

JAPANESE LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND LEARNERS' INTEGRATION INTO JAPANESE SOCIETY

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1. Outline of the study

1.1. Purpose of the study

By taking four test subjects with different backgrounds and proficiency levels in Japanese, this study aims at ascertaining how foreigners learn Japanese, identifying the problems they encounter and whether they find it hard to integrate themselves into Japanese society. Also, it will be examined in which ways the different backgrounds and language acquisition factors of the four test subjects influence the acquisition of Japanese as a second language as well as the integration process into Japanese society. While the study is to provide the reader with an insight into this field, it is at the same time intended to help teachers of the Japanese language to find out the problems their students are mostly concerned with, which may prove useful both in class and in the preparation of teaching material. For instance, the observations concerning A and B (children attending a normal Japanese primary school) show that their language acquisition progress takes a course quite different from that of C and D (adults learning Japanese at university), both as to their way of learning (see e.g. “stages of development of the negative form”, test person A) and their sequence of learning (A and B, e.g., master colloquial expressions like “datte etc.” much earlier than C and D).

The same holds for first language (L1) acquisition, a typical example being the acquisition of one's mother tongue. However, second language (L2) acquisition is not limited to one single pattern of acquisition — in fact, a number of patterns and cases can be distinguished. In general, there are 3 major factors that decide on which pattern is chosen:

- (1) age
- (2) environment
- (3) input

Environment refers to the environment in which the L2 acquisition process takes place. Accordingly, two cases have to be considered: (1) the language is acquired within a social group which uses the target language as a means of communication in everyday life (*second language* in the stricter sense of the word), (2) the language is acquired outside such a social group (*foreign language*).

¹ We would like to express our gratitude to Mr. Mark Thomas Essex for his correction of this paper.

8 CATEGORIES OF L2 ACQUISITION (based on the factors age, environment and input):

	age		environment		input		L2 acquisition pattern
	children	adult	sec.lg.	for.lg.	acqu.	learnng.	
I	O		O		O		Second language acquisition in children
II	O		O			O	Second language learning in children
III	O			O	O		Foreign language acquisition in children
IV	O			O		O	Foreign language learning in children
V		O	O		O		Second language acquisition in adults
VI		O	O			O	Second language learning in adults
VII		O		O	O		Foreign language acquisition in adults
VIII		O		O		O	Foreign language learning in adults

Source: Yamaoka, p.240

Input refers to the amount of L2 input the student is exposed to. According to the type of language input, a difference has to be made between *acquisition* and *learning*. The term *acquisition* is used for the process where language is acquired as a result of natural and largely random exposure to language, the term *language learning* where the exposure is structured through language teaching, i.e. the student, by instructed teaching, receives a continually increasing amount of input. Taking this as a starting point, Yamaoka (1997)² classifies the patterns of L2 acquisition into the above eight groups:

Yamaoka excludes category VII (Foreign language acquisition in adults), claiming it to be a case which generally does not occur. He does not deal with categories 2 and 6 either, as in these cases, students (both children and adults) receive instructed language input while living in the L2 environment, which means that they are at the same time also exposed to natural language input outside class. Hence, taking solely the learning aspect into account, — according to Yamaoka — makes these categories inappropriate for a discussion concerning the particular features of L2 acquisition patterns.

The present study, however, aims at examining exactly these two categories (category II — second language learning in children — and category VI — second language learning in adults), due to the following reasons:

- (1) These two categories constitute the most common patterns of language acquisition for foreigners learning Japanese in Japan, and there is a definite need for research in this field.
- (2) Separately examining the aspects of acquisition and learning has nothing but experimental value; by observing both aspects at the same time, the reality is reflected in a more objective way.

² Yamaoka, Toshihiko 1997, *Dainigengo shutoku kenkyu. (Research on second language acquisition)*. Kiriara Publishing Co., Tokyo

1.2. Methods

For the above purposes, four students of the Japanese language were selected, who were (or had been) studying Japanese at a Japanese primary school (or other educational facility) or a Japanese university. These students were observed over a specific period of time both in the classroom and during their activities outside school, and detailed records were taken.

These observations were carried out from April, 1997, through April, 1998, with the following 3 test subjects (A,B,C) as well as a retrospective self-study of the author (D = Monika Cigler).

