

Entrance Examinations as a Barrier: Language Proficiency and the Risk of School Failure among Foreign Pupils in Czech Education

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This article addresses the challenges faced by pupils with a different mother tongue (hereafter referred to as 'foreign pupils') in the Czech educational system. It focuses on their preparation for the standardised entrance examination for four-year upper secondary schools, particularly in terms of language proficiency and teacher preparedness.

The research is grounded in the implementation of the course, entitled 'Preparation for Entrance Exams to Secondary Schools', in the years 2024 and 2025. Additionally, it is informed by a meticulous linguistic analysis of examination materials in both the Czech language and mathematics.

The findings unequivocally demonstrate that the requirements of these compulsory tests align with levels B2–C2 (as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [CEFR]), which falls short of the level that can be attained by foreign students receiving maximum statutory support during their final school years. The discrepancy between the expected language proficiency and the possible language training received by foreign pupils has been shown to increase the risk of school failure.

The analysis further demonstrates that a deficiency in teachers' preparedness in the domains of Czech as a second language and intercultural communication diminishes the efficacy of pupil support. The study proposes measures to address this mismatch, including the realistic setting of language goals, the adaptation of assessment materials, systematic teacher training, and the strengthening of cooperation between schools and counselling institutions.

Keywords: *Czech Republic; foreigners in education; primary education; secondary education; language proficiency; Czech as a second language; entrance examinations; educational support; CEFR; intercultural communication; teacher preparedness*

Introduction

The integration of pupils with a different mother tongue (i.e. foreign pupils) into the national educational system and their support in developing the language of the majority are key factors for the full realization of the educational aspirations of individual pupils in the country of residence. A comprehensive overview of migration processes in both historical and contemporary contexts is provided in many titles¹. The historical development of teaching Czech to non-native speakers has been described Hrdlička². The topic of teaching Czech as a second, foreign, or non-native language has further been elaborated in the monograph *Čeština jako druhý jazyk*³. Similarly, one may note the substantial volume of information, as well as the extensive body of publications and methodological materials issued by governmental and non-profit organisations.⁴

However, we did not identify any publication that addresses the specific topic examined in our research, namely the linguistic demands of the unified entrance examination and their impact on foreign-language pupils in Czech education. Nevertheless, the topic of the unified entrance examination for secondary schools remains a recurring subject of expert and public debate, media coverage, and conflicting opinions.

In Czech primary schools, more than forty thousand foreigners were added at the turn of the school years 2021/2022–2022/2023 (Figure 1).

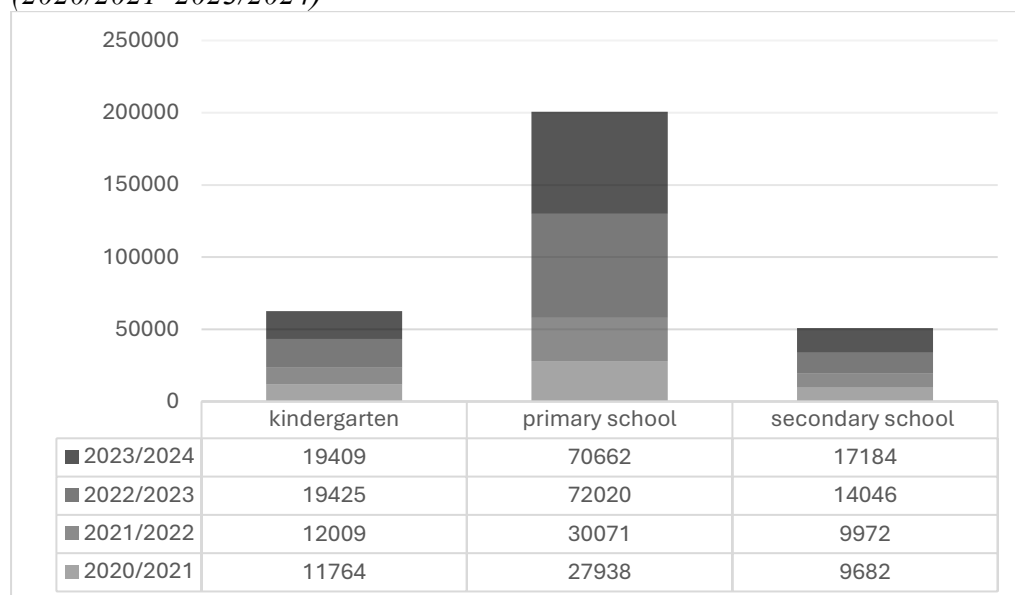
¹ Haas, H. de. (2024). *How migration really works: 22 things you need to know about the most divisive issue in politics*. Penguin Books; Cohen, R. (2019). *Migration: The Movement of Humankind from Prehistory to the Present*. Andre Deutsch; Uhrek, Z., Honusková, V., Ošťádalová, Š., & Günter, V. (2016). *Migrace: historie a současnost*. Ostrava: Občanské sdružení PANT.

