writing. This “balanced” or “mixed” approach proved more successful than merely presenting a word’s definition without allowing students the opportunity to encounter that word in context. Similarly, only seeing a word context is not as helpful as when a definition for the word is also provided. Second, depth of processing resulted in greater retention and comprehension of vocabulary. This was the case whether that processing was associative or generative in nature. By generative processing, Stahl and Fairbanks refer to the production of the word by such means as defining it in one’s own words or using it in a novel sentence. Associative processing is more passive and involves associating a

word with a single context or a definition. Third, more than two exposures to a word resulted in greater learning of vocabulary. However, drill-and-practice methods involving the repetition of merely associative information did not consistently increase vocabulary comprehension. It is most beneficial to encounter a word in various contexts. Finally, Stahl and Fairbanks found that the keyword method is useful in vocabulary acquisition. This is a method in which learners think of a word in their own language which sounds similar to a target word, and then use that L1 word to create an image which is related to the target word.

A more recent large-scale analysis of research on vocabulary instruction was carried out by the National Reading Panel (NRP) in 2000. The panel had been commissioned by Congress in 1997 “to assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read” (NRP, 2000, p. 1-1). The Panel researched a variety of topics related to reading, including vocabulary instruction. Forty-seven studies from 1979 to the time of publication met the NRP’s scientific criteria and were therefore used in its analysis. It should be noted that the research on vocabulary instruction included students through 11th grade, and was thus not focused only on young children. However, the panel’s conclusions were generalized, and it is possible that some conclusions might be more applicable to learners of certain ages. Within the context of reading instruction, the Panel (2000, p. 4-4) highlights eight specific implications of its research on vocabulary instruction:

1. There is a need for direct instruction of vocabulary items required for a specific text.
2. Repetition and multiple exposures to vocabulary items are important. Students should be given items that will be likely to appear in many contexts.
3. Learning in rich contexts is valuable for vocabulary learning. Vocabulary words should be those that the learner will find useful in many contexts. . . .
4. Vocabulary tasks should be restructured as necessary

5. Vocabulary learning is effective when it entails active engagement in learning tasks.
6. Computer technology can be used effectively to help teach vocabulary.
7. Vocabulary can be acquired through incidental learning. . . Repetition, richness of context, and motivation may also add to the efficacy of incidental learning of vocabulary.
8. Dependence on a single vocabulary instruction method will not result in optimal learning. A variety of methods was used effectively with emphasis on multimedia aspects of learning, richness of context in which words are to be learned, and the number of exposures to words that learners receive.

Notably, several of the points highlighted by the National Reading Panel paralleled the findings of Stahl and Fairbanks (1987). Context is helpful for learning words, as are repetition and multiple exposures to words. The Panel does not address “depth of processing” as explicitly as Stahl and Fairbanks, but it does argue that “active engagement in learning tasks” is helpful. Other important points are that direct instruction of vocabulary is beneficial, that computers can be used effectively in instructing vocabulary, and that vocabulary acquisition should ideally occur through a variety of methods.

I.S.P. Nation (2013) also reviewed the literature on vocabulary acquisition. Nation concludes that three cognitive processes—*noticing*, *retrieval*, and *creative usage*—make language learners most likely to retain vocabulary. *Noticing*, can be defined as “giving attention to an item” or being “aware of it as a useful language item . . . ” (Nation, 2013, p. 103). *Noticing* is aided by motivation, since learners are most likely to notice words when they find a task interesting (see also Tarone, 2000; Broner & Tarone, 2001). The second cognitive process which enhances the ability to remember vocabulary is *retrieval* (Nation, 2013). Language learners are most likely to remember words which they must retrieve multiple times in a given task. *Retrieval* may be receptive, such as in a listening or reading task, or it may be productive, such as when the learner is speaking or writing. Both forms of retrieval will strengthen the learner's memory of

that word. Finally, *creative use* or creative processing contributes to the retention of vocabulary. This use may be receptive or productive so long as language learners are encountering/using a word in a different context. For example, learners may encounter a word in various contexts in a story, which would constitute creative processing of that word. An example of productive creative use would be students retelling input from a different vantage point. Related to creative use is the pairing of visuals with words, since visuals may enrich the processing of a word (Nation, 2013).

These findings are similar to those of Stahl and Fairbanks (1987) and the National Reading Panel (2000), but provide a view exclusively from the perspective of the learner's cognitive processes rather than the teacher's instructional methods. Nation's emphasis on creative use or processing echoes the findings of other research that context is a helpful aid in learning new words (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1987; National Reading Panel, 2000). With 'retrieval' Nation echoes the finding that students need multiple exposures to new words (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1987; National Reading Panel, 2000). Finally, Nation's assertion that motivation aids in noticing (Nation, 2013), corresponds to the National Reading Panel's (2000) observation that "active engagement in learning tasks" helps with vocabulary acquisition.

In sum, a variety of techniques for vocabulary instruction can and should be used by instructors (Kamil & Hiebert, 2005; National Reading Panel, 2000; Folse, 2004). However, some principles may be more beneficial than others and have found widespread support in studies on vocabulary acquisition. First, creative use of vocabulary—which involves deeper processing of words—makes learners more likely to remember new lexemes. Related to this point is the fact that encountering or employing vocabulary in rich and diverse contexts fosters its acquisition. The pairing of a word with an image may also result in deeper processing. Second, repetition is

an important aid to vocabulary acquisition, so that students retrieve lexemes multiple times. Finally, there is an affective element of vocabulary acquisition. Not surprisingly, students appear to learn best when they are actively engaged in tasks. Moreover, motivation can foster noticing, which has been shown to be beneficial for vocabulary acquisition.

1.3.2 Intersections Between Language Play and Vocabulary Acquisition

Ludic language play appears well-suited to bring about several processes which are known to help in the acquisition of vocabulary. The literature on language play indicates that it often leads to creative language use, noticing, and in some cases repetition and retrieval of new vocabulary. To an extent, these benefits of language play are all furthered by the affective atmosphere it creates.

Cook (2000) suggests that creativity is one component of language play, describing “reference to an alternative reality” as a feature of semantic language play (Cook, 2000, p. 123). Studies have borne out this claim, documenting how children and adults use their imagination to create fictional worlds when they engage in language play (Garvey, 1977; Bushnell, 2008; Broner & Tarone, 2001; Bell, 2012a). In some cases, they merely play “in” the language – creating a fictional world which is not dependent on manipulation of language – while at other times they are creative “with” the language itself (Bell, 2012a). Crafting a fictional world may in many cases spur generative use of vocabulary which arises in the new situations which are created. In role plays, for example, participants create an alternate reality in the language while also experimenting with the language itself (Pomerantz & Bell, 2007; Hann, 2017).

This creativity is spurred by the affective atmosphere created by language play. Learners may feel a sense of freedom to experiment with language which is not present in non-playful language tasks. For example, Pomerantz and Bell (2007) present a role play in which a student

insults one of her conversation partners. They conclude that she felt comfortable taking such a risk because one can always back away from statements made in a role play, should one's partner take offense. The study by Hann (2017) provides further examples of humorous exchanges in role plays which would not be appropriate under normal circumstances. In this case, humor was a way for the participants not only to experiment with language, but also to save themselves from the embarrassment of having limited ability to express themselves in the target language (TL). From these examples, it appears that role plays offer an affective atmosphere in which students feel comfortable experimenting with language in ways which they would not attempt under non-humorous circumstances. Thus, language play becomes a means for generative language use which otherwise might not occur.

Ludic language play can also lead to noticing as language users pay increased attention to language structures such as morphemes, phonemes, and lexemes. This is the case because these linguistic structures become sources of humor or play (Cekaite & Aronsson, 2005; Lucas, 2005; Broner & Tarone, 2001). When LLs are playing with or laughing about a certain aspect of language, their attention is directed towards it. Furthermore, the affectively charged atmosphere created by language play may lead to increased noticing. Language learners are simply more likely to notice structures which they find interesting (Nation, 2013; Tarone, 2000; Broner & Tarone, 2001). A student who has 'zoned out' of a task is unlikely to notice much of anything, while a student who is engaged and motivated may notice even more mundane aspects of the language or pick up incidental vocabulary (see NRP, 2000).

Finally, ludic language play may foster the repetition and retrieval of vocabulary items. David Hann's (2017) study demonstrates how the lexeme "OK" became a continual source of humor in his adult ESL class as students used the word in situations where its use was not

entirely polite or appropriate. In doing so they acquired a greater understanding of the potential semantic uses of this word. This means that they did not just learn the word “OK” but they learned a variety of ways in which the word can be employed (both appropriately and inappropriately). This is also an example of the affective benefits of language play; Hann determined that his students were able to take potentially embarrassing language limitations and turn them into a source of humor and learning.

It stands to reason that students are likely to repeat things which they find funny. In doing so, they are retrieving lexemes multiple times and thus more likely to acquire them (see Bell, 2005). Lucas’s study (2005), in which learners discussed comics with each other, found that understanding of the puns actually *increased* one day after the discussions took place. It is not clear why this was the case, but it is possible that students were repeating the phrases to themselves or to others and considering their meanings. This would not be surprising; a funny joke is more memorable than a dull one, and people often repeat funny jokes to each other. Teachers can of course bring about repetition through more mundane means, but it may be that language play would stimulate repetition in a more natural and enjoyable way.

In summary, the literature on ludic language play suggests that it can foster language acquisition in regards to vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatics. From the perspective of SLA, there are good reasons to consider employing language play to instruct vocabulary. Ludic language play encompasses several processes which have been shown to be beneficial for vocabulary acquisition, including noticing, creative language use, and repetition. To my knowledge, no study to date systematically explores how the literature on language play intersects with cognitive processes involved in vocabulary acquisition and uses these insights to construct a framework for material design. The question, then, is how to design instructional

materials for teaching vocabulary which incorporate both sound principles of vocabulary acquisition and the literature on language play. In the next chapter, I will outline such a process and present language play lessons which focus on solidifying or introducing vocabulary.

