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**Кваліфікаційна робота**

**Порівняння зовнішнього незалежного тестування з англійської мови (ЗНО) в Україні та випускного іспиту з англійської мови в Угорщині**

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**COMPARING THE EXTERNAL INDEPENDENT TESTING IN  
ENGLISH (ZNO) IN UKRAINE AND THE ENGLISH MATURA  
EXAMINATION IN HUNGARY**

Master's Thesis

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## **Introduction**

A school leaving examination is a very significant event in a person's life. As its meaning implies, it is the time when a young person starts on the road to adulthood, when they begin to think about their future, even to plan for it. The school-leaving examination is the final stage of secondary education, so the results of the examination are largely determined by the quality of secondary education. The school-leaving exam not only symbolizes the conclusion of eleven (in Ukraine) or twelve (in Hungary) years of public schooling, but it also establishes a course for the future. Data obtained from examinations is used to make critical judgments such as selection, placement, and measuring the instructional effectiveness of a program of study.

The school-leaving examination (Matura for short) is the final examination for secondary education and admission to higher education, which is included in the legislation of many countries and in many places - including Hungary, where the two-level school-leaving certificate was introduced - it replaces the examination in the higher education admission procedure. It can be a final examination of an academic nature, a qualifying examination for a job or a social position, a qualifying examination or an entrance examination.

In the Hungarian educational system, the secondary school-leaving test (Matura) is the most important exam. It marks the end of a student's secondary school education and grants them the right to continue their education at a higher level. Since 2005, the secondary school-leaving examination has taken the place of entrance exams. Students have the freedom to choose the subject and level of the exam they will take.

The Ministry of Education and Science has adopted and applied the so-called External Independent Testing (or ZNO) of general secondary school graduates who choose to continue higher courses as part of providing equal and fair access to quality education. This is a type of national entry exam for higher education that represents one of the most important educational changes in Ukraine since independence.

The ZNO was implemented on a trial basis in various regions of Ukraine between 2005 and 2007. The following is the stated rationale for the ZNO's implementation:

- To ensure that all citizens have fair and equitable access to high-quality education.
- To offer an accurate and impartial mechanism for assessing the quality of secondary education in Ukraine; to modernize the educational system; and to make the admissions process easier for students. Objectivity and greater student flexibility were two further variables to consider.

External evaluation of student accomplishment based on set standards and centrally administered tests is a key component of the debate over instruments that can aid in improving educational systems' quality. At the end of this educational stage, they compile a list of each student's accomplishments, and the results are utilized to award certificates. As a result, the assessments have a bigger or lower influence on students' future educational, training, and professional careers.

This push for school-leaving examinations has been aided by changes in education system governance, which have manifested themselves primarily in increasing school autonomy and decentralized decision-making capabilities. School-leaving examinations towards the end of a student's school career are considered as a tool for "navigating" the educational system. As can be observed in Hungary, this perspective is likely to serve as the foundation for reforming existing statewide test systems with the specific goal of ensuring and increasing educational quality.

School-leaving examination tests certify and signal secondary school students' achievements to universities and employers in several countries. The nature of these examinations has been a topic of contention in many countries because it is felt that they have a considerable impact on how teachers teach and how students study. Changes in examination systems are usually invariably part of efforts to reform secondary education.

School-leaving examinations are essential in the educational system as the information gathered from them is used for a variety of objectives, it is worthy of some consideration from the research community and should focus on gathering data to support or disprove claims in the academic literature. One of the key motivations for the research reported in this thesis was to make that determination.

The lack of an empirical comparison between the External Independent Testing in English (ZNO) in Ukraine and the English Matura examination in Hungary prompted the current study. This investigation is thought to fill a gap in the research on this topic because it has not been thoroughly examined. This research was also justified because many Transcarpathia students take advanced final exams in Hungary, therefore it is feasible that the conclusions of this investigation will also assist them.

This thesis presents a comparative study targeting the differences and similarities between the External Independent Testing in English (ZNO) in Ukraine and the English Matura examination

in Hungary. The thesis introduces the context of the school-leaving examination in Ukraine and in Hungary.

The current research compares the two school-leaving exams and is divided into two parts, followed by two sections with references and appendices. Part 1 is an introductory section that gives a review of the academic literature on the major issues surrounding the topic under consideration. First, numerous definitions of school-leaving exams and their functions are presented in general. This is followed by a detailed description of the establishment, structure and changes/renewals of both the External Independent Testing in English (ZNO) in Ukraine and the English Matura examination in Hungary over the years. It also provides an overview of the educational systems in Ukraine and Hungary, as well as an assessment of the state of English as a foreign language instruction in Transcarpathian Hungarian schools. Part 1 also offers information on joining the Bologna system and looks at academic literature-based strategies that students could utilize before taking their school-leaving exams too. Each of the four skills examined in the English language exam (reading, listening, writing, and speaking) is discussed in this section, with alternative solutions offered for each.

The research methodology is presented in Part 2. On the basis of the literature evaluation and the rationales for the current investigation, the hypotheses and research questions are outlined, clarified and justified. It describes the participant's of the research - students – before introducing and depicting the research instrument – student interviews. This section also includes a report on the testing of the research tool - the interview protocols. Finally, the section goes over the data gathering procedures and data analysis methods in detail.

The reader is also informed about the investigation's results in Part 2. The interview findings are reported in this section as well. Part 2 also examines all of the research's findings in connection to the investigation's original research objectives and research questions. This section of the thesis also contains interpretations of the outcomes.

The final section summarizes the findings, draws the study's conclusions, and highlights the research's key implications. A detailed analysis of the results shown in the thesis can serve as a guide to the success of further preparation for the school-leaving examination. The research's contribution to the field of comparative research is the focus of the implications. This part also includes a discussion of the research's limitations.

The final part of this thesis contains the list of references, and include nine appendices, such as tables of the participants' personal information, their preparation methods for the exams, useful

tips for the exams, figures of the students' preparation habits, the most difficult and easiest tasks, the reasons for difficulties/simplicities and the research instrument (interview).

## **PART I**

### **Theoretical considerations on testing**

#### **1.1 What is a test?**

"It is perhaps items or tasks that first come to mind when we think of tests. This is because they are the most obvious, visible, part of a test" (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007, p. 69). According to Brown (2004) a test is a way of determining a person's aptitude, knowledge, or performance in a specific topic, in simple terms. A test is first and foremost a procedure. It is a tool - a combination of techniques, methods, or materials – that necessitates the test taker's participation. Second, a test must be able to quantify anything. Some tests assess overall ability, while others concentrate on extremely specific skills or goals. After then, a test is used to assess a person's aptitude, knowledge, or performance. The test takers must be identified by the testers. A test evaluates performance, but the results also indicate the test-ability, taker's or competence, to use a term from the study of linguistics. Most language exams assess one's ability to execute language, which includes the ability to speak, write, read, and listen to a subset of language. Tests that tap into a test-knowledge taker's of language, such as describing a vocabulary item, reciting a grammatical rule, or identifying a rhetorical characteristic in written discourse, are popular.

As Pintér and Wéber (2019) said, in terms of task structure, it can be argued that they are made up of two interdependent elements: informative material and relevant instructions, as well as questions requiring job completion. Following that is the candidate's answer, which will be graded. Open tasks are more difficult to evaluate (but not impossible, even objectively). Dévény (2008) opined that, there must be a meaningful similarity between the behavior induced by the test and the behavior expected in real life real-world experience for it to be testable, quantifiable, and assessable.

Pintér & Wéber (2019) concluded that foreign language tests, of course, concentrate on language behavior and foreign language knowledge while sampling. The whole repertoire of knowledge of the person being assessed can be inferred from the sample. The test is well-known in foreign language education pedagogy. According to ALTE (2011) all test and examination providers should strive to make their tests as fair as feasible.

According to Pintér and Wéber (2019), the test is a time-limited, simplified type of control that can be fitted at the conclusion (or beginning) of the demonstration-application practice cycle as a measuring instrument. It is a limited assessment of a language learner's foreign language skills

(and thus feedback). Foreign language exams provide information and an evaluation of language learners' language skills by setting them in a closed framework of criteria and only indicate the completeness of language proficiency.

Fairness, according to Banerjee (2016), is defined as the treatment of all test takers fairly during the testing process, the lack of measurement bias, equitable access to the constructs being assessed, and defensible validity of test score interpretation for the intended purpose (s).

### **1.2 Introduction of the types of tasks used in language tests**

Báthory (1997) worded that in terms of examination methods, essay (written) tests, oral examinations, practical examinations and production tests are very common. As Bárdos (2002), said, the tasks can be classified into two groups based on how they are completed: multiple-choice and multiple-choice groups. Multiple choice (many people identify this sort of task with the concept of a test), alternative choice, matching (one-to-one, multiple-to-one, multiple matching, pairing), and row construction are the most common types of multiple-choice activities. Addition (completing sentences, assertions), short answer (providing words, numbers), long answer (longer phrases, complete sentences), and essay-type assignments are the most common forms of response tasks (coherent text consisting of several sentences). Such alternatives, according to Norris (2000), include not only test types with a long history of use—such as multiple choice, matching, true-false, and fill-in-the-blank tests; cloze and dictation procedures; essay exams; and oral interviews—but also tests with a scope and structure that differ from these well-known options.

In standardised assessments, as Read (2000) conceived, multiple-choice items have been particularly popular. A professionally produced multiple-choice vocabulary test is extremely trustworthy and successfully distinguishes learners based on their vocabulary knowledge level. Furthermore, it is frequently linked to measurements of a student's reading comprehension skills.

Based on the study of Lopes, Babo, Azevedo and Torres (2010), there are two sections to a multiple-choice test item: At the start of each item, there is an issue (stem), which might be in the form of a question/problem or an incomplete statement. A list of alternatives (alternatives) including one correct option (the answer) and a number of wrong ones (distractors). The intention of the distractors is for them to look as attractive solutions to the problem, plausible competitors of the answer for students who did not achieve the test item's goal.

Tóthné Parázsó (2013) found that multiple-choice tasks entail selecting one of several answer options for a question or task, marking correct or incorrect answers, pairing data sets, ranking, sorting, sorting answers according to chronological or other logical criteria, and identifying cause-and-effect relationships and connections. Einhorn (2012) worded that a multiple-choice task is one in which the student/examiner is given more than one response to a question and must choose the correct one. Despite its name, it does not just work by mixing question and answer, also known as multiple choice. Hughes (2003) drafted that, tems where the test taker must pick solely between YES and NO, or TRUE or FALSE, are functionally multiple choice items with only two options.

Bárdos (2002) said that the "true or false" two-choice test battery is the second most prevalent sort of test, and it's especially popular for reading comprehension tasks. According to Einhorn (2012), students/test takers are given statements to decide whether they are true or false in this practice. Tóthné Parázsó (2013) formulated that the type of task that makes questioning easier by relying solely on recollection.

Tóthné Parázsó (2013) phrased that simple choice (closed-choice): comprises of one interrogative or declarative statement and a number of response options. At a time, only one of the solutions is to be picked. One of the most well-known and widely utilized types, which is based on facts and concepts, and is used to understand and apply concepts and settings, as well as to assess competency.

Tóthné Parázsó (2013) believed that asks that require juxtaposition, pairing, or sequencing are known as associative and sequencing tasks. The goal is to find a link between the components of two sets that are somehow connected. For instance, understanding the connections between concepts and judgments, visuals and names, works of art and artists, and tools and features. As Csapó (2004) said various things must be matched and matched in this type of work, such as concepts with their explanations, passages with titles or themes, questions and answers, textual material and data, the beginning and finish of a proverb, and so on. Based on the study of Falus, Tóthné Kömyei, Bábosik, Szabolcs, Nádas, Réthy, Csapó and Nahalka (2004) these kinds of tasks can be used to assess the capacity to make independent decisions, recognize connections, synthesize, and make sense. The evaluation' objectivity is usually achieved by making a list of the statements that should appear in the answer.

In his book, Purpura (2004) explained that within the same task, matching tasks are used to examine numerous discrete characteristics of grammatical knowledge. They are also meant to

urge test takers to cross-reference and explore the relationships between the two lists in order to identify construct-related linkages.

According to Pintér and Wéber (2019) the components of two sets must be connected along some relation in order to match (or pair). If the number of objects that can be paired is at least four, or if the number of components in one set is at least one larger than the number in the other, the possibility of chance matches is lowered. As a result, the matching type can be one-to-one, one-to-many, or even many-to-many. Again, it is critical to spell out exactly what kind of response is required in the assignment. This type can be determined from the task's wording:

1. one-to-one correspondence
2. one-to-many correspondence (classification).
3. Matching a number of items to a number of others

Kontra (2011) described that finding some form of content link between the elements of two sets is the goal of matching (pairing) replies (concepts, results, years, etc.). If the number of objects that can be paired is at least four and the number of components in one set is at least one greater than the number in the other, the chances of a blind match are reduced. The following are typical pairings:

One-to-one correspondence (for example, matching an event to a year if there was only one event in each of the specified years)

Matching one to many (e.g. matching an event and a year number if there could have been more than one specified event in a given year).

Hughes (2003) opined that here are additional items in which test takers must fill in a gap with a word. Gap filling items for reading or listening function best if the missing words can be discovered in the text or are simple, high frequency terms that should not cause any problems with spelling. Gap filling tasks can also be useful in grammar and vocabulary assessments.

As Purpura (2004) said this challenge requires you to provide input in the form of a sentence, passage, or dialogue that has had a number of words removed. The gaps have been chosen to test one or more grammatical knowledge areas. Examinees must fill in the blanks with a contextually appropriate response. Gap-filling exercises are used to assess a learner's understanding of grammatical forms and meanings.



Tóthné Parázso (2013) explains that supplementary tasks: in terms of structure, they can be classified as partially closed and partially open. When a missing letter, number, word, sign, symbol, or other item must be filled in during the replying process, it is referred to as a simple completion. According to Einhorn (2012) candidates must either complete incomplete paragraphs or phrases on their own or with the use of provided elements, because the given pieces must be incorporated into the text, it is a completely closed activity that works on the idea of a sequential task, there is frequently a substantial variation in difficulty between the two forms.

Tóthné Parázso (2013) describes that open questions are terms used to describe essay-style papers that require a longer explanation. Csapó (2005) worded that the most difficult evaluation tasks are those that require more than one phrase of meaningful replies. These types of assignments are good for assessing the capacity to make independent decisions, recognize connections, synthesize, and make sense. The evaluation's objectivity is usually achieved by making a list of the statements that should appear in the answer. Different markers of goodness can be used to describe the quality and goodness of the tests. Objectivity, validity, and reliability are the three traditional markers of test quality. The test's objectivity, like objectivity in general, meaning that it is objective rather than subjective. More specifically, the result of the test's measurement is unaffected by the person performing the measurement. The test's reliability is one of its most important features. Only if a test has high reliability indicators can it be used to measure anything. When we talk about test validity, we're talking about whether the test actually measures what it was meant to measure, or what it's supposed to measure.

Kontra (2011) drafted that if the assignment needs an essay-style response (a cohesive text consisting of several sentences), higher-order cognitive activities such as analysis, synthesis, problem-solving, and evaluation are more likely to be tested. However, a big challenge may be the evaluation's objectivity, for which compiling a list of concepts, statements, and propositions expected in the replies appears to be a self-evident approach.

### **1.3 Joining the Bologna system**

Szarka and Kötél (2008) conceived that the transformation of higher education gained new pace in 2004, primarily as a result of political upheavals, and the desire to launch the Bologna Process became more and more strong. By September 28, 2004, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science had already developed its guidelines, titled "Modernisation of Higher Education in Ukraine and the Bologna Process." At the Conference of European Ministers of Education in Bergen on May 19, 2005, the country formally joined the Bologna Process.

