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**Reading the German Graphic Novel:
Understanding Learners' Readings of Multimodal Literary Comics**

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**Reading the German Graphic Novel:
Understanding Learners' Readings of Multimodal Literary Comics**

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John David Benjamin

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, both here in the United States and in Poland, especially my wife, Agnieszka Katarzyna Makles, without whom I would never have been able to do this. Dziękuję bardzo za twoją miłość, wsparcie i przyjaźń.

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So, with the following from New Jersey's favorite son, Bruce Springsteen ...

Someday girl I don't know when
We're gonna get to that place where we really want to go
And we'll walk in the sun
But 'til then tramps like us, baby, we were born to run.

... I dedicate this work to you. *Chodź, idziemy.*

Abstract

Reading the German Graphic Novel: Understanding Learners' Readings of Multimodal Literary Comics

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2019

Supervisors: Per Urlaub, Katherine Arens

This dissertation considers the reading process among collegiate German language learners interacting with related texts in the target language: short prose texts by Bertolt Brecht (Brecht, 1967) and their adaptations in comics form by Ulf K. (Brecht & K., 2014). This comparison aims to understand the second language (L2) reading process of multimodal texts and to establish an instructional model for teaching them. The study addresses three primary research questions: (1) How do comics compare to prose texts regarding L2 reading comprehension? (2) How does genre-specific background knowledge of comics in terms of form, plot, and theme affect reading comprehension? (3) Do students enjoy comics, do they consider them literature, and how do these views affect reading comprehension? The dissertation provides applied linguists and scholars of literature, visual studies, and multimodality with systematic insights into the instructional use of graphic novels and multimodal texts.

L2 reading research emerged over 30 years ago from L1 work and has since developed new insights into L2 reading. Beginning in the 1990s, theoretical approaches related to new literacies and multiple literacies have provided scholars new methods for understanding and defining L2 reading comprehension. Recent work on multimodality, focused on meaning-making beyond the written word, has worked to expand the definition of reading material, allowing researchers to consider a wider range of texts.

The German graphic novel is well suited for the exploration of these issues in research on L2 literary reading at the university level. Scholars are increasingly investigating these works as material for L2 learners. Much work is needed to connect comics theory to L2 literary reading and reader-oriented literary-theoretical approaches.

The dissertation's study measures the L2 reading of comics and prose texts through Immediate Recall protocols (IRPs), modeled after Bernhardt (1983), rated according to a set of Rubrics for Assessing Reading Across Modalities (RARAM) and idea units, as well as pre- and postquestionnaires. The IRPs allow the researcher to see what participants comprehend from a text and how they understand it. The prequestionnaire determines the participants' familiarity with comics to measure background knowledge and their affective views of the medium. The postquestionnaire elicits shifts in the participants' views of comics as literature and language learning material.

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Introduction:

Setting the Problem

As university language departments shrink, institutional language requirements are reduced or disappear, and language majors become rarer, second language (L2) teaching is becoming more innovative and effective. Such instruction involves not only a familiarity with current pedagogical practices but also instructional materials relevant to the evolving needs and desires of students. As people—especially the younger demographic—read fewer literary texts each year, it may be tempting to write off L2 learners as non-readers and expect a curriculum oriented away from texts and reading. This reaction, however, ignores the changing nature of reading itself; while today’s readers spend less time with the canon, they are increasingly embracing multimodal¹

¹ Multimodality studies, discussed in greater detail in Sections 3.4.3–3.4.6, arose in the mid-1990s from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1978). It examines how meaning is constructed from multiple systems of socially-determined resources called modes. Meaning is made in real spatial and temporal “reading” contexts by individuals with specific social and cultural relationships to the modes. According to scholars of multimodality, no one mode is better than another at expressing meaning. Instead, each mode is defined by its affordances, its ability to represent specific meaning in individual contexts (see, e.g., Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996/2006, p. 2). When a text is first conceived, it is expressible in more than one arrangement of representational modes. The meaning of the resulting text is thus conditioned by the selection of specific modes to realize it.

forms. L2 instructors in turn are focusing more on texts in which image and text commingle.

According to popular media, reading is on the decline—consider just a few recent headlines from NPR, the New Yorker, and the Washington Post, respectively: “Why aren’t teens reading like they used to?” (Ludden, 2014), “Do teens read seriously anymore?” (Denby, 2016), and “The death of reading is threatening the soul” (Yancey, 2017). Despite their shared sense of grief, the authors of these articles agree on neither what is disappearing nor on what can be done about it. Some concern themselves with the dwindling popularity of the novel; others grumble at the figure of the teenager, smartphone in hand, oblivious to the world; still others provide tips on how to stave off the seemingly inevitable. All view tweets, memes with bolded slogans superimposed on images, and sitcoms to be binge-watched on Netflix as the culprits. And yet what else is happening in these practices but reading, the creation and transmission of messages and information in various modes of meaning?

These views introduce the two problems of my dissertation: (1) a decrease in reading, especially of traditional literary texts, and (2) the lack of knowledge from readers and reading teachers of how multimodal texts—meaning realized in often new and malleable forms—function. Both problems loom large for second-language instructors who often believe that reading literary texts is indispensable for a language education. But are students actually reading less, or are popular definitions of literature simply too narrow? And how can students learn to read second language (L2) literary

texts if what and how they are reading in their first language (L1) is not sufficiently understood?

A 2016 report from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) focusing on “literary reading” can help clarify the first problem. The report narrowly restricts its material to genre constructs—novels, short stories, poems, and plays. This definition has remained consistent over several consecutive NEA reports and can thus be tracked diachronically. The results of the study differ by age, but they are nonetheless clear and dire. From report to report, literary reading is declining overall, and its best champions are aged 55–74. The youngest demographic tracked, the under-24s, are below the mean (National Endowment for the Arts, 2016). Therefore, according to the report, literary reading is decreasing across demographics and most rapidly in the newest readers.

The second problem, however, complicates these findings. If we consider the growing role of images and non-verbal media in our lives, we might reinterpret the decrease in reading in the NEA Report as a shift in what and how we read. Scholars in multimodality and visual literacy make this very argument. For example, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996/2006) claim that visual communication is “more and more crucial in the domains of public communication” (p. 3). Many even argue that readers interact with all texts multimodally (see, e.g., Van Leeuwen, 2015, p. 447); they read a prose text printed on a page by accessing information communicated in more than just the verbal mode, including through the text font, the page layout, or the images on the volume’s cover. Despite the clear importance of literacy across modalities, however, academics have not given multimodal texts like social media posts, audiobooks and podcasts, or comics,

significant attention in research or in pedagogy. A better understanding of the texts assigned in second language teaching can help make them more meaningful to students: If a narrow definition of literary reading like the NEA's does not correspond to the reading which is actually being done, how can it be improved? Does "literary reading" still mean what it always has in the NEA surveys, and should it? In other words, what types of complex reading practices might profitably be added to the traditional ideas of literature and what are the resulting advantages for readers?

1.1. Research Questions

To approach the more general problems guiding this dissertation, a targeted set of questions focusing on comics as L2 multimodal reading material in comparison to traditional literary texts began to form. The research design that ultimately emerged builds on established work in L1 and L2 reading research, comics studies, literary theory, and image-text relations. It addresses three research questions:

- (1) Does L2 learners' reading comprehension of graphic novels differ from that of prose texts?
- (2) How does familiarity with graphic novels in terms of form, plot elements, and themes affect reading comprehension?
- (3) Do students enjoy graphic novels, do they consider them literature, and how do these views affect reading comprehension?

1.2. Research Design and Rationale

To begin to answer these questions, this dissertation presents the results of an applied linguistics research study comparing second-language (L2) learners' reading comprehension of two related sets of texts in the L2, one in prose by Bertolt Brecht (1967) and its adaptations into comics (in short graphic novel form) by comics artist Ulf K. (Brecht & K., 2014). This comparison foregrounds how learners read and informs how "reading" may be redefined in reference to new text types.

The research design combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to the question of reading. Advanced L2 learners of German in two groups read one text from each of the two forms (prose and comics), and data on their reading was gathered using Immediate Recall Protocols² (IRPs) (Bernhardt, 1983) and pre- and post-test questionnaires. The results offer much-needed data to inform how to teach multimodal reading of authentic, literary texts in the collegiate L2 classroom.

To set a baseline about who is reading, the study uses pre- and posttest questionnaires to ascertain specifics of learners' schematic background knowledge and individual views of graphic novels as literature and material for language learning. These data set the stage for understanding the mix of qualitative and quantitative data derived from the IRPs. To address the limitations of both positivist readings of text recall common in applied linguistics reading research and of theoretical approaches developed from work in image-text relations, multimodality, and literary theory, these IRPs are

² An Immediate Recall Protocol is captured when a reader reads a text, surrenders the text, and then writes down everything recalled from the text. For more on their use in this dissertation's study, the history of their use in L2 reading research, and their rating/scoring, see Sections 4.2.3, 4.5, and 4.6 respectively.

scored using multiple rating systems. The first of these is more traditional, based on learners' recall of idea units, the deep information structure of a text (see Propp, 1968). These data speak to the extent and quality of student reading, as they allow a comparison between acts of reading in the different multimodal forms. The second rating system, a set of Rubrics for Assessing Reading Across Modalities (RARAM), is my own, designed using theoretical approaches from beyond applied linguistics to capture differences in reading arising from student background and text type. The data and resulting analysis can start to define comics reading as a *different* literacy requiring different staging for successful use in the L2 classroom.

Beyond more traditional investigations into modalities of reading, my analysis thus requires a closer look at our understanding of literature itself. The NEA Report measures literary readership according to one set of forms over time. As technology and alternate forms of traditional reading (including not only graphic novels, but also, for example, hypertext³) alter what and how people read, however, a focus in teaching and research on new and newly-popular forms of literary reading can further benefit and serve these readers, including our students. Nonetheless, regardless of inclusiveness defined in student-centered terms, any change in media also suggests that any definition of literary reading based on traditional understandings of genre or form alone will encounter difficulties in accounting for change.

³ Hypertext refers to text created through online links, that is, “an electronically displayed, created, edited and published text form organized in nonlinear chunks, which are connected by associative links” (Ensslin, 2006, pp. 13-14). For a book-length treatment of the topic, see Ensslin (2007).

In consequence, in this dissertation, I instead define literature and literary texts through the estranging presence of “the literary,” a quality of challenging expression and/or content that renders textual expression interesting, extraordinary, and beyond the norm.⁴ At the opposite end of a continuum with orate language,⁵ both new and traditional forms of literature require readers to wield a broad set of literacies in constructing meaning; by the same process, when they read successfully, they also learn how to operate within and between them.

For today’s readers, comics (especially literary comics, or “graphic novels”⁶) can address both main problems. First, they are increasingly popular: The comic book industry in North America alone generated \$870 million in profits in 2013, a significant uptick from \$265 million in revenue in 2000 (Lubin, 2014). Digital comics also show

⁴ For a detailed discussion of the scholarship on the term “literary,” see Section 3.3.1. There, I echo the summary work done by Hall (2015). In his monograph, Hall offers a definition by setting up a continuum from “literary language,” or language that is more varied in style, register, and aim, to “ordinary language,” which is typical of the simplified dialogues in language textbooks (2005, p. 11). For how this relates to L2 learning, I look to Kramsch (1993), who discusses the literary as “a dimension of particularity that seems like an added difficulty,” especially for L2 learners (p. 106). In Chapter 3, I expand on how this difficulty requires additional literacies that simultaneously provide insight into the target language and culture.

⁵ Kramsch (1993), following Widdowson (1978), contrasts an orate, or colloquial, mode of language with literary language.

⁶ In Section 2.1, I describe my use of “graphic novel.” With the term, I refer to literary comics following the definition of the literary introduced above and discussed in greater length throughout the literature review in Chapters 2 and 3. I am thus not adopting several other popular definitions of the graphic novel (also laid out in Chapter 2), especially that it either (1) refers to the material form of the work or (2) bears any resemblance to the prose novel. Few scholars consider the first definition useful. The second definition is likewise largely a misconception; already in his 1985 classic, *Comics and Sequential Art*—the first major theorization of graphic novels in the American theoretical tradition—Will Eisner dismisses any claims that graphic novels must resemble the novel. Graphic novels may be “novelistic” but can also be non-fiction (Eisner, 1985/2008, p. 149). Many of the most commonly-cited examples of graphic novels corroborate this claim. Among them are certainly works resembling the novel (e.g., Alan Moore’s *V for Vendetta* [1988]) and Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell’s *From Hell* [1989-2006]. Yet other oft-cited examples include collections of short stories (e.g., Eisner’s *A Contract with God* [1978]), collected limited comics series (e.g., Alan Moore’s *Watchmen* [1986] and Frank Miller’s *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* [1986]), and (auto-)biographies (e.g., Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* [1986-1992] or Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home* [2006]).

similar growth (Gustines, 2014). Furthermore, the expanding presence in the public sphere of long-form illustrated texts is clear from their central role in popular culture—consider, for example, the many current film and television adaptations made from them,⁷ as they are being bought as potential film properties, just as novels were in past generations. Comics that can make claims to being literature as I define it here, or graphic novels, are also enjoying unprecedented popularity (see García, 2015). Second, comics are “blended” multimodal texts, or a mixture of textual and visual modalities, that require exposure and training to fully comprehend (Serafini, 2014, p. 17). Finally, comics are widely present in academia and have been used across many disciplines for at least the last 50 years (cf. Blanch & Mulvihill, 2013; Dong, 2012; Syma & Weiner, 2013), albeit often with the assumption that they are accessible unproblematically to any reader, which emphatically does *not* describe today’s graphic novels, with their sophisticated information structures. Today, they are present in courses on, among other subjects, art, literature, history, law, and medicine (see, e.g., Tabachnick, 2009), but often with little attention paid to their formal or rhetorical construction.

This research design originated in the shadow of such assumptions that needed to be challenged through a comparison of reading comics and prose texts in the L2. I

⁷ According to Box Office Mojo (<https://www.boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?p=.htm&yr=2018>, retrieved on March 25, 2019), the top two highest-grossing films of 2018 in the United States and five of the top ten were adapted from, or based on, characters originating in comic books: *Black Panther* (#1), *Avengers: Infinity War* (#2), *Aquaman* (#5), *Deadpool 2* (#6), and *Ant-Man and the Wasp* (#9). Four of the remaining five, *Incredibles 2* (#3), *Jurassic Park: Fallen Kingdom* (#4), *Dr. Seuss’ The Grinch* (#7), and *Mission: Impossible—Fallout* (#8) are parts of entertainment franchises that include comics adaptations. And *Incredibles 2* is a superhero movie based on ideas from 1960s comics. Only *Bohemian Rhapsody* (#10), which tells the story of the rise of the rock band Queen, is arguably independent of the comics world. And yet the band itself featured in no fewer than four comics titles during the 1990s. See Section 3.4.6 for a further discussion of the significant role of adaptation in comics as a whole.

initially chose comics for my study of L2 reading due to their prevalence and popularity, because in my teaching, I wanted to encourage students to read more in the L2, and because popularity can support student interest.

However, I increasingly realized that a focus on multimodality and multimodal texts *as literature* and *as mediators within multicultural learning* could also provide additional depth to a discussion of how students actually read. To better understand how students' reading habits are changing, then, the role images and other non-verbal modalities play in textual literacy as well as in learning became more prominent. These two poles in the prevailing discourses on multimodality not only inform the study of how we read comics, but how we read in general, both inside and outside of academia. In turn, the discussion also opens up the question of how comics might well be considered literature: as potentially sophisticated textual messages, based on both visual and verbal signifying practices, that span a range from simple to complex communication acts, much as prose texts can.

The project and the rubrics used to score the IRPs were thus conceived and executed to highlight the idea of constructing meaning across literacies (see Swaffar & Arens, 2005), which is based on literary hermeneutics and the "hermeneutic circle" (a model of understanding through the recursive establishment of and improvement on hypotheses [see Gadamer, 2013, on "prejudice"]). To be considered culturally literate, readers must have access to a top-down approach to reading that builds up patterns of awareness of how particular text types pattern and communicate meaning. Readers must be able to repeatedly propose possible meanings based on the knowledge they bring to a

text and improve on those which fail. The range of possible meanings are, of course, not infinite; they are delimited by context (Fish, 1980b) and discursive rules at all stages of communication⁸ (see, e.g., Hall, 1993, who offers a four-stage model—made up of production, circulation, use/distribution/consumption, and reproduction—in which each stage has significant autonomy). The space between initial assumptions or expectations based on paratextual elements such as culture, text type, and content must be narrowed through the reading process, as a specifically cultural literacy (see Jauß, 1970). Reader-text interactive theories and the figure of the hermeneutic circle provide further versions of this understanding of the reading process. Finally, scholarship in image-text relations provides insight into how meaning is constructed across visual and verbal modalities. In these diverse fields, meaning is always recursive, constructed, and never completed.

To clarify these points, my study design needed to examine comics as L2 reading material by building on established work in L1 and L2 reading research, comics studies, literary theory, and image-text relations using these insights from theorists of literary reading. Thus, the study design, with its dual rubrics capturing data from IRPs in two

⁸ Important here is the distinction between, on the one hand, the then new field of communications studies (Schramm, 1954) with its more linear theories of communication (see, e.g., Shannon & Weaver [1964]) and, on the other, the work coming from cultural studies first associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies [CCCS] at the University of Birmingham, England. An example of the latter, Hall (1993, originally published in 1977), muddies, or perhaps, even erases the distinction between encoders and decoders. Cultural studies approaches the construction of meaning similarly to the contemporary literary-theoretical reader-oriented theories of Fish (1980a, 1980b, 1981) and Jauß (1970). Both reorient the site of meaning production away from the author alone and distribute it across various locations, including to the author, the reader, the text, and history. Scholars of multiliteracies distribute meaning similarly within a model referred to as the *Designs of Meaning across Available Designs, Designing, and the Redesigned* (New London Group, 1996). In this final form, these models have been taken up by applied linguistics and L2 reading theorists (see, e.g., Kern, 2000; Smagorinsky, Cook, & Reed, 2005; Leander & Boldt, 2012) and applied to the bridging of multiple modalities in graphic novels and other multimodal texts (Chun, 2009; Lynch, 2010).

ways, collects data that allows for a comparison of how L2 learners interact with comics texts and prose texts. Second, the use of such data against learner demographics and experience amplifies established knowledge about how reading comprehension depends on genre-specific background knowledge of texts (prose and comics texts alike) in terms of form, plot, and theme. Third, it asks how learners think about comics and whether these views affect reading comprehension. This information will help clarify comics' claim to being multimodal literary genres, as it also aims to investigate what reading means to this new generation of students, which by no means constitutes a homogeneous group of readers.

1.3. Goals for and Significance of the Dissertation Study

My project thus was designed both to transform the existing understanding of “literary” reading and multimodal reading and to argue for including a broader repertoire of texts in the L2 classroom. By including comics, the classroom can interact with forms of contemporary culture that are more relevant to today’s students. More particularly, I argue that comics have potential to be considered as “literature” for L2 learners, thus allowing them to fill the role literary texts have traditionally played in the classroom. Not only can these texts run the gamut from simple, popular works to complex graphic novels, they are also culturally authentic⁹—neither simplified nor specifically targeting

⁹ Applied linguists have long debated whether the benefits of authentic texts outweigh their drawbacks. Some have argued that authentic texts are important for L2 learners as they exhibit natural, useful, and complex examples of language and culture (cf. Berardo, 2006; Crossley & McNamara, 2016). In this view, inauthentic texts reduce language and cultural context to a manageable level yet may not yield the same results for L2 learners. Others argue that L2 learners often lack sufficient linguistic and cultural background knowledge to engage with authentic texts (Crossley, Louwse, McCarthy, & McNamara, 2007; Kern,

L2 learners' current abilities—which testifies to their appeal to their native-language audiences. Their diverse lengths and levels offer instructors appropriate choices for widely varying learning contexts, given the large number of genres and formats available. Even wordless comics may be beneficial because of the culture-specific visual literacies that they can offer.¹⁰ The conventions on which they rely to tell their stories are relatively transparent for readers with proficient visual literacy regardless of linguistic skill level, while also providing access to the target culture's iconography.

Nonetheless, despite such potential benefits, collegiate second-language learners rarely study comics in the contexts of their language, cultural, and literary studies. At most, they encounter comic strips with simplified language in textbooks or translations of perennial Anglophone favorites like *Peanuts* or *Calvin and Hobbes*, which do not make use of the full affordances of the form. The latter—short texts with simple graphic conventions—additionally convey the message, perhaps inadvertently, that comics are universal, rather than visually and verbally culture-specific.

To address such omissions, this dissertation documents and explains the various literacies associated with the range of the modern “comic,” including detailed data on their conditions of readability and popularity, to argue and specify how they might be effective “reading” texts for advanced L2 learners. Furthermore, as the dissertation starts

2000; Kramersch, 1993). I believe that the positives outweigh the negatives, and I thus advocate for scaffolded contextualization to make authentic texts as legible as possible. For an extended overview of the debate, see Crossley and McNamara (2016) or O'Donnell (2009).

¹⁰ For example, Japanese manga use distinct conventions for representing a range of emotions. Pointed fangs and claws represent anger, while an X replaces the eyes to show excitement. For a broader discussion of what he calls the “morphology” of Japanese visual language, see Cohn (2013). For a German example, consider the culturally-specific iconography in Hendrik Dorgathen's (1993) *Spacedog*.

with the analogy between traditional literature and these multimodal “literary” graphic novels in comics form, it also engages in debates about literature in literary studies, reading research, comics studies, and multimodality studies.

The results presented by this dissertation provide insights into four main research areas: (1) L2 reading research, (2) multimodality, literature, and visual studies, (3) theories of comics genres as forms of literature, and (4) L2 curriculum and instruction. In providing data on the specific effectiveness of comics as sources of L2 knowledge, it also specifies how to understand which comics texts are appropriate for advanced learners, and which might be the most effective ways of identifying them, given the learners’ background knowledge of content and form, and their views on their use in the classroom. The conclusions are not intended to be global, because these data were gathered only among collegiate learners of German in one university’s language-learning environment, as described in the methodology in Chapter 4.

The interpretation of the data, however, yields results expanding both the current understanding of L2 reading and the use of the IRP as a data-gathering instrument. I collect IRPs not only from literary prose texts, but also from texts that require visual literacy to comprehend.¹¹ As such, the IRP, as shown in Chapter 5, yielded much-needed data on readers’ approaches to multimodal literary texts. Finally, my results inform literary theory by providing data on specific claims about genres and readers, with a

¹¹ Further detail on IRPs for reading research and multimodality is provided in Sections 4.5–4.7. IRPs have primarily been used in L2 reading research for short prose texts of 200–250 words each (Bernhardt, 2011, p. 28). An exception, Liu (2004), uses them to investigate comics in the L2. However, as the texts he uses are inauthentic texts and arguably not comics at all—let alone examples of the complex comics texts I refer to as graphic novels—little data has been collected on reading comics in L2 using IRPs.

focus on the comparison of the two different text types. These data illuminate assumptions about the reader-oriented approaches of reader-response theory and *Rezeptionsästhetik* and their application in multimodal contexts.

Furthermore, the presence of both the L2 and the literary adds to the basic model of what reading does, where cultural background, unknown vocabulary, visual cues, and new text types, among many other unknowns create further obstacles between the reader and an appropriate and useful grasp of a text. The navigation of the multiple modalities in comics texts must therefore be understood as theoretically accounting for similar issues. My overall goal is to show how L2 classrooms can be constructed with the understanding that readers do not encounter meaning resting between cultures or literacies; they dynamically construct it in these liminal spaces. This dissertation considers how readers of L2 multimodal literary comics navigate these spaces to create meaning so that educators can most effectively teach their students.

1.4. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of an introduction, five thematic chapters, and a conclusion. This introduction has provided a statement of the problem, introduced the research questions, described the study's research design, and stated the dissertation's goals. Chapters 2 and 3 are the literature review. The first examines graphic novels and comics, their multimodal construction, and their relationship to the literary, while the second considers the scholarship on L2 multimodal literary reading toward a better understanding of how L2 readers read comics texts as representative multimodal literary

texts. Chapter 4 gives a detailed description of the research design for the study, while Chapter 5 reports the data. Chapter 6 discusses the results to answer the research questions and outlines their implications for L2 reading research, the theory presented, classroom instruction, and text selection. The conclusion discusses the limitations of the study as well as possibilities and plans for further research.

Chapter 2: The Graphic Novel as a Research Object: Theoretical Considerations About the Text Form

This chapter is the first of two reviews and analyses of the literature underpinning the research design described in Chapter 4. These chapters represent a theoretical and practical presentation of the problems central to designing a study on the literacy of reading multimodal texts in general and the graphic novel in particular.

This chapter focuses on comics and reviews scholarship that helps address what comics and graphic novels are, and the specific characteristics of German comics and graphic novels, if any. As prose narration has long been at the center of literature studies and short texts are by no means novel to the L2 classroom, I focus here in a dedicated section solely on comics and the comics form.

Chapter 3, the second part of the literature review, focuses on the reading process and provides scholarship that helps to better understand a second issue central to this research, that is, how second language readers read multimodal literary texts and specifically comics.

The present chapter begins with definitions of the terms “comics” and “graphic novels” (section 1), followed by an historical contextualization of the text types recognized as central to the forms (section 2). To consider the particularities of German comics, the third section looks at existing scholarship on comics in German before providing an overview of how German comics and their history differ from the international account (section 4). A section on comics form follows (section 5), which presents my proposal for establishing terms with which we can meaningfully discuss how graphic novels combine image and text to create meaning and make use of “the literary” for play. The sixth section concludes.

2.1. What Are Comics and Graphic Novels?

Scholars have difficulty defining comics and graphic novels. As a result, little consensus and a multitude of opinions coexist. This section establishes the definitions I use in this dissertation and contextualizes my choices within current research.

The fundamental terminological difficulty exists in differentiating comics and graphic novels. The term “comics” is typically applied to more formulaic and serialized works (often “comic books”), but it is also used as an overarching category, with “comics” referring to works differentiated under other, more precise designations, such as “graphic novels” or “literary comics” (sometimes referred to in German as *Autorencomics*), that point to more extensive claims for art and authorship. For most purposes, it suffices to distinguish more formulaic comics on the one hand from literary graphic novels on the other, to acknowledge such claims.

For example, American comics scholars commonly differentiate between comics and graphic novels¹ in several ways. Providing a useful typology of such distinctions, Campbell (2007) sees the term graphic novel as referring to (1) a comic book of any style rebranded with a different name, perhaps to appeal to different audiences; (2) a bound publication containing comics of any content, similar to French “albums” (Grove, 2010, pp. 22–23), often one that collect strips from magazines (frequently producing a narrative chapter progression out of daily or weekly offerings by a single author); (3) a comic book version of the prose novel; or (4) something “more than a comic book in the scope of its ambition—indeed a new medium altogether” (Campbell, 2007, p. 13). This final definition is notable for its understanding of the graphic novel as an historical development from earlier comics.

The first of these definitions suggests that the publishing industry simply uses the term graphic novel to sell the same comic books under a new name. McCloud (2000, p. 28), also hinting at the second definition, refers to this practice as the “cynical” repackaging of children’s comic books in bound volumes. Similarly, for Weiner (2012), the term graphic novel has simply replaced the term comics in general; he does not distinguish it from the serialized superhero comic.

Campbell’s (2007) first definition is beyond the scope of this dissertation, as I am focusing on the form of graphic novel texts in both their textual and visual dimensions.

¹ This practice is slowly gaining prominence elsewhere as well. See, for example, the works published in Germany as “graphic novels” by Carlsen Verlag (primarily German and international graphic novels by authors from Flix and Reinhard Kleist to Osamu Tezuka) and Panini Comics—graphic novels from Marvel, DC (Vertigo), etc.

The same is true of his second definition, which views the graphic novel as a bound volume regardless of contents.² Here again, there is no relationship to the formal distinctions considered in this dissertation.

Despite the similarity in name of the two forms, graphic novels are rarely analogous to prose novels—the thrust of Campbell’s (2007) third definition. Already in his seminal 1985 book, *Comics and Sequential Art*, Eisner does not restrict the term graphic novel to longform fictional narratives; instead, he includes non-fiction genres such as autobiography, as well. In an historical example of his broad use of the term, Eisner’s (1978) own *A Contract with God*, the first major work referred to as a graphic novel, is in fact a collection of short stories. And many of the most notable graphic novels are autobiographical, including Harvey Pekar’s *American Splendor* (1986), Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* (1986–1991), Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* (2000–2003), and Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home* (2006).

Campbell’s (2007) fourth definition is his most compelling. Here, the graphic novel emerges as a new form that did not and could not exist until recently, accompanied by a range of associated paratextual (peri- and epitextual) innovations.³ The graphic novel is thus understood as a comic differentiated by new models of distribution—they are sold in bookstores and online rather than at newsstands or in headshops; by their

² For example, the Merriam-Webster dictionary online defines “graphic novel” as “a story that is presented in comic-strip format and published as a book.” This definition claims that a graphic novel is necessarily one story, a reference to the third definition, but also suggests that graphic novels may not be formally distinct from comic books. (Graphic novel. [n.d.]. Retrieved July 25, 2018, from [https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/graphic novel](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/graphic%20novel))

³ Baetens and Frey (2015) go even further, arguing that, because the graphic novel is distinct from the comic book in formal issues such as narrative and page layout, content—it is aimed at adult readers—publication format, production, and distribution, it represents a new medium altogether.

authorial attribution to a single author-artist; by new readerships; and by new themes—their topics ranging from revolution and genocide to sexual identity, teenage sexuality, and national/cultural identity are more diverse than in standard comic books.⁴

Other scholars also prefer Campbell's (2007) fourth definition of graphic novels. McCloud (2000) sees the origin of the graphic novel properly distinguished from formulaic comics in *A Contract with God*, a "serious work"⁵ that differentiates itself from the common reissuing of children's comic books as graphic novels (p. 28). Eisner (1985/2008) himself focuses on readership, viewing the graphic novel as a longer-form comic book intended for more sophisticated readers (pp. 140–141). Hatfield (2005) also traces the term to *A Contract with God*, focusing both on seriousness (p. 29) and the new sales opportunities for the graphic novel in standard bookstores rather than at newsstands or in dedicated comics shops. Both of these aspects coincide with a changed audience, one that is "increasingly self-conscious, relatively affluent, and eager for belated recognition of the comic book as 'art'" (Hatfield, 2005, p. 29). Versaci (2007) and Wolk (2007) both also focus on readership as the defining characteristic. For example, Wolk (2007) specifically looks at class—graphic novels demand more money than disposable comic books.⁶ Finally, Weiner (2012) synthesizes these views in a chapter on *A Contract*

⁴ Classic examples of graphic novels commonly cited by scholars include Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2000–2003) focusing on the Iranian Revolution, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1986–1991) on the Holocaust, Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* (2006) on sexual identity, Charles Burns's *Black Hole* (1995–2005) on teenage sexuality, and Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* (2006) on national/cultural identity.

⁵ I am wary of defining the term "serious" in this dissertation, and I also make no claim to a connection between seriousness and quality or legitimacy. Comics scholars should avoid yielding to a perceived "*Rechtfertigungszwang*" (drive for legitimacy) (Frahm, 2010, p. 31), as the result is more often than not a challenge to the legitimacy of the form. For a further discussion of this perception, see Frahm (2010, pp. 7–28).

⁶ On class, see also Baetens and Frey (2015).

with God entitled “The Graphic Novel: Comics Take Themselves Seriously” (pp. 17–20),⁷ in which he defines the graphic novel in terms of publishing, seriousness, and readership.

In agreement with this approach, I understand the graphic novel as a development situated temporally, a type of publication reflecting new reading and publishing practices, addressing a distinct readership, and emerging from a specific historical trajectory. I further argue that graphic novels are most clearly differentiated from comics through their use of what has been called in scholarship on literature “the literary,” a term to which I will return in Section 5 of this chapter below, as critical to distinguishing the graphic novel from the formulaic comic and to setting up my study. Just as literary works employ “the literary,” or language and information structures that expand the number of possible interpretations through their range of language play and diverse voices and styles, I will argue that graphic novels make use of “the literary” through their play with standardized comics conventions, in terms of panel regularity, image-text relations, intertextuality, and language.

By focusing on the presence of the literary in graphic novels, I set up a continuum from comics to graphic novels, on which works making greater use of play with language and form tend toward the latter end. Graphic novels are thus those works that eschew standardized plots for a more open field of possibilities and appeal to a broad readership in terms of age, education level, gender, race, and nationality. This continuum is best

⁷ Eisner wrote the preface to the volume outlining how the “lowly” comic book “grew up, took itself seriously, and made enough noise so that mainstream readers were finally forced to pay it serious attention” (Eisner in Weiner, 2012, p. xi).

understood as a measure of the kinds of reading skills, experience, and/or sophistication required to read them successfully. That is, the authors/artists of graphic novels often employ a larger variety of formal and content features than do those of formulaic comics, thus requiring a wider range of literacies of their readers. These literacies necessary to read graphic novels, thus defined, make the works comparable to literature and distinguish them from standard comic books, just as literary prose can be differentiated from simpler prose texts employing less play.

2.2. A Brief Pre-History of the Graphic Novel

As graphic novels are often understood as a recent development in a longer history of comics, in this section, I present the historical developments in comics leading to the literary graphic novel and clarify what innovations separate the two poles of these genres' formal and content complexities. In locating the origin of comics, scholars typically cite one of three sources, which all develop, via the comic strip, into the comic book by the 1930s.

The earliest of these creators of the genre, Swiss author Rodolphe Töpffer (1799–1846), produced illustrated books, with pages arranged by panels with narration, as well as theoretical writings on these works. For Kunzle (2007), Töpffer is “the father of the comic strip,” and for McCloud (1994), the “father of the modern comic” (p. 17). The second cited origin is the *Bildgeschichtentradition* (image story tradition) associated in Germany with author Wilhelm Busch (1832–1908), best known for his *Max und Moritz*

(1865).⁸ Busch created short, comical stories in verse, with images printed among lines of text. Each page typically contains multiple images. A third source is American cartoonist Richard Outcault's (1863–1928) Yellow Kid, the central character from what is often cited as the first newspaper strip, *Hogan's Heroes* (see, e.g., Knigge, 1996, p. 17), originally published between 1895–1898 in both Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal*.⁹

While some consider Töpffer the most important of the three (Fix, 1996; McCloud, 1994), other scholars, primarily German, look to Busch (Gasser, 2000; Knigge, 1986). Beyond these minor differences of opinion, most view these figures collectively as significant influences on the development of comics (García, 2015; Kunzle, 1990).

The origins of the literary graphic novel first emerge fifty years beyond the birth of the Yellow Kid.¹⁰ The 1950s are important for the history of the graphic novel for two interconnected reasons: (1) the rise of EC Comics (1944–1956)¹¹ and (2) the emergence of the Comics Code (1954–2011). Prior to the 1950s, comics had largely been a

⁸ Other early work in this tradition from outside Germany includes Charles Henry and Emilie de Tessier/Marie DuVal's *Ally Sloper* from England, Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro's *Zé Povinho* from Portugal, and Palmer Cox's *The Brownies* from Canada.

⁹ The comic strips were so popular that Hearst's and Pulitzer's editors began wrapping their newspapers for delivery in the strips to drive sales. The term *Yellow Kid journalism* was coined shortly thereafter to describe reporting focused on profits at the expense of fact. This was later shortened to the better-known *yellow journalism* or *yellow press* (Knigge, 1996, p. 17).

¹⁰ Most works on the graphic novel quickly dispense with this intervening period. For example, Weiner (2012) affords pre-1950 comics one chapter before spending the remaining fourteen chapters discussing the following half century. Works that do focus solely on the earlier period typically do not read it as a pre-historical moment for graphic novels and are thus not relevant for the purposes of such a history. For accounts that discuss the era in at least some detail, see, for example, García (2015), Knigge (1986), and Schikowski (2014).

¹¹ EC Comics originally stood for Educational Comics until founder William Gaines died in 1947 and left the company to his son Max, who rechristened it Entertaining Comics (Nyberg, 2009, pp. 59–60). The company stopped publishing comics entirely in 1956 following the arrival of the Comics Code and focused exclusively on *Mad Magazine*.

commodity of mass production, either in strip or book form, with little thought from publishers to aesthetic value or authorial control. EC Comics, though it “operated under the same severe conditions of production as most other publishing houses at the time” (García, 2015, p. 81), paid its artists and writers better than the others and allowed for political content in its output. It thus represents the beginning of a division that deepened over the following decades between popular comics, produced by author teams and published by Disney, Marvel, Archie, and DC, and so-called *author comics*, or those for which the author is often more important than the title or the characters. The latter ultimately resulted in the graphic novel (Baetens & Frey, 2015; García, 2015; Weiner, 2012).

The anti-comics debates, beginning in the late 1940s, were a further driver of this split. Fredric Wertham’s (1954) psychological study of children and adolescents who had committed violent and sexually abusive crimes supposedly because of what they read in comics has become metonymous with this moment. Hearings before the United States Congress involving both Wertham and Max Gaines of EC Comics resulted in the industry-imposed Comics Code,¹² which prohibited most depictions of violence, sex, and drug use in comics. The Comics Code effectively ended EC Comics and solidified a two-tiered industry, comics mass-produced in accordance with the Comics Code, and those that defied its control and for which violating it became a political act. As I discuss in the

¹² The Comics Code (1954-2011) was administered by the Comics Code Authority, which was itself formed in 1954 by the Comics Magazine Association of America.

following section, these debates were not restricted to the United States and had repercussions for comic books around the world.¹³

Following the rise and fall of EC comics, two main movements connect the relative artistic freedom and quality of EC Comics to today's graphic novel: (1) San Francisco's underground comix of the 1960s/1970s, associated with Robert Crumb and Gilbert Shelton and (2) alternative comics from the 1980s onward, initially connected to New York and Art Spiegelman and his magazine *Raw* (García, 2015; Gasser, 2000; Schikowski, 2014).¹⁴ Whereas underground comix—their spelling distinguished them from other comics and also referred to their adult readership (Schikowski, 2014)—often had political goals, especially feminist ones,¹⁵ and depicted violence, sex, and drug use in defiance of the Comics Code, alternative comics focused on realism and reportage ultimately giving rise to the autobiographical graphic novel, which many view as its ideal form/genre (García, 2015; Knigge, 1996; Schikowski, 2014).

Publishing and distribution methods underwent significant changes in this period that sustained both models. While comix were often self-published in small numbers and sold in head shops, stores primarily selling cannabis-related paraphernalia (García, 2015, p. 103; Weiner, 2012, p. 12), alternative comics were first sold in a new commercial

¹³ An edited volume from Lent (1999b) provides further useful background on how the Comics Code and the surrounding debates in the United States connect to the various debates internationally.

¹⁴ Not all scholars agree on the terminology here, with some proposing the term alternative for both (Hatfield, 2005; McCloud, 2000) and others using the terms interchangeably (Knigge, 1986, 1996). Still others use the term graphic novel to refer to anything following comix (Baetens & Frey, 2015; Weiner, 2012). Using geography, genre, and content, I distinguish between the two phenomena to underscore the sense of historical development.

¹⁵ Important early feminist comics include Trina Robbins and Barbara “Willy” Mendes’s *It Ain’t Me Babe* (1970) as well as *Wimmen’s Comix* (1972–1992), a collective work including contributions from Robbins and Mendes, among others.

innovation, the comic book store (Knigge, 1996, p. 154), and later in book stores (García, 2015, p. 151), paving the way for their common graphic novel sections today.¹⁶ Before these developments, comics distribution occurred through newsstands, driven by the publishers' beliefs about what customers wanted and evidence from points of direct sale—newsstands returned what they could not sell. With underground comix and alternative comics, head shops, comic book stores, and bookstores could choose titles in light of their specialized knowledge and individual clientele. This shift in distribution made the later success of graphic novels possible.¹⁷

International innovations also play a significant role in the history of the graphic novel, though they are often omitted from American accounts, aside from brief mentions of Japanese *manga* (Hatfield, 2005; Weiner, 2012). Most important are the then newly-founded Franco-Belgian comics magazines that began publishing works, often longer-form narratives attributed to individual authors, concurrently with the rise of underground comix (García, 2015; Grove, 2010). As an example of the influence, readers first encountered Goscinny and Uderzo's *Astérix* (1959–present), one of the most successful Franco-Belgian comics of all time in France's *Pilote* (1959–1989).¹⁸ In contrast to practices in the United States, Goscinny and Uderzo began publishing *Astérix* in the album form in 1961; by the late 1960s, these volumes were selling over a million copies each (Grove, 2010; Knigge, 1996; Schikowski, 2014). Both *Pilote* and the album form

¹⁶ The current result of this trajectory is the purchase of comiXology, the most successful digital comic distributor, by Amazon, which has integrated the comics site into its online bookstore.

¹⁷ For a detailed account of this change in distribution, see García (2015, pp. 117–122).

¹⁸ While *Pilote* was by no means the first *bande dessinée* magazine, it was the first major magazine established that allowed for considerable authorial creativity during the 1960s (Grove, 2010; Schikowski, 2014; García, 2015). The tradition turned political and remains extant in journals like *Charlie Hebdo*.

stressed the importance of the authors involved and yet were also widely popular (Grove, 2010, pp. 141–147). As a result of a smaller divide between commercial and author comics, Franco-Belgian authors published works using a more diverse set of story-telling forms. Therefore, when the magazine *Métal hurlant* (1974–present) or the publisher L’Association are noted as both highly innovative and influential for the American alternative comics scene and the graphic novel in the 1990s (García, 2015; Grove, 2010; Knigge, 1996), it is due to their range of content and not because of any stress on individual authors; the latter had long been the norm in the Franco-Belgian context and was already quite familiar to the international comics scene.

2.3. German Scholarship on the Graphic Novel

Against the background of American and Franco-Belgian comics, the German graphic novel has a distinct genesis. Given the focus of this dissertation on L2 German comics, it should be noted that, in the scholarly literature, the term “German comics” often refers to works from any national background originally written¹⁹ in the German language.²⁰ This section presents the existing scholarship on German comics, and the following discusses the development and nature of the German graphic novel.

¹⁹ In this discussion of German comics, I do not consider comics in German translation. Though such comics are widely popular among German readers, their inclusion would raise further questions as to cultural authenticity for L2 readers. This distinction is admittedly difficult to universally maintain. Consider, for example, the original *Astérix* translation/adaptation by Rolf Kauka (1965), in which the original names and some historical events were replaced by German equivalents to appeal to a German audience (see Dolle-Weinkauff, 2008, p. 31).

²⁰ While this usage includes, but is not limited to, comics from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, the Swiss tradition has a strong orientation toward Franco-Belgian comics—there are relatively few notable Swiss authors writing in German—and Austria’s German-language artists have typically worked and become popular abroad. For example, Ulli Lust and Nicolas Mahler are both from Vienna, but Lust now works in Berlin and Mahler became popular in France and Canada long before he was ever known in

Comics research in Germany begins in the 1960s with works critical of comics, largely in agreement with Wertham (1954). Most notable are volumes by Baumgärtner (1965), Metken (1970), and Fuchs and Reitberger (1971). Of these early works, only Fuchs and Reitberger's (1971) volume has enjoyed much staying power; it has been translated and reprinted in several newer editions.

After this early scholarship, no major works were published for over a decade on German comics until a new wave of research began with Knigge's (1986) first monograph on comics; output has remained constant to this day. Most of the larger works since this time are comprehensive historical accounts that rarely delve into theory or focus closely on any one period or aspect. Of the recent formal work from the German tradition that attempts to buck this trend, the most influential is Frahm's (2010) volume, discussed briefly in Section 2.5 below on form.

Historical comics research in Germany rests largely on six major works in two categories: those that focus on the German tradition alone (Dolle-Weinkauff, 1990, 2008; Knigge, 1986) and those that see it as one, often quite minor, component of a larger history dominated by the United States, France/Belgium, and, to a lesser extent, Japan (Knigge, 1996; Platthaus, 2000; Schikowski, 2014). Knigge's (1986) book is also the first major work to include a significant discussion of comics culture in East Germany, "Comics in der DDR," authored by Lettkemann.²¹ Dolle-Weinkauff's (2008) volume, the result of a comics exhibition of the Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main and the

Austria. As such, here, "German comics" refers primarily to German-language writers in Germany, but some caution about national variants is necessary.

²¹ For a comprehensive treatment of East German comics, see Lettkemann and Scholz (1994).

Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, is the most comprehensive and helpful primer for newcomers to German comics. It is divided into two sections: (1) a 60-year history of German comics from 1947–2007 and (2) a detailed list of individual authors and artists. It is a very successful introduction to the diversity of German comics artists after the war, and it includes a discussion of the development of graphic novels.

In addition to the large monograph histories of German comics, several articles, dissertations, and monographs provide insight into specific historical aspects of German comics and graphic novels, including Jovanovich and Koch (1999) on the German anti-comics campaign; J. Benjamin (2019), Eedy (2016), Kock (1999), Kramer (2002), Lehmstedt (2010), Lettkemann (1986), and Lettkemann and Scholz (1994) on East-German comics, especially the popular *Mosaik*; and Hoepfner (2012) and Malone (2010) on the rise of German manga.

2.4. Peculiarities of the German Graphic Novel

With this basis in the scholarship on German comics in hand, I now turn to the specific development of the German graphic novel, as I did above with the international tradition—by starting in the period after WWII. 1945 is often described in German comics research, as in discussions of culture in general, as a *Stunde null*, a zero hour before which there was nothing (Dolle-Weinkauff, 2008, p. 9). For example, Knigge (1986) refers to the period before 1945 as “das deutsche Vakuum” (the German vacuum) (p. 69). Although this reductive history is demonstrably false as laid out in these same historical accounts, this rhetorical move enables scholars to dispense with the Nazi period

in no more than a few paragraphs (see, e.g., Schikowski, 2014). The scholarly consensus on the period, however, is that, regardless of popular views of comics, both paper shortages and official disapproval of the comics medium and its supposed American heritage led to widespread government bans of comics by 1941. In fact, by 1944, few books containing pictures of any kind were printed at all (Knigge, 1986, p. 59).

Following World War II, comics proper were reintroduced to Germany first in English by American GIs and then, in the early 1950s, as translations by French and Danish publishers of foreign comics primarily from Italy and the United States, including *Micky Maus*, which has remained popular for decades (see Dolle-Weinkauff, 2008, p. 9; Knigge, 1986, pp. 73–74.). In 1953, Germany saw its first homegrown hit, Ralf Kauka's *Till Eulenspiegel*, published by Kauka Verlag,²² which first gave life to what are perhaps the best-known German comics characters, Fix and Foxi. Soon thereafter, the comic was renamed for them as *Fix und Foxi*.

From 1954–1957, Germany (the FRG)²³ experienced its own anti-comics movement, the *Schmutz und Schund* (filth and trash) campaign, modeled after Wertham's (1954) book and marked by an opposition to the American popular culture that had prevailed in the FRG since the postwar occupation.²⁴ On June 9, 1953, the government

²² Other comics publishers of the time (listed with well-known comics and their initial year of publication) include Ehapa Verlag (*Micky Maus*, 1951; *Lucky Luke*, 1965; *Disneys Lustiges Taschenbuch*, 1967; *Asterix* 1968), Walter Lehning Verlag (*Sigurd*, 1953); and the GDR's Verlag Neue Welt (*Mosaik*, 1955).

²³ Here, I refer only to the Federal Republic of Germany, as the vast majority of the comics and the resulting comics scholarship come from the West. The GDR also had its own anti-comics campaign centered around the 1955 *Verordnung zum Schutze der Jugend*, which stipulated fines and prison sentences for importing or producing comics. See Ministerium für Volksbildung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (1955).

²⁴ Though 1957 is usually seen as the end of the campaign, its effects were felt well into the 1960s (Jovanovic & Koch, 1999).

passed a law, *das Gesetz über die Verbreitung jugendgefährdender Medien* (the Law on the Dissemination of Media Harmful to Children), establishing a federal body, *die Bundesprüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Medien* (BPjM, the Federal Inspection Authority for Media Harmful to Children). The BPjM, which officially came into being in 1954, was tasked with regulating media affecting children. If an issue of a comics series was deemed dangerous for children, the BPjM could ban the series for one year. As a result, the German comics industry established the *Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle für Serienbilder* (FSS, the Voluntary Self-Monitoring for Sequential Images) in 1955 to self-regulate. Though similar in goals to the Comics Code in the United States, the FSS went much further, dealing with issues of political and historical accuracy as well. It had a significant chilling effect on German comics.

Jovanovic and Koch (1999) argue that the German campaign was distinct from its US analogue in three ways. First, the German debate was marked to a greater extent by a traditionalism that opposed comics as a medium regardless of the content. Second, Germany was much harsher than many other countries in its suppression of comics; as a result, its comics culture missed out on the returning popularity of the superhero in the 1960s that occurred elsewhere. Finally, the German campaign wrote off comics as foreign by ignoring the history of the German comic prior to the war. Importantly, the movement distinguished between the *Bildgeschichte* (image story) as a positive German phenomenon and the American comic, by focusing on formal issues, especially speech

balloons (Lent, 1999a, p. 21).²⁵ Both the popularity and the quality of comics suffered. The result was a “Mangel an Experimentierfreudigkeit bei Verlegern und Comic-Machern, der gerade für die qualitative Entwicklung der Comics in Deutschland bis zum Ende der 60er Jahre ein massives Hindernis darstellte” (“lack of willingness to experiment by the publishers and comic-makers that presented a massive hindrance to the development of comics in Germany in terms of quality up to the end of the 1960s,” Dolle-Weinkauff, 2008, p. 25).

When FRG comics culture rebounded in the 1960s, and foreign comics, especially those from France, Belgium, and the United States, gained popularity, the market came to resemble that of elsewhere in Europe. Mass-produced comic books often reproduced in albums dominated, alongside a growing focus on author comics (see Dolle-Weinkauff, 2008). The resulting increase in authorial control, political content, and genres such as the autobiography coincided with the rise of the '68 generation and the subsequent importing of underground comix from the United States in the early 1970s. FRG artists began publishing in several local comix/alternative comics magazines, including *U-Comix*, *Zomix*, and, later, *Strapazin*, all of which also printed works by R. Crumb, Gilbert Shelton, and Franco-Belgian comix artists. A student of Theodor Adorno, Alfred von Meysenbug, published *Glamour-Girl* (1968) and *Super-Mädchen* (1968), the classics of this German comix underground. Later, *Strapazin* (1984–present) signaled a shift away from the political radicalism of comix toward work resembling American and

²⁵ This same issue affected the GDR government’s stance toward *Mosaik*, which it referred to as a *Bilder-Heft* or *Bilderzeitschrift* rather than a *Comic* (Kock, *Das Mosaik* von Hannes Hegen, 124.) Its creators even removed the speech balloons to appear more like a *Bildgeschichte* between 1962–1975 (J. Benjamin, 2019).

Francophone alternative comics (Beaty, 2007), solidifying the German scene's place among other alternative scenes.²⁶

By the middle of the 1980s, German-language comics artists began producing works that were graphic novels in all but name. The best-known of these early works include Franziska Becker's *Mein feministischer Alltag* (1980–1988), a four-volume series dealing with gender roles and other political issues; Matthias Schultheiss's *Der lange Job* (1984), a collection of adaptations of Charles Bukowski's short stories; Ralf König's *Der bewegte Mann* (1987), which focused on sexual orientation and tolerance and whose film adaptation became a hit in 1994²⁷; Walter Moers's *Kleines Arschloch* (1990); and Hendrik von Dorgathen's *Spacedog* (1993). These works helped establish the German graphic novel not only as a distinct form, but also as one with staying power in the German comics scene.

