

## **IMPROVEMENT OF GERMAN LANGUAGE SKILLS THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN PASCH-JUGENDKURS**

**Iwa Sobara**  
**Technische Universität Berlin**  
iwa.sobara.fs@um.ac.id

### ***Abstract***

*Since 2008, the Goethe-Institut has organized PASCH-Jugendkurs for students from partner schools around the world through the initiative of “Schools: Partners of the Future” (PASCH). One of the main objectives of PASCH-Jugendkurs is to improve students' language skills. During the three-week youth course, scholarship holders have the interesting experience of learning German in the international learning community. They learn with many friends from many different cultures and countries. This gives participants the opportunity to be friends of the same age and to exchange ideas with other participants from different countries. Most of PASCH-Jugendkurs participants from Indonesia made significant progress after participating in PASCH-Jugendkurs. 77.73% of all participants showed an improvement in their German language skills. When interacting with participants from various countries, they sometimes encounter obstacles especially in communication. Language barriers, cultural differences, differences of temperament and character and age differences are the reasons given by the participants and the inhibiting factors they face when communicating with friends from different cultural and language backgrounds. However, the positive impressions they receive in the PASCH-Jugendkurs will definitely bring them back to their home country.*

**Keywords:** *PASCH-Jugendkurs, German, language skills, communication.*

### **Introduction**

In 2008, the German Federal Foreign Office, led by Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, launched a global initiative “Schools: Partners for the Future” (PASCH) to promote the German language. It is a worldwide initiative. According to the German Federal Foreign Office (2009: 11), the initiative wants to offer and develop as a partner for future decision-makers, particularly in the growth regions of Asia, the Near East and the Middle East and in the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) and Central and Eastern Europe. Indonesia is therefore one of the priority regions of the partner school initiative PASCH.

Youth course (*Jugendkurs*) is the most important tool for the PASCH project because they not only promote the network of partner schools around the world, but also make a significant contribution to the development of the international learning community. Participation in German courses in Germany motivates students from many countries around the world to learn German more diligently.

In the three-week intensive course, the participants are given the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of German. They also have a good chance to practice their German skills in real

situations. At the end of the three-week course, they can take a German language test according to the Common European Framework (CEFR). During the intensive course, they not only learn German, but are also familiarized with everyday life in Germany. In addition, they also do other common activities, such as trips. However, during the PASCH-Jugendkurs the participants experienced various difficulties, especially in communicating with participants from different countries. Through this work I want to find out whether the participants from Indonesia had difficulties communicating with participants from other countries during the PASCH-Jugendkurs. And did the participants' German skills improve after attending PASCH-Jugendkurs for three weeks in Germany?

Contact with other students abroad should indeed offer the opportunity to use a foreign language in practice and be a motivation to continue learning. As part of the PASCH initiative, the German language acts as the connecting language. This means that the students are already learning German in their own school.

In February 2018, the PASCH initiative celebrated its 10th anniversary. The initiative now connects more than 2,000 schools in Germany and schools abroad. Around 600,000 students learn German in a global network. They are part of an international learning and education community and therefore also develop new common perspectives ([www.pasch-net.de](http://www.pasch-net.de)).

