

CHALLENGES IN TEACHING GERMAN AS L3 TO TOURISM STUDENTS

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Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this paper was to present the results of the primary research regarding problems and difficulties found in teaching German as a second language (L3) to students attending the study programs Hotel and Tourism Management and Gastronomy at the University College Aspira in Split, Croatia. The aim of the research was to find out the students reasons for choosing the beginner level of learning German, although the majority of them have previously learned German. The influence of students' knowledge of English language (L2) on their German study was also taken into consideration.

Methodology – The questionnaire, designed by the author of this paper, and qualitative interviews were used to collect students' answers, opinions and feelings about the subject of learning (again) German from the beginning. The attitude towards German language was also subject of inquiry as well as their outlook on English language. A total of 51 students attending the undergraduate professional study program of International Management in Hotel and Tourism at the University College Aspira in Split, Croatia, participated in the research. A few Erasmus students attending German lessons were also included in the research.

Findings – The majority of students felt that their knowledge of German acquired mostly during their secondary education was not sufficient for their future career in tourism and therefore chose to start learning from the beginning again. The research revealed that students their difficulties in learning attributed mostly to German language being allegedly difficult to learn, in contrast to their positive attitude towards English language. More often than not they refuse to accept their own responsibility for their learning progress.

Contribution – Strategy for discovering the false beginners from the start is discussed in the paper which concludes that there is a real need for more guidance in strategies of foreign languages acquisition both in secondary and tertiary education with the aim to give students more prospects and a greater practical understanding of their competencies. It is particularly important in a country like Croatia, where tourism is growing steadily and is expected to continue so.

Keywords German as L3, L3 acquisition

INTRODUCTION

In 2018 I was asked to make a syllabus for beginner level of German as a second foreign language at University College Aspira in Split, Croatia and to teach German to students of Tourism. This paper is the result of my interest in factors that drive tourism students in Split to learn German as a second foreign language (L3) from the beginner level, although previously having been learning German for at least two years. I conducted a small-scale research project that involved interviews with first and second year tourism students at University College Aspira in Split.

At Aspira the second foreign language is compulsory for students of International Hospitality and Tourism Management and Gastronomy from the first semester. They can select either German or Italian language and both are offered from the beginner level

(A1) since no interest was shown in attending higher levels. English is taught as a first foreign language (L2) from B1 level. The study program is implemented in accordance with the Bologna process and last for six semesters i.e. three years. The first and second foreign languages are the essential part of the study program in the first two years. In the third semester students can choose the third foreign language as an elective course. Classes are taught three hours per week in a lecture format with about 25 students attending per class.

One of the goals in my first lecture was to assess the range of students' cultural competence by using a four minute video with Rowan Atkinson acting the part of the famous British baritone Robert Bennigton. During his performance of the European Anthem (Ode of Joy) he loses his script and starts singing whatever comes to his mind in connection with German language: geographical names (*Berlin; Hamburg...*), famous German sportsmen (*Schumacher, Becker...*), German car brands (*Porsche, Audi...*), German beer types (*Hoffmeister, Holstein...*), advertising slogans in German (*Vorsprung durch Technik*), famous quotation from John F.Kennedy's speech (*Ich bin ein Berliner*), German words which became common in English (*Kindergarten*), words and names that British people connect with German (*ja, nein, schnell, Blitzen...*).

After watching and briefly discussing the text, students were asked to imagine themselves in the same situation, only instead of singing their words were to be written on a paper. Upon collecting their papers I noticed that only few students used Croatian orthography (*Minhen, Dojč*). All other declared beginners on their very first lesson wrote all words in quite correct German orthography (*München, Deutsch...*) almost the same result was obtained the following year with the first semester students, which drew me to conclusion that it presents more the rule than exception. After conducting interviews with students it was established that the vast majority had been learning German for at least two years, which explained the knowledge of German orthography. Interviews also provided an insight into students' reasons for starting again to learn German from the beginning.