As Kozma and Juhász (2008) said among the major tasks mentioned were student engagement in evaluations, the dissemination of results, the involvement of international specialists, and collaboration with European quality assurance organizations. In international organizations, however, involvement and cooperation are scarce. The Ukrainian Centre for Quality Evaluation in Education is one component of this system.

According to Szarka and Kötél (2008) the decree of December 25, 2007, established a mandatory uniform testing system in Ukrainian higher education, which includes a single set of tests that are encrypted until used and can be completed by all students graduating from secondary school at the same time. Because this exam is also an entrance exam, students can use the same score to apply to many universities. However, the new education regulation fails to consider the needs of kids of different nationalities.

As Pallay (2019) said the Bologna system was used to introduce a single admission method. As a result, an advanced level examination, known as a "external independent test," must be taken at independent testing centers. The goal of this innovation is to ensure that everyone gets a fair shot at the entrance exam. Currently, all high school graduates are required to take independent test exams, regardless of whether they plan to study at a Ukrainian higher education institution or not, or even if they do not intend to apply to a university or college. Ukrainian language and literature are still required for all students, with history of Ukraine, mathematics, and biology as optional topics. If the candidate desires to attend a higher education institution, a third course is required. The findings of an independent test assessment are also used to determine admission scores and graduation grades.

Einhorn (2015) explained that the purpose of the school-leaving test is to represent a country's educational strategy in terms of the type and extent of screening that takes place between public and higher education. Exam regulation can certainly have an impact on how many persons in a given age group are able to enter higher education, and hence on the predicted social mobility. Of course, the structure, function, and operation of a country's school-leaving test are inextricably linked to the country's educational system and educational policy goals.

According to Einhorn (2015) the school-leaving examination's subject structure and regulation reflect educational policy considerations and societal expectations, but it also has a considerable impact on the entire educational picture. The treatment of foreign language knowledge in the final test requirements is also significant for the status of foreign languages. The need in the

exam regulations that language exams be given priority in admissions score has had an impact on the language skills of younger age groups.

As Einhorn (2015) said the school-leaving test can have an impact on future generations' literacy, social mobility, learning attitudes, and equal opportunities. Simultaneously, it is evident that the modifications and intentions to amend the school-leaving examination regulation are not coincidental.

In 2021, school-leavers had to sit exams in four subjects in the external independent test. Previously, passing three subjects was sufficient for further studies. <http://life.karpat.in.ua/?p=45462&lang=hu> (February 10, 2021)

#### **1.4 The school-leaving examination**

Halász and Lannert (2000) conceived that the school-leaving certificate is the focal point of the vertical articulation of the education system: meeting the requirements of the lower level of education is a prerequisite for progress to the higher level; its form and requirements are shaped by the interests of secondary and higher education. As Halász and Lannert (2003) said examinations play a crucial role in assessing the effectiveness of public education. While their primary function is to assess and reward the performance of individual students, they can also provide important feedback on the performance of an institution or even the education system as a whole.

Mátrai (2000) opined that today, examinations play a major role in the regulation of public education worldwide, and their impact can be directly measured in the quality of knowledge expected from students (in terms of examination requirements and content) and the social distribution of this knowledge. Kaposi (2009) described that in general, in international practice, examination systems have two main functions, one quantitative (qualitative) and the other qualitative (quantitative), in regulating the conditions for progression to higher education. In this context, the socio-political and educational strategy issues are closely interlinked, as they make it possible to address the "barriers" to higher social status and social mobility, and to enforce the aspects that, based on the currently accepted public literacy standards, introduce into the system the quality guarantees of the fulfilment of the current literacy objectives, in order to ensure the results deemed necessary in schools.

Major (2006) explained that in general, the aim of the examination today is to assess whether students possess the necessary knowledge and skills required by the curriculum for secondary schools and have reached the appropriate level of maturity for the purposes of upper secondary

education. Kaposi (2009) described that examinations are based on valid curricula. The knowledge and competences of the learners are measured and are at the heart of the programme. Only content that is crucial to the subject matter and relevant to further learning and deeper knowledge of the field is measured. Successful completion of the school-leaving examination enables students to go on to university, and although the criteria for admission vary from country to country, it can also be generally agreed that the results of the school-leaving examination influence students' opportunities for further study, since in many places the combined marks obtained in the subjects covered by the school-leaving examination and the school-leaving examination result are the score with which school-leavers can apply for admission to higher education.

Kis (2005) worded that the exams are a long-established method of evaluating topic knowledge that differs qualitatively from all other forms of assessment. It is critical for a child's success to have established abilities and subject knowledge. This is sometimes referred to as intelligence. The ability of a student to deal in an examination scenario, or his social maturity, is just as important as his other intellectual qualities in determining his success. It is critical that the learner be well motivated.

Nagy (1995) found that there has traditionally been just one royal path to higher education: the school-leaving examination. As a result, the school-leaving certificate is the entry requirement for higher education. Ötvös (2007) worded that the school-leaving examination is a state examination. The school-leaving examination must be held in accordance with nationally uniform examination requirements (hereinafter referred to as the central examination requirements). According to Arató, Knausz, Mihály, Nahalka and Trencsényi (2003) the school-leaving examination is designed to measure the extent to which candidates have acquired, through their prior learning, the competences necessary for continuing adult learning, active participation in education and training and, in particular, for further learning at tertiary level, including critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

As Brown (2000) said the of the components of the quality assurance system for vocational education and training is the school-leaving examination. Kaposi (2015) drafted that the separation, transition, and reintegration are the three phases of the school-leaving examination, which retains its community-building purpose. Horváth (2003) phrased that the relationship between the end-of-secondary education examination and "maturity" can be explained using a complex conceptual framework: an act of integration into society, or "coming of age," as

evidenced by an examination, a proof of secondary education completion, and an expression of aptitude for further studies."

According to Pálincás (2005) the school-leaving examination is a method of outcome assessment that has been in place in Hungary for about 200 years. Its meaning, purpose, and function have evolved over the decades and centuries, but there are some generalizations that can be made that apply to practically the whole population of today's society who has completed the school-leaving exam. According to this, "The school-leaving examination is: (1) a ceremonial, evaluative examination at the end of secondary education; (2) a qualification which guarantees and proves membership of an educated section of society; (3) a certificate which permits or facilitates access to employment; (4) a qualification giving access to higher education; (5) a set of requirements to regulate the content of the upper level of public education, and through this, the role of the knowledge and literacy canon.

Einhorn (1999) opined that the school-leaving examination is now the final examination for secondary school, and it serves an essential instructional function in this regard. The exam's reliability is a major concern. The preparation and assessment of an external exam must meet strict reliability criteria in order for the results to be usable. A major issue is the examination marking method. The final type of exam's nature indicates that the outcome is evaluated by the teacher who prepared it, but the knowledge assessment exam's reliability is determined by an external examiner.

Vigh (2010) found that the rationale for this method at the advanced level is that it serves as a language examination and an admission examination in addition to serving as a final examination at the secondary level. To assess the rigor of the assessors and take this into account when interpreting performance, language tests often entail the employment of qualified external assessors, double assessment, or probabilistic test theory models.

Mihály (2005) conceived that the school-leaving examination has served numerous purposes since its inception. For a young person just leaving childhood, it meant an act of becoming an adult - at least a mature adult in knowledge - and it also signaled the end of the process of preparation for a future career. Simultaneously, it provided - and continues to provide - exclusive access to university and other forms of higher education.

Ötvös (2007) described that the school-leaving examination must be regularly refreshed and modified to current demands, according to society and the education industry. As Mátrai (2007) said the concept is that the entrance exam score should be a good predictor of future academic

success and chances of staying in higher education. As a result, the most common selection factor in many countries' admission procedures is secondary school performance. Bárdos (2004) formulated that the exam situation is also strange from a non-linguistic standpoint, because applicants rarely pass the threshold with indifference, even knowing the script of what will happen in the exam and agreeing on the exam topic. The goal is to survive and win, although the two aren't always mutually exclusive. One might or might not be able to find a quiet exam room. It's possible to sit next to a window and not see the committee because of the glare, although it could be preferable. According to Einhorn (2005) there is a considerable societal interest in the school-leaving test because it impacts many individuals as students, parents, and teachers, yet lay people often take the form of the examination they are familiar with for granted.

Based on the study of Maghnouj, Fordham, Guthrie, Henderson and Trujillo (2020) the mechanisms that countries use to monitor and evaluate the performance of their education systems are referred to as system evaluation. A good assessment system serves two purposes: it improves educational achievement and it holds the government and other stakeholders accountable for achieving national goals. As Csapó (2009) said students' success in upper secondary education is a direct result of their previous achievements.

Havril (2005) worded that exams in most general and specialized language testing systems are divided into divisions based on the traditional classification of language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Language abilities have been described in a variety of ways. Although the focus in the exams is usually elsewhere, skills cannot be easily separated from one another; they are not isolated. Chang and Read (2007) explained that the understanding communication in our home tongue appears to be simple and straightforward, but in a foreign language, it is sometimes a source of difficulty, irritation, and even stress for many language learners.

According to Alderson (2012) Modern European English exams emphasize on evaluating a learner's capacity to use the language rather than whether they can recite the language's rules, how many words they have learnt, or whether they sound like a perfect English gentleman or lady. Modern exams are more concerned with presenting learners with tasks that require them to read, listen to, speak, or write in the target language, and evaluating their ability to do so. After all, what matters to users of examination results – employers, universities, and foreign institutions – is not whether the student knows the third conditional or the irregular forms of obscure verbs, or whether they can understand Shakespeare in the original English, but how well they can communicate their meaning or understand the meanings of others in real-life

situations. What matters in modern English exams is that students can meet their own needs to communicate and be understood in both written and spoken modes, not whether they are 100 percent faultless.

Alderson (2012) drafted that the Common European Framework, or CEF for short, aims to promote the usage of the target language in real-life situations for communication. It does so by presenting a framework for the types of texts learners may have to read, listen to, or produce in writing or speech, as well as the types of things they may have to do with those texts, the types of topics they may have to deal with, the ways they may have to use the language to achieve their goals, and the types of goals they may have in using the language. According to Kaposi (2009) the school-leaving examination should be an objective measure of a graduating student's standard knowledge and proficiency in general competences, and it is important that it is appropriately standardised and partly conducted with the involvement of external experts. Báthory (1997) described that students who want to go on to higher education face a double hurdle, even if the current school-leaving exam is a "Mayoral" one, and this is a source of frustration.

Neuwirth pointed out that (2010) it should not be forgotten that the school-leaving examination is indirectly an indicator of the efficiency and effectiveness of teachers and schools, and nothing proves this better than the fact that from time to time there are articles ranking schools, in which one of the basic indicators for ranking is the effectiveness of the school-leaving examination, the number of students who have passed the examination at the higher level. Turcsányi (2014) opined that the school-leaving examination therefore concerns all participants in the upper secondary level of public education, they follow the changes in educational policy related to the examination and are interested in the professional debates.

#### **1.4.1 Functions of the school-leaving examination**

Kojanitz (2003) described that the most important practical condition for modernising the content of the school-leaving examination is that it should also serve as an entrance examination. Only in this way can it be guaranteed that the highest-stakes examination will be conducted in accordance with requirements that are in line with the aims and methods of compulsory school education.

As Horváth said (2006) the socially and pedagogically valid system of requirements and examination specifications is a kind of performance benchmark, a model of cultural goods to be acquired and considered important in the long term (e.g. preference for applicable

knowledge, prevalence of problem-solving tasks). The specific examination topics set priorities, values and criteria, thus influencing the literacy image of the school and society in the short and long term. This examination function has at least two meanings: on the one hand, it sets a standard for quality performance and, on the other, it sets a sustainable level of performance that is similar from year to year.

Horváth (2006) pointed out that examination standards and performance are of prognostic value for education administrators, training institutions, students and those who receive graduates, in so far as they predict the knowledge and skills of the population who will graduate and go on to further education or employment. The qualification function is a key issue in the assessment of examination performance. A uniform, publicly documented and transparent assessment-marking system promotes consistency in assessment and harmonises teachers' assessment practices. The analysis and interpretation of the results can have a reinforcing or corrective effect on the examination requirements, the examination tasks and the assessment procedures.

According to Horváth (2006) a specific feature referring to the objectivity of the examination paper (written test papers) and the assessment of the examination performance measured by them, and to the quality of the functioning of the examination papers. Reliability generally refers to the appropriateness of the tasks to the target areas of assessment and the assessment principles and procedures. Reliability can be increased and guaranteed by periodic quantitative and qualitative analyses in addition to training of assessors. The reliability is increased by a clear and professionally agreed set of evaluation criteria, the possibility to compare the performance against the standard stated in the evaluation guide, the evaluator's qualification and experience. An important condition is the assignment of the task itself. Its content validity ensures that the task actually enables the performance that is intended to be assessed (e.g. the topic and genre are consistent, the students have sufficient background knowledge, i.e. neither the content nor the genre of the topic exceeds their assumed competence).

The function of the examination, in its role of selection, is related to the purpose of the examination, the stakes of the results, the weight of the results in further education or in other fields and is generally strongly linked to the educational management strategy of secondary and even tertiary education.



### **1.5 Introduction of the External Independent Testing**

As Orosz and Pallay (2020) said from 2008, it was made compulsory to assess the knowledge of secondary school leavers by means of an external independent test examination (ZNO<sup>1</sup>). Initially, external examinations in Ukrainian language and literature were compulsory independent test examination, and then as a second subject, mathematics and history of Ukraine History of Ukraine. External independent testing is now required for graduates of vocational secondary schools and higher vocational education institutions, according to a 2018 decision by Ukraine's Ministry of Education and Science, making the assessment fully comprehensive for the first time at the end of the 2018-2019 academic year. A person who does not achieve the pass mark in a necessary subject will not be awarded a vocational certification, according to the legislation.

In their study, Orosz and Pallay (2020), explained that the main difference between assessing students' knowledge through tests and grading based on personal judgements of individual performance is that the same tests and test tasks can be solved by many different, sometimes very large, numbers of students, so that a detailed picture of the properties and "behaviour" of the tests and tasks can be obtained.

#### **1.5.1 External Independent Testing in English**

Brown (2000) worded that foreign languages have a prominent place in education and testing today. Knowledge of a foreign language is a means of mediating between different cultures. With the globalisation of the economy, the labour market and the revaluation of geographical borders, the mobility of individuals has increased and (usable) language skills have also become much more valuable. Nowadays, the lack of a language certificate is a major handicap.

According to Huszti and Kacsur (2016) in our fast-globalising world, there is no doubt about the need to know at least one foreign language. The majority of Hungarian schools in Transcarpathia offer English classes to its students. It is without a doubt one of the most important subjects taught in school. The Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science has implemented an advanced level examination in this subject, which is taken at the conclusion of 11th grade. As a result, every final-year student planning to take the exam in question will be looking forward to the end of secondary school with bated breath.

"The aim of the English ZNO is to assess the level of foreign language competence of secondary school leavers in accordance with the state standards, the curricula in force and the Common

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<sup>1</sup> ZNO is the abbreviation for the full name of the Ukrainian school-leaving exam (Зовнішнє Незалежне Оцінювання)

European Framework of Reference for Languages. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level B1" (Nakaz 2014).

### **1.5.2 The structure of the ZNO test before 2018**

In 2008, the External Independent Testing was introduced in Ukraine. In the study of Orosz Ildikó and Pally Katalin (2020) it was pointed out that first, Ukrainian language and literature ZNO was made compulsory for all secondary school leavers in Ukraine. It was first possible to take this exam in a foreign language in 2010.

The test was set at Level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the level of the B1 Preliminary certification, from 2010 to 2017. It consisted of three sections: reading, use of English, and writing.

