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HAS GENERAL ENGLISH KNOWLEDGE OF SERBIAN FRESHMEN STUDENTS PREPARED THEM FOR AN ESP COURSE – A PILOT STUDY

ABSTRACT: This study delves into the language knowledge of incoming freshmen students at two Serbian faculties, the Department of Criminal Investigation of the University of Criminal Investigation and Police Studies and the Faculty of Mining and Geology at the University of Belgrade. The aim of the pilot study was to assess their prior English language proficiency before beginning English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. Recognizing the challenges of teaching ESP in large, multi-level groups, the study sought to gather initial data on the distribution of Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) levels within the student sample. A questionnaire was administered, gathering demographic details on English language learning experiences, alongside a Face2Face Written Placement Test to assess proficiency levels from A1 to C1. The study, conducted during the 2022/2023 academic year, involved 152 voluntary participants from two faculties. The findings offer valuable insights into the dynamics of language education and their impact on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. The results reveal that while a significant portion of students is expected to have a B level of English proficiency upon completing secondary school, the actual language proficiency among students varies widely. ESP courses face the challenge of accommodating students with varying language skills, as this demands tailored language support and instructional strategies to bridge the proficiency gap effectively.

Keywords: language proficiency level, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), General English (GE), placement test.

DA LI JE PREDZNAVANJE OPŠTEG ENGLESKOG JEZIKA PRIPREMILO BRUCOŠE U SRBIJI ZA KURSEVE ENGLESKOG JEZIKA STRUKE – PILOT STUDIJA

APSTRAKT: Ova studija se bavi jezičkim znanjem brucoša na dva fakulteta u Srbiji, Departmanu kriminalistike Kriminalističko-policijskog univerziteta i Rudarsko-geološkom fakultetu Univerziteta u Beogradu. Cilj pilot studije bio je da se proceni njihovo prethodno znanje engleskog jezika pre nego što započnu kurs engleskog jezika struke (EJS). Prepoznajući izazove podučavanja EJS-a u velikim grupama sa različitim nivoom znanja, studija je na ovom uzorku nastojala da prikupi početne podatke o distribuciji nivoa prema Zajedničkom evropskom referentnom okviru za jezike (ZEO). Korišćen je upitnik kojim su prikupljeni demografski podaci o iskustvima u učenju engleskog jezika, zajedno sa Face2Face testom za procenu nivoa znanja od A1 do C1. U studiji, sprovedenoj tokom školske godine 2022/2023, dobrovoljno je učestvovalo 152 studenta sa dva fakulteta. Nalazi nude vredan uvid u dinamiku jezičkog obrazovanja i njihov uticaj na kurseve engleskog jezika struke (EJS). Rezultati otkrivaju da, iako se očekuje da će značajan deo učenika imati B nivo znanja engleskog jezika po završetku srednje škole, stvarno poznavanje jezika među učenicima uveliko varira. EJS kursevi se suočavaju sa izazovom da se prilagode studentima sa različitim jezičkim veštinama, jer to zahteva jezičku podršku i strategije učenja sačinjene „po meri” kako bi se efikasno premostio jaz u znanju.

Ključne reči: nivo znanja jezika, Zajednički evropski referentni okvir za jezike (ZEO), engleski jezik struke (EJS), opšti engleski (OE), test za utvrđivanje jezičkog nivoa.

1. INTRODUCTION

Quite a significant number of papers (e.g. Hutchinson & Waters 1987; Strevens 1988; Johns & Dudley-Evans 1991; Master 1997a; Master 1997b; Dudley-Evans & St. John 1998; Master 2000; Duff 2001; Paltridge & Starfield 2013) have been published in recent decades on the topic of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The researchers usually deal with particular groups of learners who have some specific needs as regards language and they try to produce tailor-made courses for students and practitioners of various professions. The topics such as needs analysis, syllabus design, testing, vocabulary as well as many others have been covered. However, it seems that there are not many studies which shed light on the issue of General Language (GL) knowledge of incoming freshmen students and if it is sufficient for the forthcoming Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) course(s), or in our case English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. In order to address this problem, we have devised a pilot study which might offer some insight into the situation in Serbia, at least with the students of the Department of Criminal Investigation of the University of Criminal Investigation and Police

Studies and of the Faculty of Mining and Geology of the University of Belgrade. First of all, we shall briefly establish some key facts about the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, give a short overview of previous similar research and then present our study and discuss its results.

