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PhD Thesis

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THE ADEQUACY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE

A German language adequacy test with regard to the knowledge of the language required for further study at institutions of higher education, conducted among the institutions of higher education using the dual written German secondary school-leaving - admissions examination

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1. Introduction

The question of the societal adequacy of knowledge mediated through educational institutions belongs to the fundamental issues of Pedagogy. Thinking about the adequacy of knowledge is more topical now than at any time before, which is well illustrated by the compound words 'knowledge-society' and 'knowledge-based society'.

In the knowledge-based society, language knowledge is also one of the key-competency areas with a constantly growing importance in every sphere of social life. Language knowledge has become a financial asset: it is a prerequisite for labour force mobility in a social context, and from the individual's point of view, the acquisition of language knowledge that facilitates access to better jobs is in the individual's existential interest. In a society shifting towards multiculturalism, foreign language knowledge is also growing in importance in both public and private life. Besides, in the world of education, foreign language knowledge is getting more highly rated. Foreign language knowledge is becoming a tool for knowledge acquisition to a growing extent due to the formation of expanding global markets of knowledge and specialized training, the increasing rate of international student mobility and the range of study programmes in foreign languages targeted both at native and foreign students. As a consequence of adaptation to the changing conditions of the labour market, the number of fields of study combining foreign language knowledge with specialized training is growing, and so is the significance of specialized language teaching.

The high ratings of knowledge as well as the functional structure of modern societies go hand in hand with the differentiation of knowledge considered as adequate. Due to societal-economic changes, the expectations of knowledge mediated through schools are also changing. In the knowledge-based society, acquiring language knowledge that is applicable in various spheres of social life becomes an issue of public concern. To this end, the consideration of various local and individual demands is an essential element of efficient educational systems. In determining the nature and quality of the knowledge mediated through schools, it is becoming necessary to explore the expectations of those who are directly involved in teaching and its output. In the specification of the objectives and contents of teaching, it is essential to investigate the respective social demands, i.e. what kind of language knowledge learners need in order to meet the requirements and needs of their private life, work, education or training.

This question can be approached from the aspect of language knowledge peculiarities. The so-called general language knowledge does not denote uniformly adequate and homogeneous knowledge, as the use of language is fundamentally predestined by any actual linguistic context, which in turn varies according to the roles taken by language learners in various aspects of social life. The commonly accepted objective of language teaching is to prepare foreign language learners to be able to use their target language as they perform a range of language functions. Concerns for the demands and needs of societal, social and individual foreign language use also constitute an important part in the planning of the process of language teaching and the acquisition of adequate language knowledge. By the identification of the elements comprising the quality of language knowledge, the setting of linguistic levels as well as the development of needs analyses, it is possible to explore the language knowledge necessary to perform various language functions. The documents drawn up by the European Council as well as the detailed descriptions of specific languages based on these documents enable planning for language teaching in this regard.

In Europe, as it is becoming multilingual and unified, there has been an objective set to increase the number of speakers of foreign languages. One of the important goals of the European Union is to achieve that every European citizen can communicate in at least two languages of the EU in addition to his/her native language and regardless of the educational career chosen. The survey conducted of the language proficiency of the European citizens reveals that there is still a lot to do to realize this goal.

According to the middle-term strategic goals announced at the summit of the European Heads of States and Governments in Lisbon, the European Union will be the most dynamically developing knowledge-based economy in the world by the year 2010 with the establishment of a region of unified higher education as one of the important conditions. The improvement of foreign language knowledge has also a priority among the strategic objectives of education of the Lisbon process: language knowledge is one of the fundamental competency areas in the knowledge-based society. Moreover, it plays an important role in opening up the educational systems towards the world beyond. Besides, educational mobility is given substantial support among the objectives of the educational policy of the European Union: the rate of students and scholars taking part in international mobility is continually increasing. And in connection to this, the rate of learners who learn foreign languages with the aim of participating in education abroad is also growing across Europe.

In Hungary, the societal demand for foreign language knowledge has also been growing steadily since the 1980s. Although the number of people speaking foreign languages has increased substantially since the change of regime, 58% of the population in Hungary still does not have applicable foreign language knowledge according to the Euro barometer survey of 2005. At the same time, there is a strong social demand that public education should provide students with a language knowledge that has solid foundations and is applicable and can also be improved. Foreign language knowledge is also becoming more and more important in the Hungarian higher education: it has a selective function at admission to higher education, and Hungarian tertiary institutions also offer courses in foreign languages to Hungarian students. Furthermore, the number of students taking part in scholarship programmes or other mobility programmes is increasing, and numerous institutions offer various training in specialized languages. Also, holding a language certificate as proof of language proficiency is a prerequisite for obtaining a degree in Hungary

Further to the above, we can state that the significance of proficiency in foreign languages is rising both in European and the Hungarian higher education. In relation to this, a question arises, namely, what sort of language knowledge is required of a student so that he/she will be able to use a particular language during his/her study in higher education either abroad or in his/her own country, or so that he/she will be able to continue his/her studies in tertiary education in the respective language.

Through the examination of the adequacy of foreign language proficiency, this dissertation relates to the above mentioned set of issues, and seeks answers to the question of what constitutes the language knowledge required for study in higher education with a focus on the German language. The dissertation's chapter on intercultural comparison investigates how the peculiarities of German language usage essential for studies in higher education are present in the language tests widely accepted as proof of German language proficiency by higher education institutions in Germany. The German language adequacy test is connected with the development of the Hungarian secondary school-leaving examination in German language. Thus we have examined the question relevant from the point of view of the adequacy test as well, namely, to what extent are the elements of the

language knowledge that is essential for the studies in foreign languages present in the advanced-level secondary school-leaving exam in German language. And in relation to the improvement of the advanced-level secondary school-leaving exam our own empirical research presented in this dissertation is concerned with the question of what sort of language usage enables secondary school-leavers to use the German language in their studies at institutions of higher education of various profiles. It has also been examined whether there are common expectations of German language use on part of the Hungarian higher education. The German linguistic investigation was to determine how relevant the knowledge contents reflected in curricula and exam requirements were to society; and so it belongs to the group of adequacy tests designed to explore the components of knowledge needed by the social groups concerned. The questionnaire-style surveys of 2001 and 2002 were conducted in the higher education institutions that had administered the dual German secondary school-leaving – higher educational entry examination in their admissions process in the year 2000. For a study on the peculiarities of German language use, the institutions in question were divided into two groups by profile – institutions offering a German Language and Literature field of study and business-oriented study programmes. The research wanted to provide a comprehensive view of the following issues in the two groups of institutions in question:

- What are the features of the students' process of learning German up to the application for admission to higher education?
- What are the students' current and future objectives of learning German?
- How frequent are the different forms of linguistic activity in German language typically associated with study in higher education?
- How competent do the students feel themselves to perform different linguistic activities and where can competence deficiencies be found?
- What is the students' ability to demonstrate competency in linguistic sub-skills and what is their level of language knowledge according to their abilities?
- What is the role of additional knowledge in relation to German language, German-speaking countries and of the specialized language in higher education?

