

**Theses of doctoral (PhD) dissertation**

**The Situation of Teaching Language for Business  
Purposes in Central and Eastern European  
Higher Education Institutions  
(Comparative Analysis of Hungary, Slovakia and  
Romania)**

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## **The aim of the dissertation and the definition of the topic**

At the beginning of the 21st century, in the age of the information technology revolution, when communication technology and various disciplines are developing dynamically, it is indisputable for all of us to study technical languages and technical language teaching.

It is important to highlight that research in technical language teaching grew exponentially with significant momentum in the 1960s and took root on many continents thanks to researchers such as Swales, Selinker, Hutchinson, Waters, Dudley Evans and Widdowson.

The social demand for technical language skills is constantly increasing. More and more multinational companies, institutions, and jobs require students graduating from higher education institutions to acquire the knowledge of the profession and the technical language of the profession. Graduating students are expected to use technical language professionally, express their ideas in the given language, and translate professional questions and thoughts into their mother tongue or express their thoughts in a foreign language.

This recognition made us write a dissertation in which we undertook a comparative study of teaching language for business purposes in higher education institutions in the Central and Eastern European region.

Today, it can often be heard in various forums that it is essential to develop language competencies for employability and economic development. The (technical) language preparation of citizens plays a crucial role in achieving all these goals, and that is why it is essential to do comparative research in the field of technical language teaching in Europe, in the current case in the Central and Eastern European region.

The main goal of the dissertation was to compare the teaching of language for business purposes in higher education institutions of three Central and Eastern European countries (Hungary, Slovakia, Romania). Furthermore, the research

aimed to explore the similarities and differences by analysing the literature background and quantitative and qualitative research data.

The research examines the conceptual triangle of closely related and interdependent concepts of motivation, satisfaction, and content. No research has been conducted in Central and Eastern Europe on the simultaneous quantitative and qualitative examination of these three fields.

One of the aims of the dissertation was to set up a multivariate statistical model of language for business purposes learning motivation and examine the model's main components by different (social) background variables.

Another aim was to set up another model, the evaluation model of the technical language teaching environment and examine the indicators related to the satisfaction with the language for business purposes teaching. The content and methodology of teaching language for business purposes in national and foreign higher education institutions have also been explored.

In the semi-structured interview analysis, which is part of the qualitative research, the aim was to get to know the subjective experiences of technical language teachers and researchers and compare them with our quantitative research results.

The relevance of the research is justified, as there is no doubt that it may be exciting and instructive for us to learn about other states' practices and make comparisons with the national situation.

The analysis focused on business and management students in higher education institutions in Hungary, Slovakia and Romania, and language teachers and researchers with decades of experience in language teaching.

At the beginning of the dissertation, the relevance of the topic was presented. Based on the literature review, the issues to be examined were scientifically determined and the dissertation's research questions were clarified.

In the first theoretical chapter of the dissertation, the history of technical language teaching was reviewed, and the characteristics, role and significance of

comparative research were covered. In the theoretical part of the dissertation, technical language teaching was placed in educational policy discourse, the linguistic geo-strategy of Central and Eastern European countries was described, and then a brief insight into the technical language teaching in Hungary, Romania and Slovakia was provided. In the third chapter, the theoretical educational aspects of teaching language for business purposes were examined and their concept, interpretation and significance were presented. In a separate subchapter, the characteristics and actors of the research area were discussed.

In the fourth chapter, technical language learning motivation is presented and embedded in a theoretical framework.

In the fifth chapter, the conceptual background of student satisfaction was presented, by focusing on its role in higher education and technical language teaching.

In the last theoretical chapter, the didactic factors, methodological perspectives and methods of technical language teaching, and the role of using ICT tools in language for business purposes courses were described.

After reviewing the national and international literature, the empirical research was presented and the research questions and hypotheses were formulated.

