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"Nothing fancy": Individual Learning Objectives in German as an Additional Competence Courses

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Abstract
This study investigates language learning in a course in German as an additional competence at a Danish university for students from all faculties, focusing on participants' individual learning objectives. The aim is to explore the individual learning objectives participants express and the implications these objectives have on language teaching and learning in a setup without predetermined common leaning objectives. Drawing on Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) needs analysis framework, recent research on individual learning objectives, and the updated CEFR (2020), the study examines the relationship between individual learning objectives and language teaching and learning. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study provides insights into participants' perspectives and desires by analyzing learning objectives from 135 participants enrolled in courses at Aalborg University between Fall 2022 and Fall 2024. The findings reveal a strong wish for acquiring functional German for everyday and professional contexts. Key areas are oral production, everyday interactions, grammar, and specialized study- and work-related vocabulary. The discussion emphasizes implications for language teaching in that specific setup and suggests potential strategies for supporting students in achieving their learning goals. This study contributes to the understanding of how individual learning objectives can enhance language teaching and learning, offering valuable insights for instructors aiming to improve teaching practices, specifically for language as an additional competence.

Keywords: *Individual learning objectives*, *German as an additional competence, language teaching strategies, functional language use, need analysis*

1. Introduction

Aalborg University (AAU) has been offering courses in German as an additional competence (GAC) since February 2022 as part of a national strategic effort. This kind of offer for students of all disciplines exists in different formats at universities all over Denmark. At AAU, the courses include ten sessions with a total of 28 hours of instruction, distributed across eight evenings with two hours of teaching each and one weekend, consisting of two days with six hours of teaching each. Students come from all faculties of AAU, representing 94 study programmes, making the classroom interdisciplinary. The courses require level A2 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as a prerequisite (German Language Course, n.d.).

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They aim to elevate participants' language competence to level B1. The courses are generally broad in scope and focus primarily on language as a professional competence, including Business German. However, they also comprise language as an academic competence. The advertising for the courses communicates that the German skills acquired by the participants are applicable for their studies and future careers (German Language Course, n.d.). This approach differs from that of some of the other universities (cf. e.g. CIP, n.d.) where the GAC courses are linked more closely to specific study programmes or academic fields. No learning objectives for the AAU courses have been formulated centrally. Moreover, there is no examination after the course, only a diploma given to participants who attended at least eight of the ten sessions. Teaching German for students who do not study languages places special demands on the didactics of the courses. The reason for this is that the participants come with diverse motivations, backgrounds, paths, and competencies, as Gebauer et al. (2024) have uncovered in their article. However, this type of course also places certain demands on the course participants themselves, because they must be aware of what they want to learn and be prepared to undertake the individual journey that language learning is. Therefore, our aim in this paper is to map the specific wishes of the participants as expressed in their individual learning objectives. Moreover, the aim of this work is to use the results of this study to show ways to adjust the content and teaching methods of this type of course to optimally align the courses with the learning objectives of the participants.

Participants in the AAU courses do not primarily acquire specific subject-related competencies, as they come from various fields of study. Instead, the courses aim to provide more generalist-oriented professional competencies, enabling participants to acquire skills that are useful in their future careers. These competencies are for example presenting (academic) topics in German as well as cultural understanding. This includes both general cultural understanding related to the German-speaking areas and understanding of business cultural aspects within the German-speaking countries. These competencies can be utilized by participants after completing their education to seek employment in the German-speaking region or to collaborate with German-speaking organizations, companies, and individuals (cf. Voldgaard Larsen, 2024).

Furthermore, one could argue that language as a professional competency is generally more comprehensive and diverse than language as a study competency, where it is more predictable which language skills are necessary and for what purposes the language will be used. Therefore, it could be argued that it is an advantage, specifically for professionally focused GAC courses, that course participants formulate their own learning objectives. In that case, these objectives are aligned with their individual dreams and goals for their professional lives.

Personal learning objectives formulated by the students themselves serve in this paper, on the one hand, as a tool or an aid for the students themselves (reflection and reflective learning). On the other hand, they serve as a source of information for research and for optimizing the courses.

Personal motivation plays a crucial role in language learning as it influences engagement and learning outcomes. In order to create a fruitful learning experience, it is important to understand individual needs and wants (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Individual learning objectives that all participants formulate themselves can be used as a suitable instrument for this. The reason is that they are essentially expressions of their wants; this means they are, in nature, individual and personal. By adjusting the teaching and the learning activities to these individual needs and learning objectives, a more personal and meaningful learning process can be promoted.

The research questions that we investigate in this paper are the following:

- What learning objectives do participants in GAC courses have for their participation?

- What are the implications of these learning objectives for the courses?

By examining the individual learning objectives, we undertake a learner-centred inquiry. The empirical material for this paper consists of individual learning objectives formulated by 135 participants of the GAC courses at AAU from the Fall semester 2022 to the Fall semester 2024. In the analysis, we first provide an overview of the learning objectives quantitatively. We then delve deeper into these learning objectives qualitatively, highlighting notable results. Subsequently, we discuss the possible implications of the results of this analysis for teaching and learning in GAC courses at universities. text.

2. Theoretical framework

Hutchinson & Waters (1987) explore needs analysis in relation to language teaching. They divide the aspects of the analysis into three categories; necessities' (i.e. what the student must learn to function in a specific situation), acks' (i.e. what competencies the student does not have yet), and 'wants' (i.e. what the student wishes to learn). Individual learning objectives are inherently personal and unique. Consequently, this article addresses what Hutchinson and Waters (1987) refer to as 'wants', which pertains to the participants' desired learning outcomes. In contrast, 'necessities' and 'lacks' refer to the institutional expectations regarding the linguistic competences required by participants to function adequately in the specified application situations that are envisioned by the institution offering the courses. These necessities are outlined in the informational materials for the GAC courses, and this theme has been explored in Voldgaard Larsen (2024).

Hattie and Timperley (2007) highlight feedback as a crucial component of learning. In this paper, we argue that individual learning objectives can function effectively as a form of 'self-feedback'. Hattie and Timperley emphasize three central questions that teachers should ask students and that students should ask themselves: "Where am I going?", "How am I going?" and "Where to next?" (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 86). The aim of asking these questions about the goals, the way to reach the goals, and what the next steps are, is to provide both general and specific guidance and to create a framework within which learners can locate themselves. This "making learning visible" is essential for learning outcomes and success. In the GAC courses, there are no opportunities for this type of formalized feedback, since there are no formalized learning objectives and no graded examinations. Therefore, the individual learning objectives in the GAC courses might serve as a personal framework and guide for the participants.

