



UNIVERSITÄT
LEIPZIG



International students enter German university: An empirical study of language proficiency and academic success

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1 BACKGROUND

1 BACKGROUND

- increasing number of international students at German higher educational institutions (239,143 (in 2009); 340,305 (in 2016) DZHW/DAAD 2017: 3)
- dropout rates for international students high (BA: 41% vs 28%, Heublein et al. 2014)
- reasons unknown, but common assumptions:
 - new **study culture**,
 - a lack of **social integration**,
 - and **insufficient language abilities** (Heublein 2015; Heublein et al. 2017)

1 BACKGROUND

GERMAN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS FOR UNIVERSITY ADMISSION (MOST INT. STUDENTS)

- university entrance language tests (RO-DT, KMK/HRLK 2004/2015 § 1.1),
 1. offered world-wide | language testing institutions: *TestDaF*, *Goethe-Zertifikat C2*, *telc C1 Hochschule*
 2. offered in Germany | universities or “Studienkollegs/foundation courses“): *DSH* & language part of the *FSP*
 3. offered at schools outside Germany | Central Agency for Schools Abroad (ZfA): *DSD II*
- level B2+/C1, relatively high (Carlsen 2018; Deygers et al. 2018; McNamara 2018)
- no post-admission compulsory further language training

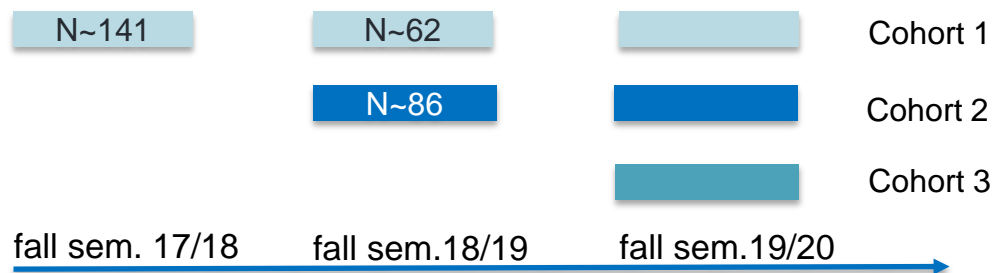


SpraStu („**S**prache und **S**tudienerfolg bei Bildungsausländer/-innen“)

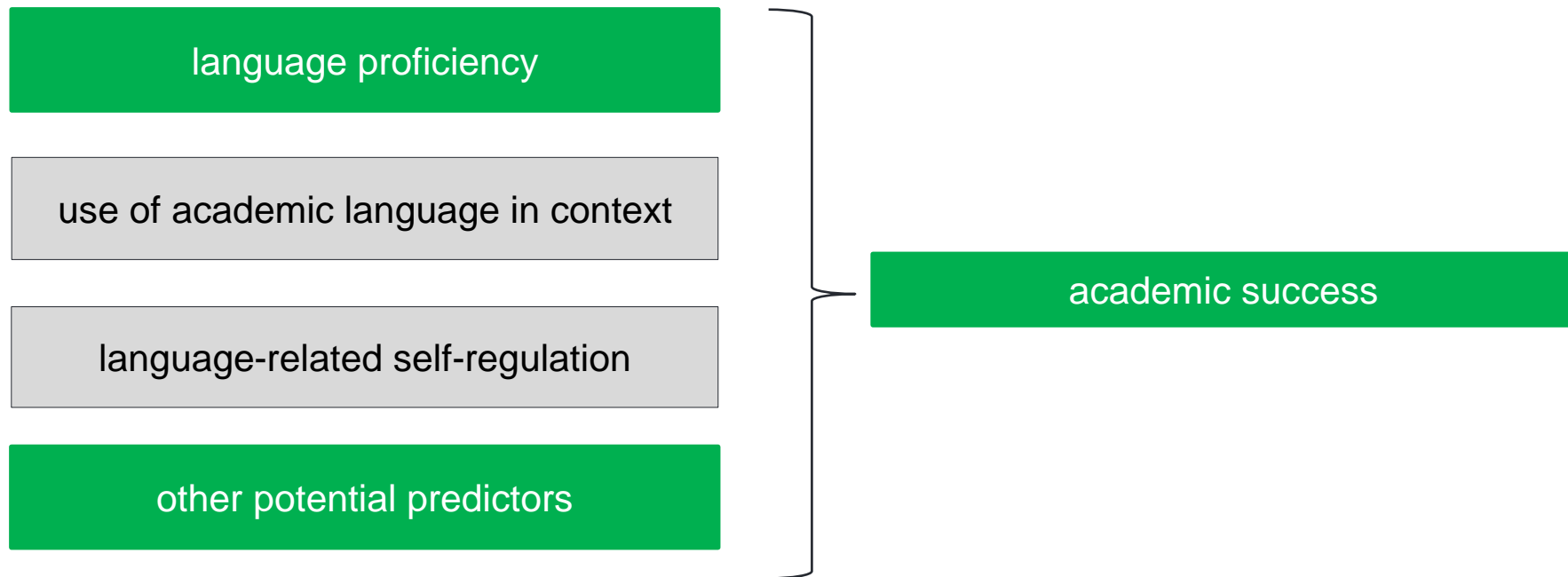
2 THE PROJECT

2 THE SPRASTU PROJECT AT A GLANCE

- 06/2017-10/2020
- Leipzig & Würzburg universities cooperation project
- longitudinal, 3 cohorts of international BA students („Bildungsausländer/-innen“)
- L1 control group



SPRASTU BUILDING BLOCKS



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How proficient are international students at the beginning of their studies?
2. How does German language proficiency develop in the first year at university? (mixed results in study abroad research, e.g., Yang 2016, Xu 2019)
3. Do students with lower language proficiency have different backgrounds?
4. Is German language proficiency related to academic success in the first semester?

3 PRELIMINARY RESULTS

OVERVIEW OF INSTRUMENTS

GERMAN LANGUAGE TESTS – CARRIED THROUGH ONCE PER YEAR

1. **onSET** (C-Test, CEFR-Levels A2–C1 *or higher* & raw scores, max. 40 min)
2. **Listening Proficiency Test** (MC-Test, CEFR-Levels A2–C2 & raw scores, max. 75 min)
3. **Reading Proficiency Test** (MC-Test, CEFR-Levels A2–C2 & raw scores, max. 75 min)
4. **TestDaF Writing Task** (TestDaF Levels TDN, max. 60 min)
5. **Receptive Vocabulary Levels Test** (Multiple Matching, frequency bands passed & raw scores, max. 25 min)
6. **Productive Vocabulary Levels Test** (Gap Completion, frequency bands passed & raw scores, max. 25 min)

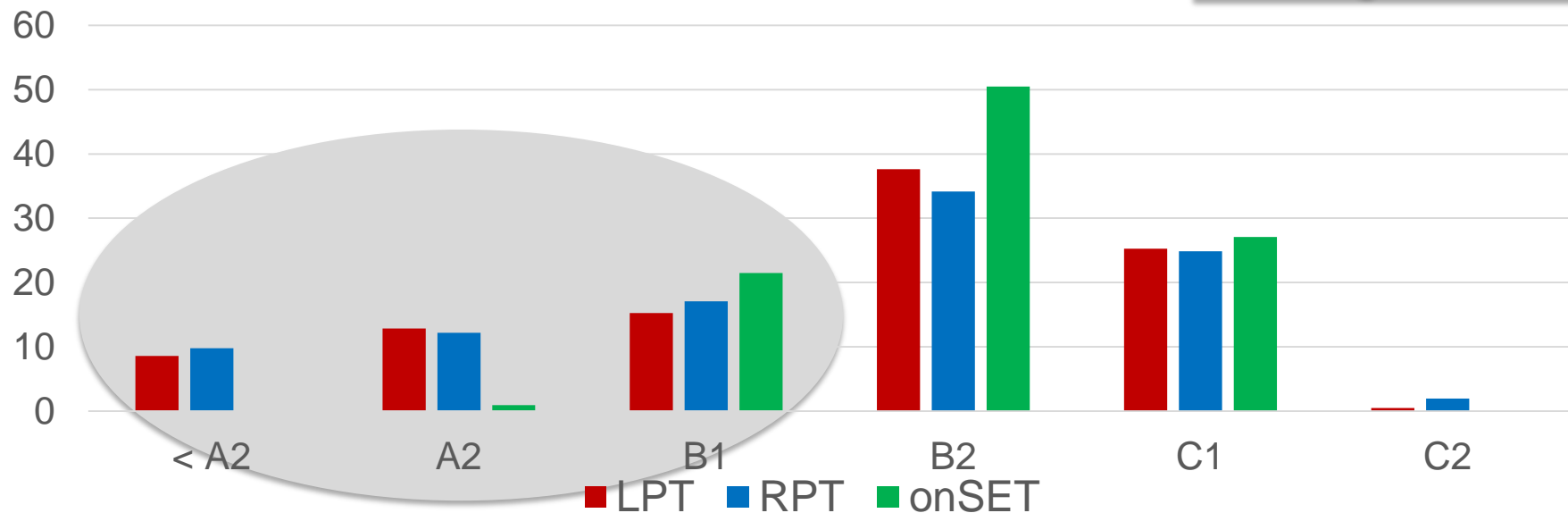
RESULTS – INITIAL TESTING (T1)

CEFR-RELATED TESTS

ONSET: *N* = 214; LISTENING TEST: *N* = 210; READING TEST: *N* = 205

below B2
 onSET: 22.43 %
 Reading: 39.02%
 Listening: 36.67%

CEFR-Levels in % (Cohorts 1 & 2, T1)



RESULTS – INITIAL TESTING (T1)

