DAS MAGAZIN
DES GOETHE-INSTITUTS

DEUTSCH

English Edition

GOETHE INSTITUT

Sprache. Kultur. Deutschland.


AUF DEM TISCH
WARTET VOR DER TÜR
STEHT IN
das Haar
die Nase
der Mund

DEUTSCH

Kathya Karolina Peña Patton, 19, from Santa Cruz, Bolivia:
"My mother was an exchange student to Germany when she was 18. She told me a lot about her experiences and showed me photos. So I was highly motivated to learn German. I had already taken German courses in Bolivia. We are a large family with four children – three boys and I was the queen. Every night, I skype with my father. Sometimes he complains that I don't seem to miss him at all. People here are always so friendly, even when I speak in broken German, and they try and help me in English or Spanish. Order is important in Germany, everywhere is clean and tidy, and people are always on time. That's all well and good, but I don't like it."

ANNA EPIKHINA, RUSSIA


MESFER ALGHAMDI, SAUDI ARABIA

IKONDJISIUA MAHARERO, NAMIBIA


ANUCHA CHUEATHAI, THAILAND

WILLIAM FELIPE PEÑA, COLUMBIA


KAJONA MUUKUA, NAMIBIA

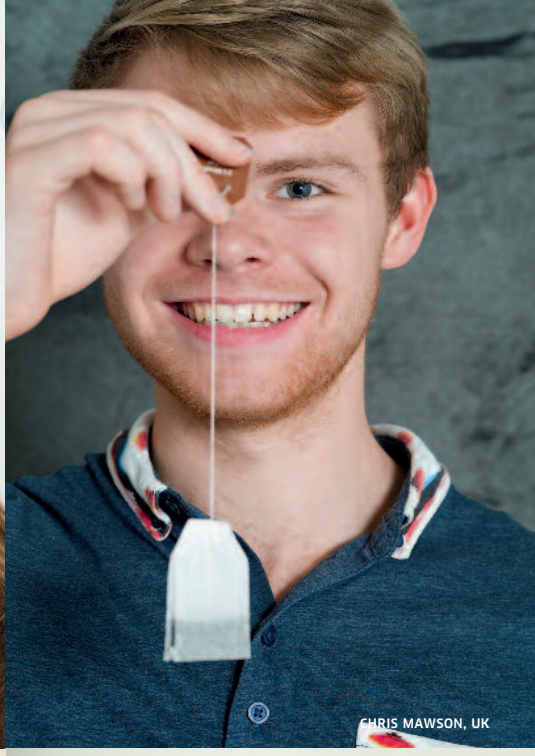

JUNYA ASAI, JAPAN

MISAKI MATSUURA, JAPAN


YANIN SINGAM, THAILAND

CHOUAIB BRICK, TUNISIA

LOURDES GASPART, SPAIN



CHRIS MAWSON, UK

MOHAMMEDREZA YOUSEFI, IRAN

WHAT ARE YOUR DREAMS IN LIFE?

The photographer Herlinde Koelbl has taken portraits of people from all over the world who are learning German at the Goethe-Institut. With a fresh eye and a great degree of empathy, she photographed and interviewed young people and adults from 22 countries participating in German courses at the Goethe-Institut Schwäbisch Hall and at the Goethe-Institut Hamburg. Herlinde Koelbl's work reveals their dreams associated with learning German, what they miss here, and what they particularly like in Germany.

ISAÏE DOUGNON, MALI

REWUT JANPONG, TIRAPONG NUALSRI, CHALOEMPHON JERMWONGRATTANACHAI, THAILAND

YANN ALBEROLA, FRANCE

WANG RUOXI, CHINA


hätte
gern
bin hier an
Ich


Funk, Kuhn, Dem...
Missverständnisse aufklären


Lektion 5
Wohnen
13. Wo ist die Katze?
e Mauer
s Zelt
Peter
Schwester
Sätze aus dem Kasten und die Präpositionen

EDITORIAL

The German language is on the rise. Never before have so many people learnt German at Goethe-Instituts around the world. Enrolment numbers at the institutes in southern Europe have hit record highs in the past two years, but German is also in great demand outside of Europe. In India, one thousand state schools have introduced German classes, for example. And in Russia, the past years' downward trend in enrolment for German classes was stopped. In South Korea and Qatar, new language learning centres were opened in 2012. Concurrently, we're also focusing on promoting German in the USA.

The high demand for the Goethe-Institut's German language courses and examinations is also a result of the precarious economic situation in many southern European countries. Even well-educated young people from southern Europe cannot find jobs in their home countries. At the same time, skill shortages in Germany are growing. The Goethe-Institut promotes the immigration of skilled and managerial workers by offering language courses geared towards occupational groups such as engineers and law and medical professionals. Some of these people want to stay in Germany, where they are urgently needed. Many want to later return to their home countries and hope to profit from the experience and skills they acquired in Germany. Mobility within the EU can be an opportunity in times of crisis.

Interest in learning German as a foreign language is greatest when knowing German offers a clear occupational advantage. This is also true for Germany as a centre of knowledge. Ludwig Eichinger, head of the Institute for the German Language (IDS) in Mannheim, makes a case for academic multilingualism and explains in an interview why German should be promoted as the language of scholarship.

Herlinde Koelbl's portraits of teenage and adult students at the Goethe-Institut Schwäbisch Hall and the Goethe-Institut Hamburg paint a subjective picture of people's aims and aspirations when they decide to learn German. The desire for a "better life" or a successful career path, the unlimited freedom to speak your mind, or a passion for German culture are all recurring themes in these short accounts.

How important personal experience is to how we feel about a foreign language is clearly illustrated in Merle Hilbk's in-depth report on Bosnians and Herzegovinians who came to Germany in the 1990s as war refugees and now again live in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These people received a warm welcome and a safe haven in Germany and today still feel connected to the Germans and their language.

Avi Primor has another moving story to tell. Primor learnt German at the Goethe-Institut Mannheim as a young man. None of his mother's relatives survived the Holocaust, the word "Germany" was taboo in his family. In 1993, he became the first Israeli ambassador to Germany for whom German was not a mother tongue.

Learning a foreign language is worth the effort – 88 per cent of all EU citizens are convinced of this fact. But achieving this goal means overcoming quite a few obstacles. Learning a language is hard work. Writer and translator Ulrike Draesner tried out many different language-learning methods. In her essay, she argues for a mix of traditional lessons (preferably in a country where the language is spoken), the use of new media, and intelligently written and captivating workbooks. Her greatest wish is that learning a foreign language and living a foreign language come closer together in the future.

The Goethe-Institut is helping make this wish a reality with its "Support For German Language Education". It supports the most important ambassadors of the German language – German teachers around the world – with teacher training courses and exchange programmes and with new teaching aids and interactive curricula. In doing so, it also helps national education systems provide innovative and stimulating German lessons. Michaela Drenovaković tells a bit about how this is done in her report of the different and yet similar conditions in Cairo and Shanghai.

The German language is booming and its renaissance has many facets, some of which are explored in this issue. I'm pleased to present them for your reading pleasure!

Johannes Ebert
Secretary General of the Goethe-Institut


teritum: gehen
h gehte
ir gingen
hr gingt
sie ginge

OH DJÖRNEE!
ON THE FUTURE OF SECOND-LANGUAGE LEARNING

In fifty years' time, today's digital language courses may well look like those early vehicles modelled on horse-drawn coaches. But first, the bad news: second-language acquisition will still involve a lot of work, even fifty years on. Understanding, memorizing, despairing, cramming, repeating, forgetting and cursing.

The announcements on German inter-city express trains are always a pleasure to hear. Deutsche Bahn churns out its globally unique brand of English with absolute on-the-dot precision. After listening to these announcements for years, I am convinced that the Deutsche Bahn staff must receive training for such a peculiarly distinctive variety of English in secret in-company language camps. When I'm travelling with guests from abroad, I translate the announcements by repeating them word for word in my own English. Then everyone is happy: German sensitivities are not disturbed by the friendly "Vee vish yuu er pleszehnt djörnee", since it nearly sounds like German; and the visitor appreciates the good intentions.

LEARNING BAVARIAN ON HIGH ALPINE PASTURES

Is this the future of second-language learning? Will we all be speaking a synthetically pure, computer-mediated English? And in fifty years' time, what will the situation be like for those (few?) German learners? Similar to the book market today, will there be language niches where a Germanised English (Deutsche Bahn as our pioneer here) is as lovingly cultivated as a volume of poetry (it is poetry) and where you can additionally learn German dialects? Will adventure holidays include an exclusive trip to high Alpine pastures set on a perfectly networked artificial glacier, with helicopter evacuation in less than a minute, where you can learn Bavarian in four weeks of solitary confinement and, using the mountain echoes, train pronunciation at the same time? After all, they are going to have to come up with something very special.

There are only two things that are true about the future: it will happen, but not the way we imagine. So in what follows I am only describing my personal vision for language learners in the future, starting from my own experience at school, at a university abroad and in language courses. However, there is one thing I'd like to make clear about the scenario above: I can certainly imagine enjoying the process of learning in seclusion with a group of non-virtual people actually present, using the support of media via phone, computer or TV channels, and with topics related to my own life: my concerns, my interests, my desire to know, linkable to my present and memories with spontaneity and humour.

Language lab at the Goethe-Institut Glasgow, 1970s

A LANGUAGE LAB FIRST

August 1982. Our protagonist's name is UD, not yet completely lacking the ability to learn a language synthetically as well (like a children can, by listening and imitating, without analysis), seated, unkempt blonde hair, rolled Bavarian "r", in a language lab at Salamanca University. UD is learning her sixth foreign language, which only makes what follows even more embarrassing. The course is a colourful mix of nations, and the teachers only speak Spanish. UD is taken together with other students into a room with microphones. Realising that she's in a language lab for the first time in her life, UD puts on the headphones. She hears voices. After a moment, she recognises her teacher's voice, and notices one particular woman's voice. But it only sinks in when the voice makes exactly the same error UD had just made.

This example shows how helpful it can be to play with diverse perceptual senses in different combinations. But it also illustrates how poorly someone starting to learn a language actually listens to it. To begin with, I didn't even recognise myself, and only began to have a sense of my accent much later. At that time, I had already learnt to distinguish the first Spanish sounds, even if I couldn't reproduce them yet. My Chinese translator is much amused whenever he offers me examples of the eight different tones in Chinese and I never manage to distinguish more than six at best.

Laureline Petit from Paris, 23, student with a Master's Degree in Marketing: "My dream is to be a writer with a house by the sea. I know it's just wishful thinking and not reality though. I love beautiful things for the soul, such as antiques as well as luxury and designer items. And I also love my boyfriend. He is German. In Bavaria, I am particularly impressed by the Ludwig palaces. For me, the romanticism of the late nineteenth century, with its philosophers, writers, and composers, and the early twentieth century are what makes up the spirit of today's times. What I don't like is roast pork, sausages, and fatty foods."

"It is fun to discover a language together." Skopelos, 1978

Second-language acquisition will still involve a lot of work, even in the future. Goethe-Institut Bangkok, 1970s

Can it really be so difficult? First, the bad news: even fifty years on, learning a language will still involve (a lot of) work. Understanding, memorizing, despairing, cramming, repeating, forgetting and cursing.

LANGUAGE LEARNING AS A CHALLENGE

Oh djörnee. Germans tend to be ashamed of the difficulties our language presents (which is complete nonsense), whereas (just as nonsensically) the Japanese are proud of how insurmountable the mountain of their language is for second-language learners. You will never fully grasp the subtleties of styles of address and respect, they claim, or at least will never feel at home with them – because language is always a way of life as well.

Yet, this is exactly what makes language acquisition beyond its immediate use so attractive, and at the same time such a challenge. Every idiom contains particular ideas about life and the world. Learning a language means spending time and thought on the unfamiliar. You open yourself to what is different, you shift your view of the world. It is an adventure, since the end result of this encounter is far from certain. In general, the walls can be climbed; we discover other gardens, strange rituals, surprising colours, images, figures of speech, magnificent metaphors, bewildering partialities, and worlds of emotion new and known, foreign yet familiar.

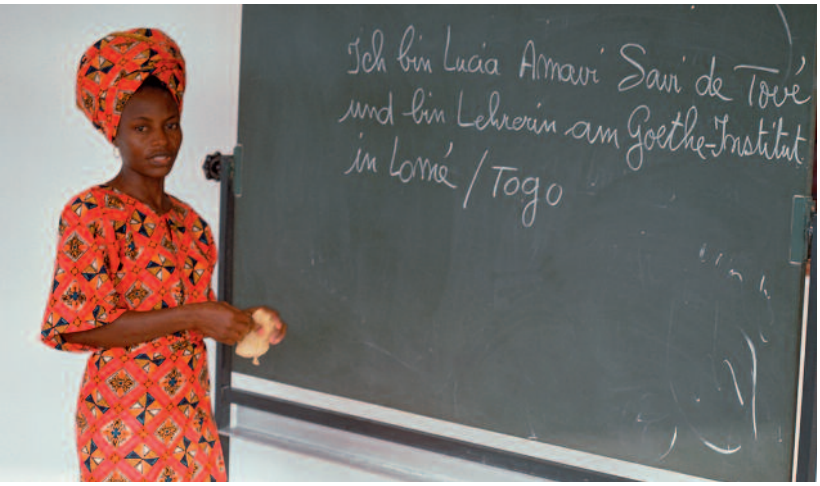
It is fun to discover this together. Research into learning in children has shown that everything that remains abstract within the school walls is easily forgotten again. In contrast, things capable of being connected to our own lives, such as a shared experience, remain in the memory almost of their own accord. The catchword here is "social learning". The emotions involved in this process may, by all means, be diverse: team spirit and competition, individual accolades and togetherness. You learn from the mistakes of others just as much as from their successes. It was consoling to laugh with my fellow students over my own stupidity in the language lab. Or moan about the instruction book or gossip about the teacher. It is good if these kinds of approaches are available in two ways: intelligently offering and promoting self-learning and group learning in online courses (for example, by online tutorials for all or through joint activities divided between different sub-groups), and in courses for real humans in the real world, in the life-worlds of those wanting to learn a foreign language. The old model has some advantages and it can react quickly and works even without electricity.

