

The Order of Subsequent FL Acquisition

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This paper introduces a number of criteria that are thought to be especially influential in multiple Foreign Languages (FL) learning. This paper focuses on the role of the order of subsequent FL acquisition throughout the learner's life, and whether it facilitates FL learning. In order to account for societal, institutional, developmental, and country-specific aspects of subsequent FL acquisition, there is a brief explanation of the social characteristics of FL instruction, followed by a description of the institutional structure of FL learning in two dissimilar school systems in Japan and Germany. This is followed by discussion of developmental and other dominating aspects, and criteria relevant to the specifics of teaching German as FL in Japan. The final section of the paper summarizes major findings and suggests future research tasks and an astonishing ability for humans to learn subsequent FL.

この論文は随時外国語学習に重要な影響を与えているように想定されている要因を紹介しながら、外国語取得順序に焦点を置き、それは学習者の命中に言語習得にどの役割を果たすのか又は外国語学習を容易にするのかを研究課題とする。社会的、制度的、発展的な及び国特有の局面を十分に考慮するため、ここでは外国語教授の社会的な特徴を言及してから、日本とドイツのそれぞれの学校制度における外国語学習の位置を示す。続いて発展的な及び他の支配的な側面を示唆し、ドイツ語を外国語として教える特徴に重要な基準を論ずる。最後に重要な結果をまとめて将来への展望を紹介する

In order to generate a broad understanding of current research and theory concerning the subsequent acquisition of any nth language, this paper attempts to determine the factors and criteria which are claimed to be influential in multiple Foreign Languages (FL) learning, focusing on the role of the order of subsequent FL acquisition throughout the learner's life, and whether this order facilitates FL learning.

Despite the wide uniformity of the Japanese school system, the following contradiction can be observed:

- a) English, because of its pervasiveness in everyday life in Japan, can hardly be considered a foreign language. In this sense, German, French, Chinese, as they are taught on the university level, would be the first truly foreign language (=L2).
- b) At least certain efforts are required to understand and learn Kanbun (ancient Chinese) and Kobun (Old Japanese) as they are taught in high school. This also can be considered foreign language learning. Therefore, German, French, Chinese, etc., as they are taught at the university level, would be the students' third or fourth, and usually last, foreign language (=L4 or L5), including English in the count.

Figure 1. Chinese, French, and German as L2, or as L4/L5?

It should not be irrelevant whether the same language(s) are learnt as L2 or as L4/L5, i.e. it is relevant in which order languages are learnt. In this paper, the observations provided in Figure 1 are intended to raise the topic: What role does the order of acquisition play for facilitating subsequent FL learning, and what influencing factors are there?

In order to analyze the effects of FL learning order on subsequent FL acquisition, several relevant factors will be discussed. This paper first considers the monolingual characteristic and institutional position of FL learning in societies in general. Secondly the institutional structure of FL

learning in two dissimilar school systems - Japan and Germany - will be described. Thirdly, language development theory will be discussed, with special attention paid to two aspects usually thought of as critically important for multiple foreign language learning: motivation and language relatedness. Then, the effects of the order in which multiple FL s are studied and any subsequent FL learning are explored in the context of the German as foreign language (GFL) teaching context at Japanese universities. The findings of this paper and the multivariate relationships of these factors warrant future research. Subsequent FL learners, despite all learning and research difficulties, in practice manage their learning admirably well.

Monolingual Societies

Many societies, especially Western, can be considered as widely monolingual. Only one language is necessary in order to manage everyday matters, be it English or Spanish in wide parts of the US, English in England, French in France, German in most parts of Germany, or Japanese in Japan. In these cases, the equation of one country to one language holds widely. In fact, this one language is sufficient. Of course, this does not hold for the first (and in cases in which integration was not enforced successfully, even in the second and third) generations of immigrants to these countries.

If, however, a second or subsequent foreign language is deemed necessary by society, it must be introduced via the school system. Thus, the inclusion of a foreign language into the education system is an artificial introduction of a naturally occurring phenomenon lacking in that particular society. This results in the language being considered irrelevant and thus undermines the efforts and goals (Ehlich & Rehbein, 1985).

