

# **SIGMA Scientific Committee on Languages**

## **LANGUAGE STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN GERMANY**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. The linguistic situation**

There is only one official language in the Federal Republic of Germany: German.

While written German is defined by rather strict regulations, there is a wide range of spoken varieties due to dialects which are still being used in most regions.

In contrast to the German-speaking areas of Switzerland, where we generally find various Alemannic dialects, with a more notable gap between written German and local spoken varieties than among the dialects, southern and northern dialects in Germany differ significantly.

Because of this special situation Germans who leaves their native area are forced to bring their particular mode of expression more into line with written German if they want to make themselves understood. For this reason, dialects are almost nonexistent on the radio and on television.

The fact that many Germans use a dialect and at the same time an oral code, which is fairly close to the written standard, has caused a certain softening of the standards, since schools - mostly for social reasons - increasingly hesitate to exclude every breach of the rules. From this situation results a new set of regional linguistic amalgams, which render the 'correct' written style inaccessible to all those whose education does not surpass a certain level, or who are learning German as a second language, beginning with the oral code.

This is not an unimportant factor considering that in 1991, there were 5.5million foreigners registered on the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany, i.e., the territory before the reunification (cf. BMBW: "Grund- und Strukturdaten 1993/94", p. 12-13). In fact, bilingualism is quite widely spread outside of the small, traditional Sorbian, Danish, or other minorities. Beside a vast number of Italian, Spanish, Turkish and Greek immigrants, there are people of German origin who have been repatriated from Eastern countries, and who often master Russian, Polish, or Romanian better than German, which many of them cannot write.

#### **1.2 The structure of higher education**

The educational system provides, apart from primary school, two basic pathways in the secondary sector. One of them comprises six years and targets children between ten and sixteen years of age; the other one correspondingly addresses young people between sixteen and nineteen. NB: in certain lands ('Länder') of the FRG, on the territory of the former GDR, secondary education comprises only eight years.

Where programmes are concerned, however, there is a large number of options between the two basic 'pillars' of secondary education: secondary schools on the one hand and vocational schools on the other (cf. my table which was compiled for a brochure by H. Peisert and Gerhild Framheim, published by the Federal Ministry of Education and Sciences, *L'enseignement supérieur en Allemagne*, Bonn 1994, p. 33).

As regards higher education, we distinguish between two types of institutions: those which require the A-Level General Certificate of Education ('Abitur') and nine years of secondary study for admission (that is true for universities, 'Gesamthochschulen', and Higher Education Institutions for Education, Theology, and Art), and the 'Fachhochschulen', for the entry of which eight years of secondary education are sufficient.

The 'Fachhochschulen' were created in 1970 and have experienced an impressive growth ever since that date. They are less research-oriented than universities and other Higher Education Institutions. The courses of study are usually shorter. Not so much based on theoretical reflection, they offer a manner of training which takes into consideration possible ways of applying the acquired knowledge and skills in professional life.

In 1992, the subdivision of students according to subjects in different types of institutions was as follows:

**Table 2: Subdivision of students according to types of institutions and subject groups, 1992**

Groups of disciplines	Universities (incl. GH, Institutions for Ed. and Theol.)	Art Colleges	Fachhochschulen (incl. administr. FH)	Total		
				'Old' Länder	Ex-GDR	Germany
	(1,378,400)	(29,000)	(419,700)	(1,685,200)	(142,000)	(1,827,200)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Languages/Culture/Sports	27.5	0.4	1.3	21.3	19.1	21.1
Law/Economics/Sociology	26.2	3.6	37.7	29.0	22.1	28.5
Mathematics/Natural Sciences	19.5	-	6.6	16.4	13.6	16.2
Medicine	8.5	-	-	6.1	9.9	6.4
Agriculture/Forestry / Dietetics	1.9	-	2.9	2.1	3.1	2.1
Engineering	13.7	6.1	48.3	21.0	27.2	21.5
Fine Arts/Art Studies	2.7	89.9	3.2	4.1	5.0	4.2
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100	100
Teacher Training (in % of the above)	13.8	14.5	-	10.1	17.2	10.6

(H. Peisert/G. Framheim, op.cit., p.38)

Apart from this fundamental division, the characteristics of the Higher Education system in Germany are essentially the following:

- (i) Education is public and free of charge
- (ii) There are no recruiting competitions
- (iii) The average age of entry for German students is higher than the results found for other countries in the European Union.

Age of first-year students	Universities			Fachhochschulen		
	Total (141,400) %	Men (78,900) %	Women (62,500) %	Total (63,800) %	Men (42,700) %	Women (21,100) %
20 years and below	45	35	58	20	14	33
21-22 years	32	41	20	30	32	25
23-24 years	13	15	10	25	29	17
25 years and more	10	9	12	25	25	25
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Average age in years:						
First-year students	21.6	21.7	21.4	23.2	23.4	22.8
Students	25.8	26.1	25.5	25.4	25.6	24.8
Graduating students 1991	28.8			27.3		

**Table 3: Age of first-year students according to types of institutions and sex ('old' FRG, 1991)** (H.Peisert/G. Framheim, op.cit., p.102)

(iv) In most disciplines, students are quite independent in their choice of classes and the organization of their studies. Mostly there are only two major obstacles to overcome: an intermediate exam in the middle of the course of study, and a final one at the end.

(v) To graduate, a thesis is compulsory in the majority of courses. This is usually based on research work which, in most cases, the student has prepared some time in advance. The student does this all the more readily as the mark that is obtained, and the subject that is treated count substantially toward the final results and influence the candidate's professional future.

(vi) Although the Study Reform Commissions have decided that university courses should last four to five years at most - four e.g. for Literature and Languages, five for Architecture - and that courses at 'Fachhochschulen' should take no longer than six to seven semesters, the actual duration surpasses these figures by far. As is shown in Table 4, students at the 'Fachhochschulen' exceed the provided period by 25-38%. These figures are even higher for the universities, where they rank from 29% for Dentistry, for example, to 74% in Languages and Literature!

This is why the actual average duration of study in 1991 was between 7.3 and 8.1 years for university courses in English or Romance Languages, and 5.0 to 5.3 years at the 'Fachhochschule'.