Comics scholars in the new millennium increasingly refer to the German graphic novel²⁸ and use the term as it is used in this dissertation for works of a literary nature with a distinct readership (Dolle-Weinkauff, 2008; Gasser, 2000; Schikowski, 2014).

²⁶ *Strapazin* was influential enough that it won a Max-und-Moritz-Preis in 1986 and was nominated for an Eisner Award in 2001. These are the most important German and American comics awards respectively.

²⁷ Many scholars, including Schikowski (2014), refer to the work as the first German graphic novel,

²⁸ Despite the increasing critical recognition of the German graphic novel, the term is not always used by authors and publishers. Many such works, such as Pellizzi's *Bernie der Milliardenflipper* (1974), König's *Der bewegte Mann* and *Pretty Baby* (1987, 1988), Bulling's *Im Land der Frühaufsteher* (2012), and Kreitz and Kästner's *Emil und die Detektive* (2012), bear only the term *Comic*. Others have no designation at all, such as Dath and Scheibler's *Mensch wie Gras wie* (2014) or Mahler and Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (2013). Others still are described by a genre into which the work fits, such as *Geschichten* (for Brecht and K.'s *Geschichten von Herrn Keuner* [2014]) or *Erzählung* (for Weyhe's *Reigen* [2011]). The majority, however, do bear the words graphic novel, including many works published by Suhrkamp Verlag, Carlsen Verlag, Egmont Ehapa Media, and Panini Comics. The later three are the largest publishers of comics in Germany, and all four have specific labels or imprints for graphic novels. As such, the term will presumably survive, at least in the short run.

Nonetheless, several trends specific to the German graphic novel distinguish it from the output of other graphic novel scenes. First, the German graphic novel largely came to prominence in an avant-garde movement in the 1990s that consciously took much from the *Bildgeschichtentradition* in an effort to be less derivative of the rest of comics history (Schikowski, 2014). Gasser's (2000) edited volume introduces the leaders of this movement, including Martin tom Dieck, Hendrik Dorgathen, and, most importantly, Anke Feuchtenberger. Second, literary adaptations play a greater role in the German graphic novel than in other traditions. The first such adaptation, Bukowski and Schultheiss's *Der lange Job*, was published in 1984, and many others have followed. Works adapted include Uwe Timm's *Die Entdeckung der Currywurst* (Kreitz, 1996), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* (Flix, 2010), Franz Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* (Corbeyran & Horne, 2011), Thomas Bernhard's *Alte Meister* (Mahler & Bernhard, 2011), Erich Kästner's *Emil und die Detektive* (Kreitz & Kästner, 2012), Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (Mahler & Musil, 2013), and Bertolt Brecht's *Die Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner* (Brecht & K., 2014), the graphic novel text used in this dissertation's experiment.

A third trend is the recent influence of a non-European tradition, Japanese *manga*. Several scholarly works discuss the popularity of manga in Germany (Hoeppner, 2012; Malone, 2010; Nielsen, 2009), and Dolle-Weinkauff (2008) outlines the work of German manga authors, so-called *Deutsche Mangaka*, such as Christina Plaka and Judith Park. Although not the most significant current innovation in the German graphic novel, this embrace of manga points toward a fourth trend that arguably extends beyond Germany,

the internationalization of the graphic novel. This globalizing movement represents the final moment in most recent histories of the German graphic novel and sometimes in those works discussing the graphic novel overall. For example, García (2015) sees the increasing convergence of American, Japanese, and European graphic novel traditions as the result of an ever more interconnected network of comic book stores, a growth in mobility, and the rise of digital publishing. The result in Germany is a German graphic novel tradition that represents a local iteration of an increasingly regularized form for international literary comics.

2.5. Comics Form: Toward a Definition of “the Literary” in the Graphic Novel

These historical accounts—German, American, Franco-Belgian, and international—conflate plots and authorship issues with the formal possibilities/language/building blocks of any comics, whether mass-marketed comic books and strips or literary graphic novels. Yet it is critical to move beyond plot and consider more closely issues at the graphic novel’s formal level. This distinction is key to understanding how graphic novels may be understood and how their difficulty is assessed for an audience of second language (L2) learners. Despite comics and graphic novels’ use of an arguably common metalanguage, the singularities of each multimodal arrangement still require a detailed examination to understand what literacies are at play in their creation and consumption.

To show what the distinction between the forms implies, in this section, I thus introduce the scholarship on form and look at two areas for literary innovation and play:

(1) in image-text relations within panels and (2) beyond the panel in panel-panel relations and page layout.

2.5.1. Theoretical Overview

Given their often distinct histories, it is not surprising that scholarship on the comics form is easily divided into European (primarily Franco-Belgian) and American traditions. While German scholarship exists and is discussed below, it is far less extensive and typically interacts with one or both of these two larger bodies of theory.

The Francophone theoretical tradition has a longer history of examining the comics form, stretching back to the 1960s, yet much of it remained untranslated and thus did not reach the Anglophone world on a wide level until the University Press of Mississippi quite recently started publishing these works in translation. Earlier works in French, including monographs by Fresnault-Deruelle (1972) and Tisseron (1985), viewed comics in terms of the theoretical movements of the day: here, semiotics and psychoanalysis respectively. Though these texts are certainly important to a detailed and historical consideration of comics theory, a look at the summaries provided in recent works in translation, especially Groensteen's *The System of Comics* (2007), will suffice for the purposes of the present project. Furthermore, as evidenced by the works most commonly cited by comics scholars today, the Francophone tradition, though certainly more detailed and sophisticated than much of the more recent Anglophone work,²⁹ has relinquished its previous clear dominance.

²⁹ For a sampling of the work of some of the more important figures in Francophone comics studies, see Miller and Beaty (2014).

Nonetheless, for its theoretical basis, the present project looks to issues discussed in both camps, as framed in the monographs by Eisner (1985/2008), McCloud (1994), and Groensteen (2007, 2013). Though not meant to be fully representative of all current and past theoretical trends, as perhaps the most widely recognizable works on comics form, these four provide useful common ground for both comics scholars and those less acquainted with the material.

The younger American theoretical tradition begins with the two oldest works that remain seminal to all discussions of comics, and both were written by comics artists. They are so dominant in the field that they are unavoidably present in any work coming from Europe following this time, as well.

In the first, Eisner (1985/2008) discusses comics, or “sequential art” as he calls it, as a distinct medium by providing an overview of elements which he calls a “visual vocabulary” of comics (Eisner, 1985/2008, p. 1), including temporality, spatiality, and the interplay between image and text. The volume, though written primarily in prose, makes frequent use of Eisner’s own comics work to exemplify his analyses. The other American theoretical work presented here, McCloud’s (1994) first book, is written entirely in the comics form. Though often criticized,³⁰ it has become perhaps the most canonical work in comics theory. After providing a broad definition of comics derived from Eisner (1985/2008), McCloud (1994) lays out what he calls the “vocabulary of

³⁰ See, for example, Frahm (2010) and Groensteen (2007). Frahm (2010, p. 32) is especially suspicious of what he sees as the many “fragwürdige Annahmen” (questionable assumptions), on which McCloud (1994) builds his theory of comics. For example, for epistemological reasons, Frahm (2010) disputes McCloud’s (1994) claim that the fragmented nature of comics must be remedied (through closure).

comics” (p. 24): the *gutter*, the space between frames; *closure*, the process by which readers fill in the gutter; color; spatiality; temporality; and a location on a continuum from realism to abstraction.

The two books by Groensteen (2007, 2013) considered here discuss comics on two distinct levels. In the first, originally appearing in French in 1999, Groensteen (2007) considers comics in terms of spatio-topology, or how time and space play out in and between comics panels, strips, and pages. He refers to this interrelation of elements for creating meaning as *arthrology* and further differentiates between restrained and general arthrology. The former relates to meaning in a sequence, focusing on local panel relations through closure in strips, the latter to panel relations across pages as well as page-page relations. In contrast to the vocabulary of Eisner (1985/2008) and McCloud (1994), where each constituent element is in itself meaningful, Groensteen talks in both works (2007, 2013) about the comics form as a generative force, as “an original ensemble of productive mechanisms of meaning” that uses the “language” of arthrology (2007, p. 2).

Groensteen’s (2013) later book looks at how the comics form enables and produces larger interconnected narratives. Echoing his earlier work, he introduces the term “spatio-topical apparatus” (p. 12) as his definition of comics, a form through which readers recognize they are reading a comic. The interplay of elements “invites the reader to look at the images one after another; contiguous images are perceived as consecutive, and this ordering constitutes a discourse, the discourse that vectorizes the visual field of a comics page.” The result is that “under this condition, while still not [automatically] defined as a narrative, the drawn or painted surface ceases to be simply a tabular surface

and becomes a comics page” (both p. 13). In detailing these interactions, he provides vocabulary for discussing degrees of regularity in page and panel layout (pp. 43–44).

Though all three theorists describe the comics form using linguistic metaphors, the Americans consider more what the individual elements are, while Groensteen (2007) is interested in what they can do. The Americans thus define comics ontologically, by what they are and what they represent; Groensteen’s spatio-topical apparatus is phenomenological, defined by what it can do and how it does it. As will become clear in the discussion of literacy and multimodality in the next chapter, Groensteen’s views track far more closely with literacy-based views in applied linguistics and the concept of the functional in Systemic Functional Linguistics and multimodality.

2.5.2. Panel-Internal Formal Issues

The questions asked in these theoretical works on the comics form primarily examine meaning in comics in two ways, focusing on elements or relations either within panels or between the panels themselves. I first turn to the former to focus specifically on image-text relations as a central formal element in comics and graphic novels.

Though any panel-internal approach to understanding how comics construct meaning must examine relationships between the verbal and the visual, scholars rarely view these components as fully exclusive of one another. For example, McCloud (1994) views image and text on a continuum from images to icons to letters, suggesting that all text in comics is in some sense visual. Eisner (1986), without conceding that he also views text in comics as necessarily visual, argues that “the visual treatment of words as graphic art form is part of [comics] vocabulary” (p. 9). Groensteen (2007) too describes

comics as a language as we saw above, but he also stresses “the primacy of the image” and in considering image-text relations favors the visual rather than the verbal. In a broad sense, McCloud, Eisner, and Groensteen are in agreement here.

It is in fact rare that a scholar discusses the interwoven visual-verbal nature of comics while favoring the verbal. Coming from a background in linguistics,³¹ Cohn (2013) bucks this trend and sees all comics form as linguistic, and, though he argues that comics is not a language in itself, he suggests it makes use of visual language, describable in terms of culturally-dependent morphologies. He uses examples of American, Japanese, and Central Australian visual language to illustrate this point.

Beyond Cohn and his linguistic view, scholars interestingly tend to avoid the consideration of text in comics from a text-structural perspective; moreover, literary-theoretical perspectives are all but absent. While many are understandably wary of literature scholarship that refuses to grant comics studies its own sphere of influence, a focus on textual meaning informed by literary theory to complement Cohn’s linguistic approach would perhaps benefit the field. The pictorial turn (Mitchell, 1994) does not necessitate that scholars of multimodal text forms avoid the verbal.

As this dissertation focuses on the expansion of reading practices beyond the verbal, its consideration of comics form should also consider further modes of meaning. However, as this expansion does not signal a departure from the verbal but rather its enrichment, this inquiry will first approach comics form through image-text relations, the

³¹ See, for example, Cohn’s (2016) work on image-text relations in comics using multimodal theories together with Ray Jackendoff’s ideas on language.

classification of how language and images relate in communicating meaning. Of the many useful image-text relation typologies for comics, McCloud's (1994) and Baetens and Lefèvre's (2014) will act as representative examples for the present project.³²

McCloud (1994) focuses on individual panel types—"word specific," "picture specific," "duo-specific," "additive," "parallel," "montage," and "interdependent" (1994, pp. 153–155)—while Baetens and Lefèvre's (2014) instead describe principles which govern panel creation—"subordination of text to image," "avoidance of redundancy," "transparency," and "now-read-on."

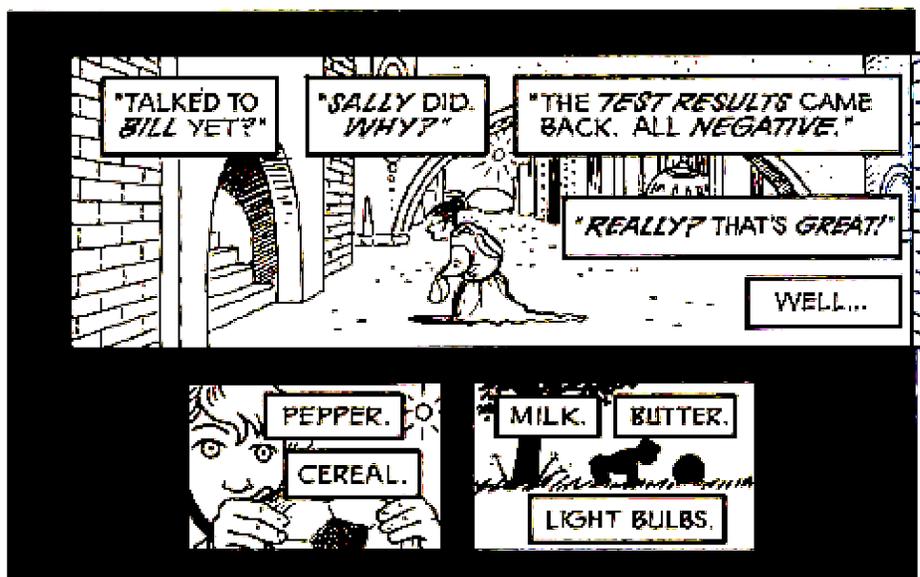
While the categories and descriptors themselves are rather self-evident, the individual types vary in the room they allow for literary play. For example, McCloud's "word/picture/duo specific" and Baetens and Lefèvre's "subordination of text to image" ask and allow much less of the reader than those in which the elements are not in direct agreement or support of each other such as "additive" and "parallel" panels or those dominated by "avoidance of redundancy" and "now-read-on." Compare, for example, McCloud's depictions of a duo-specific panel (Fig. 1), in which the image and text mutually reinforce one another, versus a parallel panel (Fig. 2), where the two never intersect.

³² For a discussion of image-text typologies from beyond comics studies, see Section 3.4.4.

Figure 1: In this duo-specific panel, the images largely repeat exactly what the words describe (McCloud, 1994, p. 153).



Figure 2: In this parallel panel, the words and images run next to each other without ever overtly intersecting (McCloud, 1994, p. 154).



In Fig. 1, the narrative, thought, and speech balloons all serve to describe, as clearly effectively as possible, what is occurring in the panel images and vice versa. In Fig. 2, it would be impossible to suggest that the boy with the soccer ball and the words “pepper” and “cereal” simply reinforce each other’s meanings. To make meaning from Fig. 2, the reader must bring outside knowledge to the image, whether cultural or genre background knowledge or some context from another part of the text. As shown in the next chapter, different approaches for wielding various types of meaning-making processes are referred to as literacies and are required of both the comics reader and the L2 reader. In fact, all readers must understand and employ these literacies and, in my use of the term literary, the more of these a text requires of the reader, the more literary the text.

With this brief introduction to the ways that image and text can relate to each other in a comics panel, we can now move on to panel-panel relations. However, it must first be noted that, despite my division of theoretical approaches into panel-internal and panel-panel approaches, these typologies of panel-internal image-text relations cannot always be considered independently of the surrounding panels. For example, any of the types requiring outside context, such as “parallel” or “now read on,” may require some degree of seriality. As such, the division of formal considerations into image-text relations and panel-panel relations is not always stable.

2.5.3. Panel-External Formal Issues

Some scholars, such as Cohn (2013), Eisner (1986), McCloud (1994), and Krafft (1978), consider both panel-internal and panel-external questions, while others, including Groensteen (2007, 2013) and the leading German-language scholar of comics form,

Frahm (2010), focus more exclusively on panel-external problems. The argument for the latter approach is that while other fields discuss image composition and image-text relations, only comics studies is concerned with the comics page. Remember that comics are “vectorized,” or made into connected series with forward momentum, not by the composition of a panel itself or the presence of multiple images or panels, but rather in how the latter interact to produce meaning in concert. Therefore, though this distinction between considerations of panel-external relations as an additional or the sole site of analysis may carry little weight for the meaning itself, it is important for determining the essence of the comics form and thus the difficulties for readers in reading this specific text type.

A discussion of panel-external issues should begin with the most elementary type of panel interactivity, closure. Building on Gestalt psychology,³³ closure in comics refers to “observing the parts but perceiving the whole” (McCloud, 1994, p. 63), or, more specifically, the completion of information across the gutter. Though McCloud’s approach to closure is criticized for its reduction of the reader’s role to the filling in of the gutter as a blank (see, e.g., Groensteen, 2013, p. 41), with no acknowledgment of the larger page (see, e.g., Groensteen, 2013, p. 74), a categorization of closure or transition types nonetheless provides a useful starting point for understanding the presence of the literary in a comics text.

³³ Closure, or the Law of Closure, represents one of the main visual laws discussed by Max Wertheimer in the 1920s–1940s. See Wertheimer (1923).

McCloud (1994) offers six types of panel-panel relations: “movement-to-movement,” “action-to-action,” “subject-to-subject,” “scene-to-scene,” “aspect-to-aspect,” and “non-sequitur” (pp. 70–72). Comics with a preponderance of “scene-to-scene” or “non-sequitur” transitions likely require more of the reader and provide more opportunities for play than those dominated by other transition types. Compare Figs. 3 and 4 showing two types of transitions.

Figure 3: Panels 7–8 show an aspect-to-aspect transition from “Freundschaftsdienst” (Brecht & K., 2015, p. 65).



Figure 4: Panels 9–10 show a scene-to-scene transition from “Freundschaftsdienst” (Brecht & K., 2015, p. 65).



Fig. 3’s aspect-to-aspect shift requires little from the reader, as it is clear from panel 7 that the paper contains important information, which is then shown in panel 8. The transition in Fig. 4 from panel 9 to 10, however, is far more difficult. Perhaps best described as a scene-to-scene transition, what would otherwise be a non-sequitur shift is clarified by written text—“Das war eine schöne Geschichte, Keuner” (That was a beautiful story, Keuner); panel 10 frames a frame narrative.

Despite the assistance in this case, scene-to-scene transitions can require significant background knowledge. In the case of Fig. 4’s transition, knowledge of textual information structures and genre conventions such as the framing of frame narratives is necessary for making meaning. In the terminology of this dissertation, it is thus the more literary of the two transitions depicted in Figs. 3 and 4—it requires more from the reader.

Beyond closure, the local panel-panel transitions that Groensteen (2007) calls restrained arthrology, readers must also consider more general panel-panel relations, or Groensteen's general arthrology. Characterizing his approach as stemming "from on high" instead of proceeding from the bottom up, Groensteen (2007) takes what he calls an image as his object of inquiry. With the term image, he is referring to the non-linear uptake by a reader who meanders through the work in consideration. In considering this reading practice, a single panel (or, in any comic containing more than two panels, a given two-panel sequence) is insufficient as it "never makes up the totality of the utterance but can and must be understood as a component in a larger apparatus" (Groensteen, 2007, p. 5). Readers must thus always also look beyond the simple linear progression from one panel to the next discussed above in terms of closure. In this view, panels and anything inside are discursive, and they relate not just to the immediately surrounding panels, but also to all the panels in the work. Groensteen explains this point by comparing an image to a close-up. "The codes weave themselves inside a comics image in a specific fashion, which places the image in a narrative chain where the links are spread across space, in a situation of copresence" (2007, p. 7).

Although the huge body of work on panel-panel relations can only be referred to quite cursorily here, I want to touch briefly on how narrative plays out across panels in the interaction of spatio-temporality and narrative. Time and space in comics are intertwined and can both be shown through, for example, the progression of events and changes in scene; panel width—wider panels allow for more dialogue and thus may appear to last longer, or a greater number of smaller panels may appear to speed up action

(Eisner, 1985, p. 29); the amount of dialogue present in general; the complexity of the language, the images, and the image-text interplay; repetition and alternation (Groensteen, 2013, p. 144); the types of panel-panel transitions; and perhaps, most importantly, the choices the reader makes when reading the comic. Groensteen (2013, p. 151) focuses on the latter's importance:

In the final analysis, the author proposes but the reader disposes. It is the latter who animates, identifies with, punctuates, and brings to life the story in his/her own way. The reader therefore contributes to the rhythm of the narration, which, ultimately, coincides with the pulsating flow of the reading process.

As the present project focuses on the reader, it is important to note both the freedom available to a comic's creator, in these possibilities and conventions for creative play, and the control in the hands of readers. At the same time, if the latter lack the literacies to engage in this literary spatio-temporal play, the comic cannot function as intended.

Though instructive, especially to the consideration of context in the present project, attempts to discuss panel-panel relations beyond closure have met with much critique. For example, Cohn (2013), who suggests that rather than these work-total interactions, everything should be dissected into minutiae, attacks Groensteen's (2007) rhizomatic interconnectedness of panels as "promiscuous transitions" (Cohn, 2013, pp. 67–68); the resulting complexity is beyond analytical possibility. This dispute is a perfect example of the disagreement regarding the real location of meaning in comics.

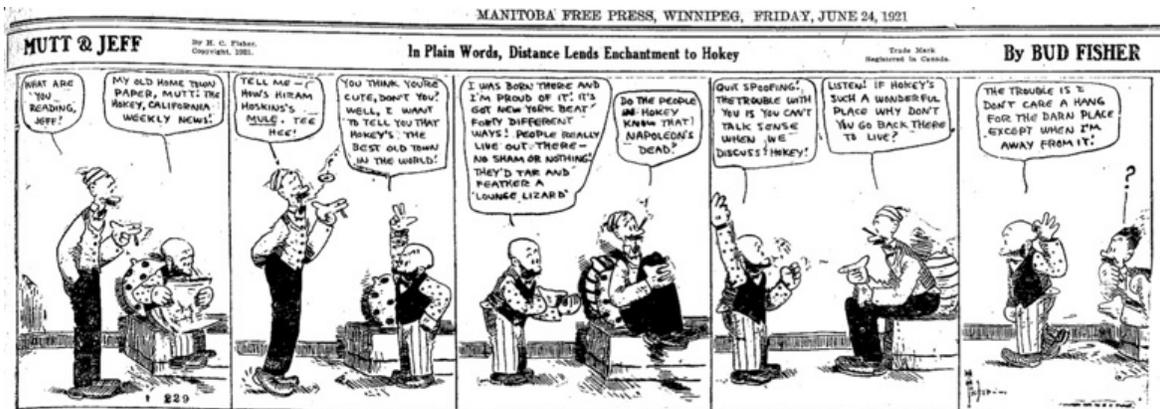
Furthermore, it resembles other critique of the lack of systematicity in the analysis of

many elaborate artistic works, or perhaps even an attack on the humanities as a whole. If comics are to be considered in terms of the literary, such critiques are to be expected.

For a concrete example of how literary play is manifested through the comics form, and as a potential way of addressing critiques such as Cohn's (2013), this discussion of panel-external relations and the comics form in general concludes with an outline of Groensteen's (2013) three-level typology of panel regularity. For the Platonic ideal of the comics page, Groensteen uses the metaphor of the "waffle iron." The most regular page layout (2013, pp. 43–44) is thus a constant number of strips, all of equal height, with each panel of equal width. Play takes license with any of these conventions.

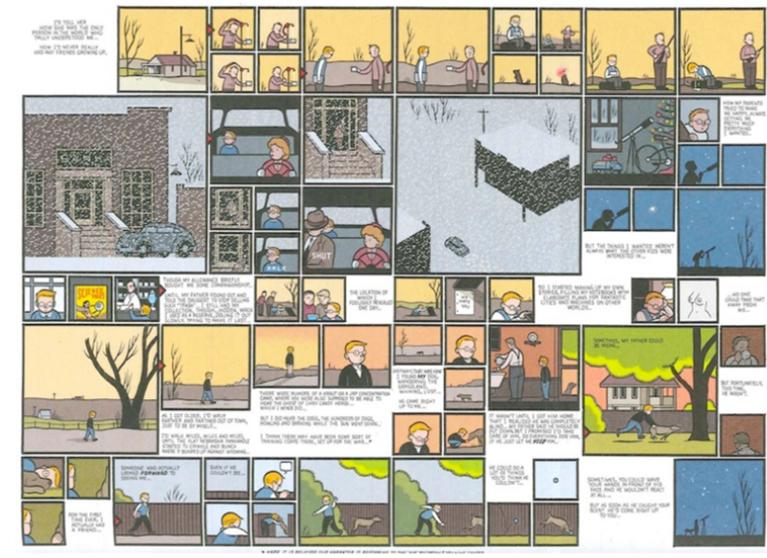
The first degree of regularity, a layout that allows for enormous variation, but still has some constants, requires an equal number of strips; the second, strips of equal height; and the third, panels of equal width. As an example of how this is realized in comics, newspaper strips usually do not have to grapple with the number of strips per page, and their panels are almost always regular in terms of height. This situation allows for play mostly within panel width. And many, as can be seen, for example, in Fig. 5, maintain almost perfect regularity, insofar as they relinquish the few opportunities they have for play in this area.

Figure 5: A Mutt and Jeff strip from June 24, 1921, drawn by Bud Fisher, taken from the Manitoba Free Press.



Alternatively, a literary graphic novel may flout all three degrees of regularity. One of the most prevalent innovators with page layout is Chris Ware, as can be clearly seen in the two-page spread in Fig. 6.

Figure 6: This two-page spread is taken from Chris Ware's *Acme Novelty Library*, #19 (2008–2010), p. 144.



Though each panel in Fig. 6 is square and there are areas of regularity, there is no overall regularity in strip number, strip height or strip width. From the comparison between Figs.

5 and 6, the extreme variation in page layout available to comics creators, and thus one of the many areas for “literary” play with the comics form, becomes clear.

2.6. Conclusion

This overview of historical and theoretical work on the graphic novel should clarify what is at stake in defining what it actually means to read and understand the forms. Since the graphic novel is a contested concept, each individual example must be clearly delimited as to how it constructs meaning and elicits understanding from its readers. The readership for which a given example was produced must also be considered in terms of its historical development. For the German variant, the analysis can start with its origins in the work of Töpffer, Busch, and Outcault, proceed to the reintroduction of comic books after World War II, the rejection of popular comics in the 1950s, and their return and literary expansion in concert with the American and Franco-Belgian counterculture in conjunction with 1968. The result is a unique path to a distinct product that is nonetheless losing its local color in Germany, as elsewhere, in the internationalization of the graphic novel.

In understanding the literary potential of the graphic novel, various opportunities for play laid out in the section above, from image-text relations to panel transitions and closure and from spatio-temporality to language use and panel regularity, have been laid out. Finally, as shown through the discussion of the more literary examples, the extreme power and freedom of the reader in creating this meaning by interacting with these various conventions cannot be overlooked.

In the next chapter, I turn directly to how this point can be developed further as the central issue of the present project, that is, how readers, or more specifically L2 readers, interact with the German graphic novel as an example of an L2 text read across multiple modalities.

Chapter 3: Second Language Readers and the German Graphic Novel: Toward a Research Design

To understand how readers read the L2 German graphic novel, this study now turns to a different body of scholarly literature: to work on reading, the reading of literature, and literacy/multiliteracies, all in the L2 context. This chapter thus represents a shift from considering how graphic novels and comics are *structured* and *composed*, to how they are *consumed* and *read*.

To elaborate on these issues, the first section of this chapter describes the nature of reading and the development of models for understanding it. The second section discusses the specifics of L2 reading models, considers how issues such as background knowledge and context influence how we read in the L2, and defines “literacy” and “multiliteracies” as the terms that guide this dissertation’s research design. The third section, on literary reading in the L2, amplifies the notion of the literary in the L2 context, principally through related constructs imported from beyond applied linguistics. The fourth section looks at multimodal reading by outlining various approaches to multimodal texts before focusing on multimodality to consider image-text relations,

multimodal reading, and adaptation. Finally, this chapter—and the literature review—concludes by introducing the existing scholarship on the reading and teaching of graphic novels in the second language.

3.1. What Is Reading?

The term reading conjures up an action or a set of actions. A teenager reads the next volume in a series of adventure novels because she finds the protagonist interesting and wants to know what happens next. A parent sits and reads the morning newspaper by skimming through articles looking for something of interest—a local zoning dispute, the sports scores, or the Sunday funnies. A college student shoots a corrective glare at the people talking loudly at the next table in the coffee shop that says, “Be quiet! I’m trying to read!” A Bob Dylan fan posts in an online forum about the meaning of a lyric and questions whether she is really reading it as intended. Each premise refers to reading and in common parlance, they might appear to be of one kind.

Yet each act of reading just described is unique—a quest for entertainment, a morning ritual, academic work requiring focus, a philological dispute. These readers are not only interacting with a range of media; they are doing fundamentally different things. Furthermore, only one of these descriptions focuses on determining the *meaning* of what is read, and none says anything about the mechanics of the reading process or the possibility of an unstable text.

This section of the literature review thus clarifies what is meant in this dissertation by the term reading and starts to answer how the reading process functions temporally, individually, and socially.

3.1.1. Bottom-up vs. Top-down Models of Reading

From the beginning of modern scholarly interest in the reading process to the latter half of the 20th century, reading¹ and reading comprehension² have perhaps most often been considered through what are now called *bottom-up* models—the linear decoding of letters, words, and sentences, leading to the extraction of a more or less static meaning from an existing and stable text. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, as researchers began to question these presuppositions, *top-down* and mixed or *interactive-compensatory* models—utilizing a wider range of meaning-making sources, tools, and structures including social context, background knowledge, and schemata—have arisen and come to dominate.

Bottom-up models understand reading as the linear decoding of linguistic elements, whether phonemes, morphemes, words, utterances, or sentences. The reader combines the smallest elements to build the larger meaning of the morpheme, word, utterance, passage, or text. For example, Spache (1964) once suggested that “reading may

¹ For a history of reading and reading models and a discussion of early reading research, see Harley (2001), Huey (1908/1968), and Samuels and Kamil (1984).

² I use Kintsch’s (1988) definition of comprehension as a process of “constructing a representation of a discourse” (p. 163) in order to satisfy constraints—unstable elements in a specific reader’s reading must be stabilized in a specific context toward a specific goal. These come together in his construction-integration model (see Kintsch, 1998, pp. 96–100). Helpful here is the distinction between word-centered (bottom-up) and discourse- and context-centered (top-down) reading models, the latter of which Kintsch (1998) later describes as successive processing cycles (pp. 101–103), similar to the hermeneutic circle, which is discussed later in this chapter. For more on this distinction in definitions of comprehension, see Omaggio (1993, p. 195) and Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes (1991, pp. 21–22).

be considered a series of word perceptions” (p. 12). Such models began to be questioned for their inability to explain data revealing reading as more than decoding. Scholars realized that readers were actually wielding formal and content knowledge to make meaning with texts that were often irregular, individual, idiomatic, and circular.

Perhaps the first major departure from this bottom-up view comes from Goodman (1967), who views reading not as a process whereby “graphic input is precisely and sequentially recoded” or “meaning is cumulative, built up a piece at a time” (p. 6), but rather as a “psycholinguistic guessing game” played “to anticipate that which has not been seen” (p. 2). Rather than proceed linearly from the bottom up, readers use cues, including the graphic, syntactic, and semantic information in the text together with their own extensive reading and language experience, to attempt a reading from the top down.

Goodman (1967) thus dismisses the previously dominant view of reading as decoding as no more than a “common sense notion,” noting the general lack of data to justify it (p. 1). He supports his claims by using empirical data to explain the irregularities of a child reading a text for the first time not as errors of word recognition, but as incorrect guesses. The child he is observing reads *he yelled* and *in his face of* instead of *I yelled* and *in the face of*. These divergences do not exhibit a carelessness or an inability to recognize the words *I* and *the*, but rather, in the first case, a guess which substitutes one pronoun for another, and in the second, a lack of familiarity with an idiom, which allows for the substitution of a grammatically acceptable possessive adjective *his* for the definite article *the* (Goodman, 1967, p. 2). According to Goodman (1967), instead of castigating children for reading incorrectly, teachers should train them

how to guess better, thus acknowledging and addressing the need for literacies beyond word recognition and grammatical knowledge.

Goodman's (1967) argument did not, however, nullify the previously dominant views. Claiming that reading only looks like the game Goodman (1967) describes, Gough (1972) rescues some of the decoding model and provides an updated bottom-up approach. For Gough, guessing is a sign of weakness in childhood reading abilities. "Rather than being a sign of normal reading, [a guess] indicates that the child did not decode the word in question rapidly enough to read it normally. The good reader need not guess; the bad should not guess" (Gough, 1972, p. 317). Importantly, Gough's (1972) approach here is not identical to previous bottom-up models. Unlike many who preceded him, he recognizes the influence of context and cultural knowledge on the reader (p. 299), though he admits his model cannot fully account for it. And even here, the site of meaning construction is relatively restrictive. Focusing only on ambiguity in individual words while ignoring the larger meaning of collocations and utterances, let alone genre, register, or style, Gough (1972) only considers context important in cases of polysemy.

Despite these differences, Goodman's (1967) and Gough's (1972) approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive, when seen as strategies among others available to support reading. In both, context and text processing are active factors. The scholars differ primarily on what takes precedence.

Stanovich's (1980) work proceeds from the assumption that the distinctions between these two models do not hold. He thus argues for an interactive-compensatory

model of reading, which combines multiple processes into one comprehensive model.³ At given moments, readers use context and background knowledge to guess meaning; when this path fails, a linear bottom-up approach takes precedence. Even within his model, however, Stanovich (1980) opposes the complete separation of processes into discrete phenomena, instead viewing a multitude of processes along a continuum from top-down to bottom-up. “A process at *any* level can compensate for a deficiency at any other level” (Stanovich, 1980, p. 36) This overall approach, returning later in the L2 work of Bernhardt (1991, 2005), is an important precursor for any scholar trying to explain the interaction of various deficits and strengths in readers’ multiple literacies as they try to make meaning out of complex (especially multimodal) texts.

3.1.2. Schema Theory

In moving beyond the problems inherent in Gough’s (1972) relegation of context to the determination of the meaning of polysemous words, *schema theory* argues that background knowledge is of paramount importance in understanding a text. In their seminal 1978 article, Anderson, Spiro, and Anderson define the term *schema* as “the conceptual framework” in which information is understood (p. 433). In the study they present, participants read texts containing a number of food items mentioned in either a restaurant or a supermarket context. Participants were better able to recall the foods associated with restaurant schemata especially when read in a text about restaurants, indicating that the schema of information in a text affects understanding. These

³ According to Grabe (1991), the term interactive here refers to (a) the combination of two or more distinct models or (b) models dealing with the interactivity between the reader and the text (p. 383).

conclusions suggest that because readers who are familiar with a text's schemata can learn from it better, teachers ought to focus on its activation in scaffolding reading so students can anticipate what is important (Anderson, Spiro, & Anderson, p. 439).

In perhaps the most frequently cited early study considering schema theory in reading, Steffensen, Joag-Dev, and Anderson (1979) investigate the reading comprehension of two different groups according to the main variable of cultural knowledge. Participants from India and the United States were asked to read and recall detailed letters describing wedding ceremonies in both countries. The study found that the participants were able to faster and better recall the culturally-familiar descriptions, as well as better identify the schematically-important information. These results suggest that culturally-defined schemata aid in the reading of texts and that these readers were literate in employing these schemata.

Schema theory, while sometimes used interchangeably with top-down processing models (see, e.g., Stanovich, 1980, p. 71), argues not only that various types of background knowledge are used, but also that these are learned as systems, that is, schematically. For example, the distinct wedding schemata from the United States and India contribute to the differences in reading, rather than solely the knowledge of disparate facts. Nonetheless, while schema theory is important in understanding how readers make meaning from texts, individual schemata cannot account for all information to be gleaned from a text. Instead, as Anderson, Spiro, and Anderson (1978) suggest, schemata are best understood as necessary for teaching, alongside other content and skills. Teachers must help readers learn to acquire and apply these schemata in their own

readings to support the processing of textual information. For the purposes of this dissertation, this prescription suggests that, in teaching comics, and by extension any multimodal text, the texts' distinct information structures must be identified and communicated as genres, not only as plots, data points, or graphics.

3.2. What Is L2 Reading?

In view of the above discussion of various reading models, I now turn to what differentiates the L2 reading process. L2 reading researchers most frequently approach this question by considering who the readers are and why they are reading in the L2, how teachers can best teach various reading practices, and what actually happens in the minds of the readers.⁴ Each of these facets have been treated as variables in scholarly models for and research on L2 reading.

In the context of the debates regarding bottom-up and top-down models, one of the first attempts to define L2 reading comes in an article from King, Holley, and Weber (1975). They begin by outlining the L1 research on reading up to that point, especially Goodman (1967) and Gough (1972), and then lay out a “new FL [foreign language] reading” that must be explicitly taught. Three points are central: (1) in line with Goodman's (1967) claims, readers need to be taught strategies to predict and infer meaning and to “skim for the gist of the material” (King, Holley, & Weber, 1975, p. 211); (2) text readability is not only determined by syntax and word density, but also by

⁴ Bernhardt (2011) categorizes these interests as *socio-political*, *pedagogical*, and *cognitive* (pp. 1–2).

format, plot, style, and organization (King et al., 1975, p. 196); and (3) reading is a process requiring practice.

These three claims regarding L2 reading, that it is a set of strategies to be taught, that it requires a wide range of knowledge, especially regarding information structures, and that it requires practice, guide this dissertation's view of L2 reading and how to teach L2 comics reading, just as they underlie much research in L2 reading today.

Against this conceptual background, I now turn to L2 reading in general. The first part of this section outlines L1 to L2 transfer in L2 reading. The second describes Bernhardt's (2005) compensatory model to consider the relationship between transfer and other issues confronted in reading an L2 text. The third details how schema theory can be applied to the L2, especially in terms of content and formal schemata. I conclude with a definition of literacy and multiple literacies that can integrate models of reading with the textual questions raised in the prior chapter. With this broader understanding of meaning making in the L2, we can then proceed to L2 literary reading.

3.2.1. L1 to L2 Transfer

Considerations of L1 to L2 transfer usually proceed from the hypothesis that L2 reading is a function of both L1 reading ability and L2 language proficiency.⁵ Scholars differ, however, in how they understand this relationship.

A central question here is whether L2 reading is a language problem—a “threshold” in L2 proficiency that must be met—or a reading problem. To address the

⁵ The Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (LIH) stresses the importance of L1 reading abilities, whereas the Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis (LTH) looks to L2 linguistic proficiency (see Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995).

issue, Bernhardt and Kamil (1995) test L1 English speakers' reading in L2 Spanish. They find that while L1 reading ability is important, certain L2 language features can create significant problems for readers. Carrell (1991) studies the question by using multiple choice items to test reading comprehension, comparing L1 English speakers learning Spanish and L1 Spanish speakers learning English. She too finds that both elements play a role in L2 reading, with L2 linguistic ability again the more dominant factor. The groups differ however in the extent to which the two elements affect their reading. Carrell (1991) attributes this distinction to the L1s and L2s themselves and the directionality in which they are learned. In another study, by Lee and Schallert (1997), of L2 English reading by L1 Korean students, the results again show that L2 proficiency is the more significant predictor, and that without a certain L2 level, readers cannot successfully draw on their L1 skills.

Carrell (1991) introduces an additional distinction between the level of L1 reading and whether or not it is transferred. She discusses further elements that may be transferred, that is, an "awareness of the reading process," "other high-level processes," and "reading strategies" (p. 159). In a similar vein, Bernhardt and Kamil (1995) identify "literacy concepts" (p. 18), and Lee and Schallert (1997) note "L1 reading skills (strategies)" (p. 717), "L1 reading ability" (p. 726), and "knowledge of L1 strategies" (p. 735). In this research, there is no consensus as to the overall relationship of all the elements that constitute the L2 reading process.

Though these studies agree that both L1 reading and L2 language skills are important for L2 reading, with the latter dominant, their conclusions seem incomplete

without an overall L2 reading model that accommodates both text and context. The next step in the scholarship thus worked to determine what else beyond a reader's L1 and the L2 skills could account for L2 reading.

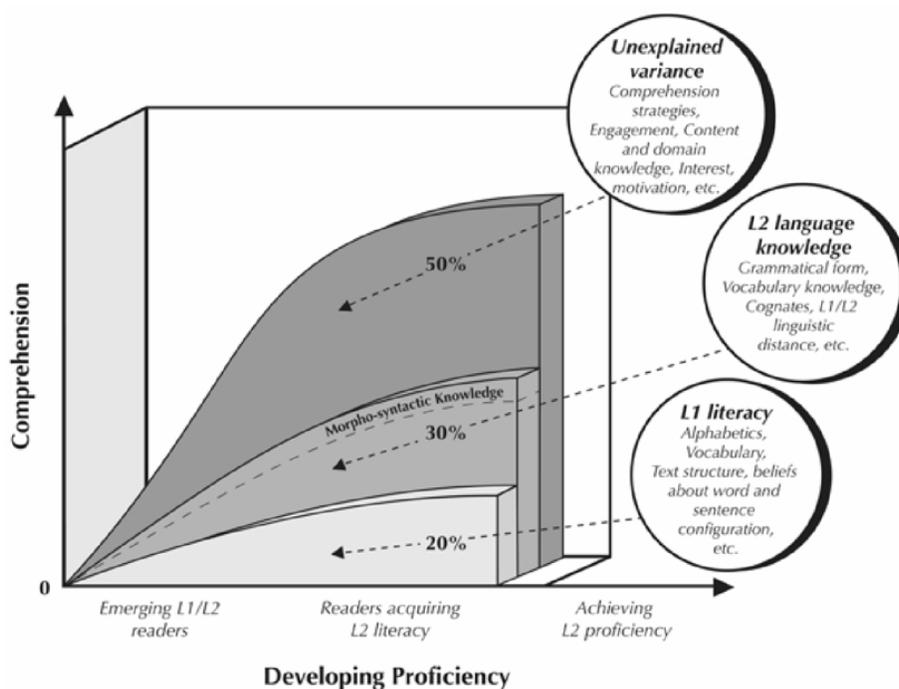
3.2.2. Bernhardt's L2 Compensatory Theory

In her first book, Bernhardt (1991) provides a preview of a more comprehensive model for L2 reading, privileging the idea of "integration" as central to the process of reading. She notes that, much like in Stanovich's (1980) continuum, the various processes in L2 reading do not remain separate but rather cooperate in a network to make meaning (p. 191).

In a 2005 article, Bernhardt lays out in greater detail a compensatory model of L2 reading that expands on the various elements of L1 to L2 transfer discussed above.⁶ Building on previous research, including Carrell (1991) and Bernhardt and Kamil (1995), she quantifies the percentage variance that can be accounted for by specific skills and knowledge, as seen in Fig. 7:

⁶ For a look at Bernhardt's (2005) compensatory model understood as a development from earlier reading theories/models going back to Goodman (1967) and, by extension, even Huey (1908/1968), see Chapter 3, "A Compensatory Theory of Second-Language Reading," from Bernhardt (2011, pp. 21–39).

Figure 7: Bernhardt's (2005) compensatory model of L2 reading (p. 140).



L1 literacy, which includes vocabulary, text structure, and language beliefs, accounts for 20% of the variance. 30% is attributable to L2 language knowledge, specifically grammar, vocabulary knowledge, and, in line with Carrell's (1991) conclusions, the L1/L2 linguistic distance; morpho-syntactic knowledge is also included here. Bernhardt (2005) describes the remaining 50% as "unexplained variance," including comprehension strategies, engagement, and background knowledge.

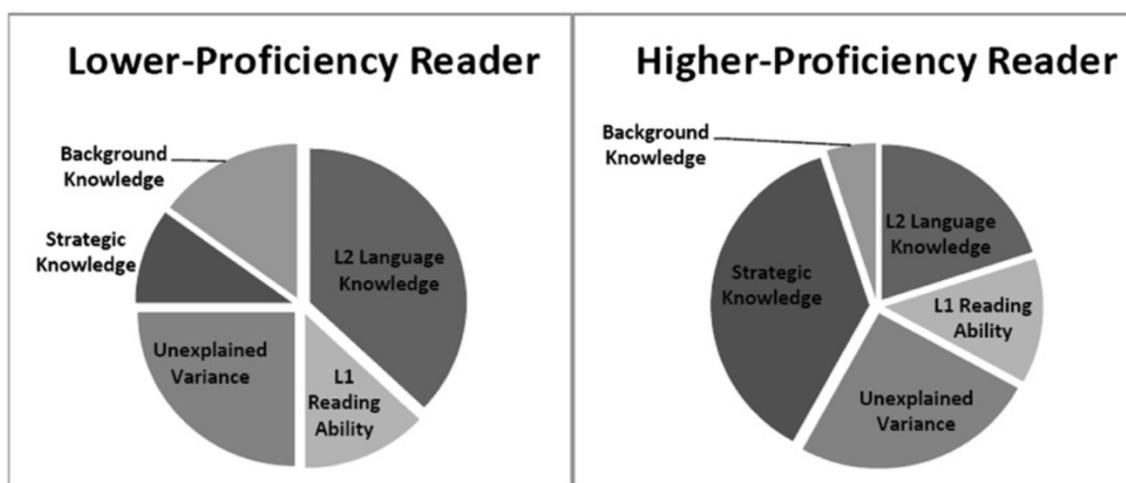
Bernhardt's model addresses many of the gaps in earlier research. First, it recognizes that there is more to L2 reading than L1 reading skills and L2 knowledge. Second, the model is compensatory, stressing that the reader has various ways to work around deficits in L2 skills and knowledge. As shown in the three-dimensionality of Fig. 7, the model does not understand L2 language skills as additions to L1 literacy. Instead,

each element supports all others in a compensatory manner, much like in Stanovich's (1980) work, to which Bernhardt (2005) alludes. Processes which support the same result can stand in for one another when needed. For example, when word recognition in the L2 breaks down, cognate knowledge from the L1 or background knowledge may be able to compensate for this deficit.⁷ Finally, it accounts for the impossibility of an L2 learner beginning at zero with L2 language knowledge or with the components accounting for the unexplained variance. A combination of cognates, assumptions about language, background knowledge, and comprehension strategies are already present for L2 readers at the outset of their L2 learning. Thus, all three categories are always operating and growing together concurrently.

As of yet, few studies have expanded on this model. The most noteworthy, McNeil (2012), examines and synthesizes the findings of a number of studies in L2 reading to provide two valuable amendments to Bernhardt's (2005) work. First, he goes beyond the categories of L2 language and L1 reading knowledge and reduces the unexplained variance by adding specific percentages for background knowledge and strategic knowledge. Second, as seen in Fig. 8, rather than showing, like Bernhardt, the progression from emerging to proficient readers over time, he offers two temporal snapshot models, of lower-proficiency and higher-proficiency readers respectively:

⁷ In investigating the lack of compensatory views after Stanovich (1980), Bernhardt (2011) uses this example as evidence of a rudimentary compensatory approach to certain characteristics of L2 reading in her 1991 book (Bernhardt, 2011, p. 36).

Figure 8: McNeil's (2012) compensatory model of L2 reading (p. 73).



While the proportions of the unexplained variance and L1 reading abilities do not change over time, McNeil concludes that higher-proficiency readers rely less on background knowledge and L2 language and more on strategic knowledge than lower-proficiency readers.

These compensatory models show that L2 reading instruction must aim for more than general reading strategies and L2 language knowledge, regardless of the reading level. In line with King et al. (1975), they imply that reading strategies and methods of obtaining and accessing background knowledge should be taught and practiced.

3.2.3. L2 Schema Theory

With knowledge of the importance of background knowledge in L2 reading models, L2 reading research has also drawn on and expanded the work on schema theory to ask its own questions. Beginning in earnest in the early 1980s, early work in L2 schema theory primarily looked to confirm the findings of L1 studies, especially Steffensen et al.'s (1979) consideration of reading comprehension across cultures. For

example, Johnson (1981, 1982) shows that cultural familiarity positively affects the recall of reading passages on American and Iranian folklore for L1 Farsi students and on Halloween for ESL students of various backgrounds in Illinois. Like in the work of Steffensen et al. (1979), familiarity with the cultural custom correlated positively with comprehension.

Work from the early 1980s largely considers schemata as an undifferentiated mass of contextual, cultural, and genre information that readers use to understand texts. Just a few years later, scholars including Lee (1986a) and Carrell (1985, 1987) began to identify and consider the effects of specific schemata types.⁸ Lee (1986a) tests specifically for the effects of context, transparency, and familiarity on recall. The former relates to text type, that is, the presence of a title and an introductory image; transparency to “concrete lexical items” providing clues to the text’s content; and familiarity to a knowledge of the subject area, as studied in Steffensen et al. (1979) and Johnson (1981, 1982). Lee’s (1986) data suggest that the type of background and contextual information provided to L2 readers affects the success of their recall; context had the largest positive effect on the recall. Carrell (1985) shows that explicitly teaching text structure increases recall ability in L2 readers. In her 1987 study, Carrell compares the effects of familiarity with text structure, or “formal schemata,” to “content schemata.” While she finds that readers with access to content and formal schemata recall texts better than those without

⁸ For example, Kramsch (1993) identifies four different schemata types: “text schemata,” “genre schemata,” “content schemata,” and “a discourse dimension,” which includes “the social and cultural context of production and the personal and cultural context of reception of the text by the reader” (p. 124). Nassaji (2007), on the other hand, suggests six: “sentence schemata,” “story schemata,” “formal/rhetorical schemata,” “content schemata,” “textual schemata,” and “symbolic schemata” (p. 181).

it, this time, she found that unfamiliar content poses more difficulties for L2 readers than unfamiliar form.

Many studies have since added nuance to these conclusions.⁹ However, the conclusions from Johnson (1982), Lee (1986a), and Carrell (1985, 1987), that schematic knowledge supports successful readings and that both content and form have an effect, to differing extents, remain largely uncontested. To raise objections, innovators have instead changed the way they think about context, moving from the declarative, though schematic, knowledge of schema theory to the procedural abilities of literacy.

3.2.4. (Multi-)Literacy Approaches to L2 Reading

Schemata have typically been understood in terms of information and structured discourses, that is, what a reader needs to know about the content and the form of a text to understand it. In the 1990s, second language reading research increasingly applied the concept of literacy, or what a reader needs to be able to do to make meaning from a text, instead of focusing on how the text structures or even enforces a particular meaning.

Unlike the more static, material nature of schemata defined as attached to texts and learned by those reading them, more recent research defines the interaction between text and reader as a literacy, buttressed by these schemata. This “literacy” is often conceived as the reader’s capacity to act, to mobilize these schemata in fluid contexts to interact with a text in given cultural, temporal, and historical contexts.

⁹ See, for example, Bügel and Buunk (1996) on gender differences, Hauptman (2000) on text difficulty, Alptekin (2006) on textual inference, Shen (2008) on intensive reading, or Gürkan (2012) for an investigation of how specific reading activities can build on schema theory to teach L2 reading.

In a call to redefine literacy as a goal for L2 learning, Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes (1991) refer to an abstract or “covert” literacy, hidden beneath the immediately accessible and tangible in language teaching. “There is a tacit consensus in L2 teaching that if students practice speaking about concrete objects and events they will eventually be able to convey meaningful thoughts about abstract ideas” (Swaffar, Arens, & Byrnes, 1991, p. 2). Instead, they contend, L2 instruction should fill this void “with a literacy which transcends the constraints of skill learning and response” (Swaffar et al., 1991, p. 2). This “covert” literacy is not just the ability to successfully wield vocabulary in grammatically acceptable utterances, a traditional definition of literacy, but rather to manipulate the medium of the L2 to create new meaning. The focus of teaching literacy is thus not on “what language to acquire, but rather what knowledge students can create with language” (Swaffar et al., 1991, p. 3).