2. ABOUT THE COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is a standardized system for describing language proficiency across Europe. It was introduced in 2001 by the Council of Europe and has since been adopted by many language institutions, schools, and universities around the world. The CEFR was developed with the purpose of providing a common standard for language proficiency assessment, as well as facilitating mobility and communication among language learners in Europe. It provides a reference for language learners, teachers, and institutions to evaluate language skills and set goals for language learning (Tagliante 2009).

The CEFR is divided into six levels, from A1 to C2, and these levels describe the learner's proficiency in the language. Each level is defined by a set of descriptors that outline the skills and competencies a learner should possess at that particular level. To put it as shortly as possible, at the A1 and A2 levels, learners can understand and use basic phrases and expressions to communicate in everyday situations. At the B1 and B2 levels, learners have a more extensive vocabulary and can communicate effectively in a variety of contexts, including work and academic environments. At the C1 and C2 levels, learners have advanced language skills and can express themselves fluently and accurately in complex situations, both orally and in writing (Tagliante 2009: 34).

The CEFR is widely used in language education and assessment, as it provides a clear and standardized way to evaluate language proficiency. It has helped to promote a shared understanding of language learning and has facilitated language learning and communication across Europe and beyond.

As more than two decades have passed since it was introduced, there is a number of studies that investigate its implementation and the perceptions of the users, both teachers and students. The current results suggest that teachers express mostly positive views regarding its implementation (see, e.g. Phoolaikao & Sukying 2021; Abidin & Hashim 2021), as well as students (Runesi et al. 2022). Sahib and Stapa (2021) performed an extensive literature review to determine the impact of language teaching and learning via the CEFR at the school level. Their

analysis also suggests that both teachers and students held positive views towards the use of CEFR, the impact being greater on the teachers. According to their results, the teachers had more difficulties in embracing the framework, as on the one hand, they had to familiarise themselves with the characteristics of the CEFR and on the other hand, they had to incorporate the framework into their everyday pedagogical routines. The students had better experiences in learning foreign languages using a CEFR-aligned syllabus, since it promoted their learning autonomy, improved their vocabulary, made them aware of language learning and, what is most important, they developed learning strategies, attitudes and motivation (Faез et al. 2011; Jaakkola et al. 2002; Kok & Aziz 2019; Krishnan & Yunus 2019; Moe 2005; Oscarson & Oscarson 2010, as cited in Sahib & Stapa 2021).

3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

There were no specific studies with the aim of determining students' knowledge (according to the CEFR) necessary for the ESP course, but there were other studies where the authors tried to investigate the relationship between the framework and the respective ESP courses. Thus, in their article on how the Common European Framework of References for Languages has been applied in language courses at the Language Centre (LC) of the Cyprus University of Technology, Athanasiou et al. (2016) present the challenges they faced in the alignment of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses with the CEFR. A part of study of West et al. (2020) deals with the level the students will be able to attain during four years of study, specifying that "all students of non-linguistic faculties in Uzbekistan's higher education institutions should be able to attain CEFR B1 level within four years of study, and many should be able to attain B2". Ahmadi and Bajelani (2012) address the issues related to ESP and in particular EAP learning in Iranian universities, including for example students' low level of literacy in non-English courses, inefficiency of textbooks, students' incapability in understanding special English, types of exercises, to mention just a few, but they do not consider the level of English language knowledge of students prior to university.

There is, however, a group of studies dealing with students' previous knowledge. Cigan & Kordić (2013: 153), for example, report that the research shows (Martinović & Poljaković 2010; Jelovčić 2008) that

groups of first year university students exhibit significant inhomogeneity in terms of proficiency level and are comprised of students whose knowledge of English is

at the advanced level but also those who have lower language proficiency as described by B2 “can do” descriptors of CEFR (Council of Europe).

In her study on lexical knowledge of Serbian L1 English L2 learners, Danilović-Jeremić (2015) estimated the English proficiency level of the learners participating in her research to be B2 (as specified by the Common European Framework of Reference) by means of the university entrance exam, which was a prerequisite for enrolment in tertiary level studies of English at the Faculty of Philology and Arts. Ivančević Otanjac (2021) provides the data of her research, which referred to the participants’ general English proficiency level. Her sample included 75 first- and second-year students of the Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation, University of Belgrade. According to her findings, most participants were at B1(33.3%) and A2 (29.3%) levels, while the remaining 37.4% were students at B2 (14.7%), C1 (17.3%), and even C2 (5.4%) level. Therefore, the available research suggests that incoming freshmen may have varying levels of foreign language knowledge and proficiency.