Structure and duration of studies in semesters and/or hours per week added for all semesters (HPW; in brackets), 1985						Actual duration of study	
Study reform commission	Duration of actual training in semesters and HPW	Duration of final exams	Pre-set duration of studies	Practical professional training	Total duration of training <b>1)</b>	a) Duration of specialized studies	b) Total duration of studies
1. Dentistry	10	1 (-)	11	-	11	12.0	14.2
2. Chemistry							
a) University	8 (240)	2 (6 months)	10	-	10	12.8	13.2
b) FH	7 (200)	(3 months)	7	1	8	9.2	10.0
3. Economics	8 (140)	(4 months)	8	-	8	11.3	13.2

a) University b) FH	6 (120)	(3 months)	6	1	7	8.4	10.0
4. Architecture a) University b) FH	8 (140) 6 (120)	1 (10-20 wks) 1 (3 months)	11 9	1 1	12 10	14.2 11.4	16.0 12.4
5. Land surveying	8 (168)	1 (4-6 mths)	9	1	10		
6. Civil Engineering a) University b) FH	9 (190) 6 (168)	1 (2 months) 1 (6-8 weeks)	10 7	1 2	10 8 or 9	14.0 9.8	14.8 10.8
7. Languages/ Literature	8 (160)	1 (6 months)	9	-	9	12.4-13.8	14.6-15.6
8. Education/ social educ./ social work <b>2)</b> a) University b) FH	8 (160) 6 (116)	1 (6 months) (3 months)	9 6	1 1	10 7	12.8 8.2	17.2 9.6
9. Biology	8 (200-220)	2 (9 months)	10	-	10	13.2	14.2
10. Psychology	8 (156)	1 (6 months)	9	1	10	13.8	17.0
11. Political Science/ Sociology <b>2)</b>	8 (160)	1 (6 months)	9	-	9	13.2	15.4
12. History <b>2)</b>	8 (160)	1 (6 months)	9	-	9	13.6	15.6
13. Geography <b>2)</b>	8 (169)	1 (6 months)	9	-	9	13.8	15.2
14. Engin. Draftsm. <b>2)</b> a) University b) FH	8 (160/174) 6 (170)	1 (3 months) (3 months)	9 6	- 1	9 7	13.2 9.2	14.0 10.0
15. Electrical Engin. <b>2)</b> a) University b) FH	8 (175) 6 (150-170)	1 (6 months) (3 months)	9 6	1 2	10 8	13.0 9.4	13.4 10.0
<b>1)</b> This does not include practical sections of the course completed before the beginning of the studies and sections after the first degree, which count toward the professional qualification. <b>2)</b> Pre-project results on which recommendations were based.						a) specialized semesters only b) complete training semesters, exp. duration of final exams included	

**Table 4: Structure and duration of studies as recommended by 15 commissions for the reform of actual studies** (H. Peisert/G.Franheim, op.cit., p.93)

**Table 5: Average duration of studies in 1991 ('old' FRG)**

Average duration of studies when degree indicated below is taken									
Areas of Studies/Subjects	University degree and corresponding degrees			Staatsexamen Gymnasium Sek.II (GCE A-Level)			Diploma (Fachhochschule)		
	Abs	HS	FS	Abs	HS	FS	Abs	HS	FS
Languages and humanities	8.0	7.5	6.6	8.0	7.8	7.1	4.6	4.4	3.7
- Protestant Theology and Religious Studies	9.0	8.3	7.4	8.2	7.8	7.3	4.6	4.5	3.9
- Catholic Theology and Religious Studies	7.1	6.6	6.1	8.0	7.7	7.1	4.1	4.0	3.6
- History	7.8	7.5	6.8	8.0	7.8	7.3	-	-	-
- German Studies	7.8	7.5	6.9	7.9	7.7	7.1	-	-	-
- English Studies	7.3	7.1	6.3	8.1	7.8	7.0	5.3	5.1	4.6
- Romance Studies	7.5	7.3	6.2	8.0	7.8	6.8	5.0	4.9	4.3
- Educational Studies	8.6	7.8	6.4	10.0	8.5	8.2	-	-	-
- Psychology	8.5	8.0	6.9	-	-	-	-	-	-
Law, Economics, and Social Sciences	6.6	6.5	6.0	8.7	8.3	7.4	4.3	4.1	3.7

- Political and Social Sciences	7.7	7.4	6.6	8.8	8.4	7.4	4.3	4.1	3.7
- Economics	6.4	6.3	5.9	7.6	7.3	6.9	4.8	4.6	4.2
- Industrial Engineering	7.2	7.1	6.3	-	-	-	6.2	5.8	3.8
- Administrative Studies	7.2	7.1	4.9	-	-	-	3.1	3.1	2.9
- Social Economics	7.6	7.1	6.0	-	-	-	4.8	4.6	4.1
- Law	-	-	-	17.2	14.7	10.7	3.4	3.4	3.2
Mathematics, Natural Sciences	7.1	7.0	6.7	8.0	7.8	7.1	5.2	5.1	4.5
- Mathematics	7.3	7.2	6.9	7.9	7.6	7.0	5.2	5.2	4.5
- Physics, Astronomy	6.9	6.9	6.6	8.1	8.0	6.9	5.6	5.6	5.1
- Chemistry	6.6	6.5	6.4	7.8	7.7	7.1	5.0	4.9	4.6
- Biology	7.1	7.0	6.6	8.1	8.0	7.3	5.0	5.0	4.7
- Geography	7.6	7.5	6.9	8.3	8.1	7.5	-	-	-
- Pharmacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
- Computer Studies	-	-	-	-	-	-	5.3	5.1	4.5
Engineering Sciences	7.1	7.0	6.7	-	-	-	5.2	5.1	4.8
- Mechanical Engineering	7.0	6.9	6.6	-	-	-	5.0	5.0	4.6
- Electr. Engineering	6.7	6.7	6.5	-	-	-	5.0	5.0	4.7
- Architecture	8.0	7.8	7.1	-	-	-	6.2	6.1	5.7
- Construction Engin.	7.4	7.4	7.0	-	-	-	5.4	5.3	4.9
Medicine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dentistry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Veterinary Medicine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Agriculture, Forestry, Dietetics	6.3	6.2	5.6	-	-	-	4.7	4.6	4.2
Art	7.3	7.1	6.2	7.7	7.5	6.5	5.5	5.4	4.9
Total	7.1	6.9	6.4	8.0	7.8	7.1	4.8	4.6	4.2
1990 results by comp.	7.1	6.9	6.4	7.9	7.7	7.1	4.7	4.6	4.2

(BMBW: "Grund- und Strukturdaten 1993/94", p. 222 f.)

