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Középiskolás diákok attitűdjei az élethosszig tartó nyelvtanulással kapcsolatban

High school students' attitudes toward lifelong language learning

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Budapest, 2017. 04. 18.

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Abstract

The paper examines the lifelong language learning attitudes of high school students in context of policies and initiatives promoting language learning and lifelong learning in Hungary and the European Union. Tenth grade members of three high school language classes of differing academic strength are examined as a part of the descriptive research. The analysis of resulting data shows that the students view the importance of languages and multilingualism similarly to the European average, but their own desired language proficiencies greatly exceed current Hungarian and European realities. The students plan to achieve high language proficiency levels by participating in language learning after their compulsory education concludes, as well as utilizing non-formal and informal channels of learning. Opinions on whether compulsory education prepares students for successful lifelong learning are highly mixed, but students believe their socio-economic backgrounds are conducive to lifelong language learning.

Introduction

The importance of lifelong learning in a modern society is now widely recognized, and heavily emphasized by the educational initiatives and policies of the European Union (EU). The EU sees lifelong learning as a key concept in establishing a highly multilingual society, in which citizens are proficient in multiple foreign languages. A Member State for thirteen years, it is presumable that Hungary shares the aims of the Union, and is working toward rising to the standards set by other Members. Hungarians' language proficiency, however, still ranks among the worst in Europe, and their general lack of participation in lifelong learning is cited as a main contributor of their subpar language competence. As the only part of the lifelong learning process that all Hungarian citizens must partake in by law is the compulsory education process in primary and secondary schools, the policies governing this system and the teachers working within play a deciding role in preparing children for the continued process of lifelong language learning throughout adulthood.

The following empirical paper focuses on language education, therefore, focuses on the participants of said compulsory education process and aims to discover whether today's Hungarian high school youth is indeed prepared to successfully continue learning foreign languages after the end of compulsory education, in a manner consistent with national and supranational policies.

The results could prove to be an important resource for practicing teachers on making more informed decisions in the classroom toward nurturing student attitudes conducive of language learning beyond compulsory education. The research may also be useful for other stakeholders in education, such as policymakers: finding correlations or discrepancies between current statistics of adult learner tendencies and the views, plans of younger students concerning the future could give us insight on whether the shortcomings of the Hungarian lifelong learning ecosystem are rooted within the walls of compulsory schooling institutions.

For the sake of clarifying the context of the research, the first chapter of the paper takes an overview of concepts and policies relevant to lifelong language learning – and shaping student attitudes toward lifelong language learning – starting with the review of pertinent policies from the European Union along with academic views as a theoretical frame of reference. That is followed by a look at statistical data analyzing the current realities of lifelong language learning in the Union, with a focus on Hungary, where the research itself is to be carried out, as to ascertain differences between EU goals and realities. Following the overview of statistical data, an attempt is made to discern whether the actual policies in effect in Hungary align with the language learning and lifelong learning philosophies and goals prescribed by the Union.

Building on conclusions from the relevant literature, the second chapter details the raison d'être of the research and its descriptive design, followed by a thorough explanation of the corresponding scientific approach, the setting and the participants, the procedures and instruments, the methods of analyzing the collected data as well as the potential limitations. A third chapter is dedicated to a discussion of the results yielded by the research and their implications. The thesis is concluded with a summary of the fundamental results and identifying possible ways to expand on the findings.

Background

Theoretical Background

The importance of language learning in the EU. The European Union is a political and economic union with an internal single market more culturally and historically diverse than any other on Earth, a fact reflected even in the official motto of the EU: „In Varietate Concordia" or „United in Diversity". The result of this inherited diversity is a Union of more than 500 million citizens living in 28 member states with 24 official languages (Council of the

European Union, 2014, p. 8). Amongst these languages are Germanic languages such as English; Slavic languages such as Slovak; Romance languages such as Italian; or Finno-Ugric languages such as Hungarian. While German has the highest amount of native speakers at around 95 million citizens, the most widely spoken language is English, spoken by around 165 million citizens, or one third of the total populace (Van Parys, 2012). Hungarian, spoken by a mere 13 million citizens – about two percent of the total EU population – still ranks as the 10th most widely spoken language out of the 24 official languages (Van Parys, 2012).

