

## Professional paper

# REPRESENTATION OF STUDENTS LEARNING GERMAN AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ZAGREB

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**ABSTRACT:** This article examines the representation of students learning German at higher education institutions in Zagreb. The aim of this research is to describe the share of students learning German and to explore both their motives for choosing a foreign language and their attitudes towards the importance of learning German.

The introductory section discusses the importance of learning foreign languages in view of the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union. Plurilingualism and multilingualism are both a goal and a means within the framework of life-long learning and workforce mobility in a new social context. An overview of the lecture hours of foreign language courses offered by the surveyed institutions is then presented with information on the ECTS credits allocated to each course. The research methodology presents the research goals and the data collection method, followed by the newly designed measuring instruments, data analysis and results. The conclusion presents survey results with the aim of indicating specific students' needs with respect to learning German at higher education institutions in Zagreb.

**KEY WORDS:** German language, communicative language competences, first foreign language, second foreign language, plurilingualism, life-long learning

**JEL:** I20, I23, I24

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Language policy in Europe

Linguistic diversity and the coexistence of the languages of its member states is one of the European Union's characteristic peculiarities. As a community of 27 countries with 23 official languages, the European Union has placed great importance on its policies for knowledge and language learning, the linguistic competence of individuals and the communication necessary for the professional life and free movement of people within

the community. Aiming to promote unity in linguistic diversity, the bodies of the European Union (European Council, European Parliament, European Commission, Council of Ministers) and the Council of Europe adopted a series of guidelines, resolutions and concrete recommendations for the implementation of language policies to promote language learning. Among other things, the measures contained in the Appendix to Recommendation of the Council of Europe concerning the learning and teaching of modern languages require educational institutions to ensure resources and provide opportunities for senior secondary students and students of higher and further education to continue learning language appropriate to their programs of study and fields of work (Council of Europe, 1982). The White Book of the European Commission goes a step further and presents the Commission's standpoint that every person should be given the opportunity to learn at least two foreign languages, providing the ability to communicate in at least two Community languages in addition to one's mother tongue. Plurilingualism is an important element of European identity and is a basic component of the knowledge society (European Commission, 1995).

The terms plurilingualism and multilingualism have often been used as synonyms. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, "Multilingualism is the knowledge of several languages or the co-existence of different languages in a given society. Multilingualism can be attained by simply offering a greater choice of languages in a school or within an educational system, or by encouraging students to learn more than one foreign language" (CEFR, 2005). Plurilingualism is viewed as the experience of an individual exposed to a language and cultural context who, based on this experience and knowledge of language, develops his or her communicative competence not in strictly separated mental compartments but through the ability to switch between languages according to circumstances. In cases where an individual has a high level of knowledge of one or more languages, his communicative competence in all of these languages is usually at different levels. This phenomenon indicates that plurilingualism is satisfied by incomplete linguistic competence (Boers, 2007). as part of official policy, multilingualism is a means of inter-cultural dialogue, social cohesion and prosperity for individuals and the entire community, taking into account national and cultural identity and the autonomy of national educational policy. As an asset and a common commitment (European Commission, 2008), multilingualism may contribute to the comparative advantages of entrepreneurship. The presence of multilingual companies across Europe is an excellent example of the real potential of linguistic diversity and inter-cultural competence to expand business.

## **1.2. Multilingualism and plurilingualism in the EU**

The European Union is a plurilingual community in two respects: many national languages are spoken in particular geographic areas and a fairly large number of citizens have communication skills in several languages. Possession of linguistic communicative competence is not evenly distributed and there is a need to encourage foreign language learning. Research commissioned by the European Commission (i.e. the Directorate-General for Education and Culture) on Europeans and their languages provided extremely interesting and important findings for further shaping of language policy: 56% of the respondents,

who were citizens of EU member states, were able to hold a conversation in a language other than their native language. With respect to the EU language policy goal that every citizen will have knowledge of two languages in addition to his or her native language, 28% of the respondents stated that they spoke two foreign languages well enough to have a conversation in these languages. An extremely high percentage of citizens who speak two foreign languages is recorded for Luxembourg (92%), the Netherlands (75%) and Slovenia (71%). Furthermore, 11% of the respondents indicated that they had communicative competence in three languages other than their mother tongue (European Commission, 2006).