In this paper, we use the term "learning objectives" for the goals set by the participants, in accordance with Rohloff, Sauer and Meinel (2019), who distinguish between broader "learning goals" and "learning objectives". "Learning goals" are defined as "broad statements of what a learner will be able to do at a certain time", providing an overview that describes "a rather wide range of knowledge and skills a student will acquire and is therefore usually not explicitly measurable". By contrast, "learning objectives have a narrow focus, describing specific and discrete units of knowledge and skills being acquired" (Rohloff, Sauer & Meinel, 2019, p. 2).

The importance of good learning objectives has been emphasized in many discussions. It has been argued that learning should be based on the learners' life world and experiences (Dam, 2015), ensuring that learners are met where they are, and that the teaching should incorporate the specific academic elements they lack and the academic focus areas they want to learn (cf. Hutchinson & Waters' 'lacks' and 'wants'). It is crucial that students know "what they are learning" and not just "what they are doing". Therefore, good and useful learning objectives are important for students'

learning. Furthermore, differentiated learning objectives can make students aware of their zone of proximal development and clarify success criteria of their learning (Brønd, Iverssøn & Hook, 2015). Moreover, it is important to break down a general learning goal into smaller parts, to make it manageable for students to see the progression in their learning and the path they can follow to achieve their goal and realize their full potential (Brønd, Iverssøn & Hook, 2015).

The field of individualized learning objectives was established in the 1970s and 1980s, with various projects investigating student involvement in learning and the formulation of learning objectives under the term "student autonomy" (see e.g. Dam, 2015), within language learning, see for instance, projects about linguistic awareness (Christensen, Engberg-Pedersen & Grønvold, 1999).

Today, this field is widely represented in the area of e-learning (see e.g., Sleptsova & Sokolova, 2018; Rohloff, Sauer & Meinel, 2019; Rohloff, Sauer & Meinel, 2020; and Kizilcec, Pérez-Sanagustín & Maldonado, 2017). This is particularly relevant in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC), which are free and open educational opportunities where students from diverse social and cultural backgrounds can participate (Rohloff, Sauer & Meinel, 2020). These courses employ self-regulated learning (SRL), which involves the student's ability to actively and autonomously take control of their learning process. Rohloff, Sauer and Meinel (2020) refer to Pintrich (2000), who distinguishes four phases within SRL: 1) forethought, planning, and activation, 2) monitoring, 3) control, and 4) reaction and reflection.

With their individualization of the educational process (Sleptsova & Sokolova, 2018), the approach in e-learning aligns to some extent with our GAC courses. The reason is that participants aim to learn the language for individual purposes that can be professional, academic, and personal. Both in GAC courses and in e-learning, a central feature is that the student sets their own learning objectives regarding the type of specialist they want to become, the level of expertise they aim to achieve, the knowledge they need, and the personal competencies they must develop.

Within the field of foreign language learning, there is an ongoing discussion highlighting the advantages of individualized learning objectives. Maslo (2015) emphasizes the motivating role of subjective learning objectives in foreign language learning featuring selected individuals, referred to as "experts", with dreams and individual goals for learning a foreign language. Maslo interviewed 14 "experts" about their "learning stories" shedding new light on their language learning process and their unique learning path. Furthermore, their very personal reasons for wanting to learn a language were explained, making it clear that their situation would not comply with ordinary learning setups.

Maslo demonstrates that it is primarily the participants' subjective feelings that drive learning, and that learning does not always occur through instrumental goals. From the diversity of the described examples and varied learning histories, Maslo criticizes standardized learning objectives. She argues that learning processes are complex phenomena that involve an interplay of multiple dimensions, interacting differently for different individuals (Maslo, 2015, p. 64). Maslo is inspired by the approach of Benson and Nunan (2005) and Kramsch (2009), who emphasize "learning diversity". For them, the premise is that all people are unique and therefore learn (languages) in diverse ways. They learn languages in varied contexts at distinct times, through individual approaches, based on personal experiences, driven by different goals, leading to a range of results, and accompanied by a spectrum of emotions (Maslo, 2015, p. 65). While Benson and Nunan (2005) emphasize learner-autonomy and advocate a learning process through meaningful, real-world tasks, Kramsch (2009) highlights the dimension of culture conceiving of language as a symbolic system, embedded in social and cultural contexts and encouraging learners to reflect critically on identity and interculturality. To accommodate this diversity in the process of language learning and to

provide instructors with insights into the goals of the course participants, the task of formulating individualized learning objectives is applied in the GAC courses at AAU.

3. Conceptual framework: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

As part of the analysis of our data, we categorize the learning objectives of the course participants on the basis of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This framework therefore requires a short presentation here. The CEFR was launched in 2001 and describes language proficiency divided into six levels, A1 and A2 (Basic User), B1 and B2 (Independent User) and finally C1 and C2 (Proficient User). These levels indicate the "can do"-competences of a person performing communicative language activities, drawing upon communicative language competences (linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic) and activating appropriate communicative strategies (CEFR, 2020, p. 34).

Recently, the CEFR descriptive scheme has been changed from the four skills (listening comprehension, speaking, reading comprehension, and writing), used e.g. in Voldgaard Larsen (2023), into "communicative language activities and strategies". The reason for this is that the former skill-based scheme had "increasingly proved inadequate in capturing the complex reality of communication" (CEFR Descriptive scheme, n.d.). This new descriptive scheme conceptualizes language as a collective social action in which meaning is constructed together by the communicative participants. It is divided into the macro-functions: reception, production, interaction and mediation (instead of the skills, reading comprehension, writing, speaking, listening comprehension). Thus, the CEFR intends to move "closer to real-life language use" with its focus on interaction and the co-construction of meaning in communicative activities (CEFR, 2020, p. 33).

These communicative language activities and strategies that constitute overall language proficiency are divided into general competences, communicative language competences, communicative language activities, and communicative language strategies (CEFR Descriptive scheme, n.d.). General competences consist of e.g. knowledge of the world, sociocultural competence, intercultural competence and professional experience. These competences are always used in combination with communicative language competences (i.e. linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences) and communicative language strategies to complete a task in a communicative situation (CEFR, 2020, p. 129). However, the boundaries between the general competences mentioned above "are not really clear-cut" (CEFR, 2020, p. 251). Furthermore, "more important than possible overlap between categories is the fact that the user/learner calls on all these various aspects, merged with the appropriate communicative language competence, in the creation of meaning in a communicative situation" (CEFR, 2020, p. 251).

