

Door to the Future



Upper images: Monthly “German on TV” textbooks, which Prof. Yoshimitsu wrote.

Lower: Textbook series used for over 20 years at many universities, including HU; the long-running edition is currently being revised.

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Prof. Yoshimitsu graduated from the Department of German, the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Osaka University of Foreign Studies and completed the master's course at the Graduate School of the same university. Her specialization is German language education. As an undergraduate, she studied at the University of Cologne for a year as a Rotary Club scholarship recipient. As a graduate student, she received a scholarship from the Goethe-Institut in Munich to attend its six-month German language teacher training course. Prof. Yoshimitsu arrived at Hiroshima University in 2005 after working in the education and public relations division at the Goethe-Institut Osaka. She served as the instructor and program supervisor of the NHK Educational TV's “German on TV” for four seasons.

My specialization is German language education. Language acquisition is influenced by various factors, which can be classified into external and internal factors. Educational materials, teachers, the number of lessons, the number of students per class, and classroom atmosphere are external factors. On the other hand, internal factors include the learner's age, mother tongue, motivation, and if it is a Japanese student who begins German in university, his or her experience of learning English in primary to secondary school, views on learning shaped by that experience (convictions about and attitude toward learning), and learning habits. My research consists of analyzing these factors through the practice of teaching classes and identifying what should be taught in class, and how.

When I tell people that I teach German, I often get similar responses: “I suffered so much studying German in college” and “I only remember *der, des, dem, den* [articles that precede masculine nouns] now.” I understand how they feel because I myself had to spend an enormous amount of time and energy to learn German. At the same time, I feel that it is unfortunate that their thought stops there. Learning a foreign language is not just about learning to use it. It is also about learning about the culture

and history of the country in which the language is spoken, all sorts of things relating to that society. In German, this is called *Landskunde*. Learning this is essential for language acquisition. Moreover, when you study a foreign language, you naturally come to think more deeply about Japanese, as well as Japanese culture and society, of which you are usually not particularly conscious. That is to say, learning a new language is a repetition of steps by which you obtain new intellectual experience, collecting new pieces of knowledge and organically linking them with one another, forming longer and longer strands extending in all directions. A body of knowledge formed in this manner can be directly useful in the learner's specialized study or daily activities. More often than not, it proves useful in totally unex-

pected ways and much, much later. Even without practical utility, new knowledge can bring joy, enriching your life.

In many European countries, it is customary for students to study their native language plus two foreign languages, starting from secondary school. In Japan, we study English in elementary and secondary schools but usually wait until university to begin another foreign language. At Hiroshima University, in addition to German, students can study seven languages from the beginner's level: French, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Russian, Arabic. Moreover, in the special trilingual training program, second-year students can continue to take German, French, Chinese, Korean, and Spanish. I want senior high school students thinking about entering Hiroshima University to experience the joy of studying foreign languages and expanding their knowledge, building a foundation for a richer life experience.

**“Learning a foreign language brings joy to and enriches one's life.”
“Exploring factors for language acquisition through lessons.”**