CHAPTER TWO DEVELOPING LANGUAGE PLAY MATERIALS FOR USE IN THE CLASSROOM

The previous chapter demonstrated that when learners engage in ludic language play, they are also likely to engage in processes which are known to enhance vocabulary acquisition. Creative language use, noticing, and repetition make students more likely to remember vocabulary. The literature on language play suggests that it is particularly well-suited to bring about these processes, perhaps because of its affective benefits. This chapter considers how noticing, creative language use, and repetition drive lesson and materials design.

The question of how language play can be incorporated in the design of instructional materials has been only peripherally addressed in the literature. No doubt, many language instructors intuitively recognize the value of incorporating playful activities in the classroom. Also, there are isolated instances where ludic language play was part of deliberate task planning. Lucas (2005) presents a lesson in which students discussed cartoons, and Tocalli-Beller & Swain (2007) analyze an eight-week ESL course based on puns and riddles. However, these studies do little to advance a generalizable understanding of how lessons might be designed around the concept of ludic language play. They do demonstrate that discussion of puns, cartoons, or riddles can elicit language play and result in language learning, but their primary focus is not the design of instructional materials. Moreover, these studies were both geared towards advanced learners. I am not aware of any study in which a unit for beginning second language learners was intentionally designed around the concept of ludic language play. Furthermore, to my knowledge no one has previously advanced a systematic theory behind how one might construct such a lesson.

The need for potential teaching resources incorporating language play is underscored by the fact that studies on the topic largely consider *spontaneous* language play (e.g. Bell, 2012a; Bell, 2005; Bell, 2012b; Broner & Tarone, 2001; Bushnell, 2008; Cekaite & Aronsson, 2005; Hann, 2017; Pomerantz & Bell, 2007; Waring, 2013). Such spontaneous language play entails the benefits outlined above, and it may occur in off-task talk and thus contribute to learning (Pomerantz & Bell, 2007). However, off-task talk emerges unplanned in the classroom, including off-task talk that features ludic language play. If such ludic language play could be incorporated in the design of a lesson, language instructors could direct the learning process in an intentional way without potentially losing control of the classroom. Ideally, instructors would have materials at their disposal which enable students to be on-task and engage in ludic language play at the same time. This leads to a two-part question: 1) can materials informed by the literature on language play and vocabulary acquisition be designed to elicit language play? 2) Can such materials be designed for the beginning level?

2.1 Making the Unit Playful

If a lesson is to be based on the concept of language play, it must be designed to elicit play. But can a lesson for beginning language learners be designed successfully around this phenomenon? If so, what characteristics should be present in such a lesson? The literature on language play can help in answering these questions. Any task *can* serve as a springboard for ludic language play, but it appears that certain conditions make ludic language play more likely to emerge.

First, the task should leave the students with some freedom and provide opportunities for creativity. Cook (2000) sees reference to fictional worlds as an aspect of semantic language play. The research has borne out this point: creative tasks such as role plays—which involve fictional

scenarios— tend to result in experimentation with language and ludic language play. Pomerantz and Bell (2007) have shown that in role plays language learners are willing to take risks—such as playfully insulting a language partner—which they might avoid in other circumstances. Role plays offer the opportunity for creative language to emerge as students have flexibility in the directing the conversation. Moreover, funny themes and phrases which spontaneously emerge in role plays are likely to be used in the future, but in somewhat different, and therefore creative ways (Hann, 2017). Open-ended tasks are more likely to result in language play than ones which are closed and give students little freedom to be creative.

Second, tasks are most likely to elicit ludic language play when they involve interaction. Most ludic language play relies on conversation between language learners and will not emerge in individual activities. The available literature indicates that almost all studies investigating ludic language play involve interaction amongst learners or between learners and instructors (see Bell, 2012a; Bell, 2005; Bell, 2012b; Broner & Tarone, 2001; Bushnell, 2008; Cekaite & Aronsson, 2005; Hann, 2017; Pomerantz & Bell, 2007; Waring, 2013; Huth, 2017). Language learners collaboratively construct jokes (Cekaite & Aronsson, 2005; Hann, 2017), and humor sometimes results naturally from mistakes made in conversation (Bell, 2005). Thus, when designing materials that are meant to elicit language play, a certain degree of spontaneity needs to be allowed for so that playfulness can emerge in interaction. Therefore, while the understanding of language play as primarily private speech makes the phenomenon a largely individual task, any in-class lesson which seeks to incorporate ludic language play should involve a significant degree of interaction between students.

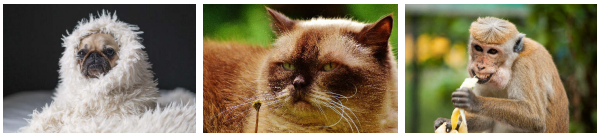

Finally, the material itself can be designed in such a way as to have potential for humor. Ludic language play can occur in even the most mundane or serious of tasks, but it sometimes

involves off-task behavior in such situations (Pomerantz & Bell, 2007). Material which is humorous in nature or has potential to result in humor is more likely to elicit on-task language play (Lucas, 2005; Tocalli-Beller & Swain, 2007). This means that the content itself needs to be funny or playful, or naturally lend itself to such uses by students.

Two lessons were designed for this thesis: the first recycled already known vocabulary, while the second introduced new words. Both were designed for students who were close to completing one semester of college German (see Appendices 1 through 4 for complete lesson plans and their accompanying worksheets). In the first lesson, it was expected that students would be able to play with words which they already knew in the L2. The review lesson would thus serve primarily as a way to solidify vocabulary and to expand semantic understanding and use of words by encountering them in new contexts. The second lesson was more ambitious in that it expected students to almost immediately play with new words. In this way, they would hopefully acquire the lexemes through language play (see Table 1 below for a summary of each segment of the lessons).

The **first lesson** was titled “*Wer bin ich? Wer bist du? Wer ist das?:* Using language play to discuss interests, food preferences, and family in German.” These topics had already been covered in the class by the time the lesson was carried out. The lesson began with a warm-up in which students discussed in pairs their interests, hobbies, food and drink likes and dislikes, and families. They then worked in groups of 3-4 students to answer the same questions for a fictional character. Three fictional characters were assigned: Sebastian (a dog), Allegra (a cat), and Bandit (a monkey). Pictures of each character were provided on a worksheet which students received. Students presented the descriptions of their character to the class. This segment of the lesson was used to create personalities for the characters.

Table 1: Summary of Language Play Lessons

<p><i>Lesson 1: “Wer Bin Ich?”</i></p> <p><i>(Practice Vocabulary)</i></p>	<p><i>Lesson 2: “Zeit mit Freunden”</i></p> <p><i>(Introduce New Vocabulary)</i></p>
<p>Phase 1: Warm-up</p> <p>Goal: Review pertinent vocabulary</p>	<p>Phase 1a: Warm-up</p> <p>Goal: Review pertinent vocabulary</p> <hr/> <p>Phase 1b: New Vocabulary</p> <p>Goal: Introduce new vocabulary</p>
<p>Phase 2: Guided Practice- Creating a Character</p> <p>Goal: Students work in groups and use vocabulary creatively to describe one of the following fictitious characters:</p> 	<p>Phase 2: Guided Practice- Creating a Character</p> <p>Goal: Students work in groups and use vocabulary creatively to describe one of the following fictitious characters:</p> 
<p>Phase 3: Guided Practice- Creating a Meme</p> <p>Goal: Students work in groups to employ vocabulary to create a humorous meme.</p>	<p>Phase 3: Guided Practice- Creating a Meme</p> <p>Goal: Students work in groups to employ vocabulary to create a humorous meme.</p>
<p>Phase 4: Coauthoring a Short Story</p> <p>Goal: Students work in groups to write a short story about a day in the life of each animal. The groups then work together by writing one to two sentences of the story before passing it on to the next group.</p>	<p>Phase 4: Coauthoring a Short Story</p> <p>Goal: Students work in groups to write a short story about a day in the life of each character (human and other). The groups then work together by writing one to two sentences of the story before passing it on to the next group.</p>
<p>Conclusion: “Which animal would you like as a pet?”</p> <p>Goal: Individually, students take a personal stance to the topic in order to review pertinent vocabulary.</p>	<p>Conclusion: “Whom would you like to have as a friend?”</p> <p>Goal: Individually, students take a personal stance to the topic in order to review pertinent vocabulary.</p>

In the next phase of the lesson, the groups wrote a meme for each of the three characters. A meme is a statement, sometimes divided into two lines, which is placed over an image. Often memes are humorous in nature, although they can also be used to make very serious statements about politics, current events, and so on. They are commonly posted on social media sites such as Facebook and are thus a relatively new, yet familiar means of communication for many young people. Previous to writing the memes, the instructor showed the students some examples of memes in German. The directions for the assignment stated that “The memes can: 1) criticize or promote a food 2) criticize or promote a hobby/activity 3) express annoyance or excitement about something to do with hobbies/food/family” The topics involved vocabulary from chapters two through five from *Netzwerk: Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (Dengler, Rusch, Schmitz, & Sieber, 2013), which was the textbook used in the course (A1 level). Therefore, the words and topics were familiar to the students. Moreover, the students would have ideas about the personalities of the characters from the previous stage of the lesson, and would have already reviewed pertinent vocabulary. Some prompts were provided by the instructor to assist in the meme-writing process. After writing the memes, the instructor used a meme generator to place the words over the images, and each group presented its memes to the class.

In the next phase of the lesson, students coauthored stories about their characters. Each group was instructed to write two sentences in the present tense before passing the story to the next group. This process continued until the group which started the story received it again and wrote a concluding sentence. The theme for the stories was “A day in the life of Allegra/Sebastian/Bandit.” The students were instructed to use vocabulary from the lesson. The lesson was thus designed to advance in difficulty and in its communicative scope, so that students began with review of vocabulary, followed by brief descriptions of characters. For the

memes, they strung the vocabulary words together and used them in different contexts. The story-writing phase of the lesson was more advanced in that they were required to combine sentences into a comprehensive whole. Once the stories were completed, each group presented the story for its character to the class.