As mentioned earlier, communicative language activities are divided into four categories of activities. Including both oral and written competences, reception, production and interaction activities are divided into several subcategories. Reception activities (CEFR, 2020, pp. 48-58) consist of oral comprehension (understanding e.g. announcements, conversation and audio media), audio-visual comprehension (i.e. watching tv, film, and video), and reading comprehension (i.e. reading with different purposes, e.g. reading as a leisure activity, reading for information). Production activities (CEFR, 2020, pp. 60-68) are made up of oral production (focusing on monologue and addressing audiences) and written production, e.g. creative writing and reports/essays). Interaction (CEFR, 2020, pp. 70-86) consists of oral interaction (e.g. formal or informal discussions, understanding an interlocutor, obtaining goods and services, and several other

types of activities), written interaction (e.g. correspondence, notes, and forms) as well as online interaction (e.g. online conversation and discussion). Mediation as the last type of activity (CEFR, 2020, pp. 90-116) is a complex category. It comprises mediating text (e.g. explaining data, translating written text, analyzing creative texts for example literature), mediating concepts (e.g. facilitating interaction with peers and collaborating to construct meaning), and mediating communication (e.g. in delicate situations and disagreements or in informal situations).

Communicative language competences are divided into linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and pragmatic competence. Linguistic competence (CEFR, 2020, pp. 130-136) is made up of the categories, general linguistic range (or morpho-syntactic range), vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary control, phonological control, and orthographic control. A distinction between range and control is made, indicating that in the language learning process, learners acquire a wider and more complex repertoire. When trying to apply this newly learned complex language, moving beyond their comfort zone, their control is often not yet fully developed. This is natural and an essential part of the learning process (CEFR, 2020, p. 130).

Sociolinguistic competence (CEFR, 2020, pp.136-137) deals with awareness of social relations, politeness, register differences, dialect, and accent. This means e.g. recognizing sociocultural cues and using an appropriate register, humor, and idiomatic expressions. This type of competence is described as sociolinguistic appropriateness and cultural repertoire, being aware of sociocultural norms, having knowledge of the landmarks of the local culture(s): people, facts and major community issues (CEFR, 2020, p. 153). Although this is explained in relation to sign language in the CEFR description, it is of course equally relevant for other forms of language.

Finally, pragmatic competence (CEFR, 2020, pp. 137-142) is defined as the knowledge of "the principles of language use" (CEFR, 2020, p. 137). This competence includes discourse competence, functional competence, and design competence. These elements consist of flexibility, turntaking, thematic development, coherence and cohesion, propositional precision, and fluency.

4. Method

The empirical material that we examine in this study is the personal learning objectives, formulated by 135 participants of the GAC courses from the Fall semester 2022 to the Fall semester 2024.

All participants in the courses have been asked to formulate freely three personal learning objectives for their participation in the course. This was done as their first task at the beginning of the first session in each course. The task was formulated in a very open way, e.g.: "Your three own learning objectives: Please write your own personal learning objectives in Danish or in English (or in German)". The participants were asked to hand in their learning objectives anonymously in the course's digital learning management system (LMS) Moodle. The task was explained by the course instructors as a substitute for the binding learning objectives that are formulated by the university for all full-time study programs and as a means for the participants to formulate their own focal points for the course. No restrictions and very little guidance were given on how exactly to do this, and what kinds of objectives must be formulated in order to make it a very free task for the participants. A few minutes' time was given to perform the task. The participants formulating their own learning objectives served as a tool for them to become aware of and articulate their personal areas of focus. More indirectly, the task also let them express their motivation for taking part in the course. Additionally, it let them indicate in which situations they expect to utilize the language in the future. The task of formulating personal learning objectives was voluntary, so not all participants performed the task. However, the vast majority of the participants took on the task and

uploaded their learning objectives in the LMS.

As the first step in preparing the data for analysis, the learning objectives have been coded by the authors. The coding was inspired by the typology set up in a pilot investigation from 2023 on learning objectives formulated by a smaller group of participants (47 individuals) in Spring 2023 presented in Voldgaard Larsen (2023). The categories for the typology of empirical material were constructed on the basis of the CEFR and the material itself. Such a data driven approach allows for the emergence of themes and insights directly from the data. Patterns can be detected based on the data themselves, rather than being imposed beforehand. Thus, the process was partly inductive, but some categories were, in fact, deductively constructed, using the CEFR framework for categories related to the dimensions of language.

In the analysis, we begin with a quantitative analysis of the learning objectives with the purpose of giving an overview of the most frequently expressed categories and subcategories of learning objectives. In the second part of the analysis, we go into depth with a qualitative analysis of selected subcategories in order to achieve more detailed insights.

In the qualitative part of the analysis, we present quotes from the learning objectives. In instances where participants expressed themselves in Danish or German, the quotations were translated into English by the authors. References to the semester in which the participants took part in the course are provided. Semesters are indicated via abbreviation of season and year in parentheses. For example, “Sp23” means that the participant took the course in Spring 2023, “Su24” means that the participant was in the Summer School course in the Summer of 2024, and “Fa22” means that the participant took in the course in Fall 2022.

The content of the learning objectives is essentially divided into two areas. The first area consists of the objectives regarding the dimensions of language which the participants aim to improve. The second area comprises the dimensions of future use of their language competences. The participants thus commented on both the elements of the language they wished to further develop and the purposes or contexts in which they intended to use the acquired language competences, i.e. the language application situations (cf. Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). These elements might be seen as motivational factors for joining the course. However, since they are stated as learning objectives by the participants themselves, we have decided for this study to classify them as learning objectives related to other aspects than linguistic competence.

5. Analysis

As mentioned above, all participants were asked to formulate 2-3 learning objectives without being provided with specific guidelines regarding the content or manner of these learning objectives. These objectives have subsequently been categorized, and the categories are visualized in Table 1. A detailed analysis will be provided in the following chapter.

5.1 Quantitative analysis of the learning objectives

In the quantitative part of the analysis, we will present, firstly, the dimension of language that the participants have indicated with the purpose of giving an overview of the categories of the most frequently expressed learning objectives. Secondly, we will unfold the dimensions of use of language competences, focusing on the situations and contexts in which the participants want to

apply the acquired language (cf. Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, on the impact of situational grounding).

