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MOTIVATION FOR ENROLMENT AND THE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AT THE FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY IN NIŠ REGARDING THE GERMAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE STUDY PROGRAMME²

This paper reports on the motivation for enrolment and the students' attitudes at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš regarding the German language and literature study programme. The aim of the research was obtaining concrete data which will serve as the basis for its improvement. An anonymous survey was conducted from June to September 2021. The research sample included 55 students in the first, second and third year. Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that among all the surveyed students intrinsic motivation predominates as regards the choice of the German language and literature study programme. As indicated in the findings, the interest in the German language and their desire to master it well were at the top of the list of motivating factors. Half of the students enrolled in their studies in order to work as German language teachers. The students' suggestions indicate the need to introduce more professional translation and practice in presentation and public speaking skills. The study also reveals that the vast majority of the students are satisfied with their choice of philology studies and that they assess their future perspectives and opportunities for professional development as good.

Key words: German language, motivation, students' attitudes, Faculty of Philosophy in Niš

1. Introduction

Various works had been carried out on the factors considered in choosing a programme of study and vocation. For instance, the work of Čabarkapa, Petrović and Kuzmanović (2016) deals with the preference of personal and social values viewed as targets in the context of choosing a university department and, with it, future profession. Two lists were used – 18 personal and 18 social values. The sample included 497 last-year-

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² The study was carried out in Niš within the framework of the Faculty of Philosophy's internal project Studies of German Language and Literature in the Light of the Jubilee – 50 Years of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš (No. 100/1-10-4-01).

grammar-school students. The research was conducted in school conditions in Belgrade and several cities in Serbia. The results show that the majority of students (55%) would opt for social-humanistic and medical-biological and less for technical and natural sciences. It turned out that gender and the type of high school courses are significant variables linked with the selection of studies and faculties, while other socio-demographic variables were not significant. The results also show that there are significant differences in the levels of acceptance of some values while, viewed globally, greater importance is given to personal than social values. In the field of education Marušić Jablanović and Vračar (2019) explored career choice motivation of teachers in Serbia. The paper concluded that intrinsic motives, social utility values and self-perceived abilities are the most important factors of teachers' career choice. Tarasova, Kradetskaya and Kudlay (2015) conducted a study on the motivational roles in learning technical translation for postgraduate students in the Russian setting. They identify that both psychological and pedagogical factors influence students taking the course of technical translation. The findings also indicate that masters students are highly motivated to take the course because the majority of them may use English, particularly translation in their future career.

The increased quality of the educational system involves attracting the best teachers, which is why it is very important to understand the motivations and perceptions that lead students to choose degrees in foreign language education (ALVARIÑAS-VILLAVERDE et al. 2022). In this study, the motivation for enrolment and the students' attitudes at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš regarding the German language and literature undergraduate study programme have been explored. The Faculty of Philosophy in Niš in 2021 marked 50 years of existence. The undergraduate German language and literature study programme is the most recently accredited programme at the Faculty and it was implemented in the 2018/2019 academic year. This study programme encompasses 48 subjects out of which 34 are mandatory (70.84%) and 14 elective (29.16%), which provides students with greater freedom in organising their studies. Through the mandatory subjects, the students acquire basic theoretical-methodological, scientific and practical knowledge in the field of the German language, literature and culture, as well as methodology and didactics, while the elective subjects furnish them with other competences necessary for their future professions. In each semester the students have four mandatory subjects, apart from the seventh and eighth semesters, when they have five per semester. The elective subjects are organised into fourteen elective blocks. The students choose at least one of the offered subjects in these elective blocks in each semester. After graduation, students can work primarily in the field of education as teachers of German language, but also in other fields which demand experts in the German language, literature and culture (e.g., in the field of culture, media, publishing, tourism).