The research also comprised the examination of the relationship between the features of students' language learning process and their language competency level or competence deficiency.

In the course of the research, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. For foreign students in Germany, it is a prerequisite for participation in German-medium higher education that they have proof of adequate knowledge of German. In the language tests in Germany, designed to assess German knowledge against the requirements set for pursuing studies in the language in higher education, only the basic components of academic language usage necessary for study in higher education are reflected.
2. In Hungary, the components of the knowledge of the language, reflected in the new secondary school-leaving examination in German relate to a language knowledge needed for the purposes of study in the foreign language in higher education.
3. The institutions of higher education that used the dual written German secondary school-leaving – higher educational admissions examination of 2000 fall into two groups by profile: (1) institutions that

offer a German Language and Literature field of study and (2) institutions with business-oriented study programmes. It can be assumed that the German language-learning background of the students of the two groups of institutions differs.

4. It is typical of both groups of institutions that the majority of their respective student body has not only learnt the German language in public education, but also in other ways (e.g. taking private lessons, acquiring experience in German-speaking countries).
5. The current language use practices of students of the two groups of institutions and their intent for the future differ in terms of general language use, and language usage for study and work.
6. The language knowledge required in the groups of institutions of higher education that employed the dual written German secondary school-leaving – higher educational admissions examination of 2000 can be determined by the language skills, linguistic activities and the level of German knowledge necessary to pursue studies.
7. The peculiarities of German language usage in the groups of institutions stand apart in terms of linguistic skills and the frequency of linguistic activities. Nevertheless, common features of the language usage necessary for study in the groups of institutions can be identified.
8. According to admitted students' self-assessment, their linguistic abilities do not meet, in many respects, the type of language knowledge required by the groups of institutions. Gaps can be detected in the students' knowledge of the language in relation to several linguistic activities that constitute an element of the kind of linguistic knowledge expected by the institutions.
9. In the students that have learnt German in public education as well as in other ways, the gaps in their knowledge of the language seem to be narrower.
10. In terms of other types of knowledge necessary for studies in higher education, the expectations by the groups of institutions also differ; yet, some common features can also be identified in this regard, which may serve as guidelines for further improvement of the new secondary school-leaving examination.

In the course of the research, qualitative and quantitative methods were used to test the validity of the hypotheses. Below follows a chapter-by-chapter summary of the essence of the dissertation

2. The Description of the German Language Adequacy Test

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings in relation to the 1st hypothesis.

According to the decree of [*Rahmenordnung über Deutsche Sprachprüfungen für das Studium an deutschen Hochschulen.*], 2004, the following language tests are currently accepted by higher educational institutions as proof of sufficient language knowledge for studies in higher education:

1. Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang (DSH)
2. Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache (TestDaF)
3. Prüfungsteil Deutsch der Feststellungsprüfung an Studienkollegs (conforms to the DSH).

The following tests administered by the Goethe Institute are also accepted: Zentrale Oberstufenprüfung (ZOP), Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom (KDS) and Großes Deutsches Sprachdiplom (GDS).

In the dissertation the focus of the comparative analysis was on the DSH and the TestDaF, which had been developed for the assessment of language proficiency required for admission to tertiary education.

The DSH falls within the higher education institutions' range of competence. Each institution has its own test regulations, and tests are developed, administered, assessed and marked by the institutions themselves, and in these they follow centrally issued guidelines. The test regulations are registered by the Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz). In the registration, the Specialist Association of German as a Foreign Language (Fachverband Deutsch als Fremdsprache, FaDaF) takes part, whose aim is to standardize tests by setting single test criteria.

The TestDaF has been in operation since 2001, and it is accepted by every university and college in Germany. The TestDaF is a standardized test, which can also be taken in foreign countries. This test was developed for assessment of the German language knowledge required for study in higher education, and it gives a differentiated picture of candidates' performance. The test was developed by the TestDaF Institute in The Hague. The test dates are set centrally, and the test can be sat for in accredited test centres.

Although the DSH and the TestDaF are different in terms of standardization and unification as per above, they have some features in common in some other aspects. It is important to note that – as in the case of the DSH, where only the test regulations were available – only a comparison of a limited extent was possible between these tests.

As for the common features, the target group of both tests is heterogeneous in terms of country of origin. The heterogeneous foreign student population whose aim is to take part in higher education in Germany will use German in the domain of education, in similar areas and environs, and in similar communicative situations with the aim of realizing specific speech intentions. To be successful in a higher educational environment, according to the decree issued in 2004, examinees need to have levels DSH 2 and TDN 4 language proficiency in all the basic language skills. This level is clearly defined for the TestDaF, and it implies a high level of language knowledge, equivalent to a level embracing a range between the higher B2.2 and the lower C1.1 levels as the two extremes. (It must be noted that the other tests accepted as proof of language proficiency (ZOP, KDS, GDS) assess a higher, level C2 language proficiency.) The TDN 4 and DSH 2 levels are accepted by every university and college in Germany. Both tests set one more language proficiency level each, one above and the other below this level. The DSH 1 and TDN3 levels are accepted only by some higher educational institutions.

The DSH and TestDaF levels span over several proficiency levels, which can be explained by the fact that that is the only way of ensuring adequately differentiated assessment of the language performance of heterogeneously prepared examinees, complying with the different language proficiency requirements of test user institutions.

In both tests the four basic language skills essential for studies in higher education are represented. And the basic skills are tested in different test parts. In the TestDaF evaluation, the proportion of the representation of the basic skills is the same (25% each), while in the DSH the representation of the speaking skills is higher (30%) and the other skills get 20% each in the evaluation. Furthermore, the DSH tests the grammatical and lexical knowledge elements typical of scientific language usage in separate tasks, whereas these language elements are not represented in sectioned way in the TestDaF. The examination of comprehension of the structures typical of scientific language usage belongs to the test parts on the receptive skills, and productive language use appears in the test parts assessing the writing and speaking skills. The goals of the assessment of each test part are at different level of elaboration in the two tests.

Both tests consider the higher educational study context as a starting point for specifying particular topic areas, communicative situations and roles, communicative intentions to be realized, and for selecting texts and supplementary materials. However, one great difference between them is that while the DSH mainly focuses on scientific language usage, the TestDaF also covers other aspects of language use associated with the everyday life of higher education. Scientific topics have a highlighted role in both tests, although specialized language knowledge is not needed in either test. There can be found some similar communicative situations and roles in both tests (e.g. students at university lectures), and examinees have to realize similar communicative intentions and goals (e.g. giving descriptions, arguing, expressing opinions) in the case of the production skills. In both tests, the texts peculiar to the context of studies in higher education are similar (e.g. the articles for the reading comprehension component are from scientific periodicals, and the composition of a longer coherent text is required for the writing skills component).

Both of the tests span over more proficiency levels, and thus the list of tasks are compiled to fit for different-level language proficiency assessment. As for the tasks in the DSH, open-ended exercises requiring individually formulated answers are also common in the test parts measuring the receptive skills. These in some cases can create more authentic situations from the point of view of language use than, for example, the closed task types of the TestDaF in the reading comprehension component. Similarly to the TOEFL, emphasis fell on structural validity rather than on real life authenticity in the development of the TestDaF. But in the listening comprehension part, the TestDaF also employs open-ended tasks which are nearer to authentic language use (e.g. note taking). The TestDaF is fixed as regards task typology.

