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Communicational Advantages from Continuing 2nd Foreign Language Learning  
「コミュニケーション習得としての第二外国語学習の継続」

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## **Preface**

Acquiring a foreign language not only broadens the scope of one's information but also enhances personal development. This is especially the case when the target language (such as German) is a less commonly acquired language (LCAL) in the respective region (Japan) and the personal development of the learner is in danger of becoming less than smooth. In order to prove this claim, this paper presents a longitudinal case study ex post facto. The development as it took place was not predictable from the start, but its “relevance in making a significant contribution” to the communication research as well as the foreign language learning (FLL) research community justifies this case study (C&T 2017).

In the following paper, all names besides the author's, dates, gender and other peggable information have been randomized, and any similarities with actual persons are purely accidental.

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## **Abbreviations**

PN = The learner in the study

IU = The university PN belongs to

SN = The city where IU is located

FU and MU = universities PN attended in the target language country

M1 to M3 = male target language exchange students from FU in SN

M4 = male target language intern in SN  
F1 and F2 = female target language exchange students in SN  
L3 = 2FL(L) = Second foreign language (learning)  
TL = Target language (in this paper mainly German)

## **1. Overview and aim of this study**

This contribution reports on a combination of communication and 2FL acquisition research. In previous contributions, the author was able to demonstrate the communicative advantages of learning a 2FL in Japan in the author's general education first year university German courses (Reinelt 2013a,b) . In a continuation to this approach, this paper aims at presenting on a case study (part 2), where one student continued learning 2FL German in various productive ways (part 4) and through this attained a very advanced TL level, which in turn gained the learner access to different societal parts of the target language, leading yet again to new learning motivation. This turned into a circle of encouraging and sometimes even discouraging, experiences which lead yet again to new learning motivation. Comparisons to other students with similar developments will also be drawn (part 5). The results inform both communication theory as well as FL acquisition approaches (part 6). Due to the ongoing character of the learning process, some issues in the study are in a constant state of flux.

## **2. Methodological considerations**

### **2.1. Case studies**

When new courses are developed on a small scale, they still have to be accompanied by scientific research, and if only few subjects are available, presented as case studies. While this approach is anything from undisputed, Eisenhardt (1989)'s seminal work linked it to theory building. Yin (2009) extended this to our situation: If the "Goal of (the) Case studied (is to) establish the parameters which can be applied to all research (...), even a single case could be considered acceptable". Klonoski (2013) then established theory building from such evidence. Criteria of good case studies are most recently defined in C&T (2017), and the most recent course is Judd (2017). In the write-up, we, in part, follow the Monash model for problem oriented case studies (Monash n.d.):Part 1 has already outlined the purpose and the problems become clear in part 4. Since PN's learning was successful, no alternatives are considered.

Part 4 below discusses the case in three ways. Part5 presents alternatives in students who learned simultaneously. In part 6, instead of implementation, ramifications for the two areas involved; Communication research and 2FLL are considered.

The case dealt with in this paper is in no way an ideal case: The subject PN's 2FL learning was indeed just above the bottom line for a considerable time. That

he nevertheless developed it to the level he has achieved presently, despite all considerable obstacles, makes it a even more a worthwhile research object.

## **2. 2. The multifaceted case study**

As the case developed before it become a research object, we can only use data from the TL learning process which are still available to us. In an ideal case, all homework, all tests, all oral exams recorded in audio and video and many other data would be available. In reality, only a few of these have remained until now, as homework and other tasks have to be returned to the learners. In part, materials have to be remembered (reconstructed) by the learner. However, as the research time spans four/five years, we can speak of a *longitudinal study*.

Its main features are:

- Duration: From the learner PN's university entry to immediately before university graduation with one year overseas stay (5 years);
- 2FL (German) learning: From scratch to very advanced;
- Previous foreign language learning: Japanese way of English grammar instruction (6 years) with almost no usable English acquisition (PN's wording);
- Age range: From the starting age of 18 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> FL German learning at IU, which is already beyond the critical period, until well into adulthood at present (24);
- Special life circumstances apply (see below in the language learning history);
- Phase in lifetime (Biographie n.d.): Critical experiences, some of which were linked to FL learning (see 3.);
- Achieved level: close to B2 CEFR; 4 skills probably not equally developed;
- As proof, we can use various tests but not all steps are available. The retrospective part of the project is only at its beginning, and materials have not yet been sufficiently recovered.

This study is thus located between a truly longitudinal study and an in-depth case study with facets of both, but also well aware of shortcomings as pertaining to both.