TESTDAF WRITING TASK

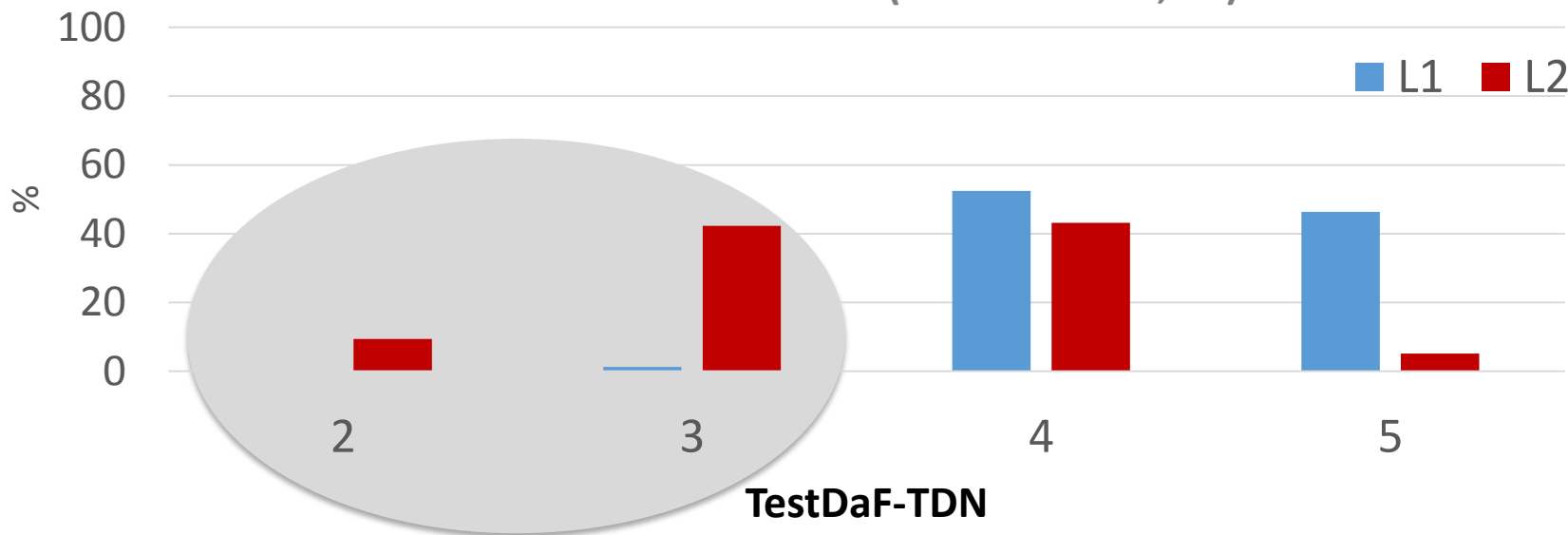
COHORT 1 $N = 144$, L1: $N = 14$, L2: $N = 130$

COHORT 2 $N = 151$, L1: $N = 68$, L2: $N = 83$

Europarat (Referenzrahmen für Sprachen)					
A Basic User Elementare Sprachverwendung		B Independent User Selbständige Sprachverwendung		C Proficient User Kompetente Sprachverwendung	
A1 Breakthrough	A2 Waystage	B1 Threshold	B2 Vantage	C1 Effective Proficiency	C2 Mastery
		B1.1	B1.2	B2.1	B2.2
TestDaF			TDN 3	TDN 4	TDN 5
ALTE	Stufe 1	Stufe 2	Stufe 3	Stufe 4	Stufe 5

below TDN 4 (B2+)
L2 > 50 %

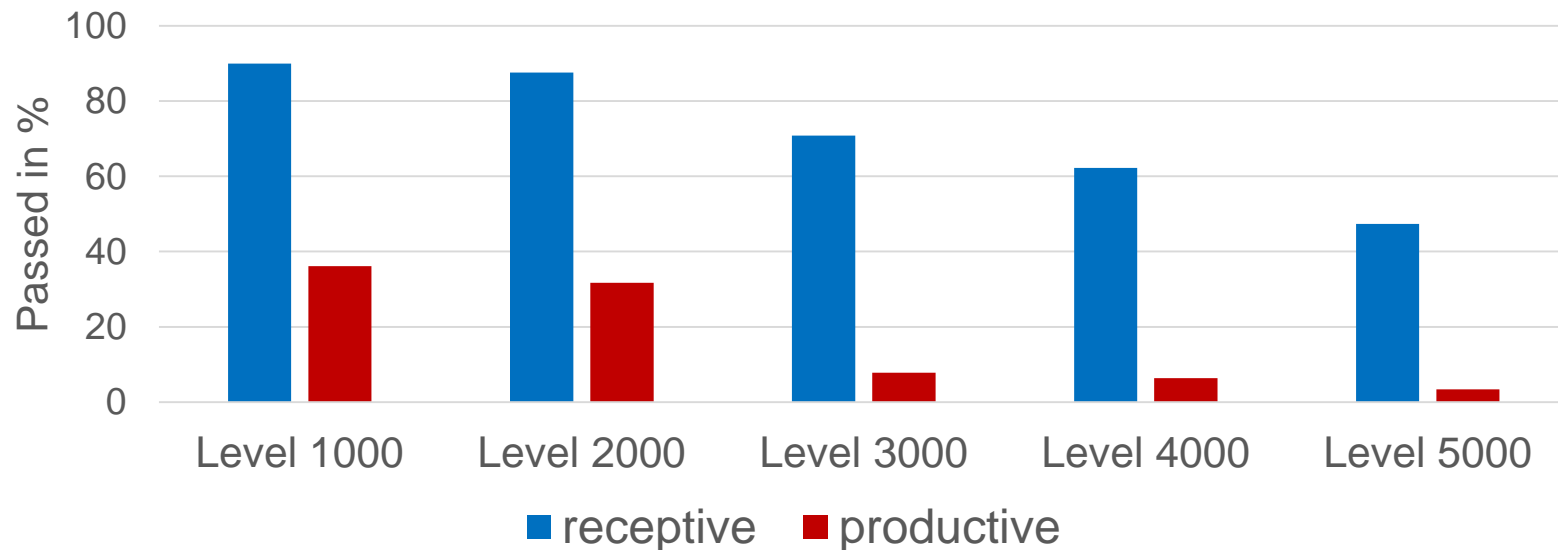
TestDaF-Levels in % (Cohorts 1 & 2, T1)



RESULTS – INITIAL TESTING (T1)

VOCABULARY LEVELS TESTS – LEVELS PASSED

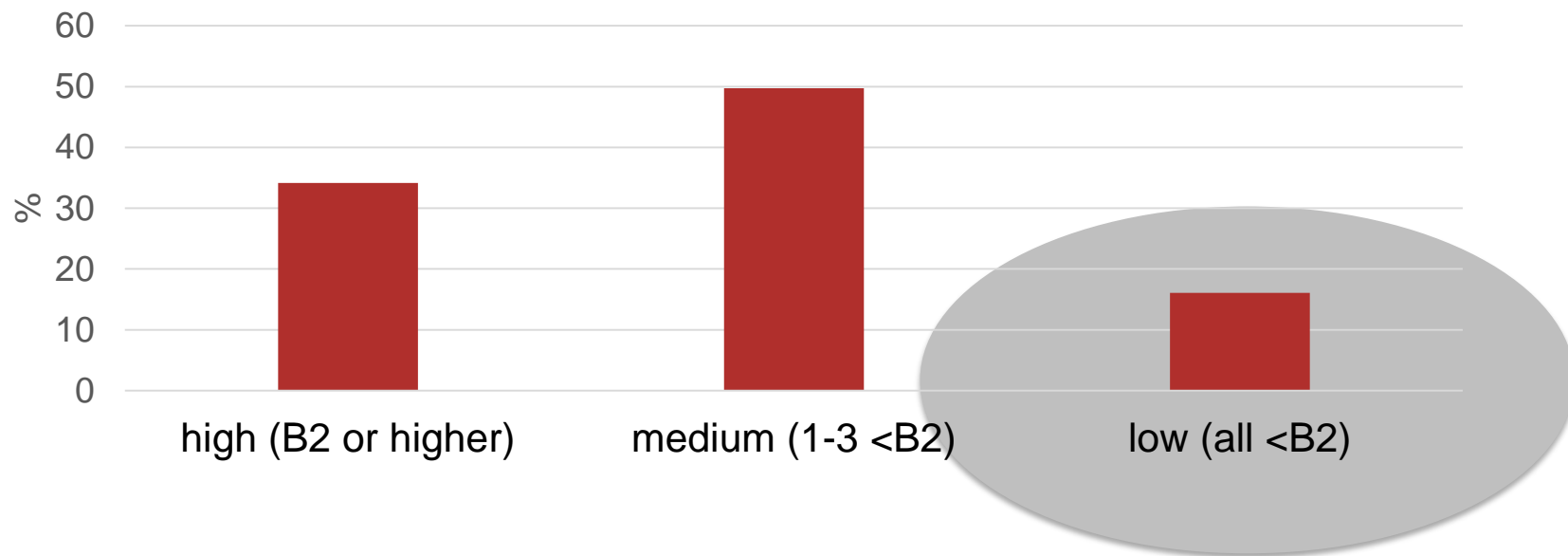
RECEPTIVE: *N* = 209; PRODUCTIVE: *N* = 205



RESULTS – INITIAL TESTING (T1): “PROFICIENCY GROUPS“

CEFR-RATED TESTS (ONSET, RPT, LPT) + TESTDAF (TDN 4 ~ B2), N = 199

T1 Language Competence Grouped



RQ2: DEVELOPMENT OF GERMAN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY INITIAL TESTING (T1) – 2ND TESTING (T2)

