



**A Comparative Analysis of Student Motivation and Beliefs in Traditional and Distance Learning of GFL**

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## **A Comparative Analysis of Student Motivation and Beliefs in Traditional and Distance Learning of GFL**

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This paper reports on the motivation and beliefs in the traditional and distance learning and teaching of German as a foreign language (GFL) at Singidunum University in Serbia. The conclusion is that between the students in the distance course (experimental group) and those in the traditional course (control group) no statistically significant difference was shown in terms of any changes in their motivation, satisfaction with the quality of teaching and time spent learning German. As indicated in the findings, the course materials and interest in German were top of the list of motivating factors, while lack of self-discipline was identified as the most demotivating factor. The study also reveals that the beliefs held by Serbian students about their 'ought self' do not reflect the perceptions of their 'actual self' as traditional and distance GFL learners. The paper underlines important pedagogical implications regarding the enhancement of students' metacognitive strategies, course design and assessment.

### **1. Introduction**

The majority of students experience foreign language learning as 'different from learning other subjects, and to involve more time, more practice and different mental processes' (Victori quoted in Hurd 2005: 12). The distance education system makes this situation more difficult. Because of the lack of teacher presence, the isolated context and insufficient opportunities for communication in the foreign language (L2), many higher education institutions around the world approach the introduction of a foreign language into their distance studies programmes very cautiously (Hurd 2006, Loreto 2008). In addition, for successful L2 learning, in both traditional and distance learning environments, students need a larger number of metacognitive strategies than for other subjects 'because of the complex combination of skills and information required for language mastery' (Sussex quoted in Hurd 2005: 14). These strategies allow learners to manage, direct, regulate, guide and evaluate their learning, and eventually help them gain higher achievements and better learning outcomes (Hurd 2005, Oxford 2002). Regardless of the type of teaching, numerous research studies dedicated to the influence of individual factors or groups of factors on L2 learning have shown that affirmative factors, primarily motivation, are of crucial significance for success (Dörnyei; Ushioda

2011, Gardner; Lambert 1972, Hurd 2000, 2005, 2006, 2007, Oxford; Shearin 1994, White 1999, Xiao; Hurd 2010).

In contrast to motivation, which may change during the learning process (Gardner; Lambert 1972), an individual's belief in his or her own capabilities represents a relatively stable category and exerts a significant influence on the learner's selection of learning strategies and on maintaining motivation (Xiao; Hurd 2010). In his self-discrepancy theory, Higgins (1987: 320-21) named an individual's perception of his abilities the 'actual self'. The individual aspires to compare the 'actual self' with the 'ideal self' (the ideal self refers to a set of features which the individual would like to have) and the 'ought self' (refers to a set of features which are expected from the individual). Disharmony between the 'actual self' and 'ought self' motivates the individual to change, in order to reduce that gap which, according to some psychologists, has a positive influence on academic achievement (Xiao; Hurd 2010). Bearing that in mind, the learner's estimation of the 'actual self' and 'ought self' may serve as a useful predictor of changes and directions required in the selection of appropriate instructional interventions in traditional and distance language teaching. That was the reason why the author of this text decided to research the motivation of traditional studies students and distance studies students, their 'actual self' and 'ought self', as well as their satisfaction with teaching content. The research will offer answers to the following questions:

- 1) Are there any significant differences in the motivation between students who study GFL at a distance and those who study GFL in the traditional way in a classroom?
- 2) Are there any significant differences in the satisfaction of these two groups of students with the teaching quality?
- 3) Are there any significant differences in the amount of time these two groups of students spend studying German?

## **2. The study**

### **2.1 Methods, procedure and participants**

In the present study, a comparative methodology was used to investigate the language learner experience in two different settings. It combined both quantitative and qualitative methods. The participants were 90 GFL students at Singidunum University in Serbia who were enrolled in distance and traditional Elementary German in October

2013. The participating students were between the ages of 19 and 25. The experimental group, which is denoted as group A in the tabular and graphical representations, consists of distance students (N = 45), who were learning German via the Moodle platform. On the basis of the Singidunum University database, it was established that employed students dominated in group A. The average age of this group was 23.02. The control group, i.e. group B, comprises students attending the traditional course (N = 45), and their average age was 21.22.

A questionnaire was administered in June 2014 at the end of the course (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was an adapted and amended version of Xiao and Hurd's study (2010). It comprised four sections: motivation, satisfaction with the teaching quality, beliefs and time spent studying German. All of the respondents voluntarily agreed to participate in the research. Most questions which required students to select from a range of options also contained an 'other' option to allow for personal responses in addition to those provided in the list. In some cases, students were asked to explain their choice.

## **2.2 German course at Singidunum University**

At the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (FTHM) and the Faculty of Business (FB) at Singidunum University in Belgrade, the elective two-semester course Elementary German is an integral part of the traditional and distance bachelor's degree programme. In the traditional face-to-face classroom model at both faculties the number of weekly classes for Elementary German is three, distributed over one day, and the total number of classes per year is 90. The syllabus for the distance and traditional face-to-face course is the same. The main objective of the course is to acquire both linguistic knowledge and competences at level A1 CEFR. The printed version of the textbook *Berliner Platz 1 neu* from the German publisher Langenscheidt is used both for distance and traditional learning and teaching. The textbook contains a workbook and 2 CDs which include all of the audio texts and pronunciation exercises from the workbook. The teaching approach in both instructional models is based on communicative tasks and is student-centred. During this research, distance and traditional teaching at the FTHM was carried out by the author, while the traditional classes at the FB were held

by her colleague who, at the same time, monitored and evaluated the work of students of the same faculty on Moodle.

The structural elements of the distance course consist of teaching materials and activities on Moodle, presented in thematic format, i.e. according to chapters in the textbook. Most of the activities are of the closed type, which provide the opportunity to practice reading and listening comprehension, writing, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. The communication elements of the distance course are realized through asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC). The distance students are able to contact each other via e-mail and discussion groups, within the framework of which they can discuss any learning problems, express their views, make comments and suggestions, ask questions regarding the teaching content on Moodle and solve tasks. Because of the large number of teaching and extracurricular commitments in the traditional degree programme and individual students' schedules (work vs. study) neither teacher was able to organize regular synchronous class meetings with the distance students. However, the distance students were allowed to attend face-to-face classes as a supplement to their learning. This was optional.

The same type of grading is applied to work done by the distance and traditional students. The final grade is determined on the basis of pre-exam activities (10 points), the first and second colloquiums<sup>1</sup> (60 points) and the oral exam<sup>2</sup> (30 points).

## **2.3 Data analysis and discussion**

### **Reasons for studying German**

Most of the questions in the questionnaire were related to motivation. The students were asked to tick from a list the most important reason for enrolling in distance or traditional Elementary German and to give any other reason. Figure 1 shows that, of the three named reasons, the most important one in group A was because of work (42.2%), followed by the desire to learn the language (37.8%) and prior learning in school

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<sup>1</sup> These are achievement tests given at the end of the winter and summer semesters, covering only the learnt material. They are developed by the individual teacher for use with a particular group. They primarily assess reading comprehension, grammar, vocabulary and some aspects of writing skills.

