An Investigation into Students’ Usage of an
Online Homework Wiki,
Its Effect on Language Improvement and
Its Benefit as a Learning and Teaching Support
for Undergraduate German

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and has been referenced properly to work done by or reported by others. It has not been submitted for any other academic award or part of, at this or at any other educational institution. I agree that this thesis may be made available by the University of Limerick to future students.

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Abstract

An Investigation into Students’ Usage of an Online Homework Wiki, its Effect on Language Improvement and its Benefit as a Learning and Teaching Support for Undergraduate German

Danielle Martin

This investigation aimed to examine the effects of using an Online German Homework Wiki and other factors on undergraduate students’ language improvement at the Shannon College of Hotel Management (SCHM) in Ireland.

The Online German Homework Wiki designed and implemented at SCHM in advance of this study. Students had the option of submitting homework online, where it was corrected by the lecturer using an elaborate coloured correction scheme, incorporating corrective feedback and comments of guidance and praise. The students and lecturer also had the ability to communicate online using comments.

The Online German Homework Wiki also stored class handouts and class pages in which the lecturer documented all white-board work on vocabulary and discussion topics as they happened in class, thus contextualising vocabulary. Key to the learning process, however, was the feature of hyperlinking, which involved the teacher underlining errors and hyperlinking them to other pages explaining the grammatical or idiomatic aspect, thus contextualising grammar.

The investigation involved developing testing methods to establish students’ language level in the pre-study and post-study phases. Questionnaires were devised to collect background information and feedback from students and also feedback from lecturers at SCHM and at other institutes.

The investigation found that students’ engagement with the Online Homework Wiki was solely affected by students’ attendance, motivation and attitude towards learning German, IT skills and the frequency of the lecturer’s feedback. The number of students’ online submissions, motivation and classroom attendance affected students’ accuracy and proficiency. When students felt encouraged by online comments they also improved in proficiency.

The Online Homework Wiki was successful in hosting the process of homework submission and provided clearer and more legible correction. It was deemed a beneficial learning and teaching support by SCHM students and lecturers at SCHM and at other institutes. The Online Homework Wiki was also awarded an EU European Language Label in September 2011.

The Online Homework Wiki will continue to be in use at SCHM. The findings recommend its use in other learning environments, with small to medium class sizes, should teachers feel confident in their IT skills and are able to commit the extra time which online correction demands.
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<th>Description</th>
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<td>ELL</td>
<td>European Language Label</td>
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<tr>
<td>FLCAS</td>
<td>Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCI</td>
<td>Human Computer Interface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCDH</td>
<td>Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypotheses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>personal computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHM</td>
<td>Shannon College of Hotel Management</td>
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<td>SLA</td>
<td>Second Language Assessment</td>
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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The Irish Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources’ Report (2009) on Ireland’s Knowledge Society highlighted the importance and the challenge of incorporating Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into all levels of education to support teaching and learning. The strategy advises early and continued exposure to ICT throughout education to ensure that the population becomes digitally literate from an early age.

At the Shannon College of Hotel Management (SCHM), a third-level institute in Ireland, the challenge to incorporate ICT was embraced in the German undergraduate classroom. The aim was to use technology to enhance individual student learning by focusing on written accuracy. It was therefore decided to focus on the process of written homework submission, as this is the only private and individual student-lecturer interaction within the German course. Therefore, to incorporate ICT, and to improve the process of homework submission, an Online Homework Wiki was launched in September 2009 at SCHM. The Online Homework Wiki will be referred to as the Wiki in the remainder of this document.

1.2 Statement of Topic

The Wiki was made available to undergraduate students of German to host homework submission and correction in an online environment. The hope was to make the homework process more beneficial for all parties involved, by preserving both the work of the learner, the input of the teacher and ultimately enhancing instruction and learning.

Students at SCHM had the option of submitting homework online, where it was corrected by the lecturer using an elaborate coloured correction scheme, incorporating corrective feedback and comments of guidance and praise. The students and lecturer also had the ability to communicate online using comments. The lecturer also uploaded class hand-outs and documented all vocabulary and discussion topics, which would
usually have been written by hand on the classroom whiteboard. Students were also invited to collaborate online with the lecturer and with each other during many classroom and homework projects. Individual homework submissions and classwork pages were available for students to view online at anytime.

While the Wiki had been in ongoing use at SCHM for three academic semesters since September 2009, no measure or analysis of its effectiveness had been carried out. This was therefore the rationale for carrying out this research, to investigate the effects of using the Wiki and other factors on student language improvement. The development of the research is outlined in the next section.

1.3 Research Development

1.3.1 Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of using the Wiki at SCHM. The research aimed to examine and determine the following:

- Do students actively use the Wiki, and what factors affect their usage and engagement?
- Is the Wiki successful in hosting the process of homework submission and correction?
- How do students’ use of the Wiki and other factors positively impact on students’ German language level?
- Is the Wiki a beneficial learning and teaching support?

1.3.2 Research Context

This study was carried out at SCHM. All student participants were undergraduate students of German in their first, third and fourth academic years. All students had been using the Wiki for one semester in the case of Year One and Year Three, and for three semesters in the case of Year Four.
1.4 Research Relevance

In 2010 the National Strategy for Higher Education Report was published. As fundamental to planning for the future, the Report considered the right skills for the graduates of 2015 and 2030 and, also what mix of skills should be pursued as learning outcomes of Higher Education in Ireland. The report highlighted quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, communication skills, team working skills and also the effective use of information technology as being essential graduate skills. In using the Wiki at SCHM, where students read, write and collaborate online, two of the Report’s prescribed learning outcomes, in developing team working skills and effectively using technology, are achieved.

This is further supported by Bradwell (2009), who explains that online collaborative tools, such as wikis, which allow people to work together more easily on content, are the cause of change for universities, and are also a tool, with which universities can respond. The teacher’s activity in the Wiki, correcting homework, communicating with students online, and adding classroom content, forged, therefore, such a response.

1.5 Research Methodology

As mentioned earlier, the Wiki had been in use at SCHM since September 2009. This study took place during the Spring semester of 2011 at SCHM. Methods of language testing were devised and carried out in the pre-study and post-study phases to establish students’ language level. A background questionnaire was administered to students in the pre-study phase and a feedback questionnaire was administered in the post-study phase. A third questionnaire, a lecturers’ feedback questionnaire, was administered also in the post-study phase. Field notes and other handwritten records on homework submissions and attendance were maintained. Online data in the Wiki was also collected. The data from all sources was then compared and contrasted to establish the effectiveness of the Wiki and other factors on students’ language improvement.
1.6 Research Structure

This study contains six chapters. Chapter One: Introduction, outlines the research background, questions, context and relevance. It also summarises the research structure.

Chapter Two: Literature Review, discusses existing literature on the process of homework submission and homework correction styles. It examines the language learner and factors which can affect language progress. It investigates the benefits and value of an online wiki for hosting homework submission and correction, examining also the teachers’ activity and students’ engagement online.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology, documents the research environment and the participants. It presents the research questions, methodology and data collection tools used. It also contains the justification and rationale for the research methodology chosen for this study.

Chapter Four: Research Findings, presents all findings by aligning them with the research questions.

Chapter Five: Discussion of Key Findings, examines the findings of this study and presents them in comparison and contrast to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Six: Conclusion, reviews the research questions, by presenting the outcomes of the study. It proposes recommendations for SCHM and other institutes and also highlights possible areas of further research.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In the Global Information Technology Report, Dutta and Mia (2010) describe Ireland as a small country whose lack of traditional raw materials, has forced the country to be smart. Ireland’s natural history has driven an intense commitment to education, as the only real access to survival and prosperity (Dutta and Mia 2010). In education, Ireland’s National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (2011) explains that third-level students are entitled to an excellent teaching and learning experience in a high-quality learning environment, which includes state-of-the-art learning resources and ICT facilities. Livingstone (2011) questions however whether a fully transformed and ICT-mediated relationship between teacher and learner is desirable or beneficial. Therefore, it must be established, where in the learning and teaching environment there exists a need, and how ICT can be address this need.

Considering the third-level teaching of German at SCHM, much focus and reward is on the successful production of linguistically accurate texts. Research shows that students’ lack of progress or difficulty with written accuracy, can greatly inhibit their meeting practical goals or indeed progressing academically (Ferris 2010; Sparks et al 1989). This is also the case at SCHM. Responsibility to tackle this problem lies, of course, with the student but ultimately with the teacher. Traditionally the teacher’s main method of focusing on individual students’ written accuracy is within the process of written homework assignment, submission and correction. It is therefore within this process of homework submission and correction, that the use of ICT, in the form of an online wiki, will be examined in this study.

In this chapter, aspects of homework submission and correction, and learning styles are examined. The use and value of online writing platforms, including wikis, are also reviewed and factors including student motivation and engagement online, and teacher commitment are discussed.
2.2 Homework Submission Process

Homework is an experience most children encounter early and continue to face throughout their education (Cardelle-Elawar and Corno 1985; Langley et al 2008). It exists at all educational levels and is a necessary and extremely effective means of learning (Langley et al 2008; King 2005). Homework is therefore a widespread and established practice.

Research explains that the function of written homework is to provide the learner with the opportunity to make mistakes and to receive feedback, making it one of the best ways to learn and to improve (Smith 2008). Writing is also something that students can take time to produce, alone, and at home (Semke 1984). Therefore homework can be beneficial because students can produce homework at their own pace in private and then learn from the correction they receive.

2.2.1 The Storage of Homework

For first and second-level education, homework is often written into a copybook of some form. Kroeker (2009) explains that the copybook, a collection of the student’s written homework, is a powerful learning tool, that helps the student retain and practice knowledge learned in class. Another advantage of storing or retaining homework, is that it provides the teacher with necessary instructional information (Langley et al 2008). However in third-level education, handwritten homework is usually submitted on individual sheets of paper and then the corrected homework is retained solely by the student. Therefore if there is no copybook at third-level, it is possible that some benefits of homework may be lost for the student and also for the teacher.

2.3 Homework Correction Styles

This section explores research on correction styles which could be employed individually or collectively within the process of homework correction.
2.3.1 No Correction

At the University of Minnesota in 1984, Harriet Semke carried out a study on 141 first year students of German, to investigate the effects of different correction styles over a ten week period. Her research results indicated that the time teachers devote to correction is not well spent, because accuracy as well as fluency is actually enhanced by writing practice alone (Semke 1984). This remarkable finding, however, does not refer to the effect on students’ attitudes or on their motivation to submit assignments.

2.3.2 Error Correction

Once a student submits homework, the teacher begins the correction process. Some researchers believe that the process of elaborate error correction does not improve learning (Semke 1984; Dekeyser 1993). Other researchers do not advocate the process of highlighting every error, because it can discourage learners by shifting the primary focus from communication to written or linguistic accuracy (Loewen 2007; King 2005). Semke (1984) also observed in her research that, in spite of corrections, students continued to make the same errors, which means that their written accuracy was not improving. Krashen (1982) is also firmly against error correction, viewing it as unnecessary and potentially harmful because it raises learners’ affective filters. This type of correction does not increase writing accuracy, fluency, or proficiency, but instead may have a negative effect on students’ attitudes or undermine students’ confidence and motivation to express their ideas through writing (Ferris 2010; Semke 1984). These arguments against the benefit of error correction are clear and certainly strong.

In light of these arguments, it must be considered then, why written homework correction forms, in fact, such a central part of Second Language Assessment (SLA). In response, it seems, that while error correction does not generally make a significant difference, it can have a significant positive or negative impact on certain individual students (Dekeyser 1993; Ferris 2010).
2.3.3 Self-Correction

Another correction style involves the student submitting homework, the teacher highlighting areas of error, and the student then revising and resubmitting their work. When students are forced to correct their own mistakes in this way, Semke (1984) believes, that this is the least effective process, in terms of both student achievement and student attitude.

2.3.4 Integrated or Corrective Feedback

Corrective or integrated feedback is another correcting style. This occurs when teachers correct errors, but additionally provide content-related feedback also known as corrective or integrated feedback. When students receive integrated feedback, they not only learn, but generally improve their language accuracy (Cardelle and Corno 1981; Park 2006). As mentioned earlier, Ferris (2010) does not generally advocate error correction, but she believes that, under the right conditions, corrective feedback can help students improve written accuracy.

Corrective feedback is a complement to error correction, in that it gives students more focused and detailed information on their errors. Basically the function of feedback is to draw the students’ attention to material not adequately learned or understood (Frank 2008; Cardelle-Elawar and Corno 1985). Cardelle and Corno (1981) explain that the more information the learners have, the better they understand why they make mistakes.

The research clearly supports the benefits of integrated feedback. Teachers also see this process of correction with feedback as a kind of duty as a writing instructor (Park 2006). On the receiving end, students generally regard teachers’ written feedback as crucial to their improvement as writers (Ferris 2004; Park 2006). It can therefore be concluded that integrated or corrective feedback is beneficial for the learner.

2.3.5 Praise or Supportive Comments

When teachers correct homework submissions, it is a common practice to praise the student by adding reinforcing or encouraging comments. Effective praise, or comments,
must however take into account the individual student’s attitude, motivation, personality and past language learning experience (Cardelle and Corno 1981).

Vogler (1971) argues against the benefits of adding comments, explaining that a few positive comments cannot possibly counteract the negative effect of numerous error corrections. Semke (1984) reported also from her study, that the addition of reinforcing comments did not make a significant difference to written accuracy. In fact, in her study it was concluded that correction alone is equal or superior to correction with comments (Semke 1984).

Semke (1984) did however report that giving supportive comments in lieu of correction appears to have a positive effect on students’ attitudes toward writing and on their language progress in general. This would imply that supportive comments indeed hold some value. Similarly Ferris (2004) also believes that when students do not receive supportive comments, they tend to feel that their teachers do not pay much attention to their writing or they presume that their teachers lack sincerity.

2.3.6 Form-Focused Feedback with Rule Reminders

When an error is corrected, a teacher can add information, reminding the student of the grammatical or idiomatic rule that applies. This is known as form-focused feedback. In theory, when students become aware of what kind of grammatical errors they often make, they come to acquire grammar rules, and they do not make the same errors in subsequent writing samples (Park 2006; Ferris 2010). In practice, however, Ferris (2010) questions whether form-focused feedback leads to long-term acquisition of a particular grammatical feature. Similarly Diana Frantzen (1995), in her study of sixty-seven second-year students of Spanish at Indiana University, concluded that the students’ grammatical accuracy improved, even without additional grammar explanation. She mentioned, however, the benefit of noting the students’ errors that cropped up during homework and exam correction and advocated then discussing these areas at a later stage in class (Frantzen 1995).
2.3.7 Correction in Red

In contrast to the students’ handwriting in black or blue, the teachers’ use of a red-pen in correction is a widespread practice. Aoki (2004) explains that red pens have been used in correction for over 300 years.

Interestingly some research shows that the very act of picking up a red pen can bias a teacher’s view (Rutchick et al 2010). Similarly for students, when they see red marks, they immediately think about errors and poor performance (Rutchick et al 2010; Semke 1984). It seems therefore that the use of the red pen benefits neither the student nor the teacher. Byrne (1988) recommends making correction neater and less threatening by using a coloured marking scheme that helps students to find and identify their mistakes.

2.3.8 Summary of Homework Correction Methods

There are many different techniques of correction, which include no correction, elaborate correction, self-correction, corrective feedback, supportive comments and the use of colours. It is proposed that some techniques could be employed alone or in combination with others. However research does not advocate a method which combines all or most of these aspects, as most teachers have neither the time nor the patience to give that much feedback in that much detail (Ferris 2010).

2.4 The Language Learner: Factors Affecting Progress

2.4.1 Andragogy & Learning Styles

Knowles (1970) defines andragogy as the art and science of helping adults to learn. Individual adult learners are embedded in cultural contexts that shape who they are and how they learn (Sandlin et al 2011). How they learn, or more specifically their learning style can be crucial to how they progress in language learning. Some students learn by seeing and hearing, reflecting and acting, reasoning logically and intuitively or memorising and visualising (Felder and Henriques 1995). Along with learning styles, factors such as personality, language aptitude and motivation are key factors affecting language learning (Dörnyei 2005). This section explores literature on the effects of
language learners’ personality, attitude, motivation, aptitude and anxiety towards the language learning progress.

2.4.2 Language Learners’ Personality

Personality represents the complex of all attributes that characterise an individual (Dörnyei 2005). Conscientiousness is a personality trait in learners which produces consistent results in language learning (Dörnyei 2005). Research shows that extraverts have a negative relationship with academic success, while introverts generally display better study habits and are not so easily distracted (Dörnyei 2005). Wang (2011) believes that it is the teachers’ job to watch, listen and ask questions of their students to learn about their personalities and gain insight into how they learn. It is therefore very important that a teacher be aware of students’ personalities and, observe in them, their conscientiousness and relationship with language learning.

2.4.3 Language Learners’ Attitude & Motivation to Improve

Once written homework is submitted, students generally look forward to getting back their homework (Semke 1984). Students’ attitude, therefore, in anticipating the return of their homework can be viewed as positive. When corrected homework is returned, this is a point at which students’ attitude can change. Semke (1984) believes that a positive attitude can stem from the students’ realisation that they are communicating, and that someone is understanding the message of their writing. In this moment they feel positive and will generally adhere to advice on how to improve their writing (Semke 1984). Ferris (2010) explains that their attitude to correction is directly linked to motivation, learning style, and linguistic background knowledge. However if the correction, in whatever form and at whatever stage, has a negative effect on their attitude, then any potential improvement in their writing will not be reached (Semke 2004; Ferris 2010). While the teacher cannot alter the students’ linguistic background or learning style the teacher must, where possible, use sensitivity in their correction, in order to minimise the negative effect on students’ attitude.

Along with student attitude, student motivation is also an important factor. Dekeyser (1993) hypothesizes that students with a strong motivation to please the teacher and to
get good grades prefer error correction, because they are then aware of what matters to the teacher. However, students with less motivation in this area may resent error correction as criticism (Dekeyser 1993). If the students are not motivated to improve their writing, then they will not improve, no matter what type of correction or feedback is given (Guénette 2007).

It can then be concluded from the research mentioned above, that negative student attitude and low student motivation to improve or impress, form a detrimental barrier to learning and improvement, independent of the teacher’s correction style.

2.4.4 Language Learning Aptitude & Difficulties

While attitude and motivation greatly influence a student’s language progress, some students’ language learning difficulties arise because they have a language learning disability (Dinklage 1971). Schwarz (1997) explains that an assessment at third-level to establish any language learning difficulty, is in practice only then recommended, when a student generally achieved well in other formal examinations, but failed specifically in their SLA.

The Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis (LCDH) states that difficulties with foreign (or second) language acquisition stem from deficiencies in the students’ native language system (Sparks et al 1989). Such students have trouble with the basic sound units of language, phonemes, and do not recognise or manipulate these basic units of sound efficiently (Sparks et al 1989). A teacher might observe in such students distinct difficulties with spelling, pseudo-word recognition or phoneme segmentation (Sparks et al 1989).

For teachers it seems, therefore, that the use of different homework correction styles cannot combat the detrimental effect of language learning difficulties on successful language production. However on a more positive note, students with language learning difficulties can overcome these difficulties, if the teacher provides them with direct instruction in phonology and syntax (Dinklage 1971; Sparks et al 1989).
To ensure then that no student with language learning difficulties is excluded from the effect of instruction, it may be crucial at third-level to integrate a language learning assessment on entry. This is a strategy also proposed by Sparks et al (1992) and Dinklage (1972).

2.4.5 Language Learning Anxiety

Another factor influencing students’ expectations and success in SLA is language anxiety. There is generally a negative relationship between anxiety and achievement (Horwitz 2001; Kim 2000). More specifically this anxiety leads to negative emotional reactions to language learning (Horwitz et al 1986). As there is a clear link between language anxiety and language performance, teachers must be sensitive to this in their handling of their students.

Anxiety can exist in two forms: trait anxiety and state anxiety. Horwitz (2001) explains that trait anxiety is a characteristic of the student’s personality. However, state anxiety manifests itself as a response to a particular anxiety-provoking stimulus, such as an important test in SLA (Horwitz 2001). State anxiety entails risk-taking (Horwitz et al 1986). Risk-taking in the language classroom occurs all the time, for example, in reading-aloud, responding to questions and producing written work. Such performances challenge the student’s self-belief as a competent communicator and can lead to anxieties such as reticence, self-consciousness, fear, or even panic (Horwitz et al 1986). Teachers may sense this anxiety in their students, but it is important to establish its scale and effect.

For this purpose, Horwitz et al (1986) established a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). It is a questionnaire of thirty-three questions on participants’ communication apprehension, test-anxiety and fear of negative evaluation and it also focuses on students’ speaking in a classroom environment (Horwitz et al 1986). Using this scale, students with higher levels of foreign language anxiety both expected and received lower grades than less anxious students (Sparks and Ganschow 1991). In fact, students with higher levels of anxiety tended to have lower self-concepts of themselves as language learners (Cheng et al 1999). If teachers could identify and reduce language anxiety in their students, this would positively impact on students’ language progress.
In contrast there is also a link in some cases between higher levels of anxiety and higher achievement (Chastain 1975; Kleinmann 1977). It can be concluded that these students were probably determined not to let their anxiety negatively affect their performance. Similarly it is often difficult to determine if anxiety has interfered with learning, or if anxious learners are simply too anxious to display their language competence (Horwitz 2001). For these reasons, it is important to separate the role of anxiety in language learning from its role in actual language performance.