		Paired Differences		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	effect size d	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Mean	Lower					Upper
Pair 1	LPT (T1 - T2)	-1,933	3,888	0,502	-2,938	0,929	-3,852	59	0,000	0,508 (medium)
Pair 2	VLT-rec (T1-T2)	-7,417	12,563	1,622	-10,662	4,171	-4,573	59	0,000	0,601 (medium)
Pair 3	VLT-prod (T1-T2)	-5,729	5,192	0,676	-7,082	4,376	-8,475	58	0,000	1,107 (large)
Pair 4	RPT (T1-T2)	-0,932	4,258	0,554	-2,042	0,178	-1,682	58	0,098	0,223 (small)
Pair 5	onSET (T1-T2)	3,967	10,355	1,337	1,292	6,642	2,967	59	0,004	-0,382 (small)
Pair 6	TestDaF (T1-T2)						Z = -,186		0,853	0,049 (small)

Listening & Vocabulary: significant **improvement**

Reading & Writing: little/no **change**

onSET: significant **decline**

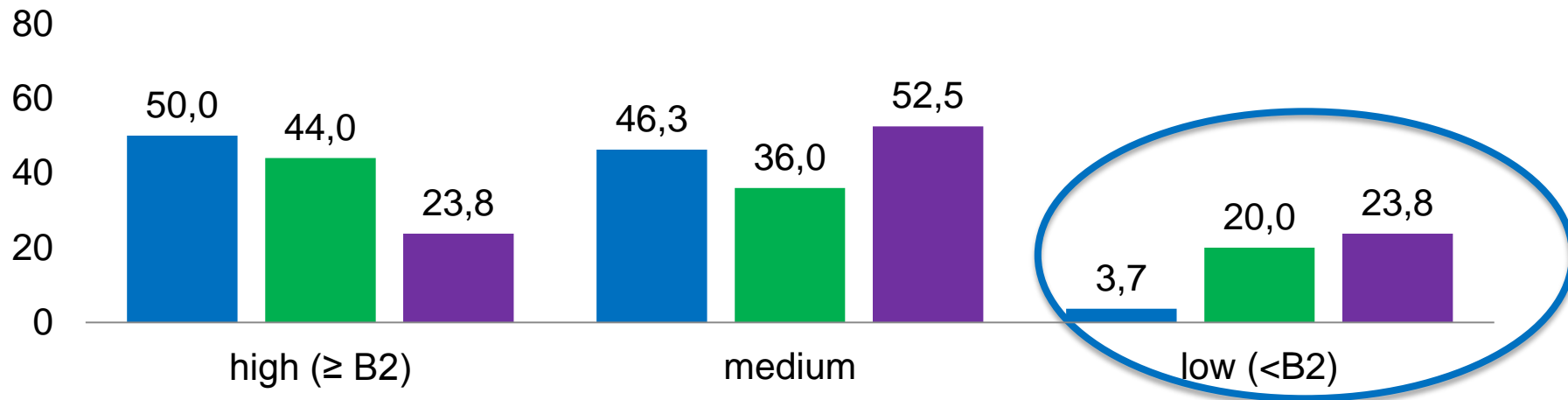
RQ3: STUDENTS' BACKGROUND & LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY (GROUPS)

SELECTED RESULTS FOR COHORT 1&2, N=223

- **age of onset** (starting earlier is better) ($F(2, 164)=12,526, p=.000, \eta^2=.135$)
- **motivation for learning German** (advantage „habitual“) ($F(2, 198)=6.494, p=.002, \eta^2=.062$ (medium))
- **migratory background** (disadvantage refugees) (Fisher (2, 198)=21.49, $p=.000$, Cramér $V=.329$)
- **L1** (disadvantage South Asian languages & Arabian) ($\chi^2(6, 143)=34.617, p=.000$, Cramér $V=.510$)
- **study subject** (disadvantage engineering) ($\chi^2(8, 176)=23.407, p=.003$, Cramér $V=.258$)
- **university entrance language test** (disadvantage “university-specific“ UELTS) (Fisher (4, 180)=17.344, $p=.002, V=.219$)

UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE LANGUAGE TESTS & PROFICIENCY GROUPS (%)

COHORT 1 & 2, T1, N=195



- language testing institutions | world-wide | TestDaF; Goethe C2; telc C1
- ZfA | schools outside Germany | DSD II PLUS German school abroad
- universities, Studienkollegs | in Germany | FSP & DSH

RQ4: LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY & ACADEMIC SUCCESS

BACKGROUND

- **problematic: language proficiency is a necessary, but no sufficient condition for academic success** (Bridgeman et al. 2015: 308; Cho et al. 2012: 424)
- **„academic success“ is a complex construct** (Heublein et al. 2010; Yorks et al. 2015; Kuh et al. 2006)
- **studies often find small correlations (UALT & GPA)** Graham 1987 (overview); TOEFL: Al-Musawi and Al-Ansari 1999; Ayers & Peters 1977; Ayers & Quattlebaum 1992; Neal 1998; Van Nelson, Nelson, and Malone 2004; Vinke & Jochems 1993; IELTS: Davies 2008

RQ4: LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY & ACADEMIC SUCCESS

INSTRUMENT

- Questionnaire (after each semester)
 - **higher education research constructs** (e.g., *study motivation, finances, academic self-concept, social and academic integration, living conditions ...*)
 - **language-related constructs** (e.g., *language contact, willingness to communicate, language mindsets, subjective development of academic and general language proficiency ...*)

RQ4: LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY & ACADEMIC SUCCESS

RESULTS FOR COHORT 1 - N=66, COHORT 1, SEMESTER 1 (!)

- students with lower language proficiency achieve fewer credit points ($F(2, 62)=16.34, p=.000, \eta^2=.35$)
- language proficiency predicts credit points:
stepwise regression analysis (credit points = dependent variable):
 - model 1: language proficiency, $R^2=.385$
 - model 2: + living & study conditions, $R^2=.502$ ($\Delta F(3, 22)=1.85, p=.168$)
 - model 3: + individual factors (*demotivation, academic self-concept*), $R^2=.740$ ($\Delta F(2, 20)=8.90, p < .001$)

DISCUSSION / CONCLUSION

Constraints:

- results are *preliminary* and to be treated with much caution
- more complex statistics (e.g., SEM) to be run for full datasets when available

From a **higher education policy** perspective...:

- compulsory, curriculum-embedded further language training during studies
(like Dömling & Pasternack 2015; Fandrych 2015: 117ff.; Fandrych 2016: 10; Geis 2017; SVR 2015, 2017 and many others suggest)

From a **language testing** perspective...:

- comparability of UALTs?



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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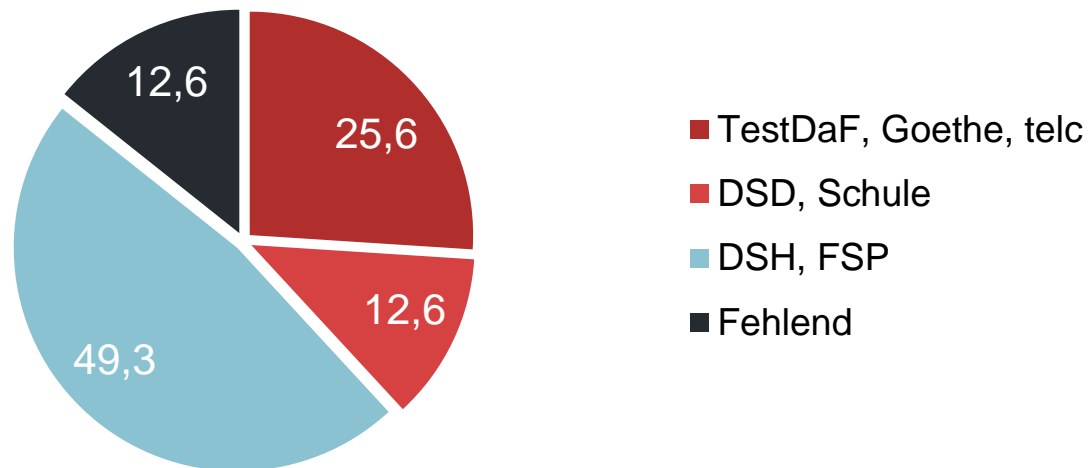
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UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE LANGUAGE TESTS IN SPRASTU

COHORT 1 AND 2, N=223

UALT types (CH1 &CH2, N=223)



GERMAN PART OF THE FSP

„FESTSTELLUNGSPRÜFUNG“ DER STUDIENKOLLEGS (PREPARATORY COLLEGES)

T1_Neu: Drei-Gruppen-Variable Sprachkompetenzen

	Häufigkeit	Prozent	Gültige Prozente	Kumulierte Prozente
Gültig hoch (mdsts. B2)	15	29,4	31,3	31,3
mittel (1- 3 Tests <B2)	28	54,9	58,3	89,6
niedrig (alle <B2)	5	9,8	10,4	100,0
Gesamt	48	94,1	100,0	
Fehlend 999	3	5,9		
Gesamt	51	100,0		

