

การประเมินความสามารถทางภาษาเพื่อเข้าร่วมการชิงทุนการศึกษา  
ในมุมมองทางด้านการเรียนการสอนภาษาเยอรมัน: กรณีศึกษา  
นักศึกษาวิชาเอกภาษาเยอรมัน ณ มหาวิทยาลัยขอนแก่น  
Evaluating the Language Proficiency for Scholarship Grants  
in Terms of German Language Education: A Case Study of  
German Majors at Khon Kaen University in Thailand

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### บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์หลักเพื่อ 1. ศึกษาความสามารถทางภาษาเพื่อการเรียนการสอนภาษาเยอรมัน 2. ศึกษาผลการทดสอบของนักศึกษาวิชาเอกภาษาเยอรมัน ณ มหาวิทยาลัยขอนแก่น 3. ให้คำแนะนำที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการทดสอบและการสอนภาษาแก่ครูอาจารย์ ในการศึกษาคั้งนี้ นักศึกษาวิชาเอกภาษาเยอรมันที่มีศักยภาพสูงจำนวน 9 คน ได้รับการคัดเลือกเข้าร่วมการทดสอบระดับความรู้ทางภาษาในปีการศึกษา 2567 โดยใช้ข้อสอบภาษาเยอรมัน onSET ซึ่งพัฒนามาจากข้อสอบ C-Test ประกอบไปด้วยบทอ่านขนาดสั้น จำนวน 8 บทอ่าน ด้วยวิธีการให้ผู้ทำการทดสอบเติมคำในช่องว่าง บทอ่านละ 20 คำ รวมทั้งหมด 160 คำ องค์กร DAAD ประจำประเทศไทย ซึ่งเป็นองค์กรวิชาการแห่งประเทศเยอรมนี รับผิดชอบการประมวลผลคะแนนการทดสอบตามเกณฑ์ของ CEFR แห่งสหภาพยุโรป ผลการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลแสดงให้เห็นว่า ผู้มีสิทธิ์ในการเข้าร่วมชิงทุนที่ผ่านการทดสอบในระดับ B1 มีจำนวนทั้งหมด 2 คน คิดเป็นร้อยละ 22.22 กล่าวอีกนัยหนึ่งคือ ผู้สมัครสอบชิงทุนการศึกษาต้องมีความสามารถทางภาษาในระดับ B1 ขึ้นไป

ผลการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลยังแสดงให้เห็นว่า ในกลุ่มผู้ทำการทดสอบทั้งหมด มีผู้ทดสอบอีกจำนวน 4 คน คิดเป็นร้อยละ 44.44 ผ่านการทดสอบในระดับ A2 และมีผู้ทดสอบอีกจำนวน 3 คน ผ่านการทดสอบในระดับที่ต่ำกว่า A2 คิดเป็นร้อยละ 33.33 ผลการศึกษานี้ นำไปสู่ข้อเสนอแนะให้กับภาควิชาภาษาเยอรมัน มหาวิทยาลัยขอนแก่นว่า ควรปรับปรุงระดับความสามารถทางด้านภาษาของนักศึกษาให้อยู่ในระดับที่สูงขึ้น

**คำสำคัญ:** การเรียนการสอนภาษาเยอรมัน; ความสามารถทางภาษา

### Abstract

This article aims to 1) investigate the language proficiency for German language education in Thailand, 2) to study the test results of students majoring in German at Khon Kaen University in Thailand in the academic year 2024, and 3) to provide some suggestions for language instructors in relation to the language testing and teaching Based on the purposive sampling, nine highly proficient students from Khon Kaen University in Thailand (academic year 2024) participated in this study. As a screening test, the C-Test, specifically the onSET in this study, consisting of eight short reading texts, was used as a study tool. The test takers had to fill in twenty gaps for each reading text based on the Exact Word Scoring. Thus, there were a total of 160 scores. The data were collected and analyzed by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in Thailand and the results were examined in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It was found that two test-takers (22.22%) in this study achieved the language competency criteria of the B1 Level as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, causing them to be eligible for the scholarship application. In other words, candidates for this scholarship must be proficient in the German language at the B1 Level or higher. Among the other selected test takers, four students (44.44%) achieved the language competency at the A2 Level. Conversely, the statistical analysis also showed the number of the test participants (n = 3) who were categorized in the weakest category. These three

students achieved the level of under A2 (33.33%). Based on the results of this study, the German department at Khon Kaen University in Thailand should improve the level of language competence of students to a greater extent.