Of the EU's 23 official languages, English remains the most widely spoken foreign language throughout Europe, with 38% of EU citizens stating that they have sufficient skills in English to conduct a conversation. In 19 of the 29 countries polled, English was the most widely known language other than the mother tongue. This is particularly the case in Sweden (89%), Malta (88%) and the Netherlands (87%). The second most widely used languages are French and German, with 14% of citizens speaking these languages. French is the most commonly spoken foreign language in the United Kingdom (23%) and Ireland (20%) whereas citizens of the Czech Republic (28%) and Hungary (25%) are most likely to be proficient in German. These data indicate the geographical and historical conditioning of the representation of a language as a foreign language. The distribution of a language and the number of citizens who speak it is directly correlated with the population of the country. In relation to the total population of the EU, the most widely used mother tongue is German, with a share of 18% (European Commission, 2006).

### **1.3. Foreign languages in higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia**

Teaching foreign languages in the education system of the Republic of Croatia is an integral part of all four education levels: pre-school (foreign language learning at an early age), primary, secondary and higher education. A key document that establishes educational standards for teaching foreign languages is the Croatian National Education Standard (CNES) for primary school, which sets forth educational standards for four modern foreign languages, English, French, German and Italian, taught as first and second foreign languages. The basic concept of the CNES draws on the theoretical guidelines and objectives of contemporary foreign language teaching, which emphasises communicative competence in foreign languages, described in detail in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - CEFR (CNES, 2005). Provisions for foreign language teaching in secondary school established in the National Curriculum Framework, which, in determining students' achievements, also draws on provisions for particular levels according to the CEFR (NCF, 2010). The higher the education level, the scarcer are provisions for foreign language teaching. Thus, the Scientific Activity and Higher Education Act (SAHEA) provides for the regulation of foreign languages only within the framework of individual study programs and it grants a high level of autonomy to higher education institutions in this respect. Article 78 of this Act states that a study program should be "i) in line with the latest scientific knowledge and skills based thereon, ii) comply with national priorities

and needs of the professional sector, and iii) comparable with programs of the European Union member states” (SAHEA, 2003). This means that higher education institutions should use the CEFR and language policy documents as applicable at the European level.

With respect to the compatibility and harmonisation of higher education of the Republic of Croatia with European higher education, the Republic of Croatia signed the Bologna Declaration in May 2001 and undertook to carry out contracted activities until 2010. Since then, higher education study programmes have been harmonised with the requirements of the Bologna process through the introduction of a system of recognisable and comparable academic and professional degrees and diploma supplements, aiming to more efficient employment and international competitiveness. A three-cycle study system of undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate (specialist and doctoral) studies and the grading system of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) have been introduced.

The implementation of the Bologna process establishes additional requirements for the higher education system in terms of curriculum reform, academic mobility (mobility of students and of teaching and non-teaching staff) and, in particular the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Students are required to study abroad and to use a foreign language in direct communication with native speakers for at least one semester. As established by the curriculum, this should allow students to achieve acceptable language knowledge to use quality materials in the foreign language, participate in conferences, and generally share their knowledge and experience. The language policies of higher education institutions should include clearly defined activities to promote foreign language teaching and the acquisition of linguistic communicative skills that are a prerequisite for academic mobility within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The emphasis is on communicative competence as a prerequisite of plurilingualism, focusing on the active use of language through interaction in specific communication situations (Savignon, 1972) or ability as defined by Hymes: the use of language in a social context with respect to sociolinguistic norms of appropriateness and effectiveness (Hymes, 1971). Little or no progress has been achieved in foreign language teaching at higher education institutions in Croatia. A large discrepancy has been noted in relation to the objectives of the language policies of the EU and the Council of Europe in terms of the number of languages taught, duration of language teaching and the teaching of languages as part of lifelong learning.

#### **1.4. Knowledge of foreign languages in the Republic of Croatia**

In recent years it has been agreed that knowledge of foreign languages is important in the social context and is necessary in everyday business communication, especially for individuals operating in an international environment. A survey conducted in June 2010 (*Poslovni savjetnik*, 2010) with a sample of 410 business people showed that the majority of respondents spoke English (99%), followed by German-speaking respondents (42%) and Italian-speaking respondents (25%). French was represented with a 10% share and Spanish was represented with 6%. A survey conducted in March 2011 (GFK, 2011) with a sample of 1000 respondents aged 15 and over showed that 78% of the respondents knew at least one foreign language. English was used by 62% of the respondents, 40% of whom

assessed their language skills as good or excellent. German was in second place, with 38%; 6% of the respondents assessed the quality of their knowledge of German speaking and writing as excellent, 12% said that they spoke and wrote well, and 50% of the respondents reported understanding a little German. In general, the majority of German-speaking respondents in this survey lived in Zagreb (32%), northern Croatia (24%), in Dalmatia (app. 14%) and Istria (Istra i Primorje) (10%). It is also interesting to consider the distribution of foreign language knowledge by the age of the respondents and their level of education completed. The results show that age is inversely and proportionally related to knowledge of foreign languages, whereas the level of education is proportionally related to knowledge of foreign languages.