The External Independent Evaluation in English was carried out on 7 June 2010. 86 678 candidates took the test (87.95% of the total number of registrations). The test tasks took 120 minutes to complete. The test was developed on the basis of the Programme for Independent Assessment of Foreign Languages (English) approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (Decree No. 865 of 18 September 2008). The maximum score that could be obtained by correctly completing all the tasks of the English language examination was - 78. In 2011 the external independent evaluation in English took place on 6 June and 62 601 candidates took the test (86.7% of the total number of registrations, 1.25 % lower than in the previous year). Unlike the year before, in 2011 the maximum score that could be obtained by completing all the tasks of the English language test correctly was - 69.

The English language test consisted of open and closed test tasks. The closed form tasks were:

- tasks with one correct answer choice;
- matching;
- fill-in-the-blank tasks.

Open form tasks:

- tasks to fill in the blanks (with short answer)
- tasks with detailed answers.

The test was divided into two parts:

- understanding the text you read;

- writing skills.

The reading section contained 50 tasks in total, while the writing section had 1 task. In the reading section, the following types of tasks were used:

Matching exercises- (Exercises 1-5, 12-16), based on the text read, candidates had to find the relationship between the title (A-H) and the parts of the text and match them accordingly.

Multiple-choice tasks- (Tasks 6-11), this type of task required students to find the only correct answer to each question from a choice of four (A, B, C, D).

Gap-filling tasks- (tasks 17-22, 23-34, 35-46, 47-50), in which words, phrases, sentences and sentences were removed from the text and replaced with spaces. The pupils had to fill in each space with the missing word/phrase or a corresponding word/phrase.

Essay- (Task 51), the aim of this task is to focus on the formulation of a problem within a given topic, in which the candidate expresses his/her opinion in written form. The text must contain at least 100 words.

In 2011 the number of tasks were changed, the reading section contained 45 tasks in total, while the writing section had 1 task. In the reading section, the following types of tasks were applied:

Matching exercises- (Exercises 1-5, 11-15), based on the text read, candidates had to find the relationship between the title (A-H) and the passages and match them accordingly.

Multiple-choice tasks (tasks 6 to 10), this type of task required candidates to find the only correct answer to each question from a choice of four (A, B, C, D).

Gap-filling tasks- (tasks 16-21, 22-33, 34-45), in which words, phrases, sentences and sentences were removed from the text and replaced with spaces. The students had to fill in each space with the missing word/phrase or a corresponding word/phrase.

Essay- (Task 46), the aim of this task is to focus on the formulation of a problem within a given topic, in which the candidate expresses his/her opinion in writing. The text must contain at least 100 words.

In 2012, the external independent English language evaluation was carried out on 26 May. 84 428 candidates took the test (92.6% of the total number of registrations). The test task took 120 minutes to complete. The structure of the test was once again changed, and the maximum score

that could be obtained by completing all the tasks of the English language test correctly was - 62.

The English language test consisted of closed and open test tasks.

Matching exercises- (Exercises 1-5, 11-16), based on the text read, candidates had to find the relationship between the title (A-H) and the passages and match them accordingly.

Multiple-choice tasks (tasks 6 to 10), this type of task required the candidates to find the only correct answer to each question from a choice of four (A, B, C, D).

Gap-filling tasks- (tasks 17-22, 23-32, 33-42), in this type of task, words, phrases, sentences were removed from the text and replaced with spaces. The students had to fill in each space with the missing word/phrase or a corresponding word/phrase.

Essay- (Task 43), the aim of this task is to focus on the formulation of a problem within a given topic, in which the candidate expresses his/her opinion in writing. The text must contain at least 100 words.

From 2013 through 2017, the tests have the same format and task categories as those in 2012. Listening comprehension tasks were first incorporated in the foreign language ZNO test in 2018. As a result, the 120-minute time limit for students has been increased to 150 minutes. Unfortunately, only one productive skill – writing – is being examined, while the most crucial skill – speaking – remains utterly untested, according to Graham Jones' blog. There are a variety of reasons why speaking has yet to be tested in the ZNO. First and foremost, there are probably not enough qualified speaking examiners available who can test according to the essential requirements. Also, where would everyone take the speaking test, and how much time would it take to test all of these students? It would be a bit of an administrative nightmare. Another key reason for the absence of a speaking exam could be because ZNO's relative objectivity is in jeopardy. Although there is always some subjectivity in marking, the precise marking criteria of tests/exams, as well as regular moderation and standardization, help to minimise it.

### **1.5.3 The structure of the 2018 test**

The external independent English language evaluation was carried out on 1 June 2018. 83 963 candidates took the test (94.0% of the total number of registrations). The test task took 150 minutes to complete. The maximum score that could be obtained by completing all the tasks of the English language test correctly was - 72.

The total number of tasks was 59.

1. Listening comprehension: questions 1 to 3 (questions 1 to 16): you had to choose the correct answers, true or false statements, based on the text you had heard. The answers to these tasks had to be given on Answer Sheet A.
2. Reading comprehension: group 4-7: 22 different comprehension questions. The task group contained several texts with questions. The questions included a guide and possible answers from the text. The answers to these questions should also be given on Answer Sheet A.
3. Language use: group 8-9: It included practical tasks requiring the application of knowledge. (20 tasks)
4. Writing: question 59: Contained a single writing task. The task was to write a letter of at least 100 words in private. The solution to this problem should be indicated on Answer Sheet B.

The English language exam included five different tasks:

#### 1. Tasks with one correct answer

There were three (Task 1: No. 1-6, Task 3: No. 12-16) or four (Task 5: No. 22-26) possible answers, of which only one was correct. The tasks were considered to be completed when the participant in the external independent evaluation selected and marked the answer on Answer Sheet A.

#### 2. True/false statements

In the tasks (Task 2: No 7-11), you had to decide whether a given statement was true or false in relation to the content you had listened to/read. The tasks are considered to be completed when the external independent assessor has selected and marked the answer on Answer Sheet A.

#### 3. Matching tasks

In the tasks (Task 4: No. 17-21, Task 6: No. 27-32), the most appropriate title for the texts/paragraphs; statements/statements/statements/texts had to be chosen; questions had to be paired with answers based on the text read or the answers given with questions. Tasks were considered to be completed when the external independent assessor selected and marked the answer on Answer Sheet A.

#### 4. Gap-filling tasks

In the tasks (Task 7: No. 33-38, Task 8: No. 39-48, Task 9: No. 49-58), the paragraphs/phrases in the text had to be completed with sentences/phrases, phrases/words from the given variants.

The tasks are considered to be completed when the external independent assessor has selected and marked the answer on the answer sheet A.

#### 5. Open task with detailed answer

Orosz and Pallay (2020) pointed out that exercise 59 involved the participant making a statement of his/her own opinion according to the communication situation suggested in Answer Sheet B.

### **1.6 Introduction of the Matura examination**

According to the Ministry of Education (2006) for decades, the issue of school-leaving qualifications has been seen as a problem by the teaching profession and the wider public. In the debates that have flared up time and again, positions have been extremely divergent and virtually non-converging. On the one hand, there were calls to raise the profile of the school leaving certificate, while on the other, its very existence was questioned. Some saw the school-leaving exam as a fossil from the past, kept alive only by nostalgia - nostalgia for a world in which only a tiny fraction of society had ever got as far as the exam, and once they had passed it, they were considered respectable gentlemen.

Bánkútai and Lukács (2015) explained that the quality and effectiveness of education can be measured by a number of indicators, one of the most important of which is the number of students who pass the school-leaving examination and the relevance, social recognition and usefulness of the knowledge demonstrated by the results of the examination. For the country's economy to function effectively, it needs educated people with advanced skills who can use them appropriately in their work and other social activities. Among the assessment systems, the school-leaving certificate (A-levels) has a prominent role as a milestone in students' lives, offering them the opportunity to enter higher education and to find a job. Due to the expansion of public education in our country, it is now increasingly expected that the majority of the population will have a secondary education level that allows them to enter higher education at any time after passing the school-leaving examination. For this reason, the objectives and content of the school-leaving examination must also be adapted to the world of work and to higher education expectations. The quality and effectiveness of teaching in secondary and primary schools is a key determinant of the results of the school-leaving examination. The school-leaving examination is a motivating factor in studies, and obtaining a school-leaving certificate is a key goal in the lives of individuals.

Hubai and Lázár (2018) found that in the Hungarian education system, the most important aspects of student assessment are their enrolment in various educational establishments at the primary and secondary levels, the assessment system in general and grading in particular during their education in those establishments, and the school leaving exams (also known as the Matura Exam) that students take, for example, in order to apply to institutions of higher education.

According to Töttössy (2005) it has occupied a central place in the development of the Hungarian education system since the introduction of the school-leaving examination in the second half of the 19th century. The need for a final examination at the end of secondary education is no longer questioned by even the most fierce critics.

Töttössy (2005) explained that one of the key regulating elements of education policy is therefore the school-leaving examination, which is provided by the structure and content of the examination, as expressed in the school-leaving examination regulations, which are in line with curricular requirements and are therefore part of public education. The Education Act sets out the basis, but the detailed rules for the examination are laid down in ministerial or governmental decisions, which respond more quickly to changing requirements than the Act itself. This feature makes it suitable for occasional changes without amending the law, but in keeping with its spirit and relevant rules.

As Gondwe and Walenkamp (2011) said, in 2005, the Bologna Framework was adopted. Development of a complete national qualifications framework, including non-higher education qualifications, is under way.

Csernoch and Korpanyi (2005), drafted that in 2005 a new school-leaving examination was introduced in Hungary. The aim of the new examination was to re-establish the prestige of the school-leaving exam and to harmonise with the exam system of the European Union. As Koláčková and Sikolova said (2017) the exam has been of high importance ever since; its passing often has been a pre-requisite for promotion or for sending abroad, which has made the exam a powerful tool.

Csernoch and Korpanyi (2005) opined that the implementation of the new examination is the result of a ten-year preparatory process. The basic principles of the school-leaving examination reform were outlined in 1995. The conceptual framework included three principles:

the same exam should be available in all types of secondary schools,

it should be available on two levels, and

it should be standardised.

The actual work started in 1997 with the development of the requirements of various subject areas. This was followed by test development and piloting. Two mock examinations were organised on a national level in 2003 and 2004. The results of the mock examinations were analysed and the necessary adjustments were made before the final tests were produced. Finally the exam was administered in May-June 2005.

Csernoch and Korpanyi  (2005) explained that tests were issued by the Ministry of Education. The most typical task-types of the written part are multiple-choice questions, true or false answers, different variants of matching, short answers and gap filling. The tasks leave little room for creative language use except for the composition part (writing skills).

### **1.7 Language testing**

Einhorn (2009) pointed out that foreign language exams test the four basic communicative skills in a separate section of the exam, using authentic texts in a single language. In order to carry out tasks on language tests, as Fulcher and Davidson (2012) described, it is possible that learners will call upon their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, as well as the related skills of vocabulary learning, grammar, and translation. According to M ty s (2007) in general, candidates are significantly motivated when they recognise the importance of learning and its impact on their future careers. Feh rv ryn  Horv th (2012) worded that people take language exams for many different reasons. They can help them to improve their English, follow a course taught in English at university or college, get a good job, travel abroad or even live abroad.

According to Henning (2001) perhaps the most common use of language tests, and educational tests in general, is to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in the learned abilities of the student. We may discover through testing that a given student has excellent pronunciation and fluency of oral production in the language of interest, but that he or she has a low level of reading comprehension. Hanim (2016) phrased that language tests are simply instruments or procedures for gathering particular kinds of information, typically information having to do with students' language abilities. Tests may have variety of formats, lengths, item types, scoring criteria, and media.

Bachman (2003) conceived that the fundamental use of testing in an educational program is to provide information for making decisions, that is, for evaluation. The target language for language measurement and assessment is language proficiency. The everyday practice of foreign language assessment and evaluation is based on the following postulates:



- the nature of language learning can be described,
- language proficiency can be measured,
- language proficiency can be measured by language tests,
- language tests can elicit all the essential components of language proficiency from the candidate,
- test performance can be used to interpret candidates' actual language proficiency.

Bárdos (2007) worded that the task of test developers is to design tests that will get the applicant to speak the language, and it is a fine art. Even with a well-defined notion of language proficiency, however, there remain limitations to language proficiency testing.

As Bárdos (2007) said over the course of a century and a half or so, a practice of language testing has developed in parallel with, and even as a result of, teaching, which, despite a number of constant and not infrequently changing techniques, has been able, in the opinion of experts, to give voice to the competences of candidates, from which it has deduced or sometimes predicted their real language skills. Just as there is no single silver bullet for learning a language, there is no single silver bullet for taking a language exam. Each language exam tries to predict the candidate's language proficiency according to its own concept of language proficiency: if practised correctly, their language profiles should be similar. However, known or hidden flaws in the measurement instruments may impair the accuracy of their measurements.

According to Fulcher (2010) language testing, like other forms of educational evaluation, is a social phenomena. It is critical to understand the difference between two forms of preparation. The first is intended to familiarize students with the test's item types, as well as the types of instructions they may receive, and to provide practice working under time limits. The goal of this type of test preparation is to prevent students from wasting time and effort figuring out what they should do throughout the test. The second type of test preparation aims to improve a test taker's score by teaching them test-taking procedures that focus on the test items rather than on the learner's ability to understand the constructs in question. For example, attempting to match lexical items in the stem to synonyms in the key, or spending time looking at the options in multiple-choice items to see how frequently the longest option is likely to be the correct response, refer to the effects of such preparation as 'test score pollution,' and claim that these practices are unethical.

Alimenaj (2015) phrased that test taking is often very stressful and frustrating for students. One of the most important things in successful test taking is exactly the ability of students to cope with the situation. Test taking is often conceived as a procedure of assessment, or a systematic method of assessment in which tests (usually paper-based, nowadays even computerbased, written or oral) are used. It is a means (instructional and administrative) to measure knowledge, skills, the general educational level of students basic formation. During testing students brain focuses automatically on the information given to him/her and after having grouped it, it finds out the way for expressing or presenting what he or she knows or pretends to know about it. Dávid (2008) drafted that validity is a very important and complex indicator of scores in language testing, showing the extent to which the conclusions drawn from the results are valid, acceptable and credible.

As Major (2008) said, looking at the examination sections individually, the results so far highlight the following elements of competence, the development of which will strengthen skills and competence-based language teaching and help prepare for the examination.

#### Reading comprehension

- Developing reading skills for different purposes (extensive reading, skimming, finding specific information, etc.).
- Practising productive types of reading tasks (completing a short summary of the text, completing statements based on the text read, etc.).
- Developing appropriate reading strategies (guessing from context, etc.).
- Appropriate dictionary use (different for monolingual and bilingual dictionaries).
- Conscious use of active and passive vocabulary

#### Language accuracy

- Recognise and actively use the structure and key cohesive elements of the text.
- Develop fluency (oral and written) alongside accuracy.
- Creative use of language, development of vocabulary in context (language structures and vocabulary) specific contextualisation).

#### Listening comprehension

- As with reading, developing listening comprehension skills for different purposes (extensive listening - not all words need to be understood; intensive comprehension, filtering information, etc.).
- More intensive development of pronunciation.
- Developing appropriate task-solving strategies at the appropriate skill level (e.g. only write on the task sheet at the second listening).

#### Writing skills

- Ability to solve productive tasks independently.
- Ability to solve communicative tasks (situations).
- Knowledge and use of genres and their characteristics (e-mail, invitation, letter, etc.).
- Identifying the purpose, audience, genre and style of a piece of writing.
- Knowledge of the basic functioning of the cohesive elements of a text.

#### Speaking skills

- The ability to actually talk (not recite memorised texts).
- The ability to solve communicative tasks (real transaction, interaction).
- The ability to express oneself.

