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A Conceptual Framework for Understanding the University Writing Climate for L2 (English) in Germany: A Cultural Approach

The first German writing lab opened at the University of Bielefeld in 1993. Although since then German writing centers and writing instruction units have been establishing themselves as the participants of the academic process, they are still scarce, underfunded, and lack recognition. The International Writing Centers Association's (2021) directory catalogs 31 German writing centers. This number is alarming as in 2021 there were about 422 universities in Germany (Statista, 2021). To put this number of German writing centers into perspective, one can compare it, for example, with the number of the writing centers at American universities, with only a medium-size state Indiana boasting 25 writing centers (International Writing Center Association, 2021). The review of the writing instruction and support unit websites of German universities indicates that although these units offer writing instruction and help through classes, workshops, and individual tutoring to English language writers, this help is limited (Müller-Lyaskovets et al., 2021a). Unlike universities in the US, German universities do not offer core curriculum composition courses for either L1 (German) or L2 (English and German) that ease students into the process of academic writing at the introductory phase of their studies (Girgensohn & Sennewald, 2012; Girgensohn, 2017). Moreover, German universities do not offer degree programs, including doctoral programs, in Rhetoric and Composition for either L1 (German) or L2 (English and German), which contributes to a shortage of professionals trained to teach academic writing.

The German university writing instruction landscape clearly contrasts with the mission of universities to provide opportunities for people to achieve career success. Because L2 (English) writing contributes to that success, it must be taught and supported. This is how Curry (2016) convincingly summarizes a utility of writing in a university context and beyond:

> Writing is essential to gatekeeping assessments such as master's theses and doctoral dissertations as well as fellowship and job application documents. As students enter the professional academic world, writing is the chief mechanism by which they are recognized as members of specific disciplinary communities. (p. 80)

The ability to communicate in English, which has become the de facto language of science, controls access to the world of science and international business.

This study is driven by a need to begin a conversation about how we can change the way German universities act towards writing instruction and support in general and L2 (English) in particular. In this respect, a need for an institutional change in both L1 and L2 writing instruction development at German universities has been expressed by the scholars who pioneered writing center initiatives and scholarship in Germany (Bräuer, 1996, 2006, 2012; Girgensohn & Peters, 2012; Göpferich, 2016;). One way to initiate this change is through understanding and changing a university writing climate embedded in university culture. Climate can be understood as an environment that offers clues to organizational behavior and policies. It also affects this behavior. Yet, before the composition and education studies can address the problem of university writing climate as a locus for initiating change, we have to understand what a university writing climate is.

The specific objective of this study was to construct a conceptual framework for the university writing climate research by identifying the attributes of the university writing climate,

providing a theoretical definition of the university writing climate, and building its model. This framework offers a roadmap for future research on the university climate for writing. The model may help identify themes or factors fostering a strong university writing climate. Future studies can use these themes as a starting point in creating, for example, a survey instrument to be utilized by universities for self-assessment of their writing climates. When created and applied, this instrument may help identify areas in need of improvement and then assess the impact of specific interventions. The aforementioned implications of our research align with an existing view of organizational culture as a "moderator variable" that has a practical significance for the effective functioning of organizations (Schneider et al., 2013).

By creating a roadmap of the university writing climate, we also started telling a story about writing support and instruction units for English at German universities. This story, grounded in literature review and informed through personal teaching experiences and observations, touches upon writing identities, work, and goals of writing instruction and support units thus contributing to the formation of an overall institutional university climate and culture. Clifford Geertz (1973) stresses the role that storytelling plays in the formation of cultures by defining culture as an "assemblage of texts" or a collection of stories we tell ourselves about ourselves (p. 448).

Literature on organizational climate and culture recognizes the crucial role of climate in organizational change (Al Ghazo et al., 2018; Moran & Volkwein, 1992; Newman et al., 2019; Schein, 2004; Thomas, 2008; Wells et al., 2014). In light of this recognition, there is a plethora of literature on organizational climate linking context-specific climates to research integrity, faculty and staff commitment, internationalization, innovation, knowledge-sharing behavior, and other phenomena (Al Ghazo et al., 2018; Bartell, 2003; Malički et al., 2017; Newman et al.,

2019; Neal et al., 2000; Rudasill et al., 2017; Thomas, 2008; Wells et al., 2014; Villamizar Reyes & Castañeda Zapata, 2014). Yet, research to date has not determined the construct of university writing climate. In addition, there are no empirical data detailing university L1 and L2 writing climates at German universities. Although the issue of climate for writing has been in circulation, publications on writing development have touched upon it only obliquely. One feels its presence in the conversations about building writing center assessments (Schendel & Macauley, 2012), institutional goals as met through the creation of writing initiatives (Childers, 2010), the conflict between the disciplinary values of composition studies and institutional climate (Poblete, 2014), and the formation of writing centers as an organizational field (Girgensohn, 2017). Other cultural factors, such as national traditions in pedagogy or academic discourse, are not viewed as contributing to the creation of climate for writing.