## 2. FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ZAGREB

The following colleges participated in the survey:

1. Visoka škola za poslovanje i upravljanje, s pravom javnosti Baltazar Adam Krčelić, 10290 Zaprešić, Vladimira Novaka 23
2. Visoka poslovna škola Libertas, Kennedyev trg 6b
3. Veleučilište VERN, Trg bana Josipa Jelačića 3
4. Visoka škola za ekonomiju, poduzetništvo i upravljanje Nikola Šubić Zrinski, Selska cesta 119, Zagreb
5. Zagrebačka škola za menadžment, Trg bana Josipa Jelačića 3 (u sastavu Veleučilišta Vern)

For the purpose of this research, two questionnaires were developed: *the Questionnaire for institutions* and *the Questionnaire for students*. *The Questionnaire for institutions* was designed to collect data on the total number of students and the representation of students learning particular foreign languages (English and/or German) at the respective colleges and to obtain the number of potential respondents. Based on the data collected by *the Questionnaire for institutions*, an overview of the total number of students and the representation of foreign language teaching is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Overview of study programmes and foreign language courses\***

HEI	Study programme	Course	Semester	Lesson hours/S	ECTS
B. A. Krčelić	Business Economics and Finances	English or German	1-2	45	3
			3-4	30	3
	Management in Culture	English or German	1-2	45	3
			3-4	30	3
	Business Secretary	English or German	1-2	45	3
			3-4	30	3

VPS Libertas	Business Economics	Business English	2-3	60	5
		Business German <sup>1</sup>	2-3	60	5
		Business Italian <sup>2</sup>	2-3	60	5
V. VERN	Economics of Entrepreneurship	Business English	1-5	60	5
		Optional: German or Italian	1-5	60	5
	Business Informatics	English for IT	1-4	60	4
		Second foreign language: German <sup>3</sup>	3-4	30	2
N.Š. Zrinski	Economics of Entrepreneurship	Business English	1-6	30	3
		Business German	1-6	30	3
ZŠM	Tourism and Hotel Management	Business English	1-6	30	3
		Second foreign lang: German/Italian	1-6	30	2

<sup>1</sup> Since ac. year 2008/09 Business German language wasn't taught

<sup>2</sup> Since ac. year 2006/07 Business Italian language wasn't taught

<sup>3</sup> After ac. year 2009/2010 the study programme Business informatics doesn't comprise the second foreign language.

\*Data valid on the date of the survey.

Source: The Questionnaire for institutions

**Table 2: Representation of students learning German in the total number of students in the academic year 2009/2010**

Higher education institution	Percentage of students learning English			Percentage of students learning German			Percentage of students learning only German		
	1.y.	2.y.	3.y.	1.y.	2.y.	3.y.	1.y.	2.y.	3.y.
B. A. Krčelić	89	90	--	11	10	0	11	10	0
VPS Libertas	100	100	--	0	0	0	0	0	0
V. VERN	100	100	100*	12	50	13	0	0	0
N.Š. Zrinski	100	100	100	100	100	100	0	0	0
ZŠM	100	100	100	45	45	45	0	0	0

\*Information refers to the study programme of Economics for Entrepreneurship

Source: The Questionnaire for institutions

German language courses and/or German language for business course are usually offered and taught at selected colleges from the first through the fourth semesters. The assigned ECTS points vary from 2 to 5 points depending on the institution and the type of study. The allocation of ECTS points to a course is based on the student workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes of a particular study programme (*ECTS Users' Guide*, 2004). German is being taught for 6 semesters at the college N. Š. Zrinski and at the University of Applied Sciences VERN in the study programmes Economics of Entrepreneurship and Tourism and

