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A Country in Focus

Research in foreign language education in Hungary (2006–2012)

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In the past quarter century, Hungary has offered fertile ground for innovative developments in foreign language (FL) education. The appropriate, albeit disparaging, label applied to Hungary in the mid-1970s – 'a land of foreign language illiterates' (Köllő 1978: 6) – no longer applies. In the wake of the dramatic changes of 1989, the number of FL speakers rose quite rapidly. As a beneficial side-effect, applied linguistic and language education research, areas which used to be relegated to the lowest rung of the academic ladder, began to be recognised as legitimate fields of scientific inquiry, offering young researchers the opportunity to embark on an academic career. As a result, Hungarian authors are now regular contributors to distinguished journals, and researchers from Hungary are welcome speakers at international conferences.

However, Hungarian authors often choose to publish their research studies in local journals and volumes which are not easily accessible to the international research community, especially if written in Hungarian. The aim of this review, therefore, is to give an overview of such studies to demonstrate the breadth and depth of recent research conducted in Hungary.

1. Background

It is a truism to state that every country is multilingual: the concept of monolingual nationhood is a myth. However, it is equally true that countries differ in the degree of their multilingualism: certain countries are less multilingual than others. Hungary, for example, where nearly 98% of the population speaks Hungarian as a first language (L1) (*Statistical Yearbook of Hungary 2009*: 2010), is certainly less multilingual than most of its neighbours. Moreover, Hungarian belongs to the Finno-Ugric family of languages, whereas all the surrounding countries use a language of Indo-European origin as their first language. Thus, Hungarians cannot communicate with their neighbours unless they learn to speak FLs.

In view of this, it is small wonder that, except during communist rule, knowledge of FLs has always been held in high esteem in Hungary. During those four decades, Russian was the

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mandatory first FL in all types of school from grade 4 up to grade 12, but in the National Census of 1990 (*Statistical Yearbook of Hungary 1994*: 1995) only 1.5% of the population claimed to speak it.

The political landslide of 1989 hugely increased language learning motivation, and Hungary's accession to the European Union (EU) in 2004 speeded up this process. While in 1980 only 9% of the population claimed to speak at least one FL, that proportion rose to 11% by 1996 and to 19% by 2001. The two latest Eurobarometer surveys (2006, 2012) indicate continuing growth in the number of FL speakers: in 2006, 29% of Hungarians said they were able to hold a conversation in at least one FL, but by 2012 this proportion had increased to 35%.

However, in a European context the picture is far less reassuring. According to the rank order set up by Eurobarometer (2012) to survey the FL competence of EU citizens, Hungary occupied the last place among the member states. While the European average is 54%, Hungary lags behind with 35%. As regards the distribution of FLs, the European averages for English and German are 38% and 11% respectively, as opposed to the Hungarian figures, which are 20% and 18% respectively. Although German is still doing quite well, it is losing ground to English. Even more worrying is the small percentage of French speakers (a mere 3%), compared to the EU average of 12%.

Although Hungary still has a long way to go to catch up with the rest of Europe, at a national level the past quarter century has witnessed dynamic progress in FL education (Laki 2006). Established in 1990, the Hungarian affiliate of IATEFL provides a forum for teachers of English to come out of their classrooms to present and publish their ideas. Since its launch in 1995, the quarterly *Modern Nyelvoktatás* (Modern Language Teaching) has focused on research in language education and applied linguistics. In addition, two English-language annual volumes, *University of Pécs round table: Empirical studies in English applied linguistics (UPRT)* (since 2006) and *Working Papers in Language Pedagogy (WoPaLP)* (since 2007), both available online, welcome papers both from established researchers and doctoral students. In recent decades, dozens of volumes wholly or partly dedicated to studies in language pedagogy and applied linguistics have been published. In academic circles, efforts have been made to increase the prestige awarded to research. As a result, the first Ph.D. programme in language pedagogy was set up at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) Budapest in 1996, soon followed by similar programmes at other universities. As this review testifies, although most of the dissertations submitted and defended relied heavily on data collected in Hungary, they deal with mainstream research issues, often with an international dimension.

After the turn of the millennium, with Hungary's accession to the EU fast approaching, the urgency of improving FL competence was recognised across the political spectrum. Upon the advice of FL specialists, forward-looking decisions were taken to promote FL education, and both legal and financial conditions were created for their implementation. FLs were allocated a much larger share in the national school curriculum and, at the same time, the school-leaving examination system was overhauled to comply with the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001). Concurrently, numerous innovative programmes and projects, some of them short-lived, others more durable, were launched to give a boost to FL teaching and learning at virtually every level of education.

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In sum, Hungary has done a lot of work to narrow the gap in FL competence between our own citizens and those of other EU member states. Considering the impressive progress achieved in the past quarter century, Medgyes (2011) may be right in giving his recent book the title *The Golden Age of foreign language education in Hungary: 1989–2009*.

2. Corpus: Selection criteria

The aim of this review is to help international readers gain an insight into Hungarian research conducted in the field of FL education and applied linguistics. However, the scope of the review is restricted by the following criteria:

- The text was published, or accepted as a Ph.D. dissertation, between 2006 and 2012. Only passing references are made to sources published prior to 2006.
- It was published in Hungary, either in Hungarian or in English. Texts widely available in peer-reviewed international journals and books published abroad are therefore not referred to.
- It is concerned with issues rooted in the Hungarian educational context; studies drawing on data collected abroad are not reviewed.
- While all the texts have direct relevance to some aspect of the theory and/or practice of FL education, the primary focus is empirical research.

The corpus comprises published books, research reports, chapters in edited volumes, papers in refereed journals and doctoral dissertations. In addition to the above mentioned publications, our sources include *Magyar Pedagógia* (Hungarian Pedagogy), *Új Pedagógiai Szemle* (New Educational Review), *Iskolakultúra* (School Culture) and *Pedagógusképzés* (Teacher Education), journals which in fact cover a wider range of educational issues than those relating to FL education and research. Conference proceedings, abstracts of conference presentations, M.A. theses and texts in which the peer-review process is unclear are generally excluded from the survey.

3. Focal points

To make the review reader-friendly and accessible, the studies are structured around seven main thematic clusters or focal points, though we are aware that the classification protocol is somewhat arbitrary and many texts could have been placed under more than one heading.

3.1 Focus on language policy and curricular innovations

Until it was about to join the EU, Hungary did not have a clear and comprehensive FL policy, a lack which was partly to blame for its handicap in terms of FL competence (Nikolov 2007;

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Petneki 2007; Medgyes 2011). Decision-makers therefore had to face up to this problem and take rapid steps to improve matters. The result was the World-Language Programme, which included several projects aimed at reinforcing FL teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools, at the same time creating equal opportunities for socially disadvantaged students (Balázs 2007; Fischer & Öveges 2008). There was certainly an attempt to give fair treatment to all the FLs being taught in Hungary, but English, through its overwhelming dominance, took pride of place in FL education policy and research.

Unfortunately, the only element of the World-Language Programme to survive (Medgyes 2012) is its flagship programme, the Year of Intensive Language Learning (YILL). Introduced in 2004, YILL made it possible for 9th-graders to study one or preferably two FLs of their choice for at least 40% of the total curriculum time, thus rendering FL development an extremely rapid and vigorous process. Note, however, that students who participate in YILL graduate from secondary school a year later than their peers in regular classes.

The number of schools joining the YILL programme has increased steadily since its inception and, due to its popularity and uniquely innovative nature, has become a favourite area of research (Horváth-Magyar 2011a). Regular reports were commissioned by the Ministry of Education to give feedback on the efficacy of the programme and monitor the learning taking place in the schools that had volunteered to sign up for YILL (more on this in Section 3.7).

In addition, several studies analysed YILL from the viewpoints of the various stakeholders. For example, Hódi, Nikolov & Pathó (2011) analysed data from a representative sample of 64 schools. Four students per school were requested to fill in an open-ended questionnaire at the time of their graduation. The data presented a mixed picture: while half of the respondents claimed that YILL had put them on the 'fast lane', implying that it had facilitated swift progress in FL competence, the other half felt they had been left stranded by the side of the road: the extra knowledge gained in YILL did not compensate for the waste caused by the one-year extension of studies.