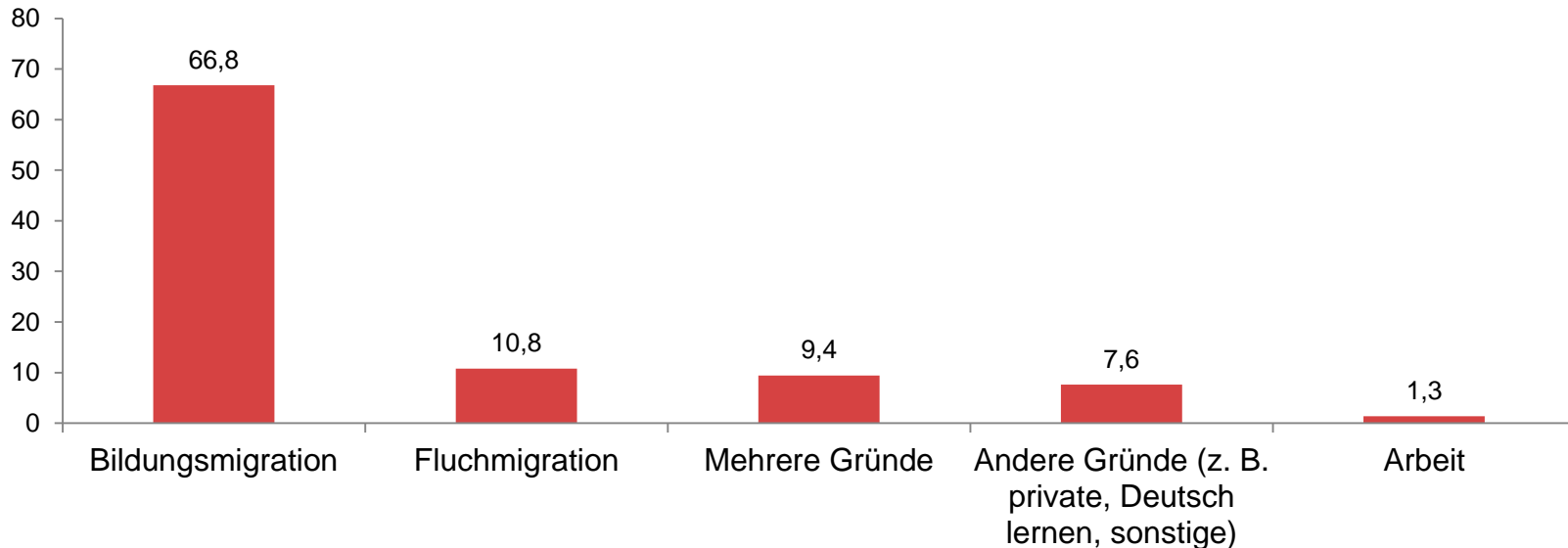
„DEUTSCHE SPRACHPRÜFUNG FÜR DEN HOCHSCHULZUGANG“ (DSH)

T1_Neu: Drei-Gruppen-Variable Sprachkompetenzen

		Häufigkeit	Prozent	Gültige Prozente	Kumulierte Prozente
Gültig	hoch (mdsts. B2)	9	15,3	17,0	17,0
	mittel (1- 3 Tests <B2)	25	42,4	47,2	64,2
	niedrig (alle <B2)	19	32,2	35,8	100,0
	Gesamt	53	89,8	100,0	
Fehlend	999	6	10,2		
Gesamt		59	100,0		

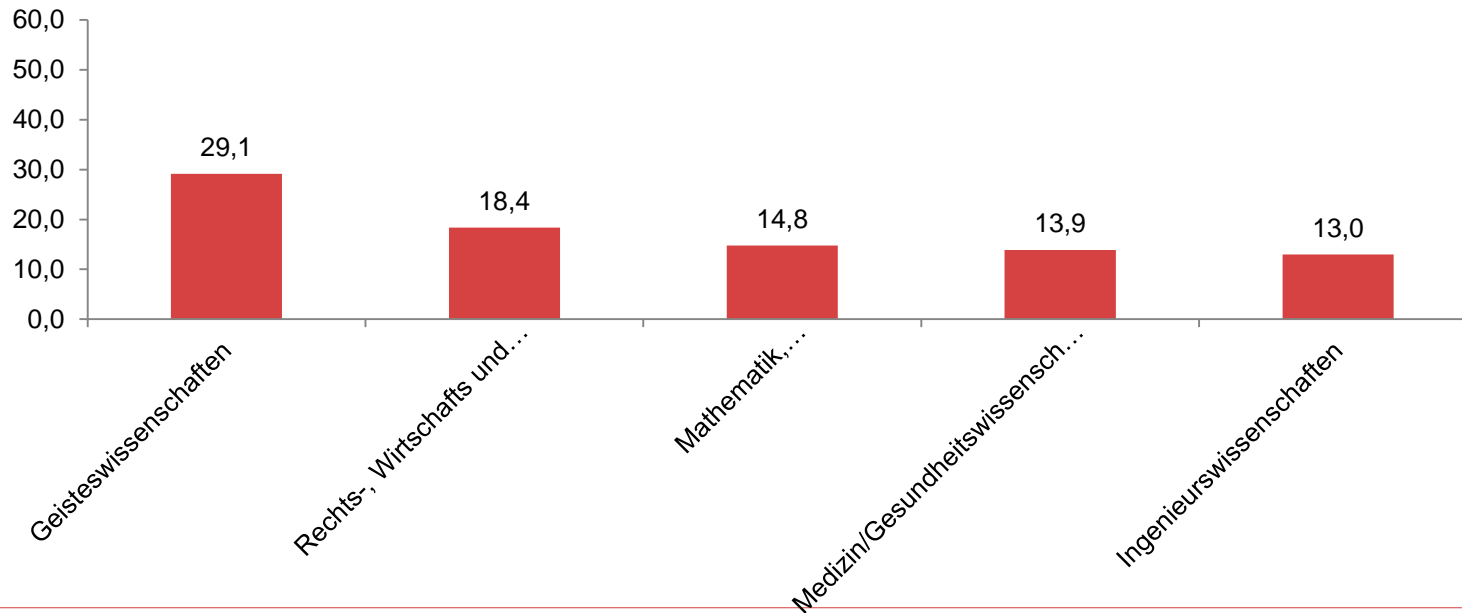
MIGRATORY BACKGROUND (%)

N=223, KH1 & KH2



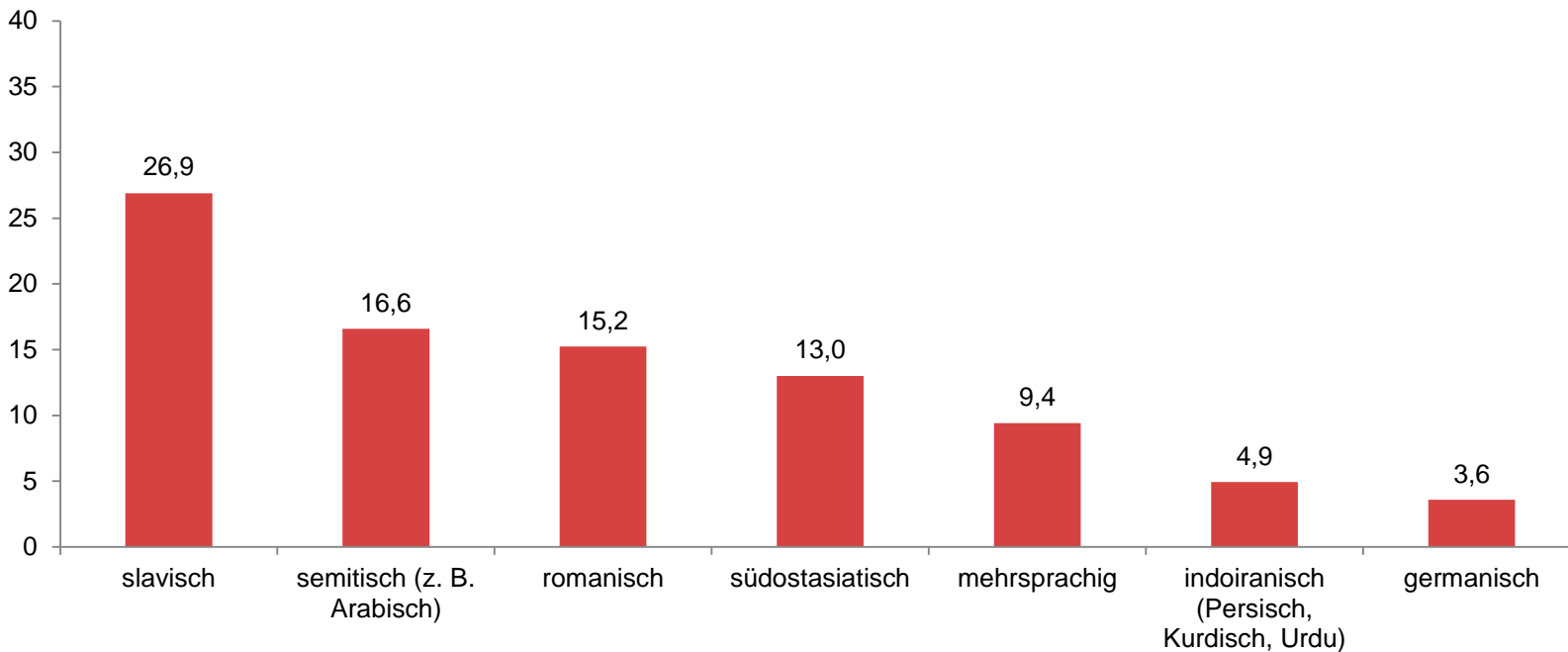
STUDY SUBJECTS (%)

N=223, KH1 & KH2



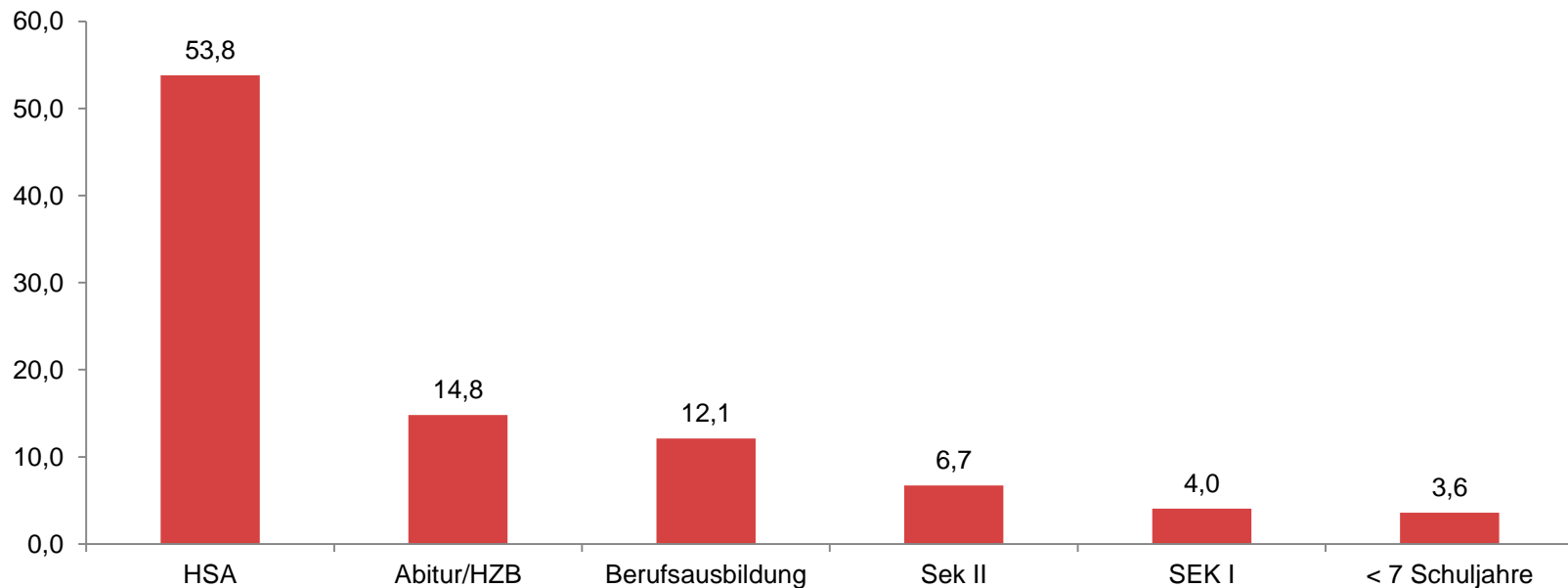
L1 (%)