Though not overt in Swaffar et al.’s (1991) description of literacy, it follows from their recognition of the discursive nature of linguistic meaning (p. 216) that literacy itself is not static. Swaffar and Arens (2005) make this point in a later monograph:

Literacy describes what empowers individuals to enter societies; to derive, generate, communicate, and validate knowledge and experience; to exercise expressive capacities to engage others in shared cognitive, social, and moral projects; and to exercise such agency with an identity that is recognized by others in the community. (p. 2)

Literacy is a reader’s access to fluid and interconnected discourses that are often elusive to L2 learners. This broad literacy must additionally be malleable enough to mediate

“between readers, writers, texts, culture, and language learning” (Kern, 2000, p. 2) for “multiple text types from various perspectives” (Paesani, Allen & Dupuy, 2016, p. 11).

To describe this interconnected network of literacies, applied linguists use the term “multiliteracies,” or sometimes, “multiple literacies.” The term stems from the New London Group’s¹⁰ “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies” (1996), in which the term *multiliteracies* is meant to address both a “multiplicity of communications channels and media” and “the increasing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 5). Multiple literacies are required to account for a new world beyond the safe linguistic binaries of bilingualism and diglossia to include increasingly diverse and individualized modes of communication for ever more specialized situations.

The New London Group (1996) argues that any semiotic process, whether productive or receptive, consists of three stages, *Available Designs*, *Designing*, and *The Redesigned*, collectively the *designs of meaning*. The term “Available Designs” refers to the linguistic, schematic, and culturally-defined conventions from which an individual selects to make meaning. Nothing is created *ex nihilo*. Designing refers to the ways Available Designs are used and altered by individuals who can interact with their contexts. The “Redesigned” is the result of Designing and is never a simple repetition or combination of Available Designs. These three terms offer a clear vocabulary and conceptualization to describe instances of meaning-making such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, understanding, and communicating, such that they no longer need be

¹⁰ The work of the New London Group originates from a group of scholars primarily from outside of applied linguistics, especially from sociology, cultural criticism, and education. Members specifically researching reading include Geoff Hall, James Gee, and Gunther Kress.

understood as mutually exclusive processes. This framework is also sometimes used as multimodal metalanguage, as discussed below.

An expansion of the literacy construct in this way appears in applied linguistics in full form in Kern's (2000) monograph on language teaching. After noting the need for the literacy construct in language teaching, he argues that we must expand "the notion of literacy beyond the strict traditional limits of reading and writing skills, and even beyond the skills of text-centric literary interpretation" (p. 5).¹¹ Kern (2000) employs the New London Group's (1996) work on multiliteracies and refers to language as the most fundamental of Available Designs. In this view, learning an L2 is the process of producing the Redesigned through Designing and thus expanding and deepening the range of Available Designs to empower readers with the covert literacy described by Swaffar et al. (1991). "One might argue that a word is a word.... But a moment's reflection leads one to realize that the physical situation of written words ... influences how we understand them and the reasons for their being written" (Kern, 2000, p. 73). He combines the social idea of literacy with the negotiation of meaning between readers, texts, assumptions, and genres.

Though these discussions of a covert literacy and multiple literacies are located primarily within applied linguistics, they are informed by and share much with similar debates in literary theory. The literacy debate provides a necessary connection between

¹¹ Kern (2000) makes a distinction here between text, "physical artifacts of language use," and discourse, "text plus the social and cognitive processes involved in negotiating meaning as people produce and interpret these texts" (Kern, 2000, p. 9), that not all traditions maintain. For an example of the complication of these concepts, see the discussion of reader-response theory in section 4.2 below.

schema theory and the discursive theories of reading necessary for understanding L2 literary reading. By locating quantitative L2 reading research in relation to more qualitative theories from other fields, a wider range of reading contexts can be better understood. With this understanding of the literacies necessary for various types of meaning-making, I now turn to the L2 literary texts at the center of this dissertation and to the figure of the literary.

3.3. What Is L2 Literary Reading?

This section begins with a working definition of the literary intended heuristically, normatively, and relationally; it is not meant to apply across a whole text, but rather to utterances, instances, and events. All texts are to some degree heteroglossic¹² and are thus more or less literary at each point—the “literary,” as I use it here, thus refers to a certain kind of complexity, often associated with issues like style. A more literary text is one that makes greater use of what each era, culture, style, and text type determine as literary.

Following this definition, the second part surveys a number of concepts from literary theory and philosophy commonly discussed by applied linguists that are relevant for reading texts. This expansion of traditional L2 reading research will set up the case for then considering L2 multimodal literary reading in the following section.

3.3.1. What Is the Literary?

Swaffar et al. (1991) end their book with a look at L2 literary reading, suggesting the literary simultaneously poses “the greatest challenges and the greatest potential

¹² See Section 3.3.2 below for a discussion of Bakhtin’s (1986) term.

benefits” (p. 213) to the reader. Literary texts are often defined in opposition to a culture’s norm, whether that be expository texts for everyday use (Swaffar et al., 1991, p. 213) or the machine-like output of the culture industry (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947). Literary texts, in this view, are not beholden to the formulae of the latter, in terms of culture, language, and information structures (Swaffar et al., 1991, p. 213). The literary simultaneously invites and requires a reader to interact with it in ways new and unfamiliar. The successful reading of the literary thus requires readers to wield their literacies toward the *Konkretisierung*, or concretization (Ingarden, 1931), of an abstract, literary text.¹³ That is, readers of literary texts have to come to a realization of the systems within the text as conditioning their understanding of it.

The present project understands this supposed dichotomy more as a continuum from less to more literary structures, building loosely on the juxtaposition of the (standard) expository and the (non-standard) literary from Swaffar et al. (1991) or the orate and literate modes of written texts from Kramersch (1993, p. 130). Understanding what this terminology implies for L2 readers and learners is critical for determining the reading challenges presented by the formal elements of the L2 German literary comic or graphic novel.

The effects of this observation on L2 reading research design require reaching beyond established conventions for three reasons: (1) few L2 scholars define what they

¹³ Ingarden’s (1931) argument that the literary work of art requires *Konkretisierung* influenced reader-response theory, which is discussed in greater detail in the following section. It also closely accords with the Gestalt psychological position (Wertheimer, 1923), which McCloud (1994) takes up in his discussion of closure and both Arnheim (1974) and Gombrich (1960) use to discuss the language of images.

mean by the literary; (2) they often conflate,¹⁴ or at least fail to show the relationship between, the literary and literature;¹⁵ and (3) their conclusions are not easily generalizable because literary works differ so greatly across languages and cultures. By their nature, texts employing literary language and structures are assumed to be unique. Nonetheless, several monographs and articles have specifically looked at the nature of the literary and literary reading in the L2.¹⁶

In defining the literary, many scholars (including both those trained in literary studies and applied linguistics) have focused on the nature of language. For instance, Kramsch (1993) connects the literary mode to L2 authentic texts through the idea of the particular, that is, a text answering to a specific context, in a particular mode of communication. In her explanation of L2 reading, an authentic text represents “the particular voice of a writer among the many voices of his or her community” (Kramsch, 1993, p. 131). The most literary, in consequence, simply represents the most particular among the possible range of authentic texts. Of course, for Kramsch (1993), the goal for L2 learners is not to move at once from their L1 literacy to the most idiosyncratic, literary L2 texts available; it may be difficult for readers to “authenticate” these texts (p. 186). Instead the goal is to support new literacies, to teach the metacognitive strategies for

¹⁴ This observation is not necessarily a criticism. The operationalization of the literary in this dissertation is heuristic and is not meant to refute scholarship imagining the relationship between the literary and literature differently.

¹⁵ Though literature and the construct of the literary may very well be related, that question will remain unanswered in this dissertation, as it would open up a range of other questions regarding cultural value systems related to high and low culture, the nature and history of literature, and, when applied to visual media like comics, the value of art.

¹⁶ See, for example, Carroli (2008), Hall (2015), Kern and Schultz (2005), Kramsch (1993), Swaffar, Arens, & Byrnes (1991) as well as the 2001 AAUSC volume edited by Scott and Tucker (2002), especially the contributions by Schultz (2002) and Swaffar (2002).

recognizing distinctions in language, culture, and genre, and to give L2 readers the tools to approach an ever-broader range of texts. What role the literary might play in bridging the L1 and L2 *cultures* for the L1 reader of an L2 text is not considered—Kramsch (1993) does not model *literacy* as a transcultural project.

Hall (2015) also focuses on the language of a text, contrasting its claim to the literary with that of the ordinary, noting the difficulty of any clear delineation between the two. Referring to a claim also debunked by literary scholars, he warns against assuming that the literary must be “flowery” or “elevated” (p. 17). Instead, he surveys approaches to the question from the New Critics,¹⁷ Russian formalism and Shklovsky’s *ostranenie*,¹⁸ corpus linguistics, dialogics,¹⁹ and intertextuality.²⁰ Hall’s (2015) contribution is important as it provides an extensive discussion of the literary beyond the dichotomies of standard/non-standard and orate/literate, while also questioning whether such language is only found in something called “literature.” He argues that not only is there no clear division between the literary and the ordinary, there is often little distinction at all. He concludes that the mark of the literary is its “sheer range” (p. 44).

¹⁷ New Criticism refers to a group of literary critics who argued for close reading to determine the meaning of texts. Significant figures include John Crowe Ransom, I. A. Richards, and, perhaps tangentially, T. S. Eliot.

¹⁸ Shklovsky’s (1997) concept of *ostranenie* (defamiliarization), drawn from his 1917 essay, “Art as Technique,” refers to the literary move of rendering things in such a way that the reader sees them anew. While the result is equivalent to the literary as presented in this dissertation, my definition requires no intentionality from the author, but refers instead to how individual readers read texts.

¹⁹ This term comes from Mikhail Bakhtin and refers to separate elements, especially language, in discourse. Dialogic is distinct from dialectic as these separate elements remain distinct in the former and are sublated into the new in the latter. I discuss Bakhtin’s related concept of heteroglossia in the next section below.

²⁰ Intertextuality is the relationship between two texts and often describes one work’s use of structures, characters, and other elements from another work through reference and allusion. See Kristeva (1980) for additional discussion.

Given these researchers' focus on context, particularity, and the multiple literacies needed for meaning making with a text, Carroli's (2008) contribution to the discussion provides the corrective that much depends on the perceptions of readers themselves. In the two studies around which she bases her book, she focuses on readers' perceptions of literature. Such an approach is welcome. She notes that, if the literary is to be understood in terms of deviation from the norm, as in Kramsch's (1993) particularity, or Hall's (2015) idea of range, then texts must *actually appear to be* more or less literary for each reader in each contextual moment—an assumption quite different for the cases of L1 and L2 readers. This example thus argues for my assumption that the literary exists on a continuum with the normal. Less helpful, however, for this dissertation's focus on multimodal texts is Carroli's (2008) sole focus, much like in Hall (2015), on the literary as a quality in language alone.

In contrast, Kern and Schultz (2005) compare a turn in the definition of literary, that has allowed it to be applied to fields as far-reaching as post-colonial theory, gender studies, and film, to the evolution of the term “literacy,” discussed above beginning with Swaffar et al. (1991). This approach allows for an expansion of the literary beyond the written word to include issues at the border between textuality and culture, like information structure. This shift opens up a space for considering the literary as a multimodal characteristic of texts. Why this is an advance can be clarified by reference to other concepts relevant to L2 literary reading drawn from literary theory and philosophy.

3.3.2. The Hermeneutic Circle, Heteroglossia, and Reader-Response Theory

This section discusses the hermeneutic circle, heteroglossia, and reader-response theory as models for the reading process often cited today. These three terms from contemporary theory are not all of the same order, but they all amplify what challenges the literary can cause the reader, especially (but not exclusively) the L2 reader. After briefly introducing each concept, I then discuss how it has been or could be applied to the problem of L2 literary reading.

The “hermeneutic circle” is an image codifying how readers approach texts: in a circular motion, iterating between the individual's predictions about and subsequent instantiation of a text’s meaning, and its place within the whole of language usage or psychological meaning of the time, place, and social milieu in which and for which it is to function (see Schleiermacher, 2010). Reading, in this figure, is recursive, with each entry into the text by the reader potentially revealing more of its information structures and meaning.

How well this hermeneutic circle actually works as a self-correcting recovery of meaning, however, is dependent on the reader's starting point. Readers begin with prejudices (Gadamer, 2013) or expectations (Jauß, 1970) that they never entirely forget or overcome. However, each reader is ideally constantly questioning them to improve on their reading, that is, the meaning they are crafting in their recursive dialogue with the text.

In this sense, the model of the hermeneutic circle is a useful metaphor for the repetitive work readers do to create a bridge between their own schematic knowledge and

literacies and an unknown literary text, thereby drawing the work's horizon of expectation closer to the reader's own. There are similarities here between the hermeneutic circle and both Kintsch's (1998) model of comprehension involving successive processing cycles and the recursivity of the New London Group's (1996) Designs of Meaning framework. As such, hermeneutic models are commonly applied to reading in general, but especially in L2 reading scholarship.²¹

Yet the hermeneutic circle, used to describe the process of reading as the reader's recursive movement between the L1 and the L2, still relies on the assumption that texts are meant to convey stable meanings that can actually be captured. It also views the reader and the text as more or less fully separate and self-sufficient entities in a diglossic relationship—the two “speak” to each other's expectations.

In practice, however, language itself is rarely, if ever, such a monolithic bearer of meaning. It consists of dialects, sociolects, and idiolects, situationally wielded by individuals in given contexts that are defined by cultural standards of appropriateness. The resulting instability of meaning in the reading process derives from the languages of both the reader and the text. In his writing on the novel, in consequence, Bakhtin (1981) refers to this situation with the term *heteroglossia*, referring in its original context to the multiplicity of voices and positions that are represented in the realist novel. He goes even further and notes that, in the novel, the speakers' voices represented are not theirs alone, but rather the amalgamation of all voices from the text's culture that have spoken before

²¹ See, for example, Carroli (2008), Gramling and Warner (2012), Kramsch (1993), Swaffar et al. (1991), and Urlaub (2012).

on the subject. His term *ventriloquation* refers to the materialization of these voices within the bounds of a text: “The author does not speak in a given language.... [He] speaks, as it were, *through* language, a language that has somehow more or less materialized, become objectivized, that he merely ventriloquates” (1219).

Bakhtin’s contribution has played a significant role in applied linguistics by destabilizing too-simple equivalencies between the separate spheres of the L1 and the L2, explaining why and how learners ought to be “operating between languages” (Modern Language Association, 2007, pp. 3–4). I understand *heteroglossia* as a useful metaphor for understanding the “range” of literary language spoken of by Hall (2015), the particularity of authentic texts (Kramersch, 1993), and the varied possibilities for interpretations.

Just as the L1 and the L2 are not homogenous or mutually exclusive spheres, L2 scholars have also begun to seek nuanced answers to questions about the relationship between readers, their readings, and their texts in other ways. Overt among their theoretical reference points is reader-response or reception theory.²² This approach considers the interactivity between a reader and a text; the text exists insofar as the reader reads it, and the reader is in turn formed by the text.

Some theorists of the German school of reception theory stress the materiality of this contact, considering this construction of the text over time (Jauß, 1970), while others

²² Reader-response theory is an umbrella term, of which *Rezeptionsästhetik*, the term used for the German scholars referred to as the “Konstanzer Schule,” especially Iser and Jauß, is but one strain. For more on reader-response theory, see Eco (1979), Freund (1987), Holub (1992), Radway (1991), and Scholes (1986). For its application to visual media, see Bordwell (1986), Ingarden (1989), and Kemp (1992).

look at the “incompleteness” of the text itself, where portions of the text are constants, leaving gaps to be completed by the reader (Ingarden, 1931, 1968; Iser, 1971, 1972, 1976). Still others, in the American variant that is usually called reader-response theory, consider the text all but immaterial, with the interpretation being the important element (see Fish, 1980a, 1980b, 1981). Another distinction between reception theory and reader-response theory is between those who consider reading a pursuit joining the individual’s horizon of expectation with that of the text (Iser and Jauss) and others for whom it is a process unmoored from the text itself (Fish).²³

Because of its orientation away from a stable text, reader-response theory is helpful for understanding L2 literary reading, as both fields make many of the same assumptions. For example, Kramersch (1993) describes the interaction of L2 reading and texts as follows: “Meaning is not in the written or spoken text, but in the dialogue between the learner and the text” (Kramersch, 1993, p. 177). Reader-response theory, especially that of Jauss, is indebted to the same covert, social conception of literacy as that outlined in Swaffar et al. (1991).²⁴ Fish appears to operate in the same paradigm but grants much less authority to the text in that dialogue.

Kern (2000) provides three implications of reader-response theory for understanding how to teach L2 reading. First, instructors should be aware not only of the various schemata and literacies of individual students, but also of the often widely-

²³ For Fish, meaning-making and interpretation occur only within an “interpretive community.” For more, see his essay “Interpreting the *Variorum*” (Fish, 1980b, pp. 147–173).

²⁴ For a look at how reader-response theory is applied to L2 reading, see Hirvela (1996), Swaffar (1988), and Hall (2015, pp. 49–63).

varying potential textual interpretations. Second, the background knowledge and literacies should be considered not only as enabling interpretation, but also as constraining a wider range of possibilities. Finally, in line with Kramsch's (1993) ideas on particularity, Kern (2000) reminds us that that all texts are written for intended audiences; the L2 may not be the origin of the difficulty in reading, when an addressee²⁵ is distinct from the reader (pp. 115–116).

In most of its incarnations, reader-response theory challenges the roles of the author and reader, but it also complicates the nature of meaning-making by the reader alone, raising several questions: If readers have a role in meaning-making, do they themselves become authors? If so, at what point does this authoring occur? And finally, is there an extra-contextual stable meaning that is first read before a reader offers an interpretation, or is everything all simply interpretation?

These important questions regarding the discursive nature of meaning have become central to L2 reading research. But they have also become common to theories of discourse and communication in the wider field of applied linguistics. As such, they must be taken into account when approaching meaning of any kind and must not be restricted to only written text. The following section thus takes up these questions in view of texts with meaning presented through multiple modalities.

²⁵ For more on intended recipients of texts, see Bakhtin (1986) on *addressivity*, or “the quality of turning to someone..., a constitutive feature of the utterance” (p. 99).

3.4. The Challenges of Reading Multimodal Texts

Thus far, this chapter has discussed reading, the distinct features of L2 reading, and the nature of literary reading. Yet it has stayed focused on the written word. To counter this bias and move closer to the research design in this project, this section introduces multimodality and multimodal reading as a way of understanding texts in multiple modalities, especially the German graphic novel.

Multimodality is by no means the only tradition useful for approaching the text-image link characteristic in these texts. I choose it simply because it has been used in the close parallels the scholarship has made between multimodality and multiliteracies, especially in L2 reading. To set the stage for my own use of the term multimodal, I now turn to some important examples of scholarly debates about texts that function in multiple modalities, starting with approaches to media and the visual.

3.4.1. Communications Studies, Media Theory, and Cultural Studies

Communications studies arose as an independent discipline in the 20th century, when unidirectional models of communication (see Shannon & Weaver, 1964) were replaced by circular models more closely resembling the hermeneutic circle, largely beginning with Schramm (1954). In these newer models, an encoder sends a message to a decoder, who then becomes an interpreter and encoder of a new message, sent back to the original encoder who must decode and interpret the new message. In this view of communication, each message is fully formed when transmitted and decoded, much like contemporaneous views of reading, although Schramm's (1954) model did not privilege one mode of meaning over any other.

This view influenced early L2 reading research and pedagogy. For example, Widdowson (1978) focuses on several aspects of language teaching and communication, including how the four skills share commonalities (pp. 57–76) and how reading should not be restricted to the written word (p. 79). Nonetheless, communications studies is necessarily clearly distinct from traditional reading research in the focus by the former on the process as a whole, rather than solely on the uptake by the decoder.

It is important to note that communications studies largely developed out of journalism and sociology programs and their interests in how society reacts to mass media—an approach through social sciences, particularly using mass data. At the same time, the less well-defined field of media theory or media studies began to emerge as an adjunct to critical theory and from attention to individual media such as film, theater, or literature; these theories of the effects of particularly visual media on message transmission represent a more humanistic approach.

This dual origin of media theory is reflected in the methodologies and goals of its scholarship. The field absorbed major impetuses from the Frankfurt School, especially W. Benjamin (1955) and Horkheimer and Adorno (1947), who focus on the results of the technological production and reproduction of cultural material; from the Toronto School, which considers how the functioning of specific media play a role in cultural and state power (Innis, 1950) and how they are read (McLuhan, 1994); and from a more recent German school of media studies surrounding Kittler (1986), who places his work at a turning point where the digitization of media is expanding rapidly. Kittler (1986) argues

that this phenomenon requires a significant shift in the theoretical priorities of media studies toward the dehumanization of media.

Media theory may not provide as obvious a link to the existing research into L2 reading as communications studies. However, when considering the larger context in which individual, society, and text are modeled as interacting, this convergence of media and communication studies interest around problems of how multimodal texts communicate provides much-needed conceptual assistance for expanding L2 reading research beyond the written word. Unfortunately, as of yet, little dialogue exists between L2 reading researchers or applied linguists and media theorists,²⁶ though some work on multimodal discourse touches on similar issues. More work here would be welcome.

It remains the domain of communications studies to provide the most widespread models for the transmission of information between individuals and groups, while media theory looks more at the media of communication and its social contexts. A third field, cultural studies, asks similar questions but focuses on the context around the transmission of information between peoples through media, especially as reflecting social power dynamics. As such, cultural studies theorists look at cultural artifacts (often those combining text and images) to understand how readers interact with them, with little systematic attention to group norms for communication or to media.

Roland Barthes, a semiotician and seminal force at the origin of cultural studies, asks questions about image-text relations in film, literature, advertisements, and myth,

²⁶ The few articles in applied linguistics discussing media theoretical works usually reference little beyond W. Benjamin's (1955) essay on the reproducibility of the artwork. For an example, see Matthias (2017).

among many other things. Especially helpful for understanding reading and the messages of communication are Barthes's writings on photographs (1977a, 2010), in which he wants to understand whether they can ever exist without connoted meaning. "How do we read a photograph? What do we perceive? In what order, according to what progression?" (Barthes, 1977a, p. 29). He answers that the images are "immersed ... in at least an initial layer of connotation" that is "grasped immediately [by the decoder] by an inner metalanguage" (pp. 28–29). This answer, like those of Kramsch (1993) or Swaffar et al. (1991) for L2 language contexts, recognizes that images are particular and contextualized.

As an example, when discussing images in political advertisements, Barthes (2010) notes that the "conventions of photography, moreover, are themselves replete with signs" (p. 1321). Importantly, these signs are produced and interpreted by individuals in contexts, such as, in this case, the political realm. Barthes's work thus expands the present inquiry into the effects of particularity and context on meaning to the visual domains. In the case of graphic novels in particular, and cultural studies in general, the literacies with which we empower our L2 learners so they can read L2 literary texts must thus also address the visual realm. As a literary critic, semiotician, visual theorist, and cultural studies scholar, then, Barthes provides a wide entry point into a common discourse for scholars from a range of fields; his work is widely present in L2 reading research and multimodality studies.

Barthes's work recognizes the social context and the cultural production of signs yet focuses primarily on the readers and their texts (of many kinds). In contrast, looking

at the wider power structures involved in making meaning, Hall's (1993) work on decoding and encoding at first appears to bring us full circle to communications studies, but the profile distinction is clear. Like Schramm (1954), Hall (1993) too offers a model of communication whose stages go beyond the immediate communicative event to include production, circulation, distribution/consumption, and reproduction. As such, Hall (1993) criticizes communications studies for its linearity and refers to Barthes (1977a), agreeing with him that there are "very few instances in which signs organized in a discourse signify only their 'literal' (that is, near-universally consensualized) meaning" (Hall, 1993, p. 97).

Hall's (1993) most significant contribution is in how possible interpretations are constrained by the encoder, guiding potential interpretations just as Kern (2000) discussed in his advice to language educators employing the lessons of reader-response theory in their pedagogy. Possible interpretations are not infinite but rather limited by discourse, context, and code. For Hall (1993), the decoder takes one of three positions in interpretation: "the dominant-hegemonic," "the negotiated," or "the oppositional" (pp. 101–103). By introducing power into the reading process, Hall (1993) has thus characterized the constraints encoded into a text and the ways that they affect readings.

From this perspective, when readers encounter L2 texts, they do not simply decode a message based on vocabulary and grammar. Similarly, they cannot rest on acquired schemata or the literacies to interact across cultures. They themselves are asked to create a meaning commensurate with those encoded in the texts, and they must choose the extent to which they will assent in a world in which power plays a role. Further work

by scholars of applied linguistics and cultural studies investigating the role of power in L2 reading and interpretation would be welcome.²⁷

3.4.2. Visual Studies and the Language of Images

Not only written texts, but also images, have meanings encoded in them, as connotations as well as explicit denotation, and they too must be “read” (or viewed) with similar constraints in mind.²⁸ Thus, as a final precursor to studies of multimodality itself, it is also instructive to pause once more, this time to look at the scholarship on the “language of images”²⁹ from visual studies³⁰ scholars—a body of work that is indispensable for understand how meaning is constructed from multimodal texts.

Visual studies scholars do not intend to understand images by relying only on their individual parts, as a visual version of the reading research that existed prior to Goodman (1967). At the same time, their work does not shy away from characterizing image components. A central voice in the scholarship, W. J. T. Mitchell (1980), characterizes his approach as an interest in “images *as* a language; the semantic, syntactic, communicative power of images to encode messages, tell stories, express ideas and emotions, raise questions, and ‘speak’ to us” (p. 3). Scholars following in his

²⁷ Though more cultural studies and applied linguistics collaboration would be welcome, for a useful volume on critical theory and pedagogy that offers a strong start, see Levine and Phipps (2012).

²⁸ In this dissertation, rather than attempt to differentiate between viewing, seeing, reading, and other approaches to meaning making, I use the term reading to refer to meaning-making with any text. It is especially appropriate for this dissertation, as it is also the primary term used in comics studies, literary theory, multimodality studies, and, of course, L2 reading research.

²⁹ This term comes from volume edited by W. J. T. Mitchell (1980) containing essays by leading theorists on the subject, including art historians/theorists such as Rudolf Arnheim, E. H. Gombrich, and Mitchell himself and philosophers of language such as John Searle.

³⁰ Mitchell (1980, p. 2) and Gombrich (1960, p. 9) refer to this work collectively as iconology, a term taken from art theorist Erwin Panofsky. The latter further differentiated between iconography, the study of meaning in art, and iconology, the study of form (see Panofsky, 1955, pp. 26–39).

footsteps ask the same questions as Barthes but focus more on the images' structural features for their answers.

In his monograph that is also a standard in this field, Gombrich (1960) looks at art as a representational illusion, relying on schemata developed within cultural contexts across time. As such, Gombrich is offering a reader-response view of art interpretation. He is concerned with "the beholder's share in the readings of images, his capacity, that is, to collaborate with the artist and to transform a piece of colored canvas into a likeness of the visible world" (Gombrich, 1960, p. 291).³¹ The reader creates the meaning, which, in line with Hall's (1993) claims above, is also constrained by the artist. But it remains unclear how these constraints, these schemata are constructed on a granular level. Arnheim's (1974) book also attempts to address this issue by painstakingly going through image composition, touching on object weight, balance, and movement; color; and space to understand how we make meaning. Many of these specific structural features appear in the work of multimodality scholars as well, especially Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996/2006) book on reading images.

Together, Gombrich (1960) and Arnheim (1974) provide a convincing approach to the language of images. However, Mitchell (1994) identifies a problem in these and other scholars' continued use of the verbal as descriptive code for visual works. In line with "the pictorial turn" (Mitchell, 1994, p. 11–34), that is, the shift away from the sole reliance on the verbal in academic and public life, the written word can no longer be used

³¹ This transformation is indebted to Arnheim's (1974) use of Gestalt psychology (Wertheimer, 1923), also influential for McCloud's (1994) discussion of closure and reminiscent of Ingarden's (1931) term *Konkretisierung*.

unquestioningly as a norm for understanding. “The very notion of a theory of pictures suggests an attempt to master the field of visual representation with a verbal discourse” (p. 9). This criticism is well taken and represents a limitation, not only for this visual studies scholarship, but also for the theory of multimodality and for this dissertation.³² Mitchell’s work is thus an attempt to destabilize the dominance of the verbal, resulting in what he calls the “imagetext,” a communicative form across modalities, not dissimilar from the multimodal ensemble (Serafini, 2014, p. 11) to which I now turn.

3.4.3. Multimodality, Metalanguage, and Multimodal Ensembles

A newer discipline, the study of multimodality, connects many of the discussions traced to this point, addressing the reading of texts and images. The term “multimodality” refers to the study of the design or construction of meaning out of texts containing different potentialities referred to as modes.

The field of multimodality goes back to the mid-1990s (Jewitt, Bezemer, & O’Halloran, 2016, p. 1), arising from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (1996/2006) work applying SFL to images under the term “visual grammar.” One of the primary claims of multimodality scholars is that meaning is produced by interacting with texts. As readers read a text, the meaning they construct is dependent not only on authorial intentions or reader schemata, but also on the *modes* of communication and the *media* of distribution. In their 2001 monograph on multimodality theory, Kress and Van Leeuwen define modes as abstract meaning resources “capable of

³² I return to this point in the dissertation’s conclusion specifically in regard to the use of the verbal for both prose and comics IRPs.

being realized in different materialities” (p. 6). Modes are how meaning works, the choices made in realizing meaning. Media are the physical material through which the modally encoded information is transmitted. In conversation, the timbre, volume, and pitch of the human voice are thus modes; the media are the vocal cords, sound waves, electrical impulses, and eardrums.

Of chief concern to the study of multimodality are the unique affordances of each mode and what its selection in each context means and does. According to this model, when a text is designed, an inchoate, deep-structural meaning is realized through the selection of specific modes of representation. Importantly, certain modes are better suited to different contexts and types of meaning. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996/2006) describe this phenomenon as follows:

Even when we can express what seem to be the same meanings in either image-form or writing or speech, they will be *realized* differently. For instance, what is expressed in language through the choice between different word classes and clause structures, may, in visual communication, be expressed through the choice between different uses of colour or different compositional structures. And this will affect meaning. (p. 2)

Scholars of multimodality claim to favor no one mode for representation above any other and advocate instead for texts that comprise a new multimodal literacy, in which “[spoken] language exists side by side with, and independent of, forms of visual representation which are openly structured, rather than viewed as more or less faithful

duplicates of reality” (1996/2006, p. 23). All modes are thus equal until they are constrained by their affordances in a given context.

Given the resultingly wide array of modal possibilities for representing meaning, scholars of multimodality seek a unified metalanguage for understanding, describing, and analyzing meaning, regardless of modal realization (Unsworth, 2014). The field, however, encounters here the same problem Mitchell (1994) observed regarding the use of the verbal to describe other, supposedly equal, non-verbal modalities. Though multimodality scholars remain indebted to their origins in linguistics,³³ they are not caught unawares. In fact, Serafini (2014) sees this very problem as the origin of his work: “[Mitchell’s] pictorial turn established the fields of visual culture and visual studies as legitimate academic disciplines concerned with multimodality and other hybrid forms of communication” (p. 20). Sound work in multimodality thus must recognize its own limitations (Iedema, 2003; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996/2006) when using verbal metalanguage for its analyses. Some scholars have responded to this stumbling block by altering the existing metalanguage from SFL. For example, Serafini (2014) reimagines Halliday’s (1978) *textual* metafunction as the *compositional* (p. 46). On the other hand, the New London Group (1996), from the related study of multiliteracies, created entirely

³³ SFL describes language—and as applied in multimodality scholarship any mode for meaning-making—through a framework of three metafunctions: the ideational, the ideas in the text; the interpersonal, the relationship between individuals in and around the text; and the textual, the structural organization of a text (Halliday, 1978). These meaning categories allow researchers to describe the process of meaning making in terms of what it does rather than what it is, much like the turn toward literacy in L2 reading research. For more on multimodality and the SFL metafunctions, see Jewitt et al. (2016), Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996/2006), Painter and Martin (2011), and Serafini (2014).

new metalanguage, the *Designs of Meaning* framework, that is not, at least overtly, couched in linguistic terms.³⁴

In all solutions to the problem of a metalanguage for analyses that span texts of multiple modalities, specific issues remain for scholars, even if they may be largely cosmetic problems in actual practice. For instance, if verbal language should not dominate in a particular representation, what becomes of traditional definitions of *reading* and the *text*? Serafini's construct of the *multimodal ensemble* (2014, pp. 11–18) offers a potential solution to the latter by shifting the terminology away from verbal language. Though useful, however, the construct does not differentiate between the overall work, such as a magazine, songbook, or comic, and a more restricted instance of meaning within that³⁵—a magazine page, song, or comics panel.

Nonetheless, in line with these concerns, these projects recommend the use of the term *text*³⁶ for full works, whereas *ensemble* provides contrast when necessary to refer specifically to smaller constellations, such as the comics panel.

3.4.4. Image and Text

Beyond their search for an intermodal metalanguage to characterize how texts realize meaning across modes, multimodality scholars also seek a theoretical approach to the wide-ranging interaction of modes in ensembles and texts, or *intermodal*

³⁴ Although the scope of multiliteracies research is distinct from multimodality, the two related fields inform each other. For instance, many members of the New London Group, especially Kress himself, but also Bill Cope, Mary Kalantzis, and James Gee, have also done work important for the study of multimodality.

³⁵ Consider here the distinction between restricted and general orthology in comics from Groensteen (2007).

³⁶ Importantly, text is of course polysemous itself and refers also to written language, especially in contrast to images in image-text relations as discussed in the following section.

complementarity (Painter & Martin, 2011; Thomas, 2014). While such an approach is theoretically informative, for our purposes in modeling the reading of graphic novels specifically, the specific relationship between image and text is of greatest interest.

While comics studies has traditionally used semiotic theory to account for image-text relations (Fresnault-Deruelle, 1972; Groensteen, 2007), a growing body of work incorporates multimodality as well (Cohn, 2009; Kaindl, 2004; Miodrag, 2013), especially ideas from Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996/2006) monograph. This shift speaks not only to the expanded importance of the field of multimodality beyond SFL and applied linguistics, but also to the increasing interconnectedness of various approaches to multiple modes of meaning. What unites several diverse approaches to image-text relations across fields are their goals and methods of description. Each field describes the ways the image and text modes interconnect, and thus designs typologies of terminology.

The semiotic work of Barthes, widely influential throughout multimodality scholarship (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996/2016, 2001; Jewitt et al., 2016; Serafini, 2014), provides a useful starting point for describing the kinds of solutions they offer. Barthes (1977b) describes two types of relations—*anchorage* and *relay* (pp. 38–41). Anchorage refers to how an image's polysemy is reduced through textual nomenclature, whereas relay describes how the two modes add meaning to one another through their interaction. Other typologies are more fine-grained than Barthes's. Recall, for example, Baetens and Lefèvre's (2014, pp. 188–189) four types or McCloud's (1994, p. 153–155) seven.

Multimodality scholars prefer typologies that foreground intermodal complementarity, again within a metalanguage for all texts. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996/2006) discuss Barthes's typology, which assumes relay as less common than anchorage. While they do not dispute his categories (p. 18), they stress that, whereas Barthes favors the verbal component of an image-text ensemble, the two components should be considered equal as possible modes. Painter and Martin (2011) suggest a dichotomy, similar to Barthes's, made up of *convergence* and *divergence*—correlating to anchorage and relay. Finally, Serafini (2014, pp. 78–79) suggests three categories: *symmetrical*, *enhancing*, and *contradictory*. In ensembles of the first type, the image and text work largely provide the same meaning in two modes; in the second, they add to one another; in the third, image and text act in opposition to one another.

3.4.5. Multimodal Reading

With this foundation in modes and intermodal complementarity, we can now consider how readers read multimodal texts and ensembles. Despite the common desire for modally neutral language for texts (Serafini, 2014), most scholars of multimodality are content with the term *reading* to refer to the process of extracting meaning from a text—consider, for example, the title of Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996/2006) book, *Reading Images*. The reason is likely the lack of a readily-available term for many of the actors and processes involved in meaning-making across modes. An example of the unwieldiness in possible terminology is the rare use of the cumbersome “rhetor” as substitute for author or meaning-maker (see, e.g., Serafini, 2014, p. 33). One suggestion to replace *reading* comes from work in multiliteracies, the aforementioned *designing*

(New London Group, 2000), which refers to the meaning-making process by both the author (*rhetor*) and, for lack of a better word, the reader of a text. Despite these acknowledged shortcomings, as noted in the discussion of visual studies above, I will retain the term reading for an approach to graphic novels and comics that takes both image and text into consideration, without constructing a clear or stable hierarchy of the two modes.

Multimodality scholarship also clearly argues that meaning does not rest solely in the ensemble or the text. Like in the reader-oriented literary theories discussed above, meaning is constructed by the reader in real time, using the meaning-making affordances of modes arranged in ensembles. In a typical elaboration of this assumption, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996/2006) describes the ways they are arranged as a “visual grammar” for images and multimodal texts. Adopting an approach from semiotics, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001, p. 48) view all systems of representation, or discourses, as having norms for meaning. The study of multimodality should outline these grammars, and their 1996/2006 book is an attempt for images.

It would be easy to criticize the term “grammar” here; it might appear that these scholars are ignoring the pictorial turn by relying on linguistic terminology for their multimodal metalanguage. However, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996/2006) use the terminology metaphorically to stress the functional element of reading. For them, like for Swaffar et al. (1991), earlier work in literacy missed the goal-oriented and creative nature of reading, by describing what individual elements in the process *are* rather than what they *can do* to represent meaning. Kress and Van Leeuwen even use a linguistic

metaphor to underscore this point. Earlier work on visual meaning examined the lexis of the text; their work looks at its syntax.³⁷ Therefore, though multimodality's SFL basis may create certain disadvantages for understanding the *reading* of an image, it can also open productive paths forward for the necessary work of describing a systematic and *functional* grammar of images.

As a model for text meaning, then, Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996/2006) grammar remains functional in character, because it views meaning as constructed in the process of readers reading. They lay out this grammar of multimodal narrative ensembles in terms of their participants (pp. 47–59), the interactive processes of these participants (pp. 59–72), and their materiality (pp. 215–238), to name just a few of the many systems of classification they develop. Their most important and most-often cited contribution is their chapter on composition, in which they outline the use of narrative vectors and break meaning in images down into (1) information value, (2) salience, and (3) framing.

While the latter two are important, they are also largely intuitive, building on approaches to images suggested by Arnheim (1974). The first requires further explanation. Information value refers to zones of the image: the vertical axis marks the theme-rheme distinction, rendered here as given-new (pp. 179–185); the horizontal differentiates between the ideal and the real (pp. 186–193); and the center-margin divide provides focus and thus salience. This glossary of functional meanings as a grammar of multimodal ensembles allows readers to understand what they do when making meaning.

³⁷ This point can be understood by contrasting McCloud's (1994), Eisner's (1985/2008), and Cohn's (2013) vocabularies/morphology of comics elements with Groensteen's (2007) generative approach to comics language.

It also provides teachers a clearer understanding of the texts they teach and a straightforward way to explain them to their students. That said, it also allows for individual readers, for whom salience is determined by more specialized schemata.

The advantage of this model is that it acknowledges that readers bring their own cultural literacies to visual texts, and in concert with various processes for producing visual meaning, produce interpretations. Recognizing the constraints on these processes specified by Gombrich (1960) and Hall (1993), multimodal reading theory thus carries the advantages and disadvantages of not allowing for the same freedom as Fish (1980a). As of yet, however, insufficient research has been done testing reading or using eye-tracking to understand whether multimodality theories of reading reflect how texts are actually read. Nonetheless, as multimodality scholarship usefully provides a way to analyze a range of multimodal texts, work like that done in this dissertation may help to begin bridging the gap.

3.4.6. Adaptation

This brief survey of issues implicated in reading, L2 reading, L2 literary reading, and multimodal reading has provided a basis for understanding the heart of the research design for the present study: the reading of two L2 literary comics (graphic novel) texts by Ulf K., alongside the reading of two prose texts by Bertolt Brecht, as understood through the lens of the discussion of L2 literary reading presented above.

However, how the text pairs relate to one another as two different modalities of representation of a single content has as of yet not been modeled. This relation is also at the heart of the present research design, since the comics are, after all, adaptations of the

original prose texts. As the last factor in this description of L2 multimodal reading, the fact of adaptation in creating, and by extension, reading these texts needs also to be considered, as well as what kind of relation the text and the adapted text actually have.

“Adaptation” is a phenomenon addressed in scholarship in depth, but the research design requires only a brief definition from adaptation studies, before this discussion considers how it is applied in multimodality. According to Sanders (2016, pp. 22–23):

Adaptation can be a transpositional practice, casting a specific genre into another generic mode Yet adaptation can also continue a simple attempt to make texts “relevant” or easily comprehensible to new audiences and readerships via the processes of proximation and updating.

For Sanders (2016), adaptation involves an original text, an adapter, and a resulting adaptation. This model differs from the one used in multimodality studies. There, all meaning, adapted or not, consists of existing ideas expressible by selecting and using available modes, with new meaning resulting from a newly-arranged ensemble (see, e.g., the Designs of Meaning from the New London Group, 1996).

The space for a specific model of adaptation in multimodality derives instead from the fact that the modal affordances are determined both by mode and by context—how an adapted text will be used in the destination culture affect the actual ideational content of the text itself. In a process referred to as *transduction*, the materiality of a multimodal selection is repurposed as it is transposed between modes as an adaptation, not because it reflects the best arrangement of modes to convey its original meaning in a new context, but rather because it refers intertextually back to an earlier text (Jewitt et al.,

2016, Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996/2006). Though all meaning-making rearranges already organized meaning, transduction makes intentional intertextual references even if at the expense of a mode's appropriateness in the new context—the source text is implicated in the adaptation, and the target multimodal form does not function in the same way as a text native to that form does. Iedema (2003) terms a similar concept *resemiotization*, described as how “meaning making shifts from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a practice to the next” (Iedema, 2003, p. 41). For the purposes of this dissertation, and because of its resonance across fields, the term adaptation will suffice to describe the relationship of the texts employed in this project's reading study, as long as it can bear the additional meanings contained in transduction.

3.5. Conclusions

The conclusion to this literature review briefly summarizes what the previous sections imply for the design of a research project based on the L2 German graphic novel, as well as for approaching the particular challenges presented in understanding L2 graphic novels. The few studies that have been done to test how graphic novels are actually read are discussed in the next chapter on methodology. The second part of this conclusion then considers the scholarship on teaching L2 multimodal texts and specifically the L2 German graphic novel.

3.5.1. Reading the (L2 German) Graphic Novel

As used here, the term L2 German graphic novel refers to a literary comic in German read by second-language readers. It is an authentic text composed in German,

not specifically written for these L2 readers. As such, it is likely not only to pose difficulties in vocabulary and theme, but also in cultural and formal schemata (Carrell, 1987) unknown to L2 learners. It is a work using the comics form for an adult readership in the source culture (most often, the FRG) that makes frequent use of the literary, a feature typically connected to the particularity (Kramersch, 1993) and range (Hall, 2015) of language. When it takes the form of an explicitly literary comic, in addition to its particular use of language and information structure (Meyer, 1985), it additionally employs the literary by playing with comics conventions such as panel regularity (Groensteen, 2007), panel-panel relations (Groensteen, 2007, McCloud, 1994), and image-text relations (Barthes, 1977a; Serafini, 2014).

To read it, L2 readers must be literate (Swaffar et al., 1991; New London Group, 1996) in terms of its visual (Gombrich, 1960; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996/2016) and textual (Fish, 1980a, 1980b) conventions and information structures. They must be able to process information and employ learned reading strategies (King et al. 1975; Kern, 2000) to compensate for deficits in knowledge, ability, and literacies (Stanovich, 1980; Bernhardt, 2005). They must recognize they are reading a text within a socio-political moment (Barthes, 1977a; Hall, 1993), and they must improve upon their expectations (Jauß, 1970) and prejudices (Gadamer, 2013) as they read. Finally, they must question the relationship of the text to their own readings in terms of the addressed reader, the voices in the text, and those ascribed to the interpretation (Bakhtin, 1986).

Any study designed to illuminate what kinds of meaning-making L2 learners engage in when they read a graphic novel must thus evaluate its results in terms of:

- L2 learners' familiarity with the graphic novel as a genre/mode in their L1;
- L2 learners' familiarity with the graphic novel as a genre/mode in the L2;
- the difficulty level of *both* the word-text and image-text in the reading, in terms of the conventionality of both text modes in relation to learners' experiences with the text types in both their L1 and L2;
- possible discrepancies between the word-text and image-text in the graphic novel (due to its status as an adaptation/transduction);
- L2 learners' use of reading strategies to understand *both* the word-text and the image-text in the reading, separately and together;
- L2 learners' use of reading strategies in conventional word-texts; and
- L2 learners' personal preferences for reading.

The research design presented in the next chapter attempts to collect data on several of these points, especially by: (1) controlling for text-reading abilities by including a comparison between a story that was originally presented in a word-text but then adapted to a graphic novel; (2) comparing reading outcomes to student demographics, reading experience, and habits; and (3) attempting to isolate what meanings are read out of the graphic novel's image-text and from the word-text through the separation of idea units by modality and a rubric assessing the readers' recognition of the modal source of information.

3.5.2. Teaching L2 Multimodal Texts and the German Graphic Novel

To ensure that learners are to achieve the goal of effective reading of a multimodal text in an L2, it is necessary to consider what they need to be taught. This point is critical not only in course design, but also in evaluating data on reading, as noted in the next chapter in the explanation of how my study used recall protocols. To make the case for what kind(s) of explicit instruction is required for the learners to acquire the multiple literacies appropriate to making meaning with multimodal texts, I trace the debate historically, largely following the same path taken in this chapter, before concluding with reference to a few useful monographs that argue for the kinds of strategies that dominate in this kind of reading.

Goodman's (1967) view of reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game implies that students should be taught how to guess. "Effective methods and materials ... must help [readers] to select the most productive cues, to use their knowledge of language structure to draw on their experiences and concepts" (Goodman, 1967, p. 9). This stress on metacognitive strategies and activation of background knowledge as a pedagogical principle continues to this day.

Yet Gough (1972) argues that readers must still learn to become decoders but also that the code itself cannot be taught (p. 310). In Gough's presentation, decoding is distinct from guessing (bottom-up vs. top-down processing). However, Gough (1985) later tempers his argument. Even then, though he moves context to the forefront, he still provides little pedagogical advice for teaching it (Gough, 1985, p. 688).

Context also plays a significant role in Stanovich's (1980) interactive-compensatory model—especially for learners who may be weaker in other areas of reading (p. 63). Nonetheless, teaching methods remain absent. Carrell (1984, 1985) expands context beyond the word level and divides it into concrete components, but unlike her predecessors, she provides models for activating and teaching background knowledge through pre-reading activities, also discussed in King et al. (1975). This approach has remained in favor ever since so that students can use background knowledge and cultural and textual literacies as tools to make sense of L2 texts.

Beyond context, Bernhardt (1991) provides several principles for teaching L2 reading, specifically, that (1) teachers should not make assumptions about what students will understand from a text, that (2) misunderstandings arise from a variety of places including both knowledge and language, and that (3) readers and understandings are individual (Bernhardt, 1991, p. 186). The main point here is that, when teaching reading, both linguistic and contextual issues arise unpredictably; teachers must prepare students to identify their own shortcomings and provide clear and effective strategies to compensate.

The *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* (1986), along with their first full revision (2012), are not intended to provide advice on pedagogy, outlining destinations rather than methods for reaching them. Nonetheless, the goals they provide are widely read and are thus influential for practices in L2 reading pedagogy. In both versions, there is a clear separation between readers and stable texts. While the distinction is understandable, given the L2 scholarship in 1986, it is striking that the 2012 versions contain no mention

of multimodality—all texts are assumed to only be written—and they still view reading as a unidirectional process, largely understood in terms of decoding. “Reading comprehension is based largely on the amount of information readers can retrieve from a text” (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2012, p. 20).³⁸ This view of reading is already challenged in Bernhardt’s (1991) pedagogical principles and is completely absent from Swaffar and Arens’s (2005) monograph. These works build on Carrell’s (1984, 1985) pre-reading activities, providing detailed pedagogies for integrative and pre- and post-reading tasks (Swaffar et al., 1991) as well as the text matrix and the précis (Swaffar & Arens, 2005). The focus is on how to construct a reading and understand the choices made, and not on simple information gathering.

As the following chapter lays out, this study makes use of the recall protocol precisely because it gathers data on *how* learners read, not only on their success. It was chosen to be central to this study because it balances depth of processing (how *well* students [try to] read) with *what* they read. The data collected illuminate many current assumptions about how and when graphic novels and other multimodal texts might be used in the classroom, and what students actually do with them, thus offering insights as to what teaching strategies may be appropriate.

Following the development of literacy and multiliteracies views of L2 reading, text selection has become an important consideration. Scholars largely agree that there is value in using authentic texts in L2 reading pedagogy (e.g., Swaffar et al., 1991;

³⁸ The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012) regarding reading do distinguish between interpersonal and interpretive modalities. Nevertheless, they still suggest that the interpretive modality is connected to more complex texts at higher levels, reinforcing curricular bifurcation.

Kramersch, 1993; Bernhardt, 2011) and that using literary texts is especially worthwhile. Several works include a section defending the latter's use against claims that literature does not lead to communicative competence or that students find it too difficult (Carroli, 2008, pp. 8–10; Swaffar et al., 1991, pp. 213–216; Kramersch, 1993, pp. 130–131).

Those who push for authentic texts argue further they should be used to teach L2 learners from the very beginning. If texts are directly created for students, or authentic texts are edited for difficult vocabulary and grammatical structures, students may ultimately be discouraged from becoming truly literate in the L2. They will not learn to “establish the conceptual patterns of the text” (Swaffar et al., 1991, p. 189). The pedagogical implication is that metacognitive reading strategies and content knowledge should be taught alongside vocabulary recognition and grammar and already from day one. This claim accords with the widespread opposition to curricular bifurcation in university language programs, that is, the postponement of content to the second year or beyond. Present already in Swaffar et al. (1991), many works have since made similar arguments, including Kramersch (1993), Kern (2000, 2004), Byrnes and Kord (2002), Swaffar and Arens (2005), and perhaps most notably, the 2007 report by the Modern Language Association, “Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World.” This report placed the problem of curricular bifurcation at the middle of L2 instruction, foreign language departments, and the entire language arts curriculum.

The broadening of the field to account for views from multiliteracies and multimodality,³⁹ communication studies, media theory, reader-response theory, and other reader-text interactive views of reading can bring exponential growth in both the potential pedagogical implications and the responsibilities of reading pedagogies. University language courses, then, must teach students how to interact with a diverse range of texts constructed across various modes of meaning; these may be photographs on smartphones (visual images), image-text ensembles (social media posts), or various foreign languages and cultures across the globe.

It is not merely that such an approach addresses learners' everyday experiences; it is a social imperative to react to a changing world (New London Group, 2000, p. 9; Unsworth, 2014, p. 1). Learners must be prepared for the future of reading in multimodal texts. This multimodal literacy must focus not only on the individual elements that constitute a text, but also on what they do, how, and why.