## **2.3. Definition of “Communicative Advantages”**

Most FLL in early life stages in Japan as in many other countries takes place in the six years in junior high school to the end of senior high school (age 18). In Japan, most of it is still grammar-based translation and multiple-choice oriented for the thusly constructed university entrance examination. While English words are used, little conversation, let alone communication, in English takes place. If, however, learners embark on learning a foreign language for use as in the classes with the author of this paper, they acquire new contents and strategies, which go far beyond what they have learnt so far. This holds for the first year of German courses as demonstrated in Reinelt (2013a and b), but also, and especially, holds for courses beyond that step, as this paper attempts to prove. Thus, “communicative advantages”

- not only concern the additional acquisition of a language,
- but also have effects on the students' world knowledge and communication abilities, and
- lead to (very often even shocking) personal experiences beyond Japan not available otherwise. The background in part three will mention some of these briefly.

Such "communicative advantages" can be operationalized as the list of communication abilities acquired in the author's courses as stated in Reinelt (2013: 20-22) minus the abilities defined in the Ministry of Education's Course of studies (Mext n.d.), which students are supposed to have acquired anyway before university.

### 3. Backgrounds

In previous papers, the author has already demonstrated the communicative advantages of learning a 2FL in Japan in the general education first year at university (Reinelt 2013 and others), so that only a few demonstrative examples should suffice:

#### a) fixed expectations diluted

- Variations in adjacency pairs:

*How are you? (Wie gehts?)* leads to a standard answer in English, but its corresponding German part requires a detailed answer: (*Sehr gut very well, nicht so gut not very well*)

- one-up-manship

*Do you like (to drink) coffee?*

*Yes, very much*

*No, I'd prefer tea*

but NOT only: Yes (i.e. up or different is o.k.)

#### b) Use variations in the sentence structure to express something: Bring semantically important parts to the beginning of the sentence (and rarely use SVO):

*At eight o'clock, I had dinner* (this is the preferred order of semantic elements (not syntactic, which is different) in German and much more usual than: *I had dinner at eight o'clock*).

#### c) 2LL as remedial education in the first year

Never is there a more decisive change in the life of a Japanese student than around the university entry (Hpd (2014), Barrett (n.d.), Societal Development (n.d.)). It thus makes good sense to link FL education and hit songs, as they are for the same age group as and familiar to TL peers: In the author's first (and

second) year courses, 2FLL is linked to the life stages the learners are about to go through. German hit songs address first-time independence, first love, and marriage, among other stages (Reinelt 2015a and b).

d) The world beyond English as the students learn it contains expectations towards young adults e.g. in Germany both socially and linguistically e.g.: Hotel Mama, fast reacting, getting a word in edgewise (*aber keinen BlueRay-Player! but (you have) no BlueRay-player, do you!*).

Ideally, the learners end up with at least three languages and world views (Japanese, English and German) on most subjects treated in class, as well as the means for speaking about them.

#### 4. The case study: Three aspects

PN, the subject in and of the following case study, came to the author's first year classes and continued with interruptions in various ways. As PN's LL went along with his personal development, his learning history and his FL learning history cannot be separated. This parallel development will be part one of the longitudinal part of this case study in part 4.1. His learning gained him access to TL peers, but also lead to some unwanted effects, as demonstrated in 4.2.

Finally, he has to manage different registers and partner configurations linguistically, which he had, and still has to adapt to as in the examples in 4.3.

#### 4.1. The subject's 2FL learning history

The subject PN's personal background and developmental stages of his 2FL as reported by himself follows in table 1.

**Table 1:** PNs L3 German learning history (as provided by PN on Nov 30, 2016)

Star t	PN's 2FL German learning development 1 to 4 activities			Key to year cells: semester/year of PN's studies/ PNs study semester (4=spring break)	
Year	1: Spring term	2: Summer break	Year	3: Winter term	4
201 2/1/ 1/1	April to July: takes RR's General Education German Course with 250 others		201 2/2/ 1/2	reaches, together with all others in the course, CEFR A2 in course final oral exam	