Hence, this paper attempts to start a conversation about university writing climates by putting them into a cultural perspective. The study builds a framework for the university writing climate by seeking answers to the following questions:

1. What is the definition of L2 (English) writing climate relevant to German universities?

2. What are the attributes of the climate for L2 (English) writing relevant to German universities?

3. How can these attributes be arranged in a model of university writing climate?

The Cultural Approach to the University Writing Climate

Locating the University Writing Climate Within Literature: Methodology

Maxwell (2013, p. 40) describes a conceptual framework as a tentative theory that further can be used in research design. Conceptual framework can be incomplete, but it should provide

sufficient scaffolding for intended research. We followed Maxwell's (2013) recommendations for the construction of conceptual frameworks.

According to Maxwell (2013, p. 40), first, one identifies a research problem. We saw our immediate research problem as the absence of theory allowing for the university climate research relevant to Germany. To construct our framework, we used "modules" provided by already existing theory and empirical research. Maxwell (2013) borrowed the idea of modules, or "prefabricated parts," from Becker (2007, 1986, p. 144, cited in Maxwell, 2013, p. 41).

We derived our modules from the following sources: "experiential knowledge," "existing theory and research," and "thought experiments" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 44). *Experiential data* consist of a researcher's own background and technical knowledge. Another way to describe this source is "critical subjectivity" (Reason, 1988, 1994; cited in Maxwell, 2013, p. 45). Thus, together with other scholars, Maxwell argues for the incorporation of researchers' identities and backgrounds in their research. *Existing theory* on organizational climate and culture offered us concept maps of climate that we further expanded and reworked. Our *thought experiments* allowed for combining theoretical knowledge with our experience as writing instructors, program administrators, and education experts. Maxwell (2013) describes thought experiments as a legitimate and reliable research technique used in physics and social sciences:

> Thought experiments challenge you to come up with plausible explanations for your and others' observations, and to think about how to support or disprove these. They draw on both theory and experience to answer "what if" questions, and to explore the logical implications of your models, assumptions, and expectations of the things you plan to study. They can both generate new theoretical models and insights, and test your current theory for problems; in fact, all theory building involves thought

> experiments to some extent. They encourage creativity and a sense of discovery, and can help you to make explicit the experiential knowledge that you already possess. Ursula LeGuin, a master of science-fiction thought experiments (e.g., 2003), stated,
>
> "The purpose of a thought-experiment, as the term was used by Schroedinger and other physicists, is not to predict the future . . . but to describe reality, the present world." (LeGuin, 2000, p. xi). (p. 68−69).

To arrive at some clarity about the university writing climate model relevant to Germany, we first reviewed the cultural approach to organizational climate and positioned climate within culture. Next, we suggested a university writing climate model based on prior theories of organizational culture and climate, other research into college writing instruction and support in Germany, and personal observations of German university writing landscape documented in our own publications. We further used the core section of the model to start creating a preliminary description of a German university writing climate.

The Cultural Approach to Organizational Climate

Half a century of thinking and research into organizational culture and climate generated multiple studies of culture and climate within organizational psychology, organizational behavior, or industrial sociology fields. Some of the major handbooks such as *The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Climate and Culture* (Schneider & Barbera, 2014) or *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (Schein, 2004) detail the development and usage of these two constructs. In addition, empirical studies suggest that there exist multiple approaches to organizational culture and climate. Moran and Volkwein (1992) review three of the major approaches – the structural, the perceptual, and the interactive – to suggest an alternative – the cultural perspective on organizational climate. In our conceptualization of university writing

climate, we drew on Moran and Volkwein's (1992) cultural approach to the formation of organizational climate. Moran and Volkwein (1992) conclude that "climate is a created response which an interacting group of individuals, who are *informed and constrained by common organizational culture*, make to the demands and contingencies arising in the organization's internal and external environments" (p. 39, emphasis added).

Moran and Volkwein (1992) incorporate prior perspectives but posit organizational culture as the key defining factor of climate within an organization. As the above-cited definition illustrates, the authors draw on the interactive approach to organizational climate by viewing climate as a response of *interacting* individuals. The interactive approach sees climate as a shared response emerging through interaction and communication (Moran & Volkwein, 1992, p. 23). Next, by acknowledging the role of *external and internal environment* in climate formation, Moran and Volkwein (1992) build on the structural approach to organizational climate. The structural approach views climate as an attribute of an organization formed under the direct influence of the organization's structure that may include, for example, the organization's size, hierarchy, and technology (Moran & Volkwein, 1992, p. 23). Finally, by conceptualizing climate as an organization members' *response* to a situation, Moran and Volkwein (1992) acknowledge the role of individual psychological perception emphasized by the perceptual approach to organizational climate.

If climate is understood as a group's *response* to a situation, how can we observe this response? In their review of organizational climate research, Schneider et al. (2013) point out that climate usually was studied using employee surveys, whereas organizational culture usually was studied using case studies (p. 362). Identifying the university writing climate as an integral part and manifestation of organizational culture allows for observing climate through practices

and storytelling within an organization. Is a university supportive of developing writing? Which practices and stories provide this support or impede efforts to create or develop writing programs?