#### **1.7.1 Strategies for language testing**

Ottó (2003) explained that preparing for the exam means extra work for students and for the teachers who prepare them. Preparation is made more difficult by the fact that puberty often makes it harder to motivate and discipline pupils. According to Rost (2011) students often experience anxiety in taking tests and as a result do not give their best performance.

Weir (2005) pointed out that the way a task is handled may be influenced by the test taker's interest or motivation. Performance may be influenced by factors such as preferred learning techniques or personality type. Before taking the test, make every effort to ensure that candidates are familiar with the work type and other aspects of the setting. The degree to which a test taker is aware with the requirements of a given test may influence how the assignment is handled. Courses in test preparation may also have an impact. This is favorable to the degree that applicants are prepared for the exam's linguistic and meta-linguistic demands, but if the test lends itself to test-taking tactics that improve performance without a corresponding increase in

the ability being tested, there must be cause for concern. As Vigh (2012) said, teachers' attitudes, students' readiness, and performance can all be affected by exam preparation.

The following are some test-management strategies for reading and listening tests that could be included in test-orientation sessions and perhaps in the instructions for the tests.

In the study of Fulcher and Davidson (2012) the following test-management strategies were aligned for reading:

- Going back to the question for clarification—rereading it carefully or paraphrasing it in order to verify or confirm understanding of the question or task, as the necessary clue may be in the wording of the question.
- Reading the question(s) first and then reading the passage/portion in order to expedite the search for the material in the text needed to answer the question.
- Selecting or eliminating options based on vocabulary knowledge or on the meaning of the sentence, paragraph, overall passage, or discourse structure.
- Performing a mental translation of parts of the text to see if the material makes sense in the L1, and then summarizing the passage as a check for comprehension.

Test-management strategies for listening items

- Checking to see if the options match keywords, precise details, assumptions about details, and amount of specificity in the listening text or question.
- Referring back to a portion or all of a previous inquiry to help choose a response to the current topic.
- Determining the level of information required to respond to a question in order to rule out options that are either too broad or too narrow.
- Identifying relevant previous information and putting it to use in the most effective way possible.
- When there is a lot of uncertainty, make an educated prediction using a combination of the tactics outlined above.

The application of a verbal report

According to Fulcher and Davidson (2012) while attempting to be inconspicuous often leads to supposition, obtaining information about what respondents are doing without being obtrusive has proven to be a difficult undertaking at times. Data from one or more of the following approaches is included in verbal reports.

1. *Self-report*—learners' descriptions of what they do, characterized by generalized statements, such as "On multiple-choice items, I tend to scan the reading passage for possible surface matches between information in the text and that same information appearing in one of the alternative choices," for example.
2. "What I just did was to skim through the reading passage for possible surface matches between information in the text and that same information appearing in one of the alternative choices," for example, "What I just did was to skim through the reading passage for possible surface matches between information in the text and that same information appearing in one of the alternative choices."
3. Self-revelation—"think-aloud," stream-of-consciousness exposition of thought processes while attending to the material—for example, "Hmm... I wonder if the information in one of these potential choices also exists in the text."

Cohen (1984) found that the usage of preceding and following context – not simply within the sentence containing the deletion – could be given special emphasis. Respondents could be taught how to estimate contextually, taking into account all of the relevant cues.

"Today, the role and importance of foreign language skills in cultural and economic terms is indisputable. Language skills improve the chances of finding a job in the labour market, contribute to raising employment and increasing the country's competitiveness" (EMMI).

Jones, who has prepared students for international exams suggest the following tips for the preparation of the ZNO examination:

1. A solid exam preparation book, such as the Formula Exam Trainer, is recommended for students. Because this book is new to the market, the language and topics are both novel. The Formula Exam Trainer takes roughly 30 teaching hours to go through the entire book and covers each element of the exam separately. It also follows a Test Teach Test lesson structure, which is ideal for exam preparation because it exposes students to what they do not know right away, making them more interested and driven to learn.
2. Students should be taught how to employ reading methods by their teachers. Over the last few decades, it has become apparent that many General English textbooks have prioritized lexis and grammar while ignoring listening and reading abilities (preferring to use reading and listening texts primarily to introduce language). As a result, children frequently need to be (re)trained in reading strategies including skimming, scanning, and reading for detail. According to Jones, the most useful sub-skill is reading for

specific information (scanning), because test takers must identify information in large volumes in a short amount of time.

3. Students should be taught to guess the meaning of unknown words based on context, prefixes, and even suffixes. It is often amazing how much of an educated assumption you can make about the meaning of an unknown word by using the words and sentences around it. Similarly, a word like 'disillusioned' may be unfamiliar to the majority of students, but the prefix 'dis' signals to them that it is likely to have a negative connotation.
4. Teachers should have students look at fixed phrases, collocations, prepositional phrases, and phrasal verbs as part of the Use of English exercise (multiple-choice cloze). Many of the options are related to these topics.
5. Exam practice should be done, but not excessively. Work on lexis, especially synonyms, as this will help with the reading portion of the test.

[https://teachingmethodologybooksetc.wordpress.com/2022/02/08/evi-and-a-little-bit-of-zno/?fbclid=IwAR3AbLk00j\\_cVn6Onp9G5cZa6K-KzKYBvLAOqBXb7h\\_DS7m7-ZZBuY7QwOCs](https://teachingmethodologybooksetc.wordpress.com/2022/02/08/evi-and-a-little-bit-of-zno/?fbclid=IwAR3AbLk00j_cVn6Onp9G5cZa6K-KzKYBvLAOqBXb7h_DS7m7-ZZBuY7QwOCs)

### **1.8 Preparing for speaking**

The fundamental distinction between the ZNO and Matura exams is that the ZNO does not include a speaking component, but the Matura does. Csépes and Együd (2004) summarised that the most significant element of current English exams is that they should offer applicants with tasks that are as near to what people do in real life with the language as possible. As a result, modern speaking exams concentrate on evaluating a learner's ability to use the language in realistic scenarios in which they must fulfill a range of linguistic tasks. Because we rarely have the opportunity to prepare for what we want to say in real life, the candidate's performance must be spontaneous. When two individuals are having a discussion in real life, they take turns initiating and responding, they may decide to abruptly shift the topic of the conversation, or they may interrupt each other to take a turn. As a result, depending on the speakers' objectives, talks might take very different paths. In other words, in real-life talks, the speaker's contributions can be somewhat surprising. It is tough to judge a candidate's oral performance with any degree of accuracy. A learner's performance may vary depending on the task, the interlocutors, and whether they take an exam alone or in pairs. The evaluation of oral language skills is clearly a complicated task, since there are numerous elements that can influence test takers' performance positively or adversely. Test designers must carefully evaluate the potential

impact of all relevant elements that may alter applicants' performances and assessments in order to elicit their "optimal performance."

According to Bárdos (2004) a candidate's mistake in a written grammar test or a tape-recorded speaking test is irrevocable, but in reality, despite the constraints of the speaking conditions, there is always room for correction, there is always some kind of backtracking.

### **1.9 Preparing for reading**

Buck (2001) pointed out that on a reading test, the test-taker can normally react at their own pace, and they can take as much time as they need on a tough item. Many listening examinations do not allow for this, and as a result, some test-takers may feel irritated or even resentful. From the standpoint of the listeners, this means that they are rarely in charge of their own working pace.

As Alexander and Jetton (2000) said reading is an interactive and constructive activity in which the reader interacts with the text while simultaneously using a range of techniques available to him (e.g., background knowledge and contextual signals) to construct meaning from it, according to reading specialists.

Bárdos (2000) drafted that reading is a linguistic ability that involves going through the steps below to figure out what a printed text means: 1) recognition of letters; 2) decoding (perception of their order as a whole, in addition to letter recognition); 3. understanding (perception of the "direct" meaning of the word or phrase); 4. interpretation (which already involves the response and completes the communicative act hidden in the text). By the time a foreign language is learned, the technology for silent and aloud reading, as well as the physiology of reading, has been developed (fixation and regression, width of fixation, speed of reading, tendency to speed-read, etc.). The best-known types of reading are: 1. skimming, i.e. picking out the main points; 3. intensive reading (also used to be called analytical reading, slow, thorough, analytical reading of the text in all its details); 4. extensive reading (also used to be called synthetic reading, reading the text at a relatively fast pace in order to gain a general understanding, such as reading fiction).

### **1.10 Preparing for listening**

According to Vandergrift and Goh (2012) listening to speech is an invisible mental process that is very difficult to define. The listener has to distinguish sounds, understand the meaning of words, grammatical structures, interpret stress and pronunciation, remember and interpret in a close or wider socio-cultural context.

Bárdos (2000) conceived that extensive listening comprehension (e.g. detailed word-by-word comprehension practice, for the sake of every detail); intensive listening comprehension (e.g. listening for a specific piece of information (how hot it will be today in the weather report); and scanning listening comprehension are all examples of listening comprehension.

According to Buck (2001) most testing scenarios have a set amount of time allotted, and the test administrators must keep track of it. In the case of listening, the test's timing is usually dictated by the order in which the texts and tasks are presented. Often, one recording will contain all of the listening materials, instructions, questions, answer pauses, and so on, and this recording will be used to control the test; the administrations in this manner.

Fehérváryné and Horváth (2012) pointed out that it is critical to understand what is being assessed and how it is being tested when preparing for an exam. This implies you should understand what abilities are required for each work type, how to master these skills, and what test strategies are required for each task type. One will be a better listener and a more successful test taker if you grasp what the listening process in English entails and how listening activities are created. Listening effectively is a skill. Competence in listening, like any other skill, is developed through study and practice. As a result, it is critical for both a teacher and a student to have a general concept of what listening is, why it might be challenging, and what can be done to improve listening abilities.

Fehérváryné and Horváth (2012) worded that listeners should be able to demonstrate their capacity to follow the major points and understand detail in a text, as required by the task, without necessarily knowing every word in a particular text, according to Hungarian school-leaving examination standards. Similarly, Cambridge's FCE exams assess listeners' ability to comprehend the gist, important points, details, speakers' attitudes, opinions, and sentiments. When studying for a test, keep in mind that successful foreign language listeners can guess what speakers will say next, therefore they will read the assignment instructions extremely attentively. Good listeners also avoid panicking while trying to guess unknown words or phrases, instead relying on their own expertise of the subject to understand and select key aspects while rejecting extraneous information.

Fehérváryné and Horváth (2012) opined that perception and comprehension of a foreign language, on the other hand, is slower, less automatic, and requires more work. Although it is vital to grasp how individual sounds are spoken, it is even more critical to recognize that once isolated words become part of connected speech, they may alter as sounds and even disappear.



As a result, do not be surprised if some of the task speakers do not "pronounce each and every sound" or speak very "clearly." In any language, this is totally normal. The disparities in languages are another reason why listening in a foreign language requires more effort on the side of the listener. In English, for example, emphasized syllables are used frequently, although this is not the case in Hungarian, French, Italian, or Slovenian. Furthermore, the method in which the words are delivered, i.e. with a rising or falling tone, with sentence stress in one place or another, is often more important than the words themselves. Spoken texts, both in real life and in tests, have certain characteristics that you should be aware of. English native speakers and fluent non-native speakers may communicate clearly and carefully in ordinary contexts, or they may speak very quietly and indistinctly, or they may speak so quickly that the words blend into one stream of sounds. The listener cannot expect to understand every word if the spoken texts comprise speakers who do not speak well. Skilled listeners do not panic and tune out; instead, they try to understand as much as they can, relying on any hints they can pick up in the flow of speech and attempting to decipher the text as it unfolds. Listening comprehension can also be influenced by sound quality and background noise. Speakers have the option of speaking loudly or softly. Background noise, such as traffic noise, ringing phones, or moving objects, may be present in the text. Poor-quality equipment can also cause distorted noises, which can make it difficult to understand. When practicing for the exam, it is crucial to choose a quiet spot to listen to the tasks and top quality equipment, especially at first.

### **1.11 Preparing for writing**

As Bárdos (2000) said writing is a learned linguistic skill in which signs are continuously and automatically put on paper according to the conventions of a given language, while the connections between sound combinations and the written image are perceived as requiring abstraction and as demonstrating the randomness of this connection according to the language's traditions.

Tankó (2005) described that an eighteen-year-old candidate wrote to a buddy in a university entrance examination letter: Writing is merely grammar, and anyone can master it. But when it comes to speaking, it is all about the language. These phrases express a mindset that still exists when it comes to writing. Given that writing is the least commonly utilized of the four language abilities (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and because developing effective writing skills involves a lot of effort on both the language learner's and the language teacher's part, this talent is sometimes overlooked. Obviously, this is an exaggeration derived from a language classroom where writing was employed to assess whether students had grasped a specific

grammar point. Writing is a form of communication, just like speaking. Writing is a difficult activity that demands far more than a decent command of the English language. Even if they have a strong command of the English language, language learners may struggle to write well-articulated scripts. The writing process is complicated by the fact that, while a text is linear in the sense that it takes the reader from the first to the final concept, its composition is a recursive process. Good writers modify their screenplays frequently, for example, by adding or removing ideas at the start or rearranging them to make the script more logical. The writing process is divided into three stages: pre-writing, writing, and reviewing. Although competent writers work through these steps in order, they may go back from the writing stage to the pre-writing stage and make some changes during the composing process, or they may decide to rework part of the screenplay during the reviewing stage and return to the writing stage.

### **1.12 Preliminary research**

The preliminary research was necessary since the information gained provided insight into the perceptions of students who had passed the Ukrainian English language exam. It was critical to concentrate on this exam because it is a requirement for students who wish to continue their education in Ukraine. The preliminary research created the framework for the main research by providing information on the exam structure, students' exam preparation habits, and their perspectives. In terms of the feasibility of the preliminary research, it was worth mentioning the significance and importance of comparing the Ukrainian English ZNO and the Hungarian English Matura exam, since many Transcarpathian students take advanced final exams in Hungary, therefore the findings of the main research may be relevant for them too.

The fundamental impetus for performing this study was that no study had been conducted in Transcarpathia that dealt with a complete examination of the Ukrainian English ZNO, just partial results. The main aim of the research was to find out students' views on the pathway to success in the Ukrainian Advanced Level English (ZNO) exam. The research was carried out at the end of the first semester and the beginning of the second semester of the 2020/2021 academic year.

The participants of the research were students of English at the Ferenc Rákóczi Ferenc Transcarpathian Hungarian College II. Data from 85 questionnaires provided information for the analysis. The students who completed the questionnaire had studied English for two to fifteen years. Students answered the questions in the questionnaire according to their own knowledge and personal opinion.

According to the students who participated in the survey, when writing a letter, it is more useful not to use complicated sentences to avoid grammatical errors. It is more effective to use short

but well-worded sentences. Writing an essay on as many different themes as possible is the most effective approach of preparation. To write an outstanding essay, one must be familiar with a variety of phrases and be able to use them at the start and end of the letter. When writing an essay, it is crucial to know synonyms of words, so growing a vocabulary is really significant. If the students taking the test do not have a broad enough vocabulary, they are more likely to use the same word more than once in their essay writing, which could lower their marks.

The most typical blunder is memorizing words without considering their synonyms, which can affect the letter's lexical content ratings. It is critical to read the task instructions in order to prevent completing the task wrong.

When working on the gap-fill activities, have a glance at the answer choices and identify the crucial words or phrases before beginning to read the text. If the grammatical structure of the language structures is closely analyzed, it is reasonably easy to rule out wrong replies. To put it another way, it is critical to analyze and evaluate the sample tests.

It is mandatory to read English books and stories, especially ones that students are interested in and enjoy, in order to improve their memorization skills. There are numerous ways to properly prepare for tests these days, including judicious use of the Internet. Watching movies or TV shows with English subtitles, as well as listening to music, are excellent ways to prepare for listening comprehension. It is a good idea to write down terms or phrases from the text and then look them up in a dictionary to see what they imply.