In a parallel survey, Dombi, Turányi & Nikolov (2011) sought teachers' opinions in 59 schools; two teachers per school were administered a questionnaire. Two disconcerting conclusions were drawn. Firstly, most respondents asserted that it was not in their mandate to raise and maintain motivation, claiming that students ought to come to English lessons already motivated. Secondly, the majority argued for streaming and gate-keeping strategies to filter out less competent students, many of whom came from socially disadvantaged families. While acknowledging that, on the whole, YILL 'was a very pleasant experience' (p. 47), the study ends with the enigmatic remark: 'YILL is a mixed blessing' (p. 61), indicating that the programme does not always achieve its noble goals.

Fehérvári (2008) focused on the measure of positive discrimination adopted by the schools running YILL classes. The data obtained from 200 school principals and nearly 2,000 students showed a rather grim picture: in the overwhelming majority of schools students from elite backgrounds stood a much better chance of enrolling in YILL classes than their disadvantaged peers. YILL may occasionally be accused of following discriminatory practices, but the Arany János Programme for Developing Talents of Socially Disadvantaged Students helps 8th-graders catch up with their academically stronger peers and thereafter do well in their secondary school studies. In discussing the FL component of the programme, Szilágyiné

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Inántsy (2010) concluded that the handicap of socio-culturally disadvantaged students was particularly severe in FL education.

The first thematic cluster is thus concerned with research on recent innovative developments in FL education. It is generally agreed that the World-Language Programme, and especially its most distinguishing feature, YILL, has provided opportunities for students to accelerate their study of FLs. YILL is reported to have been successful on the whole, but more in-depth research is required in order to identify its weaknesses and recommend ways to improve it. A special feature that deserves more attention is how YILL may enhance the chances of socio-economically disadvantaged students. At a more general level, we believe that researchers should be more proactive in offering ideas for politicians to consider before language policy decisions are taken.

3.2 Focus on the learner

In recent years, individual differences have been widely researched in primary, secondary and higher education (less so in private language schools). Studies have inquired into students' language learning motivation, their goals and beliefs, anxiety and willingness to communicate, and age-related issues as well as various learning difficulties (learner aptitude and creativity are discussed in section 3.6.)

3.2.1 Motivation and attitudes

In a three-year study investigating motivation and other variables (Péter-Szarka 2010), 277 learners of English and German in upper-primary classes filled in questionnaires on why and how well they learnt FLs. The data showed a decline in the students' level of motivation, self-perception and achievements in both languages over the years, as well as a significant correlation between the level of proficiency and motivation.

Secondary school students were the focus of a study by Galántai & Csizér (2009). The authors mapped the role of teachers and parents in forming students' motivational self-system (Dörnyei 2009). Involving 12 teachers and 197 students, the inquiry revealed that teachers had hardly any success in boosting students' motivation. This finding is in line with other studies: teachers do not perceive nurturing learners' motivation as part of their job (see Section 3.3.2). Heitzmann's (2008a, 2008b) longitudinal study documents the dynamic changes in her 16 secondary school students' English learning motivation: how their self-perceptions changed and how the teacher's instructional strategies impacted classroom climate, learner development and the evolution of achievement goals and mastery motives (Kagan 1972). The most unusual feature of the study is its dual emic perspective of the teacher and her students.

In a cross-sectional study, Illés & Csizér (2010) examined the attitudes of 50 secondary school students towards English as an international language. They found that learners' awareness of the role of English in international communication did not result in increased openness towards varieties of English, and participants did not seek contact opportunities with

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speakers of English. The relationship between motivation and self-regulation was explored in adults and secondary school learners by Mezei. A case study (2008) focused on a pre-intermediate and an upper-intermediate adult student, while a more comprehensive inquiry (2012), involving five teachers and their 101 students, explored how teachers motivated their students to learn English. This mixed-methods study found that motivational strategies and self-regulation were interrelated in complex ways.

A number of questionnaire studies examined adults' language learning motivation at language schools and universities. Csizér & Kormos (2007) asked 230 students at various higher education institutions about their language learning goals and behaviour, self-perceptions as language learners, and attitudes to speakers of English. Being highly motivated to become competent users of English, the participants invested a lot of energy in language learning. Kormos & Csizér (2009) studied 193 learners of English at language schools and workplaces. Applying structural equation modelling to examine the relationships between the participants' attitudes, learning orientations and motivated behaviour, they revealed that adults were willing to make more effort if their self-perception as language learners and their perception of English as an international language were positive. Csizér (2012) found that 79 English majors' self-regulated learning was impacted by their anxiety and beliefs about their self-efficacy; these factors determined how much effort they were willing to invest in learning English. In another study that involved 100 English majors, Török & Csizér (2007) revealed that participants were willing to make efforts to improve their English language competence and achieve native-like proficiency despite their negative attitudes towards native speakers.

In an interview study, 20 English majors were found to be highly motivated to improve their language proficiency, but their knowledge about the target cultures was limited to stereotypes (Menyhárt & Kormos 2006). The relationship between the motivation, learner autonomy and self-regulation strategies of 638 secondary school learners, university students and adults was investigated by Csizér & Kormos (2012). Their inquiry displayed a mismatch between a higher level of motivation to learn English and lower levels of autonomy and use of self-regulation strategies.

The interaction between language learning motivation and out-of-class intercultural contact was examined by Szaszkó (2007, 2011) in a mixed-methods study that involved adults studying English at private language schools, which revealed that various forms of intercultural contact had a more substantial effect on the development of proficiency than on motivation to learn English. Contact with English and American cultural products (such as through media or films) proved to have the greatest impact on the participants' motivation, while the use of English at work was the least influential type of intercultural contact. Integrative motivation to learn English was manifested by their perception of the quality of life in the USA and Britain.

Motivation was explored in study-abroad contexts in two case studies by Szentpáli Ujlaki (2007, 2008). In the first, the author conducted structured interviews to map the goals and expectations of four Hungarian Erasmus students before and after their study-abroad experiences. Students aimed to improve their language and academic knowledge, learn about new cultures and enhance their value on the job market. Apart from the last aim, on which students had no feedback, all were achieved by the end of the study-abroad experience. In her second inquiry, Szentpáli Ujlaki examined her own ambivalent experiences and the dynamic

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shifts in her motivation in diary entries she had written while studying in China for four months.

Motivation, together with other individual differences, has been widely researched. Although some studies applied mixed methods and covered a longer period of time, cross-sectional questionnaire studies are dominant and the overwhelming majority of participants were studying English.

3.2.2 Goals and beliefs

The relationships between students' language-learning goals, beliefs and strategies and their English language proficiency were examined by Bacsa (2008). Involving all (219) seventh-graders in a small rural town, the study found that students with mastery and achievement goals performed significantly better than their peers whose strategies focused on avoidance.

Learners' beliefs were examined in two studies conducted by Rieger (2008, 2009). Examining 61 secondary school students, she found significant differences between beliefs, gender and English versus German. Learners of German found oral communication easier than written communication, whereas more learners of English believed that their target language was easy (2008). In a follow-up study (2009), using the same questionnaire, comparing the beliefs of 54 English and 55 German university majors, the results of the first inquiry were confirmed.

Édes (2008) explored three English majors' beliefs about their autonomous language learning behaviours, focusing on the interaction between them. The answers provided insights into why the students were passive in seminars and what activities they found useful, though difficult. Doró (2011) analysed first-year English majors' goals, perceived language proficiency and readiness for their university studies. While most students had vague instrumental and intrinsic motives before their university studies, only one third of them said their experiences matched their expectations: their level of language proficiency was seen to have declined during the first year.

