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## **Foreign students as Tutors for 2FL classes? – exploring some new paths in second foreign language education: 2FL-Chats in the FL Salc at Niigata University**

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Room: 407 B, 18.35 – 18.55 pm

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1. **Overview of foreign tutors in 2FL-education at Niigata University (A. Hopf)**
  - 1.1. **Foreign tutors** in 2 FL classes
  - 1.2. **Autonomous learning** in 2FL chats at FL SALC
2. **FL SALC: 2FL chats (2012 – 2014 summer term)**
  - 2.1. **The students perspective:**  
Results of 2FL chats participants questionnaires & interviews:  
French & German chats (Chinatsu Komagata)
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(Anja Hopf)
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### **1. Short overview**

Foreign tutors at 2FL education in Niigata University means:

- 1) the possibility to work with one or more
- 2) exchange students as tutors (TAs)
- 3) in 2FL classes

Start:

- since winter term 2008: start of the programme in French 2FL classes
- since spring term 2009: expansion to other 2FLs classes

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### **1. Short overview**

Data:

Winter term 2008: 4 classes 2FL French (89 students)

Spring term 2009: 7 classes 2FL French (222 students)

Winter term 2009: 14 classes 2FL education: French, German, Chinese  
(356 students)

Winter term 2010: 24 classes 2FL education: French, German, Chinese, Korean  
(596 students)

Spring term 2013: 30 classes 2FL education: French, German, Chinese, Korean  
(634 students)

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#### **1.1. Foreign tutors in 2FL classes**

- Two patterns:

Pattern 1:

- Tutors as teaching assistants:
- One teacher & one tutor regularly in class  
throughout the whole semester

Depending on teacher and class, there are many different ways to work with the tutors in 2FL classes.

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### 1.1. Foreign tutors in 2FL classes

Pattern 2:

Tutors in project orientated classes:

one teacher + more than one tutors:

Group work: one tutor per group

e. g.:

- at the end of the month, once every three weeks etc.
- after mastering basic language skills, the tutors will be used in tasks using the language learned in projects etc.

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### 1.2. Autonomous learning in 2FL chats

What are 2FL chats?

- They ideally provide a „space“, where students can try out there language skills outside of class with a native speaker, who is a foreign exchange student;
- As this „space“ should provide a comfortable „flat“ environment for student-student communication no teacher is present.
- It is held weekly, with one or more tutors in charge.
- It is open to every learner for how long she or he desires to participate.

Start of the programme:

- since spring term 2012 as pilot programme in the „FL SALC mini“ for French, German, Chinese.
- since winter term 2013: programme start in the FL SALC inside the newly opened library for French, German, Chinese and Korean.

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### 1.2. Autonomous learning in 2FL language chats

Semester	French	German	Chinese	Korean
Spring term 2012	1 x per week Total: 6 times 2 Tutors Students: 12	-	-	-
Winter term 2012	1 x per week Total: 10 times 7 Tutors Students: 20	1 x per week Total: 8 times 1 Tutor Students: 10	Group chat	-
Spring term 2013	1 x per week Total: 10 times 1 Tutor Group: 4 Tutors Students (total): 80	1 x per week Total: 8 times 1 Tutor Students: 55	Group chat	-
Winter term 2013	1 x per week: Total: 8 times Beginners: 1 Tutor Group: 4 Tutors Students (total): 34	2 x per week (90 min. each) Total: 19 times 2 Tutors Students total: 72	2 x per weeks 2 Tutors each Total: 18 times Students: 36	3 x per semester 2 Tutors Students: 15
Spring term 2014	1 x per week: Total: 12 times Beginners: 1 Tutor Group: 4 Tutors Students (total): 104	2 x per week (90 min. each) Total: 18 times 2 Tutors Students total: 105	2 x per weeks 2 Tutors each Total: 18 times Students: 54	2 x per semester 2 Tutors Students: 31

### 1.2. Autonomous learning in 2FL chats

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Spring term 2014:

- 2FL chats in four 2FLs  
(French, German, Chinese, Korean)
- 164 students
- 24 sessions work with
- 12 tutors

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## 2. FL SALC: 2FL chats at FL SALC (2012 – 2014 summer term)

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### My questions to participants

Is there any relation between 2FL students' participation and study abroad ?