² Hrdlička, M. (2002). *Cizí jazyk — čeština*. ISV – Institut sociálních věcí; Hrdlička, M. (2025). *Čeština mezi jazyky*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, nakladatelství Karolinum; Hrdlička, M. (2023). *Kapitoly z didaktické gramatiky: (se zřetelem k češtině jako cizímu jazyku)*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, nakladatelství Karolinum; Hrdlička, M. (2019). *Kapitoly o češtině jako jazyku nematěřském*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, nakladatelství Karolinum.

³ Šormová, K., Hudáková, A., & kol. (2019). *Čeština jako druhý jazyk: Metodická perspektiva*. Univerzita Karlova, Filozofická fakulta. <https://books.ff.cuni.cz/cestina-jako-druhy-jazyk/>

⁴ Národní pedagogický institut ČR (n.d.). *Odlišný mateřský jazyk*. <https://zapojmevsechny.cz/odlisny-matersky-jazyk>; META, o.p.s. (n.d.). *Podpora příležitostí ve vzdělávání*. <https://meta-ops.eu/>

Figure 1: Increase of foreigners in education in the Czech republic (2020/2021–2023/2024)



Source: Statistical Yearbooks of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2020/2021–2023/2024

The highest numbers of newly arrived pupils were observed among pupils from Ukraine, who in these years usually stayed in the Czech Republic under a specific type of residence called temporary protection. The mechanism of temporary protection was activated by the European Union for the first time in March 2022⁵. The Czech Republic provided all holders of temporary protection, who applied for admission to upper secondary study programmes (four-year programmes with the school-leaving examination) in the above-mentioned years, with the possibility of a unique adjustment of the admission procedure under Act No. 67/2022 Coll.⁶ Pupils with another type of residence had to continue to take the standardized entrance examination in its original form (i.e. in the Czech language), and only with minimal support corresponding to their individual needs.

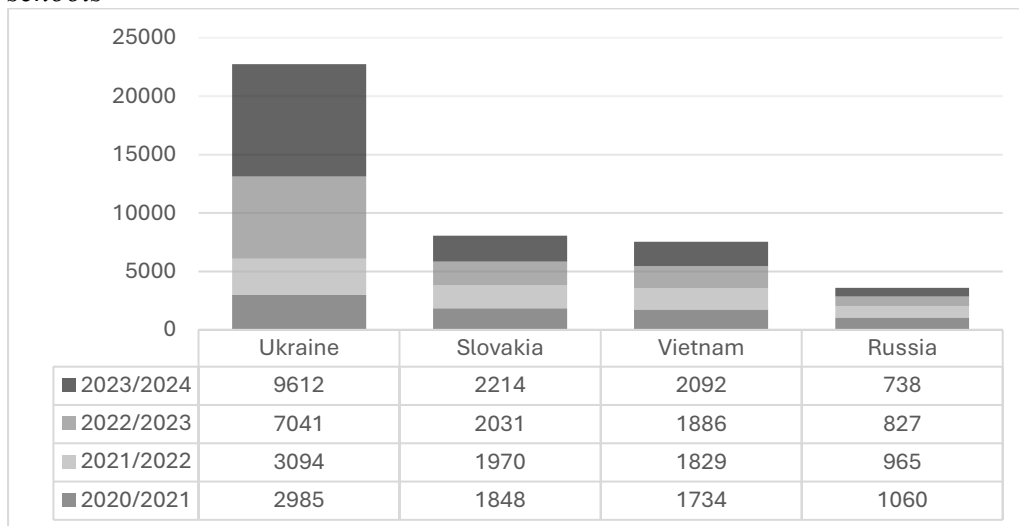
During the validity of this law (from 2022), we record at Czech secondary schools an unprecedented increase in the number of foreign pupils, especially of Ukrainian nationality (Figure 2).