Table 1: Typology of learning objectives

Typology of learning objectives	**Fa22**	**Sp23**	**Fa23**	**Sp24**	**Fa24**	**Total**
I Communicative Language Activities and Strategies						
Reception						
1 Oral comprehension	2	9	4	10	3	28
2 Reading comprehension	1	4	6	8	1	20
Production						
3 Oral production	4	11	10	17	5	47
4 Written production		1	3	5	2	11
Interaction						
5 Oral interaction	3	9	8	15	7	42
6 Written interaction			1	2	1	4
7 Mediation	1	2	4			7
II Communicative Language Competence						
Linguistic competence						
8 General linguistic range	2	5	4	3	1	15
9 Vocabulary range and control	1	2	10	11	5	29
10 Grammatical accuracy	1	6	8	19	6	40
11 Phonological control	3	1	2	4	1	11
12 Sociolinguistic appropriateness		5	2	9	2	18
13 Fluency (pragmatic competence) and processing speed	1	2	4	7	2	16
III Specific developmental objectives						
14 Refreshing the language	1	3	2	12	3	21
15 As preparation for taking more German courses and learning more in the future		1	2	4		7
16 Being comfortable with using the language / addressing language anxiety	2	4	7	13		26
IV Subject-specific content areas						
17 Germany and German culture (amongst others history, traditions, and politics)		2	5	13	2	22
18 Technical language	2	1	3		2	8

19 Business and organizational culture		2		3		5
V Concrete work-related purpose						
20 Study or internship abroad		1		1	1	3
21 Study	1	3	3	2		9
22 Job		7	5	10	6	28
VI Personal interest						
23 Interest in Germany and German language			1	6	1	8
24 Use German for vacation and in private life		7	1	6	1	15

5.1.1 Dimensions of language

For the description of the first area, we based our approach on the CEFR dimensions containing *Communicative language activities and strategies*: reception, production, interaction, and mediation and *Communicative language competence*. To ensure relevance and clarity, we adjusted the table categories to match the results, so that only categories that were actually addressed by the participants were included in Table 1. In this way, in the area of *Linguistic competence* there are four categories included, and under *Pragmatic competence* only one. Additionally, we established further categories based on the empirical material. Furthermore, some participants formulated objectives that expressed general statements about improving their German, i.e. competences regarding the language in a broader, less specific sense: refreshing the language, preparing themselves for learning more German in the future, and being more comfortable with using the language. One could argue that these general statements are not learning objectives but rather learning goals in the sense described by Rohloff, Sauer and Meinel (2019). However, we found that these categories were relevant developmental goals which provide further insights into the participants' language learning process in the long run.

Moreover, many participants expressed an interest in not only acquiring various linguistic skills, but also certain subject-specific content areas related to the German speaking world. Finally, we included the ways in which the students planned to use their acquired linguistic skills and knowledge differentiating between work- and study-related purposes and personal interest.

In the main categories we thus included:

I. Communicative Language Activities and Strategies
II. Communicative Language Competence
III. Specific developmental objectives
IV. Subject-specific content areas

As for the CEFR dimensions, the category "Oral production" is the most frequent, with 47 occurrences in the empirical material. The second most frequent category is "Oral interaction" with 42 occurrences. Another category concerned with orality, "Oral comprehension", obtained 28 occurrences. However, the category concerned with pronunciation "Phonological control" only had 11 hits. While the participants are highly motivated to further their oral skills, they are less concerned with problems regarding pronunciation.

The third most frequent category of all is “Grammatical accuracy” with 40 occurrences and the most frequent category of *Linguistic competence* under *Communicative Language Competence*. It is noteworthy that this category appeared relatively frequently, as it is often highlighted by students in schools as something burdensome and negative that has too much weight in the educational system (cf. Barfod Lund et al., 2023). However, it could also be interpreted that the course participants consider it vital or particularly important to improve their grammatical competences in order to enhance their language skills and produce correct German (both in speaking and writing).

The second most frequent category under *Linguistic competence* is “Vocabulary range and control” with 29 occurrences, making it one of the most important to the participants after oral competences and grammar. This fits the impression in the study, that the participants often lack exposure to and practice of their German language skills. Also, this assumption is consistent with the fact that the category “Refreshing the language” features 21, i.e. relatively many occurrences.

Another frequent category in the first area is “Oral comprehension”, which encompasses understanding spoken language as well as understanding media (films, videos, etc.). This category had 28 occurrences in our material. Moreover, reading comprehension is quite frequent as well with 20 occurrences and indicates that participants find “Reception” competences valuable. This might be related to the fact that for them as students, reading is a predominant activity, that they see reading skills as important for their future career and value reading German literature as an attractive leisure activity.

All in all, the focus lies clearly on the CEFR macro function “Production”, primarily of spoken text, rather than the macro function “Reception”, i.e. reading and listening comprehension. Moreover, the focus leis on oral rather than written activities and strategies.

Another complex category, “Mediation”, received 7 occurrences in our study. “Mediation” includes activities and strategies such as relaying specific information, explaining data, and encouraging conceptual talk. The participants in the study who filled in this category are all concerned with being able to give study- and work-related presentations.

In the area of *Communicative Language Competence*, “Fluency” is also given some attention with 16 occurrences as the only pragmatic competence mentioned. The participants understand that they need to work with their communicative speed to keep up with a conversation in German.

Some participants have formulated very general learning objectives such as “improving my German”. For these types of statements, we used the category “General linguistic range” of the CEFR which obtained 15 occurrences. Reflecting on this category together with “Refreshing the language” which is likewise somewhat general, but received relatively many hits, one can assume that some participants are not very conscious of how language learning works, nor what they themselves want to learn more specifically, why they want to learn it, and what they want to use their achieved new competences for.

The categories regarding specific subject-related content include “Germany and German culture”, “Technical language” and “Business and organizational culture”. The most frequent occurrence in this section is “Germany and German culture” with 22 occurrences.

As for their plans for using their language skills, most participants mention “Job situations”, which obtained 28 occurrences. However, remarkably, 15 participants plan to use their German in private settings such as for vacation or with family and friends, while 8 have a personal interest in Germany and German language.

Another important point for the participants is a focus on confidence, being comfortable with or reduction of anxiety in using the German language, and this theme is surprisingly significant. A total of 26 participants formulated an individual learning objective with this in focus.