The final component of the lesson was for students to individually answer the question: “Which animal would you like as a pet?” and to justify that answer with at least two reasons (in German). This question was designed give them a chance to compare their own hobbies and interests to those of the characters and take a personal stance on the topic.

Lesson two, titled “*Zeit mit Freunden*” (“time with friends”) was conceptually almost identical in structure to lesson one, but entailed the introduction of new vocabulary related to hobbies, friendship, and personality/relationships. Its theme was designed to correspond to chapter six of the course’s textbook, *Netzwerk* (Dengler, Rusch, Schmitz, & Sieber, 2013). The lesson involved the introduction of additional vocabulary relating to hobbies and friendship along with terms from the book. The lesson therefore included a vocabulary introduction phase which was not present in lesson one. In this phase, I introduced new vocabulary using a PowerPoint presentation. Each new word was placed next to multiple images which illustrated that word. Another difference between the lessons was the final segment. In lesson one, students were to select one animal which they would want as a pet and justify that decision, whereas in lesson two students selected the character which they would want as a friend.

The character-creation phase, meme-writing phase, and story-writing phase were identical in structure to lesson one. However, the characters in lesson one were replaced so that they would fit with the topic. Also, it was thought that using the same characters in back-to-back lessons might result in boredom and therefore detract from the playfulness of the lesson. The

characters used in lesson two were “Leonard,” who sports long hair, a long beard, and a flannel shirt, “Otto,” a very strong and apparently passionate weightlifter, and “Buddy,” a dog.

2.2 Evaluating Lesson Design

The question which guided the design of these lessons was whether they would likely elicit language play. That is, to which extent do they display a) humor, b) freedom for creativity and playfulness, c) interaction d) repetition, e) affordances for noticing, and f) affective benefits?

An attempt was made to create material which lent itself to humor and playful speech by selecting potentially comical pictures of animals or people for the lessons. The exaggeration of traits in the images as well as the personification of animals were intended to make them humorous. Sebastian the dog is wrapped in a blanket and has an ambiguous expression which might be interpreted as haughtiness, boredom, or contentment. Allegra the cat looks distinctly unhappy or perhaps annoyed. Bandit the monkey brandishes a huge smile while eating a banana. In the second lesson, Leonard appears somewhat bohemian, with long hair and beard, a flannel shirt, and sunglasses. Otto is a bodybuilder with gargantuan muscles, and is in the process of a very strenuous weightlifting session. Buddy the dog is shown jumping in the air to no apparent purpose.

The tasks were designed to allow students the freedom to be creative so as to foster a playful atmosphere. Students had a great deal of freedom in terms of how to define their characters and in writing the memes. They could create fictional worlds (Cook, 2000) for their characters and even weave the lives of their characters together. They could determine in which direction(s) to take the short stories. They also had the freedom to make a personal choice in the last phase of the lesson by choosing one character as a pet in lesson 1, or a friend in lesson 2.

Although the fictional nature of the lessons and characters may appear silly, this aspect was designed to spur creativity and lead to language play.

Interaction was also central to these lessons. Although the lessons did not systematically plan conversation, students had to interact with each other in the lessons. They discussed how to design their characters, worked together on memes, and co-constructed short stories. In the story-writing phase, interaction took place not only between individuals, but also between groups. Each group had to react to what the previous group had written, and this situation led to some fun turns in the stories. Because the stories were co-authored by the groups, a degree of spontaneity which is beneficial for language play was inherent in the task.

Do the lessons involve creative language use, repetition, or noticing? What kind of affective benefits might they have? These are processes which should result from language play and which also foster vocabulary acquisition. First, as already noted, the lessons were made to allow and encourage a great deal of creativity on the part of the students. This creativity was not only semantic in the sense of creating fictional worlds, but also involved the creative use of vocabulary in various contexts. The character creation phase, meme writing phase, and story-writing phase all provided opportunities for the same vocabulary items to be produced in different contexts. Moreover, groups presented their work to each other at several points in the lesson, meaning that those listening would have to creatively process vocabulary presented by another group. By the end of the lesson, students would likely encounter or produce most of the vocabulary words in several contexts.

At the same time, this creativity was constrained, first, by the theme of the lessons and second, by the target vocabulary words which were previously learned in class or introduced during the lesson. In teaching vocabulary, it would not be as helpful to have students simply

write and say anything they want. Rather, the instructor must make sure that students employ target vocabulary which is meant to be acquired or solidified. Particularly since these students were beginning learners of German, their ability to express themselves was quite limited, and there was a need to create fairly strict guidelines within which they could be creative. Therefore, in lesson one, students created their characters by focusing on food preferences, interests, and family. In lesson two, a variety of vocabulary relating to hobbies and friends was introduced. As will become evident below, these strict guidelines did not prevent students from being creative, but rather simply gave direction to their creativity.

Noticing was promoted in these lessons largely through their humorous nature. The assumption was that students are more likely to notice words when they appear in a humorous context (Cekaite & Aronsson, 2005; Lucas, 2005; Broner & Tarone, 2001). This means that if the lessons are successfully designed as ‘language play’ materials, noticing is also likely to occur. Additionally, I introduced new vocabulary in the second lesson in a PowerPoint presentation which was accompanied by pictures. The visual presentation was meant to promote noticing by placing the new vocabulary items in a more interesting and striking context than would have been the case in a simple vocabulary list. Moreover, this gave me the chance to draw attention to individual words and define them, which have been noted as ways to elicit noticing (Nation, 2013). Finally, groups presented their work to the class after the character creation phase, the meme writing phase, and the story-writing phase. These presentations created opportunities for me to emphasize various points or for noticing to occur spontaneously through what students found humorous.

Repetition was encouraged through the fact that each stage of the lesson recycled the same vocabulary, albeit in an increasingly complex and communicative manner. The lesson was

designed so that students would not ‘drill’ vocabulary through rote memorization, but rather would repeat it in enjoyable, creative, and to some extent communicative contexts throughout the lesson. First, students reviewed vocabulary (lesson one) or were introduced to new vocabulary (lesson two). Second, they used target vocabulary to pick their character’s attributes. Third, some of this vocabulary was repeated in the meme-writing phase. Vocabulary was then recycled a fourth time in the story-writing phase, once again new contexts. Finally, the conclusion of the lessons involved using the vocabulary again by taking a personal stance to the topic and justifying that stance. One difficulty is that not every target vocabulary word would necessarily be used by students in each phase of the lesson. Since students had a great deal of freedom, it is possible that some words would not even be used at all. This is a trade-off when creativity and freedom are encouraged. However, since several groups were working simultaneously and the vocabulary known to students was quite small, it was deemed likely that most target words would be used multiple times in the lesson.

Finally, do these lessons create an affective atmosphere which promotes noticing, increases students’ interest, or lowers affective barriers? This question, like that of noticing, is largely dependent on the ability of the lesson to create a playful atmosphere. When students play with language, they feel more freedom to experiment with it (Pomerantz & Bell, 2007), are more likely to engage in noticing (Cekaite & Aronsson, 2005; Lucas, 2005; Broner & Tarone, 2001), and may experience increased interest and motivation (Lucas, 2005). The affective benefits of the lesson are therefore primarily to be seen in the fact that it was designed to elicit ludic language play. Additionally, the use of technology was included partly to increase student interest. The National Reading Panel (2000) suggests that computer technology can be used successfully to foster vocabulary acquisition, and it seems reasonable that a task such as creating

memes might generate more interest than stereotypically ‘academic’ tasks. Memes are a common way for young people to communicate, create humor, and engage in social commentary. They may therefore serve as a means to foster vocabulary acquisition in a way which is interesting, relevant, and different from tasks which students are used to performing in the classroom.

In sum, the goal of this chapter was to explain the design of the materials created for this thesis. I illustrated how these lessons involve several principles which are likely to bring about language play, including creativity, interaction, and materials which lend themselves to humor. The lessons were designed to foster vocabulary acquisition through eliciting creative vocabulary processing and production, noticing, and repetition. It was suggested that the affective benefits of these lessons would largely be dependent on their success in bringing about ludic language play from the students. Also, the meme creation phase was thought to be a compelling and relevant way for college students to practice vocabulary, and therefore to be motivating in nature. The next chapter describes the classroom proceedings for both units and discusses to which extent the materials were effective in eliciting language play.

CHAPTER THREE

IMPLEMENTING TWO LANGUAGE PLAY LESSONS IN THE BEGINNING GERMAN CLASSROOM

The previous chapter outlined two language play lessons created for the purposes of this thesis. The first lesson was designed to help students preface, solidify, produce, and broaden the usage of vocabulary which they had already learned. The second lesson focused on introducing new vocabulary. I carried out these lessons in my beginning German class at the University of Tennessee in the Summer of 2017. This chapter describes and evaluates the implementation of these lessons in the classroom from the perspective of the instructor. The most important factor in determining the success of these lessons is whether they elicited ludic language play from students. I argue here that both lessons were successful in eliciting language play.

To demonstrate that language play took place, it is first necessary to consider signs of ludic language play which appear in the literature. First, physical signs such as laughter and smiles often accompany ludic language play (Broner & Tarone, 2001; Pomerantz & Bell, 2007). Second, the recycling of material can be an indication that students are playing with the language. Running jokes are often co-constructed over a period of time by students as they make use of recurring themes and experiment with words in new contexts (Hann, 2017). Third, code-switching has been observed to take place when students play with language (Cekaite & Aronsson, 2005; Bushnell, 2008). Too much code-switching can be negative if it keeps students from practicing the target language. However, some code-switching can lead to a playful atmosphere and stimulate experimentation in the L2 (Pomerantz & Bell, 2007). Fourth, language learners may play with the language by constructing puns (Crystal, 1998; Cekaite & Aronsson, 2005). Fifth, the discussion of taboo topics has been identified as a sign of language play (Cook,

2000). Finally, the creation of fictional worlds indicates that ludic language play is taking place (Cook, 2000).