3.2.3 Anxiety and willingness to communicate

Anxiety was researched in Tóth's (2006; 2007a; 2007b; 2008a; 2008b) series of projects. After validating a foreign language anxiety scale for Hungarian learners of English (2008a), 16 students were chosen from a larger sample to take an oral test and asked how anxiety had impacted their performances (Tóth 2006). In a comparative study on pre-intermediate and advanced learners of English, Tóth (2008b) found that English majors were more anxious than their less proficient peers, and anxiety in the first group was often induced by classroom factors and stringent requirements. As for predictors of English majors' FL anxiety, L2 self-concept and competitiveness seemed to exert the strongest influence (2007b).

Piniel (2006) examined 61 9th-graders' anxiety about learning FLs at a secondary grammar school. She found that individual students' level of classroom anxiety varied in the two FLs they were studying, but the differences were induced not by the target languages but their

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teachers. Teachers' anxiety was examined by Tóth, Heitzmann & Sheorey (2007): based on the results of a questionnaire, the majority of the 95 teachers of English felt comfortable in their classroom and were not apprehensive about using the target language.

In a mixed-methods project, Nagy (2008) examined English majors' willingness to communicate, anxiety, self-confidence and motivation. She found perceived language skills and anxiety to be prominent in determining both students' willingness to communicate and their actual L2 behaviour. A qualitative inquiry revealed the intricacies of how self-confidence and fluency had made participants more willing to speak and why they had often failed to speak in classroom contexts due to peer pressure (Nagy & Nikolov 2007).

3.2.4 The age factor

Mandatory FL education in Hungary starts in grade 4, but due to parental pressure, schools offer a variety of early start programmes in grades 1–3. In order to establish a baseline, the Ministry of Education and Culture commissioned a survey in the first three years of primary school (Morvai, Ottó & Öveges 2009). It turned out that one third of the institutions ran a programme prior to grade 4; the percentage of pupils learning a FL ranged from 64% in grade 1 to 86% in grade 3, and the typical class size was 11–15 pupils. Most schools followed traditional FL curricula (two thirds in English, one third in German, in one or two classes per week), while one child in ten benefited from bilingual instruction in four or five classes per week (see 3.7.1). As for teachers' qualifications, a mere 34% had been appropriately trained. The teachers claimed that the challenges they faced ranged from inappropriate teaching conditions to a lack of teaching materials and the low aptitude of learners.

A comprehensive assessment framework on the development and diagnostic testing of young language learners was designed by Nikolov (2011). The document surveyed the situation regarding the teaching and learning of English, analysed empirical studies on learners' achievements and other factors, and defined realistic achievement targets for grades 1–6, which comprised empirically validated 'can-do statements' for the four skills and age-appropriate task types. This document served as a basis for designing and piloting diagnostic tests so that teachers could pinpoint their pupils' strengths and weaknesses and scaffold their development (see 3.6).

3.2.5 Learners with special needs

Recent attention paid to learning difficulties in educational research has resulted in a range of publications, including discussions on language rights (Kontráné Hegybíró 2009). We highlight here two special needs groups: (1) dyslexic and (2) deaf and hearing impaired language learners and their teachers.

A representative sample of 324 FL teachers was surveyed by Kontráné Hegybíró & Kormos (2007) to examine their knowledge of and experiences with dyslexic learners. The results showed that although many had been teaching students with learning difficulties, none had been trained to enable them to tailor their teaching to their learners' special needs. The

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participants' attitudes were favourable towards dyslexic students and the majority disagreed with their exemption from FL classes. Five focus group interviews were analysed by Kontráné Hegybíró & Kormos (2008) to explore how teachers implemented the ideas they had learned in a training programme on how to help dyslexic learners. The respondents' answers detailed how individual learners' needs were taken into consideration and how boredom was avoided in revision tasks by applying multi-sensory approaches.

Sarkadi (2007) interviewed ten dyslexic FL learners and their accounts showed a controversial picture. Undiagnosed dyslexics often experienced humiliation and flunked language courses, while others who were exempted from being graded found the lack of challenge demotivating. Although their needs were usually met, the lack of training prevented their teachers from appropriately scaffolding their development. In a study examining the learning styles and strategies of 77 English and German learners, Napravszky, Tánczos & Mónos (2009) compared three groups of dyslexic language learners in grades 6, 7 and 8 with their non-dyslexic peers. All the students were characterised as auditory or visual learners, and no significant differences were found between the groups. As for the differences between dyslexic learners of German and English, students in the first group preferred metacognitive and cognitive strategies, whereas those in the second group found social strategies especially useful.

The language learning motivation and experiences of 131 deaf and 200 hearing impaired learners were analysed in a questionnaire survey (Csizér, Kontráné Hegybíró & Sáfár 2008; Kontráné Hegybíró, Csizér & Sáfár 2009). Their level of motivation was found to be similar to that of other learners and they were aware of the benefits FLs could offer them in their work and everyday life. The most important motivational factors were the milieu and method of learning. About half the deaf participants and one out of five hearing impaired respondents had never studied a FL, either because their school had not offered one or they had been exempted. While participants with language learning experiences were more motivated than those with no such background, all respondents were optimistic about their ability to master a FL.

All studies overviewed in this section examined learners' individual differences in a range of educational contexts, but learners from deprived socio-economic backgrounds attending state schools were not studied. Few longitudinal inquiries were carried out, and it is unclear how learners themselves and their teachers could benefit from the research findings. It would be useful, for example, to know how strategies and tasks can help students and teachers enhance and maintain language learning motivation and willingness to communicate in the classroom and beyond.

3.3 Focus on the teacher

3.3.1 Teacher education and professional development

As a precursor to regime change in 1989, Russian had been officially stripped of its privileged status as the compulsory first FL in state education in Hungary, which led to an acute shortage of teachers of other languages. To alleviate the shortfall, especially of teachers of English but also of German, a fast-track, practice-oriented pre-service language teacher

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training programme was established in most universities and colleges across the country. The prototype of this form of training was the Centre for English Teacher Training (CETT) at Eötvös Loránd University Budapest, which acquired international fame for many of its innovative features, some of which were reported in research studies (Medgyes & Malderez 1996; Medgyes 2011).

Arguably, the most beneficial aspect of the programme was the collaborative spirit it created among the participants. Drawing on data from a longitudinal study that involved 75 CETT respondents, Kimmel (2007a) explored how the naive views of trainees were gradually transformed into expert knowledge and practice through reflective thinking. She found that the development of professional competencies was greatly facilitated in a context that promoted collaboration between teachers, mentors and students. The most typical form of collaboration took shape in the school practicum spanning an entire academic year (later reduced to one semester for financial reasons). During this period, the trainees were expected to teach in pairs, thus taking joint responsibility for their learner group. As well as being helped by their peers, they received support from a school-based mentor teacher and a university-based tutor (Barócsi 2007a, 2007b; Enyedi & Révész 2009).

Fostering collaboration, however, began well before the third-year practicum. Examining a second-year methodology course, Dorner & Major (2009) investigated how collaboration might be promoted through an internet-based 'Moodle' course management system. Allocated to small groups, the 20 participants were assigned to carry out methodology-related tasks in the form of online interactional exchanges, stored in log-files. In addition to promoting collaborative work, such exchanges were found to be successful in encouraging shy students to come out of their shells and gain self-confidence.

The practice-oriented philosophy of teacher education espoused at CETT was in sharp contrast to the traditional training programme, which not only had a curriculum that was one or two years longer, but which also had a strong bias towards theory-building, through courses in literature and linguistics. The primary goal of this type of teacher training was to develop philologically erudite individuals, and its proponents claimed that the rest would take care of itself: novices would pick up the tricks of the trade through classroom experience. However, as shown by Holló (2009), the majority of the 130 students featuring in her study were highly critical of this type of pre-service training, their major complaint relating to the preponderance of theory at the expense of practice. A similar critique was voiced by five trainees interviewed during their short-term teaching practice as part of the traditional programme (Barócsi 2011).