(vii) Taking the student's comparatively mature age and the course's actual duration into account, the German student, whose studies will in most cases not be terminated before the age of 25, and quite possibly considerably later, is not always a full-time student either.

Students who are eligible for a grant from the state, which they will receive only for a limited period of time, are forced to work during the university holidays and often even during the term when they are not supported any longer. Others do the same because they prefer renting their own room or small flat to living with their parents any longer.

**Table 6: Sources from which students finance their needs, 1991**

Financial source	Percentage of students who use this source		Portion of living costs covered by this source 1)	
	'Old' FRG %	Former GDR %	'Old' FRG %	Former GDR %
Parents	69	58	46 (b)	23 (b)
Paid work	66	23	26	6
BAföG funds	28	88	17	60
Saved money	20	25	(c)	(c)
Relatives/friends	14	11	(c)	(c)
Consort/partners	5	9	(c)	(c)
Insurance support/ orphan's pension	4	5	(c)	(c)
Stipends	3	0.6	(c)	(c)
Loans (excluding BAföG)	1.5	0.8	(c)	(c)
Others	6	5	11	11

Total	217 (a)	225 (a)	100	100
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1) average students only; (a) more than 100%, because these two columns feature more than one contributing source; (b) this includes payments in kind, such as accommodation, clothes etc.; (c) included in 'Others' Source: 13th social survey: cf. Schnitzler et al. 1992, p. 178, 196. (H. Peisert/G.Framheim, op. cit., p.110)

(viii) Traditionally, German students tend to be mobile. In the area of Language Studies, it is not unusual to change from one university to another within the country once or twice, and stipends to spend a part of one's studies abroad are frequently demanded.

In 1990, 34,850 out of a total of 1,822,013 German students had spent some time abroad, if official statistics are to be believed. Without doubt, these figures give a distorted image of reality, as a large number of those who are taking courses in Languages spend a year abroad before enrolling at the university. Moreover, 62.3% out of 3,931 students in 1988 and 59.5% of 5,682 students registered in 1991 who had chosen France were from Languages, Sports Studies, and Humanities - a remarkable phenomenon which is illustrated in the following table. Finally, it should suffice to remember the average duration of study in Languages in order to explain the fact that these numbers must be multiplied by five or six, which produces results that reflect the importance a study period abroad has in language training.

In the light of these thoughts and the characteristics young Germans display concerning university studies, the following table on studies abroad completed by students who graduated in 1991 (that is, in the 'Länder' of the FRG before the reunification) can be conveniently interpreted:

**Table 7: German students abroad: typical countries they choose, divided according to subject areas, for the years 1987 - 1991 ('old' FRG territory)**

European Community members	Year	Number of students	Languages, Humanities, Sports %	Law, Econ., Social Sciences %	Mathematics, Natural Sciences %	Medic. %	Agri-culture, Forest., Dietet. %	Engin. Sc. %	Art %	No subject given %
Belgium	1987	345	22.6	20.9	7.5	43.2	1.7	2.3	-	1.7
	1988	337	20.2	24.6	8.3	41.2	1.2	2.1	-	2.4
	1989	336	21.4	26.5	8.6	39.0	1.2	1.2	-	2.1
	1991	322	28.3	25.2	8.7	34.2	0.9	1.2	-	1.6
Denmark	1987	320	38.8	19.4	10.9	12.5	1.3	14.1	3.1	-
	1989	416	38.5	22.4	12.3	9.9	0.7	12.3	3.6	0.5
	1990	526	40.9	24.0	9.7	8.0	1.0	12.2	5.0	0.4
	1991	611	42.7	22.7	15.1	6.7	1.5	6.4	3.9	1.0
France	1988	3,931	62.3	15.8	10.1	7.1	-	-	-	4.7
	1989	4,834	58.9	19.4	13.7	6.7	-	-	-	1.3
	1991	5,682	59.5	19.4	14.0	5.5	-	-	-	1.6
Italy	1986	1,828	11.9	6.8	4.6	68.4	0.5	6.1	-	1.6
	1987	1,828	11.9	6.8	4.6	68.4	0.5	6.1	-	1.6
	1990	1,591	21.4	17.0	6.2	39.9	0.6	9.6	-	5.2
Netherlands	1987	847	32.3	15.7	9.7	20.8	2.7	15.6	3.2	-
	1991	693	7.1	38.1	6.1	12.6	3.0	11.7	21.5	-
Other countries										
Canada	1988	1,262	25.5	17.7	12.0	4.0	2.9	6.3	4.8	26.9
	1990	1,373	22.7	22.2	7.0	5.7	6.6	6.0	3.9	25.9
	1991	1,450	13.9	19.5	11.6	7.6	6.1	2.9	3.8	34.6
Austria	1988	4,899	24.4	16.8	7.3	11.0	1.2	6.8	23.7	8.8
	1989	5,042	23.3	18.4	6.8	10.2	1.1	7.1	23.8	9.4
	1990	5,139	25.6	18.4	7.2	10.0	1.8	10.2	23.6	3.2
	1991	5,307	32.1	20.2	7.9	9.0	1.4	11.1	16.9	0.3

Romania	1986	423	-	-	-	92.2	1.7	1.4	0.5	4.3
	1987	388	-	0.5	-	94.6	1.5	1.8	0.8	0.8
	1990	351	-	0.3	-	87.2	-	6.8	1.4	4.3
Switzerland	1989	3,717	23.8	39.5	21.9	4.1	0.6	8.0	2.1	0.0
	1990	4,025	23.0	39.5	23.6	3.7	0.6	7.6	2.1	-
	1991	4,303	22.0	40.0	24.1	3.6	0.6	7.6	2.1	0.1
Hungary	1987	411	-	0.2	1.5	94.2	2.2	0.5	1.5	-
	1991	588	2.0	2.2	2.2	69.9	21.3	0.9	1.5	-

(BMBW: "Grund- und Strukturdaten 1993/94, p. 191.)