N=223, KH1 & KH2



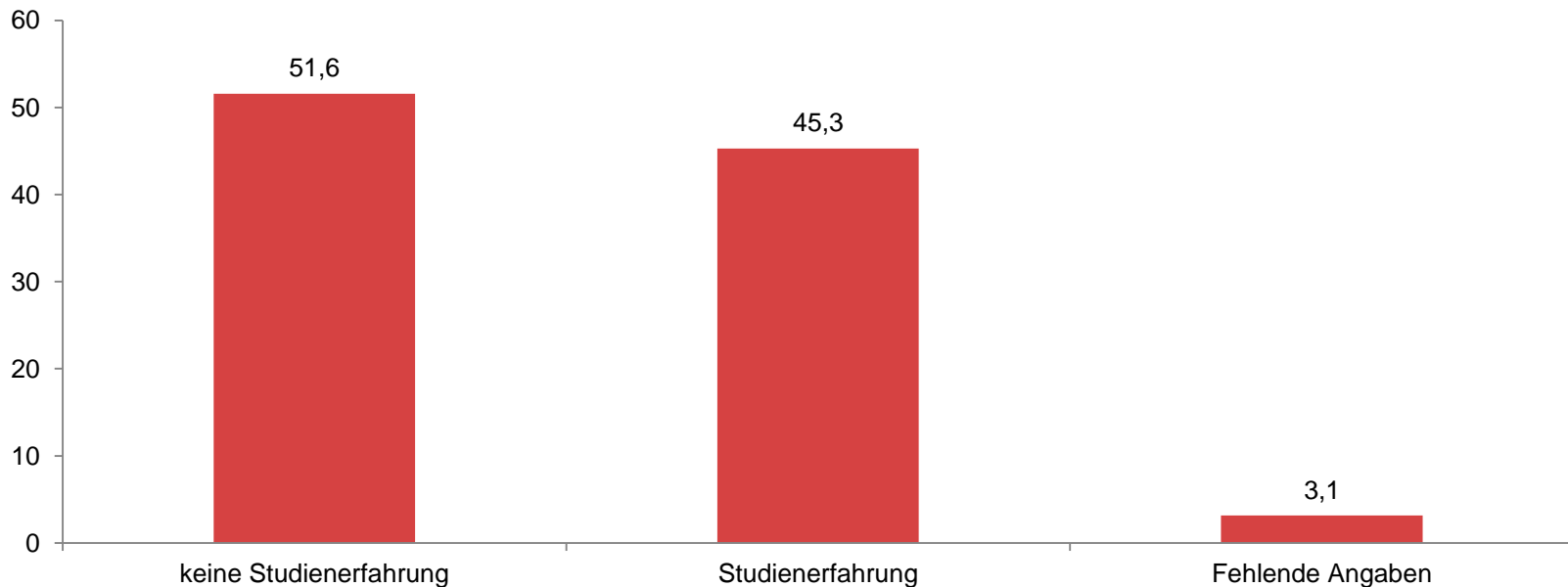
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND (MOTHER) %

N=223, KH1 & KH2



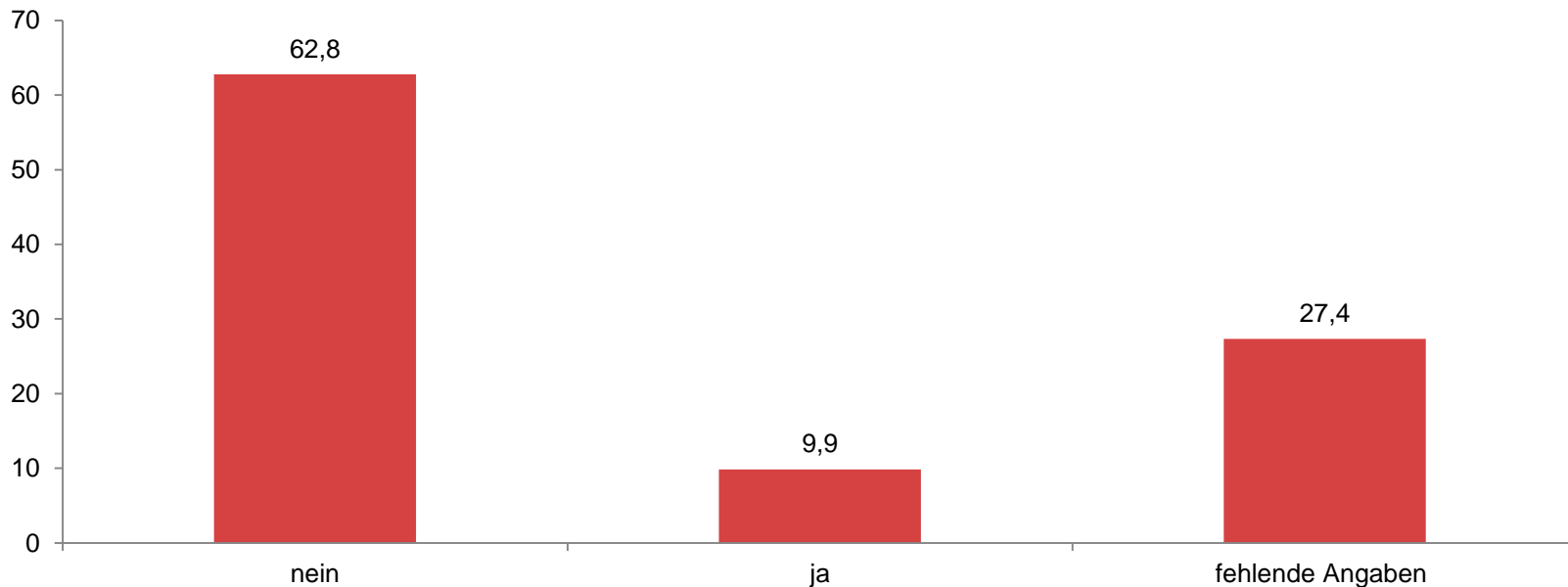
STUDY EXPERIENCE (%)

N=223, KH1 & KH2



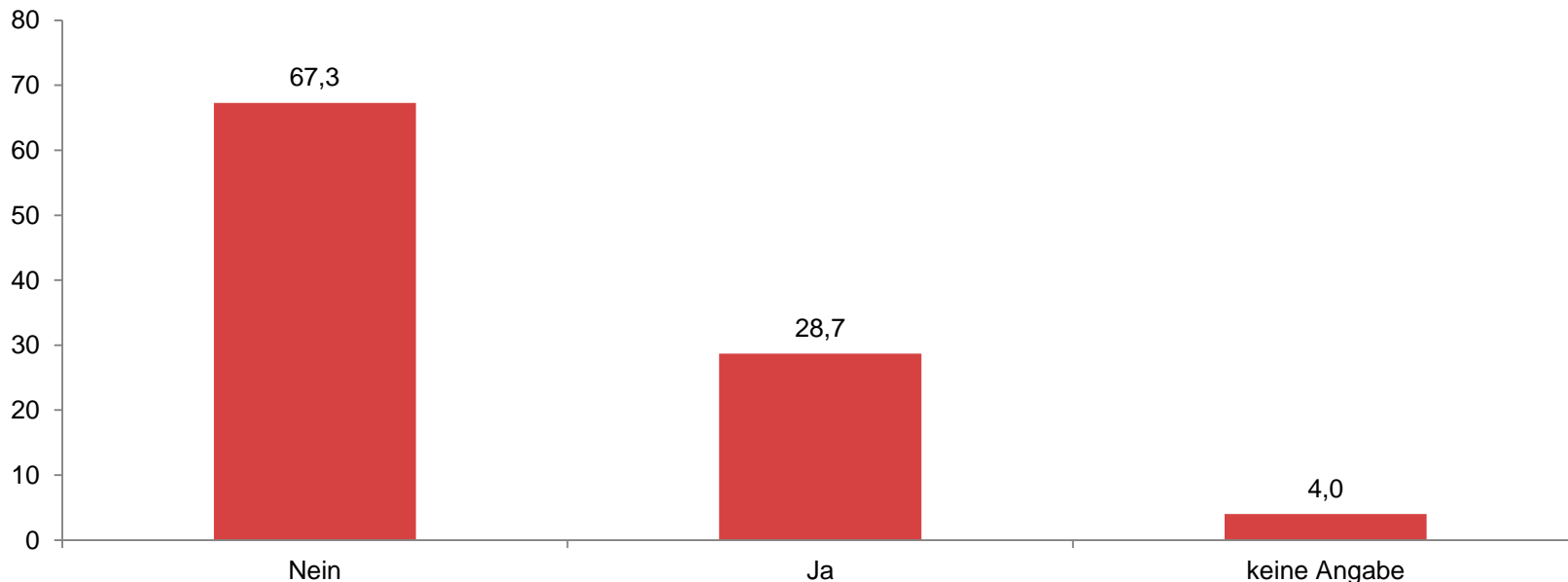
STUDY EXPERIENCE IN GERMANY (%)