Table 1: Number of PASCH Schools Worldwide

PASCH schools in America		PASCH schools in Europe		PASCH schools in Africa		PASCH schools in Asia		PASCH schools in Australia-Oceania	
USA	117	Poland	106	Egypt	32	China	127	Australia	12
Canada	49	Russia	100	South Africa	18	India	51	New Zealand	6
Mexiko	14	Croatia	61	Morocco	7	Indonesia	30		
Guatemala	5	Romania	53	Namibia	7	Uzbekistan	20		
Costa Rica	4	Hungary	46	Cameroon	6	Kazakhstan	16		
El Salvador	2	Ukraine	43	Tunisia	6	Korea	16		
Nicaragua	2	France	40	Algeria	4	Vietnam	16		
Dominican Rep.	1	Italy	40	Cote d'Ivoire	4	Thailand	12		
Honduras	1	Turkey	40	Ghana	4	Mongolia	11		
Panama	1	Slovakia	39	Kenya	4	Kyrgyzstan	10		
Brazil	48	Bulgaria	34	Ethiopia	3	Palestinian Territories	9		
Argentina	30	Czech Republic	34	Nigeria	3	Israel	9		
Chile	28	Bosnia Herzegovina	28	Reunion (Frankreich)	3	Afghanistan	7		
Paraguay	16	Spain	24	Senegal	3	Iran	7		
Peru	15	Belarus	21	Tanzania	3	Malaysia	7		
Colombia	11	Slovenia	21	Togo	3	Pakistan	7		
Bolivia	7	Finland	20	Burkina Faso	2	Taiwan	7		
Ecuador	5	Serbia	18	Gabon	2	Iraq	6		
Uruguay	3	Sweden	17	Madagascar	2	Japan	6		
Venezuela	3	Lithuania	16	Mali	2	Bangladesh	5		
		Latvia	15	Mauritius	2	Jordan	5		
		Greece	14	Mozambique	2	Lebanon	5		
		Estonia	13	Benin	1	Sri Lanka	5		
		Georgia	13	Burundi	1	Tajikistan	5		
		Netherlands	11	Djibouti	1	Philippines	4		
		Great Britain	10	Guinea	1	Hongkong (China)	3		
		Armenia	8	Malawi	1	Turkmenistan	3		
		Portugal	8	Rwanda	1	United Arab Emirates	3		
		Denmark	7	Uganda	1	Qatar	2		
		Albania	6			Oman	2		
		Macedonia	6			Saudi Arabia	2		
		Montenegro	6			Singapore	2		
		Azerbaijan	4			Bahrain	1		
		Belgium	4			Kuwait	1		
		Kosovo	4			Myanmar	1		
		Moldova	4			Nepal	1		
		Ireland	2						
		Norway	2						
		Switzerland	2						
		Germany	1						
		Iceland	1						
		Luxembourg	1						
		Malta	1						
		Cyprus	1						

(As of March 2019, based on: [www.pasch-net.de](http://www.pasch-net.de))

German is the second strongest foreign language in Indonesia after English. This is because German is the second foreign language in the curriculum in addition to Japanese, French, Chinese and

Arabic in Indonesian secondary schools. Indonesia remains one of the focus areas of German cultural policy in Southeast Asia (Haupts-Beier/Beier 1994: 95).

Indonesia is one of the countries in the world that has joined the “Schools: Partners for the Future” network (PASCH). The number of partner schools in Indonesia in 2019 is 29 FIT schools: state and private, muslim, christian, military or other schools. FIT schools are schools in national education systems, where German is taught or developed and supervised by the Goethe-Institut. There is also another school in Indonesia, the German School Jakarta. However, the school belongs to the DAS category. A DAS school is a German school abroad and is supervised by the Central Agency for Schools Abroad (ZfA).

The PASCH schools in Indonesia are listed below:

1. SMK Negeri 2 Banda Aceh & SMK Negeri 1 Banda Aceh
2. Pesantren Modern Al Falah Abu Lam U
3. SMA Negeri 1 Plus Matauli Pandan
4. SMA Negeri 3 Samarinda
5. SMA Santa Ursula BSD
6. SMA Santa Ursula Jakarta
7. St. Peter’s Senior High School Jakarta
8. SMA Negeri 31 Jakarta
9. Saint John’s Catholic School
10. Madania School (Junior High School)
11. Madania School (Senior High School)
12. SMA Dwiwarna Boarding School
13. SMA PGRI 1 Bandung
14. SMA Negeri 7 Bandung
15. SMA Negeri 3 Tasikmalaya
16. SMA Negeri 3 Yogyakarta
17. SMA Kolese De Britto
18. SMA Taruna Nusantara Magelang
19. SMA Negeri 15 Surabaya
20. SMA Negeri 5 Surabaya
21. SMA Negeri 5 Malang
22. SMA Negeri 1 Malang
23. SMA Negeri 4 Denpasar
24. SMA Negeri 3 Mataram
25. SMA Negeri 1 Manado
26. SMA YPPK Agustinus Sorong
27. SMA Negeri Siwalima Ambon
28. SMA Negeri 1 Ambon
29. SMA Katolik Frateran Maumere
30. Deutsche Schule Jakarta