5.1.2 Dimensions of language use

In addition to the area “Dimensions of Language” the second area “Dimensions of Language Use” emerged from the empirical material. In this second area that the course participants envisioned, the focus leis on the situations in which the acquired language is to be utilized. We have divided the data into two main categories:

1. Concrete work-related purpose
2. Personal interest

“Concrete work-related purpose”, with 28 occurrences, is the most frequent in this category. Many course participants thus indicate that they intend to use the acquired language in their professional lives, although not always specifying further. These occurrences are primarily oriented towards the use of German in relation to internships as part of the participant’s education or jobs in companies with relation to German speaking countries, i.e. not only Germany, but also Austria and Switzerland are mentioned by the participants. The participants express interest both in working in companies situated or with their headquarters in German speaking countries and in domestic companies that have collaboration with German speaking companies or export/import to German speaking countries. Furthermore, three participants want to use the language for a study abroad semester in a German speaking country during their education. Some participants pursue strategic objectives with the course, aiming to improve their work qualifications. In contrast, only five participants use the course primarily for their CV, receiving a diploma or a job interview.

The category “Personal interests” enjoys a surprisingly extensive representation in our data material, encompassing a total of 23 occurrences. We have divided these into two subcategories: First and more frequently seen, a general, personal interest in Germany and German, and second, a more specifically focused interest in using the language with family, friends, and on vacation. The interest in Germany and German language (eight occurences) can be general, but one participant also justifies it by stating that German is an important language spoken by many people. Three participants justify their interest in the German language by expressing a desire to master multiple languages. In the second subcategory, there are an almost equal number of occurrences between participants who want to use their German on vacation and in other private contexts, and those who want to speak German with friends and family. These findings are partly related to production and reception, partly to interaction (cf. CEFR, 2020). Moreover, we find combinations of private and professional interests in the data material, which means that the participants are not solely expressing either a private interest or a professional, work-related interest.

5.2 Qualitative analysis of selected learning objectives

In this part of the analysis, we conduct an in-depth investigation within selected categories, specifically focusing on the four most frequently occurring categories, i.e. oral production, oral interaction, grammatical accuracy, and vocabulary range and control. It is noteworthy that all four categories are within the dimensions of language, not within the dimensions of language use. This

section will include the interpretation of selected quotes from the learning objectives of the course participants.

5.2.1 Oral production and interaction (subcategory 3 and 5)

When participants formulate a specific desire to improve their speaking skills – beyond general statements expressing that they want to "speak German better" or "engage in conversations", which are also common – they indicate an interest in functional German: "nothing fancy" (Fa24). Many are particularly interested in everyday language that enables them to handle "real-life situations." Terms like "everyday language" and "everyday conversations" are frequently mentioned. This could also suggest that many course participants learned more specialized vocabulary in school (e.g. about politics, history, culture, and literature) and that less emphasis was put on everyday language, which they now seek to address.

The participants want to realize the linguistic potential they acquired in school for practical use. Although they learned German in school, they repeatedly express that they cannot yet apply it in conversations. This can be seen as correlated to the category 23 "Being comfortable using the language" as many seek greater "confidence" (Sp24) in the language, preferring to securely master the "basics" (Sp24) and "common phrases" (Fa24) for everyday situations rather than having advanced knowledge that they are unsure about.

The desire to "conduct a normal conversation in German" (Fa22) or "small talk" (Su24) is shared by several participants, with pronunciation frequently mentioned as a prerequisite for speaking and engaging in conversations. Some course participants are thinking in detail about how they can elevate their language skills to a level where conversation becomes possible:

"More common phrases. I feel like what gets me furthest with my German is the few common sayings that I know, and I would like to increase my toolbox of these as they really help keep a conversation going" (Fa24).

Many want to be able to conduct everyday conversations in German without being hindered by linguistic limitations: "Being able to effortlessly converse in everyday German" (Sp23). This point is very common and is remarkable considering that focus in the AAU description of the course primarily is on Business German. The reason for this may also be because some participants feel that they are far from the level where they can engage in conversations, let alone use work-related German: "I would like to reach a point where I dare to throw myself into speaking German" (Sp23). The desire to speak with native speakers is also frequently expressed, for example having "a conversation with a German speaker" (Sp23), for example German tourists in Denmark (Sp23). Participants who expressed this wish may perceive that such situations would provide access to authentic language use and thereby enhance their language competences. Moreover, participants have observed that prior knowledge of German – acquired, for instance, in school - does not necessarily enable them to engage in authentic interaction, in "actual conversations" (Sp23). They now aim to realize their linguistic potential, as illustrated by one statement: "I am frustrated that I cannot speak better German, even though I have studied it for many years in school – I want to change that" (Sp23). They aspire to be able to "expressing myself freely in German language (Sp24), and with "not just pre-practiced sentences" (Sp23). Frequently mentioned objectives include speaking fluently at an appropriate pace, improving pronunciation and speaking more grammatically correctly (Sp23). A particularly notable learning objective was formulated by one participant, who conceived the idea of calling his former German teacher, who had assessed him

critically, and engaging with her in a conversation in German (Su24).

Some participants express a desire to use oral language production in academic or professional contexts, for example, “being able to give a presentation in German” (Sp23) which was coded under the category “mediation”. Other kinds of professional language are also of interest: “I would really like some training in formulating more formal German that can be used in work contexts” (Su24). This includes skills such as conducting a phone call: “That I can complete an entire phone call in German” (Su24).

In relation to oral language production, issues of confidence and, indirectly, language anxiety are repeatedly mentioned, as seen in the wish to “understand basic conversations in German and be able to contribute to them without making a fool of myself” (Su24) and in the following learning objective: “My goals are to become comfortable with the German language, to speak with more confidence, and to improve my grammar” (Sp24). Thus, the desire for greater grammatical accuracy is not solely about formal competence but also about building confidence in language use.

5.2.2 Grammatical accuracy (subcategory 10)

PThe high frequence of the want for “grammatical accuracy” in the individual learning objectives can be interpreted as the perception that grammatical knowledge enables the production of correct and well-functioning language. To confirm this assumption one interesting question is which grammatical elements the participants aim at learning and why. Although many course participants simply express a desire to improve their grammar without specifying particular aspects, like in the following quote: “To refresh my German grammar” (Sp24), our data gives a few more answers. When participants explicitly mention aspects of grammar they want to improve, these include syntax (with one example specifically mentioning the position of the verb in the sentence), verbal tense (past and future tense of verbs), conjugation and declension, as well as the gender of nouns. Participants do not always use grammatical terminology but describe the grammatical elements in everyday language, e.g. “der, die, das” or “to get better at putting a sentence together” (Fa22).