Language anxiety can be overcome. It is the result of failure and not the cause of failure (Dinklage 1971). In creating more supportive classroom environments and helping students deal with their language anxiety, it can be possible to greatly reduce their anxieties (Horwitz 2001).

2.5 An Online Homework Submission Environment

2.5.1 Introduction

Instead of writing homework on paper, a student with access to a personal computer (PC) could theoretically type their homework. Rather than writing in an application on a local computer, an online writing environment can provide the student with the opportunity not just to write something, but also to get online feedback and ultimately learn from his or her mistakes (Giuseppe et al 2007). Therefore the traditional process of homework submission, which involves assignment, submission and correction, could be accommodated online, for example, within a website.

2.5.2 Online Wiki for Homework Submission

Wikis are websites that are based on a pedagogy centered on empowering the learner (Sims 2006). Grant (2006) concurs explaining that those who actively use the wiki are also those who primarily create its content. This means that a wiki does not present information for transfer, its function is rather to facilitate an ever-changing online store of information, created mainly by its users. For the purposes of online homework submission, the student-user writes their homework online, the teacher-user corrects the student’s online homework with additional feedback and explanation.
2.5.3 Social Construction of Knowledge in a Wiki

Wikis are generally used for online learning and writing, and research suggests that there exists the potential to promote learning and to facilitate a social construction of knowledge (Langley et al. 2008; Duffy 2008). The construction of knowledge occurs when ideas are expressed as relationships between pages, creating a network of inter-related topics (Duffy 2008; Park 2006; Wible et al. 2001). Duffy (2008) explains that the content in the wiki changes, not according to time, but in line with the evolving and edited texts or pages. This simulates mind-mapping, which is the way we learn or remember new knowledge, in that we tie or associate new information to our current knowledge, thus making knowledge networked and contextualised (Duffy 2008; Clark 2009). This proves that the interlinking of pages in a wiki can replicate the way humans store and construct knowledge.

2.5.4 Suitable Written Assignments for a Wiki

Once a wiki-based online homework submission website is launched and students are familiar with its functionality, a suitable type of assignment needs to be chosen. Carr et al. (2007) explain that wikis are usually used in education for process writing, project planning in teams, sharing knowledge, online discussion, collaborative writing and preparing ePortfolios. This gives the teacher many options to create new or incorporate old assignment formats into their wiki.

Another consideration is when and how often to use a wiki. It is recommended to continuously use a class wiki for a variety of assignments or weekly activities within a course, independent of whether they are individual, group or class assignments (Walters-Coppola et al. 2002; Cubric 2007). By using a wiki in this way, it may become an integral part of the learning environment, thus making its use for homework submission a more everyday experience.

2.5.5 Grading Assignments in a Wiki

If grades are to be awarded for content or homework created in a wiki, then the teacher must be able to store this information and keep a record of online contributions and
activity. Augar et al (2005) explain that the wiki content is stored in flat files or databases which can easily be replicated or backed up, thus preserving necessary data for grading. In terms of monitoring students’ contributions, a statistic on viewing patterns can also be generated. This consists of the number of viewing events a student performs during and after the submission period (Langley et al 2008). More specifically, Mindel and Verma (2006) explain that a wiki stores the result of the original and all subsequent saved modifications to a page. What this means for the teacher is that he or she can actually review the sequence of all saved versions of the document and can monitor and assign credit to students’ contributions over time.

The teacher also has the option of stepping in to provide assistance when necessary, thus enhancing the quality of the teachers’ input or feedback (Mindel and Verma 2006). These features therefore enable the teacher to collect data on content and effort, further facilitating grading and making available the option of continuous feedback. Other tracking features found in popular word processing tools (e.g. Microsoft Word) provide a more limited ability to monitor document activity, but are of pedagogical value nevertheless (Mindel and Verma 2006).

2.5.6 Activity in the Online Homework Submission Environment

A wiki provides an ever-growing storage facility for homework submission and correction and for enriching that content with text-formatting functionality and inter-linked pages. This section examines the teachers’ and students’ activity online.

2.5.6.1 Teachers’ Correction Online

Providing and delivering the tools and feedback required for students to engage successfully online, is definitely a much more demanding process for the teacher than traditional modes of delivery (Bruns and Humphreys 2005). This section looks at online correction, its demands, and its value. It was suggested earlier that the process of launching a wiki is straightforward; the difficulty arises later in its usage, as reported by Walters-Coppola et al (2002). The tutors in their study found that the time required to provide interlinear-comments and individual feedback on all students’ written submissions, accumulated significantly (Walters-Coppola et al 2002). Similarly Kirkup
and Kirkwood (2008) reported that it was harder for their tutor-participants to feel, that the extra time and new learning demanded by the electronic system, was producing enough extra advantage.

If online correction and feedback involves more effort and time on the part of the teacher, it is important to investigate whether this would hinder its success. Interestingly Kirkup and Kirkwood (2008) report, in their findings, that tutors were in fact willing to change from their previous less time-consuming practice of handwritten marking, because they could really see an improvement in the quality of their feedback to the student.

More specifically Carr et al (2007) describe a tutor who logged into her wiki every evening to add feedback to her students’ work; this tutor believed that tutors who used the wiki in this way, really made a difference to their students’ learning (Carr et al 2007). It seems therefore the commitment of additional time for online correction improves students’ learning and improves the quality of feedback.

In order to increase students' engagement, the role of tutor should become the role of active reviewer, with feedback being continuous rather than sporadic (Cubric 2007; SEG Report 2008). This demand for continuous feedback would definitely take up time outside of work hours, thus extending traditional teaching demands considerably.

2.5.6.2 Students’ Engagement Online

The previous section discusses a necessary increased time commitment on the part of the teacher, but this alone may not ensure success. It is necessary that students engage with the wiki. Tsinakos (2006) believes that wikis only succeed in the hands of healthy communities. Mindel and Verma (2006) concur explaining that, in their wiki, they deliberately did not appoint student leads, as they wanted to examine whether the students would treat a wiki as a valuable resource and contribute: the students did not (Mindel and Verma 2006). Therefore when students are left to their own devices, it seems student engagement is negatively affected.
One suggestion to encourage interaction between students and teacher, is to incorporate a human aspect or social presence (Wang 2008; Mandernach 2009). Mandernach (2009) states that when a course has more instructor personalized multimedia components, students will report increased course engagement. In terms of the interaction within the homework process, the timestamp on comments along with a photo of the teacher would create a social presence.

2.5.6.3 Summary

To summarise, the use of a wiki can enhance learning and improve the quality of feedback. But to ensure success and student engagement, it seems the onus again falls mainly on the teacher. The teacher must commit more time, be present online even after hours, provide more frequent feedback and then also take on the responsibility of encouraging student engagement. These demands require therefore a major commitment on behalf of the teacher.

2.5.7 Benefits of Online Homework Submission Environment

2.5.7.1 Introduction

This section discusses the benefits of an online homework submission environment.

2.5.7.2 Students’ Benefits in the Online Homework Submission Environment

When students type, research shows that their revision behaviour changes and the quality of their writing is positively impacted upon, because they can easily reformulate, alter, correct, revise and expand their writing (King 2005; Kovacic et al 2007; Ferris 2010; Semke 1984; Truscott 1998; Krashen 1982).

In any online writing environment, the student learns technical literacy, content creation, the art of online collaboration, consensus building and effective communication of ideas to other people through networked knowledge environments (Bruns and Humphreys 2005). The use of a wiki therefore enhances learning, independent of the content or subject matter, because it brings with it another type of learning: the development of technical skills.
In fact, in practicing these skills, students are building crucial skills for the workplace, in a world where more and more organisations are adopting wikis for internal and external collaboration and information exchange (Duffy 2008). While the responsibility to practice the skills lies with the learner, again the choice to facilitate the practice of these skills, by using a wiki, lies with the teacher, a choice that brings with it as discussed an increased commitment of time.

2.5.8 Further Benefits of an Online Writing Environment

2.5.8.1 Introduction
The previous sections have examined traditional homework submission, correction and feedback for the individual student. However at third-level the homework process can involve revising corrected work, working on writing tasks collaboratively in groups.

2.5.8.2 Facilitating a Process of Revision Online
In terms of the revision process, King (2005) considers the common situation, whereby the teacher collects the written homework, corrects every error and returns the homework without any further responsibility on the learner to identify and correct their own errors, which could possibly enhance their learning. This revision practice, currently not part of the traditional homework process, could potentially be beneficial, if incorporated online.

2.5.8.3 Facilitating Collaboration Online
Group collaboration, one of our most powerful experiences, occurs when interaction occurs throughout the group instead of just between one participant and facilitator (Bruns and Humphreys 2005). The traditional homework interaction involves only the individual student and the teacher and not the entire group. Carr et al (2007) believe that if students can be persuaded to share drafts of their written production, then, not only teachers, but also peers can provide input that enhances the whole writing process. In the traditional homework system, this process of viewing others’ work would involve photocopying work and distributing manually. However in a wiki this can be easily
achieved by altering the user access control on a particular page or folder within the wiki.

Research shows that when students can read other students' written work, the element of wonder about other students’ work is removed, and writers, in this case, students, can see how their peers write and deal with similar subjects and thus benefit from this information (Zaphiris and Zacharia 2006). Langley et al (2008) analysed students’ self-reports on viewing their peers’ writing, during and after starting work on their own assignments. Their data indicated that peer writing samples were indeed a valuable resource from which one could possibly gain something (Langley et al 2008). Zaphiris and Zacharia (2006) explain that the effect is that students no longer remain passive recipients of a teacher's grades, wondering why one student's paper was judged as better than another’s. In the study by Langley et al (2008), they found in fact that almost half the students wished to collect ideas from others before submitting and only 2% actually admitted to the selfish motivation of not wanting to share. However Bruns and Humphreys’ research did not make the same discovery: they found that students did not want their drafts to be the subject of public scrutiny (Bruns and Humphreys 2005).

In addition to students sharing their online writing, another area to consider is the process of collaborative writing. Mindel and Verma (2006) found that unless students were strongly guided in online collaboration, they tended to accumulate or aggregate content on wiki pages, which is, of course, not true collaboration. Bruns and Humphreys' research discovered that students were too polite to want to interfere with other students’ work and they certainly did not want their own work to be interfered with by others (Bruns and Humphreys 2005). If collaboration, however beneficial to learning it may be, is not a comfortable practice for students, how can teachers promote online collaborative writing? Bruns and Humphreys (2005) feel that if there is a clear differentiation made between the zones of individual and collaborative activity, then students will begin to benefit from the individual kinds of learning possible in online collaborative environments.
2.5.9 Generating a Valuable Online Resource

Mindel and Verma (2006) observed their students making pages in their wiki, as an easy way to post and share ideas while they were still on their minds. This resulted in less leakage of ideas and learning becoming less formal and more social (Mindel and Verma 2006). In this way, all group knowledge can be stored and documented online. Elgort (2007) highlights the value of this body of students’ work, as it can potentially be built upon by future cohorts of students. This makes students, traditionally limited to the passive role of recipients, become active partners in the creation and continuance of the corpora of information that they and their successors can learn from (Ravid et al 2008). To define a structure for this corpora, the instructor could seed a wiki with an initial outline of page stubs, which would then be expanded collaboratively by the students (Mindel and Verma 2006; Wible et al 2001). Another suggestion is to use the wiki as an alternative to a class website (Bryant 2006; Ravid et al 2008).

This exciting aspect, generally not a practice or process of the traditional classroom, could definitely be advantageous to both learning and teaching in any future extension to this study.

2.5.10 The Online Homework Wiki at SCHM

SCHM’s Online Homework Wiki is available on www.schmgerman.pbworks.com. The following section reviews the components of the Wiki with reference to research on Human Computer Interface (HCI).

2.5.10.1 Human Computer Interface (HCI)

In an educational setting, the human computer interface (HCI) is what enables the learner to communicate with the computer and what enables the computer to communicate with the learner (Chalmers 2003). Stanley (2007) explains that a wiki is a website where content is given priority over design (Stanley 2007). Information delivery is not the only or primary aim in a wiki (Sims 2006). The goal of the Online Homework Wiki at SCHM was not to instruct, but rather to act as a storage facility for students to write their homework online and to provide the text formatting functionality for teachers to add corrections, feedback and comments.
This section investigates how the Wiki performs in storing information. The Frontpage of the Wiki is shown in Figure 2.1 below. Students can click on their names to open and view their individual homework folder. Their names are written in blue font, but are obscured by yellow boxes for this presentation. BECTA (2005) recommends that the number of on-screen colours be limited to three or four, using a high contrast between background and text colours, as this facilitates reading and can improve performance on tasks such as recall and retention of information. The Wiki uses four colours for texts (black, yellow, red and blue) in stark contrast, as recommended, to the white background. In fact Tognazzini (2006) favours black text on white or pale yellow backgrounds, as is the case here.

Figure 2.1: The Online German Homework Wiki at SCHM

Tognazzini (2006) explains that most users cannot and will not build elaborate mental maps and will become lost or tired if expected to do so. It is necessary therefore to enable backtracking and history based navigation, so that the user can navigate with confidence knowing they will not get lost (Bieber et al 1997). It is possible in the Wiki to use the browser’s left and right arrow buttons to navigate on each page.

A one-click return to the home page and a way of confirming where the learner is in the program must exist on each screen (BECTA 2005). On every page in the Wiki it is possible to navigate to the Frontpage using the top left “pencil” icon. Similarly the
Sidebar and Navigator panes are visible on the right of every page, as shown in Figure 2.1.

It is also important that buttons are in a consistent place on each screen of the website, so that the learner quickly knows how to find their way around, and has only the subject matter to contend with (BECTA 2005). When the student types homework and the lecturer corrects homework in the Wiki, all text-formatting buttons and other buttons to add multimedia content and links are also in a consistent place. This is shown in Figure 2.2 below.

![Figure 2.2: Text Formatting in a Wiki Page](image)

In terms of security, a wiki has built-in access and permission security to ensure that non-enrolled people are kept out and it is also possible to protect pages as works in progress (Bruns and Humphreys 2005). Student participation can be validated by user authentication, so that each contribution can be attributed to an individual and their participation can be assessed (Augar et al 2005). At SCHM, students are provided with individual user logins and passwords. One problem however associated with this was that teachers could not always be sure whether it was actually the individual student who made the submission or whether he or she divulged the login to another student (Smith 2008).

As with all technology, Ravid et al (2008) advise giving all students a 20-minute in-class introduction to using a wiki (logging in, editing, saving, viewing history), and in
their research the students consequently did not experience difficulties in using the wiki. Similarly all students at SCHM were instructed in the use of the Wiki.

2.6 Conclusion

The literature has justified the existence of the traditional homework system as a valuable instructional tool in language teaching. It has examined many methods of correction, including error identification and correction, focused feedback and praise. The effect individual language learners have on their own learning success and engagement has also been presented.

It seems that an online writing environment, accommodating the process of homework submission, is essentially viable within a wiki. The structure of a wiki facilitates the submission, storage and correction of homework and the linking of relevant information. The structure and HCI of the Wiki at SCHM was reviewed, highlighting also the importance of the students’ and teacher’s role in the creation of the Wiki’s content.

An increased commitment of time and effort online on behalf of the teacher is mentioned as necessary to achieve an improvement in the quality of correction and feedback. While this commitment is essential for success, students must also engage, and the literature makes some clear suggestions on how to forge such engagement. Possibilities for extending the use of a wiki to other classroom activities have been outlined, to make the Wiki a more valuable online resource.
Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology used in this study. It explains the purpose of this research and documents the research subjects and environment. The research questions are described and the justification for the research methodology and data collection tools used are presented. Data analysis considerations are also highlighted.

3.2 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study was primarily to investigate the use of the Online Homework Wiki in third-level teaching of German at SCHM and its effect on students’ German language improvement. Another focus of the study was to identify other factors, affecting students’ engagement with the Wiki and students’ language progress.

Despite continued use of the Wiki at SCHM since September 2009, the time interval specified for this study was the Spring semester 2011, from January 2011 until April 2011.

3.3 Research Subjects

3.3.1 Introduction

All student participants in this study were undergraduate students at SCHM, enrolled in business degrees in International Hotel Management and taking German as their language option.

3.3.2 Selection Criteria

All students taking German, in their first, third or fourth academic year at SCHM, were selected to participate in this study. Students of German in their second undergraduate
year did not participate, as they were spending their year working in the hotel industry abroad.

In total there were eighteen student participants. They entered SCHM in Year One with post-Leaving Certificate level German, having taken either Higher or Ordinary level German. Of these eighteen, two students had language difficulties, certified by the Department of Education, which rendered them exempt from penalty for spelling and grammatical errors in language written assessments and examinations at SCHM.

All students of German, who were present at SCHM in Spring 2011 and participated in this study, are broken down into each academic year, as shown in Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year One</th>
<th>Year Two</th>
<th>Year Three</th>
<th>Year Four</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Year One Icon]</td>
<td>![Year Two Icon]</td>
<td>![Year Three Icon]</td>
<td>![Year Four Icon]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Student Participant Breakdown

Male and female students are represented using a male and a female student icon, rather than using one unisex student icon. However no focus is made in this study on male and female students separately.

### 3.4 Research Environment

#### 3.4.1 Introduction

The research environment in this study comprises of the physical classroom environment and the online Wiki environment.

#### 3.4.2 Classroom Environment

Year One participants attended four hours of scheduled Business German language instruction weekly. Year Three and Year Four students attended two hours weekly. The Year Three and Year Four classrooms were equipped with multimedia computers.
including a projector. The Year One classroom unfortunately did not have such facilities. However all student-groups were scheduled in the multimedia language lab for one hour every week or fortnight during the academic weeks of this study.

All students were taught by the only German lecturer at SCHM, who is the researcher in this study. This avoided the issue in language research studies, as reported by Frantzen (1995), of many teachers being involved in the same research, but teaching quite differently. At SCHM, classroom attendance was mandatory across all undergraduate modules including Business German. Attendance was credited as 5% of each year’s overall German grade.

Students were usually required to produce a weekly written homework assignment based on a topic or scenario discussed in class, with a word count of 200, 150 and 100 words for Year Four, Year Three and Year One respectively. Usually homework was assigned at each class meeting. It was then submitted before or at the next class meeting and corrected by the lecturer. Students were neither required to re-correct nor to re-write their work. Marks for homework submissions accounted for 10-15% of SCHM students’ SLA.

3.4.3 Online Wiki Environment

3.4.3.1 Classroom Use of the Wiki

In the classroom the lecturer focused on the content of the [Idioms] and [Grammar] wiki folders to provide focused grammatical and idiomatic instruction during the course of the study. This was to integrate the Wiki into the classroom and to encourage the students further to use the Wiki more actively. No other formal grammar instruction was given during the course of this study.

Classwork pages were created in the [Year1], [Year3] and [Year4], whenever a PC and projector were available in the classroom. All vocabulary and discussion strands were documented in these pages, as they happened, using rich-text formatting and colour. Figure 3.1 illustrates this.
3.4.3.2 Students’ Use of the Wiki

Students had individual logins and could use the Wiki to access their folders [Year1], [Year3], or [Year4] to find lecture handouts in Microsoft Word document format. Students could find classwork pages, which provided contextualised vocabulary and writing guidance for students both absent and present, to assist them in their written homework assignment on the topic of discussion. Students could also use the search function in the Wiki to search for pages and grammar advice. The main function of the Wiki was that students could create a page of homework, save it and await its correction by the teacher.

3.4.3.3 Teacher’s Use of the Wiki

The teacher created all user login accounts and all folders and managed the security access controls to each folder. The teacher monitored all activity in the Wiki for new homework submissions which could then be opened, edited and corrected. This process is explained in the next section.
3.4.3.4 Online Correction in the Wiki

During 2009, the teacher developed an online colour correction scheme. It was explained to students that the red and strikethrough font would be used for errors, corrections would be added in blue, word order errors would be framed in gold, and in-text comments would be added in green as shown in Figure 3.2.

![Figure 3.2: Corrected Online German Homework Submission Sample](image)

Additionally whenever idiomatic or grammatical errors occurred, the text was underlined and a hyperlink was created to another page containing a detailed explanation. These explanatory pages in the [Idioms] and [Grammar] folders were created by the lecturer, as and when a student made such an error. Following the initial creation of these pages, many of which were created in the first semester of use, in Autumn 2009, hyperlinks from new instances of these errors were linked to these same original [Grammar] and [Idioms] pages. This aspect was highlighted as key to the learning process. The participants were advised to click on these hyperlinks to read and learn from the detailed explanation on the errors, which often included within the explanation the specific error the student made, to explain better where students were going wrong. This is shown in Figure 3.3 below.
3.4.3.5 Other Uses of the Wiki

After using the Wiki in their first academic year, Year Two students, currently on placement and excluded from this study, worked on an online Distance Learning Project, which comprised of folders and pages in the Wiki. This involved their contributing to online collaborative and individual pages on their learning about culture, working and living abroad. Year One students were prepared in May 2011 to carry-out an identical project during their second academic year on placement abroad, from May 2011 to June 2012. This aspect and these Year Two students are not a direct part of this study, but this is mentioned to illustrate yet another use of the Wiki.

3.5 Research Questions

To decide upon which research method and which data collection tools to use in this study, the research questions must be stated.

The following list contains the research questions of this study:
• Do students actively use the Wiki and what factors affect their usage and engagement?
• Is the Wiki successful in hosting the process of homework submission and correction?
• How do students’ use of the Wiki and other factors positively impact on students’ German language level?
• Is the Wiki a beneficial learning and teaching support?