On the occasion of the initiative “School: Partners for the Future” (PASCH), the Goethe-Institut has been organizing international PASCH-Jugendkurs for students from partner schools from different countries around the world since 2008. Every year PASCH-Jugendkurse take place in German cities for three weeks. Particularly successful and committed German students abroad can be motivated by invitations to PASCH-Jugendkurs in Germany. They have the opportunity to get to know Germany as a scholarship holder within the three weeks. They meet in an open and lively exchange.

More than 10,000 young people from PASCH partner schools from about 120 countries have already taken part in children's and youth language courses (commonly called *Jugendkurs*) and

German tests in Germany. In 2016, 9249 grants were awarded and 7732 language exams took place (Goethe 2016: 29). The annual PASCH-Jugendkurse make a contribution to the networking of students and motivate many students to continue learning German (cf. Hoffmann et al. 2019: 433).

For most participants, learning in a diverse and international learning community is a special experience. This brings them to a broader horizon because they do not learn German in a homogeneous learning community as in their own home country or in their schools, but they learn with many other students of the same age from many other cultures and nations. Therefore, the participants have the opportunity to become friends and communication partners of the same age from different nations.

## **Research Method**

A qualitative method was used in this study. A written questionnaire was chosen as the investigation tool. The population for the survey is made up of all participants in the PASCH-Jugendkurs from Indonesia. Former participants in the PASCH-Jugendkurs from the first project year 2008 to 2018 are asked to complete the survey for this work online. The questionnaire was designed using *Google Form*. 184 subjects from different Indonesian PASCH schools were involved in this study. The subjects filled out the questionnaire between June and August 2019. In the questionnaire I asked respondents about the German language level before and after following the PASCH-Jugendkurs in accordance with the CEFR for languages (A1 / A2 / B1 / B2 / C1 / C2) along with their grade (very good / good / satisfactory / sufficient / failed) to answer the first research question. Then to answer the second research question I asked them, whether they ever had trouble dealing with their friends from other countries and if so, for what main reason? They are also allowed to write their experiences related to communication during PASCH-Jugendkurs took place. Most of the respondents wrote their answers in Indonesian. The answers were then translated into English.

## **Finding and Discussions**

### **Indonesian Student's German Language Level**

To answer the first research question about German language skills of Indonesian learners before and after participating in the PASCH-Jugendkurs, I first present brief information on the CEFR for languages. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) can be briefly explained below. The CEFR is a system that provides an overview and makes comparisons for learning and teaching languages as well as for assessing language competence based on common criteria. It is a recognized reference framework for the description of language skills across Europe and thus an important basis for the development of the curriculum, for the creation of textbooks and also for language tests. Based on a communicative-action-oriented concept in foreign language teaching, the CEFR describes comprehensive language knowledge, language skills and language use on three levels. These three levels are further divided into two sub-levels:

Table 2: CEFR Language Levels (Trim et al. 2001: 34)

A elementary language use		B independent usage of language		C competent language usage	
<b>A 1</b> Breakthrough	<b>A 2</b> Waystage	<b>B 1</b> Threshold	<b>B 2</b> Vantage	<b>C 1</b> Effective Operational Proficiency	<b>C 2</b> Mastery

For language learners in Europe, a framework of six broad levels is likely to adequately cover the relevant learning space (Trim et al. 2001: 33).

*Breakthrough*, referred to as 'Formula Proficiency' by Wilkins in 1978 and called 'Introductory' by Trim in the same publication.

*Waystage* corresponds to the Council of Europe's existing learning objectives.

*Threshold* corresponds to the existing learning objective description of the Council of Europe.

*Vantage* corresponds to the Council of Europe's third description of learning objectives above threshold, referred to by Wilkins as 'Limited Operational Proficiency' ('limited independent use of language') and by Trim as 'adequate response to situations normally encountered' usually encountered').