From the comparison of the typical features of these two tests and the tests administered by the Goethe Institute, it is apparent that the peculiar characteristics deriving from the function of the DSH and the TestDaF, the typical language use practices in study at higher education can only be represented with certain limitations. Beside general language use, pursuing studies in a foreign language also involves specialized language use to a certain extent, as it requires engagement in scientific texts in various fields of specialization, depending on the depth of studies. As scientific language usage in the context of higher education is mainly determined by the field of a particular specialization, these tests can only assess the general basic elements and general language use essential for studies in higher education, and as a result, these tests do not differ very much from tests on general language use at higher levels.

3. The Secondary School-Leaving Examinations in Foreign Languages

The aim of this chapter is to outline some of the features of the development of the secondary school-leaving examination in German language in connection with the 2nd hypothesis, as well as the findings of the analysis of the exam documents related to the hypothesis.

The industry of foreign language knowledge testing was characterised by standardization and the finding of a common ground for the theory and practice of test administration in the 1990s. The development of the new Hungarian secondary school-leaving examinations in foreign languages was carried out with consideration for international traditions of language tests, quality standards relating to language proficiency testing as well as relevant international documents. Some of the quality requirements for exams assessing language proficiency relate to the content validity of exams. The new foreign language secondary school-leaving examinations meet

the expectations in this regard: they are competency-centered exams based on the papers of the Council of Europe.

The development of the secondary school-leaving exams in foreign languages is fundamentally determined by the issue of social adequacy. With regard to this, the following are significant points: the identification of the exams' target groups as well as the score users, a study into the expectations of the target groups regarding foreign language knowledge and into the requirements for their future language use, the formulation of an exam model; the tracking of users' exam satisfaction, and an impact analysis of the exam on teaching and the users. (*Milanovic, 1997*) It made difficult the development of the foreign-language secondary school-leaving exams, and the setting of the exam levels that it was problematic to identify the target groups aiming for the intermediate and advanced levels due to, for example, concerns about the value of the exam levels for higher education, that of the admissions procedure, where foreign language knowledge acts as a selection criterion, and that of the new advanced-level secondary school-leaving exam. According to the hypothesis about the target groups, set at the beginning of the development process, the advanced-level exams in foreign languages will not only be chosen by students who want to go on to foreign language and literature programmes in higher education, but also by other competitive students with an inclination for any other professional orientation. And these are students who use a particular foreign language in various form in the course of their study in higher education or participate in some kind of specialized language training, and who get employment in a position requiring language knowledge. Consequently, when setting requirements for the advanced-level exam, the other potential target groups need taking into account beside the ones aiming for foreign language and literature fields of study or teacher training. (*Einhorn, 2007*) The development of the new secondary school-leaving exams in foreign languages was also hindered by the lack of research into the language proficiency level attainable at secondary school and the fact that the features of the future language use of exam takers had not been properly specified.

The development of the exams cannot be considered to have ended with the launch of the new secondary school-leaving exams: it has been going on ever since based on the findings of exam results monitoring, the shaping of societal expectations towards the exams as well impact assessment. It cannot be predicted how selection between the two levels will work in the long run by only considering the outcome of the first cycle. With regard to the advanced-level exam, only the decision of students aiming for foreign language and literature fields of study in higher education has been proved conclusively, for this exam has only been required of them yet. It has high importance that how the aspects of study in foreign languages are represented in the exam because the higher educational institutions' expectations for the levels of the exam had changed before the introduction of the new secondary school-leaving examinations, and they will again and probably many times in the future, and because there can be groups of students participating in some other kinds of education in foreign languages and/or training related to foreign languages (general and specialized language training) among the potential target groups taking the advanced-level exams.

An important aspect of the requirements for the advanced-level secondary school-leaving exam in every subject was that the desired knowledge should contribute to the preparation for studies in higher education. Besides, a fundamental feature of the new examinations is that they are standardized, which, with regard to foreign languages, means that the exams – in their present forms – can only assess the general language usage necessary for everyone, and thus they do not suitably represent the needs of any other, specialized language use.

Comparing the common features of the language tests accepted as proof of language proficiency by German higher educational institutions and those of the secondary school-leaving exam in the German language, it can be claimed that the advanced-level secondary school-leaving exam in the German language contains general elements relevant to study in the German language. The statements that follow support the second hypothesis.

The language proficiency level of the advanced exam is equivalent to the B2 level of the Council of Europe Framework. For admission to higher education in Germany, a higher level German language proficiency is required (the TDN4 level, which embraces the upper B2.2 and C1.1 levels), and language knowledge of lower levels is only accepted by some institutions. Hungarian universities and colleges can naturally have requirements for the level of German language knowledge other than above. However, it must be noted that the features and the level of German language knowledge necessary for study in different higher educational institutions have not been clearly defined as yet, and it can be assumed that there can be differences in the requirements by individual institutions. At the same time, a significant element in the reformed secondary school-leaving exam, which deserves recognition, is that the performance of public education should constitute the starting point for setting the levels of the secondary school-leaving examination.

In the secondary school-leaving exam, some of the topic areas are the same as in the German tests accepted by German higher educational institutions as proof of language proficiency. Some of these topic areas include: Man and Society, Our Environment, School, Free Time, Culture, (books, the role and influence of the Internet and media) Science and Technology, for example. Regarding the actual representation of these topics in the exam, it is important that they by no means require a level of knowledge higher than average, necessary for the secondary school-leaving examination.

Although, the role of 'student in higher education' cannot be found in the list of *The Communicative Situations and Roles*, the role of secondary school student offers similar opportunities for expression. The list of *The Communicative Intentions* only contains requirements pertaining to the intermediate level. By comparison, the examinee is expected to realize more of his/her communicative intentions and needs, and to express himself/herself at a higher degree of quality in a more subtle and sophisticated way at advanced level. In the intermediate-level list, there are also several elements present that are necessary for taking part in training in foreign languages: e.g. expressing opinions, describing events and objects, and reasoning.

As for *The Grammatical and Lexical Knowledge* at advanced level, it is a requirement to demonstrate knowledge equivalent to the B2 level. To this end, students must have adequately extensive vocabulary that allows them to express thoughts in connection with abstract topics. Active and productive knowledge of specialized terminology is not required, though.

The new secondary school-leaving exam also tests examinees in the four main communication skills required for studies in foreign languages in higher education.

Among the testing objectives of *The Reading Comprehension* component there are also some that are significant for students, such as, the ability to follow the main points and arguments of texts, the comprehension of information in detail and the deduction of the stand of the author. In this exam component the texts in use are longer, linguistically more complex and more abstract in their content. The total word count for the texts is between 1200-1300 words. Among the text types used in the exam are also ones that are important for study in

an academic environment, e.g. newspaper articles, scientific and literary texts. Among the task types there are tasks that correspond to situations in the higher education context, e.g. open ended questions (note-taking).