**Keywords:** German Language Education; Language Proficiency

## 1. Introduction

In order to develop students' proficiency to the fullest potential and prepare them to compete with graduates from other ASEAN and ASEAN Economic Community nations, it is crucial for language educators in Thailand to assess learners' language proficiency. However, language teachers do differ in language education in accordance with a distinct curriculum for each university when taking into account the situation of foreign language teaching in Thailand. This fact suggests that language teaching itself would benefit from motivated instructors, instructional materials, and evaluation techniques that are effective for all students. To increase educational standards at every level, the assessment system must be improved. For educational success, the testing and selection processes need to be considered, and the teaching strategies and methodologies will need to be changed to support the educational policy. Additionally, the learner should be able to analyze and synthesize for their future employment. In this regard, the curriculum should be updated in accordance with the demands of the individuals and groups involved in the job search process.

### *1.1 Purposes of the Study*

- 1) To investigate the language proficiency for German language education in Thailand
- 2) To study the test results of students majoring in German at Khon Kaen University in Thailand in the academic year 2024
- 3) To provide some suggestions for language instructors in relation to language testing and teaching

### *1.2 Delimitation and Limitation of this Study*

The proficiency level of students at one university cannot be compared to those at other universities due to the time constraints in this study. There may be some differences in the proficiency level among students across the nation.

### *1.3 Definitions of Terms*

The C-Test: A new format of cloze test procedure developed to resolve the problems of the conventional cloze. In this test, the second half of every second word is deleted, beginning from the second sentence.

Exact Word Method: Test-takers get a correct answer if the word they fill in the gaps of the test is the exact word that was deleted from the original text.

## **2. Review of the Literature**

According to Spolsky (2000), numerous research studies related to language tests have been conducted. Language testing has its own long tradition.

For the early years, before specialized journals appeared, it gives an excellent picture of the history of the field language testing in the United States. Later, it continued to appear a number of important articles especially on topics like prognosis and aptitude tests, the cloze test, oral testing ect.

(Spolsky, 2000, p. 537)

From this citation, one of the most important thing is the development of a new kind of tests. This probably reflects the interest in language testing.

According to Boonsathorn (1990), Raatz and Klein-Braley developed and suggested the c-test in relation to test development based on the idea of the cloze test in 1981. This new C-Test is a new language test to resolve the problems of the cloze test. In the C-Test, the second half of every second word is deleted, beginning with the second sentence. This test should have high reliability and validity.

(Boonsathorn, 1990, p. 48)

Example:

Many univer\_\_\_\_\_ have cant\_\_\_\_\_. There, stud\_\_\_\_\_ and emplo\_\_\_\_\_ have lun\_\_\_\_\_,  
drink cof\_\_\_\_\_ or simply ta\_\_\_\_\_.

*Key: Many universities have canteens. There, students and employees have lunch, drink coffee or simply talk.*

(Adapted from [www.onset.de](http://www.onset.de))

To support this notion, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in Thailand has been using the C-Test, specifically the onSET in this study, in order to evaluate students' general language proficiency for the scholarship grants in the Thai context. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) uses the test as part of the screening process. The scores have been collected and analyzed according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

#### *Importance of Language Testing and Evaluation for Language Education*

In the aspect of the role of testing and evaluation for language education, Jackson (2011) clarifies the role of assessment for language teaching to place an emphasis on this study as follows:

In order to determine whether students have reached the level of rigorous learning you are trying to help them reach and are ready to move to the next stage of rigorous learning, you need to include some form of ongoing assessment. These assessments may take traditional forms, such as quizzes and tests, or they may be somewhat less formal, such as homework or in-class assignments, projects, and papers completed during the independent practice phases of lessons.

(Jackson, 2011, p. 96)

Besides, Jackson (2011) illustrates that language educators should examine the proficiency of learners to lead them to appropriate teaching directions:

“Knowing where your students are going” is more than a matter of identifying a learning goal; it’s about moving beyond prescribed learning goals. It’s about you and your students reaching - and reaching for - something more. It’s about instruction that is richer and more meaningful. It’s about showing students how to think in flexible, robust ways that extend beyond the schoolhouse. It’s about exploring the possibilities of your curriculum rather than being confined by its limitations. It’s about giving students the education they deserve rather than the one prescribed for them.

(Jackson, 2011, p. 106)

Apart from the role of assessment, teaching foreign languages for specific purposes is very important to produce qualified graduates nowadays. In this regard, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) mention that as follows:

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has become a vital and innovative activity within the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language Movement (TEFL/TESL). For much of its early life ESP was dominated by the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP); most of the materials produced, the course descriptions written and the research carried out were in the area of EAP. English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) played an important but nevertheless smaller role. However, the massive expansion of international business has led to a huge growth in the area of English for Business Purposes (EBP).

(Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p. 6)

#### *German Language Testing in Thailand*

Watcharakaweesilp (2004) investigates the S1 - Test in Assessing General Language Proficiency of Non-Native Speakers in High School in the aspect of English and German. Seventy-five students from each regional school studying both English and German participated in this study. It was found that both the English S1-Test and German S1-Test can be used as a tool for general language proficiency of high school students. The statistical analysis reveals that the S1 - Test was more powerful in providing sufficient discrimination among subjects in contrast to the National University Entrance Examination and was reliable and valid enough to be used with high school students. The subjects' attitudes toward the S1-Test are at the satisfactory level. They agreed that both the English S1-Test and German S1-Test are good general language proficiency tests.

Watcharakaweesilp (2013) also conducts a research study on Südostasiatische Deutschstudierende und ihre Sprachkompetenz im Hinblick auf die Funktionsverbgefüge. Fourteen students from Thailand, thirty-three students from Vietnam, and thirteen students from Malaysia participated in this study.

The language competence of these students was investigated based on the designed test in the aspect of the grammatical topic in German language called Funktionsverbgefüge. The test consists of five parts. In addition, a questionnaire was also employed to examine their attitudes toward the test.

Additionally, Watcharakaweetilp (2014) examines the grammatical knowledge for the workplace of German majors at Khon Kaen University in the academic year 2014. Twenty-one students participated in this study. Purposively, the researcher constructed the test consisting of six grammatical topics to investigate the grammatical knowledge of students. In this study, it was recommended for further studies that the language competence of students among universities in Thailand and Southeast Asia should be compared to examine the difference of their knowledge level in order that German language educators in this region can improve students' language proficiency to their fullest potential.

These previous studies indicate that the development of language testing has a long history. The new evaluation techniques have been developed and numerous test formats have been approved to support the new policy of language education and the language testing purposes. In relation to evaluating the language proficiency, it is vital to study historical overview and the role of language testing for language education.

### 3. Scope of the Study

In Thailand, the scholarships for Thai students who study German language at the university level have been annually granted by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). So, this study is based on the results of the online testing process in which Thai students at Khon Kaen University had to achieve the expected and required level of language proficiency in order to receive their scholarship award for the following academic year. Evidently

and specifically, this study was conducted prior to the year in which the scholarships are annually granted.

#### 4. Methodology

##### 4.1 Participants

Nine students, majoring in German, in the third academic year of the year 2024 at Khon Kaen University in Thailand were purposively selected as research participants in this study based on their excellent grade points average, ranging from GPA 3.00 to 4.00.

##### 4.2 Instrument

The online C-Test, specifically the onSET in this study, consisting of eight short reading texts, developed by an German organization called Gesellschaft für Akademische Studienvorbereitung und Testentwicklung e. V. (See <https://www.onset.de/en/language-placement-test-english-onset/institutions/>), was used. Each reading text has 20 gaps to fill in.

##### 4.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis

In November 2024, the students' scores were collected. While administering the test, students have only five minutes to complete all the deleted words of each text. So, the total possible scores are 160.

The total points of students were analyzed according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and according to the differentiation of the CEFR levels.

For this reason of scholarship grant, the total score is assigned to one of the following CEFR levels: A2, B1, B2 or C1 or higher. In this regard, the basic tentative criteria are set as follows:

A2 / 46-51 points

B1 / 74-79 points

B2 / 106-111 points

C1 / 135-140 points

## 5. Analyzing the Test Results

As mentioned earlier, the scholarships are annually granted for Thai students to take the German summer courses at universities in Germany. Hence, the test has been administered as a screening test for the candidates.

In this part, the language proficiency of students in the academic year 2024 (n=9) at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University in Thailand was examined. In this regard, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in Thailand as a globally recognized organization assessed the general language proficiency of students for the scholarship grant. These are the results:

| <i>Level</i> | <i>Number of Test-Takers</i> | <i>Percentage Points</i> |
|--------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| B1           | 2                            | 22.22%                   |
| A2           | 4                            | 44.44%                   |
| under A2     | 3                            | 33.33%                   |

**Note:** Due to the *Confidentiality Policy*, the researcher cannot reveal the total scores of these nine test-takers. However, criteria of the language proficiency are set as the following: A2 / 46-51 scores, B1 / 74-79 scores, B2 / 106-111 scores, C1 / 135-140 scores, as mentioned in the part of data analysis.

Among the test-takers in this study, it was found that two students are eligible for the scholarship application as the minimum requirement in terms of the language proficiency is the B1 Level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. In other words, those who wish to apply for this scholarship must possess at least the B1 Level.