As a cosignatory of the Bologna Declaration, Hungary radically overhauled its system of higher education in the first decade of the new millennium. In teacher education, too, this implied a two-tier model, which would allow B.A. graduates to continue to work for an M.A. teacher's degree (Major 2007; Bárdos 2009). Student interest in this new type of M.A. programme is quite intense, as demonstrated in Furcsa & Szilágyiné Hodossy's (2010) questionnaire survey of lower primary school teacher trainees: almost half of the 472 respondents planned to continue their studies. In a study integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to data analysis, Lehmann, Lugossy & Nikolov (2011) collected feedback from 44 teachers on a new M.A. in TEFL programme. According to the data obtained from two questionnaires over a period of four semesters, the participants found the

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majority of the courses both motivating and relevant, though they criticised some courses for failing to set clearer evaluation criteria and provide a better synergy between theory and practice.

In the area of language teacher education, three further studies are worth mentioning. Szabó (2008) analysed the way teachers plan their teaching. Drawing upon questionnaire data collected from 84 school teachers of English, she established that planning embraces a wide range of thought processes as well as practical activities. She summarises by saying that this complex step in the teacher's work deserves far more attention than is customary in pre-service training.

Révész's doctoral dissertation (2011) was an investigation of mentor teachers' capability to convey professional norms, values and attitudes to their trainee students. On the basis of online questionnaire data obtained from 245 mentor teachers representing a wide range of school subjects, including FLs, she arrived at dispiriting conclusions, noting the lack of standardisation in the selection, training and job description of mentors, poor remuneration, heavy workload, sporadic job-related communication and loose contacts with the training institutions. No less worrying was the observation that mentors were seldom consulted before policy changes were introduced.

In relation to doctoral studies in applied linguistics and language pedagogy, Soproni (2007a), herself a practising teacher and a doctoral student, investigated the effect of a taught Ph.D. course with a strong research bias towards classroom work. While the eight respondents in her study acknowledged some degree of personal and professional development, they expressed doubts whether the theoretical knowledge they had obtained during their doctoral studies would have made them better teachers.

3.3.2 Teacher beliefs, identities and motivation

The recent surge of interest in what makes a successful teacher is also reflected among Hungarian researchers. Soproni's (2007b) questionnaire-cum-interview study with 34 teachers was centred on the factors that may be instrumental in developing professional competence. Since we are familiar with the belief system of teachers in Hungary, it comes as no surprise that the respondents put the ability to transmit subject knowledge at the top and the ability to cooperate with colleagues near the bottom of the scale (see 3.3.1). In a case study with a lower primary teacher, Lugossy (2009) examined the interplay between teacher beliefs and practices. Her findings indicate that beliefs are not directly abstracted from theory but instead constructed in the context of dialogues, which in turn have the potential to bring about positive changes in the teacher's classroom behaviour.

Harking back to a popular research topic, that of the differences in professional attitude between the native and the nonnative teacher, Juhász's study (2011) involved 18 native English-speaking teachers working in Hungary. The purpose of the questionnaire inquiry, complemented with follow-up interviews, was to find out what native teachers perceived as their professional advantages and disadvantages compared to their nonnative peers. In consonance with the findings of earlier research, Juhász's claim was that, despite the obvious attitudinal discrepancies, 'the principal reasons for professional success or failure in teaching

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EFL', to quote an interviewee's enigmatic statement, 'lie elsewhere' (p. 96), probably implying that there is much more to it than the teacher's linguistic provenance. Bereczky (2009) investigated the identity of teachers specialising in teaching business English. Drawing on data received from two interviewees, a business English teacher and a teacher trainer, the author pointed out that many nonnative teachers feel inferior to native colleagues, and business English teachers with a TEFL degree often have low professional self-esteem due to their defective knowledge of the business world (we return to specialist FL use in section 3.7.2).

Teacher motivation, a largely uncharted area of research, was explored in Menyhárt's (2008) study, based on in-depth interviews with seven university lecturers. Her purpose was to find out (a) whether teachers preferred to 'lecture' in their seminar classes or engage in a dialogue with their students, and (b) what urged them to choose one or the other mode of teaching. The results revealed a mixed picture: the three respondents who were in the habit of delivering monologues regarded themselves as academics whose principal job was to do research and publish, as opposed to their four colleagues who saw teaching as their primary concern. While Menyhárt's perspective was that of the university lecturer, Bosnyák & Gáncs (2012) chose to investigate teacher trainees' motivational disposition. At the end of their first year, the four interviewees revealed a rather negative attitude towards their training programmes, regarding them as preoccupied with theory at the expense of practice (see also 3.3.1). Hardi (2011) examined pre-service lower-primary teachers' motivation in a questionnaire study. While the 38 participants' instrumental, integrative and mastery motivation to learn and teach English was found to be strong, their self-confidence was at a significantly lower level.

In this part of our review, the focus has shifted from the learner to the teacher. Traditionally, neither researchers nor teacher trainers paid much attention to the value of collaboration among fellow-teachers, or to the need for trainees to learn how to cope with the eventualities of classroom life. In the past twenty years, however, both the philosophy and practice of teacher education have changed dramatically, offering plenty of opportunity for scientific inquiry. Arguably the most exciting area of research is the study of synergy, or the lack thereof, between teachers' beliefs and practices. Both student motivation and teacher motivation have been examined fairly extensively, but the interplay between them is an area still waiting to be explored.

3.4 Focus on the classroom

3.4.1 Language teaching methodologies and practices

For most of the twentieth century, applied linguists and FL teaching experts around the world might be said to have been in quest of a method that would solve all their problems, but for the past twenty years they have been engaged in empirical research. In Hungary, too, the focus has switched to investigating who the learners are, what their needs are, and how they can most effectively be helped to achieve their specific goals (Holló 2006; Kontra 2007).

In his comprehensive survey, Graddol (2006) found that there is a universal trend: FL learners are getting younger and English is rapidly becoming a component of basic education alongside the three Rs. In Hungary, too, the age at which children begin to learn English

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(and, to a much lesser extent, other FLs) has been falling. Compulsory FL education starts at grade 4, but an increasing number of schools choose to introduce English as early as grade 1, partly in an effort to attract children in a sustained period of demographic decline. As a result, teaching young learners has become a popular area of research (see 3.2.4).

In an exploratory study, Nikolov (2008) examined early-start programmes by observing 60 English lessons taught by 30 teachers, followed by interviews with the same teachers. Her conclusions are devastating: most of the participating teachers had severe language and methodological shortcomings, and in most places the programmes were being run in a disorganised fashion, which meant that pupils' opportunities to benefit from the programmes varied from one school to another. This being the case, the pupils would be better off, the author claimed, if they were not offered the chance to study English in lower primary schools.

As mentioned earlier, German is the second most popular FL in Hungary (Petneki 2006). Sebestyénné Kereszthidi (2010) observed 19 lessons taught by three teachers of German in bilingual lower primary classes. Although her criticism is not as harsh as that of Nikolov, her analysis gives little reason for optimism. In an attempt to identify why outdated teaching methods were still being used, Sebestyénné Kereszthidi (2011) conducted follow-up interviews with six of the teachers. Her data indicates that the interviewees were basically ignorant of the children's natural aptitude, so their classroom work was less than successful. The author echoed Nikolov's (2008) advice: that good practice is the result of continuous self-assessment of one's work.

Némethné Hock (2007) collected data on English teachers' language use. After observing and evaluating a total of 152 English lessons in five secondary and three primary schools, she administered a questionnaire to 84 teachers. Based on the data, she created a typology of the most frequent instances of teachers' language use, to serve as a model of English language use for teaching purposes.

3.4.2 Group dynamics

Another area of emerging interest, generated partly by communicative language teaching, is group dynamics and its role in the FL classroom. As teachers obviously play a central role in group-building, their contribution to this process has come under scrutiny. A volume was devoted to this topic (Csizér, Holló & Károly 2011), most of whose chapters are centred on different aspects of the relationship between group dynamics and motivation. In one of them, Vukics (2011) investigated the way intra-group relations influenced language learning motivation. In a quantitative survey of 64 students in a secondary school, he found a strong correlation between group dynamics and motivation. However, cooperation within the group was less valued. Another chapter is concerned with the relationship between the goals of FL teaching and group dynamics. Analysing interview data gained from eight teachers of English, Mezei (2011) found that the synchronisation of the teacher's and the learners' goals can best be achieved through negotiation between the partners. Involvement in this process, she pointed out, contributes to group cohesion and thereby to successful language learning.