Among the testing objectives of the exam component *Listening Comprehension*, there are ones that are also important comprehension goals for students: e.g. the ability to follow main points, to understand information in detail, to infer speakers' points of view. The texts used in this exam part are often complex regarding their structure and content. The total length of the texts used is between 8-10 minutes. Among the text types used in the exam there are some which are significant from the point of view of studies in higher education: e.g. educational texts on topics of general interest. Among the task types there are some which are relevant to the higher educational context (e.g. note-taking).

In *The Writing Skills* component, the exam assesses the written realization of the communicative intentions specified in the exam requirements. With regard to studies in higher education, examinees are required to discuss given topics from a general point of view. Furthermore, they have to express their opinions and viewpoints in a subtle way; to present their arguments systematically; to create coherent, well-organized and logically structured texts, whose register and format are consistent throughout and appropriate to a particular text type. The linguistic realization must involve the application of a wide range of register and vocabulary items, and must be accurate and sophisticated. Although, among the text types that examinees have to create in the exam, there is not one that students on a programme in a foreign language at higher education are required to produce, the second component of this exam part reflects the requirements by higher education: examinees have to produce a 200-250 word long text in which they also have to express their opinion.

The Oral Part of the exam is to establish if examinees are able to express their thoughts linguistically at the required level, and if they are able to realize communicative intentions during transactions and interactions. With regard to studies in higher education, it is essential that examinees discuss given topics from a general point of view at the advanced-level exam; express their points of view fluently in a consistent way; and present their arguments clearly. The linguistic realization of the task is characterised by a fluent and accurate language use as well as an efficient application of communicative strategies. In the exam, there are task types also important for students of foreign language programmes in higher education: e.g. debate and individual presentation. Both tasks in this exam part reflect higher educational requirements. The first task facilitates a debate in which examinees have to present their point of view and have to argue. The second task is to give a coherent, individual presentation based on verbal and visual stimuli.

4. The Description of the German Language Adequacy Test

In connection with the specification of the possible target groups and the set of requirements for the advanced-level secondary school-leaving exam a question arose, namely, of what sort of language usage is required of secondary school-leavers so that they will be able to use the German language in the course of their study in higher education. As the higher educational institutions' expectations with regard to the levels of the exam are still in the process of forming even after the introduction of the exam, the below would greatly contribute to the further development of the secondary school-leaving exam in German. The identification of the type of language knowledge required by the individual higher educational institutions and the groups of higher educational institutions under their framework of training, the specification of the common higher educational requirements

for German language use – if any – can both provide important data. For that purpose was the adequacy test presented in this study conducted.

In the preparatory phase of this study, it was assumed that the institutions that used the joint written secondary school-leaving – higher educational entrance examination in the previous exam system will most probably be users of the new advanced-level secondary school-leaving exam. Thus, this group of institutions was involved in the survey of the springs of 2001 and 2002. As a result, the adequacy test reveals the requirements for German language knowledge essential for studies in higher education in relation to these groups of institutions only and not on a full scale. The features of German language use were revealed according to professional orientation, with the institutions being divided in two groups. One group consisted of the institutions offering German Language and Literature and Teacher Training (group 1), and the other consisted of institutions with business-oriented study programmes (group 2). When devising the questionnaire, the following materials were consulted: the material of the study programmes in German or the ones involving the German language in the examined higher educational institutions, the papers of the Council of Europe, and the self-assessment scales developed on their basis as well as the documents published on adequacy tests in Hungary. The following thematic areas were covered in the questionnaire:

- the features of the process of learning German up to application for admission to higher education;
- students' current and future objectives of learning German;
- the frequency of different forms of linguistic activity typically associated with study in higher education, their importance and students' competency in these linguistic activities;
- the level of language knowledge in students, and their ability to demonstrate competency in linguistic sub-fields;
- the role of additional knowledge in relation to the German language, German-speaking countries or a specialized language essential for study in higher education.

The survey involved full-time students who had studied in German or had taken part in general or specialized language training in the German language in the examined higher educational institutions for a year. The students were asked to respond to the items of the questionnaire reflecting on their own linguistic competence and experience from their studies in higher education.

A major methodological problem of the research concerns the representative nature of the sample taken. On the one hand, not all the institutions belonging to the groups in question were available for the survey: out of the eleven contacted institutions offering German language programmes, only ten returned completed copies of the questionnaire, while this ratio was 8:6 for the contacted college faculties and institutes offering business-oriented study programmes. On the other hand, as copies of the questionnaire were returned in fairly uneven numbers from the individual institutions, it was not possible to present sub-patterns reflecting student numbers. Thus, it was decided that the two groups of institutions would be considered as a homogenous group each, and the data gained from all the returned copies of the questionnaire would be analysed accordingly.

The following institutions provided data for the research:

- Group 1: Berzsenyi Dániel College; The University of Debrecen; Eszterházy Károly College; Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities; Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Elementary and Nursery School Teacher Training; The University of Miskolc, Faculty of Humanities; The College of

Nyíregyháza; The University of Szeged, Faculty of Humanities; The University of Szeged, Juhász Gyula Teacher Training Faculty; The University of Veszprém, Teacher Training Faculty;

- Group 2: The Budapest Business School (BBS); Faculty of Foreign Trade; the BBS, Faculty of Commerce, Catering and Tourism; the BBS, Faculty of Finance and Accountancy (Budapest, Salgótarján, Zalaegerszeg); Széchenyi István College.

44% and 45% of the copies of the questionnaire (643 and 501 copies respectively) were returned from the two groups institutions out of a total number of copies calculated with the respective student numbers in mind. The research focused on the features of the sub-samples each. Also, the answers provided by the students of the two groups of institutions were contrasted with the help of appropriate statistical methods. For the data analysis, the SPSS 13.0 software for Windows was applied.

5. The Results of the German Language Adequacy Test

5.1 The Characteristic Features of the Learning Process in Students

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings of the research in relation to the 3rd and the 4th hypotheses. There are several common elements in the learning process of students in the two groups of institutions, but differences can also be identified.

Students in both groups, almost without exception, learned the German language during their studies in public education (97%), but a great number of them have also taken part in private tuition of German (62%). These students can be considered successful language learners on the basis of their successful entrance exams and language test certificates.

Both among students on German language and business-oriented programmes, those who learned German as their first foreign language outnumber those who did not, but this is more typical of students in the first group of institutions (72% and 62%). During their studies at secondary school, the majority of the students learned German at a high level, but in general, it can be stated that students on German Language and Literature as well as Teacher Training learned the German language more intensively in public education. More than half of the students have taken part in some form of high level German instruction (55%), while this rate is lower for students in the second group, being only 39%.

Half of all the students have taken private lessons and 16 % of them have attended language schools in addition to learning the language in public education. When comparing the two groups, it turns out that students in German language programmes have taken part in private tuition in a higher percentage, but the rate of the difference is little. In terms of experience gained in a target-language environment, it is revealed that students of the first group of institutions rather have such experience. Nevertheless, there are considerable anomalies within each group in this regard.