The Union considers all its official languages to be equal: *The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*, which came into effect after the Treaty of Lisbon in 2000 and has since been the main document enshrining the rights of EU citizens, prohibits discrimination based on any ground, explicitly including language (The Member States, 2016, art. 21) as the „Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity" (art. 22). In other words, the *unity in diversity* applies to language just as it does to differences in gender or race.

With such disparity between spoken languages, treating all 24 official languages equally might seem counter-intuitive, but the unique situation of the EU must be noted here: its most widely spoken language, English, is spoken by less than one third of its total population, a plurality that will further weaken as the United Kingdom is expected to leave the Union in the near future. This is starkly in contrast to other economic and political unions comparable to the EU in size: around 95% of United States citizens speak English (Shin & Kominski, 2010), and over 70% of Chinese citizens speak Mandarin (Simons & Fennig, 2017). The lack of a majority-spoken language is likely a major reason why EU language policy focuses not on creating a singular lingua franca of the region, but rather on a general emphasis on creating a *multilingual society*: that is, an area in which several languages co-

exist simultaneously, with its inhabitants able to use a multitude of these languages (European Commission, 2008).

The European Union considers multilingualism to be a precious asset in facilitating a more cohesive multicultural society (European Commission, 2008, p. 6), as well as a key to achieving lofty economic goals: the EU aimed to build the world's most advanced *knowledge-based economy* (European Council, 2000), and sees foreign language proficiencies as a crucial contributor to this goal (European Commission, 2003, p. 3). The European Parliament (2008) also argued that in the modern, highly globalized economy, proficiency of multiple languages gives a competitive edge to both citizens seeking employment and to EU business as a whole (p. 7).

Much of the Union's modern education policy stems from the European Commission's 1995 seminal work, *Teaching and learning - towards the learning society: White paper on education and training* (White Paper), which posited that in an increasingly globalized and technologically driven environment, the society of the future will be a *learning society* (p. 2). Similar visions by various EU bodies communicated in the mid-90s shared the views of the *White Paper*, envisioning a knowledge-based economy. In order to help the EU build this learning society, the paper outlined five general objectives, with one of the objectives explicitly pertaining to language learning: objective four called to "develop proficiency in three Community languages" (p. 47). As most EU citizens only speak one language natively, the paper argued that teaching at least two foreign languages to students at school is necessary (p. 13).

The *White Paper*'s belief in championing multilingualism and its concrete goal of achieving proficiency in two foreign languages has, over time, been re-iterated by various EU bodies and subsequently became one of the main tenets of the Union's education policy. Following the 2002 Barcelona European Council, the Council advocated "teaching at least

two foreign languages from a very early age" (p. 19). *A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism* (Framework Strategy), released by the European Commission (2005) defined this goal as a long-term objective of the EU, which marked the first time a European Commissioner explicitly mentioned the necessity of promoting multilingualism (p. 2). Additionally, the *Framework Strategy* identified several key areas of education that require attention from Member State policymakers, such as a better teacher training that responds to the changing demands of language use and focus on early language learning, such as language learning in primary schools as well as the use of foreign languages in higher education.

The European Parliament's 2008 resolution titled *Multilingualism: An Asset for Europe and a Shared Commitment* also reaffirmed the need for promoting linguistic diversity and stressed that learning two foreign languages should become a key education objective (p. 3). While mostly echoing the sentiments of the *Framework Strategy*, the Parliament posited a few crucial additions with consideration to the dimension of *lifelong learning*.

Lifelong learning: a necessity for successful language learning. As an academic concept, the idea of learning beyond the confines of traditional, childhood education certainly predates the European Union itself: Lindeman (1926), discussing "this new venture […] called adult education" (p. 6) already stated that "the whole life is learning, therefore education can have no endings" (p. 6). It is important to note here that, while there is a tendency to merely equate lifelong learning with adult education, it actually signifies an unending, cradle-to-the-grave stance on learning. Lindeman himself already agreed that what he called adult education is not confined to adults, and as the EU Council phrased in a Council Resolution on lifelong learning, "lifelong learning must cover learning from the pre-school age to that of post-retirement" (Council of the European Union, 2002).