2. Methods

Most students enrol in certain university programs of study but later regret or withdraw from such programs due to lack of interest. The goal of this study is to explore the motivation and the attitudes of students towards the German language and literature undergraduate study programme at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš and the means for its improvement. With that aim, a questionnaire was compiled which presents a short-

ened and adapted version of the questionnaire which was implemented between May and October 2011 within the framework of the Tempus project, *Reforming Foreign Languages Studies in Serbia*, which dealt with research into the relationships between studies in philology at Serbian universities and labour market needs in Serbia. The questionnaire consists of questions of the closed ended type (a selection of one or more offered answers) as well as combined forms (if none of the offered options suits the respondents, other responses may be added). The questions in the questionnaire referred to the motivation to enrol in the studies, opinions on the study content and opportunities for professional development. This anonymous survey was carried out during the June and September exam terms in 2021, when most of the students usually take their exams, after the written exams in Contemporary German Language 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. The total number of students included in the sample is 55, the majority of whom are in the first year of study (22), followed by the second year (19), with the lowest number of respondents in the third year (14). Mostly active students participated in the research, i.e., those who regularly attend classes³, “therefore it may be assumed that they have detailed insight into structure, content and any shortcomings of the study programme” (VUČO at al. 2012: 8). We opted for the distribution of printed questionnaires at the faculty’s premises out of concern that an online questionnaire may result in a lack of motivation and poor response. The sample could be considered as representative considering that over 50% of the enrolled students participated in the research.⁴ Once the survey was completed, we moved on to processing and interpreting the results. In the following tables the first year is marked as group A, the second as group B, and the third as group C.

3. Results and discussion

The goal of the first question was to investigate the students’ motivation to enrol in the German language and literature study programme. From the offered options the majority of the students in all three groups chose interest in the German language (group A 90.9%, group B 89.5%, group C 78.6%) (Table 1). For the first year students, the motivational reasons were: the wish to master the language, (86%), good job prospects (72.7%), and interest in the German literature and culture (54.5%). In this group, the students highlighted good job prospects (27.2%) as the most important factor, followed by the desire to master the German language (22.8%). Other motivating factors cited by the students were their interest in the German language, literature and culture, and the fact that they had a great teacher at school (13.6%). When it comes to the second year students, the wish to master the German language is predominant and at the same time the most important motivational factor (94.7%), followed by interest in the German language (89.5%) and good job prospects (63.2%). As for the third year students, interest in the German language (78.6%), was followed by good job prospects (71.4%), the wish to master the German language (50%) and interest in German literature and culture (42.9%). In this group the most important factor was shown to be interest in the German language (50%), while the

3 After the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, teaching at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš was carried out online from March 2020 until June 2021.

4 On the basis of the Students Service’s data for the 2020 academic year, 28 students were enrolled in the first year, 28 students were also enrolled in the 2019 academic year, and 24 students in 2018.

second was good job prospects (35.8%).

Motivation explains “why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity, and how hard they are going to pursue it” (DÖRNYEI 2001: 7). comparison of the answers of all three groups of students indicates that the motivation for enrolment in the studies stems more from a personal need than the desire to achieve some external goal (DURBABA 2011). The vast majority cite their interest in the German language and desire to master it as the main motive. Students who are intrinsically motivated are more successful during their studies, more satisfied and more likely to stay loyal to the profession they choose after graduation (ALVARIÑAS-VILLAVERDE et al. 2022; MARUŠIĆ JABLANOVIĆ & VRAČAR 2019). This result coincides with the results of the research conducted within the framework of the Tempus project *Reforming Foreign Language Studies in Serbia* (VUČO et al. 2012: 30), where in the sample of 690 students, it was established that 83% enrol in language studies because of their interest in foreign languages and 51% in order to master a given foreign language. On the other hand, more than half of the students are stimulated to choose the German language and literature study programme by extrinsic motivation, i.e., by their awareness of the deficit of people employed in professions that require an expert in the German language, literature and culture (such as teacher, translator, pre-editor, project assistant, event manager, cultural consultant, etc.) and good job prospects linked with such studies. This motivation could be linked to economic factors, i.e., the fact that Germany has been the biggest foreign-trade partner of Serbia for a large number of years, as well as that representatives of companies from German speaking countries are the most highly represented on our market (ĐUKIĆ MIRZAYANTZ 2017). The number of students who had been influenced by a fantastic teacher at school, family or friends is low, as is the number of those who opted for the motive of going abroad, the belief that language studies are easier than some others or the lack of a better idea.