In the first group, 29% of the students have had the opportunity to spend an altogether longer period of time (half a year or several times one or two months) in a German-speaking environment, while only 17% of the students in the second group have done so. In both groups, the proportion of those who have spent a shorter period of time (once 1-2 months or several times one week) in a target-language environment is high (50% and 58%). 3,2% and 4% of the students in the two groups have spent one week in a target-language environment. In

the first group, the proportion of students who have had none or hardly any personal experience in a target-language environment is high (18%), while this rate is a little bit higher (20%) in the second group.

Another difference is that students on German Language and Literature and Teacher Training possess more and higher-level language test certificates than students in the second group. 89% of the students in the first group and 82% of the students in the second one have some kind of language certificate in German. In both groups, the language test certificates were obtained mainly before the secondary school-leaving exam.

Investigating the reasons for these differences was not in the scope of our research. However, it can be assumed that, on the one hand, the choice of career, and on the other hand, dissimilarity in the socio-cultural background can account for these differences. Further investigation would be necessary regarding this question.

5.2 The Current and Future Objectives of Language Learning

The aim of this chapter is to summarize the findings of the research in relation to the 5th hypothesis.

The proportion of students who want to pursue further studies is high in both groups (70% and 55%). In line with their future goals, students on German language programmes presumably chose their particular higher education institution to acquire proficiency in the language.

Currently, it is typical of general language use and the language usage relevant to particular higher education studies that students in the first group use German more often. As for their intents for the future concerning general language use (except for reading for pleasure), the difference between the two groups disappears, but in connection with future studies, students of the first group also plan to use German more.

In terms of current, general language use, watching TV programmes and films, listening to the radio – in other words, audio and visual perception dominates in both groups: 88% and 82% of the students use the language for these purposes. In the first group, more than half of the students read in German for entertainment, and they use German in the course of their travels at about the same rate. Using the language for travel is likewise important in group 2, but reading plays a lesser role: hardly more than one-third of the students read in German for entertainment. Personal correspondence and the role of communication with natives are not significant with students on German language programmes (39% and 32% respectively), and the role of these activities is also less important in the second group (27% and 15%).

In line with the findings of former investigations, it has come to light that the features of general language use will change in the future: the role of oral language use will increase in importance. Active language use during travels leads the list in both groups: more than two-thirds of the students think that they are going to use the German language for this purpose. Besides, communication with native speakers of German is the activity that more students intend to practice in the future than those who do so at present. From the aspect of intended language use, the two groups differ regarding reading for entertainment: although, a somewhat fewer students of German language programmes think that they will read for entertainment in the future, and students in group 2 render invariably less importance to this. TV programmes, films and radio programmes have experienced a decrease in importance in both groups (57% and 53%).

In terms of study-related language use, there is only little difference between the two groups in one instance, at participation in German language practice lessons (with 87 % and 96% of the students of groups 1 and 2 respectively). The linguistic practice of the two groups differ in every other area: every study-related activity plays a more important role in students on German language programmes. As students of the first group

render less importance to study-related language use in the future, the difference between the groups decreases in terms of future objectives: there is no longer substantial difference between the two groups in terms of taking oral exams in German or active participation in academic lessons. Students on German language programmes assume that, in the future, they will mainly use German for reading reference material in connection with their studies, and consider participation in language practice lessons the least typical feature (34%). In contrast, participation in language practice lessons (42%) is still on top of the list in the second group.

The intentions of students in connection with language use in their work stand not as apart as their intentions for language use in their studies. However, one difference is that students in German Language and Literature and Teacher Training expect more frequent language use in almost every activity related to their work. In both groups, the following linguistic activities are frequent: translation from German to Hungarian and from Hungarian to German, oral communication with native speakers of German in working relationship and correspondence. In the first group, among the frequent linguistic activities, four additional activities are present that relate to mediation as well as reading German reference materials, and taking part in some training in relation to the German language. The question whether mediation really plays as important a role in the language use practices connected to work as students' expectations suggest requires further research.

5.3 The Peculiarities of German Language Usage in the Groups of Institutions

The frequency of linguistic activities

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings of the research in relation to the 6th hypothesis concerning the basic linguistic skills and the linguistic activities and in relation to the 7th hypothesis.

The students were asked to mark how often they performed certain types of linguistic activities (e.g. note-taking in lectures) in the course of their studies in higher education. The following options were offered: daily (6), several times a week (5), several times a month (4), several times in half a year (3), several times a year (2), never (1). The average frequency rates for mediation as well as the use of the basic linguistic skills (comprehension, reading, speaking and writing) were calculated using the scores received for the individual linguistic activities each.

Based on the results, it was found that mediation and the four basic linguistic skills are needed in both groups of institutions. It should be noted, however, that students on German language programmes use the different linguistic skills except for mediation significantly more often than their counterparts on business-oriented study programmes. The most considerable discrepancy between the two groups lies in listening comprehension and writing. In both types of professional orientation, the receptive skills are used the most frequently: listening comprehension (4.58 and 4.52) holds the first place, followed by reading (4.52 and 4.42) a considerable way behind. Students on German language programmes need the speaking skills (4.43) less frequently than the reading skills, and the least frequently the writing (4.27) and the mediation skills (4.26). (There is no significant difference between the latter two.) As for the second group, the average frequency rates for speaking and mediation do not substantially differ (4.28 and 4.26 respectively), and the writing skills are used the least often.

In the exploration of the features of German language use, it was also investigated how often students carry out the respective linguistic activities. The figures rendered to the top ten forms of communication in the two groups also show that students on German Language and Literature and Teacher Training use the German

language more often. The most frequent (daily – a couple of times a week) linguistic activities here are as follows: note-taking (5.72), following long lectures (5.37), active participation in language practice lessons – contribution to discussions, conversations – (5.36), reading texts of general interest (5.13), following conversations of general interest in German (5.08), active participation in academic lessons (4.96) and comprehension of speakers of German in personal communication (4.78). In the institutions offering business-oriented study programmes, active participation in language practice lessons (4.80) heads the ranked list, but its average frequency rate falls behind that of group 1.

Considering all the forms of communication as listed in the questionnaire, a common group of linguistic activities can be identified that is necessary for study in both groups of institutions. However, there are also numerous differences in this regard. Receptive skills such as oral interaction and translation skills as well as professional orientation-specific language use play a significant role in both groups of institutions. And the following forms of language use occur at least monthly: following conversations of general and specialized language in German, understanding speakers of German in personal communication, reading texts of general and specialized language in German, active participation in language practice and academic lessons, note-taking, translation from German into Hungarian and from Hungarian into German. However, the listed linguistic activities with the exception of a few (translation, reading texts of specialized language and following discussions on themes in specialized fields of study) are significantly more frequent in institutions offering German language programmes. Considerable differences can be detected in terms of note-taking (5.72 – 4.69), active participation in language practice (5.36 – 4.80) and academic lessons (4.96 – 3.98).