	A	B	C	D
observation period	May 1997 — March 1998	Sept. 1997 — Jan. 1998	May 1997 — Jan. 1998	Oct. 1991 — July 1998

The author carried out observations with other students as well. However, the present study only takes into account these three cases due to the fact that close relationships were formed between the author and A, B, C. Through them, the author gained access to frank and open statements from the test subjects. Also, A-D represent typical categories of students and are, therefore, very useful for a comparative study like the present one.

2. Observations and results

2.1. Test person A (Austria, 8 years old, 2nd grade, female, time in Japan before the beginning of the study: 1 month)

2.1.1. Social background, situation at home

A arrived in Japan with her mother (an assistant professor at the Institute for Japanese Studies of Vienna University doing research on gender studies in Japan). Her period of stay in Japan was limited to one year.

The author noticed a very close and strong mother-child relationship, especially during the first 6 months when A was very reluctant to live in Japan and spent most of her free time at home. During the second half of her stay, A went to a nursery for one or two hours a day and also to the girlscouts. A's mother engaged deeply in school-related activities.

In Austria, A had attended a school which followed the educational principles of the Steiner method.

2.1.2. First impression concerning A's language and social integration at the beginning of the study (May, 1997)

The author spent one day a week accompanying A in her classes and made observations during her free time. At this stage, A went to school together with an interpreter, however, these hours were gradually reduced.

A was very reluctant to go to school, mostly due to communication problems with her classmates and teachers, but maybe also due to bullying by some of the other children.

Her Japanese was still very poor. She could only read a few Hiragana, and she knew a few words (*keshigomu*, *kutsu*, *gakkoo*,...).

2.1.3. The language and social aspects during the observation period

A took part in the normal classes and received special classes of Japanese for approximately 5 hours a week. However, these were stopped in October, both because of the financial burden the school had to carry and because no significant improvement was seen.

During the first semester (from April to September), A's progress in Japanese was slow and not very satisfying. She considered the Japanese lessons boring (one factor seemed to be the lack of communication between teacher and student and the inevitable misunderstandings this brought about), and did not understand the normal classes. Except for Music and Mathematics, her motivation in class was very low.

Her level of Japanese developed from nouns and nouns connected with *nai Keshigomu*, *kutsue* (= *tsukue*), *ichi*, *zoo*; *A san*, *kutsu nai!* *Shippo nai!* (May 28) to one- and two-word sentences like *Katta!* *Tanoshikatta!* *Neko kawaii!* *Isu itai!* (June 15), until, in September, she was able to remember some phrases (*Minasan*, *shizuka ni shite kudasai!* *Seki ni tsuite kudasai!* *Matte yo!*) and started to express her own ideas in Japanese, even though these were, in most cases, not understood. (*De*, *Uiin wa*, *watashi wa*, *sannensei desu*. *De*, *kotchi wa*, *ninensei*. *De*, *chiisaku wa dame!*).

The first six months of her life in Japan A showed a very negative attitude towards her new situation and stayed mainly at home with her mother. However, over the summer holidays, her motivation to learn Japanese increased, apparently due to the following reasons:

- (1) Her former interpreter came to live with them and spoke in Japanese with her mother, and A didn't understand them,
- (2) A went home to Austria and was admired by her peers because she was studying Japanese,
- (3) she started going to the girlsscouts and the nursery so that she received first hand contact with many children. She started to stay with Japanese children for some hours, made friends and began to enjoy her life in Japan. At home, she started to speak a mixture of German and Japanese, with the Japanese part getting more extensive week by week.

Stages of language acquisition, taking as an example the development of the negative form:

- (a) In the first stage, A applies the word *nai*, which she knows to have a negative meaning, to every negative sentence; hence, *nai* takes over the meaning of *iee*. (This might, in fact, also be partly due to interference with German, as the pronunciations of *nein*, the German word for *iee*, and *nai* are very similar). *Kutsu nai!* (May, 28) — *Ikimasu ka? Nai!* (June, 3) — *Onaka ga suita? Nai!* (May, 28). *Tanoshikatta nai!* (June, 11).
- (b) The negative form changes to *wa nai* or *ja nai* (without any difference in meaning or usage). *Iku? Iku ja nai.* (September 19) — *Tanoshikatta? Tanoshikatta wa nai!*
- (c) The negative form changes to *ja nai yo*: *Wasurechatta ja nai yo.* *Hora!* (Sept 25), *iku ja nai yo* (Sept 17).
- (d) The negative form changes to — *masen*: *Renshuu wa tanoshiimasen*, *gakugeikai wa*

tanoshimashita. (Oct 20)

- (e) Last stage: Use of all forms, at first interchangeably; from January 98 onwards increasing use of the correct form by copying patterns heard from the other children. In February 1998, all of a sudden, almost all her negative forms turn out to be correct.