In a case study, Prescott (2006) observed a university skills development class over five weeks, followed by formal and informal interviews with the participants. The researcher's aim was

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to explore the benefits of positive group dynamics for the learning process. His data seems to prove that even in a group working under unfavourable conditions, as was characteristic of the class under study, a dedicated teacher may be able to trigger the 'electrical charge' necessary for successful learning. Having carried out interviews with ten teacher educators, Pohl & Szesztay (2010) investigated 'the elusive phenomenon of group energy' (p. 23), which is said to help classwork run smoothly. With reference to metaphors borrowed from the interviews, the authors found that the four key ingredients resulting in the unfolding of positive group energy are intensity, humour, empathy and challenge.

3.4.3 Intercultural awareness and competence

In harmony with international trends, the study of intercultural awareness and competence has also gained momentum in Hungary. In her book, Holló (2008) emphasised that communicative competence implies far more than the ability to correctly use language forms. It should be an essential part of the teacher's job, she contended, to sensitise the learner to the 'cultural baggage' that native speakers of the target language carry. In her doctoral dissertation, Lázár (2006) explored the perceived role and current status of teaching intercultural communication skills and attitudes. Her data indicate that culture does not feature prominently in the English language classroom, mainly because the methodology of developing intercultural communicative competence is a neglected element in most Hungarian teacher training programmes.

It may be assumed that only interculturally competent teachers can be expected to develop favourable attitudes in their students. Lakatosné Török & Dorner (2007) reported on eTwinning, an online programme whose purpose was to foster intercultural communication among European school children. Through an investigation of ten schools, the authors recommended collaboration in intercultural communication not only between students, but also between teachers and students, as well as between FL teachers and teachers of other school subjects (more on collaboration in 3.3.1).

Csizér & Kormos (2006) conducted interviews with 40 upper primary school students, half of whom were studying English, the others German. The authors found that students with more opportunity to maintain direct and indirect intercultural contacts made more strenuous efforts to learn the FL, were more self-confident using it and enjoyed a heightened sense of achievement in communication than their less fortunate peers. Sárvári's (2006) longitudinal study was carried out in an English-medium secondary school. Its principal aim was to investigate the relationship between intercultural competence and language learning processes. The data gained from 21 students confirmed that students who were highly competent speakers of English were able to integrate into the multicultural group more easily than their less proficient classmates.

With the involvement of three instructors and 16 students, Menyhei (2011b) analysed a lecture-cum-seminar course in intercultural communication designed for English majors. Whereas the students on the whole were satisfied, the instructors spoke less favourably of the course. As one respondent put it, intercultural communication 'as a field of study in its own right is "not serious", and is "unacademic"' (p. 52). Dombi (2011) used retrospective written narratives to map third-year English majors' intercultural experiences and find elements of

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commonality and divergence. Their ideas having been triggered by the narratives of international students studying at the same university, the 45 Hungarian participants described their successful, unsuccessful or surprising incidents in encounters with foreign cultures.

Szentpáli Ujlaki (2011) investigated the acculturation experience of 19 international students attending a residential intensive language course for Erasmus students upon their arrival at a regional university in Hungary. The aim of the course, as well as that of the study, was to provide an insight into the types of challenges – social, psychological and adjustment – the students would have to tackle. In an attempt to describe experience in participatory pedagogy, Horváth-Magyar (2011b) invited six non-native-English-speaking Erasmus students to meet two groups of Hungarian secondary school pupils. The Erasmus students gave presentations about their home country and their first-hand experiences in the host country. Even though the presentations proved to be less than engaging, they succeeded in arousing the students' interest in foreign cultures and making them aware of study-abroad opportunities.

Furka (2011) carried out 16 semi-structured interviews with foreigners who worked with Hungarians and Hungarians who worked with foreigners on a regular basis. The purpose of the study was to describe the cultural profile of Hungarians. The author concluded that Hungarian learners would need to be sensitised to the fundamental differences between cultures as they manifest themselves in verbal and non-verbal behaviour. In a comprehensive study, Bajzát (2011) compared the FL needs of engineers and their employers in large companies operating in Hungary. Her results show that, regardless of nationality, interaction between the two parties is primarily conducted in English. This being the case, the author concluded, engineers would need a high level of intercultural competence, a requirement that university language training usually fails to provide. Interest in intercultural communication has also emerged in the area of business management (Falkné Bánó 2008) (see also 3.7.2).

3.4.4 New technologies and corpus-based studies

The last two decades have also witnessed a rapid advance of information and communication technology (ICT) in Hungary. Csoma (2007) examined how teacher and learner roles had changed as a result. The most original finding of her questionnaire survey was that while the participating teachers of English claimed to use ICT fairly extensively at home, few did so in the classroom. This neglect was due to a lack of professional training in ICT applications as much as to an absence of, or difficult access to, digital facilities in the school. In addition to infrastructural problems, Kiss (2008) suggested that the relatively slow spread of ICT use in schools is also ascribable to gender: as women, generally speaking, are more reluctant than men to use computers, the teaching profession, in which women are in a huge majority, is particularly badly affected.

Németh's (2012) doctoral dissertation was concerned with the specific roles teachers play in the design and implementation of e-learning language courses. The 29 participating teachers, often called facilitators in an e-learning context, agreed on the necessity of providing special training for online instructors. In another area of e-learning, Kimmel (2007b) presented the hitherto untapped potential of the e-portfolio, listing both the benefits and challenges it presents in language education.

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Computer-mediated chatting, a special form of computer-assisted language learning (CALL), was the topic of Eszenyi's project (2007). In a case study with her own group of secondary school students, she investigated how chatting could be incorporated into language classes, thereby influencing the students' FL development, motivation and use of learning strategies. Eszenyi found that so long as this popular form of interaction builds on the learners' creative potential and natural spheres of interest, it is likely to have a positive impact on the learning process.

In a highly technical study, Sankó (2006) compared the application of computer-based hypertext annotations with that of traditional paper-based texts. With the participation of 120 secondary school students at intermediate level of English, he examined differences in vocabulary acquisition and retention when new L2 lexical items were acquired incidentally versus intentionally. Sankó's findings seem to prove that (a) the enhancement of hypertextual input has a favourable impact on vocabulary learning, and (b) intentional vocabulary learning is more effective than its incidental counterpart.

Corpus linguistics is the topic of a project implemented at the University of Pécs. As reported by Horváth (2007), a corpus containing nearly half a million words written by over 300 students studying English had been compiled. The main purpose of the project was to describe characteristic features of the written products of learners of English. Since the bulk of the corpus is easily available on the internet (http://joeandco.blogspot.com), the reader may gain an insight into the issues that preoccupied students' thinking and the linguistic tools they were capable of using to express themselves. Horváth (2012) discussed research on L2 writing pedagogy: how blogs, e-books and academic writing tasks develop students' skills and self-confidence, what students and their tutors think about these issues, and how they deal with the challenges of thesis writing and avoid plagiarism.

Moving on from learners and teachers, the thematic cluster covered in this section has dealt with research on different aspects of classroom life. Although Hungarian children are beginning to learn FLs earlier than before, primary teachers have been found wanting in terms of both their methodological and language competences. A great deal of research has been done on the crucial role of group dynamics in the classroom. In line with international trends, Hungarian researchers have also been concerned with the interaction between intercultural competence and language skills. Finally, there is growing interest in exploring how ICT is used, or rather underused, in Hungarian classrooms. As ICT is profoundly transforming the profile of education all over the world, the number of studies on the influence of digital technology on the Hungarian FL classroom is likely to multiply in the years to come.

3.5 Focus on the text

3.5.1 Analysing oral discourse

Three types of speech events were analysed in studies on oral texts: (1) oral presentations and university lectures, (2) naturally occurring interactive speech samples and (3) ethnographic interviews.