<sup>2</sup> This exam requires students to communicate orally in situations that are viewed as practical and realistic (such as introductions, giving directions, shopping, descriptions, or planning a trip). It is always held at the end of the summer semester.

(17.8%). One student (2.2%) offered another reason for learning which was enrolling in Master's studies in Vienna. In group B, the most important reason for the students to opt for the German language was because of work (42.2%), followed by prior learning in school (40%), the desire to learn it (15.6%) and for one student (2.2%) it was essential for enrolling in Master's studies in Germany.

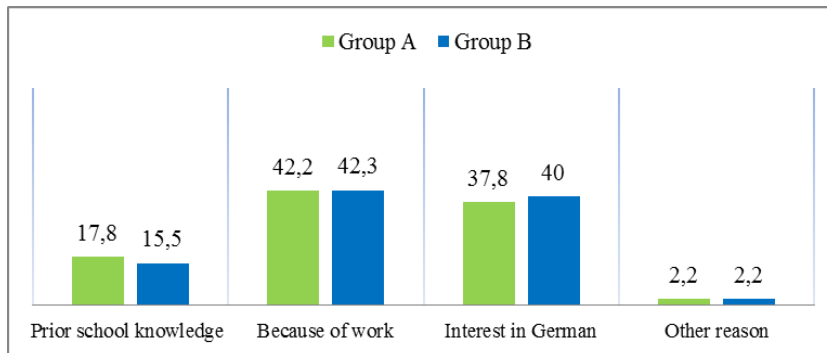


Figure 1. A Comparative Overview of the Students' Motivational Reasons for Choosing Elementary German.

When comparing the responses of the two groups of students it can be seen that the motivation of both was more the desire to achieve some external goal than to realize a personal ambition. The vast majority of distance students (82.2%) and students attending the traditional course (84.4%) chose the subject Elementary German in order to improve their chances of employment, to obtain good grades in the exam with less effort due to prior school knowledge and to continue their education in German-speaking countries. The dominant external motivation for the surveyed students could be linked to economic factors, i.e. the fact that Germany has been Serbia's primary foreign trade partner for many years and that a large number of companies from German-speaking countries operate in Serbia.

### Motivation maintenance

In response to the question as to whether they managed to maintain motivation to study during their Elementary German course, 80% of the distance students stated that they did manage to maintain motivation as opposed to 71.1% of those students who study in a traditional way. These figures are encouraging if we compare them with similar studies (Hurd 2006, Xiao; Hurd 2010) in which half of L2 distance learning students failed to maintain motivation.

### Motivating and demotivating factors

Most of the students from Group A who managed to maintain motivation marked the course materials (41.7%), my teacher (30.5%) and interest in German (27.8%) as the most important factors (Figure 2). A further explanation could be found in the students' comments on that question. One student wrote: 'All the required information reaches the students on time, and I like the orderliness of the subject platform. This platform is the best one we have', while another student stated, 'I have a good basic knowledge of the German language, I like this language and want to use it at work. The materials on the platform are very clear and precise. I can check my knowledge with answers to the practice exercises'.

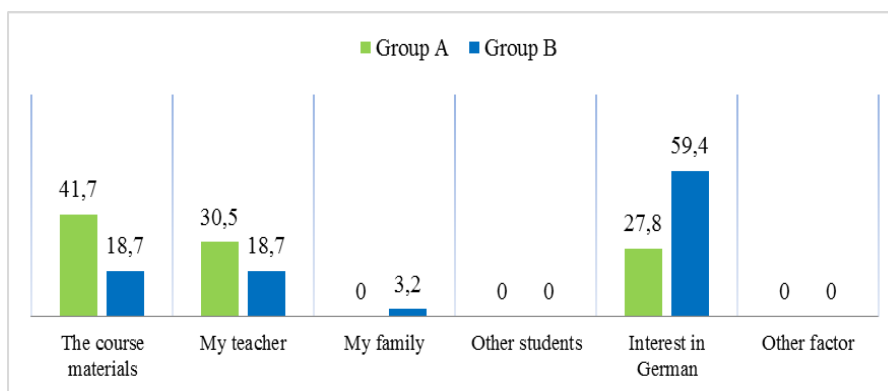


Figure 2. A Comparative Overview of Motivating Factors

For the students from Group B, the most frequent reply was interest in German (59.4%), while 18.7% opted for course materials and my teacher and 3.2% family (Figure 2). Ten students wrote down their observations which confirm the listed factors:

It's important to learn languages, particularly German and English, because of work but also for personal satisfaction.

When I was a child, I used to spend my holidays with relatives in Austria and that's why I became interested in this language and have the desire to learn it.

I like the way our professor teaches, the classes are interesting and I know that she will always help us.

It's very important to know German because it will help us in the future.

My motivation is to master another foreign language.

The professor explains well and we are quite involved in the classes.

I want to finally master the German language, considering that I've been learning it since third grade of primary school. I like the language.

The teacher keeps my attention and maintains motivation for language studying.

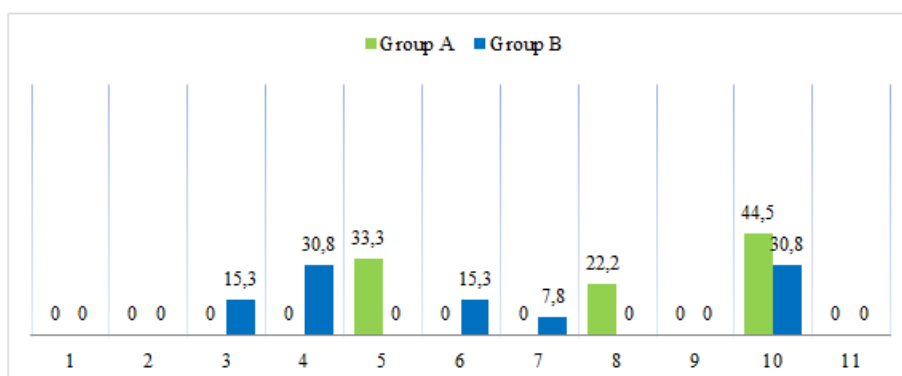
We follow the book in our classes, which is excellent for learning. The professor explains well, points out the mistakes we make and shows us how to correct them.

The professor is the one who maintains our motivation because her classes involve a lot of communication which suits us.

These findings and comments demonstrate that traditional students attributed motivation maintenance to intrinsic factors, in this case interest in German, far more than other factors. On the basis of these comments it could also be concluded that with the help of appropriate teaching materials, methods and techniques, both teachers managed to transform the students' initial extrinsically motivated desire to learn the German language into an intrinsic one which in the study environment manifests itself as enjoying using the language and engaging in communication activities, discovering new rules, solving new tasks etc.