4. PRESENT RESEARCH

Although we may think that the required level for students starting an ESP course is the same, it can actually vary depending on the specific context and purpose of the course. As we said earlier, generally, the CEFR is used to determine language proficiency levels for language courses. The required level for an ESP course will depend on the specific language demands of that field or profession. When indicating variable characteristics of ESP courses, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 5) state that “ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level instruction or in a professional work situation.” They also say that ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students, assuming basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners. This means that, for example, in some ESP courses a B1 (intermediate) level of English may be sufficient, while in other courses learners may need to have a B2 (upper-intermediate) or C1 (advanced) level of English. In some highly specialized fields, such as medicine or law, learners may need to have a C2 (proficient) level of English to effectively communicate and understand the language specific to that field. Ivančević-Otanjac (2021) mentions that according to some authors, such as Liu & Berger (2015), the indicated level of ESP students’ English knowledge is usually intermediate or advanced, but that there are many ESP courses designed for pre-intermediate and intermediate English language learners (Day &

Krzanowski 2011, as cited by Ivančević-Otanjac 2021). In general, and maybe in an ideal case, the required CEFR level for an ESP course should be determined based on an analysis of the specific language needs of the learners in that field or profession. It is important for ESP course designers and instructors to assess the language proficiency of their learners and to design their courses to meet the specific language needs of their learners.

Our research was conceived as a pilot study. By definition, this type of research is a pilot survey in which the number of respondents is very small, but it is very useful because errors can be eliminated before the start of a large-scale survey (Giddens 2009). Although pilot research does not guarantee the success of the main research, it greatly increases the certainty of success (Simon & Goes 2011).

4.1. Goal, instrument and sample

The aim of this pilot study was to determine what kind of prior knowledge students of the 1st year of undergraduate studies had when they started their first English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course. The rationale is that anyone who teaches an ESP course faces a number of problems in practical teaching. One of these problems is that in many cases teaching takes place in large multi-level groups. For that reason, the primary goal of our paper was not to confirm that the students are at multiple levels of knowledge, as we are well aware of that, but rather to gather some initial data on the distribution of the CEFR levels within our sample. The expectations were that the insights into the distribution of those levels could be useful in practice for both teachers and students, allowing the teachers to plan lessons and select materials which would be suited to the students' level of knowledge.

With that in mind, first a questionnaire was compiled with seven demographic questions (the questionnaire is given in the Appendix) that included the name and surname of the respondents (optional, in case they wanted to know the results after the test), gender, age, what type of high school they completed before coming to the university (grammar school or secondary vocational school), how long they had been learning English, if they learned English only at school or if they also had additional classes, and finally, if they ever took a placement test at all. In addition to the questionnaire, they were also given a placement test, in this case we opted for Face2Face Written Placement Test by Cambridge University Press 2010, for levels from A1 to C1 according to the CEFR. The results were processed numerically, through percentages, which were then analysed. Fisher's

Exact Test was also used in order to determine whether some of the variables, such as type of school, length of learning or the learning setting influenced the achieved CEFR levels. The analysis included the complete sample, as well as the two sub-samples individually in order to determine if there were any differences between them.

The sample included 152 students from two faculties, the Department of Criminal Investigation of the University of Criminal Investigation and Police Studies from Belgrade and the Faculty of Mining and Geology, University of Belgrade. Students from both faculties participated in the research on a voluntary basis. The data were collected during 2022/2023 academic year.

4.2. Results and discussion

The first part of the results would refer to demographic questions and what we could learn from them. The sample in our research consisted of 84 male and 68 female students, aged 18 to 22, in other words more than a half (55.26%) were male students and 44.74% were female students. This percentage is not a surprise, since both faculties offer education for the traditionally male professions; however, the number of female students who chose these professions has increased over time, so they now make almost a half of the student population. The data related to the age range are also within expectations, since the majority of students enrol into the first year at the age of 19 (+/- 1 year), and those who are older are usually those who had already studied elsewhere and decided to change the faculty.

As for their previous education, 76 students (50%) completed grammar school and 76 students (50%) completed secondary vocational school. Regarding the length of learning English, the largest number of students, 70 (46.05%) of them, had been learning English for 12 years, which is in line with the fact that in most schools English language learning starts in the first grade of primary school already. Four students (2.63%) reported that they had been learning English for four years only, while 26 (17.10%) said they had been learning between 8 and 11 years, and finally 52 (34.22%) students had been learning English for more than 12 years. The percentage of students who learned English for more than 12 years can be explained by the fact that some started learning the language even before elementary school (in kindergarten), as well as by the fact that some learned it at another faculty before enrolling in their current studies.