N=223, KH1 & KH2



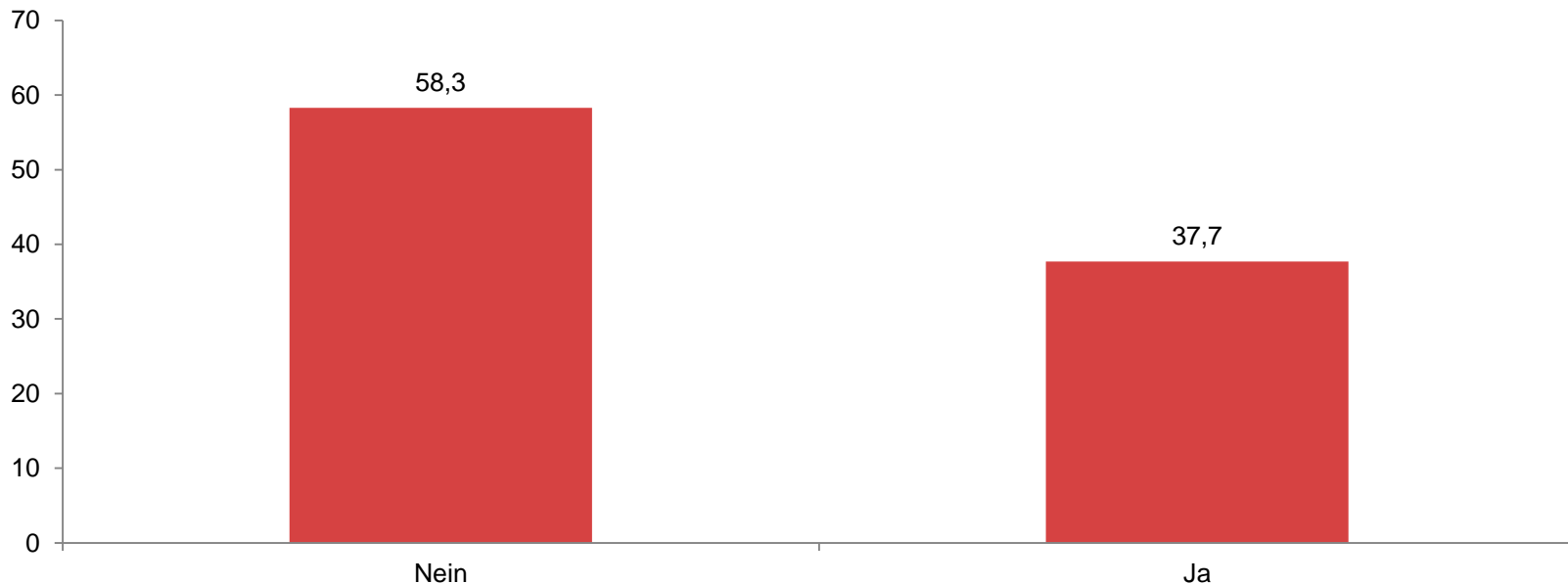
ATTENDANCE OF PREPARATORY COLLEGE (%)

N=223, KH1 & KH2



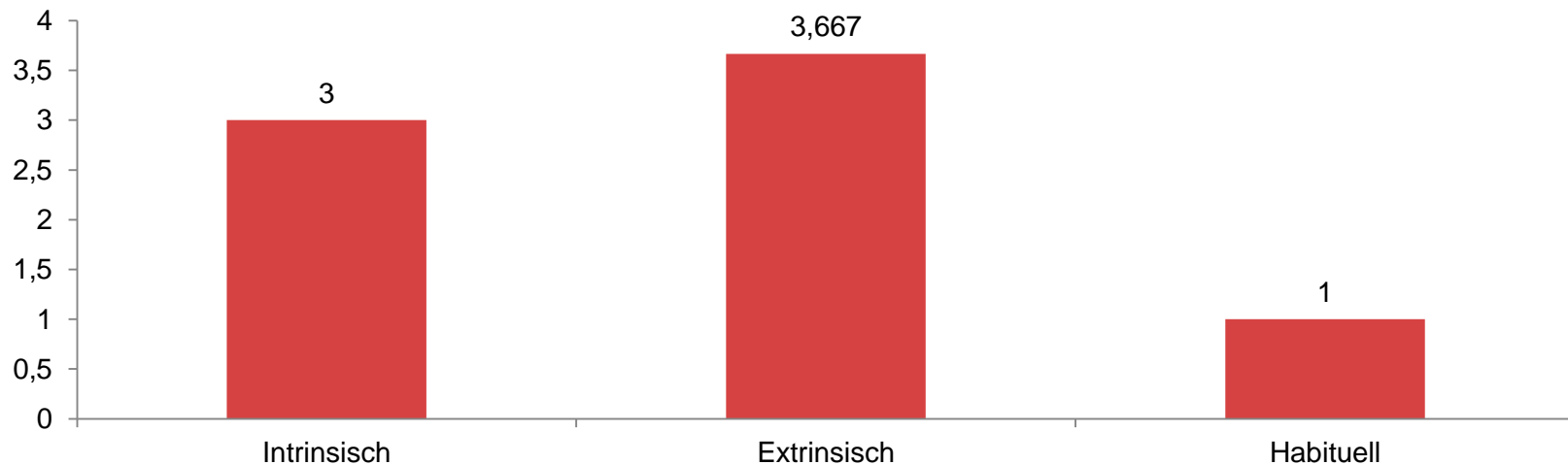
LANGUAGE COURSE BEFORE TAKING UP STUDIES (%)

N=216, KH1 & KH2



MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING GERMAN (MEDIAN)

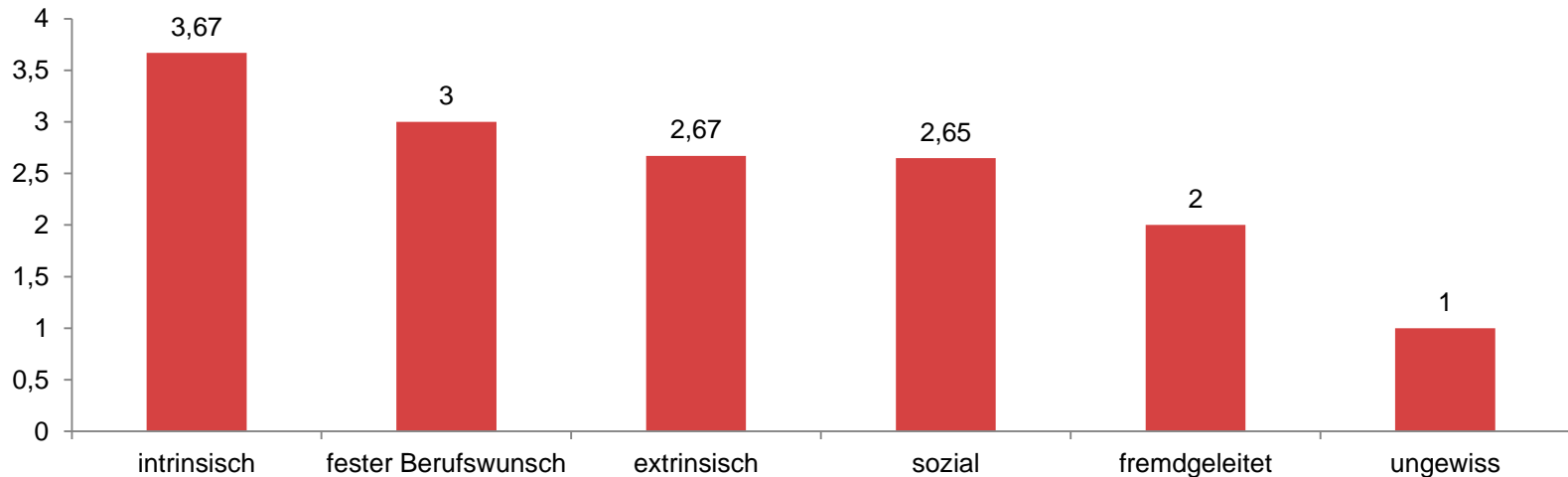
N=214, KH1 & KH2



1 = not at all true; 4 = totally true

MOTIVATION FOR CHOOSING A STUDY SUBJECT

N=214, KH1 & KH2



1 = not at all true; 4 = totally true

REGRESSION

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Reading	,433	,493	,394
Writing	,254	,135	,331
Everyday life challenges		,189	,111
Institutional study conditions		,293	,353
Subject-related challenges		,137	,037
Demotivation			,006
Academic self-concept			-,516
R²	,385	,509	,740
<i>n</i>	61	28	28

GERMAN LANGUAGE TESTS

ONSET

Fragen zur Berufswahl

Alte Berufe verschwinden, neue kommen hinzu: Bei d [] Berufswahl
ha [] Schüler im [] wieder Fra [] oder Prob [] .
Denn e [] gibt ei [] große Anz [] sehr versch []
Berufe, u [] es i [] nicht ein [] , die rich [] Wahl
z [] treffen. D [] berufliche Zuk [] sollte m []
rechtzeitig pla [] . Dabei ka [] es sinn [] sein, sich beim
Arbeitsamt beraten zu lassen. Manchmal hilft auch ein Test zu den persönlichen
Berufsinteressen.

TEXT FERTIG BEARBEITET

Text 1 von 4

GERMAN LANGUAGE TESTS

ACTFL LISTENING PROFICIENCY TEST

www.actfl.org/actfl-test

Step 01

Sample Question

Step 02

Begin Test

Sample Question

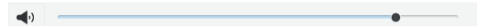
Try this question. It won't count toward your final rating.