Do they come to the chats because :

- they have an actual plan to study abroad ?
- they want to keep their language level after a time abroad ?

Do they have a stronger motivation to study abroad after taking part in the chat ?

### 1. Questionnaire - results

- 1) Regular chat participation :  
once/twice a week for three months  
-> only 2FL students who have been abroad or want to go abroad
- 2) At chats only held twice  
-> many participants had no intention to go abroad (chat as additional event to the 2FL class)

### 2.1. Individual interviews - results

- 8 participants who have been regularly attending the chats
- Among them were students:
- 1) with no experience abroad,
  - 2) with short term experience abroad,
  - 3) with experience longer than one month abroad.

#### 2.1-1. students with no experience abroad

- Listening to exchange students talking their cultures has been perceived very stimulating.
- Talking to other Japanese students shortly before starting their study abroad was very informative.
- Plans to go to study in an English speaking country before being a student. Now rather interested in going to a 2FL country.
- For 2FL studies, like to go only for a month. For studying contents in the major subject, no university cooperation is available at Niigata University for now.

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#### 2.1-2. students with short term experience abroad

- Took part in a short term language exchange program in 2012. No chat available at that time (or not known). No intention to go long term abroad. Therefore, participation at chat perceived as good fun, provided he or she comes along well with the other students at chat.
- Enjoys the communication with the exchange students greatly. Was participating the short term language exchange program last year 2013, and went for traveling to see friends for one month this year 2014. No further intention to go abroad.

#### 2.1-3. students with experience longer than one month abroad

- Experiences difficulties to keep motivated for 2FL learning because she found a job which requires no 2FL skills, but its fun to participate in the chat. Wants to maintain the feeling and sensibilities to communicate in the 2FL.
- Needs more 2FL classes for advanced students at the university, which are not sufficiently available. Attending chats and speaking in 2FL for 90 minutes every week serves student as an alternative.

### 2.1. Conclusion from interviews

- The 2FL chats functions equally as preparative and follow-up sessions for studying abroad.
- 2FL learners have easy access to a once-in-a-week session where they have the opportunity to find someone whom they get along well to talk with in the 2FL they study.  
-> which seems to be most important motivation for the participants.

**2.2. The tutors perspective:  
results of an interview with German tutors**

- Interview held early August 2014 in German
- Background of tutors:
  - Tutor 1:  
exchange student, major: Japanese studies
  - Tutor 2:  
exchange student, major: law
- Both have been in charge together for one German chat during winter term 2013 and summer term 2014 (during their whole year in Niigata)
- Learners level: advanced beginners, some participants with experience of a longer stay in Germany)

**2.2. The tutors perspective:  
results of an interview with German tutors**

**Contents of interview:**

1. Preparation, form, realization ( 5 questions)
2. On learning effects and other (5 questions)
3. Advise for future tutors  
(Please see appendix 2. for interview questions)

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**2.2. The tutors perspective:  
results of an interview with German tutors**

Q. 1.1. How long and how did you prepare for the chat?

- 90 minutes & they often talked about it in their free time

Choice of topic:

- daily life topic
- similarities & differences in German and Japanese culture
- internet and youtube used as references
- timely topics (soccer world cup in Brazil 2014)

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**2.2. The tutors perspective:  
results of an interview with German tutors**

Q. 1.2. How did you choose the topic and how did it go in the chat?

- short easy question in the beginning, which leads into a conversation on a topic
- choose an easy topic
- comparison between mutual experiences in Germany and in Japan as a foreign student
- tried to find a good balance between language and cultural topics
- especially popular were topics on daily life
- focus on useful phrases and slang

**2.2. The tutors perspective:  
results of an interview with German tutors**

Q. 1.3. Where did you experience difficulties in regard of preparations and proceedings?

- to find new topics every week
- to understand the level of German of the participants
- abstract or private topics turned out to be difficult (e. g. what does freedom mean to you? etc.)
- without thorough preparation a meaningful conversation was difficult to develop
- how to deal with indifference on the part of the participants?

