Comparing the Hungarian School-Leaving Exam with International Language Examinations

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Hungarian Accreditation Board for Foreign Language Examinations

The 6th Annual EALTA Conference, 27–30 May 2010 The Hague, Netherlands
Overview

• Background
  – Language examinations accredited by the state
  – Advanced level school-leaving examination in foreign languages

• Research study
  – Research questions
  – Research design
  – Participants
  – Methods
  – Results

• Conclusions

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Background

Hungary:
1. Language examinations accredited by the state
2. Advanced level school-leaving examination in foreign languages
   - CEFR as a common reference point
   - Alignment of levels ()
   - A language exam is not a school-leaving exam
   - A school-leaving exam is not a language exam (?)
Research study

• Research questions
  – How do school-leaving exam tasks perform in comparison to language exams accredited by the state?
  – To what extent do school-leaving examination tasks measure the same level (B2) as the language exams accredited by the state?
    • English (and German)
    • Reading and writing skills
Research study

• Research design
  – comparison of two international language exams (FCE, ECL) and the advanced level school-leaving exam in English
  – three reading tasks and one writing task
  – pilot examinees completed the tasks in simulated exam circumstances
• Participants
  – 100 secondary school students "close to B2"
  – Könyves Kálmán Grammar School (50)
    • school-leaving examination + ECL
  – Veres Péter Grammar School (50)
    • school-leaving examination + FCE
Research study

- Methods
  - Classical test analysis
    - comparison of facility values (mean p)
  - IRT-based analysis
    - comparison of item difficulty estimates
  - Correlation analysis
Research study

• Results
  – reading (school-leaving exam – ECL)
  – difference between mean p values is significant
  – correlation: 0.413 (p≤0.01)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School-leaving exam</th>
<th>ECL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No of items</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean p</td>
<td>0.6830</td>
<td>0.7354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>α</td>
<td>0.762</td>
<td>0.822</td>
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</table>
Research study

• Results
  – reading (school-leaving exam – FCE)
  – difference between mean p values is not significant
  – correlation: 0.709 (p ≤ 0.01)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>FCE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No of items</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean p</td>
<td>0.6040</td>
<td>0.6238</td>
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<td>α</td>
<td>0.775</td>
<td>0.850</td>
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Research study

• Results
  – reading
  – IRT analysis

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Research study

- Results (school-leaving exam – ECL)
  - reading
  - IRT analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAR00005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>1,312</td>
<td>.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>.384</td>
<td>47,949</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Research study

- Results (school-leaving exam – FCE)
  - reading
  - IRT analysis

### Independent Samples Test

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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAR00005</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.025</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>.484</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Research study

• Results (ECL – FCE)
  – reading
  – IRT analysis

### Independent Samples Test

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAR00005 Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>1,270</td>
<td>,264</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-024</td>
<td>53,001</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Research study

• Results
  – Writing (school-leaving exam – ECL)
    • results in percentages due to the different scales
    – difference between average results is significant \( (p \leq 0.01) \) (t-test)
    – correlation: 0.535 \( (p \leq 0.01) \)

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<th>ECL</th>
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<tr>
<td>Average results</td>
<td>72.70%</td>
<td>59.68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research study

• Results
  – Writing (school-leaving exam – FCE)
    • results in percentages due to the different scales
    – difference between average results is significant ($p \leq 0.01$) (t-test)
    – correlation: 0.286 ($p \leq 0.05$)

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<th>FCE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Average results</td>
<td>85.76%</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
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Conclusions

• Reading: no significant differences, although this finding is not completely obvious
• Writing: school-leaving examination seems significantly easier
  – CEFR level?
• The relatively small sample size and the simulated circumstances may have distorted the results
• Need for further research

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