



Learning vocabulary in the digital world: A case study of English and German in Facebook language functions

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to shed light on the concept of how first foreign language (L2) and second foreign language (L3) in the context of non-native speakers can be enhanced. In this regard, language functions of Facebook in English and German are examined in terms of a comparative study in the context of non-native speakers and the following research questions are focused: 1) What can German teachers consider when using Facebook in the class?; 2) What kind of effective teaching materials and tasks can be employed based on the efficient language teaching performance?; and 3) What practical recommendations can be provided to foreign language (FL) teachers concerning effective language pedagogy? It is suggested in this study that comparing the knowledge of German with what learners have learned previously, namely the knowledge of English, can enhance the competence of learners when learning German language. Regarding data analysis, the language functions of the two languages are analyzed qualitatively which will lead to some practical recommendations for foreign language teachers concerning effective language pedagogy in the context of the first foreign language (L2) and the second foreign language (L3). Additionally, the results of this study may be applied to develop the competence of students to their fullest potential and to enable them to compete with graduates from other institutions and countries in the ASEAN and ASEAN Economics Community.

Keywords: Facebook language functions, Comparative study, L2, L3

Introduction

English can be understood as the Global language widely used around the globe. In Thailand, English is taught as the first Foreign Language (L2). To enhance the English proficiency of students, Khon Kaen University in Thailand has launched the new policy in terms of using English as a means of instruction. This means that some courses taught in English should be offered to students to prepare themselves for the workplace. To reinforce this notion and to support the policy, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences as one of the organizations attached to Khon Kaen University also planned to organize a training course for the lecturers to provide insight into the concept of English-medium teaching and how to design a course when being taught in English. Inevitably, the lecturers of the Language Programs (French, German, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean) are expected to provide some courses taught in English to foster the ability of students as well as to develop the competence of students to their fullest potential to enable them to compete with graduates from other countries in the ASEAN and ASEAN Economics

community. Apart from English as L2, learners may transfer the previously gained knowledge and relate their learning styles, experience, obstacles or problems to their L3 learning to acquire the third language effectively and efficiently. In this regard, relating the knowledge of learners to their previously gained knowledge may enable them to learn successfully. Prior to German, it is obvious that Thai learners learn English as the first foreign language (L2). Thus, comparing the L3 knowledge (German) with the L2 knowledge (English) can be an efficient learning strategy as these two languages have some language features in common which will cause learners to find some similarities for their language studies.

In relation to language education and technologies, Facebook is popular among users around the globe. In terms of academic purposes, Facebook is used to communicate between instructors and learners. Regarding foreign language teaching, Facebook offers various languages which are widely used by people in many countries. Hence, it is recommended that examining the language functions of Facebook for language education in Thailand, specifically English

and German, is vital for learners in the context of non-native speakers.

Previous studies on L2 and L3 in Germany and Thailand

Hufeisen (2010) mentions the role of L2 for L3 learning as follows:

Beim Lernen einer zweiten Fremdsprache tritt nicht nur eine weitere Fremdsprache hinzu, sondern das Lernen einer Fremdsprache wiederholt sich und bedeutet den erwähnten *qualitativen* Unterschied zum Lernen einer L2.

Erfahrungen mit dem Lernen der ersten Fremdsprache können auf das Lernen der zweiten übertragen werden (wenn sie sich z. B. als gut funktionierend und erfolgreich erwiesen haben) oder völlig vermieden werden (wenn sie beispielsweise als ungeeignet empfunden wurden); Vergleiche zwischen den Lernprozessen und/oder den Sprachen können helfen. Der gezielte Einsatz bestimmter Lernstrategien bei typischen Fremdsprachenaufgaben [...]

(Hufeisen, 2010, p. 203)

From the citation, English as L2 can affect L3 learning. Learners may transfer the previously gained knowledge and relate their learning styles, experience, obstacles or problems to their L3 Learning to acquire the third language effectively and efficiently.

Watcharakaweesilp (2015) studies Teaching German through English in the Thai context. He focuses on the topic *Telephoning* in his study based on the concept of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). He states,

According to Ackerl (2007), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a rather recent teaching approach in second language education, which enjoys great popularity and has already been introduced in many countries.