The language block and listening comprehension were the most difficult parts of the test for the participants. In general, the reading comprehension component did not provide any difficulties to the students. The following were the causes of the challenges encountered: lack of practice, short thinking time, quality of the audio content, pronunciation, weariness, low playback, and external noise for listening comprehension. The issues with essay writing were a lack of language and confidence. Students struggled with identifying the correct synonyms for words due to a lack of practice with this type of task, and they felt the tests to be very complex and deceptive. The inability to choose the correct verb tenses was due to a lack of understanding of grammatical norms.

The majority of students (16) studied for the listening comprehension section by watching videos, solving online activities for the grammar section, and practicing accurate formal and informal letter writing for the opinion section. According to the students' opinions, the key to passing the ZNO in English is to follow a logical preparation structure, which can be aided by a tutor, and to practice often.

### **1.11.1 Summary of the research**

The External Independent Testing in Ukraine is always full of surprises, with new variants being created every year. From 2010 to 2017, the English language maturity test examination question sets were divided into the following types of questions: matching, multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank and opinion questions. As a result, the 120-minute time limit for students has been increased to 150 minutes. The introduction of listening comprehension in the foreign language ZNO was not very popular and there were many complaints about the poor quality of the audio file, but the results show that the majority of candidates have no major problems with this task. When looking at the results, choosing the right synonyms for words is the biggest difficulty for graduates year after year. The writing part, in which students are asked to express their own opinions on a given topic, shows varying scores. Due to varying levels of preparedness among candidates and the fact that students frequently do not even begin the writing work, the task's complexity varies from year to year (e.g. in 2020, 21 200 candidates did not write the letter and 5356 did not meet the conditions of the task [https://testportal.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ZVIT-ZNO\\_2020-Tom\\_2.pdf](https://testportal.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ZVIT-ZNO_2020-Tom_2.pdf) ). A big factor in students' results in the English language test is their preparation. If they practise the types of questions on the test, they should not have too much trouble solving them. A tutor with whom students can build an efficient process can help a lot.

### **1.11.2 Conclusion of the research**

During the ZNO, the participants have to learn to perform several tasks: determining whether a statement is correct or incorrect, choosing the correct answer, filling in gaps in the text and giving a detailed opinion. Repeatedly performing these types of tasks and correcting any errors that occur will guarantee maximum results. At the same time, a tutor can share the secrets of effective performance and guide the process. It can help to overcome language barriers, misunderstandings of words, and help to remediate practical skills. Of course, much depends on the student. Students can get better results by devoting time outside of the classroom or extra courses to improving their English skills on a daily basis.

If the participant wants not only to pass the test but also to get a good result, in this case, regular practice is an essential part of the preparation, so it is necessary to prepare for the test every day, even if only a little. The secret to effective preparation is a comprehensive approach to studying, which means that you should alternate practising the tasks on the test. Reading is an essential element, as is practising grammatical structures orally and in writing. The focus should be on helping students preparing to take the ZNO in English to make up grammatical deficiencies and expand their vocabulary. Sharing new information with others can be an effective way of helping them to organise their thoughts in a logical and rational way.

Students often do not take enough time to prepare. The more English-language material a student surrounds himself with, the better. Watching instructional videos, listening to foreign

radio programmes or podcasts is an effective method, and it can be a great help if you have friends you can correspond with in English. The use of vocabulary cards is also recommended. In conclusion, it is important to make the most of the preparation and, consequently, to increase the chances of passing the ZNO exam.

As the data from the research clearly showed, effective preparation can be ensured by the assistance of a tutor who can help to structure the process in a logical way and identify the student's weaknesses and needs. Other advantages of preparing with a teacher are the ability to explain more difficult to understand material and to apply the latest effective learning methods, while students are under constant pedagogical supervision.

Of course, the more time and effort the student puts into practising and preparing, the better. Reviewing and solving tests from previous years can also be an effective method. Rehearsing a test exam can be useful, as some students have complained that they have not had enough time to think through their answers. They can incorporate this into their lives, for example, once a week, but on a regular basis. This way, students can be more transparent about how much time they will spend completing each section and how many minutes it may take to transcribe everything from the outline and check it. Thanks to this, students can have an idea of the process and flow of the exam.

Not least, in addition to the necessary knowledge, it is essential that participants believe in themselves and their ability to perform well, so it is important that they have self-confidence. Furthermore, during the preparation it is important not to worry and to be alert. The successful outcome of a test exam depends largely on the effort/attention of the student.

## **PART II**

### **EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

This part of the thesis introduces the research by providing background information, demonstrates the purpose of the research in detail, the research questions and hypotheses, the research methodology, along with the participants, the instrument, the procedure, the strategy used to collect information and an outline of the research. The aim of the research is to provide information about the two exams.

The External Independent Testing (ZNO) is a compulsory examination in Ukraine, designed to determine the academic level of secondary school students, just like the English Matura examination in Hungary. The main aim of the research was to find out students' views on the path to success in the External Independent Testing in English (ZNO) in Ukraine and the English Matura examination in Hungary.

The significance of the study stems from the fact that there have been few investigations on this topic in Transcarpathia. The main aim of the thesis is to compare the two exams, as many students from Transcarpathia take advanced final exams in Hungary, so the results of the current research may be important for them as well. The objective of the thesis is to compare the two exams (the types of tasks included) with the aim of finding out whether or not there is a significant difference between the two.

#### **2.1 Research question and hypothesis**

The aim of the research was to compare the two examinations (the types of tasks that are incorporated in them) with the goal of determining whether or not there is an outstanding difference between the two. The research shed light on the contrasts and similarities between the two English school-leaving examinations. The aim was to compare what the academic literature says about the two exams with the findings obtained from the research. The rationale for writing this part is that it can highlight similarities and differences in the structure and functioning of the two maturity profiles and can facilitate the preparation of the students for the examinations.

The underlying two hypotheses were used to guide the entire thesis based on the literature:

Hypothesis 1: The Ukrainian External Independent Testing in English (ZNO) was easier to pass than the English Matura examination in Hungary.

Hypothesis 2 : The Ukrainian External Independent Testing in English (ZNO) was easier to pass as the exam did not include a speaking section.

In order to see whether the two hypotheses were true or untrue, two research questions were proposed. The two research questions were the following:

Research Question One: Which exam was easier to pass?

Research Question Two: Why was the Ukrainian External Independent Testing in English (ZNO) easier to pass?

In Part 2, the answers to the following research questions are assessed in relation to the research findings, and a concise description is presented as to whether the thesis' hypotheses were proven or disproven.

### 2.1.1 Research participants

The participants of the research were students, who passed the External Independent Testing in English (ZNO) in Ukraine and students, who passed the English Matura examination in Hungary. The number of students who took part in the research was six. The six students were aged between 18 and 20. The interview questions were answered by four female students and two male students. Each of them answered all of the questions which the instrument of the research included. The students who were questioned had been studying English for 12 to 14 years. The students answered the interview questions according to their own knowledge and personal opinion.

Table 1 below summarises the students' personal information (age and gender), the number of years they have studied English and the date they took the examinations. To protect the identities of the participants and maintain anonymity, the students were given pseudonyms.

| <i>Name</i>                            | <b>Bianka</b> | <b>Róbert</b> | <b>Béla</b> | <b>Eliza</b> | <b>Noémi</b> | <b>Csilla</b> |
|--|---------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| <i>Age</i>                             | 18            | 18            | 18          | 19           | 19           | 20            |
| <i>Gender</i>                          | Woman         | Man           | Man         | Woman        | Woman        | Woman         |
| <i>Years spent on learning English</i> | 12 years      | 12 years      | 12 years    | 13 years     | 13 years     | 14 years      |
| <i>Year</i>                            | 2020          | 2020          | 2020        | 2019         | 2019         | 2021          |

Table 1. Participants' age, gender, years of English language leaning, and year when passed ZNO/Matura

### **2.1.2 Research instrument Interview**

To carry out this research, which aimed to discover the differences and similarities between the External Independent Testing in English (ZNO) in Ukraine and the English Matura exam in Hungary, interview questions were devised and asked of the participants. First, the amount of questions for the interview had to be selected, and then it had to be double-checked that all of the important issues had been covered.

23 open-ended questions were used in the research instrument (interview). The choice of this method was motivated by the need to provide a larger amount of data. A survey like this, on the other hand, can only provide the views of a small group of students. The purpose of the interview questions was to collect data on the participants' preparation habits for the reading comprehension task, the listening comprehension task, the grammar section, the writing assignment and the speaking part.

Two questions on the participants' backgrounds were included in the research instrument. Further questions were asked from the participants about which tasks were the most difficult and the easiest for the students when preparing for the ZNO and Matura exams in English, and what the participants thought were the reasons for these difficulties and why some tasks were easier to solve. It has also been looked at whether the students had prepared for their school-leaving exams with or without a teacher, and whether they had attended extra-curricular language classes or extra lessons. The interview questions were answered in Hungarian, which was the mother tongue of the participants. The questions and answers from the participants were then translated into English as accurately as possible.

### **2.1.3 Research procedure**

The research took place at the end of the first semester and the beginning of the second semester of the academic year 2021/2022. In summary, the study involved students who were able to draw useful conclusions regarding the preparation for and passing of the abovementioned school leaving examinations. The students were informed about the aims of the research and were asked to answer the questions honestly. The interviews were conducted online using Google Meet and Messenger. The interview questions took up to 30 minutes to answer. Students answered the questions of the research tool based on their opinions, experiences and preparation



habits. All the students who participated in the research provided demanding, thoughtful, considered responses (and in many cases, justifications).

#### 2.1.4 Results

Respondents provided so many comments, opinions, criticisms and reflections that a detailed, qualitative analysis of these comments, opinions, criticisms and reflections is far beyond the scope of this summary report. With the exception of one student, the students spent a few months preparing for the External Independent English language exam in Ukraine, as the Hungarian exam was earlier, so they concentrated on that (see Table 2), only<sup>1</sup> one student studied for both tests for the same length of time. As the Ukrainian exam is the equivalent of an intermediate level exam, the tasks that were set for the Ukrainian English ZNO seemed very easy for the students compared to an advanced level Hungarian exam. Students felt that having to complete a more difficult set of work prior to the Ukrainian English ZNO made the examination much easier to prepare for, so it is much preferable to attend an exam with a more challenging set of tasks beforehand.

| <i>Participants</i>               | <i>Bianka</i> | <i>Róbert</i> | <i>Béla</i> | <i>Eliza</i> | <i>Noémi</i> | <i>Csilla</i> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| <i>Preparation for the ZNO</i>    | 1-2 months    | 1 month       | 1 month     | 4 months     | 6 months     | 2 years       |
| <i>Preparation for the Matura</i> | 1 year        | 1 year        | 1 year      | 1 year       | 1 year       | 2 years       |

Table 2. Time spent by students preparing for the ZNO and Matura

The first and most important step in preparing for the exam is to know the exam requirements: the form of the exam (oral or written), how much time you have during the exam to prepare, answer or write, when the exam will be held, etc. The next step is to collect the material for the examination. It is important that the students have the books, notes, practice tests, items, etc. to help the students learn from the start. Scheduling is one of the most important steps in the preparation. In order to make good use of the students' preparation time, it is essential to make a time plan.

Learning takes place in several phases: preparation, memorisation, repetition. During each phase, the knowledge is built upon in stages, with repetition being more firmly anchored, so

<sup>1</sup> This student spent two years studying for the examinations, after failing the Ukrainian language exam for the first time in Ukraine.

that a coherent framework of knowledge is established. Knowledge that at first seems vast and unmanageable becomes a transparent, logical system. This can be helped by a variety of note-taking and sketching techniques. The amount of time spent on each stage of learning varies and is determined by the individual.

As Table 3 shows, to guarantee the best possible outcome, all six pupils enlisted the assistance of a tutor, in addition, all six students attended extra-curricular school preparatory classes for the school-leaving examinations, and the other four students, with the exception of Béla and Noémi, also took part in extra lessons. A tutor can assist in properly structuring the process and identifying the learner's shortcomings and needs, ensuring effective preparation. Other benefits of working with a pre-service teacher include the capacity to explain more difficult topics and to use the most up-to-date effective learning methods while students are under constant pedagogical monitoring during the preparation phase.

| <i>Participants</i>       | <i>Bianka</i> | <i>Róbert</i> | <i>Béla</i> | <i>Eliza</i> | <i>Noémi</i> | <i>Csilla</i> |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| <i>Teacher</i>            | Yes           | Yes           | Yes         | Yes          | Yes          | Yes           |
| <i>Preparation school</i> | Yes           | Yes           | Yes         | Yes          | Yes          | Yes           |
| <i>Extra classes</i>      | Yes           | Yes           | No          | Yes          | No           | Yes           |

Table 3. The methods of the students' preparations

## 2.2 The process of preparation

When it comes to exam success, the most crucial aspect of exam success is the examination technique, which is divided into two components. There is examination preparation as well as post-examination preparation. If students want to succeed in an exam, they must have a strategy or plan.

The participants of the research found it vital that before taking an exam, students must first learn about the exam (see Table 4). Students, for example, must seek and look for previous year questions in the university or collage library. So that pupils can become accustomed to the examination format.

As Table 4 summarizes students should attempt to answer the examination paper after searching it. Students may consult the instructor or other reference materials if they have any questions concerning the issues. So that when the questions come up during the exam, they will be able to understand and answer them without hesitation. Róbert remarked that:

*I think analysing the previous years' questions are really beneficial since it allows us to assess our competence or degree of knowledge on specific topics.*

Furthermore, students should pay attention to the instructor's explanations of the exam subject (see Table 4). As Eliza described that:

*For example, in lectures or tutorials, the teacher may provide some hints about the topics of the exam and may inform us about the types of exam questions, time limits etc. As a result, I believe that we must take advantage of this opportunity to listen to what the lecturer has to say.*

In general, students may find adequate study locations during examination weeks. They must, for example, seek out quiet and comfortable locations, such as a library. The most crucial issue is that they must locate a location where students can arrange their work (see Table 4). Apart from that, Noémi explained that:

*For me, it was a must to ensure that I have a study routine in place. I think it is critical to manage our activities timetable, which includes doing certain exercises, revision, and studying.*

Some students believe that exercising on a regular basis will help them learn faster and do better on exams.

*Róbert: In my opinion, everything lies in regularity. I consistently practiced doing all of the tasks and in such a way that by performing the exercises on a regular basis prior to taking the exam, I believe that the amount of stress during the exam can be reduced.*

*Csilla: I think it is obvious for everyone that the more we practice the better we will become, this is also clearly true for the exams. We must practice everything over and over again.*

For students, the examination strategy (see Table 4) is also highly significant. If pupils wish to pass the exam, they must understand how to create an examination strategy. In this instance, pupils should be less anxious when taking the examination. For example, students should not be alarmed when they encounter an exam question, especially if it is too long or difficult. The strategy is for pupils to carefully read and comprehend the exam questions.

In written exams, students have to complete the tasks in a certain amount of time, so it is important to manage their time well. There is no one to help the test takers during the exam, no feedback on how well or badly they are doing. Exam papers are usually test-like or require a longer written explanation of a topic or question. In the latter case, students will be asked to produce a longer, well thought-out, precise piece of writing in the given genre.

| Key                                     | Why?   |
|---|--|
| <b>Learn about the exam</b>             | To familiarize yourself with the exam structure                                |
| <b>Practice answering the questions</b> | To assess your competence  |
| <b>Use the tutor's assistance</b>       | To inform you about the different types of tasks, time constraints, and so on. |
| <b>Develop a study routine</b>          | To plan your work  |
| <b>Create an exam strategy</b>          | To reduce stress/ become more confident  |

Table 4. Useful preparation tips before the exam

Béla expressed that:

*What helped me a lot is that I did not start solving the task(s) right away. I think students who are about to take the exam should study and interpret the tasks, the questions. It is worth going through the whole set of questions to see how long it is, how many tasks and questions it contains, and what types of tasks are included. This is what was beneficial to me to manage the time available properly.*

Students should not try to solve the issues in order, as it is preferable to always write down what they know first. Students taking the school-leaving examinations should always read and understand the instructions carefully before working on the exercises. If one does not answer the questions as instructed, they may lose valuable points.