The overwhelming majority of students learned English only at school (120 or 78.94%), while 32 (21.06%) of them learned the language additionally

outside of school. When asked to state where and how they learned the language outside of school, 12 students stated it was at a private language school, 10 stated that it was at home with a private teacher, one student stated that she studied on her own, and the remaining seven stated that they learned the language with the help of music, video games, the Internet and family members who lived abroad.

As for the last question, only ten students (6.58%) had previously taken some kind of a placement test, while 142 (93.42%) reported that they had not taken such a test. This question was asked primarily to determine whether respondents had any experience with this type of testing. For those who had already taken such a test, they were asked to specify which one. The reason for this was to enable us to compare the results from the previous test they had taken and the one we gave them. Out of these 10 participants, according to the results of the current test three were at A1 level, one at B1, three at B2 and three at C1. Out of the three participants at the current A1 level according to the test we gave, one said that she had previously taken A2 test but passed only A1, one said that she had taken A1, A2 and B1 tests, and one said that he had taken B1 test. Therefore, these three participants are either at the same level or below the level they had previously taken. The participant who is currently at B1 level had taken the same test in the past, therefore, he is at the same level as in the past. Out of the three participants who are currently at B2 level, one had previously taken B2 test, whereas the other two had taken C1 and CAE respectively. These results suggest again that one participant remained at the same level, while the other two are now below the level they had previously been placed at. Finally, out of the three participants who were at C1 level, one had previously taken B2 test, one had taken TOEFL and one had taken IELTS. In this case, we can see that one student has improved his knowledge, and as for the other two, it is difficult to make the comparison since for both TOEFL and IELTS tests the actual level depends on the score achieved, and these respondents have not specified which level they had according to these tests.

The results related to questions 6 and 7 are most likely the reflection of the economic situation which has contributed to the fact that a smaller number of students can enrol in a language school in order to expand their language knowledge or hire a private teacher, rather than of the lack of interest in language learning, although it would be difficult to research that further in order to confirm or support such an interpretation of the results, since the questions related to the family's economic status are very sensitive.

The second part of our results refers to the scores on the placement test, which are given in Tables 1 through 3; in Table 1 for all students, and in Tables 2 and 3 for the two sub-samples respectively.

Level	Male	Female	Total
A1	24	19	43 (28.29%)
A2	12	12	24 (15.79%)
B1	12	15	27 (17.76%)
B2	25	18	43 (28.29%)
C1	10	5	15 (9.87%)
Total	83	69	152 (100%)

Table 1. Results of Placement Test – All students

The present research has established that the vast majority of respondents had studied English for 12 (102) and more than 12 years (17), while a smaller number stated that they had studied English for 8-11 years (29), and only 4 respondent studied English for 4 years. Still, the levels achieved vary a lot according to the results (Table 1). Two levels of knowledge – A1 and B2 – were reached by 43 respondents respectively, with levels A2 and B1 the number of respondents is slightly smaller, but similar (24 and 27 respectively), while the smallest number of respondents reached level C1 (15). If we combine levels A1 and A2 into one level A, we get a number of 65 respondents who are at level A, which makes 44.08% percent of the total number of respondents, while in this way there would be 70 respondents in category B or 46.05% percent. Therefore, the number of students at levels A and B is similar. However, if we start from the premise that the expected level of knowledge of the English language at the beginning of studies should be B2 (taking into account the expected exit level at the end of high school in Serbia), it is clear that a good part of students will have certain problems when they start their ESP course.

This is further confirmed by Mićović & Beko (2022: 130-131), who say that the students in Serbia are expected to have a B2 level of English language proficiency when they finish secondary school. This level is estimated based on the number of years of learning English as a Foreign Language in elementary and high schools in Serbia, which ranges from 10 to 12 years depending on whether they started to learn English as a Foreign Language in the first or in the third grade of elementary school. Various high schools select various course books, but whichever course book the high school selects (different publishers mostly), they all finish the fourth grade of high school with a B2 level course book.

