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Chinese en passant –a personal case study -

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Abstract

- The presenter reports a personal case study, where learning of this language was restricted, and the efforts led to mixed successes.
- Coming from a school background with multiple FL learning (but little acquisition!), the presenter had to do with the Chinese language in various contexts and on various stages. This presentation introduces five (of many more) kinds of contact, the approaches taken in each, and the results.
- The first contact was interest in a free time activity during slow working hours on a student job.
- The second contact opportunity arose in Japan and included formal instruction in an introductory course at the presenter's university.
- The third contact arose as on-the-spot "helper" with a teacher delegation in China.
- The fourth contact arose from research on languages and writing systems using square letters/signs and their use for receptive multilingualism.
- The fifth contact resulted from grasping the opportunity to employ an exchange students for conversation classes.
- The differences in results can be taken as a starting point for comparing the effectiveness of various approaches to FL learning/acquisition.

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Language	name of squares
Japanese	Kanji
Chinese	4Han4zi, signs

- Conventions
-

Introduction

The quest: Is there any way to learn a language over a long time

- The presenter reports a personal case study, where learning of this language was restricted, and the efforts led to mixed successes.
- Coming from a school background with multiple FL learning (but little acquisition!), the presenter had to do with the Chinese language in various contexts and on various stages. This presentation introduces five (of many more) kinds of extended contact (there were of course man more), the approaches taken in each, and the results.

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Languages at home and at school (age/grade)

- Language at home: Silesian German > High German (never: regional language of the school area: lower German)
- Languages at school (-until,age/schoolyear)
- - FL1 (10/5): Latin (-15/10), continued on to 18/13
- - FL2 (12/7): English (-18/13)
- - FL3 (16/11): Ancient Greek (-18/13)

and started: Russian (16/11- 18/13)

Note: None to more than reading (without dictionary at that time) except English (grammar oriented 13/8 then conv. 14/9-18/13)

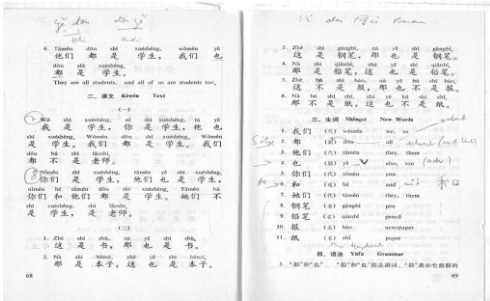
English: Grammar oriented start 12/7, but speaking etc. oriented from 14/9 (change in the German educational system! Teachers used E!)

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- 1. Pure self study
- The first extended contact with Chinese was interest in a free time activity during slow working hours on a student job.
- - Boring job, seeking a challenge which could be halted and taken up again within seconds
- No stroke order or radical learning, slow identifying and drawing only
- no native speaker contact, no partner speaking, stroke order but no fast writing, textbook only
- practically no retention at all after finishing the job (and closing the textbook)
- pronouncing tries only

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- copy from textbook

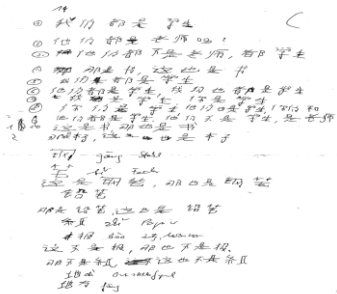


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- The textbook did have a part on writing strokes but this was skipped (for whatever reason, probably wanted to go to the first interesting lesson, nr. 8, as fast as possible).
- > A theoretically logical language grammar book is not necessarily useful for learning that language

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- copying out sentences from the textbook
- copy here



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- copying in handwriting from a textbook does not necessarily lead to learning anything

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Intermezzo

- Coming to Japan in the early 1980s
 - limited Kanji-learning
 - - limited time per day (20 min.?)
 - - fast writing (NO calligraphy)
 - - recognizing (identifying Kanji in the environment)
 - - limited number each time (fast repetition, 5 to 7 Kanji + about 5 compounds each)
 - - use in everyday life (speaking, identifying in newspaper etc.)
 - - important points: speed, this-is-it-assumption(!), use
- Lit: Reinelt: Who is afraid of Japanese? rireki
Result: Learned how to handle Kanji/Hanzi

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Japanese to Chinese

From then on: assume meaning similarity

- Kanji-wise: Chinese meant adding to each Kanji learnt so far 講 KOH 3jiang lecture
- completely new pronunciations and meanings to be added 讓 JOH yuzur(u) to give in to 让 4rang to cause
- sometimes phrases and/or combinations

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2. The second extended contact opportunity arose in Japan and included formal instruction in an introductory one term course at the presenter's university. (copies only, not available now)
- wayward scheduling of a general education course (many teachers as students!)

