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Analysis of German Language Proficiency Exam B1

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Abstract

It's important to carefully examine the types of questions and formats used in these tests to enhance teaching and learning effectiveness, especially in preparing for German language proficiency exams. The insights gained from such studies can serve as valuable guidance for both students and teachers, helping them better understand and navigate the structure of the B1 German proficiency exam. The data analysis in this study follows the Miles and Huberman model, which involves four key stages. First, researchers collected and observed data to gather enough information about the B1 German language proficiency test and the HSK 4 Mandarin test. In the second stage, they filtered and refined the data, followed by the third stage, which involved presenting the findings. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the results. The study revealed both similarities and differences in the assessed competencies, particularly in grammar, vocabulary, and overall evaluation. One key finding is that the B1 German test is aligned with the CEFR B1 level and evaluates four core language skills. To perform well on the exam, test-takers are expected to know around 2,400 words. The test also uses a modular scoring system, which means each skill area is assessed separately.

Keywords: Analysis, German Language, B1

1. INTRODUCTION

Mastering a foreign language has become increasingly important, especially as a tool for communication in a more globalized world. In today's industry 4.0 era, being proficient in language

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like German is highly valuable. According to Keklick (as cited in Murni, 2014), foreign languages are widely recognized as essential means of communication across the globe. German plays important roles—not only in education but also in various sectors where people interact regularly. Because of this, they are now among the most commonly spoken and studied second languages in many countries.

To help students master German effectively, a comprehensive approach to foreign language instruction is essential. The success of teaching foreign languages—specifically German—is influenced by various factors, including the teacher, the learning materials, and the teaching methods used. A teacher's ability to integrate appropriate content with effective methodologies in the classroom is crucial. Additionally, learners' individual differences must be taken into account, as foreign language learners possess varying levels of ability. Therefore, it is highly recommended that instructors be skilled in organizing teaching materials and selecting methods that align with the learners' needs and interests.

The B1 exam is a standardized test designed to assess the German language proficiency of non-native speakers, such as international students or newcomers from abroad. The German language exam follows the *Gemeinsamer Europäischer Referenzrahmen* (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), abbreviated as CEFR, which is comparable to the TOEFL exam for English. For academic purposes in Germany, a minimum language proficiency level of B2 is typically required. In Indonesia, the standardized German proficiency test is administered by the Goethe-Institut, which has branches in three cities: Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya.

The Foreign Language Education Department at Universitas Negeri Makassar (UNM) is actively working to ensure that students reach the B1 level of German language proficiency. This certification has become one of the key requirements for students before they can take their final exams in their respective programs.

This research focuses on the components of the B1 German proficiency test as outlined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The findings aim to help lecturers and academic programs better prepare students—not just to pass the test, but also to build the confidence and skills needed to communicate in everyday situations. This effort aligns with what Hincks (2003) noted, as cited in Amiruddin (2018): highly motivated students often end up using the German language more fluently and effectively than what's required for basic daily interactions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) divides language proficiency into six levels: **basic**, **independent**, and **proficient** use. Each category is further split into two levels, making up the full scale: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2—with C2 being the highest.

According to the official CEFR website, someone at the **B1 level** is expected to:

1. **Understand the main points** of conversations or texts when standard, clear language is used—especially on familiar topics like work, school, or hobbies.

2. **Handle most situations** they might encounter when traveling in a German-speaking country.
3. **Talk about familiar topics** and areas of personal interest in a simple, connected way.
4. **Share personal experiences and events**, talk about their dreams, hopes, and goals, and explain their opinions or plans in a brief and clear manner.

3. METHODOLOGY

According to Sugiyono (2018:482), data analysis is the process of systematically searching for and organizing data collected from interviews, field notes, and documents. This involves organizing the data into categories, breaking it down into manageable units, synthesizing it, finding patterns, selecting what is important, and drawing conclusions that are easy to understand for both the researcher and others.

The reliability of the data collected is crucial, but it's important to remember that different sources of information can give different perspectives. This means that analyzing data requires focus, effort, and deep thinking. Along with analyzing and processing the data, the researcher will also review the literature to confirm previous theories.

In this study, the data analysis technique used follows the Miles and Huberman model:

a. Data Collection

At this stage, the researcher processes the results of field observations, literature reviews, and internet searches into a transcript, scans materials from various references, and organizes the data to compare the B1 and HSK 4 exams based on their types and sources of information.

b. Data Reduction

Here, the researcher simplifies raw data from field notes, summarizes the data, and classifies the answers regarding the B1 and HSK 4 exams, while comparing the two exams.

c. Data Presentation

Miles & Huberman describe data presentation as a set of organized information that allows for conclusions to be drawn and actions to be taken. They believe that clear, well-organized presentations are key to valid qualitative analysis. This might include using matrices, graphs, charts, and diagrams—all designed to bring together information in a way that's easy to digest. In this phase, data is presented in concise descriptions, tables, charts, and by showing the relationships between categories.

d. Conclusion Drawing

Drawing conclusions is part of the whole process. These conclusions are verified throughout the research. Verification involves revisiting the data, rethinking it, and consulting with colleagues to reach a shared understanding. It's also about making sure that the findings fit into the broader.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1.1 Vocabulary

The number of vocabulary items that should be mastered by participants of the B1 German language exam is approximately 2400 lexical items. This vocabulary is suitable for use in the B1 exam for both adult and adolescent levels. The topics that typically appear on the exam are related to everyday life and the current use of the German language, especially in private and public spheres. Additionally, common topics include work, school life, and education.

