

## The motivation for learning German in Taiwan. A pilot study on the foreign language-specific motivation of Taiwanese learners of German<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** In the context of teaching and learning foreign languages, a multiplicity of internal and external variables, interacting with each other and individualizing the learning process, plays a significant role. The motivational construct represents a substantial factor in the foreign language-specific learning process because motivation is responsible for persevering in the often laborious process of learning a foreign language. It is therefore assumed that motivation plays a crucial part for achieving success in language learning. In the present pilot study, Taiwanese students of German with Chinese as their first language were asked about their motivation to learn German. A quantitative approach was employed by administering a questionnaire to students learning German as their minor field or as a second or further foreign language at National Chengchi University in Taipei. In this research, both internal personality factors and external factors were taken into account.

### 0. Introductory remarks

What motivates students majoring in other academic subjects to learn German? Many instructors have asked themselves this question. In foreign language acquisition research, the motivational construct has been investigated for many years, and recently it has again become one of the main topics for discussion. In foreign language acquisition research and foreign language didactics, motivation is accorded equal attention as a factor contributing to successful foreign language learning. To be sure, the traditional concept “motivation” has undergone changes over time due to insights gained from employing newer, more suitable and more meaningful concepts taken from psychology and educational research.

The present study will attempt to answer the question why Taiwanese students majoring in other academic subjects attend German courses. A questionnaire completed by 45 participants in an entry-level course at National Chengchi University in Taipei provides the necessary data for this investigation.

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## 1. Overview of research on motivation<sup>2</sup>

Research on affective factors is connected primarily with the socio-psychological motivation model developed by Gardner & Lambert (1972) which dominated the discussion in this field into the 1990s.

This motivational model is essentially based on the acceptance of a more or less developed ethno-centric point of view vis-à-vis other languages and cultures and the resulting dichotomization into an *integrative* and an *instrumental orientation* in the language acquisition process. The terms *integrative* and *instrumental orientation* were coined by Gardner & Lambert (1972) and are based on Mowrer's (1950) hypothesis that in first language acquisition, adjustment to and/or identification with the target language group is an important prerequisite for language acquisition.

This theory, in brief, maintains that the successful learner of a second language must be psychologically prepared to adopt various aspects of behaviour, which characterize members of another linguistic-cultural group. The learner's ethnocentric tendencies and his attitudes toward the members of the other group are believed to determine how successful he will be, relatively, in learning the new language. His motivation to learn is thought to be determined by his attitudes toward the other group in particular and toward foreign people in general and by his orientation toward the learning task itself (Gardner & Lambert 1972: 3).

*Integrative orientation* refers, for instance, to a situation where a person shows interest in a language and is motivated to learn it. S/he does that for personal interest, because s/he is interested in the language, its speakers and culture, or because s/he needs the language in order to fit in socially. This readiness to accept other languages and cultures is often found with children of ethnic minorities because they need the language in order to play with other children. They are motivated and are also prepared to be integrated into the target language community. This readiness for linguistic and cultural adjustment is an expression of *integrative orientation*. In Taiwan, it is observed predominantly with the ethnic minorities of the Hakka and the autochthonous populations who must integrate into the Mandarin and Taiwanese communities constituting the majority of Taiwanese society.

*Instrumental orientation*, on the other hand, occurs especially with adult learners of foreign languages and is purely utilitarian in nature. The student proceeds with the learning of a foreign language due to external factors, such as its practical value or the expected personal gain derived from having acquired another language. For example, in Taiwan, Japanese is needed in order to conduct business more successfully. It may also be the case that students have done well already in school in this subject, and they expect that taking Japanese at the university would require less effort than learning French or German.

The concepts *integrative* and *instrumental motive* are derived from these two original forms of motivation. The terms have been continually refined since 1972; for example, in 1985 Gardner concretized the previously somewhat vague distinction between *orientation* and *motivation* by positing that integrative orientation is only one of several components of motivation. Empirical studies have shown that both kinds of motivation may result in successful language learning. Obviously, it is not impossible for a person to be motivated by both integrative and instrumental factors, so that both motives for learning a foreign language may be present even though the relative proportion of each may vary in different cases:

Of course, an individual could be motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically to various degrees. And a student may be motivated both extrinsically in one course and intrinsically in another and be motivated by both in a third (Deckers 2005: 281).