Learning a language means spending time and thought on the unfamiliar. You open yourself to what is different, you shift your view of the world.

Above all, though, it encourages discussions before and after class and deals with mistakes and regional particularities in a different way from a "one size fit all" computer course. My second English teacher learnt his English during the Third Reich and as a young man after 1945. After a while, thanks to intensive pop music consumption, even I could tell how bad his pronunciation was. But this also gave his lessons a rather endearing quality: they showed that even the teacher had to make an effort to cope with this foreign language. And they showed us that we were starting out on a better basis.

THREE-DIMENSIONAL ONLINE COURSES

The new media have a potential to support language learning in many different ways. Digital vocabulary-building books as smartphone apps are, in principle, neither better nor worse than a homemade vocabulary-building book. I personally find it easier to learn when I can use my hands: if I write something



Will DIY learning substitute the teacher in the future? Togo, 1960s

"If I write something down, I can remember it better." Goethe-Institut Izmir, 1980s

down, I can remember it better. This is where individual situations and preferences are decisive, as is, at least in the world today, the size of your wallet, since even if good apps are available for free, you still have to download them to a suitable device. The learning material itself is fun: games and adventure stories presented as entertainment so you (almost) forget they are in German.

The learning gain in online courses is, in turn, different. I imagine them in the future as three-dimensional in my living room, in real time, ideally with the possibility to communicate "on the side", as well: a look at my neighbour, a wink that not everyone can see. Or will these rooms be subject to such a strict regime of computer rules that they remain almost completely sterile? Online courses today already offer the chance to learn in a group of like-minded people without having to change your location. You cannot see each other, but you can hear each other. A good opportunity, once you have learnt how to deal with all the programs and technical requirements. Before the course starts, you need to become familiar with the course structure (unfortunately – and it's different every time). For many exercises, you are not working with a person, but a more or less intelligent program, which can be very pleasant, especially for DIY language learning.

POWER CUT IN POURING RAIN

Ideally, the possibilities are combined: vocabulary trainer, grammar builders, guided or DIY learning. Practicing reading, listening, and speaking freely. Dialogue with a tutor and a group meeting. It's no surprise that the demand for online services is growing. The advantage of not having to leave work or home to take part makes many things easier, as does the fact that a large part of the course can be flexible arranged to fit in with individual daily schedules. That's all very well as long as it works (technically) and the requisite level of self-discipline remains high. Extending the provision of online courses, though, should not mean that conventional programs are forgotten. We can't imagine how the digital world will look in fifty years. But we do know what it looks like today. Who actually has access to the Internet? When and how often and for how much? When I was travelling in South East Asia this spring, heavy rain always resulted in a power outage lasting several hours. And it rained every day. As far as those kinds of technical difficulties are concerned, I assume there will be a range of improvements. Similarly, courses should become even more user friendly: how long you have to wait for a page to load, how often you have to click, and how easily data can be lost when you change pages.

Pleszehnt djörnee, maii diear. When I studied in England for two years, I learnt the language without hardly noticing. Amid the challenges of everyday life ("what's the word for 'Steckdose'?", "wow, he looks good, but how do I start talking to him?" and "oh, what's that, Indian English?") and my own feelings – my brain absorbed the language, almost without conscious effort. Since then I find individuality and a relationship to reality important in language learning. I like to hear the language around me so that I can also "breathe it in" in a parallel process to conscious learning. We generally imagine language learning as cognitive. But the process starts somewhere else, physically and outside the classroom, as a background noise, something surrounding us. As a result, for a long time successful language courses have offered a kind of immersion experience: spending four weeks just dedicated to the language and its speakers. This kind of learning is extremely effective, flexible as the course progresses, comprises the modules appropriate for the participants' skills, and takes a liberal approach to learning blockages. And it was already clear how terrible that can be

in 1982 in Salamanca. I learnt most in a course module I really shouldn't have been taking. The module was called "poetry". For a long time, I didn't have a clue what was going on in the course, and I spent the afternoons looking up every word, but it helped me delve into the character of the Spanish language, its pride and musicality.

MORE DARING, PLAYFUL AND SURPRISING

I have three wishes for the future. Dear course writers, spare a thought for people who have already learnt a second language, too. Offer something more than a country's culture or tourist attractions. Why not dedicate an entire course to sports, music, technologies, history or scientific discoveries? The idea is already applied to educational games. For beginners' courses, this would be something of a linguistic challenge. But an expression using the verb "to call" could also be taught through sentences such as "Part of Spain is called Castile".

My second wish: the texts for print media as well as for audio and online purposes could be more daring, playful and surprising. Learning apps sometimes have elements going in this direction; even a larger course could be designed as one story/narrative.

Why not ask a writer if they want to design a course?

The third and most important wish: more feeling for language. German is rich in melodic nuances and has a wide spectrum of rhythms. Unfortunately, even today many practice sentences read as if they were taken from some starchy grammar book. Immense technical efforts are put into creating attractive virtual classrooms and providing any amount of supporting materials for learners – and then sentence after sentence wend their way to an artificial conclusion just to include a particular grammar construction. More attention is given to natural language than years ago; however, the criterion of attractive language appears to be non-existent.

What a shame. What a waste of potential!

My suggestion: why not ask a writer if they want to design a course? If they can write entire novels without using the letter "e" or only using the vowel "i", they could approach this work with playful language use, innovative freedom and humour.

Anyone considering the future of German in second-language acquisition also needs to ask who will want to learn German, and what their learning environment will be.

BILINGUAL SCHOOLS AS PART OF THE SOLUTION

The number of people learning German depends on economic factors. German as a second language booms with an attractive job market in Germany. In that respect, given our demographic development, the future is looking good. Or will we be speaking English with everyone who works and lives in Germany? And sometimes with our German-language friends or colleagues as well, simply because some English words springs to mind more aptly and readily? And after every meeting with fellow writers from Africa, India or Asia, I ask myself that question with a new urgency. Most of them grew up bilingually as a matter of course, the result of the sombre, colonial history of their countries. But in the meantime entire areas of German life have been outsourced to English: the natural sciences and economics, and often technologies as well. This trend will become even stronger. Since Germany's demographics will be significantly different in fifty years' time as well, it seems reasonable to imagine English in evidence on the street, in shops and on the bus. It is already that way for me just outside the German language area: even across Europe, my mobility is primarily powered by English.

It will also be crucial to motivate those who do not find it easy to learn a second language.

The fact of a worldwide patois brings us closer together, yet at the same time it creates a two-tier society, dividing us into those who speak the global language better and those who do not. For that reason, language learning tasks in the future will need to be looked at from two perspectives: How do people from other countries learn German? And how do German speakers learn English? Here, it will also be crucial to motivate those who do not find it easy to learn a second language. Bilingual schools could be part of the solution; integrative from the outset. This presupposes very different teacher training, with a requisite shift in the curriculum as well as in our ideas of the future. This is where the problem lies, and not in the spasmodic nature of technological progress.

I BEGAN TO COLLECT LANGUAGES

A foreign language takes you into a world impossible to discover solely through your own language. A world creating new proximities and distances with, on top of that, the gift of imparting a fresh sense of self – as I was fortunate enough to find out at some point in my time at school. I started to collect languages to allow me to grasp more of the world's inflection in grammars

Kajona Muukua from Windhoek, Namibia, 20, student:
"My dream for the future is to be successful in my career, to be at the forefront of everything, and to earn a lot of money. Perhaps I will study law. Or maybe I will open my own restaurant and even be the cook. I love to cook, mostly traditional food like good meat and cornmeal polenta. I am not all that fond of the food in Germany. But I admire the lifestyle that people enjoy here, with their beautiful houses and great cars."

and idioms, proverbs and emotional amalgams. For example, “apprehension”, which includes both perception and fear, is just such a portmanteau word, while ‘serendipity’ is a fabricated word describing a complex hybrid feeling.

Gut djörnee. I hope that second-language learning and living come closer together in tomorrow’s world; I dream of instruction books adaptable to my level and speed of learning, of intelligent texts, entertainment and excitement, humour and games. Online and in a world without electricity. Quite possibly, in fifty years’ time, today’s digital language courses will resemble

I hope that second-language learning and living come closer together in tomorrow’s world.

those early vehicles modelled on horse-drawn coaches. I am looking forward to developments and, with that thought, I have decided that if I live to be eighty, I will learn Chinese.

Ulrike Draesner was born in Munich in 1962, and studied English, German and philosophy at the university. In 1992, she presented her doctorate on Wolfram von Eschenbach’s “Parzival”, later resigning from her university post to dedicate herself to writing. In 1995, she published “gedächtnisschleifen” (i.e., “Memory loops”), her first volume of poetry, which was followed by twelve more books. Her most recent work, a novel entitled “Vorliebe” (i.e., “Preference”), was published in 2010. Ulrike Draesner, poet, novelist and essayist, lives in Berlin.

LEARNING GERMAN WITH GOETHE.DE AND MOBILE APPS

VOCABULARY TRAINER With the mobile vocabulary trainer from the Goethe-Institut, you can build up, practice and improve your German vocabulary – from anywhere and at any time. In addition to numerous vocabulary lists for different language levels, the vocabulary trainer app lets you learn your own vocabulary just like you used to with index cards made of paper. Or you can link the app to a German course and use the vocabulary cards offered on its learning platform.

▷ WWW.GOETHE.DE/VOKABELTRAINER

THE MYSTERY OF THE NEBRA SKY DISK

The Goethe-Institut’s free app “The Mystery of the Sky Disk” invites you to embark on a German learning adventure. Together with art expert Vincent Mirano, players find themselves on a journey taking them all over Germany to try and solve the mystery of the Nebra Sky Disk in this fun approach to learning the German language. The app has already been downloaded 25,000 times and every week there are another 150 new downloads.

▷ WWW.GOETHE.DE/LERNABENTEUERDEUTSCH

TICKET TO BERLIN Six candidates, two teams, one goal. Learners of German from different countries are converging on Berlin and on their way they solve tricky tasks, meet interesting people, and discover a different side to Germany. Both teams are followed on camera. The videos will be shown in the fall of 2013 on the web sites of the Goethe-Institut and Deutsche Welle.

▷ WWW.GOETHE.DE/TICKET-NACH-BERLIN

THE CITY OF LANGUAGES Haven't you always wanted to know what language has 27 ways of saying "moustache"? Or to what language family Arabic belongs? And what happens when you order "oil" in Sweden? These and many other questions await you in the interactive online quiz "The City of Languages".

▹ WWW.GOETHE.DE/STADTDERSPRACHEN

PASCH-NET PASCH stands for the "Schools: Partners for the Future" initiative. It is a global network linking some 1500 schools that place particularly high emphasis on teaching German as a foreign language. The initiative's web site has many interactive features. Its "teachers' lounge" offers course material for German teachers. Their students can inform themselves about music, films and literature from Germany. They can also learn German in the site's virtual classrooms. There are currently around 90,000 registered users with a growth rate of 30 per cent each year. ▹ PASCH-NET.DE

GERMAN IN FIGURES

GERMAN WORLDWIDE

German is the number one language spoken in Europe, with around 100 million native speakers.

More than 14 million people around the globe are learning German. Most of them live in Poland and Russia.

Over 75 million people access the Internet in German, comprising 3.6 per cent of all Internet users worldwide. German is currently the sixth most used language on the Internet.

Within the EU, German is the most widely used native language, with 16 per cent of the population. English is by far the most frequently spoken foreign language.

MULTILINGUALISM IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

There are 23 officially recognized languages and more than 60 regional and minority languages spoken within the European Union.

The majority of European citizens (81 %) hold the view that all of the languages spoken in the EU should be treated equally.

Slightly more than half of all European citizens (54 %) indicate that they can converse in at least one other language. One quarter (25 %) speaks at least two other languages and a tenth of all citizens (10 %) can express themselves in at least three other languages.

According to 61 per cent of EU citizens, the most important advantage to learning a new foreign language is the possibility of working abroad.

LEARNING GERMAN AT THE GOETHE-INSTITUT

In 2012, some **208,400** individuals took part in one of the **17,200** language courses offered by the Goethe-Institut outside of Germany. In 2010, there were **185,500** course participants.

39,400 people came to Germany in order to study German at one of the 13 Goethe-Instituts located in the country. That is **7500** more than in 2010.

201,000 individuals worldwide took a German language test in 2012, some **31,500** more than in 2010.

The Goethe-Institut recorded the largest rate of growth in language course participants in southern Europe between 2010 and 2012: 57 per cent in Spain, 41 per cent in Portugal, 34 per cent in Italy, and 24 per cent in Greece.

During the same time frame, the number of course participants rose by 18 per cent in North America and 10 per cent in Oceania.

Yann Alberola from Paris, 22, economics student:
"I have a lot of these hats in different colours and I wear them a lot. I see them as a symbol of a bohemian lifestyle, as I am interested in many things. I am open to new experiences. I play the piano, occasionally draw, and just enjoy life. I am a bon vivant and would like to be a successful businessman with a house by the sea. I chose German as my second foreign language at school because my uncle spoke German. And now I notice that the words are coming back to me and I am even beginning to think in German. I was very surprised at how friendly the people are here. When I arrived at the train station, I asked someone for directions in English. The man immediately answered me in French, as he recognized my accent."

TEACHING, TRAINING, SHAPING LANGUAGE POLICIES

AN OVERVIEW OF THE MANY WAYS THE GOETHE-INSTITUT FOSTERS THE GERMAN LANGUAGE AROUND THE WORLD

With 100 million native speakers, German is the most widely spoken language in Europe. Around the world, some 14.45 million people are learning German as a foreign language, with the lion's share coming from Poland. German language courses at the Goethe-Institut attract some 247,800 students per year. Of those, 201,000 take an exam at the end of the course, as the groundwork to prepare for a life in Germany or to equip themselves for the international job market. The number of adults taking German at Goethe-Instituts outside Germany rose nearly across the board by five per cent from 2011 to 2012. Trends vary when looking at the number of children and teenagers around the world who are learning German in school. That number is rising in some places, such as India or Egypt, while it has remained level or dropped in other countries. This trend can largely be attributed to demographic factors, in addition to the fact that many educational systems concentrate on only one foreign language, namely English. This article will address measures taken by the Goethe-Institut to counter that trend, improve the quality of German language teaching worldwide and respond to current socio-political needs.

