



# Mapping of Interactional Competencies in the German Pair Speaking Test of B1 Level Students

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**Abstract.** This research is intended to map the communicative competence of students as an effort to project their level of readiness to face the German language international exam on interactive oral communication skills (interactional competence) on the level B1 pair dialogue test. Due to the institution that has the official authority to carry out international standard German communicative competency exams conducts assessments based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the types of tests and scoring rubrics in this study were adopted from the CEFR. The test instrument used is a type of paired dialogue test level B1. The test is to evaluate students' ability in discussing and planning activities around the themes of everyday life. The research data corpus included 14 conversations in pair dialogues, which were carried out by seven pairs of PSSJ students and seven pairs of PSPBJ students at Universitas Negeri Surabaya. Data collection and analysis was carried out using descriptive qualitative methods. Based on the analysis of this study, a map of student communicative competence was produced as follows: Interactional competence 4 pairs of test takers were able to complete tasks with moderate results. They have quite good knowledge and understanding of linguistic aspects, including the domains of syntax, morphology, and phonology. However, it is still weak in the interactional competencies in topic management and task management. The remaining three pairs were not competent enough to perform discussions in level B1 German.

**Keywords:** communicative competence, interactional competence, topic management, task management.

## 1 Introduction

Globalization currently provides opportunities for people of productive age to seize career opportunities abroad. This phenomenon affects the types of qualifications required. If someone wants to be accepted to work in a foreign country, he is not only required to master the academic and work fields, language competence is also an important requirement [1]. This situation is also beneficial for graduates of foreign language study programs, especially German in Indonesia; because their ability to speak foreign languages opens wider opportunities for careers abroad.

This opportunity was seized swiftly by the Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA) as a higher education institution. UNESA, as mandated in its strategic plan, is determined to produce graduates who are able to compete in the national and international job market. To support this plan, *Program Studi Sastra Jerman* (PSSJ) or German Literature Study Program and *Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Jerman* (PSPBJ) or German Language Education Study Program at UNESA as study programs aimed at producing competent graduates, strive to meet graduate qualifications with international standard competencies. Moreover, Germany is currently experiencing a productive age workforce crisis and is opening massive opportunities for foreign workers to work in Germany[2].

In Germany, the ability to speak German is an important requirement for foreigners who wish to settle, apprentice, or work in Germany[1]. German language competence that meets the requirements to settle down and get a green card (work permit in Germany for foreigners) is at least B1 level, which is the competence at the independent level for communicating (communicative competence). For studying or working in certain fields, the level and type of German language competence required could be higher.

In order for PSSJ and PSPBJ graduates to gain career opportunities in Germany, these two Study Programs have started preparing their students since the first semester to meet international B1 level German competency qualifications. German language skills courses must be taken at least four semesters[3]. The purpose of learning skills is to equip students to be able to communicate, therefore learning and assessment are carried out with a communicative approach. As stated in the writings of foreign language learning experts edited by Burwitz-Melzer et. al.[4], communicative competence in learning a foreign language is most appropriate if it is carried out using a communicative approach. What is no less important than learning activities, according to Burwitz-Melzer, is assessment with standardized tests that can measure and project learner competence.

German language learning at PSSJ and PSPBJ has been carried out with a communicative approach. However, the assessment has so far only been carried out within the scope of the Study Program. In order to investigate the German language competence of PSSJ and PSPBJ students on par with international standard demands, starting in 2023 preparations are being made to send students to take an international standard B1 level German communicative competency exam to an external institution recognized by the German state. The institution that has the authority to carry out international standard German communicative competency exams in Indonesia is the Goethe-Institut. In the B1 level German competency exam, four skills are tested: listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

This research is intended to map the communicative competence of students in order to project the level of readiness of students to face German language international exams. The study focused on mapping the spoken German communicative competence at B1 level of students in tests in the form of paired dialogues (interactive competence).