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Edmondson points out furthermore that

[...] an 'extrinsic' motivation can exert no influence on success in learning unless this extrinsic stimulus has been registered 'internally' by the learners. Moreover, it is highly probable that each 'intrinsic' stimulus, attitude or motivation must have one or more 'extrinsic' sources or even causes (Edmondson 1996: 73; Translation T.L.).

Gardner & Lambert's (1972) socio-psychological model of motivation and its implicit dichotomization are not appropriate in a contemporary view of the complexity of foreign language learning. This static interpretation of the relationship between the learners and their attitudes to the learning process has been increasingly criticized by experts in the field:

After all [...], the common experience would seem to be motivational flux rather than stability [...]. The concept and the associated theory, however, do little to explain how the relationship between learning experience and motivation might be mediated, so that vicious circles might be broken and positive motivation generated out of negative learning outcomes [...]. It is clear that this agenda calls for a radically different concept of motivation, one that is not defined simply in terms of strength of feeling, or amount of effort or time devoted to a task, but is ascribed an active, functional and dynamic role throughout the learning process (Ushioda 1996: 10 f.).

Gardner & Lambert's socio-psychological model must therefore be brought together with other models of motivation because the complexity of prevailing factors precludes the selection of a single model of motivation. In his later work, Gardner himself pointed out the problems with a dualistic motivation model by remarking that a dichotomization of this kind had not been intended:

The scale contrasted the integrative and instrumental orientation and consequently led many to consider orientation in terms of this dichotomy [...]. This is not, however, the case [...]. In fact, although they may have initiated the dichotomy for purposes of measurement, Gardner and Lambert obviously do not see them in this way as indicated by the fact that they subsequently considered other possible orientations [...] and argued for assessing orientations which did not depend upon a categorical system (Gardner 1985: 10).

The following approaches emphasize particularly the process component and certainly need to consider more fully the origin of motivation (see, e.g., Rheinberg 2004). I would like to bring together two motivation models, which, on the one hand, emphasize the process dimension but also, on the other, capture the cognitive and affective dimensions, thus creating a conceptual framework for a thorough understanding of the complexity and dynamics of the terminology. Borrowing from Williams & Burden (1997), the term *motivation* may be defined as follows:

Motivation may be construed as a state of cognitive and emotional arousal which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals) (120).

Zoltán Dörnyei emphasizes the process orientation implied in the above definition. For him, motivation is

[...] a process whereby a certain amount of instigation force arises, initiates action, and persists as long as no other force comes into play to weaken it and thereby terminate action, or until the planned outcome has been reached (Dörnyei 1998: 118).

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This time-limited and purposive process characteristic also provides for "interference factors" that can weaken prematurely the persistence of the purposeful action by intervening factors, or can bring the action to a complete stop before it reaches its goal.

Learning a foreign language therefore does not proceed in a straight line from the point of view of motivation; it is 'interference-prone' by the occurrence of different intervening factors (negative: for example, if learning difficulties suddenly arise; positive: for example, if an already initiated action is brought to a halt because the learner realizes that by proceeding with a different approach the task can be solved more quickly and effectively). Such an 'open' framework of motivation permits the development of a model of motivation that has room for the unexpected (Düwell 2000: 38; Translation T.L.).

Maehr & Braskamp stress that "invested effort" plays a substantial role in the maintenance of the dynamic character of the motivational construct:

It is important to remember that motivation is a *dynamic* process. Personal investment occurs as part of a continuous stream of ever-changing events. [...] personal investment is both a product and a producer of dynamic interaction with a variety of persons, situations, and events. The effects of one's personal investment feed back to affect the continuing investment of oneself. We can take a picture of the variables in motivation to any given moment, but such a static portrayal seldom does justice to what in reality is a very dynamic and continuous flow of events (Maehr & Braskamp 1986: 10-12).

In the field of formal teaching and learning foreign languages outside the target language country, Dörnyei (1990) has isolated different components of motivation that can be related to the learners' differing goals for achieving linguistic competence. In Gardner's theories the assumption prevails that in language learning the acquisition of structures and vocabulary is not the only important consideration, but that especially with reference to motivation, cultural aspects – dealing with the speakers and the culture – must also be considered. However, attitudes to foreign languages and cultures in Dörnyei's (1994) research turned out to be as irrelevant as predictors of success. More relevant were found to be general dispositions towards learning foreign languages: an appreciation of foreign languages, the intellectual challenge involved in learning a foreign language as well as travel interests. Psychological components considered relevant include, for instance, *need for achievement, self-confidence, fear of public speaking, an assessment of one's own L2-competence*, as well as the *personal appraisal of prior language learning experiences and prior linguistic knowledge (causal attributions)*. With regard to the learning situation itself, instructional, teacher and group factors affect the motivation for foreign language learning. Interest in, expectation of and satisfaction with the curriculum, teaching materials and teaching methods are the main markers of the instructional aspect. These findings are seen to be incompatible with the dichotomization between integrative and instrumental orientation. Only the dimension "professional career" is considered to be instrumental orientation. The other motives are labeled *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation by Dörnyei.<sup>3</sup> By extrinsic motivation is meant the orientation of persons towards some kind of "reward" (material objects, professional career, high marks, positive feedback, etc.), while intrinsically motivated actions, following Deci (1975), are described as follows:

[...] there is no apparent reward except the activity itself. People seem to engage in the activities for their own sake and not because they lead to an extrinsic reward. [...] Intrinsically motivated behaviours are aimed at bringing about certain internally rewarding consequences, namely, feelings of *competence* and *self-determination* (quoted by Riemer 1997: 27; italics in the original).

By intrinsic motivation, personality-dependent factors are meant, such as the desire to achieve success, the intellectual challenge implicit in learning foreign languages, or tourism-related interests.

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## 2. Background information

### 2.1 Foreign language learning motivation in Taiwan

Research on foreign language learning motivation in the Taiwanese context has so far played only a marginal role. Taiwanese society, which is shaped by Chinese culture, is steeped in Confucian learning traditions, which lead to a high instrumental learner motivation. The acquisition of knowledge using the traditional learning strategy of memorization and the largely uncritical acceptance of given content and patterns are often considered normal by Taiwanese students. The students' motivation in the *institutional context* to learn foreign languages in general, and English in particular, usually has less to do with the linguistic scope, the cultural status or the global prestige of the languages. Thus, the *lingua franca* English plays only an important role for many students because proficiency in English is tested in the *central university entrance examinations*. Due to the way in which university entrance exams are structured, teachers in Taiwan are often forced to instruct their students in a manner that will prove most useful to them. Therefore, the focus of what is taught in senior high school is geared toward sitting these exams. They constitute a rigorous test of grammatical understanding of the English language, with students being required to translate complex passages and to have an extensive vocabulary and excellent knowledge of grammatical structures. One can assume, therefore, that the focus of the exams is not on the students' speaking and listening skills. For this reason, teachers see no need to prepare students for something which will not be tested. It has been suggested that having to sit the university entrance exams is the main reason or source of motivation for the majority of Taiwanese students to study English. Certainly, a high percentage of senior high school students identify the need for high scores in the central university entrance examinations as the major reason for the study of English. Passing the examination with a score high above the average in several exam subjects entitles the student to enrol in an elite university. From a university's point of view, a knowledge of English serves the sole purpose of screening the applicants by their learning potential. The question with which motives or motivations the students acquire certain content is secondary. In contrast to Germany, Taiwanese senior high school students must make extra learning efforts in order to be able to pass the university entrance examination since academic achievement in senior high school is not taken into consideration for admission to the university.

### 2.2 Subjects

The survey was carried out in December 2006 at National Chengchi University in Taipei. In the fall semester 2006/2007, two elective courses were specifically offered for students other than German majors. One of these courses given at the time of this study was taught by this researcher. However, to eliminate bias during each phase of the research process, it was decided to conduct the administration of the questionnaire exclusively in the course offered by the colleague. At the time of the data collection, the students were between 18 and 22 years of age. Of the 45 participants, 17 were males and 28 were females. The subjects were a homogeneous group of learners, with a largely uniform socialization background. None of the subjects had ever been abroad in a German-speaking country. Their non-university knowledge of Germany was therefore obtained and shaped predominantly by Taiwanese and international media such as newspapers, radio broadcasts, television, films as well as history books. In other words, they had no direct personal experiences with Germany. The majority of the students had been learning German as the second or further foreign language for approximately three months.<sup>4</sup> For this research, students with A1-level (CEF) were interviewed. Their academic majors ranged very broadly from linguistics through philosophy to economics and law.

