

HUNGARIAN 6TH AND 8TH GRADERS' PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH AND GERMAN AT DUAL-LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

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Dual-language education, a form of intensive foreign language (FL) programs integrating content and language at secondary schools, has been around since 1987 in Hungary; however, few empirical studies have compared how it impacts students' development in FLs and the subjects they study in them (but see *Vámos*, 2007; and *A nemzeti idegennyelv-oktatás fejlesztésének stratégiája az általános iskolától a diplomáig: Fehér könyv 2012–2018*, 2012, p. 18). Dual-language schools have recently mushroomed; the number of primary schools doubled between 2002 and 2012 (*A nemzeti ...* p.13); therefore, decision-makers introduced quality control measures. A ministry decree (*Az emberi erőforrások minisztere 4/2013. (I. 11.) EMMI rendelete a két tanítási nyelvű iskolai oktatás irányelvének kiadásáról*, 2013, p.609) defined what CEFR levels students are expected to achieve: A2 and B1 by the end of years 6 and 8, respectively. Unless 60% of the students achieve these levels, the schools must discontinue their dual-language program. To put the rules into practice, annual high-stakes testing was introduced. The aim of the project was to assess the proficiency levels of 2,911 6th and 8th graders at 81 institutions in English and German in June 2014 in order to establish how many of the students achieved the required levels. The measuring instruments developed for the project assessed students' communicative competences (*Alderson, Clapham & Wall*, 1995; *Bachman & Palmer*, 2010; *McKay*, 2006) in listening and reading comprehension and writing in line with curricular requirements (*Nikolov*, 2011); decision makers excluded speaking. Tests were administered and scored locally by the students' teachers. Nearly 90% of the sixth-graders learning English achieved A2 level; 71% of their peers learning German did so. As for eighth-graders, at B1 level the results are 91.2% and 85.6%, respectively. The ratios are higher at B1 level than at A2 level; differences are minimal in English. In German, year 6 students' difference is close to 15% lower than that of 8th graders. The difference between the two years in German is significant ($p \leq .001$). Comparing the results for years 6 and 8 in the two languages, the differences are significant ($p \leq .001$): English learners performed significantly better than their peers learning German in both years. Differences between English and German scores were significant ($p \leq .001$) in the 3 skills except for reading at B1 level. The results seem to provide evidence that dual-language programs ensure that the majority of learners achieve the required levels. However, a word of warning is needed about the reliability of the results, since the students' own teachers were responsible for administering the tests and assessing their writing tasks. Further research is needed to compare results to traditional FL programs in order to find out to what extent outcomes are due to intensive FL learning and not content learning in the FL or to students' individual differences.

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