3.6 Research Methodology

3.6.1 Introduction

This section discusses the following main research methods used in educational research:

• case study
• action research
• ethnographic study
• observational research
• investigation

3.6.2 Case Study

A case study captures the complexity and particularity of a single case of very special interest and aims to understand its activity within important circumstances (Stake 1995). A case study involves the in-depth study of one individual, program, community, setting or event during a defined period of time (Cottrell and McKenzie 2011). Case studies provide descriptive records of one or more individual’s experiences and behaviours (Stangor 2010).

3.6.3 Action Research

Action research was devised by Kurt Lewin in 1946. It exists when a hypothetical solution to a problem is devised and implemented, its success is evaluated, insights are
gathered, and the original hypothetical solution is revised accordingly to increase success in a successive implementation or implementations (Lewin, 1946). Action research is unique in the way it associates research and practice (Avison et al 1999). McNiff & Whitehead (2009) explain that action research combines the idea of taking action with educational intent, and then testing the validity of the claims made about the process in order to generate living theories of practice.

3.6.4 Ethnographic Research

Ethnographic research is a study of social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organisations, or communities (Reeves et al 2008). Often an ethnographic researcher might live the life of the observed group in order to gain a better understanding of the group being studied (Cottrell and McKenzie 2011). Myers (1999) explains that ethnographic research is the most in-depth and intensive research method possible, but it takes a lot longer to execute than most other kinds of research.

3.6.5 Observational Research

Observational studies can provide answers to determine what phenomena occurred, particularly when people are involved in a process, along with gaining insights into why the phenomena occurred (Leicht et al 2010). Such studies usually assess the behaviour of a relatively large group of people, without the researcher participating in the action (Stangor 2010).

3.6.6 Investigation

Carrier and Spafford (2004) define an investigation as a process that develops and tests hypotheses. It is important to recognise the clear difference between an investigation and a case study. The case study and the investigation are similar, in that, they take place during a set time period, however, the findings of a case study cannot be generalised or applied to other similar groups (Cottrell and McKenzie 2011).
3.6.7 Research Method in this Study

This study was labeled an investigation over a set time period, to measure the effectiveness of the Wiki and other factors, as outlined in the research questions. In contrast however to a case study, this investigation aimed to generalise its findings for other teaching environments. The factors explored in the investigation are listed below:

- students’ usage of the Wiki
- the effect of the Wiki and other factors on language improvement
- the benefit of the Wiki as a learning and teaching support

3.7 Data Collection Tools

3.7.1 Introduction

Research methods can be quantitative or qualitative. Interviews, case studies, ethnographic studies and observational research are qualitative research methods (Muijs 2004; Cottrell and McKenzie 2011). Quantitative research methods, however, search for indicators and collect data, which signals numerical change, answers questions, establishes relationships between variables, explains phenomena or tests hypotheses (Bryman 2001; Muijs 2004; Cottrell and McKenzie 2011).

In order to select the data collection tools which offer the best potential to answer the research questions, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) advise considering all the answers that are sought. Therefore in response to the research questions, it was deemed necessary to collect the following data and use the following data collection tools, as shown in Table 3.2 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers Sought</th>
<th>Data Collection Tools Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>student language level (pre-study and post-study)</td>
<td>testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students' opinion on the Wiki and on aspects from the literature review (pre-study and post-study)</td>
<td>questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student's semester attendance, number of students' handwritten and online homework submissions observation-notes</td>
<td>field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student usage of the Wiki, homework and other pages and time-stamps (on-going during the study)</td>
<td>(online data in the Wiki)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
opinion of other educators on the Wiki and on other factors of this research (post-study) | questionnaire
---|---
SCHM Written Assessments (December 2010, Year Three and Year Four only) | (SCHM assessment data)
SCHM Final Written Exams (May 2011, all years) | 
External Recognition of the Wiki: application for European Language Label Award | (application form)

Table 3.2: Answers Sought, Data Collection Tools Used & other Data Sources

To summarise, this study would use the following quantitative data collection tools:

- testing
- questionnaires
- field notes

Bell (2007) advises the piloting of all data collection tools. This includes language testing, as advised by Kiss (2005). One of the advantages of conducting a pilot study is that it might give advance warning about where the research instrument is inappropriate, incorrect or too complicated (Teijlingen and Hundley 2001). All tests and questionnaires in this investigation were therefore piloted. The piloting procedure used for each test and questionnaire is documented separately within each section.

Online data and other data on assessments at SCHM are included as data sources. Recognition of the Wiki was also sought in the application for the EU European Language Label Award, which is explained later in this chapter.

The next section explains in more detail the theory and development of the data collection tools used in this investigation.

3.7.2 Language Tests

3.7.2.1 Introduction

This section focuses on testing methods and explores the theory of testing and the use of testing by other researchers. It documents the development of new testing procedures at SCHM to establish students’ language level at the pre-study and post-study stages.
3.7.2.2 The Theory of Testing

Testing is a quantitative method, because it involves examining the relationship between sets of facts (Bell 1993). A test result is a dependent variable, which is observed to determine what effect, if any, the other types of variables or data may have on it (Brown 1988). A dependent variable cannot be identified in isolation and makes sense only in the context of other variables in the study (Brown 1988). All test results alone therefore do not denote a finding, but rather depend on being compared to other test results or other variables under investigation.

A test has one of two labels: parametric or non-parametric (Cohen et al 2000). A parametric test is carried out on a large population and a researcher can compare results for a subset of participants with the results for the whole group (Cohen et al 2000). A non-parametric test, however, is specifically designed for a set group of participants, with no reference to comparison with a larger population (Cohen et al 2000). Tests can also be categorised as norm-referenced tests or criterion-referenced tests. Norm-referenced tests compare one participant’s result with another’s (McCauley and Swisher 1984). Such tests are designed to produce a norm reference of student scores (Cartier 1968). Criterion-referenced tests require students to complete a test of criteria-based steps, usually amounting to a mark or grade (Cohen et al 2000). Criterion-based tests are essentially more difficult to devise and often to administer, however Cartier (1968) believes that the additional time and effort required is easily justified by the reliability and validity of the information they provide about student ability.

3.7.2.3 Rationale for New Testing in this Investigation

As shown in Table 3.3 below, the students’ last official results were outdated. It was therefore deemed necessary to explore and devise one testing method to establish students’ German language level to employ in the pre-study and post-study stages, and to analyse in comparison later.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam/Assessment Results Available</th>
<th>Academic Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Certificate Examination June 2010</td>
<td>Year One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHM Year One Final Written Exam May 2009</td>
<td>Year Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHM Year Three Final Written Exam May 2010</td>
<td>Year Four</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: Students’ Last Official Examination
Both Year Three and Year Four students sat an SCHM classroom written examination in December 2010 worth 10% of the overall final German grade. Year Three results and papers were available and could, therefore, be included as an addition to this investigation.

3.7.2.4 A Method for Testing Language Accuracy

To establish students’ language accuracy a free-writing testing method is proposed (Semke 1984). Such testing involves students writing on any topic or on a mix of topics of their choice during a set interval (Semke 1984). A test of free-writing maximises the amount of practice students have in producing language and can provide additional insight into students’ control of the syntax of language (Semke 1984; Sparks et al 1989). A mark for language accuracy can then be established from free-writing samples as the percentage of correct words to total words (Brütsch 1979). In this way the measure of accuracy test in this study, using a free-writing sample, can be classed as a non-parametric criterion-referenced test. This test is contained in Appendix B.

In Frantzen’s study (1995) it was presumed that the students had never created a free-writing sample in this way, nor were they given any warning that this testing would take place. In this way students wrote freely without advance preparation (Frantzen 1995). Chandler (2003) recommends not stipulating a word count for free-writing samples. Semke (1984) reports from her free-writing testing, with no guidance or topic or what to write, that her students reportedly felt pressured to write simply, to avoid making mistakes. However Frantzen (1995) explains that her students were instructed to write about a memorable experience from the past, and this made them primarily concerned with getting the message across and not about accuracy during free-writing testing.

In January 2011 (pre-study) and again in April 2011 (post-study) students at SCHM were required to create and submit a free-writing sample on any topic. Semke (1984) collected her students’ free writing samples after a ten minute timed session in line with Brütsch (1979), who defines language fluency as the number of words produced in ten minutes. As fluency is not a focus of this testing, but rather accuracy, a reduced time of seven minutes was decided upon, due to class time constraints. All free-writing samples
in January and in April were corrected and graded by the SCHM German lecturer using the scheme proposed by Brütsch (1979), to establish a percentage mark for accuracy.

Similarly using the scheme proposed by Brütsch (1979), the essay questions in the SCHM assessments were re-graded to provide a possible comparable measure of accuracy. It is however, important to note, that these essays were created in a formal examination setting and the students’ written essay comprised of text produced in response to a prescribed essay question, and not a free-writing sample produced in a classroom. These assessments included:

- Christmas written assessment December 2010 (Year Three and Year Four only)
- final written assessment May 2011 (all years)

3.7.2.5 A Method for Testing Language Proficiency

As mentioned in the previous section, the free writing testing method measures only accuracy. This section describes the development of a second test to measure proficiency.

To measure proficiency, researchers advise the use of a cloze test, however in multiple choice format, because such tests are less confusing than regular tests and indicate a better range of language learning (Oller 1973; Carstens 1979; Semke 1984). A cloze test is a fill-in-the-blank test, usually constructed by randomly deleting words from a prose passage (Aitken 1977).

An example of the development of a multiple-choice cloze-test can be found in a study by Currie and Chiramanee (2010). They tested one hundred and fifty-two university undergraduates in Thailand studying English. These students sat a series of tests first in constructed-response format, and later in three stem-equivalent multiple-choice formats. Incorrect answer-options, known as distractors, in the multiple choice test were actually formed using incorrect answers from the constructed-response tests corrected during earlier stages (Currie and Chiramanee 2010).
Following Currie and Chiramanee’s method (2010), a new multiple choice test of fifty-seven sentences was created at SCHM in November 2010 for this investigation. Each test sentence contained one correct answer and three distractors. However, rather than generate distractors through repeated testing, as in Currie and Chiramanee’s method (2010), the sentences and context of the errors were based on the students’ common homework errors, as captured in the online [Idioms] and [Grammar] Wiki folders.

As explained earlier, the pages in these folders were created during the correction process, as student errors were occurring. The online explanatory [Idioms] pages were written in an informal way to simulate a one-to-one oral explanation. The explanatory page also incorporated, as an example, the student’s own difficulty, misspelling or mistranslation. These student errors then formed most of the distractors in the multiple-choice test, thus making the test customised for these students and more relevant to their language errors (see Appendix C for the full test questions). In this way, the measure of proficiency test in this study, using a multiple-choice cloze-test, can be classed as a non-parametric criterion-referenced test.

Table 3.4 below contains sentence No. 33 of the proficiency test used in this study, as shown in Appendix C. This sentence translates as, I ate a..._____.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ich habe einen [_<strong>(3)</strong>] gegessen.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 3.4: One Sample Sentence No. 33 in the Proficiency Test

The answer is cake, but in the online Wiki, students often had difficulty with the spelling of Kuchen (translated from German as: cake). Therefore, along with the correct answer, the three remaining answer-options were real mistakes the students made in their online submissions and translate as shown in Table 3.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kochen</th>
<th>Kuchen</th>
<th>kochen</th>
<th>Küche</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to cook (verb) with incorrect initial capitalisation</td>
<td>cake (noun)</td>
<td>to cook (verb) with correct initial lower case letter</td>
<td>kitchen (noun) with correct initial capitalisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5: Distractors from Sentence No. 33 in the Proficiency Test
Prior to testing the participants, the test was piloted by email to three native German speakers in sequence for review. Each time the corrections and recommendations were incorporated into a re-draft of the test for the next reviewer. A final draft was sent to the SCHM German course’s external examiner for review and testing. Minor errors were reported and the test was again amended. The test was then deemed ready for distribution and on the day of testing no students had difficulty with the test format or instructions.

In January 2011 (pre-study) and again in April 2011 (post-study), students were requested to complete the multiple-choice proficiency cloze-test. Semke (1984) used native speakers to correct the students’ test, however the lecturer at SCHM corrected all students’ proficiency tests. In this study, there were no resources to employ native speakers.

3.7.3 Questionnaires

3.7.3.1 Introduction

This section discusses the theory of questionnaires and explains the content and development of the three questionnaire used in this investigation:

- student background questionnaire
- student feedback questionnaire
- lecturer feedback questionnaire

3.7.3.2 The Theory of Questionnaires

Like testing, a questionnaire is also a quantitative method used to collect scientific data (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995). In contrast to a test, however, questionnaires do not have correct or incorrect answers, but rather seek factual, behavioural and attitudinal data from the respondents (Dörnyei and Taguchi 2010).

A questionnaire can include closed and open-ended questions. Closed questions enable researchers to produce aggregated data quickly, but the range of possible answers is set by the researchers not by the respondents, and the richness of potential responses is
lower (Boyton and Greenhaigh 2004). Closed ended items often cause frustration, usually because researchers have not considered all potential responses (Boyton and Greenhaigh 2004).

Open-ended questions invite free text comments in order to get as many details as possible (Bogdan and Bilken 1984; Boyton and Greenhaigh 2004). Using open-ended questions, the researcher can avoid the bias that may result from suggesting individual responses to participants (Schuman and Presser 1979). Such questions enable the researcher to discover the responses that individuals give spontaneously (Schuman and Presser 1979). It is important that the researcher plan in advance, however, how the open-ended answers will be analysed and determine if the researcher has the time, skills, and resources for such analysis (Boyton and Greenhaigh 2004).

Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) advise asking respondents to enter their name on a questionnaire, but indicate that this practice is only acceptable when the responses to the questions do not cause embarrassment to the respondent or pose a threat. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) believe that anonymity may not sometimes serve the purpose of the research.

Boyton and Greenhaigh (2004) explain that when a standardised questionnaire is administered, all participants are asked exactly the same questions in an identical format and the participants’ responses are recorded in a uniform manner. Standardising is therefore a measure, which increases a questionnaire’s reliability (Boyton and Greenhaigh 2004).

3.7.3.3 Student Background Questionnaire

Semke (1984) recommended collecting information on the students’ background in German and motivation to learn German as a complement to the testing. A standardised background questionnaire was therefore devised to collect students’ feedback on German language background and experience, attitude towards homework and Wiki usage (this can be found in Appendix D). Students were required to enter their name and academic year in order to link their responses to their test results. The questionnaire
had eight questions which comprised of one open-ended question and seven closed questions.

This questionnaire was piloted to two colleagues at SCHM and no issues were found. This questionnaire was administered to the students in the pre-study phase, on the same day as the accuracy and proficiency tests.

3.7.3.4 Student Feedback Questionnaire

To collect students’ opinion on aspects from the literature reviewed in this study and on their usage of the Wiki, a second standardised feedback questionnaire was created (see Appendix E). This feedback questionnaire had two parts with thirty-eight questions in total. Part One had seventeen closed questions and one open-ended question. Part Two had nineteen questions and one open-ended question. Similarly in this questionnaire students were required to enter the name and academic year to link their feedback to their test results and to their responses in the background questionnaire.

In Part One of the feedback questionnaire, the participants were asked about aspects which arose in the literature review such as their motivation and attitude towards learning German, their perception of their own ability, their opinion on correction methods, and language anxiety. Other areas surveyed included their broadband access, their reasons for sometimes not using the system and about aspects of online collaboration.

In Part Two students were asked about their process of online writing and revision behaviour, rating also their homework effort. Other areas surveyed were attention to errors and feedback, perception of homework turnaround and usefulness of reference pages (e.g. hyperlinks to [Idioms] pages). At the end of the survey, students were asked how they assessed the Wiki’s effect on their written German and whether the Wiki should continue to be in use at SCHM for future cohorts of students.

Part One and Part Two of the questionnaire was split by Question No. 17 which queried students’ frequency of using of the system. Students, who responded rarely or never, were instructed to scroll down to the end of the survey and select the button [Finish
Survey]. Students, who responded *always* or *sometimes*, were invited to continue. The rationale for this was that the questions in Part Two focused on the Wiki and it was therefore important to capture the views of only those students who had real experience using the Wiki.

The student feedback questionnaire was piloted to five lecturing colleagues in sequence. Their feedback was incorporated each time and then sent to the next colleague. The fifth colleague found no errors in the questionnaire, and it was then deemed ready for distribution.

3.7.3.5 *Language Lecturers’ Feedback Questionnaire*

To collect feedback on the benefit of the Wiki as a learning and teaching support, feedback on the Wiki and this research was sought from lecturing peers.

The lecturers’ feedback questionnaire was standardised and contained twenty seven open-ended questions (see Appendix E). The first four sections queried information from the respondents on their institutes of learning, languages taught, group-sizes and on their feeling towards technology for learning and teaching. The remaining sections covered all aspects of the Wiki and how it was being used within the German language course at SCHM, including homework submission and correction, correction colour scheme, the capturing of common errors, homework turnaround, distance learning, the documentation of classwork and contextualised grammar and vocabulary teaching. Some initial findings on participant usage and other observations were also mentioned. Following a brief explanation of each aspect, there was an empty comments box inviting open-ended responses.

The questionnaire required the respondents to consider the aspect, its viability in their environment and give their feedback. The questionnaire design involved the respondents typing their comments into the form and returning it by email.

The questionnaire was piloted to two lecturers at SCHM and no amendments were necessary.
An email explaining the research process and environment was sent to all language lecturer colleagues at the Shannon College seeking volunteers to provide feedback. The same email was sent to all contacts in the Business German in Ireland Working Group, whose members are Business German lecturers at Institutes of Technology and universities in Ireland. All volunteers were then sent an individual email with a feedback questionnaire attached (see Appendix F).

3.7.4 Field Notes

3.7.4.1 Introduction
The documenting of structured observations generates quantitative data, in the same way as questionnaires or tests (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995). Lofland and Lofland (1984) explain that field notes comprise of notes the researcher jots down that will serve as a memory. This section documents the handwritten homework submissions and attendance logs which were recorded on an ongoing basis during the study. The lecturer’s field notes are also documented.

3.7.4.2 Attendance Log
In advance of the students’ return on January 11th 2011, a handwritten log documenting classroom attendance was established. This log was used to record each student’s weekly classroom attendance and medical or authorised classroom absences.

3.7.4.3 Homework Score-sheet
A log documenting homework submission was established. At each class meeting, students received a mark for online homework submission, handwritten homework submission, non-submission or absence. It was also highlighted whenever an online homework was submitted in advance of a class that a student failed to attend.
3.7.4.4 Lecturer’s Notes

A sequential list of notes on observations was maintained by the teacher. This documented issues that participants reported, and also observations and trends that emerged during usage throughout the study.

3.7.5 Online Wiki Data

Online Wiki data was available on submission times, correction turnaround times and numbers of different types of online pages and dates created. Whenever an online homework page was submitted, details on previous modifications could be found by opening the page and clicking on the [Page History] button. This opened the Revisions page. All saved modifications of the page were listed in chronological order with the option of comparing two versions and the option of deleting recent versions in order to revert back to an earlier version. This data indicated the correction turnaround time, which is the time interval between submitting and correcting. It was also possible to observe students’ revision practices prior to submission.

3.7.6 External Recognition of the Wiki

The European Language Label Award was established in 1998/1999, as a European Commission Initiative which recognises creative and inventive projects to improve the quality of language teaching and learning (Léargas 2011). Research advises seeking recognition for a language initiative by applying for the European Language Label Award (Lorenzo et al 2009; Giebert 2011). Many projects which earn the European Language Label Award involve the creation of electronic or online tools (e.g. a wiki) (Godwin-Jones 2008).

A European Language Label Award application for the Online German Homework Wiki was therefore submitted in March 2011. One focus of the European Language Label Application Form was whether the use of the Wiki could be replicated in other teaching environments. This formed the rationale for seeking feedback from lecturing peers by means of questionnaire, as explained earlier.
3.8 Data Analysis Considerations

3.8.1 Introduction
This section contains information on ethics, reliability, validity and triangulation to consider in data analysis.

3.8.2 Ethics
Ethical procedures in research involve gaining the agreement of individuals in authority to provide access to study participants at research sites (Creswell 2003). At SCHM, permission was granted by email by the College Registrar to conduct the research (see Appendix A). The Registrar responded that no explicit consent from students was necessary but that the students should be aware that they are participating in their lecturer’s research project.

Creswell (2003) suggests an ethical issue also arises when there is no reciprocity between the researcher and the participants, who should both benefit from the research. For this reason all student participants were returned their individual test scores for consideration, and were involved in the European Language Label Award process.

In research, participants must not be put at risk and their anonymity must be respected (Creswell 2003). Therefore highlighting of students with learning difficulties or other status was made in a way that ensured students’ anonymity was protected.

3.8.3 Reliability & Validity of the Study
Evaluation of research depends on complete and accurate reporting of findings without suppressing, falsifying or inventing findings to meet a researcher’s needs (Creswell 2003). In this study the researcher collected and corrected all test data and reported all participant responses from the questionnaires truthfully in Chapter 4: Findings.

In terms of the integrity and validity of the participant responses, it must be remembered that all research conclusions based on these responses, are actually based on what the
respondents reported that they believed, which could possibly be a deviation from the truth (Dörnyei and Taguchi 2010).

3.8.4 Testing Considerations & Limitations

Much data was collected from the pre-study and post-study student testing. However, when considering the analysis or comparison of test results, Chandler (2003) believes that by using the same test and marking scheme, this enables the comparison of two tests. This would therefore validate single comparison of the proficiency tests and also of the free-writing accuracy tests in January and April. However for a writing assessment, Frantzen (1995) suspects that a decrease in overall performance occurs because of taking the same test twice.