Based on the collection of outcome assessments and process assessments that were completed by researchers during four semesters of learning activities, the study's focus was chosen. In each assessment session, the results of the paired dialogue test are always at the bottom. In fact, this type of test is highly recommended by linguists who are communicative because it can measure learners' free spoken communicative competence (interactive competence)[4].

Based on the description above, this study aims to map interactional competencies in German speaking skills for B1 level students at PSJJ and PSPBJ, Universitas Negeri Surabaya. The results of the research are expected to be able to project the success rate of students who will take international B1 level exams, especially on interactional competence in paired oral tests. Interactional competence at level B1 is based on symmetrical oral dialogue (carried out between students) in the context of everyday life. Apparently, most of the students do not have this interactional content, so they are not able to communicate interactively like native German speakers. This situation requires special attention; therefore, this research was conducted on interactional reservoirs for students learning German as a foreign language in preparation for speaking ability tests at level B1, especially the type of paired dialogue test.

### **1.1 Communicative Approach in Foreign Language Learning**

The communicative approach has developed for more than three decades, but until now it is still considered feasible to be applied in foreign language learning[4]. The development of a communicative approach is influenced by sociolinguistics and pragmatics. Sociolinguistics and pragmatics view language as related to its function as a medium for social interaction. Chaer and Agustina[5], Löffler[6] view language as a social communication tool. It is not only as having a personal function, but also interpersonal. Communication events, thus, are complex activities because the meaning of speech is influenced by verbal, nonverbal, and situational components[7][8].

This view influences language learning activities, determining material, and assessment. The characteristic of the communicative approach is the provision of wider space for interactive competence, not between teachers and students as in other approaches, but between learners. Foreign language learners are given a wide opportunity to carry out communication simulations as appropriate in authentic communication.

According to Richard & Renandya[9] to be able to communicate interactively, it is not enough if students only have knowledge and understanding of grammar and vocabulary, but also management and communication strategies that are appropriate to the context and prevalence of native speakers in communicating. These competencies are called interactional competencies. Azies and Alwasilah[10] mentioned five aspects of communication that are used when communicating, namely meaningfulness, convention, conformity, interaction and communication structure. These aspects must also be considered in learning a foreign language and its assessment.

## 1.2 Assessment of Interactional Competency in Learning German as a Foreign Language

Assessment is an important component in learning activities because it can provide an overview of the achievement of results and the learning process as well as projecting the ability of learners in the future. According to Susanto and Bulton [11][12], the assessment is divided into two: results assessment and process assessment. Outcome assessment is an activity to measure the achievement of learning based on predetermined learning objectives. Outcome assessments are developed in accordance with the objectives and learning materials. The results of the assessment data are seen from the results of the learner's tests. Process assessment measures the achievement of the learning process and serves to measure the achievement of the learning process and diagnose its weaknesses. The results can be used as a basis for improving learning. Based on these two assessments, future learner competencies can also be projected.

In the assessment of learning German as a foreign language with a communicative approach, the appropriate assessment is a performance assessment. In performance assessment activities, types and test items must be used that can measure free communicative competence. Based on Azies and Alwasilah's communication aspects above and adjusted to the German CEFR assessment criteria[13], the assessment of communicative competence in this study is grouped into four criteria: (1) topic management (delivery of task substance related to the speaker's role, vocabulary spectrum, realization of intention to speak), (2) task management (participation in conversation, use of discourse strategies, fluency in speaking), (3) mastery of syntax and morphology, (4) pronunciation and intonation. These criteria were adopted from the CEFR provisions on German spoken communicative competence as a foreign language level B1 for interactive tests in pair dialogues.