Based on the national and international literature, the following hypotheses were formulated:

***Hypothesis H1: Identifiable principal components characterize the language learning motivation of students learning a language for business purposes in the studied countries.***

The motivation of students with different sociodemographic backgrounds to learn a language vary from country to country (1a). Variables that can influence technical language learning and related to career show significant results in technical language learning motivation (1b).

***Hypothesis H2: The implementation, technical, and learning environmental factors included in our technical language learning environment assessment model are similar in all three countries.***

Students are satisfied with the evaluation indicators of the implementation environment (2a). Students are very satisfied with the technical environment of technical language teaching (2b). The assessment indicators for the learning environment in language courses for business purposes meet students' expectations in all three countries (2c).

***Hypothesis H3: In the examined national and foreign higher education institutions, teaching language for business purposes is realized with clearly identifiable content and methodological conditions.***

Students judge the degree of emphasis placed on different foreign language skills to the same extent (3a). There is no difference between countries in assessing the importance of the tasks prepared for technical language classes and the course activities (3b). During the technical language courses, mainly online teaching materials and interfaces are used, and the use of modern ICT tools is prevalent (3c). According to students learning a language for business purposes, a language proficiency equivalent to level B2 is sufficient to carry out various language-related activities in the labour market (3d).

## **Applied Methods**

The analysis focused on students learning a language for business purposes in higher education institutions in Hungary, Slovakia and Romania, and teachers and researchers with decades of work and experience in technical language teaching whose opinions and experiences on vocational education were examined.

The research examined teaching language for business purposes using quantitative and qualitative methods, keeping congruence in mind. The quantitative research subjects are students learning a language for business purposes in higher education institutions in Hungary, Slovakia and Romania, who could express their opinions on teaching language for business purposes through an online questionnaire. A total of 1,041 students filled in the questionnaire. In terms of country breakdown, 449 students learn a language for business purposes in Hungary, 304 in Slovakia and 288 in Romania.

The sample was only partially representative, but it reflects the population studied in the given countries relatively well. In the exploratory quantitative study, descriptive and multivariate statistical analyses are used to prove our hypotheses.

In the qualitative research, the measurement instrument was a semi-structured online interview, in the course of which nine open-ended questions were asked from four well-known language instructors about technical language learning motivation, satisfaction, the content of technical language teaching, and the presence and future of technical language teaching. The outstanding scientific activity and recognition of the interviewees in the field of technical language teaching and research, as well as the representation of technical language teachers and researchers from the examined three countries (Hungary, Slovakia, Romania) played a major role in the selection of the interviewees. The questions followed a

predetermined order. The answers were recorded during the online survey with a voice recording program.

In the analysis of the interviews, the characteristics that support the quantitative research results were highlighted, and therefore the frequently applied "in vivo" coding of qualitative research was used to illustrate the results more clearly.

## Results

The **first hypothesis** examined the technical language learning motivation and assumed that identifiable principal components characterize students' technical language learning motivation in the examined countries. This hypothesis was accepted because the principal components of technical language learning in all the three studied countries have been created, and they were suitable for exploring the correlations with background variables. The main principal components of learning a language for business purposes were "professional future", "abroad", "performance", and "external" language learning motivation. In the comparative analyses, it is one of the similarities that has been revealed between the countries.

The sub-hypotheses have been verified, as the data from Hungary, Slovakia and Romania showed significant differences in socio-demographic variables for different principal components. The other variables, which can influence technical language learning, also showed statistical significance in the different countries.

In the descriptive statistical analysis of technical language learning motivation, the statement "I am learning a technical language because this kind of knowledge will come in handy in the future", had the highest average for all three countries. It can be concluded that students consider technical language learning to be essential and see its future benefits. Therefore, technical language learning has an important role and place in higher education. Furthermore, it has been also found that the approach discussed as the "second linguistic motivational self-system" in the theoretical chapter of the dissertation appears here, and in the current case, the ideal linguistic self embraces the ideas and desires that the foreign language learner wants to achieve in the future. One such desire is to recognize that students will need technical language skills in the future, and it is a powerful motivation for them to learn a language.