The sentences in the multiple choice proficiency test were based on these students’ common errors, as a group. The error scenarios were, however, not all individual to each student. This in a sense could be forcing students into using certain structures they would not normally use and therefore not make that error (Paschazadeh 2010). Chandler (2003) documents another difficulty of multiple choice testing, which is that the student may achieve a correct answer or many correct answers, simply by employing a variety of strategies for answering that have nothing to do with the student’s linguistic knowledge. There was therefore no way of identifying truth or guess, or its extent, in the individual students’ proficiency test results.

3.8.5 Triangulation

Triangulation denotes a study that combines multiple research methods (Jick 1979; Andrews 2005). The effectiveness of triangulation rests on the premise that weaknesses in each single method will be counter-balanced by the strengths of another (Jick 1979). In this study, quantitative data from the accuracy and proficiency tests, two student questionnaires (pre-study and post-study), and a lecturer’s feedback questionnaire were used. Other data available such as SCHM Christmas and final assessments, attendance records, homework submission records, lecturer’s notes, and Wiki data on online pages were included in the investigation.
3.8.6 Summary of Timeline of Data Collection

Figure 3.4 illustrates the timeline involved in collecting data during this study from December 2010 to May 2011.

![Timeline of the Data Collection](image)

Figure 3.4: Timeline of the Data Collection

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research approach and methodologies used in this study. This study is an investigation during a set time period using quantitative data collection methods. The next section will present the data collected from testing, questionnaires and field notes.
Chapter Four: Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Overview

This investigation set out to explore the effects of using the Wiki and other factors on students’ language improvement. This chapter details the findings of this investigation. Data was collected from accuracy and proficiency language testing in January (pre-study) and in April (post-study). At both times, the testing incorporated a free-writing accuracy test and a multiple-choice proficiency cloze-test.

Data from three questionnaires was collected: a student background questionnaire (pre-study), a student feedback questionnaire (post-study) and a lecturer feedback questionnaire (post-study). These methods of data collection facilitated triangulation and thus increased the validity and reliability of the research.

The results of this investigation are presented in five sections in line with the research questions outlined in Chapter 3. Section 4.2 presents findings on students’ usage of the Wiki and factors affecting their usage. Section 4.3 incorporates findings on how effectively the Wiki hosts the process of homework submission and correction. Section 4.4 documents students’ language improvement and factors affecting this. Section 4.5 examines how beneficial the Wiki is as a learning and teaching support. Section 4.6 concludes the findings of this investigation.

4.1.2 Research Respondents

Eighteen students of German at SCHM were available during the investigation. One student was absent in January 2011. Seventeen students underwent language testing and completed the student background questionnaire in the pre-study phase. All eighteen available students underwent language testing and completed the student feedback questionnaire in the post-study phase in April 2011.
Five lecturers from SCHM and six lecturers from other third-level institutes in Ireland volunteered to complete the lecturer feedback questionnaire and returned it by email in May 2011. The respondents’ institutes are illustrated in Figure 4.1.

![Lecturer Feedback May 2011 - Institutions](image)

**Figure 4.1: Language Lecturers’ Institutes of Learning**

Five of the eleven respondents were lecturers in German. The remaining six lecturers taught English, French or Spanish. Two lecturer respondents taught classes of nine or less students, three taught classes of ten to fourteen students and six lecturers taught classes of fifteen to twenty students.

### 4.1.3 Other Information Sources

Data from other information sources, as listed below, is presented also in these findings:

- SCHM written assessments (December 2010, Year Three and Year Four only)
- SCHM final written examinations (May 2011, all years)
- attendance records
- homework submission records
- lecturer’s notes
- Wiki data on usage and online pages, etc.
- the process of application for the European Language Label Award 2011

### 4.2 Students’ Wiki Usage

#### 4.2.1 Introduction

This section documents students’ usage of the Wiki for homework. It examines also factors affecting students’ online submission rates.
4.2.2 Students’ Online & Handwritten Homework Submissions

The number of total written homework submissions, which combine online and handwritten per student, is indicated by the height of the individual bars in Figure 4.2. Within each bar the portion of homework submissions, that the students made online is coloured in blue.

![Figure 4.2: Total of Individual Students’ Homework Submissions](image)

Figure 4.2 depicts the total number of online submissions made by each student in each academic year. Year Four students made no online submissions. Each Year One student generally made a low number of online submissions. Year Three students were the most frequent online submitters. Out of eighteen students, only eight students made five or more online submissions.

![Figure 4.3: Number of Online Homework Submissions per Student](image)

The percentage of homework submitted online in Year Four and Year One was 0% and 28% respectively. However Year Three students used the Wiki for 91% of their homework submissions.
4.2.2.1 Students’ Perception of their Wiki Usage

In the student feedback questionnaire, students were asked if they were frequent or regular users of the Wiki and were thus invited to complete Part Two of the student background questionnaire. Part Two focused on usage of the Wiki, which was why it was important to get feedback only from students who actually used it regularly.

Twelve out of the eighteen student participants, indicated that they always or often used the Wiki. However, the Wiki data shows, that only eight of these students made more than five online submissions. These eight students will be referred to, in the remainder of these findings, as online submitters, as shown in Table 4.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year One</th>
<th>Year Three</th>
<th>Year Four</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Online Submitters

4.2.2.2 Lecturers’ Feedback on Students’ Usage of the Wiki

Students’ usage of the Wiki was presented in the lecturer feedback questionnaire. The lecturers suggested that the usage statistics would improve with increased submissions online and with an improvement in Ireland’s broadband access reliability. One lecturer suggested the low usage in some cases could probably be due to the students’ poor IT skills. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 25 in Appendix G.

4.2.3 Factors affecting Students’ Wiki Usage

4.2.3.1 Introduction

This section presents how the following factors relate to students’ online submission rates:

- broadband access
- perception of the benefit of homework
- perception of homework effort
• motivation and attitude
• attendance

4.2.3.2 Broadband Access

In the background questionnaire, students rated their home broadband access on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being high). Figure 4.4 illustrates, for each academic year, the students’ broadband rating: excellent (5), very good (4), good (3), weak (2) or poor (1). In year One 67% reported weak or poor broadband. Conversely 71% and 75% of Year Three and Year Four students respectively reported good to excellent broadband. In the student feedback questionnaire (post-study), students were asked again to rate their home broadband access between 1 and 5 (5 being high). Three students’ broadband access remained the same, eight students’ access decreased, while three students’ access increased. When asked about the main reason for not using the Wiki (post-study), 92% of students responded that it was due to poor broadband access.

Figure 4.4 shows however that 67% of students who reported high broadband access (post-study) made only 0-2 online submissions, while 25% of students with low home broadband access made 5-9 online submissions. Therefore while students may have expressed that a lack of broadband access was the main reason for non-submission online, the actual online data does not coincide with this.

![Figure 4.4: Comparison of Broadband & Online Submissions](image)

4.2.3.3 Students’ Perception of the Benefit of Homework

In the student background questionnaire, students rated how beneficial homework was to learning on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being high). Fourteen out of seventeen students believed homework was very beneficial or highly beneficial to learning. The only three students who disagreed were all Year Three students.
Of those students who believed that homework was beneficial (rating of 4-5), the majority, 62%, made a very low number of online submissions. In fact, all students who believed homework was not so beneficial (rating of 2-3) made a high number of online submissions. Therefore there is no link between students’ opinion of the benefit of homework and the students’ actual number of online submissions.

4.2.3.4 Students’ Perception of their Homework Effort

Students rated their homework effort on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being high). One student reportedly made a low effort, ten students made an average effort (3), and five students admitted to a high level of homework effort (4-5).

Figure 4.5 presents how high homework effort (rating of 4-5) and low homework effort (2-3) relate to students’ online submissions. There is only a slightly lower number of students of lower homework effort making a very low number of online submissions (0-2).

There was therefore no corresponding link between homework effort and students’ use of the Wiki.

4.2.3.5 Motivation

In the background questionnaire, students were asked to rate their motivation for learning German on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being high). Fifteen out of eighteen students were motivated or very motivated about learning German. Two Year One students expressed a motivation of indifference, while one Year Four student was unmotivated. Remarkably apart from two students, most students expressed an identical level of motivation towards learning German in January 2011 and in April 2011.
Figure 4.6 explores how students’ motivation affected their number of online homework submissions. Motivated students (rating of 4-5) used the Wiki most, with 70% of these students making between three and ten online submissions. 75% of students who expressed indifference (rating of 3) made a very low number of online submissions. All students lacking in motivation (rating of 1-2) made a very low number of submissions, between 0 and 2 submissions.

Therefore students’ motivation to learn German clearly relates directly to their use of the Wiki.

4.2.3.6 Motivation & Attitude

In the student feedback questionnaire (post-study), students were asked to rate their motivation and attitude. Figure 4.7 sorts students in decreasing order of number of online-submissions along the X-axis. For each student, a pair of bars for attitude (blue) and motivation (red) is displayed.

Generally all students who made more than five online homework submissions displayed a distinctly higher level of both motivation and attitude towards learning German.
4.2.3.7 Attendance

As part of all undergraduate modules at SCHM, students’ attendance forms 5% of their overall final grade. Figure 4.8 illustrates for each student the percentage of classes attended. Year Three students had generally high attendance, while the percentages of attendance in Year One and Year Four were varied.

Figure 4.8: Students’ Attendance

Figure 4.9 clusters students in groups of percentage-ranges of attendance (90-100%, 70-80%, etc.) and indicates the number of online submissions from 0 to 10 on the Y-axis.

Figure 4.9: Comparison of Students’ Attendance & Online Submissions

Here it can be seen that the high attendees (90-100%) generally made a higher number of online submissions.
4.2.3.8 Correction Turnaround Interval

The teacher logged into the Wiki most days to check for new online homework submissions and corrected regularly. Fifty-nine online homework submissions were corrected by the lecturer during this investigation.

Students were asked what they perceived the online correction turnaround time to be. Generally all students, who made two or more submissions, perceived the usual correction turnaround time to be better than it actually was. Unfortunately for three students who made two online submissions, their submissions were corrected only after five days or longer.

For the five online submitters, who made seven to ten submissions, 43% of their online homework submissions was corrected, more promptly, in the first four days. A fifth of their online submissions was corrected in the five to seven days after submission. Only a third of their online submissions was corrected later, after seven days. It is clear in this investigation, that the lecturer generally took more time to correct low online submitters’ submissions, than to correct high submitters’ submissions.

In the traditional handwritten homework scenario, the interval between when the student writes their homework by hand and when it is corrected is equal to the time between writing it, waiting to submit at the next class and then waiting until the subsequent class for collection. This traditional period therefore always exceeds 7 days. However in the Wiki, 65% of homework submissions were corrected within seven days, with 35% corrected after seven days, thus reducing the correction turnaround time considerably.

Lecturers responded very positively to the online correction turnaround time. One lecturer remarked that the late homework submitter may be motivated to submit, when he or she sees that other students have submitted on time. Other lecturers recognised that the lecturer would be able to track and manage their workload better online. Another lecturer mentioned the flexibility the Wiki gives to the student, in that they can submit to their own schedules and deadlines. Another lecturer stressed that corrections are much more effective when returned in a shorter timeframe. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 15 in Appendix G.
4.3 The Wiki: hosting Homework online

4.3.1 Introduction
This section investigates how successful the Wiki was, in hosting the process of homework submission and correction. Findings from students’ and lecturers’ feedback on the components of the Wiki, online correction, other correction strategies and online collaboration are presented here.

4.3.1.1 Technology in Education
To introduce the Wiki in the lecturer feedback questionnaire, lecturers were asked about their opinion on technology in education. They responded positively, highlighting that technology appeals to young people and can motivate both the teacher and the learner. However five out of eleven responses conveyed teachers’ doubt in their ability to use technology and mentioned also their fear of the scenario, when technology breaks down. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 4 in Appendix G.

4.3.2 Components of the Wiki

4.3.2.1 The Folders
The structure of the Wiki’s folders was explained in the lecturer feedback questionnaire. All feedback is contained in the response to Question No. 5, listed in Appendix G, and it was very positive. The lecturers mentioned the user-friendliness and ease of accessing the Wiki. They felt that the Wiki was a useful storage facility for the teacher to track improvement and for the student to use for revision.

4.3.2.2 The Sidebar
The structure of the sidebar of the Wiki was explained in the lecturer feedback questionnaire. The lecturers’ feedback is listed in the responses to Question No. 6 in Appendix G, and it was very positive. They mentioned that this feature was very student-friendly, enabling students to search and retrieve coursework easily.
4.3.2.3 The Hyperlinks

Whenever students created a common idiomatic or grammatical error, their mistake was underlined and hyperlinked to another page, which contained an explanation of the error. Half of the online submitters always or sometimes clicked on the hyperlinks, while the other half rarely or never did.

All lecturers responded positively, with comments describing this feature as fantastic and amazing. Some lecturers predicted the building of a reusable bank of errors which would reduce correction workload. Other lecturers remarked that the hyperlinking could encourage independent learning and enable the interested student to make considerable learning strides. Other lecturers stressed the importance of using such a feature also in the classroom, so that the students could recognise its value.

One lecturer questioned why some students would not use the hyperlinks. In response, another lecturer predicted that her students probably wouldn’t click on the hyperlinks, because they are not good at looking at grammar issues themselves and would rather learn in class. All responses are listed as responses to Question No. 9 in Appendix G.

4.3.3 Online Correction in the Wiki

4.3.3.1 The Correction of all Errors

All errors in online homework submissions were identified, highlighted and corrected. Online submitters were asked how they felt about this. All eight (100%) found this level of correction useful.

The lecturers gave mixed reactions to the process of correcting all errors. Some felt that it was not a good practice to correct all errors in some cases, as it could discourage students with learning disabilities or strong students. Another difficulty one lecturer mentioned was that the process of correcting all errors was too time consuming especially with larger groups and proposed peer correction and self-correction. Others remarked however that the system of correction of all errors provided good feedback and that the students at SCHM clearly recognised the value of such correction. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 13 in Appendix G.
4.3.3.2 Learning from Correction

When asked about their attitude towards corrected homework, thirteen students were interested in learning from their mistakes, as shown in Table 4.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I am interested to learn from mistakes.</th>
<th>I am demotivated, when I see all the mistakes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year One</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Three</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Four</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Students’ Attitude on Reviewing Corrected Homework

Interestingly all online submitters, except one, were interested to learn from their mistakes.

4.3.3.3 The Colour Correction Scheme

Online homework was corrected using a colour correction scheme as outlined in Section 3.4.3.4. Figure 4.10 illustrates how, by using this colour correction scheme, the amount of red used drops from 40% to 14%. When asked, the majority of online submitters felt this scheme added clarity (87%).


Figure 4.10: Comparison of Online Correction Samples using Red & Colours
The lecturers were asked to comment on the elements of the colour correction scheme. Their comments are listed as responses to Question No. 7 in Appendix G. Lecturers found that the colour correction scheme added more clarity to correction with one lecturer deeming it a productive rather than critical method of correction. Similarly, the lecturers also agreed that the online correction scheme lends more legibility to the correction process. All comments on legibility online are reported as responses to Question No. 8 in Appendix G.

4.3.3.4 Corrective Comments

Another component of online correction was a comment added to every corrected online homework submission. When asked about the comments, 100% of online submitters admitted to finding them encouraging and 87% said that they always read them.

Some documents contained in the [Grammar] and [Idioms] folder invited participants to edit the content in order to enhance or expand the teacher’s explanation. No student responded on any page. However when online submitters were asked if they commented back, 25% admitted to doing so.

In response to the Wiki’s ability to house an online dialogue of comments, the lecturers found this feature excellent, encouraging and useful. Some lecturers remarked that there really is only space, online, to give this level of detailed feedback, individualised praise and encouragement and the opportunity to ask questions. Some lecturers felt this feature was highly valuable for student engagement because it created a closer link between lecturer and student. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 11 in Appendix G.

Online submitters were also asked how they felt about the online comments being accompanied by a profile picture and timestamp. Half of the online submitters agreed that they make the interaction more human, while 38% felt they added no value.
4.3.3.5 The Overall Quality of Online Correction

All eight online submitters found the overall quality of online correction better than using the traditional handwritten submission system.

4.3.4 Other Correction Strategies

4.3.4.1 Grading Homework Online

When asked whether corrected homework should be graded, 67% of all students were in favour.

4.3.4.2 Commented but Uncorrected Homework

When asked about commented but uncorrected homework, 56% of students felt they would be demotivated by a lack of correction.

4.3.4.3 Self-Correction of Underlined Mistakes

Students were also asked whether they would be in favour of a system, whereby mistakes are underlined and the onus was then on the student to correct their mistakes. Slightly over a fifth, 22%, were definitely in favour, with almost two thirds (61%) maybe in favour of such a system.

4.3.4.4 Rewriting Corrected Homework

Students were asked whether they would be in favour of a system whereby the student must rewrite corrected homework. A third, 33%, were definitely in favour and 39% were maybe in favour of such a system.

4.3.5 Online Collaboration

To begin an investigation into collaborative writing, although not a main focus of this project, in the Year Three and Year One classwork folders collaborative pages were created and students were required to update the pages online in groups during class-time. The lecturer’s notes recorded that only aggregation occurred, no collaboration.
Students were reminded that at various stages in class and for homework, they were required to collaborate with classmates on online pages. They were asked, when writing their input, whether they collaborated or aggregated. Eight out of eighteen students admitted to collaborating online, and four of these students were in Year One. Year One had more contact hours and therefore more experience and exposure to online collaboration in class.

On a collaborative page, students were asked whether they would have felt comfortable deleting and replacing another students’ work with their own. Only one student reported feeling comfortable deleting or editing another students’ work. Four students responded that they were unsure, while thirteen responded No.

In the student feedback questionnaire, students were also asked whether they would be in favour of allowing other students access to their own private online homework folder, to enable all students to better learn how to handle assignments and to see where they themselves stood in the class. Only 55% were definitely or maybe in favour. Notably four out of the five who replied definitely were online submitters.

4.4 Students’ Language Improvement

4.4.1 Introduction

This section explains the results from all language testing, including the SCHM written assessments. It also presents findings on factors affecting student language improvement.

4.4.2 Students’ Accuracy & Proficiency Results

4.4.2.1 Accuracy Results (Essay)

In December 2010, all Year Three and Year Four students wrote an essay as part of their Christmas assessment. Year One students did not have a Christmas written assessment. Year Three and Year Four students’ accuracy in this essay was marked in
line with the scheme devised by Brütsch (1979), as a percentage of correct words to total words.

In December 2010 the percentages students achieved ranged from 50% to 92%. In May 2011, all students wrote an essay as part of their final formal written examination. The percentages Year Three and Year Four students achieved in May 2011 ranged from 67% to 88%. Year One students’ results from May 2011 are excluded from this presentation because there is no December data to compare to their May results.

### 4.4.2.2 Accuracy Results (Free Writing Sample)

In January 2011, all students were asked to complete a seven minute free-writing sample in class. Students’ writing accuracy was marked in line with the scheme devised by Brütsch (1979), as a percentage of correct words to total words. In January 2011 the percentages students achieved, ranged from 64% to 97%. One Year Four student was absent for testing. All students completed a post-study free writing test of accuracy in April 2011, with results ranging from 56% to 92%.

During the collection of free writing samples in January 2011, some students in Year One reacted negatively to the testing. Their comments are shown in Table 4.3 below. Students in Year Three and Year Four made no comments during or after testing.

| The sounds from other students, writing frantically, was off-putting. |
| I was wishing the whole time that it was over. |
| It was very stressful to write for seven long minutes. |
| I went back to the comfort of secondary school, writing all the stuff I’d learnt off for my Leaving Certificate oral exam. |

**Table 4.3: Year One Students’ Comments on Free Writing Test January 2011**

### 4.4.2.3 Proficiency Results (Multiple Choice Test)

In January 2011, all students were asked to complete a multiple-choice proficiency cloze-test in class. The percentages students achieved ranged from 27.5% to 87.5%. All students also completed a post-study multiple-choice cloze-test of proficiency in April 2011, with results ranging from 30% to 87.5%.
4.4.2.4 Students’ Perception of their Language Improvement

All online submitters perceived, that they made an improvement in their German language by using the Wiki. A quarter, 25%, of online submitters felt that they made a huge improvement. However, 38% of online submitters felt they made a definite improvement and another 38% felt they made a slight improvement. Therefore all online submitters felt they made some improvement using the Wiki.

The students’ perception of their improvement was presented to the lecturers in the feedback questionnaire. One lecturer remarked that it was disappointing that half of the students noted only a slight improvement. Other lecturers pointed out that students’ perception of improvement is often inaccurate, which was the case, in fact, in this investigation. Another lecturer remarked that at least all students felt they made some improvement. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 17 in Appendix G.

4.4.2.5 Lecturers’ Feedback on Testing

In the feedback questionnaire, the initial comparison of accuracy and proficiency results were presented. One lecturer commented on the difficulty of measuring improvements using testing methods and another lecturer suggested that the use of a more holistic method may have revealed more.

Other lecturers understood from the findings that online correction benefited the motivated learner. Another lecturer remarked that it was interesting that many significant improvements were linked to online submitters, stating that this was very transparent proof of the effectiveness of the project. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 24 in Appendix G.