In some learning objectives the wish is further specified like here:

I have never quite figured out the gender of German words and how to determine/know when to use der, die, or das. I hope to improve this through the course, as it will likely make it a bit easier and more comfortable or secure to use the language (Sp24).

In this example, the desire is expressed to brush up German grammar and address a specific knowledge gap that the participant has identified. In the learning objectives, the topic of gender was a frequently requested grammatical topic. One participant mentions the German grammatical cases: “Mastering the use of German cases (nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive) by creating and practicing sentences that correctly implement each case” (Su24).

We observe that syntax emerges as by far the most frequently mentioned grammatical topic, and the ability to construct sentences is a common aspiration among participants who express a wish to improve their grammar. The following examples illustrate this focus, highlighting different aspects of syntax from a general perspective, such as “to formulate sentences” (Fa22), to more specific concerns: “I do not expect to master the grammar, but rather to improve my word order” (Fa22) and “Syntactic sentence analysis needs to be refreshed, I want to master the genitive case” (Su24).

Participants are aware of the fact that German sentences have specific structural possibilities, and

they aim at improving their understanding of sentence structure in German and their skills in constructing sentences, like in the following cases: “To gain a better understanding of basic sentence structures in German grammar” (Sp23) and “I would like to improve my skills in sentence construction in German” (Sp23).

Some of the participants address dealing with language anxiety related to grammatical errors. It is important to them to improve their grammar but also to better cope with inevitable grammatical mistakes: “To dare to make grammatical mistakes and to improve my grammar” (Sp24). In this case we observe that language anxiety plays a role in relation to missing grammatical knowledge and skills, which might be seen in relation to the educational focus on grammar at lower educational levels, e.g. in youth education (cf. Barfod Lund et al., 2023). We also observe a certain distancing from this focus as some participants appear to have recognized that speaking flawless German is unrealistic. Consequently, they now aim, on the one hand, to improve their grammatical competence and, on the other, to ‘dare’ to make mistakes. This suggests that strict demands for grammatical correctness may pose the risk of inhibiting learners from speaking the language (freely) altogether.

5.2.3 Oral comprehension (subcategory 1)

The most frequently expressed need in relation to oral comprehension is to understand spoken language, e.g. in this quote from a participant: “A better general understanding of German when other people speak” (Fa22). Two aspects are particularly emphasized, firstly the speed of speech and secondly the need of understanding the language in everyday contexts. An example of the first aspect are the following quotes: “Be more able to understand German, also when it is spoken a bit fast” (Fa22), “I would like to be better at understanding spoken German. Be more used to the speed at which people speak the language” (Sp23) and “The primary goal is to be able to understand a fast casual conversation between native German speakers, in other words, keep up with a conversation” (Fa24). In connection with the second aspect, participants emphasize that understanding in everyday contexts is particularly important to them, like in the following quote: “Understanding everyday spoken German” (Fa22).

Some course participants also see more opportunities to improve their comprehension (i.e. reception) in contrast to speaking and/or writing (i.e. production). This point is expressed in the following example: “I don’t expect that I’ll be better at speaking the language, but I hope for a better reading comprehension and that it will be easier to understand German speaking persons” (Sp23).

The desire to understand German is often linked with the wish for conversation, i.e. interaction (cf. CEFR), where speaking and listening are equally involved. This desire can be seen in the following objective:

I would like to be better at oral German so I can understand and have the ability to answer German people who might try to have a conversation with me in their own language. I would especially be interested in knowing German at a level that I can speak relatively fluently with German tourists in Denmark (Fa23).

Again, we observe that the wish for fluency and the speed of speech play an important role.

In the following examples, comprehension constitutes a central focus. Understanding oral interaction emerges as a key priority for these participants, as illustrated by the statement: “To understand the general meaning of a conversation and engage in a casual conversation” (Sp24).

The desire to comprehend German media is expressed repeatedly, including understanding specific media content – for instance - what commentators say during a Bundesliga soccer match, or being able to "watch a movie or play a computer game without subtitles" (Sp24). The focus is on "understanding natural German when I hear it" (Sp24). Similarly, participants articulate a broader objective of understanding media without having to read subtitles, as reflected in the following quote: "I want to be able to watch German media without subtitles and have good comprehension" (Sp24).

Some course participants express a realistic and pragmatic approach to language learning. They are aware that they will not achieve perfect German by the end of the course; therefore, they set more immediate and attainable learning objectives, such as the following: "To understand simple German sentences and a limited number of difficult but frequently used words" (Sp24). This introduces the concept of language learning through chunks, as well as the goal of functional language by specifically practicing frequent, difficult words. Learning objectives within the area of reception might appear to be more achievable than production in the eyes of some participants. Furthermore, the primary focus is on functional language, i.e. words and phrases that are commonly used.

Furthermore, some participants aim to improve their general understanding without specifying further, like in the following example: "To get better at understanding German" (Sp24). In contrast, others, who express themselves only generally and briefly, emphasize that their main goal is to understand spoken language: "Understand spoken German better" (Su24).

The desire to understand native German speakers who speak at a "natural" pace is also expressed by some of the participants, for instance in the following quote: "I also need to understand when a German person speaks (they often speak very quickly)" (Su24). Thus, the understanding of everyday or casual language in everyday contexts is repeatedly emphasized, "in real-life situations" (Fa24), as well as "German in casual form" (Fa24).

5.2.4 Vocabulary range and control (subcategory 9)

Another aspect that indirectly relates to language reception and listening comprehension, but also to language production and speaking is vocabulary. Participants frequently express a general aspiration to improve and expand their vocabulary. Typical statements include "I would like to have a better vocabulary" (Fa23) or "increase my German vocabulary" (Sp24). This objective is often mentioned in connection with oral comprehension and/or oral production as well as grammatical accuracy, as illustrated by the statement "to repeat vocabulary and grammar to be able to speak again" (Su24).

When participants refer to vocabulary, they include both everyday and specialized vocabulary. In some cases, both types are desired simultaneously, for example, in this statement: "I would like to know basic German to engage in small talk. If I learn some technical terms, that would be great" (Fa22). There are also frequent aspirations for both specialized and subject-specific vocabulary, often related to the participants' fields of study and future professional areas such as economics (Fa22), computer/IT (Sp23) or other areas, as in the following example: "Acquire technical vocabulary in architecture and construction" (Sp23).