In choosing the *graphic novel* as an object for research, then, the present study hopes to make the case for including genres heretofore less frequently considered by instructors, as part of the "New Structures for a Changed World" called for in the MLA Report. It thus makes the case for teaching the genres with which learners are familiar, in the modalities they prefer, so that these contemporary literacies can be bridged with those of a culture's past.

³⁹ For a look at pedagogical practices informed by approaches to multiliteracies, see the edited volume by Cope and Kalantzis (2015a), especially the first chapter, Cope and Kalantzis (2015b).

This belief leads to two broad principles regarding the pedagogy of multimodality: (1) As Unsworth (2014) makes clear in a study of how multimodal literacy is fostered in the Australian curriculum for teaching English, multimodal reading can and should be taught to students starting at an early age (pp. 1–3). The potentially problematic absence of the pictorial turn discussed above loses much of its significance when the possible gains of introducing visual reading from the very beginning of childhood education using approaches from multimodality are considered. (2) Not only can multimodal texts be introduced early in education, but simple—not simplified—examples of a multimodal text type can provide a productive introduction to more elaborate, rich, and literary texts. Serafini (2014) suggests that teachers select model example texts when introducing new text types (p. 94). In this way, students can learn how an individual multimodal text type functions. As students encounter new text types, they can begin to draw connections between them to develop claims about all multimodal texts. The desired result will be the informed development of their own intermodal metalanguage and their multiple literacies, their ability to make meaning out of multimodal texts.

I conclude this review of the literature that identifies how graphic novels challenge inherited definitions of literary reading by comparing two recent monographs that have synthesized the pedagogical theory on L2 reading into clear recommendations, and that demonstrate how much work is necessary to instrumentalize what is already known and what may soon be learned from the research.

The first is Grabe (2009), which expands and updates his earlier (1991) summary of L2 reading research and applies it to pedagogical practice. He first provides an extensive review of theories of reading and L2 reading, as well as the acquisition of reading and metacognitive strategies. His recommendations for teaching then follow, derived from both L1 and L2 reading research. Grabe's (2009) conclusions are restricted to a decidedly cognitive view. Though he devotes an entire chapter to the social contexts of reading, he does not view reading as a social process, almost completely ignoring the covert literacy discussed above. As such, he does not address multiliteracies or multimodality.

Paesani et al. (2016), in contrast, focus specifically on the contextual aspects of reading. They begin with a summary of the existing reading models that have grown out of the need to teach metacognitive and metalinguistic strategies⁴⁰ and account for background knowledge in schema theory and individual readers. Their work presents the implications of a view of reading expanded beyond the unidirectional position taken in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* (1986) toward the incorporation of multiple literacies and multimodality. The volume also discusses the implications of reader-text interactive theories (Paesani et al., 2016, p. 145). This synthesis of conclusions culled from diverse fields results in clear, streamlined models for the guided reading of written and video texts.

⁴⁰ For an earlier model for the teaching of these strategies, see Stauffer's (1969) "Directed Reading Thinking Activity" (DRTA) strategies.

Paesani et al.'s (2016) volume reflects two assumptions of the multiliteracies framework that have had great influence in L2 pedagogical theory. The first is that, in view of the multimodality of texts considered as designs of meaning, it is problematic to maintain the distinctions between the *four skills*—reading, writing, listening, and speaking. As an example, following Widdowson (1978) and Kern (2000), Paesani et al. (2016) state that “reading and writing are seen as complementary processes that are intrinsically linked” (p. 169). Both are receptive and productive processes of meaning-making. The distinctions between listening and reading and between writing and speaking are also diminished.

These shifts lead to the authors' second claim, that while there are still distinctions between materialized modalities—temporally, culturally, and physically—their similarities are such that it is possible to apply certain practices across these modal divides. For the New London Group (1996), these practices were characterized by the designs of meaning. For Kern (2000) and now Paesani et al. (2016), concrete templates are provided, for example, “A Template for Organizing Multiliteracies Video-Mediated Listening Instruction and Assessment,” (Paesani et al., 2016, pp. 218–222). The monograph concludes with a valuable discussion of the teaching of literacies in view of recent technological developments, especially Web 2.0.

3.5.3. Toward a Research Design

An interdisciplinary consideration of L2 verbal-visual reading with an eye toward the future of reading is the goal of the present study, which I now present in full. The next chapter (4) outlines the process of designing and implementing the study and

contextualizes the choices regarding data collection in previous research, primarily from L2 reading research. After that, two chapters present the study's results and a discussion of its implications.

Chapter 4: Study Design and Administration

As outlined above, the current project documents an experiment in the reading of two L2 German prose texts and their respective graphic novel adaptations, first developed in a fall 2015 graduate seminar on second language research design at the University of Texas at Austin with Dr. Per Urlaub.¹

This chapter presents how data collection was designed and collected from 26 total participants. For the study, each participant was asked to complete pre- and postquestionnaires. The central part of the experiment consisted of the reading of two texts, one each in prose and comics. After reading each text, participants completed two Immediate Recall Protocols (IRPs), one for each of the texts. Table 1 shows the overall experiment order.²

¹ My application to the University of Texas at Austin's Internal Review Board (IRB), outlining the basic study design, was submitted in January 2016 and received approval on January 28 that same year. IRB Study Number: 2015-12-0056

² For a detailed experiment order map explaining the specific order for each group, see Table 2 below in Section 4.1.2.

Table 1: Simple Experiment Order Map.

Prequestionnaire
Text 1 (Prose/comics, dependent on group)
Recall 1
Text 2 (Comics/prose, the text type not already encountered, dependent on group)
Recall 2
Postquestionnaire

Two raters then independently rated each IRP using two rating systems, a set of rubrics and idea units, in May 2018. I analyzed the data in the subsequent months. The following provides a detailed account of the processes of the study design, the data collection, and the rating. The data and their analysis are presented in the following two chapters.

4.1. Study Design

4.1.1. Texts

The experiment used four German-language texts, two texts in prose and two adaptations of these texts into comics. The two prose texts “Freundschaftsdienste” (*Favors*) and “Herrn K.’s Lieblingstier” (*Mr. K.’s Favorite Animal*)—referred to throughout the study as “Prose text 1” and “Prose text 2” respectively—were selected from Brecht (1967); the comics adaptations of the prose texts, “Freundschaftsdienste” (*Favors*) and “Herrn Keuners Lieblingstier” (*Mr. Keuner’s Favorite Animal*)—hereafter “Comics text 1” and “Comics text 2”—were taken from Brecht and K. (2014). All original texts are included below in Appendix A.

Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956), the author of the prose texts, is one of the most significant figures in 20th-century German literature, best known for his plays, poetry,

and aesthetic writings that are both accessible and socio-politically critical (he also wrote novels and short prose texts). The two prose texts used in the present study are taken from his *Die Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner* (The Stories of Mr. Keuner). An ongoing project from 1926 until 1956, the final selected 121 texts were published by the renowned Suhrkamp Verlag between 1930 and 1953 in several volumes.

Prose text 1, “Freundschaftsdienste,” is 199 words long. In the text, Herr K. tells the story of an Arab man who assists three young siblings in dividing up 17 camels bequeathed to them by their father in various proportions. Herr K. describes this magnanimous action as a true “favor.” Prose text 2, “Herrn K.’s Lieblingstier,” is 221 words long. In it, Herr K. names the elephant his favorite animal when prompted for his opinion. To justify his answer, he provides many descriptive characteristics of an elephant, including strength, speed, and guile. The elephant also sacrifices itself for art by providing ivory.

The two comics texts were adapted from Brecht’s texts by Ulf Keyenburg (born 1969 in Oberhausen), a celebrated comics artist in Germany and recipient of the prestigious Max-und-Moritz Prize for Best German-language Comics Artist in 2004. Keyenburg writes under the pen name Ulf K.

The two comics texts used in the study appeared in his *Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner* (2014), a collection of 34 comics texts, 30 of which are adaptations of Brecht’s prose texts. The remaining four are K.’s originals, though they incorporate elements of Brecht’s works, in both character and theme. The comics texts were originally published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* between September 2013 and January 2014 before

appearing in the edited form used in this study in a 2014 volume published by Suhrkamp Verlag. Comics text 1, “Freundschaftsdienste,” consists of 253 words, 4 pages, and 11 panels. Panels 3 and 6 are twice the size of the comics text’s regularized panel size,³ and panel 11, printed on its own page, is of another size entirely. Comics text 2, “Herrn Keuners Lieblingstier,” consists of 228 words, 6 pages, and 24 equal-sized panels. The images and words in both comics texts are rendered in black, white, and gray.⁴

These texts were chosen because the content of the comics texts resembles closely that of the corresponding prose texts at least in terms of the written text. As the basis for the study's recall protocols, the text pairs can thus be read as representations of the same content. The comics texts are *adaptations* of the prose texts, as the term was defined above in Chapter 3. Certain changes have been made, some or all of which may stem from the genre change (or transduction) between prose and graphic novel. For the purposes of this study, I proceed from the assumption that these differences do not fundamentally alter the meaning. Nevertheless, in the limitations section of the conclusion, I problematize this claim and focus on the unique nature of each text even between the original texts and their adaptations.

4.1.2. Conditions for Participant Groups

Following class recruitment visits (see Section 4.3.2 below), I used a collected list of voluntary participants and their contact information and assigned the first participant to

³ For a discussion of page/panel size regularity, see Groensteen (2013) on three degrees of regularity, laid out in Section 2.5.3 above.

⁴ Persimmon (HTML Color Code: #EE4D19) accompanies the black and white used on the cover of Brecht and K.’s (2014) volume, in contrast to the grey in the comics contained inside.

group A1, the second to A2, the third to B1, and the fourth to B2. I then started the process again, assigning the fifth participant to group A1 and so on, until I had four evenly-sized subgroups. When the spring 2016 semester of data collection concluded, the groups were very uneven in number. For the second round of data collection, in spring 2017, I thus randomly assigned the new participants to the four groups, as I had done previously, but first assigned larger numbers to the groups which, following the first round of data collection, had fewer participants.⁵ The final results were even, with 13 participants each in the A groups and the B groups. The group-internal numbers were also quite even; A1 (n=7) and A2 (n=6) were very close in number to B1 (n=6) and B2 (n=7). These small differences were not factored into the data analysis.

The A groups (A1 and A2) read Comics text 1 and Prose text 2, whereas the B groups (B1 and B2) read Comic text 2 and Prose text 1. The two pairs of similar content are important to the experiment's structure. To compare the reading of prose and comics texts, it is important to see how individuals interact with different text types. At the same time, having one participant read two versions of the same content, one in prose and one in comics form, would be a problem, as the recall completed second would be affected by having already seen the content in another multimodal form. Therefore, using two versions, one in prose and one in comics, of two different stories mitigates this variable.

⁵ I determined the specific distribution as follows: I first calculated how many participants each group required to equal the number in the largest group. Given that, in the first round, only approximately 1/3 of all students who signed the consent forms completed the study, I multiplied the number of participants needed for the equalization of each group by 3 and assigned this many potential participants to each group at random. My hope was that one third of these new potential participants would complete the study, thus evening out the groups. The remaining names were then distributed equally through the random process I used in the first round of data collection.

The 1 groups (A1 and B1) read their respective comic first and their story second. The 2 groups (A2 and B2) read their texts in the opposite order. The sequence variation counterbalances the results (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 145) so that any effects of text sequencing would not skew the results for or against one of the two text types—graphic novel or prose text. The sequence in which each group moved through the measures is provided in Table 2:

Table 2: Experiment Order Map.

Group A1 (n=7)	Group A2 (n=6)	Group B1 (n=6)	Group B2 (n=7)
Measure 1			
Prequestionnaire	Prequestionnaire	Prequestionnaire	Prequestionnaire
Measure 2			
Comic 1	Prose text 2	Comic 2	Prose text 1
Recall 1	Recall 1	Recall 1	Recall 1
Measure 3			
Prose text 2	Comic 1	Prose text 1	Comic 2
Recall 2	Recall 2	Recall 2	Recall 2
Measure 4			
Postquestionnaire	Postquestionnaire	Postquestionnaire	Postquestionnaire

All groups began with the prequestionnaire (Measure 1), proceeded to the first text, and then moved on to recall 1 (Measure 2). All then encountered the second text and completed recall 2 (Measure 3) before finishing with the postquestionnaire (Measure 4). The A groups (A1 and A2) can be distinguished from the B groups (B1 and B2) by the texts they read for recall. The distinction between the 1 groups (A1 and B1) and the 2 groups (A2 and B2) is in the order in which they read their respective comic and prose

texts. As measures, Recalls 1 and 2 were identical aside from the text type recalled and their order; the number in their titles signifies only the sequence in which the participants completed them.

4.2. Measures

Each participant completed four measures: pre- and postquestionnaires, as well as two IRPs, one each of a prose text and a comics text. Each participant completed all four measures in one sitting, after which their participation was at an end. All measures—both questionnaires and the IRP prompts—are included in Appendix B below.

4.2.1. Prequestionnaire

The prequestionnaire accomplished three things. First, items 1 and 2 determined the participants' language background, that is, how long the participants had been learning German, how they learned it, and their preferred L1. If the L1 was not English, the participant provided their L1 and described their English abilities. This information is important in rating the IRPs, all of which were completed in English. Second, the questionnaire inquired about the participants' views of comics. It asked if they like comics (item 3), what their views of comics as literature were (item 8), whether they thought reading comics in German would be useful for language learning (item 9), and whether they found prose or comics easier to read (item 10). Finally, the questionnaire determined their background knowledge with comics. It gathered information about their comics-reading history (item 4), their experience with foreign-language comics (item 7), the genres and types of comics they enjoy (item 5), and their favorite characters and titles

(item 6). If they answered in item 4 that they had not read any comics, they skipped the remaining questions regarding their reading practices. The final item (11) asked about their knowledge of specific characters. It listed nine of them—Batman, Goku, Lex Luthor, Asterix, Rick Grimes, Enid Coleslaw, Wolverine, Rorschach, and Scrooge McDuck—as well as a tenth, Dr. Demoniac, a distractor character I created. Participants were asked to identify whether they were familiar with the character, and if so, whether it was only by name, from another medium than comics such as a film or a video game, or from reading the comics themselves. The examples chosen ranged from well-known characters such as Batman and Scrooge McDuck, to figures from celebrated graphic novels, like Rorschach and Enid Coleslaw, to others from international comics such as Goku and Asterix.

The goal of this item was to better understand the types of comics students read to establish a baseline for their breadth of knowledge of a range of comics in terms of form, plot, and themes. Descriptions of each character, not present on the prequestionnaire provided to participants, are included following item 11 in Appendix B.

Though not all the characters presented are best known from literary comics, they are all appropriate for learning about the types of reading considered here for two reasons. First, many characters who are often seen in popular comic books have also been featured in graphic novels. The best-known example of this phenomenon is Batman in the celebrated *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (Miller, 2002). And superheroes more broadly should not be pigeonholed as characters only present in non-literary comics; another example to the contrary is *Watchmen* (Moore & Gibbons, 1987), a graphic novel

making broad use of genre play, intertextuality, and found cultural materials. Second, as this dissertation defines the literary through formal play, it is entirely possible that even the least innovative comics may still have moments of divergence from the norm. For both reasons, it should not be assumed that a character associated with standard comic books like Superman's villain Lex Luthor should automatically be seen as less literary than a character like Enid Coleslaw of the graphic novel *Ghost World* (Clowes, 1997). As such, the data collected on comics reading practices including popular comic books can potentially say much about the reading of literary comics and graphic novels.

To analyze the data from this item, I assigned point values to each possible statement to quantify the responses. When a character was not recognized at all—for the response “I have never heard of _____”—0 points were assigned. Knowledge of a character's name alone—“I have only heard the name of _____”—which may signal the activation of some expectations and background knowledge, received 1 point. 2 points indicated knowledge of the character's attributes and histories/origin stories gained through other media—“I am only familiar with _____ from TV, films, books, etc.” 3 points meant knowledge of the characters, information about them, and an awareness of how they are realized in the comics form—“I have read comics in which _____ played a role.” The resulting composite point values, though admittedly rough, may point toward a general understanding of each participant's familiarity with a diverse range of comics characters and thus some picture of their knowledge of the genre.

4.2.2. Postquestionnaire

The postquestionnaire consisted of four items: Items 1 and 2 asked whether the participants had previously read anything by Bertolt Brecht or Ulf K., and if so, what specifically. I had intended to remove any IRPs from the study if the participant completing them had already read the texts recalled; this problem, however, never occurred. If they had read Brecht or K. before, their data was not excluded from the study, but this potential contribution to background knowledge was noted and could be considered in further work with these data. Items 3 and 4 of the postquestionnaire returned to items 8 and 9 from the prequestionnaire relating to views of comics as literature and material for language learning: they asked participants how their experiences completing the study's measures had changed their views on these topics.

4.2.3. Immediate Recall Protocols (IRPs) in the Present Study: Text Conditions

The remaining measures, administered between the two questionnaires, were two Immediate Recall Protocols (IRPs). This section discusses the preparation of the texts for the IRP and its administration; it will conclude with a discussion of the logic of implementing IRPs in an experiment for text comprehension.

Largely in line with Bernhardt's (2011) recommendation of 200–250 words per recall (p. 28), Prose texts 1 and 2 are 199 and 221 words respectively. Comics texts 1 and 2, with 253 and 228 words respectively, generally fit these verbally defined limits as well. However, as no studies have gathered data for reading comprehension in L2 comics

via IRP,⁶ it is as yet unknown how to compare the lengths of comics texts to prose texts. The amount of text may be equivalent, but it remains unclear how the images and the interaction of the images with text affect the appropriateness of a text for recall in terms of length. I discuss this issue further in the limitations section of the conclusion below. This exploration of text appropriateness for recall in terms of text type and genre also notes the character of the language in the prose texts; there is no research, for example, on Bernhardt's (2011, p. 28) prescribed length range in terms of a text's literariness.

After completing the prequestionnaire but before receiving the first text for recall, the participants were presented with the following instructions on the screen:

- You will now begin with the reading/recall portion of the study.
- You will be presented with two texts, one at a time.
- For each, please:
 - Read the text presented carefully as many times as you like.
 - Do not take notes.
- When you feel that you have understood as much of the text as you can, please continue to the next page.
- When prompted, please write down, IN ENGLISH, as much of the text as you can.
- When you feel that you have written down as much of the text as you can recall, please continue to the next page.
- Please repeat the same process for the second text.

My choice of English as the language of recall is but one of three common possibilities for IRPs: (1) their L1s, (2) the L2 (German), or (3) a designated language (e.g., English). The first option is common in studies in which participants share an L1 (Lee, 1986b, p. 204). The second option can cause problems with recall if participants do

⁶ Liu's (2004) study does not really look at comics, but rather at an inauthentic and simple type of multimodal text that more resembles a picture book.

not feel comfortable in the L2 (Bernhardt, 2011, p. 28). The final option is primarily used in studies with various L1s, such as Connor (1984), who looked at both L1 and L2 English speakers. For the present study, I selected this third option and chose English as it is both the L1 or near-native L2 for all students at the University of Texas at Austin and a way to avoid the need for translations in the event that the raters cannot read a given participant's L1 well or at all. Those whose L1 is not English reported it on the prequestionnaire as noted above. Had participants self-rated their English abilities as limited in any way, I would have had to determine how to proceed with their IRPs, but that was not the case.

The lack of notes or other ancillary materials was set as a condition on the IRP to reduce the participant's reliance on individual words and reduce further variables, including dictionary literacy. Instead, the IRP without notes, dictionaries, etc. puts the focus on understanding/remembering and the ways a reader can "use the information included independently" (Bernhardt, 1983, p. 32).⁷

At the bottom of the screen with the IRP instructions, participants entered their group number and were thus routed to the first text for that group on the following screen. The full texts for reading were then displayed on single pages. This presentation required little to no scrolling for the short prose texts. For the comics, the participants could scroll up and down to see the full content of all of the original comics pages. After

⁷ As I discuss in the conclusion, it is clear from the data that some participants either took notes nonetheless or took screenshots of the texts for later use while completing their IRPs. Some IRPs simply appear too close to the original texts—extensive details at the word level would have to have been remembered exactly—to have been constructed entirely from memory.

reading and proceeding past each text, the participants then encountered the recall for that text, essentially a blank prompt for entering the recall, on one screen. Importantly, there was no ability to return to or consult the text when writing the recall, for the same reason that additional materials were not allowed. For the recalls, participants wrote down everything they could remember from the text. Once this first text and recall pairing was completed, participants repeated the process for the second text and recall.

4.3. Test Environment and Participants

4.3.1. Consent Forms

The consent form, included below in Appendix C provided potential participants a general description of the nature of the study, its rationale, and its potential benefits to the study of language learning. Furthermore, it described in brief the four measures they would encounter after choosing to participate, that is, the prequestionnaire, the two IRPs, and the postquestionnaire, and estimated a maximum of 65 minutes for completing their part of the experiment.

In addition, it provided the steps taken to protect participants' privacy and the contact information for the Internal Review Board (IRB) and for me, in case of any grievances. It clarified that their participation was voluntary and would neither affect their language course grade in any way nor present any dangers. Finally, it included signature and date lines for both me as the obtainer of consent and the participants.

4.3.2. Recruitment of Study Participants

The consent form was distributed and collected during the recruitment visits to each class selected as a source of participants.⁸ During each visit, each student received a consent form, and I reiterated the information on the consent form to all potential participants. To introduce the tasks, I informed them that the study relates to comics and that their part in the study, consisting of four main components—two questionnaires and two reading tasks—should take no longer than 65 minutes. In order to avoid influencing student perceptions of comics as language learning material and literature—issues investigated in the questionnaires—I did not provide any further details of the study. I concluded by assuring them that participation was voluntary, that their personal data would be protected, and that their identities and any identifying characteristics would be anonymized when reporting data. I confirmed the lack of any risk from participating in the study, the potential benefits being further knowledge for improving language instruction.

I then asked whether any of the students were native speakers of German. If they answered yes, I asked that they not participate, as the study focused on second language reading. Following an opportunity to ask any further questions and complete the forms, I

⁸ I visited six courses for recruitment, three each in Spring 2016 and Spring 2017. The courses in Spring 2016 were German 343C, “Contemporary German Civilization,” German 346L, “German Literature, Enlightenment–Present” and German 369, “German Language: Historical Perspectives.” In Spring 2017, the courses were German 343C, “Contemporary German Civilization.” German 348D, “German Play: Student Production”—for this course, students read Max Frisch’s *Biedermann und die Brandstifter* together with theories of drama and then produced the play in German—and German 369, “Structure of the German Language.” I chose these courses for recruitment as they were the only undergraduate courses offered in those semesters at the “upper-division” curricular level that were either taught in the German language, or, in the case of the German 369 courses taught in English, that had many enrolled students who were eligible to take courses taught in German at the “upper-division” level.

collected them all, signed and unsigned. Finally, I asked consenting participants to write down their email addresses on a separate sheet so that I could contact them with information for accessing the study. During the following class period, each participant received a copy of their signed consent forms for their records.

4.3.3. Test Administration

All questionnaire and IRP data were collected via Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com), an online service for survey and data management. Qualtrics was an optimal choice for this study's data collection as (1) it is widely used at the University of Texas at Austin and many students are thus familiar and comfortable with it, (2) it can be accessed from anywhere on or off campus using standard university login information, (3) its robust feature set makes it easily navigable by multiple groups within one study—as is the case with the present study as described below—and (4) its analytical tools, which allow researchers to produce cross tabulations and a range of visualizations, are useful for data analysis.

The participants accessed the study via an experiment-specific URL (https://utexas.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_6MrFVGyUBxUapQp) and logged in with their own university login and password. All participants received the URL, their group assignments, and a study-specific password (“comics”) in an email after signing the consent form and providing an email address during recruitment. All participants were emailed separately so that their identities were protected from one another. See Appendix D for the contents of the instructional email provided to participants, further instructions present on the Qualtrics site, and sample screenshots of various parts of the study.

4.4. Participant Demographics

The participants of the study were 26⁹ university students of L2 German in upper division courses at the University of Texas at Austin, having completed the equivalent of at least 312 contact hours in the language. All participants were native speakers of languages other than German. For 25 participants, the native language was English. The remaining participant spoke Spanish as an L1 but reported “native fluency” in English.¹⁰

During data collection (spring 2016 and spring 2017), all participants were enrolled in upper-division courses offered in the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Texas at Austin focusing on German literature, culture, and/or linguistics. I selected the classes only by level; I recruited participants from every upper-division German language, literature, and/or linguistics course offered during both data-collection semesters. Not all students had taken the full sequence of courses at the university, and some had considerable experience outside of class in the target language, for example, while studying abroad. All participants provided their German language background on the prequestionnaire. The L2 German learners in this study are thus best described as readers who were enrolled in upper-division German courses where they encountered texts from a range of historical periods, genres, and styles on a variety of subjects.¹¹

⁹ 34 participants provided some data to the study. However, only 26 completed all measures according to the instructions and are thus included when discussing the data. However, all completed IRPs were rated; these ratings are included in the calculation of interrater reliability presented below in Chapter 5 to better reflect the overall reliability of the rating system.

¹⁰ See Appendix G for the full results of the prequestionnaire.

¹¹ For a detailed discussion of what is meant by “upper division” in the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, see the definition of advanced learners and the problem of proficiency in the following subsection.

I selected these learners studying at the University of Texas at Austin in upper division courses as potential participants for several reasons. First, because this population was enrolled at the university, I was able to easily gain access to them for recruitment and testing. The IRB application was thus straightforward and the data collection process streamlined and uniform for all test subjects. Second, the homogeneity of the students in a university course relative to the overall population of language learners reduced the effects of a number of potential variables, including language-learning experience, education, and age. The test population is nonetheless quite heterogeneous by some measures, especially in terms of their experience with and affective views of comics, as will be discussed below in the context of my results.

4.4.1. Research Design Considerations About the Sample Group: Advanced L2 Readers and the Problem of Proficiency

Finally, and most importantly, I recruited German learners from upper-division German courses as the test population for two additional reasons related to language development and reading research. First, I wanted the participants to be able to read and comprehend these literary texts for recall with minimal difficulty resulting from vocabulary and syntactic difficulties. Second, I wanted the results to address the gap in research on advanced L2 reading identified by, among others, Brantmeier (2005) and Bernhardt (2011).

To further justify this choice, I searched for a construct to compare the ideal group in terms of L2 reading with the intended learner population. However, I struggled as I contend that not enough is known about how to match readers to texts. Nonetheless,

given the impetus to make this study informative to the larger body of research on L2 reading, I started by selecting proficiency as a common and thus comparable measure used in language—and reading—assessment.

Following from the research on L2 reading, I began planning for the selection of the participant group with two assumptions in mind, that is, that (1) literary reading requires certain abilities, literacies, and knowledge likely present in more experienced readers and that (2) the most experienced L2 German readers among the undergraduate student population at the University of Texas at Austin are those enrolled in the highest level of German courses, the post-bridge-course upper-division curriculum.¹²

To confirm my choice against a national benchmark, I applied these assumptions to the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* (2012), as a widely known set of standards, and took its Advanced reading proficiency level as a starting point. At its lower limit, Advanced Low, comprehension often results from “situational and subject-matter knowledge.” This level is distinguishable from Intermediate High; readers at this level can exclusively read texts successfully to which they bring “personal interest or knowledge.” Therefore, the Advanced level is at least partially defined by the ability to understand more complex texts with less background knowledge.

At first glance, this distinction appeared to be where my study could produce meaningful results. The Advanced Low proficiency is the baseline for sufficiently

¹² While there may of course be further learners at the university whose L2 German would be appropriate, it is difficult to identify such individuals outside the language program. Furthermore, if such learners were identified, an additional measure might be needed to assess their reading. If, as I will show, the level is defined by the course itself, then any students who are selected from these courses would by definition be appropriate.

reducing L2 reading proficiency as the dominant determining variable when encountering new and potentially unknown reading material. According to these standards, participants at this level would perhaps be able to read the study's texts, and I could test their reading.

Despite the limited number of studies investigating advanced L2 reading, those that do exist support my identification of ACTFL's Advanced Low as the baseline for reading literary texts. While theoretical work on L2 literary reading and literature in the L2 classroom shies away from discussions of proficiency,¹³ studies investigating L2 reading in a larger sense back up the position. Though Bernhardt's (2011) extensive survey of studies investigating second language reading¹⁴ finds few looking at more advanced readers, those looking at the reading of literary texts focus exclusively on advanced readers (p. 81). And the reasons for this connection may also accord with my conclusions. For example, Brantmeier's (2005) investigation of self-assessment and enjoyment considers advanced readers because it is at this level that "the reading of complete, authentic texts usually begins" (p. 495).¹⁵

For understanding Bernhardt's (2011) view of reading level in her survey, we can look to two graphs (pp. 31, 34) in which she specifically uses the term proficiency to describe a set of "increasing abilities" developed over time (p. 31)—an overt statement of the kinds of literacy required by the learners.

¹³ Reading proficiency is not discussed at length in such discussions in Kramersch (1993), Hall (2015), or Carroli (2008).

¹⁴ Bernhardt's (2011, pp. 132-191) table containing the details of 200 studies "investigating second-language reading in adolescents and adults" provides a useful resource for further meta-analyses.

¹⁵ Of course, the reading of texts need not be—and is not always—delayed. For example, Swaffar and Arens (2005) show how the teaching of texts can begin from the first day of instruction. For the larger discourse surrounding the problems with curricular bifurcation see the 2007 MLA Report and Maxim, Höyng, Lancaster, Schaumann, and Aue (2013).

Here, she also points to individual variation in reading development in relation to background knowledge, discussing it as a “personal idiosyncrasy” separate from proficiency levels (Bernhardt, 2011, p. 31). This knowledge is part of the 50% of second language reading processes she suggests cannot be attributed to either L1 reading abilities or L2 language knowledge. Nonetheless, this hard and stable separation of background knowledge from “reading proficiency” is problematic in that it suggests L2 reading ability is quantifiable independently of the reading of a given text. Though she recognizes the problems inherent in assessment approaches that “place readers on a generic measuring stick” and thus advocates the testing of readings of individual texts through Immediate Recall Protocols (Bernhardt, 1991, p. 191), she has difficulty conceptualizing a construct for understanding reading as something other than a progressively developing proficiency.

This view dominates in considerations of reading proficiency. For example, Grabe (2009, pg. 357) lists 14 features of reading useful for assessing proficiency. Though some do go beyond the level of word and grammar recognition to consider the reader’s interaction with textual organization of meaning—consider, for example, “text-structure awareness and discourse organization” and “inferences about text information”—Grabe is still unable to account for what the reader brings to a specific text at a given moment.

This insufficiency lies not with Grabe’s (or Bernhardt’s, or even ACTFL’s) version of proficiency, but rather with proficiency itself as a measure. Even if it could be effectively defined and isolated from context, it cannot tell us much about how a reader will actually be able to read a text. As Swaffar et al. (1991) note regarding the

determination of text readability, “linguistic and cultural background may play as important a role as the formal properties of the text” (p. 43). Given that the relationship of background to a text is not constant for individual readers, proficiency as a measure can never tell the full story.

With proficiency then set aside, I needed to find another approach to describe the study’s learners. Swaffar (2004) has suggested defining advanced learners simply as those who qualify to study beyond the initial language sequence, that is, in upper division courses. Others, including Brantmeier (2005), have followed her lead. This approach is far more useful than it might first appear. It simultaneously uses a model that all language instructors know intimately, the progressive curriculum, while also laying bare that there is still very little known about whether learners in these courses are actually capable of what is expected of them. Certainly, a passing grade in a previous course is hardly a legitimate measure of reading, especially when it is unclear how to assess it effectively in the first place. Still, investigating readers based on curricular progression is as good a place to start defining reading literacies as any. And it has the added benefit of providing valuable data for better understanding articulation toward the mitigation of curricular bifurcation.¹⁶

For my study, I decided to adopt Swaffar’s (2004) definition of advanced learners as a functional and established approach that carries with it an inherent critique of proficiency. What remained then was to provide a brief description of the types of

¹⁶ Not everyone is satisfied with this approach to defining advanced language learners (see, e.g., Paesani & Allen, 2012). However, such critiques usually run into the same pitfalls as the attempts to define proficiency described above.

reading expected of the target population, while recognizing that what these readers are actually able to do can only be determined individually in practice and in context.

Syllabi from courses offered in the present semester (spring 2018) in the Department of Germanic Studies provide examples of the content of courses at the “upper division” curricular level. Students in these courses were expected to read full prose works (or selections from them), for example, Egon Erwin Kisch’s *Paradies Amerika* (1930), Günter Grass’s *Kopfgebirten oder Die Deutschen sterben aus* (1980), and Wladimir Kaminer’s *Ich bin kein Berliner: Ein Reiseführer für faule Touristen* (2007); drama such as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s *Nathan der Weise* (1779) and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Faust I* (1808); poetry including Clemens Brentano’s *Zu Bacherach am Rheine* (1801) and Heinrich Heine’s *Lorelei* (1824); theory, for example, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’s *Das kommunistische Manifest* (1848) and Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1885); and linguistic texts including Stephen Barbour and Patrick Stevenson’s *Variation im Deutschen: Soziolinguistische Perspektiven* (1998).¹⁷

The L2 German learners in this study were thus readers who were enrolled in upper-division German courses where they encountered the types of reading and literature I just introduced. A more precise definition is not yet available in the literature.

¹⁷ The three advanced-level courses offered in spring 2018 in the Department of Germanic Studies used here as examples were titled “German Travel Literature,” “Von der Aufklärung bis zum Kaiserreich,” and “Language and Society in the German-Speaking Countries.” All courses and coursework were conducted in German.

4.5. The IRP as a Test of L2 Reading

For reading assessment—as the instrument used for data collection in this experiment—I follow Bernhardt (1983, 1991, 2011), who advocates using Immediate Recall Protocols (IRPs). In coming to this conclusion, she outlines three commonly used assessment methods: (1) cloze tests, (2) multiple choice and short-answer questions, and (3) IRPs. At first glance, cloze tests, for which participants fill in individual-word blanks created at regular intervals throughout a text, might appear a valid measure of reading comprehension beyond grammar recognition. There is even a strong correlation between the results of cloze tests and proficiency measures (Bernhardt, 1991, p. 196).¹⁸ However, there are a number of drawbacks. First, cloze tests usually require one specific word for each blank in the text, reinforcing the position that there is a stable text with one possible reading, a position that also strengthens the problematic native-speaker norm.¹⁹ Second, cloze tests are too focused on the word, clause, or sentence level to be of use for our purposes (Wolf, 1993). For example, Shanahan, Kamil, and Tobin's (1982) study shows that a consideration of the text as a whole is largely unnecessary for completing the measure. When the researchers rearranged the sentence organization of the texts prepared for cloze tests, the results were not significantly different. As I am arguing for a conception of reading as dependent on the structure of a text as a whole, the cloze test cannot be considered an effective measure.

¹⁸ See the section above on population for my argument against proficiency measures as the best way to conceptualize reading.

¹⁹ For a discussion of the downsides of the native speaker norm, see, for example, the 2007 MLA Report.

Multiple-choice and short-answer questions also have positives and negatives. As Brantmeier (2005), who uses multiple-choice questions in her study alongside IRPs, notes, these item types are familiar to students and easy to score consistently. However, the questions are also often text independent—test-takers may be able to determine the answers without the text—or they provide new information, thus invalidating them as a comprehension test of the original text (Bernhardt, 1991, pp. 198-199). Additionally, questions requiring specific informational answers—in the case of multiple-choice questions, those selected from a predetermined set of possible responses—reinforce the position, present for example in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* (2012) that reading is reducible to the information retrieval.²⁰

IRPs, on the other hand, fulfill the desiderata, as presented by Kern (2000), that assessment should (1) “be based on a broad view of language and literacy” (p. 270), (2) “be multidimensional in nature,” and (3) “allow for individual differences in responses” (p. 276). The former is necessary to guard against the information-retrieval view of reading; multifaceted tests address the need to assess reading as a network of interacting literacies—compensating for various strengths and weaknesses in other areas of the process—to create meaning; and the latter finds a place for readers as they make meaning from their experiences, knowledge—linguistic, cultural, and literary, among other types—and the text itself.

²⁰ For a larger critique of what he calls “discrete-point, ‘right-wrong’ item types” as a test of reading, see Kern (2000, p. 275).

The IRP accomplishes these goals in a number of ways. First, the IRP tests a wide range of issues related to reading comprehension, including knowledge of text structure, knowledge, and grammar in use. Unlike cloze tests, IRPs focus on a reader's intersentential comprehension of a text's structure. And unlike multiple-choice and short answer questions, IRPs do not affect the subject's understanding of the text at all by providing additional information. As such, the IRP asks what readers can do with a text, fulfilling Kern's (2000) first objective: it inquires not just as to whether they understand it, but also how. It fulfills the latter two of Kern's (2000) goals in the variety of scoring procedures allowing recalls to be mined for various pieces of information to capture a more nuanced, and potentially individual, picture of a reader's process. Put simply, the measure reorients the researcher away from confirming information retrieval and toward the thought process in the recall's construction. "A recall reflects ... process not product" (Bernhardt, 1983, p. 31). It is not merely the quantitative data regarding the amount recalled that is important, but also the wealth of information on what the reader understands, and potentially the sources of comprehension difficulty, be they from gaps in vocabulary or larger structural issues (see, e.g., Swaffar, Arens, & Byrnes, 1991, p. 164). The term "recall" should not mislead us to conceive of IRPs as mere text regurgitation; they are much more indeed.

Here, I also want to note the drawbacks of the IRP as a test of L2 reading comprehension. First, the measure's results may be skewed by the reader's (short-term)

memory abilities.²¹ Second, there are also potential problems to their use in the present study specifically, notably the lack of IRP research with multimodal texts, the specifics of which I will return to shortly. But first, I need to discuss the few previous studies that have dealt with images and image-texts in recall that I have used to develop my scoring tactics.

Research on L2 multimodal reading begins with Omaggio's (1979) comparison of the effect of images on L1 English and L2 French reading comprehension. Omaggio (1979) uses recall with her texts and images—not comics, but something resembling a picture book—alongside recognition questions. In her study, though she relegates images to a secondary and separable position as “supplementary” contextual knowledge (p. 109), this positioning seems to be in name only, as she also collects recall data on the reading of images, or “pictorial contexts,” alone. She finds no effect from the pictures for the reading of the L1 English text, but significant effects for both the L2 French recall and recognition tests. The reading of the images alone produced significantly lower scores than any other combination. Omaggio (1979) suggests therefore that L2 readers benefit more from the interaction of images and L2 text than L1 readers. The study does not, however, account for culturally specific issues in the images themselves, the issue of translation—Omaggio (1979) herself translated the original French into English for the text—or the verbal-only modality of recall.

²¹ For a discussion of the role of short-term memory in reading comprehension, see Kintsch (1998); Harris, Cady, and Tran (2006); and Chang (2006).

Further studies on the recall of multimodal texts follow,²² but these investigate the L2 and tend to view the images as an addition to the verbal. Both are the case in Liu (2004), the only study to use recalls to measure the L2 reading comprehension of comics. Like Omaggio (1979), Liu (2004) finds that images supplementing the verbal have a positive effect on L2 reading comprehension. At first, this finding seems an important step toward the goals of this dissertation. However, there are several problems with using Liu's (2004) work as the basis for the present study.

First, Liu (2004) focuses on proficiency, locating a general reader next to a stable text, allowing no place for individual readers or considerations of context and background knowledge. Second, Liu's (2004) verbal-visual comic strips are hardly comics as discussed in this dissertation. They are defined as "a series of pictures inside boxes that tell a story" (p. 229); the images are potentially separable from the text. In fact, they are inauthentic images that are composed for and added to an existing text to clarify and illustrate its meaning. That they are in boxes—presumably panels—seems of secondary importance, and there is no discussion of the formal elements that make up comics, such as speech and thought balloons, page layout, or narration. Liu (2004) omits these issues because he is primarily interested in a "repetition effect" that erases the distinctions in the multimodal image-text typologies I discussed in the literature review above. For Liu (2004), images in comics do not, using the terminology of Barthes (1977a), anchor or relay the possible readings of a multimodal ensemble; by design, they simply repeat the meaning of the words themselves. As such, Liu's (2004) findings are

²² See, for example, Anglin (1987) or Gambrell and Jawitz (1993).

better understood as an expansion of Omaggio's (1979) work than as something informing the research of reading comics.

Before I describe the present experiment's data collection process with IRPs, I want to mention a final issue with the use of the IRP for visual-verbal comics texts. A significant problem that I will discuss in the limitations section at the end of the dissertation concerns the lack of modal parallelism between the comics texts and the recall itself. Like with the use of the L1 for recall to reduce L2 writing abilities as a variable, there may be drawbacks to a distinct shift in form between text and recall. In the case of using the L1, the reader must translate the meaning of the text from its original language into the L1. A potentially far more substantial problem arises in the present study where the reader must "translate"—or transduce—an L2 visual-verbal text into the L1 verbal modality alone in the IRP.

As I argue that reading is distinct from information retrieval, there is of course a further intermediate process at work as well. While reading a text, the reader constructs an individual reading that is later relayed onto paper or a screen during recall. Thus, the underlying questions here are what modalities readers use to construct mental readings of texts that are later written down verbally, and whether another language or set of modalities is the best way to do this. Obviously, the option of having readers recall in comics form is hardly optimal, as the result would be more a test of drawing abilities and knowledge of comics form than of L2 reading. Ultimately, though this problem is beyond the purview of this dissertation and best suited to cognitive science or neurolinguistics, it

cannot be ignored.²³ It is these types of issues that create uncertainty in the present study, but that at the same time make its new insights laying the groundwork for further research in the use of the IRP with multimodal texts all the more exciting.

4.5.1. Variables in the IRP: Defining the Data

This section discusses the dependent and independent variables that can be tested with IRPs and other instruments (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 103). In experimental studies, the dependent variables are those that are tested. Some independent variables that are not tested may still be important to the study, while others may be irrelevant. The main dependent variable for the present study is reading comprehension, as tested by the participants' representation of their comprehension in the Immediate Recall Protocols.

I separate the many independent variables that can be isolated within an IRP—those that likely cause the effects seen in the dependent variable—into multiple categories.

The first category consists of the two independent variables I directly investigate in the research questions (in the pre- and postquestionnaires) and around which the measures were designed: (1) background knowledge of comics and (2) affective views of comics—the enjoyment and consideration of comics as literature.

²³ For a consideration of the mental pictures created in the reading comprehension of image-texts, consider Gambrell and Jawitz (1993).

A second category includes independent variables not directly tested that nonetheless affect the study, that is, short-term memory,²⁴ L1 reading ability,²⁵ and computer literacy.²⁶ Some of these were discussed above in the literature review, and I will return to some in the limitations sections below.

In a third category, I place those independent variables that are outside the purview of the dissertation—aspects of identity, including age and gender; educational background; and writing ability. Such variables will likely have affected the results. Consider, for example, L1 writing ability, especially issues like coherence and cohesion that are tested on the scoring rubric discussed in the rating section below. Further work on multimodal reading using IRPs would do well to will return to these issues in greater detail.

As established above, the study's dependent variable, reading comprehension, is tested by the two recall protocols to answer the first research question. Information on the independent variables in the first category, background knowledge of comics and students' views on and enjoyment of comics, is collected through the pre- and

²⁴ For the relationship between memory and comprehension, see Kintsch (1998) and Harris, Cady, and Tran (2006). See Chang (2006) for a study considering the role of short-term memory on the testing of L2 reading using Immediate Recall Protocols.

²⁵ See Section 3.2.1 for a discussion on the transfer of L1 (literary) reading knowledge into the L2. See, especially, Bernhardt (2011).

²⁶ The latter is discussed in the limitations section of the conclusion. A well-developed computer literacy—likely familiarity with the screenshot function—may have allowed some participants to save the texts for recall for further review after they were gone from the screen, despite the directions to rely only on memory. It is thus impossible to discuss the variability of short-term memory in the present study without also considering computer literacy. For a larger discussion of computer literacy, access, and language learning, see Winke and Goertler (2008).

postquestionnaires. These data provide contextual information for considering the results from the IRPs to answer the second and third research questions.

4.6. IRP Rating: Scoring the Data

4.6.1. Alternatives for Scoring IRPs

IRPs have been scored in several ways, most often through propositional analysis (Johnson, 1970) and Meyer's (1985) syntactic system. In Johnson's (1970) system, the text for recall is divided into pause acceptability units—also referred to as pausal units. These are a number of words delimited by a point in the text where someone reading aloud would pause “to take a breath, to give emphasis to the story, or to enhance meaning” (Johnson, 1970, p. 13). Points are awarded to a recall protocol when it contains the words or meaning of the lexical items within the pauses.

The advantage of this rating system is its relative simplicity for preparation and scoring. Though in Johnson's (1970) original study, he had 23 raters mark the pauses and deemed a pause acceptable only if more than half marked it as such, the same effect can be achieved by a much smaller number of raters. A relatively quick process of reading a text, pausal marking, and comparison renders any text ready for scoring. This versatility makes it incredibly attractive for instructors to use regularly in classroom assessment.

The approach also has its drawbacks, though some are avoidable. For example, the fact that each pausal unit is rendered equal in the scoring, is remedied by weighting different units (Swaffar et al., 1991, p. 24) according to importance. The result is a recall

test where certain propositions are understood as more central to a text than others, and an approximation of the informational structure of the original text is possible.

Nevertheless, other problems are more endemic to the approach. First, it is lexically-based; the elements to be recalled are all present in the original text in lexical form. The system thus understands reading as information-retrieval or worse, lexical-item retrieval, rather than as an individual process of meaning construction discussed throughout this dissertation. It diminishes the agency of readers by assuming too much about their readings prior to rating (see Swaffar et al., 1991, p. 164). Though some units are deemed more or less important, they are still considered all of a kind, which is not an appropriate representation of salience or cultural value. Second, it cannot account for texts with complex structures. Every word in the original text is taken as part of its meaning, and each element is isolatable and presented in a linear, connected manner—which is not how many, if not most, adult readers read.

A second proposal for IRP scoring, Meyer's (1985) system analyzes the larger structure of a passage syntactically, and after mapping out individual structural elements, the lexical items that make up each one are organized hierarchically. This approach thus determines macrostructural elements—for example, a question and a response—and identifies the words used to convey the meaning. While the system accounts for the organization of information in a passage and thus would appear to resemble the structure of idea unit analysis used in this dissertation and discussed shortly, on closer examination, this system has several flaws. First, it is time-consuming both in the

preparation of the text and the scoring. The preparation of a 250-word text can take upwards of 25 hours (Bernhardt, 1991, p. 202).

Furthermore, though the analysis according to structural element is a positive, the system is marred by an overreliance on the words themselves. Scoring can allow for approximations of lexical items and thus allow for some individuality in readers, but the analysis, as is the case for Johnson's (1970) pausal units, still assumes a stable text. It is thus too fine-grained to account for readers and their readings. Finally, it too requires isolatable units of meaning organized linearly.

Beyond the difficulties in propositional analysis and syntactic mapping, the unique form of the comics themselves carry their own problems for rating. The modality of the recall was already discussed above in the introduction of IRPs. A further issue is how to prepare the comics text for rating. One approach, following Johnson's (1970) propositional analysis, could determine pause acceptability units for the comics texts. It might follow Groensteen's (2007) view of panels as the smallest units of meaning in comics (pp. 4-5) and equate each panel to a pausal unit.

This approach, however, would encounter the same difficulties discussed for Johnson's (1970) prose analysis above. Reading a comic would be reduced to the retrieval of information in isolatable, panel-sized chunks, presumably consumed in a linear manner. It would also render meaningless issues of comics form such as panel regularity, page layout, and the meaningful interrelation of elements throughout the whole work, that is, *arthology*.

4.6.2. Rubrics for Assessing Reading Across Modalities: A New Strategy²⁷

In rating my IRP data, however, I wanted to accomplish two things that none of these systems could do alone. First, I wanted to make sure that my rating accounted for the individuality each reader brings to their recalls, that is, their readings of the texts. Rather than determine ahead of time how they were supposed to read the texts, I wanted to evaluate their readings in and of themselves, in terms of coherence and cohesion, while not allowing for complete freedom of referentiality from the text. As such, I wanted to better understand how each text's modal affordances constrained the readings. Second, I wanted to better understand how participants' readings exhibited an understanding of the texts' structures. As the approaches discussed above would be unable to accomplish these goals, I decided instead on two rating systems for the IRPs: (1) a set of Rubrics for Assessing Reading Across Modalities and (2) analysis by idea unit using a definition derived from Propp's (1968) morphology of folktales.

The first rating system for the IRPs developed for the present project is a set of four rubrics measuring content referentiality, coherence, cohesion, and inference. These rubrics react to Bernhardt's (2011) call for holistic rating (pp. 106-112). Not only does she show such rating systems to be reliable—their results correlate highly to the propositional scoring methods when used for prose texts—but they tell us far more about a participant's understanding of the text than Meyer's (1985) or Johnson's (1970) approaches can. For example, using propositional analysis, Perrig and Kintsch (1985)

²⁷ These rubrics were co-developed in spring 2018 with Katherine Arens, with additional assistance from Janet Swaffar.

show that participants may receive a high score by recalling a large amount of vocabulary while failing to construct any reasonable meaning from the lexical items.²⁸

As such, I expanded on Bernhardt's (2011) single rubric to develop the RARAM to account for individual phenomena within the readings and incorporate reader-oriented and image-text theories of reading in describing what comprehending a text—producing a consistent and coherent reading—actually means. These rubrics accomplish two further goals. First, they account for the multiplicity of phenomena associated with reading and thus fulfill Kern's (2000) call for multidimensionality in assessment. Second, they provide future researchers, including those investigating other multimodal text types, a potentially valuable template for scoring recall tasks across modalities.

The RARAM adopt Bernhardt's suggestion of a discrete, four-point scale (p. 109). According to the general scoring guidelines, the content assessed in an IRP receiving 0s is “ambiguous/unclear/not present.” For IRPs with 1s, the content is “mostly ambiguous/unclear/not present.” In those with 2s, it is “mostly unambiguous/clear/present.” For those receiving 3s, it is “unambiguous/clear/present.” Table 3 shows the detailed definitions and score descriptions for each individual rubric.

²⁸ For more on the limitations of recall rating and scoring, see Bernhardt (2011, p. 110) and Swaffar et al. (1991, p. 28).

Table 3: Rubrics for scoring Immediate Recall Protocols (IRPs) for all texts.

Rating	Content Referentiality ²⁹	Coherence ³⁰	Cohesion ³¹	Inference ³²
=RUBRIC DEFINITION →	= The IRP demonstrates the ability to recall content elements from the source text accurately and effectively (e.g. main issues; chronology; details about character; setting and organization of events).	= The IRP connects underlying ideas from the text logically, developing and relating them in ways that reflect the ideas and logic of the source text.	= The IRP expresses the connection and logic of ideas drawn from the text, using appropriate rhetorical markers and expressions reflecting an understanding of and engagement with the source text.	= The IRP addresses how the reader draws inferences about the text in terms of its visual and/or verbal information structures.
Score ↓				

²⁹ This rubric is intended to assess comprehension and recall of textual data: the who, what, where, when, and why of the source text; as such, it emphasizes *what is drawn from the text* as opposed to *what the reader knows in advance*.

³⁰ This rubric is intended to assess comprehension and recall of textual logic: how the source text argues its case and/or connects data to tell its story; as such, it emphasizes the reader's ability to recall and recount a logic *that may not be their own* and that may reflect cultural norms not of their own culture.