If these signs of language play are evident, students are also engaging in processes which will facilitate vocabulary acquisition. Laughter and smiles indicate that attention is directed to something funny, and noticing is therefore likely to take place. Recycling of material involves the repetition of words, which is an important factor in acquiring vocabulary. Similarly, if words are recycled in new contexts, language learners are engaging in creative language use. I argue here that these processes occurred in both of these lessons. In the description below, I rely on my own observation of the lessons when describing physical signs of language play. For other evidence of language play, I rely on the responses which students wrote on their worksheets and handed in (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 4).

3.1 Lesson One

3.1.1 Warm-Up Phase

This stage of the lesson revolved around the question “*Wer bist du?*” (“Who are you?”). In the warm-up phase, students wrote approximately three to six sentences about their hobbies, food and drink likes and dislikes, and family. They then discussed their answers with a partner. The primary goal of the warm-up phase was to activate previously learned L2 knowledge so that students would have vocabulary in mind which they could use throughout the lesson. Also, having a few minutes to acclimate to using the L2 and practice speaking about the topic of the lesson could lower anxiety by the time the more creative phases of the lesson began. This was the only phase of the lesson which was not explicitly designed to elicit play, since its primary task was to prime students for the rest of the lesson by reviewing pertinent vocabulary. Students appeared to be actively engaged in the task as they answered the basic questions about their own

hobbies and food likes or dislikes. Answers regarding hobbies included basic statements such as “*Ich lese gern*” (“I like to read”) and “*Ich schlafe gern*” (“I like to sleep”). Similarly, most statements about food likes and dislikes were straightforward (e.g. “*Ich esse Fleisch und Kartoffeln gern. Ich trinke Bier und Cola gern*” (“I like to eat meat and potatoes. I like to drink beer and soda”). The vocabulary used by students indicated that they were already capable of discussing their interests and food and drink habits.

3.1.2 Creating a Character

Each group now had the chance to construct a persona for its character. The language learners first brainstormed individual words which described their character. They then wrote approximately three to six sentences in which they answered the same questions from the introduction, but for their character rather than for themselves. Students were engaged in the task. The instructor observed laughter, smiles, and even talking between groups where they heard their descriptions of characters intersect. Some of the descriptions of characters were creative and silly. Sebastian’s (the dog’s) group determined: “*Sebastian isst gern Braunschweiger mit Zwiebel. Er trinkt gern Deutsch Bier*” (“Sebastian likes to eat braunschweiger with onions. He likes to drink German beer”). Regarding family, they determined: “*Sein Bruder ist im Gefängnis*” (“His brother is in jail”). Similarly, Allegra’s (the cat’s) group decided that Sebastian is her brother, “*aber Sie mag ihren Bruder nicht*” (“but she does not like her brother”). As is clear from these statements, students were eager to employ appropriate vocabulary in playful ways, and were fully capable of doing so. Since animals were being personified in these tasks, it was natural for students to use some imagination in determining their characteristics. Some statements which might appear less ‘funny’ still involved the creation of fictional worlds, which is a sign of language play (Cook, 2000). For example, Bandit’s group determined that he likes to

cook, travel, visit friends, and drink coffee. These are ultimately human traits being ascribed to a chimpanzee. If nothing else, the extraordinary nature of such statements may make the vocabulary more memorable, and their incongruence with reality demonstrates a playful element.

3.1.3 Meme-Writing Phase

The goal of the meme-writing phase for was students to recycle vocabulary from the lesson, but in new contexts and with an increasing degree of freedom. Memes are especially conducive to humor because of the image which is paired with statements. Also, this was an authentic task where students would practice a mode of communication which is increasingly common in social media. This phase of the lesson included signs of playfulness and humor such as laughter and smiles. These were present when examples of memes were presented by the instructor, when students wrote the memes, and as they presented their memes. A clear attempt was made by students to use vocabulary relating to the lesson topic. For example, one group wrote for Sebastian's (the dog's) meme: "*Ich habe hunger / Haben Sie 'Pig in a Blanket?'*" ("I'm hungry / Do you have 'pig in a blanket?"). The meme makes a pun on the image provided of the dog wrapped in a blanket, but uses vocabulary from the lesson relating to food ("*Ich habe hunger*"). The instructor did not discourage the code-switching required to say "Pig in a Blanket," since such code-switching can allow students more freedom to experiment with the language (Pomerantz & Bell, 2007). Another playful meme involved Bandit (the monkey): "*Mehr Bananen? / Doh! Ich mag gern bier*" ("More bananas? / Doh! I like beer"). Once again, "Doh!" might be considered code-switching as an example of a word which appears in colloquial English but not in German. Additionally, the meme demonstrates playfulness through an unexpected turn: the monkey prefers beer to bananas.

At least one meme made an attempt to integrate cultural information in a playful way. One group described Allegra (the cat) as saying “*Du liebst Fußball? / Jeder liebt Fußball in Deutschland.*” (“You like soccer? Everyone in Germany likes soccer.”) Although the statement is both simple and an inaccurate generalization regarding German culture, it derives humor from the grumpy, disinterested look of the cat. The students imagined that Allegra does not care to hear more about a sport which they know to be very popular in Germany.

Many of the memes were simple. For example, one portrayed Bandit as saying “*Ich mag bananen /mehr als du*” (“I like bananas / more than you”). This meme demonstrates a successful attempt to remain on topic (hobbies/food/family). The simplicity of most of the memes reflects the proficiency level of the students after one semester of German. More abstract topics and complex vocabulary were beyond the linguistic capabilities of the students and were thus not targeted by the memes. However, an ability to integrate vocabulary from the memes was present, and signs of playfulness such as code-switching, puns, and the creation of fictional worlds were present. Physical signs of playfulness such as chuckling and smiles also indicate that the students interpreted the task as playful.

3.1.4 Coauthoring a Short Story

In the co-authored story phase, groups wrote short stories about the characters. These were co-authored stories, in which each group wrote one to two sentences before passing the story to the next group. There was enough time for three rotations, meaning that each group was able to conclude the story which it began and to contribute to the other stories one time. Students were able to successfully integrate vocabulary from the lesson in the stories. Terms relating to leisure activities and to food were present in the stories, including “cake,” “sleep,” and “travel.” Most playful was Sebastian’s story: he visits his brother in jail and brings his brother a cake in

which a knife is hidden (“*Und in den Kochen [Kuchen] ein messer*”). One interesting thing about Sebastian’s story is that it relates to the phase where students designed the characters and stated that Sebastian’s brother is in jail. This apparently struck the students as funny and was thus recycled in the story-writing phase. The recycling of material in this phase should be viewed as positive, since it involves both creative use of language (because it is used in new contexts) and repetition/retrieval. These are processes known to foster vocabulary acquisition.

Furthermore, the recycling of humorous phrases in various contexts has been observed as one way that language play manifests itself (Hahn, 2017). Also, statements involving jail are—if not taboo—at least unorthodox in a beginning language class. Cook (2000) asserts that discussion of such topics is one element of language play. The recycling and continuation of the storyline that Sebastian’s brother is in jail was thus a clear example of language play. Although it involved some vocabulary not directly relating to the lesson, such as “*Gefängnis*” (“jail”), it was still on topic through the use of food and family terms such as brother, knife, and cake. Students were thus able to integrate humorous material into the topic successfully.

3.1.5 Summary

Language play was evident in each phase of the lesson besides the warm-up. With the aid of images and appropriate limitations, beginning foreign language students were able to employ basic vocabulary with which they are familiar in various tasks. Even with a very basic set of familiar vocabulary words, the students were able to be use language creatively, make jokes, and recycle themes and linguistic material which they found humorous.

The main limitation of this lesson was simply the students’ low proficiency level. Even with the aid of prompts, some students appeared to find writing memes and co-authoring stories difficult. Perhaps because of this issue, the lesson moved slower than expected, and there was not

time for the final phase, in which students would have selected one animal as a pet and justified that decision. However, the vast majority of the lesson was covered, and omitting the last phase did not detract greatly from the lesson since students still had ample opportunity to use target vocabulary.

3.2 Lesson Two

3.2.1 Warm-Up Phase

The second lesson was titled “*Zeit mit Freunden*” (“Time with Friends”). This lesson involved the introduction of new vocabulary through language play tasks. In the warm-up phase, students wrote one to two sentences answering the question “*Was machst du gern mit deinen Freunden?*” (“What do you like to do with your friends?”) They then discussed their answer with a partner. This was the only phase of the lesson intended as a review of previously learned material. The goal was for students to begin thinking about the topic and to get used to speaking German before the introduction of new vocabulary. Students were able to complete the task and successfully employ linguistic material on the topic. For example, one student wrote, “*Ich reise gern mit meinen Freunden. Wir sehen einen Film gern auch.*” (“I like to travel with my friends. We also like to see a movie”). Another student wrote “*Ich grille und fahre gern Snowboard mit meine Freunden*” (“I grill and like to go snowboarding with my friends.”) The task was familiar to the students since much of the vocabulary related to the previous lesson, and all of it had been covered in class. There was no evidence of language play in this phase of the lesson, but that should be seen as acceptable since this was a warm-up. The primary aim was simply to prime students for the topic and allow them time to think of pertinent vocabulary with which they were already familiar.

3.2.2 Introduction of New Vocabulary

In the next stage of the lesson, I introduced a series of vocabulary words relating to the topic “Time with Friends”. Most of the terms involved actions one might do with others, such as *wandern* (to hike) or *Im Fitnessstudio trainieren* (to work out at the gym). Some vocabulary items were introduced which could be used to describe people, e.g. *spontan* (spontaneous), *diszipliniert* (disciplined) and *traurig* (sad). The idea was that the language learners would expand their ability both to talk about what they do with their friends and to describe themselves and others. A PowerPoint presentation was used to introduce the words. Images as well as the new vocabulary items were visible on the slides, and I modeled the new vocabulary items by giving examples in German and using hand motions. Occasionally I also provided an English translation. Very little was required of students in terms of output in this phase of the lesson. However, at times I directed them to repeat a word so that they could practice pronunciation.