Hotel Management. The number of students learning German is consistent with the English learning students only at the college N. Š. Zrinski. At the majority of selected colleges, the share of students learning German is far lower than the percentage of students learning English, amounting to approximately 10%. A somewhat higher percentage of students learning German (45%) is reported in the study programme in Tourism and Hotel Management due to its specific curriculum. There is an increasing dominance of English at these colleges.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in June 2010 at the colleges noted above with a sample of 241 respondents, of which 41.5% were male ( $N = 100$ ) and 58.5% were female ( $N = 141$ ). Students were not surveyed at the college VPŠ Libertas because German was not taught in the academic year 2009/2010. The survey was conducted through a questionnaire consisting of three basic interrelated parts. The first part comprises four questions that allow multiple answers (multiple choice questions) to explore the respondents' experience of learning foreign languages in elementary and secondary schools as well as the respondents' preferences in the selection of foreign languages during their continued education. The second part examines the attitudes and motives of the respondents from these colleges for learning German. Two instruments with a dozen separate items assess the respondents' motives for learning the German language as well as their attitudes and experiences in using the German language. The theoretical assumption for the construction of the items assessing motivation is that students decide to learn a foreign language for two main reasons: they choose a language they have already learned because it is easier and more convenient, or they choose a new foreign language (in this case, German) because they believe it is useful for future personal or professional advancement. The second instrument examines respondents' attitudes regarding methods of teaching and learning the German language and respondents' personal involvement in the learning process. The third part of the questionnaire comprises a set of independent variables, including the basic demographic characteristics of respondents (years of study, gender and place of primary socialisation - the place where students attended primary school) and two selected socio-economic characteristics (parents' education and the perception of the respondent's current household income). Many studies have found these socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics to be related to students' educational achievement (at all levels, from primary school to faculty) and relevant to the overall professional success of an individual.

The administration time for the questionnaire was 15 minutes. The students were informed that the survey was anonymous.

### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS ANALYSIS

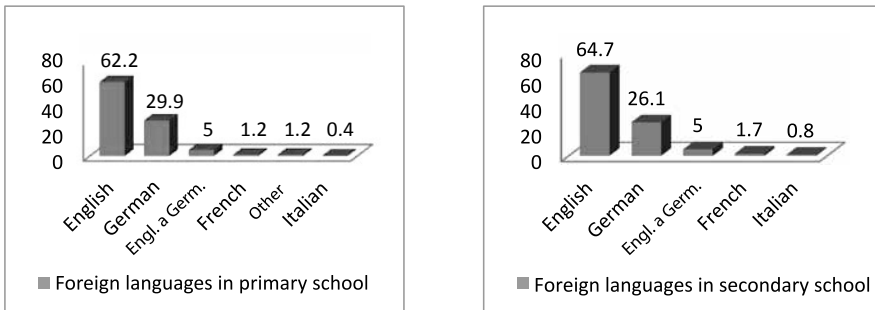
The results obtained by conducting the survey were analysed using SPSS 14.0. The results are presented in tables and graphs. Response frequencies were calculated by applying descriptive statistics, which made it possible to obtain concise and clear insight into the students' attitudes towards learning German.



### 4.1. Previous foreign language experience

The majority of the respondents learned English as their first foreign language in primary school (62.2%) and secondary school (64.7%). Of the students surveyed 29% learned German as their first foreign language in primary school, and 26.1% learned German during their secondary school education. A very low percentage of the respondents learned both the English and the German language in primary school (5.0%) and in secondary school (6.2%). Additionally, 35.7% of the respondents began learning their second foreign language in their first class of primary school.

**Graph 1: Parallel presentation of prior experience in the study of foreign languages in primary school and secondary school**

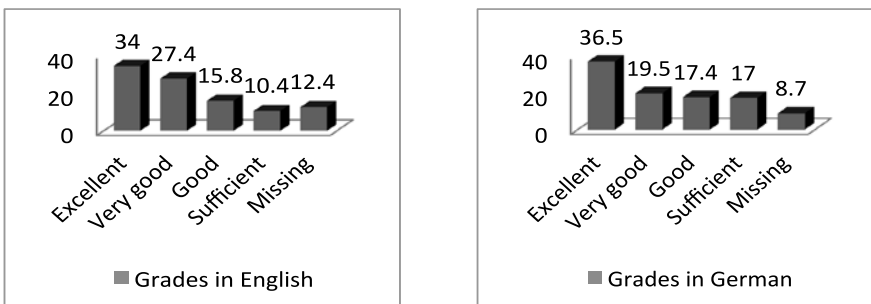


Source: *Questionnaire for institutions*

### 4.2. Students' performance in foreign languages in the past year

Data regarding foreign language grades were obtained with the aim of comparing student's grades in English and German courses. The data analysis showed that grades were not indicated by 30 students for English and by 21 students for German. More students earned an *excellent* grade in German (36.5%) whereas more students earned a *very good* grade in English (27.4%). A grade of *good* was represented by similar values: 17.4% for German and 15.8% for English. The average grade at the end of the 2008/2009 academic year was 3.97 for English and 3.83 for German.