The following is what Bianka said regarding the exam writing section:

*Before submitting the essay, it is advisable to read the whole essay and check what has been written and correct any mistakes. When correcting, I think shoudents should aim for clarity. When I took the exams I aimed for a clear, aesthetic and readable layout. Improperly corrected additions here and there will detract from the overall impression, even if the content is good.*

Taking a major examination without first reviewing the prior year's papers on the subject is almost always a formula for failure. Although students might pass the exam sufficiently, this is usually a dangerous technique. As a result, it is preferable to review past years' questions and become familiar with the exam format. Additionally, previous year question papers might assist the students in determining which questions to answer first and which to save for later.

The most effective approach for preparing for the tests, according to the students, was analyzing and mastering previous year's sets of questions and test papers. Students should go over each

type of question and strive to solve it until they have mastered it before moving on to the rest of the test. They can complete the entire test once they are confident in their ability to complete each section. According to Csilla's opinion:

*I think taking as many practice exams as possible and observing the trends that emerge is the best way to prepare for the Use of English part.*

Noémi shared one of her preparation strategies for the exams:

*I believe previous year's question papers can be used as a useful self-assessment tool to track our exam preparation progress. When I was preparing for the exams, I solved the test papers and compared my current performance to past attempts to see where I excelled and where I fell short. I think keeping a journal of the progress is the greatest approach to track the progress for any exam. This diary can keep track of the grades students received on each previous year's question paper. The goal is to come back to this diary once a week to monitor the progress and increase the amount of hours we spend studying in areas where we need to improve.*

As a result, students can easily use past year papers as a self-evaluation criterion to improve their exam preparation. However, by solving previous year's questions, they will have enough knowledge of the question pattern to feel more secure about taking the exam.

Students should construct a study plan while using previous year question papers to improve their time management abilities, self-confidence, and acquaintance with the exam structure. During their preparation, students should be able to use this plan to fill in any areas that require improvement they find.

To do so, they have to identify the types of questions that they were unable to solve in the practice tests and devote extra attention to them. This manner, the students can design effective tactics for preparation and future study based on prior years' papers.

The long and short of it is that a crucial factor in students' results in both English language tests is their level of preparation. If they practise the types of questions on the test, students should not have too much trouble solving them. A tutor can help a lot to build up an efficient process.

Students uniformly agreed that studying and solving previous year's sets of questions and practice tests was the most effective strategy to prepare for the tests (see Figure 1). True or False statements, Summary Completion, Form Completion, and other types of questions are all included in the listening section. Before moving on to the entire test, students should look through each type of question and try to solve each one until they have mastered it. They can

take the entire test after they feel secure in solving each section. The best method to prepare for the Use of English section is to take as many practice tests as possible and observe the patterns that develop.

Without exception, as Figure 1 demonstrates, the students (6) interviewed claimed that they had prepared for both the External Independent Testing in English (ZNO) in Ukraine and the English Matura examination in Hungary using the previous year's question sets and practice tests, and that the preparation for the exams did not differ (see Figure 1) because in both cases they were preparing for school-leaving exams, in the same manner. Solving past year's question sets, in the students' perspective, helped them establish a strategy for cracking the examinations based on the analysis of previous year's items. It offered students a sense of how the exams would be structured. Moreover, it was advantageous in the sense that it is the most effective method of learning time management during tests.

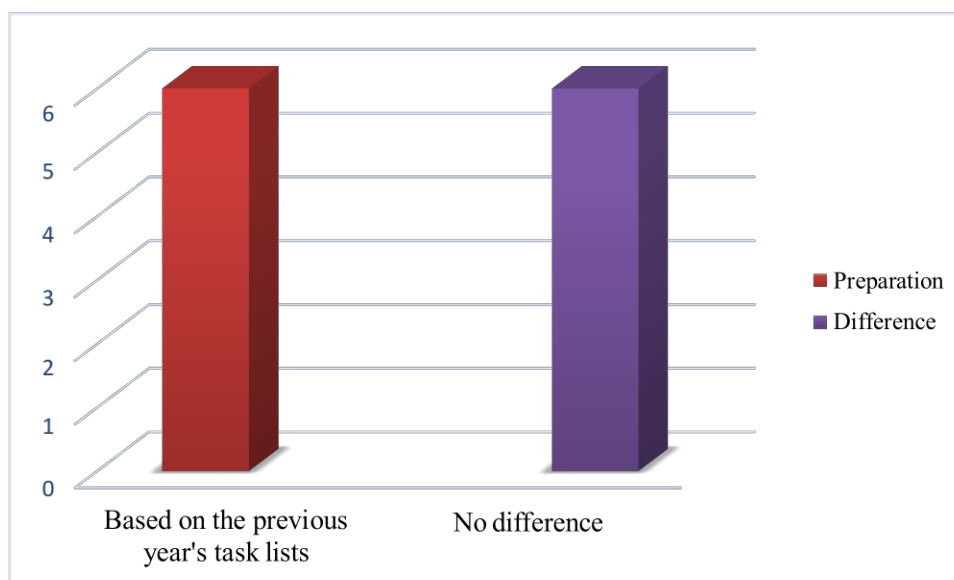


Figure 1. Habits of preparation among students

From 2010 to 2017, the test consisted of three sections: Reading, Use of English and Writing, and was set at Level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the level of the B1 Preliminary qualification. Tests were issued by the Ministry of Education. The most typical task-types of the written part are multiple-choice questions, true or false answers, different variants of matching, short answers and gap filling. The tasks left little room for creative language use except for the composition part (writing skills). Unlike the English ZNO exam, the English Matura examination included tasks related to listening comprehension from the beginning.

The students who took part in the research (6 by number) took the advanced school-leaving examination in Hungary, as it was a requirement for university entrance. The exam is divided into two parts: a written section and an oral section. At the Intermediate level, the written section consists of three Papers (Listening, Reading, and Writing) and lasts 180 minutes, but at the Advanced level, it consists of four Papers (Listening, Reading, Writing, and Use of English) and lasts 240 minutes.

The levels of the Matura exam was compared and it was found that the difference between the two levels is that the essay-type tasks are much more specific at the intermediate level (shopping, holidays) and more general and abstract at the advanced level (consumer society, the importance of tourism). In terms of communication situations, it does not distinguish between the two levels, but in the list of communication intentions, it notes that the difference between the two levels is quantitative and qualitative. It is clear what they mean by qualitative difference (e.g. possible expression of gratitude at intermediate level: Thank you very much; at advanced level: Thank you ever so much.), so at advanced level the student should express himself more nuanced and demanding. Both the intermediate and advanced written tests are marked using a scoring system, with the points being converted into examination points using the conversion table calculated for that year, and the percentages calculated from this.

In the case of receptive skills (reading comprehension, listening comprehension), both levels require the use of strategies in the text that are appropriate to the objectives and the task, and which allow the two levels to ask for different levels of depth of understanding of the text. At the intermediate level, it is usually sufficient to understand the gist of the text or the train of thought and to extract key information or light details, whereas at the advanced level, it is necessary to understand the information in detail and even to be able to infer the author's point of view or the characters' emotions. In the case of productive skills (writing, speaking), the most typical difference is that at intermediate level the text to be produced is related to the candidate's person, immediate environment or familiar everyday topics, while at advanced level it can be related to more general and abstract topics.

The expectations of texts measuring receptive skills and grammatical accuracy are very similar at both levels and the differences are similar. Texts should be authentic, possibly with a low degree of editing, clearly structured, relevant to the life experience and interests of the age group, with a general level of literacy sufficient for comprehension at the level of the final examination, and selected according to the subject heading of the document. Because of their authenticity, texts may contain words, phrases and structures that are not required at the level,

but which are not necessary for the task. The basic difference between the two levels is that at intermediate level the text is short and simple, while at advanced level it is longer and more complex in terms of language and content.

For Listening comprehension, there may be differences not only in the length of the text, but also in the pace of speech, standard pronunciation and background noise. In terms of text types, only one or two newer text types appear at an advanced level: publicistic writing, fiction texts in Reading Comprehension and popular science texts in Listening Comprehension.

To summarise, the main differences for each skill are in the subject matter, the range of elements used and the complexity of application. Whereas at intermediate level the topic is specific and personal, the range of elements required for the tasks (vocabulary, grammatical structures) is narrow and their presentation is simple, both in the texts on which the tasks are based and in the texts produced, at the advanced level the topic is general and abstract, the range of elements used is broad and their presentation is complex.

Figure 2 summarises the participants' opinions (5) that the easiest task was, by far, the reading comprehension in both exams. Students stated that they had a large enough vocabulary that it was simple to understand what words meant. Students definitely found it simpler to complete assignments in which they succeeded in class or which they enjoyed. The students stated that the fact that they were growing their vocabulary pushed them to put in as much time and energy as possible in these exercises, which they profited from.

Regarding the exams, Bianka identified two separate assignments as the easiest. The writing section of the English Matura exam in Hungary was the simplest for her to finish, while the listening part of the English ZNO presented no difficulties.

The Use of English section of both exams was cited by four students as the most challenging task. One student (Bianka) stated that the reading comprehension section of both exams was the most difficult for her to accomplish and another participant (Róbert) stated that for him, the most difficult aspect was having to complete the writing part (essay).



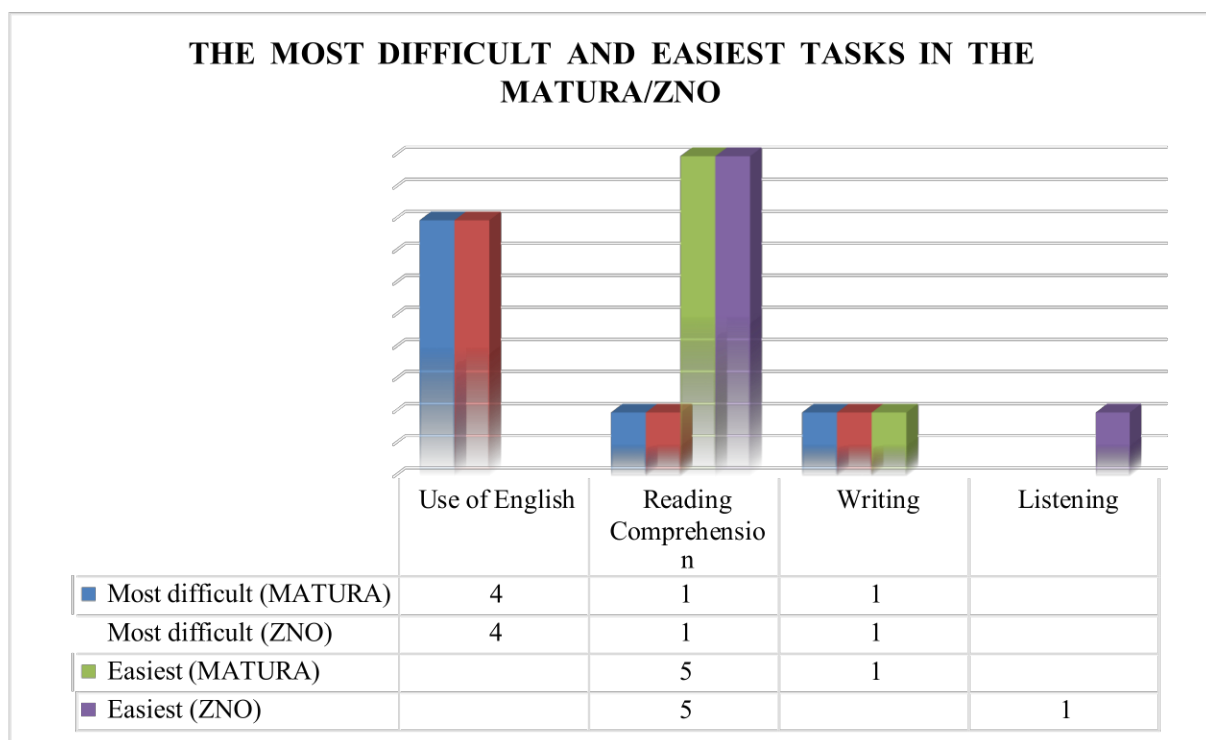


Figure 2 : The most difficult and easiest tasks in the Matura/ZNO

### 2.3 Reading comprehension

According to Eliza's opinion:

*I think when students respond to multiple choice questions, they must understand how to approach the questions and determine whether the response is the best or the correct one. The same can be said for the essay questions. They must use the answer-to-question strategy for the multiple choice answer.*

What Eliza meant by that is that students had to read the offered answer first before moving on to the questions. This is because students need to have a general idea of the answer and be able to acquire the solution without having to read the question first. The advantage of this strategy is that it can shorten the time it takes for students to come up with a solution.

During the interview, Csilla concluded that:

*Good reading skills are essential and should be developed through a variety of reading materials and reading techniques. Students should be encouraged to read English texts outside the classroom. I found it truly useful when I read texts that were relevant to my interest, in addition to the test tasks. I think students should be made aware that, in addition to attending lessons, independent, conscious language learning is also very important for success.*

From Csilla's standpoint, on the other hand, it must be recognised that the development of reading skills is not only up to the teacher, but is also linked to many factors that influence the effectiveness of the teacher's work.

Róbert personally thought that:

*As far as I see reading comprehension can be developed at a higher level by using reading strategies. Reading strategies consist of tasks to be carried out before, during and after reading a text in order to achieve the aim of reading. Obviously reading strategies have long been used in teaching in English. I believe that of particular importance among the reading strategies are the short exercises before the texts, which are designed to explore the language learners' background knowledge of the topic.*

As a reminder, Noémi mentioned that:

*In the reading section of the current exams, students will mainly find matching, gap filling, multiple-choice, true/false/undecided statements, so students will not have much room for manoeuvre, he or she usually has to record the letter of the answer option in the right place, typically in a square, so the test will be easy to correct, but has no connection with real language situations. It is true that the texts are authentic, but unfortunately their completion is mechanical and therefore I think that their results are not reliable in the light of real knowledge, because the test allows for guessing.*

The Reading Paper is designed to evaluate applicants' abilities to read and comprehend authentic texts independently and under time constraints. Students must be able to comprehend authentic writings encountered in everyday life, with topics that are relevant to their own personal experiences. They should be prepared to demonstrate their ability to apply reading methods that are appropriate for real-world reading goals (e.g., reading for information, instruction/advice, reference, and so on). They must be able to follow the major points and comprehend the details in a text as required by the assignment, even if the material contains a few unfamiliar terms or expressions.

#### **2.4 Use of English**

Bianka explained a type of pre-reading task that teaches language learners the key words of the text in the form of different types of vocabulary-building exercises. For instance, matching exercises, in which key words are often paired with sentences describing their meaning, are

often encountered. This also includes tasks where the meaning of words has to be chosen from several possibilities. Bianka described that:

*The first step in any reading comprehension task is to read the text quickly. According to my opinion this is necessary to understand the main ideas and the structure of the text. The meaning of some of the unknown words can often be deduced from the context. I think that the acquisition of this skill consists of building on existing vocabulary and grammar knowledge to have some idea of what the text is about.*

Certainly, Bianka indicated that the biggest problem is the reassessment of grammatical correctness tasks. It is easy, of course, to criticise purely grammatical tests: those measuring answer choice, matching (words with text), conjugation or independent completion, but it is all the more difficult to propose new ones to replace them.

