

**SPECIAL FEATURE 特集****Exploring Our Vocabulary Histories as Learners**

## 学習者としての語彙経験の探求

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*Key words:* 学習者ナラティブ、語彙発達、個人の目標設定、語彙経験

In a workshop at the 2011 Realising Autonomy conference on exploring learners' vocabulary development (see Barfield, 2012), participants were asked to recall and share their own experiences of learning and using vocabulary in a second or foreign language. At the end of the workshop, the people taking part agreed to stay in contact by email, and this led to some of us later writing our vocabulary histories and sharing them by email. A vocabulary history (VH) is similar to a language learning history (Benson & Nunan, 2005; Murphey, 1997; Murphey, Chen, & Chen, 2005; Pavlenko, 2001) in which a learner (or teacher) narrates their personal story of language learning and formulates their future learning plans and goals. What is different about a VH is that a learner (or teacher) gives much greater attention to how they have learned vocabulary at different stages in their L2 development and what positive and negative experiences they have had in doing so. The following VHs were written by Andy Barfield, John Spiri, Peter Cassidy, Lewis Malamed, Philip Shigeo Brown and Martha Robertson. As VHs offer a useful way for teachers to recall and reconstruct their own lexical learning practices and explore together different questions of lexical development, we would like to encourage members of the Learner Development SIG to write and share their vocabulary histories in future issues of *Learning Learning*.

語彙経験(VH)とは言語学習経験 (Benson & Nunan, 2005; Murphey, 1997; Murphey, Chen, & Chen, 2005; Pavlenko, 2001)と類似している。言語学習経験とは、学習者(または教師)が個人の言語学習経験を語るにより自ら今後の学習計画を立て、目標設定を行うことを指す。語彙経験が言語学習経験と異なる点は、語彙経験において学習者(または教師)は第二言語習得の様々な過程における語彙習得に着目し、それぞれの語彙習得経験が自らの言語習得にどのように作用したのかを省察するという点である。本論の語彙経験はAndy Barfield, John Spiri, Peter Cassidy, Lewis Malamed, Philip Shigeo Brown, Martha Robertsonの記述である。語彙経験の記述は教師が自らの学習経験を振り返ることで、語彙指導の方法を再構成し、語彙発達に関する多様な課題について共に探求するための有効な方法である。この観点から、Learner Development SIGの会員にも今後語彙経験を記述し、*Learning Learning*の誌上で共有して頂きたい。

**References**

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## **Learning and Using German: Ein Wunderbarer Wort- und Erlebnisschatz [A Wonderful Treasure of Words and Experiences]**

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It's a long time since I started learning German—I was 12 years old and had been learning French and Latin for a year, so German was my fourth language (but not my last). I am not quite sure why I chose to do languages, and I really had no idea about German at all, except for caricatures in films and a few words in comics like “*Donner, Blitz und Himmel*.” But I started, and the first lesson I still remember today: our teacher didn't speak a word of English the whole class. The lesson was done in an interactive Direct Method way. It was a lot of fun, even if I wasn't completely sure what was going on at the beginning.

We did some kind of audio-lingual course at the start, which involved a thick, heavy textbook with lots of drills, and us recording our answers on tape and listening back to them again, and getting on with learning basic grammar through recorded speaking and listening drills. We also read and translated, and did sentence-level exercises all focused on the grammar.

I kept a first German vocabulary notebook, and then later another one—and another one. It was the usual pattern of German word on the left and English translation on the right, and it went on like that for pages and pages. I was good at this kind of learning and could memorise things easily. I don't think anybody ever talked to me at school about learning German vocabulary, inspirational as my main German teacher was, Paul Dicker. Mr Dicker “...was noted for his quick sense of humour and ... had a deep love of German literature and music, knew his subject well and inspired many of his pupils. ... He always appeared at the right moment to give support. He cared deeply for those for whom he was responsible...”<sup>1</sup> In class we were expected to read and understand a lot quite quickly, and soon we were getting a learner's magazine called *Die Fabrt* (yes, lots of laughter the first time we saw that), which had short articles and dialogues, and which was written in a controlled vocabulary and grammar for beginners of German.

So, vocabulary learning for me in German in these few two years was based on materials provided by the teacher—textbooks, tapes, a learner's magazine—and also a few real-world materials. I remember Mr Dicker coming into class with a news magazine and showing us various headlines. We would then discuss what they meant and make an attempt at

translating them into English. It was playful and a lot of fun, and it made German seem more real for us during the first few years of learning the language.