### 2.3 Questionnaire

The background as well as the purpose of the questionnaire (see Appendix) were described to the students in a large-group setting. They were informed that the survey was anonymous and that participation in the study was

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voluntary; the data would be kept strictly confidential and would be used exclusively for research purposes. They were told that the questionnaire was not an examination and that their answers would not influence their scores in the course. During the completion of the questionnaire, individual questions were answered and comprehension problems were immediately clarified. All in all, the Chinese version of the questionnaire was apparently well understood. The questionnaire contains open, half-open as well as closed items (multiple responses were possible) on motives for learning German and on integrative, instrumental, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

### 3. Summary of the results

The purpose of the present study is to try to understand which motives and motivations Taiwanese students majoring in other subjects exhibit while studying German. The limited number of available investigations of the foreign language learning motivation of Taiwanese students of German permits only tentative and intuitive conclusions. Consequently, the following findings should be interpreted cautiously with regard to their explanatory power because some aspects are based more on personal experiences and conversations or observations in class than on hard empirical findings.

The author is aware of the fact that the research sample is not representative, in particular because the sample size of 45 participating students is too small. The present findings, therefore, make no claim to completeness and generalizability. However, they can make a contribution to a discussion on motivation in foreign language learning in Taiwan. They present first-hand views of Taiwanese learners in a German course and should subsequently lead to larger empirical investigations, in which – with the help of more sophisticated procedures and methods – the tentative conclusions drawn here can be validated and extended.

#### 3.1 Intrinsic motivation

From the data corpus, it becomes clear that the participating group of learners exhibits a strong interest in language learning, and knowledge of several languages is important to them. In addition to English as the first foreign language, which is required in the school program, the answers to the question “*Is German the second, third, or fourth foreign language for you?*” reveals that their language learning history is characterized by contacts with other foreign languages. In this case, for most students, German was the third (14) and fourth (23) foreign language, with which they had come into contact. It may be assumed that prior positive experiences with foreign language learning, a solid command of several languages and an appreciation of languages in general, affect positively the motivation to learn other languages (see also Dörnyei 1994). Individual *multilingualism* and foreign language learning are valued highly in the already multilingual Taiwan (Chinese, Taiwanese, Hakka and Austronesian languages). The students’ attitude towards learning other foreign languages is entirely positive even if they describe learning foreign languages as being time-consuming and difficult. Nevertheless, learning a second or further foreign language is evaluated in positive terms. The following adjectives were used in response to the question “*How would you describe a person who learns voluntarily a second or third/fourth foreign language?*”: “active”; “purposeful”; “ambitious”; “courageous”; “progressive”; “talented”; “having a good, open, cultivated and global attitude”.

It is possible that continuously being involved with learning another language as well as a proficiency in several languages could have led to intensified *reflection about language* among the subjects. Thus, the majority of the students comment that they think “regularly” about their language learning in response to the statement “*I reflect actively on what I have learned in my German class*” (29). Three learners “hardly ever” think about language and foreign language learning while 13 “once in a while” reflect about their language learning.

Most Taiwanese students know that English and German are related etymologically and typologically. The value of the experience of having learned several languages and previously acquired linguistic knowledge is recognized by the students, and it serves as a potentially powerful aid in learning German. In this way, experiences with language learning and proficiency in English contribute to the process of acquiring German.

The *language combination* of Chinese, English and German is characterized by the fact that the target language of Chinese-speaking students learning the German language resembles less their mother tongue than their first foreign language English in morphology, syntax, grammar, lexis and phonetics. Differences in the writing systems are also obvious: in Taiwan, an ideographic writing system based on Chinese *han* characters is used, i.e., children do not use an alphabetical letter writing system when they learn their mother tongue. In this language constellation, it is clear that strong cross-linguistic transfer processes take place on several levels between the closely genetically related Indo-Germanic languages English and German.

The *language relationship* between English and German can be of particular use in the Taiwanese context at the beginning of the learning process. The students respond positively to the question: “*How does English affect your learning process in German?*” According to them, it is helpful to be able to recognize from context Anglicisms and internationalisms in the German language due to their orthographic similarity; moreover, cognates or *faux amis* can be remembered better by memorizing in this manner.

The relationship between the two languages leads to the fact that words in German are not perceived as completely “foreign”. All in all, a proficiency in English is evaluated positively for learning German even if pronunciation problems arise occasionally when German words are pronounced with English sound features. In grammar as well, prior knowledge is transferred from English when learning German. Many informants indicate that they think in English and would learn German in this manner. One student makes the following point: “*Learning German via English is easier than via Chinese.*”

The positive assessment of previous language learning experiences and linguistic pre-knowledge has a positive effect on the students’ foreign language learning motivation. A curricular methodology for multilingualism that deliberately and systematically makes use of prior knowledge and previously learned languages in the German class would use unused synergy potentials and would contribute to the strengthening of motivation in foreign language learning (see Lay 2006: 469).