Van de Craen et al (2007) state that Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a powerful and empowering way to learn languages. As a result, most CLIL research is policy-driven research. While we do not want to question this, it is equally

legitimate to look at CLIL from a completely different point of view, namely, to consider CLIL as an innovative approach to language pedagogical practices in line with modern research about language learning and teaching as well as motivational aspects, cognitive development and learning and the brain.

In his study, he designed the tasks and produced materials in class, the learning outcomes in three pillars based on *Teaching German for Business Communication* were considered as follows:

A: Content-related learning outcomes

- 1) Learners should be able to make telephone calls and receive calls.
- 2) Learners should be able to use specific vocabulary and expressions for telephoning.

Strategies:

- 1) Instructor accesses and builds on students' existing knowledge by *Cut and Paste* and *Visual Aids*.
- 2) Learners repackaging the information in a user-friendly way by providing logical sequences.
- 3) Instructor encourages learners to think critically and creatively by changing the layout.

B: Language-related learning outcomes

- 1) Learners should be able to compare and transfer knowledge.
- 2) Learners should be able to correctly use vocabulary and expressions for telephoning.

Strategies:

- 1) Instructor uses graphic organizers to help learners chunk and repackaging the information by inserting comparable words in English.
- 2) Instructor simplifies the text by giving learners pieces of papers first instead of the whole text.
- 3) Learners underline the key words or the words they know.

C: Learning skills-related learning outcomes

- 1) Learners should be able to work individually and co-operatively in groups.
- 2) Learners should be able to develop their language skills based on new vocabulary and expressions.

Strategies:

- 1) Instructor develop critical thinking by setting tasks which move gradually from lower to higher order thinking. (Listening + underlining the words you think they know + matching + finding definitions + roleplays + summarizing)
- 2) Instructor reinforces and fosters learners' knowledge by roleplays and summarizing.
- 3) Learners listen to the conversation and put the sentences in order.
- 4) Learners match the underlined words with comparable words in English and find the meanings.
- 5) Learners role play the situations.

In fact, the findings suggest that the class instructor needs to consider:

- 1) Content-related learning outcomes;
- 2) Language-related learning outcomes;
- 3) Learning skills-related learning outcomes when teaching German through English based on the CLIL.

Having considered the learning outcomes in the three dimensions, the researcher specifically selected the suitable situations of telephoning in German and designed the tasks in class as follows:

Task 1: The class instructor shows the picture concerning telephoning and let the learners guess or anticipate what they are learning:

Task 2: The class instructor gives students many pieces of paper and has the learners put the pieces of paper in order.

Then, he reads two telephone conversations out loud.

Students must listen to the instructor and put the pieces of paper in order again based on what they heard. After they have finished, the class instructor will repeat these two telephone conversations so that the students can check the correct order.

Task 3: The class instructor shows students the conversations. Now, students are supposed to read the conversations on their own and go to task 4.

Dialog 1

Telefonist: Firma Lego, Was kann ich für Sie tun?

Frau Schön: Schön, guten Tag. Ich möchte bitte mit Herrn Kümmel sprechen.

Telefonist: Wie ist Ihr name, bitte?

Frau Schön: Mein Name ist Schön.

Telefonist: Einen Moment bitte, Ich verbinde Sie.

Frau Schön: Danke.

Dialog 2

Sekretärin: Firma Bos, kann ich Ihnen helfen?

Herr Kümmel: Guten Morgen, würden Sie mich bitte Frau Schön verbinden.

Sekretärin: Tut mir Leid, Frau Schön ist nicht im Haus. Möchten Sie eine Nachricht hinterlassen?

Herr Kümmel: Nein. Danke. Ich rufe sie nochmal an.

Sekretärin: Auf Wiederhören.

Herr Kümmel: Auf Wiederhören.

(Adapted from Buscha, A. & Linthout, G., 2005, pp. 107-109)

Task 4: Work individually; underline the words that you know?

Task 5: Work in pairs, find the comparable words given in the table.

