

German language education for advanced beginners:

A case study of first and second year university students

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Recently, there has been heightened interest in the collaboration or connection between high schools and universities. In a broad sense, this includes open campus, demo lessons, and allowing high school students to take university courses. Nevertheless, a smooth transition from high school to university is not actually realized in terms of developing the individual student's proficiency with continuity and consistency (Shibata, et al. 2012). This is particularly true for foreign languages other than English (second foreign languages), which are not commonly taught in Japanese high schools. Thus, in many universities, there are not enough advanced beginners to form a class, so they are placed in classes along with novice beginners, which disregards their foreign language experiences in high schools. On the other hand, those universities which have specialized courses or curricula for advanced beginners need to evaluate whether they actually facilitate the development of language proficiency. This study considers the education of advanced beginners of German at Dokkyo University, which offers specialized courses for first and second year students. It examines relevant issues from the perspective of students through classroom observations and a questionnaire survey.

First, the paper introduces how advanced beginners are treated in universities in Japan, followed by some characteristics of students who have studied foreign languages in high schools in the US and the UK. Next, it provides general information about the curriculum and classes for advanced beginners at Dokkyo University. Then, it presents the results of the questionnaire survey, followed by discussion of students' perceptions of the German education at the university and their studies. It seems that the students are generally satisfied with the classes they are attending, but some of them are not satisfied with the types of courses available in the first year, and they are not completely satisfied with the overall university learning environment including non-credit courses to prepare for proficiency tests and language learning facilities. The questionnaire also brought out the students' difficulties and the need for support, as well as the moment they realize their progress and feel happy about learning German. It concludes by suggesting the need to cooperate with other institutions teaching German and other foreign languages to support the students' continued learning and development of language proficiency.