### 3.2 Integrative motivation

Compared with other foreign languages, English is perceived as a language that can be acquired relatively easily. German, however, is thought to be generally difficult. German therefore represents an *intellectual challenge* when it comes to learning a foreign language, according to the data collected from the interviewees.

From the responses to the question “*Is learning German an intellectual challenge for you?*” it becomes clear that for 40 students working on German is indeed an intellectual challenge, while four subjects did not think so. The German language is particularly felt to be difficult because of its highly differentiated morphology (compared to the less minutely developed morphology of the English language). In the grammar, there are also substantial differences between Chinese and English. Chinese has neither number nor genders or tenses: nouns, adjectives and pronouns are not inflected, and verbs are not conjugated. Many words in modern Chinese, particularly bisyllabic ones, can be used as nouns, verbs or adjectives. Whether a word is to be understood as a noun, verb or adjective depends on its position in the sentence where the word sequence is subject to strict grammatical rules.

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General difficulties with the comprehension of grammar are one cause for the learning difficulties experienced by Taiwanese learners of German. There is hardly enough time during the course to learn the grammatical structures adequately because a basic knowledge of the features of the language of science cannot generally be assumed *per se*. For the most part, it has to be acquired for the first time in the German class. Generally, the students also have also an unsatisfactory knowledge of grammatical terminologies and have cognitive problems in handling grammatical structures; furthermore, in comparison with Chinese, German has substantially longer sentence constructions. Nevertheless, learning German is perceived to be motivating by some individuals because they want to master this "difficult" language. Even if the linguistic structure of German is sometimes seen as complicated, the answers to the question "*Do you learn the German language because it is fun for you to learn it or in order to realize your objectives?*" show that the vast majority of students obviously enjoys learning German (41). Almost all students decided to learn German because of a general interest in languages. It should be mentioned here with regard to curricular factors that only a limited number of academic fields at NCCU (e.g., English Studies or Foreign Policy Studies) require explicitly a proficiency in a second foreign language in their program regulations. Credits for the elective courses can also be acquired in other easier, non-language-related seminars. Compared to many other subjects, foreign language learning in particular requires continuity with frequent repetition phases.

The role of tourism-related interests should not be underestimated because 28 students reported them as motivation to learn German ("*Learning German can be important for me because I want to travel to Germany*"). Germany gained greater worldwide attention because of the Soccer World Cup held in 2006. Since then, interest in German language and culture has grown in Taiwan. Many of the students plan to travel to Germany in the future, also in the hope to be able to use their knowledge of German in *everyday unshielded interactions*.

An important aspect in Gardner & Lambert's theory of motivation is the assumption that in successful language learning not only does the acquisition of syntax and vocabulary play a role, but that especially regarding motivation, the cultural aspect must also be considered, i.e., the concrete encounter with the speakers of the language and the target language culture. In particular, Oller, Baca & Vigil's (1977) work has shown that positive attitudes to the target language culture do not have to be inevitably favorable for a successful foreign language acquisition process to occur. For instance, it was shown that for Mexican immigrants to the U.S. an "anti-integrative" motivation, combined with an instrumental orientation, proved to be favorable for the learning process.

The present findings reveal a largely positive or neutral attitude towards the target language culture (the country and the people) among the subjects. However, positive attitudes towards German culture cannot be regarded as a decisive motivational factor in our findings. Consequently, our results agree with those obtained by Dörnyei (1990): Attitudes towards foreign languages and cultures play a less important role for motivation to learn another language in formal foreign language instruction outside the target language country; general attitudes towards foreign language learning appear to be more relevant.

For 11 informants, contact with German speakers is important; and for 27 informants, contact with foreigners in general is important ("*Learning German can be important for me because it will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people*"). Contacts with foreigners are usually regarded as important in Taiwan. It may be assumed that many Taiwanese display a general interest in North America and Europe and do not learn German because they are specifically interested in Germany. 16 students consider a knowledge of German to be relevant in order to be able to participate in cultural activities, while 20 persons want to understand the language of poets and philosophers as well as German culture and literature more thoroughly by studying German.

The opportunity to establish contacts with foreigners in general and with Germans in particular by learning a foreign language plays an interesting paradoxical role in relation to the language learning motivation of Taiwanese students. Many students assume on a rather general level that multilingualism provides, on the one hand, the op-



portunity to extend their own cultural and intellectual horizon; on the other hand, they consider it to be a great advantage for facilitating communication with other people and guaranteeing easier access to other languages and cultures. However, the number of North Americans and Europeans living in Taiwan is small compared with foreigners from the neighboring Asian countries.