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Oral presentations were examined in three projects. Bereczky (2007) compared how logical connections in conjunctions were marked in two English and two Hungarian conference presentations given by native speakers. She found both quantitative and qualitative differences: there were fewer conjunctions in the English than in the Hungarian presentations and they were used differently, especially in the opening and closing sections. Sazdovska performed speech act and genre analyses. In her first study (2007), she examined how four business students had developed in a semester-long presentation skills course in English and found that they could structure their talks better and apply organisational indicators more efficiently. In a larger-scale study (2009), she created an Intentionality Model and examined 53 student and expert business presentations from various perspectives. Her conclusion was that the adoption of a process-oriented approach, coupled with exposure to authentic materials, contributed to the pragmatic competence students needed for successful business presentations. Veljanovszki (2007) analysed the types, frequency and perceived importance of academic speech events in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses at the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of a Hungarian university. He found that the most frequently occurring academic events were note-taking, questions asked by students inside and outside class, students initiating and leading discussions, and group work.

Two studies inquired into natural discourses. Kalocsai (2011) examined the complexities of English as a lingua franca (ELF) used by 142 Erasmus exchange students engaged in social practices. Her ethnographic study analysed audio-taped interviews and observational data, field notes, Facebook posts and email messages. Having observed the students in a variety of communicative situations for a whole academic year, she concluded that while students had created their own version of ELF, they exploited their plurilingual repertoire and resorted to code-switching whenever they deemed it appropriate. Machata (2011) analysed her daughter's development over nine years when she used English with her at home. She identified various strategies, especially in code-switches between English and Hungarian, used for a range of pragmatic functions in the daily interactions between mother and child.

Ethnographic interviews were conducted by Fodor (2008) to explore how images of ethnocultural identity are built through language. She elicited 28 life narratives from ten second- and third-generation Hungarian-Americans and applied content and discourse analysis to map how their social ties, family stories and life experiences formed their identities over time. Emerging themes and concepts included homeland, geography and history, language choice and code-switching, canonical literature, stereotypes, traditions and community.

3.5.2 Analysing written discourse

One study in this group analysed teaching materials, while others examined authentic business emails, as well as short texts and theses written by English learners at intermediate and advanced level.

Lukácsi (2008) compared how question tags were categorised in books on linguistics, grammar books and language teaching materials. He analysed 104 examples from a popular course book series using quantitative and qualitative techniques, and found that although

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examples in the explanations were in line with current theories, a mismatch characterised most exercises, as they failed to offer practice in all forms and functions of question tags.

Zsubrinszky (2010) proposed a theory- and data-based model for the structural and linguistic description of business emails in English and tested it on 30 English L1, 30 English L2 and 30 Hungarian L1 business emails. She found culturally-determined differences between English and Hungarian business people's L1 and L2 discourses in their rhetorical structure as well as the linguistic characteristics of the texts. Furka (2008) conducted a rhetorical and cultural analysis of English CVs and motivational letters written by nine Hungarian students and triangulated questionnaire data on their experiences. Despite intensive training, most texts fell short of the required standards. Although students applied the basic format, the texts did not display the expected cultural and linguistic qualities. As for content, students found it hard to appraise their own positive qualities, as they saw this as self-glorification.

Kiszely's (2003, 2006) complex study compared the organisation of 30 secondary-school students' Hungarian and English argumentative essays by applying discourse and topical structure analyses. For triangulation, he used a standardised essay assessment procedure and explored students' L1 and L2 writing processes and literacy backgrounds. The main difference was that in their Hungarian texts, students employed more arguments to prove their points, while in English they discussed the arguments and counterarguments in a more balanced way. Secondary-school students' English texts were examined in Árva's (2007) mixed-methods study that combined document analysis, interviews and questionnaires. Inquiring why the students' writing skills fell short of expectations, she found that this was mainly because (a) teachers regarded speaking skills as the priority and thus gave little time to the development of writing skills, and (b) they had not been properly trained how to teach writing.

In a small-scale exploratory study Prescott (2007) examined first-year English majors' organisational competence in writing at the point of entry to university. He analysed 12 essays in terms of four criteria (overall superstructure, academic text type, paragraphing and conjunctive cohesion), and found only a quarter to be satisfactory. In a larger-scale inquiry, Tankó & Tamási (2008) investigated English majors' preferences for argumentative thesis statement types and the relationship between type selection and the prompt in an essay-writing task. They analysed 225 texts and found two thesis types (simple policy and causal theses) the most frequent; no relationship emerged between the prompt and the thesis types. A comparative study looked into the issue of authenticity in students' compositions. By comparing the written products of ten Hungarian and ten Croatian English majors, Zergollern-Miletić & Horváth (2009) revealed how the texts expressed individual voice, role play and personal narrative in words.

Academic writing was the focus of two studies. Horváth & Reif (2010) explored various forms of, and reasons for, plagiarism in academic writing in English, asking 36 first-year English majors at a university to fill in a questionnaire and, conducting long interviews with one student and two tutors. They found a mismatch between tutors' and their students' expectations and their understanding of good academic writing, authenticity and plagiarism. Walkó (2007) conducted a comparative study of novice and professional writing by analysing four B.Ed. theses written by English majors at a university and four research articles published in *TESOL Quarterly*. She combined textual and context-focused perspectives to highlight important characteristics of the two kinds of research reports, such as the use

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of foregrounding and backgrounding devices, as well as the interaction of 'consensus' and 'novelty'.

The studies described in this section analysed both oral and written texts, but none inquired into how languages are used in the classrooms of state schools. It would also be necessary to explore teachers' and learners' discourses to find out how different types of tasks work, how teachers scaffold students' language development and how learners interact with one another.

3.6 Focus on assessment

Various aspects of assessment, including external proficiency examinations and school-leaving exams, have for decades played a central role in FL education in Hungary. A range of studies focused on assessment issues; many applied a range of instruments for data collection to provide insight into how individual differences (aptitude and creativity) and thought processes contribute to proficiency in the four skills and vocabulary. Research projects range from case studies to large-scale inquiries; some studies analysed test types, others applied innovative techniques of data mining.

3.6.1 Aptitude and creativity

Hild (2007a, 2007b) explored the thought processes three adults applied while taking a validated aptitude test. She analysed data elicited through think-aloud protocols and revealed patterns reflecting individual differences in sub-components of their aptitude and test-taking strategies. Simon (2009a, 2009b) compared the Hungarian and English speech perception and comprehension processes of 200 upper primary students with tests of perception, lexical access and comprehension. She found moderate correlations between L1 and L2 results, but the relationships between the three factors were weaker in both languages. The decoding processes were most significantly impacted by the speed and efficiency of lexical access and the size and contents of the mental lexicon. With a sample of 41 university English majors, Albert (2006) explored the relationship between two aspects of creativity (creative fluency and flexibility), language aptitude and level of proficiency, and found a negative relationship between creativity and phonetic coding ability, one of the four components of the aptitude test. Correlations were positive in relation to inductive reasoning and advanced proficiency. She pointed out that creative students may be disadvantaged when memorisation and sound symbol associations are required.

3.6.2 Language skills

Most research on testing skills in our corpus focused on L2 literacy skills and only two studies inquired into listening. Verbal reports were used by Barta (2010, 2011) to examine two tests of listening comprehension. In the first inquiry she analysed the listening comprehension

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sub-skills and strategies used by her 14 participants while taking tests. The second study focused on how two test types – multiple choice questions and completing a table – worked with six intermediate-level students. Zöldi Kovács (2009) compared 15 university students' strategies while taking two listening comprehension tests: one on general English and another on medical English. She found that high achievers relied more on holistic strategies and their specific knowledge, while lower achievers applied more bottom-up strategies and general background knowledge. Feyér (2012) assembled a sample of 62 secondary school students to examine their comprehension of, and attitudes towards, different varieties of spoken English. Participants faced no challenges when listening to ELT materials using Received Pronunciation, but unfamiliar native and non-native accents presented difficulties. Students' attitudes were more favourable towards native speaker varieties and more negative towards accents.