What were the main reasons why some students did not manage to maintain motivation to learn German, regardless of the type of teaching? 20% of the distance students and 28.9% of the traditional students did not manage to do so.

The distance students stated that lack of self-discipline (44.5%), lack of synchronous CMC with the teacher and other students (33.3%) and workplace overload (22.2%) had a negative impact on maintaining motivation (Figure 3).



Note:

1. The course materials
2. Grading criteria
3. My teacher



4. Small number of classes during the week
5. Lack of synchronous CMC
6. Insufficient practice opportunities
7. Overload with other subjects
8. Workplace overload
9. Decreasing interest in German
10. Lack of self-discipline
11. Other factor

Figure 3. A Comparative Overview of Demotivating Factors

On the one hand, this suggests that the distance course communication component might need to be redesigned. The asynchronous CMC would appear not to be enough. Regular synchronous oral interaction between students and teachers and among the students themselves could also be an integral part of the course. On the other hand, some students would appear to have been unable to adapt to the distance course because they experienced difficulties with independent learning. In the Serbian education system the teacher-centred method is widely used from primary school to university level. Both teachers tried to use the student-centred method not only in the traditional but also in the distance course; therefore, this new learning model might have been unfamiliar to some distance students. These findings also reflect the fact that distance students differ from traditional students in various ways. They are usually older than traditional students and they have various responsibilities (i.e. jobs and families) (Yukselturk; Bulut 2007) which might make it more difficult for them to focus on their studies.

The traditional students pointed out lack of self-discipline and the small number of lessons during the week (30.8%) as the most significant factors, followed by my teacher (15.3%), insufficient practice opportunities (15.3%) and overload with other subjects (7.8%) (Figure 3). Three students explained their answers to this question:

I consider the small number of classes as the main culprit because once a week is too little, it would be better to split the three lessons over three days, which means that we would study for three days a week and not just one.

I think that the number of classes should be increased.

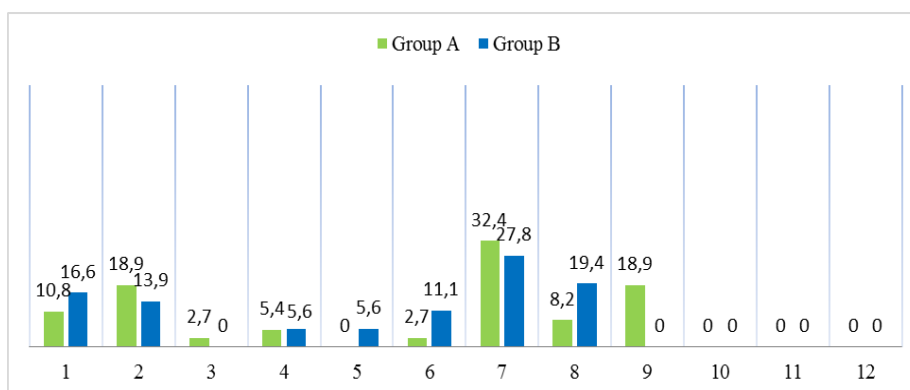
The teacher had the most influence on the drop in my motivation to study because of her insufficient dedication to those students who have just started to learn the language.

The first two comments were heard frequently among the traditional students. They feel that it is not possible to master the German language if there are not enough classes at faculties. The experience of the traditional students in this respect reflects to some

extent the status of the German language at non-philological faculties in Serbia. From being the only foreign language, to becoming the language of science, then a banned language, the German language today holds the status of an elective course with fewer and fewer classes, with an increasingly smaller number of students choosing this language and earning an increasingly smaller number of credits for doing so (Krželj 2014). The drop in the number of students who study German at university is the consequence of the freedom they have to select their first foreign language (normally English) which will be studied throughout the entire education process (Krželj 2014). However, this phenomenon is not specific only to Serbian higher education but can be noticed in the majority of universities which are striving to harmonise their development with the demands of the Bologna Declaration (Lévy-Hillerich; Serena 2009).

### Ways to maintain motivation

The majority of the students, 82.2% of the distance students and 80% of the traditional students, believe that they found ways to motivate themselves during their studies (Figure 4). Positive self-talk is the way which most of the students from Group A chose (32.4%), followed by: watching German TV channels and seeking support from my teacher (18.9%), keeping in touch with German native speakers (10.8%), attending face-to-face classes as often as possible (8.2%), listening to or singing German songs (5.4%), watching German films and setting goals and keeping them under review (2.7%). The most common answer for the traditional studies students was also positive self-talk (27.8%). This was followed by attending face-to-face classes as often as possible (19.4%), keeping in touch with German native speakers (16.6%), watching German TV channels (13.9%), setting goals and keeping them under review (11.1%), listening to or singing German songs and reading German (5.6%).



Note:

1. Keeping in touch with German native speakers
2. Watching German TV channels
3. Watching German films
4. Listening to or singing German songs
5. Reading German (e.g. German newspapers, comics, etc.)
6. Setting goals and keeping them under review
7. Positive self-talk
8. Attending face-to-face classes as often as possible
9. Seeking support from my teacher
10. Seeking support from other students
11. Seeking support from my family
12. Other strategy

Figure 4. A Comparative Overview of the Students' Ways to Keep Motivated

It can be noted that both groups of students used several ways to help with self-motivation. The most significant strategy for both groups was positive self-talk. A small number of students recognised the value of a very significant strategy which demands that students set themselves goals and follow the level of progress in their achievements, and less than one quarter of the distance students attended regular classes to maintain motivation.

The answers gained could be interpreted as the consequence of individual differences in maintaining motivation among the respondents. However, it is important to encourage students to implement and consistently use those strategies which were established as being neglected in comparison with others. Numerous studies have proven how much reading, listening to music and watching films in German contribute not only to motivation, but also to better memorisation of new words (Abraham 2009, Perner 2014, Pleß 2014, Sass 2007, Wild 2015) and how valuable social peer support can be in strengthening motivation (Hurd 2000, Xiao; Hurd 2010).

### **Motivation fluctuation and satisfaction**

The students' responses on issues related to changes in motivation, attitudes toward the subject and engagement in learning could be analyzed by comparing their frequencies in the two groups of respondents. The  $\chi^2$ -test of independence provides an adequate analysis of the relationship between two groups with the same number of respondents. The test measures the intensity of the connections between the attributive (qualitative) characteristics in groups but does not show the nature of such connections. The following tables give the values of the  $\chi^2$ -test for compliance (correlation) for the two groups of students for the observed characteristic.

As for whether motivation for learning German had changed during their studies, in the case of the distance students, motivation had increased for 31.1%, decreased for 17.8% and remained the same for 51.1%. The motivation for learning German via classes had increased for 35.5% of the traditional students, decreased for 20%, and for 44.5% it had remained the same. By means of statistical analysis, according to the values of the  $\chi^2$ -test, it was established that both groups of students can be considered statistically equal in terms of motivational changes during their studies (Table 1). The fact that more than a third of them managed to increase their motivation can be interpreted as positive, bearing in mind that this group of students did not have the opportunity to communicate orally with the teacher in the German language.

	DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS			$\chi^2$ – test, (gr.A ↔ gr.B) ( $p = 0.05$ )	
	AVERAGE VALUE ( $\bar{X}$ )	STAND. DEV. ( $\sigma$ )	COEFIC. VARIATION (CV-%)	Probability $\chi^2$ statistic	Compliance frequency by groups
Group A	2.20	0.89	40.66	0.818	Equal
Group B	2.09	0.90	43.09		

Table 1. A Comparative Overview of the Rise and Fall of the Students' Motivation

The questionnaire provided answers to the question of how satisfied the students are with the distance and traditional teaching of the subject Elementary German. Group A students responded to this question as follows: 55.6% were completely satisfied, 28.9% were mostly satisfied, and 15.5% were fairly satisfied. There were no entirely dissatisfied or not very satisfied students. In response to the same question, 51.1% of the students in group B said they were mostly satisfied, 28.9% that they were completely satisfied, 17.8% fairly satisfied and 2.2% were generally dissatisfied. These groups could be considered statistically equal in terms of their expressed satisfaction with the quality of teaching (Table 2). However, the distance learning students were slightly more satisfied with the quality of teaching (the average value of the responses in group A = 4.40 is higher than in group B = 4.07), although the difference is not large enough for the hypothesis to be adopted. In sum, this question shows positive student attitudes towards both distance and traditional teaching in terms of their appeal and helpfulness.

	DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS			$\chi^2$ – test, (gr.A ↔ gr.B) ( $p = 0.05$ )	
	AVERAGE VALUE ( $\bar{X}$ )	STAND. DEV. ( $\sigma$ )	COEFIC. VARIATION (CV-%)	Probability $\chi^2$ statistic	Compliance frequency by groups:

Group A	4.40	0.75	17.06	0.054	Equal
Group B	4.07	0.75	18.46		

Table 2. A Comparative Overview of the Students' Satisfaction Level with the Quality of Teaching

The students were asked to make suggestions for the organization of the teaching of the German language (Figure 5). The distance students believe that there is much less that should be changed compared with what should be kept. A large percentage (95.5%) agreed that the method of providing feedback from teachers should not be changed, nor should the way of preparing and presenting the educational content on Moodle (86.7%). The monitoring and assessment process should not be changed either (84.5%), nor the textbook or the time and number of office hours with the teacher (73.3%). Several students made the following suggestions and comments: 'I don't think anything should be changed in terms of the quality and organisation', 'I would like more online lectures', 'We should practice pronunciation more' and 'I think the platform was well designed, but the problem is the lack of oral communication with the teacher. That should be improved'.

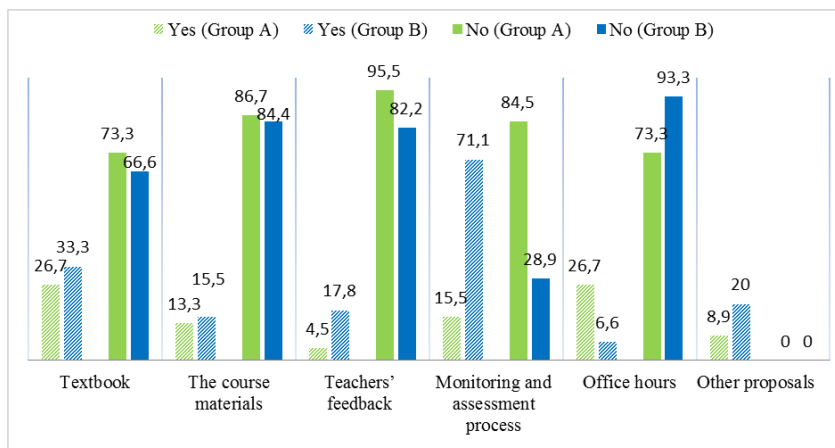


Figure 5. A Comparative Overview of the Students' Proposals

From the group of traditional students the most objections related to the monitoring and assessment process; 71.1% of the students suggested that it should be more demanding (e.g. 'the colloquiums are very easy', 'the teacher should be stricter'). The times and number of office hours with the teacher should not be changed (93.4%), nor should the feedback from teachers (82.2%), the preparation method or the presentation of the course content during lessons (84.5%) or the textbook (66.7%). Several students added their proposals, among them were: 'Maybe watching a film or listening to songs. It's important to hear how the words are pronounced because of the accent', 'More

repetition of grammar' and 'More lessons a week or to redistribute the current number of classes in a different way'.

Although both groups of students gave quite similar answers, the differences in their opinions refer to the monitoring and assessment process. In the open-ended comments section, the classroom-based students suggested that they should be more rigorously monitored and tested before they take the final test to encourage them to learn more in an on-going way. It seems that they were more objective in their opinions in comparison to their colleagues attending the distance course, who would appear not to have any complaints about the monitoring and assessment process. This conclusion is rooted in the respondents' scores on a non-standardized proficiency test<sup>3</sup> which was administered between June and September 2014 in accordance with the work obligations of both the examiners and students (see Appendix B).

The implemented test belongs to the category of summative assessment because its purpose was to determine whether the goals of the syllabus (to achieve level A1 after two years of study) were achieved and which changes, which will apply to the next generations of students, the teacher should implement in the teaching process (Green 2014). In order to reduce the subjectivity in the assessment process to a minimum, the responses to the test were anonymized (Dörnyei 2009). The test consisted of two parts: 1) a written part, which tested reading comprehension skills (25 minutes), listening comprehension skills (20 minutes) and writing skills (25 minutes); 2) an oral part, which tested speaking skills (15 minutes). The total score was 100. The students' achievements were compared and interpreted according to the following scale: 1 (0-59), 2 (60-69), 3 (70-79), 4 (80-89) and 5 (90-100). The distance learning students achieved an average score of 2.04 on the test and the students attending traditional courses 2.40.

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<sup>3</sup> The costs and organizational difficulties were the reason why Start Deutsch 1, a well-known standardized proficiency test, was not used in the present study.