Therefore most Taiwanese students learn *European languages* without having direct contact with Europeans during the language acquisition phase. The lack of a German-language environment and, in particular, the lack of likely personal contacts in Taiwan often lead to the belief that learning German is a process undergone in isolation. Only students majoring in German are required to complete a one-year program of studies in Germany in their third academic year. As a rule, these study-abroad experiences increase greatly the individual's motivation because language proficiency can be proven in practical situations, and because with positive reinforcement the learner's motivation rises.

The generally limited extent of quantitative and qualitative contacts with the target language speakers and the awareness of the lack of a practical use of German often lead to the assumption that the lingua franca English is sufficient for international communication with *all* foreigners. In Taiwan, contacts with the target language culture play a special role, particularly when learning a second or third foreign language. With regard to English, Japanese, and Korean, Taiwanese foreign language learners are used to have a great deal of authentic contacts supplied by the media and the foreigners living in Taiwan, so that the usefulness of the language becomes apparent quickly. For those who learn European foreign languages, this linguistic and cultural presence in Taiwan is less strongly developed. It is therefore more difficult for the learners to conceive of a practical use for the language. The *learning environment for German* is, consequently, assessed by most participants in the study as being unfavorable because of the geographical-cultural distance between them and Germany (for a tabular overview of a possible engagement with German in Taiwanese everyday life, see Lay 2004: 246 f.). Regarding the statement "*Taiwan offers a good learning environment for German*", three persons evaluate the learning environment as positive and sufficient, while 16 persons agree somewhat, and 24 persons consider the learning environment to be insufficient. For this reason, the Internet represents an important and indispensable source of information for learners of German in distant Taiwan from which authentic language material (news, newspaper articles, live stream transmissions, radio broadcasts, songs, etc.) may be obtained.

In response to the statement "*If I had the opportunity and knew enough German, I would use German-language media (magazines, newspapers, TV, radio, internet, etc.) to learn German*", 31 informants indicated, in principle, the intention to use media of any kind when learning a foreign language, if they had the requisite level of language proficiency. 12 students would make use of this opportunity occasionally, while one person would not do so at all.

Self-sufficiency, a low level of fear of using a foreign language and a high degree of self-confidence and self-esteem usually enhance success in foreign language learning and increase motivational intensity. The present findings confirm this assumption. Most of the students would take the chance to use their foreign language in *unshielded communication situations* outside the educational institution. 20 interviewees would communicate with a partner in German and English, or would speak mostly English (15), while 10 persons would use Chinese if their German knowledge were not sufficient. Six students would speak a little German and would switch to Chinese when given the opportunity, while one person would not dare to communicate in German (see Item 17 in the Appendix). These numbers make it clear that this group of learners would be ready to use German actively. They have a high degree of self-confidence and do not feel too shy to communicate in German with foreigners. This high readiness to speak and take risks, i.e., to use a foreign language in everyday life in unshielded real situations even from the outset, is *not* often found among foreign language learners from East Asian countries because of the "Confucian style of teaching" (by Chinese and Western teachers) and certain socio-cultural reasons.

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### 3.3 Extrinsic motivation

According to Dörnyei (1994), teachers, course-specific factors as well as the group climate represent important factors affecting the learners' motivation in a formal institutional foreign language learning context. *Instructors* are often the only contact persons to German language and culture in Taiwan. Therefore, they should be conscious of the fact that an increase in intercultural awareness and enhanced motivation essentially are the result of their efforts. In addition, their behavior and their attitudes are a model for their students (see also the findings for the school context obtained by Apelt 1981). 31 students agree with the statement "*I'm learning German because I would like my instructor to be satisfied with my work*". A majority of the students indicates in the questionnaire their intention to learn German well in order to receive *social recognition*. They study German diligently so that the instructor will be satisfied with their work in class (*affiliative drive*).

Instructors and learning content are factors which strongly affect the learning atmosphere in the class. Responding to the statement "*I'm learning German because I got good friends in this class*", 18 students report to have classmates and/or friends in the same German course. Friendships surely contribute to a positive and pleasant learning climate in the course even although 14 answers were "I agree partly" and 13 were "I do not agree". The students like the instructor, and there is interaction occurring in the class, according to data provided by the interviewees (a (11), b (24), c (9); "*In German class: a. I volunteer answers as much as possible; b. I answer only the easier questions; c. I never say anything*"). Questions or problems are encountered by the students and are solved in class. 30 of the subjects immediately ask the teacher for help, 13 only seek help before the examinations, while one person generally does not ask questions (see Item 12 in the Appendix).