**Graph 2: Parallel presentation of students' performance in English and German courses in the academic year 2008/2009**



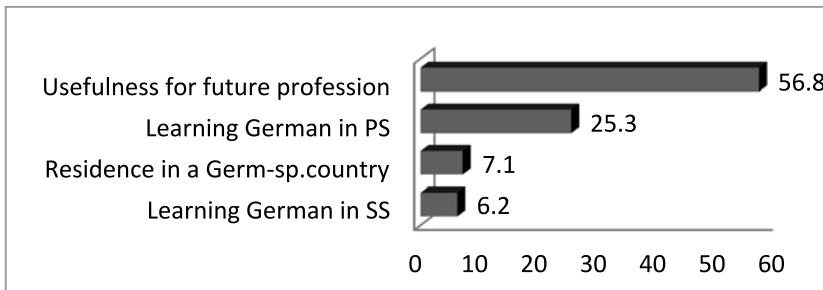
Source: *Questionnaire for institutions*



### 4.3. Reasons for learning German

Among the reasons provided in instrument 6 of the *Questionnaire for students*, the respondents chose as the most important reason for learning German at the college its usefulness for their future profession (56.8%), followed by the fact that they had learned German in secondary school (25.3%). Residence in a German-speaking country was cited by 7.1% of the respondents, followed by having learned German in primary school (6.2%). Slightly more than half of the respondents expressed their view that knowledge of the German language was associated with practical benefits and would provide favourable opportunities for finding employment and professional advancement, joining the 73% of participants at the European level who believe that knowledge of foreign languages contributes to better employability (European Commission, 2006).

**Graph 3: Graphical presentation of the reasons for learning German**



### 4.4. Motives and attitudes towards learning German

The second part of the questionnaire comprises two instruments with 10 items. The first instrument assesses students' motivation for learning German, and the second instrument assesses students' attitudes regarding methods of teaching and learning German and their personal involvement in the learning process. For each item, the respondents were offered a 5-point scale to specify their level of agreement or disagreement, from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*.

The results obtained for the responses to items 7.1 to 7.10 of the *Questionnaire for students* were ranked according to means and are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Motivation for learning German**

	N		Mean
	Valid	Missing	
7.5. We live in a time of interrelatedness and international cooperation when foreign languages are necessary.	240	1	4,56
7.10. If I speak several languages, I will more easily find the job I wish.	240	1	4,38
7.9. Knowing at least two foreign languages has become a part of contemporary culture.	241	0	4,32

7.4. My parents think that it is very important to know another foreign language.	239	2	4,00
7.1. Learning German is important for my personal development.	241	0	3,99
7.2. It is useful when I can read books for exams in German.	240	1	3,44
7.8. I have learned German so far and it makes no sense to interrupt.	239	2	3,44
7.3. I learn German because it is an obligatory course at this college.	240	1	3,12
7.6. Language schools have imposed a trend of learning languages in order to make a greater profit.	241	0	2,97
7.7. All my friends learn foreign languages, and I don't want to be worse than them.	240	1	2,30

The ranked results suggest that the respondents have a high level of awareness of current trends in their environment of the growing interrelatedness of nations and cultures, and of the need for knowledge of foreign languages. The second-ranked belief is that mastering languages will enable the respondents to more easily find an appropriate job and facilitate professional development. The item stating that knowing at least two foreign languages has become part of contemporary culture is in third place.

The frequencies and percentages for each item are given in Table 4.

Histograms for the first three highly ranked items show the frequency distribution, how the frequencies of particular values are distributed in relation to the mean. The frequency value of the first three ranked items (7.5, 7.10, 7.9) indicates that the frequency distribution, compared to the standard distribution, has shifted to higher values.