Reading comprehension tests were analysed in various projects. A mixed-methods study by Csereszny és (2008) examined the relationship between various characteristics of multiple matching reading comprehension tasks and learners' performance on them. She used content analysis, think-aloud protocols and statistics to examine the relationship between the variables identified and item difficulty. Nine item characteristic variables were reported to exert particular effects on item difficulty. Loch (2006) scrutinised the effect of short-answer questions, multiple choice items and the language of rubrics (Hungarian and English) on reading comprehension performance. She gave four groups of 50 adults two reading tests with rubrics in the L1 or L2 and a questionnaire. L1 use elicited superior performance on multiple choice tests only; however, test-takers did not find that either task type or L1 or L2 use contributed to test difficulty. Hardi (2007) asked 30 college students to read two English texts and carry out two tests by spotting errors inserted into the text and then answering comprehension questions. The results showed that students failed to spot errors which did not impact meaning or which concerned grammar. Erdélyi (2007) and Cs. Czachesz & Erdélyi (2007) analysed 344 secondary students' reading comprehension in German and Hungarian and their strategy use at bilingual schools. They found a strong relationship between results on reading in the two languages as well as on German reading tests and extracurricular reading in German. As for the relationship between learners' uses of strategies and achievements, more proficient test-takers used strategies more appropriately, while their less proficient peers gained little benefit from applying them.

Bors (2008) analysed short compositions written by 231 8th-graders (age 14) with the help of text linguistics, corpus linguistics, and assessment criteria. She examined the complex relationships between criterion- and corpus-based, as well as holistic and analytic, assessment. She mapped developmental patterns and revealed a strong positive relationship between the number of correct language forms and accuracy scores, but a moderately negative relationship between scores and the number of errors. Think-aloud protocols were used to investigate the process of decision-making while rating English compositions in Bukta's study (2007a, 2007b), which involved pre- and in-service teachers exploring how they applied assessment criteria on students' texts. The study revealed that raters tended to concentrate more on the completion of content points than on other aspects of texts.

A nationally representative sample (over 20,000 participants) of 12- and 16-year-old learners of English and German was tested in a project by Nikolov & Józsa (2006) to explore

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the relationships between proficiency in the two languages and classroom-related variables. The study tapped into listening, reading and writing skills and found significantly better results in English than in German. The relationships between proficiency, years of study and frequency of weekly classes were weak, while the strongest correlations were found between proficiency and the students' socio-economic status.

3.6.3 Vocabulary

Dóczi (2006) explored the organisation of pre-intermediate EFL learners' mental lexicon through word associations by tapping their depth of word knowledge. She analysed 15 participants' L1 and L2 word associations for 21 prompt words and found more paradigmatic associations in English for nouns than for verbs and adjectives. In her dissertation, Dóczi (2012) revealed how students' deep word knowledge developed over 16 months, thus establishing a developmental hierarchy between the word knowledge categories.

Advanced learners' English vocabulary was assessed in two projects. Involving over 100 participants, Lehmann's study (2006, 2009) examined the size and depth of English majors' vocabulary. She developed new tests to measure the receptive–productive continuum of their lexical knowledge. In a follow-up study (2007) she developed and analysed a corpus of authentic required readings in the participants' curriculum and determined their discipline-specific lexical needs. Doró (2008, 2009, 2010) involved 341 English majors in different years of their study and compared their vocabulary knowledge in terms of a number of background variables. She examined the relationship between various types of lexical knowledge measured by different tests, the relationships between test scores, and the actual use of vocabulary in written production tasks.

In a longitudinal study, Hardi (2010) explored how a teenage student used various strategies while solving reading and speaking tasks. She found that inferring meaning was the most frequent and successful strategy for identifying the meaning of lexical items. Classroom assessment of all four skills was the focus of a qualitative study by Hild & Nikolov (2011). By looking into teachers' views on tests, they analysed what kinds of tests the teachers used and why they thought they were appropriate to test their pupils' progress in English. Despite the emphasis on oral skills, most tests tapped reading and writing.

3.6.4 Language examinations

In recent studies, the focus has fallen on two types of language examinations: those that form an integral part of state education (school-leaving examinations at the intermediate and advanced levels) and external proficiency examinations offered by accredited examination boards.

Three projects were implemented by the Hungarian Accreditation Centre for Foreign Language Examinations. A quality assurance survey explored how accredited language examinations functioned (Együd et al. 2008): why the success rate was much higher at certain examination centres than at others, and how various prescribed measures were implemented.

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The questionnaire proved to be unable to explain the differences, but useful baseline data were collected for further reference. Focusing on 374 examinees with special needs (visual and hearing impairment, dyslexia and dysgraphia), the second survey (Gottlieb, Huszti & Tóth 2012) revealed that candidates often lacked information about their rights, and the success rate of dyslexic and dysgraphic examinees was the lowest among special needs test-takers. In a small-scale project, Szabó & Kiszely (2010) compared nine accredited language examinations and the advanced level school-leaving examination in English and German. They collected data in live examinations from candidates taking one of the proficiency examinations and the school-leaving examinations. The findings on reading, writing, and grammar and usage components showed considerable differences.

Dávid (2009) applied two steps to relate a language proficiency examination to the CEFR (2001). He used many-faceted Rasch analysis in linking CEFR to local performance samples' levels in a proficiency examination accredited in Hungary. First, the CEFR scale itself was replicated on the basis of calibrating local raters' judgments of descriptors by anchoring them to reference values. Next, the actual performance samples were linked on the basis of rater judgments with appropriate fit values. In a related project Dávid (2012) examined the validity of the Hungarian translation of CEFR. He found a good degree of fit between the way Hungarian judges rated the descriptors in Hungarian, English and German and the official CEFR level categories; however, judges tended to be too lenient about the requirements at levels A1 to B2 and too strict about those at levels C1 to C2.

Fazekas (2009) conducted a meta-analysis on two partly overlapping datasets: all examinees' performances at (a) the two levels of the school-leaving examination and (b) all levels of accredited proficiency examinations. She found that test-takers' proficiency levels were higher than those documented in the school-leaving examinations. As students benefited more from taking external examinations, they chose the safer, lower-level compulsory examination.

Various aspects of test development, test characteristics and comparative test analyses were examined in studies on school-leaving examinations. A study by Illés (2011) analysed 'true/false/information not included in text' type reading comprehension tests from a pragmatic point of view. It concluded that this test, often used in the school-leaving examination, was unsuitable for assessing reading comprehension. In a three-year ethnographic inquiry into five examiners' perceptions of test and item analysis, Lukácsi (2011a) provided insights into how professional and corporate priorities interacted, and often clashed, in the development of an accredited examination.

Major (2006) and Major & Einhorn (2006) explored the process of test development in the English and German school-leaving examinations, while Einhorn (2007) discussed how students performed on the new examinations and what steps were necessary to make them more valid and reliable. Vígh (2008, 2010, 2012) analysed the difficulty levels and washback effect of the intermediate- and advanced-level school-leaving examinations in German. Using the Rasch model and examining the reading and listening comprehension and use of the German tests from 2005 and 2006, he found a mismatch between the estimated and empirically measured difficulty at both levels. Vámos (2007) compared the proficiency levels at which students in bilingual schools took the school-leaving examinations and the extent to which the examination allowed students to perform at an appropriately high level. Finally, Petneki (2010) analysed the test types used in the grammar and use component of

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the German school leaving examination. By comparing the booklets issued in different years, she found that the tests were valid at the intermediate level, but the level of difficulty varied at the advanced level, making the test unreliable.

Item Response Theory was applied in a range of language testing projects. Szabó (2006) analysed the impact of the number and difficulty range of anchor items on item difficulty calibrations in a six-year study. In another study, the difficulty levels of 85 listening comprehension tests were established in a large-scale test-development project (Nikolov & Szabó 2011). The study documented how diagnostic tests (Nikolov 2011) piloted with over 2,000 young English learners in grades 1 to 6 were calibrated with the help of anchor tests and Rasch analysis.

