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1

2013 5 18 12PanSIG NagNan OLE LLL JSL Forum LLges at all stages and ages Reinelt Very old learners

## Improving German at very old age Rudolf Reinelt, Ehime University

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2

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- [Session Overview](#) **Session OLE-11-13: OLE LLL JSL Forum** *Time: Saturday, 18/May/2013: 4:55pm - 6:30pm* *Session Chair: Rudolf Reinelt* *Location: 41 OLE LLL JSL 40* **Presentations Learning languages at all stages and ages**
- Rudolf Reinelt<sup>1</sup>, Don Maybin<sup>2</sup>, Yo Hamada<sup>3</sup>, Joseph Dias<sup>4</sup>, Megumi Kawate-Mierzejewska<sup>5</sup>
- <sup>1</sup>Ehime University; <sup>2</sup>Shonan Institute of Technology; <sup>3</sup>Akita University; <sup>4</sup>Aoyama Gakuin University; <sup>5</sup>Temple University Japan Campus; [mkawatemierzejewska@gmail.com](mailto:mkawatemierzejewska@gmail.com)
- This forum consists of 3 papers contributed by three different SIGs, Other Language Educators (OLE), Lifelong Language Learning (LLL) and Japanese as a Second Language (JSL) with two discussants. The forum focuses on lifelong language learning in each context. *The first presenter reports a case study where a very old learner of German enjoys success.* The second presenter describes his own language learning experiences, starting with secondary school French in Canada. The final presenter introduces negative factors that Australian Japanese language learners have when learning JSL and their solutions. This forum also invites participants and discussants to join discussion.

3

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- RR (temporary project: Improving German at very old age)
- (Mr. In and Out, lets call him Dr. IO)
- **Abstract I**
- Learning German was a constitutive part of pre-war Japanese Higher Education. Often taught by Nazi-prone, grammar-emphasizing German native speakers and not yet tainted by conversationalist ideas, students seem to have gained a fundamental, though, despite many contact hours, mainly receptive knowledge.
- After a long work-life with only spurious contact with that language, very old learners try to re-activate their German. This presentation reports a case study where a very old learner enjoys success even in a not-yet emphasized skill, speaking.

4

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- **Abstract II**
- This presentation, in part one, briefly introduces the original German as target language learning situation and the language retention conditions. Part two discusses how language learning at old age can be studied. Part three reports a case study and its results, and part four concludes with ramifications for the age and language learning relationship.

5

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- **Aim of this study:**
- Demonstrate in a case study how a very old learner enjoys success even in a not-yet emphasized skill, speaking.
- Explore how to make it available for research

6

- Part I briefly introduces the original German as target language learning situation and the language retention conditions
- The mother tongue, the first foreign language, the second foreign language
- In this case: Japanese > German > English

7

- Learning German was a constitutive part of pre-war Japanese Higher Education (high school!).
- Source: 真善美 (Shinzenbi) Reminiscence of Matsuyama High School (all quotes below).
- from 1920 to 1945 5 German NS teachers, one opposed to Hitler(Miyoshi Remembering Foreign Teachers p.29-31 ).
- all others went on to the task of ideologizing at Higher Institutions: Their writings (Scheid, B.)
- p. 246: photo of the teaching staff for one year (not dated)

8



9

- German teaching at MatsuHigh
- up to 11h of German instruction per week, about one third of all 33 teaching hours!
- with so many lessons, learners will learn/retain something
- no curriculum available? but see below
- role of German native speaker teachers

10

- Classes were often taught by grammar-emphasizing German native speakers who brought over their cultural characteristics (strictness, etc.)
- teaching methods: no information available here but probably somewhere
- only frontal teaching can be supposed
- and not yet tainted by conversationalist ideas, teachers read books and taught songs
- mainly translation into Japanese (to understand anything at all)
- students seem to have gained a fundamental, though, despite many contact hours, mainly receptive knowledge.