Although, to a different extent in each group, the following linguistic activities are also necessary at least once half a year: holding presentations on topics of general and specialized knowledge, listening to long lectures, following TV programmes and films, listening to radio programmes and audio recordings, conversing with one partner, taking oral examinations and making reports, completing oral assignments, writing compositions and essays, producing oral summaries in one language, of literary works and events in the other one. With regard to these communication forms, it can also be claimed that students on business-oriented study programmes use them significantly less frequently. Thus, such students have to listen to long lectures and radio programmes and audio recordings much less often (5.37 - 3.19) and (4.36 – 3.50) respectively, or have to write compositions and essays (3.95 – 3.16) less frequently.

Only students on German language programmes are required to carry out the following activities frequently: reading literary texts, entries of monolingual dictionaries and encyclopaedias, making conversations in German with several partners, holding presentations on topics of general interest; writing class papers (short studies) for seminars.

Gaps in linguistic competence

The aim of this chapter is to summarize the findings of the research in relation to the 8th hypothesis.

To identify linguistic competence deficiencies in students, a method was applied that helped analyse the ability to carry out linguistic activities (competence) and their importance together in one chart. Students could give a score (on a scale of 1 to 5) for the importance of individual linguistic forms each and their competence in relation to the forms. When doing the calculations, the figures given for importance were subtracted from the figures given for competence, and then the resulting figures were added 4 each. The results are indicated on a

chart whose scale ranges from 0 to 8. If a figure in the chart is close to 8, it means that students consider the given activity very important for their successful studies in the institutions they attend and, at the same time, they find themselves little able or even unable to perform it (a gap in competence). We can talk about an absolute gap in competence item if a figure in the chart is above 4, as in this case, the score given for importance is higher than the score given for ability. Figures close to 0 indicate that a particular activity is considered useless: students can perform well and easily that unnecessary activity in their particular higher educational context. Because of the behavioural tendency for reducing cognitive dissonance, indices close to 4 also imply deficiency. It should be emphasised here that judgements about the importance of and competence in the examined linguistic activities are subjective – they reflect the viewpoint of the participating students, and therefore, deficiencies in linguistic competence based on personal opinion can only be identified with the used method. The summary of the findings of the competency gap survey that follows supports the 8th hypothesis.

The gap in competence areas index has been calculated for every single linguistic activity in relation to both groups in the above-described method. Then based on the indices, the gap in competence in the basic skills and mediation index average has been calculated. According to the findings, students have a gap in their competence in almost all of the basic skills. The gap in competence is the widest for speaking (4.47 and 4.61). Students of the first group of institutions only think that their ability to understand recorded texts is more or less up to standard in the case of listening comprehension: there is no absolute gap in competence present here, but the figure close to 4 (3.96) also implies difficulties in this regard. There is slight, but statistically detectable, difference in terms of three skills when the institutions offering German Language and Literature, Teacher Training and business-oriented study programmes are compared. Students of the second group feel themselves less capable at speaking (4.47 and 4.61), mediation (4.23 and 4.44) as well as listening comprehension (3.96 and 4.15). The ranking of the examined activities, which is determined by the degree of deficiency in students on German language programmes, is as follows: speaking is followed by mediation (4.23), writing (4.22) and reading (4.18), there being no significant difference in the indices for the three skills. Lagging behind, the index for listening comprehension is to end the line. As for the second group, mediation (4.4) comes after speaking, then with fairly similar average figures follows writing (4.20), listening comprehension (4.14) and reading (4.14). There can be detected no significant difference between the latter three.

To explore competence deficiencies, the forms of language use that were considered as absolute gap in competence items were collected. And on the basis of the data collected a common gap in competence map of the German language can be devised in relation to students who, irrespective of professional orientation, have studied German for a year in the examined groups of institutions. (*See Chart 1.*)

Chart 1: The gap in competence map of the German language typical of students in the two groups of institutions

<p>Listening comprehension Following discussions of specialized professional interest in German Following presentations on themes of specialized professional interest Comprehension of speakers of German in personal communication Listening to official orientation</p>	<p>Speaking Active participation in specialized classes Active participation in language (practice) lessons Oral examinations, oral assignments Conversation with one or more partners Holding presentations on topics of the respective field of specialized study Holding presentations on topics of general interest</p>
<p>Reading Reading specialized texts Reading official texts Reading entries of monolingual dictionaries and encyclopaedias</p>	<p>Writing Writing assignments for seminars (short studies) Writing compositions or essays Writing summaries Written examinations – answers in some sentences Note-taking Writing official letters, applications, tenders</p>

The detailed analysis shows that linguistic competence in students is insufficient in many areas, which can be explained by the fact that their linguistic training is in progress. But as in these groups of institutions, the German language is not only the goal of learning, but it is also the instrument, the identified deficiencies in every field also influence the efficiency of learning.

It can be stated that in the topics of the examined fields of study, communication is hindered in relation to every basic linguistic skill. Students are little prepared to absorb and create official texts, although these types of activity are not often required. The research survey shows that speaking has the highest gap in competence chart figure: both oral interaction and the production of coherent texts present problems. With regard to the reading skills, there is a common competence gap for reading official texts and texts of specialized professional interest. Based on self-assessment, students are not competent enough at the writing skills, either: they cannot produce coherent texts or create some-sentence-long short answers at the adequate standards. As for the listening skills, both the comprehension of conversations and coherent texts can cause problems. The educational function of mediation differs from that of the four basic skills. Out of the pairs of activities belonging here, it is always the translation of any particular text into German that presents greater difficulty as per expectations. Two of the linguistic activities that are only characterised by deficiency in competence in students on German language programmes coincide with frequent and important linguistic activities peculiar to that particular group alone. And these are: following long lectures and reading literary works and texts of general interest. The competence deficiencies only typical of the second group are related to telephone conversations.

The level of language proficiency

The aim of this chapter is to summarise the findings of the research in relation to the 6th hypothesis concerning the language proficiency levels of the students.

To examine students' levels of proficiency in German, the detailed descriptions of the B2, C1 and C2 levels of the Council of Europe were consulted as well as the description of the DIALANG self-evaluation scale relating to the levels in question. Based on the above mentioned descriptions and with the higher educational context in mind, statements assigned to the four basic skills were selected and formulated. These statements, on the one hand, can indirectly be suitable for identifying the level of foreign language proficiency; on the other hand, they can provide a more detailed picture of the linguistic abilities of students with regard to the different areas of linguistic competence. The students were asked to indicate how well the individual statements reflected their actual competence, i.e. whether the realization of the activities as specified in the statements go well and easily (4), at an average level (3) or with difficulty (2) for them.

On comparison of the average figures for the statements on sub-competency areas grouped according to basic skills and levels of language proficiency, it can be stated that the students of the first group felt themselves more competent in almost every category, thus, the levels of language proficiency in these students on German language programmes were higher according to their self-evaluation. However, it must be noted that there is only a slight difference between the two groups concerning this question. According to the distribution of the average figures and the answers to the respective statements, we can conclude that the level of language proficiency in the students do not fully match the C1 level. It must be added, however, that there are certain language knowledge areas in which the competency levels of a fraction of the students exceed the C1 level. Also, it needs emphasising that the knowledge of students in terms of particular basic skills may vary, so is usually the average language user's knowledge non-homogenous.