Later, for A-level studies in German, we had to read several works of literature within two years. This meant going through each page and translating it, page by page. Schiller's *Maria Stuart*, Fontane's *Irrungen, Wirrungen*, Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, Buchner's *Woyzeck*, Durrenmatt's *Der Besuch der Alten Dame*, Boll's *Und sagte kein einziges Wort*, and so on.

Looking back, I find it simply amazing that we read so much by sheer force of translation, but we learnt on our way a huge amount of vocabulary, and I could read German literature more or less freely by the time I left school. We also listened now and again to German radio recordings of current news, but speaking in German was mainly limited to doing reading aloud and translating (and never really using the language for my own purposes, whatever they were).

When I went on a school trip to Austria one summer, I could understand quite a lot of what I heard, but I don't think I really said much until one night I went to the pub, had a few beers and started talking with the people. *Nun ja, sehr gut! Zum Wohl!*

At university, for my BA, I did Combined Honours in French/German Language and Literature. This involved a massive amount of reading in both languages, but, looking back, it was a strangely literary and linguistic approach, without much focus on the history of Germany and social and political change and development in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, let alone other parts of Europe that had minority German populations. In hindsight, that was a great shame—the whole of 20th century history in Europe was waiting to be discovered from different points of view, but it also meant that living in Germany for a year as a student was a really extraordinary time for me.

Like many other exchange students (both then and now), I don't think I did anything in particular to learn German vocabulary—I was just using the language, making friends, studying, travelling, falling in and out of love, hitchhiking, doing a lot of beer drinking, also working in a glass factory as a holiday job and getting to learn about a whole different Germany from the world of literary classics. It was an amazingly enjoyable and carefree time.

When I look back now at how I learnt German vocabulary, it seems to have featured initially:

- a massive amount of non-comprehensible input made comprehensible through translation and teacher-learner L1 mediation
- a certain amount of graded reading and listening in the L2 (but not really extensive listening or reading)
- some interaction in German, but little expression of my own ideas or interest in German until the year abroad.

So, in many ways, my German vocabulary history was neither autonomous nor self-directed. Rather, it was continuously scaffolded. It was also heavily constrained by the style of education at the time, and the requirements of O- and A-level syllabuses and exams. I don't

think I minded this because I could do it and do it quite well, and I was good at learning a language in this way.

The big change for me was going to Germany as a student and becoming fluent over a period of several months. This involved:

- a lot of talking and interaction
- a lot of reading
- using everyday German every day, and also having long serious discussions over a game of chess or a pint, or both, on whatever the issue was that came up.

As for specific vocabulary strategies, it's very difficult to say if I had any. Because I knew Latin, and because learning and using (German) vocabulary invite a certain creativity (you can literally join words together to try and express that particular meaning or idea that you are after), I was good at decoding and guessing German word formation from different prefixes and suffixes (and using my knowledge of Latin to help me, too). Most important of all, I feel now, is that I always enjoyed learning and later using German. Overall, I would characterize my lexical history in German as input- and translation-based, expanded by exposure, interaction, and meaningful use, as well as inspired by an exceptional teacher, Paul Dicker, and enriched by an ever-growing sense of confidence and purpose in using German.

### Note

1. These extracts come from Paul Dicker's obituary, which is included in *EFA Tributes to Former Players and Officials. (A-E)*. Retrieved from <http://www.fivesonline.net/oldefasite/information/obituaries.a-e.html>

### Keeping Vocabulary Notebooks

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Although I am a native English speaker, the first time I tried intentional learning of vocabulary was in high school. We would have weekly vocabulary quizzes in English class, and to prepare I would happily drill the list outside of class, usually resulting in a perfect score. Years later, my friend and classmate would prompt me with a word from a list for fun, and I would run off at least several from the list: *ecclesiastic* (of the church), *predatory* (preying), etc. In a college English course the memorization paid dividends as I defined a word exactly as I recalled it from the high school list, and the teacher marked it wrong on the midterm exam. Confident that she had mismarked it, I visited her office showing her the entry in a dictionary, and she reluctantly reversed it, which pushed my score up to 90. In the end I got an "A" for the course by the narrowest of margins.

Even though my efforts were grossly rote, I feel that it was a positive learning experience, and I did learn many new words. Similarly, during my "I want to be a writer" phase during my early 20s, I made a push to learn vocabulary on my own, keeping a notebook of words I gleaned from books I was reading. That too, I enjoyed.

Unfortunately, I had no interest in the Spanish class I took in high school, and can recall no effort to learn a single word. When I finally did feel desire to learn a foreign language, after earning my bachelor's degree, I tried to learn French on my own, but failed miserably using a