<p>201 3/1/ 2/3</p>	<p>April to July - bored after abandoning sports circle after the first year, - two peers continue German in RR's course (now DK), - PN also registers for German but does not come to RR's class as he dislikes RR and his teaching approach, - during this time PN has only marginal contact with German in his third semester.</p>	<p>August - PN takes 1 month German summer course in FU in Germany. - plays beach volleyball after the courses with FU university students</p>	<p>201 3/2/ 2/4</p> <p>October to March - continues studying on his own to regain A2 after return from Germany. - also: Frequent contact with (almost) peer exchange students M1, M2, and M3. Most communication in Japanese as this is the language they are learning here, but PN asks and is taught obscene terms (bad/dirty words) enabling group access to German peers using them to other Germans; - this partially results in contact failures and being despised for inadequate/overuse by F1. - continued Skype contact with friend in FU. - returns to attend RR's courses. <b>From here on, all speaking with RR only in German!</b> - continues learning German after being chosen as one-year exchange students (IU students usually stop after being chosen).</p>	
<p>201 4/1/ 3/5</p>	<p>April to July - frequent contact with only slightly older M4, assistant intern teacher at RR's seminar, mainly in German. - attends RR's classes and helps with oral exam as scorer and speaking partner, - experiences Germans' soccer</p>	<p>Aug 2014 - leaves for Germany as exchange student for one year. - In August, takes one-month intensive German course</p>	<p>201 4/2/ on leav</p> <p>- after the one month summer course mainly on his own, very little socializing, partly citing monetary reasons. - living circumstances (share house members use English) not very contact-friendly. - mostly reclusive study on his own in FU, - vocabulary knowledge explodes. - no FU university courses taken.</p>	

	<p>craze</p> <p>- has continued Skype contact with friends In FU and other German cities.</p>				
2015/1/ on leave	<p>April to July in Germany</p>	<p>August-September</p> <p>- during and after finishing one year in FU travel to four places in Germany</p>	2015/2/3/6	<p>October2015 to March2016</p> <p>- takes courses for his majors.</p> <p>- sometimes reporting on them in RR's advanced course</p> <p>- comes to RR's new most advanced course with philosophical and cultural topics,</p> <p>on PN's request from 23:00 to 1:00,</p> <p>- level well above B1.</p> <p>- contact with Germans in SN,</p> <p>- contact with F1 in SN.</p>	



2016 /1/4/ 7	April to July - continues learning on his own, - listens to radio, - watches movies in German in original (Tatort), - starts preparing graduation paper whose topic is concerned with the situation in Germany, - reads part of the literature in German, - occasionally submits parts in German to RR for correction, - participation in RR 's most advanced courses very irregular, - asks for informal but distant after hour contact with R (and other Germans) outside of university classes, - despite initial reluctance by NP, unlimited talk about recent events.	August and part of September - takes part in summer courses for German in MW, short travels. - almost unrestricted speaking ability for exchange with students and locals in MW, but not used extensively (shy, money?).	2016 /28	Oct to Dec (present state of this study) - use of German for everyday information and enjoyment, - listens to radio - continues graduation paper, in part with sources in German, - seeks and establishes German contact with a wide variety of incoming exchange students, such as F2, and Germans residing in SN for various reasons (marriage, working holiday, etc.) - PN's German level close to B2, although sometimes not colloquial or phrasal enough.	
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Future developments beyond the present graduation term, however, cannot be foreseen.

## Discussion

A few things should be noted:

- The table does not separate linguistic from societal and learning developments as they went very much hand in hand and any differentiation would introduce a separation which is not the case.
- we cannot simply distinguish more or less intensive learning phases. Ups and downs, even continuing for longer stretches, can be distinguished, but at this point we have no way of reasoning why this is the case.
- Despite the ups and downs in learning and fugitive and bugging out actions (PN himself), there is in the end an increase in knowledge as well as achievement in L3, which is remarkable at the very least.

- It is hard to prove what kind of influence the peers had on PN, and in which way. At least the first vocabulary boost as well as the unsuccessful use of some of the “bad” words in the end worked to his advantage in his German mastery. This last point brings us to our second example from a transcript.

#### 4.2. Issues of target language use

The following situation was accidentally recorded, while PN was speaking with F1 about his use of “bad words” and that F1 had informed F2, who had just arrived in SN, about PN’s way of speaking. At the same time, this is an example where the results of a learning process and of the indiscriminate use of learned contents can lead to issues and how they could be eschewed.

#### Table 2: Transcript “Bad words”

Description: Transcript Boese Woerter (VID\_20161107\_212921BeiKL)

Location: Bar in SN

RR and a few other customers sit in front of the counter, F1 and F2 work behind the counter, but only F1 speaks with PN. PN, who does not drink, has already stood up in the back of the sitting customers in order to prepare his leave. Noises from various speakers overlap, and the transcription is only a close attempt.