GERMAN LANGUAGE COURSES

The Goethe-Institut offers German language courses in 92 countries and 136 cities, for every age group, level of proficiency and a wide variety of specific target groups. In addition to group and individual classes, long-distance learning, and intensive or corporate courses, the institute offers a wide variety of web-based self-tutoring options, as well as specialized classes for professional groups such as doctors, engineers or nurses. Those courses complement the standard range of German courses available at the Goethe-Instituts.

In many countries, the Goethe-Institut offers courses in German language and culture for spouses planning to join their husbands or wives in Germany, preparing them for the exam "Start Deutsch 1" and for life in Germany. In addition, the institute is the contact point worldwide for some 350 testing partners, such as universities, adult education institutions and cultural societies focussed on relations between Germany and the foreign country.

▷WWW.GOETHE.DE/DEUTSCHKURSE

DEVELOPING AND APPROVING EXAMINATION METHODS

The Goethe-Institut's German language exams are recognized internationally. They comprise all Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) levels, from A1 for beginners to C2 for complete proficiency in a language. Among the Goethe-Institut's significant newer developments is the exam "Goethe Zertifikat C2", as well as exam preparatory materials for people with special needs such as the blind or deaf.

▷WWW.GOETHE.DE/PRUEFUNGEN

EXPANDING DIGITAL LEARNING

The Goethe-Institut is constantly developing new digital platforms to use in its language courses worldwide. They include mobile apps, games, social media tie-ins and platform-specific components of language courses. Currently 100,000 language students use the Goethe-Institut's interactive teaching platforms. Currently in development for the Goethe-Institut web site is a digital community for people all over the world who are learning German.

▷ WWW.GOETHE.DE/UEBEN

above **PASCH STUDENTS** at the Goethe-Institut Schwäbisch Hall, 2012

CONTINUING EDUCATION

The Goethe-Institut has an extensive programme of continuing training for educators teaching German as a foreign language, whether in their own countries, in Germany or via distance learning. Each year, the institute awards some 1700 scholarships for courses in German language or culture in Germany. With its new programme, "Deutsch Lehren Lernen" (i.e., "Learning to Teach German"), the Goethe-Institut offers academically certified ongoing training. Special qualification programmes target teachers who teach German as a second language, giving them the training to handle the demands of the special integration courses designed to equip foreigners for all aspects of life in Germany. The Goethe-Institut also caters to the needs of nursery and primary school teachers with its distance learning programmes "German as a second language in primary school" and "German as a second language in elementary learning". In countries with a great need for German teachers, such as India, the Goethe-Institut cooperates with local universities to train German teachers as part of a bachelor's degree. Intercultural training such as "Fit for Germany" is designed to help professionals deal with the challenges of intercultural work environments.

▷ WWW.GOETHE.DE/FORTBILDUNG

INFLUENCING LANGUAGE POLICY

The Goethe-Institut works closely with educational facilities and associations of German teachers in its host countries in order to strengthen the position of German as a foreign language worldwide. It advocates the integration of German in the curricula of schools and universities, and provides teaching materials. The Goethe-Institut also fosters the German language within EU institutions with language courses for senior EU staff and ministerial civil servants from EU and other partner countries. Within Germany, the Goethe-Institut is represented on numerous panels and advisory boards dealing with migration and integration and is an important player in the areas of pre-integration planning, transition management and skilled labour immigration. ▷ WWW.GOETHE.DE/INTEGRATION

FOSTERING MULTILINGUALISM

The Goethe-Institut is committed to the idea of a multilingual Europe and campaigns for at least two foreign languages to be taught in school in all European countries. The institute has organized professional congresses on the subject, collaborates with European initiatives such as SurveyLang and runs ad campaigns and competitions to foster multilingualism.

▷ WWW.GOETHE.DE/MEHRSPRACHIGKEIT

GERMAN LANGUAGE INITIATIVES

The Goethe-Instituts abroad use exhibitions, film series, readings, concerts and competitions to present a current picture of Germany and to bring awareness of the German language to a broader public. In certain countries with a particularly high number of German teachers, such as Poland, Russia or France, the institute organizes large-scale language campaigns and promotional programmes, sometimes lasting for several years. Among the newest initiatives are the "Deutschwagen Tours" (i.e., "German automobile tours") in Poland and Italy and the "Lern Deutsch!" initiative (i.e., "Learn German") in Russia.

▷ WWW.GOETHE.DE/LERNDEUTSCH

SUPPORTING LABOUR MOBILITY

One of the largest projects established by the Goethe-Institut to promote the immigration of skilled labour is the initiative "Mit Deutsch in den Beruf" (i.e., "On The Job With German"). This project involves 24 Goethe-Instituts in Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Belgium and Germany. Among the components of the programme are specialized language courses for doctors, engineers, nurses, lawyers and people in the tourism and automobile industries, along with training for job applicants, business German, intercultural training, corporate-sponsored language projects at schools and teacher training. The programmes are open to school and university students, vocational trainees and established professionals. ▷ WWW.GOETHE.DE/DEUTSCHUNDBERUF

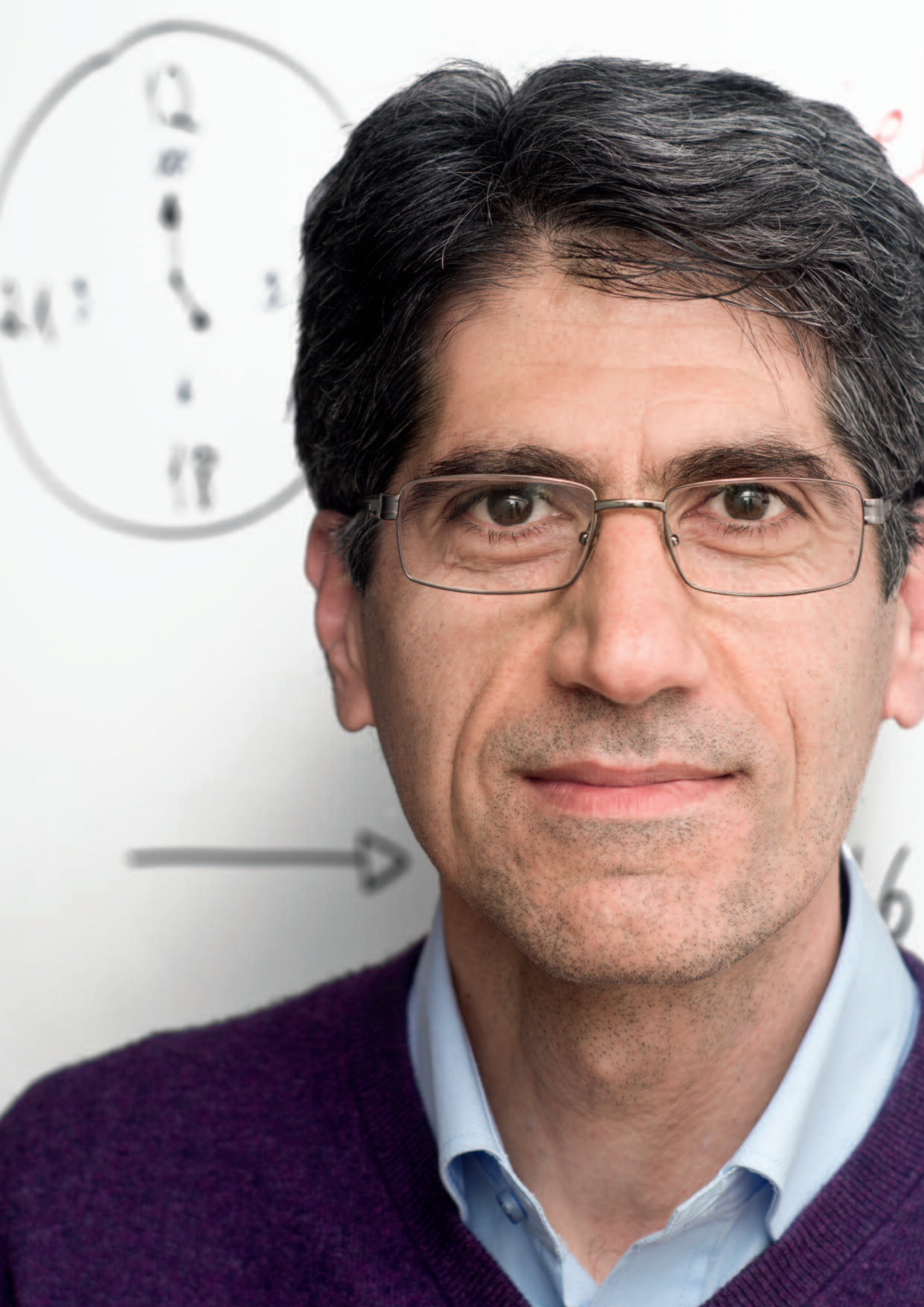
CONSULTING AND ADVISING

The Goethe-Institut is working in cooperation with the German Foreign Office on the PASCH initiative, which stands for "Schools: Partners for the Future". The institute sponsors 520 PASCH schools in the national education systems of more than 100 countries, which means some 154,000 German language students, as well as 1600 German teachers. Around the world, 1500 schools are part of the PASCH network, making them official partner schools of Germany. The Goethe-Institut provides extensive advice and sponsoring, contributing not only to improving the quality of the lessons, but also to expanding the curricula in the PASCH schools. It furnishes classrooms with up-to-date teaching materials, runs language courses and seminars in German culture and educational methodology at all language competency levels, and specialist training for PASCH German language teachers with limited teaching experience. Youth camps for PASCH students are organised on both the national and international levels; since 2008, almost 6000 students have participated in one of these courses for young people. One particular effective measure in educational policy is the PASCH conferences for school principals and directors, which are held both nationally and internationally.

▷ WWW.PASCH-NET.DE

NETWORKING

The Goethe-Institut also works in cooperation with both the German Labour Office department for brokering skilled jobs and jobs abroad (ZAV) and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees to help promote the mobility of skilled labour and encourage young professionals in their respective fields.



INDIA'S BIG LANGUAGE EXPERIMENT

GERMAN LESSONS ARE BEING INTRODUCED AT 1000 SCHOOLS

Today, what began as an experiment is one of the Goethe-Institut's greatest success stories: the introduction of German as a foreign language at all of the 1000 schools in the Kendriya Vidyalaya state school system. The students and their parents anticipate finding career opportunities worldwide from the German lessons.

The eleven-year-olds look spic and span in their blue uniforms – the girls with red hair ribbons, the boys with neatly parted hair and ties. The everyday routine at Kendriya Vidyalaya School in Bhopal is no different from that at other Indian schools until the teacher enters the room. The sixth-graders just bounce up from their seats and say, "Guten Morgen, Herr Lehrer." The foreign German phonemes drown out the hum of the ceiling fans. A map of Germany hangs on the bluish-whitewashed walls that show water damages from the latest monsoon. Automobile logos mark the locations of Ingolstadt, Munich and Wolfsburg. Cars and Germany are not only the stuff of boys' dreams.

A SMALL EDUCATIONAL REVOLUTION

What is happening in the classrooms of Bhopal, a city of 2.5 million inhabitants and the capital of the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, is not merely intended to inspire dreams. It is rather the beginning of a small educational revolution in India. This revolution needs more than organizational talents and more than a vision; it needs one of India's largest state school systems, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, or KV for short. Its more than 1000 schools are spread all over India and ensure that when their parents are transferred, the children of civil servants are taught the same curriculum in spite of the federal diversity of the education systems in the Indian states.

It was less than two years ago that the tradition-based school system awoke from its foreign language slumber and made the nationwide introduction of German as a foreign language one of its objectives. English, the language of the former colonial rulers, had sufficed for decades in order to succeed on the international stage, but now India is discovering other languages. With the introduction of foreign languages the KV school administrators aim to enhance the narrow linguistic framework of its schools in order to open the world to more people of India. Until now, only a few of the nation's 1.2 billion inhabitants have been able to profit from the economic opening that began in 1991. "In a globalized world, we must prepare students to meet the challenges of a multilingual and multicultural world," according to a commissioner of the KV schools.

1000 TEACHERS FOR 1000 SCHOOLS Indian school principals in Munich

INITIATED BY GERMANY'S FOREIGN MINISTER

Hindi, English and traditional Sanskrit are compulsory in the national school system. The idea of learning foreign languages in schools is new, in spite of India's huge linguistic diversity with over twenty-two languages and 300 dialects spoken and in spite of its generally multilingual and linguistically gifted population. Perhaps everything would have stayed that way if the former German foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, had not launched the initiative "Schools: Partners for the Future," or PASCH, in 2008. Since then the Foreign Office has funded a network that has now grown to 1500 PASCH schools, which have German lessons and special ties with Germany in common.

Two schools in the KV system were added to the PASCH network in India, thus signalling a language policy departure for KV. It is not difficult to calculate the added numbers of learners when students from all 1000 KV schools choose German as a subject and the excitement and elation on the German side were high. The number of learners rose to nearly a million. This was a huge challenge for the Goethe-Institut and its funder, the Foreign Office in Berlin, but Foreign Minister Westerwelle reaffirmed during his visit to New Delhi in 2011, "We want 1000 schools in India to offer German as a foreign language in the coming years." Therefore, the Goethe-Institut started up the project German at 1000 Schools, which is focussed on recruiting and training teaching staff for German as a foreign language. None of the universities train German teachers since there were previously no German lessons in schools.

Mohammedreza Yousefi from Tehran, 49, sociology teacher:
"I worked as a teacher in Tehran for 25 years. During the demonstrations in 2009, in which I also took part, people were arrested and some were even killed. Afterwards, I obtained a visa and came to Germany with my family. I cannot return to Iran because of the political situation. My two sons want to study and make a career here. I speak with them in German and help them write letters. I first have to improve my German to the C2 level in order to be able to work as a teacher in Hamburg. I like the freedom here in Germany, being able to express one's opinion without restrictions or censorship. People can think about the future, have great goals and still enjoy life."

THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS LEARNING GERMAN COULD GROW TO MORE THAN A MILLION A class at the Kendriya Vidyalaya School in Masjid Moth in New Delhi

250 KV schools have begun with German lessons since 2011. German is only the pilot language, however. French, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian are also planned. The provision of teaching staff tipped the scales for launching German first. "One thousand teachers for one thousand schools, those are huge numbers, the Chinese, Japanese, and Russians could not keep up," says the project director at the Goethe-Institut, Puneet Kaur. "With 5000 teachers in India, French indisputably had better chances," she admits and adds mischievously, "but we were faster to implement the programme. If we're successful, this will be the greatest accomplishment in the history of the Goethe-Institut."

SEARCHING FOR TEACHERS ONE UNIVERSITY AT A TIME

With great élan Puneet Kaur is tackling the herculean task of recruiting teachers for 1000 schools as quickly as possible. When, during one of her recruitment journeys from university to university, she discovered twenty-five students in Varanasi interested in learning German all at once, she could hardly believe her luck. One of them is 22-year-old Prasant. For the farmer's son with a Bachelor's degree in German, the teaching job means social advancement. Prior to his first day of work in Rourki, he went through intensive language training at the Goethe-Institut. If Puneet Kaur has her way, all new teachers will have to pass the Goethe exam at level B2 this year alongside their teaching work. Prasant doesn't mind. "It's as if I were only really learning German now. With the Bachelor's degree from the university, we are able to read literature, but not converse," he says, highly motivated.

Anyone who has started to learn German also learns a bit about the German culture. They are emotionally tied to the country.

The language skills of Anil, who is teaching in Bhopal, could use some improvement and he's all the more enthusiastic about it. While he writes "das Heft", "die Schultasche" and "der Kugelschreiber" on the chalkboard, the seventeen students in the sixth grade repeat the words after him in chorus: notebook, school bag, pen. "Think in Hindi for the pronunciation, an A is an A and an E an E," he explains to them. "Don't think in English." His love and feel for German not only motivates the students, but also the other teachers. They have already begun to greet one another in the school corridors with "Wie geht es dir?" The school principal, Mr Thakur, does not mind that the German teachers at his school are still in the learning process themselves. "It's about something far more important. The language courses give our children insight into the culture, economy and social aspects of a country. Anyone who has started to learn German also learns a bit about the German culture. They are emotionally tied to the country."

"GERMAN IS EASY AND FUN" Students of Kendriya Vidyalaya School in Masjid Moth at the Goethe-Institut New Delhi

CREATING A STRONG NETWORK

Introducing and committing India's youth to Germany at a young age by means of a broad-based language programme is in perfect alignment with the foreign cultural and educational policy of the Federal Republic of Germany. "The aim is to create a lasting and strong network of friends and partners for Germany." This is not altruistic; this sort of network will not only ensure full lecture rooms at German universities in the future, but the economies of both countries will also profit from it. Germany's good reputation as a nation of engineers, technicians and scientists has been steadfast for decades. People enrolling their sons or daughters in German lessons hope that they will be able to study in Germany after they finish school and start a rewarding career. The responses of the eleven-year-olds in Bhopal reflect the ambitions of their parents. "I am learning German so I can find a good job some day," answers Meera confidently.

Behind the scenes, however, the foreign language programme in the KV schools has triggered considerable grumbling. Most students choosing German usually do so at the expense of Sanskrit. This has caused quite a stir not only in conservative Bhopal, but also in the capital city of New Delhi. It does not change Anil's stance, though. "What advantage does Sanskrit offer if you cannot even use it in modern life?" he asks. And the success proves that he and the KV school administrators are right.

Only one year following the introduction of a choice between German and Sanskrit, 40 per cent of all students in grades six, seven and eight decided against Sanskrit. Of 90 to 100 students between the ages of eleven and fourteen, thirty-five are learning German. "The offer really should not end after the eighth grade as it has for the programme to persevere," says Mr Thakur, the school principal. "Otherwise it will be difficult to convince the parents of the long-term benefits of learning foreign languages." India is on the right path with its big language experiment as the reaction of Anil's German students shows, who smile and call, "Deutsch ist einfach und macht Spaß!" (i.e., "German is easy and fun!").

Dorothea Riecker is an Indologist and art historian. She has lived in India as a freelance journalist for eight years, first in Mumbai and now in New Delhi.

EXCHANGE STUDENTS ARE THE BEST AMBASSADORS

THE EUROPEAN DEBT CRISIS HAS LED TO A GROWING INTEREST IN GERMANY AMONG AMERICANS

Many Americans regard Germany as a modern and dynamic country, as well as being a good place to live. Young people even describe the country as "cool". Heike Uhlig, head of the Language Department at the Goethe-Institut, and Werner Ott, director of the Goethe-Institut Chicago, sat down to discuss with Gabriele Stiller-Kern how they motivate young people in the USA to take up the German language.

Gabriele Stiller-Kern: *This year, the Goethe-Institut is committed to increasing its support for German as a foreign language in the USA. Isn't this an almost hopeless venture in an English-speaking country?*

Heike Uhlig: Not at all. Since 2008, the number of people taking language courses at the Goethe-Institut in North America has steadily increased. And at the Goethe-Instituts in Germany, the USA ranks among the top ten countries of origin among students enrolled there. Rarely has interest in Germany been greater in the USA than it is right now – right in the middle of the European debt crisis. Although the number of those learning German in American schools, especially at the secondary level, has grown slightly in recent years, there still remains much to be done. German as a foreign language is facing stiff competition, in particular from Chinese. It is therefore essential to make learning German attractive once again. And this cannot wait until young people have already graduated. It has to take place while they are still at school, which means that German must remain part of the school curriculum. A study commissioned by the German Foreign Office in 2011 on the state of German as a foreign language in the USA highlights the potential that exists through the increased networking of both Germans and Americans involved in promoting languages, the need to focus on new target groups, and, above all, the development and expansion of exchange programmes.

Werner Ott: Americans already know the importance of foreign languages in theory. Many colleges, particularly prestigious ones, require foreign language skills for admission. Even while still at secondary school, students can earn college credit, which can provide an incentive to start learning a foreign language early on, in light of the very high university tuition fees in the USA.

Ai Yamada from Tokyo, 30, works in customer service for an employment agency: "I like the German lifestyle. There are so many bakeries and such delicious bread. And people don't have to work as much as in Japan. Unfortunately, I don't have a bath in my apartment, only a shower. In Japan, it is customary to take a bath in the evening. German is a difficult language and I don't find it easy to use the right article. I always have to pause and think – is it 'der', 'die', or 'das'? I would like to live and work in Germany, but my future plans are still uncertain."

In addition, the national education policy continues to support the learning of foreign languages. The Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships Program and the Critical Language Scholarship Program are examples of this. Emphasis, however, is given to the so-called "critical languages", such as Russian and Chinese. Financial support from the US State Department and the Department of Education is provided exclusively to those languages they regard as critical. These are languages that relate to the strategic and current foreign policy interests of the country and that, until now, have not been widely taught at educational institutions. German is thereby given just as little consideration as Spanish or French.

In terms of economic and foreign policy, the media and politics are firmly focused on Asia, the Arab world and Latin America. Almost all school authorities, decision makers and parents in the USA agree that children should learn the languages of those cultures that Americans regard as most important.

Many colleges, particularly prestigious ones, require foreign language skills for admission.

In a census taken thirteen years ago, some fifteen per cent of all Americans claimed to have German roots. Shouldn't there then be a greater interest in the German language?
Ott: The public school system is under enormous financial pressure to cut back in areas not seen as a priority. During the last presidential election campaign, there was much talk about increasing the competitiveness of the USA against the background of the economic crisis. Above all, more effort was to be focussed on the STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). Due to budgetary constraints, this has often been at the cost of other subjects, including the traditional foreign languages of French and German. Therefore, our incentive measures should focus on using the educational policy discussion to present Germany as a country of excellence in the area of science and technology and to clearly emphasize that transatlantic economic relations are still extraordinarily important for the USA. In addition, we have to increase awareness of Germany's important role in the world among policy makers who are either responsible for German programmes in schools and universities or who can play an influential role in reaching political and administrative decisions with respect to the framework of foreign language instruction.

How many Americans are learning German? Are there any figures?
Ott: Unfortunately, German programmes at public schools in large cities are showing a decline in number; however, courses offered in the suburbs are experiencing a greater interest. This means that strong programmes grow and weak ones disappear. We primarily support programmes that are potentially or already successful. According to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, some 395,000 students were

THE GERMAN AMERICAN PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM WILL BE FURTHER EXPANDED SO THAT MORE YOUNG AMERICANS AND GERMANS WILL BE ABLE TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER'S LANGUAGE AND CULTURE.

learning German at school in the USA in 2008. At colleges and universities, the total number in 2009 was 93,000.

According to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, some 395,000 students were learning German at school in the USA in 2008.

When it comes to learning a foreign language, most young Americans think strategically. Career prospects are a decisive factor. What arguments will you use to convince students that it is worthwhile for them to learn German?
Uhlig: Learning a foreign language generally isn't a high priority in the USA, as in other English-speaking countries. So instead of sparking an interest in Germany through the language alone, we have to focus on German technology, natural sciences or economic performance. If you ask parents and students why they decided to take German at school, it usually comes down to a functioning exchange programme with schools in Germany. The prospect of actually using the language that you learn in school in the country where it is spoken is an unbelievably huge motivating factor.

Ott: There already exists a positive fundamental interest in Germany according to opinion polls. Around twenty per cent of all Americans regard Germany as one of the USA's most important international partners, ranking fifth place just behind Britain, China, Canada and Japan. In terms of foreign direct investment, Germany also ranks fifth place for the USA. This means, among other things, that there are many jobs and employment opportunities available for young Americans with German language and cultural skills. For many Americans, Germany is a modern and dynamic country, as well as being a good place to live. Successful labour market reforms, economic success and high employment in a time of crisis, environmental technologies, and a strong automotive industry all contribute to an increased interest in Germany. Over and above these factors they name Germany's role as initiator in many scientific and cultural areas and in European affairs.

In short, it's a matter of making clear that it is in the interest of the USA – culturally, economically and in terms of foreign policy – to maintain a spirit of close cooperation with Europe and Germany, in particular. It is also important to preserve our community of values in a time of globalization. Our target groups are not only elementary school, secondary school and university students, but also German language teachers and, of course, as previously mentioned, American decision makers. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, for example, regards Germany as her "first choice".

Is knowledge of German even necessary in branch offices of German companies in the USA? English has long been the lingua franca of international business.
Uhlig: We have observed in recent years that the importance of the German language has been growing, even in international companies. Of course, this changes nothing in the status of English, which, just as computer skills, is a job prerequisite. Yet, German language skills are the key to understanding German business culture and can help corporate employees pursue an international career and even take them to Germany.

Ott: A basic knowledge of German is encouraged for those white-collar professionals and senior managers maintaining regular contact with the head office in Germany. Job applicants who can offer their specialized expertise, bundled with language skills, have a considerable advantage. The combination of language skills and cultural awareness, in particular, is something that German companies find important. It is a matter of understanding German company culture and conveying basic knowledge of the region.

Exchange students in Berlin, 2012

What are your plans for the coming years?
Uhlig: The German American Partnership Program will be further expanded so that more young Americans and Germans will be able to get to know each other's language and culture. Exchange students are excellent ambassadors when it comes to convincing other students to learn German. They offer the most vivid account of what they experienced on their stay in Germany and how it enriched them. In addition, our colleagues will introduce a programme for science teachers as offered in the Transatlantic Outreach Program. These American teachers, who usually cannot speak German, will be given the opportunity of travelling to Germany and develop teaching material together with experts here. They will then be able to offer a first-hand account of Germany as a country of technological advancement and present new ideas to their students.

In order to ensure the long-term future of the German language in American schools, we will also have to speak with selected decision makers, invest in continuing education for German teachers and show students that learning German can be really fun because Germany also has something to offer in the area of youth culture.

The Goethe-Instituts in North America receive advice and support from our headquarters in Germany. Of course, this all requires additional personnel and financial resources in the USA. Without additional funding from the "Bildungsoffensive Deutsch" (i.e., "German Language Campaign") programme, none of this would be possible.

At the same time, we are starting a large ad campaign for language courses at Goethe-Instituts in Germany and we anticipate synergy effects from our coordinated activities. It hardly needs to be said, of course, that social networks will play a great role in our advertising efforts.

Ott: Among the projects that are particularly important to me and my colleagues from the Goethe-Instituts in North America is the "Wirtschaftsstandort Deutschland 2013" (i.e., "Germany – Vital Economic Centre 2013") conference series that is aimed at German and economics teachers and offers them an introduction to economic issues in Germany and Europe. Thereby, not only can German teachers acquire a greater knowledge of the country, but economics teachers are also motivated to include topics on the German economy in their classes. The topic of the next conference is "Money and Work" and it will address the recent issue of labour migration. This project is a cooperative effort of the Goethe-Institut Chicago with the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, renowned universities and other partners, such as the London School of Economics and the University of Chicago.

What does the Federal Reserve Bank expect to gain from cooperation with the Goethe-Institut?
Ott: First and foremost, we are targeting teachers and educators of economics, because they are, in other words, the decision and opinion makers and involved in developing and spreading the curriculum for teaching German. These people are essential in the process of motivating students to learn German and become interested in Germany. It is in the interest of the Federal Bank that its outreach programme not only concentrates on issues concerning the American economy and finance market policies, but also addresses international issues. The Federal Bank gratefully welcomed the proposal by the Goethe-Institut Chicago to hold a conference series on Europe, Germany's standing in Europe and on Germany from a business perspective, as well as develop interdisciplinary case studies together with the Federal Bank for use in economics and German courses. Also planned are networking events, joint projects and exchange programmes with the European Central Bank and the Deutsche Bank.

"THE GERMAN LANGUAGE OPENED UP A NEW WORLD TO ME"

A JOURNEY TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA REVEALS THAT LANGUAGE IS AN EMOTIONAL CATEGORY

by Merle Hilbk

350,000 Bosnians and Herzegovinians lived in Germany as war refugees in the 1990s. Today, many of them still have close ties to Germany. Everywhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina one gets addressed in German; it doesn't matter whether it's at the gas station or in a café, at museums or government agencies.