4.4.3 Factors Affecting Language Improvement

This section documents how the following factors affect students’ language improvement:

- online submissions
- motivation
• attitude
• attendance
• anxiety speaking
• anxiety reading
• self-belief
• impression of time spent abroad
• writing practice alone
• online multimedia presence
• online hyperlinks
• opinion on online comments

4.4.3.1 Online Submissions

Figure 4.11 illustrates a comparison between the pre-study (December 2010) and post-study (May 2011) essay writing in an examination setting. Seven students improved in accuracy by between 0.17% and 5.92%. Four students’ accuracy disimproved by between 1.21% and 16.8%. There is no distinction between accuracy improvement made by online submitters (yellow) or other students in formal assessments at SCHM.

![Comparison of Accuracy (Essay) December 2010 & May 2011](image)

Figure 4.11: Comparison of Accuracy (Essay) December 2010 & May 2011

Figure 4.12 illustrates that, during the study, nine students (50%) improved in accuracy in the free-writing test, and five of these students were online submitters. Therefore it can be concluded the majority of students who improved in accuracy were online submitters.
Figure 4.13 shows that eight students out of eighteen improved in proficiency, and five of these students were online submitters. Therefore it can be concluded that the majority of students who improved in proficiency were online submitters.

To summarise, it seems that there is no link between the number of online submissions and improvement in accuracy in formal SCHM assessments in December 2010 and May 2011. However the majority of improvers in accuracy and proficiency between January 2011 and April 2011 were online submitters.

4.4.3.2 Motivation

Table 4.4 displays the students’ motivation levels and the number of students who improved and disimproved in accuracy. Six motivated students improved in accuracy, while three disimproved. Five indifferent and unmotivated students disimproved, while two improved. Therefore the more motivated student generally improved in language accuracy.
Table 4.4: Students’ Motivation & Accuracy Improvement

Table 4.5 displays the students’ motivation levels and the number of students, who improved and disimproved in proficiency. Four motivated students improved in proficiency, while four disimproved. Three indifferent and unmotivated students disimproved, while four improved. Therefore there is no link between motivation and improvement in language proficiency.

Table 4.5: Students’ Motivation & Proficiency Improvement

4.4.3.3 Attitude

In the student feedback questionnaire, students were asked to rate their attitude to learning German on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being high), as illustrated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Students’ Attitude towards learning German

Two thirds of students were positive or very positive about learning German, while a group of four Year One students and one Year Four student expressed indifference. No student expressed a negative attitude.
Tables 4.7 and 4.8 display students’ attitude level and improvement in accuracy and proficiency. For each level of attitude, an almost identical number of students improved and disimproved. The majority of students with a very positive attitude improved in proficiency. The numbers here, however, are two low to draw clear conclusions between attitude and accuracy and proficiency improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTITUDE LEVEL</th>
<th>ACCURACY IMPROVEMENT</th>
<th>ACCURACY DISIMPROVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>very positive (5)</td>
<td>3 students</td>
<td>2 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive (4)</td>
<td>4 students</td>
<td>4 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indifferent (3)</td>
<td>2 students</td>
<td>2 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very negative (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7: Students’ Attitude & Accuracy Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTITUDE LEVEL</th>
<th>PROFICIENCY IMPROVEMENT</th>
<th>PROFICIENCY DISIMPROVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>very positive (5)</td>
<td>3 students</td>
<td>1 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive (4)</td>
<td>4 students</td>
<td>4 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indifferent (3)</td>
<td>1 student</td>
<td>3 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very negative (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8: Students’ Attitude & Proficiency Improvement

### 4.4.3.4 Attendance

Figure 4.14 below clusters students in percentage ranges of attendance. In terms of improvement in accuracy, one student in each group of students with 70-80% attendance and 50-69% attendance made a significant improvement in accuracy of 11.93% and 18.61% respectively. However, apart from these two significant improvers in the lower attendance ranges, most improvement in accuracy was among those students with 90-100% attendance.

[Figure 4.14: Comparison of Students’ Attendance & Accuracy Improvement]
Figure 4.15 below also clusters students in percentage ranges of attendance and presents their improvement in proficiency. All students who improved in proficiency had high attendance (70-100%).

![% Student Attendance & Proficiency Improvement (Multiple Choice)](image)

**Figure 4.15: Comparison of Students’ Attendance & Proficiency Improvement**

### 4.4.3.5 Anxiety Speaking German

Over half (53%) of the student participants admitted to rarely or never experiencing anxiety, when speaking German. Four Year One students, two Year Three students and three Year Four students experienced anxiety speaking German sometimes or often. Anxiety speaking was more widespread in Year One and in Year Four.

Table 4.9 below documents the improvement in accuracy based on their reported level of anxiety speaking. While many Year Three students, who improved in accuracy, rarely experienced anxiety when speaking German in class, it was not possible to establish any clear link in these findings between anxiety speaking and improvement in accuracy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>anxiety speaking</th>
<th>ACCURACY IMPROVEMENT</th>
<th>ACCURACY DISIMPROVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>often</td>
<td>1 student</td>
<td>1 student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>3 students</td>
<td>3 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rarely</td>
<td>5 students</td>
<td>2 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9: Students’ Accuracy Improvement & Anxiety when Speaking

Table 4.10 below documents the improvement in proficiency based on students’ reported level of anxiety speaking. Both students who often experienced anxiety when speaking improved in proficiency, while five out of the six students who sometimes experienced anxiety speaking all disimproved. Again here, there is no clear link between anxiety speaking and improvement in proficiency.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>anxiety speaking</th>
<th>PROFICIENCY IMPROVEMENT</th>
<th>PROFICIENCY DISIMPROVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>often</td>
<td>2 student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>1 student</td>
<td>5 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rarely</td>
<td>3 students</td>
<td>3 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>2 students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10: Students’ Proficiency Improvement & Anxiety when Speaking

### 4.4.3.6 Anxiety Reading German

Students were asked whether they experienced anxiety reading in class. Anxiety reading is more widespread in Year One and in Year Four. Interestingly the only two students, who reported *often* experiencing anxiety reading, were the only certified dyslexic students at SCHM taking German.

### 4.4.3.7 Self-Belief

Three Year One students perceived that they were not good at German. In Year Three and Year Four, all students perceived their level to be OK or good, with only one Year Three student unsure of their level. Two of the three students, who admittedly felt not good at German, improved slightly in accuracy by 0.74% and 1.04%, and one student disimproved by 5.22%. Two students disimproved significantly in proficiency by 7.5% and 10%, with the third student improving by 12.5%. No conclusive link can therefore be drawn between a lack of self-belief in a student’s ability in German and his or her language improvement.

### 4.4.3.8 Impression of Time Spent Abroad

When asked about their feeling on time spent abroad in Germany, twelve students responded positively. Three students responded negatively. Of these three students, two improved in accuracy and two improved in proficiency. These numbers are too low to draw any conclusion between students’ impression of time spent abroad and language improvement.

### 4.4.3.9 Writing Practice Alone

Online submitters were asked how they typed their homework. Only one student in Year One wrote his/her homework by hand, then typed it into the Wiki. Four Year
Three students typed their homework into Microsoft Word, then pasted it into the Wiki. The remaining three online submitters typed their homework directly into the Wiki.

For those online submitters who typed homework into the Wiki directly, Table 4.11 presents their improvement in accuracy and proficiency. The third column indicates the actual number of online submissions the online submitters made. Interestingly all three made an improvement in accuracy. Two of the three dropped by 2.5% in proficiency, but one excelled by 10%. The numbers here are too few to confirm any direct link between the practice of online writing and language improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>actual number of online submissions</th>
<th>ACCURACY (free-writing)</th>
<th>PROFICIENCY (multiple-choice test)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>IMPROVEMENT</td>
<td>DISIMPROVEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>IMPROVEMENT</td>
<td>IMPROVEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>IMPROVEMENT</td>
<td>DISIMPROVEMENT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11: Typing Directly into the Wiki & Language Improvement

Combining handwritten and online writing submissions, 66% (twelve students) made between seven and fourteen homework submissions. Only 50% of these students improved in accuracy and 50% improved in proficiency. Therefore no link can be drawn in this investigation between the act of writing and language improvement.

**4.4.3.10 Effect of Multimedia Presence Online**

Of those students who found, that the profile picture and timestamp made the interaction more human, four of these were frequent online submitters. On further analysis of these four online submitters, the majority improved in accuracy, but 50% improved in proficiency. Therefore there is no evidence to suggest that the lecturer’s online multimedia presence affected students’ language improvement.

**4.4.3.11 Use of Hyperlinks Online**

Students were asked whether they clicked on the online hyperlinks. Four students indicated that they *always or sometimes* clicked on hyperlinks. Of these four, half
improved and half disimproved in proficiency. The other four online submitters who rarely or never clicked on these hyperlinks, all improved in proficiency. There is therefore no general link in this study, between the frequency of clicking on hyperlinks for further explanation, and actual improvement in proficiency.

4.4.3.12 Opinion of Comments Online
All eight online submitters found the online correction comments encouraging. Seven always read the comments and one sometimes read them. Slightly more of the online submitters (five out of eight), who found the additional online comments encouraging, improved in both language accuracy and proficiency.

4.5 The Wiki: A Beneficial Learning and Teaching Support

4.5.1 Introduction
This section documents findings on the value of the Wiki as a learning and teaching support. It includes also external approval of the Wiki and highlights what is necessary for the teacher to do to forge a successful wiki.

4.5.2 The Wiki: A Beneficial Learning Support

4.5.2.1 Increased Writing Effort Online
Online submitters were asked to rate the effort of their online homework. A quarter (25%) of online submitters did their homework online to the best of their ability. However, 63% reportedly sometimes put in a big effort, but sometimes not, and 13% indicated that they put in minimum effort.

Students were asked whether they usually reread their homework prior to submitting. 87% of students sometimes or always reread prior to submission.

The [Page History] function in the Wiki enables the teacher to review how often and to what extent the student has modified his or her online homework submission. The
lecturers found this feature very good and felt that its existence could incentivise students to work more. Many lecturers also remarked that this feature enabled the teacher to monitor student engagement in their learning and to observe students’ working styles. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 14 in Appendix G.

4.5.2.2 Increased Engagement Online

The online submitters were asked how often they checked to see if their homework was corrected following submission. Half of the online submitters checked once or twice a week after submission. The others checked only when they logged on again to create a new homework submission.

4.5.2.3 Promoting Learner Autonomy

It was explained to the lecturers that the Wiki contained an in-built search function which enabled students to search for help. The lecturers responded favourably to this feature, describing it as a great learning tool and explaining that it encouraged students to take responsibility for their own learning and promoted learner autonomy. Some mentioned the important fact that the Wiki content created by the lecturer was personalised and relevant and correct, unlike websites, which often have incorrect information. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 12 in Appendix G.

In May 2011 two European Language Label jurors visited SCHM to attend a presentation by the lecturer on the Wiki. Afterwards there was an informal discussion with the lecturer and two Year Three student volunteers. The students spoke positively about the Wiki and the benefit to their learning. They explained that on that particular day, which coincidently was also the day of their final German formal written examination, they were actively using the Wiki in the library, to review their corrected homework assignments and the classwork pages in preparation for the essay question in their examination.
4.5.2.4 Learning of Workplace Skills

By using the Wiki, students are developing transferable IT skills. The lecturers were in total agreement with this, labeling it an added bonus to the process of language learning. They expressed the usefulness of developing these skills from the first academic year and the benefit for the students’ careers. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 20 in Appendix G.

4.5.3 The Wiki: A Beneficial Teaching Support

4.5.3.1 Classwork Documented

During the course of the study, fifty-six lessons plans and thirty-seven classwork pages were created by the lecturer. Classroom pages in the Wiki were created during each class to store all phrases and vocabulary discussed. The lecturers responded favourably to this, with one lecturer stressing the importance of integrating the Wiki into the class to ensure students not try to avoid the Wiki. Another lecturer remarked on the usefulness of these pages for students’ revision or when catching-up on work missed. Other lecturers highlighted the importance of seeing vocabulary in context with the lesson and deemed this aspect a great visual aid and an excellent resource for vocabulary building and improvement in level of expression. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 18 in Appendix G.

4.5.3.2 Students’ Errors Captured & Documented

The Wiki has been in use at SCHM since September 2009 and while the initial phase is not part of this research, many of the common idiomatic errors were captured, or created as pages in the [Idioms] folder in the early stages of usage, as shown in Figure 4.16. Apart from a few new [Idioms] pages in Autumn 2010, the majority of common errors had been captured and created as pages in the [Idioms] folder in the first semester of use in 2009.
The [Idioms] folder contained in total thirty-two documents on common errors, which provided critical instructional information for the teacher to reiterate in the classroom. These errors are listed below in the Table 4.12.

| When (Wann, Wenn, Als) Mann or man home zu Hause nach Hause Es gibt means there is/are kein means not a will will wollen want im or in ago, etc. ganz or sehr Junge Jugendliche junge Leute Meinung | the first time, for the first time gleich aehnlich waere or wuerde ie or ei das or dass German the Germans comma when to use it um zu prepositions that dont translate Spass machen or haben schoen or schon | Lust and keine Lust Wissen or kennen Alle die does not mean all of Abends Morgens am Abend Menus and items Plurals Kueche Kuchen kochen words that take prepositions es gefaellt mir different andere verschieden |

**Table 4.12: Table of Common Idiomatic Errors**

### 4.5.3.3 Top Proficiency Errors Extracted for Reinforcement in Instruction

Each sentence in the multiple choice test focused on a different grammatical or idiomatic difficulty which occurred during online correction, and resulted in the creation of a hyperlinked page in the [Grammar] or [Idioms] folders explaining the error. The top fifteen idiomatic and grammatical errors from January and April 2011 are illustrated in Figures 4.17 and 4.18 which indicate the number of students making each error. The student numbers are plotted on the Y-axis.
The combined top fifteen errors in each testing session were almost the same, with a difference of three errors between them. This concludes that, while the frequency of some errors was changing slightly, all of these top errors, captured in the [Idioms] pages of the Wiki, were still reoccurring.

It was explained to the lecturers that the pages in the [Grammar] and [Idioms] folders were created, as student errors occurred. The majority of lecturers’ initial reaction was that this was a lot of work for the lecturer. They responded positively to the capturing of common errors, remarking that this was tailored to the students’ common errors and was a great learning resource for the students. Some remarked that it was also very beneficial for the teacher to use during classroom instruction and would also reduce correction time for the teacher in rewriting or repeating corrections. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 10 in Appendix G.
4.5.3.4 Contextualising Grammar

Hyperlinking errors to online pages in the Wiki’s [Grammar] or [Idioms] folders attempted to contextualise grammar. Lecturers responded very positively to this and explained that keeping grammar in context is the best way of teaching grammar effectively and students could see how grammar points relate to their writing. One lecturer however expressed wariness towards mixing grammar topics and felt that this approach only benefited the better students. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 19 in Appendix G.

4.5.3.5 Other Online Writing Possibilities

It was explained to lecturers, that the Wiki was also used for an online distance learning project. The lecturers responded positively to this combination of individual and collaborative writing in a multimedia format as a preparation for the myriad of group projects in their Year Three. One lecturer used an online environment for learning diaries and explained that it was more user friendly and interactive and it also gave students regular contact with someone in the College. While most lecturers responded favourably to this use of the Wiki, one lecturer reiterated the necessity that the participating lecturer should be well trained in IT. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 21 in Appendix G.

The possibility of using the Year Two distance learning project content as a basis for Year One instruction and for Year Three discussion and writing tasks was explained to the lecturers. All responded very favourably, mentioning the great potential of this excellent idea. They particularly remarked on the student-centered approach which incorporated peer-learning about and from other students’ experiences and advice, thus creating an electronic resource particularly tailored to these students’ needs. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 22 in Appendix G.
4.5.4 Approval of the Wiki

4.5.4.1 Award of the European Language Label for the Wiki

As part of the external review process, the Wiki was put forward for the European Language Label (ELL) Award 2011. An ELL Application for the Wiki was submitted in March 2011, which resulted in a shortlisting and an ELL jury visit in May 2011. On the European Day of Languages ceremony on Monday, the 26th September 2011 at All Hallows College in Dublin, the ELL award was presented to the lecturer for the Online German Homework Wiki.

![Figure 4.19: European Language Label Logo 2011](image)

4.5.4.2 Positive Feedback from Lecturer Peers

One focus of the European Language Label Award process was whether other lecturers could or would use the Wiki in their teaching environments. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 23 in Appendix G. Lecturers highlighted, in their comments, the benefit of the Wiki in terms of the production of multimedia content and organisation of information. They specifically mentioned using it in their environments for writing assignments, collaborative projects, translations, distance learning projects and communication. One lecturer queried how the use of this resource compared to more conventional approaches to teaching. Four lecturers however expressed real concern about the technical skill required to use a wiki.

In response to Question No. 16, as listed in Appendix G, lecturers reiterated their view that the use of the Wiki is beneficial and stressed again the difficulty of using it with larger class sizes and when the lecturer lacks the necessary IT skills.

One lecturer with a few years experience correcting online, explained that the hyperlinks to [Idioms] and [Grammar] pages would greatly reduce the correction time.
This lecturer also felt, if more students regularly submitted online, that their improvement would be more significant and recommended again the incorporation of online writing within the classroom.

Other lecturers applauded the Wiki’s positive effect on student engagement by promoting more interaction with the language. They remarked that the Wiki enables collaboration and teamwork, while nurturing students’ skills of self-assessment and correction.

4.5.4.3 Positive Feedback from Students

All online submitters felt that the Wiki should continue to be in use at SCHM. Table 4.13 contains a listing of all student comments made in the post-study online questionnaire. The comments mention the effort involved in creating the pages, the benefit for revision and creating homework and the value of comments of encouragement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I found the online website to be very helpful, for example all lectures were posted online which I found excellent. A lot of time and effort went in to creating pages to help the students, which was excellent. I feel the website made German homework more assessable and easier to do. It was also very encouraging to read the comments on corrected homework. Thank You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the Wiki personally was very useful this year. I always had a document of my homework when I needed to revise, in contrast to loose sheets where they are sometimes misplaced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The effort from the lecturer for making this website should be appreciated and therefore used by all students. It is also useful if a student misses class and can get an update on what they missed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good System! Keep it up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The online Wiki was a great addition to the German class and homework submission, and a great resource for queries and grammar.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13: Comments in the Students’ Feedback Questionnaire

4.5.5 The Teacher’s Commitment & Success of the Wiki

4.5.5.1 Student Preparation for Using the Wiki

The final question in the background questionnaire was whether the students felt they were adequately instructed in the use of the Wiki. All students responded yes. Similarly in the post-study stage, all online submitters reiterated that they were adequately instructed.
4.5.5.2 Increased Workload involved in Online Correction

It was estimated by the lecturer in this study and explained to the lecturers that online correction involves twice as much time as traditional handwritten corrections. It was also highlighted to the lecturers that all online submitters found online correction more beneficial.

In response, the teachers recognised that online correction was of better quality and was more legible and accessible. However they remarked that the increased time commitment was considerable, especially with larger groups. All comments are listed as responses to Question No. 16 in Appendix G.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented detailed findings from the research that was carried out. The findings were gathered using two methods of language testing, three questionnaires and data from other information sources. In Chapter Five, these findings will be analysed in light of the literature outlined in Chapter Two.
Chapter Five: Discussion of Key Findings

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Outline of the Chapter

In Chapter Four the findings of this investigation were presented. This chapter discusses this investigation’s findings, by linking them to literature reviewed in Chapter Two. New issues arising from this investigation are also presented.

5.1.2 Overview of the Research

This investigation set out to examine the effects of using an Online Homework Wiki in the teaching of undergraduate German. The study took place at SCHM, a third-level institute in the West of Ireland. The participants were undergraduate business students studying International Hotel Management taking German. The Online Homework Wiki was in use at SCHM since 2009. Students were encouraged to use the Wiki to submit their homework online and the lecturer corrected it.

In order to establish the effect of using the Wiki on students’ language improvement, testing methods were devised and employed in the pre-study and post-study stages. Students’ feedback in the pre-study and post-study stages was also collected using two standardised questionnaires. A third standardised questionnaire was devised and administered to collect feedback on the Wiki and on this study from lecturers at SCHM and at other third-level institutes. Other data on students’ attendance and homework submissions, observations and SCHM assessment results were collected and included in this investigation.

5.1.3 Key Findings

The key findings of the investigation can be summarised as follows:

- Eight out of eighteen students frequently used the Wiki for online homework submission. These students had very high attendance marks, were motivated,
displayed a very good attitude towards learning German, had good IT skills and received online feedback from the lecturer within a short time-frame.

- The Online Homework Wiki was successful in hosting online homework submission and correction effectively, incorporating colours and comments of feedback and praise and contextualising vocabulary and grammar, using online hyperlinks.

- Students’ improvement in language accuracy was directly related to their motivation. Students’ improvement in both language accuracy and proficiency was directly related to their attendance and to the number of online submissions they made.

- The Online Homework Wiki could be deemed as a successful learning support as it forged an improvement in students’ writing quality and could build, in the students, crucial IT skills for the workplace.

- The Wiki could be deemed as a successful teaching tool, as it documented classwork, captured common errors for use in instruction and provided many online individual and collaborative writing possibilities. It was awarded the European Language Label Award in September 2011.

- While the workload involved in online correction became more flexible for the teacher, it took twice as much time as handwritten correction. However, the quality was deemed better by students and by the lecturers surveyed.