3.2.3 Creating a Character

The next stage of the lesson was the same as the character creation phase of lesson one in terms of procedure. However, the characters and the questions were different. Students first brainstormed individual words relating to their character. Then they answered questions regarding their character’s best friend, hobbies, and what their character does with friends. The students were able to successfully employ vocabulary which had been introduced in the previous phase. For example, Leonard’s group wrote: “*Er schreibt Gedichte. Er spielt Gitarre.*” (“He writes poems. He plays guitar.”) A number of the statements demonstrated playfulness. For example, Otto’s (the weightlifter’s) group wrote: “*Er sammelt Briefmarke gern*” (“He likes to collect stamps”). Buddy’s (the dog’s) group determined that he likes to lift weights. Otto’s group wrote that the actor ‘The Rock’ is his best friend, but that they like to write poems together.

Leonard's group determined that he works out with Otto and that they are best friends, despite Leonard's comparatively petite size: "*Sein bester Freund ist Otto. Sie trainieren zusammen.*" The playfulness of these statements is evident in their irony or the incongruence between what might stereotypically be expected of characters and what the students described as their hobbies. Additionally, laughter and smiles from the students were evidence of ludic language play.

3.2.4 Meme-Writing Phase

The meme-writing phase was the same as in lesson one, except that the prompt was altered to fit with the topic of lesson two. The prompt stipulated that: "The memes can: 1) criticize or promote a hobby/activity 2) express annoyance or excitement about something to do with hobbies or friends 3) Express a thought about friendship or personality." Students were able to employ the new vocabulary to fulfill the assignment. One group employed the new vocabulary words "*glücklich*" ("happy") and "*traurig*" ("sad") in their meme for Buddy: "*Ich bin sehr glücklich. /Ist das nicht traurig.*" ("I am very happy/. Is that not sad.") Another meme used the new vocabulary word "*klettern*" ("to climb") in regard to Otto: "Ich klettere den Stein/ mit der Rock" ("I climb the rock, with the Rock"). Part of the playfulness of this statement is the fact that the actor "the Rock" had been identified as Otto's friend in the character creation phase. The students had found this statement humorous and decided to recycle it in the meme-writing phase, but within a new context (climbing). Other signs of playfulness included laughter and smiles from students as they wrote the memes.

3.2.5 Coauthoring a Short Story

The story-writing phase was the climax of the lesson. As the final cooperative task, it gave students a great deal of freedom to be creative. Also, they had already been exposed to most of the target vocabulary multiple times and thus could string together much of the pertinent

vocabulary without difficulty. Numerous vocabulary words from the lesson were evident in the stories, including “friends,” “to see a film,” and “to lift weights.” Much of the playfulness in the stories revolved around the word “*Gitarre*,” (“guitar”), which I had used peripherally in introducing the phrase “ein Lied schreiben” (“to write a song”). The guitar became a theme which worked its way into each story in various contexts. In Leonard’s story, he is described as having “*keine Freunden, nur sein Gitarre*” (“no friends, just his guitar”). His favorite drink is decaf coffee, and he sings songs to coffee with his guitar. Another story described Otto and Leonard meeting to swim, and Leonard as swimming with the guitar. This same idea worked its way into Buddy’s story, in which buddy discovered Leonard with the guitar. The final sentence reads: “*Buddy . . . isst die damn Gitarre.*” (“Buddy . . . eats the damn guitar”).

Several signs of language play were apparent in this stage of the lesson. The fact that students recycled and developed the themes shows that they were playing with them by placing them in new contexts and developing the story. Notable is the fact that the guitar became a common source of humor in the co-authored stories. The absurdity of Leonard’s obsession with the guitar made the stories all the more ridiculous. Laughter and smiles during the story-writing indicated that students found the stories humorous. Moreover, they played off of each other in continuing the story-line and co-constructing the increasingly absurd stories.

One particularly playful turn was the final sentence of Buddy’s story, in which he eats “*die damn Gitarre*” (“the damn guitar”). The sentence expresses feigned frustration with the focus which had been placed on the guitar throughout the story-writing phase. Code-switching should be seen as a sign of language play here. The use of “damn” strengthens the expression in a way which students would not have been able to do in German due to their proficiency level in the L2. Also, the English word stands out in the story, bringing added attention to its final

sentence. The students' body language (smiles, laughter) indicated that the statement was meant as a funny way to end a story. Presumably, this was a comment on the absurdity of the guitar taking such a prominent role in the stories.

An advantage of the common threads between the stories is that students used some of the vocabulary words in several contexts. This repetition and creative language foster the acquisition of vocabulary (Nation, 2013). One target word which appeared twice in the stories was "to lift weights." This phrase was used playfully, as not only Otto, but also buddy the dog is described as lifting weights. The guitar was also mentioned several times. Leonard plays/sings with the guitar, swims with the guitar, and buddy eats the guitar. Note that in such sentences students are not only practicing the word "*Gitarre*," which is almost identical to its English equivalent, but also the verbs which appear in the phrases. Similarly, the pool showed up in each story, usually with the guitar also present. In one story, Leonard wakes up after seven decaf coffees in the pool. In another, Otto and Leonard meet to swim. In Buddy's story, he finds Otto and Leonard at the pool before eating the guitar.

3.2.6 Concluding Phase

In the concluding phase, students described which character they would want as a friend and justified that decision with one or two sentences. The goal of this phase was to refer students back to the topic ("Time with friends") and spur them to use target vocabulary. Also, this stage of the lesson allowed them to take a personal stance on the topic and to once again consider their own interests and how they might intersect with those of the fictional characters. Much of the target vocabulary was used in this stage of the lesson, including *trainieren* (to work out), *glücklich* (happy), *Gedichte schreiben* (to write poems), and *diszipliniert* (disciplined). Also, there was also some evidence of ludic language play. One student wrote: "*Ich finde Buddy super!*"

Er ist der Mensch bester Freund, und er isst der damn Gitarre” (“I find Buddy super! He is man’s best friend, and he eats the damn guitar”). Notable is the fact that the eating of the “*damn Gitarre*” was recycled once again in this final stage of the lesson. It had thus become a running joke which had stuck in the mind of the student. The salty language and code-switching involved in the statement add to its playfulness. As is often the case with jokes, the statement was recycled playfully in a new context.

3.2.7 Summary

Both lessons were successful in eliciting ludic language play from students. Physical evidence of language play included smiles and laughter. Code-switching, puns and irony, the creation of fictional worlds, and topics normally not discussed in the classroom also came to the fore in this lesson. Moreover, material which students found funny was recycled, creating running jokes in which words or phrases were used in multiple contexts.

Evidence of ludic language play in these lessons encompassed processes which are known to foster vocabulary acquisition. Repetition was evident as words were repeated across phases of the lessons. Language learners also engaged in creative language use by employing words in various contexts. In some cases, this occurred by using the same words in different phases. At other times, words were used in different context in the same phase. This was evident in the case of the co-authored stories, where some words were used multiple times as students built on each other’s stories. It is difficult to know whether noticing took place, but the success of the lessons in eliciting ludic language play suggests that some noticing occurred.

One potential drawback of these lessons is that the use of a given target word could not be ensured by the tasks. For example, the word “*wandern*” (“to hike”), which was introduced in lesson two, was employed by one group in the character creation phase but not in the meme-

writing or story-writing phases. Ideally, students would have had more exposures to this new word. However, this should be considered an acceptable trade-off for allowing students a degree of freedom which allows creativity and playfulness to emerge. Provided that instructors alternate more strictly structured lessons with language play lessons, they can still ensure that students receive adequate exposure to all target vocabulary.

An exciting finding of this endeavor was that language play lessons can be designed either to review vocabulary or to introduce new words. Moreover, it appears that such materials can be used successfully at the beginning level. With this in mind, instructors have a great deal of flexibility in terms of how they employ language play materials. In the conclusion, I summarize my findings and consider the direction forward in the design of such materials.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to integrate the literature on ludic play and vocabulary acquisition in the design of instructional materials. To justify this endeavor, I first suggested that language play is a natural part of human communication. When learning their L1, Children talk to themselves, recycling lexemes and practicing phonemic and syntactic variation. They also engage in ludic language play in social situations by creating fictional worlds, making up nonsense names, and experimenting with pragmatics. Adults play with language as well through such means as puns, riddles, jokes, and the creation of fictional worlds in everyday speech, books, or television. The same signs of language play are evident in the L2 as in the L1: manipulation of language for humorous purposes, the creation of fictional scenarios, and various forms of jokes and wordplay. The literature on language play indicates that such play can benefit language acquisition in a variety of ways. Language learners use ludic language play to practice phonemes, lexemes, syntax, and pragmatics. Ludic language play also entails a number of affective benefits: it can lower affective barriers, motivate learners, lead to increased communicative confidence, and foster community formation.

I posit in this thesis that ludic language play may have applications for the introduction of vocabulary in the classroom. An analysis of several large-scale studies on the vocabulary acquisition literature revealed that noticing, retrieval and repetition of lexemes, and creative language use are important in acquiring words. Also, affective factors can play an important role in whether a word is remembered. I argued that ludic language play fosters these processes, and therefore intersects with processes known to aid in vocabulary acquisition. These points of intersection between ludic language play and vocabulary acquisition suggest that language play could be applied effectively in the foreign language classroom for the introduction of vocabulary.

Yet few studies involve planned language play tasks, and none are suited to beginning language learners. Furthermore, I could not find any studies which construct a systematic theory behind how one could go about designing such tasks.

The first step in designing such a lesson is to make sure that it is playful. Several factors contribute to a lesson's potential for playfulness. First, students need some freedom for creativity out of which play and humor arise. Second, interaction between students or between students and an instructor is necessary for ludic language play. Finally, the material itself should provide potential for humor. This can be accomplished through means such as exaggeration, wordplay, and fictional scenarios where animals are personified or other factors incongruent with reality are introduced. Two lessons were designed according to these principles for this thesis. The first lesson involved the review of previously learned vocabulary, while the second lesson introduced a new set of words. The lessons were evaluated according to their potential for eliciting ludic play and thereby aiding vocabulary acquisition. I argued that the lessons display playfulness, interaction, repetition and retrieval, affordances for noticing, and affective benefits.

