On Second-Language Acquisition: The Effects of Learning German

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Orientation to Learning German:

The acquisition of German as a second language may have implications for the development of second-language acquisition.
relations were reported to exist between the integrative orientation and second language proficiency (Oller, Hudson and Liu 1977), while at other times (Chihara and Oller 1978), no significant relation was obtained between either orientation and proficiency.

In an attempt to reconcile these divergent findings, Clement and Kruidenier (1983) examined the orientations of eight groups of students: francophones and anglophones, living in multicultural and uniculural environments, studying English or French or Spanish as a second language. Four orientations were obtained which were common to all eight groups of learners: "Students learn a second language to achieve pragmatic goals (i.e., the instrumental orientation), to travel, to seek new friendships, and to acquire knowledge" (Clement and Kruidenier 1983: 286). Five other orientations were specific to certain subsets of language learners, and two aspects were proposed as influences on appearance of these factors. The first aspect was related to the relative dominance or nondominance of the language learner's group in comparison to that of the target language group. The second aspect was related to the opportunity for immediate contact with the target language group. Kruidenier and Clement (1986) further showed that the four orientations common to all groups were significant predictors of the individual's motivation to learn a second language.

Although Clement and Kruidenier (1983) emphasized the importance of contextual variables in second language acquisition, they did not consider apparently important aspect of that context: the ethnocultural background of the learner. In some cases, students of a second language are learning parents' or ancestors' mother tongue (Danesi 1986). Some studies indicated that within this subset of learners the patterns of integrative and instrumental orientations may not appear as clearly as originally defined by Gardner and Lambert (1972). For example, Anisfeld and Lambert (1981) found that Jewish learners of Hebrew who were asked to items indicative of learning the language for instrumental reasons achieved greater proficiency. It was suggested that (Anisfeld and Lambert 1972) that an "instrumental" orientation of second language learning such as employment may, in fact, be integrative orientation, since entering into the target language group requires extensive participation in the target language group.

In another study, Tenebaum, Edwards, and Hudson (1975) found that students of Spanish with a Spanish-speaking background who used their Spanish skills to use through employment in the local Spanish-speaking community did more poorly on a Cloze test designed to measure proficiency than students who studied Spanish for other reasons. Given the results of the Tenebaum et al. study, the first purpose of the present study is to compare the orientations of students learning a "heritage" language with learning the same language as a second language.

The second purpose of this study is to investigate the orientations to learning German: The Effects of Language Heritage individual's motivation to learn German. The German community in Canada represents the second largest minority language group in Canada (Statistics Canada 1987). Studies on the orientations of German language learners have produced conflicting conclusions. While an early study (Bausenhart 1971) suggested that more instrumentally-oriented students were enrolled in German Language Schools, a later study (Bausenhart 1984) indicated that more integratively-oriented students were enrolled in university courses of German. If Clement and Kruidenier's (1983) conclusions regarding the effect of context are accurate, the contradictory results may be due to the fact that the two studies involved students living in different contexts.

In the present case it may be, for example, that students with a German family background would be more "pragmatically" oriented than students with no German background. Also, for the former students, the instrumental orientation may be more related to motivation and second language achievement than for the latter. This study is meant to assess these hypothetical relationships.

A final purpose of the present study regards the theoretical status of orientations as constructs related to second language acquisition. Contemporary research theorizing on the social psychology of second language acquisition have upheld the central role which they were once attributed. For example, Kruidenier and Clement's (1985) model focuses on the determining role of attitudes on motivation and second language achievement, while Clement's (1984) model stresses the importance of frequency and quality of inter-ethnic contact, communication networks, and self-confidence in one's ability to use the second language.

For the present study, the model is meant also to examine the relation of orientations to other variables which are currently considered to play an important role in the second language learning process, such as attitudes, self-confidence, motivation, and aspects of inter-ethnic contact.

Summary, the purposes of the present study are threefold: to delineate the orientations of another population of language learners, study the motivational characteristics of students with a German background to those students without such a background, and examine the relations between orientations and those aspects which have gained importance, such as attitude, motivational strength, aspects of contact, and self-confidence.