*Effective Operational Proficiency*, referred to by Trim as 'Effective Proficiency' and by Wilkins as 'Adequate Operational Proficiency', corresponds to an advanced level of competence that enables the mastering of more complex communicative tasks in work and study.

*Mastery* (Trim: 'comprehensive mastery'; Wilkins: 'Comprehensive Operational Proficiency') corresponds to the top exam objective within the system of ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe). This level could also be extended to the further developed intercultural competence above this level, which is achieved by many who deal with languages professionally.

Table 3: Common reference levels: *global scale*

<b>Proficient</b>  <b>User</b>	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

<b>Independent User</b>	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
<b>Basic User</b>	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Source: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale>

Below is an overview of Indonesian students' German language level before and after participating in the PASCH-Jugendkurs.

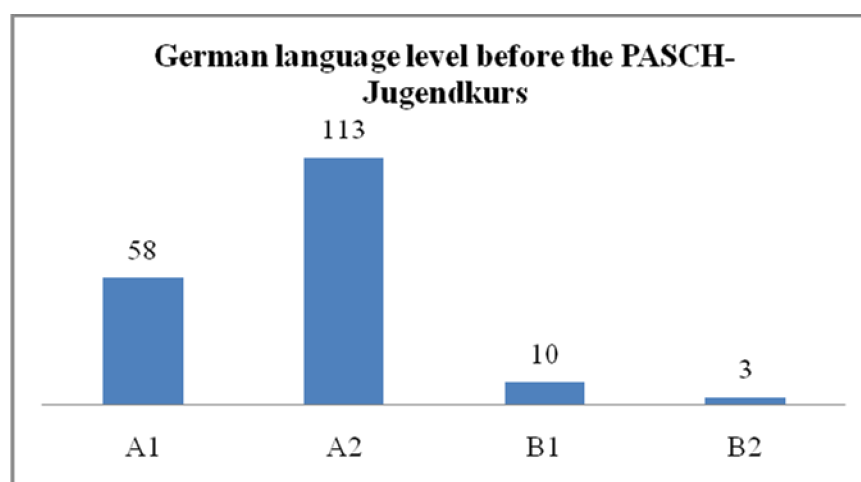


Figure 1: German language level of the participants before the PASCH-Jugendkurs (n = 184)

German language tests can be taken at the Fit Schools in cooperation with the respective Goethe-Institut or its test partners. As a rule, these are tests at levels A1 and A2 of the CEFR (Goethe certificates A1 / A2 for young people), but also tests at higher levels (cf. Hoffmann 2019: 433).

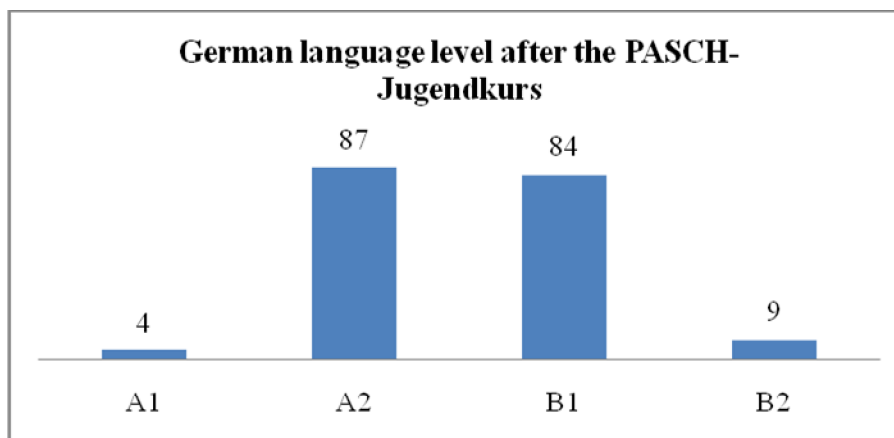


Figure 2: German language level of the participants after the PASCH-Jugendkurs (n = 184)