Acknowledging that the then common time-frame for foreign language learning, namely language classes during secondary education, is not enough to complete the lofty goal

of achieving proficiency in two foreign languages, the 1995 *White Paper* argued that foreign language learning should begin at the pre-school level (European Commission, p. 47), while also stressing the importance of continuing language learning in adulthood. These sentiments signified the European Union's first major steps toward shifting the educational paradigm from a focus on general education – then overwhelmingly manifesting in the form of compulsory education inside traditional school environments that eventually culminate in a high school matura, followed by possible participation in tertiary education institutes such as universities – toward emphasizing education and learning in a far broader sense. This paradigm-shift was underlined by the fact that The European Council and the European Parliament decided to designate 1996 as the European Year of Lifelong Learning. The Commission's 1995 *White Paper* is, regarding education policies, a significant paper in the wave of discussions and subsequent initiatives within the European Union at a time when "concern with globalisation and its impact on the competitiveness of the European economy, on the labour market and on unemployment crystallised" (Davies, 2003, p. 104), prompting European action toward building the *knowledge society*. The *White Paper*, however, received considerable criticism over the years for the lack of real, sustainable proposals to achieve its grandiose ideas (Davies, 2003, p. 105; Hake, 1999, p. 67). Nevertheless, the *White Paper* is generally considered to be an important work establishing the modern education policy of the European Union: even in a highly critical review of EU lifelong learning policies, Dehmel (2006) still agreed that the *White Paper* established lifelong learning as a strategic priority in future EU education policy (p. 53), a means to combat issues and challenges faced by the European Union such as globalization, an aging society and emerging technologies. Affirming the ideas proposed in the 1995 *White Paper*, the European Commission published the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (Memorandum) in 2000, on the heels of the Lisbon Council. Per the *Memorandum*, "lifelong learning is no longer just one aspect of education

and training; it must become the guiding principle for participation across the full continuum of learning contexts" (p. 3).

Non-formal and informal learning. Importantly, the *Memorandum* (European Commission, 2000) urged Member States to "improve the ways in which learning participation and outcomes are understood and appreciated, particularly *non-formal* and *informal learning*" (p. 16) as they have become key channels for continuous education (p. 17). These dimensions of education, which exist in addition to formal or traditional education, are respectively defined by the Cedefop glossary as "learning embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning […] intentional from the learner's point of view" (Cedefop, 2014, p. 183) and "learning resulting from daily activities […] not organised or structured in terms of objectives […] in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective" (p. 111). However, some academics, such as Dierking (1991) warned that such distinctions are not entirely appropriate as learning is always influenced by the so-called informal, unintentional factors such as social interaction, individual beliefs or learning attitudes (p. 4).

The recognition that the institutional, formal methods of adult learning are simply insufficient to build a knowledge-based society had profound effects on the education process and teaching as a profession, as the main emphasis of education has moved toward instilling the enthusiasm and ability for learning throughout life, developing adults who are both capable and willing to learn and adapt perpetually (Jones, 2005, p 256).

Similarly, the *Memorandum* (European Commission, 2000) described an end of traditional teacher roles, claiming that teachers must become guides, mentors, whose primary objective is helping students take charge of their own learning process by nurturing a motivation to learn and instilling the knowledge of how to learn (p. 14). Helterbran (2005) declared that in this new paradigm of learning, educators in compulsory schooling still possess an unparalleled influence, and must implement positive and practical practices that

promote both the value and the joy of learning to facilitate successful lifelong learning attitudes in students. Finsterwald and her colleagues (2013) argued that the two core determinants of successful lifelong language learning that must be instilled in students by teachers in compulsory schooling are self-regulated, *autonomous learning* and continuing *motivation* (p. 145).

Language learner autonomy. Benson (2013) defined autonomous language learning as "practices involving learners' control over aspects of their learning or, more broadly, learning that takes place outside the context of formal instruction" (p. 840). As such, autonomous learning would include introducing various learner strategies or developing collaborative projects in the classroom, as well as facilitating foreign language use outside of school by real-life situations in school or by facilitating native language sources via providing to foreign language films, organizing exchange student programs or inviting native language teachers. Recently, Benson (2013) noted the pivotal role of the internet in providing genuine language sources and thus removing a traditional bottleneck of language learning. As a result, he claimed that with the proper digital literacies in hand, language learning can now be successfully carried out without supervision of a teacher figure (p. 840).