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- later continued once-a-week private classes with an exchange student for a few weeks
- interesting event: Theater play > stage book
- --(some) reading (comprehension) possible, understanding too > only so far (Germ: only cook with water)
- important points from learning Japanese above

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- television: reading subtitles, trying to read along (only signs I knew), reading speed! pronounced words and signs go together!
- first breakthrough > it is possible to understand something (even only in part correctly)
- took fear away (anxiety)
- listening comprehension still very peacemeal and basic
- difficult if sudden (this continues even until today)
- trying to read along extremely helpful, with reduced expectations!

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3. The third, rather more intensive than extended, contact arose as on-the-spot "helper" with a Japanese-German teacher delegation in China.
- Hotel – on the outskirts of Beijing - reception people recognized a, though limited, reliable, accessible communicability (at least better than with the Japanese participants) of the author > help with everyday problems
 - using Hanzi and speaking together, but only little English
 - probably didn't get much right languagewise, but minimally functional
 - extremely motivating for the author
 - (Russian adage: Necessity is the mother of invention!
 - With a few basics remembered forced use is extremely effective!

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- 3a. research on speech act verbs ((development of) SAY radical) > check vast amounts of literature, dictionaries
- little retention from this
 - to wit: you cannot learn a language from dictionaries!

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4. The fourth extended contact arose from research on languages and writing systems using square letters/signs and their use for receptive multilingualism.
- reading(that is skimming) Chinese and Korean newspapers in Tokyo for a scientific study
 - reading while looking for test materials
 - aim: to find texts that would be intelligible for Japanese (or Koreans) who have not learned Chinese
 - invented and conducted brief course for Jap > Chinese > Kor and Chinese > Jap without language learning

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- LARA texts here
- 办手机只要一通电话，即可送到您的手中！！
- 充价式国际电话卡
- 手机无料，无起??
- 手续简单，迅速！
- 可看电视
- ? 音乐的手机
- 25 / 分 中国 11 / 分 中国
- 料金 手机无料
- 保? 金 14,000—
- 手数料 3,150—
- 预付是用料 10,000—
- 付费方式

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- little active learning or retention
- to wit: you cannot learn a language from reading

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- 5. The fifth extended contact resulted from grasping the opportunity to employ an exchange student for conversation classes
- Exchange student as teacher continuing
- After return to Germany: later on Skype
- Continuing after short break with different exchange student

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- Since April:
- Classes once a week with Chinese exchange student
- Trying to cover the *meyasu* contents
- Overwhelmed by everyday work, not doing bthe necessary repetition
- missing: Chinese native speaker etc. environment for continuous intake and necessity for rapid exchanges
- varying topics which dominate each time
- learner has to direct the student teacher

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- once a certain step is reached, former steps cannot be remembered!
- grammar not much of a problem, but of course mountains of mistakes

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- The differences in results can be taken as a starting point for comparing the effectiveness of various approaches to FL learning/acquisition.
- 1 to 5

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step	place	context	approach	notes	amount	effects
1	workplace	free-time activity	reading explanations and copying from textbook		1 book	almost no retention of the target language, grammar o.k. in part
Int.	Japan	university (Japanese)	strictly aimed for use			
2	university	formal course	NS used copies and had students speak to each other	later with native speaker student	1 term	got to the beginning stage incentive for continuing
3	in Beijing	help in hotel	speak in the situations, look up many words	out of necessity	(at the time) useful phrases	remembered a few phrases + extremely motivating
4	Japan	research	skimming written texts	similar to Intermezzo	reading headlines of tens of free paper articles and a few articles	· not afraid of reading · increase of reading- understanding or at least combining
5	Japan	private classes	speaking on the spot (new words written as they come up)	no exchange topic dominated	large amount of words (pity: not all learned) some phrases	not afraid of speaking to that student, still not very confident

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- future:
- continue learning (speaking), increase speed and finding uses
- Results
- no slow learning > leads to nothing (also German 2012)
- needs early-on intensive phase (experience with Thai exchange student: Many parts still remembered)
- At some time language environment requiring the target language use necessary

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- Any hints
- Thank you
- and continue learning languages