The detailed analysis of the statements related to sub-competency areas also shows that students in the first group feel themselves more competent in relation to almost all the statements concerning sub-competency areas than students in the second group.

Because of the inaccuracy of self-evaluation, a trustworthy and detailed picture regarding the level of language knowledge could only be drawn with the help of tests assessing linguistic competency. Further research would be necessary in that regard.

The relations analysis

In the course of the relations analysis, in relation to the 9th hypothesis, some features of the process of learning German up to application for admission to higher education were contrasted with students' linguistic competence deficiencies and their ability to demonstrate competence in linguistic sub-fields. The following features of language learning were in focus: particulars about the start of learning German (as a first, second or third foreign language), the nature of foreign language instruction at secondary school (participation in any form of higher-level foreign language instruction or regular language instruction under the central curriculum), private lessons and time spent in a target-language environment as well as the level of standard language tests taken if applicable.

The issue of learning German as their first or second foreign language is not linked with linguistic competence in students of German Language and Literature and Teacher Training, while it makes students of the second group disadvantaged somewhat if they started to learn German as their second foreign language. In both kinds of professional orientation, students who took part in any form of high-level language teaching at secondary school, the gap in their competence is narrower than it is in students who only had German lessons the minimum number of times per week under the curriculum. This has little influence on students on German language programmes, and much stronger effect on the second group. Investigation into the causes of this difference was not in the scope of our research, but it can be assumed, that in the first group, irrespective of the chronological order in which students started to learn languages and of the types of language courses they attended at secondary school, students' future educational plans in relation to the German language became important at some point. And this must account for the smaller difference in their language competence. Further research is required concerning this question.

The relations analysis has revealed some interesting information about the link between private language tuition and linguistic competence: they, contrary to expectations, are inversely proportional, for the gap in the linguistic competence of students who have taken private language lessons is wider than that of students who have not. In very few cases (seven activities), there can be a weak link detected between private tuition and the competency gap index in the first group: competency deficiencies in students who have attended private language lessons are more considerable. In the second group, the gap in competence areas index in relation to several linguistic activities (in 33 cases) is significantly higher for students who have taken part in private tuition. Compared to the first group, this prevails more strongly and with more linguistic activities in the second group.

In the examination of the relationship between the role of private lessons and language competence in students with regard to sub-competence areas, we get the same results, namely, that students who have attended private lessons have a lower level of competence regarding their sub-competence skills than students who have not attended private lessons. This link plays a more important part again in relation to the second group,

affecting every level of language proficiency and every linguistic competence area. With students on German language programmes, however, the results for the statements on the writing skills at the B2 and C1 levels, and the statements on the speaking skills at the C2 level reflect no difference. We can thus conclude that students who have not taken part in private tuition feel more competent than students who have.

In the relations analysis, we also examined the impact of time spent in a target-language environment on linguistic competence. With both types of professional orientation, it can be observed that the competence gap index for students who have spent a longer period of time in a German-speaking environment is lower than that of their fellow students who have spent less time in such an environment. Spending some time in a target-language environment has had a beneficial effect on the linguistic activities relevant to conversations and telephone conversations, comprehension of TV programmes and films in both groups. Moreover, the positive impact of spending some time in a target-language environment on active participation in language practice lessons and the use of the Internet in students on German language programmes shows. And in students of business-oriented study programmes, it influences the linguistic activities relevant to listening comprehension. All this confirms the influence of linguistic experience obtained in a target-language environment on listening comprehension and oral interaction.

5.4 Additional knowledge and specialized language knowledge

The aim of this chapter is to summarise the findings of the research in relation to the 10th hypothesis.

The students were asked to specify, based on their experience with higher education, what sort of and how thorough knowledge and specialized language knowledge enables them to pursue studies successfully. The findings of the investigation duly proved the 10th hypothesis. For both groups, it is necessary to have the linguistic and grammatical knowledge relevant to the German language, but to a different extent. And some additional knowledge of the society, politics, geography and culture of the German-speaking countries each is also required in some depth. In addition, familiarity with German literature and history is essential for students on German language programmes, while familiarity with the economy, trade, tourism and catering industry of the German-speaking countries is stressed in relation to the second group.

As for specialized languages, a thorough knowledge of grammatical and linguistic terminology is a common requirement in the two groups of institutions. Also, the knowledge of some fundamental concepts related to literature and history alone is required of students of German Language and Literature and Teacher Training. In the second group, the knowledge of Business German is significant, and familiarity with the specialized language of trade, politics and tourism is required beside the knowledge of respective fundamental concepts. Familiarity with only a couple of concepts in the fields of catering and Geography is also a requirement.

5.5 The appearance of language usage peculiarities typical of the groups of institutions in the new secondary school-leaving examination in the German language

With regard to the analysis of the new secondary school-leaving examination, it was found that the advanced level secondary school-leaving examination in the German language contains general elements that relate to learning in the German language. And in relation to the adequacy test, it was also investigated that how the

language knowledge commonly essential in the examined higher education institutions is reflected in this examination. As the new advanced-level secondary school-leaving examination in the German language basically belongs to the competency assessment type, the four basic linguistic skills commonly required for study in higher education are present in this exam. Comparing the components of the examination with the frequent linguistic activities used over the course of studies in higher educational institutions, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The *listening comprehension* component of the examination contains listening to conversations and coherent texts, and among the task types note-taking can also be found.
- In the *reading comprehension* component, along with the texts of general interest, there are also educational texts, and note-taking is also included in the task types.
- In the *writing* component, examinees have to create a longer coherent text.
- In the *oral component*, examinees are also required to interact and to create a coherent text.

The mediation skills are not tested in any form in the exam. Knowledge of the society, politics, geography and culture of the German-speaking countries each, which is a shared requirement by both groups of institutions, can be tested via the topics, the texts used and the ones to be produced by examinees. The assessment of the linguistic and grammatical knowledge relevant to the German language is not part of the exam. As the adequacy test has not specified accurately the essential language proficiency level, it can only be assumed that, in some cases, and mainly in the first group of institutions, the language proficiency level required of students may surpass the B2 level at the advanced-level secondary school-leaving exam.

In the standardized German secondary school-leaving examination, the following areas that are prioritised by the groups of institutions are not emphasized or are not present at all: reading literary texts, writing short studies, and topics and language usage elements of specialized professional orientation.

6. A Summary, Implications and Proposals

The dissertation seeks answers to the question of what constitutes the German language knowledge essential for tertiary studies. In the dissertation's chapter on intercultural comparison we stated that in Germany the language tests currently accepted by higher educational institutions as proof of sufficient language knowledge for studies in higher education do not differ considerably from the tests on general language use at higher level. As the scientific language usage in the context of higher education is mainly determined by the field of study, the tests can only represent the general basic elements of specific language usage and the general language use essential for studies in higher education. On the basis of the above we can accept the validity of the 1st hypothesis.