In the *Memorandum*, the European Commission (2000) urged further cooperative academic research on effective implementation of autonomous learner techniques as "we still know and share too little, for example, about how to generate productive self-directed learning" (p. 14). Similarly, Finsterwald and her co-authors (2013) pointed out that teachers are now asked to develop and implement autonomous approaches to learning, but they lack the background for proper classroom implementation.

Language learning motivation in school and adulthood. In addition to the importance of instrumental and goal-oriented motivating factors for language learning, such as a desire for a better job or grades, Dörnyei (1994) highlighted the substantial motivational

impact of the language class teacher, the learner group or the course methodology (p. 277). Shoaib and Dörnyei (2005) asserted that "language learning is a highly face-threatening and often negatively loaded emotional experience" (p. 29). This thought was backed up by the European Commission in 2005, when they observed that language learning was perceived as a difficult subject and a major factor in developing feelings of failure at school, implying that negative school experiences tend to rid students of motivation to further pursue language learning. Shoaib and Dörnyei (2005) found that language learning motivation may change over time due to various factors, such as maturation, internalization of external goals, moving into a new life phase such as leaving school and beginning to work or the influence of other people.

The European Commission (2005) stated that adults "often point to lack of time and motivation as the main reasons for not learning languages" (p. 11), and consequently, urged language learning opportunities outside of formal education via increased use of media, new technologies as well as cultural or leisure activities. Further considering the positive motivational element of informal education, Jarvis and Pell (2002) argued that relevant out-of-school experiences may act as crucial contributors to establishing a lifelong personal interest in a school subject (p. 980). McCombs also believed that motivation and lifelong learning are intertwined concepts, declaring that "the motivated person is a lifelong learner, and the life learner is a motivated person" (1991, p. 117).

Current State of Language Knowledge in the EU and Hungary

Proficiency and participation. Foreign language proficiency levels of the Hungarian population are generally considered to be among the worst in the European Union. One of the many reports that seem to be corroborating this notion is the European Commission's comprehensive *Special Eurobarometer 386 - Europeans and their languages: Report* (Special Eurobarometer), which stated that Hungarians are the least likely to be able to speak a foreign

language (European Commission, 2012, p. 5) in the Union, with only 35% of citizens able to speak at least one foreign language, and only 13% able to speak at least two. In contrast, 54% of EU citizens considered themselves proficient in at least one foreign language, and 25% of the surveyed population met the EU goal of having proficient language skills in at least two foreign languages.

Eurostat's Adult Education Survey from 2007 (Cedefop, 2010) found that 63% of the adult EU population – referring to people between ages 25 and 64 per EU nomenclature – claimed to speak at least one foreign language at all, and 31% of all EU citizens stated they speak at least one foreign language at a good or proficient level. As reported by this survey, Hungary ranks last among EU member states in both categories: only 13% of Hungarians alleged to speak a foreign language at a good or proficient level, and perhaps even more shocking is that only 25% of Hungarian adults partaking in the survey said they possess any kind of foreign language knowledge whatsoever, trailing even the second to last Portugal (48%) by a considerable margin. Despite the vast differences in language proficiency, 85% of Hungarians believed that every EU citizen should be able to speak at least one foreign language, and 65% of Hungarians shared the Union's sentiment that every EU citizen should be able to speak at least two foreign languages (European Commission, 2012, p. 113). These rates are similar to the rest of European countries.

Hungary trails behind fellow Member States in lifelong learning participation: per 2009 data (European Commission, 2011, p. 35), just 2.7% of Hungarian adults participate in formal or non-formal lifelong learning, far from the EU average of 9.2%, beating only the most recently joined Member States Romania and Bulgaria. Meeting the EU's 2020 goal benchmark of 15% participation set by the currently active framework of European educational initiatives known as ET 2020 are the three Nordic Member States Denmark, Sweden and Finland, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. Save for the natively

English-speaking United Kingdom, these states score far above EU average in foreign language proficiency. These statistics seem to confirm that increased participation in lifelong learning is a crucial element of improving language proficiency rates.