It's easy for Americans: everywhere they go they can make themselves understood in their native language. English has become a kind of worldwide lingua franca. Even in the transitional countries of Eastern Europe most young people learn English as their first – and often only – foreign language. This is due mainly to economic reasons, as English skills are demanded in most job postings. Furthermore, most development cooperation projects, which are often the only well-paying work on location, communicate in English; likewise, many academic articles are also published in English. So, you may hardly believe your ears at first when travelling through an eastern European country where German is spoken at every turn. Everywhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina people address one in German; it doesn't matter whether it's at the gas station or in a café, at museums or government agencies. Not only that, but people usually engage in lengthy conversations about Germany.

In the 1990s, 350,000 Bosnians and Herzegovinians – one tenth of the population – lived in Germany as war refugees and took language courses there. The fact that even twenty years later the German language still flourishes in Bosnia and Herzegovina may be due to the close ties that many repatriates still have to Germany today, be it through personal friendships, social initiatives, universities or social media platforms. Perhaps, though, it is also the feeling that many associate with Germany – a feeling of being welcome, concern and sympathy.

NEIGHBOURLY HELP FOR THE WAR REFUGEES

It is a feeling that grew not only at the political level, but most of all thanks to the personal commitment of many Germans, as was the case for the Kliko family from Jajce. The Klikos came to Bavaria with the aid of a smuggler, with no money and no documents, because they had to leave their town from one minute to the next. Their house in Jajce had been hit by a bomb and the father was threatened by co-workers because he did not want to "fight against his own neighbours" in the army, as he says. The three kindergarten age daughters were traumatized by the weeks fleeing through the mountains of Bosnia.

In the Bavarian village where they were allocated a place in a Red Cross dormitory, they were received by a Catholic priest. To welcome them he invited them for coffee in his home. The girls stood in amazement in front of the pictures of saints that hung there in the corridor. "He explained to us why his religion had them, but not ours, but that we all believe in the same God," recalls Indira, the oldest daughter. She also can remember that the owner of a grocery shop brought them food packages, the local locksmith offered her father a job, the neighbours helped their mother care for the children and the day care teacher practiced German with Indira until she was able to communicate with the other children.

Once back in Jajce no one showed an interest in her; no one asked whether the Cyrillic alphabet was difficult to learn, how her father would rebuild the destroyed home with no money, how they should live with no work and no welfare benefits. They waited in vain for the "building aid" that the president of Bosnia and Herzegovina had promised all repatriates and for which the Federal Republic of Germany had transferred money to the new government. Neither a job nor an apartment could be found without connections.

Indira has supported the family with her job as a tour guide for four years. As she guides groups of German tourists through the founding city of the "Socialist People's Republic of Yugoslavia", she gushes about Germany, although the country expelled her family in 1998 just as she had been slated to attend Gymnasium. "In Germany, the individual is important," says Indira Kliko. "Society gives you the opportunity to find out who you want to be." Ever since she left Germany she has known that she wants to become an interpreter.

ADMIRATION FOR SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT

Many of the former war refugees have much praise for German civil society. They were not merely impressed by the material prosperity in Germany, but most of all that many people are involved in shaping society, says Hermin, a physiotherapist from Mostar, who spent six years in Stuttgart. The people of Stuttgart even exerted an influence on political decisions and he personally benefited from this involvement: a citizens' group helped to place him in trauma therapy as he had been tortured by soldiers – and then later supported him in learning physical therapy techniques with which he was later able to help other victims of trauma in Bosnia and Herzegovina. When he speaks

Samir El Rajab from Tripoli, 41, imam at the Hamburg Islamic Centre: "I've been living in Hamburg for nine years. Until now, I have always needed a translator. Now I am pleased to be able to speak directly to people when they come to see me. My dream is that someday all people can live together peacefully. Some are worried that mosques generate terrorism. But our religion is not at all like it is portrayed in the media. We have an open-house day at our mosque and people are invited to talk and have some coffee. I also enjoy contact with pastors and I find it very good that we can exchange views. No one has ever shown me any hostility. All people are equal, but whenever I see young girls smoking, drinking alcohol or taking drugs, my heart grows heavy."

INDIRA KLIKO She supports her entire family with her job as a tour guide

German today, he remembers this support, which gave him back the most important thing in life: the ability to trust other people.

It is an unusual experience for a German to travel through a country that was invaded by the German army in the Second World War but where nonetheless one is met with such admiration for Germany.

The admiration in itself is not so unusual. Germany is admired worldwide for its prosperity, its economic aptitude, an unruffled style of politics – in a nutshell, for its performance and success. Yet, this is admiration that produces distance, a teacher-student relationship, in the worst case even envy.

What is unusual in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the reason for the admiration: the citizens' involvement, the commitment of many Germans to their communities, to their neighbourhoods, their acceptance of different lifestyles – all those things that generally fall under the heading of civil society. It is a reason that seems to create closeness, personal interest, an emotional bond. "How one is perceived in a country is not only influenced by politics," explains Elverim Sukovic, who studied German in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Personal connections play a far greater role, "and the closer and warmer they are, the more feelings one develops for the country."

THEY WOULD LIKE TO HAVE BECOME GERMAN

The political level is a mystery to many Bosnians and Herzegovinians. "Why were hundreds of thousands put in language courses to learn German? Why did the government pay for their schools, education and housing and then send them back?" wonders Fuad Tunovic, who fled to the Netherlands. He was granted citizenship there a few years later and built a house. His son works as an engineer, his daughter at the Dutch Embassy in Berlin. Every year in August he meets friends from his youth in Sarajevo, not a few of which were in Germany during the war. "They say, 'You're lucky, Fuad! You were allowed to decide whether you wanted to stay or return home. And now you're a genuine Dutchman!'" he relates.

He adds, "I think they would have liked to become German." They still cling to Germany in spite of their involuntary return to Bosnia and Herzegovina and take every opportunity to connect with Germans in Sarajevo. "They felt at home in Germany."

"We will always have a close tie to Germany," says Fatima Kliko, 53, the mother of Indira. "Personally, no one made us feel that we didn't belong. In Catholic Bavaria, the people helped us in any way they could, even though we are Muslims. 'We know what war and flight mean,' they told us." Home is mainly a feeling and that feeling has still not returned to them in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The young people who took part in a photography project at the Goethe-Institut Sarajevo in 2009 expressed similar viewpoints. Regardless of whether their families were deported from Germany or their parents returned voluntarily, for most of the young people it was not a return to their homeland, but a forced new beginning in a foreign land. "We had opportunities in Germany. No one respects you here. You have the feeling that no one is interested in your abilities," wrote one participant, and added that he wanted to go back.

PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS ARE THE FOUNDATION

It seems that the German scholar Sukovic may be correct in his hypothesis that personal encounters, culture and social engagement – civil society – play a far greater role in the perception of a country than was once thought; a role that is very rarely considered in political discourse, at international conferences or in the media.

This is an insight that could also support change in development cooperation, in which there is increasing awareness that sound prospects for a country's future cannot only be developed by economists and engineers. Culture and mutual interest could finally transform "development cooperation" into what the term literally means: a reciprocal learning process – a learning process limited not merely to conveying technical and scientific capabilities, but that also could promote social awareness.

There is a Serbian Orthodox monastery that was renovated after the war with aid from the international community twenty kilometres northwest of Prijedor. In the devotionals shop, Darko, a 28-year-old novice, talks in German about his life in the monastic community. "I have gotten the feeling here that I am once again the boy I was before the war," he says.

The community taught him that he could finally let go of the war and the feelings of guilt and shame passed on by his parents

THE KLIKO FAMILY The repatriates waited in vain for the "building aid" that the Bosnian government promised

that had made him see the world as if through a veil. "I consciously tell Germans about the war," says Darko. "I have the feeling that we share something that they have forgotten how to talk about: grief."

In the western Bosnian town of Bihac, Armin Amidzic, aged 25, worked towards declaring the region surrounding the Una Canyon a national park. During the Second World War hundreds of Bosnian partisans were thrown into the canyon by German soldiers. Now, with his company Una Aqua Centar he paddles with tourists through the canyons in rubber dinghies and hikes the mountains with them.

He learnt how a national park is managed from the web sites of German ecotourism initiatives, he learnt the German language and, as he puts it, "ecological thinking" as a teenager in Baden-Württemberg. His web site advertises in German, Bosnian and English the tours offered by his company, which he founded with the help of his father who inexpensively bought property on a number of islands on the river from Bosnian Serbs who left the country. Initially he did not know what to do with them. "The German language opened up a new world to me," says Armin Amidzic. "Now I have to find a way to make this world a reality in Bosnia and Herzegovina."

Following her law studies, **Merle Hilbk** was a journalist for "Spiegel" and "Zeit". Today, she lives and works as a travel journalist and writer in Berlin. In her books, she deals primarily with Russia and Central Asia. Her most recent publication is "Tschernobyl Baby. Wie wir lernten, das Atom zu lieben" (i.e., "Chernobyl Baby. How we learnt to love the atom", 2011).

WHERE'S THE PROBLEM?

LUDWIG EICHINGER SPEAKS ABOUT GERMAN AS A LANGUAGE OF SCIENCE AND SCHOLARSHIP

English is the dominant language in scientific communication. The share of German-language publications in the natural sciences has fallen to one percent worldwide. The Institute for the German Language (IDS) in Mannheim works to promote multilingualism in academia. IDS director Professor Ludwig M. Eichinger spoke with Christoph Mücher of the Goethe-Institut about strategies to strengthen the position of German.

Mr Eichinger, what language do you use to converse with your non-German colleagues?
Let me give you an example. I have an English colleague. When we meet, I speak German and he speaks English, and we understand each other. After ten minutes, I speak English and he speaks German, just to be polite.

Does German have any chance of surviving in the sciences and academia?
In the literary sciences, the widely-spoken languages do still have a chance against the dominance of English, because they are based in text. They also have a chance in application-oriented fields such as mechanical engineering. And there are many uses for German as a scientific language in fields such as, for example, neurobiology. That doesn't mean that the important trade magazines will be published in German. But German will play a role in academic doctrine and it will play a role in disseminating information to the public.

Many sciences have two faces, such as chemistry, which has commercial aspects, too. And the legal profession – lawyers who deal with German and international law do well to publish in both German and English. It even applies to economists, really, who write in English to be trendy, but who in fact must communicate in German when they deal with small or medium-sized German companies. There is a series of those sorts of fields undergoing change, in which I see good chances for German to survive as a scientific language. Given the current state of affairs, it is completely improbable that English could completely replace German in Germany within two or three generations. So it is most definitely the duty of the literary language to help along the process of implementing top-notch scientific language in German, as well. We need to advocate for that.

In November 2011, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Goethe-Institut and the Institute for the German Language (IDS) organised a conference in Essen to come up with stimuli to strengthen German as an academic language. What was your personal take-away from that interdisciplinary conference?
Mainly, I felt encouraged. What I wanted and expected, and what I find very positive, is that we established a level of discussion grounded in theory but still pragmatic. We talked about what could be done to attain the goal of people continuing to learn German – the direction that most of us agreed upon. It's not only pointless to always use the old adage, "things used to be better back then", it's also just not true. German is one of the central European languages with applications in various fields worldwide and it is the language of a politically important country.

I think the PASCH initiative is a very good way to foster the dissemination of German. It links some 1500 schools around the world, in which German is given particular weight. German schools abroad have always had a very good reputation. As long as that continues, there will be a certain academic class speaking German, which is very important to perpetuate language skills.

There was discussion at the Essen conference about the journal impact factor in publishing. It is intended to measure how often academic journals are cited in other publications and, in many places, has become a parameter for measuring academic achievement. It can be conjectured that an evaluation based on a benchmark of citations might be at least partially responsible for the increasing restriction to English in scientific and academic communication. Do you think there is a realistic chance of changing that?
It is definitely something that needs further work. Those indices are unfair. First of all because they don't keep track of everything that is published, for instance, in the humanities. And second, because their reasoning doesn't take into account relative potential readership size. Everyone reads English, but German texts are measured the exact same way, although not everyone can read them. So what needs to be done in order to accurately compare impact factors is to calculate the relative effectiveness of articles in certain fields using a realistic number of readers. We need to work toward improving those mathematical models for the individual journals. It is foreign companies in particular who use the journal impact factor to assess candidates when hiring, so a person who publishes in a non-English journal is already at a disadvantage. Despite the fact that, for an archaeologist or a person in the German studies field, it is much more natural to publish in a German-language or Italian-language magazine.

Isaïe Dougnon from Bamako, 43, lecturer in ethnology at the University of Bamako, Mali: "I received a scholarship from the Humboldt Foundation to learn German. In the future, I would like to earn a doctorate at the University of Bayreuth. My dream is to someday be appointed professor. German is very difficult. I would like to be able to speak more quickly, but it is a problem. I also don't have so much contact with people, as I spend a lot of time in my office reading and researching. At the university, I know colleagues who have done research on Africa. These are serious and very thorough researchers."

How did the journal impact factor become so significant?
The American academic and economic system is simply of an unrivalled vastness, which is why it has become so dominant. And by the way, by asking that the citation index be worked out relative to the intended public, we are not promoting just the German language. More generally, it's about multilingualism. The Germans and the French are facing a similar problem in that respect.

Why is multilingualism important? Wouldn't it be sufficient if we could all order a beer in the much-cited "bad English"? If the beer is good and the person sitting next to you is pleasant, what does it matter whether we can speak Italian, Spanish, French, Portuguese or Russian?
We can order a beer in any language. Or in German, since we're the best at beer anyway. But in a specialist context, where things must be very accurate and specific, it's important to be able to name things in the original language. Philosophers know that, and mechanical engineers apparently do, as well. Somebody who has a good knowledge of German economics or law will also read the relevant texts in the original language, in order to satisfy his or her need for exactitude. And apart from that, I think German literature should be read in German. Given our role in the Enlightenment and in philosophy, in international education and the development of the modern economic system, we should certainly appreciate academics and scientific scholars who understand things without taking a detour through a translation. In addition, it's sometimes polite and pleasant when, as a visitor, one can speak to the host in his or her own language. We all dream of a kind of reciprocal multilingualism, in which we all understand and can speak a bit in a few languages.