This is also confirmed by Danilović and Grujić (2014: 205) as well as by Danilović-Jeremić (2015: 92), who have found that “the students had spent between eight and ten years learning English in elementary school and high school. Their level of proficiency in English was estimated as B2 (according to the Common European Framework of Reference)”. However, speaking from experience, the actual level of knowledge in most cases is lower like in our research, and regardless of the fact that the number of years of learning English as a foreign language is rather similar, students still differ a lot in terms of their knowledge. This claim would need to be investigated further, but in the previous research by Mićović (2020) on the influence of vocabulary size on reading comprehension of ESP texts, the author established that the sample of research, which consisted of the first-year forensic engineering students at the University of Criminological and Police Studies in Belgrade, differed quite a lot, as the number of years they had been learning EFL ranged between 8 and 12, while the number of words they had learned ranged between 2,000 and 10,100 based on the Vocabulary Size Test by Nation (Nation & Beglar 2007).

If the two sub-samples are observed individually (UCIPS students and FMG students) the results are slightly different, as follows: among the UCIPS students (Table 2), we have the smallest number of respondents at the A1 (3) and C1 (6) levels, while we have similar numbers for the A2 levels (10), B1(12) and B2 (15) (Table 2). If we group the results in the same manner as we did for the entire sample, at level A we have 13 respondents or 28.26%, while at level B we have 27 respondents, or 58.70%, which clearly shows that the number of students with B level is twice larger than those with level A.

Level	Male	Female	Total
A1	2	1	3 (6.52%)
A2		7	10 (21.74%)
B1	6	6	12 (26.09%)
B2	7	8	15 (32.61%)
C1	2	4	6 (13.04%)
Total	20	26	46 (100%)

Table 2. Results of Placement Test – Students of the Department of Criminal Investigation

Among the FMG students (Table 3), observed individually by level, the largest number of respondents are at levels A1 (40) and B2 (28). The number of respondents at levels A2 and B1 is almost the same (14 and 15). However, the

highest percentage of respondents is at level A (50.95%), while the percentage of respondents at level B is slightly lower and amounts to 40.56%.

Level	Male	Female	Total
A1	22	18	40 (37.74%)
A2	9	5	14 (13.21%)
B1	6	9	15 (14.15%)
B2	18	10	28 (26.41%)
C1	8	1	9 (8.49%)
Total	63	43	106 (100%)

Table 3. Results of Placement Test – Faculty of Mining and Geology

This difference in results between the two groups of respondents could be explained by the difference in the number of respondents, namely the group of the FMG students is twice as big as the group of the UCIPS students. Also, another possible explanation to the difference in levels achieved may be related to their previous English language learning experience, in other words it may be explained by the fact that a larger percentage of respondents at the University of Criminological and Police Studies attended grammar school, whereas a larger number of students at the Faculty of Mining and Geology attended secondary vocational schools. Namely, the weekly number of classes in grammar schools and in secondary vocational schools is different. For the first and second foreign languages in grammar schools, the number of lessons in English, French, Russian, German, Spanish and Italian is two lessons per week, with 74 lessons per year (Pravilnik o nastavnom planu i programu za gimnaziju). The number of foreign language lessons for vocational school is two lessons per week with 70 lessons per year, except for the fourth grade, with 60 lessons per year (Pravilnik o planu i programu obrazovanja i vaspitanja za zajedničke predmete u stručnim i umetničkim školama). There is also a possibility that if a larger sample were tested, the results would be different. Also, the results from our study differ from those obtained by Ivančević-Otanjac (2021).

Finally, we shall refer to the results of Fisher's Exact Test.¹ In our case, the Fisher's exact test results for the association between different variables (type of school, length of learning, and learning environment) and CEFR levels provide

¹ The result of this test is a p-value. If the p-value is below a predetermined significance level (commonly 0.05), it suggests that there is a significant association between the variables. If the p-value is above the significance level, there is insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis of independence.

valuable insights into the potential influences on English language proficiency among the study participants. For the relationship between the type of school and CEFR level, the obtained p-value of 0.008991 suggests a significant association between the type of school attended (grammar school or secondary vocational school) and the achieved CEFR levels. This finding implies that the educational background of students plays a significant role in determining their English language proficiency levels. Students from grammar schools had more exposure to English language instruction or different teaching methodologies compared to those from vocational schools, resulting in varying levels of proficiency (Figure 1).