Table 1. For student A and B:

Verb		Adverb		Noun		Pronoun	
Ger	Engl	Ger	Eng	Ger	Eng	Ger	Eng
Kann	.....	.....	not	.....	operator	ich	.....
.....	do			.....	company	Sie	.....
möchte	.....			Frau	.....	.....	your
sprechen	.....			Herr	.....	mich	.....
verbinde	.....			Name	.....	sie	.....
helfen	.....			Moment	.....	
.....	'd like			Sekretärin	.....	
rufe...an	.....			.....	office		

Table 2. For student A

Preposition		Collocation / Chunk		Expression / Chunk	
German	English	German	English	German	English
.....	for	.....	leave a	.....	What can I do for you?
.....	with	.....	message	.....	I'd like to talk to Mr. Kümel.
				.....	What is your name, please?
				.....	Mein name is ...
				.....	Hold on! / Just a minute!
				.....	I'm connecting you.
				.....	Would you connect me to Mrs...
				.....	I'm sorry.
				.....	Mrs. Schön is not in the office.
				.....	I'll call you again.

Table 2. For student B

Preposition		Collocation / Chunk		Expression / Chunk	
German	English	German	English	German	English
für	eine Nachricht	.....	-Was kann ich für Sie tun?	.....
mit	hinterlassen?	.....	-Ich möchte bitte mit Herrn	.....
				Kümmel sprechen.	
				-Wie ist Ihr Name, bitte?	.....
				-Mein Name ist.....	.....
				-Einen Moment bitte.	.....
				-Ich verbinde Sie.	.....
				-Würden Sie mich bitte	
				Frau Schön verbinden.	.....
				-Tut mir Leid.	.....
				-Frau Schön ist nicht im Haus.	.....
				-Ich rufe sie nochmal an.	.....

(Watcharakaweesilp, 2015, pp. 279-256)

To create various activities regarding comparable words, students A and B are supposed to do the same activity for Table 1 by finding comparable words both in German and English. But for Table 2, student A has to find the German words equivalent to the English words given. In contrast, student B is required to find the English words with the same (Watcharakaweesilp, 2015, pp. 279-256) tasks are designed and materials are produced in class by creating tables for language summary so students can study and compare vocabulary of the two languages.

To conclude, the insights gained in this study can lead to the new teaching approaches and methods of conducting research which lies on the instruction in the context of L2 and L3.

Research Methodology

Research questions

Specifically, this study mainly focuses on the following research questions:

- 1) What can German teachers consider when using Facebook in the class?
- 2) What kind of effective *teaching materials and tasks* can be employed based on the efficient language teaching performance?
- 3) What practical recommendations can be provided to foreign language (FL) teachers concerning effective language pedagogy?

Data collection and analysis

The language functions of Facebook were collected and analyzed qualitatively in terms of linguistic studies.

Language functions of Facebook: a comparative study between English and German (L2 AND L3)

This part is illustrated according to the research questions.

Research question 1: *What can German teachers*

consider when using Facebook in the class?

In the first step of learning, language functions of Facebook at the vocabulary level should be considered. For instance, a group of words concerning feelings between the two languages can be compared as the following:

Table 3. Languages

German	English	German	English
fröhlich	Happy	gesegnet	blessed
geliebt	Loved	traurig	sad
dankbar	Thankful	aufgelegt	excited
verliebt	in love	verrückt	crazy
sehr dankbar	Greatful	glücklich	blissful
fantastisch	fantastic	albern	silly
festlich	Festive	wunderbar	wonderful
cool	cool	belustigt	amused
erholt	relaxed	positiv	positive
entspannt	chill	hoffnungsvoll	hopeful
freudig	joyful	müde	tired
motiviert	motivated	stolz	proud
allein	alone	nachdenklich	thoughtful
nostalgisch	nostalgic	zornig	angry
krank	sick	erfreut	delighted
ausgelaugt	Drained	bewegt	emotional
selbstbewusst	confident	hervorragend	awesome
frech	Fresh	entschlossen	determined
erschöpft	exhausted	genervt	annoyed
froh	glad	glücklich	lucky
gelangweilt	bored	todunglücklich	heartbroken
schlafrig	sleepy	voller Energie	energised
hungrig	hungry	lustig	funny
schmerzerfüllt	pained	friedlich	peaceful
enttäuscht	disappointed	optimistisch	optimistic
kalt	cold	niedlich	cute
betrübt	sorry	beunruhigt	worried
fabelhaft	fabulous	großartig	great
schlecht	bad	mies	down
inspiriert	inspired	zufrieden	satisfied
Voll motiviert	pumped	ruhig	calm
verwirrt	confused	vermisst	missing
bravy	good	sarkastisch	sarcastic
einsam	lonely	stark	strong
beunruhigt	concerned	besonders	special
deprimiert	depressed	munder	jolly
neugierig	curious	niedergeschlagen	depressed
willkommen	welcome	kaputt	broken
schön	beautiful	außergewöhnlich	amazing
genervt	irritated	gestreest	stressed

unvollständig	incomplete	aufgedreht	hyper
schelmisch	mischievous	erstaunt	amazed
stinksauer	annoyed	aufgefressen	fed up
verwundert	puzzled	wütend	furious
stocksauer	annoyed	erfrischt	refreshed
versiert	accomplished	überrascht	surprised
verblüfft	perplexed	frustiert	rustrated
hübsch	pretty	besser	better
schuldig	guilty	sicher	safe
frei	free	verloren	lost
alt	old	faul	lazy
schlechter	worse	fruchtbar	horrible
beaglich	comfortable	dämlich	stupid
verschämt	ashamed	hundeelend	terrible
todmüde	asleep	gut	well
ebendig	alive	schüchtern	shy
taff	rough	merkwürdig	weird

From learning experience of Thai learners in English class, they may have already learned this vocabulary previously. However, these comparable German words can be their new knowledge. Hence, the German language function of Facebook can be useful for their learning process to study comparable words between the two languages. apart from the vocabulary level, the sentence level can be studied follows:

English	German
Wassamill shared a link	Wassamill hat einen Link geteilt.
Mutual friends	gemeinsame Freunde
New message	Neue Nachricht
Create a new account.	Erstelle ein neues Konto.
friend request	Freundschaftsanfrage

Although some sentences used in the Facebook language function may not be learned in class, learners may transfer the previously gained knowledge and relate their learning styles or experience to their L3 Learning to acquire the third language effectively and efficiently. Besides, learners

may foster their autonomous learning through language comparison of Facebook. In other words, English as L2 can affect L3 learning.

In conclusion, these examples show the possibility how to compare English and German can help instructors conduct a comparative study in the context of non-native speakers when using Facebook in the class. For the comparative studies between English and German, vocabulary should be taken into account for learners at the fundamental level. Sentence level in English and German should also generally be illustrated to Thai learners to create general pictures in their mind and to enable them to compare their L2 with their L3.

Research question 2: *What kind of effective Teaching Materials and Tasks can be employed based on efficient language teaching performance?*

According to Dudley-Evans and ST John (1998), it is important that instructors should consider Grammar for language teaching. Additionally, Reisman (2012) mentions that grammatical gender of German language is vital in terms of a comparative study between English and German. Based on this notion, grammar can be a vital role for language teaching in the Thai context. To create effective teaching materials and tasks in the classroom, the following

aspects: 1) *Structure and Word Order*; 2) *Grammatical Gender*; and 3) *Present Tense / Past Tense* can be considered and some practical and useful examples can be provided:

2.1) Structure and word order:

English	German
You /are/ friends /on Facebook.	Ihr /seid /auf Facebook /befreundet.
1 2 3 4	1 2 4 3

From the example, it is clear that the English sentence starts with Subject (*You*), followed by a Verb (*are*), then the word *friend* is in the third position, and the phrase *on Facebook* is the last position of the sentence. In contrast, in German sentence, the phrase *auf Facebook* in German language is in the third position whereas the word *befreundet*, which means friends in English, is in the last position.