11

- Course contents as remembered:  
Literature (s. Raeuber p. 127)  
singing (list of songs: Lindenbaum, Heidenroeslein, Staendchen, Lorelei, Liebe der Matrosen, Das gibts nur einmal, Abschied, Wiegenlied p. 54-55),  
theater (stagebook p. 127)
- Little questioning of roles or contents

12



Part II How language learning at old age can be studied.

- Kay Ohly (2007)
- Third Life (over 50)
- “Foreign language geragogy”
- attempted to find out the FL learning strategies used
- used think aloud protocols (TAP)
- no clear relationships

Possible research designs

- only observe, no testing
- Interview with Mr. IO?
- Anecdotal information from talk in class
- Telling from himself
- Practice: Writing after listening/identifying o.k. in parts

Part III A case study and its results

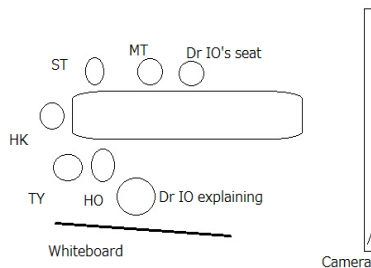
- After a long work-life with only spurious systematic contact with non-medical parts of that language, a very old learner tries to re-activate his German in order to realize his dream of visiting there once.

- Subject: Dr X
- age: 80s
- German as first foreign language at MatsuHigh in Matsuyama, Ehime(Iyo) before WWII
- after the war: English, spent 1 y in Baltimore
- no contact with German of any sort except technical terms
- German in medicine: chart, names of illnesses
- Due to his profession (doctor) constant contact with and extremely recurrent use of a limited number of expressions.
- still writes weekly/monthly articles in local medical magazines, very active and bright despite hearing impairedness.

• Scene



WS:2012 14 2 13 Do6 Old Learners: WorkcopyExtraPresIO.avi



• Transcript

- WS2012 14 2 13 Do6 Old Learner WorkcopyExtraPresIO.avi
- after writing to dictation on a tape (identifying by mutually helping, all together, then one person writes, others help by saying) and then copying new words that have come up, Dr. IO wants to present the story he had watched on TV this afternoon.
- 7:02
- RR Herr io hat etwas fuer uns [Mr IO has something for us](7:12)
- IO Heute habe ich sehr interessante fernseh/ ferngeSEhen [Today, I watched a very interesting TV/ TV watched ](7:26)
- RR Oh! Aha
- IO (comes to the whiteboard, on his way): Okay?
- RR Ja, bitte [Yes please](7:29)
- IO ????(Radio hoeren??)
- RR Ja^, Ja^(about whiteboardmarkers, exchange for a working one)
- RR helping/encouraging by frequent ja! not noted below
- (IO writes sentence beginnings, only important words)

- RR Rot, rot
- IO ??
- IO Wissen wir , Deutscher sagt nach Niesen [As we know, Germans say after sneezing] (8:05): „Gesundheit“, „Gesundheit“(8:15)
- IO dann. Amerikaner/ mit k / Amerikaner God bless you[ and Americans (with k) Americans (say) God bless you](8:36)
- RR und[and ]?
- IO warum eh sagen Deutsche und Amerikaner sagen solche ....eh..[why do Germans and Americans say such (phrases) ..(8:45).....??? ....
- RR Woerter, oder Redewendungen [words, or phrases] (8:52), solche Wendungen, ja[such phrases, yes]
- IO Ja, eh, zum Beispiel, zum Beispiel [yes, eh for example, for example] (9:02),
- IO Deutscher denkt [Germans think](9:06) eh
- IO Niesen ist schlecht/schlechtes/schlechtes [sneezing is bad/ bad/ a bad](9:14)
- IO schlechte/schlechte Omen [a bad/bad omen]
- RR Ooh?{(loud)Aeh?}(9:29)
- 