The *content of the learning experience* should meet the learners' interests and needs. This is especially important for courses where the learners have only three contact hours per week. If content is selected that does not touch upon the learners' life or is considered irrelevant, this can lead quickly to demotivation. Interesting and varied learning activities, language learning games, stories, narrations, songs, movies and varying social groupings contribute, among other things, to maintaining motivation in class. Experiences with aspects of German culture and civilization motivate the students to learn more about German society and culture. Because of the small amount of direct contact with the target language culture a systematic approach to conveying *Landeskunde*-items and cultural aspects in class should play a particularly important role in Taiwan.

All in all, German as an elective is evaluated by most course participants as being interesting ("*I find learning German very interesting*"), and it ranks very much at the top (38) in popularity among the courses and seminars attended by the students. After one semester, most students plan to continue and broaden their study of German in their senior level of study. They have concrete, *realistic objectives* regarding the individually required level of proficiency (Rheinberg 2004: 71ff.). To the question "*Which level would you like to reach in German?*" 11 students said that they would like to obtain a basic knowledge, while 30 have the goal to reach the intermediate or advanced level in the next few years. They would like to be able to hold and understand simple every-day conversations so that they can travel in Germany by themselves without problems and speak with the people there. The following are their goals in reading and writing: to be able to understand globally German-language newspapers as well as to write letters and short essays.

### 3.4 Instrumental motivation

Some of the students decided to elect German for their minor (11), because Germany still serves as a traditional model in the students' *major field* (for example, in law and philosophy), i.e., German is considered to have a connection to the respective academic major ("*Learning German can be important for me because German is important for my major subject*"). In Taiwan, learning German has always been popular for students in law, philosophy,

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medicine and music. Most of these students plan to go to Germany or Austria to pursue higher academic goals. The knowledge of several languages is, on principle, relevant in addition to the program of studies itself, particularly with reference to *professional qualifications* (10) and the competition on the domestic and international labor market (21: “*Learning German can be important for me because a knowledge of German will some day be helpful in getting a good job*”).

Many of the students expressed positive opinions about studying in Germany (“*Would you like to study in Germany?*”). If the opportunity were available and there were no financial obstacles, 40 subjects said that they would definitely consider studying in Germany, while three would not do so, and two students were uncertain. The number of responses indicating a willingness to consider studying in Germany is very high for students in a minor. This opinion - certainly supplied *ad hoc* - indicates that German research institutions or studying in Germany, in general, seem to be attractive for them. Many aspiring Taiwanese university graduates usually study abroad in the U.S., the U.K. and Japan.

The potential professional opportunities and the resulting extrinsic motivation to learn German cannot be considered representative of this group of learners, since many of them are aware of the fact that they will acquire only a basic knowledge of German after completing German courses at the university. A tendency to continue with the study of German after graduation from university cannot be clearly ascertained. The data permit the conclusion that it is intrinsic motivation, such as interest in and enjoyment of the language, which are decisive for the current motivation for the students learning German. It is hoped that the students will remain interested in German language and culture after the completion of their program of study.

#### 4. Conclusions

Most Taiwanese students are interested in language learning, and the ability to speak several languages is important for them because multilingualism carries a high value in contemporary Taiwan. Different foreign languages are necessary to better meet the needs brought about by increasing globalization. Prior positive experiences with foreign language learning, a solid command of different languages, and the appreciation of languages in general affect positively the motivation to learn another language.

Research on third-language acquisition has shown that the acquisition of a second and more foreign languages takes place not exclusively on the foundation of the first language. For the teaching and learning of a tertiary language, this means that references should be made to previously learned languages. Making systematic use of pre-existing knowledge and experiences, language learning experiences and learning processes as well as transferring elements, units and structures from languages learned before must be included systematically in teaching.

A relatively sophisticated knowledge of the English language as well as conscious reflection about the learning process by the learners make it possible that the learning content to be acquired can be made more challenging, that instruction in a second foreign language (particularly with receptive work with texts) can begin at a higher level and can offer the students new horizons of content in class, which will challenge and develop their cognitive output and their creativity in an age-appropriate manner.

The survey has also revealed that most students are learning German for travel purposes. The very limited contact with the target language country should lead to giving aspects of culture and civilization a greater role in instruction in the future in Taiwanese German language courses. Cultural content serves well to motivate the students to want to learn even more about German society. To this end, field trips with an emphasis on Germany could, for instance, be organized – where this is feasible – in order to raise the students’ interest in German language and culture.