As with most exams, the vocabulary used in the exam draws from three standard variations of the German language: the variation from Germany itself, Austria, and Switzerland. The themes that need to be mastered include:

1. Bildung (education)
2. Farben (colors)
3. Himmelsrichtungen (directions)
4. Länder, Kontinente, Nationalitäten (countries, continents, nationalities), Sprachen (languages)
5. Politische Begriffe (political terms)
6. Tiere (animals)
7. Währung, Masse und Gewichte (currency, measurements and weights)
8. Zahlen, Bruchzahlen (numbers, fractions)
9. Zeit (date, holidays, seasons, months, times of day, time, weekdays, time references)
10. Familie und Freunde (family and friends)
11. Wohnen (housing)
12. Einkaufen (shopping)
13. Gesundheit (health)
14. Schule, Ausbildung, Beruf (school, education, profession)
15. Freizeit und Reisen (leisure and travel)

In addition to these themes, candidates should also master "Redemittel" (expressions) in German, such as:

1. Giving responses and suggestions
2. Asking questions and answering
3. Expressing opinions
4. Providing examples
5. Mentioning the advantages and disadvantages of something
6. Apologizing
7. Asking for something

1.2 Grammar

From a grammatical perspective, some forms that should be mastered by exam participants include:

1. Gegenwart und Vergangenheit (present and past tense)
2. Modalverben (modal verbs)
3. Konjunktiv II (subjunctive for hypothetical situations)
4. Präpositionen mit Dativ, mit Akkusativ und mit Dativ/Akkusativ (prepositions with accusative, with dative, and with accusative or dative)
5. Konnektoren (connectors)
6. Nebensatz (subordinate clauses)

1.3 Evaluation

The B1 German language exam is not structured as a single package but rather as modular, meaning the four skills (reading, listening, writing, and speaking) are tested individually, each with its own evaluation. For each module, the maximum score is 100, with the passing threshold being 60.

a. Reading and Listening

In both of these modules, there are 30 questions. Each correct answer is awarded 1 point. The total score is then converted to a scale of 100 by multiplying by a factor of 3.33. After that, the result is rounded. Below is the score conversion table.

Poin uji	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21
Poin hasil	100	97	93	90	87	83	80	77	73	70

Poin uji	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11
Poin hasil	67	63	60	57	53	50	47	43	40	37

Poin uji	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Poin hasil	33	30	27	23	20	17	13	10	7	3	0

b. Writing

The assessment of writing is based on the following four aspects:

Section	Aspect	Score				
		A	B	C	D	E
1 and 2	Erfüllung (task fulfillment) , which includes content, scope, linguistic function (such as letter format or giving advice), text type, and appropriateness of register.	10	7,5	5	2,5	0
	Kohärenz (coherence), which includes text structure (such as introduction and conclusion), connectors between sentences, and parts of sentences.	10	7,5	5	2,5	0
	Wortschatz (vocabulary) consists of range and mastery of usage.	10	7,5	5	2,5	0
	Strukturen (grammar) includes range and mastery (morphology, syntax, orthography).	10	7,5	5	2,5	0
3	Erfüllung (task fulfillment) consists of content, scope, linguistic functions (such as letter format or giving advice), text type, and appropriateness of register.	4	3	2	1	0
	Kohärenz (coherence) consists of text structure (such as introduction and conclusion), connectors between sentences, and sentence components.	4	3	2	1	0

	Wortschatz (vocabulary) consists of range and mastery of usage.	6	4,5	3	1,5	0
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Each section must be completed by the exam participant. As with the reading and listening modules, the minimum passing score is 60, which is obtained by adding the scores from the three sections. As a note, an E (0) score is given for a section if the number of words written is less than 50% of the required amount, or if the theme written does not align with the task fulfillment section.

c. Speaking

In the speaking aspect, the assessment is conducted based on the following criteria:

Section	Aspect	Score				
		A	B	C	D	E
1	Erfüllung (task fulfillment) consists of language functions (such as giving advice and agreeing with advice), content, and scope.	8	6	4	2	0
	Interaktion (interaction) evaluates the way of starting, interrupting, and ending a conversation. Additionally, it also assesses the ability to respond.	4	3	2	1	0
	Wortschatz (vocabulary) consists of register, scope, and mastery.	8	6	4	2	0
	Strukturen (grammar) includes the spectrum and mastery (morphology and syntax).	8	6	4	2	0

Erfüllung (task fulfillment) evaluates the achievement in presenting the five prepared folios, the content, and the scope of the presentation theme.	12	9	6	3	0
Kohärenz (coherence) consists of the ability to use conjunctions between sentences and parts of sentences.	4	3	2	1	0
Wortschatz (vocabulary) consists of register, coverage, and mastery.	12	9	6	3	0
Strukturen (grammar) includes the spectrum and mastery (morphology and syntax).	12	9	6	3	0
Erfüllung (task fulfillment) consists of linguistic functions (giving responses, asking and answering questions), content, and scope.	15	12	8	4	0
Aussprache (pronunciation) is assessed based on sentence melody, accent, and letter sounds.	16	12	8	4	0

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis of the German language proficiency test B1, it can be concluded that in the assessed competence aspects, such as grammar and vocabulary, the duration given for the listening comprehension test is 40 minutes. In terms of vocabulary, the German language proficiency test B1 requires mastery of 2400 words. The vocabulary topics in the B1 exam generally cover social life and education in a simple form.

Regarding the grading system, the German language proficiency test B1 follows a modular assessment system, meaning each skill aspect must meet the passing grade that has been set. The suggestion in this study is that it is hoped to be used by teachers and students as a reference or learning material in preparation for the German language proficiency test B1.

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