⁵ European Council. (n.d.). How the EU helps refugees from Ukraine.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/refugee-inflow-from-ukraine/>

⁶ Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on Pre-school, Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and Other Education

Figure 2: The most numerous groups of foreign pupils at mainstream secondary schools



Source: Statistical Yearbooks of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2020/2021–2023/2024

Research Objectives

The objectives of the research presented here were:

1. To analyze the language challenges faced by foreign pupils in the form of standardized tests of the unified entrance examination,
2. To describe teacher preparedness and systemic barriers during the transition from lower secondary level (second stage of primary school) to upper secondary education (secondary school).⁷

Methodology, Data Collection and Analysis

The research was conducted based on the categorisation of language elements in the unified entrance examination tests for four-year secondary school programmes according to the language levels described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)⁸ and/or the European Language Portfolio⁹. The analysis examines the areas of lexicology

⁷ The results of this particular research aspect have not been included in the article.

⁸ Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy. (n.d.). *Společný evropský referenční rámec pro jazyky*. <https://msmt.gov.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/spolecny-evropsky-referencni-ramce-pro-jazyky/>

⁹ Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání (RVP). (n.d.). *Evropské jazykové portfolio (EJP)*. <https://ejp.rvp.cz/>

(vocabulary), morphology (word forms), syntax (factual structures), and text linguistics and stylistics (text comprehension, functional styles, and genres).

The data collection process involved the compilation of a list of problematic vocabulary items selected by foreign language students enrolled in the course entitled 'Preparation for Secondary School Entrance Exams', which was conducted in 2024 at the Center for Foreigners in the South Moravian Region. The course was attended by seven students aged between 13 and 15 years old, hailing from Ukraine (3), Afghanistan (2), Turkey (1), and Egypt (1). The duration of stay and study in the Czech Republic varied for each individual (from 6 months to 4 years). Their knowledge of spoken Czech ranged from A1 to B1+.

The statistical data from 2020–2024 were obtained from verified sources, which are listed in the link at the end of this article. In light of the research's focal point, the most prevalent data collection sources encompassed the yearbooks of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the reports of the Czech School Inspectorate (ČŠI), and other pivotal documents from educational institutions within the Czech Republic. These include the Education Act and PISA studies¹⁰.

The years 2020–2024 were selected for this article primarily to provide a reflection of the situation in Czech education, which was strongly influenced by the arrival of students from Ukraine after 24 February 2022. These students are covered by Act No. 67/2022 Coll. on measures in education in connection

¹⁰ Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy. (n.d.). *Statistická ročenka školství*. Statistický informační systém MŠMT. <https://statis.msmt.cz/rocenka/rocenka.asp>; Česká školní inspekce. (2025). *Tematická zpráva – Souvislost výsledků přijímací zkoušky a společné části maturitní zkoušky s vybranými znaky středních škol*.

<https://www.csicr.cz/cz/Aktuality/Tematicka-zprava-Souvislost-vysledku-prijimaci-zko>;

Česká školní inspekce. (2025). *Tematická zpráva – Rovné příležitosti a prevence rizik ve školním prostředí*. <https://www.csicr.cz/cz/Aktuality/Tematicka-zprava-Rovne-prilezitosti-a-prevence-riz>;

Česká školní inspekce. (2024). *Tematická zpráva: Čtenářská gramotnost na základních a středních školách ve školním roce 2022/2023* [Thematic Report: Reading Literacy at Primary and Secondary Schools in the 2022/2023 School Year]. https://www.csicr.cz/CSICR/media/Prilohy/2024_p%C3%ADlohy/Dokumenty/TZ_Ctenarska_gramotnost_final_12032024.pdf; Česká školní inspekce. (2022). *Národní zpráva PISA 2022* [National PISA 2022 Report]. <https://www.csicr.cz/cz/Aktuality/Narodni-zprava-PISA-2022>; Česká školní inspekce. (2022). *Mezinárodní šetření PIRLS 2021* [International PIRLS 2021

Survey]. https://www.csicr.cz/CSICR/media/Prilohy/2022_p%C3%ADlohy/Mezin%C3%A1rodn%C3%AD%20šetření%C3%AD/PIRLS-2021_koncepcni-ramec_27092022_FINAL.pdf; Česká školní inspekce. (2024). *Tematická zpráva: Čtenářská gramotnost na základních a středních školách ve školním roce 2022/2023* [Thematic Report: Reading Literacy at Primary and Secondary Schools in the 2022/2023 School Year].

https://www.csicr.cz/CSICR/media/Prilohy/2024_p%C3%ADlohy/Dokumenty/TZ_Ctenarska_gramotnost_final_12032024.pdf

with the armed conflict in Ukraine caused by the invasion of the Russian Federation (the so-called Lex Ukraine).