In many cases, the countries studied differ significantly. In six questions significant differences in the principal components of technical language learning motivation and the background variables have been discovered. At the principal component level, the neighbouring countries are similar rather than different in technical language motivation. Concerning the direction and number of the significant correlation between the background variables and the principal components of technical language learning motivation, the most similar countries are Hungary and Slovakia.

The satisfaction of learners with technical language teaching has also been studied. Based on the technical language learning environment assessment model and the relevant literature, the **second hypothesis**, which assumes that the implementation-, technical- and learning- environment factors in the model are similar in all the three countries, had to be rejected, since the descriptive and multivariate statistical analyses of the student satisfaction with technical language teaching led to several significant results.

It has also been revealed that students are satisfied rather than unsatisfied with the development of their language skills and are satisfied with the indicators of the implementation environment; therefore, this sub-hypothesis was accepted.

The sub-hypothesis, which says that students are very satisfied with the technical environment of teaching language for business purposes, was rejected because the averages of the variables examining the technical environment were closer to the Likert scale's class mean, which does not reflect high satisfaction.

All three evaluation indicators of the technical environment (satisfaction with the classroom, satisfaction with the technical equipment, satisfaction with the Internet) reflect that Hungarian and Romanian students are significantly more satisfied with the technical conditions of technical language teaching than Slovak students.

The sub-hypothesis, which says that the learning environment's evaluation indicators in all the three countries meet the students' expectations, was also

rejected because, according to the students of Slovakia, the number of language classes is inadequate. This finding is also verified by the interview analysis of the qualitative research, as the language teachers interviewed in Slovakia and Romania supported the increase in the number of language classes.

Pertaining to the curriculum, the students in Romania are the most satisfied, the number of classes is considered appropriate for the students in Hungary, and the satisfaction with the difficulty of completing the course is the same in all three countries.

From the statistical analyses of the three countries' technical language learning environment satisfaction indicators, it can be concluded that Hungarian and Romanian student satisfaction with teaching language for business purposes is very similar. In many cases, the satisfaction of students in Slovakia differs from that of Hungary and Romania.

The **third hypothesis** of the research, which assumed that teaching language for business purposes in the national and foreign higher education institutions is implemented with clearly defined content and methodological conditions, was also rejected. The significant differences between countries prove that it is not true that teaching language for business purposes is implemented under clearly defined content and methodological conditions.

During the analysis of the four sub-hypotheses of the third hypothesis related to the content of teaching language for business purposes, non-parametric descriptive statistical analyses were performed. Adjusted residuals were also examined in the cross-tabulation analyses to reveal the differences and similarities that could not be identified from the countries' percentage data.

It has been found that speaking and listening comprehension should be practised more intensively, whereas most students would not put more emphasis on writing, reading, and translation skills. The first sub-hypothesis had to be rejected because, calculating with the adjusted residuals, the countries differ significantly in assessing different skills.

The second sub-hypothesis assumed no difference between the countries in judging the importance of the tasks performed during the technical language courses and the tasks prepared for the classes. Of the seven activities, students considered listening and understanding oral speech to be the most important for all countries.

The pairwise post hoc comparisons of the countries showed a significant difference between the countries, and for all seven variables, difference has been found in the way students see the importance of different tasks. In terms of assessing the importance of language for business purposes courses, Hungary and Slovakia are most similar, and Romania differs the most from the other two countries regarding student opinions of the importance of technical language classes.

Examining the third sub-hypothesis, we concluded that students learn primarily from language books during the courses, and the use of business realia is rare. Looking at the countries as a whole or separately, it can be seen that the projector use comes first. The least used IT equipment was the student voting system.

The third sub-hypothesis, which says that students of business and management use mainly online teaching materials and interfaces during the technical language courses, and the use of modern ICT tools is widespread, was rejected because this statement is not true at all. Both in terms of teaching materials (university printed notes, photocopied materials from teachers, lecture notes) and ICT tools (laptop, projector, photocopier, interactive whiteboard), the most significant differences are between Romania and the other two countries (Hungary, Slovakia).