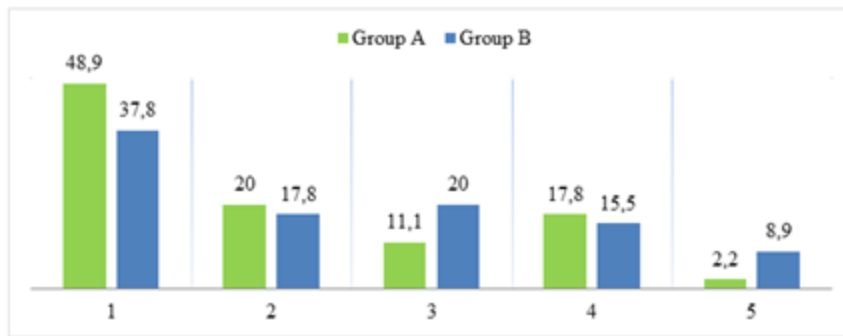
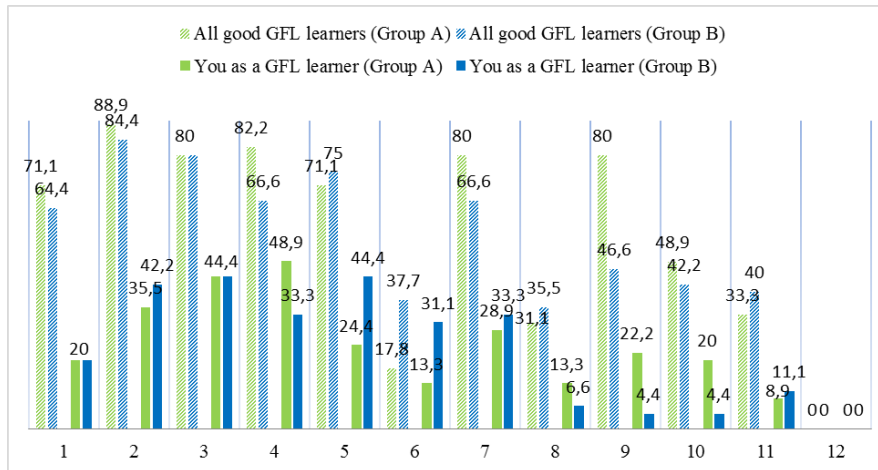


Figure 6. A Comparative Overview of the Students' Test Score

Group A's test results indicate that almost half of the respondents (48.9%) did not achieve 60 points, i.e. did not reach level A1 (Figure 6). 20% of them were awarded a score of 2, 17.8% grade 4, while 11.1% received 3. Only 2.2% of the respondents achieved a score of 5. More than a third of the students (37.8%) in group B did not achieve the minimum satisfactory result (Figure 6). 20% of them were graded with a 3, 17.8% with a 2, and 15.5% 4. An extremely small number of the respondents (8.9%) scored between 90 and 100 points. All this suggests that, regardless of the respondents' attitudes, there is a need for more rigorous monitoring and assessment prior to the final test because the average test score is, by all accounts, very low.

### Learner beliefs

In addition to researching motivation, the goal of the questionnaire was also to analyse the students' opinions regarding those characteristics, i.e. abilities, associated with a good GFL student. In Group A, the most frequent answers in percentages were: persistence in following the curriculum (88.9%), the ability to make good decisions about my German studies (82.2%), maintaining enthusiasm/motivation and the ability to assess own strengths and weaknesses (80%), confidence in being successful at German and the ability to fit German studies around other commitments (71.1%) (Figure 7). Nevertheless, the students did not attach as much importance to the following abilities: willingness to accept constructive criticism (48.9%), being good at taking the initiative (33.3%), willingness to take risks (31.1%) and the ability to get on with other learners (17.8%).



Note:

1. Confidence in being successful at German
2. Persistence in following the curriculum
3. Maintaining enthusiasm/motivation
4. Ability to make good decisions for myself about my German studies (e.g. what to learn, how to learn, the pace, etc.)
5. Ability to fit German studies around other commitments
6. Ability to get on with other learners
7. Ability to assess own strengths and weaknesses
8. Willingness to take risks (even if mistakes are made)
9. Being self-aware and reflective
10. Willingness to accept constructive criticism
11. Being good at taking the initiative
12. Other characteristic(s)

Figure 7. A Comparative Overview of the Students' Beliefs

As a part of same question, both groups were also tasked with marking the characteristics/abilities they believe they possess. The answers given by the distance students reflect that 48.9% believe they have the ability to make good decisions about their German studies, 44.4% that they can maintain enthusiasm/motivation, 35.5% that they are persistent in following the curriculum, 28.9% that they have the ability to assess their own strengths and weaknesses, 24.4% that they know how to fit their German studies around other commitments, 22.2% that they are self-aware and reflective, 20% that they are confident in being successful at German and willing to accept constructive criticism. A very small number of the distance students believe that they know how to get on with other learners (13.3%), take risks (13.3%) or the initiative (8.9%).

The answers given by the traditional students are slightly different (Figure 7). The most frequent answers were that a good GFL student is persistent in following the curriculum (84.4%), knows how to maintain enthusiasm/motivation (80%) and has the ability to fit



their German studies around other commitments (75%). 66.6% think that a good GFL student has the ability to make good decisions about their German studies and to assess their own strengths and weaknesses, while 64.4% claim that a good student is confident in being successful at German. Less than half of the traditional students believe that a good GFL learner is self-aware and reflective (46.6%), accepts constructive criticism (42.2%), takes the initiative (40%), gets on with other learners (37.7%) and is willing to take risks (35.5%).

When evaluating their capabilities, 44.4% of the students from Group B claim to know how to maintain enthusiasm/motivation and to fit their German studies around other commitments, 42.2% believe they are persistent in following the curriculum, 33.3% that they have the ability to make good decisions about their German studies and to assess their own strengths and weaknesses, 31.1% claim to know how to get on with other learners, and only 20% believe they are confident in being successful at German. 11.1% claim to take the initiative, 6.6% to show willingness to take risks, and 4.4% to possess self-awareness and reflectiveness. There were no additional comments from either group.

The results show that both groups of students have a quite clear idea about which metacognitive abilities and features characterise a good GFL student. However, less than half of the participants from both groups believe that a good GFL student is self-aware and reflective, accepts constructive criticism, gets on with other learners, takes the initiative and that the possibility of making mistakes does not prevent him/her from participating in activities. As for personal perceptions, it was concluded that more than half of the students from both groups profess not to possess the aforementioned characteristics and abilities. Such findings suggest that teachers should conduct more metacognitive activities 'so that the students gain knowledge of how to learn, how to monitor their learning progress, and how to self-correct' (Walqui; van Lier 2010: 84).

Teacher interventions, such as counselling and instruction about the existence and significance of various metacognitive strategies could help students to bring their 'actual self' closer to their 'ought self', to acquire more self-confidence and develop appropriate learning and organisational skills. In the virtual environment, lectures on this subject could be presented to students in the form of video recordings or, even better, through the use of audio and video conferencing in which the two-way interaction between distance students and teacher develops freely, something which can be facilitated by good technical equipment on both sides. Although the teacher plays a

significant role in bridging the differences between the ‘actual self’ and the ‘ought self’ (Higgins 1987), a positive result can only be achieved if students show readiness to change.

### Time spent learning German

The research was based on the assumption that the distance students would spend significantly more time learning the German language because of the flexibility offered by distance learning, the lack of oral communication with teachers, encounters with new ways of learning a foreign language and the fact that they are mainly employed people who have embraced this study concept in the desire to expand their knowledge and not simply for the purposes of obtaining a diploma. The answers to the question of how much time they spend studying gave us this picture: 46.7% of the distance students study German for up to an hour a week, 26.7% for up to two hours, 4.4% up to three hours, 11.1% for more than three hours, 2.2% study just before a test and 8.9% of the students in this group do not study at all.