The discussion will now turn to the topic of how differently the institutional introduction of FL learning is enacted in two societies similar in terms of economic development and levels of education.

FL Education within School Systems: Two Approaches

FL s in school systems

School systems can pursue quite different approaches to FL education. For example, they may introduce only one FL at an early or late stage, or they may require students in advanced parts of the system to learn two or more FLs. Techniques to measure FL ability may differ also. Some require that learners simply mark sheets, while others require learners to show a variety of advanced skills, such as independently performing projects in the FL. The timing of the introduction of the first FL may also vary from the early years of grade school, as is recently the case in parts of Japan and Germany, to a later start, almost at the end of the critical period, as is still usually the case in Japan. Further variation can be expected for the introduction of any subsequent FL, if this is required at all. The following briefly presents a simplified view of the systems in Japan and Germany.

Japan

The Japanese school system has comparably little variation across the country. FL learning starts with English. Universities do not have to, but usually still do, require their students to study a second foreign language. Whether the study of Ancient Chinese and Old Japanese taught in high

school counts as FL learning will be discussed in more detail below (see also Reinelt, 2004a). Recently, attempts at early L2 instruction have begun, but the results will not be evident for some time (Hogan, 2004; Takagaki, 2003).

Foreign language learning in the Japanese school system may be summarized as in Figure 2.

Age	6	7 - 11	12 - 14	15 -17	18
Grade	1	2 - 6	1(7) – 3 (9)	1(10) –3 (12)	1
School type	elementary	elementary	JHS	HS	Univ.(c)
L2		English	English	English	English
L2				Ancient Chinese, Old Japanese	
L3				German, French, Chinese, Korean, others (a)	German, French, Chinese, Korean, others (b)

- (a) In some high schools.
- (b) FL has not been obligatory for university graduation since 1992.
- (c) Because of the uninterrupted continuation of schooling through to university and the high percentage of more than 70% of all adults 18-21 attending tertiary education, the undergraduate years can be considered part of the school system.

Figure 2. FL s in the Japanese school system

Age		6	7-9	10-11	12-15	16	17	18	19
Grade		1	2-4	5-6	7-10	11	12	13	
School types	- elementary .school		(English)						
	20% of students have L1 other than German (various languages)								
	- compulsory education								
	L2:			English					
	- "realschule"								
	L2:			English					
	L3:				French				
	- "gymnasium" JHS+HS								
	L2:			English					
	L2 until 16, then L5:			English					
	L3:				French				
	L3:				Latin				
	L4:					Spanish, Russian, Greek and others if requested/Natural Science and others if requested			
	L5:						Italian, Greek, Russian, Spanish and others if requested, also French or Latin if not before		

University: No FL learning. Acquisition considered completed

Figure 3. FL s in the German school system

In short, apart from recent initiatives, English as L2 (FL 1) usually starts close to the end of the critical period at age 12, and continues throughout high school and university. Apart from Ancient Chinese and Old Japanese taught in high school, 2FL(=L3) teaching occurs in a number of high schools and most universities, starting at age 16 or 18.

Germany

As straightforward as the Japanese system is, the German system of FL education is highly decentralized. Each of the 16 states has authority for L2 education. The result is a wide variety of approaches. Only a very simplified overview may be presented, and only parts of which are realized in each of the states and different schools throughout the country. With the high rate of immigration, even higher than the United States in terms of immigration/population, not even German L1 can be taken for granted.

The German system may be represented as in Figure 3. In short, beginning the first FL (usually English, but French in one state), a new FL can be learnt every two to three years thereafter, depending on each state's school system. Any schooling (starting at age 10) beyond compulsory education requires a second foreign language, usually French after English. Traditionally in the most demanding system, the integrated junior and senior high school called *gymnasium*, the third FL (=L4) has been a point of discussion, as any Internet search vividly demonstrates (*dritte Fremdsprache* (third FL) search). Recently, the study of a third FL has become unnecessary and various alternatives have been created. One of these alternatives leads to a fourth (*vierte Fremdsprache* (fourth FL) search) or even fifth FL (Reinelt,

2004a). Because FL education is to be completed before entering university, there is no FL teaching at the university level, except for language related majors, such as Chinese, or history, for which Latin is required.