To summarize, A's language acquisition process can be divided into two phases: The first phase, from May to approximately October, is marked by low motivation and unsatisfactory progress in Japanese grammar and vocabulary. During the second phase, significant progress in language acquisition was observed, possibly attributable to the positive feedback A received when her Japanese was, finally, understood by her classmates.

From A's stages of development of the negative form³, especially from stages (c) and (d), we can learn an important lesson concerning her L2 acquisition progress: In stage (c), A makes use of a grammatical pattern which she has clearly acquired by exposure to natural language and everyday communication with her classmates.

On the other hand, the *keigo* forms used in stage (d) are without any doubt results of a learning process where the language used by teachers and in textbooks seems to be the major source of input. This clearly shows us that also in an L2 acquisition pattern like A's, the student's classroom environment as well as linguistic input by the teacher plays an important role.

2.1.4. Problems that remain to be solved

A's social problems in Japan seemed to have been solved by the end of the year (i.e. approximately 9 months after her arrival in Japan), coinciding with the point of time she started to speak understandable Japanese.

³ When comparing A's stages of development of the negative form with those occurring in first language acquisition, a number of similarities and differences can be found (The following is taken from Katsutoshi Ito, "Kodomo no kotoba" (the language of children), 1990, Keiso shobo Publishing, Tokyo): Ito divides the children's development of the negative form into 6 stages. He observes that in the first stage, "dame" and "iya" are used much in the same way as "nai". However, as the children progress towards higher stages, a differentiation takes place: In the third stage, "nai" is used to express *disappearance, non-existence and the negation in yes/no-questions*, while "dame" is used for *prohibitions* and "iya" to express *refusals*. In the fourth stage, "nai" is no longer used in the sense of *disappearance*. The form "ja nai" as a means of expressing *negation in yes/no-questions* appears for the first time in the sixth stage; however, in the fifth stage "chigau" is used for this purpose (later, "chigau" runs parallel with the "ja nai" form) (see Ito K., "Kodomo no kotoba, p.95-104).

A's development of the negative form is similar to the above mentioned process, as she, too, uses "nai" to express all the above mentioned meanings in the beginning, a form which later is replaced by "ja nai". However, "iya" appears much later than "nai" and A, during the first few months, seems to be reluctant to using "chigau". (The reason for this is that she first comes across this word in the form of "chigaimasu" in her Japanese classes, a form which she refuses as being "too hard to remember").

From the above it can be seen that there are a lot of similarities between A's acquisition process and that of first language learners, but also differences.

Next, let us look at the order in which Japanese students (adults) usually *learn* the negative form:

1. Iie, (gakusei) *de wa arimasen/ ja arimasen* (negation of noun)
2. (iki) *masen/ (iki) masen deshita* (negation of verb, present and perfect)
3. (tanoshiku) *arimasen/ nai desu* (negation of -i adjectives, present tense)
4. (genki) *de wa arimasen deshita*. (negation of -na adjectives, present, perfect)
5. (tanoshiku) *arimasen deshita/ nakatta desu*. (negation of -i adj., perfect)

From the above we can see that — different from A and B — students of the Japanese language (C and D were found to follow this learning order as well) start to develop the negative form out of the polite style of the verbs before the plain style appears.

Generally speaking, it can be said that children who arrive in Japan under similar circumstances as A, without speaking any Japanese at the beginning, reach A's level of language acquisition within a year or less if they succeed in adapting themselves to Japanese school and social life. As pointed out in 2.1.3, classroom teaching does have an influence on L2 acquisition; however, it also seems to be true that it neither decisively accelerates nor decisively delays the acquisition process. (Rather, there does not seem to be any *direct* relation between classroom teaching and the L2 acquisition process).