³¹ This rubric is intended to assess links between what a reader understands from a text and the ability to express this understanding. As such, it tries to connect recall of logic and content with the reader's ability to express/communicate their recall effectively.

³² This rubric is intended to assess the reader's use of cues specific elements of the text beyond explicit grammar and rhetoric when making inferences: *how* the reader constructs an understanding of the text, *what multimodal information cues, if any* does the reader rely on from the text (visual or textual), and how does the reader recall that information. For example, does the reader mark the function of verbal cues in the text (e.g., the text describes...), mark some recalled elements as visual (e.g., the images depict/we see the hero...), and/or omit most indications of what a text means beyond its explicit grammatical/rhetorical markers).

Table 3, cont.

Rating	Content Referentiality	Coherence	Cohesion	Inference
3	Reflects most of the significant elements from the source text, with few or no significant errors or omissions; the recall of text elements is generally correct and reliable.	Reflects a clear understanding of the logic, connections, and development of ideas in the source text, despite occasional errors or inadequacy of the ideas and/or linguistic resources adduced from the source text.	Demonstrates effective use of markers from grammar and rhetoric. Uses explicit and appropriate links between sentences and/or clauses as well as text markers appropriate to communicating to the reader ideas and content from the source text.	Draws inferences from the text clearly, based on text structures beyond explicit markers from grammar, rhetoric, or visual relationship cues; demonstrates an understanding of what the text implies; moves beyond a strictly literal reading of textual elements.

Table 3, cont.

Rating	Content Referentiality	Coherence	Cohesion	Inference
2	Reflects many of the significant elements from the source text, with some errors and/or omissions (even significant ones); the recall of text elements may be flawed but does not distract from their general correctness and adequacy to the source text.	Reflects a largely adequate understanding of the logic, connections, and development of ideas in the source text, with some more significant and/or frequent errors or inadequacy of the ideas and linguistic resources adduced from the source text.	Demonstrates competent but not always effective use of markers from grammar and rhetoric. Links between sentences and/or clauses are often implicit rather than explicitly marked. Ideas from the source text are often implicitly rather than explicitly connected.	Draws some inferences from the text's information structure but merely suggests an understanding of what the texts implies beyond a strictly literal reading of text elements; and/or imposes ideas onto the text that do not correlate with text structures and/or explicit visual/verbal cues.

Table 3, cont.

Rating	Content Referentiality	Coherence	Cohesion	Inference
1	Reflects some elements drawn from the source text, but with significant errors and/or omissions; the recall reflects the source text inadequately.	Reflects a largely inadequate understanding of the logic, connections, and development of ideas in the source text; contains frequent and/or significant errors or lapses in logic and/or inadequacy of the ideas and linguistic resources adduced from the source text.	Demonstrates frequently ineffective, sometimes incorrect use of markers from grammar and rhetoric. Few if any adequate or effective explicit connections are made between sentences and/or clauses; ideas often are inadequately and/or incorrectly expressed.	Draws few, if any, inferences about the text based on visual/verbal information beyond a strictly literal reading of text elements; and/or draws inferences from personal experience that do not reflect text data or structure.

Table 3, cont.

Rating	Content Referentiality	Coherence	Cohesion	Inference
0	Reflects few if any elements of the original text accurately and/or appropriately; the recall does not adequately reflect substantial elements of the source text.	Reflects a generally inadequate, unclear, and/or ambiguous understanding of the logic, connections, and development of ideas in the source text; adduces few if any ideas and linguistic resources unambiguously drawn from the source text.	Demonstrates little or no use of markers from grammar and rhetoric to connect ideas; little or no attention is paid to explicit connection of ideas.	Demonstrates little or no capacity to draw inferences about the texts; rarely moves beyond recall of information explicit in the text; demonstrates little or no capacity to understand text data (explicit or structural) contributes to the meaning of a text.

The first rubric focuses on the comprehension and recall of textual data. It assesses the recall of details explicitly taken from the source text rather than what the reader brings to the text. While this dichotomy is not meant to be stable—I have repeatedly pointed to the impossibility of fully separating the information in a text from what readers contribute—this rubric can offer some information on the level of detail that the reader can recall. Again, this dissertation does not follow Fish (1980a) in nullifying the text entirely. Instead it only stresses the pitfalls in imagining a powerless reader lacking any and all agency.

The second rubric assesses the reader's representation of textual coherence and logic in the IRP. It inquires as to how the recall depicts the presentation of information in the original. This rubric emphasizes readers' ability to recall and recount the textual logic of the original regardless of their own views.

The third rubric investigates how well the reader is able to express the connective tissue of the text. For example, it assesses whether the recall presents the original text as a set of separate ideas or as idea units, in the contextual definition discussed below.

The final rubric assesses how well the reader recognizes the origins of information in making inferences. In constructing an understanding of the text, does the reader use multimodal information? If so, does the recall show evidence of the source? For example, does the reader make reference to the prose text (e.g., the text describes...) or the visual text (e.g., the images depict/we see the hero...) explicitly? Are these references appropriate?

4.6.3. Proppian Functions and Idea Units: Complement to Rubric Grading

To expand on the *qualitative* evaluation provided by the rubrics, I added a *quantitative* dimension to my IRP evaluation by determining the presence of idea units in the source texts and the learners' IRPs.

The use of idea units for scoring recalls has a long history in reading research, though the term is used imprecisely.³³ In some research, it is interchangeable with Meyer's (1985) system and related syntactic approaches (see, e.g., Wells, 1986; Bernhardt, 1991). Carrell (1985), for example, describes an idea unit as consisting of "a

³³ Alderson (2000) has also discussed this lack of precision in defining idea units.

single clause (main or subordinate, including adverbial and relative clauses)” (p. 737). Other studies, most notably Steffensen, Joag-Dev, and Anderson (1979), and the many which cite it, use the term without defining it at all. Still others, including Swaffar et al. (1991), use the term interchangeably with proposition, without fully defining either.

Despite these distinctions, all the uses focus on the meaning and structure of the text, recognize that certain textual elements—not necessarily synonymous with lexical or phrasal items—are more important than others, and acknowledge the difficulty in finding descriptors that can work for all texts.

As this study considers how meaning is structured in literary texts, I define idea unit more broadly than previous syntactic approaches by adapting the literary theoretical approach to describing Russian folktales pioneered by Vladimir Propp (1968) as constructed by morphemes, or “functions,” of the literary text. Propp (1968) defines his morphology as “a description of the tale according to its component parts and the relationship of these components to each other and to the whole” (p. 19). Though Propp (1968) defines his functions syntactically, as Carrell does with idea units (1985)—they appear “in the form of a noun expressing an action” (Propp, 1968, p. 21)—he also stresses the importance of context above all: “The meaning which a given function has in the course of action must be considered” (p. 21). Therefore, when taken together, he understands a function within a story as “an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action” (p. 21).

I proceed from this approach and define idea unit for the purposes of the present project as an *action by—or newly-introduced characteristic or fact of—a character that has meaning insofar as it relates to the larger meaning of the passage.*

Note that unlike previous definitions of idea unit, my definition presents no need for a hierarchy; all idea units depend on all other idea units for their meaning. Without each idea unit standing in its specific relation to all others, the story would be different; it would become a text of a different type (see Propp, 1968, p. 22). With this definition and approach as guiding principle, I contend that it is possible to isolate the main issues of significance within a text—while still allowing the reader the freedom to add or subtract specific details and shape the importance of individual idea units—to demonstrate their comprehension both quantitatively (did they remember a majority of the texts' idea units) and qualitatively, indicating how well they recognized and reported on these units according to the appropriate story-grammar (in Propp's sense).

As such, this idea unit analysis determines whether the reader recognizes and presents the important information in the text—its deep structure. However, it does not tell a complete picture. The glue that holds a text together—its coherence and cohesion—together with information on the modal sources of meaning constructed by the reader are captured by the RARAM.

4.6.4. Determination of Idea Units

The second rating system for the reading protocols took the form of a list of idea units in each text that are potentially present in each IRP. Using the definition of idea unit inspired by Propp (1968) discussed above, I divided up each text accordingly, and Dr.

Katherine Arens independently did the same. We then compared our determinations and when disagreements arose, the discrepancy was resolved according to the principle that it is better to have fewer idea units than more. Though this approach can be taken too far, the identification of a small number of idea units per text that constitute the main line of its exposition helps determine its deep structure—the most salient and useful structural “functions,” in Proppian (1968) terms.

Further principles guided our determination: (1) Not every word of a text necessarily belongs to an idea unit. (2) Some idea units produced by the students in their IRPs may summarize content from the learners’ point of view and thus may contain new words not present in the original texts. As such, both German and English are used in the idea unit lists found in Appendix F. (3) Idea units may contain information that is located throughout the text. Thus, an idea unit made up of words from the text may be interrupted by another idea unit (example: information about characters may occur in several passages but could be part of one idea unit). (4) Finally, multimodal texts are built by idea units in different modalities.

The idea unit as it is used in this dissertation is inspired, as noted in previous sections, by previous work testing reading and rating IRPs. It is also intended as an improvement on propositional rating systems, both weighted and not. That said, the process of their determination, especially the discrepancies in their numbers and constitution—revealed them to not be without their problems. Further research can build on the work presented here to better systematize how they are determined, measured, and assessed.

The identification of idea units for the comics texts also proved more difficult than for the prose texts, as there is little precedent for establishing idea units in image-texts. For the comics in this study, I separated the verbal and visual modes primarily to learn more about the types of information readers accessing as well as for ease of rating. Future studies may want to build on what I have done and consider the presence of multimodal idea units in additional ways as well. Table 4 shows the texts and idea units.

Table 4: Idea Units by Text.

	Verbal Idea Units	Visual Idea Units	Total Idea Units
Prose text 1	13	n/a	13
Prose text 2	7	n/a	7
Comics text 1	13	6	19
Comics text 2	20 (7)	22	42 (29)

Before I move on to the rating procedures, I need to note two issues regarding the division of the texts into idea units. First, the number of idea units varies widely by text—no text has the same number as any other—and across modality—the prose texts have fewer than the comics texts.

Second, the number of idea units varies between the two versions of each texts—the number of idea units in the prose texts do not match the number in the respective comics adaptation, not even by modality. This mismatch should come as no surprise, as any text is likely to be organized differently, and the distinct affordances of each multimodal arrangement affect the presentation of the information, not only in quantity, but in structure and organization. Moreover, words present in both a prose text and a comic text cannot be regarded as the same, as they take on meaning within their

multimodal context. As such, they cannot be understood in the same way in terms of idea units.

However, in order to make them comparable across multimodal arrangement type, after they were scored for the idea units as determined in Table 4 above, I reduced the number of verbal idea units for Comics text 2 from 20 to 7. These original 20 idea units were subsumed under the new 7. I matched each with the equivalent idea unit for prose text 2. The results were two texts with similar content and equivalent numbers of verbal idea units. In this guise, this study can better show similarities and differences between these two texts distinguished by multimodal form. The 22 visual idea units remain unchanged despite their large number as they are not being directly compared to the anything in the corresponding prose text.

4.7. Rating Procedures

4.7.1. Raters and Rating Context

Two raters were selected from among the graduate student population in the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. The reviewers were one native speaker each of English and German. Because the IRPs are written in English while the prose and comics texts are in German, I chose one native speaker of each language to better account for potential comprehension problems in the IRPs attributable to linguistic knowledge. The native speaker of English was an MA student of literature, the German speaker a PhD student of literature and political theory. The raters were not selected based on knowledge of either the project or the subject matter.

Following training, the two raters blindly and independently rated all remaining IRPs. Only then did I compare the results. While rating the IRPs, the raters did not know whether a given IRP was completed first or second temporally. Raters were also unable to match the two IRPs completed by any one participant. The raters had no access to information about the participants beyond their IRPs.

4.7.2. Rater Training

I met with the two raters described above and brought rating packets for all three of us as the basis for the rater training. Each packet was divided into four sections: (1) the four original texts by Brecht and Ulf K. (Appendix A), (2) the full RARAM as discussed above (Appendix E), (3) the four prepared texts analyzed for rating by idea unit as discussed above (Appendix F), and (4) copies of the full set of IRPs in randomized order. Each IRP had scoring tables printed below the texts for recording idea unit and RARAM scores.

The IRPs included in the packet for scoring were in randomized order, different for each rater, except for the first twelve in each, which I separated out for training purposes to hopefully foster interrater reliability. For these first twelve, after reading through all of the recalls, I had selected three example IRPs each for each of the four texts. For each of the four texts, I selected one IRP each that I expected would receive low, medium, and high scores on the RARAM respectively. I selected the texts based on the expected results on the rubrics rather than the idea unit analysis as I assumed the likelihood of a low interrater reliability would be higher for the RARAM with its 4-point

scales than for the more binary idea unit scoring. I included each of the four sets of training IRPs in the rating packets in the same, random order for each rater.

To start the training, I briefly presented the goals of the study, provided the reasons for the multiple rating procedures, and then read the original texts. I allowed for any questions, especially regarding unknown vocabulary or potential areas of confusion for the L1 English rater. I then read aloud the RARAM. When completed, I again allowed for questions. Finally, I read the idea unit breakdowns and once again allowed for questions.

Next, we all selected the first of the three IRPs from the first of the four text sets and discussed how we would rate it according to the RARAM and idea unit breakdown. Once we were comfortable with our determination, we recorded it and proceeded through the first of the three selected IRPs for each of the three remaining sets. Once we had finished this, we repeated the entire process for the second of the three texts for each of the four sets. This time through, however, we each made our determinations for the RARAM and idea unit scores individually and only then compared results for each IRP before moving on. After this second round, we repeated the process one final time for the third texts in each of the four sets; this time, all four IRPs were rated individually without pausing to check our scores between each recall. At the end of this round, we did the final comparison of all the scores recorded.

The idea of the evolving process was that each successive round of communal rating would become more independent until the raters could be set loose to do all the remaining rating independently. Following the training, I again allowed for a final round

of questions, after which we took a brief break. Finally, I asked the raters to continue with the rating until finished.

4.7.3. Ratings

Following training, the raters rated each of the remaining IRPs according to the RARAM and idea units. When completed, I collected the ratings and thanked the raters. I then took these ratings and calculated interrater reliability, described in the following chapter. All discrepancies in ratings between the raters were resolved by taking the mean of the two ratings.

Chapter 5: Results

This chapter presents the results of the experiment. Following sections explaining the determination of interrater reliability and the process of cleaning the data, its central section outlines the data applicable to each research question. The full, raw prequestionnaire, postquestionnaire, and IRP data are included below in Appendix G.

5.1. Approaching the Data: Interrater Reliability, Rubric Validity, and Idea Unit Comparability

To provide the most accurate assessment of the overall rating system, I calculated interrater reliability overall as well as separately for each method—each individual rubric and idea unit list.¹ By calculating each method separately, I am able to state the reliability of each and isolate areas for improvement in the rating systems when used for individual

¹ All IRPs including those removed from the final analysis due to a participant not completing the full set of measures are included. While participants' incomplete questionnaires would render their completed IRPs unhelpful for answering the research questions, especially 2 and 3, they do not affect their use for determining the reliability of the IRP rating system.

measures. Further, to better assess the measures' use for readings by multimodal text type, I can also provide collective reliability numbers for prose IRPs and comics IRPs by method and overall.

It is useful to recall here that each IRP was rated twice, using both the RARAM and the idea units, by two raters, one native English speaker and one native German speaker. I trained them by first selecting four IRPs, one for each text, and all three of us discussed how to rate each one according to the rating system and came to a consensus. In a second step, for further IRPs were rated, each one individually, and then collectively to check for agreement between raters. The raters conferred after each IRP. In a third step, an additional set of four IRPs were rated by the individual raters. This time, the raters compared scores after rating all four. Following this training, the raters rated the remaining IRPs on their own.

Rather than percentages to calculate interrater reliability, I use the more-accurate Cohen's Kappa coefficient (Cohen, 1960), which accounts not only for the agreement between raters, but also the degree of chance. Cohen's Kappa yields a kappa (κ) value between -1 and +1, with values below 0 unlikely. The closer the kappa (κ) value is to +1, the higher is the measure's reliability. According to Watkins and Pacheco (2000), a kappa (κ) value below .40 represents poor agreement, .40–.60 fair agreement, .60–.75 good agreement, and .75–1.00 excellent. Table 5 reports kappa (κ) values for each rating method and agreement strength according to these descriptive categories. It also presents the kappa (κ) values for all prose and comics scores overall, for all RARAM and idea unit categories, and for all ratings.

Table 5: Interrater Reliability.

Rating Method (and Measure)	Cohen's kappa (κ)	Strength of Agreement (Watkins & Pacheco, 2000)
RARAM Prose Content Referentiality	.41	Fair
RARAM Prose Coherence	.66	Good
RARAM Prose Cohesion	.41	Fair
RARAM Prose Inference	.44	Fair
Prose Idea Units	.58	Fair
RARAM Comics Content Referentiality	.59	Fair
RARAM Comics Coherence	.43	Fair
RARAM Comics Cohesion	.33	Poor
RARAM Comics Inference	.69	Good
Comics Verbal Idea Units	.42	Fair
Comics Visual Idea Units	.58	Fair
All Prose Methods	.62	Good
All Comics Methods	.59	Fair
All RARAM Methods	.59	Fair
All Idea Unit Methods	.56	Fair
All Rating Methods	.60	Fair/Good

According to these numbers, the least reliable rating methods were the rubrics for cohesion when used for the comics ($\kappa = .33$), which assesses the recall of details explicitly from the text, and cohesion and content referentiality when used for prose ($\kappa = .41$), the latter of which considers the reader's expression of the connections between elements in the text. The most reliable were the rubrics for inference when used for comics ($\kappa = .69$), which looks at how well the readers recall the multimodal source of information and provide evidence, and coherence when used for prose ($\kappa = .66$), which considers how readers understand and thus represent the logic of the original.

Despite this range in reliability, every rating method but one, RARAM Comics Cohesion, showed a kappa (κ) value showing at least fair agreement. The relative weakness of this rubric's reliability when used with comics, along with the strengths and

weaknesses of the others as discussed above, may be attributable to the study design, perhaps even in the selection of raters. One rater, the native English speaker, is a beginning MA student in literature, and the other, the native German speaker, a PhD student in literature and political theory. While it is difficult to conclude or even extrapolate anything from the sample of only two raters and 34 participants, the specifics of how these backgrounds and related literacies are reflected in the varying strengths of the rubrics is something further research using these rating systems should consider toward their improvement.

The composite kappa (κ) value for all prose rating methods ($\kappa = .62$) was slightly above that for all comics rating methods ($\kappa = .59$), and the reliability of all RARAM rating methods ($\kappa = .59$) was slightly above that for all idea unit methods ($\kappa = .56$). Again, while it is tempting to draw conclusions from these results, the small sample size and narrow distinction in kappa (κ) value preclude anything beyond conjecture. Finally, the overall reliability ($\kappa = .60$) is marginal between fair and good agreement.

While excellent agreement is desirable—and in certain study designs even necessary, especially in the natural sciences where marginal disagreements can have life-changing effects—the individualized nature of reading and the instability of texts make such high kappa (κ) values difficult. However, the lower kappa (κ) values shown in this study may additionally result from choices made in the study design and training.

A related study that assesses student learning through media (Hammer & Swaffar, 2012) also used a set of holistic rubrics and showed far higher interrater reliability, with an overall kappa (κ) value of .90. Two features of that study's design, however, likely

contributed to the higher reliability. First, the raters initially rated a set of essays on their own with the rubrics before holding a two-hour discussion of how to rate with the rubrics. This order may have helped the raters establish their own understanding of the rubric that they then refined during the discussion rather than trying to establish consensus from the beginning. More importantly, the calculation of interrater reliability looked at cumulative scores from all rubrics rather than from each individual rubric. Hammer and Swaffar (2012) also asked their raters to confer on discrepancies when these cumulative scores were not within 95% of each other between raters. In the present study, though such an approach may have yielded higher kappa (κ) values, the lower values observed through a focus on individual rubrics and modalities can provide more fine-grained information for improving the rubrics. As such, I considered each individual rating method separately.

Though the rating systems and procedures detailed in the previous chapter can and should be refined and improved, the overall kappa (κ) value of .60 is encouraging for this study. This result suggests that both the present use of idea units and a holistic rating scale like the RARAM are not simply random and can potentially be quite useful in formative assessment and research.

Finally, as noted above in Chapter 4, after rating all IRPs, I also reduced the possible number of recallable idea units in comics text 2 from the original 20 to 7, categorizing the original 20 according to the similar content present in the 7 in prose text 2. Not only does this render the idea unit ratings more easily comparable across text type, it also better reflects both Propp's (1968) understanding of the deep structure of a text and the claim from multimodality scholars that modal selection by affordance realizes an

inchoate, pre-modal meaning concretely. In line with both approaches, if the underlying meaning is meant to be the same for both text types, the idea unit numbers should resemble one another.

However, this one-to-one correlation in idea unit numbers is, admittedly, an oversimplification. In practice, the individual affordances of modes allow information implicit in one multimodal text structure to be rendered explicitly in another. As such, the equalized number of verbal idea units is a shorthand for a complex issue that needs to be addressed in approaching each set of texts. That said, as one goal of this study is to work toward a usable way for teachers to make choices in text selection, such heuristic (reductive) moves are both functional and inevitable.

This normalization of idea units across text type, however, cannot also be done for the two text groups (comics/prose texts 1 vs. comics/prose texts 2). Here, the difference in idea unit numbers, while problematic for data analysis, is unavoidable. While texts of the same meaning differentiated by modal realization might have similar or the same numbers of idea units, the numbers of idea units in texts of distinct content are completely independent of one another.

The solution chosen here for the unrelated sets of idea units in two different sets of meaning, percentages, is by no means ideal. It suggests, first, that each idea unit's meaningfulness is quantifiable and that that quantity is changed by each new unit in a text. Every idea unit in a text with four idea units would be rendered less meaningful (worth 25%) than one in a text with three idea units (33.3%). While this approach thus affects the nature of the idea unit analysis, no other solution can reveal numerically

comparable results. Thus, the raw data are first reported below in Table 3, before percentages are used in comparisons thereafter to best answer the study's research questions. Further work beyond the purview of this study can examine the data from this experiment from each text more individually to see how readers are approaching specific types of information in multimodal texts and consider the ways various types of comics and prose texts render information differently.

5.2. The Data

Though 34 participants provided data to the study, only 27 completed all measures, that is, both questionnaires and both IRPs. This led to some data being excluded. Without a full picture of how participants' readings compare across multimodal text type and how this relates to their own experiences and views, the data cannot help answer the research questions, especially #2 and #3 comparing the IRP rating results with the questionnaire data. As such, these 7 responses were removed from the following analysis.

An additional participant completed one of the IRPs in German instead of English. As this language distinction represents an additional variable only for this participant, the participant's data were removed entirely from consideration to normalize the data, yielding a participant (n) number of 26.

As such, in exploring the research questions, I include only those 26 participants who completed every part of the study in English. All RARAM and idea unit statistics as

well as findings from the two questionnaires reflect only the responses of these 26 participants and not the larger pool of 34.

5.2.1. Reporting the Data

Table 6 shows the raw data for all IRPs for the four Rubrics for Assessing Reading Across Modalities and the idea units:

Table 6: All RARAM and Idea Unit Data.

Participant	Group #	RARAM Content Referentiality	RARAM Coherence	RARAM Cohesion	RARAM Inference	Prose Verbal Idea Units Recalled/Total	Comics Verbal Idea Units Recalled/Total	Visual Idea Units Recalled/Total
1	A2	2, 2	2, 3	1.5, 3	1, 2	5/7	10/13	3/6
2	A1	2, 2	2, 3	1.5, 2	0, 0.5	4/7	11/13	4/6
3	A1	3, 2.5	3, 3	2.5, 1.5	0, 0	5/7	8/13	3/6
4	B1	2.5, 3	3, 2.5	1, 1.5	0, 0	13/13	4/7	5.5/22
5	A2	0, 2	2, 2	3, 2	0, 0	3/7	8/13	4/6
6	B1	2.5, 2	2.5, 2	1.5, 0.5	0.5, 0	12.5/13	5.5/7	2/22
7	A1	1, 2.5	1, 2.5	1, 2	0, 0.5	4/7	8/13	4/6
8	A2	1.5, 1	1, 0.5	0.5, 0.5	0, 0	4.5/7	3.5/13	1/6
9	B1	3, 3	3, 2.5	2, 2	0.5, 0.5	11/13	6.5/7	5/22
10	A1	1, 2.5	1, 3	1.5, 2.5	0, 0	3/7	9.5/13	3/6
11	B1	2.5, 3	2.5, 3	2, 2	0, 2	12/13	6/7	6/22
12	B2	3, 3	3, 3	3, 3	0.5, 3	13/13	6/7	13/22
13	A1	1.5, 1	1, 1	0, 0	0, 0	3.5/7	3/13	0/6
14	B1	3, 3	3, 3	1.5, 1.5	0, 0	12.5/13	6/7	2/22
15	A1	2, 1.5	2, 1.5	2, 0	0, 0	4/7	10/13	2.5/6
16	B2	3, 3	3, 2.5	2.5, 2	0, 0	12/13	7/7	8.5/22
17	B2	2.5, 3	2, 2	1, 2.5	1, 0	9.5/13	5.5/7	4.5/22
18	B1	2.5, 2	2.5, 1.5	2, 1.5	0, 0	8/13	5/7	5/22
19	A1	1, 1	1, 1	2, 1.5	0, 1	3.5/7	6/13	2/6
20	B2	2, 3	2.5, 3	1.5, 2.5	0, 0	7/13	7/7	8/22
21	B2	3, 3	3, 3	3, 2.5	0, 0	13/13	6/7	5/22
22	B2	3, 3	3, 2	3, 3	0, 0	9/13	6/7	3.5/22
23	A2	2, 2	2, 1.5	1, 0	0, 0	5/7	11/13	2/6
24	A2	3, 2	3, 2	3, 0	0, 0	7/7	11/13	1.5/6
25	A2	0, 1.5	0, 2.5	1, 1	0, 0	3/7	6.5/13	3/6
26	B2	2, 2	1, 2	1, 2	0, 0	3/13	6/7	3/22

For the RARAM, the first score represents the prose text, and the second following the comma is the comics text. The idea unit scores are all listed separately, and the total

number possible for each text is provided following the score for clarity. In comparisons later in this chapter, the idea unit scores are presented as percentages for ease of comparison, as described above. Each RARAM and idea unit score represents the mean of the two raters, also as described above.

Separated by research question, the data are reported in the following first using descriptive statistics, that is, mean, median, mode, and standard deviation. These statistics provide the reader with a useful overview of the small data sets, outlining trends for comparison toward the answering of the research questions. Yet they do not address statistical significance, the determination of which lends legitimacy to conclusions drawn from the data and suggests that the results are replicable and not random. Because the data overall are not normally distributed—as determined through visual inspection and confirmed by a series of Shapiro-Wilk tests²—parametric tests such as standard T-tests or ANOVAs would not result in any clear determination of significance.

There are other tools available that render the data usable in other ways. For research question #1, comparing reading comprehension in prose and comics, I use a series of Wilcoxon signed-rank tests (Wilcoxon, 1945), which are typically employed in place of T-tests when data do not follow normal distribution to determine statistical

² The Shapiro-Wilk test (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965) tests the null hypothesis that a data set is normally distributed. If the alpha-level is set at $\alpha = 0.05$, a p -value of anything less than .05 rejects the null hypothesis revealing non-normal distribution in a data set. I ran 14 individual Shapiro-Wilk tests: 8 for the RARAM (1 for each of the 4 rubrics for the 2 text types) and 6 for the idea units (1 for the idea units for each of the two prose texts and 1 for each of the 2 idea unit types for each of the 2 comics texts). The resulting p -values (listed from smallest to largest) [.000, .000, .001, .001, .002, .004, .017, .019, .062, .074, .089, .101, .102, .299] show that only 6 tests failed to reject the null hypothesis, indicating normal distribution in those cases. As the majority of the Shapiro-Wilk tests thus showed non-normal distribution, the data overall can be treated as non-normally distributed.

significance. For research questions #2 and #3, on the effects of background knowledge and affective views of comics on reading comprehension, for which I use multiple variables resulting in small group sizes, data are reported using descriptive statistics, means and standard deviations, only. The pictures offered by these cross tabulations are meant to generate further questions rather than clearly determine statistical significance.

5.2.2. Research Question 1

The first research question asks whether L2 learners’ reading comprehension of graphic novels differs from that of prose texts. Data to answer this question come from the prose and comics IRPs and the two rating systems, that is, the four rubrics and the idea units.

5.2.2.1. Rubrics: Descriptive Statistics

5.2.2.1.1. RARAM Content Referentiality

Table 7 shows the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation for the prose and comics IRPs for content referentiality, the recall of details taken explicitly from the original text, with a range from 0–3.

Table 7: RARAM Content Referentiality Descriptive Statistics.

	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Dev.
Prose IRPs	2.10	2.25	3.00	0.91
Comics IRPs	2.29	2.25	3.00	0.70

The median and mode were the same for the prose and comics IRPs for content referentiality at 2.25 and 3.00 respectively. The mean for the comics IRPs was 8.66% higher than that for the prose IRPs. The standard deviation numbers show that the variability for the prose IRPs was greater than that for the comics IRPs.

5.2.2.1.2. RARAM Coherence

Table 8 shows the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation for the prose and comics IRPs for coherence, the depiction in the recall of how the original text presents information, with a range from 0–3.

Table 8: RARAM Coherence Descriptive Statistics.

	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Dev.
Prose IRPs	2.11	2.25	3.00	0.89
Comics IRPs	2.25	2.50	3.00	0.74

The mode, 3.00, was the same for the prose and comics IRPs for coherence. The median for the comics IRPs, 2.50, was higher than that for the prose IRPs, 2.25. Like for content referentiality, the mean was higher for the comics IRPs; the difference here was 6.42%. The standard deviation numbers show that the variability for the prose IRPs was, like in the content referentiality results, higher than that for the comics IRPs, though the difference here was smaller.

5.2.2.1.3. RARAM Cohesion

Table 9 shows the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation for the prose and comics IRPs for cohesion, the presence in the recall of the connective tissue of the text, with a range from 0–3.

Table 9: RARAM Cohesion Descriptive Statistics.

	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Dev.
Prose IRPs	1.75	1.50	1.00/1.50 ³	0.84
Comics IRPs	1.63	2.00	2.00	0.97

Unlike for the previous two rubrics, the mean for cohesion was higher for the prose IRPs. The difference was 7.1%. The median and mode were also distinct between the two IRP types. In both cases, despite the higher mean for the prose IRPs, the results for the comics IRPs were higher. Also unlike for content referentiality and coherence, the standard deviation for comics was higher than for prose showing a greater variability in scores.

5.2.2.1.4. RARAM Inference

Table 10 shows the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation for the prose and comics IRPs for inference, the recognition and representation in the recall of the multimodal origins of information in making inferences, with a range from 0–3.

Table 10: RARAM Inference Descriptive Statistics.

	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Dev.
Prose IRPs	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.30
Comics IRPs	0.37	0.00	0.00	0.78

For inference, the median and mode were identical for the prose and comics IRPs, as was the case for content referentiality. The mean for the comics IRPs was greater than for the prose IRPs, almost three times as high. The standard deviations point to a much greater variability in scores for the comics IRPs than for the prose IRPs.

³ Both scores occurred six times each. As such, there are two modes.

5.2.2.2. Rubrics: Wilcoxon Signed-rank Tests

The descriptive statistics presented above provide detail about the individual rubrics and some information as to how they compare. For a closer understanding of the significance of how the results compared between readings of prose and comics, I used Wilcoxon signed-rank tests, equivalent to standard paired T-tests but for nonparametric data. For these tests, the *p*-values range from 0–1 and reflect the likelihood that the differences between the two data sets are simply due to chance. Lower *p*-values reflect higher confidence in the reproducibility of the results and a higher significance level. For example, a *p*-value of .80 reflects a 20% significance level, whereas a *p*-value of .20 indicates a level of 80%. Table 11 shows the results for the four tests run on the four rubrics across modality.

Table 11: RARAM Statistical Significance Measured by Wilcoxon Signed-rank Tests.

	RARAM Content Referentiality	RARAM Coherence	RARAM Cohesion	RARAM Inference
Z-value	-1.137	-0.577	-0.243	-1.556
<i>p</i> -value	0.256	0.564	0.808	0.120

Assuming a desired significance level of 95% ($\alpha = 0.05$), four individually-run Wilcoxon signed-rank tests each show that despite the differences in means noted above in tables 3–6, there are no statistically significant differences in the ratings according to any of the four rubrics readings of the prose and comics IRPs.

5.2.2.3. Idea Units: Descriptive Statistics

With the presentation of the IRP data using both descriptive statistics and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests for statistical significance as rated by the RARAM complete,

I now move on the other rating system used in the study. Here, I present the IRP data as rated by idea units first using descriptive statistics and then another Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

For the descriptive statistics, I begin by presenting the data for the IRPs by text type and individual text, given the different possible raw scores. Further, these are separated by modal type, and both the verbal and visual idea unit results from the IRPs are provided. I then provide overall descriptive statistics in percentages by text and modality type, that is, all prose idea units, all visual idea units in the comics, and all verbal idea units in the comics for comparability. Table 12 shows the mean, median, mode, standard deviation for each of these categories of idea units:

Table 12: Idea Unit Descriptive Statistics.

Idea Unit by Text (maximum possible score)	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Dev.
Prose 1 (13)	10.42	12.00	13.00	3.02
Prose 2 (7)	4.19	4.00	3.00/4.00/5.00 ⁴	1.13
All Prose in %	70.03	70.33	100	22.15
Comics 1 Verbal (13)	8.12	8.00	8.00/11.00 ⁵	2.72
Comics 2 Verbal (7)	5.89	6.00	6.00	0.79
All Comics Verbal in %	73.52	77.75	85.71	20.36
Comics 1 Visual (6)	2.54	3.00	3.00	1.22
Comics 2 Visual (22)	5.46	5.00	5.00	3.00
All Comics Visual in %	33.66	30.30	50.00	19.08

Table 12 is organized by text and idea unit type. Following the raw numbers for each text and idea unit type, each of the three categories are presented in percentages to render them more comparable. The percentage of all comics visual idea units recalled (33.66%)

⁴ Each score occurred 3 times. As such, there are three modes.

⁵ Both scores occurred 3 times. As such, there are two modes.

was less than half of that of both all prose (70.03%) and all comics verbal idea units (73.52%). The latter two differed by just under 3.5%. Table 13 provides the Wilcoxon signed-rank test results for the comparisons of idea units from the prose and the verbal text of the comics. The visual idea units recalled from comics are not compared here because they have no analogues in the prose text.

Table 13: Idea Units Statistical Significance Measured by Wilcoxon Signed-rank Test.

Z-value	-0.533
<i>p-value</i>	0.594

These data show no statistical significance in the difference between the comics verbal idea units and the prose idea units recalled, assuming an α -value of 0.05 ($p = 0.594$).

5.2.3. Research Question 2

The second research question asks how familiarity with graphic novels in terms of form, plot elements, and themes affects reading comprehension. Three prequestionnaire items offer useful data. First, item 4a/b determines whether participants currently read or have ever read comics and, if so, requests further detail. Item 11 learns of participants' familiarity with a variety of comics characters to try to gain a window into their reading experiences and breadth of knowledge. Finally, item 7a/b asks if participants have read comics in a foreign language and, if so, which ones. This section presents the data from these three questionnaire items and how these variables affect comprehension as measured by the RARAM and idea unit data.

5.2.3.1. Comics Reading Experience: Quantitative Data

First, table 14 shows the responses to item 4a from the prequestionnaire, “Do you currently read/have you ever read comics?”

Table 14. Prequestionnaire Item 4a: “Do you currently read/have you ever read comics?” (n = 26).

Response to Item 4a from Prequestionnaire	Number	Percentage
Yes	19	73.07
No	7	26.92

Almost three-quarters of participants (73.07%) reported having read comics at some point, while just over one-fourth (26.92%) said they had never read comics.

Table 15 shows the mean RARAM scores and standard deviations for all comics IRPs according to the responses to item 4a from the prequestionnaire:

Table 15. Mean RARAM Scores and Standard Deviations (SD) for Comics IRPs According to Response from Prequestionnaire Item 4a: “Do you currently read/have you ever read comics?” (n = 26).

Response to Item 4a from Prequestionnaire	RARAM Content Referentiality		RARAM Coherence		RARAM Cohesion		RARAM Inference	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
	Yes (n=19)	2.32	0.71	2.24	0.69	1.58	0.99	0.26
No (n=7)	2.21	0.70	2.29	0.91	1.79	0.95	0.64	0.94

Between groups of participants who answered positively (readers) and negatively (non-readers) to currently reading/having ever read comics, the mean RARAM scores were almost identical for content referentiality and coherence. The non-readers scored somewhat higher on the cohesion rubric (1.79 vs. 1.58). The starkest difference came in the inference rubric, for which the non-readers scored almost 2.5 times higher than the

readers (0.64 vs. 0.26). Table 16 shows the mean idea unit scores and standard deviations for all comics IRPs according to the responses to item 4a from the prequestionnaire:

Table 16. Mean Idea Unit Scores and Standard Deviations (SD) for Comics IRPs in Percentages According to Response from Prequestionnaire Item 4a: “Do you currently read/have you ever read comics?” and Comics Text Read (n = 26).

Response to Prequestionnaire Item 4a	Verbal Idea Units		Visual Idea Units	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Yes (n = 19)	75.13	19.71	31.58	17.76
No (n = 7)	68.58	22.88	38.96	23.06

Overall, those who had some experience reading comics recalled more verbal idea units than those with no experience, but fewer visual idea units. The variability in the scores ranged from 17.76% for comics readers’ recall of visual idea units to 22.88% for non-readers’ recall of verbal idea units.

5.2.3.2. Comics Reading Experience: Qualitative Data

Participants who answered yes to item 4a were then asked in 4b to provide detail. Many report changes to their reading habits over their lives, most often involving a decrease in comics reading. Participant 19 reported “I used to love the comics page of the news paper [sic],” while participant 24 remembered reading comics “[o]n occasion as a child, though not so much anymore as an adult.” Participant 2 stated: “I would read the Sunday comics with my grandma when I would stay with her on weekends growing up.” Participant 22 noted: “I read comics weekly as a kid. Now, as a student, I read comics during the summer and winter breaks; so, only three or four times a year.” Finally, participant 16, who also reported reading less, noted a change in reading habits not solely in quantity, but also in quality: “When I was young I had a subscription to the Amazing

Spider-man, and read comics regularly. As I've grown up I don't read comics all that regularly, but when good storylines come out I do buy and read them as graphic novels.”

From these and other responses to item 4b, there is no clear trend linking reported comics reading habits to scores on the RARAM or idea unit scores. However, it is useful to report on one clear exception to the rule. Participant 12's words describe the strongest and most consistent comics reading practices among all participants, only noting a change in quality but not quantity in reading practices over the years:

I have read comics my whole life. When I was much younger I read newspaper comics and would collect anthologies of my favorites. When I was in middle school I was turned on to graphic novels and read several. In high school I developed an interest in webcomics as well as Japanese manga, both of which I continue to read on a weekly/daily basis respectively to this day.

Participant 12 not only has long read comics, but also reads them very well according to the data as evaluated by the RARAM and idea unit rating methods.⁶ Participant 12's comics IRP was the sole recall to receive 3s for all four rubrics, and it also recalled 85.71% of the verbal idea units, above the mean of 73.52%, and 59.10% of the visual idea units, almost twice the mean of 33.66%. These scores are higher than or equal to those from all but four IRPs for comics verbal idea units and three for visual idea units.

5.2.3.3. Comics Reading Knowledge

Also providing data for research question 2, item 11 lists 10 comics characters and elicits learners' familiarity with them. Table 17 shows the raw data from item 11 by

⁶ Participant 12 is also a good reader of prose according to the RARAM and idea unit rating methods. Participant 12's prose IRP received 3s for three of four rubrics and was one of only three that recalled all idea units. Participant 12's prose IRP inference rubric score, while only 0.5., was also more than one standard deviation (0.30) above the mean for all prose IRPs (0.13).

participant number, along with the composite point values calculated according to the assignment of point values on a scale from 0–3 as described in the methodology chapter above:

Table 17. Prequestionnaire Item 11: “Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following” (n = 26).

Character	I have read comics in which ____ played a role. (3 points)	I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc. (2 points)	I have only heard the name of _____. (1 point)	I have never heard of _____. (0 points)	Composite Point Values
Batman	6	19	1	0	57
Goku	0	9	9	8	27
Lex Luthor	3	16	0	7	41
Asterix	3	3	8	12	23
Dr. Demoniac	0	0	2	24	2
Rick Grimes	2	8	3	13	25
Enid Coleslaw	0	0	2	24	2
Wolverine	5	19	2	0	55
Rorschach	8	3	5	10	33
Scrooge McDuck	4	12	5	5	41

According to the composite point values, the best-known characters are those from superhero comics (Batman, Wolverine, Lex Luthor) and a popular children’s series from Disney (Scrooge McDuck). In the middle range are a character from the acclaimed graphic novel, *Watchmen* (Rorschach), one from a popular adventure comic, *The Walking Dead* (Rick Grimes), and the two from non-English language works (Goku, Asterix). Least known are the sole female character (Enid Coleslaw) and the distractor (Dr. Demoniac, a name made up by this researcher but present in no known comic). When looking solely at the characters known specifically from comics, the numbers are largely the same, with the superhero characters enjoying higher recognition than the others, with

one notable exception. The character best known from comic book reading is Rorschach from *Watchmen*. 8 out of 26 participants, or 30.77%, reported having read a comic with the character, higher than more typical superhero characters, Batman (6 participants, or 23.08%) or Wolverine (5 participants or 19.23%).⁷

To better explore how familiarity and knowledge of the characters, plots, and comics affect the comprehension of the comics in the study, I first determined the participants' individual knowledge according to prequestionnaire item 11 by totaling their answers for each comic. Table 18 shows the composite point values for each of the 26 participants for all ten comics:

⁷ That result correlates with the generally assumed iconic or canonical status of *Watchmen* (1986) for comics readers—it's assumed to be among the first great graphic novels with superhero content.

Table 18. Composite Score from Prequestionnaire Item 11 Reflecting Comics Knowledge (n = 26).

Participant Number	Composite Score ⁸
1	12
2	7
3	6
4	16
5	10
6	12
7	11
8	6
9	16
10	9
11	15
12	18
13	14
14	16
15	16
16	23
17	10
18	6
19	13
20	4
21	12
22	20
23	7
24	8
25	15
26	8
Mean	11.92
Median	12
Mode	16
Standard Deviation	4.816

After removing the distractor, Dr. Demoniac, the highest possible score from the remaining nine characters was 27. For the 26 participants, the resulting scores ranged from 4 to 23, with a mean of 11.92.

⁸ The two participants who reported recognizing the distractor character, Dr. Demoniac, did not receive points for this knowledge, as the character does not exist.

Table 19 shows the RARAM scores for all comics IRPs according to the division of participants into above-median and below-median comics knowledge groups⁹:

⁹ 11 participants scored above the median (12) and 12 participants below. To split the groups evenly along the median, I assigned the three participants who received 12s, 1, 6, and 21 to the two groups according to the nature of their comics knowledge. Participant 1 had some knowledge of 7 of the 10 characters, whereas the other two participants only knew 6. With this greater breadth of knowledge, participant 1 joined the above-median group. Between participant 6 and 21, only the former had read comics with any of the characters and was thus also added to the above-median group. Participant 21 was added to the below-median group.

Table 19. Mean RARAM Scores and Standard Deviations (SD) for Comics IRPs According to Comics Knowledge Group as Determined by the Data in Table 14 (n = 26).

Comics Knowledge Group	RARAM Content Referentiality		RARAM Coherence		RARAM Cohesion		RARAM Inference	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Above-median (n = 13)	2.31	0.83	2.27	0.72	1.62	1.04	0.65	1.03
Below-median (n = 13)	2.27	0.56	2.23	0.78	1.65	0.92	0.08	0.19

The RARAM scores for content referentiality, coherence, and cohesion were close to identical. Conversely, the mean score in the above-median group for inference was more than 8 times as high as the group with below-average knowledge (0.65 vs. 0.08).

Table 20 shows the idea unit scores and standard deviations for all comics IRPs according to the comics knowledge group to which the participants belong as determined by the data in Table 18:

Table 20. Mean Idea Unit Scores and Standard Deviations (SD) for Comics IRPs in Percentages According to Comics Knowledge Group as Determined by the Data in Table 18 (n = 26).

Comics Knowledge Group	Verbal Idea Units		Visual Idea Units	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Above Average (n = 13)	72.10	21.96	30.14	18.84
Below Average (n = 13)	74.94	19.42	37.76	19.94

Readers with above-average knowledge of comics as determined by comics knowledge scores presented in Table 18 above recalled fewer verbal and visual idea units than those in the below average group.

5.2.3.4. Foreign Language Comics Reading Experience

Finally, by providing detail on literacy with foreign language comics, item 7a provides further data for the second research question. It asks, “Have you ever read comics in a foreign language?” and, if answered affirmatively, leads participants to item 7b, which asks “Which comics and languages?” Only four participants had read comics in a foreign language. Of the four, two had read *Astérix* in German, one a collected manga volume translated into German, and the last *Maus* in German and *Astérix* and *Tintin* in their original French versions. Table 21 shows the mean RARAM scores and standard deviations for these four and those who do not have foreign language comics reading experience. Note that the total number of participants presented in the table (n = 19) reflects the smaller group who reported having read comics in prequestionnaire item 4a as shown in table 14 above:

Table 21. Mean RARAM Scores and Standard Deviations (SD) for Comics IRPs According to Response from Pquestionnaire Item 7a: “Have you ever read comics in a foreign language?” (n = 19).

Response to Item 7a from Pquestionnaire	RARAM Content Referentiality		RARAM Coherence		RARAM Cohesion		RARAM Inference	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
	Yes (n = 4)	2.63	0.75	2.25	0.65	1.75	1.32	0.75
No (n = 15)	2.23	0.70	2.23	0.73	1.53	0.93	0.13	0.30

For all four rubrics, the scores are higher for the readers with foreign language comics experience than for those who have only read comics in English.

Of note, the inference rubric score is almost six times higher for those who have read comics in a foreign language. Table 22 shows the mean idea unit scores and standard

deviations according to foreign language reading experience. The scores reflect the results for the same 19 participants for whom data were reported in Table 21:

Table 22. Mean Idea Unit Scores and Standard Deviations (SD) for Comics IRPs in Percentages According to Response from Prequestionnaire Item 7a: “Have you ever read comics in a foreign language?” (n = 19).

Response to Item 7a from Prequestionnaire	Verbal Idea Units		Visual Idea Units	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Yes (n = 4)	74.59	12.24	36.55	17.58
No (n = 15)	75.28	21.61	30.25	18.18

Participants who had not read comics in a foreign language recalled just under 1% more idea units from the comics text than those who had; this latter group recalled 6.3% more visual idea units than those who had not read foreign-language comics.

5.2.4. Research Question 3

5.2.4.1. Comics Reading Enjoyment

The third research question asks whether learners enjoy graphic novels, if they consider them literature, and how these views affect reading comprehension.

Prequestionnaire item 3, which asks if the participants like comics/graphic novels, and 8a, which asks if they consider them literature, provide data to answer this question.

Table 23 shows the responses to item 3 from the prequestionnaire, “Do you like comics/graphic novels?”:

Table 23. Prequestionnaire Item 3: “Do you like comics/graphic novels?” (n = 26).

Response to Item 3 from Pquestionnaire	Number	Percentage
Yes	16	61.54
Not Sure	6	23.08
No	4	15.38

A clear majority (61.54%) reported liking comics/graphic novels. Only one quarter as many (15.38%) said they did not like them. The remaining six respondents (23.08%) stated that they were unsure.

Table 24 shows the RARAM scores for all comics IRPs according to the responses to item 3 from the prequestionnaire:

Table 24. Mean RARAM Scores and Standard Deviations (SD) for Comics IRPs According to Response from Prequestionnaire Item 3: “Do you like comics/graphic novels?” (n = 26).

Response to Item 3 from Pquestionnaire	RARAM Content Referentiality		RARAM Coherence		RARAM Cohesion		RARAM Inference	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
	Yes (n = 16)	2.28	0.75	2.19	0.68	1.44	1.08	0.28
Not Sure (n = 6)	2.17	0.75	2.33	1.08	1.92	0.86	0.75	0.99
No (n = 4)	2.50	0.41	2.38	0.48	2.00	0.41	0.13	0.25

Those who reported enjoying reading comics/graphic novels scored the lowest on the cohesion and coherence rubrics and scored the second lowest numbers on the other two.

Those who reported not liking comics/graphic novels scored the highest in content referentiality, coherence, and cohesion, but not in inference. The biggest outliers were the high scores for inference among respondents who reported being unsure whether they

liked comics/graphic novels and the scores for cohesion among those who reported enjoying them.

Table 25 shows the idea unit scores and standard deviations for all comics IRPs according to the responses to item 3 from the prequestionnaire:

Table 25. Mean Idea Unit Scores and Standard Deviations (SD) for Comics IRPs in Percentages According to Response from Prequestionnaire Item 3: “Do you like comics/graphic novels?” (n = 26).

Response to Item 3 from Prequestionnaire	Verbal Idea Units		Visual Idea Units	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Yes (n = 16)	75.17	21.14	28.08	16.77
Not Sure (6)	74.27	25.13	36.62	18.76
No (n = 4)	65.80	8.52	50.95	21.80

Those who reported liking comics/graphic novels recalled the most verbal idea units (75.17%), whereas those who reported not liking them recalled the least (65.80%). The opposite was true for the visual idea units. Those reporting being not sure whether they like comics recalled the most visual idea units (50.95%), and those who report liking them recalled the least (28.08%). Scores for both verbal and visual idea units were in the middle for those who reported being unsure of whether they liked comics/graphic novels.

5.2.4.2. Views of Comics as Literature

Table 26 below shows the responses to item 8a from the prequestionnaire, “Do you view comics as literature?”

Table 26. Prequestionnaire Item 8a: “Do you view comics as literature?” (n = 26).

Response to Item 8a from Pquestionnaire	Number	Percentage (%)
Yes	17	65.38
Not Sure	5	19.23
No	4	15.38

Similar to the responses to item 3, shown above in Table 23, a strong majority here (65.38%) reported viewing comics as literature. Four respondents (15.38%) said they did not view them as literature. The remaining five participants (23.08%) stated that they were unsure. Table 27 shows the RARAM scores and standard deviations for all comics IRPs according to the responses to item 8a from the prequestionnaire:

Table 27. Mean RARAM Scores and Standard Deviations (SD) for Comics IRPs According to Response from Pquestionnaire Item 8a: “Do you view comics as literature?” (n = 26).

Response to Item 8a from Pquestionnaire	RARAM Content Referentiality		RARAM Coherence		RARAM Cohesion		RARAM Inference	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
	Yes (n = 17)	2.41	0.64	2.32	0.64	1.68	0.90	0.41
Not Sure (n = 5)	1.90	0.74	2.10	0.89	1.50	1.41	0.40	0.89
No (n = 4)	2.25	0.86	2.13	1.11	1.63	0.85	0.13	0.25

The highest scores for all four rubrics came from those who reported viewing comics as literature, while the lowest came from those who stated they were unsure. The sole exception was for inference, where the lowest score came from those who reported they did not view comics as literature.