An analysis of the implementation of these lessons provided ample evidence that they were successful in eliciting language play. I observed numerous signs of language play, including smiles and laughter, the recycling of material to co-construct jokes, code-switching, the construction of puns, the discussion of taboo topics, and the creation of fictional worlds. The students played with both the previously learned vocabulary (lesson one) and the new words (lesson two). Examples of probable noticing, retrieval and repetition, and creative language use were also evident. The presence of these processes strengthens the argument that ludic language play entails processes which foster vocabulary acquisition.

My hope is that the principles put forth in this thesis could serve as a model for the design of language play lessons focused on vocabulary acquisition for beginning language students. Instructors should feel free to construct their own units based on principles of ludic language play and vocabulary acquisition. Based on my research, instructors should design tasks which entail freedom for creativity, interaction, (potentially) humorous material, repetition, and affordances for noticing. Such tasks are likely to elicit language play and the affective benefits which accompany it. Moreover, they will likely benefit learners in acquiring vocabulary.

The lessons designed for this thesis could be adapted by using different images which fit a given topic. Likewise, any task could be replaced with a task of similar difficulty. For example, the meme-writing phase could be replaced with another guided writing task. The story-writing phase was arguably the most complex task in these lessons because it incorporated longer units of language (sentences) which had to be integrated into a paragraph and fit with what was written by previous groups. This phase of the lesson could be substituted with a role-play if the teacher desires to focus on speech rather than writing. Similar to the coauthored story, role plays entail generative language use, freedom for creativity, potential for humor, and retrieval of vocabulary words through repetition.

There is no reason that such tasks should not be designed for the students at the beginning level, as long as appropriate guidelines are put in place and the material is scaffolded. For example, the lessons designed for this thesis began with review, followed in lesson two by the introduction of new words. Then, vocabulary was used to create characters, first by using individual words, then by combining them into sentences. Only after this task did students engage in the more difficult task of writing memes. The coauthored story was arguably the most complex task, requiring the stringing together of sentences and reaction to the ideas of other

groups. It was therefore placed near the end of the lessons. The lessons thus began with simpler tasks in which students reviewed and used individual words and familiar sentences. The complexity of the tasks as well as freedom for creative language use increased as the lesson progressed. Nevertheless, even the beginning stages of the lesson—with the exception of the review phase—elicited ludic language play. Hence, language play can be incorporated throughout a lesson as tasks are scaffolded in terms of level of difficulty, degree of communicative production, and guidance from the instructor. In this way, students are able to accomplish the tasks, play with the language, and obtain the affective benefits of language play. These affective benefits could be lessened if students have to begin with the more difficult tasks before they are prepared for them.

One important question for instructors who wish to integrate ludic language play in their classrooms is how the phenomenon relates to communicative language teaching. Cook (2000) critiques CLT for excluding a great deal of natural language use which is not considered transactional discourse. He argues that aspects of language play such as fiction, ritual, taboo topics, and jokes, are prevalent in language and should be included in language materials. Other authors similarly posit that CLT ignores aspects of ludic language play which are falsely viewed as inauthentic (Cekaite & Aronsson, 2005; Pomerantz & Bell, 2007). It is not my purpose here to determine the accuracy of these critiques or the extent to which CLT incorporates ludic play at the present time. However, it should be noted that it *is* natural to play with language. People do so naturally in their L1 as well as when learning an L2. Teachers do not weaken their students' communicative abilities when they incorporate language play in instruction. To the contrary, they may be preparing them for playful forms of discourse that they will likely encounter when interacting with native speakers or which they may find personally enriching.

The key for instructors who want to add a ludic element to their language instruction is to make sure that tasks lead students towards communicative proficiency in the language. Not all ludic language tasks would spur students towards communicative competence. For example, memory games involving words may be a fun way for students to practice vocabulary, but they do not elicit natural communication. Instructors may find it beneficial to employ such tasks, but it is important to take ludic language play further so students are talking to each other or engaging in writing tasks which further their communicative abilities. One reason that the meme-writing task was incorporated in this thesis is that it is an example of a common form of communication among young people. In a modern world where most students have one or more social media accounts, reading and writing memes in German are examples of natural communication.

From the perspective of SLA research, this thesis raises several questions for future research. The primary goal of this thesis was to construct a framework for the design of language play materials on vocabulary acquisition. The lessons elicited ludic language play, and students appeared to be engaged in processes known to benefit vocabulary acquisition. The next step would be to test the acquisition and retention of vocabulary empirically. In this way, it could be determined to what extent students retain or acquire the vocabulary from the lessons. A longitudinal study could be carried out by setting up a pre-test with target vocabulary words, followed by post-tests after the lesson. A post-test could be conducted immediately after the lesson, a second time after a period of a few days, and a third time after a period of a few weeks or even months. Ideally, the data would be analyzed from several angles: 1) how do the number of exposures to a word affect its acquisition/retention? 2) How does the context in which a word is encountered or used (playful or non-playful) affect acquisition/retention? 3) Does the medium

in which students use or encounter playful speech—writing, reading, speaking, or listening—
affect acquisition and retention?

Another way to further this study would be to collect qualitative student data regarding how learners viewed the planned language play lessons. Such data could aid in determining what affective benefits or drawbacks the lessons entailed. It may be that different students respond to language play tasks in a variety of ways. Do the vast majority find them helpful, or are they intimidating for some students? Do students feel that the material is more memorable when framed in a playful context? What are their favorite parts of the lessons? With the help of student feedback, the lessons could be altered to maximize affective benefits. For example, a writing task could be replaced with a speaking task, more or less guided practice could be offered, or a phase could be shortened or lengthened.

There is still much to learn about ludic language play and the ways it can be harnessed for pedagogical purposes. This thesis offers a framework for how language teachers—especially at the beginning level—can use language play materials to teach vocabulary. Ideally, such materials would exist for a variety of topics, at a variety of levels of language proficiency, and engaging a variety of aspects of language. With the help of empirical testing, further insights can be gained into how effective such materials would be, or how they could be designed to maximize learning. Going forward, the best way to add credence to the incorporation of language play materials in curricula is to consider insights from SLA.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1
Language Play Lesson 1

Wer bin ich? Wer bist du? Wer ist das?: Using language play to discuss interests, food preferences, and family in German.

Class Level: Beginning German

Textbook: *Netzwerk: Deutsch als Fremdsprache*

Materials needed: textbook, worksheet which accompanies lesson, whiteboard and marker, computer and ability to generate memes online, doc cam.

Background: Students have already been introduced to the vocabulary relating to this lesson in chapters 3, 4, and 5 of their textbook. This lesson serves as a review prior to the final for the first semester of beginning German. It is designed to promote retention of vocabulary through the use of words in several creative and potentially humorous contexts.

Learner objectives:

- 1) Recall, identify, and select appropriate vocabulary relating to a given topic.
- 2) Use vocabulary creatively to write sentences describing a given character
- 4) Integrate vocabulary and use it sequentially.
- 5) Express and justify an opinion

Learner outcomes:

- 1) Describe a fictional character by selecting appropriate vocabulary regarding family, food likes/dislikes, and hobbies.
- 2) Write lines for a meme when provided with topics and prompts.
- 3) Author stories in the present tense describing the daily life of given characters. These stories should integrate the vocabulary into a continuous whole.
- 4) Determine which of the animals one would want to be his or her pet, and justify that choice.

Lesson Outline:

I. Warm-up

A. Instructor writes following questions on the board: 1) Was machst du gern? Hast du ein Hobby? 2) Was isst du gern? Was trinkst du gern? 3) Wie ist deine Familie?

B. Instructor models answers to these questions.

C. Students discuss these questions with a partner, asking and answering each one.

D. Instructor poses these questions to individual students.

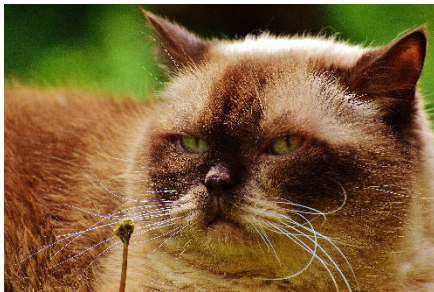
II. Guided practice: describing/creating a character

A. Students are divided into groups of three, and a picture of an animal is given to each group.

- 1) Sebastian



2) Allegra



3) Bandit



B. Each group brainstorms individual words which could describe their character. Then, each group selects a scribe and answers the questions on the board in complete sentences (See section I) for their character. Some use of imagination is necessary here.

C. One member from each group (not the scribe) presents the group's description of their character to the class. This written description will be displayed on the doc cam as they present so that the class can read along.

III. Guided Practice: Creating a Meme

A. The instructor introduces several memes in German to the class. Then, he introduces the following guidelines for the memes which the students will write. The memes can: 1) criticize or promote a food 2) criticize or promote a hobby/activity 3) express annoyance or excitement about something to do with hobbies/food/family.

B. The instructor introduces the prompts provided on the worksheet which the students can use to help them write the lines.

Wo ist mein...?

Nach einem/einer

. . . zum Frühstück?

Warum . . . immer?

Ich mag

Ich mag . . . nicht.

Zu viel

Möchtest du . . . ?

Wann ist/kommt

Wo ist . . . ?

ich brauche

ich will. . . .

ich muss noch . . .

. . .gern.

C. Students write one or two lines for each character which could be placed on the picture to create a meme.

D. The instructor plugs the lines into an online meme generator

(<https://imgflip.com/memegenerator>)

and presents the memes to the class. If necessary, a 5-minute break can be taken at this point for the instructor to finish generating the memes.

IV. Extension of creative writing phase: coauthoring a short story

A. Each group begins a short story about their character by writing two sentences. The theme for the stories is “A day in the life of Allegra/Sebastian/Bandit.” The stories should involve everyday things which students have already discussed in the lesson, such as hobbies, food, and family. Stories should be written in the present tense.