The Cermat tests, utilised for the purpose of language analysis, were administered to applicants for study on both regular and alternative dates between the years 2019 and 2024. The original versions of these tests are accessible to the public on the website of the Center for the Assessment of Educational Results (CZVV).

The article presents exclusively the findings resulting from the language analysis of the tests. In addition to this linguistic analysis, the overall research also included the following methods:

- meetings with teaching staff and with foreign-language students,
- a questionnaire survey among a sample of teachers in second stage of Czech elementary school.

The publication of the entire dissertation research is currently in progress and will be fully available at the beginning of 2026.

The Current Situation in the Czech Republic Regarding Support for Foreign-language Pupils

The present Czech education system is characterised by a paucity of teachers who are qualified to teach Czech as a second language. The first master's programme in the field of teaching Czech language and literature, specialising in pupils with a different mother tongue, was established in 2017 at the Department of Czech Language and Literature of the Faculty of Education at Masaryk University in Brno (Masaryk University, n.d.). Prior to this development, the university's offerings were limited to a programme entitled Czech for Foreigners, which was primarily geared towards adult education.

The provision of support to foreign-language pupils, otherwise referred to as pupils with a different mother tongue, extends beyond the scope of language teaching and necessitates the implementation of sociocultural and psychological intervention strategies. This paradigm shift necessitates a transformation of the teacher from a mere carrier of subject content to a mediator of the language in which subject content is conveyed. The provision of education for foreign-language pupils in the Czech Republic necessitates a high level of linguistic and cultural sensitivity. However, access to training in this area is often constrained by geographical limitations, teachers' time constraints, and the support of school management or personal interest. Addressing these challenges requires cooperation within and outside educational institutions.

It is imperative that cooperation between teachers (representatives of educational institutions), legal guardians, and foreign-language pupils is fostered in all possible combinations in order to ensure equal opportunities

in Czech education, irrespective of nationality, language, traditions, or other variables. In addition to this triad, however, in the area of education and setting up support for pupils at risk of early school leaving, it is also necessary to consider cooperation between schools and founders, as well as governmental and non-governmental organisations.

The Czech School Inspectorate¹¹ identifies in 2025 collaboration between schools, teachers, legal guardians, counselling institutions, as well as founders and other partners in education, in conjunction with the competitiveness of individual educational institutions in the Czech Republic, as external factors of education that can influence the organisation and success of the educational process and the support of pupils at risk of school failure.

Language Support for Foreign-language Pupils in Czech Primary Schools

In public primary schools, instruction is provided exclusively in Czech, with the exception of foreign language lessons. It is therefore vital to consider pupils' language skills as a key factor in determining educational success. These skills influence two key aspects: first, the comprehension of subject matter, and second, the results achieved in standardised tests. These latter tests are used to determine whether a pupil should continue their education or not, in particular with regard to specific types of study.

Czech legislation first enshrined the right to language support for newly arrived pupils with insufficient knowledge of the language of instruction in 2021 in Section 20 of the Education Act¹². Pupils who do not meet the requirements for inclusion in this form of support may be eligible for language support in accordance with Section 16 of the Education Act. In the latter case, it is usually necessary to visit an educational-psychological counselling centre, which will determine the number of hours of Czech as a second language that the school will provide to foreign-language pupils.