- To consider the use of a wiki in another environment, the teacher must feel confident in his or her IT skills and be able to commit the extra time that online correction demands. It is recommended also for use with smaller class sizes.
5.1.4 Presentation of Findings for Discussion

This chapter presents these findings in more detail and aims to determine if the findings are consistent with current theories, as outlined in Chapter Two: Literature Review. The findings will be analysed under the following headings:

- Students’ Wiki Usage
- The Wiki: Hosting Homework Online
- Students’ Language Improvement
- The Wiki: A Beneficial Learning and Teaching Support

Implications of the research findings are also discussed at the end of this chapter.

5.2 Students’ Wiki Usage

5.2.1 Introduction

This section presents both factors affecting and not affecting students’ usage of the Wiki and discusses these in light of the relevant literature highlighted in Chapter 2.

5.2.2 Factors Affecting Students’ Usage of the Wiki

High classroom attendees (90-100%) generally made a higher number of online submissions. Students who expressed a high level of motivation to learn German and also a high level of attitude made more than five online homework submissions.

One lecturer suggested the students’ poor IT skills could also be a reason affecting their ability to submit online. There was no other data collected in this investigation which corroborated this fact. However only one online submitter admitted to writing his or her homework first by hand and then typing it into the Wiki. This indicates a good level of IT skills among the other online submitters.

In this study, it was discovered that the lecturer took more time to correct online submissions made by the students, who made a very low number of submissions (e.g. two). The online submissions made by students who submitted more, were corrected
more promptly. This fact, be it coincidence or not, concurs with the research which shows that students’ engagement with wiki-based learning activities is directly proportional to the quality and frequency of tutor’s feedback (Cubric 2007; Carr et al 2007).

Therefore in this investigation, the identifiable factors affecting students’ usage of the Wiki are students’ attendance, motivation and attitude towards learning German, good IT skills and the frequency of the lecturer’s feedback.

5.2.3 Factors not Affecting Students’ Usage of the Wiki

During this investigation, Year One and Year Four students used the Wiki for 28% and 0% of their homework submissions respectively, while Year Three students used it more actively, for 91% of their homework submissions. Some lecturers suggested that usage statistics would increase with an improvement in Ireland’s broadband access reliability. Poor broadband was actually identified by 92% of students as the main reason for not submitting online. However 67% of students with high broadband access made two or less online submissions and 33% of students with low broadband reliability made five to nine online submissions. Therefore broadband reliability did not affect students’ ability to submit online.

On examination of other factors, such as students’ opinion of the benefit of homework and their opinion of their own homework effort, no parallel could be drawn to link these factors to students’ number of online submissions.

Therefore broadband is not a factor that affects students’ practice of online submission, nor is students’ opinion of the value of homework or their opinion of their homework effort.
5.3 The Wiki: Hosting Homework Online

5.3.1 Introduction
This section compares the following aspects of the Wiki, with the literature covered in Chapter Two:

- an online homework store
- the correction of all errors online and other correction strategies
- the feature of hyperlinking
- the coloured correction scheme
- corrective comments

5.3.2 An Online Homework Store
Kroeker (2009) describes the traditional copybook as a powerful learning tool that helps students retain and practice knowledge learned in class. Similarly, the lecturers described the Wiki as a useful storage facility for students and for the teacher to track improvement. The lecturers praised also the feature of the Wiki to store multimedia content and to organise information online.

5.3.3 The Correction of all Errors
Many researchers argue against the correction of all errors as it does not improve learning (Semke 1984; Dekeyser 1993). Others concur, highlighting its discouraging and harmful effect on learners (Krashen 1982; Loewen 2007; King 2005). Some lecturers in this study also echoed this sentiment, doubting the value of correcting all errors, especially for strong students or students with learning disabilities. However other lecturers remarked that this system of correction can forge good feedback. Research also shows that the more information the learners have the better they understand their mistakes (Cardelle and Corno 1981). Similarly, in this investigation, thirteen out of eighteen students at SCHM expressed their interest in learning from their mistakes and all online submitters found this level of correction useful.
All online submitters found the overall quality of correction better online. Lecturers recognised that online correction is of better quality and is more legible and accessible. The online data in the investigation showed clearly that 65% of online submissions were corrected within seven days, which is shorter than in the traditional system of handing up and returning homework at weekly class meetings. Similarly, one lecturer stressed that corrections are much more effective when returned in a shorter timeframe.

5.3.4 The Feature of Hyperlinking

Research highlights the premise that when an error occurs and is corrected, that the student no longer makes that error (Park 2006; Ferris 2010). However on comparison of the proficiency tests in this investigation, the top fifteen errors each time were almost identical with a difference of only three. Therefore while the frequency of some errors was changing, the errors as captured in the [Idioms] and [Grammar] folders were still reoccurring. This is in line with Ferris’s doubt (2010) that form focused feedback leads to long-term acquisition of a particular grammatical feature.

The most striking feature for the lecturers was the feature of hyperlinking errors in homework pages to explanatory [Idioms] and [Grammar] pages. Research also applauds this creation of a network of information which constructs knowledge (Langley et al 2008; Duffy 2008; Park 2006; Wible et al 2001; Clark 2009; Lund 2008). This knowledge, according to the lecturers, is contextualised, personalised, relevant, and correct, unlike many websites with incorrect information.

5.3.5 The Coloured Correction Scheme

Research explains that red, the traditional colour for correction, is not beneficial to the teacher or the learner (Rutschick et al 2010; Semke 1984). Byrne (1988) recommends producing a marking colour scheme to help students identify their mistakes more clearly. This was adopted in the Wiki and the amount of red used in correction was reduced from 40% to 14%. A significant majority (87%) of the online submitters found that this method of correction added clarity. The lecturers also found that the correction scheme lended clarity and improved legibility and also deemed it a productive rather than critical method of correction.
5.3.6 Corrective Comments

Comments were added in the online [Comments] field of each corrected homework submission to praise the student and provide focused feedback on errors. Vogler (1971) does not see any benefit in supportive comments as they cannot counteract the negative effect of numerous errors. Semke (1984) feels that comments are only beneficial when they exist alone, without any correction. However Ferris (2004) and Park (2006) regard teachers’ written comments as crucial to students’ improvement and make students sense teachers’ sincerity. All online submitters admitted to finding the teacher’s comments encouraging. Lecturers found the facility of online comments excellent and also encouraging.

Research advises the incorporation of a human aspect or social presence online to encourage students (Wang 2008; Mandernach 2009). However, only 50% of online submitters felt that the teacher’s profile picture and time-stamp made the interaction more human.

Lecturers applauded the online comment box as a space for individualised praise and encouragement and described the facility for students to comment back online as highly valuable for student engagement. Although 25% of online submitters admitted to commenting back, no student did in reality.

5.3.7 Other Correction Strategies for Consideration

Some other correction strategies were presented to the students in the students’ feedback questionnaire, in line with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. They expressed favour for some and a lack of favour for others.

A clear majority (67%) of students were in favour of grading corrected homework. If homework was returned commented, but uncorrected, 56% of students felt they would be demotivated by a lack of correction.
Most students (83%) were definitely or maybe in favour of a system whereby mistakes are underlined and the student then corrects their own mistakes. Semke (1984) believes this process however to be the least effective.

Almost three-quarters (72%) of students were definitely or maybe in favour of a system whereby students must rewrite corrected homework, a process which King (2005) believes enhances learning.

5.3.8 Summary of the Value of the Wiki

In this section the features and functionality of the Wiki were examined in how they relate to the literature in Chapter Two. An important result in the findings was also that all online submitters felt that the Wiki should continue to be in use at SCHM. The lecturers also applauded the Wiki’s positive effect on student engagement, promoting more interaction with the language and enabling collaboration, teamwork, while nurturing students’ skills of self-assessment and correction. In September 2011, the Wiki was also further validated by receiving the European Language Label Award.

5.4 Students’ Language Improvement

5.4.1 Introduction

Students were tested in two ways using a free-writing measure of accuracy and a standardised multiple-choice cloze test of proficiency. The next section discusses findings on factors affecting language improvement in both accuracy and proficiency.

5.4.2 Factors Affecting Student Language Improvement

Using the Wiki the lecturer corrected online submitters’ homework, by using colours, correcting all errors and adding focused comments of feedback and encouragement, as outlined earlier. Ferris (2010) and Semke (1984) both believe that this type of correction does not increase writing accuracy or proficiency. However the findings in this investigation indicated that the majority of students who improved in accuracy, actually were online submitters; they experienced more frequently the detailed online
correction as explained earlier. Similarly one lecturer, who used a wiki in his or her environment, predicted that if students regularly submitted online, that their improvement would be more significant.

Guénette (2007) stresses that if a student is not motivated, he or she will not improve no matter what type of correction is employed. This is true also in this investigation. Only the more motivated students generally improved in language accuracy, but there was no link between motivation and improvement in language proficiency.

Students were asked if they found the additional online comments encouraging. The majority of those students, who found the comments encouraging, improved in both accuracy and proficiency.

When students were categorised in percentage ranges of attendance (90-100%, 80-90%, etc.), most improvement in accuracy was among those students with 90-100% attendance. All students who improved in proficiency were in the 70-100% range.

Therefore the number of online submissions and students’ motivation are both factors that affect accuracy. Students who reportedly found online comments encouraging improved in accuracy. This implies that the use of online comments positively impacts on accuracy. Finally students’ attendance is a factor that affects both accuracy and proficiency.

5.4.3 Factors not Affecting Student Language Improvement

Semke (1984) believes that writing alone, even without correction, enhances accuracy. In this investigation, however, this was not the case. Of those students who made between seven and fourteen homework submissions, only 50% improved in accuracy and 50% improved in proficiency.

No conclusions can be drawn in the investigation between students’ attitude, anxiety speaking, self-belief as communicators, or their impression of time spent abroad on their language improvement. No link can be made either, between the effect of the teacher’s
multimedia presence in the Wiki, or the students’ frequency of clicking hyperlinks, on their language improvement.

5.5 *The Wiki: A Beneficial Learning & Teaching Support*

5.5.1 *Introduction*

This section discusses findings on the benefit of the Wiki as a learning and teaching support.

5.5.2 *The Wiki: A Learning Support*

5.5.2.1 *Information & Revision Source for Students*

Fifty-six class lesson plans were uploaded in Microsoft Word format and thirty-seven classwork pages were created by the lecturer during class and were therefore available online. In this way, the wiki was being used as a class website, as recommended by Bryant (2006) and Ravid *et al* (2008). Similarly, some lecturers highlighted the importance of seeing vocabulary in context with the lesson, deeming it a great visual aid and an excellent resource for vocabulary building and improving level of expression. They also mention the advantage the classwork pages for students’ revision or for catching up on work missed.

The lecturers also complimented the sidebar feature, which they understood enabled students to search and to retrieve course-work easily. They mentioned also its benefit for student revision, which the Year Three student volunteers concurred with during the European Language Label jury visit in May 2011.

5.5.2.2 *A Change in Student Behaviour*

Research explains that when students type, their revision behaviour changes and the quality of their writing is positively impacted upon (King 2005; Kovacic *et al* 2007; Ferris 2010; Semke 1984; Truscott 1998; Krashen 1982). This was also found online with 87% admitting to always or sometimes re-reading their work prior to submission.
A clear majority (87%) admittedly *always* or *sometimes* put a big effort into writing their homework. Semke (1984) explains that once homework is submitted, students generally look forward to its return. This was also true in this investigation, with 50% of online submitters checking once or twice a week to see if their homework had been corrected. Therefore online submission greatly enhances the participants’ homework revision practices, and possibly increases their pride in their work, therefore forging a very probable improvement in writing quality.

5.5.2.3 *Students’ Learning Workplace Skills*

Research explains that students’ use of a wiki builds crucial skills for the workplace in technical literacy, content creation, online collaboration and communication (Bruns and Humphreys 2005; Duffy 2008). The lecturers were in total agreement with this effect, labeling it an added bonus to the process of language learning and expressed the importance of building these skills from the first academic year.

5.5.3 *The Wiki: A Teaching Support*

5.5.3.1 *Student Errors Captured & Documented*

Research suggests retaining homework and errors as this provides teachers with necessary instructional information (Langley *et al* 2008; Frantzen 1995). Sixty-three homework pages were corrected during the study. Errors identified in these pages were corrected by underlining them and hyperlinking them to a new or existing page explaining the idiomatic or grammatical errors. The lecturers also responded very positively to this. They stated that students could better see how grammar points relate to their writing, thus putting grammar in context. The presence of the hyperlinks and the choice for the student, to click on the hyperlinks or not, encouraged independent learning, according to the lecturers.

5.5.3.2 *Other Online Writing Possibilities*

Research recommends the continual use of a class wiki for a variety of class assignments, whether they are individual, group or class assignments (Walters-Coppola *et al* 2002; Cubric 2007; Carr *et al* 2007). It was explained to the lecturers that the Year
Two students, not part of this investigation, added content to individual and collaborative pages as part of their distance learning project. The page stubs for the project were created by the lecturer to shape the students’ contributions, as recommended by Mindel and Verma (2006). In this way students and teachers become partners in the creation of information (Mindel and Verma 2006; Elgort 2007; Wible et al 2001). The lecturers applauded the combination of individual and collaborative writing possible in multimedia format.

The possibility of using the Year Two distance learning content as a basis for Year One instruction and for Year Three discussion and writing tasks was explained to the lecturers. In this way, the students’ online information can be built upon by future cohorts of students, creating a language corpora tailored to these students (Elgort 2007; Ravid et al 2008). All lecturers responded favourably, highlighting that this approach was student-centered, particularly tailored to SCHM students’ needs, incorporated peer-learning from the students’ own experiences and advice.

5.3.3.3 Online Collaboration & Peer Review

The literature indicated that if a student can view another student’s homework, then this can enhance the whole writing process (Carr et al 2007). Measuring such an improvement was not an aspect of the investigation, and only 55% of students surveyed said they would allow other students read-access to their online homework folders.

During this investigation students were asked to collaborate both inside and outside the classroom on project pages. Almost half, eight of the eighteen students, admitted to collaborating. This finding was in contrast to Mindel and Verma’s study in 2006, which reported only aggregation, no collaboration. The majority, thirteen students, admitted that they would not feel comfortable editing or deleting another student’s work on a collaborative page. It seems that however beneficial, these students are not yet ready for true online collaborative writing.
5.5.4 Summary
The Wiki supports learners in their search for information and when creating homework or revising for assessments. The act of online writing forges a probable improvement in writing and builds in the students valuable IT skills for the workplace. The Wiki supports teachers by capturing common errors which can be focused upon during instruction. It also provides many new online and collaborative possibilities for writing.

5.5.5 Teacher’s Constraints of Time & Skills

5.5.5.1 Introduction
This section discusses findings on the time commitment and skills necessary for a teacher to use an online wiki and discusses these in line with the literature presented in Chapter Two. Recommendations for student engagement with the Wiki are also made.

5.5.5.2 The Time Factor
It was estimated during this investigation that correcting online involves twice as much time as correcting by hand. Walters-Coppola et al (2002) expressed that tutors in their study also found that quite a significant amount of time for online correction was necessary. In Kirkup and Kirkwood’s study (2008) tutors were unsure whether the extra time was producing enough advantage. Similarly, the lecturers in this investigation felt that online correction would be far too time consuming, especially with larger groups.

However, one lecturer with a few years’ experience correcting online, explained that the hyperlinks to [Idioms] and [Grammar] pages would greatly reduce the correction time. Another lecturer labeled the Wiki folders as a reusable bank of errors which would reduce the correction workload. In fact, in this investigation in 2011, twenty-seven of the thirty-two [Idioms] pages were created in the first semester of use, in 2009, and were reused continuously after that.

In Kirkup and Kirkwood’s study (2008) their tutors were willing to change from the previously less time consuming practice of handwritten correction because they saw a real improvement in the quality of their online feedback. Research also promotes
continuous rather than sporadic feedback as it directly increases student engagement (Cubric 2007; SEG Report 2008).

The process of online correction, however improved or beneficial, definitely demands more time, and more time outside of work hours to provide the essential continuous feedback. This therefore would extend traditional teaching demands considerably.

5.5.5.3 The Skills Factor

Five out of eleven lecturers conveyed their doubt in their ability to use technology and their fear of the scenario when technology breaks down. Many times they expressed real concern about the technical skill required to use a wiki.

5.5.5.4 Recommendations for Student Engagement

Ravid et al (2008) advise that students be trained to use the system in advance to avoid problems and boost engagement. Training occurred at SCHM and all students responded in the pre-study questionnaire that they were adequately instructed in the use of the Wiki and no problems were reported during the semester in the lecturer’s notes.

Another recommendation for success is to incorporate the wiki into regular classroom instruction (Walters-Coppola et al 2002; Cubric 2007). This was echoed by a lecturer with many years experience in online correction. Another lecturer felt that this practice would reduce the situation of students’ trying to avoid the Wiki.

Other lecturers highlighted the importance of using a feature like the hyperlinking in class, so that students could recognise its value. One lecturer wondered why students would not use such a feature, while another lecturer anticipated that students probably would not click on such a feature because they are not so good at looking at grammar issues themselves. Similarly in the investigation, 50% of the online submitters always or sometimes clicked on the hyperlinks, while the other 50% rarely or never did.
5.6 Implications of Research Findings for SCHM

The data collection tools created for this study could certainly be employed for future cohorts of students.

In Chapter Three: Methodology the need for language testing at SCHM for this investigation was established because the students’ last official test results were outdated. Research proposes integrating language learning assessments on entry (Dinklage 1972). Therefore the methods of accuracy and proficiency testing could be used as an informal standardised test at various academic stages at SCHM. In this way both students and teachers could be aware of progress and difficulties and it may motivate students to engage more with their learning.

Aspects of the students’ background and feedback questionnaires could also be incorporated into the SCHM Student Needs Analysis Review Form, which has been administered at SCHM every September in Year One and Year Three since 2007. One example would be the question on students’ experiencing anxiety reading. In this investigation both students registered with learning difficulties were the only two students to respond that they always experienced anxiety reading. This question on anxiety could also be instrumental in pinpointing students who may not yet have been certified with learning difficulties. While language anxiety does not always relate to achievement, it can be reduced in more supportive and understanding classroom environments (Horwitz 2001). Also if a student expresses this anxiety, a first stepping stone then exists for the student to seek more help and for the teacher to provide more support on this matter.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the findings of this investigation in light of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Chapter Six will conclude this thesis by summarising the outcomes of this investigation and making recommendations for further use of the Wiki at SCHM or in other teaching environments. Areas for future research will also be identified.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

Ireland’s National Strategy for Higher Education Report (2010) identifies the skills which should be pursued as learning outcomes of Higher Education in Ireland. Two of the Report’s prescribed learning outcomes are developing team working skills and effectively using technology. At SCHM students’ level of German written accuracy was forming a barrier to their German language academic success.

The process of homework is the singular individual point of contact between teacher and student. It was therefore decided to implement technology, in the form the Online Homework Wiki, to provide an online platform for homework submission and correction in the hope of improving students’ written accuracy. Eighteen undergraduate students participated in this study. This investigation examined the function of the Wiki, the students’ usage of the Wiki and factors affecting their language improvement during the Spring semester 2011 at SCHM.

This chapter will provide a short summary of the research findings and will give recommendations for further research in the area.

6.2 Outcomes of the Investigation

The objectives and findings of this investigation are contained in the question and answer sections below.

6.2.1 Do students actively use the Wiki and what factors affect their usage and engagement?

Students’ Wiki usage for homework submission was impressively high in Year Three (91%), but alarmingly low in Year One and Year Four (28%, 0%). The factors affecting students’ Wiki usage were students’ attendance, motivation, attitude towards learning German, IT skills and the frequency of the lecturer’s feedback.
6.2.2 Is the Wiki successful in hosting the process of homework submission & correction?

The Wiki stored and organised individual homework, handouts and classwork pages online in multimedia format. Using hyperlinks, errors were linked to explanatory pages which put clear and correct guidance on grammar in context for the student. The Wiki incorporated a clear and legible coloured correction scheme, including focused feedback and online communication using comments. Both lecturers and online submitters believed the quality of correction online was better.

6.2.3 How do students’ usage of the Wiki, and other factors positively impact on students’ German language level?

Students’ number of online submissions, their attendance and motivation were factors that affected accuracy. Students’ attendance also affected proficiency. Similarly students who indicated that they felt encouraged by online comments also improved in proficiency.

6.2.4 Is the Wiki a beneficial learning and teaching support?

Students’ usage of the Wiki enhanced their homework and revision practice and many displayed increased pride in their online homework by checking the Wiki frequently for correction. Online corrections were returned within a shorter timeframe, thus making corrections more effective. Students built crucial technical skills for the workplace by typing and collaborating online. The Wiki therefore benefited learning.

Teachers could enjoy more flexibility correcting online, making their correction workload more manageable. Teachers could present vocabulary in context within online classwork pages. They could present grammar in context using the hyperlink feature and this fostered independent learning in their students. The content in the [Idioms] and [Grammar] folders provided crucial instructional information. Lecture handouts could also be uploaded. The Wiki also received a 2011 European Language Label Award, recognising it as a creative and inventive project which improved the quality of language teaching and learning. The Wiki therefore benefited teaching.
6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 Recommendations at SCHM

Students expressed favour for the following processes which will be incorporated sporadically into future German language teaching at SCHM:

- the process of correction, whereby underlined errors are corrected by the student
- online collaboration

Features of the students’ background and feedback questionnaires will be incorporated into the students’ Needs Analysis Review Forms at SCHM to identify anxiety, motivation, attitude and other factors which can affect students’ language progress or indicate language difficulty. Both testing methods of accuracy and of proficiency will be carried out, once or possibly twice a year, to establish for both the teacher and the student, the students’ language level and also their progress.