Actually, as A's teachers in Japan knew that she would return to Austria after one year, problems concerning her studies at school were taken very lightly. Upon her return to Austria in April 98, she had problems at her old school as, in a number of subjects, she was one year behind her classmates (she could not yet read fluent German nor write orthographically correct sentences).

2.2. Test person B (Peru, 11 years old, 5th grade, female,
time in Japan before the beginning of the study: 10 months):

2.2.1. Social background, situation at home

B lives in Japan with her younger brother and her parents, both of whom work, leaving the children to play with their Japanese friends until evening. Neither mother nor father speaks much Japanese.

First impression concerning B's language and social integration at the beginning of the study (September, 1997)

The author spent one day per week with B, accompanying her during all her classes, the breaks, lunch, cleaning and on her way home. The fact that B spent most of her time among Japanese children had great influence on her language, which, to the author, did not seem any different from the language of her Japanese classmates at the beginning of the study. Her pronunciation of Japanese was perfect and she used the same type of language as other Japanese children of her age.

- “*mishte*” instead of “*misete*” (colloquial form, often heard in the street)
- *choo-umai* and other expressions typical of the young generation
- *Nande ikanai no?* — *Nan da, sore!* — *Kyoo, uchi ni kuru no?*
(Expressions heard by other children rather than formal Japanese sentences)

B was always together with a group of Japanese, especially with one girl, Aya-chan, and did not appear to have any problems socially whatsoever. Hence, the first impression the author got, both concerning the aspect of language acquisition and her social life, was that of a happy girl, fully integrated into Japanese society, and — because of being a little too perfect — not particularly apt to act as a test person in the present study.

2.2.2. The language aspect during the observation period

After a few weeks the author changed her opinion concerning the language used by A due to the following reasons.

Mathematics, Sciences, etc.:

B's main problems in these subjects lay

- (1) in the great number of technical terms used (*kisuu, kooyakusuu, fuuryoku, kaisei,...*), which the other children had learnt in previous years.
- (2) in the fact that she did not understand the explanations in her textbook, as most of the Kanji were unknown to her.
- (3) in her inability to communicate at a formal level of Japanese (when there was something she did not understand, she asked her teacher in the same way she would ask her friends: *Hora, nan da, sore?*).

Kokusai Kyooshitsu World (Special class of Japanese):

B's ability in written Japanese was far behind that of her oral Japanese. She could read Hiragana and Katakana, but not fluently, and knew a few Kanji (however, she mixed *on-* and *kun-yomi*, e.g. the "*ki*" of "*mokuyoobi*" with the "*kin*" of "*kinyoobi*").

In terms of grammar, problems occurred mainly in two fields:

- (1) that of *joshi*, especially with "o", while having command over other *joshi* like "de" or "ni" (which is interesting in itself):
Watashi wa kuri taberu. (instead of "o" she either used "ga" or did not use any particle)
 She also often omitted *joshi* that not are used in colloquial speech (*Kyoo, kuru? — Watashi, ano hito daisuki,...*).
- (2) B had problems with, and never used, complicated grammatical structures like "*Uma ga hashiru no o mita*" (November 20, 1997).

At home, B spoke Spanish with her parents, but very often Japanese with her younger brother.

2.2.4. The social aspect during the observation period

As B was already able to speak fluent Japanese on a conversational level at the beginning of the study, the author, defending the theory that it is possible to be fully accepted in Japanese society as soon as one speaks Japanese, assumed that there should not be any major integration problems, which turned out to be true. B adapted her lifestyle very quickly to the situation of being in Japan and did not act very differently from her Japanese classmates. According to her teachers and parents, there had not been any major problems during the first 10 months either, due to the fact that, right from the beginning, B had found a Japanese friend who defended her against all bullying by her classmates.

2.2.5. Problems that remain to be solved

At first, B's school teachers proceeded on the assumption that B and her family would return to Peru soon; hence, they were not as strict towards her as towards her Japanese classmates as far as Kanji studying and homework were concerned. However, the assumption turned out to be wrong as B's parents decided to stay in Japan, one reason being their fear that B might have problems at school upon their return to Peru, while in Japan, everything seemed to be going well.