Table 28 shows the mean idea unit scores and standard deviations for all comics IRPs according to the responses to item 8a from the prequestionnaire:

Table 28. Mean Idea Unit Scores and Standard Deviations (SD) for Comics IRPs in Percentages According to Response from Prequestionnaire Item 8a: “Do you view comics as literature?” (n = 26).

Response to Item 8a from Prequestionnaire	Verbal Idea Units		Visual Idea Units	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Yes (n = 17)	79.67	15.26	30.57	17.14
Not Sure (5)	67.69	28.47	38.94	24.61
No (n = 4)	54.67	19.68	39.59	22.95

Participants who reported viewing comics as literature recalled the most verbal idea units (79.67%) and the least visual idea units (30.57%). Those who reported not viewing comics as literature recalled the least verbal idea units (54.67%) but the most visual idea units (39.59%). Scores for both verbal and visual idea units were in the middle for those who reported being unsure of whether they viewed comics as literature.

Chapter 6: Discussion

In this chapter, I discuss the results of the study. I will focus on the following variables: text type, background knowledge of comics, and student enjoyment and views of comics as literature; examine what they mean for instruction and text selection. The discussion examines what the study's findings mean for instruction and text selection. Further, I will contextualize the results within the research presented in the literature review in Chapters 2 and 3. In the conclusion following this chapter, I consider the limitations of these results and offer ways for elaborating on and refining the study's methodology.

6.1. Answering the Research Questions

6.1.1. Research Question 1: Does L2 learners' reading comprehension of graphic novels differ from that of prose texts?

The data, shown in Tables 6–13 in Chapter 5, reveal no statistically significant differences in how well L2 learners comprehend prose and graphic novel texts. Though

prose IRPs outscored comics IRPs for only one of the four rubrics, the differences between the two were not significant. The idea unit data show the same results, with very little difference between the prose and comics verbal idea units.

The results for the inference rubric may, however, suggest a difference in how well L2 readers recognize the multimodal sources of their readings of the two text types. Though these differences did not reach statistical significance, the average score for comics IRPs (0.37) were almost three times as high as that for prose IRPs (0.13). This difference shows that readers are noting the modal origin of the information more when completing IRPs of comics texts than prose texts. This may mean that L2 readers are noticing the form more when reading the comics texts.

This conclusion from the higher scores for the inference RARAM for comics IRPs may suggest a correlation between familiarity with a text form and its recognition and recall as the modal source of or a reading. The results from prequestionnaire items 4a/b, 7a/b, and 11 presented in Chapter 5 show that not all participants are well acquainted with comics texts. If advanced L2 readers are all at least somewhat familiar with prose texts, it is thus reasonable to believe that the mean knowledge of the comics form is below the mean familiarity with short prose texts. If this is the case, this disjunction in familiarity may account for at least part of the greater RARAM scores for inference. Studies of other text types using the RARAM could further test this finding and also perhaps determine whether it holds only for comics or for other lesser-known multimodal text forms.

6.1.2. Research Question 2: How does familiarity with graphic novels in terms of form, plot elements, and themes affect reading comprehension?

As revealed in Tables 14–15 in Chapter 5, familiarity with graphic novels does not affect the reading comprehension according to either the rubrics or the idea units. According to the scores on the content referentiality rubric, participants with no comics reading experience recalled only slightly more (2.32) than those with at least some (2.21). IRPs from participants with no comics experience scored marginally higher than those with some for coherence (2.29 vs. 2.24) and cohesion (1.79 to 1.58).

However, those with no comics reading experience scored more than twice as high (0.64) than those with some (0.26) on the inference rubric. These results suggest that while readers who are unfamiliar with comics tend to comprehend them as successfully as those who know them better, they also notice the form more. This finding is quite similar to the results from research question 1. Here it is again possible to conclude that readers with less formal familiarity with a genre focus more on the form while still understanding the text and constructing cohesive recalls.

A caveat here is for participant 12, who scored high on all four rubrics and has obviously read comics. Participant 12 is, however, an outlier in many respects. Having learned German already for seven years, more than most, participant 12 also grew up with a native speaker father. Further, participant 12 who “always loved comics” has also read a range of comics, including webcomics, manga, and comics in German. Thus, it is always difficult to draw conclusions from one outlier, and there certainly appears more at play here than solely experience reading comics.

Table 16 largely corroborates these conclusions, showing only a 7% difference in the number of idea units recalled between those with and without comics reading experience. However, the results do reveal an interesting dynamic. The groups who recalled 7% more idea units for both the verbal and visual idea units were not made up of the same readers. The readers with at least some reading experience recalled 7% more of the verbal idea units; those with none recalled 7% more of the visual idea units. This distinction, in which the readers with less experience recalled more visual idea units, is replicated when considering several other variables such as knowledge and positive affective views of comics as I discuss below. It seems then that L2 readers with less experience with, less knowledge about, and negative views of comics are thus looking more to the visual than those with more experience and knowledge and positive affective views.

Regarding experience with plot elements and themes as presented in Tables 17–22, the numbers for the three of the rubrics and the idea units match what has been seen so far. Participants with greater breadth and depth of knowledge are not statistically distinguishable from those with less knowledge. On the rubrics for content referentiality, coherence, and cohesion, and for verbal idea units, those with above average comics reading knowledge scored higher than those below it, but not by large margins.

However, once again, the scores for the inference rubric stand apart from the others. In this case, though, unlike for research question 1 and for comics reading experience as discussed above, the participants with greater comics knowledge and experience reading foreign language comics, who likely also are more familiar with the

form of comics, scored between six and nine times higher (0.65 and 0.75 respectively) than those with knowledge below the mean and no foreign language comics reading experience (0.08 and 0.13 respectively). Here, it is readers with more background knowledge of comics that are more apt to notice the modal source of information they recall in their IRP.

The idea unit analyses reveal little effect on comprehension for the variables of comics knowledge and experience reading comics in a foreign language. Here, the distinction between the recall of verbal idea units according to the variables was negligible at less than 3% in both cases. For visual idea units, the dynamic noted above, where readers with less experience focus more on the visual than those with more is repeated for comics knowledge with a difference of 7.52%, but not for experience reading foreign language comics. Here, those who had read L2 comics recalled 6.30% more visual idea units.

In sum, there is little effect of familiarity with comics on reading comprehension, aside from the results from the inference rubric and the recurring phenomenon that readers with less experience and knowledge and negative affective views of comics tend to focus more on the visual than their counterparts. However, even these two trends in the data are not uniform. Tables 19 and 21 show that the broader and deeper the exposure to comics, the more likely an L2 reader is to recall the modal source of the information. Table 15 contradicts this conclusion, however. Similarly, Tables 16 and 20 show that the broader and deeper the exposure to comics, the more likely an L2 reader is to recall

visual information. Table 22 shows the opposite. I return to these trends in the following section.

6.1.3. Research Question 3: Do students enjoy graphic novels, do they consider them literature, and how do these views affect reading comprehension?

Most L2 readers participating in this study, as shown in Tables 23 and 26 enjoy graphic novels and also consider them literature. This enjoyment of comics and consideration of them as literature, however, did not have much of an effect on their reading comprehension, as measured by either the RARAM or idea units and shown in Tables 24–25 and 27–28. However, not all the results were equal.

First, the vast majority of participants (16, 61.54%) said they liked graphic novels, a smaller number (6, 23.08%) were not sure, and only a few (4, 15.38%) said they did not like them. These numbers suggest that comics are quite popular among L2 learners.

Second, the participants' views on comics as literature were quite similar. An even larger majority (17, 65.38%) thought they were literature than liked them, another five (19.23%) were unsure, and four (15.38%) thought they were not literature.

These results are important for teachers to consider, as they suggest that L2 learners as a whole enjoy and are receptive to graphic novels in the classroom. I discuss this in greater detail in the following section.

Third, the only distinct rubric scores are the rather low scores for cohesion for the participants who like comics (1.44) in contrast to those who do not (2.00) or are not sure (1.92) and the much higher scores for inference for those who are not sure if they like comics (0.75) than those who do (0.28) or do not (0.13) like comics. However, it must be

noted that it is very hard to conclude much without a clearer trend across the rubrics, given that some of these groups contain as few as four participants. Here, idea unit scores showed greater distinctions, and they also fit the trend discussed above regarding visual idea units. Whereas those who enjoyed reading comics recalled the most verbal idea units, they recalled the least visual idea units. The opposite was the case for those who did not enjoy comics. Visual information again plays a stronger role in the readings of those with less exposure to and a less positive view of comics.

Finally, there was no clear correlation between readers' views of comics as literature and their comprehension of the texts. As noted above, the majority of participants viewed comics as literature, and these readers scored higher on all four rubrics than those readers who did not consider comics literature or were unsure. However, these numbers were only marginally different, and often those who were not sure scored the lowest, indicating no clear connection between their views and their comprehension. Once again, the idea unit scores reflected the clear trend across almost all variables, that those readers who knew less about comics and did not like them focused more on the visual than those who did not fit the description.

In conclusion, it is difficult, based on the data, to argue that affective views of comics have an impact on reading comprehension.

6.2. Implications Beyond Instruction

6.2.1. Implications for L2 Reading Research

This study suggests several ways that L2 reading research could be expanded to address changes in reading. First, by refining the use of idea units according to the deep structure of a text using the theoretical work of Propp (1968), the inquiry shown here moves beyond the word level in investigating reading. It helps to account for the individual reader that Swaffar et al. (1991) recognize is still not fully addressed through weighted propositions.

Second, it addresses the shortcomings that exist even with the Proppian idea unit analysis, especially the lack of information on modally realized form, by using the set of holistic rubrics (RARAM). Encouragingly, the idea unit ratings and the RARAM analysis largely yielded equivalent results. As such, though both rating systems point to the same answer, they are able to avoid some of the criticisms which could be legitimately leveled at either if used exclusively.

Third, the separation of specific components of reading into individual rubrics of the RARAM achieves what an individual rubric, even if holistic, could not. First, the content referentiality rubric replicated, using a holistic scale, the results of the idea units. Second, the multiple rubrics reflect an understanding of reading as a set of practices rather than as a monolith or a collection of components of knowledge, as in Bernhardt's (2005) compensatory model of reading where L1 and L2 knowledge can be identified, isolated, and even quantified. These rubrics identify literacies, that is, the abilities to read for main ideas, to isolate important information from a text, to connect information in a

recall, and to note the source of information. They thus approach reading from a multiliteracies perspective, where a set of processes interact to construct a meaningful reading. Future work on multimodal reading should further develop and refine what these rubrics do and can do.

It is important not to forget that the RARAM and idea unit analyses respond not only to work in L2 reading, including Bernhardt's (2005) call for holistic rating and the critique of even the innovative weighted propositional analysis in Swaffar et al. (1991). They also react to the individuality of the L2 reader in terms of cultural and content knowledge discussed in schema theory and in Kramersch (1993) and the unique and covert literacies required to make meaning in a given context (Swaffar et al., 1991). Finally, they also rely on the recognition of the role of the reader in the construction of meaning, first championed in phenomenological reading theories (Ingarden, 1931), taken up later by German theorists of *Rezeptionsästhetik* (Iser, 1976; Jauß, 1970), and finally expanded to questions of the role of the community (Fish, 1980b) and power (Hall, 1993). This study, by focusing on the individual readings of readers and confirming both the validity and reliability of the IRP measure and the two rating systems used, justifies the reference to this theoretical work in the study.

6.2.2. Implications for Multimodality

In addition to their novelty for L2 reading research, the RARAM and Proppian idea unit rating systems offer something innovative to research in multimodality. Beyond the studies by Omaggio (1979) and Liu (2004), the limitations of which I noted in Chapter 3, there is no research in multimodal reading using the types of empirical

methods common to reading research in the L2. Both the use of IRPs for multimodal texts and the expansion of idea units beyond the verbal are novel. The results show that not only are the two rating methods consistent—participants whose IRPs for the comics text scored low on verbal and visual idea units tended to also get low scores on the RARAM—but they are also reliable. The interrater reliability for the ratings of comics texts ($\kappa = .59$) were almost equal to that for the prose texts ($\kappa = .62$).

These results suggest that it is possible not only to capture IRPs for texts that employ the visual and texts that make meaning in multiple modalities, but also that the two rating systems are individually reliable and largely equivalent. Though further research is needed to confirm the utility of the RARAM and multimodal idea unit analysis for other text types, the results in this study are promising. Their use here opens up a much wider field for reading research with multimodal texts. In turn, with further data on a wider variety of multimodal texts, teachers will be able to incorporate these new text types and information structures into language curricula with a greater degree of confidence.

In addition to their use in the present study, the rating systems in the present study can offer multimodality scholarship further avenues of inquiry and ways to understand texts, expanding on what was discussed in Chapter 3. For example, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996/2006) have outlined a visual grammar for reading images, employing concepts, including information value, salience, and framing. Others, including Barthes (1977b) and Serafini (2014), have proposed image-text typologies for use with a variety of multimodal texts, similar to the one used by McCloud (1994) for a specific text genre,

comics. In the conclusion to this project, I propose a way that the two rating systems used in this study can be combined with existing methodologies in multimodality studies toward the development of a more sophisticated approach to multimodal text grading.

6.2.3. Implications for Comics Studies

The study's results also have much to offer comics studies. First, the study provides additional data for the claim that comics texts are popular reading material. It also suggests that people do, in fact, view comics as literature, a common point of contention in comics studies.¹ Second, it indicates that comics are legible and that comics are at least as legible as prose for L2 readers. Third, it suggests that knowledge and enjoyment of comics do not have a large effect on reading comprehension, though familiarity tends to raise awareness of form. It notes that L2 learners likely have a broad knowledge of comics, though not of foreign language comics. It also suggests that readers with less familiarity with and negative affective views of comics tend to recall more visual information than those with more familiarity and positive views. These conclusions open up a variety of questions comics studies can and should investigate in future work.

The study is also useful for comics studies in the methodologies used, especially in the suggestions of how to factor in visual and verbal literacies as separate skills. By showing that empirical and quantifiable research into comics reading is possible, it opens up a different line of inquiry for a field that has thus far largely looked to close textual

¹ See, for example, Frahm (2010), Groensteen (2009) or Singer (2018), for discussions of comics and legitimization.

readings, the history of the genre, or formal analysis. By approaching comics through reading research toward an understanding not of what the texts say, but what and how the readers do something with them, this study leads to possibilities for new ways of conducting work in comics studies.

6.3. Implications for Instruction

This section outlines the instructional implications of the results organized according to the research questions. It focuses first on the students' overall reading comprehension, including their awareness of form, then on their familiarity with and knowledge of comics, and finally on their affective views on comics.

6.3.1. Reading Comprehension

According to the data, there is little to distinguish students' ability to read graphic novels and prose texts, though comics readings did receive higher scores on three of the four RARAM scales. Teachers can thus use them freely as they would any text without fear that the singularities of this multimodal form are likely to cause difficulties for readers.

The readings were not identical, however. The formal origin of information was recalled more from graphic novels than from the prose. As such, graphic novels may offer teachers a way to focus on the form of a text without sacrificing students' comprehension of the texts' meaning. Thus, comics' presence in instruction may be able to accomplish two things. First, they may offer a better access point for teaching about form and genre than prose. As a less familiar genre, comics can potentially help to

defamiliarize the reader from the text and thus deautomatize the reading process in the sense of Shklovsky's (1997) definition of art. At the same time, as students are likely to already be better attuned to the constitution of the multimodal ensemble in a comics text than in other such text types, teachers can build on this knowledge and effectively discuss the construct of the literary, or genre play, in the text. Comics can thus function as an effective middle space for teaching form, combining the estranging affordances of a lesser known form with a degree of familiarity.

Second, if students need to be exposed to multimodal text forms repeatedly to grasp the form and thus understand the genre, as Serafini (2014) argues, the apparent readability of comics makes them a good place to start. When teaching a variety of text types, rather than beginning with a form that may be more difficult for students or teachers to comprehend effectively, comics provide a safe entry point. Of course, this latter benefit to comics may be diminished if further research with the RARAM and idea units determines the high readability of further multimodal forms. However, as comics appear to be quite legible for advanced L2 learners, they are for the time being perhaps a safe set of texts to begin teaching with and about multimodal texts.

6.3.2. Thematic and Formal Familiarity and Knowledge

Most L2 readers surveyed currently read or have read comics and have extensive knowledge of the characters from a variety of media, including comics, primarily those written in or translated into the L1. While this knowledge of comics did not seem to have a large effect on their comprehension, it does suggest several ways that teachers could use comics in the classroom.

First, as stated in the previous section, the determined readability of—and students’ knowledge about—the comics form allows for greater nuance in discussions of multimodal information structure. Comics can act as a bridge from prose literature to new, lesser-known, or experimental forms.

Second, familiarity with the types of characters, tropes, and plotlines common to comics allows the students to more easily “authenticate” the comics texts, in Kramsch’s (1993) terminology, thus avoiding some of the potential pitfalls of some authentic texts. Further, comics in translation in German—also authentic in the sense that they were translated for L1 German speakers and not for L2 learners—provide a very effective way for readers to access German texts. Early American titles translated into German, such as *Micky Maus* (1951), could even play a helpful role in an historical look at the early cultural development of West Germany, especially in light of adaptations made for the FRG audiences.

Finally, the students’ overall lack of experience reading comics in the L2 should not discourage teachers from using them. As this study shows, comics appear to be quite legible and offer a powerful way to introduce cultural material central to German and European life into the language classroom. Most citizens of East Germany knew and read *Mosaik*, West German children grew up with *Fix und Foxi*, and the French *Asterix* is familiar to most Europeans. These texts, meaningful for the development of an identity (see, for example, J. Benjamin, 2019, on an East German reading community surrounding *Mosaik*), can thus support reading in German, learning about German culture, and crossing between cultures, as called for in the 2007 MLA Report.

6.3.3. Affective Views

As shown in the data, students enjoy reading comics. Though this view does not appear to affect reading ability, it suggests that teachers are not likely to meet significant student opposition to the form based on a lack of interest. Further, given the wide range of lengths, difficulties, and topics represented by comics texts, this enjoyment situates comics as ideal for extracurricular reading. They provide a legible and accessible body of texts for students who want to improve their reading skills or acquaint themselves with German culture through texts outside of class. Finally, and also importantly, as enjoyment does not appear to affect reading comprehension, the minority of students who does not like comics can still understand them when they encounter them in the classroom.

More surprising to instructors may be the result that students surveyed viewed comics as literature. I consider this fact as important for three reasons. First, students who understand the texts as such are already primed for the appropriate types of meaning-making strategies discussed in the literature review above especially in Swaffar et al. (1991), Kramsch (1993), and Kern and Schultz (2005), and summarized in Hall (2015). Guided reading approaches, building on the work in Stauffer (1969) and developed for second-language reading in Kern (2000), Paesani et al. (2016), and especially the *précis* model discussed in Swaffar and Arens (2005), can be incorporated into the teaching of these literary comics.

Second, accepted as literature, comics can rather seamlessly assume a role in all language courses including literature courses. By starting with shorter, simple comics and

developing the literacies for graphic novels throughout the curriculum, they can provide a way to overcome the curricular bifurcation addressed in the 2007 MLA report (see, e.g., Maxim, Höyng, Lancaster, Schaumann, & Aue, 2013), thus strengthening vertical articulation. Comics texts' wide availability and great diversity also provide an enormous body of work from which to select useful and effective authentic texts (Crossley & McNamara, 2016) for a given group of readers.

Finally, this view of comics as literature accords well with the trend, especially strong in German comics, to adapt beloved prose works into the comics form. A German teacher could supplement a reading of Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* with Corbeyran and Horne's (2011) adaptation, or a course could investigate adaptation or multimodality and the affordances of different forms by comparing Brecht's original *Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner* with the versions by Brecht and K. (2014), as in the present study. The possibilities for exploiting these adaptations in literature courses grow with each new published adaptation, even as complements to older adaptation studies—a potential connection to genre/media studies.

6.4. Conclusions: Text Selection

This study's results suggest that comics are at worst enjoyable, legible, and familiar, and that their readers recognize them as literary texts. Few barriers would seem to preclude the use of these diverse multimodal texts in the classroom. Yet the individual texts differ from one other in visual and verbal quality, literariness, length, theme, and in

their readability for a specific readership. It thus remains to be shown how teachers might approach this broad text genre and appropriately select texts for their individual learners.

Traditionally, text readability has been measured in terms of length, vocabulary, and genre/verbal information structure, approaches that view texts as collections of written words on a page—or, increasingly, a screen—that are the same for all readers. In view of this study, however, teachers might also consider how to account for multimodality and readers' interaction with texts beyond the written word. Such an approach may thereby begin to address ways to teach the multiple literacies needed to read all texts by unique readers with diverse backgrounds.

First, in selecting a text for instruction, it is important to recognize what makes a given comic legible for readers in terms of content and context by determine the themes of the comic. Then, teachers can consider the background knowledge the readers possess in relation to the text to determine the types of prereading and scaffolding activities needed to contextualize the work, in terms of content, language, and graphic layout. For example, a graphic novel like Paula Bulling's *Im Land der Frühaufsteher* (2012), which discusses the nuances of the racial animus often shown refugees in Germany, may pose difficulties for those with only a passing knowledge of immigration in Germany regardless of its verbal and visual makeup, while others with relevant experiences may find it all the more legible. While this study's results suggest that readers' enjoyment of the comics genre does not affect comprehension, teachers should take care not to conflate affect about the form with content schemata, that is, subject knowledge.

Second, when selecting a text, language teachers should consider its form, and examine issues beyond length, vocabulary, and theme, including the information structure of the text and the presence and degree of formal play. As the data suggest, readers are more likely to notice the comics form than that of the prose text. The only rubric which showed a consistent distinction was inference, which pointed to the multimodal origin of the information that students recalled. As such, a focus on these structural phenomena may allow teachers to better identify the most appropriate texts.

Finally, a consideration of analytical methodologies from multimodality, including approaches to image-text relations and text composition, may be beneficial when selecting texts. Just as literary theory can provide context to approaches from empirical reading research when characterizing written texts, the selection of multimodal texts can be guided by theoretical approaches from multimodality, comics studies, and visual studies. With this type of work, an example of which I outline at the end of the conclusion, the present research study can be expanded to provide detailed recommendations for instructors seeking a variety of texts appropriate to diverse audiences.

Conclusion: Limitations and Ideas for Further Study

This conclusion is divided into two parts. The first outlines several limitations of the study. The second focuses on potential areas for further study, including an extended proposal for using methods from multimodal scholarship to analyze IRP data.

7.1. Limitations

The experiment encounters problems familiar to applied linguistics research, especially the relative lack of diversity in geographic location, age, life experience, and education of its participants, and, of course, their small number. With these limitations, it is of course difficult to generalize the results beyond the immediate environment and the individual participants. Given that these issues are common to many such studies, however, I focus in this section instead on a productive discussion of what this type of research can and cannot do. Only in this way can there be improvement in the methodologies for empirical multimodal reading research.

7.1.1. Reading Research

Before noting the problems with the present study's specific methodology, it is useful to briefly recall the discussion from Chapter 3 regarding endemic limitations to reading research. First, the majority of the research considers L1 reading. L2 studies and theoretical work meant to be generalizable across all L2s often build on assumptions gained from L1 reading research. There is also a distinct lack of L2 work from non-English L1 environments, such as from German and Germany-based *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (German as a Foreign Language) backgrounds. Thus, most of the claims and conclusions in reading research come from an Anglo-American cultural background, with an English-language bias. The results of this bias are unclear, especially in multimodal research involving non-verbal modalities. There is simply no data on how “the same” genres and graphic layouts actually differ (if at all) across national lines—data which would be crucial to assessing readability.

Second, the validity and reliability of empirical study data in L2 reading research is debatable. Empirical studies cannot get at reading comprehension directly; they instead rely on observable behavior. The main methods used in empirical reading research—cloze tests, multiple choice and short answer questions, and immediate written recall protocols (IRPs)—thus all test reading indirectly and have limitations. Cloze tests are often vocabulary-dependent; questions of any type often text independent or they provide additional information, thus invalidating them as a comprehension test of only the original text; IRPs may reflect short-term memory as much as comprehension, and any

quantification of linguistic units is inherently problematic as well, as discussed in Chapter 4.

A third area of limitations relates to the interpretation of the data on comics reading experiences in relationship to other forms and contexts of readings. As no questionnaire items inquired about the participants' broader reading practices, there is no way to judge this relationship. As they are currently formulated, the questionnaires appear to proceed from the assumption that comics reading exists independently of other reading practices. As the extent of transfer between comics and other literacies is unclear, further questions asking about all types of reading practices would strengthen the conclusions regarding the multimodal and specifically comics reading practices investigated in this dissertation.

A final, overarching set of limitations to L2 reading research relates to the divide between positivist empirical research on the one side and the theoretical, cultural studies views on the other. While some works attempt to bridge this gap (Carroli, 2008; Paesani et al., 2016; Swaffar et al., 1991), others are more firmly located on the empirical (Bernhardt, 1991) or theoretical side (Kramersch, 1993). A related dichotomy exists between theoretical works that describe the phenomenon of reading (Kramersch, 1993) and those more focused on detailed pedagogical recommendations (Swaffar & Arens, 2005). While all of these viewpoints are important, it is necessary for researchers in the field to recognize these divides and locate their work with knowledge in relation to one or more of these approaches. The present study attempts to straddle both divides—empirical research/theory and the reading process/the teaching of reading—by using empirical data

informed by both discrete idea unit and holistic RARAM rating systems informed by theoretical principles to understand the L2 reading process and inform language teaching.

7.1.2. Multimodal Literary Texts

While these limitations are present in all reading research, the present study encounters further problems specific to using multimodal literary texts in empirical reading research. I will discuss three specific issues here, that is, (1) the use of written IRPs for texts employing non-verbal modalities, (2) the determination of appropriate text length, and (3) text comparability.

The IRP, as laid out in Bernhardt (1983, 1991, 2011), is a verbal text that recalls verbal information. When used for L2 texts, there is often a translation process between the L2 and the L1, but otherwise it is possible for the reader to relate verbatim what was read. Now, I have already discussed throughout this study my misgivings about considering reading a simple reproduction of a stable text.

However, this verbal-verbal transfer of meaning, even if from L2 to L1, avoids several significant problems with IRPs as used in this study. First, a verbal IRP of a text employing modalities beyond the verbal requires the process of transduction, or translation between multimodal arrangements, as presented in Chapter 3. Meaning in one modality is refigured to be modally produced in another. This process does not require meaning to be lost or added, but it does introduce an additional variable.

A second issue with the visual-verbal transduction central to the study is that it favors the verbal. The implication is either that meaning is only interpreted in the brain verbally or that it is best recorded verbally. The resulting verbal IRPs are the only source

of information for assessing reading. If we agree with the central claim of multimodality scholarship, that modes are selected for their specific affordances, then this transduction process resulting in an IRP is not a simple reading of a text. Instead, the verbal IRP of a multimodal text becomes something else entirely, perhaps even an adaptation of the original reading.

A third problem with the use of verbal IRPs for multimodal texts is in the fact that multimodal texts are not simply a collection of modalities, but rather text genres in their own right that function as a whole in unique ways. For example, in comics, temporality plays a different role than in sculpture or landscape painting, though each makes use of the visual modality.

As such, the best recall methods produce recalls in the same multimodal form as the original, so that the modes function the same in the original and the recall. In the present study, this would require participants to recall the comics texts using the comics form. This solution is, of course, hardly without its own problems, as it would create the significant variables of drawing/artistic ability and knowledge of the comics form. While writing ability is already a variable, all university students will have had instruction in writing, whereas there is no assurance that students know how to draw. It is also clear from the data that knowledge of comics is not equal among participants. As such, this suggestion creates more problems than it solves. Thus, the different multimodal forms of the texts and recalls remains an unsolved problem in any recall study of multimodal texts.

A second problem with the use of multimodal literary texts in empirical reading research is that the appropriate text length is unclear, for both the prose and comics texts.

While the prose texts for the study are of typical length for IRPs in terms of word count, their literary nature calls this easy conclusion into question. In her determination of 200–250 words as the optimal text length, Bernhardt (1983, 1991, 2011) does not account for different types of texts. Texts employing literary play certainly cannot be recalled in the same way as an instructional manual.

In the present study, the variable hermeneutic distance created between reader and text is compounded by the presence of multiple modalities in the comics form. It remains unclear whether graphic novel texts are best quantified by words, panels, a mixture of the two or something else, for example, processing time. An effort to quantify this final possibility could yield comparability between widely varying text types but would also depend on the individual reader. Research could set up an experiment correlating time spent reading texts with resulting IRP ratings. However, these results would also be inconclusive. A longer processing time may not point to a greater difficulty. There may in fact be no correlation.

Finally, the presence of the literary creates a problem for reading research with multimodal texts. Two texts written in the same form and of the same length, however determined, are by no means automatically equivalent. With the addition of the literary, or challenging content that plays with norms, the possibility of regularity for comparison is further diminished. Thus, difficulty in text comparability arises not only between two multimodal text forms, but also between texts employing similar information structures.

In concrete terms, Brecht's prose texts are quite different from one another, as are the two comics texts. Determining the appropriateness of individual texts for a set of

readers is the ultimate goal of the work begun in this study. The text pairs used were selected to be as closely comparable as possible; they are of similar length in word count and, for the comics, in panel number and drawing style. They are written by the same authors in the same time period around a common set of characters. However, the knowledge of how individual readers will read them needed to determine their comparability cannot be fully known until these readers read them and provide data. This problem is initially unavoidable, but future research may begin to overcome this problem through further strategies and the sheer quantity of data.

7.1.3. Test Environment

A final limitation in the study is the test environment. The comics texts in this study are presented on screens on a continuous vertical page, rather than on four to six physical pages as in the originals, as the prose texts, originally presented in a physical book, also appear on a screen. I chose this format for the uniformity and ease of test environments and to restrict participants from referring to the texts when writing the recall.¹ Though comics are increasingly available in digital format, this feature is a specific choice that may have an effect on participants' readings of the texts and thus the results. For example, it negates the meaning derived from single and double-page layouts,

¹ This gambit may not have been uniformly successfully for all participants. In the experiment, participants were told not to refer to the text, and the experiment through the Qualtrics site was set up so as to not allow participants to return to the texts after continuing to the next screen to write the recall. However, as a few recalls appear to provide almost verbatim translations of the texts, it is possible that somehow a few respondents may have nonetheless continued to look at the texts. They may have found the texts elsewhere, perhaps through an internet search or through the library, or they may have taken screenshots of the texts while completing the test. They were left in the data, however, as it is impossible to determine which recalls were completed this way.

page turns, and splash pages and alters what Groensteen (2007) calls arthrology, or the way panels and pages relate spatially.

The study, however, does not focus on the reading environment as a dependent variable, and thus did not test for experience reading various text types in different material environments. As such, it is not possible to know whether it is more common for these participants to read prose or comics on paper or screens. Of note, no participant mentioned the test environment in any answers on the readability of comics or prose, or their usefulness for language learning. Given the rapid increase in handheld mobile devices and digital texts, future work might look at the effects of reading on screens.

7.2. Areas for Further Study

To conclude the study, I want to briefly mention a few areas that would benefit from further attention and outline several possible projects for future research in L2 multimodal reading research.

First, more empirical data are needed on how readers make meaning from the verbal and visual multimodal comics form. Future work should consider the many ways of rendering text—in speech, thought, or narrative balloons; inside, outside, or across panel frames; and handwritten, typewritten, or drawn as an image itself—and examine how these different contexts affect a reader’s interaction with text. Beyond the text itself, new research in the comics form should gather data on how readers construct meaning across the gutter, the space between panels (Wildfeuer & Bateman, 2014), between lines, and between and across pages. Finally, the affordances of panel size, arrangement, and

composition, and how they relate to temporality in reading, or as discussed above, processing time, would benefit from further data.

A second area requiring further empirical research builds on the first area and considers the role of the L2 in the reading process. As noted in both Chapters 3 and 6, there are only a few empirical studies looking at reading comics in the L2. As language studies increasingly turns its attention to comics, comics research needs to better understand the particularities of the reading process in the L2. The affordances of the verbal and visual modes, when encountered in L2, or even C2, contexts are different than when in native language and culture environments, are unique. In consequence, just as traditional L2 reading research has used questions previously tackled by L1 scholarship to ask similar questions as well as those unique to the L2, comics research in the L2 must build on previous comics research to determine what questions are most important going forward.

Multimodal construction grammar (e.g., Zima & Bergs, 2017) offers another area for future research. This dissertation calls for applied linguistics reading research to consider work beyond the traditionally quantifiable in its advocacy for verbal and visual idea units and the RARAM inference rubric account. Approaches from multimodality and literary theory can aid this pursuit. At the same time, more work refining the quantifiable with the rigorous tools from linguistics work in construction grammar applied to the visual could strengthen the claims to legitimacy in a more diversified field of multimodal research.

Finally, additional perceptual data regarding comics would add further depth to this dissertation's results. While the present study addresses the experiences and views of students as representatives of L2 readers, and perhaps by extension of L2 learners, little is known of the attitudes, views, and knowledge of the language professoriate. Surveys or interviews could gather data that would inform the understanding of the presence and role of these texts in language classrooms and curricula.

7.2.1. Ideas for Further Study in L2 Multimodal Reading Research

This section lays out plans for future studies in L2 multimodal reading research. The first replicates this study's experiment with different texts of varying types. The experiment could be repeated through comparisons of other texts and their adaptations into other multimodal text forms. For example, one possible comparison could investigate a comic and its filmic adaptation together; correlative scenes from each form could be tested just as full prose and comics texts are considered in present study.

A second study uses eye tracking technology to compare the L1 and L2 reading of comics. For example, reading paths in comics are fertile ground for future research as they could provide data on how L1 and L2 readers differ in their use of image and text for meaning support. As this study suggests, especially regarding the reliance on the visual mode by readers with less comics reading experience and negative affective views of comics, different readers may focus on unique aspects from a text to make meaning. More data in this area could help answer questions as to what types of information are most useful to L2 readers in various contexts and text forms.

A third future study investigates graphic novels and other multimodal texts in materials and curriculum development. Through targeted pretest/posttest studies relating to comics in instruction at various levels of the curriculum, more can be learned about using multimodal texts across curricular levels and building courses to teach the comprehension of comics and other multimodal texts. Readers could complete tests following the use of comics texts in a curriculum and could be compared to tests by a control group who only read prose texts.

7.2.2. Formal Issues in Graphic Novels: A Proposal for Understanding Text

Selection: A Closer Look at the Final Moments of Prose/Comics Text 2

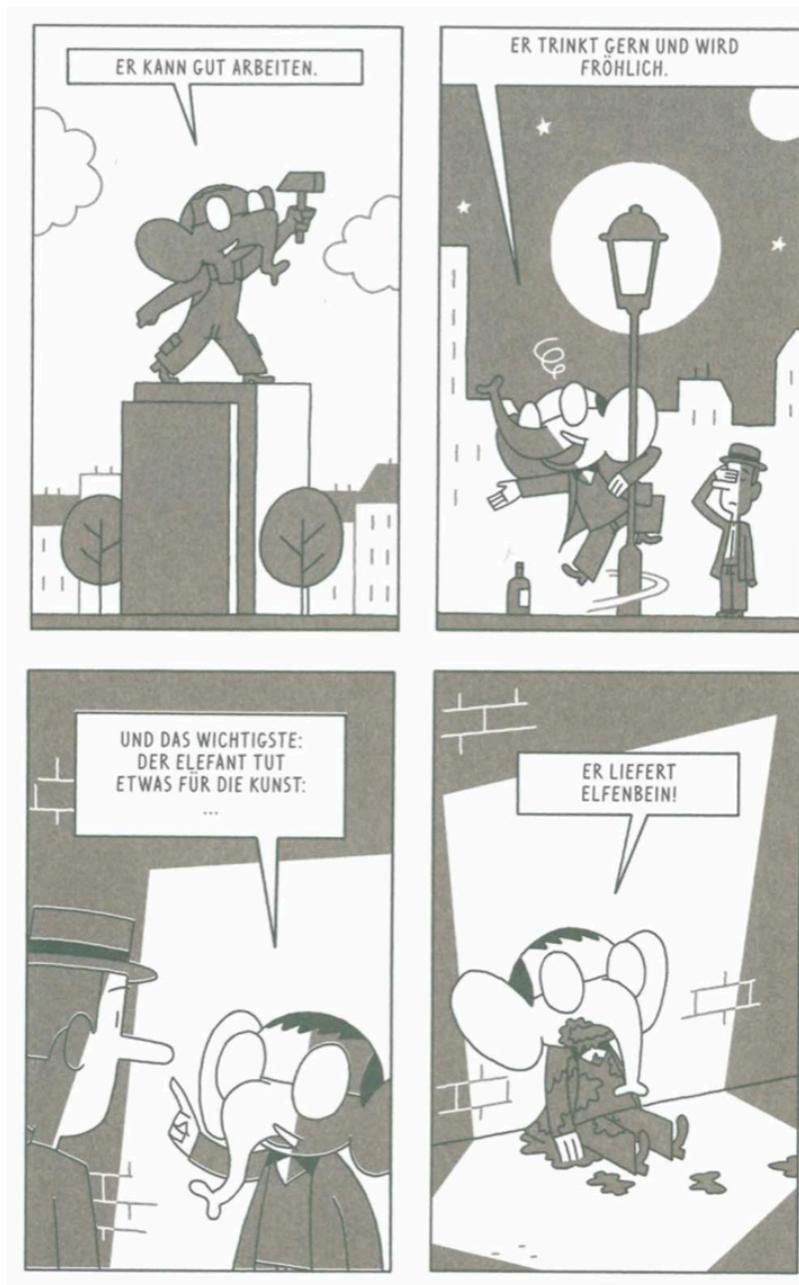
(Herrn K.s/Keuners Lieblingstier)

To conclude, I want to provide a final idea for further research in greater detail that ties together the L2 multimodal literary reading research methodology from this study with multimodal analysis. In the final chapter (6), I discussed how teachers might approach text selection with multimodal texts. To explore how this view of multimodal literacy affects text selection, in this section, I briefly show how a multimodal textual analysis can be used to analyze a text and determine its readability not according to what it is, but how it functions, characterizing the individual idea units (or panels) using an image-text typology and ideas from visual grammar presented in the second chapter of the literature review (3). In a second step, the IRP data are consulted to identify how well participants recall these individual idea units and to consider the difficulty of the correlating section of the prose text. By investigating how the multimodal information structure relates to recall on an individual idea unit basis, teachers may be able to more

effectively determine what texts to select for their specific learners. As it would be difficult to isolate only this area of the text in the recall and rate the data holistically using the RARAM, this section relies only on the idea unit scoring method. Though this method of close reading might seem to contradict the principles laid out above opposing a stable text, if used together with methods considering the larger information structure of a text, this approach can yield meaningful results.

To explain this proposal, I use an excerpt from the conclusion of comics text 2, “Herrn Keuners Lieblingstier.” In the verbal text, Herr Keuner is concluding his description of an elephant. Fig. 8 shows the final panels from the comic.

Figure 9: The Conclusion of *Herrn Keuners Lieblingstier* (Brecht & K., 2014, p. 104).



In the idea unit analysis used in the original study, each panel corresponds to one visual idea unit (19–22 respectively), and there are two verbal idea units (6, “He can work well/He drinks and has fun,” which are collectively positive, but anthropomorphic,

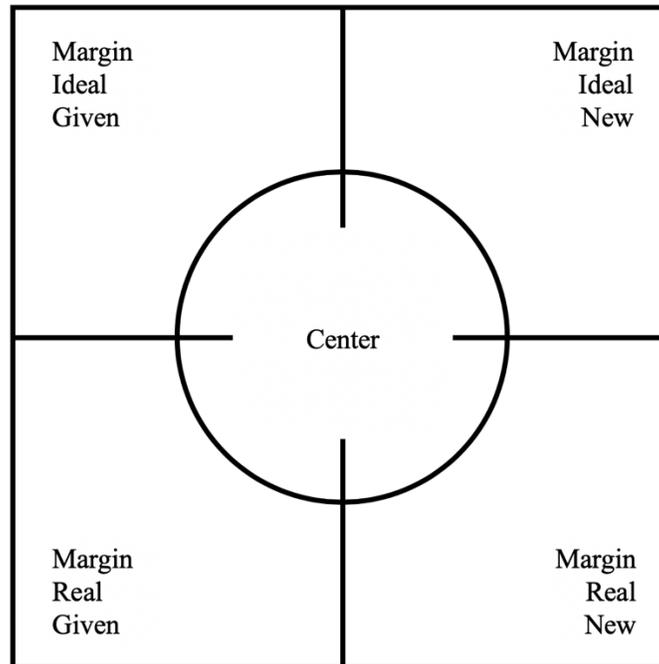
characteristics of the elephant and 7, “He does things for art/He provides ivory,” which functions as the punchline or moral of the story).

As introduced in Chapter 3 and briefly discussed in Chapter 6, multimodal analysis most often uses multimodal ensembles, most typically based on image-text relations, or visual grammars developed from ideas present in visual studies (for the most widely cited example, see Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996/2006).

Also, as noted above, the image-text typologies can be separated into those pertaining to a single genre, such as the comics-specific typologies from McCloud (1994) or Baetens and Lèfevre (2014) or they may employ intermodal metalanguage, including those by Barthes (1977b), Painter and Martin (2011), and Serafini (2014). While the former can provide insight into a single text type, the latter are more appropriate for use as an analytical tool in this project, concerned with understanding reading across modality. As this study and future work in this area aims to develop methods for research in multimodal reading, in my proposal here, I use Serafini’s (2014) ternary typology of image-text relation types—symmetrical, enhancing, and contradictory. In symmetrical relationships, the information from one modality repeats that of the other; in an enhancing relationship, the information in each modality adds something new that would not otherwise be present; in a contradictory relationship, the information in one is contradicted by the other.

As stated in Chapter 3, for visual grammar, images are divided, as shown in Fig. 9, into four equal quadrants by means of vertical and horizontal axes.

Figure 10: The dimensions of visual space, adapted from Kress and Van Leeuwen (1995/2015, p. 197).



Information in the top half is taken to be ideal, the bottom half real, the left given, and the right new. Finally, the center, either determined through a circle in the middle of an image, or by its division of an image into three quadrants, with two peripheral and one central, becomes the most salient area.

In the first step of the project, these multimodal analytical methods are used to analyze multimodal ensembles. The verbal and the visual in the first panel, in the top left of Fig. 8, can be characterized as enhancing, meaning that the text and words enhance each other's meaning. On its own, the image contains a strange statue, but not necessarily a character from a story. The words indicate that the elephant works hard. However, when taken together, the panel become a reference to Brecht's communist politics. Neither the words nor the images could produce this wordplay on their own. The first

panel's enhancing nature is even more apparent when we consider its composition using Kress & Van Leeuwen's (1996/2006) visual grammar terminology. The elephant's placement in the upper half of the image, literally in the clouds, speaks to him as ideal, as does the upward vector made from his arms. He is also literally progressive, as he moves forward from the given to the new, using Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996/2006) visual application of theme-rheme. This information is only not present in the words, unless one considers the political views of Brecht, and even then, such a reading is perhaps a stretch.

In contrast, the second panel, on the top right of Fig. 8, is symmetrical, meaning that the words and image parallel each other. By this point in the comic, the reader has accepted the elephant's anthropomorphism, so the fact that the elephant becomes merry from drinking hardly needs the image to confirm that he is drinking alcohol. Interestingly, however, this straightforward depiction of drinking and dancing is presented as backwards-looking toward the theme and quite clearly real rather than ideal.

The third panel, on the lower left of Fig. 8, is also symmetrical, as the image and text here again add very little meaning to each other. The word *Kunst* is perhaps the one element here that is somewhat enhancing; its meaning is not present in the image. The panel then sets up the shocking conclusion. In visual grammar terms, the elephant is again real and, while he represents new information, he is again facing backward.

The final panel, in the bottom left of Fig. 8, is most certainly enhancing, in that the verb *liefern* provides a very different meaning to this final brutal image than it would have otherwise had. In visual grammar terms, both of these final panels depict very real things. In neither, do vectors or the given/new and theme/rheme distinctions seem to play

a role. Rather than movement toward the right or left, the salient space is instead in the center of the image, perhaps creating a triptych where the center is the space of mediation.

With this analysis complete, the second step would examine the IRPs to determine which idea units were recalled and then compares these results with characteristics of the panels. The results might detail whether a certain type of image-text relation type is more often successfully recalled, or if the type of visual information, salient or not, real, ideal, given, or new, affects recall. The scoring methods used in this study do not allow for this analysis, as image-texts are considered as two separate parts in the idea unit analysis outlined in Chapter 4. However, the data in Appendix G can be used to that end if analyzed according to this proposed methodology.

The results of this proposed work might provide data on the types of multimodal information structures readers can understand. These results might help teachers to determine what types of texts to select for what readers. This work can also provide insight into the presence and character of the literary in multimodal texts. Presumably, symmetrical image-text relationships are the least apt to make use of the literary or genre play; they correspond to the most orate on the orate/literate continuum discussed in Chapter 3. If Kramsch (1993) is correct that more literate language is more difficult to read, these results might offer insights into what types of image-text relationships are most playful or most illegible. They might also suggest something about the types of layouts that are most legible. Perhaps images with backwards-looking, given, ideal information are more apt to be falsely recalled or forgotten; or maybe they are most likely

to appear in literary multimodal ensembles that employ contradictory image-text relations.

Such a research methodology, while requiring a great deal of labor could open up a whole new set of approaches for L2 reading research that could in turn inform the fields of multimodality, visual studies, and literary theory. It is this type of work, combining theoretical approaches from multimodality scholarship with empirical research, that I have advocated for in this dissertation and that I believe is the future of L2 reading research.

Appendices

Appendix A: Texts

All the following English translations are mine.

A.1. Brecht Prose Texts

A.1.1. Prose Text 1

Brecht, B. (1967). Freundschaftsdienste. In *Gesammelte Werke: Vol. 12. Prosa 2* (pp. 389–390). Frankfurt/Main, Germany: Suhrkamp.

Als Beispiel für die richtige Art, Freunden einen Dienst zu erweisen, gab Herr K. folgende Geschichte zum Besten: „Zu einem alten Araber kamen drei junge Leute und sagten ihm: ‚Unser Vater ist gestorben. Er hat uns siebzehn Kamele hinterlassen und im Testament verfügt, dass der Älteste die Hälfte, der zweite ein Drittel und der Jüngste ein Neuntel der Kamele bekommen soll. Jetzt können wir uns aber über die Teilung nicht einigen; übernimm du die Entscheidung!‘ Der Araber dachte nach und sagte: ‚Wie ich sehe, habt ihr, um gut teilen zu können, ein Kamel zu wenig. Ich habe selbst nur ein einziges Kamel, aber es steht euch zur Verfügung. Nehmt es und teilt dann, und bring mir

nur, was übrig bleibt.‘ Sie bedankten sich für diesen Freundschaftsdienst, nahmen das Kamel mit und teilten die achtzehn Kamele nun so, dass der Älteste die Hälfte, das sind neun, der Zweite ein Drittel, das sind sechs, und der Jüngste ein Neuntel, das sind zwei Kamele bekam. Zu ihrem Erstaunen blieb, als sie ihre Kamele zur Seite geführt hatten, ein Kamel übrig. Dieses brachten sie, ihren Dank erneuernd, ihrem alten Freund zurück.“

Herr K. nannte diesen Freundschaftsdienst richtig, weil er keine besonderen Opfer verlangte.

Favors

As an example of the right way to do friends a service, Mr. K. shared the following story: “Three young people came up to an old Arab and told him: ‘Our father died. He left for us seventeen camels and stipulated in his will that the oldest of us should receive one half of the camels, the second-oldest a third, and the youngest a ninth. But now we can’t agree on the division; please take over and decide for us!’ The Arab thought to himself and said: ‘As I see it, in order to divide them up correctly, you are lacking one camel. I myself have only one single camel, but it is at your service. Take it and divide up everything, and just bring me what is left over.’ They thanked him for this favor, took the camel, and then divided up all the camels. The oldest received one half, that is, nine camels, the second a third, that is, six, and the youngest a ninth, that is, two. To their surprise, when they had each separated out their camels, one camel still remained. With thanks, they returned it to their old friend.”

Mr. K. deemed this favor correct, because it demanded no special sacrifices.

A.1.2. Prose Text 2

Brecht, B. (1967). Herrn K.s Lieblingstier. In *Gesammelte Werke: Vol. 12. Prosa 2* (pp. 387–388). Frankfurt/Main, Germany: Suhrkamp.

Als Herr K. gefragt wurde, welches Tier er vor allen schätze, nannte er den Elefanten und begründete dies so: Der Elefant vereint List mit Stärke. Das ist nicht die kümmerliche List, die ausreicht, einer Nachstellung zu entgehen oder ein Essen zu ergattern, indem man nicht auffällt, sondern die List, welcher die Stärke für große Unternehmungen zur Verfügung steht. Wo dieses Tier war, führt eine breite Spur. Dennoch ist es gutmütig, es versteht Spaß. Es ist ein guter Freund, wie es ein guter Feind ist. Sehr groß und schwer, ist es doch auch sehr schnell. Sein Rüssel führt einem enormen Körper auch die kleinsten Speisen zu, auch Nüsse. Seine Ohren sind verstellbar: er hört nur, was ihm paßt. Er wird auch sehr alt. Er ist auch gesellig, und dies nicht nur zu Elefanten. Überall ist er sowohl beliebt als auch gefürchtet. Eine gewisse Komik macht es möglich, daß er sogar verehrt werden kann. Er hat eine dicke Haut, darin zerbrechen die Messer; aber sein Gemüt ist zart. Er kann traurig werden. Er kann zornig werden. Er tanzt gern. Er stirbt im Dickicht. Er liebt Kinder und andere kleine Tiere. Er ist grau und fällt nur durch seine Masse auf. Er ist nicht eßbar. Er kann gut arbeiten. Er trinkt gern und wird fröhlich. Er tut etwas für die Kunst: er liefert Elfenbein.

Mr. K.'s Favorite Animal

When Mr. K. was asked, which animal he treasured about all others, he said the elephant and justified his answer as follows: The elephant combines cunning with

strength. This is not the pitiful cunning that allows one to escape pursuit or get hold of food by not attracting attention. No, it is the cunning for which the strength for undertaking great things is available. A wide trail follows wherever this animal has been. Yet it is good-natured; it understands fun. It is a good friend, just as it is a good enemy. Though very large and heavy, it is also quite fast. Its trunk feeds even the smallest foods, even nuts, into its enormous body. His ears are also adaptable: he only hears what suits him. He also gets very old. He is also very social, and not only to elephants. Everywhere he is beloved as well as feared. A certain humor even makes it possible to worship him. He has a thick skin in which knives shatter, but he has a tender nature. He can become sad. He can become angry. He likes to dance. He dies in the thicket. He loves children and other small animals. He is grey and only stands out because of his mass. He is not edible. He can work well. He likes to drink and becomes merry. He also does something for art: he supplies ivory.

