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Introduction

Unlike natural language acquisition where new linguistic structures and expressions are acquired and used in real life contexts, in the FL-class such contexts are usually missing (Birkenbihl 1992, 153). Therefore, the FL-classroom is dominated by "medium-orientated communication" where almost every utterance only serves the purpose of practicing new linguistic patterns (Butzkamm 1989, 59; 1995, 192). This results in typical artificial classroom interactions like "Is this a lamp?" "Yes, this is a lamp" or superficial mini-dialogues which would not mean a thing to anyone were they not textbook dialogues (Butzkamm 1995, 189). However, since "message-orientated communication" in which you say what you really mean, clearly shows whether and to what extent new linguistic structures and expressions have become embedded and can be used creatively (Dodson 1967, 52; Kasjan 1993, 132), the question arises as to how this kind of communication could be established in the FL-class, particularly in the elementary courses.

Current problems of German-FLT in Japan

German is almost exclusively taught as a second foreign language within the bounds of the courses in general education at university level. Most students study German for only one year with approximately 60 lessons. Since knowledge of German does not improve prospects in the Japanese labor market (Coulmas 1994, 79f.) and since German does not play an important role as a language of science any more (Kakinuma 1994; Mori 1994), it is mostly only studied to meet the requirements of the university curriculum.

German was and still is predominantly taught by means of the "grammar translation method" (Yamaji 1994, 232; Schröder 1997, 168). During the first semester the students have to get familiar with what is supposed to be the systematic German grammar, starting from the conjunction of the present tense and finishing with the subjunctive mood. Classroom interaction mostly confines itself to having students translate certain German sentences into Japanese with the aid of a bilingual dictionary. In the second

semester the students are considered to be able to decode all kinds of German literature, ranging from Goethe to Thomas Mann and Heinrich Böll. Finally, after the first academic year the struggle with the German language ends for the vast majority of the students with a sigh of relief.

However, dissatisfaction with the present situation of German FLT is not limited to the students, but is also shared by the vast majority of the Japanese language teachers wishing to see it improved (Yamaji 1994, 230). Therefore, the reason for the durability of the "grammar translation method" should also be attributed to the fact that the various approaches by mostly native speakers to teach German by means of so-called "communicative methods" did not achieve satisfactory results.

For teachers using such methods often try to avoid the mother tongue of the learners and spent a lot of time using the direct-method procedure of meaning conveyance (Dodson 1967, 52). On the one hand, this makes it necessary to make concessions to the content of the textbooks since they have to be suitable for the procedure of monolingual meaning conveyance. However, the more time is spent for meaning conveyance the less time will be availible for creative use of the language. And it should be remembered that German is taught to students without any previous knowledge whose compulsory curriculum usually does not exceed 60 lessons.

Moreover, even language teachers that spent a lot of time explaining new words and patterns in the target-language, generally fall back into the mother tongue of the learners when they have to deal with all the little problems of everyday school-life like organizing parties or examinations, scolding or encouraging the students, giving instructions or information, in other words, when they say what they really mean (Butzkamm 1989, 199f.). Therefore, when "communicative methods" are used in the German FL-class for Japanese students the use of the target-language is often limited to "medium-orientated communication".

Trying to solve the problem: the "Bilingual Method"

FLT at university level should take into consideration that even learners who wish to acquire communicative skills in the first place, do not want the lessons to be confined to everyday-conservation. Thus, even in elementary FL-courses we should strive for a teaching method which quickly enables the learners to acquire useful linguistic patterns and to use them not only creatively but also in a target-appropriate way. On the other hand a favorable teaching method should lead the learners to a sort of communication which is rich in context and to creative use of the foreign language.

Trying to fulfill these demands, my German FL-class for Japanese students over the last years have been oriented toward the "Bilingual Method" (Dodson 1967; Butzkamm 1980). All classroom-management is in principle done in the target-language, because instructions like "Take your copies, please!" and questions like "Is it too hot? Shall we open the window?" or information like "There will be no class on Friday" are clear instances of "message-orientated communication". Useful expressions for classroom management are partly practiced by means of the "TPR-method".

In addition, real life contexts are artificially created by means of role-playing which assist the subconscious learning process as much as actual experience would (Birkenbihl 1992, 153). Dialogues of around 60 words, which may also contain some narrative parts, serve as scripts for such role-playing. Since language-related explanations are, without exception, made with the aid of Japanese, these dialogues can be predominantly selected with regard to content, without paying much attention to lexical and grammatical progression. The dialogs must be easy to perform, their content must both attract the learners and they must contain useful patterns for classroom management.

The following dialogue which is partly adopted from the ASSiMiL Textbook German with Ease (Schneider/Stettler 1987, 1) is the script for the very first such role-playing. It does not only contain useful patterns and vocabulary for classroom magement or conversation in the classroom like "Let's take a break!" "Excuse me!" "I am tired" "Why don't you ..." "I keep on ..." but it is also suitable for illustrating one of the most difficult parts of German grammar for Japanese students, i.e. the gender of the nouns and the three articles "der/die/das". The following dialogue is usually introduced in the third lesson of my German FL-class for students of the first semester.

1) Frau Teufel: Frau Wolf, ich bin müde. Machen wir eine Pause!
2) Frau Wolf: Gehen Sie doch kurz ins Café! Ich arbeite allein weiter.
3) Frau Teufel: Herr Ober, der Tee ist kalt.
4) Ober: Wie ist der Tee?
5) Frau Teufel: Er ist kalt.
6) Ober: Oh, Entschuldigung!
7) Frau Teufel: Herr Ober! Der Tee ist jetzt heiß, aber die Tasse ...
8) Ober: Ja, die Tasse?
9) Frau Teufel: Sie ist zu klein.