Table 1. *A comparative presentation of the motivational reasons for choosing the German language and literature study programme*

Why did you choose the German language and literature study programme?	A – First year students				B – Second year students				C – Third year students			
	All		Most important		All		Most important		All		Most important	
	N (number)	%	N (number)	%	N (number)	%	N (number)	%	N (number)	%	N (number)	%
(1) Interest in the German language	20	90.9	3	13.6	17	89.5	4	21.1	11	78.6	7	50
(2) Interest in German literature and culture	12	54.5	3	13.6	9	47.4	0	0	6	42.9	0	0
(3) The wish to master the German language	19	86.3	5	22.8	18	94.7	10	52.6	7	50	0	0
(4) A fantastic teacher at school	7	31.8	3	13.6	6	31.6	0	0	6	42.9	1	7.1
(5) Going abroad	11	50	1	4.6	6	31.6	0	0	3	21.4	1	7.1
(6) Encouragement/persuasion from family or friends	7	31.8	0	0	2	10.5	0	0	2	14.3	0	0
(7) The deficit of persons in such professions, good job prospects	16	72.7	6	27.2	12	63.2	5	26.3	10	71.4	5	35.8
(8) The belief that studies in philology are easy/easier than others	1	4.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7.1	0	0
(9) The lack of a better idea	2	9.1	1	4.6	3	15.8	0	0	1	7.1	0	0
(10) Other reason	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL			22	100			19	100			14	100

In response to the question regarding what they would like to do after university, the highest number of students in all three groups chose the teaching profession (group A 50%, group B 63.2% and group C 50%) (Table 2). The second most popular option on the scale of future professions were jobs where the German language would be used for work in other fields (for instance tourism, journalism, marketing, foreign trade, and public administration) (group A 22.8%, group B 26.3% and group C 21.5%). The desire for a career in professional/technical translation and literary translation was expressed by a low number of students (group A 13.6 %, group B 10.5% and group C 14.3%). Those students who participated in the research project *Reforming Foreign Language Studies in Serbia* demonstrated a different approach. More of them expressed the desire to become translators (45%) rather than teachers (36%) (VUČO et al. 2012: 31).

Table 2. *A comparative presentation of the students' estimations of their future professions*

After graduation in which profession do you see your future career opportunities?	A – First year students		B – Second year students		C – Third year students	
	N (number)	%	N (number)	%	N (number)	%
(1) In the teaching profession	11	50	12	63.2	7	50
(2) In literary-translation	3	13.6	2	10.5	1	7.1
(3) In professional/technical translation	3	13.6	0	0	2	14.3
(4) In consecutive or simultaneous interpreting	0	0	0	0	1	7.1
(5) In jobs where the German language would be used in other fields (for instance tourism, journalism, marketing, foreign trade, public administration)	5	22.8	5	26.3	3	21.5
(6) Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	22	100	19	100	14	100

The respondents' responses to this question are not surprising because the study programme was established particularly because of the huge need for schooling a cadre primarily in the field of education as teachers of the German language, but also in other fields which demand experts in the German language, literature and culture (HEINE 2021; MOMČILOVIĆ & OGNJANOVIĆ 2021). The shortage of teachers in Niš and this region has been a problem for years. This was also confirmed in communication with secondary school pupils, German language teachers, colleagues, school directors, Anglicist graduates (who study German as their second language for 6 semesters during their studies) who teach German in the private sector because of the lack of Germanist graduates and who, after studying the English language, also attend the German language study programme. With that aim, the Department of German Language and Literature has initiated more intensive communication with schools and regularly monitors interest among pupils on the one hand, and market needs on the other. That will, at the same time, serve as the basis for improving the study programme through the introduction of new subjects or the adaptation of the curriculum content. The following suggestions may be useful: more language

production classes should be offered, in this context there should be more German lectors sent from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), new courses on topics such as public speaking skills, intercultural competence, business correspondence, blended and online teaching, etc. should be introduced.