In addition, some participants explicitly request non-specialized vocabulary that is more relevant for everyday conversations and small talk. This dimension also reflects the following respons related to speaking and listening comprehension: "Expand my vocabulary; not necessarily within the specialized fields, but just general everyday things" (Fa23).

Several participants aim to learn the necessary vocabulary for communication (Fa24) or to participate in a conversation: “Engage in a simple conversation in German without having to refer to a dictionary” (Sp23). They experience that a limited vocabulary can hinder fluency and cause “too many pauses” in a conversation (Su24), as although their understanding is good, they cannot respond (Sp24).

Some participants aspire to improve their vocabulary in the context of job searching: “I would like to learn more about using German in relation to job opportunities, including CVs, job applications, etc.” (Fa22), generally build a professional vocabulary: “I would like to be able to formulate a professional-sounding email and potentially improve it in the future” (Fa23), and “to learn words that could be beneficial for working in a German-speaking country” (Fa24). One participant has already found a job and now aims to prepare for working in Germany: “I have secured a job at a German company, so I want to learn more technical language and vocabulary” (Fa24).

Another aim is to build or expand vocabulary and enhance reading comprehension for academic purposes, in order to “understand academic texts” (Fa22) and “get better at reading academic texts in German (as it will help in my studies)” (Fa23). Moreover, various cultural areas are in focus in vocabulary related objectives for purposes such as following “German news and current topics (e.g. politics)” (Sp23) and consuming German media, as illustrated by these examples: “be able to understand parts of German series or movies” (Sp23) and “I would like to watch German videos without subtitles at a slow to normal speaking pace” (Sp23).

One participant even quantifies their vocabulary objectives, stating: “I would like to learn 15 technical terms for my field in German” and “I would like to hold a 3-minute everyday conversation without having to search for words more than 5 times” (Sp23). However, such a level of specification remains exceptional.

6. Summary of the analysis

6.1. Summary of dimensions of language

Considering the results of the quantitative analysis, the emphasis in the learning objectives lies on oral production of language. However, oral comprehension, i.e. reception, is also considered important by the participants. Grammar receives greater emphasis than vocabulary range and control, although the latter also plays a significant role. The aspect of feeling comfortable in using the German language and language anxiety likewise occupy a relatively prominent position. This is likely related to the categories of improving and refreshing language skills, as participants appear to recognize that language competences must be practiced, reinforced, and revisited to ensure effective use. It is evident that participants build on their prior knowledge of German, their existing competences, and their previous experiences with German and language learning more broadly, even though they rarely articulate these experiences explicitly.

The perceived importance of grammar - as the most prominent category after those related to orality - is somewhat unexpected. This finding raises the question of why course participants attribute such high significance to grammar. One possible explanation is, that this emphasis derives from the (over)representation of grammar in school curricula, leading participants to internalize the belief that mastering German requires thorough grammatical knowledge. Alternatively, participants may genuinely have a personal interest in learning more grammar because they perceive it – or have experienced it – as beneficial for their engagement with the German language. However, this

question cannot be answered on the basis of the available data, as it would require more in-depth qualitative investigation into the participants' perceptions and experiences of grammar, for example through interviews.

6.2 Summary of dimensions of language use

In the category "Dimensions of Language Use", the participants in their learning objectives focus on situations in which they want to use the German language. A significant number of participants express a professional interest without specifying further. The second most common goal among course participants in this category is to complete the course in order to qualify for an internship or employment in a company related to one or more German speaking countries. Many view German language skills as an integral part of enhancing their overall professional qualifications. Notably, a substantial number of learning objectives reflect a personal interest in German, stemming from both a general enthusiasm for the language and a desire to use German while on vacation or in interaction with friends and family.

6.3 Summary of the qualitative analysis of selected learning objectives

The qualitative investigation into the selected dimensions of oral production, interaction, and comprehension, grammatical accuracy, and vocabulary range and control shows that participants express both specific and more general aspirations regarding language improvement. A key focus for most participants is oral production, speaking, and they wish to be able to conduct dialogues in German and use everyday language to handle "real-life situations". That is, both production and interaction (cf. CEFR, 2020) are central. Many participants aim to gain more "confidence" in using the language. They prefer to master the "basics" and "common phrases" for everyday use rather than acquire advanced knowledge that they feel uncertain about and therefore hesitate to use. This indicates a desire for functional German at a realistic level, rather than specialized or overly complex language skills. Furthermore, participants wish to refresh and activate the linguistic potential they have acquired through their previous schooling and other learning contexts.

That the focus on everyday language even seems to exceed the emphasis on, for instance, knowledge about Business culture invites reflection, as the courses are mainly designed to support the use of German in professional contexts. This result supports the observation that everyday language is a linguistic dimension that is largely neglected in the senior grades of the Danish school system. Students may experience a lack of foundational skills before they are able to build upon their language proficiency with more specialized topics and linguistic features.

In connection with the frequently expressed learning objective, achieving oral comprehension, primarily two aspects are in focus for the participants: understanding speech at "natural" speed, as German speaking people are seen as fast speakers, and understanding spoken language in everyday contexts. Also, understanding German media is highlighted in the learning objectives, e.g. understanding natives speakers' spoken language in films and computer games as well as in more specific media releases like Bundesliga matches. The former aspect is related to reception and interaction (cf. CEFR, 2020), whereas the latter is primarily related to reception.

Grammar competencies, which are mentioned by quite a few participants as a goal, are generally perceived as a means to enable the production of correct and well-functioning language (cf. CEFR, 2020), rather than as a way to enhance the receptive competences. The learning objectives vary significantly in termns of specificity, ranging from very general goals, such as the wish to "improve

their grammar" to more specific grammatical areas participants aim to improve, e.g. gender of nouns, syntax, and verbal tense. The learning objectives related to grammar are predominantly centered around the practical use of grammar in spoken and written language, and less focused on theoretical knowledge of grammar. Once again, we observe that the emphasis lies on functional language use.

Often, participants mention grammar and vocabulary together as areas they wish to enhance. Improving vocabulary for oral conversation on everyday topics is a common objective, expanding specialized vocabulary for reading and studying as well as for speaking professionally is important for some. They wish to improve their vocabulary in relation to work and career, academic contexts, as well as media consumption. Participants express a desire to understand fast-paced conversations by native German speakers and to speak freely and fluently, without hesitation or searching for words. This is, once again, related to the functional language competence that most participants aim to acquire through the courses.