**Table 8: German students abroad: how long they stay in which country, 1991 ('old' FRG)**

Total number of students				Which number of students spent how many months abroad				
	Male	Female	Total	1-6 mths	7-12	13-24	25-36	37 and more
<b>Europe</b>								
- EC countries	4,200	3,599	7,799	3,256	3,320	704	253	266
Belgium	2,965	2,750	5,715	2,587	2,433	438	141	116
France	187	157	344	82	119	91	36	16
Gr. Britain (incl. N.Irel.)	848	990	1,838	842	832	131	19	14
Ireland	1,185	896	2,081	1,129	843	87	13	9
Italy	78	79	157	85	71	1	-	-
Netherlands	359	245	604	162	257	63	63	59
Spain	72	67	139	52	58	16	5	8
Others - Other countries	192	279	471	212	208	39	4	8
Austria	44	37	81	23	45	10	1	2
Poland	1,235	849	2,084	669	887	266	112	150
Romania	381	283	664	198	353	68	31	14
Sweden	108	53	161	14	27	31	25	64
Switzerland	74	45	119	6	18	37	22	36
Former Soviet Union	24	24	48	26	17	3	1	1
Hungary	496	289	785	294	392	67	22	10
Others	32	64	96	66	12	6	1	11
<b>Africa</b>	87	49	136	76	37	11	3	9
South Africa	54	25	79	47	21	5	3	3
Others	33	24	57	29	16	6	-	6
<b>America</b>	1,404	722	2,126	652	1,228	181	29	36
Brazil	29	18	47	15	17	3	3	9
Canada	126	59	185	54	110	18	2	1
U.S.A.	1,196	588	1,784	529	1,063	152	21	19
Others	53	57	110	54	38	8	3	7
<b>Asia</b>	159	167	326	97	164	42	10	13
Israel	34	27	61	20	36	1	2	2
China, Tibet	36	45	81	21	36	19	4	1
Others	89	95	184	56	92	22	4	10
<b>Australia and Oceania</b>	58	39	97	76	20	1	-	-
<b>Unclear/no data available</b>	2	1	3	1	-	-	-	2
<b>All countries</b>	5,910	4,577	10,487	4,158	4,769	939	295	326

(BMBW: "Grund- und Strukturdaten 1993/94", p.220.)

### 1.3. The effect of secondary education on language studies in higher education

All GCE (A-level/'Abitur') graduates have had to learn two or three foreign languages before beginning their university studies. Still, it is hard to find two participants in a university course who possess the same basis. This is due to the federal structure of the country as well as to the de facto disappearance of a common foundation of obligatory requirements in the curricula for the last two or three years of secondary education.

The federal structure allows each of the sixteen 'Länder' to organize its own school policy in the language sector. This policy is obviously more conservative in certain southern areas, like Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, owing to centralistic tendencies of Napoleonic origin. This assures the survival of Latin, for example (which is considered a foreign language in the same way as English or French in Germany), and ascertains that the level of demands required in final classes at all schools is almost the same. In the 'Länder' on the territory of the former GDR, the situation is characterised by a certain instability, which is apparent in the noticeable degree to which the percentage of A-Level graduates has been increasing since the reunification put an end to the restrictions of the past. It becomes also visible in the radical replacement of Russian by French and other languages of the European Union (a development discernible since 1989), which cannot have influenced studies there in a very positive way.

In those countries of the 'old' FRG that are not happy with traditions which enable the Minister of Education to organize GCE regulations in the same direct manner as in Bavaria, requirements often vary distinctly from one secondary school to another. But, as has been mentioned above, language skills also differ from one pupil to another because of a series of options provided for them since the 70s. While still maintaining the traditional system which distinguished between a first, a second, and a third foreign language, this reform permitted pupils not only to abandon one or two foreign languages altogether in favour of other subjects, but also, in contrast to this, to redouble their efforts on behalf of one or two languages during the last stage of their school education.

Furthermore, there is a vast number of secondary schools which offer a bilingual branch, where certain subjects are taught in a foreign language. If we add this, and the fact that the number of A-Level graduates whose native language is not German has increased steadily over the past years, to the circumstances outlined above, it is easy to understand why the majority of students at the university need a year or more to complete a language training until their skills meet the standards defined by the departments or faculties. Otherwise, university departments would have to face the same chaos which, in this respect, reigns in the secondary sector.

This said, it should be pointed out that these deficits are evidently not the same for all languages and for all areas: in 1991/92 5,029,513 pupils learning English were counted in the entire secondary education sector, while a total of 1,238,331 were taking classes in French, 382,258 were learning Russian, 72,820 Spanish, and 13,073 Italian (cf. K.Knapp "Englisch", in: Handbuch Fremdsprachenunterricht, ed. K.-R. Bausch, H. Christ, and H.-J. Krumm, 3rd edition Tübingen 1995, p.336). This means that the level of English is usually satisfactory, but that there is only a tiny minority who speak French well. On the other hand, these effects of dismembering the traditional canon are balanced, at least where the oral code is concerned, by young people's tendency to spend a year abroad before they begin their studies.

An unexpected effect remains to be mentioned: the birth of a private market in sharp contradiction even to the most basic principles of public and free education, encouraged by the huge student surplus at some universities. Many departments do not have enough lecturers, and as they are in no shape to fill the gaps in the A-Level graduates' language training quickly enough, the latter are obliged - or at least tempted - to appeal to private institutions which offer paid courses in English or French. As a consequence those students who, for financial reasons, are unable to choose this way out, risk losing even more time than the others. They cannot possibly finish their studies within a reasonable period.



## **2. TYPES OF TRAINING OFFERED BY THE UNIVERSITIES**

### **2.1. Traditional courses in Language and Literature**

At most universities two different courses of study are offered in English as well as in French, but usually also in Spanish, Russian, and Italian (sometimes even in Portuguese or other languages less often taught in secondary schools). Of these courses one leads to the 'Staatsexamen' (state exam), which is compulsory for those who aspire to a school teaching career. The other one prepares for the examinations a student has to undergo in order to obtain an M.A. degree ('magistra/magister artium').