In the textbooks used by foreign language teachers, for example, every time a new grammatical structure is introduced, they use the technique of "look it up in the text and discover its use", i.e. they do not say that they are going to learn about the past tense, for example, but they draw attention to certain sentences and use questions to help the learner to explain the rules by asking questions. Not to do so is to kill creative and experiential language teaching.

The purpose of the Use of English Paper is to see if the student has the lexical, grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic information needed to communicate independently. Learning the parts of the linguistic system is an important part of learning a communicative language that is well-interpreted. Without the foundations of language competency, no true communication is possible. By integrating a Use of English Paper in the written test, it can be demonstrated that accepting and applying communicative language teaching concepts is not incompatible with a full understanding of the linguistic system.

The school leaving exam assesses linguistic skills in a variety of ways. The knowledge of numerous linguistic aspects will be examined in the Use of English section of the exam in any one task. Some task types may be similar to those employed in the Reading Paper, with the exception that the task in the Use of English Paper focuses on grammatical and lexical unit understanding rather than the overall meaning expressed by all of these aspects. The texts used in the Use of English paper are less difficult than those used in the Reading Paper, thus problems with reading comprehension should not prevent one from completing the work.

According to Noémi:

*Students must be able to apply grammatical structures and lexical units as required by the examination level, as well as have semantic and pragmatic understanding at the text and sentence levels.*

## **2.5 Writing**

The main requirement for the productive skills test is the same: the students must be able to realise the communicative intention given in the task. According to Eliza:

*Personally speaking, writing skills text types should include the Internet as a more modern alternative to their paper counterparts, which are already in practice and are more commonly used by young people: e-mail, blog posts, forum posts, online advertisements, etc. These text types are already standard in international language examinations.*

The purpose of the Writing Paper is to evaluate the participants' abilities to develop written language for real-world conversation and accomplish writing activities relating to daily life and work. Students should be able to express themselves in writing at the required level, following the standards of common written text-types used in everyday life to guarantee that the text produced is clear and understandable to the reader and that the text's communicative aim is met. Students' writing abilities are evaluated using a communicative approach to language instruction and testing, in which they are required to complete real-world writing activities that are interactive and purposeful, and in which they create texts for specific readers.

Real communicative circumstances are produced in the examination of writing skills, i.e. the text to be written has (a) reader(s) (to whom it is written), a purpose (for which it is written), and a topic (for which it is written) (about which it is written). Furthermore, the assignment describes when and where the material is written, as well as the writer-reader connection. These elements determine the text's type, style, and register; as a result, applicants should write their texts with the organisational and linguistic requirements of the text's kind, style, and register in mind.

From the data received, it is clear that participants fully agreed (6) that the most effective preparation method is to write an essay on as many possible topics as possible. In order to write a good essay, it is necessary to learn a variety of phrases and use them at the beginning/end of the letter. Vocabulary building is significant, as it is mandatory to know the synonyms of words when writing an essay. If the vocabulary of the students taking the test is not rich enough, they are likely to use the same word more than once in the writing of the essay, which may affect their scores.

The 6 students who participated in the research actively practised writing proper formal and informal letters. All of them prepared for the ZNO and Matura in extra lessons with the help of a tutor, where they first reviewed the formal requirements together, followed by the teacher giving different topics with their corresponding outline points. First, the teachers helped the students to write the corresponding essay and then, the students worked on the task on their own and the mistakes were reviewed together.

## **2.6 Listening comprehension**

Csilla described that:

*In the ZNO exam, for the listening comprehension booklet, the examining board is responsible for providing a CD player. Unfortunately, the parameters of the player are not specified and this jeopardises equal opportunities, I think it might be a source of difficulties for students. It is easy to see that in a relatively large room, a low-powered player will not guarantee the same quality as a high-powered player in a small room.*

Finally, there remained the listening comprehension exercises, which in the current examinations were definitely based on authentic texts. In the current school-leaving exam, there are similar tasks to the other parts of the exam for listening comprehension: a true/false/undecided, a multiple-choice and a supplementary question.

The purpose of the Listening Paper is to determine how effectively a student can understand native and/or non-native speakers of the target language in their natural speech. Students who take part in the examinations should be able to comprehend a variety of texts drawn from everyday life and relevant to their own experiences. They should be prepared to demonstrate their ability to follow the main points of a text and understand detail in a text, as required by the job, without necessarily knowing every word.

Students' listening abilities will be examined using a variety of texts and assignments. The tasks will not put the student's memory to the test. If faults do not obstruct comprehension, linguistic accuracy or spelling will not be evaluated.

## **2.7 Speaking (only in the Matura in Hungary)**

The speaking part was the only section of the assignment that the students did not mention, neither the simplest nor the most difficult. As it has already been explained in the thesis, the ZNO has no speaking part, only written tasks, unlike the Matura, where students are required to complete both oral and written tasks in order to pass the examination.

The speaking test requires students to think about a topic for a few minutes before speaking about it for a few minutes. The students worked with their preparation teachers to prepare their themes by asking them to come up with more than three ideas for each issue.

The tutors encouraged their students to talk about the topics, brainstorming ideas in the same way that they would compose an essay. This provided students with not only speaking practice, but also the opportunity to plan and prepare a topic. The teachers advised them to always properly prepare the topic, as doing so will make it easier for them to fully develop and clarify their thoughts on exam day. They needed to cover as many topics as possible.

The purpose of the oral test is to evaluate students' capacity to express themselves in the target language at the level required for the assessment, as well as perform various tasks in everyday life. Students must be able to converse in conversational English in a variety of situations. They should be able to communicate in a variety of ways, including general interactional and social language, as well as transactional language.

According to the findings, selecting the appropriate synonyms for words was the most difficult task for the students in both tests, with four students citing the Use of English Part as the most challenging (see Figure 3). The students considered several answer options to be correct, thus taking longer to think through the differences between the nuances, and therefore found this type of task rather confusing.

For Róbert, the writing part proved to be the most challenging, he had difficulties expressing his own opinion, noting that:

*This was not my strong point in my mother tongue either, especially not in writing, which was always the hardest for me. I think the Writing Part is the most complex task of all, in which a number of factors have to be considered, including the formal requirements and structure of the text (addressing, saying goodbye). In order to attain an outstanding result, it is vital to practise the correct structure of the text and employ as much terminology as feasible.*

As Figure 3 summarizes, the sole student (Bianka) out of the six who found the reading comprehension section the most difficult in both the External Independent Testing in English (ZNO) in Ukraine and the English Matura examination in Hungary noted, that the difficulty could be due to a lack of time to solve the problem, and that she believed it was easy to lose the thread if the student was not attentive and in the appropriate spot. According to her, the

Hungarian exam is typically challenging, and the solutions to the questions are frequently unclear.

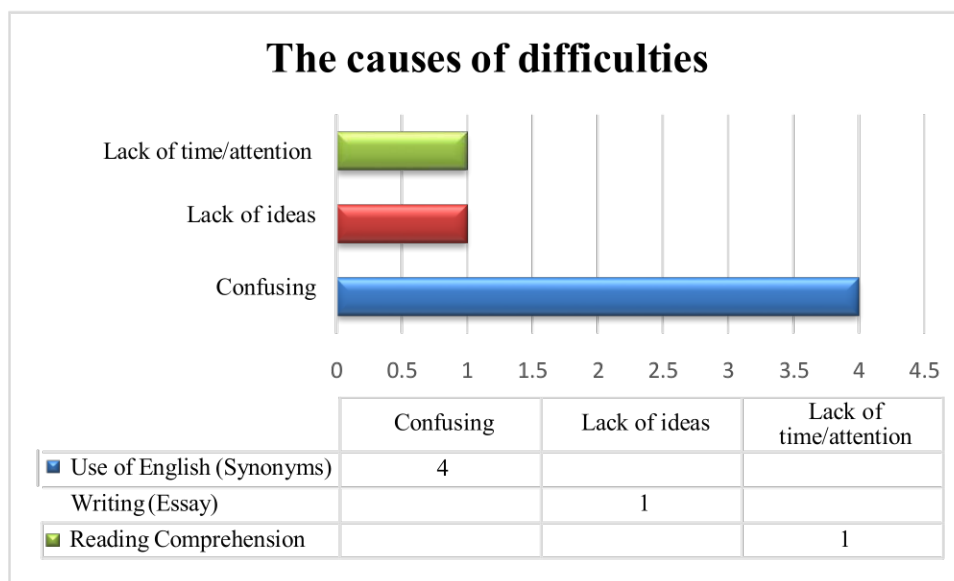


Figure 3: The reasons for the difficulties encountered in the exams

With the exception of one participant (Bianka) all students were on the same opinion that the Reading Comprehension Part was the easiest to complete (see Figure 4). Students could not really articulate why this part was the easiest for them, although they noted that this type of task was always easier for them. Students generally have no difficulty in the understanding of the text.

Students clearly identified the tasks that they excelled at in classes/extra courses or that they enjoyed the most to be the simplest to do. Four students commented that they were motivated by the fact that they were expanding their vocabulary and therefore invested more time and effort in these tasks, which they clearly benefited from.

Only Bianka named different tasks in the exams which proved to be the easiest for her (the listening part at the ZNO and the essay-type of task at the Matura) as shown in Figure 4. Bianka found the listening tasks on the the External Independent Testing in English (ZNO) in Ukraine to be the easiest. According to Bianka, there is no significant secret to the listening exercise's simplicity; all that is required is full attention, because if the learner pays attention, finding the proper answers to the work is relatively simple.

The written assignments proved to be the most uncomplicated for Bianka in the English Matura examination in Hungary. Everything that occurs to the student's mind, in her opinion, should be included and articulated. The goal should be to use as much terminology as possible, as this

is how the reader will determine whether or not the participants are adequately prepared. The assignment's simplicity stemmed from the fact that she was always stronger at these aspects, allowing her to devote more time to them than, say, a reading task.

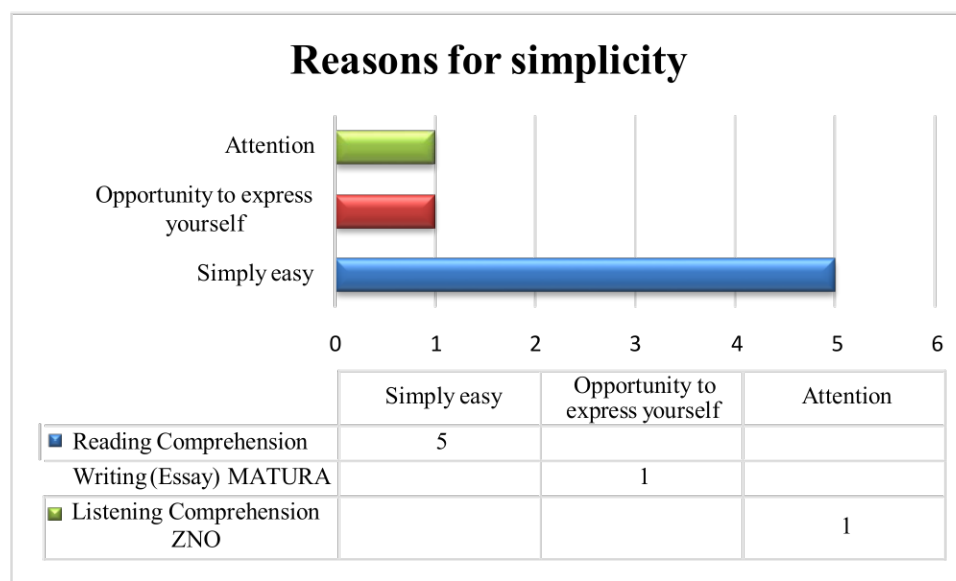


Figure 4 : The reasons for the simplicity of the tasks in the exams

According to the participants, the same emphasis was placed on all types of tasks. In their opinion, everything should be practiced and practiced repeatedly, but four students noted that the reason why some tasks were easier for the students to solve was that they always found those particular tasks easier or liked solving them better, and had a greater sense of achievement in solving them.

The students put in a lot of practice time with their tutor, holding conversations on different topics. The grammar section was also discovered to be a matter of practice by the students. According to their opinions, if you want to achieve good outcomes, you must sit and work a lot. The participants of the research explained that they could not keep track of how many essays and letters they had written on various topics. The adage "practice makes perfect" could not be more accurate.

As a result, in this comparison investigation, the ZNO was determined to be easier. This is hardly surprising given the historical differences in foreign language teaching circumstances, English status, and assessment procedures between the two countries. In addition, the English ZNO in Ukraine did not include a speaking component; instead, only one active skill, writing, was assessed; students were required to complete reading, listening, and writing assignments throughout the ZNO. The speaking part of the task, however, was the only aspect of the



assignment that the students did not address, and it was neither the easiest nor the most difficult. So, in general, it can be said that students did not find it very challenging to pass the oral part of the English Matura examination in Hungary.

Exams can help to improve the quality of education at a school. On the one hand, the tests are designed to provide explicit and transparent information on what competences pupils should have learned by the conclusion of upper secondary school, as well as where schools need to improve. On the other hand, they hold teachers accountable for their job and tie students' graduation to their grades.

The school-leaving exam - as it has been written before - has several functions. On the one hand, it marks the end of secondary education, on the other, it is an entry qualification for higher education and a necessary condition for certain jobs.

## CONCLUSIONS

The External Independent Testing in English (ZNO) in Ukraine and the English Matura examination in Hungary were examined in this thesis. The goal of the research was to examine if there was a substantial difference between the two tests (and the types of tasks they cover). All of the research findings in regard to the two research questions were covered in the preceding part of the thesis. These debates resulted in important consequences. The findings on the two school-leaving exams are presented in this section. The part concludes by pointing out some of the thesis' limitations in terms of research.

In the implementation of the research, advanced students who had passed their school-leaving exams were able to provide credible information. The target audience of the research are graduating students. For students who are preparing to take their school-leaving examinations and wish to succeed, the research can provide valuable, essential and reliable information.

The English school-leaving examination in Hungary is designed to assess students' communicative language ability at both the Intermediate and Advanced levels by administering separate tests of the four basic language skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing in situations as close to those encountered in everyday life as possible. At the Advanced level, in addition to the four skill exams, there is a fifth component, the Use of English Paper, which assesses candidates' linguistic competency, as well as their ability to apply their understanding of grammatical structures and vocabulary in a foreign language.

The Matura consists of both a written and an oral section and measures the four basic skills: reading comprehension, listening comprehension, speaking and writing, on the contrary, the ZNO does not include a speaking section. Both exams measure grammatical and lexical competence, as language users need to have adequate vocabulary and language structures in order to use communicative skills.

With fresh changes presented every year, the External Independent Testing in Ukraine is constantly surprising. The English language examination question set was divided into four categories of questions from 2010 to 2017: matching, multiple-choice, gap-filling, and essay. The addition of listening comprehension to foreign language test exams was a notable advancement in 2018. As a result, the 120-minute time limit for students has been increased to 150 minutes. The introduction of listening comprehension in the foreign language ZNO was not well received, and there were several complaints about the low quality of the audio file, but

the findings reveal that the vast majority of students had no significant difficulties with this task.

Two hypotheses were stated in the research. The first hypothesis that the Ukrainian External Independent Testing in English (ZNO) was easier to pass than the English Matura examination in Hungary, was supported, given the historical variations in foreign language teaching settings, the status of English, and assessment systems between the two countries, this is barely surprising. Furthermore, the Ukrainian English ZNO did not feature a speaking component; instead, students were required to complete reading, listening, and writing tasks throughout the ZNO. Because it is the equivalent of an intermediate level language exam, the questions in the Ukrainian school-leaving exam were easier to answer (and, as the data showed, all the students in the research had taken an advanced level exam in Hungary).