Preliminary suggestions regarding future issues

Due to the similarity of the background of initial FL learning (E as L2), it can be compared across countries despite differences in the school systems e.g. according to factors such as development, motivation, linguistic similarity, and transfer discussed below. However, apart from this, there seem to have been no such comparisons yet made on a larger scale.

Due to the uniformity of the Japanese school system, most second FL learning occurs under similar conditions. This characteristic could be used to investigate how factors such as age of learning onset and previous FL learning experience influence university FL learning. Again, this has not yet been done on a larger scale.

The discussion thus far suggests that, despite individual institutional differences, various comparisons of further FL learning are possible and may be promising. Such comparisons have only begun, and some initial results for comparing the learning across various foreign languages (L3) in Japan are mentioned below (Reinelt, 2001a).

The following section addresses some of the most relevant factors pertaining to the discussion of how order affects the acquisition of subsequent FLs. Although focusing on Japan, the issues are relevant for the order of subsequent FL teaching under any circumstances.

Developmental Aspects, Motivation, and Relatedness

Any attempt at a theory of subsequent FL learning (beyond L2) must take into consideration three factors: aspects of language learning development, motivation, and relatedness. Integrating previous work, this section aims at introducing basic factors and thus considers developmental aspects and the two issues of motivation and relatedness, both widely held to be decisive in FL learning, in their role in the order of subsequent FL learning.

Developmental aspects

According to Griebhaber (n.d. a), when devising a theory of subsequent FL learning the following issues are relevant to the order of subsequent FL acquisition. While parameter setting in the language acquisition device will be complete with the acquisition of the mother tongue (Griebhaber, n.d. b), the first foreign language has to “break this open” again somewhat to allow for further language learning (Griebhaber, n.d.c). This accounts for the considerable difficulty of learning a first FL after early childhood. If, however, this is successful, with more learning experience of and learner strategies (Missler, 2000) for learning FLs (Dentler, 1998), subsequent FL learning should become increasingly easier. The question arises as to which order FLs should be learnt in order to optimize the increasing ease of subsequent FL learning. As yet, few theories have ventured to explain the kinds of developments that take place in subsequent FL learning (Griebhaber, n.d. d, e) and how they influence, or are influenced by, the order of learning.

Increasing *ease of learning* of subsequent FL s is reported by many multiple FL learners. This is supported by August and Hakuta (1997) who report fast subsequent FL acquisition, the duration of which is, in reality, much shorter than learning for the first FL (Neuner, 1996), or the mother tongue. The question arises: Is there an order which facilitates this, or is it naturally so?

This assumption of increasing ease, and faster and more effective subsequent FL learning (especially following the relatively difficult Latin or French) seems to be responsible for, and even institutionalized as, the requirement to read difficult texts, despite the very short time available for third (and fourth) FL learning as it occurs in many German high schools. For example, the author had only three years to acquire enough Ancient Greek to translate parts of the Odyssey in the gymnasium graduation test.

However, the assumption of “getting easier” does not seem to hold in Japan (Reinelt, 2001a). This may be due to an insufficient acquisition of, for example, grammatical categories during English learning in the six years before entering university. For example, students often report problems--besides pronunciation--with personal pronouns, grammatical gender, or discontinuous elements (personal communication), all of which occur in English previously in English learning, and are essential for the later learning of German, French, or Chinese.

Motivation, a complex, composite construct (Csizer & Dörnyei, 2005) is, in itself, deemed almost as important as, although not directly related to, development, and relatedness of the involved languages is often mentioned as decisive for success in subsequent FL learning. This raises the question: How do these two factors interact with the order of subsequent FL learning?

Motivation

Three factors in the role of motivation for the order of subsequent FL learning include the need of *injection*, pre-existing (dis)liking, and rapid change during learning. Due to the artificiality of introducing a FL in the school system, motivation always has to be injected into the learning process. How can this be done, and what role does motivation play? The extensive literature on this subject (see Lingley, 2005) accounts for the difficulties involved in coming to terms with this elusive topic.