As a result, most participants in the PASCH-Jugendkurs from Indonesia made significant progress before and after participating in the youth course. 77.73% of all participants showed an increase in their knowledge of German. 26.1% of the participants stated that their German language skills improved from A1 before taking the PASCH-Jugendkurs to A2 after the PASCH-Jugendkurs. In the meantime, 39.7% of the respondents stated that their knowledge of German rose from level A2 to B1. German language skills 2.7% of the other respondents improved from B1 to B2. And what is surprising is that 1.6% of the respondents saw a significant increase in their German language skills from level A2 before the PASCH-Jugendkurs to level B2. In the meantime, 21.73% of the participants remained. Afterwards there were 0.54% of the participants whose knowledge of German decreased compared to the time before taking the PASCH-Jugendkurs. As happened to one of the respondents, he initially received a German certificate of level A2 with the grade “very good”, but after the PASCH-Jugendkurs his grade was “good”.

One of the main purposes of the PASCH-Jugendkurs is to improve the language skills of the students. As with any school exchange program, the PASCH-Jugendkurs could increase student interest in the target country, in this case Germany, and its language. Furthermore, a successful intercultural encounter offers the participants a positive experience that aims to expand their knowledge and skills as well as to develop values, attitudes and behaviors in the sense of openness, respect and appreciation towards (foreign) people (Scridon 2014: 11). Indonesian students at 30 PASCH schools can network with many students from various other countries from all over the world, who also belong to the Pasch network.

### Communication among the participants during the PASCH-Jugendkurs

In an international encounter such as the PASCH-Jugendkurs, communication is undoubtedly one of the biggest problems that the participants face. However, the participants gradually understand how difficult it is to express their thoughts and feelings. If the foreign language skills of the participants - in this case German - are not good, inevitable problems and difficulties arise because the “essential” communication cannot take place.

Language barriers are a common reason for culture shocks when students enter a new country for the first time. Likewise with the PASCH-Jugendkurs participants from Indonesia who took part in this program. For most of the young people (77%) it was their first experience to set foot abroad and face the “outside world”. In the meantime, the rest (23%) have traveled abroad for various reasons, e.g. Family vacation, exchange program, language course etc. However, most of them had

the visit together with their parents. The target countries that the participants had visited included countries in Southeast Asia, East Asia, Australia and several European countries such as the Netherlands, France, Italy and Germany. However, only a very small number of them had ever been to European countries, especially Germany.

When interacting with participants from different countries, they found that there were obstacles at that time. 75% of those questioned had difficulty communicating with other participants from abroad. In the following table 4 we can identify the various difficulties that Indonesian participants encountered when interacting with their friends from other countries. Each respondent could choose multiple answers.

Table 4: Reasons for the difficulties in dealing with friends from abroad

Reasons	percentage
language barrier	64.67
cultural differences	39.13
different temperament and character	36.96
age difference	4.35

Language barriers, cultural differences, different temperament and character as well as age differences are the reasons given by the participants, so that the participants had difficulty communicating when dealing with friends from different cultural and language backgrounds. However, the age difference is not the main reason when comparing the other reasons why many respondents answered the question about communication difficulties. The age difference between the participants in the PASCH-Jugendkurs is relatively the same and lies between 12 and 18 years (cf. Hoffmann 2019: 433). The age of the students is important in another respect. The participants who take part in exchange programs find themselves in an important place in their psychological development: the formation of a personal identity (Bade 2001: 26).

Language barrier was a reason that was often mentioned by the participants. The respondent (1) found that she had difficulty communicating with two friends from Panama while working in a group.

- (1) *„Saya mengalami ‘deadlock’ dalam komunikasi kelompok bersama dua siswa Panama yang tidak bisa berbicara bahasa Inggris dan berbicara bahasa Jerman di level A1 saja, sehingga kami terpaksa berkomunikasi dengan bantuan Google Translate.“*

“I experienced a ‘deadlock’ in the group with two Panamanian students who spoke no English and no German at A1 level. So we had to communicate using Google Translator.”

Another respondent (2) revealed that she felt irritated when she was unable to communicate successfully because the interlocutor was unable to speak German or English well.