The allocation of the full amount of language support enables foreign-language pupils entering the second stage of primary school to receive a number of hours of Czech as a second language corresponding to level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Within this paradigm, it is imperative to accentuate the persistent shortcoming within the Czech education system, which is characterised by an inadequate level of

¹¹ Česká školní inspekce. (2025). *Vnější faktory ovlivňující kvalitu vzdělávání na základních školách* [External Factors Affecting the Quality of Education at Primary Schools]. https://www.csicr.cz/CSICR/media/Elektronicke-publikace/2025/TZ_vnejsi_faktory_ovlivnujici_kvalitu_vzdelavani_ZS/html5/index.html

¹² Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on Pre-school, Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and Other Education

preparedness among teaching professionals in relation to instructing Czech as a non-native language. This institutional unpreparedness is a significant factor influencing the time foreign-language pupils need to effectively learn the Czech language. Consequently, the scope of allocated teaching may not correspond in practice to the levels that pupils are actually capable of achieving. It is imperative to undertake a systematic linguistic analysis of the assignments allocated to pupils, even after the completion of the stipulated number of hours. This process necessitates a meticulous adjustment of the technical explanation and alternative forms of pedagogical communication.

Unified Entrance Examination from the Perspective of Foreign-Language Pupils

The unified entrance examination (henceforth referred to as the Exam) comprises two components: a written examination in Czech language and literature (ČJL) and a written examination in mathematics and its applications (MA). The tasks included in each grade level are based on the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education¹³. A comparison of the Exam's content with the key competencies defined for these subjects reveals overall consistency. However, an analysis of the vocabulary demands of the selected curriculum indicates a discrepancy between these demands and the content of Czech as a second language instruction. This finding prompted us to conduct a survey on the support available in the teaching of the tested subjects.

As is often the case in the field of education, it is evident that foreign-language pupils are expected to demonstrate a level of linguistic proficiency approximating that of native speakers when undertaking these examinations.

Czech Language and Literature Tests

The examination in Czech language and literature is designed primarily to assess pupils' receptive competence, specifically their ability to process and interpret a source text by means of comprehension-checking items. Morphosyntactic phenomena and other linguistic features are evaluated in direct association with the source materials. An overview of the texts used in the exercises of the Czech language and literature (CzLL) Examination for four-year secondary school programmes (4ySSP) in 2022–2023 is presented in Table 1.

¹³ Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy. (n.d.). *Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání (RVP ZV)*.
<https://edu.gov.cz/rvp-ramcove-vzdelavaci-programy/ramcovy-vzdelavaci-program-pro-zakladni-vzdelavani-rvp-zv/>

Table 1:¹⁴

Overview of introductory texts of the CzLL, 4ySSP, 2022–2023

Exam Session/ Year	Author/Source	Title of the text	Genre
1/2023	J. Seifert	<i>Rozhledna na Petříně (Jablko z klína)</i>	poetry
	B. Chambers	<i>A Psalm for the Wild-Built</i>	fiction, space opera
	A. Patchett	<i>Dodger</i>	fiction, novel
	Časopis 100+1, Dotyk	<i>text about Scotland</i>	article
	iDnes.cz, epochaplus.cz	<i>text o vynálezu vysavače</i>	article
2/2023	J. Seifert	<i>Chlapec a hvězdy</i>	poezie
	iDnes.cz, zoom.iprima.cz	<i>a text about Predjama Castle</i>	newspaper article
	S. Mayer	<i>The Host</i>	fiction, sci-fi román
	M. Atwood	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	fiction, dystopian novel
	Časopis 100+1, iDnes.cz	<i>a text about the invention of the refrigerator</i>	popular-science article
1/2022	J. Neruda	<i>Balada česká</i>	poetry, romance
	a group of authors	<i>Jak to bylo doopravdy (a text about the statues on Easter Island)</i>	article
	M. Puzo	<i>The Godfather</i>	fiction, novel
	P. Boulle	<i>Planet of the Apes</i>	fiction, science-fiction novel
	iDnes.cz, reflex.cz	<i>a text about the Spanish tradition "Devil's Jump"</i>	newspaper article
2/2022	J. W. Goethe	<i>The Treasure Seeker</i>	poetry
	a group of authors	<i>Planeta tajemných světů (a text about Mont-Saint-Michel Bay)</i>	encyclopedia entry
	D. Brown	<i>Origin</i>	fiction, mystery–thriller novel
	J. Jonasson	<i>The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared</i>	fiction, comic novel
	iDnes.cz, spanelskyptacek.cz	<i>a text about the Spanish festival Sanfermines</i>	newspaper article

Source: CERMAT (n.d.). Čtyřleté obory – Český jazyk a literatura: Testová zadání v PDF.