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire: Motivation on Learning German in Taiwan

Male  Female  Age \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

Major Subject \_\_\_\_\_ Semester \_\_\_\_\_

1. *Is German the second, third or fourth foreign language (FL) for you?*

Answers: 2. FL (14), 3. FL (23), 4. FL (7), 5. FL (1)

2. *How would you describe a person who learns voluntarily a second or third/fourth foreign language?*

3. *Why are you learning German?*

4. *Which level would you like to reach in German?*

5. *Do you learn the German language because it is fun for you to learn it or in order to realize your objectives?*

Answers: Fun (41), Realization of objectives (4)

6. *Learning German can be important for me, because:*

a. *It will allow me to be more at ease with the Germans.*

b. *It will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people.*

c. *It will allow me to better understand and appreciate German culture and literature.*

d. *I will be able to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups.*

Answers: a (11), b (27), c (20), d (16)

7. *Learning German can be important for me because:*

a. *German is important for my major subject.*

b. *I think it will someday be helpful in getting a good job.*

c. *I'll need it for my future career.*

d. *It will make me a more knowledgeable person.*

e. *Other people will respect me more if I have knowledge of another foreign language.*

f. *Because I want to travel in Germany.*

Answers: a (11), b (21), c (10), d, (27), e (6), f (28)

8. *I find studying German:*

a. *not interesting at all.*

b. *no more interesting than other subjects.*

c. *very interesting.*

Answers: a (1), b (6), c (38)

9. *I'm learning German because I got good friends in this class.*

a. *I agree*

b. *I agree partly*

c. *I don't agree*

Answers: a (18), b (14), c (13)

10. *When I'm in German class, I:*

- a. *volunteer answers as much as possible.*
- b. *answer only the easier questions.*
- c. *never say anything.*

Answers: a (11), b (24), c (9)

11. *Is learning German an intellectual challenge for you?*

Answers: yes (40), no (4)

12. *When I have a problem understanding something we are learning in the German class, I:*

- a. *immediately ask the teacher for help.*
- b. *only seek help before the exam.*
- c. *just forget about it.*

Answers: a (30), b (13), c (1)

13. *I'm learning German because I like the professor.*

- a. *I agree*
- b. *I agree partly*
- c. *I don't agree*

Answers: a (31), b (13), c (1)

14. *I'm learning German because I would like my instructor to be satisfied with my work.*

- a. *I agree*
- b. *I agree partly*
- c. *I don't agree*

Answers: a (24), b (16), c (5)

15. *I reflect actively on what I have learned in my German class:*

- a. *very frequently.*
- b. *hardly ever.*
- c. *once in a while.*

Answers: a (29), b (3), c (13)

16. *How does English affect your learning process in German?*

17. *If I had the opportunity to speak German outside the university, I would:*

- a. *never speak it.*
- b. *speak German most of the time, using Chinese only if really necessary.*
- c. *speak German most of the time, using English only if really necessary.*
- d. *speak it occasionally using Chinese whenever possible.*
- e. *speak it occasionally using English whenever possible.*

Answers: a (1), b (10), c (20), d (6), e (15)

18. *If I had the opportunity and knew enough German, I would use German-language media (magazines, newspapers, TV, radio, internet etc.) to learn German:*

- a. *as often as I could*
- b. *not very often*
- c. *never*



Answers: a (31), b (12), c (1)

19. *Taiwan offers a good learning environment for German:*

a. *I agree*

b. *I agree partly*

c. *I don't agree*

Answers: a (3), b (16), c (24)

20. *Would you like to study in Germany?*

Answers: yes (40), no (3), I don't know (2)

### **Anmerkungen**

<sup>1</sup> This paper is an English translation of the German version of an article by the author (see Lay 2008).

<sup>2</sup> This description of motivation as it regards the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is selective in nature. For more detailed reviews of research on motivation in foreign language acquisition see Dörnyei (2001a, 2001b), Grünewald (2001), Kleppin (2001, 2002), and Riemer (1997, 2001, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> The concept presented here is only one selection from many distinctions made between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. For further information see, e.g., Deckers (2005), Heckhausen & Heckhausen (2006), Sansone & Harakiewicz (2000), and Schiefele & Köller (2001).

<sup>4</sup> The students have three hours of German per week. Some students had already learned German for one year during Senior High School or attended German courses at the German Cultural Center in Taipei during term holidays.