- (2) *„Ketika saya harus berkomunikasi dengan orang lain yang tidak bisa berbahasa jerman maupun berbahasa inggris dengan fasih.“*

“When I had to communicate with other people who couldn't speak German or fluent English.”

It is therefore not surprising that the language that the participants from Indonesia used with participants from other countries, especially when they were outside the classroom, was not only German but also English. Of course, not all participants are hampered by language factors when communicating with participants from other countries or with German speakers. One example is the



respondent (3), who stated that he had a good opportunity to communicate with Germans or other participants in German he had learned.

- (3) *„Berinteraksi dan berkomunikasi langsung dengan orang Jerman di negara Jerman dengan mengaplikasikan kemampuan bahasa Jerman yang telah diperoleh.“*  
 “(I) communicated with Germans in Germany. I applied the knowledge of German that I had acquired.”

Clement et al. (2001) found that increasing positive contact not only led to more confident language use, but also influenced language learners' identification profiles and reduced learners' levels of anxiety when language was used outside and within language classes (cf. Csizér/Kormos 2008: 32). The fact that language barriers can be overcome also has a positive effect on the self-confidence of the language skills themselves and self-confidence in general (cf. Seebauer 1997: 70). Of course, someone becomes more motivated if he / she knows what he / she is learning a foreign language for. Barden and Cashwell (2013: 291) find that participants who can overcome language barriers with locals in the host country show a deep feeling of satisfaction, self-confidence, and self-efficacy that continues a few months after they return home.

In addition to the language barrier factor, many participants viewed cultural differences as another limiting factor in communication. For example, the respondent (4) stated that the fundamental difference in the culture of each participant was one of the factors that made communication difficult for them.

- (4) *„Perbedaan budaya yang mendasar antara Asia, Afrika, & Eropa.“*  
 “Fundamental cultural differences between Asia, Africa and Europe.”

This is also the case with another respondent (5) who claims that there are fundamental differences between Indonesian culture and Western cultures, so that communication difficulties arise.

- (5) *„Budaya barat yang sangat berbeda dengan budaya Indonesia.“*  
 “Western culture is very different from Indonesian culture.”

Nevertheless, someone benefits from international communication experiences. The reason for this is that he / she can use the language skills that are available outside of the classroom. There are various benefits that students receive from their learning experiences abroad when they return, including the opportunity to better understand themselves and appreciate other cultures (ibid.).

- (6) *“(Saya) melihat peserta dari Turki dan Israel yang kurang bersahabat dan berdebat di lorong gedung.“*  
 “I saw participants from Turkey and Israel who were less friendly and argued in the hallway.”

The example given by the respondent (6) indicates that when PASCH-Jugendkurs participants communicate sometimes the differences of the character and temperament of each participant become a problem when communicating with other participants. Student exchange programs such as the PASCH-Jugendkurs can be a place of intercultural communication. A lot is expected of young people if they are to be able to cope with this encounter. They ought to spend some time in another country, deal with different, perhaps very unique culture, and live with the people of this culture for a certain time (cf. Bade 2001: 17).

Attending PASCH-Jugendkurs promotes language skills considerably. This finding can be explained by the fact that the improvement of foreign language skills is a central goal and is also the main motivation for participation. However, attending PASCH-Jugendkurse not only improves

language skills, but also social skills. Otherwise, it promotes open dealing with other and unfamiliar situations as well as tolerance towards differences of opinion and trust (cf. Thomas/Perl 2010: 297).

### Conclusion

Intercultural contact is an important topic in the acquisition of second languages for several reasons. First of all, the main goal of learning second and foreign languages is to be able to communicate with members of other cultures who do not speak their mother tongue. In addition, interaction with speakers of other languages opens up the possibility of developing the language skills of L2 learners. Compared to the time before participating in the PASCH-Jugendkurs, we can see that there was a significant increase in German language skills among Indonesian students after taking the PASCH-Jugendkurs. However, the PASCH youth course brought various communication problems, especially with participants from other countries. Some of the reasons given by the respondents for this difficulty were language barriers, cultural differences, different temperament and character. However, the positive impressions they receive during PASCH-Jugendkurs will bring them back to their home country.

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