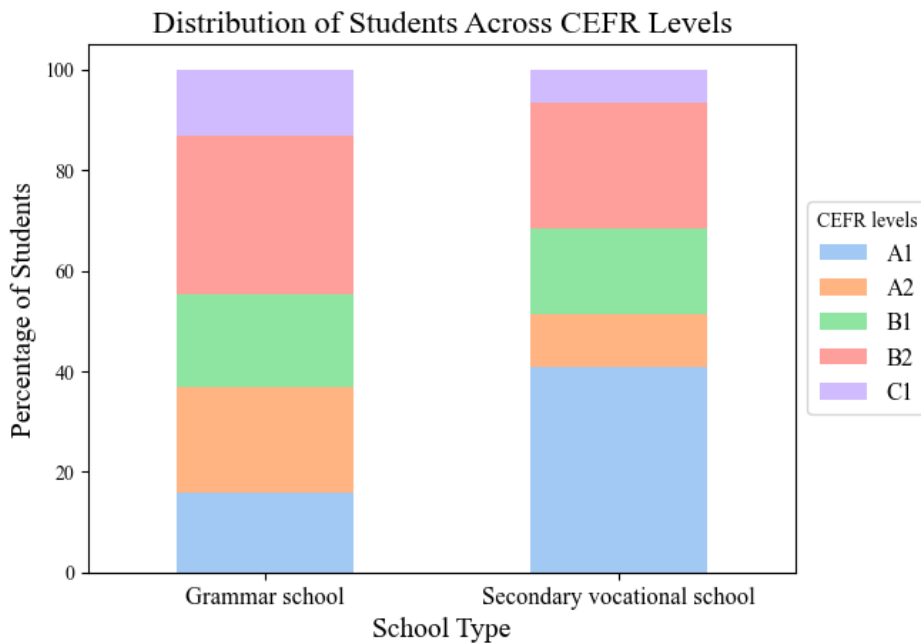


Figure 1. Distribution of Students across CEFR Levels

In case of length of learning and CEFR level, the p-value of 0.0018, indicates a statistically significant association between the length of English learning and CEFR levels. This result suggests that the duration of English language instruction influences students' proficiency levels. Students who have been learning English for a longer period tend to achieve higher CEFR levels, reflecting the cumulative effect of extended exposure to the language (Figure 2).

Distribution of Students Across CEFR Levels by Years of English Learning

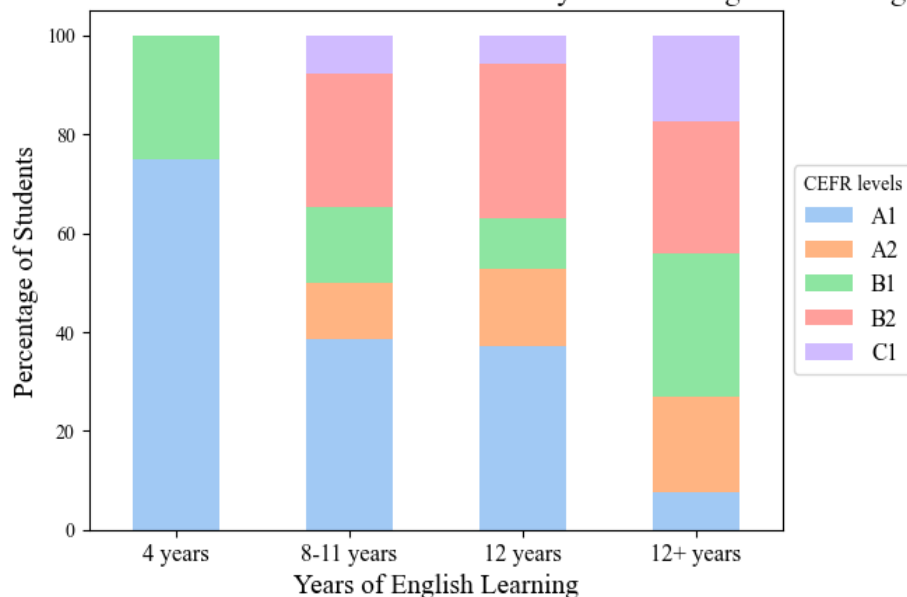


Figure 2. Distribution of Students across CEFR Levels by Years of English Learning

As for learning environment and CEFR level, the test yielded a p-value of 0.01794, indicating a significant association between the learning environment (school-based instruction only vs. additional classes outside of school) and CEFR levels. This finding suggests that the learning environment, including factors such as access to supplemental instruction or resources, positively impacts students' English language proficiency levels. Students who engage in additional English language classes outside of school achieve higher proficiency levels compared to those relying solely on school-based instruction (Figure 3).