The cultural approach to organizational climate identifies organizational culture as the key defining factor of climate, or, in other words, *of shared perceptions and storytelling observable as practices* within the organization. Krumm (2016) describes the role that storytelling plays in the formation of organizational identity and, by implication, organizational culture as it is laid out by the interpretative and social constructivist vein of organizational studies research. From this perspective, stories are seen as the "the medium of interpretative exchange" within organizations (Boje, 1995; cited in Krumm, 2016, p. 151), and storytelling is regarded as "the preferred sense-making currency of internal and external stakeholders embedded in the dynamic process of incremental and collective refinement of their stories of new events as well as ongoing reinterpretations of culturally sacred story-lines" (Boje, 1994, cited in Krumm, 2016, p.151). Krumm (2016) shows that storytelling can be manifest on a formal level on websites or newsletters. Storytelling can be manifest also informally in discussions and e-mails amongst different groups (Krumm, 2016, p.155). In a similar vein, we believe that stories provide organizations with a potent framework for manifesting values and guidelines as well as establishing specific practices.

In the section "A Chaotic Landscape of Writing Instruction in Germany," we used the central elements of our model to map the practices and stories of writing instruction and support at German universities.

In building a framework for the university writing climate, we connected practices and stories of writing support and instruction units to the university culture in Germany. Our focus on

writing support forms and occurrences is dictated by the understanding of culture as a dynamic entity – as a "set of *rules and practices* by means of which a group organizes itself and its values, manners, and worldview" (emphasis added, Frankenberg, 1993, p. 202). Following Frankenberg and other cultural theorists (Ashroft et.al., 1989; Hall, 2004; Rommelspacher, 1995), we view culture as "indispensable precondition to any individual's existence in the world" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 202). At a metalevel of cultural studies, this understanding of culture captures what the organization science framework categorizes as artifacts, beliefs, and subconscious assumptions. Schneider (2013) points out that Schein (2010) proposes "three levels of organizational culture: artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions" (Schneider et al., 2013, p. 371). By including practices in the category of "artifacts," Schein's (2010) framework makes the attributes of culture conveniently accessible and describable.

Positioning Writing Climate Within the University Culture

Climate and culture are linked, but they are not the same. Schneider et al. (2013) emphasize that "organizations do not have a singular climate but rather multiple simultaneous climates of both the process and strategic outcome sort" (p. 369). The same is true of the university culture, as illustrated by Bergquist and Pawlak's (2008) book *Engaging the Six Cultures of the Academy: Revised and Expanded Edition of the Four Cultures of the Academy*. The authors describe a diversity they found within a university as an organization by identifying the following six cultures: collegial, managerial, developmental, advocacy, virtual, and tangible cultures. Bartell (2003) looks at the university culture through a similar lens of diversity when using Weick's (1976) and Orton and Weick's (1990) conceptualization of "loosely coupled systems" to describe university culture (p. 53). In doing so, the aforementioned researchers

present what Schneider et al. (2013) call a “differentiated view” of organizational culture (p. 370).

What do we gain from distinguishing climate from culture? Schneider et al. (2013) review studies in the three top organizational psychology journals and document climate and culture to be “two alternative constructs for conceptualizing the way people experience and describe their work settings (including not only businesses but also schools and governments)” (p. 362). Yet, the authors identify one group of studies within the “culture as moderator” (Chatman & Spataro, 2005, cited in Schneider et al., 2013, p. 375) approach that views culture as a contextual variable for other constructs (Schneider et al., 2013, p. 375). Advocating for a cultural approach to the university writing climate, we suggest examining the writing climate as moderated by the university culture. To illustrate a mutually reinforcing nature of climate and culture, Schneider et al. (2013, p. 377) invoke Schein’s revised definition of culture in relation to climate. Schein “stated in his introductory chapter to the 2000 *Handbook of Culture and Climate* that ‘to understand what goes on in organizations and *why it happens in the way it does*, one needs *several* concepts. Climate and culture, if each is carefully defined, then become two crucial building blocks for organizational description and analysis’ (Schein 2000, pp. xxiv–xxv; italics in original)” (Schneider et al., 2013, p. 377).

Schneider et al. (2013) make a convincing argument for integrating culture and climate with practice implications. One such practical area is organizational change. Organizational change lends itself to be explored through the interrelated lenses of culture and climate (Schneider et al., 2013, p. 378). One reason for addressing organizational change through climate is a less stable nature of climate as compared to culture. Cultural change is a paradigm shifting

process, which might be desirable rather than attainable within a foreseeable future. For practitioners, climate change might be a more realistic goal than cultural change.

Thus, unlike culture, "climate is a relatively enduring characteristic of an organization" (Moran & Volkwein, 1992, p. 39). As less enduring than culture but located within the given culture, climate is more responsive to change (Moran & Volkwein, 1992, p. 40; Schein, 2004). In our case, a change in the university climate for writing may ultimately spur positive change in both L1 and L2 culture for academic writing in Germany.