**2.2. The tutors perspective:  
results of an interview with German tutors**

Q. 1.4. How do you evaluate the form of the chat?

- very positive: 2 tutors, 90 minutes, room and equipment sufficient (iPads).

Q. 1.5. After one year of being tutors in the chat, is there anything you would do differently, or do you have other comments?

- the space of the „box“ (=room) was very efficient, to make the participants feel comfortable, that led to a good intercultural experience, and the participants found the courage to actually use German. (in comparison to the French chat that has been held at round tables in an open space)
- the neighbouring rooms were sometimes a little noisy

**2.2. The tutors perspective:  
results of an interview with German tutors**

Q. 2. On learning effects and others

- Q. 2.1. Do you think the participants improved there language and intercultural understanding?
- YES definitely in regard of intercultural understanding
  - YES also in regard of language, especially daily life communication (participants were always taking notes)
  - The ideal situation is, when all participants have the same level of German.

**2.2. The tutors perspective:  
results of an interview with German tutors**

Q. 2.2. Which merits / demerits do see for you as tutors?

- Only merits, no demerits
- both said they learned a lot about:
  - communication methods
  - intercultural understanding and Japanese culture
  - an open and flexible attitude
  - re-thinking the own cultural background
  - global skills
  - how to lead and hold up a conversation

**2.2. The tutors perspective:  
results of an interview with German tutors**

Q. 2.3. Where would you see the differences (plus / minus) of the chats in comparison to 2FL classes?

- in 2FL classes grammar and vocabulary knowledge can be achieved
- in the chat one can experiment with the 2FL (no teacher present, no hierarchy, no tests and therefore no pressure)
- one can experience foreign cultures and the foreign languages in an authentic environment and manner
- as a tutor: different relationship with chat participants than in 2FL classes. one gets more familiar, everybody is on an equal level
- everybody gets very friendly and has a lot of fun together.

**2.2. The tutors perspective:  
results of an interview with German tutors**

Q. 2.4. Did you develop personal friendships ?

- YES. As there were a lot of repeaters, everyone got very friendly and got to know each other quite well.

Q. 2.5. Do you think, the participants interest in German and German culture has been enforced through the?

- YES:
  - a lot of participants could keep their level of German (after coming back from one year in Germany)
  - topics about daily life in Germany and German culture seemed to be most popular

**2.2. The tutors perspective:  
results of an interview with German tutors**

Q.3. What advise would you give to future tutors?

- try to be not too formal and create a relaxing atmosphere
- try to be equal and on the same level with the participants & avoid a top-down attitude (like teacher vs. learners)
- try to focus on „communication“ rather than „teaching“
- be well prepared
- in order not to fall into the trap of prejudice & stereotypes try to reflect about the own cultural background

**3. Outlook: more questions than answers**

- After this study, we found, that the 2FL chats at Niigata University are successful for both: 2FL learners and exchange students as tutors alike in all kinds of aspects and on all kinds of levels
- It seems, that the tutors in 2FL classes and 2FL chats are very useful for language improvement, but how could this be graded? (like TOEIC etc.)
- It also seems, that the contact with foreign tutors is helping the Japanese students develop some extent of intercultural understanding, but how could this output be measured?
- It also seems, that especially the 2FL chats very likely provide a motive for a year abroad, but again – how could this be measured?

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#### Appendix

1. FL SALC, 2FL chats participants questionnaire (Japanese)
2. Foreign tutor interview questions (German&Japanese)

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Thank you for listening!