Table 3. *A comparative presentation of the students' familiarity with the goals and outcomes of the German language and literature study programme*

Are you familiar with the goals and outcomes of the German language and literature study programme?		A – First year students		B – Second year students		C – Third year students	
		N (number)	%	N (number)	%	N (number)	%
(1)	Yes	21	95.4	18	94.7	12	85.7
(2)	No	1	4.6	1	5.3	2	14.3
TOTAL		22	100	19	100	14	100

Table 4. *A comparative presentation of the students' familiarity with the subjects in the German language and literature study programme*

Are you familiar with all of the subjects you will be studying during your four year undergraduate course?		A – First year students		B – Second year students		C – Third year students	
		N (number)	%	N (number)	%	N (number)	%
(1)	Yes	16	72.7	16	84.2	12	85.7
(2)	No	6	27.3	3	15.8	2	14.3
TOTAL		22	100	19	100	14	100

The vast majority of the respondents are familiar with the goals and outcomes of the German language and literature study programme (group A 95.5%, group B 94.7%, group C 85.7%) (Table 3), as well as with all of the subjects they will be studying during their four year undergraduate course (group A 72.7%, group B 84.2%, group C 85.7%) (Table 4). This data confirmed that the students are well informed about the content, goals and competences which they acquire in this study programme most probably from consulting the information booklet provided for students and/or the faculty website (<https://www.filfak.ni.ac.rs/studije/osnovne/nemacki>). In addition, for the secondary school pupils interested in studying the German language and literature in Niš, the department regularly organises special consultations in order to monitor their progress, and provide them with information about the study programme as well as appropriate support with the aim of high quality preparation for the entrance exam and their potential future studies. Consultations are announced through the Faculty's website on the news page (<https://www.filfak.ni.ac.rs/vesti>) as well as through the network of German language teachers.

Table 5. *A comparative presentation of the students' assessments of the usefulness of the study content*

How would you assess the usefulness of the study content provided during the first, second and third years of study in terms of finding a job or working after graduation?	A – First year students		B – Second year students		C – Third year students	
	N (number)	%	N (number)	%	N (number)	%
(1) Very useful	6	27.3	12	63.1	4	28.6
(2) Mostly useful	13	59.1	6	31.6	7	50
(3) Moderately useful	3	13.6	1	5.3	3	21.4
(4) Mostly useless	0	0	0	0	0	0
(5) Completely useless	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	22	100	19	100	14	100

In their assessments of the usefulness of the provided study content, the students mostly chose two options, very useful or mostly useful (Table 5). This data suggests that the study programme is both of good quality and contemporary, which is also confirmed by comparisons with programmes from other German language departments in Europe⁵, which are characterised by division into language and literature subject groups. We should also mention its compatibility with German language programmes at other Serbian faculties such as the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade and the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad.

The majority of the students from all three groups assessed that the curriculum content which does not have any particular significance for future jobs contributes to general education and professional security (Table 6). Several students justified their answers with comments:

- “In life we do not know what will we really do, and therefore it is important to study a variety of subjects which enable us to find ourselves” (a first year student)
- “Those are elective subjects, I think it is good to have such subjects.” (a second year student)
- “Those are mainly elective subjects which may be indirectly linked with the German language or a future profession, but are mostly chosen based on personal interests.” (a second year student)
- “I think that all contents will find their role in future employment, and therefore there is no subject which is insignificant.” (a second year student)
- “Serbian language and pedagogy.” (a third year student)
- “The content of subjects which are not exclusively directed at studying standard German.” (a third year student)

The given answers could be interpreted in such a way that the offer of elective subjects is adequate, thus enabling the adaptation of the study programme to the students' needs and interests.

5 For instance with the Leipzig Faculty of Philology (<https://www.leipzig-studieren.de/studienangebot/studiengang/course/show/germanistik-ba/>) or with the Graz Institute of German Studies (<https://germanistik.uni-graz.at/de/studieren/studien/bachelorstudium-germanistik/>).