The reviewed studies on organizational climate and culture allow for developing an adaptational perspective on writing climate. Following Ehrhart et al. (2013), Wells et al. (2014) suggest examining organizational climates through their components: events, policies, practices, and procedures (p. 72). Building on this understanding, **we propose the following definition** of the university writing climate that also strives to capture a reciprocal relationship between climate and culture. *University writing climate is a cultural environment observable as patterns of organizational university life (events, policies, practices, and procedures) and behavior that contribute to the establishment and maintenance of L2 (English) writing instruction and support for students and staff.*

A Conceptual Framework for the University Writing Climate Research

Our conceptual framework for the university writing climate research in Germany (see Figure 1) stems from a well-grounded organizational climate model proposed by Moran and Volkwein (1992) and termed "the *cultural approach* to organizational climate" (p. 34). Moran and Volkwein's (1992) model untangles a complex interplay of organizational characteristics, organizational culture, organizational climate, and individuals engaged with an organization. Using Moran and Volkwein's (1992) "*cultural approach* to organizational climate" as a

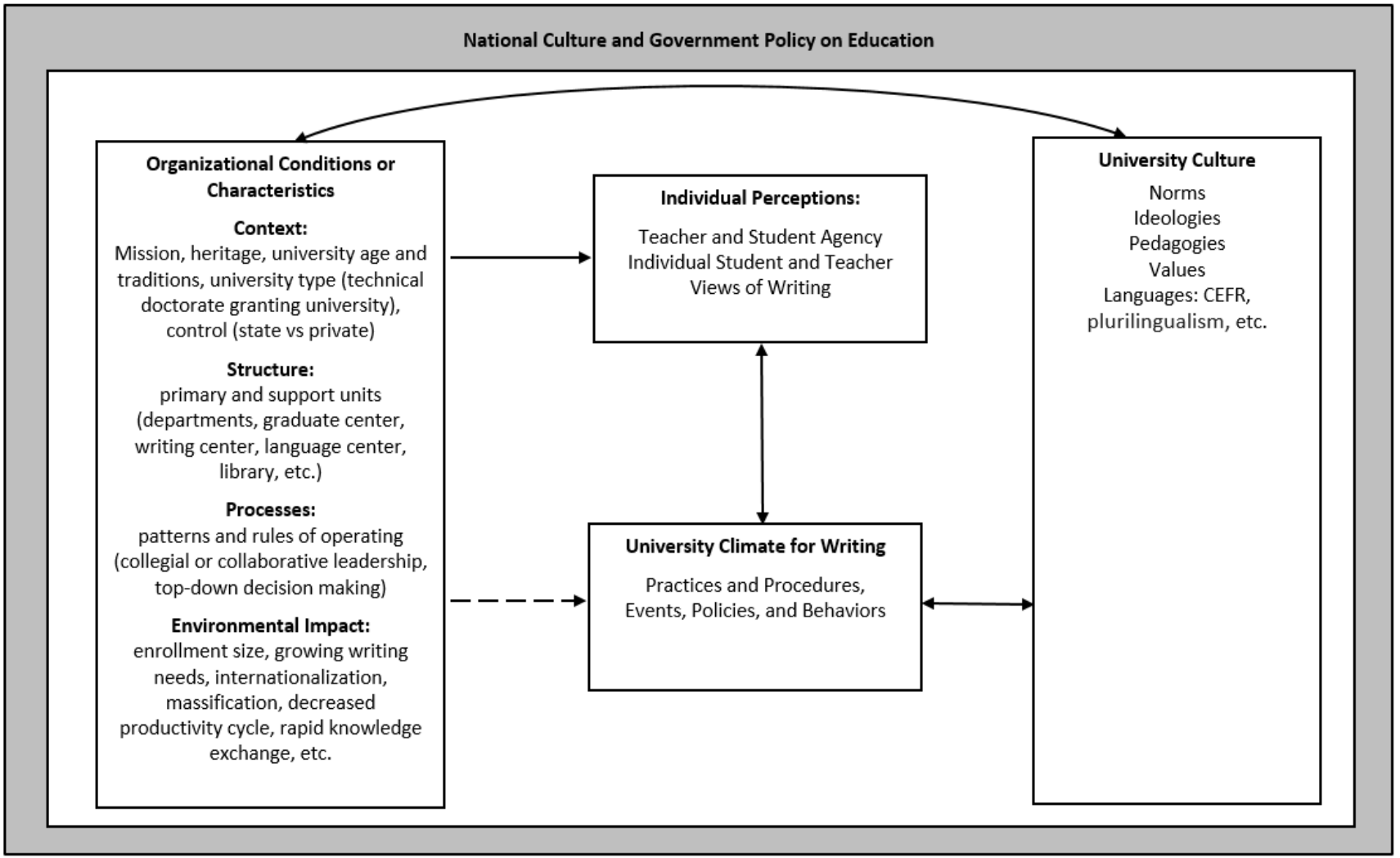

Figure 1. A conceptual framework for the university writing climate research. Adapted from "The Cultural Approach to the Formation of Organizational Climate" by E. T. Moran and J. F. Volkwein, 1992, *Human Relations, 45*(1), p. 32.

blueprint, we adapt their model to a unique type of organizations – higher education institutions, which have idiosyncratic organizational conditions and characteristics, governance, culture, and workplace dynamics (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Lacatus, 2013; Peterson & Spencer, 1990; Tierney, 1988; Viđak et al., 2021). Moreover, higher education institutions are embedded into national higher education systems shaped by the national culture and the government policy on education (Le Feuvre & Metso, 2005; Tierney, 1988). For instance, the German higher education system exemplifies "the Humboldtian model" (Le Feuvre & Metso, 2005, p. 8) of higher education, in which universities "though rely on academic freedom and institutional autonomy, might not be receptive enough to the needs and stakeholders' interests" (Lacatus, 2013, p. 425).