1) Mrs Teufel: Mrs Wolf, I am tired. Let's take a break!

2) Mrs Wolf: Why don't you go to the café for a while? I keep on working by myself.
3) Mrs Teufel: Waiter, the tea is cold.
4) Waiter: What is the tea like?
5) Mrs Teufel: It is cold.
6) Waiter: Oh, excuse me.
7) Mrs Teufel: Waiter! The tea is hot now, but the cup ...
8) Waiter: Yes, the cup?
9) Mrs. Teufel: It is too small.

The dialogues are practiced in class sentence by sentence so intensively that the learners are able to perform them offhand, with native-like intonation and appropriate gestures and miming. Every sentence of each dialogue is first pronounced, then translated into Japanese, and once more pronounced by the teacher. The students repeat the sentence in chorus or individually without looking at the written word although their textbooks are open. Through such practice the spoken word becomes the main stimuli while the written word only serves as a support for this stimuli (Butzkamm 1980, 54) without causing interference from English pronunciation which can often be observed in the German FL-class in Japan. Therefore, Students are only allowed to take a brief glance at the written word when they forgot the content of a sentence. Furthermore, since wrong intonation of whole phrases causes much more severe problems for comprehension than a wrongly pronounced single phoneme would (Hirschfeld 1995, 179), students are strongly advised to pay close attention to the correct intonation of the whole sentence and not to pay much attention the pronunciation of any single phoneme.

When translating into the mother tongue of the learners we always give the functional equivalent of an utterance. However, in addition to such equivalents, we give literal and formal translations "if the internal structure is not understood, i.e. if the utterance, or parts of it, remain for the learner a memorized chunk or an unanalyzed whole" (Butzkamm 1985, 89). For example, when translating into English we will give *Let's take a break!* as a functional equivalent of the utterance *Machen wir eine Pause!* but add **Make we a break* as a formal translation which enables the learners to work out how the German sentences function. If we consider the two utterances *Wie ist der Tee? Er ist kalt* we give *What ist the tea like? It is cold* as a functional equivalent but add *How is the tea? He is cold* as a literal translation. Thus, illustrating the meaning of the linguistic term "gender" by showing that a masculine noun is substituted by the masculine personal pronoun even if does not stands for living being.

The same techniques can be used when translating into Japanese. For the above mentioned utterances *Wie ist der Tee? Er ist kalt* we give *sono kôcha-ga dô ka shimashita ka - sameteiru no yo* as a functional equivalent but add *sono kôcha-wa dô desu ka. kare-wa tsumetai* as a literal translation. If we consider the utterance *Gehen Sie doch kurz ins Café* we give *Chotto kissaten-ni ittara ikaga desu ka* as a functional equivalent but add **iku anata-wa shitara dô mijikaiku naka-e kissaten* as a formal translation. Although such literal and formal translations may sound odd to English and Japanese ears they provide the learner "with transparent syntactical data". The foreign language is mapped onto the native language so as to make the learners recognize the foreign pattern and identify its components" (Butzkamm 1985, 91). Thus, such translation are much more effective and economical, i.e. less time consuming, than linguistic explanations and therefore save time which can be used for the creative use of the foreign language.

After the role-play their phrase-patterns are modified and tied into the already existing linguistic repertoire of the learners by various bilingual oral pattern drills and monolingual oral exercises. The bilingual pattern-drills usually begin with a modal sentence from a well-practised role-play dialogue. The teacher gives the Japanese functional equivalent of this model sentence as a stimulus, the students react to this stimulus by giving its German translation. Then elements of the model sentence will be exchanged, new elements will be added and the structure of the sentence will be transformed. But usually only one element should be substituted when going from one sentence to the next. Whenever possible the teacher breaks away from the drill using the practised sentences to initiate a conversation.

During monolingual exercises the students react to German stimuli like answering questions about the practised role-play dialogues or questions like "Where do you come from?" "What is your hobby?" or "Is this German class interesting?". Furthermore, the teacher may have the students react in German to stimuli like "You speak German well" "I love you" or "You are lazy as hell". However, we should keep in mind that this kind of communication is predominantly medium-orientated, since its main purpose is not to exchange of new information but to practise linguistic patterns although it could lead to message orientated communication.

After these various exercises the learners write and perform their own role-play dialogues.

Conclusions

Using this method the learners were more quickly enabled to use new linguistic

patterns creatively and in a target-appropriate way. Analyzing the results of the final written examinations, we know that even the gender of the nouns and the declension of the adjectives were used target-appropriate by the majority of the learners, although in the examinations no such grammatical hints were given. After 50 lessons of German the students had an active vocabulary of around 400 words and a productive knowledge of the so called "basic German grammar", excluding the relative pronouns, the passive voice, the past perfect and some aspects of the conjunctive mood. However, the writing skills of the students by far exceeded their speaking skills.

Since the target-language was predominantly used for classroom-management, the students acquired good listing skills, and since the oral use of the target language was practised extensively by means of role-play and various exercises, the students also acquired good "medium-orientated" communicative skills. "Message-orientated communication" was mostly limited to one- or two-word utterances like "Thank you" "Guten Tag" or "Herr Kasjan!". But perhaps there is not much more to achieve after 50 lessons of FLT.

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