For the 'Staatsexamen', which at least in some 'Länder' resembles a steeplechase, the ministry in charge generally allows a minimum of eight semesters of university studies. Exams are normally taken in two disciplines, which the candidate may choose from a catalogue of subjects which is different for each 'Land', and which covers most subjects taught at secondary school. Simultaneously, the candidate is examined about his or her basic knowledge in Educational Theory and/or Philosophy.

In the discipline itself we can distinguish between five components, at least if it is a language: training in that particular language, literature, philology and/or linguistics, cultural studies, and special teaching methods. Whereas, for obvious reasons, the importance of linguistic competence has been admitted unreservedly in all the 'Länder', the significance attributed to literature, philosophy, and linguistics, as well as to cultural studies and didactics differs not only from one 'Land' to the other, but also from university to university. On the other hand, it is known that given the choice, students display a certain preference for literature, and that the course structure as well as the nature of the 'Staatsexamen' force them to sacrifice the better part of their effort to learning the language.

It is, above all, this linguistic competence which has always granted the 'Staatsexamen' a certain prestige, although in most 'Länder' the chances of being employed as a full-time teacher at a secondary school have been extremely scant in most disciplines for almost a decade.

As to the other course type, which leads to the degree 'Magister/Magistra Artium' (M.A.); it is a more recent invention which leaves the students more freedom to choose and combine their subjects.

To obtain this degree generally requires at least four years of reinforced studies in one major and two minor subjects. In addition to this, the student has to compose a thesis at the end of his or her studies, choosing a topic from the major discipline and from somewhere between this 'primary' subject and another area of interest, which is usually one of the two minor subjects.

Numerous variations can be found even inside of this pattern, since many faculties allow their students to narrow down their studies to two 'principal' subjects. Moreover, 'subjects' are not defined in the same manner everywhere: there are faculties which have subdivided French into French Literature, French Philology, and French Culture, while others think that the subject should be called 'Romance Languages', an attitude which implies that the student should prove a basic knowledge of at least one Romance language other than French.

Apart from these problems of definition, some essential differences concern the emphasis laid on the minor subjects in comparison with the major. While the stress laid on the minor disciplines is inevitably reduced, because students have less time to devote to them, students are often allowed to choose whether they wish to specialize in literature or in linguistics. Other departments reduce the level of language competence to a strict

minimum on the grounds that this is above all a means of granting the students access to texts, which are then to be examined from a scientific literary or linguistic viewpoint.

To date, this recurring tendency reflects a conviction which once formed the starting point for the creation of this course type. It was in fact believed that an alternative should be offered to all those who thirty years ago were still obliged to approach a doctorate thesis directly because they had chosen a subject which was not eligible for the 'Staatsexamen'.

Therefore the panorama is very divers, and everything depends on the observer's point of view.

At certain universities, courses mainly aim at the formation of young researchers, sometimes without any solid linguistic competence in the secondary subjects. The final papers compete, in quality if not in length, with a doctorate thesis, and it is not uncommon that good candidates supply the first chapters of their doctorate thesis from their first degree thesis. In these institutions, those who are less successful risk warranting the prejudices of those in Languages who continue to believe that students preparing for the 'Staatsexamen' are 'better', and that their knowledge is superior to M.A. candidates. This is merely to protest against a widely accepted regulation by which many departments have reinforced language training. This demands written final exams in each of the three subjects, containing a 'Thema', that is, a translation into the foreign language on a particular subject which the examiner determines from the classes the student has followed.

This decision has contributed to improving the image of the course and has led to new possibilities of employment for those who are successful in this rigid examination in three different disciplines.

M.A. courses in Languages have been very successful since the students understand that a passed 'Staatsexamen' does not guarantee later employment. Moreover, these new courses give students the opportunity to organize their studies according to their talents and personal tastes.

Thus, in the same grammar course one may meet people who are studying French, Spanish, and English simultaneously, as well as others who are taking courses in Art History, Archeology, and Italian; in Portuguese, History, and Political Science; or in Philosophy, Mathematics, and Spanish.

Apart from the lack of posts in the public education sector, this liberty of choice is one of the reasons for which there are far more students preparing for the M.A. than for the 'Staatsexamen', as is shown by the following numbers, ascertained by the Scientific Council ('Wissenschaftsrat') for its study on the average duration of studies in various university branches in 1991.

For the Romance Languages, for example, the number of students who have obtained the degree of 'Magistra' or 'Magister' or a university diploma (comparable to the degree awarded by the universities of Giessen and Kassel) has risen from 78 in 1980 to 526 in 1991, whereas the Staatsexamen figures have fallen from 1,799 to 626 students in the same period.

**Table 9: Number of degrees obtained in Romance Languages**

Degrees obtained	1980	1985	1990	1991
M.A./ Diploma	78	209	517	526
Staatsexamen	1,799	1,540	691	626

PhD	52	36	59	88
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(Wissenschaftsrat, Fachstudium an Universitäten, 1991, p.65.)

**Table 10: Statistic figures which illustrate the general tendency of degrees taken in English**

Degrees obtained	1980	1985	1990	1991
M.A.	136	283	559	570
Diplom	-	14	60	98
Staatsexamen	1,718	2,832	1,066	1,074
PhD	48	56	76	85

(Wissenschaftsrat, Fachstudium an Universitäten, 1991, p.65.)

Although these statistics illustrate the general tendency perfectly, they are not quite trustworthy because of the proportion between the 'Staatsexamen' and the M.A.: this proportion is not the same for all the 'Länder' (cf. op. cit., p.63 and p.214 or p. 216), and it is not sufficiently representative, because only the major subject has been counted, and while the Staatsexamen requires two subjects, the M.A. demands three.

Like most other courses in Germany, the M.A. course is divided into two parts: the 'Grundstudium', which comprises the four semesters, or two years, before the intermediate exam ('Zwischenprüfung'), and the 'Hauptstudium' which roughly corresponds to third and fourth year studies. This is topped by the composition of a final thesis and by the final examination, which should extend over a time period of one or two semesters at most, according to the ministry's regulations.