Positioning our theoretical framework as both appropriate for quantitative and qualitative research paradigms, we envision the climate for writing as a complex latent outcome variable that is influenced both directly and indirectly by three broad latent concepts: 1) organizational conditions or characteristics; 2) university culture; and 3) individual perceptions and behaviors of stakeholders (see Figure 1). While operationalizing the latent concept of organizational conditions or characteristics, we draw on previous studies of university culture and climate that suggested including a wide range of variables that underpin this concept. First, we propose to include *context*, i.e., mission, heritage, age, traditions (Clark, 1970; Grant & Riesman, 1978; Kuh & Whitt, 1988), university type, and university control (Moran & Volkwein, 1992). Second, we theorize that a university *structure*, as represented by units providing writing instruction, form an important part of organizational conditions and characteristics that influence the university culture. As Kuh and Whitt (1988) posited, "structure, as represented by an organizational chart, provides a point of reference for the way people think about and make sense of the contexts in

which they work" (p. 23). Third, capitalizing on previous studies of the role of leadership in organizational culture of higher education institutions (Smart & St. John, 1996; Tierney, 1988), we suggest that organizational *processes* defined as decision-making processes and leadership styles be included in organizational conditions and contexts affecting both university culture and climate. Finally, we hypothesize that *environmental impacts*, such as rapid knowledge sharing in the digital era (Manesh et al., 2021), internationalization (de Wit & Altbach, 2021), and massification of higher education (Altbach, 1999; Tight, 2019) that lead to increased enrollments, "a diversification of academic institutions" (Altbach, 1999, p. 107), and "less homogenous student populations" (Altbach, 1999, p. 107) that need more extensive and effective writing instruction, form the last piece of the puzzle in the latent construct of organizational conditions and characteristics.

We posit that organizational conditions and characteristics that encompass *context, structure, processes,* and *environmental impact* have a direct effect on the university climate for writing (see Figure 1). At the same time, we concur with Moran and Volkwein's (1992) idea of organizational conditions and characteristics as "being focal points of individual perceptions" (p. 34) that are transformed by "the intersubjectivity arising from the interactions of individuals" (p. 34) which impacts "the creation of the organization's climate" (p. 34). Therefore, we suggest that organizational conditions and characteristics also have an indirect effect on the university climate for writing as mediated by perceptions of stakeholders, such as teacher and student agency (Müller-Lyaskovets et al., 2021a) and student and teacher attitudes toward writing (Müller-Lyaskovets & Horner, 2021; Müller-Lyaskovets et al., 2021b).

Prior scholarship illuminated the complex interrelationship between organizational culture and climate (Moran & Volkwein, 1992; Schneider & Barbera, 2014; Schneider, Ehrhart,

& Macey, 2013) and stated that both concepts provide "a reasonable framework for making sense of the nonrational and informal aspects of an organization that are not captured in formal documents and procedures, objective characteristics of its members, quantitative measures of resources and performance, or organizational charts" (Peterson & Spencer, 1990, p. 4). Hence, we hypothesize that university culture has a direct effect on the university climate for writing (see Figure 1). Although definitions of organizational culture vary, most researchers agree that the major attributes of organizational culture include "the deeply embedded patterns of organizational behavior and the shared values, assumptions, beliefs, or ideologies that members have about their organization or its work" (Peterson & Spencer, 1990, p. 6). Summarizing prior definitions of organizational culture and recognizing that "universities present an inherently unique cultural paradox" (Bartell, 2003, p. 52), we suggest that *norms, ideologies, values, pedagogies,* and *languages of instruction* undergird the latent construct of university culture. However, this latent construct can be expanded further or adapted to the local context.

Finally, we conceptualize the latent construct of the university climate for writing through the following broad attributes: *events, policies, behaviors, practices, and procedures* (see Figure 1 and Table 1), which can be operationalized and measured in various ways. Climate attributes can be explored as objective measures, such as the number of writing events offered, presence/absence of policies for writing instruction, etc., and perceptual measures, such as student/faculty attitudes and opinions about effectiveness of policies, practices, etc.

Recognizing the transformative role of climate, we also theorize that the university climate for writing, in its turn, has a direct effect on the university culture as "climate shapes interaction within the organization, that interaction in turn not only shapes the organization's climate, but eventually can alter its culture as well" (Moran & Volkwein, 1992, p. 34).

In summary, our conceptual framework for the university writing climate that operationalizes this latent construct through cultural perspectives can serve as analytical lenses for future studies and can become a blueprint for statistical modeling of climate as well as qualitative inquiries, such as case studies and ethnographic research.

A Chaotic Landscape of Writing Instruction in Germany

University writing climate can be understood by looking at the patterns of *practices and procedures, events, and policies* that writing instruction and support units implement and at the patterns of stakeholders' *behavior* (Figure1). The scope, consistency, and quality of these occurrences define the nature of this climate.

In their review of organizational climate research, Schneider et al. (2013, pp. 367-368) distinguish between *strong, weak, and negative* climates. The authors describe a weak climate as resulting from a situation "when policies and procedures are inconsistent and/or when the practices that emerge from policies and procedures reveal inconsistencies" (p. 367). Because organizations need stronger climates for better outcomes, universities should be striving to build stronger writing climates to support the success outcomes of their students and researchers.