Has a politically united Europe had an effect on foreign language learning?
There aren't many statistics on that. There is the EU Commission's ideal, which has taken a back seat again, that every EU citizen should learn two languages in addition to his or her native tongue. English, of course, is in first place. German was once a traditional choice of language in schools in Europe. But in many countries, there is now a greater selection of second foreign languages on offer in schools. Logically enough, that diversification has led to a drop in the number of people learning German in Europe. But I have the impression that the situation has stabilised somewhat. German is one of the most prominent languages, but it is in competition with some others. Spanish has made great gains in this respect. And we'll have to see what happens with Russian in the long term.

There is a relatively pessimistic feeling in the German studies field about the number of people learning German. By contrast, the Goethe-Institut has documented a huge gain in people graduating from German courses. What is your personal forecast?
I tend to be realistic. As a language that has left a powerful mark on culture, German certainly once played a greater role in some countries than it does now. A few years ago, there were more than 80 German studies institutes in Korea. Things have changed, but talking about who or what is responsible is pointless, since arguing about the past doesn't help. But then we can also look at Brazil, Russia, India and China, which are developing their own language areas. The Koreans are a good example. Until about 15 years ago, they would never have learnt Chinese. Now they are learning Chinese and that changes the picture. It's a difficult balancing act – not throwing tradition away, but still seeking out new, sensible things. And also learning to live with the fact that one will be smaller than one once was.

Nonetheless, there are good reasons to have a command of German. My favourite anecdote on this subject is when I was at the German embassy in Tokyo six years ago as part of the "Germany in Japan" year and gave a lecture titled "1000 reasons to learn German". I claimed that I could only think of three reasons, but that wasn't too bad either. Afterwards, an elderly Japanese gentleman came up to me and said he knew exactly why he was learning German, because he needed to know immediately about the newest discoveries of the "Swabian inventors" and not wait for the translation, if any. To ensure that German doesn't disappear into insignificance, we have to concentrate more on target groups and not just keep saying "German is important; we were and are a great culture".

So in that sense, I am quite optimistic. I think we're moving towards a new kind of multilingualism. It definitely won't dispense with English, because of course there are the five mathematicians scattered around the world who are working on the same curious problem. They're sitting wherever they are, and one is Chinese and the next one doesn't speak any other European language, which means they will certainly have to speak English. On top of that, they speak in numbers anyway, and the three words they still do need might as well be English. I'm exaggerating, of course. But there are a lot of people to whom it is worth it to be able to speak directly to us Germans. They may be philosophers; they may be mechanical engineers. And they may be people who have had a fantastic education – for instance, at one of the PASCH schools.

In India, that approach seems to be having an effect on German studies as well, and not just on practical fields. Warsaw was the site of the 2010 congress of the IVG, the international federation of German scholars, which is held every five years. And everybody complained, except the Indians. Of course it's

more difficult in some areas of the world, like in the English-speaking countries, to motivate people to learn German. Because the need to learn another language is not that powerful there. German was once a world language; there's no argument about it. These days, it is only a world language under specific circumstances and with a strong European imprint.

What do you see as the primary tasks of the institute in the coming ten years?

One of our main tasks is to maintain the standing of German among the European languages. We have to do that with academic measures. Everybody has a duty of their own, and we are not primarily language politicians or language teachers. We try to document German as thoroughly as possible electronically and we are in contact with international German language and culture teachers and students on many fronts, in order to encourage exploration of the German language in other countries.

We also try to buttress the language by carrying out basic research that can be the foundation for dictionaries or textbooks. We also focus intensely on issues of norms and standards. Unlike the Académie Française in France, we are not prescriptive here in Germany. But it is one of our responsibilities to develop standard terms that are close to real usage and to look at what constitutes Standard German these days. We are a linguistic research institute for the German language. We want to sustain the character of German as an important European language with a long literary history, a large population and many things that are quite typical of the modern spirit in Europe.

Where do you see links to the Goethe-Institut?
We have already organised many joint conferences and other events – "language without borders", "German as a language of science" – where interaction is key between the more theoretically-historically inclined explicators and those who are more active on a practical and cultural policy level. We consider ourselves a partner of the Goethe-Institut, but also of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

Scholarship leads to the question of how we can ensure that people all over the world are learning enough German so that there will always be enough people who can communicate with each other in German. That is an important job for both of us. The Goethe-Institut should not give up the daily battle to keep the language working. That would be my desire.

Ludwig M. Eichinger has been the director of the Institute for the German Language (IDS) since 2002 and is a professor for German linguistics at Mannheim University.

Christoph Mücher is the head of Communications and PR at the head office of the Goethe-Institut.

GERMAN AS A LANGUAGE OF SCHOLARSHIP

THE LANGUAGE OF SCHOLARSHIP CHANGES. Erudite people in ancient Europe communicated in Greek and Latin; the two languages held equal status. Only in the Middle Ages did Latin become dominant as the language of scholarship. As late as the 15th century, some three-quarters of all printed texts were in Latin. It was not until the 19th century, when many new scientific discoveries emanated from the German-language region, that German became established as one of three languages of the learned, alongside English and French. After the two World Wars, English increasingly became the dominant language of academic and scientific exchange.
COUNTING CITATIONS. The fact that scientists and academics worldwide now publish primarily in English is partially due to the journal impact factor (JIF). It is used to measure the impact of academic journals by measuring how often the content is cited in other publications. It has also long been used to assess the academic standing of authors. Because English publications have far greater circulation and more readers, they are cited more often than German-language publications. So it is far more efficient for scientists to publish in those trade journals. As an example, to qualify as a professor at Berlin's Charité teaching hospital, a candidate must prove 30 publication points. As Wolfgang Hasse, a paediatric surgeon in Berlin points out critically, to achieve that amount, the candidate would have to publish 55 articles in the German-language trade journal "Der Chirurg" (i.e., "The Surgeon"), but only four in "Annals of Surgery". English is particularly dominant in the natural sciences and in medicine. For those in the humanities and cultural studies fields, German is still considered one of the international languages of scholarship.
ENGLISH IN THE LECTURE HALL. The Bologna Process, an initiative to standardise the architecture of higher education across Europe, was begun at the end of the 1990s. That gave English a free pass as a language of instruction, including in German universities. The first 21 English-language degree programmes were established 16 years ago. Since then, they have expanded enormously. Of the 9471 basic courses of study that the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) lists on its Internet home page, 136 are entirely or largely in the English language. That share is significantly greater when looking at advanced coursework, accounting for almost ten per cent of the degree programmes.


GRÜNEN
TRÄGT
VIELL
JAHR

BACK TO SCHOOL

WHEN TEACHERS LEARN: TEACHER TRAINING ENSURES HIGH-QUALITY GERMAN LANGUAGE COURSES ACROSS THE GLOBE

by Michaela Drenovaković

Worldwide, there are about 300,000 German teachers. Their students need to learn, but teachers also need training. And to get it, these teachers can always turn to the Goethe-Institut. The nearly 1000 teacher training courses offered by the Goethe-Institut last year are our contribution to quality assurance in German courses around the globe.

Cairo and Shanghai are found lacking. More precisely, what they're lacking are the twenty-six letters of the Roman alphabet. Chinese and Arabic characters have nothing in common with German letters; for students of German, this means first learning their ABCs.

Cairo and Shanghai have something else in common: their difficulty with the German umlaut. "Words with an umlaut are hard for Egyptians to pronounce," confirms Riham Tahoun, a German teacher at the Goethe-Institut Cairo.

Que Ying works at the Goethe-Institut Shanghai and is just as familiar with the struggle with the umlaut, especially the "ö". "This sound doesn't exist in most Chinese dialects," she explains. But it's not only umlauts that plague native speakers of Chinese: "What's most foreign to us is the assignment of a gender to German words," says the 35-year-old teacher. It's difficult to explain to the students why a table is "der" but a shelf is "das", even though both objects are furniture made of wood. "Nouns don't have a gender in Chinese. That's why even I, the teacher, mix up the genders of words, even ones I use often." Teaching German therefore means continually learning German and improving one's own skills. Which is why teachers too need to regularly go back to school.

MORE THAN JUST GRAMMAR

Presenting effective German lessons means more than just acquiring a knowledge of the language. Alongside umlauts and "der, die, das", educators also need teaching skills and tools. A good teacher also knows Germany, follows contemporary German debates, and continuously improves his or her own language skills. For the Goethe-Institut, quality management of its German courses is a global task. One excellent opportunity for teachers to get a well-rounded impression of Germany today is the Goethe-Institut's teacher training in Germany. "These courses bring teachers from around the world together to bring their knowledge of Germany up to date," states Karin Ende, Acting Head of the Section "Support For German Language Education" within the Language Department of the Goethe-Institut.

Last year, around 2200 German teachers from across the globe took advantage of this opportunity to develop their skills in Germany. Many participants came from Eastern Europe and Central Asia, in particular from Russia, followed closely by Central and Southeast European participants, but some also came from Northern Africa. Not only Goethe-Institut teachers profited from these courses. "Our courses are open to all German teachers, not only teachers from the Goethe-Institut," Karin Ende stresses. "We work together closely with local education agencies."

The choice of the right learning material is key to good German language lessons. The Goethe-Institut is also the right source for lesson plan ideas. The Goethe-Institut links scholarship and experience in the development of its teaching material. "We cooperate with universities to develop new materials that meet the European standards for teachers and are oriented toward global standards for teaching qualifications," Karin Ende explains. Goethe-Institut teaching materials and teaching manuals therefore provide a basis for strong German skills – and are available to everyone around the world. These materials are not only used by the Goethe-Institut, but also, for example, in state schools and educational institutions.

Turning our attention back to Cairo, the project "Career start for 100 German teachers" trained as many new teachers in 2012. German is becoming more and more popular in Egypt. "Many people here make their living in the tourism industry and want to work in international companies. Knowing German is a definite advantage," Riham Tahoun explains.

Her colleague, Wael Ahmed, also conducts teacher training courses at the Goethe-Institut. To him, German is more than just a language. "Here at the Goethe-Institut, you feel like you're working in Germany. What I like most is how well Germans work together as a team, how systematic they are," he says. And then of course there are all the other good things made in Germany: "Mercedes, BMW and potatoes," he lists with a smile.

WANTED: GERMAN TEACHERS

German food is also remembered fondly in Shanghai. "I remember marzipan very well," Que Ying reminisces. The 35-year-old was in Lübeck on one of her trips to Germany and today still remembers the port city and its sweetest top export quite fondly. In general, Germany has a good reputation in China. "German products stand for quality. Many business people tell me they like working with Germans best, because they're so reliable,"

Benita Ramkorun from Mauritius, 25, chemistry student:
"Sometimes people stare at me when I am out for a walk with my boyfriend. He is German and we want to get married soon. We met in Australia, where we were both studying. Until now, we spoke English with each other. But now I would like to learn German and we want to live in Germany. My dream is to someday have my own restaurant and be my own boss. I love food and cooking. Things will probably turn out different. I hope to be able to study here, earn a doctorate, and find a good job."

AROUND 2200 GERMAN TEACHERS TOOK PART IN A GOETHE-INSTITUT TRAINING COURSE IN GERMANY LAST YEAR

says Que Ying. But it is not only punctuality and high-quality goods that make Germany so popular in China; Germany is also an important economic partner. "More and more German companies are setting up subsidiaries in Shanghai, such as VW, BASF, Bosch and Bayer," the 35-year-old says.

Some of her students work with German partners or want to work in Germany in the future. "Some of our students come from areas as diverse as mechanical engineering, architecture or medicine." But even those who are staying in China have good chances of finding a job as a German teacher. The Goethe-Institut's interactive learning method is novel in China. "The didactics are very different from traditional Chinese teaching methods, which rely on teacher-centred teaching," Que Ying explains. "Traditional Chinese lessons are kind of like the theatre: the teacher has the lead role. He is the most important person in the course, the students only listen. Lessons at the Goethe-Institut aren't like that. The teacher is more like the stage director; the students also have main parts. Students are encouraged to work in pairs or on their own. That's absolutely new for most Chinese people."

To learn this new interactive method for teaching languages, German teachers must sit in on classes at the Goethe-Institut and gather practical experience. This is also true in the new training programme, "Deutsch Lehren Lernen" (i.e., "Learning to Teach German"), in which participants can receive a university certificate upon completion. This training programme was developed by the Goethe-Institut in cooperation with universities and qualifies participants to teach German not only at the Goethe-Institut, but at a variety of institutions, whether universities or schools. Certification prerequisites include attending local courses as well as online distance learning. It takes one year before participants hold their certification in their hands.

TRAINING COURSES IN GERMANY GIVE PARTICIPANTS AN UP-TO-DATE AND NUANCED PICTURE OF THE COUNTRY

And who knows which opportunities will then be available to them. Wael Ahmed, for one, is certain: “For me, the German language was a gate to all of Europe.”

Michaela Drenovaković studied German and English and subsequently worked in publishing in Kiel. Today she is a freelance journalist in Berlin and writes for the German daily newspaper “Tagesspiegel” and “Missy Magazin”, among others.

MOSCOW, 2011

“УЧИ НЕМЕЦКИЙ!
LEARN GERMAN!”