Conversely, the statistical analysis also indicates the number of unsuccessful test-takers. The language proficiency of seven students is at the lower level than B1. Four students have the language proficiency at A2 Level (44.44%), and three students are respectively categorized in the weakest group, namely at the level of *under A2* (33.33%).

This leads to further discussion that the German department at Khon Kaen University in Thailand should improve the level of language competence of students to a greater extent. In this regard, this online test, specifically the onSET in this study, may be applied in the following teaching aspects: 1) It may be used as a supplementary learning material for promoting vocabulary growth and for the development of vocabulary acquisition of students; 2) It may be used to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the students in class; and 3) It may be used as a part of the final examination to investigate the general language proficiency of the students.

The use of this online test for assessing the general language proficiency of students in this study can be viewed as a follow-up research study to expand the field of language testing in Thailand and the findings of this study demonstrate the language proficiency of the learners to a certain extent. However, it has left the researcher with some questions for further study and subsequent investigations as the following:

Due to the limitation of time in this study, how can the proficiency of students in one university be compared with that of students in the other university? The level of language proficiency of students throughout the country may have discrepancy to a certain extent.

The results found in this study are different from the academic year 2023. To further discuss, this study can be more meaningful if the results in the next academic year 2025 can be compared to investigate the trend of the language competence of students.

Apart from this, it may be possible to use this online test for measuring language proficiency in terms of teaching foreign languages for specific purposes based on the notion of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). According to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), English for Specific Purposes has become a vital and innovative activity within the Teaching of English as a foreign language movement (TEFL/TESL). For much of its early life, ESP was dominated by the teaching of English for academic purposes (EAP); most of the materials produced, the course descriptions written and the research carried out were in the area of EAP. English for occupational purposes (EOP) played an important but nevertheless smaller role. In recent years, however, the massive expansion of international business has led to a huge growth in the area of English for Business Purposes or EBP (cited in Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

They also state that it is important that instructors should consider social, economic, cultural and linguistic consequences of the global spread of English. English language educators also need to be aware of this inequality and to consider how they can challenge it by promoting curricula concerning Business English that allows all learners the opportunity to critically think about their environment, express their own views and identity in addition to the specific language patterns necessary for business communication. Class instructor, as researcher or evaluator, may use the c-test in class if he or she wishes to test the skills of learners. In relation to ESP practitioner as teacher and materials provider, class instructor may use it as teaching material.

In addition, Lafond, Vine & Welch (2010) place an emphasis on Negotiating and International Negotiations when teaching foreign languages for business communication.

After considering these statements, the situation of teaching German for specific purposes is also crucial when compared to English for specific purposes. Furthermore, designing the c-test for teaching a foreign language in the business context can be challenging, purposive and meaningful for language educators.

Additionally, this online test may be used as a *Language Dominant Test* to assess the potentially bilingual children in the both languages they have been exposed to in order to see which their stronger or dominant language is.

For those who can speak both German and English, this online test can be used to conduct a study on language transfer. According to Hufeisen (2010), English as L2 can affect L3 learning. Learners may transfer the previously gained knowledge and relate their learning styles, experience, obstacles or problems to their L3 Learning to acquire the third language effectively and efficiently.

To support this notion, Watcharakaweesilp (2016) conducts a pilot study using the tests in both languages (Test of English for Negotiation and Test of German for Negotiation) to investigate the competence of Thai learners. The researcher purposively selected the topic Language for Negotiation, specifically Negotiating English and German, and designed the tests in both languages (Test of English for Negotiation and Test of German for Negotiation) to investigate the competence of Thai learners. In his study, the research participants were Twenty German Majors in the last academic year (2016) at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University in Thailand.

Based on this kind of comparative study between the two languages in terms of qualitative data, students may correctly compare words, collocations, and expressions of English with German. Or they could relate their syntactical knowledge of L2 to L3. Hence, this online test may measure competencies of language, such as morphology, lexicon, syntax etc. As a result, it may be employed as an integrative Test.

Finally, this online test may be used with students on the purpose of screening tests or the high stakes tests; for example, those who are applying for a scholarship in other fields apart from language education.

## 6. Conclusion and Discussion

Language testing has its own long tradition. From the language testing historical overview, the evolution of language testing has a long history, the new evaluation techniques have been developed and numerous test formats have been approved to support the new policy of language education and the language testing purposes. As a result, new teaching strategies and research methodologies that are related to the idea of teaching foreign languages for assessing learners' proficiency should be studied.

The research findings revealed that the online test in this study was reliable and valid to be used as a screening test for the process of the scholarship application to indicate the satisfactory level of language proficiency of Thai students.