1. THEORETICAL ASPECTS

Motivation to learn languages is a field of numerous theories, which shows the awareness of its importance, but also stresses its complexity. Among the more recent ones is Dörnyei's (1994), who positioned the framework motivation for learning L2 on three different levels: the language level, the learner level and the learning situation level. The concept of the learner level includes students' individual characteristics: need for achievement, perceived foreign language competence, self-efficacy, self-confidence and language use anxiety. The source of self-confidence, according to Clement (1980) can be found in the frequency of the contact with the target community. Self-efficacy is according to Bandura (1995) defined as people's beliefs about their abilities to influence events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Students who doubt their capabilities have low aspirations and weak commitment to their goals.

The result of Dörnyei's development of his framework for L2 motivation is L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005), which unifies psychological theories of the self-system. Dörnyei states there that students have the ability to motivate themselves by creating future visions of them. The L2 Motivational Self System has three components: *the ideal L2 self*, *the ought-to self* and *the L2 learning experience*. An important part in creating the *ideal L2 self* play emotions, a somehow neglected dimension of the cognitive motivation theories. The *ideal L2 self* is an effective motivator if it is accompanied by a set of concrete action plans and learning strategies. The *ought-to self* takes into consideration one's beliefs of attributes one should possess to avoid negative outcomes. According to Dörnyei both *the ideal* and *ought-to self* should be unified in each possible self in order to acquire well balanced identity. *The L2 learning experience* takes into consideration learner's immediate learning environment and awareness.

However, the adoption of Dörnyei's framework for L3 motivation has been increasingly researched only in the recent decade. The first step in that direction was made in a study by Csizér and Lukács (2009). The study works with the L2 Motivational Self System and analyses whether there are differences in students' *ideal* and *ought-to selves* when learning English and German as foreign languages simultaneously. The study showed that for learners who learn both English and German, the *ideal self* images show interference. Students have more favorable attitudes towards English than German, and the ideal self for English is better developed than that for German. The study's results suggest that an already developed ideal L2 self is likely to have an effect on a developing ideal L3 self and on students' engagement with the L3. Dörnyei and Chan (2013) found evidence of separate language-related self-images, and claimed that these images may interfere with each other both in a positive and in a negative, demotivating way. As Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie (2017) conclude, one of the characteristics of the motivation to learn L3 is that it is overshadowed by one's inclination towards English as L2.

Motivation is not the only relevant issue in the educational psychology, because although a motivated student is more likely to achieve learning outcomes, various distractions and obstacles can interfere and diminish even strong dedication. There is a constant information overload to students' brains nowadays, due to new social media, which creates distraction and prevents successful learning. Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) pointed out the importance of 'student engagement' which in the educational psychological sense refers to active participation and involvement in learning. The concept of student engagement offers an important advantage over the notion of motivation, or in Mercer and Dörnyei words "motivation is undoubtedly necessary for 'preparing the deal', but engagement is indispensable for sealing the deal".

Horvatić Čajko(2009) researched first year Croatian student opinions about knowledge of foreign languages upon the completion of high school and established a difference in the use of German and English language in relation to the use of L2 and L3 in everyday situations such as: Internet searches, electronic communication, reading professional literature, reading magazines, watching TV programs, listening to music, travel, etc. Participants used the German language almost never or rarely in non-teaching situations, while English was used often. A positive correlation was also confirmed between participants' language learning awareness and the role of the teacher.

1. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The research questions framing this inquiry were: 1. What motivates tourism students to learn German language? 2. What motivates students to learn German language from the beginning despite the previously obtained higher level?

In order to answer these questions 51 students were interviewed and observed, all of whom had previously admitted the learning experience with the German language. The students were informed about the research and its goal to improve the quality of German classes at Aspira. Their participation was on a volunteer basis and anonymous in order to ensure honest responses. The second semester students had the questions projected onto a whiteboard and explained before they were given paper to answer them during regular class at Aspira. Semi - structured interview was held with fourth semester students in small groups at the beginning of the new semester. The data collected from them were their gender, age and period of learning German before their enrollment in Aspira. As they were all between 19 and 22 their age was not considered a relevant point in this research.

All participants had had the previous experience with learning German, either in state schools or in private schools for foreign languages, but German was always a L3 for them, even for those who had begun with learning in the primary school. In Croatia English language is compulsory in primary education from the first year, and second foreign language is elective from the fourth year. In secondary education English continuous to be compulsory subject whereas other languages can be chosen as a compulsory or elective, but mostly from the beginning level. Students attending Courses at language schools completed at least A1 level, and those living in German speaking countries (Germany, Austria) attended some sort of formal education during their stay (Kindergarten, Primary school).