In the subsequent analysis, it has been revealed that B2 intermediate and B1 basic language skills are no longer sufficient to carry out basic communication activities in business, and the students of business and management are aware of it.

In percentage terms of all countries, students believe that the highest level of language proficiency (C2) is required to teach specific subject content, and C1 proficiency is required to read technical materials, listen to speeches, talk to clients, talk to professionals, participate in discussions, and give presentations.

The fourth sub-hypothesis, which says that in the opinion of students of business and management, a language proficiency corresponding to a B2 intermediate language exam is sufficient to carry out various language-related activities in the labour market, was also rejected. The analysis revealed that students consider the language level C1, and not B2, to be the appropriate level for performing activities in the labour market.

In the qualitative research, semi-structured online interviews were used. Nine open-ended questions were asked from well-known technical language teachers about technical language learning motivation, satisfaction, content and the presence and future of technical language teaching.

By comparing qualitative and quantitative data, parallelism between language teachers' opinions and the research results of technical language teachers and students has been discovered, so our comparison shows the similarities and differences within discourse communities (language teachers) and between discourse communities (language teachers - students).

It was revealed from the interviews with technical language teachers that technical language skills are essential for students to enter the labour market and these findings can be verified with the quantitative research results as it turned out that most students are aware of the importance of technical language learning and it appears as a professional vision for them. Another important code set up during the interview analysis of technical language teachers is "global, multinational human activities", which also appears in the "foreign" principal component of motivation of all three countries. It is known that the students of our century are mobile. They do not strictly stick to the local jobs, so it is not a problem for them to search for a job at a multinational company abroad.

Overall, both students and language teachers are satisfied with technical language teaching, but increasing the number of classes of language courses per week and extending the technical language teaching period to all cycles would be an essential measure to improve the quality of teaching language for business purposes. Another proposal is closer cooperation between universities and companies to develop students' general and technical language competencies.

# List of publications related to the dissertation



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Candidate: János Farkas  
Doctoral School: Doctoral School of Human Sciences  
MTMT ID: 10058220

## List of publications related to the dissertation

### Foreign language international book chapters (1)

1. **Farkas, J.:** The Impact of the Common European Framework of Reference on Hungarian Higher Education Language Teaching.  
In: Forlang : Cudzie jazyky v akademickom prostredí. Szerk.: Eva Kascáková, Henrieta Kozaríková, Technická Univerzita v Košiciach Katedra jazykov, Kassa, 169-177, 2019, (ISSN 1338-5496) ISBN: 9788055333984

### Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (1)

2. Nagyné Bodnár, K., **Farkas, J.**, Domonyi, R.: Módszertani adalékok a gazdasági szaknyelvi vizsgákon elvárt hallás utáni szövegértési készség fejlesztéséhez a Debreceni Egyetem Gazdaságtudományi Karán.  
*Porta Lingua.* 15, 327-338, 2016. ISSN: 1785-2420.

### Foreign language scientific articles in Hungarian journals (1)

3. **Farkas, J.:** Teaching multiculturalism for tourism students and developing their intercultural competence at the University of Debrecen.  
*Nyelvvilág.* 19, 56-61, 2017. ISSN: 1786-0636.

### Hungarian conference proceedings (1)

4. **Farkas, J.:** Egyetemi hallgatók felkészítése a multikulturális munkakörnyezet elvárásaira.  
In: "A vidék él és élni akar" : II. Gazdálkodás és menedzsment tudományos konferencia.  
Szerk.: Ferencz Árpád, Kecskeméti Főiskola Kertészeti Főiskolai Kar, Kecskemét, 779-783, 2015. ISBN: 9786155192340

### Foreign language conference proceedings (1)

5. **Farkas, J.:** Teaching ESP for Management Students at the University of Debrecen, Hungary.  
In: Teaching English for Specific Purposes at Universities. Ed.: Jana Jaskova, Milan Smutny, Dagmar Šťastná, Brno University of Technology, Brno, 53-62, 2018. ISBN: 9788021457416





Hungarian abstracts (3)

6. **Farkas, J.:** Motiváció a hazai gazdasági szaknyelvoktatásban.