B. Every three minutes, each group will pass their story to the next group and receive the story from a different group. They will then add to the story by writing one-two new sentences. This process will continue until each group has added to each story **twice**.

C. Once all the stories have been completed, each group will display its story on the doc cam, and a group member who has not yet presented will read it.

V. Conclusion: Which animal would you like as a pet?

A. Students will select one of the characters which they would most like to have as a pet. They must justify their choice with at least two reasons. Their reasons are likely to intersect with vocabulary from the lesson (e.g. where interests align with a particular character).

B. Each student will share his or her selection and reasoning with a partner.

Detailed Lesson Plan
 Formatting taken from Klaus Brandl (2008)

Segment	Time	Teacher Tasks	Student learning tasks	Rationale	Skills
Warm-Up: listening portion	5 min.	<p>1. Instructor writes the following questions on the board: 1) Was machst du gern? (what do you like to do?) Hast du ein Hobby? (Do you have a hobby?) 2) Was isst du gern? Was trinkst du gern? (What do you like to eat? What do you like to drink?) 3) Wie ist deine Familie? (What is your family like?)</p> <p>Teacher introduces himself, answering the questions on the board by describing his hobbies/interests, food likes/dislikes, and family.</p>	Listen to teacher silently, recall and comprehend phrases regarding hobbies/interests, food likes/dislikes, and family.	Review vocabulary which will be pertinent to lesson.	Listening comprehension
Warm-Up: speaking portion	5	1. The instructor directs students to discuss the questions with a partner, asking and answering each one.	Students will practice expressing their own hobbies/interests, food likes/dislikes and describing their family.	Review and practice vocabulary which will be pertinent to lesson.	Speaking, listening comprehension

Segment	Time	Teacher Tasks	Student learning tasks	Rationale	Skills
		2. The instructor poses the questions on the board to individual students.			
Guided practice: describing/creating a character	15 min.	The teacher divides the class into groups of three and passes out a picture to each group of the animal which they will describe (See outline, Section II). Then, the teacher walks around the room to monitor progress and answer questions while students brainstorm answers to the questions on the board for their animal.	Students receive a humorous picture of an animal. They brainstorm individual words relating to family, hobbies, and foods/drinks which they could use to describe that animal. Then, they write complete sentences which answer the questions on the board. Each group will select a “scribe” to write their answers. Each group will then display their answers under the doc cam and a member (not the scribe) will share their description of their character with the class.	Use vocabulary creatively to describe a fictitious character.	Writing, presenting, listening comprehension

Segment	Time	Teacher Tasks	Student learning tasks	Rationale	Skills
Guided practice: creating a meme	25 min.	<p>The instructor introduces this phase of the lesson by showing some memes in German to the class. Then, he introduces the following guidelines for the memes which the students will write. The memes can: 1) criticize or promote a food 2) criticize or promote a hobby/activity 3) express annoyance or excitement about something to do with hobbies/food/family. After this, he introduces the prompts provided on the worksheet. These prompts provide partial sentences which students can use to complete lines for the memes. The teacher instructs the students to write one or two lines for each picture (so in total, each group creates three memes).</p>	<p>Students will be shown some examples of memes in German by the instructor. They will then write one or two lines for each picture which will be used to create a meme for that picture. They may use the prompts provided by the instructor. Then, they will read their memes to the class as the instructor displays them.</p>	<p>Employ vocabulary to create a humorous meme.</p>	<p>Writing, presenting</p>

Segment	Time	Teacher Tasks	Student learning tasks	Rationale	Skills
		<p>The lines for the memes will be provided to the instructor, who will then use a meme generator to create the memes. Each student will read one meme created by their group to the class.</p>			
<p>Extension: creative writing phase</p>	<p>30 min.</p>	<p>The instructor describes the next task: each group starts with their own character. They begin a story by writing two sentences. The story should describe a day in the life of this character and should include vocabulary from the brainstorming and meme portions of the lesson. The story should be in the present tense. Every three minutes, the instructor will direct the groups to pass their story to the next group and receive the story from the previous group.</p>	<p>Students work with their groups to co-author creative stories. Each group writes one-two sentences before passing their story to the next group and receiving a new story. The spontaneity of the process is likely to lead to humorous situations. At the end, each group will display the story for their character through the doc cam and read it to the class.</p>	<p>Practice using vocabulary for the purpose of creative writing. Creative use of vocabulary is important for retention of vocabulary and may also lead to humorous or memorable situations.</p>	<p>Writing, reading comprehension</p>

Segment	Time	Teacher Tasks	Student learning tasks	Rationale	Skills
		<p>They then add one-two sentences to the new story. This process continues until each group has added to each story twice (in larger classes, each group would add to the story just once). The teacher will warn the groups when it is time for the last group to write so that they can conclude the story. Also, the teacher will monitor as students write to make sure that sentences are intelligible and basically correct in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Then, the instructor will have each group read the completed story about their character to the class.</p>			

Segment	Time	Teacher Tasks	Student learning tasks	Rationale	Skills
Conclusion	10 min.	<p>Students write which character they would like as a pet and give two reasons for this choice. This task allows students to compare their own interests to those of the characters and find intersections or things which they like. The teacher will explain the final task to students and model an example. He will model the use of the verb “mögen” as well as the conjunctions “auch” (also) or “denn” (since). He will also model “finden” (to find). Ex: “Ich mag Allegra, denn ich trinke gern Milch und ich bin auch gerne allein. Ich finde sie cool. (I like Allegra because I like to drink milk and also like to be alone. I find her cool).”</p>	<p>Students will select which character they would want as a pet and justify their decision with two reasons. Each student will present his or her conclusion to a partner (if time allows, to the entire class).</p>	<p>This task allows students to consider all of the vocabulary from the lesson while enabling them to take a personal stance to the subject matter. Since most of this lesson involved group work, it may pique interest to allow students an entirely individual choice. This task also allows students to personally identify with a character by finding ways in which their interests and preferences intersect.</p>	<p>Presentation, writing, ability to justify or explain a choice in German.</p>

APPENDIX 2
Accompanying Student Worksheet for Lesson 1

Wer bin ich? Wer bist du? Wer ist das?

I. Wer bist du? Answer the following questions in complete sentences, then discuss them with a partner.

- 1) Was machst du gern? Hast du ein Hobby?

- 2) Was isst du gern? Was trinkst du gern?

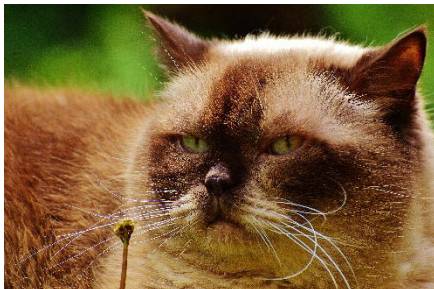
- 3) Wie ist deine Familie?

II. You have been assigned one of the following three characters. Using the questions below as a guide, brainstorm individual words which could describe your character. Then, create a description for your character by answering the questions in complete sentences.

- 1) Sebastian



- 2) Allegra



3) Bandit



1) Was macht er/sie gern? Hat er/sie ein Hobby?

2) Was isst er/sie gern? Was trinkt er/sie gern? Was isst er/sie nicht gern?

3) Wie ist seine/ihre Familie?

**III. Write one or two lines which will be used to create a meme for each character.
The memes can: 1) criticize or promote a food 2) criticize or promote a hobby/activity 3)
express annoyance about something to do with hobbies/food/family**

You can use the following prompts to help you write the lines for the memes:

Wo ist mein...?

Nach einem/einer

. . . zum Frühstück?

Warum . . . immer?

Ich mag

Ich mag . . . nicht.

Zu viel

Möchtest du . . . ?

Wann ist/kommt

Wo ist . . . ?

ich brauche

ich will.

ich muss noch . . .

. . .gern.

1) Sebastian

Top line:

Bottom line:

2) Allegra

Top line:

Bottom line:

3) Bandit

Top line:

Bottom line:

IV. Coauthor a story for each character. Select a scribe from your group and start your story on a separate sheet of paper!

V. Welches Tier möchtest du als Haustier haben? *Which of the animals would you like to have as a pet? Use complete sentences, and give two reasons to justify your choice.*

Beispiel: "Ich mag Allegra, denn ich trinke gern Milch und ich bin auch gerne allein. Ich finde sie cool."

APPENDIX 3
Language Play Lesson 2

Zeit mit Freunden: Using language play to discuss interests, friends, and personality in German

Class Level: Beginning German

Textbook: *Netzwerk: Deutsch als Fremdsprache*

Materials needed: textbook, worksheet which accompanies lesson, whiteboard and marker, computer and ability to generate memes online, doc cam.

Background: This lesson serves as an introduction to the vocabulary words and phrases in chapter six of the textbook. Some additional phrases which relate will also be introduced. The chapter is titled *Zeit mit Freunden* (“time with friends”). This lesson is designed to promote retention of vocabulary through the use of words in several creative and potentially humorous contexts.

Learner objectives:

- 1) Recall, identify, and select appropriate vocabulary relating to a given topic.
- 2) Use vocabulary creatively to write sentences describing a given character
- 3) Integrate vocabulary and use it sequentially.
- 4) Express and justify an opinion

Learner outcomes:

- 1) Describe a fictional character by selecting appropriate hobbies/ interests and describing his or her best friend.
- 2) Write lines for a meme when provided with topics and prompts.
- 3) Author stories in the present tense describing the daily life of given characters. These stories should integrate the vocabulary from the lesson into a continuous whole.
- 4) Determine which of the characters one would want to be his or her friend, and justify that choice.

Lesson Outline:

I.A. Warm-up: Instructor models the following question: *Was machst du gern mit deinen Freunden?* (“What do you like to do with friends?”). Then, students discuss in pairs.