B's case is a rather special case (but far from being rare), as the duration of stay which the teachers assumed at the beginning turned out to be incorrect. In contrast to A, written Japanese is an important factor for B, as the role of written language increases with the children's age, not only for passing the entrance examination but also for everyday life.

However, conscious learning, maybe even combined with a certain kind of forced learning rather than exposure to the language in a natural setting will be decisive in order to successfully acquire proficiency in written Japanese.

This leaves a crucial educational problem for B's teachers: Should they start to treat her extremely strict so that she might have a chance of passing the test into high school, thereby forcing her to devote all her time to studying or should they go on in the same way as until now? Where should the line be drawn and up to which level should they teach Japanese?

Decidedly different from A's experience, B's case (that of a child attending a Japanese primary school with the purpose of continuing her secondary education in this country, something common in Japan) demonstrates how learning a language in the classroom setting should be carried out and, ultimately, what the role of the teacher should be. At the same time, the study clearly shows that exposing students to a natural setting in which the target language is spoken is not enough to ensure successful L2 acquisition.

2.3. Test person C (Ecuador, 32 years old,

Japanese Course at University, male, time in Japan: 1 month)

2.3.1. Social background, situation at home

C came to Japan as a Monbusho Scholarship Student, planning to stay 3 years in Japan (half a year at Hitotsubashi University, where he took part in an intensive Japanese course, and the rest at Shinshu University, where he wanted to do a Master's course in the field of Computer Sciences). Before coming to Japan, C had already worked, but had not studied any Japanese at all.

2.3.2. First impression concerning C's language and social integration at the beginning of the study (May, 1997)

At the beginning of the study (mid-May), C could say simple sentences like *Shashin o totte imasu*, but did have problems with *joshi* and the meaning of simple grammatical structures like — *te kudasai* (*Anata ni tabete kudasai!* May 16, 1997).

2.3.3. The language aspect during the observation period

C took part in the university's Japanese course for foreign students from April to July (Monday to Friday), and its intensive course in September. Problems C faced during this period, especially up to July, were the following, according to himself:

- Too few opportunities to practice newly-learned grammar, too much new grammar,
- Homework was hard to do as the Kanji in the books were not the same and larger in number than the ones studied in class

Problems C faced after moving to Shinshu University:

- No time for going to classes of Japanese as they coincided with the lessons of his specialty.
- He did not understand the reference material, which was all in Japanese.

For an example concerning C's level of proficiency in the Japanese language at the end of the study (January, 1998), see the following letter (written by C, addressed to the author):

Monika Sensei, ogenki desu ka?

Nagano kitte kara kenkyu o suru koto takusan dekimashita. Watashi no kenkyu no chimu daisuki desukara mainichi 10jikan gurai benkyou o shimasu. Shikashi, benkyou dake dewa arimasen...

Tatoewa, senshu kenkyushitsu no gakuseitachi ishioni (= to issho ni) ga Nozawa Onsen e suki o yari ni ikimashita. Suki o suru koto wa totemo kowaii...demo omoshirokute tanoshikatta desu.

Moo hitotsu wa, Nagano-shi de Orimpiku tame ni iroirona koto o shite imasu. Dakara mainichi kenkyuu o owatta kara asobi ni ikimasu.

Ototoi tomodachi kara shoogi o (nihon no gemu) oshiete morau koto jajimarimashita (= hajimarimashita). Shoogi wa chess yori musukashi to omoimasu. Gambarimasu!

Wasuremashita...tabun shigatsu ni daigakuin ni hairimasu. Sore mo ima gambatte imasu...

Monika Sensei, Sayonara!

As the letter shows, C, after one year in Japan, appears to master simple conversations needed in everyday life, but neither uses *keigo* nor structurally complicated phrases. He still has problems with joshi (*Gakuseitachi issho ni ga Nozawa Onsen e ikimashita/Orimpiku tame ni...*), grammatical features (*owatta kara,...*) and appears to make extensive use of word-for-word-translations from Spanish (*wasuremashita... tabun...* appears to be a direct translation of the Spanish phrase *olvide...* which is often used in such a context). While a number of errors still exist, C does, in fact, make active use of the grammatical features studied during the 6-month intensive course of Japanese and is able to express his own ideas in a natural way. C complained about having too few opportunities for practising the grammar learnt during the 6-month course of Japanese; however, there is no doubt that the grammar taught in these six months serves as a good base for everyday communication in Japanese.