The role of motivation in school contexts can become an even more decisive factor in the case of subsequent FL learning, depending on whether students, for whatever reasons, like a language or not. Reinelt (2001b) reports that in the Japanese university context, this may include, for example, information about a teacher, information from an older student, or the impression of a language or its country as being *difficult* (German), *fashionable* (French), or *currently important* (Chinese).

In the case of Japan, even after beginning to learn a further FL, motivation can quickly turn from enthusiasm to disillusion and disinterest, especially, as Yamamoto (2003) has shown, when differences to previously learnt FLs arise.

Relatedness

Common belief holds that related languages are easier to learn. This poses the question of the kind of relatedness that proves languages easier to learn. Is it grammatical similarity (English - Chinese; Korean - Japanese), as Spolsky (1989) has claimed? Or is it cultural relatedness (German - English),

or even familiarity from everyday life (English in Japan)? How *foreign*—at least in terms of pronunciation, but also in other areas—must a FL be to require learning efforts? English, for example, has intruded into many more areas of everyday life in Japan than in Germany, where, for example, a "table" is still unknown.

If relatedness is too close (Korean and Japanese?), does this facilitate target language learning or make it more difficult? Except for Holzer-Terada (2003), extensive comparative analyses are not yet available. They may, for example, find areas of positive transfer between related languages where the order facilitates subsequent FL learning.

The claims and questions raised thus far suggest that, although there is still no theory for subsequent FL learning available, the order of learning will play a role (even if only to explain ease of learning); that motivation can be even more variegated in subsequent FL learning and can be influenced by languages learnt previously; and that relatedness has to be specified much more in order to become operational for research where its importance for the order of subsequent FL learning can be more clearly understood.

Other factors relevant to the order of subsequent learning of FLs are less often discussed, probably because they are less conspicuous. Since they are, however, potentially equally as important, we will exemplify them from the actual German as 2FL situation in Japan.

Other Factors Exemplified from German as 2FL in Japan

There are a number of factors which have not, so far, been duly considered in the subsequent FL learning context and the relationship to the order of acquisition of which has rarely been discussed, but which may wield important influence on the success of learning.

The research context of German as 2FL is first discussed here. Somewhat earlier than Cenoz, Hufeisen, and Jessner (2001), Neuner (1996) discussed four sets of issues relevant to the case of German as a FL in Japan. Starting from the assumption that German, despite reduced interest, is still a regionally important language in Europe and globally quite common as a FL after English, he addresses

- the institutional conditions of late onset and much faster learning progression in less class time, compared to English
- foundations for a didactic concept aimed at developing pragmatic-communicative competence, proposing 10 guidelines for achieving this
- content, which should be treated on the basis of student English levels
- teaching materials for *German after English*, using comparative, conscious approaches, and proceeding from understanding to utterance.

In order to determine relevance to the order of subsequent FL acquisition, the following points must be weighed against Neuner's (1996) proposals. The following issues are conspicuous: Age, required *school languages*, transfer, internationalization, methods and skills of previous learning experiences, and intrinsic language characteristics.

Age of FL learning onset

A late first FL start may not be helpful for further FL learning, especially if that takes place considerably later than the onset of the critical period. Andragogics (Eggers, 1997; Grotjan, 2003) could provide us with answers in this area, but it is difficult to conduct contrastive research. Also, since Japanese universities exhibit many characteristics associated with school, education designed for adults may soon meet its limits (Reinelt, 1999). Whether, under such circumstances, the order of FL acquisition still plays a role is open to discussion.

School languages

Whether previously learnt required *school languages* do have any effect on later learning has fundamental consequences for the discussion of the role of the order of acquisition. However, the role of the mother tongue and, for example, 1FL, is anything from clear. In the Japanese FL learning context the roles of *Kanbun* (Ancient Chinese) and *Kobun* (Old Japanese) learning should also be considered (Reinelt, 2004a). If both are indeed learned without any long-lasting effect, this raises the question of how such

learning is possible at all. On the contrary, if they do have any effect, it should be possible to show what that effect is and how this could be utilized by, for example, analyzing *Kanbun* and *Kobun* for learning French, German, and Chinese (Reinelt, 2004a).