The textual stimuli used in the examination display considerable variation with respect to thematic orientation, genre, stylistic register, and historical provenance. This diversity of texts significantly complicates the understanding of vocabulary and language forms used, which consequently prevents full

¹⁴ The titles are provided in their English translations, whereas the titles of Czech works remain untranslated. For texts authored by a collective, we consistently present the Czech title, followed by the topic of the text in English in parentheses.

comprehension of the source text for several subsequent tasks assessing content, stylistic, and cultural understanding.

An important role in the tests is played by the occurrence of significantly archaic, literary, or atypical lexemes and stylistically literary devices subject to changes in inflectional Czech, which usually prevent foreign pupils from identifying their basic form and therefore understanding their meaning. All of these texts include also examples of lyric and epic discourse; one of the test forms analysed also incorporated a dramatic excerpt. In all instances, pupils were additionally required to undertake a poem analysis. Possible support through a translation dictionary and additional time is in such cases a measure that lacks its primary purpose.

Several test forms included items targeting the recognition and comparison of semantic or stylistic equivalence between idiomatic expressions – tasks that constitute highly specialised linguistic operations typically associated with C2-level proficiency. Idioms, as conventionalised multi-word units, exhibit non-compositional meaning, and successful idiom comprehension is closely linked to implicit sociocultural knowledge and to prolonged exposure to the linguistic environment in which an individual acquires the language.

The analysis of the text types listed in Table 1 – each of which contains linguistically marked or otherwise opaque features described in the introduction to this chapter—demonstrates that successful performance on the written examination in Czech language and literature for four-year secondary programmes effectively presupposes native-speaker-like proficiency in Czech on the part of foreign-language pupils, approximating the C1–C2 levels of the CEFR. Attaining such proficiency is not realistically achievable for these pupils, even under conditions of comprehensive language support at the primary-school level. Consequently, the unified entrance examination imposes disproportionate linguistic and cognitive demands on foreign-language pupils, substantially reducing their likelihood of success in the admission process and heightening the risk of premature disengagement from education.

Mathematics Tests

The examined mathematics tests showed a high degree of repetition of instructions, almost identical across individual years and test sessions. In terms of inflection, in 2024 there was a change in case usage and minor adjustments in the wording of instructions by replacing the academic form of verbs with a more communicative form (Table 2). The instructions are presented only in their original form.

Table 2:
Instructions, Mathematics tests, 4ySSP, 2022–2023

Instrukce		termín	1.	2.	1.	2.	1.	2.
		rok	2024	2024	2023	2023	2022	2022
1	V úlohách 1, 2, 4.1, 4.2, 6, 7, 8 a 16 přepište do záznamového archu pouze výsledky.	missing 16	missing 16					
1 a	V úlohách 1, 2, 3.1, 3.2 4.1, 4.2, 6, 7, 8 a 16 přepište do záznamového archu pouze výsledky.							
2	Doporučení: Úlohy 3, 4.3 a 5 řešte přímo v záznamovém archu.							
2 a	Doporučení: Úlohy 3.3, 4.3 a 5 řešte přímo v záznamovém archu.							
3	V záznamovém archu uved'te v obou částech úlohy celý postup řešení.							
3 a	Do záznamového archu uveďte u obou podúloh celý postup řešení.							
3 b	V záznamovém archu uved'te v úloze 3.3 celý postup řešení.							
4	V záznamovém archu uved'te čísla doplněná do rámečků.							
5	V záznamovém archu uved'te pouze v úloze 4.3 celý postup řešení.							
5 a	V záznamovém archu uveďte pouze v podúloze 4.3 celý postup řešení.							
5 b	Do záznamového archu uveďte u podúlohy 4.3 celý postup řešení.							
6	V záznamovém archu uved'te v obou částech úlohy celý postup řešení (zkoušku nezapisujte).							
6 a	Do záznamového archu uveďte u obou podúloh celý postup řešení. Zkoušku nezapisujte.							
7	Doporučení pro úlohy 9 a 10: Rýsujte přímo do záznamového archu.							
8	V záznamovém archu obtáhněte celou konstrukci propisovací tužkou (čáry i písmena).							
9	V záznamovém archu obtáhněte celou konstrukci propisovací tužkou (čáry i písmena).							
10	Velikosti úhlů nemějte , ale vypočtete .	vypočítejte	vypočítejte					
11	Zkontrolujte , zda jste do záznamového archu uvedl/a všechny odpovědi.							