The fact is that traditional students allocate little time for studying. Thus, 42.2% of the respondents from group B spend up to one hour a week studying, 28.9% up to two hours, 4.4% up to three hours, 2.2% more than three hours, and 4.4% just before a test, while 17.9% of the students do not study at all. Both groups can be considered statistically equal in terms of the time spent studying the German language (Table 3). However, when we compare the number of students in both groups who claimed to study (91.1% in group A, compared to 82.1% in group B) with the number who claimed not to study (8.9% in group A, compared to 17.9% in group B) we can see that more distance students study. Nonetheless, these findings and low scores on the non-standardized proficiency test lead to the conclusion that neither of the two groups studies enough to achieve high test scores and therefore to demonstrate they have reached the expected level of achievement.

	DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS			$\chi^2$ – test, (gr. A ↔ gr.B) ( $p = 0.05$ )	
	AVERAGE VALUE ( $\bar{X}$ )	STAND. DEV. ( $\sigma$ )	COEFIC. VARIATION (CV-%)	Probability $\chi^2$ statistic	Compliance frequency by groups:
Group A	2.22	1.61	72.36	0.483	Equal
Group B	2.51	1.90	75.76		

Table 3. A Comparative Overview of the Time Invested in Studying German

How can we improve the level of studying of both groups of students, considering the fact that, as a rule, work habits and self-discipline develop during school time (Corno 2008, Dweck; Walton; Cohen 2014)? Some of the possible solutions could be: increasing the percentage share of pre-exam activities in the overall grade (e.g. from 10% to 30%),<sup>4</sup> the continuous monitoring of students through the implementation of short tests whose results will have some impact on the final grade, encouraging weaker students to come to office hours regularly and sanctioning students who show a lack of discipline in following the educational content on Moodle and completing their study obligations (for instance disabling access to the next online lesson until they have completed all of the activities from the previous online lessons). Implementing a more rigorous work schedule might, however, also have an adverse effect on motivation and attitude.

It is also the case that teachers' psychological interventions can change students' mindsets. Dweck, Walton and Cohen (2014) give many useful indications as to how teachers can foster student tenacity and performance (i.e. by helping them to see how the syllabus is relevant to their own lives, demonstrating the intrinsic value of teaching material, holding them to high standards and giving them the attention and scaffolding they need to meet those standards). To what extent the proposed measures and directions might be effective remains to be verified in the author's future research.

## 2.4 Suggestions

Based on the students' responses, the following suggestions may be useful for distance and traditional courses in the design of a high-quality learning environment:

- Singidunum University needs to re-evaluate its views about assessment content/difficulty and the weekly class scheduling in the traditional degree programme. The traditional course should meet at least four days per week, for 50 minutes each class period. In work with both groups of students a variety of forms of assessment needs to be implemented. In order to encourage regular work and greater retention the author supports continuous assessment which, in contrast to the traditional assessment system with a single final exam, places the focus on students'

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<sup>4</sup> In this case, it is possible that distance students will do their pre-exam activities with the help of others (although it is unlikely that all will have consistent help from somebody with advanced German skills). The possibility of cheating can be eliminated with adequate time limits for doing pre-exam activities and the greater presence of activities based on the use of synchronous forms of CMC and group work.

continuous autonomous work and self-evaluation. This will not be a simple task and both students and teachers will need time to adapt to the new approach to evaluation.

- During the teaching process, teachers should introduce the distance and traditional students to the advantages of using metacognitive strategies, giving diagnostic tests several times during the academic year and encouraging students to carry out peer- and self-assessment. This ties in with Garner's contention that 'to make an individual metacognitively aware is to ensure that the individual has learned how to learn' (Hurd 2000: 76).
- The course content in the traditional instructional model should consist of more audio-visual materials which better meet the motivational needs of the GFL students (i.e. German songs, didactic video clips and supplementary pronunciation tutorials).
- Because of insufficient opportunities for interaction on Moodle it is important to relieve teachers of some of their weekly classes for traditional studies in order to make more time for synchronous and asynchronous CMC with distance students. As concluded by Sánchez-Serrano (2008: 172), '[i]nstitutions must realize the specific demands of the field and its particular teaching context when hiring and supporting [online] teachers to fulfil their missions'.

## **2.5 Limitations of the Study**

This study draws upon the experience of a relatively small group of distance and traditional GFL students at a specific university in Serbia. It may not be possible to transfer some or all of the findings to other contexts, given the small number of participants. Nonetheless, this kind of study has never been conducted in Serbia and can, therefore, inform future studies.

## **3. Conclusion**

This study has revealed some useful insights into the motivational orientation of traditional and distance GFL learners in Serbia. On the basis of the results the following conclusions can be drawn.

The motivation of choice for the distance and traditional GFL students at Singidunum University is mainly extrinsic. Most students enrolled in Elementary German in order to improve their chances of employment.

The distance studies students and those following traditional studies could be considered as statistically equal in terms of the changes in motivation during their studies, the satisfaction they expressed regarding the quality of teaching and the time spent learning the German language. The vast majority of students from both groups

managed to maintain motivation for learning German during their studies. These encouraging facts are important for faculties planning to introduce German or other foreign languages into their distance degree programmes. In both groups, interest in German and the course materials ranked highest among the motivating factors, while the most demotivating factor was lack of self-discipline.

As regards suggestions for the organisation of the distance and traditional GFL teaching, the students believe that most of it should not be changed. Differences of opinion related to assessment difficulty. The traditional students advocate more monitoring and testing prior to the final test in order to allow them to prepare adequately for it and to reach the goals of the syllabus. The poor results achieved in the non-standardized proficiency test confirm that they were right.

The findings of this study suggest that both groups of students need to be trained in metacognitive skills such as time planning, self-monitoring, seeking social assistance, and reflecting on personal learning habits. These are particularly important for the distance students who often have other responsibilities outside their studies (e.g. family, job).

Both groups of students used several ways to maintain motivation and the most significant was positive self-talk. However, the value of many strategies was not recognized (seeking help from peers, watching German films, reading German, setting goals and keeping them under review). This finding suggests that teachers need to target their efforts more towards these under-used strategies.

The distance foreign language learning field in Serbia is in its early stages and its design still has a long road of improvements ahead. This is why it is important to encourage those L2 teachers in Serbia who are involved in distance learning to carry out research in order to study the achievements of their distance learning students, the level of their satisfaction with the course, their motivation, the time invested in learning and those organisational and other factors which influence students' achievements because, as Goertler and Winke have stated (2008: 254): 'By knowing the success and failures of others who have already embarked on developing hybrid or distance learning courses, others can follow in their footsteps but avoid making some of the same mistakes'.

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### Author Biography

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### Key words

Motivation, learner beliefs, GFL, traditional and distance language learning, pedagogical implications

### Appendix A: Questionnaire

First and second name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Student book number: \_\_\_\_\_ Faculty: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) Why did you choose German as a second foreign language? In the column tick only ONE most important reason. You can use the blank line to give any reason which is not in the table.