1 : Susan's Hobbies

Questions

1. What is Susan's favorite hobby?
2. With whom does Susan go shopping?
3. How often does Susan go swimming?

Listening Passage



You'll only hear the passage once, and you'll be unable to pause. Take some notes as you listen if you need to. Don't worry, your notes won't affect your rating.

Step 01

Sample Question

Sample Question

Try this question. It won't count toward your final rating.

1 : Susan's Hobbies

1 What is Susan's favorite hobby?

- Going to the movies
- Watching television
- Dancing
- Swimming

2 With whom does Susan go shopping? She goes shopping with...

- Jane.
- Mary and Jane.
- her sisters.
- her swimming classmates

3 How often does Susan go swimming?

- Every day
- Every week
- Every month
- twice a week

GERMAN LANGUAGE TESTS

ACTFL READING PROFICIENCY TEST



Sample Question

Try this question. It won't count toward your final rating.

Selection time remaining will appear here.

1: Computer Safety

Dear Employees,

As you know, our company computers are very important. Our network security, however, begins with our company email accounts. It is important that every employee change to a new, safer email password. Please change to a new password by next Friday the 23rd. If you are still using your old password on the following Monday, we will give you a new one. Here are some tips to help choose a better, more secure password. First, never give your password to anyone for any reason. Make your password something that you can easily remember, but also hard for others to guess. Do not use names of your family, birthdays, or important personal numbers in your password. A strong password is a mix of lower case and upper case letters and numbers. The best tactic is to take a sentence and make it into a short password. For example, "I get up at eight in the morning", could be "IGua8itM." Good luck and please remember to change the password by next Friday.

Questions

- 1 Who is the writer of the memo? The writer is...
 - a company spokesperson
 - an outside consultant
 - a customer
 - an employee
- 2 When will the company change all passwords that have not been updated? The company will change all passwords that have not been updated on...
 - Monday, February 26th
 - Monday, February 19th
 - Friday, February 23th
 - Friday, February 16th

GERMAN LANGUAGE TESTS

TESTDAF WRITING TASK

Schriftlicher Ausdruck

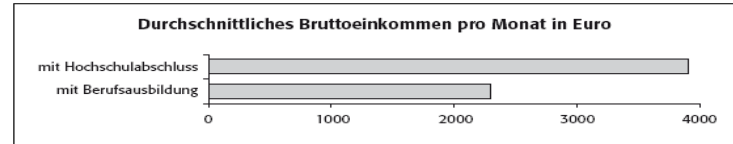
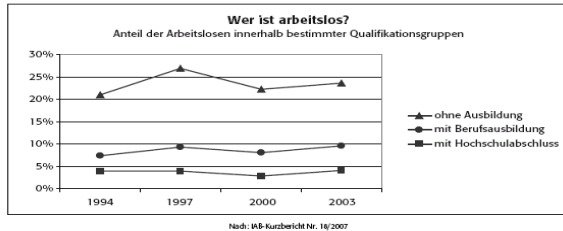
Modellsatz 04 Schriftlicher Ausdruck
Thema 60 Min.

Studium oder Berufsausbildung?

Vor dieser Frage stehen junge Erwachsene nach dem Schulabschluss. Ist eine praktische Berufsausbildung, z. B. eine Handwerkslehre, und damit eine baldige Erwerbstätigkeit besser für die Zukunft? Oder bietet ein Hochschulstudium die besseren Zukunftsaussichten, auch wenn viele Studierende erst mit Ende 20 ihr Studium beendend und deshalb erst relativ spät Geld verdienen können? Bei dieser Entscheidung sollten verschiedene Faktoren, z. B. das Problem der Arbeitslosigkeit oder die Verdienstmöglichkeiten, berücksichtigt werden.

Modellsatz 03 Schriftlicher Ausdruck
Schreiben Sie einen Text zum folgenden Thema

Studium oder Berufsausbildung?



Nach: BMBF, Reihe Bildungsreform, Band 9, Tabelle 125, 2004

Beschreiben und vergleichen Sie,

- wie sich der Anteil der Arbeitslosen je nach Qualifikationsgrad von 1994 bis 2003 entwickelt hat und
- wie sich die Einkommensverhältnisse je nach Ausbildungsniveau unterscheiden.

Lohnt sich ein Hochschulstudium? Hierzu wird folgende Meinung vertreten:

Ein Hochschulstudium lohnt sich nicht, denn es dauert viele Jahre und kostet zu viel Geld.

- Nehmen Sie Stellung zu dieser Aussage und begründen Sie Ihre Stellungnahme.
- Wägen Sie dabei die Vorteile und die Nachteile eines Hochschulstudiums ab.
- Gehen Sie auch auf die Situation in Ihrem Heimatland ein.

GERMAN LANGUAGE TESTS

VLT - RECEPTIVE

Niveau 1 von 5 ▾ 23:57

1a) - blau

1b) - Bild der Liebe

1c) - Raum in der Wohnung

2a) - Teil, der das Ganze vertritt

2b) - Person, die etwas kauft

2c) - Weg für Autos

3a) - Teil des Gesichts

3b) - Linie

3c) - zum Lesen über die Welt

Beispiel

Alles e

Zurück Weiter

GERMAN LANGUAGE TESTS

VLT - PRODUCTIVE

Niveau 1 von 5 ▶ 21:35

1) Wir treffen uns in der M , weil wir dann einen gleich langen Weg haben.

2) Die Ent unserer Stadt ist sehr positiv. Die neue Universität macht sie auch für junge Menschen interessant.

3) Ich will eine Reise ans M machen. Ich liebe das Wasser.

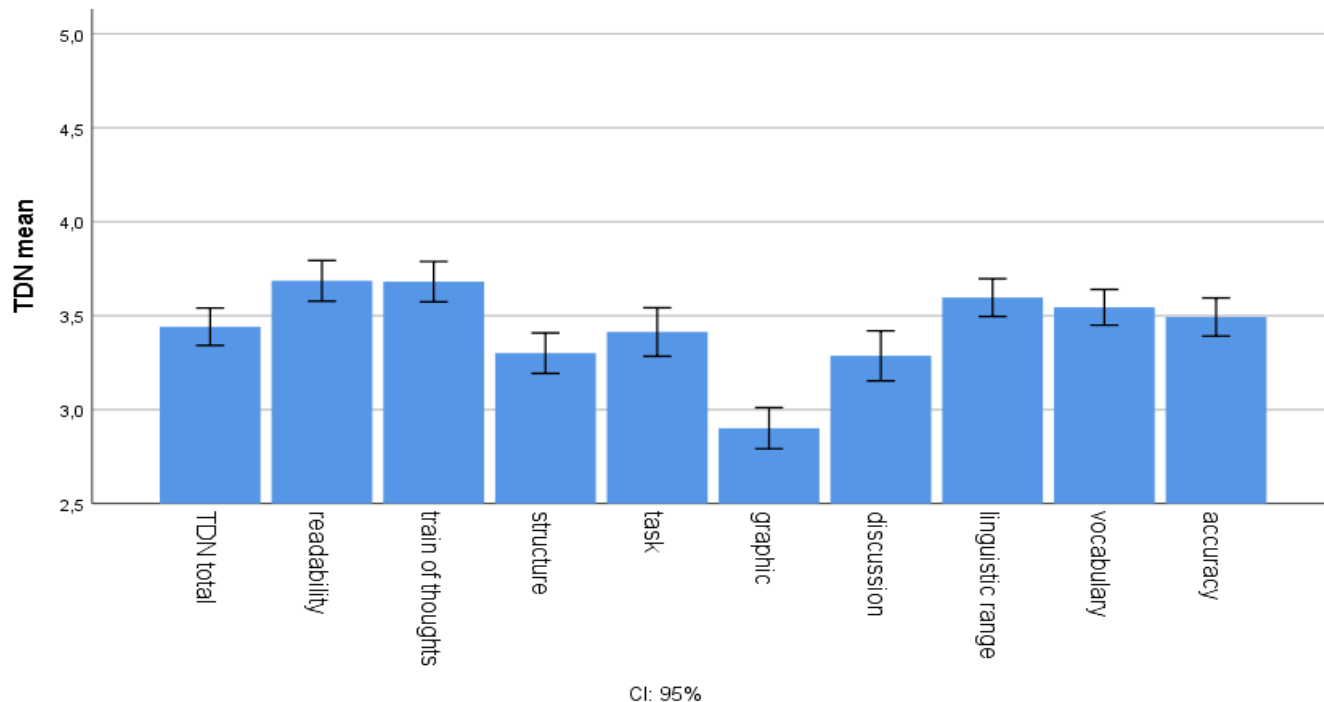
4) Welche Krankheit hat der nächste Pa ?

5) Das Sprechen stellt für ihn keine Sc dar, das Schreiben ist aber noch ein Problem.