*Mehrere Stimmen*

*(1)(7:40)*

*PN: Ich wollte Nein, nein, nein ????F1 hat F2 gesagt,  
dass ich vor zwei Jahren boese Woerter  
RR: wieder ein boeses Wort sagen doch  
F1 nein*

*(2)*

*PN Woerter gesagt. Gesagt habe*

*F1 Ich hab F2, ich hab (nicht zu) F2(direkt) gesagt, ich hab es dir  
jetzt gesagt((dass du die nicht sagen sollst))?????*

*(3)*

*PN Ich wusste garnicht, wirklich wirklich nicht, dass ,???? ich wusste nicht,  
dass es nicht ??? dass ich*

*F1 Ich hab es dir jetzt (gesagt)*

*(4)*

*PN ???? A sind*

*F1 nein, auch das nicht, besser nicht. besser nicht*

*English transliteration: Bad words*

*Several voices*

(1)

PN: *I wanted* no,no,no ???F1 said to F2 that two years ago

*I was saying many bad words*

RR: *say a bad word again?* no

F1 no

(2)

*PN said bad words*

F1 *I said, I didn't tell F2 (directly), I just told you (that you shouldn't use them))?????*

(3)

PN *I didn't know, really didn't know, that,????* *I didn't know that it is (no good), that I .....*

F1 *Oh. I've just told you*

(4)

PN *???? even that better not*

F1 *no, not even that, better not, better not*

In the brief extract, PN says that at the time he used the “bad words” he didn't know they were so offending. F1 tells him that she hasn't told F2 about this yet, but tells him better not to use them. Three points can be gleaned from this brief part:

- 1) PN's way of escaping from problems with his own language use, an important part of learning a foreign language beyond safe phrases and situations;
- 2) The importance of being told how offending language can be even as a foreign language;
- 3) The possible societal consequences of the use of certain parts of a foreign, acquired, language, in so far as they have effects as if a native speaker has uttered them.

### **4.3. Speaking level and register**

Although PN has acquired a huge vocabulary, the differentiation of registers has not followed suit in many cases. The following is a small collection of examples:

(1) *If I do this I will be*

PN *rausgeworfen werden* (thrown out(?) from work (not phrasal))

One correct phrase would be: *entlassen werden* given the sack

(2) PN mentions that a friend he speaks about

PN: *ist in einer Verbindung* is in a connection with someone

Instead of the German phrasal expression: *hat eine feste Freundin* (has a steady girl friend).

(3) Restrictions of the scope of the use of phrases are still not clear, especially, if the phrase has a different scope in the learner's mother tongue:

*jedem das Seine* (*everyone what he deserves*) is usually only used in negative contexts in German, but PN constantly uses it in neutral or even positive contexts, where it sounds odd at the very least.

PN's recent efforts have however gone in a direction, where he recognizes this problem. This may enable him to differentiate e.g. personal from academic contexts and to learn to use literal and phrasal expressions correctly.

## **5. Comparison with other learners**

More or less simultaneously with PN, other learners have acquired German to a fairly high degree, some even without ever having a chance to go to the TL country Germany (for any longer time). One student without overseas experience has acquired German to such a high level of achievement that he earned a grant from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), but of course with a much more limited vocabulary. This does rarely lead to register problems, however. One other learner developed a very good feeling for the language, mainly from use in class. A third learner, who also earned the same grant, had several short stays in the TL country and developed a good feeling for the language so that he even passed a German company's entrance exam, although grammar problems remain. Some of these issues were solved by PN himself in his own learning.

As one corollary, we can try to determine comparison criteria and thus define relevant criteria for future research:

- *length of stay in the TL country*, which can lead to a huge amount of vocabulary;
- *teachers*, if they can enable their students to continue with their learning and are successful in motivating;
- *teaching styles*, which enable students to carry on speaking and thus
- make the students/ learners experience successful and thus *rewarding TL use* situations.

Note that for none of the students mentioned in this part, the acquisition of grammar played any important role, although each of them acquired and consciously studied it at some late point during their learning process. When this is most appropriate, is still a question for research.

## **6. Ramifications**

The results from this case study inform both communication theory as well as foreign language acquisition approaches. In short, the expansion of the range of possible communication can lead to increased FL learning, even under not especially facilitating circumstances. The fact that this was successful as it was in PN's case, can again lead to new motivation to actually continue further learning, again even if socially unwanted effects, such as being despised, can loom. While this is no great finding for average students or higher achieving students, this is certainly a remarkable development for students who are underachieving at a certain time in their live.

The following graph tries to highlight important points in this process:

**Table 3 “the process of increased communicative advantages”**

start 2FL > reach a minimal success point in A2 > increase language learning > .....continue > expand usage > increase FL knowledge and abilities > use! > success > get recognized access to important others (heer = target language peers) > success > increased motivation > increase learning > refine e.g. when looking for use in work > with an open end...

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