All online submitters, in fact, eight out of the eighteen student participants in this investigation, were in favour of continued use of the Wiki at SCHM. To promote improved student engagement with the Wiki at SCHM, the Wiki will be more actively used in the German classroom so that it becomes an integral part of learning and teaching and so that students may not try to avoid it.

6.3.2 Recommendations in other Teaching Environments

The lecturers’ feedback on the Wiki and its possibilities was indeed positive. However, to decide to implement a similar wiki in another teaching environment, a teacher must feel confident in his or her IT skills. The teacher must consider his or her class size, as lecturers in this investigation questioned if the workload involved would be too great for larger class sizes; the German classes at SCHM had five to seven students. The teacher must invest time training the students, and then make time, in fact twice as much time, to correct online. Hyperlinking could reduce this somewhat, although in a new wiki, equivalent [Idioms] and [Grammar] pages would need to be created. To forge student engagement with a wiki, the teacher must also continuously add feedback and often after hours.
Therefore if the teacher is confident in his or her IT skills, has medium to small class sizes, and is willing to commit the extra time required, then a wiki could be a beneficial learning and teaching support in other teaching environments.

6.4 Future Research in this Area at SCHM

Outside of homework submission, a Wiki-based online distance learning project was launched as part of the Year Two language assessment at SCHM. It is now in its second year. This project requires that students contribute multimedia content to individual and collaborative student pages on living, working and experiencing life in Germany. Further research needs to be undertaken on student engagement with this project, and also on the value of the content of the project in its current form.

Using the students’ Distance Learning content, a language corpora could be built at SCHM, to inform Year One instruction on placement preparation and to form topics for discussion and writing in Year Three. The lecturers responded positively, and believed that this process would be student-centered and would foster peer-learning from the advice and experience of other students. Further research needs to be undertaken to examine how to establish such a corpora and how to best incorporate it into the learning and teaching at SCHM.

6.5 Conclusion

This investigation has examined the use of the Online Homework Wiki and has made some interesting findings based on the use of the Wiki with three small class groups, in total eighteen undergraduate students of German at SCHM. Further research is necessary however, to determine the effectiveness and explore the possibilities of implementing a wiki in other educational settings and levels, for larger class sizes, for other languages or other subjects, which involve online writing or collaboration.
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List of Appendices

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Appendix C: Proficiency Test
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Appendix E: Student Feedback Questionnaire
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Appendix A: Registrar’s Approval of Research

EMAIL SEEKING APPROVAL

From: Danielle Martin
Sent: Mon 10/01/2011 1:00 PM
To: Kate O’Connell
Subject: Seeking Approval for Student Questionnaires & Testing

Dear Kate,

I am emailing to request permission to collect test and questionnaire data from our students of German. My research is based on examining whether students' German written accuracy improves during an interval (semester) of using the online homework wiki. I therefore have to measure the accuracy before and after the interval.

I have created and piloted 2 testing methods on proficiency & accuracy, and also a pre-study and post-study questionnaire.

I wanted to firstly ask for your permission to test all 18 German students (yr4=5; yr3=7; yr1=6)

I am confident that is a sensitive and non-stressful testing method. It will take 15 minutes for the pre-study test in week2, and 25mins for the post-study test in our last academic week. I will administer the tests and questionnaires during class time.

I am also encouraging the students to continue using the online homework wiki this semester. I will be analysing their writing samples as part of my data, including frequency of individual student’s errors/improvements, submission dates, rewrites/revision times.

I will also investigate the effects on improvement of other factors, including motivation & attendance. Do I need to ask the students' permission to do this?

Please advise.

Thank you, Kate.
Regards,
Danielle

Danielle Martin
Lecturer - German, Business Information Systems
Shannon College of Hotel Management

EMAIL GRANTING APPROVAL

From: Kate O’Connell
Sent: Mon 10/01/2011 23:18
To: Danielle Martin
Subject: RE: Seeking Approval for Student Questionnaires & Testing

Dear Danielle,

Yes, go ahead.
You have permission.
No, you do not need explicit student permission but of course they should know about the testing & why.
The results should be interesting.
Regards,
Kate

Kate O’Connell
Deputy Director/Registrar
Shannon College of Hotel Management
Appendix B: Accuracy Test

PART I: MY FREE WRITING SAMPLE

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Write as much as you can.
- You have 7 minutes and will be informed when the time is up.
- Write about anything you want and switch topic if you like.
- Maybe consider the following for inspiration: e.g.: your life, student-life, job, your future or past, issue, event, etc.
- Just keep writing!
- Please start now!

(The test originally included two additional lined pages, which are excluded from this presentation)
Appendix C: Proficiency Test

INSTRUCTIONS:

- In this section you will find a series of forty sentences.
- Each sentence contains one blank with four multiple choice options to choose from.
- For your answer, please circle only one of the four multiple choice options in each sentence box below.
- Please read all sentences and answer-options very carefully.

Monika hat eine blaue Tasche und Rosa hat eine schwarze Tasche. Die Taschen sind [___(1)___].
[ gleich ] - [ verschiedenen ] - [ unterschiedlich ] - [ anderen ]

Diese Woche müssen wir uns [___(2)___] die Prüfung vorbereiten.
[ auf ] - [ wegen ] - [ für ] - [ zu ]

Ich habe einen [___(3)___] gegessen.

Wir geben den [___(4)___] die Bonbons.

Ich lese [___(5)___] mein Buch.
[ Abends ] - [ an Abend ] - [ abends ] - [ am abend ]

[___(6)___] Leute waren freundlich.

Wir [___(7)___] gut Deutsch.
[ wissen ] - [ können ] - [ kennen ] - [ wollen ]

Ich habe [___(8)___] Lernen!
[ keine Lust zum ] - [ keine Lust für ] - [ keine Lust um ] - [ keine lust auf ]

Ich habe [___(9)___] Blumen zum Valentinstag bekommen.
[ schönen ] - [ schonen ] - [ schöne ] - [ schone ]

Ich habe in Deutschland sehr viel Spaß [___(10)___]!
[ gemacht ] - [ gehabt ] - [ getan ] - [ gewesen ]

Ich brauche Medikamente [___(11)___] Kopfschmerzen.
[ auf ] - [ gegen ] - [ für ] - [ zu ]
Ich muss Mehl kaufen, um frisches Brot zu backen.

Ich weiss du müde bist.

Die trinken gern Bier.

Hast du meinen Stift gesehen?

Eine Party! Das super!

Da die Freundinnen blonde Haare haben, sehen sie sich gleich.

Im Jahr 2009 war ich in Deutschland.

sind Lebensmittel in Irland sehr teuer.

ich kenne viele in meiner Stadt.

Das fantastisch.

ich wohne schon in Dublin.

ich arbeite am liebsten Restaurant.

Wenn Stefan uns 50EUR gibt, wir Monika 20EUR geben.

Wir haben Milch.

viel Schnee in Österreich.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ich fahre jetzt [_<strong>(27)</strong>].</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vor den Prüfungen muss [_<strong>(28)</strong>] viel lernen.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ mann ] - [ man ] - [ Man ] - [ Mann ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[_<strong>(29)</strong>] Simon angerufen hat, war ich bei der Arbeit.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Die [_<strong>(30)</strong>] Lehrer trinken Kaffee in der Schulkantine.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ alte ] - [ alten ] - [ alter ] - [ alt ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thomas ist mein bester Freund. Ich treffe [_<strong>(31)</strong>] jeden Tag in der Schule.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ihm ] - [ ihn ] - [ er ] - [ ihnen ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gibst du bitte [_<strong>(32)</strong>] Sekretärin meinen Krankenschein?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ die ] - [ der ] - [ den ] - [ dem ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Der Zwiebelauflauf [_<strong>(33)</strong>] von Monika gemacht.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ war ] - [ wurde ] - [ werde ] - [ würde ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ich sehe den Mann, [_<strong>(34)</strong>] in Limerick wohnt.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Die Studenten geben mir [_<strong>(35)</strong>] {engl: their} Hausaufgaben.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ seine ] - [ euere ] - [ ihre ] - [ Ihre ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[_<strong>(36)</strong>] nach Dublin.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ich fahre mit [_<strong>(37)</strong>] Lehrerin zur Schule.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ den ] - [ dem ] - [ die ] - [ der ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ich möchte [_<strong>(38)</strong>] fahren.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ um 1800 mit dem Zug nach Dublin ] - [ mit dem Zug um 1800 zu Dublin ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ nach Dublin um 1800 mit dem Zug ] - [ zu Dublin mit dem Zug um 1800 ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ich esse gerne Schokolade, [_<strong>(39)</strong>] es für die Zähne nicht gut ist.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ obwohl ] - [ deswegen ] - [ aufgrund ] - [ nach ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ich habe schon immer eine skandinavische Kreuzfahrt [_<strong>(40)</strong>].</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ gemacht gewollt ] - [ machen gewollt ] - [ machen wollen ] - [ gemacht wollen ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Student Background Questionnaire

Name: ____________________________ Year: ____________________________

1. Enter the number of years of German Language Education in Secondary School: [□] ___________ ___________

2. Tick one box, indicating your feeling on time spent abroad in a German speaking environment:
   positive [□]  negative [□]  question not applicable [□]

3. On a scale of 0 to 5 (5 being the highest), rate your motivation for learning German: [□] ___________ ___________

4. On a scale of 0 to 5 (5 being the highest), rate the reliability of your home broadband access: [□] ___________ ___________

5. On a scale of 0 to 5 (5 being the highest), rate your general German homework effort: [□] ___________ ___________

6. Tick one box, indicating how much time you usually spend on written homework:
   10-30mins [□]  30-60mins [□]  1-2hours [□]

7. On a scale of 0 to 5 (5 being highest), rate, in your opinion how beneficial corrected homework is to learning German: [□] ___________ ___________

8. I have been adequately instructed in how to use the online homework Wiki:
   true [□]  false [□]  not sure [□]
Appendix E: Student Feedback Questionnaire

Part One

1) Please enter your name.

2) What academic year are you in? Please tick one.
   - Year One
   - Year Three
   - Year Four

3) What is your attitude to learning German? Please tick one.
   - very positive
   - positive
   - indifferent
   - negative
   - very negative

4) On a scale of 0 to 5 (5 being the highest), rate your motivation for learning German. Please tick one.
   - 0
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

5) Do you feel that you are good at German? Please tick one.
   - Yes, I am.
   - I am only ok.
   - No, I am not.
   - I am not sure.

6) Do you experience anxiety when speaking during German language class? Please tick one.
   - Yes, often.
   - Yes, sometimes.
   - Yes, but rarely.
   - No, never.
   - Other (Please Specify):

7) Do you experience anxiety when reading during German language class? Please tick one.
   - Yes, often.
   - Yes, sometimes.
   - Yes, but rarely.
   - No, never.
   - Other (Please Specify):

8) You receive credit for all submitted homework, independent of effort, do you think your homework effort would increase, if you were given a grade (%) for each submission? Please tick one.
   - Yes.
   - No.
   - I am not sure.

9) If you submitted homework and it was not corrected, but rather commented on by your teacher, how would you feel? Please tick one.
   - encouraged by the comments alone
   - demotivated by the lack of correction
   - Other (Please Specify):

10) Would you be in favour of a system, whereby your homework mistakes were underlined by the teacher and it was then up to you to correct them? Please tick one.
    - Yes, definitely.
    - Yes, maybe.
    - No, definitely not.
    - I am not sure.

11) Would you be in favour of a system, whereby it was compulsory to rewrite corrected homework. Please tick one.
    - Yes, definitely.
    - Yes, maybe.
    - No, definitely not.
    - I am not sure.

12) Would you be in favour of allowing all students access to view your private online homework folder, to enable all students to better learn how to handle assignments and to see where they themselves stand in the class? Please tick one.
    - Yes, definitely.
    - Yes, maybe.
    - No, definitely not.
    - I am not sure.

13) At various stages in class and for homework, you were required to collaborate with your classmates on online pages. When writing your input, what did you do? Please tick one.
    - I mainly aggregated (added my input without disturbing others' work)
    - I mainly collaborated.
    - I am not sure.
14) On a collaborative page, would you have felt comfortable deleting and replacing another students' work with your own? Please tick one.
- Yes.
- No.
- I am not sure.

15) On a collaborative page, would you have felt comfortable having your work removed or edited by another student? Please tick one.
- Yes.
- No.
- I am not sure.

16) When you review your corrected homework, what is your usual attitude? Please tick one.
- I am interested to learn from my mistakes.
- I am demotivated when I see my mistakes.
- Other (Please Specify): □

17) On a scale of 0 to 5 (5 being the highest), rate the reliability of your home broadband access. Please tick one.
- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

18) How often did you use the Online Homework Wiki? Please tick one.
- always
- often
- rarely
- never

If you answered RARELY or NEVER to Q19, please scroll down now to the end, click on [Finish Survey] and return to your seat.

If you answered OFTEN or ALWAYS to Q19, please continue and complete all remaining questions on the usage of the Online Homework Wiki.

Part Two

19) Before using the Online Homework Wiki, were you adequately instructed in the use of the system? Please tick one.
- Yes.
- No.
- I am not sure.

20) Did you have any difficulty initially using the Online Homework Wiki? Please tick one.
- Yes.
- No.
- I am not sure.

21) How often do you use the Online Homework Wiki for written German homework? Please tick one.
- every week
- most weeks
- some weeks
- rarely
- never

22) What is the main reason you may not have used the Online Homework Wiki? Please tick one.
- I had no broadband access.
- The homework assignment didn't suit.
- I didn't have enough time to use the Online Homework Wiki.
- I had no interest in using the online Online Homework Wiki.
- Other (Please Specify): □

23) When submitting homework online, what did you usually do? Please tick one.
- I usually wrote my homework on paper, then typed it into the Online Homework Wiki.
- I usually typed it into Microsoft Word, then copied and pasted it into the Online Homework Wiki.
- I usually typed it directly into the Online Homework Wiki.
- Other (Please Specify): □

24) Did you usually re-read your homework prior to submitting it online? Please tick one.
- Yes, always.
- Yes, sometimes.
- No.
- I am not sure.
25) In the Online Homework Wiki, how would you rate the effort of your work? Please tick one.
- I usually did my homework to the best of my ability.
- Sometimes I put in a big effort, sometimes not.
- I put it minimum effort, just to get it done.
- Other (Please Specify): □

26) How often did you log onto the Online Homework Wiki, to see if your homework had been corrected? Please tick one.
- Every day, until I saw that it was corrected.
- Once or twice a week.
- Only when I logged on to create a new homework page.
- Other (Please Specify): □

27) What is your perception of the time interval between homework submission and correction? Please tick one.
- same day - next day - 2-4 days later - 4-7 days - longer

28) All errors in your online homework were corrected, how did you feel about this? Please tick one.
- It was excessive.
- It was disheartening.
- It was useful.
- I am not sure.
- Other (Please Specify): □

29) How do you find the coloured correction scheme? Please tick one.
- It was confusing.
- It was unnecessary.
- It added clarity.
- I am not sure. - Other (Please Specify): □

30) Whenever you made a "common error", e.g. Mann instead of man, an underline was visible, indicating a "hyperlink" to another page explaining this error. When reading your corrected homework, did you click on these hyperlinks? Please tick one.
Yes, always. - Yes, sometimes. - Yes, rarely. - No, never.

31) How did you find the individual comments or feedback at the end of the page? Please tick one.
They were encouraging. - They were unnecessary. - I am not sure.

32) When online corrections were accompanied by a comment from your lecturer, did you read it? Please tick one.
Yes, always. - Yes, sometimes. - No, I rarely or never read it.

33) Once your online homework was corrected, you also received a comment from your lecturer. Did you ever use the facility to comment back? Please tick one.
Yes, always. - Yes, sometimes. - No, never.

34) Comments were accompanied by a profile picture of your lecturer and a timestamp. How do you feel about this? Please tick one.
- They make the interaction more human.
- They add no value.
- I am not sure.
35) Considering the highlighting of errors, the feedback, comments and hyperlinked information, do you believe the overall quality of correction and feedback in the Online Homework Wiki is better than using the traditional paper-based system? Please tick one.

Yes, - No, - I am not sure.

36) What improvement do you think, has the correcting method in the Online Homework Wiki made on your written German? Please tick one.

huge improvement - definite improvement - slight improvement - no improvement - I am not sure.

37) Do you think students at Shannon College should continue using the online German homework wiki? Please tick one.

Yes, - No, - I am not sure.

38) Please enter any additional feedback or comments. Thank you!

Thank you for your time and your feedback. Please click on [Finish Survey] and return to your seat.
Appendix F: Lecturer Feedback Questionnaire

Dear Lecturer,

We are using an online German homework wiki website in our undergraduate Business German modules at Shannon College of Hotel Management.

From January to April 2011, I have been carrying out a study of its effectiveness, in terms of improving accuracy and how the students’ anxiety, motivation, attitude, effort, attendance and other factors tie in.

As part of this study, I would be very interested in your feedback and perspective on the wiki and results so far, from your experience, teaching, and class sizes/demands.

Please don’t be put off by the length of the document. It contains mostly screen shots etc. There are just over 20 areas/aspects with optional comment boxes.

Please type any comments in the comments boxes & return by email to daniellemartin@shannoncollege.com

Thanks so much for your time and effort.

Very much appreciated,

Danielle Martin

Lecturer (German, Business Information Systems)
Shannon College of Hotel Management
M.A. in Digital Media Development for Education (University of Limerick) AUTUMN 2011
1. Please enter your name & third-level institute.

2. Please enter the language you teach.

3. Please list your approximate class sizes (e.g. 12, 15, …)

4. How do you feel about using technology for teaching and learning?

   comment:

5. The homework wiki has a homepage as follows:

   ![Homework Wiki Homepage](image)

   The student submits “homework” by clicking on their own name. This hyper-links to their own private folder. The student then creates a page and adds their homework as content. All homework submissions are stored, like an online copybook, and are accessible to the individual student and the lecturer(s) later.

   comments:

6. The wiki also has a sidebar on the homepage with hyperlinks to folders containing lecture notes, lesson plans, and pages with grammar/vocab/idiomatic explanations:

   ![Sidebar](image)

   comments:
7. A student homework-sample can be seen below. It is corrected using a **colour scheme** as follows:

- **red & strikethrough**: error;
- **blue**: added words;
- (DM: green): comments;
- <<highlighted >>: word order

When surveyed, this is how the students found the colour correction scheme:

![Image of_colour_correction_scheme](image)

comments:

8. Because the homework is typed and corrected online, the legibility is enhanced. Also, using this colour scheme the **amount of red** used is greatly reduced: from 40% of the words to 14%.


comments:
Whenever a common grammatical or idiomatic error occurs in the students' writing, a hyperlink is created from the error to a page in e.g. the [Idioms] folder. The student can click on this error for further information. These “hyperlinked” pages are created as and when an error occurs and can be hyperlinked to again, whenever the error reoccurs in a homework submission for that student or another.

When asked whether they used the hyperlinks, the students responded:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Click on the hyperlinks?</th>
<th>2010/2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>always</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rarely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, in 2009/2010, 72% of students said they sometimes/always clicked on the hyperlinks and read the explanations.

There are 32 pages in the [Idioms] folder, which capture the common idiomatic errors these students make in German. Here are some:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When (Wann, Wenn, Als)</th>
<th>Meinung</th>
<th>different andere anders verschieden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mann or man</td>
<td>the first time, for the first time</td>
<td>unterschiedlich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home zu Hause nach Hause</td>
<td>gleich aehnlich</td>
<td>Spass machen und spass haben</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es gibt means there is AND there are</td>
<td>waere and wuerde</td>
<td>schoen or schon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kein means not a</td>
<td>ie or ei</td>
<td>Lust and keine Lust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will will wollen want</td>
<td>das oder dass</td>
<td>wissen und kennen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Im or In</td>
<td>German the Germans</td>
<td>alle die does not mean all of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ago, etc</td>
<td>comma when to use it</td>
<td>abends morgens am Abend am Morgen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ganz or sehr</td>
<td>um zu</td>
<td>menus and items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junge Jugendliche junge Leute</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28 of these 32 were actually captured (& created as pages) in the first 7 weeks of using the system in Autumn 2009. The workload involved in creating these pages was initially high.
11. Using the Comments field, the lecturer can add comment, feedback, encouragement and praise. Student/teacher discussion on correction can also be achieved, as the student can comment back in the privacy of their homework page.

How did you find the individual comments?
- encouraging
- unnecessary
- not sure

When asked about the comments, the students responded:

comments:

12. Whenever a student is writing, online or on paper, he/she can search in the wiki, for explanations and guidance, in a specific folder or in the whole wiki: [Grammar], [Idioms], [vocab], [Classwork], [Lecture notes].

comments:
13. ALL ERRORS ARE CORRECTED
When asked how they feel about the fact that all errors are corrected, the students responded:

![Pie chart showing all errors corrected]

**useful**

**not sure**

comments:

14. When viewing a students' homework online, the lecturer can click on [Page History] and can see how many times a student revised their homework before submitting.

In 2011 this ranged between 1 and 11, indicating that students were re-reading and hopefully improving their homework!

comments:

15. Homework turnaround
On the Frontpage, below the side bar, the lecturer can review the activity in the homework wiki and whenever a homework is created, or a comment is added, the lecturer can correct it.

![Recent Activity]

This greatly improves the homework submission/correction turnaround time. The explanation/correction might be more meaningful for the student, as the difficulty is still fresh in their mind. It also makes the correction workload more flexible for the lecturer. A lecturer can correct submissions shortly after they are submitted.

comments:

16. Online Correction WORKLOAD:
It takes on average 10 mins to 150 online words in this way. This is approx. equal to twice the average handwritten time. When asked about the overall quality of online correction, the students responded:

![Pie chart showing overall quality of correction better online?]