Alles einreichen Zurück Weiter

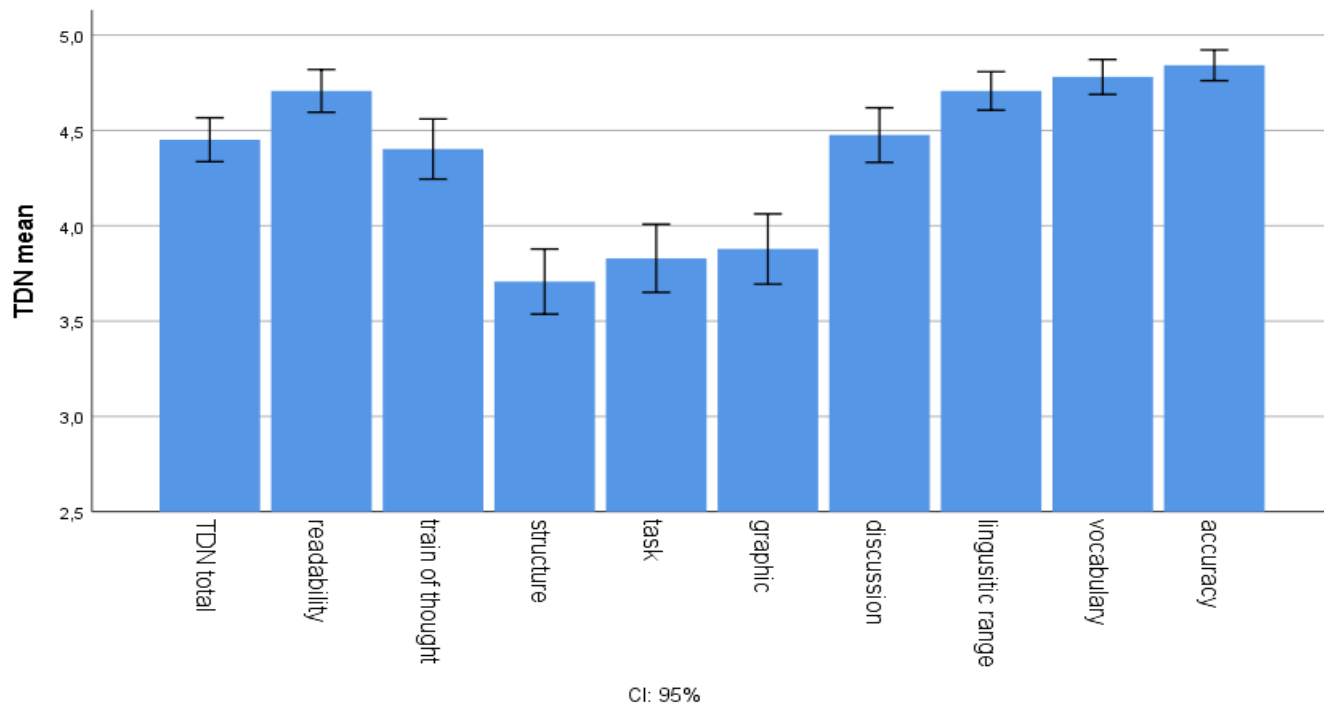
RESULTS – INITIAL TESTING (T1)

TESTDAF WRITING TASK – DETAILED RESULTS L2 (N = 213)



RESULTS – INITIAL TESTING (T1)

TESTDAF WRITING TASK – DETAILED RESULTS L1 (N = 82)



RESULTS – INITIAL TESTING (T1)

CORRELATIONS

		onSET	LPT	RPT	VLT-rec	VLT-prod
onSET	Pearson Correlation	1	,705**	,719**	,549**	,822**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
	N	214	201	200	200	200
LPT	Pearson Correlation	,705**	1	,784**	,619**	,781**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000		0,000	0,000	0,000
	N	201	210	201	207	201
RPT	Pearson Correlation	,719**	,784**	1	,597**	,798**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000		0,000	0,000
	N	200	201	205	199	205
VLT-rec	Pearson Correlation	,549**	,619**	,597**	1	,631**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	0,000		0,000
	N	200	207	199	209	199
VLT-prod	Pearson Correlation	,822**	,781**	,798**	,631**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	
	N	200	201	205	199	205

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

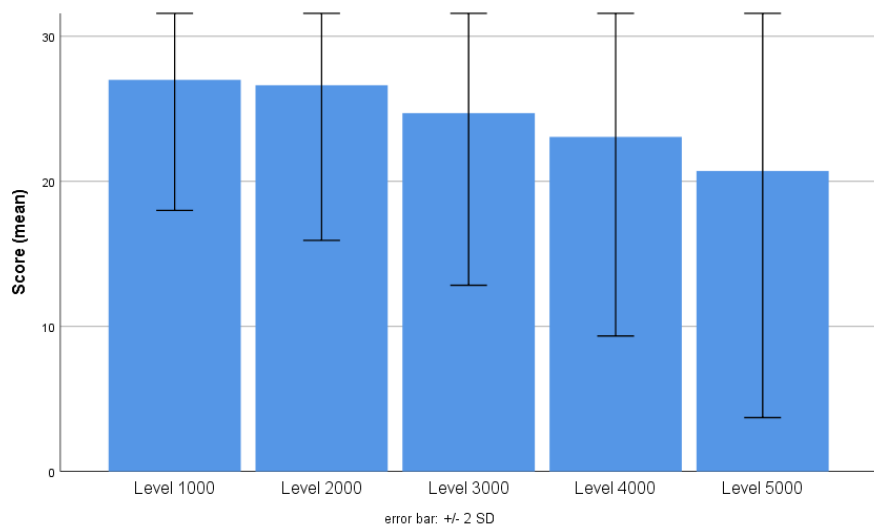
			onSET	LPT	RPT	VLT-rec	VLT-prod
Spearman's rho	TestDaF	Correlation Coefficient	,569**	,434**	,529**	,425**	,536**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
		N	211	203	202	202	202

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

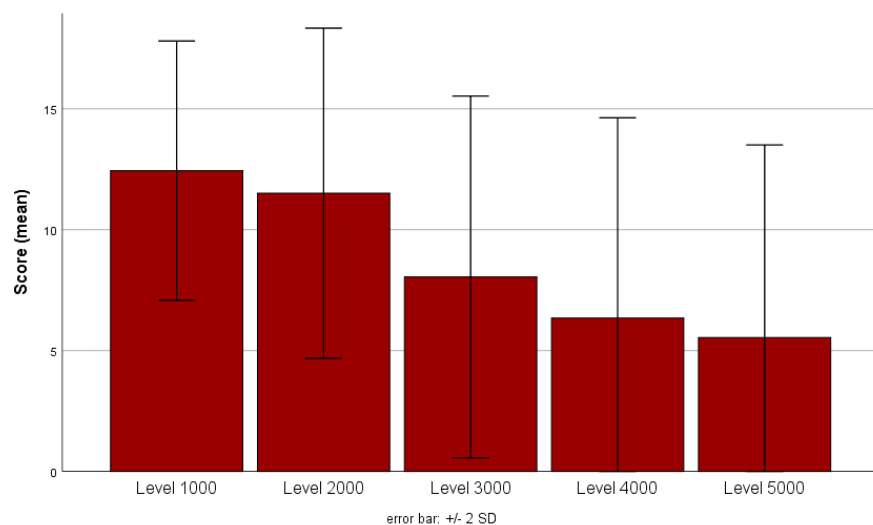
RESULTS – INITIAL TESTING (T1)

VOCABULARY LEVELS TESTS – SCORE

RECEPTIVE: $N = 209$ (MAX SCORE = 30)



PRODUCTIVE: $N = 205$ (MAX SCORE = 18)

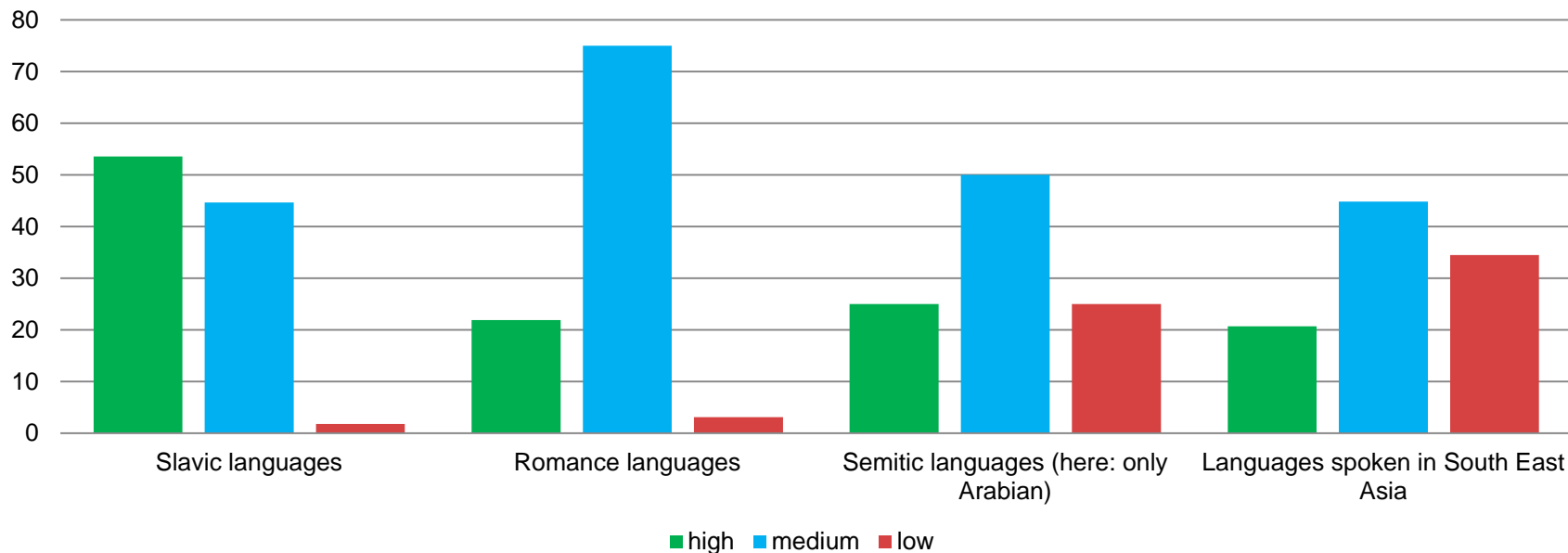


RQ3: STUDENTS' BACKGROUND & LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

- Instrument: **questionnaire**
 - predictors of academic success common in **higher education research** (e.g., *educational background, socio-economic status, study motivation ...*)
 - **language-related** aspects (e.g., *language learning biography, university entrance language test taken, motivation for learning German ...*)

L1 & LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY GROUPS (N=133)

4 most frequent L1 groups & proficiency groups (%)



RQ3: STUDENTS' BACKGROUND & LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

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