**Graph 4: Histogram for item 7.5**

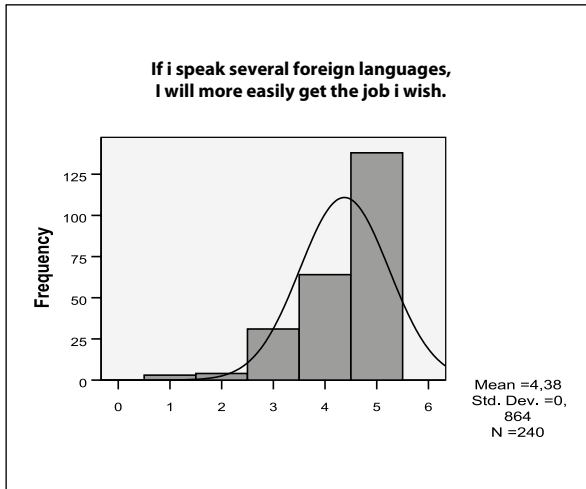


Legend:

Abscissa: frequency

Ordinate: scaling 1-5

**Graph 5: Histogram for item 7.10**

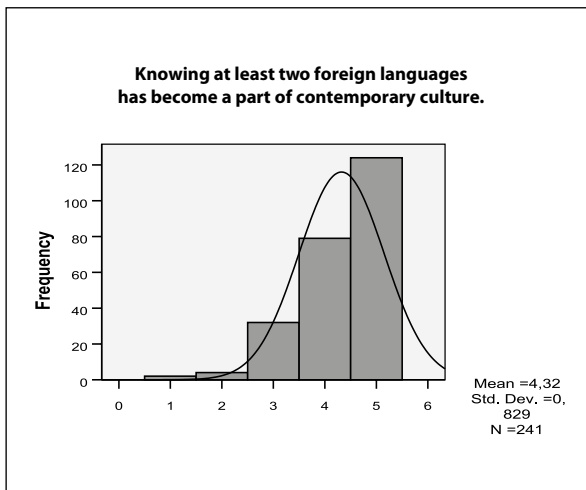


Legend:

Abscissa: frequency

Ordinate: scaling 1-5

**Graph 6: Histogram for item 7.9**



Legend:

Abscissa: frequency

Ordinate: scaling 1-5

**Table 4: Students' motivation for learning German (frequencies and percentages)**

Item	I completely disagree		I disagree		Neither agree, no disagree		I agree		I completely agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
7.1. Learning German is important for my personal development.	10	4,1	8	3,3	44	18,3	92	38,2	87	36,1
7.2. It is useful when I can read books for exams in German.	18	7,5	25	10,4	72	29,9	83	34,4	42	17,4

7.3. I learn German because it is an obligatory course at this college.	49	20,3	46	19,1	35	14,5	47	19,5	63	26,1
7.4. My parents think that it is very important to know another foreign language.	11	4,6	13	5,4	46	19,1	65	27,0	104	43,2
7.5. We live in a time of interrelatedness and international cooperation when foreign languages are necessary.	1	,4	2	,8	16	6,6	64	26,6	157	<b>65,1</b>
7.6. Language schools have imposed a trend of learning languages in order to make a greater profit.	37	15,4	47	19,5	77	32,0	47	19,5	33	13,7
7.7. All my friends learn foreign languages, and I don't want to be worse than them.	79	32,8	59	24,5	66	27,4	23	9,5	13	5,4
7.8. I have learned German so far and it makes no sense to interrupt.	30	12,4	26	10,8	46	19,1	82	34,0	55	22,8
7.9. Knowing at least two foreign languages has become a part of contemporary culture.	2	,8	4	1,7	32	13,3	79	32,8	124	<b>51,5</b>
7.10. If I speak several languages, I will more easily get the job I wish.	3	1,2	4	1,7	31	12,9	64	26,6	138	<b>57,3</b>

A factor analysis of the data (after excluding item 7.8 *I have learned German so far and it makes no sense to interrupt.* in the initial factor analysis) and the principal components method used for factor extraction indicate the existence of three factors that explain 58% of the total variance.

To obtain a better interpretation of the extracted factors, a Varimax rotation was performed. The first factor, which accounts for 31.38% of the total variance, comprises social motivation for learning German and correlates mostly with the following items 7.5. *We live in a time of interrelatedness and international cooperation when foreign languages are necessary*; 7.9. *Knowing at least two foreign languages has become a part of contemporary culture.* and 7.10. *If I speak several foreign languages, I will more easily get the job I wish.* The second factor, which explains 15.41% of the total variance, comprises individual motivation for learning German and correlates with items 7.1. *Learning German is important for my personal development.*, and 7.2. *It is useful when I can read books for exams in German.* The third extracted factor is related to external locus of control and correlates with the following items 7.3. *I learn German because it is an obligatory course at this college*; 7.4. *My parents think that it is very important to know another foreign language*; 7.6. *Language schools have imposed a trend of learning languages in order to make a greater profit.* and 7.7. *All my friends learn foreign languages, and I don't want to be worse than them.*

The results obtained for responses to items for instrument 8 of the *Questionnaire for students* reflect students' attitudes towards teaching methods and learning German and their personal involvement in the learning process. To express their attitudes the respondents were presented with a response format with 5 options, from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Frequencies and percentages for each item are given in Table 7.