## 1.3 Related Works

Relevant studies have been carried out by Karuna and Karsam. Karuna[13] conducted research to map the German language competence at B1 level of Pattimura State University students in 2020. The research was intended to ascertain the level of achievement of 4 skills - listening, reading, writing, and speaking - German students. Based on the results of the research, it can be seen that (1) no students have reached level B1, (2) in mapping each skill the results are obtained in the following order: reading skills get the lowest score. In these skills, no student achieves a passing grade. The next lowest order is listening skills: 16% achieve a passing grade, followed by writing: 26%, and speaking; 68%. Karsam's research] in 2022 aims to examine (1) the rules and criteria for evaluating the speaking module's language proficiency test based on the CEFR standard; and (2) application of the standard assessment criteria for speaking proficiency tests through exercises and exam simulations. So, this research is a theoretical study.

Karuna and Karsam's research is similar to this research because it focuses on assessing German speaking skills as a foreign language using CEFR criteria. However,

this research is different from previous studies. Karsam only conducted theoretical studies. Karuna mapped competency levels in four skills, namely listening, reading, writing, and speaking, while this study focused on mapping interactional competence in German speaking skills at B1 level of students at Universitas Negeri Surabaya.

## 2 Method

This research was conducted with qualitative methods. The research instruments included (1) test items developed based on on Azies and Alwasilah's communication aspects and the CEFR framework, (2) grading rubrics, (3) video recordings of paired oral dialogue tests. The population of the study was 28 PSSJ students and 29 PSPBJ students, with the condition: students have taken at least 4 semesters of German language skills courses. The research data corpus was obtained from a randomly selected research sample, namely 14 conversations in pair dialogues, conducted by seven pairs of PSSJ students and seven pairs of PSPBJ students at Universitas Negeri Surabaya.

The research data was taken from the dialogues of the test takers, which had been recorded and stored on video. The test used is a speaking test in pairs. The task that must be completed by test takers is to plan joint activities on the theme of everyday life.

The collected data was analyzed using the communication aspects of Azies and Alwasilah. Scoring is measured based on an CEFR-analytic scoring rubric with detailed descriptive boundaries in order to provide a measure of the ability levels of the test takers, as shown in table 1 below:

**Table 1.** Grading Rubric

No.	Competence Criteria	Description	Scale
1.	Topic Management	Delivery of the substance of the task related to the role of the speaker	3 = completely appropriate
		Spectrum of vocabulary	2 = mostly appropriate
		Attainment of the intention to speak	1 = mostly inappropriate 0 = completely inappropriate
2.	Task Management	participating in conversations	3 = completely appropriate
		using discourse strategies	2 = mostly appropriate
		speaking fluency	1 = mostly inappropriate 0 = completely inappropriate
3.	Mastery of Syntax and Morphology	Syntax	3 = no mistakes or little unobtrusive mistake
		Morphology	2 = little obtrusive mistake 1 = significantly obtrusive mistakes

			0 = mistakes resulting to failure in communication
4.	Pronunciation and Intonation	Pronunciation	3 = does not interfere with understanding 2 = could interfere with understanding 1 = significantly interfere understanding 0 = could not be understood
		Intonation	

Each criterion has a scale with a range of scores between 0 (for the lowest score) to 3 (for the highest score).

### 3 Results and Discussion Map of German Language Interactional Competence for Level B1 Students

This section describes the mapping of German language interactional competence at B1 level for PSSJ and PSPBJ students. Based on the Azies and Alwasilah communication aspects above and adapted to the CEFR German language assessment criteria, interactional competence tests and assessments are determined from linguistic knowledge, paralinguistics, and interactions in communication. So, the analysis of meaning is determined by the purpose, function, and context of speech. These components are grouped into four criteria, namely (1) topic management (delivering the substance of the task related to the role of the speaker, spectrum of vocabulary, realizing the intention to speak), (2) task management (participating in conversations, using discourse strategies, speaking fluency), (3) mastery of syntax and morphology, (4) pronunciation and intonation. The results of the mapping research are as follows:

#### 3.1 Topic Management

Topic management is an important component of interactional communicative competence. The competencies analyzed include three things, namely (1) the success of conveying the substance of the task related to the role of the speaker, (2) the spectrum of vocabulary, (3) the ability to realize the intention to speak. In the realm of topic management, a score is obtained for the answer "What topic was discussed?". Communicative competence that corresponds to level B1 is communication about themes in everyday life. In this study, 8 themes were developed (1) visiting a friend who was being treated in the hospital, (2) going to the cinema to watch a German film, (3) attending a friend's wedding, (4) having a class farewell party, (5) taking a vacation, (6) designing a presentation with the topic "My Homeland", (7) activities around the city in one day, (8) designing a sports program.

Even though there are 8 themes, each question is bound by considering the role of the participants (speaker and listener), goals and communication channels. Based on

these questions, the test takers were given the task of conducting discussions between friends who already know each other. The purpose of the discussion is to plan an activity together, and the discussion is carried out face-to-face. Thus, this task requires appropriate utterances for informal communication between friends in everyday communication situations.

The results of the analysis showed that the ability of the test takers in the realm of topic management ranged from moderate, sufficient, and lacking. Of the 7 pairs of test takers, 4 of them succeeded in conveying the substance of the assignment well enough so that the discussion continued. However, 1 pair experienced obstacles in the discussion because one person could convey the task well, but the other person did not master the task and did not respond well. The group had difficulty conveying the topic because it was difficult to express intent well. In addition, their vocabulary is also small. This can be seen from the repetition of the same words from the beginning to the end of the discussion.

The other two pairs were not even able to discuss. They are the group that gets the theme of designing a presentation with the topic “My Homeland”. The success of conveying the substance of the task related to the role of the speaker, the spectrum of vocabulary, and the ability to realize the intention to speak was absent because not a single sentence was uttered. Apparently, they are weak in discussing and do not have enough vocabulary about the theme.

### **3.2 Task Management**

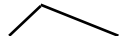



The tests in this study focused on the task of conducting discussions in pairs. The test takers are students who have taken four semesters of German language skills courses. So, this discussion is a symmetrical dialogue between friends who know each other. As described in section 3.1. the topic of discussion is making an activity plan with discussion partners on daily themes. To find out the competency of the test takers in this section, the assessment is aimed at the test takers’ task management abilities, including (1) participating in conversations, (2) using discourse strategies, (3) and speaking fluency.

The results of the analysis on task management show similarities with topic management. If grouped, test takers have abilities between moderate, sufficient and less. Four pairs of test takers participated in the conversation though not quite fluently. This can be seen from the long pauses every time they intend to convey something. Most of their statements are preceded by a lengthy “eee” exclamation, indicating that they are thinking. Conveying intentions, for example expressing ideas or asking the other person’s wishes, also cannot be conveyed properly because they do not have enough communicative expressions that are in accordance with the intentions to be conveyed. The other three pairs even showed low ability in interactive communication. Apart from taking too long pauses, they are also not able to convey their intentions properly.

### **3.3 Syntax and Morphology**

Knowledge and understanding of linguistic rules in the realm of syntax and morphology are also an important part of the success of interactive communication. Understanding of syntax and morphology in interactional competence can be shown by being creative in conveying ideas, ideas, thoughts, or feelings with grammatical patterns according to grammatical rules. In addition, it also appears in the variety of sentences used. In this study, apart from two pairs of participants who were unable to discuss at all, the other 5 pairs were able to compose sentences which some of them could still understand, even though quite a few sentences were used repeatedly.

**Table 2.** Speech error

Correct pronunciation:	Wrong pronunciation:
<p><b>vielleicht</b></p> 	<p>vielleicht</p> 
<p><b>gehe</b></p> 	<p>gehe</p> 

### 3.4 Pronunciation and Intonation

Pronunciation and intonation are the fourth competencies that need to be analyzed to determine the interactional abilities of the test takers. Oral communication can be understood by hearing the sounds spoken by the speaker. In this section, the phonemes spoken by the speaker are analyzed. Phonemes are the smallest sound units in a language that function to distinguish meaning involving segmental and suprasegmental sounds as well as changes in phoneme sounds at the orality level [15]. Context, gestures, and expressions can also be taken into account in drawing conclusions about the intent or message to be conveyed by the speaker.