In this regard, validity is an evaluation of the adequacy and appropriateness of interpretations and uses of assessment results in terms of valid language testing. According to Linn and Gronlund (2000), if an assessment is used to describe student achievement, language educators should be able to interpret the scores as a relevant and representative sample of the achievement domain to be measured, (cited in Linn and Gronlund, 2000, p. 108). Thus, it can be concluded that the findings of this study demonstrate the language proficiency of the learners to a certain extent to allow German language educators to evaluate the proficiency of learners at their own universities.

Linn and Gronlund (2000) also mention that reliability, the consistency of assessment results, is a crucial for evaluating the proficiency. The results may have a degree of reliability from one occasion to another if test takers obtain similar scores when the same test is used with the students on different

occasions. This notion leads to further discussion that it has left the researcher with some questions for future study and subsequent investigations as in the following: 1) The study can be more meaningful if the results in the other academic years can be compared to investigate the trends of the language competence of students; 2) Due to the limitation of time in this study, how can the proficiencies of students in one university be compared with that of students in other universities? The level of language proficiency of students throughout the country may have discrepancies to a certain extent.

## 7. Recommendations for Further Studies

### *7.1 Recommendations in Terms of Using the Test Results for Appropriate Directions of Teaching*

As a matter of fact, the curriculums in Thai universities have to be revised every five years to keep up with the new happenings emerging in societies. Test results in this study can be used to further develop a new language curriculum for foreign language teaching in Thailand to serve the requirements of the workplace in the changing and dynamic society.

Analyzing the test results will enable language educators to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of learners to foster and develop their competence to their fullest potential to enable them to compete with graduates from other countries in ASEAN and the ASEAN Economic Community. In terms of language pedagogy, the test results may also be applied to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the students in class as mentioned by Jackson (2011) in the part of literature review that language educators should give students the education they deserve rather than the one prescribed for them, show students how to think in flexible ways and explore the possibilities of the curriculum rather than being confined by its limitations. In other words, analyzing the test results can lead them to appropriate teaching directions for the better contexts of language education.

### *7.2 Recommendations for a Comparative Study between English and German*

According to Watcharakaweetilp (2015), it could be useful if German courses are taught in class in comparison with English perspectives for occupational purposes. This would be beneficial for them if the instructor could impart his or her knowledge of and fluency in the two business vocabulary of the two languages as both English and German are required for their job application. (Watcharakaweetilp, 2015, p. 292)

Having considered these statements, the situation of teaching German for specific purposes is also crucial when compared to English for specific purposes based on the notion of Dudley-Evans and St John (1998). Furthermore, designing the test for teaching a foreign language in the business context can be challenging, purposive and meaningful for language educators.

For those who are bilingual in German and English, the test may be further used to examine the language transfer and to investigate their stronger or dominant language. According to Hufeisen (2010), learning German (L3) might be impacted by English as an L2. To effectively and quickly learn a third language, learners can apply previously acquired knowledge and relate their learning preferences, experiences, challenges, or problems to their L3 learning.

Thus, the following tests are suggested in terms of a comparative study between English and German for specific purposes, specifically for business purposes:

#### *Test 1: Matching*

*Please match the phrases in English with their comparable ones in German and underline the keyword(s) that help you find the answers.*

- a) Sie wissen, es geht um die Zahlungsbedingungen.
- b) Zwecks Unterschriftsleistung unseres Vertrags möchte ich mit Ihnen diesen Termin vereinbaren.
- c) Ich würde Ihnen den Termin unserer Vereinbarung bestätigen.

- 1) It's about terms of payment.
- 2) I'd like to arrange this meeting to discuss our contract to be signed.
- 3) I'd like to confirm the meeting for our negotiation.

( Key: 1 = a / 2 = b / 3= c )

*Test 2: Comparable Words between the two languages*

2.1 English: Will you give us a 10% discount?

German: Würden Sie uns ..... von 10% .....?

(Key: einen Rabatt geben)

2.2 English: If you ..... today, I will agree to that.

German: Wenn Sie heute den Vertrag unterschreiben, wäre ich mit den Zahlungsbedingungen einverstanden.

(Key: sign the contract)

(Watcharakaweesilp, 2022, pp. 144-169)

Students are supposed to expand the knowledge in relation to a comparison of the two languages while doing this test. They can appropriately compare words, collocations, and expressions in English and German based on the concept of a comparative study. Alternately, their syntactical knowledge gained in their L2 can be also applied in their L3 learning. Therefore, creating this type of integrative test may assess linguistic abilities such as morphology, lexicon, syntax, ect.

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