Source: CERMAT (n.d.). Čtyřleté obory – Matematika: Testová zadání v PDF.

Within the scope of the research, we examined not only the instructions but also the linguistic complexity of the individual task prompts and the verb forms employed in these prompts. The linguistically most demanding tasks were specific word problems that incorporated the most complex linguistic features, including longer sentence structures, specialized vocabulary, complex syntax, and inflection.

The key components of preparing foreign pupils for mathematics tests within direct instruction – whether in Czech as a second language courses or in subject-specific instruction – appear to comprise:

- systematic development of mathematics-related vocabulary,
- practice with verbs in the imperative mood,
- the teaching of text comprehension strategies,
- and the gradual incorporation of authentic materials (tests from the unified entrance examination).

The above points are only a simplified list of basic strategies that may contribute in pedagogical practice to the improvement not only of language but also subject-specific competencies and knowledge in mathematics and its applications as well as other educational areas. As is most likely evident from the list, preparation for the unified entrance examination in mathematics is not solely the responsibility of mathematics teachers but is closely connected to the need for interdisciplinary collaboration across various educational areas, at a minimum in geometry, Czech language and literature, Czech as a second language, composition, and literary education.

Findings and Recommendations

The results showed that the language requirements of the unified entrance examination tests do not correspond to the scope of language support available to foreign-language pupils in primary schools. The findings indicate that pupils who receive the standard statutory support are unable to attain the language proficiency level required for successful completion of the entrance examinations.

The high variability of texts across different years makes it impossible to prepare a unified set of vocabulary and other linguistic features for which pupils can be systematically prepared. Therefore, from our perspective, text adaptation appears to be the only viable measure to ensure equal opportunities. We consider level B1, as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), to be an appropriate target level for such adaptation. We propose text adaptation primarily in the following areas:

- shortening texts (i.e., removing segments not directly related to the comprehension tasks),

- dividing texts into shorter sections,
- replacing problematic vocabulary in task instructions with expressions from everyday communicative language,
- reformulating instructions into simpler syntactic structures.

Preparation for standardised tests does not constitute a short-term endeavour; rather, it entails a continuous process unfolding across several school years. Throughout this period, pupils engage in systematically targeted practice of vocabulary, grammatical structures, and text-comprehension strategies, progressing from simplified teacher-prepared materials used in direct instruction to the original unified entrance examination tests.

Consequently, the role of subject teachers shifts from that of transmitters of disciplinary content to mediators of the language through which such content is conveyed. In the absence of methodological guidance, accessible training opportunities, and ongoing professional development focused on language proficiency levels and evidence-based didactic principles applicable to the instruction of foreign-language pupils in heterogeneous classrooms, this shift is exceedingly difficult for teachers to navigate. The development of linguistic competences across all subjects—particularly in those assessed within the unified entrance examination—is essential not only for reducing linguistic barriers in instruction but also for mitigating the risk of early school leaving among foreign-language pupils.

Conclusion

Foreign-language pupils in the Czech educational system face significant linguistic and organisational barriers that limit their opportunities to fully develop their educational aspirations. This article focused particularly on the unified entrance examination, identifying it as a major obstacle to equal access to education in four-year secondary school programmes and, subsequently, to further studies at higher vocational or tertiary institutions.

The analysis of the educational system and the linguistic examination of written tests in mathematics and Czech language and literature demonstrated that the language support provided in primary schools often does not correspond to the level required in secondary school entrance procedures. The tests' linguistic demands – corresponding to levels B2–C2 of the CEFR – exceed the attainable language proficiency of foreign-language pupils even when maximum support is provided.

Teacher preparedness – especially in the areas of working with foreign-language pupils and implementing comprehensive language support – was also identified as insufficient.

The research showed that effective interventions include:

- setting realistic language goals,
- adapting test tasks,
- systematic teacher training,
- supporting interdisciplinary collaboration both within and beyond the school environment.

Preparation for entrance examinations is a long-term process that permeates the entire educational trajectory and therefore cannot be reduced to the final years of compulsory schooling. The procedures proposed in the results section can facilitate access to secondary and higher education not only for foreign-language pupils but also for pupils with special educational needs or pupils from the majority population who experience difficulties with text comprehension and interpretation¹⁵. Text adaptation is therefore an effective tool for supporting equal educational opportunities for all learners, without distinction.

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