After analyzing the different structures of the two languages, the task can be suggested as follows:

Suggested Task: Look at the language function of Facebook in German language. How to say this sentence in German?

Eng: Jack and Tom / have / their birthdays / today.

1 2 3 4

Ger: ...?...

(Answer: Jack and Tom / haben / heute / Geburtstag.)

1 2 4 3

After giving the correct answer in class, students should further analyze the word order of each word in the sentences of the two languages.

2.2) Grammatical gender of German language

English	German
Wassamill shared <i>a</i> link	Wassamill hat <i>einen</i> Link geteilt.

In this English sentence, “a” as an article is used without considering the grammatical gender. But in

German language, students have to consider grammatical gender (Masculine/Feminine/Neutral) when building sentences. Learners have to find the correct gender for the word **Link** which is *Masculine* in German language. This is the reason why the word **einen** is used in the given German structure. After analyzing this, students should further analyze other words with various grammatical genders as the following:

Suggested task: Look at the language function of Facebook in German language. How to say this sentence in German?

Eng: Share in a group

Ger: ...?...

(Answer: In *einer* Gruppe teilen)

From this correct answer, students can learn that the word *Gruppe* in German is *Feminine*. This is the reason why *einer*, which means “a” as an article in English, is used in this sentence.

2.3) Present tense / Past tense:

English	German
Create a new account.	Erstelle ein neues Konto.
(Present Tense)	(Present Tense)

At this learning step, after analyzing the structure of the two languages in the present tense, learners should study the sentences in the past tense and compare with German sentences.

Suggested Task: Look at the language function of Facebook in German language. How to construct a comparable German sentence with the given English sentence in the form of past tense?

Eng: Wassamill added two new photos. (Past Tense)

Ger: ...?...

(Answer: Wassamill hat zwei neue Photos hinzugefügt.)

In doing so, students need to know how to say the

word “add” in German. After students get the correct answer, they must analyze the past tense form of the word in German language. Then, they can correctly construct a comparable sentence between the two languages.

From these examples, Facebook allows all learners the opportunity to critically think for their language learning and communication. Class instructor may use it as teaching materials in terms of a comparative study in class if he or she wishes to enhance the skills of learners according to its purposes to specifically assess the language skills of non-native speakers in the Thai context.

Research Question 3: *What practical recommendations can be provided to FL teachers concerning effective language pedagogy?*

terms of academic purposes to communicate between instructors and learners. Regarding foreign language teaching, it offers various languages which are widely used by people in many countries. A comparative study between English and German based on the language functions of Facebook is consequently recommended. Based on the notion of Dudley-Evans and ST John (1998),

It is important that instructors should consider Grammar for language teaching. According to Reisman (2012), grammatical gender of German language is vital in terms of a comparative study between English and German.

Researcher, language evaluator, class instructor, or German language educators in Thailand may use the suggested examples if he or she wishes to foster the skills of learners. Some practical Recommendations in this study can be helpful to design language activities so students can study and compare vocabulary and linguistic features of the two languages to develop the competence to their fullest potential to enable them to compete with graduates from other institutions and countries in the Asia and ASEAN Economics Community.

Lastly, learners may transfer the previously gained knowledge and relate their learning styles,

Regarding data analysis in the previous part, the language functions of the two languages are analyzed qualitatively which will lead to some practical recommendations for FL teachers concerning effective language pedagogy in the context of L2 and L3. In terms of language teaching at the higher level for advanced learners, linguistic features such as *morphology, syntax, pragmatics, semantics, and so on* can be further discussed and studied based on the language functions of Facebook to enhance the competence of learners when learning German language in comparison with English.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier that, Facebook is popular among users around the globe. Facebook is used in

experience, obstacles or problems to their L3 learning to acquire the third language effectively and efficiently. In this regard, relating the knowledge of learners to their previously gained knowledge may enable them to learn successfully. Prior to German, it is obvious that Thai learners learn English as a first foreign language (L2). Thus, comparing the L3 knowledge (German) with the L2 knowledge (English) can be an efficient learning strategy as these two languages have some language features in common which will cause learners to find some similarities for their language studies.

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