Table 6. *A comparative presentation of the students' opinions of study content which is of no significance for specific future jobs*

Does the faculty curriculum provide content which is of no significance for a specific future job, but may contribute to general education and professional security?		A – First year students		B – Second year students		C – Third year students	
		N (number)	%	N (number)	%	N (number)	%
(1)	Yes	14	63.6	14	73.7	11	78.6
(2)	No	8	36.4	5	26.3	3	21.4
TOTAL		22	100	19	100	14	100

Although the majority in the group A (86.4%) rejected the claim that some contents which will be necessary in their professional lives had not been offered during their studies (Table 7), a significant percentage of the students from groups B (42.1%) and C (57.1%) agreed with this statement, which could be interpreted in terms of their experiences during their studies and by analysing their needs and interests. Several students made the following suggestions and comments:

- “Not enough attention is paid to pronunciation, slang...” (a first year student)
- “More subjects which focus on practice in the use of the foreign language should be added.” (a second year student)
- “Translation should be practiced more often and more seriously.” (a second year student)
- “Personally I would like more opportunities to learn about German culture, history and geography (and not only the language and literature). That might not be of crucial significance for learning the language itself, but it certainly does make it easier and helps to gain a better understanding of it.” (a second year student)
- “I think that we need to master phonetics.” (a third year student)
- “I think that we should deal more with translating professional texts.” (a third year student)

Table 7. *A comparative presentation of the students' opinions of contents which are not offered during their studies*

Do you think that some contents which will be necessary in your professional life are not offered during your studies?		A – First year students		B – Second year students		C – Third year students	
		N (number)	%	N (number)	%	N (number)	%
(1)	Yes	3	13.6	8	42.1	8	57.1
(2)	No	19		11	57.9	6	42.9
TOTAL		22	100	19	100	14	100

The respondents' comments are similar to those made by philology graduates and the students who participated in the TEMPUS project *Reforming Foreign Language Studies in Serbia*. They also emphasise that more comprehensive work on translations of all

kinds should be a constituent part of the philological studies curriculum and that greater focus should be placed on contemporary, speaking skills more connected to real-life needs (VUČO at al. 2012: 35 and 38).

In response to the question as to whether certain skills and knowledge should form part of the curriculum, 72.7% of the respondents in group A answered “no”, 52.6% in group B and 64.3% in group C (Table 8). Those students who answered in the affirmative (group A 27.3%, group B 47.4% and group C 35.7%) were asked to provide their suggestions for improvements to the curriculum. All three groups highlighted knowledge of professional terminology from certain fields in the first place, followed by presentation and public speaking skills, organisational skills and business correspondence (Table 9).

Table 8. *A comparative presentation of the students’ opinions on whether certain skills and knowledge should form part of the curriculum*

Are there any skills or knowledge unfamiliar to you which present a problem when finding or performing certain jobs, and which should form part of the curriculum?	A – First year students		B – Second year students		C – Third year students	
	N (number)	%	N (number)	%	N (number)	%
(1) Yes	6	27.3	9	47.4	5	35.7
(2) No	16	72.7	10	52.6	9	64.3
TOTAL	22	100	19	100	14	100

Table 9. *A comparative presentation of the students’ opinions on the skills and knowledge which should be the part of the curriculum*

Which skills and knowledge should form part of the curriculum?	A – First year students		B – Second year students		C – Third year students	
	N (number)	%	N (number)	%	N (number)	%
(1) Knowledge of professional terminology from certain fields	4	18.2	5	26.3	5	35.7
(2) Computer skills	1	4.6	0	0	1	7.1
(3) IT	0	0	0	0	0	0
(4) Business correspondence	2	9.1	1	5.3	2	14.3
(5) Organisational skills	2	9.1	3	15.8	3	21.4
(6) Team work skills	1	4.6	0	0	3	21.4
(7) Presentation and public speaking skills	4	18.2	5	26.3	2	14.3
(8) Other	0	0	0		0	0

Students from all three groups assessed their future perspectives and opportunities for professional development as being mainly quite good or exceptionally good (Table 10). A much lower number of respondents opted for moderately good or limited and weak. It was established within the framework of the TEMPUS project *Reforming Foreign Lan-*

guage Studies in Serbia that the majority of students and employed philologists (over 60%) estimate their career perspectives as good, and the same belief is shared by almost half of unemployed philologists. The same study also determined that those respondents who are more motivated to work in their field have more positive estimations regarding their prospects on the labour market.