In Russia there are around 2.3 million people learning German – one of the highest figures worldwide. Looking back, though, we see that the number of schoolgoers learning German as their first foreign language has declined over the past ten years. In November 2010, the Goethe-Institut launched an ambitious promotional and lobbying campaign in Russia entitled “Learn German!”, that has successfully revived the prospects of the German language in Russia. The campaign’s most important objective is to make a minimum of two foreign languages compulsory in general secondary schools. This would make German by far the most widely studied foreign language in Russia after English. The Goethe-Institut moved closer to that goal in May 2012, when a presidential decree included a clear recommendation for two foreign languages to be taught in Russian general secondary schools. The push by the Goethe-Institut for the German language targets students and parents, school principals and educational policy makers right across Russia through promotional tours for German-language learning, rap concerts, competitions and festivals, public transport ads, trade fairs, recruitment training for German teachers, conferences on education and teaching prizes for German instructors. These initiatives have already prompted a rise in the number of youngsters learning German at school and increased demand for the Goethe-Institut’s own German courses. In 2011, the number of school students picking German as their second foreign language grew by five per cent over the previous year. ▷ WWW.GOETHE.DE/LERNDEUTSCH

ST PETERSBURG, 2012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IMPROVING JOB OPPORTUNITIES

NURSES FROM PORTUGAL PREPARING FOR LIFE IN GERMANY

by Christoph Mücher

Many youths in south and southwestern Europe have no vocational prospects. At the same time, the lack of skilled workers is growing in Germany. "Mit Deutsch in den Beruf" (i.e., "On The Job With German") is the new initiative by the Goethe-Institut, designed to help smooth the pathway to the German labour market for people in Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Greece. We visited the Goethe-Institut Lisbon to find out more.

Long lines form in front of the freshly renovated auditorium of the Goethe-Institut Lisbon. The Portuguese are patient people; no one grumbles, the feeling is relaxed. In the end, almost everyone finds a seat. Those who do not fit into the auditorium find chairs in the spacious garden of the institute, which has decked itself out for its special anniversary.

AN OPEN PLACE FOR DIALOGUE

The people have come to congratulate the Goethe-Institut on its fiftieth anniversary, but also to experience a special birthday guest. After many years away, Maria João Pires, Portugal's internationally acclaimed pianist, is finally holding a concert in her homeland again. Her performance in and for the Goethe-Institut Lisbon demonstrates the institute's special ties with the arts scene of Portugal. The commemorative speakers have much to say about the legendary Curt Meyer-Clason, who was director of the Goethe-Institut from 1969 until 1976 and opened it to the Portuguese art world during the days of the Salazar dictatorship. Artists and intellectuals had an open place for dialogue and free speech on the Campo Mártires da Pátria.

A fresh cultural breeze from Germany, free of censorship but also of paralyzing ceremonial pomp, made its mark on an entire generation of artists and those in the cultural sector. One of them is translator and literary scholar João Barrento who, in his speech, counts off an almost endless number of German writers, filmmakers, theatre people, poets and philosophers who moved and awakened the people with their appearances in the auditorium of the Goethe-Institut Lisbon. In those days, Barrento remarks, he could have even held his speech in German; the language of the north was so widespread in his homeland.

Lourdes Gaspart from Barcelona, 29, architect: "My father speaks five languages, my mother four, and soon I will also speak four. I have a talent for languages. I find German easy. It is always good to have a dream. One of mine would be to live by the sea or on a cliff in a minimalistic house in the style of Mies van der Rohe. For me, he is the father of architecture. I have studied sustainable architecture in London and now work in Zurich, because the best job opportunities are in German-speaking countries. I enjoy life in the cities here. People work very conscientiously and orderly. I like that, but disapprove at the same time. In Spain, things are just the opposite."

RISING NUMBERS OF COURSE PARTICIPANTS

Perhaps the German language will soon be able to regain its earlier strength. As in many southern European countries, German is a way out of unemployment for many young people; the number of course participants has been rising steadily since 2011. And while the guests in the building are celebrating five decades of successful work, a special course for nurses is beginning in the newly furnished classroom in the former caretaker's flat. Over a period of almost four months, fourteen young women and two valiant men will be brought up to B1 level so that they can begin their new jobs at hospitals in Frankfurt and Munich.

The new employer is not only paying the course fees, but also Portugal's minimum wage of about 500 euros, so that the course participants can concentrate fully on acquiring the accusative case and the relevant repertoire of technical terminology.

The group's élan and optimism is impressive as they fire questions at their guest in German after only one day of lessons. None of them had previously learnt German in school. English is the first and for most the only foreign language. Carolina is particularly good at it. Sure, she could also have gone to the United Kingdom, says the young woman with a slight American accent. Yet, although that would have been easier for her, she is intrigued by the new experience. She took a lot on, too; after all, she came all the way from Madeira. Now she lives in Lisbon together with two friends who are also taking part in the Goethe course.

It was hard to say goodbye to her family, but they all agreed that this step was worth taking as it promises a way out of the widespread unemployment plaguing young people in particular. Carolina heard about the course from a colleague who already completed the first model course and is now earning his living in Frankfurt. The good outlook is visibly motivating and even those who seem to have less of a gift for languages than Carolina are highly dedicated. On the second day of class they are already bravely battling with numbers, listening to twelve-digit phone numbers, comparing birthdays, addresses and lucky numbers.

HOMEWORK IN THE SHADY GOETHE GARDEN

Thirty minutes before the end of class, Lina packs her things. The young woman bids a friendly farewell, not because the afternoon sun is tempting her outdoors, but because the evening shift awaits her at the hospital, combined with an advanced training course for nurses. "It is a bit much," Lina admits with a smile, but the surplus workload will end soon enough. She relaxes by playing the clarinet in a jazz band, a hobby that demands its tribute late at night. Her classmates are no less energetic. As soon as the lesson is over, half of the class gathers around one of the shady tables under the trees in the garden to chat about their experiences and do their homework.

It is not surprising that the clinic in Frankfurt is very satisfied with the first troupe of its Portuguese helpers, as Anne Nicklich, who coordinates the language courses in Lisbon, reports. The high professional ethic and the sheer unshakeable conviviality of the young nurses seem to justify the German employer's investment. Naturally, the move from the Tejo to the Main was at first a demanding intercultural experience for many, the more so as nurses in Portugal have a broader range of responsibilities. But as yet they are all still cheerful and on board.

In the meantime Anne Stöhr has also come to sit in the garden. The young teacher takes a rest over a cup of coffee from six hours of teaching. She is obviously enjoying the intensive programme. The close contact with the group generates a special feeling of community, a little like a family, and this group is motivated and enjoys learning. Anne Stöhr first was a teacher at the Goethe-Institut Rio before coming to Lisbon. Supervising the special course is a unique challenge. "We make an effort to use technical terminology early on and also work with authentic materials that the hospitals provide to us," she explains. It is a tailored programme that is supplemented by a web-based offering. There are more materials in the workroom for in-depth study and a platform for sharing.

GOOD GERMAN TEACHERS ARE IN SHORT SUPPLY

Dorothea Klenke-Gerdes, head of the Language Department in Portugal for four years, welcomes the new momentum that the increased demand for German has brought. Nonetheless, the institute is all the more at the extent of its limits. Although the renovation has resulted in new classrooms, they are already occupied almost round the clock. "It is possible for us to find new spaces outside of the institute," Klenke-Gerdes admits, "but then we would need new teachers." Well-trained German teachers are working fully to capacity due to the boom and it is not easy to find new teachers – for example, from Germany – particularly since they cannot offer them permanent employment.

For Klenke-Gerdes, though, expanding their own language programme is not as crucial as strengthening the choice of German as a foreign language within the Portuguese educational system. "The state curricula offer too little space and continuity for the second foreign language," she complains, "even though politicians express their will to support it." She also wishes that parents would become more involved by influencing the educational options of their children early on.

A NETWORK OF PARTNER SCHOOLS

All the same, there have been initial successes. For example, just recently a high school introduced its first German course in twenty years and more are expected to follow. The Goethe-Institut attempts to support this trend by supporting important beacon schools. A network of Pilot Schools for German has been set up where the language is taught with enthusiasm and success. It helps to have the example of people who have taken advantage of their German skills to conquer new career frontiers – like our young nurses or Maria João Pires, who ends her feverishly acclaimed visit to the Goethe-Institut Lisbon with a ferocious Brahms interpretation.

Christoph Mücher is the head of Communications and PR at the head office of the Goethe-Institut.

Even with the best training, many young skilled workers in southern Europe cannot find jobs. Germany is among their favourite destinations, as revealed by enrolment numbers for German courses at the Goethe-Institut.

The Goethe-Institut saw a 57 per cent increase in the numbers of course participants in Spain from 2010 to 2012, 41 in Portugal, 34 in Italy and 24 per cent in Greece.

B1 LEVEL SKILLS IN FOUR MONTHS German course for nurses at the Goethe-Institut Lisbon

Anne Nicklich coordinates the language courses at the Goethe-Institut Lisbon

“LANGUAGE IS THE FLESH AND BLOOD OF A BOOK”

AN INTERVIEW WITH PÉTER NÁDAS

Where would a writer be without translators? Outside their own language borders, often nowhere. The Hungarian novelist Péter Nádas therefore does not mind having to share his “Brücke Berlin” award with his translator. On the contrary, Nádas lauds the fine art of translation.

Márta Nagy: *Mr Nádas, you spent nearly twenty years working on “Parallel Stories”; Christina Viragh spent four years on the translation of the novel. How often did you communicate with one another about the text?*
Péter Nádas: Christina invited me to her place in Rome. We spent a week each working together on the translation for the first two volumes. Afterward, we only discussed the third volume via email.

What were the greatest difficulties in the translation?
Hungarian and German are such vastly different languages that there were manifold difficulties. For example, German sentences are longer, which changes the inner proportions of the text. That’s already an aesthetic difference. Then, for some Hungarian terms there are no German equivalents; then others have philosophical associations in German, but not in Hungarian.

You speak fluent German. Does that make working with German translators easier or sometimes even harder?
I have been working with very different translators for more than twenty years, which has given me incredible linguistic experience. It has been a great school of language and a great school of thinking. But, it is also very exhausting, because you see the boundaries taking shape when you’re constantly

I have been working with very different translators for more than twenty years, which has given me incredible linguistic experience.

switching between the two languages. Sometimes you wish to explain something to the translator that she simply cannot understand in her other language. The barriers lie where the native language and the learnt language adjoin. I would have to be bilingual in order to be able to move back and forth across these borders with relative ease.

The **Brücke Berlin** literature and translation prize, endowed with 20,000 euros, is awarded every two years by the BHF Bank Foundation (Frankfurt am Main), the Goethe-Institut, the Literary Colloquium Berlin, and the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation. The jury includes Klaus-Dieter Lehmann, the president of the Goethe-Institut, Wilhelm Burmester from the BHF Bank Foundation and the literature critic Jörg Plath. Péter Esterházy, writer and winner of the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, is its patron.

PLAYING WITH LIGHT AND SHADOWS Péter Nádas is an acclaimed photographer, in addition to being an author

The “Brücke Berlin” award is already the third prize that the German translation of “Parallel Stories” has received in the less than three months since its publication. And it is the first prize that the writer and translator are receiving jointly.
Yes, that’s the way it is with this award; that is very clever.

What does this recognition mean for you?
The Brücke award creates a clear link between the two achievements; it shows that the two works are connected from now on. One cannot appreciate the art of translation highly enough. I am very pleased about the award.

One cannot appreciate the art of translation highly enough.

Is a translation a copy or more an interpretation of the original?
The translator Hildegard Grosche once got very angry with me because I said to her, “Hildegard, this is not my book. I never wrote a word in German, but this book is entirely in German; every word originated with you.” The personality of the translator plays a huge role. Language is the flesh and blood of

a book. What else? When German readers pick up a book by me, they get to know it through the idiom of Hildegard Grosche or Christina Viragh. No matter how correctly and conscientiously the translator may work, she speaks in her own language. That is a very odd thing.

Two parallel plots run through the entire novel. One takes place in Hungary and one in Germany. Can we describe Parallel Stories as a Hungarian-German novel?
No, Parallel Stories is a European novel. Some scenes take place on Capri, others in Groningen or in Switzerland, and there are also strong references to France. The fact that the German reference is so strong is because the histories of the two countries are inseparable. I didn't want to separate what cannot be separated. Interestingly, Hungarians are more aware of the

Germans are aware of the historic disaster they left behind them, but they do not recognize as much the historical and linguistic values, the correlating systems that collapsed once and for all or are now newly emerging.

connections between the two cultures than the Germans. Germans are aware of the historic disaster they left behind them, but they do not recognize as much the historical and linguistic values, the correlating systems that collapsed once and for all or are now newly emerging.

You lived for a long time in Berlin. Do you have good memories of this time?
I love Berlin. The city is very accommodating; it is a good place to live. I became acquainted with the city anew a total of three times. I was in East Berlin in the early 1970s. That was a very complicated situation and you could feel it in the city. Ten years later I lived in the western part of Berlin, and after the fall of the wall, the city showed itself from yet another entirely new side.

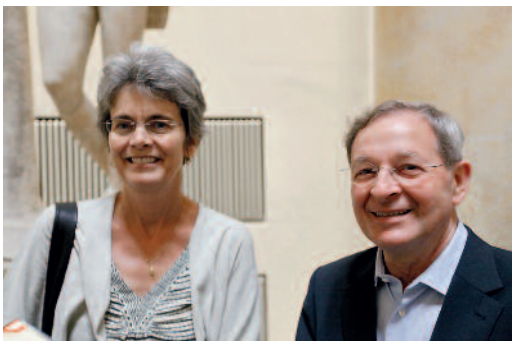
When did you learn German?
I also learnt the language a number of times. It's a very funny story: when my grandparents did not want my brother and me to understand what they were talking about, my grandfather spoke Viennese, and my grandmother answered him in Yiddish. That's where the ball got rolling. Then, as a teenager I spent an entire summer with children from Saxony in a spa resort, in Wiesenbad near Annaberg, as part of a children's holiday programme. The staff and the counsellors were from the Erz Mountains. In my family everyone could speak German. When I returned home, they were all of the unanimous opinion that what I spoke was not German. It was some sort of silly children's language, it was not anywhere near to German, and I ought to forget it. Then I took an intensive German course for foreigners at the Humboldt University.

Do you read German literature in the original language?
Yes, I have done that regularly ever since the late 1960s. Goethe, for example, his poems, "Faust", the "Elective Affinities". Goethe's language, it fascinated me. And I thought it could be used as common speech. Among my German friends I met with lively applause when I used certain terms and phrases. For example, instead of saying "vielleicht" (i.e., "perhaps"), I said "wenn ich wohl vermuthe" (i.e., "if I may suppose"). Years later my friends still jibed me when I said "perhaps" or "maybe". They laughed and said, you mean, "If I may suppose."