As the demand for the adequacy of foreign language knowledge is increasing, the expectations of foreign language knowledge by the Hungarian higher education are high. Furthermore, conforming to the European development process necessitates an increase in the range of foreign language and specialized language training on offer. In addition, the number of students joining international mobility programmes has been increasing since the 1990s. Therefore, it is crucial that the basic elements of the language knowledge essential for tertiary studies be also represented in public education, and firm foundations be given to language knowledge in this regard. The analysis of the exam documents supporting the 2nd hypothesis has proved that the advanced-level secondary school-leaving exam in the German language contains general elements relevant to study in the German language. However, as a fundamental feature of the new examinations is that they are

standardized, the exams – in their present forms – with regard to foreign languages – can only assess the general language usage necessary for everyone, and thus they do not suitably represent the needs of any other, specialized language.

The German language adequacy test has revealed significant information on the students' German language learning process and on the German language usage peculiar to the data-provider higher educational institutions. We accept the 3rd hypothesis concerning the language learning background, as the findings proved that the language learning process of the students of the two groups of institutions contains similar elements, however, there are numerous differences as well in this regard. The 4th hypothesis was justified by those results according to which the majority of the students in both groups of institutions has learnt the German language in private lessons or when they spent some time in German-speaking environment. The 5th hypothesis was concerned with the current language use practices and the future intents of the students. As for the current general language use, the students on German language programmes use the German language more often, but the features of the general language use are similar in the two groups. The intents for the future general language use the two groups stand closer. According to this, the hypothesis concerning the general language use practices was only partially justified. In terms of the study-related language use, almost every study-related language use activity plays a more important role in the group of students on German language programmes. These students render less importance to study-related language use in the future, in this way the great difference between the two groups decreases, but remains still considerable. Therefore, we can accept the 5th hypothesis concerning the general language use for study. The intentions of the students in connection with language use in their work stand closer in the two groups than their intentions for the language use for study, the difference is that the students on German language programmes expect more frequent language use in connection with all work-related activities. Yet, we can identify a group of linguistic activities which belong to the frequent linguistic activities in both groups, therefore, we can partially accept the 5th hypothesis concerning the language use for work.

One of the important findings of the research is that the language knowledge required for study in higher education is not homogenous in many respects. On the one hand, beside the common features of the German language knowledge required for German language and business-oriented programmes, individual German language usage peculiarities can be identified. On the other hand, it has also been found that the extent to which linguistic skills are needed varies from institution to institution within the two groups. The data about the linguistic skills and linguistic activities confirmed the 6th hypothesis. Based on the results, it was found that mediation and the four basic linguistic skills are needed in both groups of institutions. Considering all the forms of communication as listed in the questionnaire, a common group of linguistic activities can be identified that is necessary for study in both groups of institutions. Beyond the common features of the language usage, along these categories the peculiarities of the language knowledge necessary in the groups of institutions can be identified. But there is need for further investigation concerning the level of language proficiency, as the indirect method for its identification used in this research concluded only that the students' proficiency level do not fully match the C1 level. The results also confirmed the 7th hypothesis: students on German language programmes use the different linguistic skills except for mediation significantly more often than the students on business-oriented study programmes, and the linguistic activities – with the exception of a few – are also significantly more frequent in institutions offering German language programmes. At the same time, as we stated above, a common group of linguistic activities can be identified that are necessary in both groups of institutions at least monthly or

at least once half a year. The research confirmed the 8th hypothesis as well and pointed out that gaps could be detected in the linguistic competence of students in many areas, in almost all linguistic skills and in many linguistic activities. And the identified deficiencies can give an indication as to what areas of language knowledge need firmer foundations in students wishing to continue their studies in higher education in the kinds of professional orientation in question. Competency deficiencies also indicate what to pay more attention to in the linguistic skills development taking place in higher education. The development of the language knowledge required for study in higher education cannot end at secondary school level; it is also the duty of tertiary education institutions to improve the language knowledge of students in response to their competence, local needs and the peculiarities of any particular language usage.

Regarding the 9th hypothesis, in the course of the relation analysis, the roles of the private lessons and the time spent in a target-language environment were contrasted with the students' linguistic competence deficiencies. With regard to the private tuition and the gap in the competence areas index it was revealed that the students who had attended private lessons have more considerable competence deficiencies, on the basis of which we discard the 9th hypothesis relating to the private lessons. However, it can be observed in both groups that the competence gap index for the students who have spent a longer period of time in German-speaking environment is lower than that of their fellow students who have spent less time in such an environment. We can accept the 9th hypothesis fully in this regard.

The findings of the investigation proved the 10th hypothesis as well. In terms of other knowledge necessary for studies in higher education, the requirements of the groups of institutions also differ, yet, some common features can also be found, which may serve as guidelines for the further improvement of the new secondary school-leaving examination. To different extent, but in both groups it is necessary to have the linguistic and grammatical knowledge related to the German language and, some additional knowledge of the society, politics, geography and culture of the German-speaking countries each in some depth.

Based on the results of the adequacy test, several proposals can be made with regard to further development of the German language secondary school-leaving exam. It is necessary to carry out further research as to how the elements of the German language knowledge required for further studies by higher educational institutions of various profiles can be represented in the advanced-level exam. The coordination of the potential of public education and the higher educational requirements and, apart from the improvement of general language knowledge, the promotion of a kind of language teaching that takes the future higher educational goals of students into consideration can help to improve the efficiency of foreign language teaching and learning in public education. The secondary school-leaving examination on the border line between public education and higher education can contribute to this process considerably by means of undergoing further development.

The development of research into assessment points in the direction of a more complex approach to the evaluation of student performance. Consideration of secondary school studies in the exam (e.g. in the form of portfolios) would ensure the representation of the contents important from the point of view of individual language learning objectives, and thus the societal acceptance of the exam could increase. In the portfolios, projects could appear that relate to the desired professional orientation and that require individual research and the ability to cover topics. And the portfolios would also document the language usage required for tertiary studies. It should be noted, however, that this must not override the tenet of the secondary school-leaving exam

reform saying that higher education should not take the leading role in the formulation of the contents of the exam.

In the examined groups of higher educational institutions, translation and mediation play an important role. The further development of the secondary school-leaving examination would necessitate the exploration of the function of translation in tertiary education (language usage in compliance with professional orientation / the traditional language teaching method). According to the results, further research is needed to explore the form of translation and its possible evaluation in the advanced-level exam.

With regard to the levels of the secondary school-leaving exam, there is need for further research to see how public education performs and what societal expectations prevail, and, based on these, whether the C1 level of language proficiency can be introduced in the exam.

As the expectations of German language knowledge by the higher educational institutions that are potential users of the exam are heterogeneous, it is necessary that the certificate of secondary school-leaving exams give a differentiated picture of the language knowledge of the students: e.g. the results achieved in the individual exam parts should appear in the certificate, and a written evaluation should help with the interpretation of the results.

The research presented in this dissertation is, on account of pre-set conditions, limited to the German language, and thus it can be classified as a diagnostic fundamental research. As the two-level educational system solidifies, so will further research into the features of German language use be justified. The kind of research to be conducted would look into the German language knowledge essential for study in higher education in a wider range of institutions, and in every educational area and every form of education in or in relation to foreign languages. And these studies would also explore the requirements for foreign languages other than German, presenting them in a comparative way. Moreover, they would explore the adequacy of foreign language knowledge to other spheres of social life.

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