The 'Grundstudium' normally consists of strictly prescribed modules in the Languages, often in the major as well as in the minor subjects. The same is true for 'Staatsexamen' candidates. The actual language acquisition takes a large part of this section, undoubtedly larger for Italian than for English, but always at the centre. At the big universities, translation courses above all form solid obstacles which are difficult to breach, thus reducing grammar courses to subsidiary functions and often transforming essay courses or conversation courses into optional choices, which only those who are already at the end of the race can attempt.

As to course evaluation, there is a strong opposition toward the introduction of a basis system of 'course units' or 'credits'.

It is widely believed that such a reform would not ask whether individual criteria are applicable to each student, and would hinder the possibilities of appreciating the student's originality as well.

As it is, the German students accumulate certificates ('Scheine'), by which their teachers confirm that a class has been passed successfully ('mit Erfolg'). This certificate cannot be used by the candidate unless the results are between the best mark '1' ('sehr gut' = very good, outstanding) and the minimum of '4' ('ausreichend' = sufficient), the two intermediate marks being '2' ('gut' = good) and '3' ('befriedigend' = satisfactory). The '5' ('mangelhaft' = defective) and '6' ('ungenügend' = insufficient) are below the pass level.

Appearances are likely to deceive: in most departments, these 'individual' marks are recorded in a central register; and they result from exams and requirements which are the same for all courses on the same level in the School of Languages.

It is true that the teacher's assessment is more independent in the seminars ('Proseminar', during the first two years of study before the intermediate exam, and 'Hauptseminar' after that examination), where the student usually has to submit a term paper.

Many departments ask the student to spend some time in a foreign country, which sometimes means that students who are studying three languages, for example English, French, and Spanish, will go abroad for a year several times in a row.

Setting aside those exceptional cases where going abroad can delay the studies immensely, the effect of the ERASMUS programme has been enormous and beneficial, above all in the extent to which the general level of language skills has risen. This obligates those students who have not been abroad to find other means of perfecting their competence if they want to keep up with the others. Moreover, we should not forget that the number of courses taught in the foreign language has increased substantially thanks to teacher exchanges. Finally, the necessity to adapt oneself to a different academic system reinforces a tendency inherent in the German courses. The latter are not based on annual programmes, but on classes that take up a certain number of weekly hours during one single semester. The study period abroad is usually placed within the 'Hauptstudium'; and it is when the final thesis is written that this liberty of choice begins to bear fruit: the German student is a nonconformist.

This has no particular impact on language teaching during the 'Hauptstudium', as the archeologist who does Italian simultaneously will express different needs from a student of French, who also does Economics or Philosophy. These needs are easier to satisfy by a period abroad, in favourable surroundings, than in standardized courses at the home university.

### **2.3. Doctorate studies**

There are no special courses for students preparing a doctorate thesis. As they usually have an M.A. or 'Staatsexamen' degree - in some few cases it may be another academic degree - , it is thought that they already possess the necessary knowledge to conduct independent research under the guidance of a professor who is traditionally called 'Doktormutter' or 'Doktorvater'. The candidate very rarely leaves the circle of subjects he or she has studied for the first degree, especially as the subject of the thesis often expands on the M.A. thesis or the final 'Staatsexamen' paper. When asked to specify three subjects in which they wish to be tested in the oral exam (the 'Rigorosum', which normally replaces the public defense of the thesis in Germany), PhD candidates return to the subjects they had prepared for the M.A. or the 'Staatsexamen'. In the latter case, the two major subjects had been accompanied by Educational Theory or Philosophy. The professors who survey the doctorates assemble the PhD candidates who work under their guidance from time to time, so they can each in turn present the theories or interpretations they are working on, and profit from critical contributions the others make.

These meetings are even compulsory if the candidates hold a stipend from the 'Graduiertenkolleg', that is, a study group consisting of a dozen young researchers or a certain number of professors from multiple subjects, who research a narrowly defined topic, and who receive financial support from the state.

A certificate of proficiency in Latin ('Latinum'), which is required by numerous Arts Faculties, often represents a major obstacle for research. Although opinions on this matter differ from department to department and from one faculty to another, the general attitude toward this subject has softened over the past few years. Even responsible officials in the Romance Languages have begun to wonder whether students can actually profit from an intensive course in Latin, which is too late to serve as a basis

for elementary ideas on language in any case, and which does not go far enough to give participants the opportunity to enjoy the hidden charm of a nicely composed sentence, or the beauty of a verse by Horace.

The ERASMUS exchange programmes have contributed substantially to these changes and new ideas, because they have brought about contacts between different systems, creating new needs: before German students can go abroad, a system must be introduced to recognize their studies abroad in Germany. Correspondingly, foreign students must be able to sign up for classes on their appropriate level, because their home university demands it. Finally, the 'Latinum' represents an obstacle which foreigners who wish to write their thesis in Germany for some reason or other cannot easily overcome.

It is true that special courses, which do not lead to a doctorate directly, also exist at certain universities, but these are regarded as a supplementary training ('Aufbau,- Zusatz- und Erg.,,nzungsstudium') for those who have already obtained a degree. In the Languages, this is usually a combination of the actual languages with modules from the departments of History, Geography, Sociology, and Economics in the case of 'Area Studies', to name just one example.

## **2.4 Applications for language degrees in higher education**

In the past, language teaching, mostly employed by the state, and translating in the widest sense were traditional fields of application for Language students. Only a minority attempted a career in other professions. They became librarians, worked in the Office of Foreign Affairs, or found employment working for a publishing company, a magazine, the radio or television. For these positions, "the Germans' favourite first name", the 'Dr. phil.', was decisive or at least useful.

These things have changed recently: only the smallest minority succeeds in securing a post in the public education sector, in libraries, or in the Foreign Service, and although the demand in the other sectors mentioned above is remarkable, jobs offered there are rarely full-time or even well-paid.

Unfortunately, the available statistics hardly account for the social situation of those who have finished their studies during the past five years; there is only one significant detail: a longish period spent abroad as an ERASMUS student is always of advantage to a good student, who can make use of it when it comes to submitting application documents. Having participated in an exchange programme does not only guarantee a certain linguistic competence, it is also proof that the person in question does not lack initiative, and that he or she is capable of adapting to new and sometimes unexpected circumstances, if need be.