Based on Schneider's et al. conceptualization (2013, p. 368), German university writing climate can be characterized as weak because *events, policies, practices, and procedures* for writing instruction and support are inconsistent and chaotic within separate universities and across different universities (Müller-Lyaskovets et al., 2021a). In the following, we describe university L2 (English) writing climate by addressing *events, policies, practices, and procedures* implemented by German university writing instruction and support units. Table 1 summarizes this analysis.

Table 1. German University L2 (English) Writing Climate

Practices and Procedures	
Observable	Desirable
Is writing recognized and established as a skill that deserves its own course? Is it taught in a standard four-skill language course? Which university unit is the main provider of writing support and instruction for English? Does the institution have a writing center? Does the institution offer tests and grant certification that include writing? (for example, DAAD, UniCert, etc,)	We need to develop tutor education and teach writing pedagogies to teacher education students.
Events	
Observable	Desirable
Does the unit use any or all of the following event formats: writing courses, workshops, writing groups, counselling, and tutor education, and other? How often are the events offered? What is the scope and variety of events in terms of topics?	Departments should offer writing intensive courses. Writing instruction and support units should collaborate with departments offering writing intensive courses.
Policies	
Observable	Desirable
Are writing courses integrated in the curriculum? Are writing courses integrated in the core curriculum? Are writing courses offered as electives? At what levels should writing courses be integrated in the curriculum? Is writing seen as an integral part of research by stakeholders?	Study programs should seek to elicit student perspectives on how writing is integrated in the curriculum. For example, they can ask the following: Would you like writing courses to be offered as electives or required courses? Would you like the writing courses to be reflected on your transcript?
Behaviors	
Current Situation	Feasibility
Although participation in most of the writing events is not recognized on the transcript, students and early-stage researchers are motivated to participate in writing workshops and courses. This behavior shows a demand for this type of events.	At this stage, universities are reluctant to expand or open writing training programs because of the shortage of funding and faculty. There is another facet of the shortage of faculty: lack of qualified faculty to teach writing courses.

Practices and Procedures

The current state of teaching English writing shows that German universities do not consign teaching writing to English or Rhetoric and Composition departments. One of the reasons for this situation might be seen in the German traditional elitist view on higher education. The idea is that only the best students, who have mastered writing and English at their top-quality secondary schools, come to universities. The reform caused by the Bologna process and massification of German higher education put a different spin on the idea of elite institutions. Now elitism is sometimes rebranded as an "excellence initiative." Thus, for example, Busemeyer (2008), a staff member at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, sees pragmatic opportunities for excellence in the gap marking "elite" and "mass-market" institutions (Busemeyer, 2008).

Not affiliated with one specific unit, writing instruction and support can be offered by a variety of units that have different missions and cater to different yet sometimes overlapping populations. One of our previous studies (Müller-Lyaskovets, et al., 2021a) analyzes quantitative data collected from 14 German technical universities. The analysis demonstrates that academic writing, in both English and German, is taught at Language Centers and Other Units, which include Centers for Doctoral Studies and Research Promotion, libraries, Regional Student Centers and Career and Student Counseling Services, and International Centers, to name just a few. Only around one third of the universities in the sample have a Writing Center, which you would expect to be a major provider of academic writing training services.

This decentralized delivery of teaching writing contributes to the inconsistency of writing instruction and support practices. As far as German universities are concerned, it is not clear

which units have the motivation and expertise to facilitate English writing instruction across the curriculum at German universities (Müller-Lyaskovets, et al., 2021a).

Certification is another practice that would acknowledge the importance of writing and testify to a strong writing climate. Most of German universities include writing in their certification available in the form of the DAAD language exams or UniCert certification programs. Yet, the DAAD and UniCert assessments normally follow the four-skill language model, which treats writing as a language skill along with reading, speaking, and listening. This approach positions German universities as the proponents of the language transparency ideology. In her critique of this ideology, Curry (2016) shows that an ideology of the transparency of language (Lillis & Turner, 2001) treats academic literacy

> as an individual writer's ability to control discrete elements of language, specifically, the grammatical/mechanical/rhetorical conventions of standard English (whether American, British, Australian, etc.). This ideology informs much teaching of writing, especially "second language" writing courses grounded in a "skills approach" (Curry, 2003; Lea & Street, 1998), which is unfortunately often perpetuated in writing manuals and advice books. In contrast, in social practice theories, academic literacy/ies is seen as emerging from the disciplinary practices of knowledge making and communication (Lillis & Scott, 2007). (p. 82)

By reducing writing to one of the four standard language skills, German universities and their language centers treat writing as a language rather than a composition skill rooted in disciplinary communication practices. They dissect writing from explorative mindset that uses writing as a tool for thinking, learning, and research.

Events

Different teaching and support units within different universities offer different sets of writing events. Müller-Lyaskovets, et al. (2021a) found that in their sample, German universities may have L2 (English) workshops, tutoring sessions, writing groups, and writing courses as the main services in their academic writing training portfolios. However, it is not clear what defines these choices and how different events, offered by different units, are coordinated through a unified university vision for L2 writing instruction and support. The lack of this unified vision for writing pedagogy is partly due to a lack of trained professionals in Rhetoric and Composition (L1 and L2). L2 (English) writing most of the time is included in traditional four-skill courses taught by the EFL instructors who are easier to find and to hire on a free-lance basis.