Fourteen (114) students registered in first-year German classes at the University of Ottawa and at Carleton University participated in the study. Women and men comprised 62% and 38% of the sample. They ranged in age from 17 to 50 years, with a mean age of 22 percent of the students claimed English as the language which they often. Forty-one percent indicated that either one or both
acquainted with how people live in German-speaking areas, was related to a desire to become familiar with this group's art and literature, to a desire to speak German in order to understand the problems which these people may experience as a minority ethnic group, as well as to a desire to participate more freely in other cultural groups. This factor seems best described as a Knowledge orientation.

Following the factor analysis of orientation items, indices of each of the five orientations were compiled for each individual. This computation was done by averaging the scores obtained on the items which uniquely identified each factor. This procedure was followed, rather than computing factor scores, in order that each orientation score would correspond to a specific sub-set of items. Asterisks in Table 1 identify the items included in the computation of the respective orientation indices. The remaining analyses were meant to assess the relationship between orientations and the other constructs involved in this study. As a first step, a multivariate analysis of variance was computed to compare students with and without a German-speaking background.

**Multivariate Analysis of Variance**

The results of a multivariate analysis of variance comparing students with and without German background on the orientation indices and the scores on the attitude, motivation, quality and frequency of contact, and self-confidence measures revealed a significant difference between those students learning German who did not have a German heritage and those who did have a German-speaking background [Wilks = .739, $F(11,94) = 3.02, p = .023$]. Examination of the univariate results suggested that students with a German-speaking background had more contact with speakers of German outside the school setting ($M = 2.91$, $F(1,104) = 23.28$, $p < .001$). They were also more likely to learn the second language in order to identify with and/or to influence members of the target language group ($M = 2.73$) than the other students ($M = 2.38; F(1,104) = 5.10, p = .026$). As well, they experienced greater self-confidence when using the second language ($M = 13.790; F(1,104) = 8.86, p = .004$).

**Factor Analysis**

In order to delineate the relationships between the orientations and the other constructs, the corresponding indices were included in a second factor analysis. In addition, for theoretical interest as well as because of the results obtained in the previous multivariate analysis, German background, coded as a dichotomous variable (with or without), was included in the analysis. In this analysis, a principal components extraction procedure was again used, followed by a Varimax rotation. As can be seen in Table 2, four factors emerged, accounting for 47.5% of the variance.

The first factor accounted for 23.3% of the variance, and had an eigenvalue of 2.80. It received appreciable loadings (i.e., greater than .3) from six variables (items 1, 8, 2, 11, 10, and 3). This factor indicated that a positive attitude toward the target language group, a desire to learn the language for reasons of friendship, high quality of contact, and a desire to learn German for knowledge and identity-influence purposes would be predictive of higher motivation. Because of the inclusion of attitudinal and motivational properties in this cluster, along with the desire to identify with the second language group for socio-affective reasons, this factor was considered to reflect an Integrative Motive.

The second factor accounted for 11.1% of the variance, and had an eigenvalue of 1.33. It evidenced appreciable loadings from four variables (items 5, 6, 10, and 4). Those students who experience high frequency of contact with the target language group were more likely to have a German-speaking background. They were also more likely to be learning German for reasons of identity and influence. As well, self-confidence loaded substantially on this factor. Because of the strong influence of the German culture and contact with German, this cluster of variables was labelled a German Environment dimension.

The third factor accounted for 7.1% of the variance, with an eigenvalue of .86. It received appreciable loadings from three variables (items 9, 8, and 7). It was most strongly defined by Travel and Instrumental orientations, and less strongly by the Friendship orientation. This combination suggested a pragmatic element, and was, therefore, labelled as a Pragmatic Orientation dimension.

The fourth factor accounted for 6% of the variance, and had an eigenvalue
The effects of language training and education on

 experimental design and analysis. This section was taken to cater

for the purpose of investigating the influence of experience on

children's learning outcomes. It was found that children who had

received training in a foreign language were more advanced in

their language skills and comprehension abilities than those who

had not received such training. This finding supports the notion

that early language training can have significant benefits on

future language development.

Discussion

The results of this study were consistent with previous research on

the effects of language training on children's cognitive development.

It was also found that children who received early training in a

foreign language were more likely to develop a deeper understanding

of language structure and grammar. This suggests that language

training can play a crucial role in promoting cognitive development

in children.

In conclusion, the results of this study highlight the importance

of early language training in children's development. It is

important for educators and policymakers to consider the

benefits of language training and to provide opportunities for

children to receive such training.

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