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The Military Language Examinations in the standard system of the Common
European Framework of Reference for Languages

a summary of the thesis

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THE SUBJECT OF RESEARCH

This thesis presents the European efforts directed towards the establishment of a standardised system in the field of language assessment and evaluation. It also examines the effects of these attempts on the language testing system of Hungary with special emphasis on the specialized military language examinations.

The thesis also introduces and explores the process which will ensure that the specialized military language examinations can become part of a transparent and standardized European testing system.

THE TOPICALITY OF THE SUBJECT

Increasing integration in Europe and strengthening globalization in the world will render foreign language knowledge more and more significant in the future. Hungary can only be an effective participant in international political, military, economic and cultural organisations if it possesses a sufficient number of experts with advanced proficiency in foreign languages.

In the European Union and indeed throughout the whole world language examinations are the most accepted tools for assessing and evaluating language knowledge. It is of fundamental importance for Hungary to be capable of meeting the international requirements and norms and of possessing language assessing and evaluating systems which facilitate the mobility of our citizens and the further international integration of our country.

The document entitled *Human Strategy for the Establishment of a Professional Military Force 2003-2013*, which outlines future objectives for the Hungarian Home Defence Forces underscores the fact that it is necessary to the establish a NATO and EU conform professional system of requirements which is compatible with the national public service system. Obviously, these objectives involve the harmonization of the military language examinations used for the assessment and evaluation of the language proficiency of the personnel with the standardized European norms.

The European Union and the Council of Europe seek to establish the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as a standardized basis for assessing and evaluating language knowledge in the member states. It is essential that the Hungarian language examination systems, including the specialized military language

examination systems, should be harmonized with the proficiency levels, categories and criteria of the CEFR.

In the forthcoming years the CEFR is increasingly expected to influence both language teaching and language testing in all member states of the Union. Therefore its applicability in the local systems should be continuously studied.

THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

1. On the basis of the available documents I planned to prove the fact that the European Union and the Council of Europe are seeking to establish transparency of the European language examinations and certificates and also intended to examine and highlight the most significant programmes and projects of the two institutions in this field.
2. I planned to study and record the fundamental changes which occurred in the language testing system of Hungary in the last six decades.
3. I intended to analyse and summarize the most essential categories and criteria of the military language examination systems in the conceptual system of the CEFR.
4. I intended to examine and describe the process which facilitates the linking of the military language examinations to the CEFR.
5. I planned to uncover the problematic points of the military language examination systems and also I intended to propose several recommendations for changes.

RESEARCH METHODS

- I have studied the Hungarian and international specialized professional literature on language testing.
- On the basis of the available documents of the European Union and the Council of Europe I have examined the most recent programmes and projects of the two institutions related to language testing.
- I have studied the CEFR with special regard to its proficiency level descriptions, its approach to language use and learning and its applicability in language testing.

- On the basis of the governmental and ministerial decrees and other available documents I have examined and analysed the main periods and characteristics of language testing in Hungary between the 1950s and the present day.
- I have explored the characteristics of specialized language examination systems and outlined the most important requirements that these examinations are supposed to meet.
- I have examined and analysed some of the statistical data of the military language examination systems available in the Testing Centre of Miklós Zrínyi National Defence University.
- On the basis of my experience in the field of military language testing I made several recommendations for the improvement and modernization of the military language examinations.

THE OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The thesis begins with the **introduction** which outlines the subject of research, the topicality of the subject, the main objectives and the methods of the research work.

Chapter 1 presents the education policy and the language education policy of the European Union and the Council of Europe and introduces the most important statements and efforts of the Union in the field of language testing. This chapter also familiarizes the reader with the two recent developments of the Council of Europe: the European Language Portfolio and the CEFR.

Chapter 2 outlines the periods and the characteristics of language testing in Hungary between the 1950s and the present day and introduces and analyses some statistical data related to the accredited language examination systems of Hungary.

Chapter 3 focuses on the specialized language examination systems and details their characteristics. This chapter also introduces the Language Testing Centre of Miklós Zrínyi National Defence University, where military language testing is exclusively conducted in Hungary.

Chapter 4 outlines the process of relating the military language examination systems to the CEFR and highlights the role of the Council of Europe in this process.

Chapter 5 addresses the possibilities for the modernization and improvement of the military language examination systems and it also provides several recommendations for the future.

At the **end** of the thesis I summarize the accomplishments of the research work, draw several conclusions and produce recommendations for the future applicability of the thesis.

The thesis ends with the bibliography, a list of my publications and the appendixes.

THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH WORK

1. On the basis of the available documents of the European Union and the Council of Europe I have proved that the two institutions seek to establish transparency of the European language examinations and certificates. I have examined and highlighted the most significant programmes and projects of the two institutions with especial regard to those which directly affect language testing in Hungary.
2. I have studied and recorded the fundamental changes which occurred in the language testing system of Hungary in the last six decades. I have examined the process in which from the inflexible, strongly centralized testing system of the fifties we gradually arrived at a more flexible, decentralized system which involves several different accredited language testing systems.
3. I have analysed and summarized the most essential categories and criteria of the military language examination systems in the conceptual system of the CEFR, which will contribute to achieving higher transparency of the military language examination systems throughout Europe.
4. I have examined and described the process which facilitates the linking of the military language examinations to the CEFR; this will also enable the linking of the military language examination systems to other language examination system(s) in the future.
5. I have uncovered the problematic points of the military language examination systems which should be amended in the future if harmonization of the European and Hungarian military language education and language testing are to be achieved. I have proposed several recommendations for the changes.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE APPLICABILITY OF THE THESIS

It is to be hoped that the thesis will contribute to the establishment of greater transparency in military language testing and to the improvement of both the test development process and the standard of language testing. It may also facilitate examiner training and help language teachers with the preparation of their students for the language examinations. The thesis can provide a basis for further research related to military language testing and can be useful for the officials or decision makers of the Hungarian Armed Forces who oversee the language training within the military and establish the objectives regarding the language proficiency level of the personnel.