- Ooh?{(loud)Aeh?}(9:29)
- IO ando(engl.)
- RR Omen,Omen, yosoku, yogen,
- IO Omen (explains briefly in Japanese)
- IO Das ist bewegWort? [that is ?? word] (9:43)
- RR Achso[Uhuh]?
- IO Ja?(9:45)
- IO (9:50)im Japanisch[in Japanese](9:52) (writes "kuschami", says) „kuschami“(9:57)
- IO Japaner sagt kuschami[Japanese say kuschami](10:02)
- RR D. Japaner sagt nicht/sagt nicht kuschami/kuschami, er sagt hekschon!(10:09)
- RR Das ist falsch, ich habe die Sendung auch gesehen(10:12)
- IO Hekschon, hekschon ist Onomatopoe(10:18)
- RR Ja, aber Kuschami ist Beschreibung, Beschreibung [kuschami is simply a description]
- IO Ja][Yes] (10:21)
- IO Japaner auch frueher sagte auch solche Rede/Redewendung[Japanese also previously said such words, phrases](10:28)
- RR Oh?(10:33)
- IO Das ist, das ist [That is:] (goes on writing)(10:41)
- IO 急速万慮(kyusokumanryo)(10:51-59)
- IO .....

- .....
- IO Kyuusoku (11:08)kyuusoku manryo bedeutet ein[that's a prayer (for help)] (Gebetwort)??
- RR Ein Wunsch, ein Wunsch fuer jemanden [ a wish, a wish for someone else]
- IO
- RR Wir sagen ein Wunsch [we utter a wish](writes this word only on the board)
- IO Ach so, Wunsch ne [ I see, wunsch=wish, yeah]
- RR Wunsch fuer./ fuer Jemanden[a wish for/ FOR someone] (11:24)
- IO
- RR Ja,ja, genau, ja(11:27)
- IO
- IO (goes along with finger) kyusokumanryo ?? fuer dich [helping wish for you] (11:33)
- ST hae-----? (11:38)
- IO (in Japanese kyo terevi de mitande(I saw it on TV this afternoon))
- IO "Gesundheit" sagen, ist ein schlechtes Omen[to say „health“ say is a bad omen] (11:47)
- IO Japanisches Wort [Japanese word] K, frueher Japaner sagte [previously Japanese said] K, (11:56)
- IO Danke schoen[thank you very much] (12:07) (and leaves for his seat)

- results
- With much help he is able to make himself understood very well
- improvement: Didn't speak very much German at the start, now 2 years

31

- discussion

32

Part IV Ramifications for the age and language learning relationship  
Some kind of LL seems to be possible at any age

33

- notes beyond this study:
- As the human body begins its natural decline in old age, bilinguals seem to maintain better cognitive function, said Ellen Bialystok of York University in Toronto, Ontario. This is the case even for people with dementia. Bialystok and colleagues have studied many Alzheimer's patients, both monolinguals and bilinguals. They found that bilinguals were on average four to five years older than monolinguals at comparable points of neurological impairment.
- Post by: [Elizabeth Landau - CNN.com Health Writer/Producer](#)
- [2 languages make your brain buff](#)
- <http://thechart.blogs.cnn.com/2011/02/18/foreign-language-learning-good-for-your-brain/>
- and also: Scheppegrell for Eric:
- <http://www.language-learning-advisor.com/age-and-language-learning.html>

34

- However, despite this scientific conclusion, language learning in adulthood and even in old age can do a lot of good.
- American researchers say that employees who know a foreign language can cope with mental tasks better than those who speak only their native language. Bilingual people focus on relevant information better and ignore irrelevant information, and therefore perform better in tests of intellectual abilities and better achievements at work. For example, those who know additional languages can effectively prioritize and work on more than one project at a time successfully.
- "The main advantage of cognitive bilingual people is the ability to engage in several cases at the same time," researchers explain. The need to switch between two languages enables bilingual people to constantly train their brain. This exercise is not accessible to those who speak only one language
- **Yana Filimonova**
- **Learning foreign languages triggers brain growth**
- [http://english.pravda.ru/science/tech/19-11-2012/122852-foreign\\_languages-0/](http://english.pravda.ru/science/tech/19-11-2012/122852-foreign_languages-0/)

35

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36

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