I.B. Introduction of New Vocabulary

The instructor introduces the new vocabulary to the class through use of a PowerPoint presentation. The novel words and phrases are paired with pictures. The new vocabulary includes words regarding hobbies/activities. The last slide includes all of the new vocabulary and can be left up during the next phases of the lesson for reference.

The following words/phrases are to be introduced:

einen Film sehen –to watch a film

(einen Berg/ einen Baum) klettern –to climb (a mountain/ a tree)

wandern –to hike

im Internet surfen –to surf the internet

ein Gedicht/ ein Lied schreiben –to write a poem/song

Gitarre/Klavier spielen –to play guitar/piano

Im Fitnessstudio trainieren –to train/work out at the gym

Gewichte stemmen –to lift weights

Briefmarken sammeln –to collect stamps

spontan –spontaneous

glücklich –happy

traurig –sad

faul –lazy

diszipliniert –disciplined

II. Guided practice: describing/creating a character

A. Students are divided into groups of three and assigned one of the following pictures:

1) Leonard



2) Otto



3) Buddy



B. Each group brainstorms individual words which could describe their character. Then, each group selects a scribe and answers the following questions in complete sentences for their character: 1) *Was macht er gern? Hat er ein Hobby?* 2) *Wie ist sein bester Freund / seine beste Freundin? Was machen sie gern zusammen?*

Students should be directed to incorporate vocabulary from the input phase when answering these questions.

C. One member from each group (not the scribe) presents the group's description of their character to the class. This written description will be displayed on the doc cam as they present so that the class can read along.

III. Guided Practice: Creating a Meme

A. The students are already familiar with memes because of the lesson from the previous day. The instructor begins this phase of the lesson by introducing the following guidelines for the memes which the students will write. The memes can: 1) criticize or promote a hobby/activity 2) express annoyance or excitement about something to do with hobbies or friends 3) Express a thought about friendship or personality.

B. The instructor reviews the prompts provided on the worksheet which the students can use to help them write the lines.

Wo ist mein...?

Nach einem/einer

. . . zum Frühstück?

Warum . . . immer?

Ich mag

Ich mag . . . nicht.

Zu viel

Möchtest du . . . ?

Wann ist/kommt

Wo ist . . . ?

ich brauche

ich will. . . .

ich muss noch . . .

. . . gern.

C. Students write one or two lines for each character which could be placed on the picture to create a meme.

D. The instructor plugs the lines into an online meme generator (<https://imgflip.com/memegenerator>) and presents the memes to the class. If necessary, a 5-minute break can be taken at this point for the instructor to finish generating the memes.

IV. Extension of creative writing phase: coauthoring a short story

A. Each group begins a short story about their character by writing one sentence. The theme for the stories is “A day in the life of Leonard/Buddy/Otto.” The stories should involve everyday things which students have already discussed in the lesson, such as hobbies and friends. Stories should be written in the present tense.

B. Every three minutes, each group will pass their story to the next group and receive the story from a different group. They will then add to the story by writing one-two new sentences. This process will continue until each group has added to each story **twice**.

C. Once all the stories have been completed, each group will display its story on the doc cam, and a group member who has not yet presented will read it.

V. Conclusion: Whom would you like to have as a friend?

A. Students will select one of the characters which they would most like to have as a friend. They must justify their choice with at least two reasons. Their reasons are likely to intersect with vocabulary from the lesson (e.g. where interests align with a particular character).

B. Each student will share his or her selection and reasoning with a partner.

Detailed Lesson Plan
 Formatting taken from Klaus Brandl (2008)

Segment	Time	Teacher Tasks	Student learning tasks	Rationale	Skills
Warm-up	5	Instructor models the following question: <i>Was machst du gern mit deinen Freunden?</i> (“What do you like to do with friends?”). Then, students discuss in pairs.	Students warm up by discussing what they like to do in the context of friendship.	This task sets the stage for the lesson, which is based on the topic <i>Zeit mit Freunden</i> (“time with friends”).	Speaking, listening comprehension
Introduction of New Vocabulary	5 min.	The instructor introduces the new vocabulary to the class through use of a PowerPoint presentation. The new words and phrases are paired with pictures. The new vocabulary includes words regarding hobbies/activities. The last slide includes all of the new vocabulary and can be left up during the next phases of the lesson for reference.	Listen to teacher silently while viewing PowerPoint presentation. Become familiar with new words/phrases.	Introduce vocabulary which will be pertinent to lesson.	Listening comprehension

Segment	Time	Teacher Tasks	Student learning tasks	Rationale	Skills
Guided practice: describing/creating a character	15 min.	<p>The teacher divides the class into groups of three and passes out a picture to each group of the person or animal which they will describe (see outline, Section III). Then, the teacher walks around the room to monitor progress and answer questions while students brainstorm answers to the following questions: 1) <i>Was macht er gern? Hat er ein Hobby?</i> (What does he like to do? Does he have a hobby? 2) <i>Wie ist sein bester Freund / seine beste Freundin? Was machen sie gern zusammen?</i> (What is his best friend like? What do they like to do together?)</p> <p>The instructor directs students to use vocabulary from the input phase.</p>	<p>Students receive a picture of a person or animal. They brainstorm individual words relating to friends and hobbies/interests which they could use to describe that character. Then, they write complete sentences which answer the questions provided on their worksheet. Each group will select a "scribe" to write their answers. Each group will then display their answers under the doc cam and a member (not the scribe) will share their description of their character with the class.</p>	Use vocabulary creatively to describe a fictitious character.	Writing, presenting, listening comprehension

Segment	Time	Teacher Tasks	Student learning tasks	Rationale	Skills
Guided practice: creating a meme	25 min.	The students are already familiar with memes because of the lesson from the previous day. The instructor begins this phase of the lesson by introducing the following guidelines for the memes which the students will write. The memes can: 1) criticize or promote a hobby/activity 2) express annoyance or excitement about something to do with hobbies or friends 3) Express a thought about friendship or personality. After this, he reviews the prompts provided on the worksheet. These prompts provide partial sentences which students can use to complete lines for the memes. The teacher instructs the students to write one or two lines for each picture (so in total, each group creates three memes).	Students will write one or two lines for each picture which will be used to create a meme for that picture. They should follow the guidelines provided on their worksheet when creating the memes. They may use the prompts provided by the instructor. Then, they will read their memes to the class as the instructor displays them.	Employ vocabulary to create a humorous meme.	Writing, presenting

Segment	Time	Teacher Tasks	Student learning tasks	Rationale	Skills
		<p>The lines for the memes will be provided to the instructor, who will then use a meme generator to create the memes. Each student will read one meme created by their group to the class.</p>			
<p>Extension: creative writing phase</p>	<p>30 min.</p>	<p>The instructor describes the next task: each group starts with their own character. They begin a story by writing one sentence. The story should describe a day in the life of this character and should include vocabulary from the brainstorming and meme portions of the lesson. The story should be in the present tense. Every three minutes, the instructor will direct the groups to pass their story to the next group and receive the story from the previous group.</p>	<p>Students work with their groups to co-author creative stories. Each group writes one-two sentences before passing their story to the next group and receiving a new story. The spontaneity of the process is likely to lead to humorous situations. At the end, each group will display the story for their character through the doc cam and read it to the class.</p>	<p>Practice using vocabulary for the purpose of creative writing. Creative use of vocabulary is important for retention of vocabulary and may also lead to humorous or memorable situations.</p>	<p>Writing, reading comprehension</p>

Segment	Time	Teacher Tasks	Student learning tasks	Rationale	Skills
		<p>This process continues until each group has added to each story twice (in larger classes, each group would add to the story just once). The teacher will warn the groups when it is time for the last group to write so that they can conclude the story. Also, the teacher will monitor as students write to make sure that sentences are intelligible and basically correct in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Then, the instructor will have each group read the completed story about their character to the class.</p>			

Segment	Time	Teacher Tasks	Student learning tasks	Rationale	Skills
Conclusion	10 min.	The students have now created fictional “characters” by describing their characteristics and preferences, creating memes about them, and writing a story about them. The final task will be to write which character they would like as a friend and give two reasons for this choice. This task allows students to compare their own interests to those of the characters and find intersections or things which they like.	Students will select which character they would want as a friend and justify their decision with two reasons. Each student will present his or her conclusion to a partner (if time allows, to the entire class).	This task allows students to consider all of the vocabulary from the lesson while enabling them to take a personal stance to the subject matter. Since most of this lesson involved group work, it may pique interest to allow students an entirely individual choice. This task also allows students to personally identify with a character by finding ways in which their interests and preferences intersect.	Presentation, writing, ability to justify or explain a choice in German.

APPENDIX 4
Accompanying Student Worksheet for Lesson 2

Zeit mit Freunden

I. Answer the following question in complete sentences, then discuss the question with a partner.

Was machst du gern mit deinen Freunden?

II. You have been assigned one of the following three characters. Using the questions below as a guide, brainstorm individual words which could describe your character. Then, create a description for your character by answering the questions in complete sentences.

1) Leonard



2) Otto



3) Buddy



1) Was macht er gern? Hat er ein Hobby?

2) Wie ist sein bester Freund? Was machen sie gern zusammen?

III. Write one or two lines which will be used to create a meme for each character. The memes can: 1) criticize or promote a hobby/activity 2) express annoyance or excitement about something to do with hobbies or friends 3) Express a thought about friendship or personality

You can use the following prompts to help you write the lines for the memes:

Wo ist mein...?

Nach einem/einer

. . . zum Frühstück?

Warum . . . immer?

Ich mag

Ich mag . . . nicht.

Zu viel

Möchtest du . . . ?

Wann ist/kommt

Wo ist . . . ?

ich brauche

ich will.

ich muss noch . . .

. . . gern.

1) Sebastian

Top line:

Bottom line:

2) Otto

Top line:

Bottom line:

3) Buddy

Top line:

Bottom line:

IV. Co-author a story for each character. Select a scribe from your group and start your story on a separate sheet of paper!

V. Wen möchtest du als Freund haben? *Whom would you like to have as a friend? Use complete sentences, and give two reasons to justify your choice.*

VITA

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