2.3.4. The social aspect during the observation period

C showed a very positive and straightforward attitude towards getting into contact with Japanese (He also made active use of programs like the Home Visit Program).

Problems: C experienced that in some of his "friendships" with Japanese he was "used" as an English teacher, hampering the inclination to form closer relationships; his closest friends, therefore, turned out to be foreign students.

From the above we can learn the following: It is often claimed that by learning a language in the country in which the target language is spoken, one has access to a natural approach towards this language, learning it faster and easier, as there are a lot more opportunities for finding friends who speak the language, and, consequently, also more chances for practising it. However, this assumption does not necessarily turn out to be correct. For a native speaker of the target language it is extremely tiring and requires special linguistic knowledge to lead a conversation with a foreigner who does not have sufficient command of the language. Usually, this function is carried out by people who either have a deep personal relationship with that foreigner, Japanese with a "volunteer spirit" or teachers feeling obliged to talk with their students. Japanese people not belonging to any of the above categories usually avoid conversations with foreigners. Hence, it is only natural for the students to engage in relationships with other foreign students (who are confronted with the same situation as themselves) rather than with Japanese.

2.3.5. Problems that remain to be solved

C's case is indicative of the problems faced by many foreign students. After half a year of Japanese it is practically impossible for a foreign student to speak enough Japanese so as to follow ordinary University classes or read reference books in Japanese. The question arising for the teacher is how to handle these cases. Should students be allowed to get through the Master's course by writing reports and undergoing exams in English or should they be treated just like any other student? How should the Japanese classes be organized? Should everyday Japanese be taught or should these classes try to focus on the students' subjects of study and teach technical Japanese after half a year?

This is an ongoing question all university teachers in Japan are confronted with at some point of time. The field of *Japanese for Specific Purposes* has already been developed up to a very high level; nevertheless, it is still far from being able to cater for all the specific needs of the students. Consequently, there are only two options. Either the teacher presents to the students his or her own, carefully prepared teaching material, or the students study their specialties directly under their specific advisors. At this stage of L2 acquisition, it is practically impossible to expect natural acquisition of the second language.

2.4. Test person D (retrospective self-study of the author): Austria, 30 years old, foreign researcher, female, time in Japan: Oct. 1991-Apr. 1993; Apr. 1997 —

2.4.1. Social background, situation at home

Before coming to Japan for the first time (in 1991, as a research student), D had already studied Japanese for 4 years in Vienna. She went back to Austria in April 1993, starting to work as an interpreter and translator until April 1997, when she was awarded a scholarship for doing linguistic research in Japan.

2.4.2. D's language and social integration at the beginning of the study (October 1991, first time in Japan)

Language proficiency level at the beginning of D's first stay in Japan (Oct. 1991): advanced (Nihongo Noryoku Shiken: level 1). There still existed problems concerning writing, understanding Japanese TV, university lectures and seminars (mostly on old Japanese literature) and jokes. Social integration in Japan: D had lots of contacts in Japan, both with Japanese and with foreign students of the dormitory. However, contacts at University were extremely sparse.

2.4.3. The language aspect during the observation period

During the first year, a marked improvement in spoken Japanese was observed, which, however, appeared not to improve after a certain level. In terms of attempting to gauge this level, it can be said that D was able to understand most conversations until they became too technical or contained too many special phrases (like *bachi ga atatta*, *kubi o hineru* etc.). She was able to express everything she wanted, but there was a large gap between her amount of active and passive vocabulary. D was misguided in believing that she could constantly improve her Japanese by learning like a child, i.e. by just living in Japan and having superficial contacts with Japanese, but this seemed to be true only up to a certain level.

When D arrived in Japan for the second time, in May 1997, her level of spoken Japanese

seemed not to be very much different from when she left Japan in 1993. However, due to her translating activities, her understanding of written Japanese had improved. Nevertheless, the speed with which she improved appeared to be much slower than in earlier years.

Clearly, in order for a foreigner (an adult with a certain level of education) to reach a level of proficiency in the second language that goes beyond everyday conversations, *language learning*, brought about either by the person's own will or forced upon him or her — always depending on the circumstances — is absolutely vital.