Table 10. *A comparative presentation of the students' assessments of their future perspectives and opportunities for professional development*

How would you assess your personal future perspectives and opportunities for professional development?	A – First year students		B – Second year students		C – Third year students	
	N (number)	%	N (number)	%	N (number)	%
(1) Exceptionally good	6	27.3	6	31.5	4	28.6
(2) Quite good	12	54.5	12	63.2	10	71.4
(3) Moderately good	3	13.6	1	5.3	0	0
(4) Limited and weak	1	4.6	0	0	0	0
(5) Without any perspectives	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	22	100	19	100	14	100

Students from all three groups were exceptionally satisfied or mostly satisfied with their choice of the philology profession (Table 11). Such satisfaction with their profession is at the same time accompanied by greater motivation to work in that profession (VUČO at al. 2012: 17)

Table 11. *A comparative presentation of the students' personal (dis)satisfaction with their choice of the philological profession*

Assess the level of your personal (dis)satisfaction with your choice of the philology profession.	A – First year students		B – Second year students		C – Third year students	
	N (number)	%	N (number)	%	N (number)	%
(1) Exceptionally satisfied	13	59.1	10	52.6	8	57.2
(2) Mostly satisfied	8	36.3	4	21.1	5	35.7
(3) Moderately satisfied	0	0	5	26.3	1	7.1
(4) Mostly dissatisfied	1	4.6	0	0	0	0
(5) Exceptionally dissatisfied	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	22	100	19	100	14	100

Conclusion

On the basis of the obtained results, it may be concluded that among all the surveyed students in the first, second and third year at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš intrinsic motivation predominates as regards the choice of the German language and literature study programme. The highest number of students enrolled in this programme because of

their interest in the German language and their desire to master it well. Half of the students enrolled in their studies in order to work as German language teachers, while others see themselves primarily in jobs where German can be used in work in some other field or in the translation profession. In terms of the usefulness of the curriculum, it was established that all three groups are satisfied to a large extent. The students' suggestions indicate the need to introduce more professional translation and practice in presentation and public speaking skills. The results also show that the vast majority of the students are satisfied with their choice of philology studies and that they assess their future prospects and opportunities for professional development as good.

Bearing in mind the fact that there are still no Germanist graduates at the Faculty of philosophy in Niš, it is not possible to gain full insight into the quality of the knowledge and skills acquired in this study programme. New analyses, consideration of the comments and suggestions for improvements, as well as any changes and amendments to the programme will be possible in two to three years at the earliest. It is thus essential to establish an infrastructure for gathering feedback from employers and other organisations regarding the competences of Germanist graduates and to work continuously on improving the quality of the curriculum in the light of the opinions of both employers and students.

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МОТИВАЦИЈА ЗА УПИС НА СТУДИЈЕ И СТАВОВИ СТУДЕНАТА ФИЛОЗОФСКОГ
ФАКУЛТЕТА У НИШУ О СТУДИЈСКОМ ПРОГРАМУ НЕМАЧКИ ЈЕЗИК И
КЊИЖЕВНОСТ

Резиме

Рад даје приказ истраживања које је имало за циљ да утврди мотивацију за упис на студије и ставове студената Филозофског факултета у Нишу о студијском програму основних академских студија Немачки језик и књижевност. Добијени подаци послужиле као основа за његово унапређење. Анонимно анкетање испитаника вршено је у јунском и септембарском испитном року 2021. године. Узорак истраживања укључивао је 55 студената прве, друге и треће године студија. На основу добијених резултата може се закључити да међу свим испитаним студентима преовлађује унутрашња мотивација у погледу избора студијског програма Немачки језик и књижевност. Интересовање за немачки језик и жеља за добрим савладавањем језика били су на врху листе мотивационих фактора. Половина испитаника уписује студије да би радила као наставник немачког језика. Сугестије студената указују да је потребно увести више стручног превођења и вежбање вештине јавног наступа. Резултати такође показују да је велика већина студената задовољна избором филолошких студија и да процењују сопствену професионалну перспективу и могућности за професионални развој као добре.

Кључне речи: немачки језик, мотивација, ставови студената, Филозофски факултет у Нишу