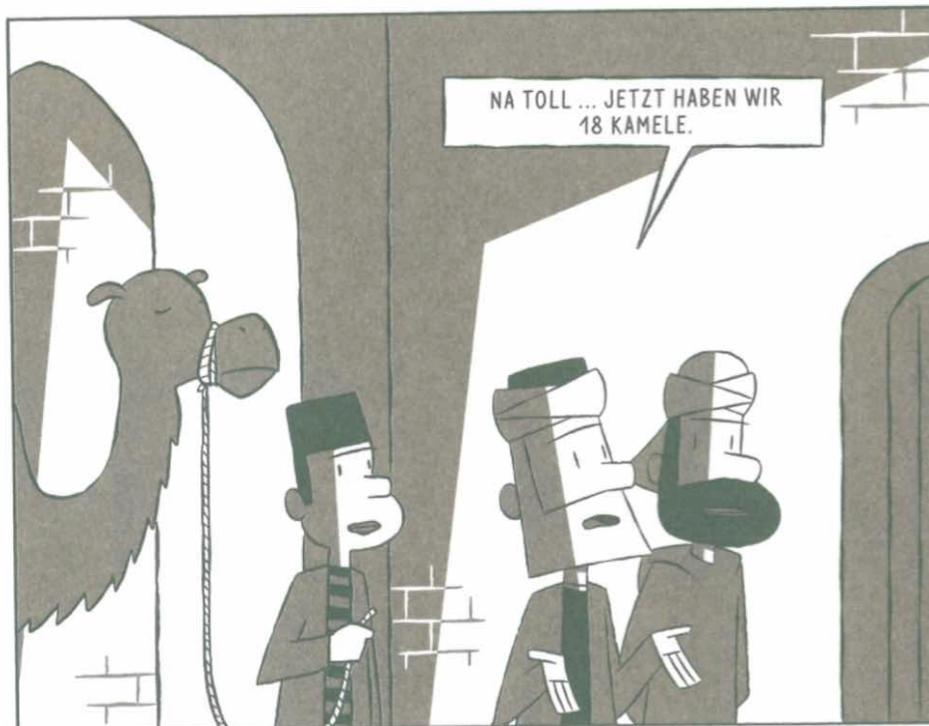
A.2. Ulf K. Comics Texts

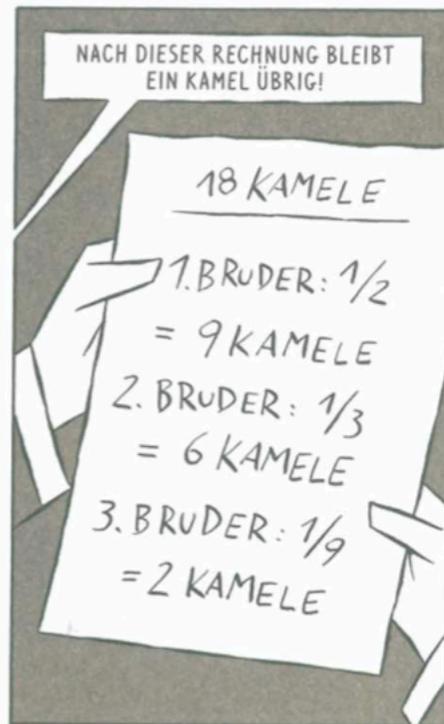
A.2.1. Comics Text 1.

Brecht, B., & K., U. (2014). Freundschaftsdienste. In A. Platthaus (Ed.), *Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner* (pp. 63–66). Berlin, Germany: Suhrkamp.

FREUNDSCHAFTSDIENSTE









Favors

Page 63:

Panel 1:

-Oh, the Ka-rim brothers. What can I do for you?

Panel 2:

-Greetings, old friend. Our father has died and left us 17 camels.

Panel 3 (left to right):

-He stipulated in his will that the oldest of us should receive one half of the camels, the second-oldest a third, and the youngest a ninth.

-But now we can't agree on the division. So, we decided that you should decide for us!

Page 64:

Panel 1:

-As I see it, in order to divide them up correctly, you are lacking one camel. I myself have only one single camel

Panel 2:

-But it is at your service. Take it and divide up everything, and just bring me what is left over.

Panel 3:

-Great. Now we have 18 camels.

Page 65:

Panel 1:

-Oh!

Panel 2:

-According to these calculations, there is one camel left over.

Panel 3:

-And we will return this one to our wise, old friend, to whom we will forever be thankful.

Panel 4:

-That was a beautiful story, Keuner, and a good example of how to do a friend a service.

Page 66:

-And this is the only true type of friendship, because it demands no special sacrifices.

A.2.2. Comics text 2.

Brecht, B., & K., U. (2014). Herrn Keuners Lieblingstier. In A. Platthaus (Ed.),

Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner (pp. 99–104). Berlin, Germany: Suhrkamp.

HERRN KEUNERS LIEBLINGSTIER



... SONDERN DIE LIST, WELCHER
DIE STÄRKE FÜR GRÖßERE
UNTERNEHMUNGEN ZUR VERFÜGUNG
STEHT.



WO DER ELEFANT WAR, FÜHRT EINE
BREITE SPUR. DENNOCH IST ER
GUTMÜTIG UND VERSTEHT SPASS.



ER IST EIN GUTER FREUND, ...



... WIE ER EIN GUTER FEIND IST.



SEHR GROSS UND SCHWER, IST DER ELEFANT DOCH AUCH SEHR SCHNELL.



AUSSERDEM SIND SEINE OHREN VERSTELLBAR: ER HÖRT NUR, WAS IHM PASST.

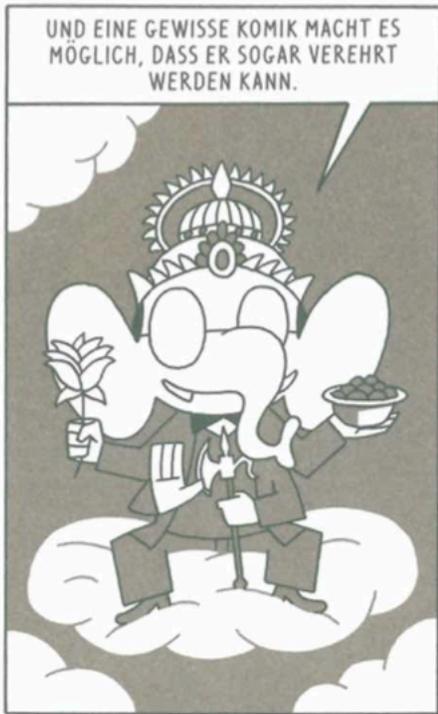


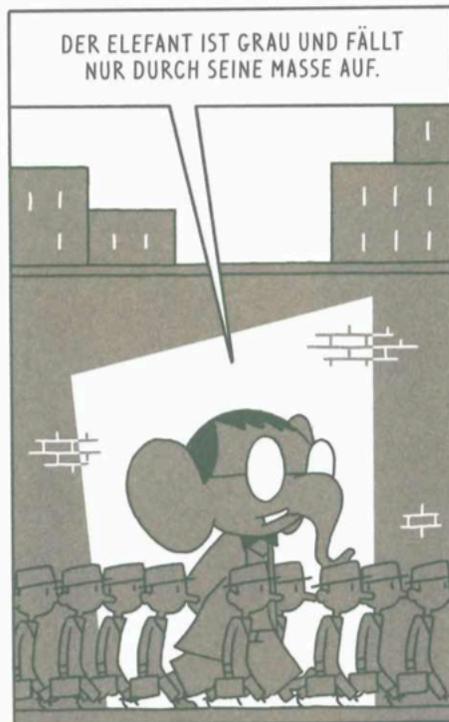
DER RÜSSEL DES ELEFANTEN FÜHRT EINEM ENORMEN KÖRPER AUCH DIE KLEINSTEN SPEISEN ZU.



ER WIRD ZUDEM SEHR ALT.









Mr. Keuner's Favorite Animal

Page 99:

Panel 1:

-Tell me, Keuner, which animal do you treasure above all?

Panel 2:

-The elephant!

-And why?

Panel 3:

-The elephant combines cunning with strength.

Panel 4:

-Not the pitiful cunning that allows one to escape pursuit or get hold of food by not attracting attention ...

Page 100:

Panel 1:

-...but the cunning for which the strength for undertaking great things is available.

Panel 2:

-A wide trail follows wherever this animal has been, yet it is good-natured and understands fun.

-This is not fun!

Panel 3:

-It is a good friend, ...

Panel 4:

-... just as it is a good enemy.

Page 101:

Panel 1:

-Very large and heavy, the elephant is also quite fast.

Panel 2:

-Also, his ears are adaptable: he only hears what suits him.

Panel 3:

-The trunk of the elephant feeds even the smallest foods into its enormous body.

Panel 4:

-He also gets very old.

Page 102:

Panel 1:

-He is also very social, and not only to elephants.

Panel 2:

-Furthermore, the elephant has a thick skin in which knives shatter, but he has a tender nature.

Panel 3:

-And a certain humor even makes it possible to worship him.

Panel 4:

-The elephant can become sad.

Page 103:

Panel 1:

-And he can become angry.

Panel 2:

-He likes to dance,

Panel 3:

-... and he loves children and other small animals.

Panel 4:

-The elephant is grey and only stands out because of his mass.

Page 104:

Panel 1:

-He can work well.

Panel 2:

-He likes to drink and becomes merry.

Panel 3:

-And most importantly, he does something for art ...

Panel 4:

-He supplies ivory.

Appendix B: Measures

B.1. Questionnaires

B.1.1. Prequestionnaire

1a. For how many years have you been learning German?

____ Years

1b. How did you learn German?

2a. What is your native language?

____ English

____ Other, please specify: _____

(if “English,” participant automatically skips to question 3)

2b. How would you describe your English language abilities?

3. Do you like comics/graphic novels?

____ yes

____ no

____ not sure

4a. Do you currently read/have you ever read comics?

____ yes

____ no

(if “no,” participant automatically skips to question 8a)

4b. Please provide detail. How often do you read/did you read comics? For how long?

When did you start/stop?

5. What are your favorite comics? Select as many as you like.

____ Superhero Comics

____ Mystery/Crime/Horror Comics

____ Graphic Novels

____ Manga

____ Other, please specify: _____

6. What is your favorite title/character (e.g. Superman/Maus/Sailor Moon/Donatello)?

7a. Have you ever read comics in a foreign language?

____ yes

____ no

(if “no,” participant automatically skips to question 8a)

7b. Which comics and languages?

8a. Do you view comics as literature?

____ yes

____ no

____ not sure

8b. Why?

9a. Do you think reading comics in German would be helpful for language learning?

___ yes

___ no

___ not sure

9b. Why?

10a. What do you think is easier to read, comics or prose?

___ comics

___ prose

10b. Why?

11. Please mark the most appropriate box for each of the following:

	I have read comics in which _____ played a role.	I am only familiar with _____ from TV, films, books, etc.	I have only heard the name of _____.	I have never heard of _____.
Batman				
Goku				
Lex Luthor				

Asterix				
Dr. Démoniac				
Rick Grimes				
Enid Coleslaw				
Wolverine				
Rorschach				
Scrooge McDuck				

Notes that do not appear on the questionnaire:

-Batman is a DC Comics superhero. He was created by Bill Finger & Bob Kane in 1939.

-Goku is a superhero from the manga series *Dragon Ball*. He was created by Akira Toriyama in 1984.

-Lex Luthor is a DC Comics supervillain usually associated with Superman. He was created by Jerry Siegel & Joe Shuster in 1940.

-Asterix is the lead character from the eponymous series. He was created by René Goscinny & Albert Uderzo in 1959.

-Dr. Démoniac is a distractor character for this study.

-Rick Grimes is the lead character in *The Walking Dead*. He was created by Robert Kirkman, Tony Moore & Charlie Allard in 2003.

-Enid Coleslaw is the lead character from the graphic novel *Ghost World*. She was created by Daniel Clowes in 1997.

-Wolverine is a Marvel Comics superhero associated with the X-Men. He was created by Roy Thomas, Len Wein, John Romita, Sr. & Herb Trimpe in 1974.

-Rorschach is a DC Comics antihero from the graphic novel *Watchmen*. He was created by Alan Moore & Dave Gibbons in 1986.

-Scrooge McDuck is a character from The Walt Disney Company. He was created by Carl Barks in 1947.

B.1.2. Postquestionnaire

1a. Had you read anything by Bertolt Brecht or Ulf K. before today?

____ yes

____ no

(if “no,” participant automatically skips to question 3)

1b. What had you read?

2a. Had you previously read either of today’s texts?

____ yes

____ no

(if “no,” participant automatically skips to question 3)

2b. Which one(s) had you previously read?

3. How has this experience changed your view of comics as material for language learning?

4. How has this experience changed your view of comics as literature?

B.2. Immediate Recall Protocol prompt

Each text for recall, comic or prose, is preceded by a statement:

“Please read the following text carefully as many times as you like and only click continue when you are ready to write down what you recall.”

After proceeding past the text for recall, instructions are provided, with a box for the IRP: “Please write down IN ENGLISH as much of the preceding text as you can recall and only click continue when you are finished with this text.”

Appendix C: Consent Form

IRB USE ONLY

Study Number: 2015-12-0056

Approval Date: 01/28/2016

Expires: 01/27/2019

Consent for participation in research.

Title. L2 reading comprehension in graphic novels and student perception of the medium
Introduction. The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

Purpose of the study. You have been asked to participate in a research study about reading comprehension in graphic novels in German and your perceptions of the medium. The purpose of this study is to better understand student reading ability of graphic novels in a foreign language, views of graphic novels as language-learning material, and graphic novels as literature.

What will you be asked to do? If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

Complete a pre-reading questionnaire.

Complete two reading-writing tasks.

Complete a post-reading questionnaire.

This study will take up to 60 minutes and will include approximately 25 study participants.

What are the risks involved in this study? There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study? You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, the study may benefit society by contributing to research on language teaching, language learning, and reading in a second language.

Do you have to participate? No, your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or, if you start the study, you may withdraw at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas at Austin (University) in anyway.

If you would like to participate, please return a signed form to John Benjamin either in person or to his mailbox in the Department of Germanic Studies office, or scan/send it to johndbenjamin@utexas.edu. You will receive a copy of this form.

Will there be any compensation? You will not receive any type of payment participating in this study.

How will your privacy and confidentiality be protected if you participate in this research study? Your privacy and the confidentiality of your data will be protected, because all data collected will be anonymous. The data will be collected via a designated

Qualtrics site, access to which will be password protected. Data will then be downloaded and stored without any identifying information aside from native language and time spent learning German.

If it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review the study records, information that can be linked to you will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate it with you, or with your participation in any study.

Whom to contact with questions about the study? Prior, during or after your participation you can contact the researcher, John Benjamin, by sending an email to johndbenjamin@utexas.edu for any questions or if you feel that you have been harmed.

Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant? For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Participation. If you would like to participate, please return a signed form to John either in person or to his mailbox in the Department of Germanic Studies office, or scan it to johndbenjamin@utexas.edu. You will receive a copy of this form.

Signature. You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

Printed Name

Signature Date

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, procedures, benefits, and the risks involved in this research study.

Print Name of Person obtaining consent

Signature of Person obtaining consent

Date

Appendix D: Instructions and Screenshots

D.1. Qualtrics-external Instructions

After providing an email address during recruitment, after signing the consent form, each student receives an email with instructions for accessing the study. The variables in the email are the group number, which may be A1, A2, B1, or B2, and the information regarding timing for completion. The following is the text of the email (the only variable between emails was the date of completion dependent on the semester and year of data collection):

“Dear student,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. There are three important pieces of information for you to know.

- 1) The password for the study, which must be entered to start: **comics**
- 2) Your group, which you will select following the pretest questionnaire. Please remember your group, and do not choose randomly. Your group number is: **B2**
- 3) Please follow this link to participate in the study.

https://utexas.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_6MrFVGyUBxUapQp

I am hoping to finish data collection by May 11th, but the early you do it the better. Remember that the study can be done from anywhere and will likely take 60 minutes or less, and that a computer using chrome is your best bet.

You will receive a copy of your consent form this week. If you have any questions at any time, or if you have problems accessing/completing the study, please don't hesitate to contact me at this email address.

Best,

John Benjamin”

D.2. Qualtrics-internal instructions

When the participant first enters the test environment, the first screen shows a prompt:

“This survey requires a password.”

After entering the password “comics” and proceeding, the following screen lays out the study:

“Thank you for participating and welcome to the study. The study consists of three parts: The first part is a pretest questionnaire, which consists of multiple choice questions, a table, and free response items. (Approximately 15 minutes)

The second part is a reading/recall portion. You will be shown two texts, one in prose and one in comics form, and you will be asked to read and then record what you can remember afterward. (Approximately 15-20 minutes per text)

The third part is a posttest questionnaire, which consists of a few yes/no questions and two free response items. (Approximately 5-10 minutes)

The full study lasts approximately 60 minutes.

You will now begin with the pretest questionnaire.”

After proceeding to and completing the prequestionnaire, a screen provides the participant information:

“This is the end of the pretest questionnaire.”

The following screen introduces the recall task:

“You will now begin with the reading/recall portion of the study.

You will be presented with two texts, one at a time.

For each, please:

-Read the text presented carefully as many times as you like.

-Do not take notes.

-When you feel that you have understood as much of the text as you can, please continue to the next page.

-When prompted, please write down, IN ENGLISH, as much of the text as you can.

-When you feel that you have written down as much of the text as you can recall, please continue to the next page.

-Please repeat the same process for the second text.

Please select the group you were assigned to in the email. If you can't remember your group number, please check your email.”

___ Group A1

___ Group A2

___ Group B1

___ Group B2

After proceeding to and completing the recall portion, the participant is informed:

“This is the end of the test portion. Please proceed to the posttest questionnaire.”

After proceeding to and completing the postquestionnaire, the participant is informed:

“This is the end of the posttest questionnaire and the full study. Thank you for your participation.”

If the participant clicks “continue” on this final screen, they are redirected to the main Qualtrics website at www.qualtrics.com.

D.3. Sample screenshots

Figure 11: Screenshot of item 1 on the prequestionnaire.

Pretest Questionnaire

For how many years have you been learning German?

Years

How did you learn German?

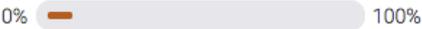
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Continue

Figure 12: Screenshot of item 3 on the prequestionnaire.

Do you like comics/graphic novels?

Yes
No
Not Sure



Continue

Figure 13: Screenshot of items 9a and 9b on the prequestionnaire.

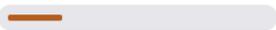
Do you think reading comics in German would be helpful for language learning?

Yes

No

Not sure

Why?

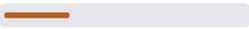
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Figure 14: Screenshot of item 11 on the prequestionnaire.

Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following:

	I have read ___ played a role.	I am only familiar with ___ from TV, films, books, etc.	I have only heard the name of ___.	I have never heard of ___.
Batman	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Goku	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lex Luthor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asterix	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dr. Demoniac	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rick Grimes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enid Coleslaw	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wolverine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rorschach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scrooge McDuck	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

0%  100%

Continue

Figure 15: Screenshot of group selection.

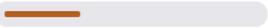
Please select the group you were assigned to in the email. If you can't remember your group number, please check your email.

Group A1

Group A2

Group B1

Group B2

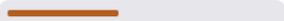
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Continue

Figure 16: Screenshot of Prose text 2.

Herrn K.s Lieblingstier
von Bertolt Brecht

Als Herr K. gefragt wurde, welches Tier er vor allen schätze, nannte er den Elefanten und begründete dies so: Der Elefant vereint List mit Stärke. Das ist nicht die kümmerliche List, die ausreicht, einer Nachstellung zu entgehen oder ein Essen zu ergattern, indem man nicht auffällt, sondern die List, welcher die Stärke für große Unternehmungen zur Verfügung steht. Wo dieses Tier war, führt eine breite Spur. Dennoch ist es gutmütig, es versteht Spaß. Es ist ein guter Freund, wie es ein guter Feind ist. Sehr groß und schwer, ist es doch auch sehr schnell. Sein Rüssel führt einem enormen Körper auch die kleinsten Speisen zu, auch Nüsse. Seine Ohren sind verstellbar: er hört nur, was ihm paßt. Er wird auch sehr alt. Er ist auch gesellig, und dies nicht nur zu Elefanten. Überall ist er sowohl beliebt als auch gefürchtet. Eine gewisse Komik macht es möglich, daß er sogar verehrt werden kann. Er hat eine dicke Haut, darin zerbrechen die Messer; aber sein Gemüt ist zart. Er kann traurig werden. Er kann zornig werden. Er tanzt gern. Er stirbt im Dickicht. Er liebt Kinder und andere kleine Tiere. Er ist grau und fällt nur durch seine Masse auf. Er ist nicht eßbar. Er kann gut arbeiten. Er trinkt gern und wird fröhlich. Er tut etwas für die Kunst: er liefert Elfenbein.

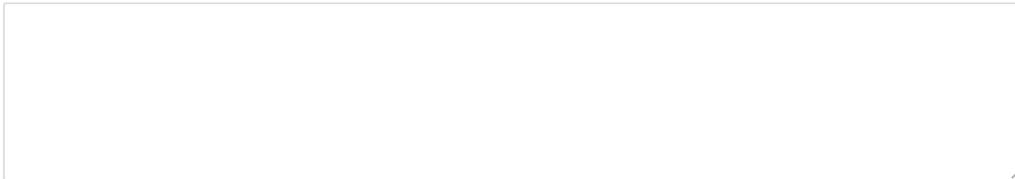
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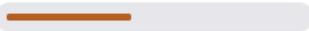
Continue

Figure 17: Screenshot of space allotted for the IRPs.

Recall

Please write down IN ENGLISH as much of the preceding text as you can recall and only click continue when you are finished with this text.

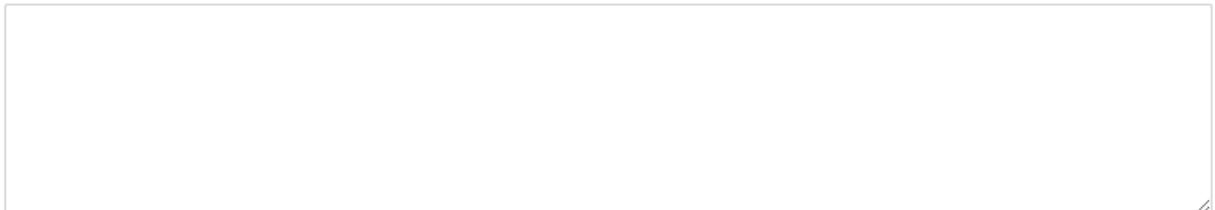


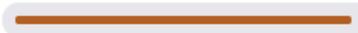
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Continue

Figure 18: Screenshot of item 3 on the postquestionnaire.

How has this experience changed your view of comics as material for language learning?



0%  100%

Continue

Appendix E: Rubrics

Rubrics for Assessing Reading Across Modalities (RARAM)

Developed by John Benjamin and Katherine Arens

General scoring scale for rubrics

3 - Unambiguous/clear/present

2 - Mostly unambiguous/clear/present

1 - Mostly ambiguous/unclear/not present

0 - Ambiguous/unclear/not present

Rubrics for scoring Immediate Recall Protocols (IRPs) for all texts

Rating	Content Referentiality ²	Coherence ³	Cohesion ⁴	Inference ⁵
RUBRIC DEFINITION →	= The IRP demonstrates the ability to recall content elements from the source text accurately and effectively (e.g., main	= The IRP connects underlying ideas from the text logically, developing and relating them in ways that reflect the ideas and	= The IRP expresses the connection and logic of ideas drawn from the text, using appropriate rhetorical markers and	= The IRP addresses how the reader draws inferences about the text in terms of its visual and/or verbal
Score ↓				

² This rubric is intended to assess comprehension and recall of textual data: the who, what, where, when, and why of the source text; as such, it emphasizes *what is drawn from the text* as opposed to *what the reader knows in advance*.

³ This rubric is intended to assess comprehension and recall of textual logic: how the source text argues its case and/or connects data to tell its story; as such, it emphasizes the reader's ability to recall and recount a logic *that may not be their own* and that may reflect cultural norms not of their own culture.

⁴ This rubric is intended to assess links between what a reader understands from a text and the ability to express this understanding. As such, it tries to connect recall of logic and content with the reader's ability to express/communicate their recall effectively.

⁵ This rubric is intended to assess the reader's use of cues specific elements of the text beyond explicit grammar and rhetoric when making inferences: *how* the reader constructs an understanding of the text, *what multimodal information cues, if any* does the reader rely on from the text (visual or textual), and how does the reader recall that information. For example, does the reader mark the function of verbal cues in the text (e.g., the text describes...), mark some recalled elements as visual (e.g., the images depict/we see the hero...), and/or omit most indications of what a text means beyond its explicit grammatical/rhetorical markers).

	issues; chronology; details about character; setting and organization of events)	logic of the source text.	expressions reflecting an understanding of and engagement with the source text.	information structures.
3	Reflects most of the significant elements from the source text, with few or no significant errors or omissions; the recall of text elements is generally correct and reliable.	Reflects a clear understanding of the logic, connections, and development of ideas in the source text, despite occasional errors or inadequacy of the ideas and/or linguistic resources adduced from the source text	Demonstrates effective use of markers from grammar and rhetoric. Uses explicit and appropriate links between sentences and/or clauses as well as text markers appropriate to communicating to the reader ideas and content from the source text.	Draws inferences from the text clearly, based on text structures beyond explicit markers from grammar, rhetoric, or visual relationship cues; demonstrates an understanding of what the text implies; moves beyond a strictly literal reading of textual elements.
2	Reflects many of the significant elements from the source text, with some errors and/or omissions (even significant ones); the recall of text elements may	Reflects a largely adequate understanding of the logic, connections, and development of ideas in the source text, with some more significant and/or frequent errors or inadequacy of	Demonstrates competent but not always effective use of markers from grammar and rhetoric. Links between sentences and/or clauses are often implicit rather than explicitly marked. Ideas	Draws some inferences from the text's information structure but merely suggests an understanding of what the texts implies beyond a strictly literal reading of text

	be flawed but does not distract from their general correctness and adequacy to the source text.	the ideas and linguistic resources adduced from the source text.	from the source text are often implicitly rather than explicitly connected.	elements; and/or imposes ideas onto the text that do not correlate with text structures and/or explicit visual/verbal cues
1	Reflects some elements drawn from the source text, but with significant errors and/or omissions; the recall reflects the source text inadequately.	Reflects a largely inadequate understanding of the logic, connections, and development of ideas in the source text; contains frequent and/or significant errors or lapses in logic and/or inadequacy of the ideas and linguistic resources adduced from the source text.	Demonstrates frequently ineffective, sometimes incorrect use of markers from grammar and rhetoric. Few if any adequate or effective explicit connections are made between sentences and/or clauses; ideas often are inadequately and/or incorrectly expressed.	Draws few, if any, inferences about the text based on visual/verbal information beyond a strictly literal reading of text elements; and/or draws inferences from personal experience that do not reflect text data or structure.
0	Reflects few if any elements of the original text accurately and/or appropriately; the recall does not adequately reflect substantial elements of the source text.	Reflects a generally inadequate, unclear, and/or ambiguous understanding of the logic, connections, and development of ideas in the source text; adduces few if any ideas and	Demonstrates little or no use of markers from grammar and rhetoric to connect ideas; little or no attention is paid to explicit connection of ideas.	Demonstrates little or no capacity to draw inferences about the texts; rarely moves beyond recall of information explicit in the text; demonstrates

		linguistic resources unambiguously drawn from the source text.		little or no capacity to understand text data (explicit or structural) contributes to the meaning of a text.
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Appendix F: Texts by Idea Unit for Rating

All the following English translations are mine.

F.1. Brecht Prose Text 1

1. *Als Beispiel für die richtige Art, Freunden einen Dienst zu erweisen*, (As an example of the right way to do friends a service,)
2. *gab Herr K. folgende Geschichte zum Besten*: (Mr. K. shared the following story:)
3. *“Zu einem alten Araber kamen drei junge Leute und sagten ihm*: (“Three young people came up to an old Arab and told him:)
4. *‘Unser Vater ist gestorben*. (‘Our father died.)
5. *Er hat uns siebzehn Kamele hinterlassen und im Testament verfügt, dass der Älteste die Hälfte, der zweite ein Drittel und der Jüngste ein Neuntel der Kamele bekommen soll*. (He left for us seventeen camels and stipulated in his will that the oldest of us should receive one half of the camels, the second-oldest a third, and the youngest a ninth.)
6. *Jetzt können wir uns aber über die Teilung nicht einigen; übernimm du die Entscheidung!*’ (But now we can’t agree on the division; please take over and decide for us!’)
7. *Der Araber dachte nach und sagte: ‘Wie ich sehe, habt ihr, um gut teilen zu können, ein Kamel zu wenig*. (The Arab thought to himself and said: ‘As I see it, in order to divide them up correctly, you are lacking one camel.)
8. *Ich habe selbst nur ein einziges Kamel, aber es steht euch zur Verfügung*. (I myself have only one single camel, but it is at your service.)

9. *Nehmt es und teilt dann, und bring mir nur, was übrig bleibt.* ” (Take it and divide up everything, and just bring me what is left over.)

10. *Sie bedankten sich für diesen Freundschaftsdienst, nahmen das Kamel mit und teilten die achtzehn Kamele nun so, dass der Älteste die Hälfte, das sind neun, der Zweite ein Drittel, das sind sechs, und der Jüngste ein Neuntel, das sind zwei Kamele bekam.* (They thanked him for this favor, took the camel, and then divided up all the camels. The oldest received one half, that is, nine camels, the second a third, that is, six, and the youngest a ninth, that is, two.)

11. *Zu ihrem Erstaunen blieb, als sie ihre Kamele zur Seite geführt hatten, ein Kamel übrig.* (To their surprise, when they had each separated out their camels, one camel still remained.)

12. *Dieses brachten sie, ihren Dank erneuernd, ihrem alten Freund zurück.* ” (With thanks, they returned it to their old friend.)

13. *Herr K. nannte diesen Freundschaftsdienst richtig, weil er keine besonderen Opfer verlangte.* (Mr. K. deemed this favor correct, because it demanded no special sacrifices.)

F.2. Brecht Prose Text 2

1. *Als Herr K. gefragt wurde, welches Tier er vor allen schätze,* (When Mr. K. was asked, which animal he treasured about all others,)

2. *nannte er den Elefanten und begründete dies so:* (he said the elephant and justified his answer as follows:)

3. *Der Elefant vereint List mit Stärke.* (The elephant combines cunning with strength.)

The following details are part of idea unit 3, as they simply add detail to the general description of the animal: *(Das ist nicht die kümmerliche List, die ausreicht, einer Nachstellung zu entgehen oder ein Essen zu ergattern, indem man nicht auffällt, sondern die List, welcher die Stärke für große Unternehmungen zur Verfügung steht. Wo dieses Tier war, führt eine breite Spur. Dennoch ist es gutmütig, es versteht Spaß. Es ist ein guter Freund, wie es ein guter Feind ist. Sehr groß und schwer, ist es doch auch sehr schnell. Sein Rüssel führt einem enormen Körper auch die kleinsten Speisen zu, auch Nüsse. Seine Ohren sind verstellbar: er hört nur, was ihm paßt. Er wird auch sehr alt. Er ist auch gesellig, und dies nicht nur zu Elefanten. [This is not the pitiful cunning that allows one to escape pursuit or get hold of food by not attracting attention. No, it is the cunning for which the strength for undertaking great things is available. A wide trail follows wherever this animal has been. Yet it is good-natured; it understands fun. It is a good friend, just as it is a good enemy. Though very large and heavy, it is also quite fast. Its trunk feeds even the smallest foods, even nuts, into its enormous body. His ears are also adaptable: he only hears what suits him. He also gets very old. He is also very social, and not only to elephants.]*)

4. *Überall ist er sowohl beliebt als auch gefürchtet. Eine gewisse Komik macht es möglich, daß er sogar verehrt werden kann. (Everywhere he is beloved as well as feared. A certain humor even makes it possible to worship him.)*

Idea unit 4 is independent from idea unit 3 in that it introduces information that is unexpected in the description of an elephant. The following is understood as a continuation of this new theme: *(Er hat eine dicke Haut, darin zerbrechen die Messer;*

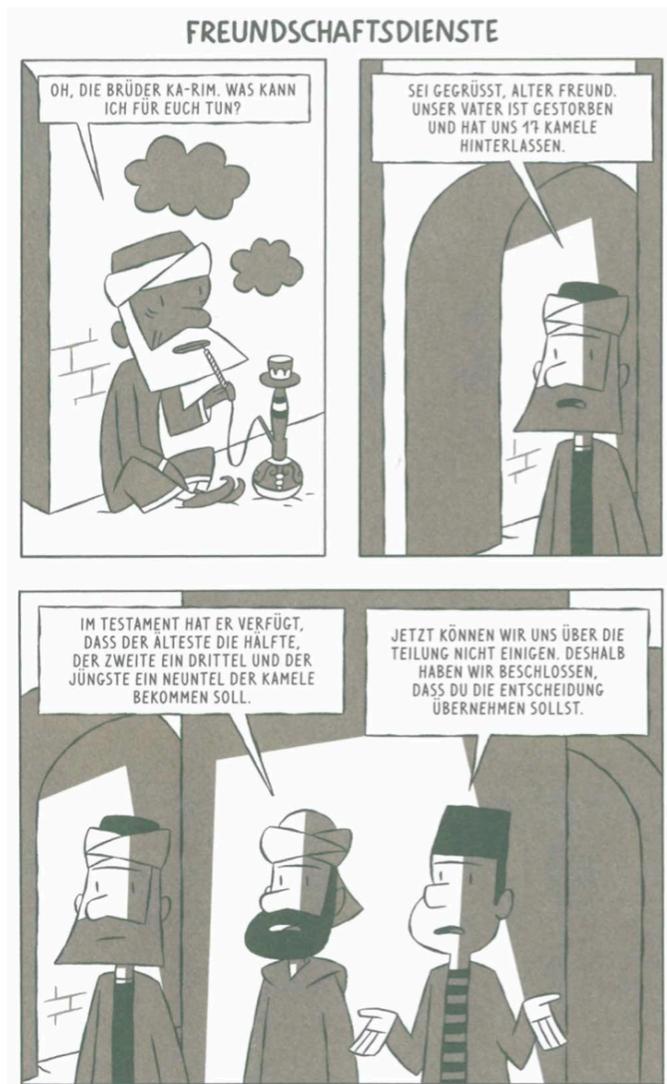
aber sein Gemüt ist zart. Er kann traurig werden. Er kann zornig werden. Er tanzt gern. Er stirbt im Dickicht. Er liebt Kinder und andere kleine Tiere. [He has a thick skin in which knives shatter, but he has a tender nature. He can become sad. He can become angry. He likes to dance. He dies in the thicket. He loves children and other small animals.]

5. *Er ist grau und fällt nur durch seine Masse auf.* (He is grey and only stands out because of his mass.) Idea unit 5 is similar in content to idea unit 3, but as it represents a turn away from idea unit 3, it was selected as an independent unit.

6. *Er ist nicht eßbar.* (He is not edible.) Idea unit 6 is jarring in its juxtaposition to idea unit 5, like the following sentences, which are more of idea unit 6. (*Er kann gut arbeiten. Er trinkt gern und wird fröhlich.* [He can work well. He likes to drink and becomes merry.]

7. *Er tut etwas für die Kunst: er liefert Elfenbein.* (He also does something for art: he supplies ivory.)

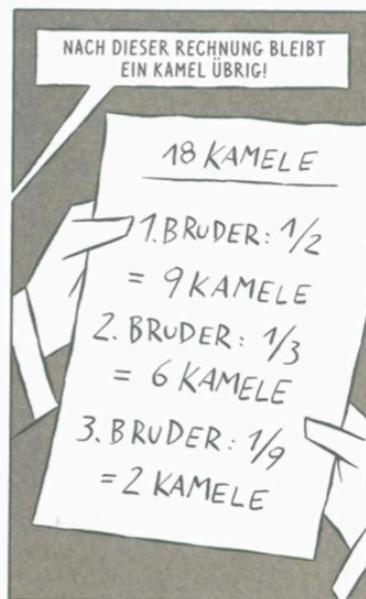
F.3. Ulf K. Comics Text 1



Panel	Visual Idea Units	Verbal Idea Units
1	1. "Not from here"/foreign setting	1. Old man talks to brothers.
2		2. Old man is their friend. 3. Their Dad is dead.
3	2. There are 3 brothers.	4. Camels need dividing. 5. They can't do it. 6. They ask for help.



Panel	Visual Idea Units	Verbal Idea Units
1		7. Old man has a camel.
2		8. He says he will lend it to them to help them out.
3	3. They have a camel.	9. They have 18 camels.

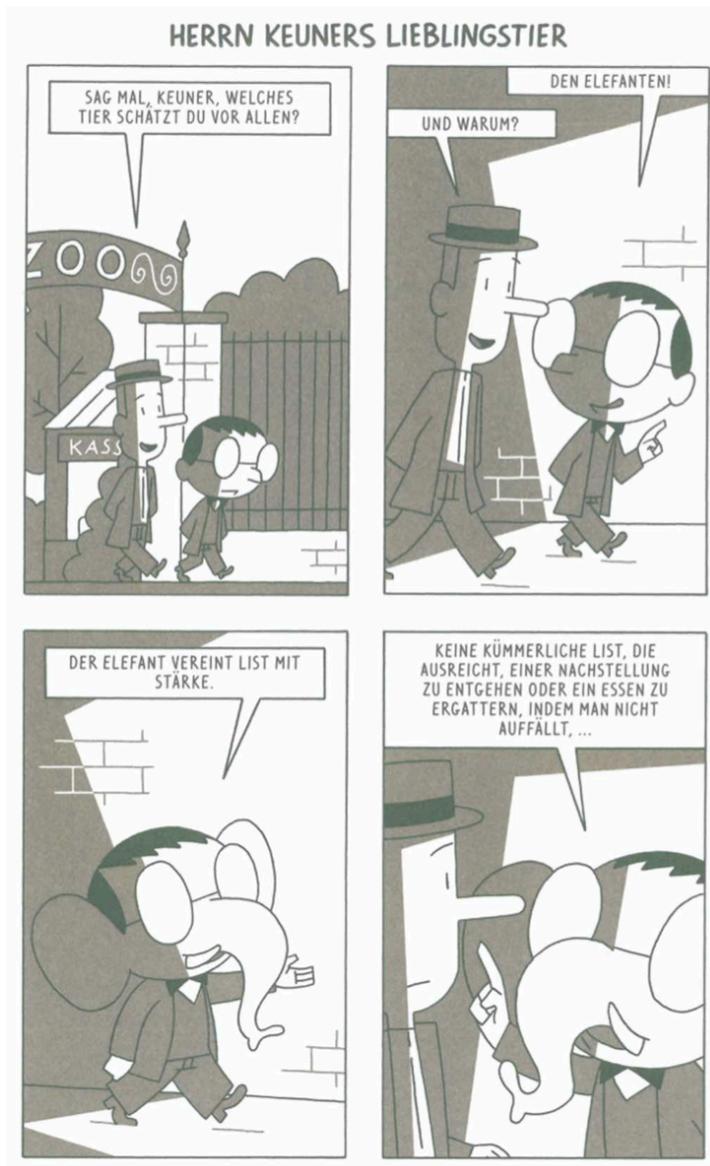


Panel	Visual Idea Units	Verbal Idea Units
1	4. They work out the divide.	10. One camel is left over.
2		
3		11. They bring the camel back.
4	5. Time/setting change, new people, maybe a man and a kid?	12. "This was a good story about friendship."



Panel	Visual Idea Units	Verbal Idea Units
1	6. The kid speaks.	13. "The moral."

F.4. Ulf K. Comics Text 2



Panel	Visual Idea Units	Verbal Idea Units
1	1. Keuner and a man are at the zoo.	1. Favorite animal question (1) ⁶
2		2. The answer of the elephant. (2)
3	2. Keuner is an elephant.	3. General advantages of an elephant. (3)
4		

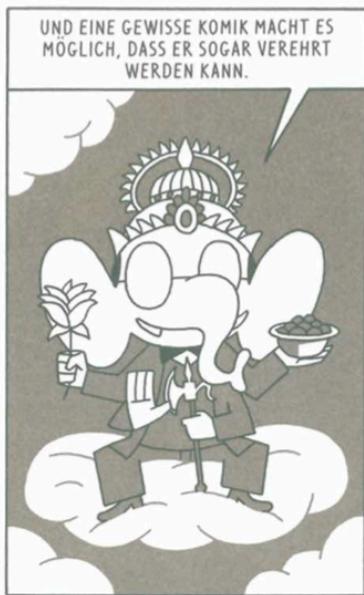
⁶ The labeling of the verbal idea units shown here uses the original numbering. The reduction to 7 idea units for rendering them comparable to those for prose text 1 are provided in parentheses.



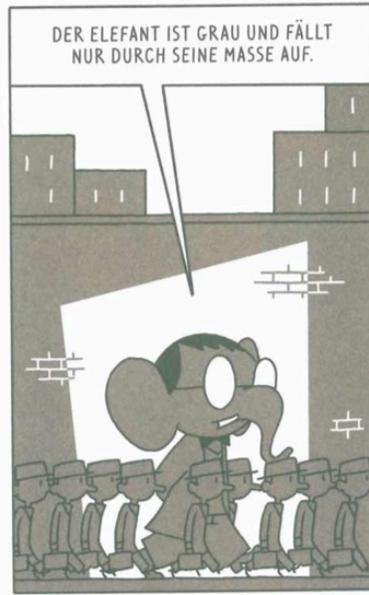
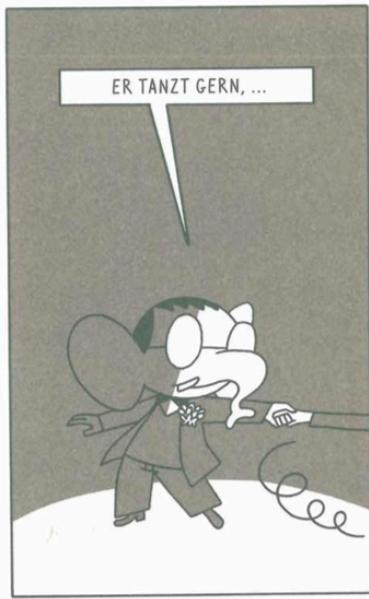
Panel	Visual Idea Units	Verbal Idea Units
1	3. The elephant is heroic.	3. Continued. (3)
2	4. The elephant is a bull in a china shop.	
3	5. The elephant loves flowers.	4. Friend and enemy (3)
4	6. Mower guy kills flower.	



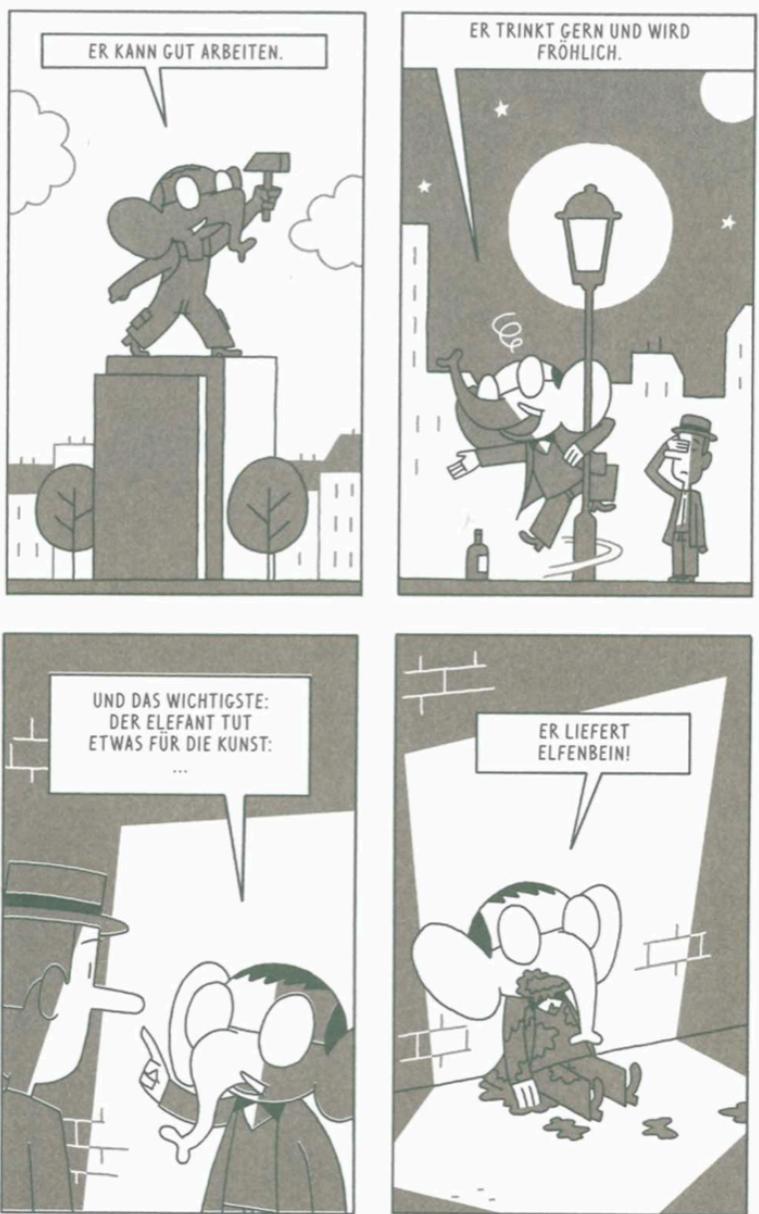
Panel	Visual Idea Units	Verbal Idea Units
1	7. Elephant is running from policeman.	5. The elephant can run. (3)
2	8. Elephant can close his ears.	6. He can decide what to listen to. (3)
3	9. Elephant eats with his trunk.	7. He has a giant trunk. (3)
4	10. Elephant is old.	8. He gets old. (3)



Panel	Visual Idea Units	Verbal Idea Units
1	11. Elephant likes mice.	9. He is friendly (3)
2	12. Elephant defuses anger/breaks knives.	10. A softy whose skin breaks knives (4)
3	13. Elephant is Ganesha/king.	11. Komik/verehren (comedy/honor) (4)
4	14. Elephant is sad.	12. traurig werden (become sad) (4)



Panel	Visual Idea Units	Verbal Idea Units
1	15. Elephant protests.	13. gets mad (4)
2	16. Elephant dances.	14. likes to dance (4)
3	17. Elephant drawings.	15. likes small animals (4)
4	18. Elephant is bigger than/with workers.	16. grey, only noticeable by size (5)



Panel	Visual Idea Units	Verbal Idea Units
1	19. Elephant is Marxist labor hero.	17. He can work well. (6)
2	20. Elephant is drunk.	18. He drinks and has fun. (6)
3	21. Elephant makes an important point.	19. He does things for art. (7)
4	22. Elephant is zombie/vampire/dead/toothless/tuskless.	20. He provides ivory. (7)

Appendix G: Raw Data

G.1. Prequestionnaire Data

1a. For how many years have you been learning German?

RN (Respondent Number)	Years
1	3
2	8
3	8
4	5
5	4
6	4
7	14
8	7
9	5
10	6
11	2
12	7
13	8
14	7
15	7
16	12
17	6
18	5
19	6
20	7
21	4
22	4
23	5
24	5
25	2
26	2

1b. How did you learn German?

RN	How did you learn German?
1	I studied German at UT and at the University of Wuerzburg.
2	I took 4 years in high school and continued for 4 at UT.
3	Middle school, High school and college classes
4	structured language classes, some tutoring
5	Mostly from grammar books and self-teaching.
6	University Classes and Study Abroad
7	I first learned German when I was nine years old when my family moved to Düsseldorf, Germany. I had a very limited education in it and only lived there for a year. I then moved back to the US and did not learn German again until high school where I took four years of German. I worked at an internship in Switzerland for three months during college where I spoke essentially exclusively German. I then started taking German again in college upon my return. I graduate with a minor and complete a total of six credit hours in German after this semester.
8	I began formal education in German my freshman year of high school. I also grew up with German influence from my grandparents and having lived in Germany for 5 months when I was a child.
9	I took 2 years in High School, 1986-7. I took two semesters at ACC (~2005). I have taken 4 semesters at UT (2015-16, courses 612, 328, 331L, currently in 346L).
10	High school classes, a year of foreign exchange, and a year of upper division German classes in college
11	I have taken classes at UT, but have also engaged myself in watching German movies and listening to German music. I also participated in a summer study in Germany.
12	At home from my native German father, but also mostly in school (my dad didn't push very hard for me to learn German from him).
13	In school
14	High school and college courses
15	Took classes in both high school and college; have never been to a German-speaking country and translated Disney and comics are where most of my out-of-class input comes from
16	I started taking classes in German in college, and the lion's share of my learning has been in academic contexts.
17	My mother is German, I am half-German. As a child, she taught me and my two sisters German first and I grew up speaking it in the household. I didn't fully have a grasp on English until I was about 6. I was never enrolled in German classes as a child or in German school. I started learning it formally in my

- freshman year of high school and have taken German every year since, high school and college (I'm a 2nd-year student).
- 18 In High School and by speaking with family.
- 19 I studied in high school for 2 years, didn't study for a year, then started again in college. I took two semesters off in the middle of my college career and just started learning again. All my German has been in classroom settings
- 20 High school, German student exchange, University courses
- 21 In high school
- 22 I learned German in high school and have taken four German courses at UT at Austin.
- 23 UT Courses
- 24 University and year-long Study Abroad experience
- 25 College classes
- 26 college courses and duolingo

2a/b. What is your native language?

RN	What is your native language?	Other, please specify:	How would you describe your English language abilities?
1	English		
2	English		
3	English		
4	English		
5	English		
6	English		
7	English		
8	English		
9	English		
10	English		
11	English		
12	English		
13	English		
14	English		
15	English		
16	English		
17	English		
18	English		
19	English		
20	English		
21	English		
22	English		
23	English		
24	English		
25	Other, please specify:	Spanish	Native fluency
26	English		

3. Do you like comics/graphic novels?

RN	Do you like comics/graphic novels?
1	Not Sure
2	Not Sure
3	No
4	Yes
5	No
6	Yes
7	No
8	Not Sure
9	Yes
10	Yes
11	Not Sure
12	Yes
13	Yes
14	Yes
15	Yes
16	Yes
17	No
18	Not Sure
19	Yes
20	Not Sure
21	Yes
22	Yes
23	Yes
24	Yes
25	Yes
26	Yes

4a/b. Do you currently read/have you ever read comics?