In: Prevenció, intervenció és kompenzáció: korszerű neveléstudományi módszerekkel a korai iskolaelhagyás ellen, Magyar Nevelés- és Oktatókutatók Egyesülete, Budapest, 82, 2019.  
ISBN: 9786155657078

7. **Farkas, J.:** A közös európai referenciakeret szaknyelvoktatást befolyásoló tényezői.

In: Kutatási sokszínűség, oktatási gyakorlat és együttműködések: absztrakt kötet : XVIII. Országos Neveléstudományi Konferencia. Szerk.: Fehérvári Anikó, Széll Krisztián, Mísey Helga, ELTE Pedagógiai és Pszichológiai Kar, MTA Pedagógiai Tudományos Bizottság, Budapest, 479, 2018. ISBN: 9789634890515

8. **Farkas, J.:** Szaknyelvoktatási helyzetkép a Debreceni Egyetemen 2017.

In: XVII. Országos Neveléstudományi Konferencia: Program és absztrakt kötet. Szerk.: Kerülő Judit, Jenei Teréz, Gyarmati Imre, MTA Pedagógiai Tudományos Bizottság; Nyíregyházi Egyetem, Nyíregyháza, 241, 2017. ISBN: 9789635088638

Foreign language abstracts (2)

9. **Farkas, J.:** Students and Multicultural Labour Market Expectations.

In: Innováció, kutatás, pedagógusok. HuCER 2017: Absztrakt kötet, Magyar Nevelés- és Oktatókutatók Egyesülete, Budapest, 59, 2017. ISBN: 9786155657023

10. **Farkas, J.:** The Challenges of LSP Teaching at Debrecen University.

In: Cudzie jazyky v premenách času VII: recenzovaný zborník príspevkov z medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie = Foreign languages in changing times / red. Radoslav Štefančík, Roman Kapil, Vydavateľstvo Ekonóm, Bratislava, 204-206, 2017. ISBN: 9788022543880

**List of other publications**

Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (1)

11. **Farkas, J.:** Gazdasági szaknyelvet tanuló hallgatók szaknyelvtanulási motivációjának statisztikai vizsgálata.

*Porta Lingua.* 2020, 331-349, 2020. ISSN: 1785-2420.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.48040/PL.2020.27>

Foreign language scientific articles in Hungarian journals (1)

12. Pusztai, G., Pallay, K., Joó, O., Cséke, K., **Farkas, J.:** Two Gap-filling Books on Non-immigrant Minorities.

*Hung. Educ. Res. J.* 8 (1), 109-115, 2018. ISSN: 2062-9605.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14413/HERJ/8/1/10>





Hungarian abstracts (2)

13. **Farkas, J.:** A gazdasági szaknyelvoktatás tartalmi vetülete (összehasonlító elemzés).

In: Család a nevelés és az oktatás fókuszában: Absztraktkötet: XX. Országos Neveléstudományi Konferencia, Debrecen, 2020. november 5-7.. Szerk.: Engler Ágnes, Rébay Magdolna, Tóth Dorina Anna, MTA Pedagógiai Tudományos Bizottság : Debreceni Egyetem BTK Nevelés- és Művelődéstudományi Intézet : Kopp Mária Intézet a Népesedésért és a Családokért, Debrecen, 23, 2020. ISBN: 9789634902584

14. **Farkas, J.:** A szaknyelvoktatás hallgatói elégedettségének vizsgálata néhány középkelet-európai ország felsőoktatási intézményében.

In: Tanulás és innováció a digitális korban : Absztraktkötet. Szerk.: Kozma Tamás, Juhász Erika, Tóth Péter, Magyar Nevelés- és Oktatókutatók Egyesülete, Budapest, 169, 2020. ISBN: 9786155657085

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