A ranking list was developed based on the obtained data and is shown in Table 8. It should be noted that more than half of the respondents (53.5%) agree that a student's performance and success significantly depend on the teacher. The results of this study reaffirm an important fact that has been widely researched by the scientific community and is consistent with findings by Bratanić, M/Maršić, T.; Mihaljević Djigunović/Mardešić, that the teacher's personality, competence and commitment are the key factors in the success of language teaching. The second-rated item relates to learning a foreign language in an organised classroom environment and the preference for group work over independent work at home. Although each of these items represents an extremely interesting topic for further investigation, they are not within the scope of this study. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that active participation in language class activities was rated third, followed by role-play, textbook content, attitude regarding German as the favourite course, and number of foreign language lesson hours in last place.

**Table 5: Extraction method: principal components analysis  
Total variance explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	2,824	31,382	31,382	2,824	31,382	31,382	2,084	23,150	23,150
2	1,387	15,412	46,794	1,387	15,412	46,794	1,777	19,745	42,895
3	1,042	11,575	58,369	1,042	11,575	58,369	1,393	15,474	58,369
4	,873	9,704	68,073						
5	,834	9,272	77,345						
6	,724	8,041	85,385						
7	,583	6,476	91,861						
8	,397	4,415	96,276						
9	,335	3,724	100,000						

*Extraction Method: Principal Components Analysis*

**Table 6: Presentation of factor loadings  
Rotated Component Matrix (a)**

	Component		
	1	2	3
7.1. Learning German is important for my personal development	,341	<b>,810</b>	,117
7.2. It is useful when I can read books for exams in German.	,163	<b>,784</b>	,182
7.3. I learn German because it is an obligatory course at this college	-,038	-,580	<b>,394</b>
7.4. My parents think that it is very important to know another foreign language.	,442	,096	<b>,496</b>

7.5. We live in a time of interrelatedness and international cooperation when foreign languages are necessary.	,779	,264	-,106
7.6. Language schools have imposed a trend of learning languages in order to make a greater profit.	-,193	-,137	,640
7.7. All my friends learn foreign languages, and I don't want to be worse than them.	,023	,177	,713
7.9. Knowing at least two foreign languages has become a part of contemporary culture.	,666	,195	-,099
7.10. If I speak several foreign languages, I will more easily get the job I wish.	,810	,050	,074

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis  
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.  
 A Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

**Table 7: Learning and teaching methods**

Item	I completely disagree		I disagree		Neither agree, no disagree		I agree		I completely agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
8.1. I take an active part in German lessons (I participate in class discussions, converse...)	5	2,1	25	10,4	64	26,6	87	36,1	60	24,9
8.2. I learn more in the class practicing group work than when I learn alone at home.	6	2,5	11	4,6	47	19,5	83	34,4	94	39,0
8.3. Student's success in foreign language learning significantly depends on the teacher.	3	1,2	4	1,7	18	7,5	87	36,1	129	53,5
8.4. I think that the content of the German course is relatively easy.	16	6,6	30	12,4	100	41,5	65	27,0	29	12,0
8.5. The number of foreign language lesson hours is too high compared with other courses.	72	29,9	81	33,6	66	27,4	14	5,8	8	3,3
8.6. German is my favourite course at this college.	42	17,4	53	22,0	87	36,1	31	12,9	24	10,0
8.7. Learning foreign languages is easier through through role-play.	7	2,9	17	7,1	94	39,0	85	35,3	38	15,8
8.8. The content of textbooks (texts and exercises) is an important part of foreign language learning.	14	5,8	21	8,7	68	28,2	96	39,8	42	17,4

**Table 8: Items regarding foreign language teaching ranked according to the mean.**

	N		Mean
	Valid	Missing	
8.3. Student's success in foreign language learning significantly depends on the teacher.	241	0	4,39
8.2. I learn more in the class practicing group work than when I learn alone at home.	241	0	4,03