2.4.4. The social aspect during the observation period

D's social contacts in Japan can be classified into two groups. One consisted of colleagues, teachers, friends (both Japanese and foreigners, without any difference), the other people D had only very casual contacts with (mostly Japanese who wanted to improve their English or who wanted to have a foreigner as a friend). However, with both groups, D had the feeling of being fully accepted in their societies, which she mainly attributed to her ability of speaking Japanese. Usually it is asserted that contact with people of the target language (or an environment that creates opportunities for these contacts) positively influences on language acquisition. Applying this theory to the four students of our study, we can say that it holds true for A and up to a certain level also for B. However, this is not the case with C and D; here, almost the opposite could be observed: the higher the grade of language proficiency, the more likely the student was of engaging in, and deepening, personal relationships with Japanese. The difference between C and D lies in the fact that D (in this case by her own will) succeeded in achieving a higher level of Japanese, even without a teacher, whereas C was not given the opportunities to do so. Usually, the factor that decides on whether an advanced grade of Japanese is reached or not, is studying with a teacher and *classroom language learning*.

3. Summary and Outlook

The present study has been concerned with the L2 acquisition and learning processes of four students as well as their relationships to the students' social integration into Japan. Among these four students,

A can be seen as a representative of children learning Japanese/beginner

B can be seen as a representative of children learning Japanese/advanced

C can be seen as a representative of adults (foreign students)/beginner

D can be seen as a representative of adults (foreign students)/advanced.

The results from the observations and analyses give us an idea on (a) the language acquisition progress of A-D and (b) the problems these four groups face, both on the language and the social integration level. Seen from the perspective of long-term L2 acquisition and integration into the Japanese society as well as engagement into Japanese studies, the following points have become obvious:

- (I) One must not put too much emphasis on second language acquisition, thereby neglecting the aspect of language learning.
- (II) The role and degree to which learning a language is deemed important increases with the students' age.

(III)The role of the teacher in guiding the students and preparing teaching material is becoming increasingly important.

Since the teaching methods based on structural linguistics predominant in the 1960ies decreased in popularity, teaching methods that concentrated on a one-sided teaching program by the teacher have generally been the target of sharp criticism. *Learning* instead of *education*, followed by *acquisition* instead of *learning* became the catchphrases of the 1970s and 1980s. During this period, a lot of scientific papers were written which reduced the role of the teacher, classroom language learning and linguistic education itself to a minimum. These papers, however, cannot claim to be a true reflection of the situation. As Yamaoka points out, a counter-movement has started in the 1990s focussing on research concerning formal instruction in second language acquisition. Thus, instructed second language acquisition is placed into the center of their reflections and work. (Yamaoka, 1997, p. 253)

Finally, consider some of the answers the four test subjects gave to a number of questions they were asked six months after the beginning of the study:

1. (6 months after the beginning of the study:)

Would you prefer to continue/increase the number of classes of Japanese? (yes, no, don't know). Specify the reasons!

	continue/increase	Reasons
A	no	boring
B	yes	more fun than the normal classes, easier to understand
C	don't know	no (because I don't want to lose time and start with my own research), yes (I want to be able to read the reference material in the field of computer science which is all in Japanese)
D	don't know	would like to have classes where more emphasis is put on practical things like writing business letters, bills etc.

2. What would you personally want to be taught?

- A Anything that is not so boring
- B Explanations concerning the things we learn in the other classes(Mathematics,..), explanations of homeworks etc.
- C Vocabulary, phrases etc. of my speciality (computer science), help with reading reference material in Japanese
- D Business Japanese (business letters, CVs etc.)

We see that the feelings of the Japanese adult students (C and D) concerning their classes of Japanese are mixed between expectations and disappointment. While at the beginning of their stay in Japan the students' main purpose is to learn Japanese in order to be able to communicate in everyday life, this purpose usually changes after six months, when they start to study their fields of specialization. It is here that they expect additional contents to be taught in the Japanese classes.

From the above study it has become clear that *instruction* and *learning* are factors indispensable for language acquisition — however, the process will only be successful if the

teacher brings in new ideas into his or her teaching methods and contents of the Japanese class in order to adapt to the needs of his students. We would like the present study to be another step in this direction and hope that it helps to show the importance of *language learning* and *instruction* in second language acquisition.

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