## **3. INITIAL AND CONTINUED TRAINING IN LANGUAGE TEACHING**

### **3.1. Initial training for language teachers**

Apparently, many trainees have never received a kind of training that would have prepared them for their future profession. This is true for the universities, where languages classes are in the hands of young colleagues from abroad, who occupy a teaching post for a limited period of time, while they complete their thesis. This measure is mostly justifiable by the advantages it offers, which are not to be discussed in this context. But it is also true for the secondary education sector, for adult education ('Volkshochschule') and for the private sector. If in the past there has been a considerable effort in the public sector to keep teachers from teaching outside their special areas, this ideal state cannot be reached as long as the almost absolute liberty of

choice, which pupils are granted in the languages in different branches, does not concur with the fact that the 'Länder' recruit most teachers on a long-term basis.

In the private and adult education sector, as well as in a series of semi-official institutions, which are supported by municipalities, churches, or companies etc., language courses are often underpaid, which has the effect that employers are none too demanding where the teachers' training qualifications are concerned. However, this is not always true: the Goethe Institute, for example, selects employees according to a rather rigid competition.

(For details on basic training see 2.2.)

### **3.2. Continued training**

Advanced training for secondary school teachers is, except for some cases, assured by institutes which answer directly to the federal ministers in charge. The revision organized by these institutes mainly targets didactical and methodological skills. A wide variety of occupations and materials is used to that end; teachers may participate in groups working on a reform of studies, or in meetings on select topics. Beside these activities, forms of work that are less influenced by the official authorities have developed spontaneously. This may include contributions for one of numerous specialized reviews, active participation in conferences organized by the national teacher associations, cooperation with exam commissions, and helping future teachers during the practical phase of their training.

Therefore, continued training is essentially a phenomenon which depends on the teachers' personal initiative. This is true for the public education sector, but even more so for the private teaching and translation sector.

In some rare cases, universities have been asked to organize a special, exclusive course for a limited period of time to enable teachers, who had to teach subjects in which they had not graduated, to acquire a proficiency which permitted them to pass the 'Staatsexamen' in the disciplines in question. In these cases the requirements were the same as outlined above (see 2.1.).

In this context, summer schools at a foreign university have often helped to improve language skills. Correspondingly, spending a year as assistant teacher at a school abroad is generally quite favourable for the training of young teachers.

Another strategy favoured by the European Commission, the exchange of teachers for a school year, can only be put into practice in those rare cases when the partners' disciplines coincide, at least partly. While a teacher of French and German has good chances to find a teacher of German in France who is willing to change places with him, and a headmaster who will accept the proposed scheme, this will be far more difficult for someone who teaches French and Natural Sciences, at least if he or she does not happen to know a French colleague in Biology who speaks German well enough.

### **3.3 Teacher training for non-native speakers of German**

The problem does not apply.

## **4. LANGUAGE CLASSES OFFERED BY UNIVERSITIES TO STUDENTS OF OTHER SUBJECTS**

### **4.1. Language studies integrated in other courses and optional language modules that can be combined with other disciplines**

As has been mentioned above, courses which lead to the M.A. require thorough studies in three subjects, which can be quite heterogeneous. Many applicants choose one language, but combine it with History, Philosophy, Political Science, or Economics. As to the 'Staatsexamen', the gap between the chosen disciplines is sometimes even wider, because the range of possibilities extends from Mathematics over Languages to Arts, and because some 'Länder' allow nearly every combination imaginable. Although a large number of young specialists in the most diverse subjects is thus formed, who have studied one or two languages thoroughly, together with other subjects, there are others who may opt for a language module in a course for Management or Engineering. It is true that in this case the number of hours scheduled is rather limited, as is the aim of the course. These options are usually courses on either vocabulary for a certain discipline, or courses that repeat bits of already existing knowledge in a foreign language. In the faculties in question, they are generally called Commercial English/French/Spanish.

In some courses, which are equally integrated into the language slot and the Management (or Economics, or Private International Law) sector, training in one or two languages plays a more important role, but then, language classes here are normally the same as those attended by future M.A. candidates or by students preparing for the 'Staatsexamen'. Viewed in the context of university programmes, the applied teaching methods and contents only differ from what has been explained above in a more pronounced tendency to prefer the oral code to the written language or literary style.

#### **4.2. Language classes offered to accompany courses in other disciplines**

In most higher education institutions, languages classes open to all students and teachers ('Kurse für Hörer aller Fakultäten') can be found. The teaching level is usually excellent, but as only a few of these classes can be offered, they are usually extremely crowded, as a large number of interested students wish to participate. It is quite common that more than 100, sometimes even 200 people fill the room, so that the dialogue with the teacher is replaced by a lecture, which is even more ineffective since it is limited to two or three hours per week. A factor that further adds to this ineffectiveness is that there is mostly neither an exam at the end of the semester, nor are there any sanctions to exclude weaker students.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the creation of exchange programmes has resulted in increasing demands, which the universities have been unable to satisfy, since they cannot create enough teaching posts.

### **5. TRAINING FOR TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS**

#### **5.1.-5.3. Institutions responsible for the organization, contents and structure of the training programmes**

Among the institutions which are responsible for the training of interpreters, three university departments, which were founding members of the current Conférence Internationale Permanente d'Instituts Universitaires de Traducteurs et d'Interprètes (C.I.U.T.I.), should be mentioned: Heidelberg, Germersheim, and Saarbrücken, which are parts of the Heidelberg, Mayen, and Saar universities respectively. In these three university departments, the training of interpreters can be compared to that which students receive at the foremost schools for interpreting, such as Paris, Geneva, or Trieste.

The former GDR is represented in this domain by an institute at the University of Leipzig ('Institut für Sprach- und Übersetzungswissenschaft'), which offers an integrated course of nine semesters where English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabian, and Portuguese are taught. The student is asked to choose two of these languages; Arabian may only be

accompanied by one other language, while Portuguese must be combined with two other languages.

The field of actual language training in these interpreting schools is enriched by classes on the theory of translation and applied linguistics, but also by a basic knowledge of Law, Economics, or a technical discipline.