8.1. I take an active part in German lessons (I participate in class discussions, converse...)	241	0	3,71
8.7. Learning foreign languages is easier through through role-play.	241	0	3,54
8.8. The content of textbooks (texts and exercises) is an important part of foreign language learning.	241	0	3,54
8.4. I think that the content of the German course is relatively easy.	240	1	3,25
8.6. German is my favourite course at this college.	237	4	2,76
8.5. The number of foreign language lesson hours is too high compared with other courses.	241	0	2,19

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

The results of this research show that the representation of students learning German at surveyed colleges is far less in comparison with the representation of students learning English. German language course / Business German language courses are offered and taught primarily in the first through the fourth semesters, and the allocated ECTS points vary from 2 to 5 points depending on the type of study. At the majority of participating colleges, the percentage of students learning German is approximately 10%. A significant percentage of students learning German was recorded in the study programme in Tourism and Hotel Management due to its specific curriculum (Veleučilište Vern). Among the participating colleges, only students at the college N. Š. Zrinski learn both English and German during three years of study. The comparison of the data in the *Questionnaire for institutions* for the academic years 2007/2008 and 2009/2010 shows a decrease in the representation of students learning German.

The analysis of the results obtained for items regarding student's motivation for learning the German language shows that the respondents possess a high level of awareness of the need to know foreign languages, especially due to contemporary economic trends and the interconnection between nations and cultures. The usefulness of knowledge of several foreign languages in terms of future professions and easier access to desired or appropriate jobs was rated second.

Factor analysis of the obtained results indicated three factors that explain 58% of the total variance. The first factor (31.38% of the variance) consists of social motivation for learning German. This factor correlates highly with the following items 7.5. *We live in a time of interrelatedness and international cooperation when foreign languages are necessary*; 7.9. *Knowing at least two foreign languages has become a part of contemporary culture*; 7.10. *If I speak several foreign languages, I will more easily get the job I wish*. The second factor (15.41% of variance) addresses individual motivation and correlates with items 7.1. *Learning German is important for my personal development*; 7.2. *It is useful when I can read books for exams in German*. The third extracted factor was the external locus of control.

The results obtained for the responses to items regarding methods of teaching and learning German show that a qualified majority of the respondents (53.5%) believes that students' success significantly depends on the teacher. Learning a foreign language in an organized classroom environment and practicing group work were given priority over



independent work at home. The third-ranked item, active participation, indicates the respondent's awareness of the importance of the individual engagement.

The data analysis reaffirms the dominance of English learning. This fact has been undoubtedly contributed to by the imbalance of the foreign languages offered for selection at an early age and the retention of this trend during primary and secondary education.

This study found that 62.2% of the respondents learned English as their first foreign language in primary school, and 64.7% learned English as their first foreign language in secondary school. Furthermore, 29.9% of the respondents learned German as their first foreign language in primary school and 26.1% learned German as their first foreign language in secondary school. A very low percentage of the respondents learned both English and German in primary school (5.0%) and in secondary school (6.2%).

Viewed from the standpoint of the language policy of the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Bologna process as implemented in the Republic of Croatia, which established the goal that every student should learn at least two foreign languages, it is clear that we are far from accomplishing that goal. Despite the clear usefulness of knowledge and mastery of communication skills in foreign languages, higher education institutions' curricula language policy, content and duration of foreign language teaching are not sufficiently developed to enable students to achieve appropriate levels of communicative competence in foreign languages. Insufficient knowledge of foreign languages deprives students of adequate preparation and training for mobility during their studies, which provides them with experience in new environments, and greater employability and integration into the labour market.

## ENDNOTES

1. The European Union with its 27 member states and 23 official languages is a community of 500 Million citizens. Official languages are: Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish and Swedish. Order of language versions and ISO codes; <http://publications.europa.eu/code/en/en-370200.htm>
2. The Council of Europe is an international organisation and entirely separate body from the European Union (47 member states with ca. 800 Million citizens) whereas the European Council is the EU body as well as the Council of the European Union also referred to as the Council of Ministers.
3. Eurobarometer is a programme of the interstate and comparative social survey. This programme has been launched with the aim to track public social and political opinion in all EU member states. Public opinion polls are conducted on behalf of and are coordinated by the European Commission, DG for Education and Culture, DG Press and Communication - Department of Public Opinion ((European Commission Public Opinion Analysis). Data used in this article originate from the Special Eurobarometer Europeans and their languages, with 28694 citizens surveyed from 25 EU-member states, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Turkey. The survey was carried out from 5th November till 7th December 2005.

4. Terms used herein the *first* and *second foreign language* refer to a foreign language the learning of which starts in the first grade, or in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade of the primary school.

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