Table 1: **Previous learning experience of German**

Type of School	Female	Male
Elementary	5%	4%
Secondary	62%	72%
Elementary and Secondary	28%	21%
Language School	2%	1%
Lived in German speaking country	3%	2%

Students were questioned for reasons of their choice of German as a L3. Most of them strongly feel the need for German in the field of tourism, well aware of the fact that the most foreign tourists in Croatia come from Germany. Since tourists from Austria follow on the third place (according to Croatian Bureau of Statistics), it is very important for students to be able to use German language, which they seem to be aware of. Many students expressed their plans for working in German speaking countries. So one can conclude that they have strong language learning motivation

Table 2. Students' reasons for learning German

Reason	Female	Male
Necessary for future job	92%	93%
Plans for working in German speaking country	56%	67%
Important in European Union	45%	54%
Like German language	7%	9%
Other offered language (Italian) not as important as German	92%	93%

Students were asked to explain why they felt the need to start again from the beginning, despite the fact that they knew the four semesters in Aspira will mean only the completion of A1 level according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the level that most of them should have exceeded. All of them stated that they had the feeling their knowledge of German is inadequate for their future career in tourism. During the interview they stated various reasons for their lack of self- efficacy which can be summarized as:

Table 3: Students' reasons for repeating the beginning level

Reason	Female	Male
All social and academic contacts beside Croatian in English	96%	95%
Never used German outside the classroom	89%	91%
Previous inadequate teaching methods	82%	87%
Negative attitude towards German language	83%	85%
Lack of effort	63%	68%
Lack of time.	74%	79%

The time gap between last learning German language and starting again at Aspira varied between several months and several years. However, they never felt confident in German the way they felt they were in English. The gender-based differences were not significant for answering the research questions. Negative attitude towards German reflects itself in their perception of German as difficult to learn as opposed to English. They stated that much more time and effort was needed for learning German than English with less result. Foreign language they used in everyday life in social and academic context was English. German teachers in Croatian secondary education tend to have the same expectancies as English teachers, neglecting the changes in Global English usage in the last decade.

There is an interference between *the ideal L2 self* and *the ideal L3 self*. Although students have a desired future self-image which is perceived as reasonable and is in harmony with the social environment, it is somehow not accompanied by effective learning strategies. It seems that the gap between ideal I2 self and ideal I3 self is the reason for the lack of the self-efficacy in L3. Students need more effort to learn German with less result due to various factors. For example, a lot of English words are learnt by incidental learning, whereas significantly less German words can be learnt that way due to fact that students

read, listen and speak primarily English in all foreign contacts. The level they expect to achieve in German is considerably less than what they want to achieve in English. It is essential for teachers of L3 to take into consideration that they have to employ different strategies in teaching L3.

During the research period interviews were conducted with the Erasmus students who participated in the German classes. They were from Portugal (2), Slovakia (2), Poland (1), Turkey (1) and Spain (1), all with previous experience with learning German, but also deliberately choosing lower level. This may indicate that similar situation is present in other countries as well.

CONCLUSION

Language learning motivation is a complex process but study is important not only in L2 field, but especially in L3 as motivation will contribute to students' long term success in language learning. The example of German learning tourism students displays the effect of issues with motivation and self-efficacy. More should be done to increase students' incidental learning of German. Research in L3 motivation could help change the teachers approach as well as to develop practical understanding of learners difficulties. The positive learning experience in L2 is not always applicable in L3, but the teachers should help students developing learning strategies for activating the ideal self. This should start from the beginning of language acquisition. Something has to be changed in school programs, especially in secondary schools. Students who simultaneously learn L2 and L3 tend to apply the same strategies for both languages, which proved ineffective.

The learning experience of student plays more negative than positive role in learning German (L3) simultaneously with English (L2). German teachers should introduced different teaching methods, which should include teaching learning strategies and guiding students to use their efforts more effectively. It all applies especially for students of Tourism, an industry where foreign language plays a significant role, especially in country like Croatia, where tourism brings almost 17% of the GDP.

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