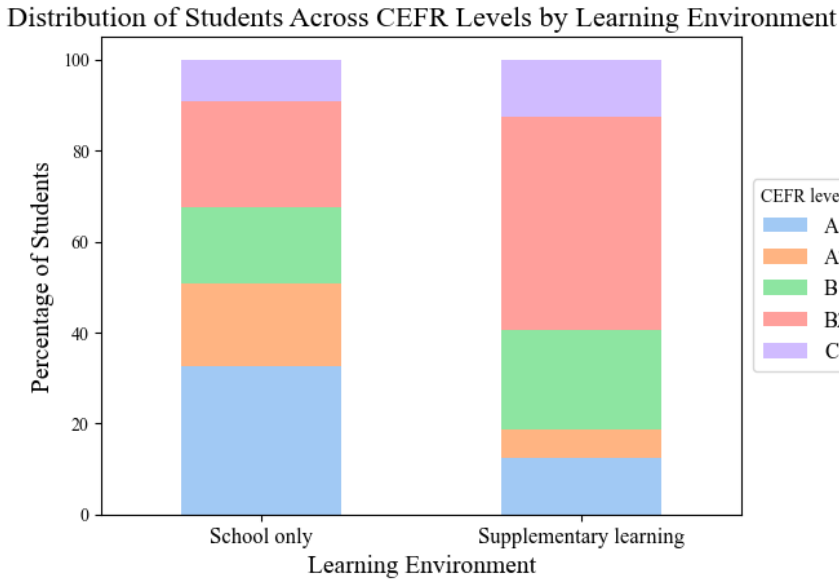


Figure 3. Distribution of Students across CEFR Levels by Learning Environment

5. CONCLUSION

Language learning progress can be influenced by a range of factors. There are many reasons why language learners may not achieve the same outcome after the same number of classes and the same number of years of learning. This is why we devised this pilot study with the aim to get insights into the demographics and English language proficiency levels of students at two faculties: UCIPS and FMG.

The study also shed light on English language learning experiences, indicating that the majority of respondents learned English primarily in school settings, while a limited percentage received additional instruction from private language schools or teachers. This trend could be attributed to economic factors affecting students' ability to seek supplementary language education. According to Sanchez (2023) second language learning does not take place entirely within the classroom and learners should increase the time outside the limits of the classroom through exposure to the language. Although today there are many sources on the Internet for independent language learning, and even though the teaching methodology has been focused on students and their independence in the process of learning a foreign language for decades now, still a small number of learners will actually take advantage of these opportunities and start learning on their own.

The results of the placement test revealed varying proficiency levels among students. While a significant number of students were expected to be at B level after secondary school, the actual levels varied widely. The research suggests that many students did not meet the expected proficiency levels, which could potentially pose challenges as they begin their ESP courses.

When examining the results for UCIPS and FMG students separately, differences in English language proficiency levels were evident, with FMG students showing a higher percentage of students at the A level. As said earlier in the discussion, one possible explanation for this could be that among the FMG sub-sample, there were more students who had attended vocational school (57) as opposed to those who attended grammar school (49), whereas the UCIPS sub-sample included more students who had completed grammar school (30) as opposed to those who had completed the vocational school (16). However, the disparities in results could be attributed to the different sample sizes between the two faculties, highlighting the need for further research with larger samples to draw more conclusive findings.

The present research confirms that the sample of our respondents has varying levels of foreign language knowledge and proficiency, with representation across all levels from A1 to C1. This indicates a diverse range of English language proficiency within the student population we investigated. This means that their current level of knowledge will certainly have impact on their progress during ESP courses, as those at lower levels would have to invest more time and more work to be able to reach the set goals, while those at higher levels would succeed without much trouble.

The use of Fisher's Exact Test to analyse the relationship between demographic variables and proficiency levels provided valuable insights. The significant associations found between types of high school attended and proficiency levels, lengths of English learning and learning environment highlight the complex interplay of factors influencing language acquisition.

As for specific pedagogical implications of the research, there are several suggestions as to what can be done. First of all, teachers should acknowledge the varying levels of language proficiency among students and the impact these differences can have on their progress in ESP courses and tailor their instructions accordingly. Second, it is highly recommended to group students based on their language proficiency levels to create a more effective learning environment. While this may not align with traditional criteria for grouping students in university courses, it can enhance learning outcomes, especially in language instruction. Third, independent language learning outside the classroom should be promoted,