The second hypothesis claimed that the Ukrainian External Independent Testing in English (ZNO) was easier to pass as the exam did not include a speaking section, however this was refuted. The only area of the exam that the students did not address was the speaking part, neither as the easiest nor the most challenging. As a result, passing the oral section of the English Matura examination in Hungary was not particularly difficult for students.

In schools, examination systems are an important aspect of the accountability system. Throughout the more than two hundred years of the history of school-leaving examinations, the strong repercussions of examinations on the educational process have always been clearly visible. This is still the case today. The quality of secondary school education is largely influenced, if not determined, by the requirements of the examinations. The current educational reform movements, which include the modernisation of school-leaving examinations, could lead to positive changes and a renewal of the content and methodology of education.

External assessments are thought to be capable of ensuring that schools maintain a comparable and consistent quality standard on the one hand, and of moving educational processes in schools and classrooms in the desired direction on the other. This is intended to occur in a variety of ways: Teachers are required to cover the whole extent of the curriculum, including subject that they are unfamiliar with, on state-administered examinations, because they do not know the contents and foci of the exam assignments in advance.

The students questioned reported they used the previous year's question sets and practice tests to prepare for both the Ukrainian ZNO and the Hungarian English language examinations, and that their preparation was similar because they were both preparing for school-leaving exams.

In the students' opinion, solving previous year's question sets aided them in developing a strategy for cracking the exams based on the analysis of previous year's items. It gave students an idea of how the exams will be set up. It was also beneficial because it is the most effective approach of learning time management during testing.

According to the participants, all types of tasks were given equal weight. Everything, in their opinion, should be practiced over and over again, but four students pointed out that the reason some tasks were easier for them to solve was that they always found those tasks easier or liked solving them better, and felt a greater sense of accomplishment when they completed them.

The broadening of perspectives on language and language use is one of the most important concerns in the field of foreign/second language learning. The goal of language learning has shifted to the development of communicative competence, also known as communicative language ability, which is characterized as possessing the following elements:

- a) linguistic competence;
- b) sociolinguistic competence;
- c) discourse competence;
- d) strategic competence;
- e) sociocultural competency.

One of the central objectives of the foreign language school-leaving examination introduced in 2005 was to strengthen communicative language teaching and to counterbalance exam-centred teaching practices. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the choice of tasks included in each exam has a similar aim.

Examinations in Hungary may finish an educational/training period, such as a secondary school-leaving exam or a vocational examination, or they serve as the basis for admission to the next educational level, such as secondary school and higher-education entrance exams. After eighth grade, there is no school leaving examination, however there is a secondary school entrance exam. The relevance of this exam became even more in the case of six- and eight-year general secondary schools, which were forced to use a selection approach after grade four or six due to a huge number of applications.

School-leaving examinations are also thought to have the ability to encourage the adoption of innovative and modern curricula and task forms (for example, accounting for authentic contexts

and students' life experiences, problem solving, cross-curricular competencies, and so on) (innovation potential). In this regard, it is also envisaged that the quality of the tasks used in the classroom by teachers will be similar to the quality of test activities (in terms of content and format).

Given that teachers do not have access to actual exam questions and assignments, this type of "alignment" could, in theory, serve to ensure some basic quality criteria of modern training, such as "real world" orientation (alignment of testing and instruction). Furthermore, the tests are supposed to increase both students' and teachers' commitment by enhancing their intrinsic drive since they both face a difficult scenario (extrinsic motivation). Finally, it is claimed that when final grades are based on a statewide exit test rather than school-specific examinations or evaluations, both students and the institutions and organizations that hire graduates have a superior instrument to judge the individual capacities of graduates.

There can be no doubt about the reliability of the tests, because they are prepared by the best experts in the country and have been subjected to several levels of scrutiny. However, the validity of the subject tests is now in doubt. Validity means that the test measures what it is intended to measure.

The major goal of the English School-leaving Examination is to give pupils with a legitimate, reliable, and relevant certificate of language competency at two levels: Intermediate and Advanced. The purpose of the School-leaving Examination is to determine whether students have adequate proficiency in the foreign language to communicate effectively in real-life circumstances, as well as their ability to comprehend and produce spoken and written English. It is used to evaluate pupils' language skills, not their personalities, intelligence, or world knowledge (cultural or otherwise).

As a result of the research, some important conclusions were drawn about the two school-leaving examinations. Of course, these conclusions should be treated with caution because the sample included in the research represents a small percentage of the total population and is predictive of a pre-selected target group.

The research yielded some insights into the parallels and differences between the two exams, as well as the preparation and potential difficulty of the exam assignments. Any research or study, on the other hand, is only as good as its application. With the hope that significant knowledge has been supplied to students who are planning to take these tests, they will be able to pass the two exams addressed in this thesis.

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## РЕЗЮМЕ

У цій роботі було розглянуто ЗНО з англійської мови (ЗНО) в Україні та іспит з англійської мови в Угорщині. Метою дослідження було перевірити, чи існує суттєва різниця між двома тестами (і типами завдань, які вони охоплюють).

Усі результати дослідження щодо двох дослідницьких питань були висвітлені в попередній частині роботи. Ці дебати призвели до важливих наслідків. У цьому розділі представлені результати двох екзаменів. Частина закінчується вказівкою на деякі обмеження роботи з точки зору дослідження.

Під час проведення дослідження достовірну інформацію змогли надати учні старшого курсу, які склали екзамени. Цільова аудиторія дослідження – випускники. Для студентів, які готуються до здачі екзаменів і бажають досягти успіху, дослідження може надати цінну, важливу та достовірну інформацію.

Іспит з англійської мови в Угорщині призначений для оцінки мовних здібностей учнів як на середньому, так і на підвищеному рівні шляхом проведення окремих тестів чотирьох основних мовних навичок аудіювання, говоріння, читання та письма в ситуаціях, максимально близьких до тих, з якими стикаються. у повсякденному житті, наскільки це можливо. На рівні Advanced, крім чотирьох іспитів на навички, є п'ятий компонент, Використання англійської роботи, який оцінює лінгвістичну компетенцію кандидатів, а також їх здатність застосовувати своє розуміння граматичних структур і словникового запасу іноземною мовою.

Матура складається як з письмової, так і з усної частини та вимірює чотири основні навички: розуміння читання, розуміння на слух, говоріння та письмо, навпаки, ЗНО не включає розмовної секції. Обидва іспити вимірюють граматичну та лексичну компетентність, оскільки користувачі мови повинні мати відповідний словниковий запас та мовні структури, щоб використовувати комунікативні навички.

Зовнішнє незалежне тестування в Україні постійно дивує зі свіжими змінами, які вносяться щороку. З 2010 по 2017 рік екзаменаційний набір питань з англійської мови був поділений на чотири категорії: відповідність, множинний вибір, заповнення пробілів та есе. Помітним прогресом у 2018 році стало додавання іспитів з аудіювання до іспитів з іноземної мови. У результаті 120-хвилинний час для студентів було збільшено до 150 хвилин. Запровадження аудіювання в іноземній мові ЗНО не було добре сприйнято, і

було декілька скарг на низьку якість аудіофайлу, але результати показують, що переважна більшість студентів не мали значних труднощів із цим завданням.

У дослідженні висунули дві гіпотези. Першу гіпотезу про те, що українське зовнішнє незалежне тестування з англійської мови (ЗНО) було легше скласти, ніж іспит з англійської мови в Угорщині, було підтримано, враховуючи історичні відмінності в налаштуваннях викладання іноземної мови, статус англійської мови та системи оцінювання між ними. Країн, це не дивно. Крім того, в українсько-англійському ЗНО не було розмовного компонента; натомість учні повинні були виконувати завдання з читання, аудіювання та письма протягом усього ЗНО. Оскільки це еквівалент мовного іспиту середнього рівня, на запитання з української атестати було легше відповісти (і, як показали дані, усі учні в дослідженні склали іспит поглибленого рівня в Угорщині).

Друга гіпотеза стверджувала, що українське зовнішнє незалежне тестування з англійської мови (ЗНО) було легше скласти, оскільки іспит не передбачав розмовної частини, однак це було спростовано. Єдиною частиною іспиту, яку студенти не розглядали, була розмовна частина, ні як найлегша, ні як найскладніша. Як наслідок, задача усної секції іспиту з англійської мови в Угорщині не була для студентів особливими труднощами.

У школах системи іспитів є важливим аспектом системи підзвітності. Протягом більш ніж двохсот років історії здобуття іспитів у школі завжди чітко проглядався сильний вплив іспитів на навчальний процес. Так є і сьогодні. На якість середньої освіти значною мірою впливають, якщо не визначають, вимоги іспитів. Нинішні освітні реформи, які включають модернізацію атестатів, можуть призвести до позитивних змін та оновлення змісту та методики навчання.

Вважається, що зовнішнє оцінювання здатне забезпечити, з одного боку, підтримання шкіл порівнянного та незмінного стандарту якості, а з іншого — рухати освітні процеси в школах та класах у бажаному напрямку. Це має відбуватися різними способами: вчителі зобов'язані охоплювати весь обсяг навчальної програми, включаючи предмети, з якими вони не знайомі, на державних екзаменах, тому що вони не знають змісту та напрямків екзаменаційних завдань наперед.

Опитані студенти повідомили, що вони використовували набори запитань і практичні тести минулого року для підготовки до іспитів з української ЗНО та угорської з англійської мови, і що їхня підготовка була схожою, оскільки вони обидва готувались до

випускних іспитів. На думку студентів, розв'язання наборів питань минулого року допомогло їм у розробці стратегії здачі іспитів на основі аналізу завдань минулого року. Це дало студентам уявлення про те, як будуть організовані іспити. Це також було вигідно, оскільки це найефективніший підхід до навчання управління часом під час тестування.

За словами учасників, всім видам завдань надавали однакову вагу. Все, на їхню думку, потрібно практикувати знову і знову, але четверо студентів зазначили, що деякі завдання їм було легше розв'язувати в тому, що вони завжди вважали ці завдання легшими або любили їх розв'язувати краще, і відчували більше відчуття досягнення, коли вони їх завершили.

Розширення поглядів на мову та її використання є однією з найважливіших проблем у сфері вивчення іноземної/другої мови. Мета вивчення мови перемістилася на розвиток комунікативної компетенції, також відомої як комунікативні мовні здібності, яка характеризується такими елементами:

- а) лінгвістична компетентність;
- б) соціолінгвістична компетентність;
- в) дискурсна компетентність;
- г) стратегічна компетентність;
- д) соціокультурна компетентність.

Однією з головних цілей екзамену з іноземної мови, запровадженого у 2005 році, було посилення комунікативного викладання мови та врівноваження практики викладання, орієнтованої на іспит. Тому доцільно припустити, що вибір завдань, включених до кожного іспиту, має подібну мету.

Іспити в Угорщині можуть завершувати період навчання/навчання, наприклад, іспит здобуття середньої школи або професійний іспит, або вони служать основою для вступу до наступного освітнього рівня, такого як вступні іспити для середньої школи та вищої освіти. Після восьмого класу випускний екзамен не проводиться, але є вступний іспит до середньої школи. Актуальність цього іспиту набула ще більше у випадку з шести- та восьмирічними загальноосвітніми школами, які були змушені використовувати відбірковий підхід після 4-6 класів через величезну кількість заяв.

Вважається, що випускні іспити також мають здатність заохочувати до прийняття інноваційних та сучасних навчальних програм і форм завдань (наприклад, врахування автентичного контексту та життєвого досвіду учнів, вирішення проблем, міжпредметних компетенцій тощо) (інноваційний потенціал). У зв'язку з цим також передбачається, що якість завдань, які використовуються на уроці вчителями, буде подібна до якості тестової діяльності (за змістом і форматом).

З огляду на те, що викладачі не мають доступу до фактичних екзаменаційних запитань і завдань, цей тип «узгодження» теоретично може служити для забезпечення деяких основних критеріїв якості сучасного навчання, наприклад, орієнтації на «реальний світ» (узгодження тестування та навчання). Крім того, передбачається, що тести підвищать прихильність як учнів, так і вчителів, посилюючи їх внутрішній потяг, оскільки вони обидва стикаються зі складним сценарієм (зовнішня мотивація). Нарешті, стверджується, що, коли підсумкові оцінки базуються на загальнодержавному випускному тесті, а не на екзаменах або оцінках, що стосуються шкіл, як студенти, так і установи та організації, які наймають випускників, мають кращий інструмент для оцінки індивідуальних здібностей випускників.

Достовірність тестів не викликає сумнівів, адже вони підготовлені найкращими фахівцями країни та пройшли кілька рівнів перевірки. Проте валідність предметних тестів зараз під сумнівом. Дійсність означає, що тест вимірює те, що він призначений для вимірювання.

Основна мета іспиту з англійської мови – надати учням легітимний, надійний та відповідний сертифікат мовної компетенції двох рівнів: Intermediate та Advanced. Метою випускного іспиту є визначення того, чи достатньо учні володіють іноземною мовою для ефективного спілкування в реальних обставинах, а також їхню здатність розуміти й створювати розмовну та письмову англійську. Він використовується для оцінки мовних навичок учнів, а не їх особистості, інтелекту чи світових знань (культурних чи інших).

У результаті дослідження було зроблено важливі висновки щодо двох екзаменів. Звісно, до цих висновків слід ставитися з обережністю, оскільки вибірка, включена в дослідження, становить невеликий відсоток від загальної сукупності та є прогнозом для попередньо відібраної цільової групи.

Дослідження дало певне уявлення про паралелі та відмінності між двома іспитами, а також про підготовку та потенційні труднощі екзаменаційних завдань. З іншого боку,

будь-яке дослідження чи дослідження настільки гарне, наскільки воно корисне. З надією, що студенти, які планують складати ці тести, отримали значні знання, вони зможуть скласти два іспити, які розглядаються в цій роботі.



**APPENDIX**  
**Interview-guide**

English ZNO and English Matura

Age:

Gender:

1. How long have you been learning English?
2. In which year did you take the Ukrainian external independent English language exam?
3. In which year did you take the Hungarian English Matura exam?
4. Did you take intermediate or advanced level?
5. How much time did you spend preparing for the external independent English language exam in Ukraine?
6. How much time did you spend preparing for the English Matura exam in Hungary?
7. How were you preparing: with or without a teacher?
8. Have you participated in any extra-curricular school preparation activities for school-leaving exams?
9. Did you attend any extra lessons?
10. On the basis of what did you use to prepare for/study for the Ukrainian external independent English language examination?
11. On the basis of what did you use to prepare for/study for the Hungarian English Matura examination?
12. How did the two preparation methods differ?
13. How did you prepare for the speaking comprehension task?
14. How did you prepare for the grammar part?
15. How did you prepare for the writing part?
16. How did you prepare for the listening part?
16. In your opinion, which were the most difficult tasks at the ZNO?

17. In your opinion, which were the most difficult tasks at Matura?
18. Why did you find these the most difficult?
19. In your opinion, which were the easiest tasks at the ZNO?
20. In your opinion, which were the easiest tasks at Matura?
21. Why did you find these the easiest?
22. What do you think was the reason for this? (Could this be because you put more emphasis on these tasks in your preparation?)
23. In your opinion, which exam was easier and why?

## NYILATKOZAT

Alulírott, Orosz Melánia angol szakos hallgató, kijelentem, hogy a dolgozatomat a II. Rákóczi Ferenc Kárpátaljai Magyar Főiskolán, a Filológia tanszéken készítettem.

Kijelentem, hogy a dolgozatot más szakon korábban nem védtem meg, saját munkám eredménye, és csak a hivatkozott forrásokat (szakirodalom, eszközök stb.) használtam fel.

Tudomásul veszem, hogy dolgozatomat a II. Rákóczi Ferenc Kárpátaljai Magyar Főiskola könyvtárának Kézirattárában helyezik el.

Beregszász, 2022. június 1.

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Orosz Melánia