Two large-scale assessment projects were conducted on the Year of Intensive Language Learning (see 3.1). The first examined stakeholders' views on examinations in the YILL programme (Nikolov & Öveges 2006; Öveges 2007). A questionnaire was applied to find out how school principals, parents and students perceived external proficiency and school-leaving examinations. Although the first two cohorts expressed balanced views, students attributed more real-life value to the proficiency examinations. In a final evaluation of the YILL programme, Nikolov, Ottó & Öveges (2009a) compared 9,144 YILL students' scores in English and German on the intermediate- and advanced-level school-leaving examinations with those of the Hungarian school leavers' full cohort. After an extra year, YILL students performed slightly (3–13%) better than their peers at the intermediate level, but their scores were lower at the advanced level. A small-scale follow-up study (Menyhei 2011a), comprising two teachers and eight students in a vocational secondary school in Budapest, confirmed most of the findings of the summative report above.

The studies discussed in this section have analysed a variety of assessment projects; some applied more than one instrument for triangulation purposes to find out how non-linguistic variables contribute to proficiency. However, more research is needed on progress testing, on how students prepare for examinations and, most importantly, on speaking, since no project examined oral skills.

3.7 Focus on teaching language for specific purposes

3.7.1 Bilingual education

Bilingual education in Hungary has a history of more than a hundred years, as reported in a book by Vámos (2008a). After a long period of prohibition during communist dictatorship, in 1987 ten secondary grammar schools were given the opportunity to launch bilingual programmes in Russian, English, German and French. The number of such schools rapidly increased after the regime change of 1989, and today there are over 250 primary and secondary schools offering some form of content and language integrated learning (CLIL).

According to recent statistics, in two thirds of these schools the target language is English, leaving less than one third for German and only small capacity for other FLs. These 'less taught languages' include Russian, which had monopolised the FL landscape during the communist regime (Vámos 2008b). With Russian in eclipse, Chinese appeared on the horizon

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with the foundation of the first Hungarian–Chinese bilingual primary school in 2004. It was reported that in the first year of its existence four-fifths of the pupils were immigrant Chinese children (Vámos 2006), but today half the student population is of Hungarian origin, an indication of the importance of Chinese as perceived by Hungarian parents. On the basis of questionnaire data provided by 38 bilingual schools, Lukácsi (2011b) found that the majority took pride in their learners' achievements in terms of both their L2 proficiency and subject knowledge. Furthermore, they claimed that their learners went out of their way to communicate in the target language, and exhibited openness and tolerance towards L2 cultures. However, they admitted that it was difficult to find, let alone keep, highly competent teachers, and adequate teaching materials were in short supply.

Márkus (2008) examined the effectiveness of teaching German in German minority primary schools. A total of 171 pupils in nine schools were tested on several aspects of their language proficiency. The researcher's hypothesis was borne out by the data: pupils who participated in CLIL had much higher scores in vocabulary use and reading comprehension than their peers in regular language classes, and did slightly better at writing and grammar tasks. Gálné Mészáros (2007) also investigated CLIL in German. Questionnaire data obtained from nearly 700 students from six secondary schools indicated that introducing the students to the special vocabulary of the non-language school subject as part of their general language training in the 9th grade greatly facilitated the intensive study of that subject beginning in the 10th grade.

In a paper with a more theoretical angle, Bárdos (2012) explained how the content structure of language pedagogy may serve as a model for defining and assessing methodologies for teaching other subjects. Describing shared elements of different content-based pedagogies, he presented a set of criteria whereby their level of development can be systematically and continuously measured.

3.7.2 Specialist foreign language use

In a two-part article, Major (2009) presented a historical overview of the literature of specialist FL use in Hungary, including lists of the major journals, conferences, dictionaries and outstanding representatives of the area. A self-contained volume (Dobos 2010) was devoted to various aspects of specialist language use. While the first part of the book reflects the multidisciplinary nature of this area of research, the second presents the characteristic features of specialist language use in disciplines such as mathematics, economics, law, music and advertising.

Within the field of business education, Kóris, in a pilot study (2012), interviewed two business English teachers with extensive teaching experience in multinational companies. Complying with corporate requirements and satisfying the immediate needs of business English learners were perceived as crucial factors in a teacher's professionalism. The language of EU institutions was the focus of Koltai's (2012) study involving ten students and two tutors. She conducted interviews to explore students' motivation, beliefs, and immediate and future goals to study what is often called 'Euro English', and applied the findings to tailor the course syllabus to their needs.

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Szendrői's (2010) pilot study estimated the proportion of teacher versus student talk in the context of a college course run for 17 students of tourism. Based on five classroom observations taught by the same teacher, she found that the amount of teacher and student talk in the ESP classroom was about the same as in EFL settings generally. However, she expressed the view that the use of the mother tongue was excessive and often unjustified. On the basis of data obtained from over 1,100 questionnaires from 14 Hungarian universities, G. Havril (2008) found considerable differences between, on the one hand, the ESP instruction provided and the examination requirements set by the language departments and, on the other, the specialist language needs and competencies required in real life. The most salient way of resolving this contradiction, she concluded, lies in offering more lectures and seminars in English.

Concerning state education, a large-scale study involving a representative sample of 67 comprehensive and vocational secondary schools examined the teaching and learning of FLs for general and specific purposes. Self-assessment was one of the tools used (Nikolov & Öveges 2008), along with classroom observations (Dombi et al. 2009). The overall results show (Nikolov et al. 2009b) that although students were highly motivated to study languages for specific purposes, their teachers underestimated their abilities and found their motivation low. The authors argued that, in the stakeholders' view, a threshold level had to be achieved before students were able to focus on their specific interests.

Section 3 has focussed on various forms of teaching FLs for specific purposes. In the first half of the section studies on bilingual language education were presented. The data confirm that the language competence of students who learn via CLIL surpasses that of students in regular schools. The second part of the section was devoted to a survey of studies dealing with specialist language use, notably in business and tourism. An inspiring future avenue of research might be the investigation of CLIL instruction in schools where only one or two subjects are taught, fully or partially, in a FL.

4. Conclusion

Reviewing our survey, it becomes clear that while certain research areas have been highlighted, others have remained relatively unaddressed. In the former group we have found large-scale evaluation projects on FL teaching and learning in state education, research on young learners, learners in bilingual secondary schools and those with special needs. Attention has been concentrated on English university majors, while majors in other disciplines, private language schools and extracurricular opportunities for life-long learning do not appear to have been on the agenda. In line with international trends, several studies have examined student motivation, intercultural communicative competence and language assessment.

Just as English sidelined German and all but obliterated other FLs on the language teaching menu, so research on learners of English dominated the research scene. Except for German speakers, no research was conducted on ethnic minorities, in particular the Roma population. Far more work on teachers' and learners' daily practices would have been welcome, such as how techniques and tasks work in the classroom, how teachers give feedback and manage

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learners, or how learners interact and benefit from daily access to a *smorgasbord* of authentic materials. Further areas of neglect include less proficient and less motivated learners, the teacher's emic perspective, and comparative studies on L1 and L2s. No study analysed speaking, except for oral presentations. While the period under review witnessed significant systemic changes at the level of national language policy, those changes were not accompanied by baseline studies, nor were they reported in comprehensive evaluation projects. Most of the research remained within a narrow applied linguistic paradigm, adopting a descriptive rather than a critical approach.

In seeking an explanation for these shortcomings, one has to consider the professional background of Hungarian researchers, who are typically university lecturers and doctoral students with heavy teaching duties, unsatisfactory infrastructure and limited financial resources. It is little wonder, therefore, that feasibility is an issue. Many studies used a single type or source of data, usually collected with questionnaires, and few moved beyond fact-finding endeavours or suggested comprehensive solutions. An increasing number of researchers, however, combined research methods creatively, and allowed readers to see old issues in a new light. In sum, the 200 studies reviewed are representative of the uneven but complex tapestry of research into language pedagogy and applied linguistics in Hungary.

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[1] Given space limitations, the titles of articles written in Hungarian have not been translated into English. Readers interested in their English translations should contact the authors.

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