The four institutions mentioned above also offer professional training for translators. Generally, the catalogue of languages that can be studied is much longer for these courses.

Apart from these traditional courses there are more specialized ones as well: the University of Düsseldorf, for example, has offered a special training in the field of literature translation for the last few years.

The Fachhochschulen also participate in this diversification, including those at Cologne and Hildesheim, to name but some examples, as well as certain Departments of Applied Linguistics.

#### **5.4. The effect of exchange programmes to date**

The impact of exchange programmes in this context is evident. One proof for this, in my opinion, is that the University of Leipzig has established ten ERASMUS networks to enable their students to spend a part of their studies abroad.

### **6. LANGUAGE STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OUTSIDE THE UNIVERSITIES**

See above under 2.1. and 5.1.-5.3.

### **7. CURRENT NEEDS IN THE AREA OF LANGUAGES**

The identification of needs in the area of language studies and, on a related note, identification of insufficiencies and gaps in the courses and programmes hitherto provided.

#### **7.1. In university programmes on various levels**

- given that the linguistic training of A-Level graduates differs from one graduate to another, university teaching lacks reference points which could serve as a basis to learn the language properly;
- the steady increase in student numbers over the past fifteen years and the stagnation of financial means granted the universities lead to overcrowded courses;
- the level of knowledge demanded at the end of the course is often insufficient, at least in the 'secondary' subjects;
- the classes offered for students from other departments display large shortcomings in the number of classes as well as in their diversity;
- the courses offered do not relate well to requirements in the professional world;
- in most Higher Education Institutions, only a selection of the official languages of the European Union is offered.

#### **7.2. In the initial and continued training for language teachers**

- the number of mobility stipends, and the amount of money offered, are still not sufficient to entice all future language teachers to spend part of their studies abroad;
- the systems which regulate the recognition of studies abroad by the home universities



are still not sufficiently improved in the Languages Departments to ensure that the time spent abroad does not cause a delay in the course;

- the possibilities for an exchange of language teachers are not fully developed yet;
- curricula and the structure of studies still vary too much from one 'Land' to another, although it would be easy to create integrated courses in language teacher training, parallel to courses which already exist in Management;
- with an eye to the 'building of Europe', it is extremely regrettable that the aim of training teachers for all European languages has been practically deserted.

### **7.3. In language classes offered by the universities to student of other disciplines**

- we find approximately the same problems that I have identified under 7.1.;
- their deficiencies are sometimes due to the fact that their status even within the university is unclear.

### **7.4 In the professional training of translators and interpreters**

- Apart from what has been said above, we find that the existing structures have nothing to offer for the new requirements of the profession and for the 'building of Europe', which could be achieved through a course for interpreters and translators that takes all official languages of the European Union into account.

### **7.5. In language studies at Higher Education Institutions apart from universities**

- we basically find all the shortcomings mentioned under 7.1.

### **7.6. In language studies in general**

With the exception of Latin, Classical Greek and other dead languages, as well as some rare examples of courses directed at isolated groups of students, there is a lack of courses that convey a 'passive' knowledge of foreign languages, instead of granting a prerogative to the 'active' competence, in the entire sector of language studies.

## **8. MEASURES TO BE TAKEN AGAINST THE INSUFFICIENCIES IDENTIFIED ABOVE**

### **8.1. Measures to be taken in the field of initial and continued teacher training**

- on a national scale, the institutions responsible for initial teacher training should agree on a compulsory minimum level of linguistic competence, an area in which all future teachers would be tested at the end of their studies. In the same way, there should be a basic common agreement on contents;
- furthermore, adequate courses should be established to ensure that future language teachers will be able to direct their pupils not only to an active competence in one or two languages, but also toward a passive knowledge of several other languages;
- regional authorities must make sure that a common basis of linguistic knowledge is assured at schools - this may include Latin or Classical Greek, since they can serve as a foundation and point of reference for Higher Education;
- they have to create the opportunity for language teacher training in all official languages of the European Union by furthering the division of tasks between suitable institutions and by creating the necessary legal basis;
- and they must put the necessary financial means to reduce the strength of classes to a didactically reasonable figure, according to current demand, at the disposition of Higher Education Institutions, no matter whether they are universities or not.
- The European Union has to make sure that less widespread official languages continue to be used in all domains and at all levels. In order to achieve this, measures should be taken to admit the possibility that students do not merely acquire a good active

competence in one or two foreign languages, but concentrate on being able to understand a significant number of languages. This requires the development of new methodological concepts, as well as a certain extent of financial support for a reorientation in language teaching;

- it should certainly maintain the existing exchange programmes, such as ERASMUS and LINGUA;

- as regards continued training, it should also prompt its member states and their respective teacher associations to formulate agreements on common principles where teacher training is concerned. The same could be done for the organization of school years in the secondary education sector, which would facilitate one-to-one teacher exchanges. These could firstly be supported by financing lengthy periods of study leave for active teachers; secondly, while we are waiting for this to become reality, a system of intensive summer schools should be created;

- it must continue to support every endeavour which is likely to facilitate the recognition of degrees and study periods abroad, and to align the actual duration of studies in its various member states by supporting studies abroad. If a satisfactory amount of stipend-money is granted for this purpose, students will not waste their time taking on a temporary job in order to be able to afford these studies abroad.

## **8.2 Measures to be taken by Higher Education Institutions other than universities**

- The measures to be taken partly coincide with those recommended above for the field of teacher education, but it is obvious that the problem of including less widespread languages into the range of courses offered is particularly difficult to solve for training centres for interpreters, because they are less numerous. Still, it is undoubtedly desirable that these institutions themselves should show some initiative.

- It is equally apparent that in the long run, schools for interpreters and translators must ask themselves whether they should above all develop capacities to translate one or more foreign languages into the native language above all else.

- Higher Education Institutions must be encouraged by the European Union to improve and standardize the possibilities of language training they have to offer to students who are not enrolled for Languages. Apart from providing additional credits, this means that basic structures must be modified in many cases in order to render responsibilities more precise and to arrive at a selection which corresponds to demands on the job market, as well as to the wishes of all those who believe in the future of a united and humanist Europe.

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