Kinds of transfer

The order of subsequent FL acquisition is also relevant to the kind of transfer that occurs between FLs. Dentler (1998) reports that different kinds of errors are influenced by aspects of the *relatedness* of the languages involved, but that other criteria also intervene. For German in Japan, the transfer routes were discussed in Reinelt (1984).

Welcome or not, transfer to other languages such as French, Chinese, and even Korean from English as default language (Hammarberg, 2001) is common practice.

Motivation and internationalization

While the discussion of motivation is of course relevant for integration purposes in any society, its relevance for FL teaching in school contexts becomes even more complicated in a time of internationalization, where, contrary to effects envisioned by many, increasingly only English seems to be necessary for all practical purposes (students' opinion, recurring in personal conversations) and a demand for more FLs and cultures can hardly be taken for granted (Yoneoka, 2000a; 2000b). Whether introduction of an even more *foreign* language before English could have positive effects has never been discussed in earnest.

Dominance of previous learning experiences

Previous FL learning experiences may be relevant, i.e. methods and strategies with which FL s have been learnt before. Probably no method holds for all learners, all languages, and all circumstances, but however different methods are, they lead to comparable results, at least in part.

This issue concerns the profession of language teaching in its fundamentals (Grießhaber, n.d. a). In particular, modern concepts such as learner autonomy can not simply be taken for granted (Degen, 2005; Gunske von Koelln, 2005; Reinelt, 2004b; Rinder, 2003) and sometimes even grammar-translation is demanded (Reinelt, 2005), especially if this was the FL teaching method familiar to the learners.

Quality of previous FL learning

Does it make a difference, if a skill is addressed or an ability is trained more practically in one language, e.g. speaking in English, or reading in French, for success in later subsequent FL learning? And does this effect vary for different languages in alternate orders of acquisition? Put more generally, does quality of previous FL learning play a role and how can this be proven?

Infra-linguistic characteristics of previous FL

Inherent characteristics of previously learnt FL s such as the lexicon, grammatical categories, syntax, and even pragmatics may influence subsequent FL learning, be that as established default language and used as such (Hammarberg, 2001), or as acquired categories, such as Time (Leung, 2003)

and in their use in transfer between FLs. Is the influence of these factors dependent on any order of acquisition of FLs, or are the effects similar?

Preliminary issues

The discussions thus far include a further complication in the subsequent FL learning context of criteria even quite difficult to research in bilingual contexts (motivation, or relatedness) as well as the need to also take superficially less important issues into consideration when researching the order of FL acquisition, such as age, the quality of previous FL learning, previous *school FLs* such as Kanbun and Kobun, and FL inherent characteristics.

Conclusion

This paper provided an overview of factors relevant to the order of subsequent FL acquisition. Almost all areas of FL learning and teaching as collated in Griesshaber (n.d.f) are concerned and display conspicuous characteristics.

Subsequent FL learning, if implemented in the school system, can vary considerably, for example between the systems in Japan and Germany. Language developmental aspects have not yet been explored sufficiently, and motivation and language relatedness, traditionally deemed strong indicators of subsequent FL learning success, are also open to debate. On the other hand, factors such as age, motivation, previous language learning experiences, as well as the methods and quality of, and skills addressed in, such learning seem to influence subsequent FL learning in many

intricate ways. Even *foreignness* as a new factor may play an important role. How these relate to the order of acquisition remains to be revealed in detail through future research.

Finally, this paper suggests that we still do not fully understand the range and interplay of factors and criteria concerned and the complex methods necessary for such research. It is hoped that the reader is now more sensitized to the multiple varieties of factors that may play a role in subsequent FL learning and acquisition.

Although factors become exponentially greater with the addition of learned languages, and remain to be disentangled through future research, language learners are usually quite apt in handling their, often very limited, subsequent FL knowledge. This reminds us of the problem of the traveling salesman, who must consider a large number of (even changing) points on his route. That which is a vexing problem to mathematics is easily solved by a salesman in his everyday life. Learners also make learning additional languages appear easier than the process appears to the researcher.

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