Péter Nádas, born in Budapest in 1942, is a writer and photographer. He studied chemistry and worked for a few years as a journalist and photo reporter. He lived for one year as a guest of the DAAD artists' programme in West Berlin in 1981. In 2005 his 1728-page novel "Parallel Stories" was published. The German version of the work, translated by Christina Viragh, has been available since the beginning of 2012.

Márta Nagy has been in charge of the cultural programme of the Goethe-Institut Hungary since 2007. From 1996 until 2001 she supervised the cultural programmes of the Central European Cultural Institute in Budapest. She has been the chairperson of the Hungarian Goethe Society since 2006.

▷ WWW.GOETHE.DE/BUDAPEST/UEBERSETZER



Péter Nádas standing with Christina Viragh, his translator

DOES SPEAKING MULTIPLE LANGUAGES MAKE YOU HAPPY?

by Gabriele Stiller-Kern

Thomas Lennertz of the Goethe-Institut's Multimedia and Distance Learning Section should know: He has learnt eight languages.

His sisters may have hated it, but he was having a great time – travelling with their parents from one country to another, discovering new places, meeting new people, and learning a new language each time they moved. Javanese, Indonesian, and German were the first languages Thomas Lennertz learnt as a child. Later, he added Spanish and English. Lennertz was born in Aachen and grew up in Surabaya, Indonesia, where his father worked for the Goethe-Institut. "As children, we were always barefoot, liked to eat rice and spoke only Indonesian," he says. The family later lived in Pune (India), Valparaíso (Chile), Chennai (India) and Buenos Aires. He was eleven before he attended a German school, and that was only for a half-year. Lennertz is convinced that the easiest way to learn a language is as a child and on the street. The desire to fit in is a great motivator, and research has proven that it is possible to learn to speak almost any language accent-free before puberty.

After initially studying in the USA, he moved to Cairo to pursue a degree in Middle Eastern Studies, where he began learning Arabic. Lennertz considers the hope of ever speaking perfect Arabic futile. Although Beirut and Damascus, and Jerusalem and Amman are separated by less than 100 kilometres, there are vast social, cultural and linguistic differences in the 22 countries of the region. Local idioms reveal quite a bit about cultural differences in the various areas where Arabic is spoken. In Cairo, for instance, you don't greet someone by casually asking "how are you doing?", but rather with "keif halak?", meaning "how's your physical state?". In Damascus, the equivalent expression is even more specific, "shoo lonak?", roughly translating to "what's your colour?".

ANYTHING BUT FINNISH

Later, as a journalist, Lennertz travelled often to North and West Africa, where he brushed up on his schoolboy French. And when heading up the marketing department of an IT company in Basel, he learnt Swiss German. He says he was no less perplexed by the language in Basel than he was in Senegal.

When asked what languages he would still like to learn, Lennertz cites one of the Khoisan (or "click") languages of Southern Africa, Tanzania and Sudan as his first choice. In second place on his list is Russian, because not only does Russia become accessible with that one language, so do all the other countries of the former Eastern Bloc. Lennertz is also curious about the grammar of the sign languages for the deaf, because he says he can't imagine how an adult can learn a language that has no written basis. One thing he is sure of is that any person can – with a little or a lot of effort – learn any foreign language. Except perhaps Finnish.

THREE TIPS AND TRICKS

There is a quote by Thornton Wilder that Lennertz really likes which is posted in one of his colleague's office: "He who learns a foreign language tips his hat to another nation." Nothing speaks of greater esteem for a culture than making the effort to learn its language. Even the attempt to formulate a few sentences in a local language often opens people's hearts. If you check your guidebook for the Arabic phrases for "hello", "how are you?", "please" and "thank you" before getting into a taxi in Cairo, you will be overwhelmed with compliments on your "damn good Arabic" from the driver. But do be careful – that rule does not apply to dialects. Mistakes in the standardised version of a language will be forgiven much faster than an improperly used colloquialism.

His tips for learning a new language are to make contact with people in your host country, immerse yourself in the country's daily life and overcome your fear of making a mistake. The effort of learning a new language is worth it. The experience of being welcomed and discovering new worlds can make you happy. Which is why Thomas Lennertz always has his passport at the ready.

THOMAS LENNERTZ above (at far left) and below

▷ WWW.GOETHE.DE/MEHRSPRACHIGKEIT

Chris Mawson from Manchester, 18, recently graduated from school: "My dream is to be a great and famous film actor. I already began by appearing in a youth theatre when I was seven. Now, I've taken a year off to discover what I really want to do. I chose to take German at school when I was 11, and at 15 I took part in a school exchange programme that took me to Stuttgart. This all makes it easier for me to learn now. I have met many friendly and helpful people in Germany. Only when they start talking in dialect do I find it difficult to understand them. I attended the traditional fair in Lauf and it was strange, but also amusing. German beer is much more delicious and cheaper than ours. And I find it unbelievable that there are at least 20 different kinds of sausage."

"TODAY THERE ARE NO MORE MISGIVINGS"

AVI PRIMOR TALKS ABOUT GERMAN-ISRAELI RELATIONS AND HIS LANGUAGE COURSE AT THE GOETHE-INSTITUT

He represented Israel in Germany as ambassador from 1993 until 1999. Avi Primor is a key figure in the dialogue between the two nations. He took his first German lessons at the Goethe-Institut Mannheim – under an assumed name for security reasons.

Maren Niemeyer: *When did you first hear of the Goethe-Institut?*
Avi Primor: I remember that there was discussion in Israel in the 1960s about whether a Goethe-Institut in Israel was acceptable. But I didn't really follow it because back then I was among the extremists who wanted no contacts with Germany whatsoever, neither political nor cultural.

You changed your attitude.
Obviously, otherwise I would not have become ambassador to Germany. I changed my opinion gradually. Not only I did; I speak of my generation. We totally rejected Germany, not only because of the Nazi past. What bothered us the most back then was that we always heard that Germans had concealed,

We ultimately grasped that Germany was striving for a European Germany and not a German Europe.

repressed, denied their past. That gradually changed. We were especially impressed by the '68 generation because they demanded that their parents and teachers finally tell the truth about what they had done in the Nazi era. Then, German-Israeli relations evolved thanks to the Reparations Agreement, which was partly a German initiative. We were also very impressed with Germany's European policy. We ultimately grasped that Germany was striving for a European Germany and not a German Europe.

And when a Goethe-Institut was opened in Israel, were you able to observe how it was received?
The opinions were divided. The Goethe-Institut and also the German Embassy in Israel went to great efforts to develop the cultural relations. High-ranking people from the German arts could not be rejected, which gradually led to the breakthrough.

You were the first Israeli ambassador in Germany whose native language was not German.
Although German is my mother's language, it is not my mother tongue. My mother came from Germany, but she didn't speak German with my siblings and me because she couldn't speak German with my father. Even so, I heard the sound of language often because my mother set great store in the language and was connected to German-speaking friends. Germany was a blank spot on the map due to her personal history. But she set great store in the language and said, "The language does not belong to the Nazis; it is a culture, it is my culture, my language."

You were appointed ambassador in 1993. How did that come about?
I began to speak and have contact with German people to develop contacts, even friendships, when I was ambassador in Brussels. If you have dealings with the European Union, you cannot avoid Germans. This changed my relationship to Germans and Germany. Although intellectually I understood that it is right to collaborate with Germany and become closer to Germans, I was afraid of it.

Before you became ambassador to Germany, you took a language course at the Goethe-Institut Mannheim.
I couldn't go to Bonn without being able to speak a minimum of German. There was a spot free in Mannheim in a suitable course. The embassy prepared it for me. I practically locked myself in for one month in Mannheim and did almost nothing besides learning German from early in the morning until late at night. The fact that I was the first Israeli ambassador in Bonn who spoke no German, while all of my predecessors were either native-born Germans or Austrians, frightened me.

I practically locked myself in for one month in Mannheim and did almost nothing besides learning German from early in the morning until late at night.

To relax a little, I rented a bicycle and rode around Mannheim and the surroundings. Quite freely, with no bodyguards, no protection. Then, on the last day, the security guards came to Mannheim to fetch me, and from that moment on the cycling was over.

Did the teachers at the Goethe-Institut know who you were?
No. At first, the embassy told me I would have to have security guards at the Goethe-Institut. I thought it was absurd. How would that look if I took security guards into the classroom with me? It already looked odd because I was by far the oldest student.

Anna Karutz from Moscow, 28, marketing manager: "I moved to Schwäbisch Hall in April, because my husband lives here. There are so many wonderful traditions and festivities. The Christmas market on the central square, for instance, is beautiful, like the one in Prague. I used to find the word order in German – with the verb at the end of the sentence – very difficult. Yet, now I can feel the melody of the language and it sounds very beautiful to me. I sometimes miss the food from home and, of course, my work. For my husband's birthday, we made a traditional Russian salad and borscht soup, followed by tea and Russian sweets. My dream is to work in medical marketing in Germany, like I did in Moscow, and preferably in a company with a long tradition. And, like all women, I would like to have children."

The others were mostly university students; they could almost have been my grandchildren. Finally, I was able to go without security guards because I had not yet handed over my credentials to the German President and was therefore not yet known. But, I attended the German course under an assumed name: Albert Schmidt.

During your lessons at the Goethe-Institut you were given a text by Mark Twain…
Yes, in this article, Mark Twain explains how difficult the German language is, but in a very humorous way. He writes that very gifted people could learn German within thirty years if they tried very hard. Everything was very funny at the Goethe-Institut back then. We didn't want to only learn the standard language, but also colloquial language and that really embarrassed my teacher, who was very shy. She wouldn't explain some words at all and said that we should ask friends instead.

The teachers I had were excellent. You could see and feel that they were into it wholeheartedly.

Can you remember what the most difficult thing was for you at the beginning?
The course was not only intensive, it was also very efficient. If you really wanted to learn, it was the very best opportunity to do so. The teachers I had were excellent. You could see and feel that they were into it wholeheartedly. In the afternoons I studied in the Mediathek, not just German, but also a lot about Germany, its culture and history.

At first I thought that German was even more difficult than they said, devilishly difficult. But that had something to do with my age. The other languages I had learnt, I learnt while I was young, and you learn much faster then. German has its difficulties, the grammar, for example. But German is a logical language, and once you grasp the logic of a language you learn very quickly.

Your son was the first Israeli ambassador's child to attend a German school.
The very first. The Israeli diplomats sent their children to the American school. But my wife and I wanted to do the work properly in Germany and also integrate ourselves into society. For us, that also meant sending our child to school with German children. In addition, it was an advantage for our son to learn the German language so early. We knew he'd learn English anyway at some point.

What is the attitude towards the German language in Israel today? Is it true that there is a German boom?
I can confirm that. It's not just about the German language, but also the German culture. The Goethe-Institut in Israel is very active. They hold a lot of events – on culture, history, literature and films, also for people who do not speak German. If that impresses someone, they want to learn the language.

"THEY ARE ALL GIVEN GERMAN LESSONS. I MADE SURE OF THAT."
Centre of European Studies in Herzliya

Most Israelis no longer have any inhibitions with regard to Germany anymore. When I was a child, you couldn't speak German on the streets. You might be attacked, not physically, but you had to expect some insults. Today there are no more misgivings. We see Germany as a very normal, genuine, parliamentarian, western democracy. It is also a nation with which we have very close ties.

Germany has great appeal. You cannot imagine how many tourists from Israel come to Berlin.

I founded a Centre of European Studies at my university, which I operate in cooperation with a Palestinian and a Jordanian university. At the end of their studies, the students fly to Düsseldorf together to continue their studies together for one year. They are all given German lessons beforehand in Israel, in Jordan and in Palestine. I made sure of that. Don't think that the students learn German reluctantly; they have difficulties, but they want to do it. For them, it is a unique opportunity that is very well received.

They are all given German lessons beforehand in Israel, in Jordan and in Palestine.

If your mother were still alive, would all of this make her happy?
She passed away one year after my arrival in Bonn. And she was more than happy when we decided to send our boy first to a German day care centre and then to a German school. She could never have imagined having a grandchild who spoke German. But if I had become ambassador to Germany before the first time she returned to Germany in 1980, she probably would have cut off ties with me.

Your mother lost all of her family in the Holocaust…
No one was left of her family or friends; no one survived the Holocaust. It was pure coincidence that my mother came to Tel Aviv in 1932. She was not a Zionist and there was not yet a Nazi regime in Germany. She came from a middle class family in Frankfurt and toured the Mediterranean region with a youth group. They also visited Tel Aviv where she met my future father by pure chance. She had just turned eighteen, fell in love and decided to stay. Her parents were outraged about it, frantic. She then cut off ties with her family for good. None of her family survived the Holocaust. When she learnt what happened she had a guilty conscience and never wanted to hear about Germany again. Germany no longer existed for her. In our family, we were forbidden to say the word Germany. She was quite fanatical about it for sheer hurt.

And then in 1980 this letter arrived from Frankfurt's Mayor Wallmann. That was a new tradition of the new German cities to invite formerly persecuted people, refugees and survivors to the city as guests of honour. When my mother received this letter, she threw it away and didn't want to hear about it. But my father urged her to visit Germany. Finally my mother gave in. She agreed to fly to Frankfurt and spend one day. But she wanted to fly back that same evening, as she did not want to spend one night in Germany. Then, they went there and spent not one day in Germany, but two whole weeks. As soon as my mother had contacts with German people the ice was broken. After that she flew every year only to Germany on vacation. That is why she was very pleased and proud when I was appointed ambassador to Germany in 1993.

What is your favourite German word?
Nah, I can't say it, it's not nice. But actually it's a favourite word that I share with most Germans: "Scheisse".

Avraham "Avi" Primor was born in Tel Aviv in 1935. He studied Political Science and International Relations in Jerusalem, New York and Paris. His diplomatic career took him to many African countries before he became ambassador to Germany. Other stops included France and Brussels.

Maren Niemeyer works at the head office of the Goethe-Institut as a consultant for film, television and radio. She held the interview with Avi Primor during the shooting of the documentary film "Planet Goethe – Warum lernen Sie Deutsch?"

▷ WWW.GOETHE.DE/ISRAEL/UEBERBRUECKEN

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