A characteristic example of a learning goal that brings several central aspects of language into play is the following: "I would like to break down my language barrier, familiarize myself with grammar and the necessary vocabulary for communication. I would like to be able to easily hold a conversation in German after the course" (Su24). This course participant integrates several linguistic elements and relates them to being skilled and successful in communication, with a clear purpose. In addition to grammar and vocabulary, the participant emphasizes the desire for oral communication and interaction, as well as gaining confidence and reducing language anxiety.

7. Discussion and concluding remarks

In this section, we will discuss the possible implications of this investigation into the learning objectives for teaching and learning of language in GAC courses at universities.

In connection with the rather vague objectives that some participants formulated, e.g. in the subcategory "Improvement of the language", the question arises whether it would have been better to limit the participants in their formulation of learning objectives, or if it can be seen as a strength of this study that the participants could freely express whatever came to mind, thereby allowing for a more thorough investigation of their individual objectives. As indicated above, it might show that not all participants are conscious language learners. This could be an argument for helping them formulate their objectives in a more specific manner, e.g. through guidelines or structured support. This could be done by giving them specifications about how to formulate specific and measurable objectives, e.g. according to the SMART principles: specific, measurable, assignable, realistic, and time-related (Doran, 1981). On the other hand, such restrictions might hinder the practical, individual work with learning objectives. Less conscious language learners may not be able to formulate very specific objectives, due to their lack of theoretical knowledge about how language learning works, or they may not identify with highly specific objectives. In such cases, overly structured formulations could reduce personal relevance and engagement.

Another question that arises is whether insights can be derived from participants' focus on linguistic elements they wish to improve as opposed to the contexts in which the acquired language is to be used. World knowledge as well as socio- and intercultural competence are essential in all intercultural communicative situations, as these factors have a crucial impact on which communicative language strategies should be employed to complete a communicative task. Therefore, the content of GAC courses must consist of a combination of teaching general competences and communicative language competences and strategies (cf. CEFR, 2020).

Many participants in this type of course seem to have an instrumental and functional view of language. In this context, it is important that the teaching activities reflect this functional perspective on language learning. This can be achieved by incorporating a variety of practical exercises and tasks into the courses, such as conversation and discussion activities, role plays in pairs or small groups, individual writing assignments, group presentations, and pronunciation training in class. Furthermore, it is crucial to provide explicit instructions during the course regarding the purpose of each learning activity, the competences being developed, and how the acquired skills can be applied.

The participants' learning objectives span several CEFR levels. For example, engaging in conversations on everyday topics is defined as part of the A2 level in the CEFR system (CEFR, 2020, p. 72), whereas giving presentations in one's field of interest is an element of the B2 level (CEFR, 2020, p. 62). This reflects the principle of the zone of proximal development and is a natural consequence of learning objectives being shaped by participants' prior knowledge, personal goals, and intended application situations. One implication is that flexibility and variation in exercises and tasks are beneficial, along with grouping participants by proficiency level. It is noteworthy that most participants likely do not have extensive knowledge of the CEFR levels and their descriptors. Therefore, it may be advisable to ask participants to revisit their learning objectives at the end of the course and possibly at mid-course to assess their progress. This mid-course check can help determine whether they are on track to achieving their learning objectives.

As for the themes taught in class, emphasizing practical oral communication and listening comprehension training is imperative. This can be achieved through hands-on tasks, such as role plays, dialogue practice, presentations, and similar activities. Oral comprehension can be trained by listening to and/or watching audio/visual materials like songs, audio-dialogues, videos, and short films, followed by group or class discussions. These discussions should preferably focus on specific themes or items introduced in advance. Introducing themes beforehand helps participants' focus their listening and viewing tasks, thereby enhancing the learning outcome. This approach can also raise participants' awareness of grammatical features if a grammatical theme is introduced beforehand, and participants are subsequently tasked with identifying these features in a video or song.

Moreover, fostering a supportive and safe classroom environment and minimizing error correction are important to reduce language anxiety and strengthen participants' confidence in their language competencies. A key goal of teaching should be to empower learners enhancing their (linguistic) self-confidence and encouraging them to use the language in practical contexts. It may be beneficial to address language anxiety and lack of confidence explicitly in class or at least ensure that tasks are designed to reduce language anxiety and appear as non-intimidating as possible (see e.g. Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Fenyvesi, 2021). This can be achieved by incorporating collaborative group work, possibly with fixed groups over a extended period, and by making tasks voluntary or offering multiple options regarding which tasks participants wish to complete and how they prefer to engage. Such flexibility and choice can also support participants in working more effectively towards achieving their individual learning objectives.

Training grammatical competencies through the introduction of lexical chunks appears to be a feasible approach (see e.g. Handwerker, 2008; Aguado, 2015; Gebauer & Larsen, in preparation). Chunks seem to be a relevant tool for the rapid development of communicative competence, as they consist of fixed expressions providing a functional linguistic unit that learners can use immediately. Repetition of chunks and related tasks, not only those focused on grammar, but also involving

different types of chunks and communicative activities, is essential to enable participants to achieve a sense of success and mastery. However, how chunks can be specifically applied in GAC courses, where participants typically have lower language proficiency than students in traditional language programs, requires further investigation.

A question that requires further investigation and discussion is, to what extent participants expect to and should acquire theoretical grammatical knowledge, or whether they should primarily develop practical competencies, such as the ability to communicate using the most common grammatical forms. The use of chunks that have incorporated grammatical features could address this issue by promoting the acquisition of practical competencies. However, it remains to be seen whether participants can effectively learn grammar through this method and whether they would accept it as a legitimate and validated approach to language learning. Alternatively, participants might not recognize that they are learning grammar in this way and may instead request more traditional, explicit grammar instruction.

For participants who are particularly motivated to maintain, brush up, and further develop their competences in German, teachers must strive to inspire and assist them in actively practicing German in their daily lives. In practice, different recommendations can be provided depending on the specific learning objectives participants aim to achieve. This could include recommending audio-visual materials, literature, and other readings, as well as presenting additional ideas for practicing German during and after the course in the students' spare time, such as writing a diary or utilizing written or audio-visual media.

Finally, and most importantly, it is essential that the course focuses on practical language, "nothing fancy", as one participant put it, meaning that it should primarily teach everyday German. This is crucial for enabling participants to acquire practically applicable language skills and communicative competences through hands-on exercises - a functional German that they can apply in real-world situations.

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