RN	Do you currently read/have you ever read comics?	Please provide detail. How often do you read/did you read comics? For how long? When did you start/stop?
1	No	
2	Yes	I would read the Sunday comics with my grandma when I would stay with her on weekends growing up. I haven't read them consistently since she passed away in 2008.
3	Yes	I have read Sunday comics in newspapers, and some web comics for about 6 years.
4	Yes	read comic books (every other week?)and in newspapers regularly till middle school age - say, till 14 years old; then only a few in newspapers on a regular basis as there was more "substantive" reading to do during school sessions.
5	No	
6	No	
7	No	
8	No	
9	Yes	Sporadic over the years. I read some comics while in college (90-97). There was a long gap, then in past 5-6 years I've started back in, chiefly with trade paperbacks instead of individual issues. Frequency of one trade/3 months or so. I currently have an unread stack awaiting reading time.
10	Yes	When I was younger I read funny comics such as Calvin and Hobbes and The Far Side. That was about the extent of my comic reading, however.
11	No	
12	Yes	I have read comics my whole life. When I was much younger I read newspaper comics and would collect anthologies of my favorites. When I was in middle school I was turned on to graphic novels and read several. In high school I developed an interest in webcomics as well as Japanese manga, both of which I continue to read on a weekly/daily basis respectively to this day.
13	Yes	I read anime comics for a few years around 2006,Äi2009
14	Yes	I have not read any comics recently, but I started reading comics and graphic novels when I was about 10 or 11 years old. I didn't read that often and there would usually be long periods in between readings.
15	Yes	I read Calvin & Hobbes and Foxtrot often as a child, many times a week. As I got older, my dad introduced me to graphic novels like

- Sandman, The Maxx, and Fables, which I read through sometimes while sometimes I just read novels. I also read a lot of manga in high school, nearly every day (I still read some but not nearly as often). I enjoy reading graphic novels still, but all of this type of media has taken more of a backseat to novels in recent years because of classes, to perhaps a couple of times a month.
- 16 Yes When I was young I had a subscription to the Amazing Spider-man, and read comics regularly. As I've grown up I don't read comics all that regularly, but when good storylines come out I do buy and read them as graphic novels.
- 17 Yes I have only read a few comics, Calvin and Hobbes and Asterix and Obelix. I mainly read both in 7th and 8th grade. I haven't read either one in quite a few years.
- 18 Yes I read some comics in middle school about racing cars.
- 19 Yes I used to love the comics page of the news paper until they went online, now I enjoy reading graphic novels and popular comics like deadpool. I don't read on a regular basis, more often when I have extra cash or if I can borrow from a friend.
- 20 No
- 21 Yes Not very often. I read some clips from Calvin and Hobbes within the last year and read the graphic novel/memoir Persepolis 1 and 2 by Marjane Satrapi.
- 22 Yes I read comics weekly as a kid. Now, as a student, I read comics during the summer and winter breaks; so, only three or four times a year.
- 23 Yes Dr. Strange. 3 times in my life sporadically over the past 2 years.
- 24 Yes On occasion as a child, though not so much anymore as an adult. The last time I sat down and truly read a comic was roughly 8 years ago.
- 25 Yes I read the Scott Pilgrim series in 2007, as well as the Loveless Manga Series in 2008
- 26 Yes I've read only a few comics, all mostly in my late teen, early adult life.

5. What are your favorite comics? Select as many as you like.

RN	What are your favorite comics? Select as many as you like.	Other, please specify:
1		
2	Other, please specify:	I like serial comics more than books. Smirk humor or commentary on daily life.
3	Other, please specify:	Short, comedic
4	Superhero Comics	
5		
6		
7		
8		
9	Superhero Comics,Graphic Novels, Other, please specify:	Science Fiction/Fantasy
10	Other, please specify:	Humerous
11		
12	Manga,Other, please specify:	Webcomics, if those count
13	Mystery/Crime/Horror Comics, Graphic Novels,Manga	
14	Graphic Novels,Manga	
15	Superhero Comics,Graphic Novels,Manga	
16	Superhero Comics,Graphic Novels	
17	Other, please specify:	Humor comics
18	Manga	
19	Superhero Comics,Graphic Novels	
20		
21	Graphic Novels	
22	Superhero Comics	
23	Superhero Comics	
24	Superhero Comics,Mystery/Crime/ Horror Comics	
25	Mystery/Crime/Horror Comics,Manga	
26	Superhero Comics,Graphic Novels	

6. What is your favorite title/character (e.g. Superman, Maus, Sailor Moon, Donatello)?

RN What is your favorite title/character (e.g. Superman, Maus, Sailor Moon, Donatello)?

1

2 It was too long ago for me to remember clearly.

3 N/A

4 Superman

5

6

7

8

9 Akira (so yea, I guess I have read some manga, sorry for missing that).

10

11

12 Bone

13 Batman

14 Fullmetal Alchemist

The Walking Dead

15 Neil Gaiman's Sandman is probably my favorite, closely followed by Bill Willingham's Fables. My favorite character is harder to choose; I never gave that much thought. (I do love Bigby in Fables, though.)

16 Superman

17 Calvin

18 Initial D

19 Rat Queens

20

21 Persepolis 1/2. Marjane herself

22 Batman

23 Captain America

24 Deadpool

25 Sailor Moon, Wallace Wells

26 Captain America

7a/b. Have you ever read comics in a foreign language?

RN	Have you ever read comics in a foreign language?	Which comics and languages?
1		
2	No	
3	No	
4	Yes	some Maus - German. some Asterix, Tintin - French
5		
6		
7		
8		
9	No	
10	No	
11		
12	Yes	I've read Asterix und Obelix in German.
13	No	
14	No	
15	Yes	I own six volumes of different mangas that have been translated into German, and have read each at least twice through in German. So far I stick to what I am so familiar with so that I don't miss anything if I don't understand something. The mangas are, volume one each of: Bleach, One Piece, Attack on Titan, Bakuman, Death Note, and Tokyo Ghoul.
16	No	
17	Yes	Asterix and Obelix, German
18	No	
19	No	
20		
21	No	
22	No	
23	No	
24	No	
25	No	
26	No	

8a/b. Do you view comics as literature?

RN	Do you view comics as literature?	Why?
1	Not Sure	I see comics as more like artwork, but I could see how they could be literature as well.
2	Yes	They have a story line. It would be remiss of someone to consider them as anything but creative writing literature.
3	Yes	They tell a story and can be analyzed with literary devices and criticism like any other form of literature.
4	No	although there are some (often simple) plots, character development is sparse. Some comics - Doonesbury or Peanuts - have commentary on current (well, current when written) events/politics - but most are "generic" in nature.
5	Not Sure	Literature usually emphasizes the content of the words, but comics emphasize actual pictures.
6	Yes	The ways in which image and text interact to tell a story or give messages often involves as much, if not more, creativity than text-based literature.
7	No	Comics tend to debase the purity of the written word. I have no problem with political cartoons, but in a graphic novel form the comic cheapens the message of the author by providing other mechanisms to convey meaning.
8	No	They are more in the art genre than literature because they are typically pictures rather than written novels.
9	Yes	The comic is an art form, comprising both illustrations and words intended to convey meaning, tone, and plot. In that way I don't see any difference between a good comic and a good book.
10	No	It focuses more on the drawings, in my opinion, which is not the same thing as literature which is normally only words on a page.
11	Yes	Comics, like other literature, come in book form and use the written word to convey a story (in addition to pictures of course).
12	Yes	Well, it kind of depends on the comic. I'm not sure I'd rate newspaper comics/webcomics as literature most of the time, but in my opinion any media that tells a story is literature. This includes American comics, graphic novels, and manga almost all the time in my opinion.
13	Not Sure	The amount of picture versus written material causes me to think about whether I consider comics literature or not

- 14 Yes They are a form of story-telling, even though they emphasize images and composition over text to tell the story.
- 15 Not Sure "Literature" makes me think of something I had to read in high school. I wouldn't say that they weren't, but I don't classify them like that in my own mind.
- 16 Yes While certainly not all comics qualify, all novels don't qualify either. Certainly there are a lot of pop-lit comics, but the graphical medium allows for a kind of experience you just can't get with text alone.
- 17 Yes I see them as short stories, and I consider short stories literature. It's an art to be able to create an entire story in small panels.
- 18 Yes It involves transferring ideas.
- 19 Yes I think it's just a different sort of medium, but for me, an identifying characteristic of comics is the text. The images won't make sense without it. Also, often, these stories are thick enough or entertaining enough to occupy a reader.
- 20 Not Sure Never read comics
- 21 Yes It is a written and artistic medium that can do many of the same things as conventional literature like tell a story, so I consider it literature.
- 22 Yes Similar to video games, I think comics (and graphic novels) are gaining mainstream credibility in academia. Even if comics are not as "upper crust" as Shakespeare or Dickens, they nevertheless explore various themes and have inspired and entertained millions.
- 23 Yes It is written art.
- 24 Yes I prefer a broader definition of "literature" that isn't restricted to classic works. Many comics are dominated by text and offer artistic critiques of social order and depict the intricacy of human interaction. The graphic novel, "Maus", was even awarded a Pulitzer, so the genre clearly enjoys some level of literary esteem. Though comics may not subscribe to the traditional image of "literature", the very idea of literature itself is a dynamic one, subject to change and evolution. Comics themselves seem to be a step in that evolutionary process.
- 25 Yes It represents culture, and it is reading.
- 26 Yes Comics are written content that someone creates, and that makes it valid as "literature"

9a/b. Do you think reading comics in German would be helpful for language learning?

RN	Do you think reading comics in German would be helpful for language learning?	Why?
1	Yes	The more exposure to German and the more experiences someone has with it, the more they learn. Comics could be another avenue for that. Also the pictures could be helpful for understanding the story if the German is more advanced.
2	Yes	I have a Peanuts comic that my high school German teacher gave me when I graduated. I would look at it sometimes, but I didn't know enough to fully understand what was going on. Had I realized I was going to be a German major, I would have looked at them more closely and continued my German education in a more interesting and relatable way.
3	Yes	Any available source of language learning can and should be utilized for learning a language. Comics may provide an understanding of certain grammatical features, vocabulary words etc. that other forms of literature do not have.
4	Yes	Exposure to German as spoken, as used in more of the Alltag sense.
5	Not sure	I think it ultimately depends on the motivation of the students.
6	Yes	The images in comics can help readers "fill in the blanks" when they are having trouble understanding the text. This is a good way to expand one's vocabulary without actually looking up words.
7	Yes	I can see it being helpful because when learning a new language it can be easier to understand when more context is given.
8	Yes	It is another source from which to learn a language and would assist visually inclined learners.
9	Yes	I would expect the language to be a little simpler, and context is easier to deduce because of the coincident use of pictures. Contextual understanding permits rapid vocabulary development. A challenge however would present itself due to vernacular and regional differences. The slang of Boston vs Texas is much less in American English than it would be in say, Plattdeutsch vs.

- Süddeutsch vs. Hochdeutsch. This challenge itself affords additional learning opportunities over time.
- 10 Yes Pictures may be more intuitive if one doesn't know a word than simply inferring from the sentence.
- 11 Yes I think that it is similar to watching television in German, in that it gives universally understood visual context for what is being portrayed, so that a language learner won't have to fully rely on language skills to know what is going on, whereas with a plain text, the only context the reader has is in written form in the other language.
- 12 Not sure Hard to say. I think it would be enjoyable, but I don't know what makes one thing or another helpful for language learning.
- 13 Yes The pictures might provide context to what one is reading
- 14 Yes I think that learning can be improved through activating all the senses. Images can give context and help encode meaning into words or phrases.
- 15 Yes I think any exposure to a language is useful for language learning. If someone likes comics already this could be a great way for them to be interested in what they're focusing on, which makes it less of a chore. Pictures that comics contain help a lot with filling in context that may be needed to fill in gaps in understanding of the language, since just by skimming the pictures you can usually get a sense of what's going on. It's also not usually a scholarly use of the language, since it's mostly written dialogue, which will help with learning how the language is actually used in contexts that anyone can engage in.
- 16 Yes Exposure to the language in a context that interests you is an incredibly effective way to learn a language, in my opinion. It's much easier to motivate yourself to continue when you enjoy the activity.
- 17 Yes Comics provide short tidbits of language that are easy to read. Smaller bites of a language are easier to understand and process. Comics are also a great way to learn the idioms, slang, and colloquial speech of a language.
- 18 Yes It's a fun and interactive way of practicing a language.
- 19 Not sure I think reading comics would hold colloquialisms, which would be both a challenge, and potentially helpful.
- 20 Yes It is helpful to have illustrations aid understanding
- 21 Not sure I have played games in German, but the net result has been acquisition of a couple vocab words. I am thinking it would be better in a comic because you take it at your pace and don't have to follow along with verbal dialogue, so you can take time to think through the language and possible idiomatic expressions.

- 22 Yes If I was familiar with the comic or superhero, then it could be helpful to read in German. This would be particularly useful for colloquial/conversation German because comic dialogue is usually less formal. Furthermore, the visual aides would be particularly helpful.
- 23 Yes It would be interesting and help provide context to text.
- 24 Yes They are engaging and fun to read and offer the language learner an active way to comfortably engage with the German language. Stories are also told in conjunction with captivating images that could clear up any ambiguities in text. Comics may also seem far less daunting than attempting to read a novel in a foreign language for the first time.
- 25 Yes When you read comics, you find what a culture holds of value and what the humor/drama/suspense is in that culture. Reading in a language you are learning also helps you learn new vocabulary/spelling with visuals.
- 26 Yes Associating pictures with words would help with understanding the context

10a/b. What do you think is easier to read, comics or prose?

RN	What do you think is easier to read, comics or prose?	Why?
1	Comics	I think of prose as more complex. Longer sentences generally means more to break down and they don't get to the point quickly. I think of comics as more direct.
2	Comics	(only marginally) Comics have the pictures in case you may not know EXACTLY what's going on.
3	Comics	Pictures provide context clues into what the comic is about.
4	Prose	The type/printing is more structured and (usually) follows a conventional pattern. Comics would use a more dispersed presentation and probably be more elliptical in word/sentence structures.
5	Comics	Prose usually has more words and is less exciting.
6	Comics	Comics have less text and the constructions used in comic dialogue would probably be less complex than those in prose.
7	Comics	Comics are easier to read because there are fewer words and more pictures.
8	Comics	There are a lot of pictures.
9	Prose	Here my old eyes are the problem. Prose I can magnify all I want on a kindle. Comics, however, involves a lot of squinting and glasses being taken on/off. I don't want to miss any subtle details that might exist in the visual art.
10	Comics	
11	Comics	For the same reasons mentioned in the previous question. It adds visual context that is not dependent on language skills to understand.
12	Comics	Especially in a foreign language, comics allow the reader to create a scene through visual representation of the scene, rather than describing it extensively to allow the reader to imagine it on their own, which makes me at least able to process the scene faster and easier. Comics are almost entirely dialogue, which is the easiest form of writing to understand and process, in my opinion.
13	Comics	There is less written material and the pictures can help give context to the written material
14	Comics	You don't have to read in between the lines as much. There are also typically less words to read.

- 15 Comics It depends; some comics are very deep and require a lot of brainpower, and some prose is simple and can be read leisurely. And vice versa. I chose "comics" overall, based on what people normally think of when they picture comics (maybe something like superhero comics). These tend to be easy to read, universal, and usually don't rely on a deeper understanding of plot or nuance.
- 16 Comics In general, both dialogue and narration in comics are broken up more by the format than they are in prose. Prose cannot communicate except through words (or the lack thereof), but comics have the extra angle of the images. Not only can this make it easier to understand in a foreign language (for instance, by making it easier to parse words you don't understand through connection with the action), but each individual chunk is smaller and that might make it easier to grasp.
- 17 Comics They are short, funny, and generally entertaining since there are pictures.
- 18 Comics Poetry can be very abstract or figurative at times, while comics are often simple and straight forward.
- 19 Comics Comics are more entertaining, and personally, more different, and therefore more interesting.
- 20 Comics Illustrations aid understanding
- 21 Prose Much more approachable and far less daunting to start and finish a comic, but reading Harry Potter, for example, is an experience that I have not had with comics/graphic novels, though I am confident that it could happen. I think the more verbose nature of prose allows for better character development.
- 22 Comics Comics are usually heavily visual, so the words typically are shown through the artwork. Prose could be harder due to density of the language.
- 23 Comics Photos help to tell the story.
- 24 faster read, more information conveyed succinctly in smaller blocks of text
- 25 Comics Comics come with visuals, which makes it more interesting and entertaining.
- 26 Prose I read comics a lot slower and comprehend less because the pictures are distracting from the main plot

11. Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following: Batman

RN Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following:
Batman

- 1 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 2 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 3 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 4 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 5 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 6 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 7 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 8 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 9 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 10 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 11 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 12 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 13 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 14 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 15 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 16 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 17 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 18 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 19 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 20 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 21 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 22 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 23 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 24 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 25 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 26 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.

11. Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following: Goku

RN Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following: Goku

- 1 I have never heard of ____.
- 2 I have never heard of ____.
- 3 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 4 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 5 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 6 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 7 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 8 I have never heard of ____.
- 9 I have never heard of ____.
- 10 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 11 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 12 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 13 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 14 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 15 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 16 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 17 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 18 I have never heard of ____.
- 19 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 20 I have never heard of ____.
- 21 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 22 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 23 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 24 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 25 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 26 I have never heard of ____.

11. Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following: Lex Luthor

RN Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following: Lex Luthor

- 1 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 2 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 3 I have never heard of ____.
- 4 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 5 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 6 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 7 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 8 I have never heard of ____.
- 9 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 10 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 11 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 12 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 13 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 14 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 15 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 16 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 17 I have never heard of ____.
- 18 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 19 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 20 I have never heard of ____.
- 21 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 22 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 23 I have never heard of ____.
- 24 I have never heard of ____.
- 25 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 26 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.

11. Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following: Asterix

RN Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following:
Asterix

- 1 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 2 I have never heard of ____.
- 3 I have never heard of ____.
- 4 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 5 I have never heard of ____.
- 6 I have never heard of ____.
- 7 I have never heard of ____.
- 8 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 9 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 10 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 11 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 12 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 13 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 14 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 15 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 16 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 17 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 18 I have never heard of ____.
- 19 I have never heard of ____.
- 20 I have never heard of ____.
- 21 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 22 I have never heard of ____.
- 23 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 24 I have never heard of ____.
- 25 I have never heard of ____.
- 26 I have never heard of ____.

11. Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following: Dr.
Demonic

RN Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following: Dr.
Demonic

- 1 I have never heard of ____.
- 2 I have never heard of ____.
- 3 I have never heard of ____.
- 4 I have never heard of ____.
- 5 I have never heard of ____.
- 6 I have never heard of ____.
- 7 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 8 I have never heard of ____.
- 9 I have never heard of ____.
- 10 I have never heard of ____.
- 11 I have never heard of ____.
- 12 I have never heard of ____.
- 13 I have never heard of ____.
- 14 I have never heard of ____.
- 15 I have never heard of ____.
- 16 I have never heard of ____.
- 17 I have never heard of ____.
- 18 I have never heard of ____.
- 19 I have never heard of ____.
- 20 I have never heard of ____.
- 21 I have never heard of ____.
- 22 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 23 I have never heard of ____.
- 24 I have never heard of ____.
- 25 I have never heard of ____.
- 26 I have never heard of ____.

11. Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following: Rick Grimes

RN Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following: Rick Grimes

- 1 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 2 I have never heard of ____.
- 3 I have never heard of ____.
- 4 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 5 I have never heard of ____.
- 6 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 7 I have never heard of ____.
- 8 I have never heard of ____.
- 9 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 10 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 11 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 12 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 13 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 14 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 15 I have never heard of ____.
- 16 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 17 I have never heard of ____.
- 18 I have never heard of ____.
- 19 I have never heard of ____.
- 20 I have never heard of ____.
- 21 I have never heard of ____.
- 22 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 23 I have never heard of ____.
- 24 I have never heard of ____.
- 25 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 26 I have only heard the name of ____.

11. Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following: Enid Coleslaw

RN Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following: Enid Coleslaw

- 1 I have never heard of ____.
- 2 I have never heard of ____.
- 3 I have never heard of ____.
- 4 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 5 I have never heard of ____.
- 6 I have never heard of ____.
- 7 I have never heard of ____.
- 8 I have never heard of ____.
- 9 I have never heard of ____.
- 10 I have never heard of ____.
- 11 I have never heard of ____.
- 12 I have never heard of ____.
- 13 I have never heard of ____.
- 14 I have never heard of ____.
- 15 I have never heard of ____.
- 16 I have never heard of ____.
- 17 I have never heard of ____.
- 18 I have never heard of ____.
- 19 I have never heard of ____.
- 20 I have never heard of ____.
- 21 I have never heard of ____.
- 22 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 23 I have never heard of ____.
- 24 I have never heard of ____.
- 25 I have never heard of ____.
- 26 I have never heard of ____.

11. Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following: Wolverine

RN Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following:
Wolverine

- 1 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 2 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 3 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 4 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 5 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 6 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 7 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 8 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 9 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 10 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 11 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 12 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 13 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 14 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 15 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 16 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 17 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 18 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 19 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 20 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 21 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 22 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 23 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 24 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 25 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 26 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.

11. Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following: Rorschach

RN Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following:
Rorschach

- 1 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 2 I have never heard of ____.
- 3 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 4 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 5 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 6 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 7 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 8 I have never heard of ____.
- 9 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 10 I have never heard of ____.
- 11 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 12 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 13 I have never heard of ____.
- 14 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 15 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 16 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 17 I have never heard of ____.
- 18 I have never heard of ____.
- 19 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 20 I have never heard of ____.
- 21 I have never heard of ____.
- 22 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 23 I have never heard of ____.
- 24 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 25 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 26 I have never heard of ____.

11. Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following: Scrooge McDuck

RN Please choose the most appropriate statement for each of the following:
Scrooge McDuck

- 1 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 2 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 3 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 4 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 5 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 6 I have never heard of ____.
- 7 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 8 I have only heard the name of ____.
- 9 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 10 I have never heard of ____.
- 11 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 12 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 13 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 14 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 15 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 16 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 17 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 18 I have never heard of ____.
- 19 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 20 I have never heard of ____.
- 21 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 22 I have read comics in which ____ played a role.
- 23 I have never heard of ____.
- 24 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 25 I am only familiar with ____ from TV, films, books, etc.
- 26 I have only heard the name of ____.

G.2. IRP Data

Participant 1:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 2)

Brecht says Herr K, when asked, said the elephant was his favorite animal. He associates it with strength. He said it is a good friend, and a good enemy. He said it is big, gray and fast. It has a big head and big ears. He said it can be sad. It is good with children and small animals. He then concluded by saying something about art, and that was why the elephant was his favorite animal.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 1)

The Old Friend greets the brothers Ka-Rim, and asks what he can do for them. They say their father died and left them 17 camels and they disagree about how to divide them because the total doesn't fit with the way they are supposed to divide them. The will said the oldest should get $\frac{1}{2}$, the second oldest $\frac{1}{3}$, and the youngest $\frac{1}{9}$. They ask him to undertake the decision for them. He discusses their problem and says they should bring the extra camel to him, and then it will divide as it is supposed to. They say they are unendingly grateful and they leave happy. Then it shows two kids talking about friendship. I think the smaller kid said something about that being the only friendship without being a victim, but it was a bit harder to understand.

Participant 2:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 2)

Mr. K. lists why elephants are the best animals: they're large and big, but quick; they have good dispositions; they are even good for art because of the ivory they produce; they know and understand friendship; they dance; they leave large paths behind them; they have large ears, but selective hearing; they literally have thick skin, but have soft personalities; they care about other smaller animals; they care about their young and their elderly.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 1)

Ka-rim's father passed away and left 17 camels to be divided by his sons (half to the eldest, a third to the second, and a ninth to the third), but 17 was not divisible by any of these, so the old friend of the deceased donated his one camel to the group. 18 was divisible by each percentage, so the sons could each get their share. All the old friend wanted was what was left over. When the camels were divided up, there was one that was unspoken for, so the old friend got his camel back. This was basically a parable/story from one man to another about an example of the selflessness of good friendship.

Participant 3:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 2)

Mr. K was asked what animal he revered the highest, and responded with the elephant. He likes the elephant because it is large and strong, but is neither lazy or overly aggressive when obtaining food. It lives to be very old, is thick skinned, sees and hears only what it wants to, and eats small food by picking it up with its trunk. It even provides something for art by providing ivory.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 1)

3 brothers come to the wise man with the problem that their father has died, leaving 17 camels. According to the testament, the first brother should get a half of the camels, the second should get a third, and the last a ninth of the camels. They find that they cannot split the camels up this way evenly, so the man gives them his camel, telling them to return whatever is left over. They can now divide the camels equally, but they discover they have an extra camel, which they return to the man.

Participant 4:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 1)

The gentleman gave this as an example of the proper service a friend can provide: Three sons came to an Arab and said, Our Father has died. He owned 17 camels and he provided in his will that the eldest should receive half of the camels, the second son should receive half, and the youngest a ninth of his camels. But we cannot make a proper division; Can you help? The Arab thought and said, You have too few camels. I have one that is available for your use. Take it and make the decreed division and bring me what's left. The sons took his camel, and then made the division. The eldest received 9 ($1/2$ of 18), the second 6 ($1/3$ of 18), and the youngest 2 ($1/9$ of 18), and to their surprise one camel remained. They returned the camel to the Arab. The gentleman said this was the proper measure of friendship, in that it did not require a special sacrifice by the Arab.

Participant 4: Comics

The favorite animal of the boy is the elephant. Why?? (Because) He is cunning and strong. He uses his strength for good and cuts a wide swath. He is sociable and a friend to small animals and children. He lives to an old age. He dances. He has thick skin and stops knives. His trunk is strong but can deliver small morsels of food. He is a good friend and a good enemy. He supports art because he gives ivory.

Participant 5:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 2)

An aging, joyful elephant is the subject of a list.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 1)

3 brothers, 18 camels. The division per their father's will leaves 1 camel unaccounted for, so they go to hookah-dude for advice. He takes one, now the division of the camels works without remainder.

Participant 6:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 1)

In order to describe the correct ways in which one does service to friends, Mr. K described the following story: Three boys came to an old Arab and told him that their father had died. Tradition demands that they parcel out his camels amongst the three of them. The oldest receives one half, the middle child one third, and the youngest child one ninth. They asked for the old man's help because they were not sure if they had enough camels to achieve the correct proportions. The old man said, "Here, take my camel. I'm not using it, and when you are done you can bring me any leftover camels." The three boys thanked him and came back later, the oldest with 9 camels, one half, the middle child with six, one third, and the youngest with 2, one ninth. That left one camel, which they gave back to the old Arab. "That is the proper way to offer service to your friends," said Mr. K.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 2)

Which animal do you like the most? Elephants... The combine strength with.... He likes to drink and be merry... He likes to dance.... He can work well... His ears allow selective hearing... He has many friends.... He is very large, but eats the smallest food.... He has thick skin...

Participant 7:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 2)

The elephant combines strength with cunning. He is gray. He is not eatable. He works well. He has a tender strength and can become angry. He dies in the thicket.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 1)

The man asks what he can do for the brothers. The brothers ask them how they can separate the camels of their father based on the fractions of a third, a ninth and a sixth when there are 17 camels. The man offers to lend them his own camel in order to distribute the camels and then he will simply receive whatever camels are left. As it turns out there is only one camel left for the man. This is actually a story being told by two businessmen that are walking. One of the men says that this is the truest form of friendship service when it seeks not to better or belittle any particular person.

Participant 8:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 2)

The Elephant is this mans response. The elephant is a strong animal, it dances, drinks, care and loves smaller animals. The elephant is a happy creature and stands tall. It is old and mighty. The elephant is gray and is the most magnificent creature.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 1)

A man walks up to his brother exclaiming that their father has died leaving them 17 camels. The father divided the camels as followings: brother 1: 9 camels, brother 2: 6 camels, and brother 3: 2 camels. The only problem is that they ended up having 18 camels rather than 17.

Participant 9:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 1)

In service of friendship, by B. Brecht. As an example of the right way to be a good friend (someone, forgot) tells the following story: There was an Arab who was visited by 3 kids who's dad had died. The father had left them 17 camels, which they were to divide as follows - for the eldest, one half, for the middle, one third, and for the youngest, one ninth. However they could not decide how to best divide 17 camels in this way, and asked the Arab for help. The Arab said "well, I have only one camel, but take it with you, and then divide up all the camels and bring me what remains". So they took the camel, and divided up the 18 camels - for the oldest $1/2$, which was nine, for the middle $1/3$, which was 6, and for the youngest, $1/9$, which was 2. They returned the extra camel back to the Arab and thanked him. This example shows service in friendship is best when you don't even have to make a big sacrifice to help.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 2)

"Keuner's favorite animal" Friend: What's your favorite animal above all? Keuner: The elephant! Friend: Why? Keuner: proceeds to tell us many things about elephants: - they are large, heavy, and gray - despite this size they like tiny foods - they like to dance and make merry - they make a good comic, and can be very delicate - they are a good friend and a terrible enemy - they are very social, and not just with other elephants - they care for small creatures - they leave a wide wake behind them, which shows they know how to have fun (although the shopkeeper disagrees) - they have a thick hide that breaks knives - they only hear what matters to them - they contribute to the arts... by doing something involving stains on the street and their clothes which ends with them in a stupor. Vomit, perhaps?

Participant 10:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 2)

A professor was asked which animal was the best, and he replied with the elephant. He described all of the traits an elephant has that makes it stronger than other animals.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 1)

Three brothers went to an old friend for advice. Their father had died and left 17 camels for them to share. However, they couldn't figure out how to evenly divide the camels in order of oldest son to youngest son. The old man lent them a camel, and then they were

able to do the math and found that they would have one camel left over, so they gave it to the old man to show gratitude.

Participant 11:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 1)

To explain the right way to serve a friend, Herr K. tells this story: "An old arab man is met by three men, who explain their situation to him. Their father recently died, and left 17 camels to be divided among the three of them. The oldest son should get $\frac{1}{2}$, the middle son should get $\frac{1}{3}$, and the youngest should get $\frac{1}{9}$. They have problems dividing them up, however. So the old arab man proposes a solution: he decides to give them his only camel, which makes 18 total. The three sons are thrilled, and divide the camels among themselves. The oldest gets 9, the middle son gets 6, and the youngest gets 2. This leaves one left over, which the old arab man asks to take back, as repayment for his services." This type of service to friends is the best because there are no victims.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 2)

A man is walking down the street with another man, who asks him what his favorite animal is. He says that elephants are, and when asked why, he lists what he thinks is great about elephants: their ability to do great things, that they have fun, they are sociable, they have thick skin for defence but are good tempered, they can drink, they like to dance, they make good friends but also formidable enemies, they can get angry, they have a trunk that can provide their enormous body with even small pieces of food... but most important is what they do for art: they supply ivory. While he lists these things, he takes part in scenes generally portraying, to some degree, what he was describing, while he acts as a personified elephant.

Participant 12:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 1)

"Friendship Service" (??) Bertolt Brecht As an example of this idea, Mr. K gave this as his best story: Three young men came to an Arab and told him: "Our father died and left us seventeen camels. In his will he said that they should be distributed as such: half to the oldest son, a third to the second son, and a ninth to the youngest son. However, we can't figure out how to distribute them so we have come to you for help." The Arab responded: "it seems to me you have one too few camels. Take one of mine, then distribute them according to the will, and return to me anything left over." Taking this camel, the three men divided up the eighteen camels according to the will: half to the oldest son, which was nine, a third to the second son, which was six, and a ninth to the youngest son, which was two. In the end, only one camel was left, so they returned the Arab's old friend to him and thanked him. Mr. K describes this as a good representation of the idea because in the end, there were no victims/losers.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 2)

A man asks Herr K what his favorite animal is. He responds: the elephant! The man asks why. Herr K responds with a list of traits over several panels: (I couldn't understand the German in several panels so I will skip over them.) -something about a list -elephants are good natured and understand what's fun (a lady points out that the elephant destroying things in her shop isn't fun!) -elephants are good friends (the elephant waters a smiling flower) -just as they are good enemies (the elephant attacks a man, who is using a lawnmower close to the flower, with a stick) -their ears are [something] and they are able to only listen to what they want to hear (the elephant folds his ears shut with people saying "blah" behind him) -they are big and heavy, but also very fast (the elephant runs from a policeman after writing graffiti) -they grow old (the elephant sits on a park bench with a beard and a cane) -they are friendly and get along with other people, not just elephants (an elephant drinks in a bar with mice) -they can be sad (an elephant wanders down a street at night) -and upset (an elephant protests with a sign at a rally) -they like to dance (elephant dancing) -they get along well with children and other small animals (doodles of an elephant with small animals and children) -they work well (elephant in a "worker" pose as a statue) -they like to drink and be merry (elephant swinging around a street lamp while the man from the earlier panels looks disappointed) The elephant-man concludes: But most importantly: elephants create something for art The next panel depicts the elephant man with blood coming out of his mouth - which is missing the tusks visible in previous panels - and covering his whole body, as well as dripping away from him as to imply someone had walked off in that direction. "they provide ivory!" the elephant man says.

Participant 13:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 2)

The elephant combines cunning with strength He is big and strong His ears hear only what he wants to hear He loves children and small animals He works well He loves art and provides ivory

-Comics IRP (Comics text 1)

What can I help you with? Our father has died and left us with camels We need help dividing out the camels The oldest brother should get half The second, a third And the third, a ninth It seems to me that you can divide them up well, bring back what you have left

Participant 14:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 1)

As an example of the correct way to provide a service to a friend, the following is the best from Mr. K: "There was an old Arab and three young people came to him and said 'Our father is dead. He left behind 17 camels and his will said we should divide them up so that the oldest gets half, the second a third, and the third a ninth. We can but decide not how to divide them. Take over the decision.'" The Arab thought. 'You don't have enough

camels to divide them well. I have myself only 1 camel. Take it and divide the camels, and bring back what is left." They took the camels with them and they now had 18 camels. They divided the camels, so that the oldest had..... To their astonishment, they had one camel left over. They brought back the camel back to the old Arab and thanked him." Mr. K correctly told the story, because it required no victim.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 2)

Tell me, Keuner, what is your favorite animal of all? The elephants. And why? They are good friends, as they are good enemies. They can be sad. They can be angry. They like kids and other animals. They work hard. They like to dance They like to drink and be merry. Most importantly they contribute to art: They provide ivory.

Participant 15:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 2)

Mr. K was asked what animal he treasured most, and he said the elephant. His reason were that it was strong. It understood fun and was a good friend. It was big but liked even small foods like nuts. It has big ears and hears what it wants. It dances and loves small children and even small animals.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 1)

"Oh, the brothers! What can I do for you?" "Greetings. Our father died and he left us in his will 17 camels, but only so the oldest gets half, the middle a third, and the youngest a ninth! (Help us?)" "It seems you're a camel short for that division. I myself have a camel and I'll lend it to you to help. Now you have it right: (Out of 18 camels, the oldest gets 9, the middle 6, and the youngest 2." "Oh thank you my friend for your help!" "WHAT a great example of friendship and friendly service." "Perhaps the truest example, since he never actually intended to give them anything at all."

Participant 16:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 1)

As an example of the correct kind of service to give to friends, Herr K told this story: An old man died, and in his will he left his sons 17 camels. The oldest would receive a half, the middle a third, and the youngest a ninth. However they could not agree on how to divide them, and so they went to an Arab, whom they asked to decide for them. The Arab said, as I see it, the problem is that you have one camel too few. I have only a single camel, but take it, divide the camels, and bring back what remains. So they did - the oldest took a half, 9 camels, the middle son a third, 6 camels, and the youngest took 2, leaving one camel remaining. They brought the last camel back to their friend, in thanks.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 2)

Which animal do you like the best, Keuner? I like elephants. Why? Elephants combine cunning with strength. No small cunning, which is sufficient to avoid imitation or to

snatch food without attracting attention, but instead a cunning which gives strength for great undertakings. Where the elephant has been, he leads a wide path, and because of this he is good natured and understands fun. He is a good friend like he is a good enemy. He is very large and heavy, but also very fast. His ears are adjustable so he can hear what he wants. The trunk of an elephant delivers the smallest food to a huge body. He will be very old. He is very friendly, not only to other elephants. He has thick skin, to break knives in it, but his mind is gentle. A good sense of humor makes it possible to honor him. He can be sad, or angry. He loves to dance and loves animals. He is grey and attracts attention because of his size. He can work well, likes to drink and have fun, but most importantly, he does something for art - he provides ivory.

Participant 17:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 1)

Written by Bertolt Brecht. Herr K. is telling this story: There were three young men who told an old Arab man that their father died. He left them 17 camels that would be divided up between the men. The oldest gets half and the second gets a third, the third child only gets a ninth. They couldn't split it up and wanted the man to do it. He said they were missing a camel and gave them his. When they split it up, they had an extra and gave it back.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 2)

A man was asking another man what his favorite animal at the zoo was. The man answered an elephant and began to list all of the reasons why. He liked them because they leave a trail of where they were, they are good friends, they are strong, big, and heavy but also fast, they have big ears but only listen to what they choose to hear, its trunk allows it to eat small treats, it can be sad but also happy, and it loves kids and other animals, and it provides ivory.

Participant 18:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 1)

Mr. K. told a story of three guy and an Arab. The three guys had inherited 17 camels so they sought the advice of the Arab, as they were instructed that the oldest was to have $\frac{1}{2}$ of the camels, the second to have $\frac{1}{3}$, and the youngest to have a ninth. The Arab said that there was a camel missing, so he let them borrow his camel so that the math would work. they divided the 18 camels up with the oldest having 9, the second having 6, and the youngest having 2. They then gave the camel back to its owner, and the friendly advice was very good indeed.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 2)

A man asks a boy when they leave a zoo, what was the best animal and the boy says an Elephant. The man asks why and the boy gives many reasons including an elephant's strength, its ability to dance and tune people out, its ability to be sad, or have a good time

breaking stuff in a store, because it is loved by kids and small animals, because it can get drunk and be happy, and because it can run very fast. Although it is only gray, it is diverse.

Participant 19:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 2)

As Mr. K was asked, the animal he thought was most powerful, he named the elephant. The elephant was big and hard and strong.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 1)

3 brothers approach an old friend about how to evenly distribute their father's wealth between them, when there are an odd number of animals. The old man charges them a camel, so that there would be no argument between brothers. At the end of the comic it's revealed to be a story that teaches a lesson, and the brothers should have been less selfish and not sought outside help.

Participant 20:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 1)

Friendship: 3 Brothers whose father recently died, left them 17 camels. They go to an arab man to help them understand how to split them per their fathers wishes: the oldest gets $1/2$, the middle gets $1/3$, and the youngest $1/9$. They are perplexed since 17 is not split nicely in these fractions, so the arab man lends them a camel so the fractions come out well and tells them to give back what is left.. To their astoundment however, there is 1 camel leftover for the arab man.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 2)

A man is asked by another man: " Which zoo animal is you favorite?" To which he answers, "An elephant!" Because an elephant is large and has the courage and ability to conquer great undertakings, he knows how to have fun, he is a good friend and a good enemy, he is sociable not just to elephants, he has such a thick skin that he breaks knives, he is a good worker, he will live live to an old age, he can get angry, he can get sad, he dances well, when he drinks he becomes jolly, he is even holy sometimes, he likes kids and even little animals, he is gray like everyone but sticks out due to his mass, and most importantly he contributes to art: with his ivory!

Participant 21:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 1)

Herr K wrote about an act of friendship. Three boys came to an Arab for help. Their father left them 17 camels in his will and split them up amongst the boys. Half for the oldest, a third for the middle son, and $1/9$ th for the youngest. They asked him how to split them up because they it didn't seem to work out. The Arab said "it seems that you don't

have the right amount. I have a single camel, take it, split up the camels, then give me what's left." The boys thanked the man and proceeded to split the camels up. 9 for the oldest, 6 for the middle son, and 2 for the youngest. To their astonishment, they had one camel left, which they returned to the Arab, renewing their thanks. Herr K named this act of friendship right, because it did not entail any sacrifice.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 2)

Mr. Keuner's favorite animal One man asks the other: Keuner, what's your favorite animal? The elephant. Why? He is combines brains with strength, is hardworking, leaves a broad trail where he walks, knows how to have fun, drinks and is happy, likes kids and small animals, he can grow old, his trunk is good for for making even the smallest foods edible, he stands out only because of his size, he is social and not only with animals,... and most importantly, he offers something to the arts... he provides ivory.

Participant 22:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 1)

Mr. K tells the story of three men who approached an Arab, in order to determine the best way to split their deceased father's seventeen camels. Their father's will said for the eldest to have a half, the middle to have a third, and the youngest to have a ninth. The old man thought on it and figured out a way for the camels to be divvied up - even offering his sole camel. Ultimately, one camel remains. Mr. K says this is a good story to showcase friendship since the old Arab didn't expect anything in return.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 2)

Outside a zoo, a man asks what animal his friend holds above all others. The friend says, an elephant because they have many strengths. The friend lists that elephants can be good friends, can listen (and not listen), can be good workers, can be emotional, and can have a good time. Elephants will also grow old, and they provide great opportunities for artists. But, above all, elephants supply ivory!

Participant 23:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 2)

Someone asked Mr. K what his favorite animal was, and he replied "an elephant". They live long, they are as big as they are heavy. They are gray. A knife can break off in their skin. They are respected as well as feared everywhere. They are tender. They can be sad. They can be furious. They love children as well as small animals. They can live a long time. They die in a thicket.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 1)

Hello brother. Greetings old friend. My father has died and he has us with 17 camels. He left the eldest son $\frac{1}{2}$ the camels, the second oldest son $\frac{1}{3}$, and the third $\frac{1}{9}$. We can't settle things and have come to you to settle it for us. I only have one camel. Give me

what is left over. We have one camel left. Take it. That was a nice story Reukel. It shows one what you get for being a good friend. No one lost out.

Participant 24:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 2)

As Mr. K. was asked which animal he appreciated above all, he replied "the elephant" and justified it thus: the elephant unites subterfuge with strength. It is not pitiful subterfuge that suffices to escape ambushes or to snatch food unnoticed, but rather the subterfuge which stands available to strength for great undertakings. A broad trail leads where this animal once was. It is therefore docile and understands fun. It is a good friend just as it is a good enemy. Very large and heavy, it is also very fast. Its trunk supplies an enormous body with the smallest pieces of food, even nuts. Its ears are adjustable and it lives to be very old. It is also gregarious, and not only amongst other elephants. The elephant is both beloved and feared everywhere. A certain humour enables its veneration. It has a thick skin in which knives break, but its disposition is tender. It can become angry. It likes to dance and dies in the undergrowth; it likes children and other small creatures. It is grey and stands out only because of its mass. It is not edible, but can work hard. It likes to drink and becomes merry. It does something for art: it provides ivory.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 1)

"Oh, the Ka-rim brothers. What can I do for you all?" "Greetings, old friend. Our father passed away and left us 17 camels." "In his will he mandated that the oldest son should receive half, the second son a third, and the youngest son one-ninth of the camels. Now we cannot reach a consensus on the division. We have therefore decided that you should take over the decision." "Hm...as I see it, you all have one camel too few for a good division. I, myself, only have one camel... but it is yours. Take it, divide, and then return to me what remains." ... "And we'll return this to our smart, old friend to whom we will be infinitely grateful." "That was a great story, Keuner, and a good example of how one can render a service to a friend." "That is really the only right form of a token of friendship because it doesn't demand sacrifice."

Participant 25:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 2)

When a man was asked what animal he liked, he only thought of the elephants. He recalled once seeing an elephant with a large head who danced.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 1)

A man is telling a story: Three brothers seek help from an older man because their father had died and left them with 17 camels. Having an odd number, they couldn't split the camels based on the fraction that the father left in his testament. The older man gave them his one and only camel so that they could finally do the math right.

Participant 26:

-Prose IRP (Prose text 1)

Mr. K told his friend a story about how someone gave some camels to the oldest, middle, and youngest. A father died, which I think is the reason why there were so many camels to give away? There were lots of fractions.

-Comics IRP (Comics text 2)

Someone asks someone else which animal is their favorite when they walk into a zoo. The person responds with all the ways elephants are good: they're strong, fast, gray... they are good friends, drink and are merry, are sometimes sad... The elephants have lots of well rounded emotions

G.3. Postquestionnaire Data

1a/b. Had you ever read anything by Bertolt Brecht or Ulf K. (the comics artist) prior to today?

RN	Had you ever read anything by Bertolt Brecht or Ulf K. (the comics artist) prior to today?	What had you read?
1	Yes	Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder by Brecht
2	No	
3	No	
4	Yes	Mutter Courage, the text of die Dreigroschenoper, some poetry/stories of Brecht.
5	No	
6	No	
7	No	
8	No	
9	Yes	I don't recall, but I think we had a poem or short writing to read in 346L this semester.
10	No	
11	Yes	Mutter Courage und Ihre Kinder and a few poems by Brecht, and nothing by the comic artist.
12	Yes	I know I have read something by Brecht in one of my classes, but I can't recall what.
13	No	
14	Yes	Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder by Bertold Brecht
15	Yes	I read Brecht's Mutter Courage this semester.
16	Yes	Bertolt Brecht's play, Mutter Courage und Ihre Kinder.
17	No	
18	No	
19	Yes	Brecht: Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder
20	No	
21	Yes	Fragen eines lesenden Arbeiters. For the Texas State German Contest
22	Yes	I believe I had read an excerpt of "Antigone" in another class, as well as "Coriolanus."
23	No	
24	Yes	Mutter Courage
25	No	

26 Yes

Mutter Courage und Ihre Kinder

2a/b. Had you previously read either of today's texts?

RN	Had you previously read either of today's texts?	Which one(s) had you previously read?
1	No	
2		
3		
4	No	
5		
6		
7		
8		
9	No	
10		
11	No	
12	No	
13		
14	No	
15	No	
16	No	
17		
18		
19	No	
20		
21	No	
22	No	
23		
24	No	
25		
26	No	

3. How has this experience changed your view of comics as material for language learning?

RN How has this experience changed your view of comics as material for language learning?

- 1 It was about what I expected. The prose seemed more complex than the comic. But the pictures in the comic were helpful.
- 2 The comics used words that I was more familiar with as well as helped me keep things chronological because of the pictures and spatial reasoning. I've ALWAYS struggled with German acquisition and am probably not where I should be for having 8 years of experience, but the comic made me feel good about my language skill. The paragraph, not so much. It gave no helpful clues for the words I didn't know. I may actually read that Peanuts comic book that my high school German teacher gave me now.
- 3 I definitely remembered more of the comic story than I did the prose story, but I am not sure why. This leads me to believe that comics, presented in individual panels with accompanying pictures, are easier to understand and remember.
- 4 The comics do "break up" the information and give some reinforcement - so they're a helpful way to "intake" new material.
- 5 They use more medium (paper, data etc.), so they might be slightly wasteful.
- 6 It seemed that the broken nature of the comic dialogue made it harder to remember the message of the story therein. In other words, the fact that the text was separated widely between the panels made it more difficult for me to recall the specifics of the text rather than general ideas about the whole story. In prose the sentences run directly into one another, perhaps making it easier for one to help me recall another. Also, the pictures weren't as helpful for discerning the meaning of words as I had expected. I think two external variable contributed to my better remembering the prose text, however: (1) The prose was more of a story and was therefore easier to recall than the list-based dialogue of the comic and (2) I expected that I would be asked to recall the prose after having already been asked to recall the comic dialogue.
- 7 With comics it appears that no matter how small the assigned section there is always a story arc that can easily be identified and recalled. It seems that this makes it easier to remember, which would be useful when learning new words.
- 8 I felt as material for language learning it was very useful. The grammatical structures were present in the dialogue and this would help students internalize these structures. The material was not difficult to understand either.
- 9 I found the comic harder, actually. The lack of color led to confusion, especially at the end, and the comic itself was very simply drawn. So while I feel I got the gist of most of the panels, there were some that were still a mystery to me. The sense of not knowing an entire panel hit me more as a loss than not knowing a few odd words here and there in the prose, because of my assumption that each panel carries a significant amount of meaning, whereas a couple words doesn't really add or subtract from a piece of prose. So my

opinion is now refined - CERTAIN types of comics are probably very useful for language learning, but they must establish enough context with as little ambiguity as possible.

- 10 I was able to remember a lot more of the comic than the long chunk of text. Retaining words is difficult when learning a new language, and because the comics helped me remember I would say it was helpful in that sense.
- 11 It made me realize that comics could perhaps be an excellent supplement to other methods of language learning.
- 12 It's hard to say. I felt much more challenged to remember the comics but I think it's because they didn't really tell a story, they were just a series of one-line descriptions, and felt much longer than the text portion. If I try to imagine the Brecht piece as a comic it seems easy to understand, and if I imagine the comic as a paragraph of text it sounds daunting. I was bothered that the two pieces were so different in their composition, and I'm not sure I can draw any conclusions about learning via these two different types of media. Also, there were significantly more words I was not familiar with in the comic, and I noticed that I wasn't able to effectively figure out what was going on from the picture. I thought going into this that maybe comics could cover for that lack of knowledge, but I think it didn't help very much. However, if I had encountered those words in a paragraph, I would have absolutely no clues as to what they were supposed to mean and would have been forced to just skip them. I think it's worth looking more into having comics as context clues so students can figure out new words without just looking them up. Memorizing the extensive list of things that happened in the comic felt significantly more difficult than the small story in the text portion. All in all I would say I think the idea has potential but the results of this particular comparison did not impress me into thinking comics are necessarily better or even a good idea at all.
- 13 I believe that the pictures that went along with the comics helped make it easier to understand
- 14 I felt that I remembered more from the prose text than the comic. Maybe the combination of the images and the dialogue in the comic interfered too much with each other.
- 15 My view hasn't changed. I prefer the comics as a more passive learning, something you can enjoy and take time with. The prose put me in a more analytical mindset. I focused on grammar and forms in order to understand. It was heavier to get through because of this, as if I were walking in the ocean where the water was at my knees and I had to work to move. Reading the comic was like walking on a trail with the occasional rock or bump you have to pay attention to. In the end, the comic was easier but the prose had more focused language engagement. I think the comics are important as a supplement (provided you enjoy comics already) in order to be comfortable with the language without putting you in a situation where you have to become too analytical and therefore feel it a chore.

- 16 The comic entry was a bit more difficult than I expected, because it was less of a narrative and more of a list. That made it more difficult to remember than the prose text, but I felt like the language was easier in the comic.
- 17 I didn't know some of the words but I liked the style. It was easy to read and the pictures gave me clues of what some of the words were.
- 18 It has elevated my view of comics as material for learning a language as I found the texts to be difficult, yet engaging and fun!
- 19 I think it's a good idea but I would have no idea where to begin looking for native German comics.
- 20 It helped me understand some words I didn't know!
- 21 They were great for learning vocabulary. Like I said, the ability to go slow allows you to understand more of the material than in a movie, for example.
- 22 Comics can be used to expand one's vocabulary, and help with visual memory. I want to read more German comics!
- 23 It did not.
- 24 Hasn't changed my view of comics as material for language learning. It can prove to be a good resource
- 25 Comics make language learning a lot more engaging and entertaining. The long article was really hard to get through, but the comic made me look up certain words I did not understand so that I could understand the story.
- 26 I'll probably use comics to help me learn german in the future

4. How has this experience changed your view of comics as literature?

RN How has this experience changed your view of comics as literature?

- 1 I still think of them more as art. But I can see the possibilities.
- 2 It didn't really change my view of them as literature. I still think they have literary merit. Maybe a smidgen more on the educational front than I thought before.
- 3 It has not, although the comic story was more enjoyable than the prose.
- 4 I still see them as a bit abbreviated for literature.
- 5 No.
- 6 It has not changed my views. I still view comics as literature. If anything, it makes me think they are more difficult to convincingly "pull off" than prose literature.
- 7 This experience has not changed my views of comics as literature.
- 8 It has not changed my opinion as comics as literature but I do think they are useful for learning.
- 9 Hasn't, really. I had forgotten about the entire wing of comics that are targeted almost exclusively at children, but children's literature is still literature.
- 10 I still think that it is not the same as literature, but it is a storytelling device.
- 11 I don't think that it has. Comics are indeed literature in my opinion.
- 12 Not at all.
- 13 I don't know if my ideas about comics as literature have changed
- 14 I still feel that comics are literature.
- 15 That view still hasn't changed.
- 16 I don't believe it has. I still believe comics are every bit as capable of being literature as novels - it's more about the author than the medium in that sense.
- 17 I see that they can also be written with creative liberty and stylized like literature.
- 18 It has not changed my view.
- 19 Not a whole lot.
- 20 Seems like a great way to expand my german vocabulary.
- 21 It hasn't. I still think it is a solid form of literature
- 22 This has solidified my view that comics should be considered as literature.
- 23 It did not.
- 24 Again, hasn't changed my view
- 25 Nope, I had already considered comics something culturally important.
- 26 I still think they're literature

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