Most important
Because I like the language and want to learn it
Because of work
Because I already studied it at school
Other reason

Other reason: \_\_\_\_\_

- 2) Did you stay motivated during your studies? Tick the appropriate answer.

Yes

No

- 3) If you are managing to stay motivated, to what would you attribute this? In the column tick only ONE most important factor. You can use the blank line to give any factor which is not in the table. If possible, please explain your choice.

Most important	Explanation:
The course materials	
My teacher	
My family	
Other students	
Interest in English	
Other factor	

Other factor: \_\_\_\_\_

- 4) If you are not managing to stay motivated, to what would you attribute this? In the column tick only ONE most important factor. You can use the blank line to give any factor which is not in the table. If possible, please explain your choice.

Most important	Explanation:
The course materials	
Grading criteria	
My teacher	
Small number of classes during the week	
Lack of synchronous CMC	
Insufficient practice opportunities	
Overload with other subjects	
Workplace overload	
Decreasing interest in German	
Lack of self-discipline	
Other factor	



Other factor: \_\_\_\_\_

- 5) Have you developed any particular strategy to keep yourself motivated throughout your study of Elementary German? In the column tick only ONE most important strategy. You can use the blank line to give any strategy which is not in the table.

	Most important
Keeping in touch with German native speakers	
Watching German TV channels	
Watching German films	
Listening to or singing German songs	
Reading German (e.g. German newspaper, comics, etc.)	
Setting goals and keeping them under review	
Positive self-talk	
Attending face-to-face tutorials as often as possible	
Seeking support from my teacher	
Seeking support from other students	
Seeking support from my family	
Other strategy	

Other strategy: \_\_\_\_\_

- 6) Did your motivation to study German change during your studies? Tick the appropriate answer.

- Yes, it increased  
 Yes, it decreased  
 No, it remained the same

- 7) How satisfied are you with the teaching quality of Elementary German? Circle the appropriate number.

- 1 Not at all  
2 Not very  
3 Fairly  
4 Mostly  
5 Completely

- 8) What would you change in the organisation of the German language teaching? In the first column tick everything which in your opinion should be changed and in the second one what should not. You can use the blank line to write other suggestions which are not included in the table.

	Yes	No	Explanation:
Textbook			
Course materials			
Teachers' feedback			
Monitoring and assessment process			
Office hours			
Other suggestion(s)			

Other suggestion(s): \_\_\_\_\_

- 9) Which characteristics would you say describe a good German language learner? In the first column please tick all the characteristics, which, in your opinion, apply to all good German language learners. And in the second column tick all the characteristics which apply to you and which you feel have helped you to become a

better German language learner. You can use the blank line to write other characteristics which are not included in the table.

Characteristics	All good GFL learners	You as a GFL learner
Confidence in being successful at German		
Persistence in following the curriculum		
Maintaining enthusiasm/motivation		
Ability to make good decisions for myself about my German studies (e.g. what to learn, how to learn, the pace, etc.)		
Ability to fit German studies around other commitments		
Ability to get on with other learners		
Ability to assess own strengths and weaknesses		
Willingness to take risks (even if mistakes are made)		
Being self-aware and reflective		
Willingness to accept constructive criticism		
Being good at taking the initiative		
Other characteristics		

Other characteristic(s): \_\_\_\_\_

10) How much time a week do you spend learning Elementary German? Tick the answer.

- Up to 1 hour
- Up to 2 hours
- Up to 3 hours
- Over 3 hours
- Just before a test
- I don't study

## Appendix B: Non-standardized proficiency test

**LESEVERSTEHEN**

**Dauer: 25 Minuten**

### Aufgabe 1

Kurze Informationen. Kreuzen Sie an: RICHTIG oder FALSCH.

1. An der Bushaltestelle:

Die Linie 22 fährt in dieser Woche nur bis Praunheim.  
Reisende nach Steinbach und Oberursel können die Anschlussbusse nehmen.

**Mann kann mit dem Bus nach Steinbach fahren.**

RICHTIG

FALSCH

2. An der Arztpraxis

Dr. Uwe H. Mayer  
Frauenarzt

Sprechstunde  
Mo-Do, 10-15 Uhr  
Fr, 14-19 Uhr

**Am Freitagvormittag ist Dr. Mayer in der Praxis.**

RICHTIG

FALSCH

3. Im Supermarkt

Sonderangebot!  
Kaffee aus Argentinien  
Zitronen aus Griechenland  
Salat aus Serbien

**Der Kaffee ist heute nicht teuer.**

RICHTIG

FALSCH

4. Im Restaurant

Bei Klaus und Eva  
Die „Super 4“-Band singt heute Abend für Sie  
Eintritt und 2 Getränke 7 Euro  
Abendessen ab 9.90 Euro

**Mann kann für 7 Euro zu Abend zu essen.**

RICHTIG

FALSCH

5. In der Uni:

Öffnungszeiten Sekretariat

Mo-Mi-Fr 9-13 Uhr

Di-Do 14-19 Uhr

**Mann kann jeden Vormittag mit der Sekräterin sprechen.**

RICHTIG

FALSCH

**Aufgabe 2**

Lesen Sie den Text, danach kreuzen Sie an: Richtig oder Falsch.



Mein Name ist Goran Tomić. Ich bin jetzt 50, und Tamara, meine Frau, ist 44 Jahre alt. Ich bin aus Kragujevac. Ich habe früher in Kragujevac gelebt. Mein Vater war Bauer. Zu Hause waren fünf Kinder. Meine Frau kommt auch aus Kragujevac. Wir haben dort 1982 geheiratet. Wir haben eine Tochter, Nina, und einen Sohn, Nemanja. Nina ist 24, Nemanja ist 22. Von 1983 bis 1990 haben wir in Belgrad gewohnt. Seit 1991 leben wir in Deutschland. Ich bin Mechaniker und habe vier Jahre in Düsseldorf bei VW gearbeitet. Meine Frau war zu Hause und hat den Haushalt gemacht. Seit 1995 arbeite ich in Stuttgart bei Siemens. Nemanja ist auch Mechaniker und arbeitet auch bei uns in der Firma. Nina studiert Kunst in Düsseldorf. Natürlich haben beide gut Deutsch gelernt. 2002 haben wir in Serbien ein Haus gekauft. Es steht direkt an der Donau. Wir machen dort gem. Ferien.

- |  |                |
|--|----------------|
| 6. Goran und Tamara haben 1982 geheiratet.         | Richtig Falsch |
| 7. Goran ist aus Serbien.                          | Richtig Falsch |
| 8. Goran und Tamara haben 3 Kinder.                | Richtig Falsch |
| 9. Sie haben von 1982 bis 1995 in Belgrad gewohnt. | Richtig Falsch |
| 10. Sie leben seit 1995 in Deutschland.            | Richtig Falsch |
| 11. Goran hat fünf Jahre bei VW gearbeitet.        | Richtig Falsch |
| 12. Familie Tomić hat 2002 ein Haus gekauft.       | Richtig Falsch |
| 13. Nina und Nemanja sprechen kein Deutsch.        | Richtig Falsch |
| 14. Nina studiert Physik.                          | Richtig Falsch |
| 15. Nemanja arbeitet bei VW in Düsseldorf.         | Richtig Falsch |

**Aufgabe 3**

Wohin gehören die Möbel? Ordnen Sie zu!