**Yes**

**No**

**not sure**

comments:
When asked about how the online correction improved their written accuracy, the students responded:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How did online correction improve your written accuracy?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>huge improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**18. Additional use: in class**

During class, to simulate an electronic whiteboard, the lecturer can type all words, phrases, and discussion items into an online page in the individual years’ [classwork] folder in the wiki.

The student (absent of present) can use it to help incorporate specialised vocab into their homework or use these pages for revision.

The lecturer can later combine the classwork page with the original lesson plan to improve the class-hand-out.

**19. Teaching grammar:**

Rather than teaching grammar per topic (adjective endings, word order) etc., the lecturer can contextualise grammar teaching using writing samples in the wiki and the [idioms]-pages as a basis for improving writing accuracy in class. The lecturer can also use the pages in the [Grammar] folder to instantly display tables of endings etc.

**20. Teaching the students transferable / IT skills**

Using this, the students are also learning online writing skills, enriching their text with colour, hyperlinks & embedding image and multimedia.

**21. COLLABORATIVE DISTANCE LEARNING**

Our Year Two students spent a year abroad working in hotels and must complete a comprehensive written distance learning project worth 10ECTS.

In 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 students are using new folders in the online wiki for their distance learning project with 4 submission deadlines and word count requirements.

They collaborate to add content to pages in three “joint” collaborative folders as follows:

They each ALSO have a new private individual folder where they add regular content to a set of individual pages (titles in German):
The idea is that their collaborative and individual content is preserved (and not lost to a box of corrected projects). This can:
- make correction intervals more flexible
- inform Year One instruction
- be shared with Year One in advance of placement
- be used in Year Three class for oral and written assignments

22. Expanding the wiki/website...
Maybe in the future the content in the wiki could form an electronic/online textbook with:
- ever-changing lesson plans/pages (can be printed also in PDF)
- collection of our students’ own cultural experiences and challenges
- content enriched with image, video, format, etc.
- details on Hotel departments in our placement-hotels, scenarios, vocab, etc.
- collection of writing samples & data on difficulties/progresses

23. PBWORKS WIKI
There is a free version of pbworks, but the version with folder-security (so that the students can have private homework folders) costs 99USD annually. It takes 45-60 minutes to set-up the wiki, the frontpage, the users and the folders.

Do you think an online wiki could be beneficial in your teaching environment? For homework? For classwork? Assignment writing with larger word-count? Specific group?
Please explain what you think.

24. LANGUAGE LEVEL TESTING & IMPROVEMENT.
Language Level was measured using an identical method for pre and post testing.

Accuracy was measured by giving the students a 7 minute timed free writing exercise. They could write about any topic, mix of topics, etc.

Their accuracy level was equal to the percentage of correct word to total words.

Proficiency was the score of a multi-choice test. Every grammar area was tested as were all common idiomatic errors contains in the wiki. In this way the test was more tailored to these students difficulties (and improvements).

Overall Language Level was the sum of the accuracy and proficiency result, divided by two.

OVERALL LANGUAGE LEVEL IMPROVEMENT (%) (12 week period, 15 students) [excl. 2 dyslexic students & 1 student absent for pre-testing]]. More students improved than stayed the same or got worse.
There were no significant patterns established between overall language level improvements, motivation, improvement, online submission rates or attendance.

25. USAGE OF THE WIKI FOR HOMEWORK SUBMISSION
Many students used the Online Homework Wiki for some or all of their homework submissions during this study (2011) and in the previous exam year. Many didn’t. In April 2011 92% of students said that the main reason for not using the system was their poor home broadband access.

11 students out of 15 students in the study used the online wiki for homework.

26. The proficiency test was a multiple choice test based on the [Grammar] and [Idioms] folder in the wiki. Using the online wiki, the students would have received more focused feedback on idiomatic and grammatical accuracy. Only students with a starting proficiency level of 50-57.5%, who were high online-submitters improved significantly (by 5-15%). See chart. No significant link was established between other levels and online usage.

OS = number of online submission; IP = improvement in proficiency (%); PJ = proficiency in Jan 2011 (marked out of 10); PA = proficiency in April 2011 (marked out of 10)

27. ANY OTHER FEEDBACK WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED. THANKS SO MUCH FOR TAKING PART.
Appendix G: Lecturer Feedback Questionnaire
(Responses)

This Appendix contains all responses to the lecturer feedback questionnaire.

### Responses to Question No. 4: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on using Technology in Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very positive: I am fortunate to be often timetabled in a CALL Lab so that I can use various websites and learning tools with students. We do e-Tandems, use grammatiktraining.com, deutschlern.net and many other sites. Students bring earphones and we listen to Deutsche Welle, Nachrichten langsam gesprochen, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite positive, but I find it takes me quite a while to get into it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very enthusiastic: but requires some planning but very worthwhile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be in favour of using it if I have very defined goals for doing this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it benefits the students because they are interested in technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested to find out more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would love to use it much more than I so at the moment but I just don’t feel that I am prepared enough to use it in some cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatively confident, but am always aware of the importance of having a back-up plan in the event of the technology not working.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always like the idea of using technology for teaching and learning but I am not as adept as I would like to be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very positive; I would like to learn more; I started using blogs&amp; wikis this year and online learning journals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it can help motivate students and teachers alike. It helps teachers bring in new materials into the classroom in a format which appeals to students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Responses to Question No. 5: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on Online Wiki Homework Folders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This seems to be great. We have a similar system on Moodle. I tend to correct electronically also but used to get a bit confused until I started to write the mark on the document name. This is a great advantage of having the homework pieces easily accessible in one place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks very good!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better than paper as with paper, teacher never sees copybook again once it’s handed back. Can see progressive improvements and go back over things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very user-friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is a great idea as both students and the lecture can see the student’s progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seems handy! My students do something similar in their distance learning and they seem to have no problems with it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It looks like it could be individualised a great deal depending on the particular class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great, saves paper and it is much easier to access for the student and lecturer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is very clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seems very clear and straightforward. From a practical point of view, it is a great way of getting students to store all of their language work in one place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brilliant – would ensure a visible, quick and efficient manner to store and retrieve assignments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Responses to Question No. 6: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on the Sidebar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is very useful and student-friendly!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks also very good!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all cross-referencing very useful and easy to use, no internet searches required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is great and very helpful for the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great for keeping news and other interesting bits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no reason that students cannot find out all of the info they are looking for and if they miss classes, all class material is available to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Again, very interesting and useful for the students, much easier to access than if they have to find information on their notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses to Question No. 7: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on the Online Correction Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are students asked to take note, accept the changes and resubmit? If not, some students might not understand the changes and make the right corrections. It might be better to indicate the type of error and allow students make the corrections themselves, i.e. word order, dative (indirect object) etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very precise way of giving feedback – and encouraging remarks!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better than a sea of red!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The colour correction scheme seems to help students to focus on the particular corrections as acknowledged in the figure shown above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think different colours are useful; it is clear what is being corrected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think red can be off-putting for students, they can get discouraged when they see a page full of red marks, nice to have the other colours to break it up and keep them motivated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that it adds clarity and post-Year One; students will be more used to it and find it increasingly helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good way for correcting homework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree with the students’ evaluation – the colour correction scheme lends clarity. I particularly like the use of gold to highlight word order issues. I also like the fact that the work is not covered in red, with all the negative connotations that this colour brings in the context of homework correction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very clear system of correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great clarity – I think this would make correcting easier and also be more helpful for a student to learn from his or her mistakes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it’s a productive rather than a critical way of correcting. When students see red ink they tend to shut down and not read over the corrections – mainly because they are embarrassed by their errors. I think reduces this.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses to Question No. 8: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on Legibility of Correction online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I agree that the colour scheme is more encouraging and less daunting for students than too much red!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks very good!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very good idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree with the statement: (that the legibility is enhanced)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This looks less intimidating to the student concerned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much easier for the students and teachers to understand homework and corrections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is important to reduce the amount of red.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much red could be discouraging for a student so the use of a more diverse range of colours is more motivating for the student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More clarity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses to Question No. 9: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on online Hyperlinks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think the hyperlinks are very useful, but students need to be encouraged to use them in class time first so that they recognise the value. I get them to do this in deutschlern.net and also to create their own vocabulary lists etc. There is a link to a dictionary and other useful aids on that website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where do the comments come from, did you put them together or take them from a book?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing students with the possibility of using hyperlinks for sourcing more grammatical information seems a fantastic idea. It would be interesting to know why some students do not use them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handy to have the explanations, I think my students probably wouldn’t click on them only because they are generally not good at looking into grammar issues themselves, they want to be taught it in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This will build up a bank of hyperlinks so that less work will need to be done on the future by the lecturer concerned. It is up to the students to click on these and make the most of what is offered to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great and easy way for the students to improve their language level, the usage of the hyperlink is still quite low but I am sure that with the time the students will use it more and more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent use of hyperlinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is a great way of getting students to understand their errors and should reduce their chances of making the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
same errors again in the future.

I think this is an amazing feature – for the interested students, they can make a considerable learning strides embedded in a relevant context.

Again I think this is a great way to encourage independent learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses to Question No. 10: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on capturing Common Errors [Idioms]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think this is really useful for students that the Wiki automatically captures and hyperlinks the common errors. It means less time is taken up by the lecturer repeating the same corrections over and over and the student avoids having to be directly corrected yet again!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wow what a great idea, all tailored to the students’ own common errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is definitely very good but I can imagine the amount of work and time involved in organising all this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That is a lot of work in the beginning, but useful if you can keep using it and adding to it for future students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presumably this will pay off in the long-term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very high workload for the teacher, but certainly very beneficial for the students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A great learning resource for students on very common errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is an amazing tool for the student; a lot of work for the teacher though! But if the most common mistakes could be generated by this programme, this would be fantastic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great feedback function for the teacher to address any common errors in class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses to Question No. 11: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on the online Comment Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That is very useful also. Sometimes students find that they don’t get enough information about the errors they make and this would give them the opportunity to ask at the appropriate time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More space online for comments than there is paper, also for positive comments on specific issues/improvements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On paper there is never enough space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great feedback from the students!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That’s useful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think this capacity for individualised praise and feedback encouraging a dialogue situation is highly valuable for student engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good, it is very difficult to give this kind of individual feedback and attention to individual students with a normal homework correction. This creates a closer link between lecturer and student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The students’ response speaks for itself here. Excellent!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very helpful for students to receive direct feedback in this way. Provides a lot of encouragement, which is vital for successful language learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very encouraging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very positive way of communicating with students who may not want to appear interested in the subject – I think this would appeal more to EU students than non-EU students. In my experience Chinese students tend to talk about their grades, comments etc… in a very open manner.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses to Question No. 12: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on Students’ Ability to search for Help online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is great to promote learner autonomy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like an online personalised dictionary/grammar book tailored to English speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good learning tool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very useful keeps things relevant and you can be sure that what they are learning is correct, sometimes they search on the internet and come up with incorrect information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great they have everything at hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This really contributes to greater autonomy for the language learner and is much easier for them than ploughing through a grammar book.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responses to Question No. 13: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on the Fact that all Errors are Corrected

I think students like errors to be pointed out, but to make the corrections themselves as far as possible, especially word order and case problems. It is appropriate to make the corrections or improve sentence structure in some cases.

Good feedback.

A good idea, but I think quite time consuming? I think with 4 classes of 16 students I wouldn’t have time, do you get them to do self correction or peer correction?

For progress moving forward, it is common practice to correct all errors. Sometimes for students with learning difficulties, we are encouraged not to do so.

I agree that for some of the students and in some cases it is not very useful if they have all the error corrected for them because they just don’t try to go over the corrections and continue making the same errors.

Again, the students recognise the value of the error correction.

Students themselves clearly see the usefulness of this system.

I think students would be delighted to get tailored and individual comments on their individual weaknesses. This varies for me depending on the ability of the student. If they are very weak then I will correct all errors. If they are strong I tend to only correct the common/major errors. I mainly do this because I don’t want to discourage the student. However I will still underline the mistake and it is up to them to decide what is wrong with it.

Responses to Question No. 14: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on Online Revision Patterns

Easy to go back to old homework, and to monitor who is working on their language skills.

Very good

That would be very useful, to see if the students are actually engaging in their learning.

This is a really positive development for the students and their language learning – being able to self-assess and subsequently correct their own work gives them a valuable skill which is highly transferable.

Excellent

This is a very effective way of monitoring students’ learning and working styles. The very fact that students know this can be monitored, should in itself lead to more revisions.

Good idea – otherwise all this work might not be used. This might incentivise students to really work with and on their mistakes.

Good way of assessing how seriously the students are taking it.

Responses to Question No. 15: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on Online Homework Turnaround

This is good as it would motivate students who tend to submit late to do it on time when they see that everyone else has submitted! It is also good for lecturer to track workload.

Good idea.

Also less sheets of paper that can get put in the wrong pile or separated from the rest and lost.

Good idea.

This is a great advantage for the students and may make managing the correction of homework easier for the lecturer.

Very good.

Excellent

It is very important that homework is returned within a short timeframe. Corrections are much more effective this way.

This should work well: I can imagine the student would submit more to their own schedules rather than deadlines.

Responses to Question No. 16: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on Increased Correction Workload Online

more legible too for both parties, and more accessible

This is a considerable investment by the lecturer

I think that the amount of time needed to do this can be a problem when dealing with big classes.

Students can see the pay-off to the extra work put in.

I do agree: the quality is much better.

Very time-consuming for the teacher, but again extremely beneficial for the student.

The quality is obviously excellent, but a lot of time involved correcting. Could be difficult if one has a large group of students.
Responses to Question No. 17: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on Student’s Improvement online

I am surprised that half of the students noted only a slight improvement. Usually when students have to write online, they invoke the German spellcheck, which immediately improves their accuracy. They also tend to be more careful with their orthography when writing electronically!

At least they all noted some improvement!

Good feedback.

Students are probably not aware of all of the improvement that they have actually made.

I think that with the time students will get used to using the online correction and this result will change.

Excellent!

All students are agreeing that their written accuracy has improved. This is the main thing. How much is not as relevant as students’ own perceptions of improvement are often inaccurate.

The slight improvement (50%) would indicate that perhaps students don’t invest the time learning from online correction of assignments – perhaps worrisome given the amount of time invested by the lecturer.

Responses to Question No. 19: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on contextualising Grammar online

Fantastic. There is nothing as discouraging for students and lecturer as taking up too much discussion time going off on grammar tangents.

Fewer abstract grammar concepts, always good!

Very useful.

Makes more sense, students can see how the grammar points relate to their actual writing.

This is the best way to teach grammar for language learning – keep it in context with task-based learning.

Excellent

Good, but I am a little wary of mixing grammar topics; however, I do see the advantage of this approach, particularly for the better students.

Grammar teaching is much more effective when examples are put into context. Not as abstract and students are more likely to understand the issues.

I think this would be a fantastic step-by-step account of the grammar components and would keep students’ attention for longer.

Contextual learning is what students look for so this is a great way of doing it.

Responses to Question No. 20: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on teaching students transferable IT skills

Agree totally

Great.

Useful for their actual career.

Considering the sometimes poor IT skills amongst Year One students on entry to university, this is an additional skill which is being enhanced by the language class.

Very good, students like it and find it more useful.

Very impressive

An added bonus to the process of language learning

I agree – students are learning a whole range of skills – they are using online technologies, working with a lecturer and seeing new technologies at work in the teaching of MFLs.

Good for improvement of their general IT skills

Responses to Question No. 21: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on using the Wiki for Distance Learning

I like the creative possibilities of the collaborative folders.

Great for learning diaries and collecting material and ideas for projects etc.

Very good, but I think that the lecturer must be well trained in IT to be able to do all this work.

I am using a similar system for distance learning and it is more useful, user friendly and interactive than paper for students on placement. Plus it gives them regular contact with someone in the College.

The fact that it is collaborative is a very important point in its favour and shows the students the importance of this skill which will be needed on a continuous basis in Year Three with the myriad of group projects.

Very good

I really like this element of the course.

Very good combination of individual and collaborative work and a great way of sharing with other years.
I really like this idea – they collate and reflect on their own experience and learning curve and present it in a multimedia format.

Good way of showing Yr. 1 students what to do and also good thing to review with Yr. 3

Table 18G: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on using the Wiki for Distance Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses to Question No. 22: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on expanding the Wiki into an online Textbook</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The possibilities are legion. Students, colleagues could be encouraged to contribute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is a very student centered learning approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sounds very promising. Students’ experiences/advice can be passed on to students about to go abroad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think that would really benefit the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This would be a great resource moving forward and really bring in the aspect of peer-learning which is so valuable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent ideas here also, even if very time-consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This would be a very effective way of creating an electronic resource specifically targeted to students’ needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Again a wonderful idea – I’d love to be a student again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it is important to keep adapting the Wiki – all above ideas are good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses to Question No. 23: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on using a Wiki in their own environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think a wiki would really benefit my students in all of these areas. For instance for the face-to-face tandems, students could incorporate photos of their partner, information about themselves and their partner, details and maybe some video regarding their respective colleges, towns etc. on the wiki. In this way the tandems could come live for other students’ benefit also. The topics they discuss such as cultural similarities and differences, hobbies and travel etc. Could be organised in areas on the Wiki etc. This approach could also apply very well to 4th year semester 2 Euro pass CV and job application dossier and transferable skills information. In fact, it would work well for aspects of each semester in each year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I do think it’s very beneficial, but I also think it would take me longer! Both the Wiki learning device and your analysis look really interesting – and I am actually hoping to do something at least along these lines. Keep up the good work!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it could be very useful. I can see myself using it for homework, teacher-student communication and feedback while abroad, year abroad preparation; student-student communication could also be made accessible to others outside the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the use of pbworks is a very good idea if the classes are small and the lecturer has the IT skills to know how to set it up and use it appropriately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would be interesting to know how the use of this resource compares to other more conventional approaches to teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yea I currently use it with Distance learning, unfortunately with my current classes, the class sizes are so big that I do not have time to manage it, which is a pity. I think it would be beneficial to have the students gathering and creating information that they can share and they would learn more from that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It could work but the larger classes for French would make it quite time-consuming. For certain projects, in Year Three and Year Four which are collaborative in their nature, we might be able to use it with the students. In terms of Year Four and their classwork, translations which should be submitted in draft forms could benefit from this tool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it would be extremely beneficial in all areas but I’m concerned about the initial workload as I am not very familiar with the system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, most definitely, although I would be less put off by the time involved than by the technological skill that is required!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it would be extremely useful for all of the purposes mentioned above but I am not sure I would have the appropriate IT skills to do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I tried last year online technologies such as reflective journal, YAGs (year abroad journals) and wikis, but I learnt that the non allocation of points to this means that students didn’t get as involved as I’d hoped. Will all change in the future though!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would be good for writing assignments
### Responses to Question No. 24: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on Initial Testing Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well done!</td>
<td>This is a very interesting finding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is clear that this benefits motivated learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If it promotes more students engagement with the subject, that is positive in itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good results</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is a disappointing result, but in no way undermines the importance of implementing this approach.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very effective mechanism for language testing but I wonder if sometimes a more holistic method, looking at the test as a whole, could reveal more, i.e. effects made which didn't linguistically result in correct sentences, but nevertheless demonstrated a certain amount of linguistic understanding on the part of the student.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very interesting that those significant improvements are linked to high online submitters. Very transparent proof of effectiveness of project.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think this is inherently difficult to measure at any rate (pre post testing etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Responses to Question No. 25: Language Lecturers’ Feedback on Usage Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It could be interesting to know why some of the students preferred not to use it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perhaps starting the students in Year One will make it more integral to their language learning for subsequent years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think these numbers will increase with continuous usage.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This approach presumes good computer skills on the part students – in my experience this is not always the case.</td>
<td>Hence, a substantial number of students continue to submit homework in the traditional way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that improved broadband access in a couple of years will provide a natural remedy to this problem.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well done a significant increase in 2011 figures over 2009 figures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This captures the benefit of using these tools: those students who were high submitters improved significantly.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Responses to Question No. 27: Language Lecturers’ Feedback: other comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It can be quite time consuming for lecturers to correct everything online. I have been doing it for a few years. Students like to be given reasons for their mistakes and this takes time. The hyperlinks are great to cut down on this. I expect that most students would improve by a greater percentage than 15% over a number of years if they regularly submit work electronically, more so if online writing skills are also part of classwork, so that students become used to the lecturer’s correction method.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The whole project looks really good – clearly a lot of time has gone into it but also it really seems to work well!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This sounds great and I will think about possibly introducing something like this for one of my groups/courses next year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that the use of a wiki website for homework is a fantastic idea as I can see it can have many educational uses. My only concern is that it could be difficult for lecturers that don’t have the required IT skills to set it up and to use it appropriately. Class size could be another factor that perhaps could offer some challenges with regards to its use. It would be great to know how the use of this educational tool compares to a more conventional approach to homework correction and the feedback given in the language class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well done, i think it is excellent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This project is really interesting and shows how technology can directly impact on student engagement through promoting more interaction with the language. Valuable life skills such as promoting collaboration and teamwork, getting students self-assessing and correcting, helping them to take on more responsibility for their language learning and showing how they can improve their language learning themselves – all help to make German more integrated with the ethos of the SCHM and hence promote greater interest in the subject amongst the students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An excellent initiative!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An excellent project which would be of great benefit to all language teachers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>