Müller-Lyaskovets' et al. (2021a) findings, presented at the EATAW 2021 conference, align with Bonazza's (2016) study of German writing support services for English. So far, the latter is the only published study on the L2 (English) writing support services at German universities. By administering a survey and by interviewing directors and coordinators of 10 German writing centers that offer support to the non-native writers of English, Bonazza (2016) demonstrates that this type of writing services is not recent at all. In fact, it started in 2005. However, its organizational models are not clearly articulated either through research or through the writing center directors' perceptions (Bonazza, 2016).

What complicates the picture is that both German writing centers and L2 (English) writing support services use very diverse organizational models and teaching approaches (Bonazza 2016; Dreyfürst & Sennewald, 2014). Bonazza (2016) lists the following organizational models of the existing L2 (English) support services at German universities that participated in the study: "academic literacies' autonomous learning models; writing across the

disciplines; the writing fellow model; writing in the disciplines; and the German writing center model" (p. 7). The author stresses that the writing center directors and coordinators often do not have certainty about the type of a model they actually use (p.7). The list of teaching approaches reported in the study is no less diverse, if not chaotic: "autonomous learning; academic literacies' contrastive language approach; ESOL/TESOL/EAP/ESP; systemic functional linguistics; genre approach; and translingualism" (Bonazza, 2016, p. 7). Breakthrough novel, Bonazza's study maps the L2 (English) writing center support landscape in Germany, but it does not explain why a particular writing center uses a specific organizational model. Further, it is not clear how a specific organizational model is connected with the chosen teaching approach.

Policies

Traditionally, writing courses in general, and English writing courses in particular, are not a mandatory part of the core curriculum at German universities. If these courses exist, they are mostly placed within the elective rubric of "Schlüsselkompetenzen" (key competencies) as the German university webpages clearly indicate. Girgensohn and Sennewald (2012), Girgensohn (2017), Göpferich (2016) and other advocates of formalized writing support at German universities argue that writing courses should not be simply treated as "add-on," but they rather should be integrated into the curricula as a mandatory part. Lahm (2016) details this by stating that "in Germany, the teaching of content has mostly been seen as the one and only responsibility of faculty. Writing support was understood as teaching the 'form' and outsourced to special courses ("Einführung in wissenschaftliches Arbeiten") or, beginning in the 1990s, to writing centers" (p. 31). This practice of separating subject content and means one more time demonstrates that German educators tend to neglect the role the universities should play in training students to use writing as a means of thinking, learning, and research.

The above-mentioned scholars call for the implementation of writing intensive courses within the disciplines, along the lines of the wid/wic approaches of American universities. Writing centers at German universities (if existent), the argument goes, should and can ably assist the departments with the development and implementation of writing intensive courses within the disciplines. This view supports the dissolving of the divide between academic writing courses/workshops/counselling offered by writing centers on the one hand and the subject-matter courses offered by the departments on the other hand and proposes an integrated approach to teaching writing for both L1 and L2 (Göpferich, 2016; Buschmeier & Kaduk, 2016; Lahm, 2016). An integrated approach requires close collaboration between writing center staff and teachers in the disciplines. Göpferich's contribution "Writing Centers as the Driving Force of Programme Development: From Add-on Writing Courses to Content and Literacy Integrated Teaching" (2016) as well as Buschmeier and Kaduk's article "Germanistik denken – schreiben – verstehen. Von der schreiborientierten Einführung zum Curriculum" (2016), to name just two examples, describe detailed concepts for such collaborations, along with the implications and benefits of such collaborations for the development of a writing-competent student body.

Behaviors [to be expanded]

Although participation in most of the writing events is not recognized on the transcript of German universities, students and early-stage researchers participate in writing workshops and courses. We do not have data on participation rates across German universities or within separate universities, but we have student survey data and testimonials about how their writing improved as a result of their participation in writing courses (Müller-Lyaskovets & Horner, 2021; Müller-Lyaskovets et al., 2021b).

Despite a chaotic landscape of writing instruction, Girgensohn and Peters (2012) are very hopeful about the situation in Germany. The authors and writing center practitioners compare the situation in Germany to that of the USA and say that in sixty years Europe may also have many more writing centers (Girgensohn & Peters, 2012, p. 1). Reviewing the history of the American writing centers, Girgensohn and Peters (2012) point to the writing center research as imperative to the successful writing center development in Germany. This study is a necessary installment in this type of research.

Conclusion [to be expanded]

By developing the conceptual framework for the university writing climate, we hope not only to facilitate further research into this emerging concept, but also to spur change in writing instruction at German universities. Equipped with proper tools of assessing the university writing climate and its impact on student outcomes, administrators will be in a better position to change elements in the institution that are at variance with the climate for writing.