Schlafzimmer	Bad	Küche

- 16) Elektroherd
- 17) Waschbecken
- 18) Badewanne
- 19) Doppelbett
- 20) Spülmaschine

**Aufgabe 4**

Wer sagt was? Lesen Sie und ordnen Sie zu.

Ji Chan = J

Ji findet Berlin super. Die Exkursion hat ihr Spaß gemacht: der Flohmarkt, die Disko, der Potsdamer Platz. „Berlin ist sehr modern“, sagte sie. Das gefällt ihr. In der Gruppe war eine tolle Atmosphäre. Das ist auch gut für das Studium, man lernt die anderen Studenten gut kennen. Ji sagt, sie kennt leider keine Berliner. Sie möchte bald wieder nach Berlin fahren.

Ted Davidson = T

Ted findet die Berlin-Exkursion auch toll, aber zu kurz. Man braucht mehr Zeit für die Stadt. Er will wieder nach Berlin fahren. Er interessiert sich für Architektur. Modern, klassisch, alt, neu- hier gibt es alles. Er hat ein Fahrrad gemietet und war abends unterwegs. Ted hat 200 Fotos gemacht.

- T besichtigt gem Häuser                      23.  mag das moderne Berlin.
21.  findet die Gruppe gut.                      24.  ist sportlich und gern unterwegs.
22.  hat viel fotografiert.                      25.  mag Musik und Diskos.

Punkte gesamt (max. 25): \_\_\_\_\_

**HÖRVERSTEHEN****Dauer: 20 Minuten****Aufgabe 1**

Wo hören Sie das? Sie hören Geräusche nur einmal.

Situationen:

- A- in der Schule
- B- im Restaurant
- C- auf der Straße
- D- auf dem Fußballplatz
- E- auf dem Flughafen
- F- im Supermarkt
- G- in der Disko

Geräusch	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Situation							

**Aufgabe 2**

Hören Sie die Texte zweimal und kreuzen Sie an. Was ist richtig A, B oder C?

8. Was soll Karl noch einkaufen?
  - A Wein
  - B Gemüse
  - C Brot
9. Wann sollen die Leute kommen
  - A am Donnerstag
  - B am Samstag
  - C morgen
10. Wann ist der Arzt in der Praxis
  - A am Wochenende
  - B am Nachmittag
  - C am Vormittag
11. Die Nummer ist
  - A 67645
  - B 66754

**Aufgabe 3**

Lesen Sie die Aussagen 12-17. Hören Sie den Text zweimal. Richtig (R) oder falsch (F) ? Kreuzen Sie an.

- 12. Herr Lenczak arbeitet seit 5 Jahren bei der Firma Schubach. R F
- 13. Er arbeitet in Hannover als Taxifahrer. R F
- 14. Am Montag und Dienstag hat er frei. R F
- 15. Frau Fenzel arbeitet im Krankenhaus. R F
- 16. Ihre Kinder hatten einen schlimmen Verkehrsunfall. R F
- 17. Sie muss manchmal am Wochenende arbeiten. R F

**Aufgabe 4**

Hören Sie die Gespräche einmal und kreuzen Sie an.

Peter	Frau Herzog	Walter	Herr Kaleschke	
				hat Grippe
				hat Husten
				hat Schnupfen
				hat Kopfschmerzen
				nimmt Hustenbonbons
				möchte nicht mitkommen
				kann nicht arbeiten
				muss Klavier spielen

Punkte gesamt (max. 25): \_\_\_\_\_

**SCHRIFTLICHER AUSDRUCK Dauer: 25 Minuten**

**Aufgabe 1**

Ich arbeite im Kontiki Call Center in Madrid in Spanien. Ich muss beruflich viel telefonieren. Ich kann Spanisch, Deutsch und Englisch sprechen, also bekomme ich die Anrufe aus Großbritannien, den USA und Deutschland. Meine Kolleginnen und ich sitzen zusammen in einem Büro. Wir beraten unsere Kunden am Telefon, informieren sie über Reisen und reservieren Flugtickets. Wir müssen am Telefon immer freundlich sein, das ist nicht leicht. Unsere Arbeitszeit ist flexibel und wir müssen manchmal auch am Wochenende arbeiten. Ich habe dann wenig Zeit für meine Familie. Meine Tochter ist leider keine Hilfe im Haushalt, sie kann stundenlang telefonieren, aber sie kann nicht kochen.

Dolores, 41 Jahre alt

**Ergänzen Sie die Informationen über die Person:**

1. Sprachen: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Arbeitsort: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Arbeitszeit: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Kinder: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Was ist manchmal schwer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Aufgabe 2**

**Erklären Sie was Ihr Traumberuf ist! Zu jedem Punkt schreiben Sie ein bis zwei Sätze:**

- Arbeitszeit
- Tätigkeit (Aktivität)
- Vor- und Nachteile des Berufes

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**Punkte gesamt (max. 25):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**MÜNDLICHER AUSDRUCK**

**Dauer: 15 Minuten**

**Aufgabe 1**

**Stellen Sie sich bitte vor. Zu jedem Punkt sagen Sie einen Satz.**

- Name:
- Beruf:
- Wohnort:
- Familienstand:
- Kinder:
- Alter:
- Freizeit:
- Lieblingsessen:
- Telefonnummer:
- Adresse:

**Aufgabe 2**

**Sagen Sie in 4-5 Sätzen etwas über**

- 1) Mein Haus / Meine Wohnung
- 2) Mein Tagesablauf (Wie sieht Ihr Tag aus?)
- 3) Was haben Sie gestern gemacht?
- 4) Was essen und trinken Sie (nicht) gern?
- 5) Mein eigenes Zimmer
- 6) Meine Freizeit
- 7) Sport
- 8) Musik
- 9) Sie möchten ans Meer fahren. Was nehmen Sie mit?
- 10) Sie fahren in die Alpen. Was packen Sie ein?
- 11) Aufgaben im Haushalt
- 12) Einkaufen (wo, wie oft, was)
- 13) Wie kommen Sie nach Hause?
- 14) Was ist interessant in Belgrad?
- 15) Reisen (wohin, womit, mit wem)
- 16) Welche Geschenke bekommen Sie gern?
- 17) Welche Sache ist für Sie sehr wichtig und warum?
- 18) Sagen Sie etwas über eine bekannte Person
- 19) Sagen Sie etwas über ein Land
- 20) Bestellen Sie etwas im Restaurant
- 21) Meine Stadt
- 22) Ausgehen
- 23) Urlaub

**Aufgabe 3**

**Stellen Sie eine Frage an den Partner verbunden mit seinem Thema.**