utilizing resources available on the internet or through peer collaboration. Students, especially those at lower proficiency levels, should be encouraged to engage actively in self-directed learning to supplement their classroom instruction. Fourth, teaching materials and tasks can be modified to accommodate the diverse needs of students with varying proficiency levels. Teachers are invited to differentiate instruction that caters to the specific skills and learning objectives of each group of students. Fifth, there should be continuous research and evaluation of effectiveness of language instruction strategies, which should be adjusted accordingly to meet the evolving needs of students. Sixth, the insights from research findings should be used to inform educational policies and strategies aimed at enhancing language instruction and supporting the diverse needs of students. This means that language proficiency assessment and targeted language support programs should become part of university curricula. Finally, teachers should be provided with professional development opportunities to enhance their ability to address the diverse needs of students in ESP courses. In order to achieve all previously mentioned goals, teachers should be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement effective instructional strategies and support their students at different proficiency levels. By implementing these pedagogical implications, institutions can better support language learners in achieving their learning goals and navigating the challenges associated with language learning at the university level.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of assessing prior knowledge and proficiency levels among students entering ESP courses, particularly in multi-level teaching environments. Further research could explore additional factors influencing language proficiency and investigate effective pedagogical approaches to address the identified challenges.

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APPENDIX: Questionnaire used in the pilot study

OPŠTI PODACI

- 1 Ime i prezime (opciono):
 - 2 Pol: M Ž
 - 3 Koliko imate godina?
 - 4 Koju ste srednju školu završili (zaokružiti)?
Gimnaziju Srednju stručnu školu
 - 5 Koliko godina učite engleski?
 - 6 Da li ste engleski jezik učili samo u toku osnovne i srednje škole (zakoružiti):
DA NE
Ako je odgovor DA, produžite na pitanje br. 7.
Ako je odgovor NE, molim vas da napišete na koji način ste dodatno odn. van škole učili engleski jezik (da li je to bila privatna škola stranih jezika, privatni nastavnik, i sl.).
 - 7 Da li ste ikada polagali test kkojim se utvrđuje nivo vašeg znanja engleskog jezika (zaokružiti):
DA NE
Ako je odgovor DA, molim vas da specificirate koji test ste polagali i koji je bio nivo koji je test pokazao.
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DA LI JE PREDZNAVANJE OPŠTEG ENGLSKOG JEZIKA PRIPREMILLO BRUCOŠE U SRBIJI ZA KURSEVE ENGLSKOG JEZIKA STRUKE – PILOT STUDIJA

Sažetak

U članku je predstavljeno istraživanje o nivou opšteg jezičkog znanja brucoša na dva fakulteta u Republici Srbiji i pokazano da li je to znanje dovoljno za predstojeće kurseve engleskog jezika struke. Dok se brojna istraživanja fokusiraju na različite teme unutar engleskog jezika struke poput analize potreba, nastavnih planova i programa, te testiranja, malo ih istražuje nivo jezičkog znanja studenata koji upisuju visoko obrazovanje. Imajući to u vidu, istraživači su sproveli pilot studiju, ispitujući studente sa Kriminalističko-policijskog univerziteta u Beogradu i Rudarsko-geološkog fakulteta Univerziteta u Beogradu. Na početku je dat kratak pregled Zajedničkog evropskog referentnog okvira za jezike (ZEO), pri čemu se ističe njegova uloga u proceni jezičke sposobnosti širom Evrope. ZEO, sa svojih šest nivoa (A1 do C2), služi kao referentna tačka za učenike jezika, nastavnike i institucije. Dalje se navode faktori koji utiču na ishode učenja jezika, uključujući prethodno znanje, motivaciju, stil učenja, okolinu, uzrast, maternji jezik, vreme posvećeno učenju, kvalitet nastave i individualne razlike. Ovi faktori doprinose variranju jezičkog znanja među studentima, čak i sa sličnim iskustvima u učenju. Autorke ovog rada sprovele su pilot istraživanje sa uzorkom od 152 studenta i analizirale demografske informacije i testiranjem nivoa ulaznog znanja. Rezultati pokazuju raznolike nivoe jezičkog znanja, sa značajnim brojem studenata ispod očekivanog B2 nivoa, što može predstavljati izazove za kurseve engleskog jezika struke. Takvi rezultati ukazuju i na potrebu efikasnog kreiranja kurseva engleskog jezika struke, kako bi se nastava prilagodila postojećem stanju stvari. Uvidi koje daje ovo pilot istraživanje predstavljaju osnovu za buduća istraživanja i kreiranje obrazovnih politika kojima bi se bolje odgovorilo na raznovrsne potrebe studenata na kursovima engleskog jezika struke.

Ključne reči: nivo znanja jezika, Zajednički evropski referentni okvir za jezike (ZEO), engleski jezik struke (EJS), opšti engleski (OE), test za utvrđivanje jezičkog nivoa.

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