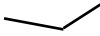
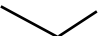
In German, the pronunciation of words is marked with a difference in stress/accent. The emphasis on speech is at the level of words, phrases, and sentences. In general, the pronunciation of the test takers was in accordance with the standard rules of the German language or the usual pronunciation in communication in everyday life, although a small number of test takers still made small and moderate mistakes. Pronunciation errors occur in the placement of stress (at the level of words, phrases and sentences), duration (short the length of vowels), and the sounding of consonants which function as endings in verb conjugations.

At the word level, the stress on the original German word should generally be placed on the first syllable. An example of an emphasis error made by the test takers occurred in the word 'vielleicht' [may], 'gehe' [went]. The stress that should be placed on the first syllable, namely 'viel-' or 'geh-', is emphasized on the next syllable, '-leicht' for the word 'vielleicht', and -e/-he for the word 'gehe'. The speech error can be described as follows:





At the phrase level, errors occur in prepositional phrases, such as ‘nach Berlin’ [to Berlin]. In German speech, the preposition is unstressed, but the name of the city is. In the pronunciation of the word ‘Berlin’ the stressed is the second syllable ‘-lin’, so if the pronunciation can be described as follows:

**Table 3.** Speech error

<b>Correct pronunciation:</b>	<b>Wrong pronunciation:</b>
nach Berlin 	nach Berlin 

Errors in stress at the phrase level also occur in noun phrases, for example ‘das Krankenhaus’ [the hospital]. In German speech, articles are unstressed when used with nouns. So, the highest stress on the phrase ‘das Krankenhaus’ is on the first syllable of the noun, namely ‘Krank-’. If you describe the pronunciation of the noun looks like this:

**Table 4.** Speech error

<b>Correct pronunciation:</b>	<b>Wrong pronunciation:</b>
das Krankenhaus 	das Krankenhaus 

When examined, errors that place unnecessary stress on phonemes are classified as minor errors or are called local errors because they do not interfere with the interlocutor's understanding. And out of 28 only 6 people made the mistake.

In the case of intonation pronunciation, some test takers still made mistakes, which caused confusion for the other person. If observed, these errors are accompanied by errors in sentence construction, not errors in intonation. Verbs in interrogative sentences without question words should be placed at the beginning of the sentence and followed by a rising intonation at the end of the sentence. For example, a participant seems to want to ask a question because the intonation rises at the end of the sentence, but the question word is not placed at the beginning of the sentence as it should. The explanation of this error is already described in the syntax section. Based on the analysis it can be concluded that the competency of the test takers on this component is good. Among the four components studied, this component gets the highest score.

## 4 Conclusion

Based on the analysis of this study, a map of student communicative competence was produced as follows: Interactional competence 4 pairs of test takers were able to complete tasks with moderate results. They have quite good knowledge and understanding of linguistic aspects, including the domains of syntax, morphology, and phonology. However, it is still weak in the interactional competencies in topic management and task management. The remaining three pairs were not competent enough to hold discussions in B1 level German.

### Authors' Contributions

Wisma Kurniawati conceived, planned the experiments, and took the lead in writing the manuscript. Ajeng Kartika and Audrey Titaley carried out the test simulation. Dwi Imroatu Julaikah and Thi Thu An Vu contributed to the interpretation of the results. Michaela Ajita Maharani, Shabrina Nurfitriya, Maria Fitri Christian and Putri Aulia Raharjo contributed to sample preparation. All authors provided critical feedback and helped shape the research, analysis and manuscript.

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