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A Conceptual Framework for Understanding the University Writing Climate for L2 (English) in Germany: A Cultural Approach

Institutional description of *zhb Bereich Fremdsprachen, Technische Universität Dortmund*

The *zhb Bereich Fremdsprachen (Department of Foreign Languages)* is one of the five departments within the *Zentrum für HochschulBildung (zhb/Center for Higher Education)* at the *Technische Universität Dortmund (TU Dortmund University)*. Our department was created mainly as a service unit that offers academic-level foreign language instruction to students of non-philological fields of study. In accordance with the language policy of the European Union and its call for multi- and pluri-lingualism among EU citizens, especially of university graduates, the zhb Bereich Fremdsprachen supports the development of competencies in foreign languages through its range of skill-specific and purpose-specific courses. Thus, it provides a substantial contribution to the international mobility of students and graduates in their studies, research, and professions.

While courses in academic writing in German (L2) and English (L2) have been an integral part of the zhb Bereich Fremdsprachen teaching portfolio at least since 2009, a more extensive academic writing program for English (L2) and German (L1 and L2) was implemented only recently under the program title *w.space,* a bilingual acronym for *wissenschaftlich*|schreiben|präsentieren|*academic*|*communication*. Since July 2020, our department has been developing the w.space program spanning not only writing courses for German and English but also writing workshops, writing counseling, and other events informed through the pedagogy that treats writing as a process and a means of communication within and across disciplines. Because there is a distinct demand for our current writing offers among students from all study programs and levels, there is an urgent need for making these offers a permanent rather than a temporary, project-based endeavor. Hence, our research paper is driven by the question "What are the attributes of the climate for L2 (English) academic writing relevant to German university campuses?" We are motivated to uncover and understand the factors that can cause a change toward building a stronger writing climate at German universities in general, and TU Dortmund University in particular.

Key Theorists: A one-page digest of key theorists and frames used in the choice of methods and research design

A Conceptual Framework for Understanding the University Writing Climate for L2 (English) in Germany: A Cultural Approach

1. Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Sage

We followed Maxwell's recommendations about how conceptual frameworks can be constructed. Maxwell (2013, p. 40) describes a conceptual framework as a tentative theory that further can be used in research design. According to Maxwell (2013, p. 40), first, one identifies a research problem. We saw our immediate research problem as the absence of theory allowing for university climate research relevant to Germany. To construct our framework, we used "modules" provided by already existing theory and empirical research. Maxwell (2013) borrowed the idea of modules, or "prefabricated parts," from Becker (2007, 1986, p. 144, cited in Maxwell, 2013, p. 41). We derived our modules from the following sources: "experiential knowledge," "existing theory and research," and "thought experiments" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 44).

2. Moran, E. T., & Volkwein J. F. (1992). The cultural approach to the formation of organizational climate. *Human Relations*, 45 (1), 19-47.

Our conceptual framework for university writing climate research in Germany stems from a well-grounded organizational climate model proposed by Moran and Volkwein (1992) and termed "the *cultural approach* to organizational climate" (p. 34). Using Moran and Volkwein's (1992) "*cultural approach* to organizational climate" as a blueprint, we adapt their model to a unique type of organization – higher education institutions, which have idiosyncratic organizational conditions and characteristics.

3. Schneider, B., Ehrhart, M. G., & Macey, W. H. (2013). Organizational climate and culture. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *64*(1), 361–388. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-113011-143809

Schneider et al. (2013) review studies in the three top organizational psychology journals and document climate and culture to be "two alternative constructs for conceptualizing the way people experience and describe their work settings (including not only businesses but also schools and governments)" (p. 362). Yet, the authors identify one group of studies within the "culture as moderator" (Chatman & Spataro, 2005, cited in Schneider et al., 2013, p. 375) approach that views culture as a contextual variable for other constructs (Schneider et al., 2013, p. 375). Advocating for a cultural approach to university writing climate, we suggest examining the writing climate as moderated by university culture.

Glossary: A list of any potentially context/culture-specific terms, both practical and profound

A Conceptual Framework for Understanding the University Writing Climate for L2 (English) in Germany: A Cultural Approach

Organizational climate: "Climate is a created response which an interacting group of individuals, who are *informed and constrained by common organizational culture*, make to the demands and contingencies arising in the organization's internal and external environments" (Moran &Volkwein, 1992, p. 39, emphasis added).

Culture: Culture is a dynamic entity – a "set of *rules and practices* by means of which a group organizes itself and its values, manners, and worldview" (emphasis added, Frankenberg, 1993, p. 202).

Organizational culture: Schein (2010) proposes "three levels of organizational culture: artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions" (Schneider et al., 2013, p. 371).

Conceptual framework: Maxwell (2013, p. 40) describes a conceptual framework as a tentative theory that further can be used in research design. A conceptual framework can be incomplete, but it should provide sufficient scaffolding for the intended research

Thought experiment: "Thought experiments challenge you to come up with plausible explanations for your and others' observations, and to think about how to support or disprove these. They draw on both theory and experience to answer "what if" questions, and to explore the logical implications of your models, assumptions, and expectations of the things you plan to study. They can both generate new theoretical models and insights, and test your current theory for problems" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 68−69).

University writing climate: Following Ehrhart et al. (2013), Wells et al. (2014) suggest examining organizational climates through their components: events, policies, practices, and procedures (p. 72). Building on this understanding, we propose the following definition of the university writing climate that also strives to capture a reciprocal relationship between climate and culture. *University writing climate is a cultural environment observable as patterns of organizational university life (events, policies, practices, and procedures) and behavior that contribute to the establishment and maintenance of L2 (English) writing instruction and support for students and staff.*