Facilitators and prohibitors of continued language learning. In the busy lives of Europeans, very few set aside time for language learning purely for the joy of it: sources of motivation for continued language learning are overwhelmingly work-related. The ability to work in another country, using languages at work and getting a better job at the home country were each considered to be a main advantage of language knowledge by more than 45% of the respondents (European Commission, 2012, p. 63). Therefore, the fact that Hungarian employers do not tend to require or encourage language proficiency could play a role in the sad state of adult language proficiency in Hungary. A survey of under 45 workers in Hungary found that only 17% of adults use a foreign language more than occasionally in a work environment, with 66% professing to have never used foreign languages in a work situation (Szénay, 2005, p. 67). The over 45 workforce most likely uses foreign languages even less frequently. Perhaps an even more prohibitive issue is that merely 27% of employed Hungarians believed that knowledge of a foreign language makes them more valuable in the eyes of their or increases their chances of a promotion (Szénay, 2005, p. 68). Non-work-related sources of motivation such as using languages on holidaying abroad, studying abroad (43%), meeting (28%) or understanding (38%) people from other countries, being able to use the internet (14%) and feeling more European (10%).

Other than not finding sufficient motivation, lack of time or money are the major discouraging factors prohibiting language learning in adulthood: respectively, 28% and 44% of Hungarians point at these elements as a reason they do not learn languages (European Commission, 2012, p. 96). Hungarians claimed to be much more inclined to learning a language if lessons were provided for them for free, or if they got paid for it, than the EU

average. They are also more likely to learn a language if their employer allowed for time off to learn, or if the material was available to access on the internet at any time (European Commission, 2012, p. 86). As that non-formal and informal channels of learning are much more flexible in these regards to traditional formal language courses, these dimensions should be playing a pivotal role in learning. Yet, Hungarians barely utilize these channels of learning such as talking informally to a native speaker (4%), long visits to foreign countries (7%), taking lessons from a native speaker (8%), taking one-on-one lessons from a teacher (9%) or self-teaching methods by reading (10%), watching TV and films (5%), or online (4%). These results are among the lowest of EU Member States (European Commission, 2012, p. 103).

Hungarian Language Education

Joining the European Union in 2004 put Hungarian policymakers in unprecedented circumstances. Although Hungary still possesses complete sovereignty over the content and execution of their own education policies (European Commission, 2001, p. 25), it was now being prompted to achieve benchmarks set out by the Union as a whole, judged by the same criteria as all EU nations. This elicited a need for education reforms, as Hungary lagged far behind its fellow Member States in most quantifiable statistics, including the number of early school leavers, participants in higher education, and indeed the foci of this paper: language proficiency and participation in lifelong learning. In simple terms, Hungary needed to catch up. This resulted in massive revisions of education policies and its official documents over the past fifteen years.

National framework. The primary document governing Hungarian education is the National Core Curriculum [Nemzeti Alaptanterv], or NAT for short. A subject of frequent revisions, the latest edition of the NAT was released in 2012. Under current law, participation in formal education is mandatory until age 16, but generally lasts twelve grades, culminating

in the matura exams [érettségi] at age 18 or 19. The matura exams are standardized, which, per Kákonyi (2014), is in line with the majority of EU Member State matura processes.

At least in spirit, the NAT itself also seems to very much be in alignment with the language learning and lifelong learning ideals of the European Union. The NAT described eight key competences [kulcskompetenciák] to be nurtured by the Hungarian education system: they are the exact same as the eight key competences for lifelong learning agreed on by the European Union (Hozjan, 2009, p. 201). Furthermore, The NAT stressed several concepts that are highly conducive to instilling a mindset necessary for lifelong language learning within students, such as the use of ICT to facilitate autonomous language learning; development of communicative competences; implementation of various language learning strategies; and opportunities for autonomous problem-solving using various sources. The Frame Curricula for langugues [Kerettantervek] further emphasize these notions (Kerettantervek, 2012).

For language learning, unlike other subjects in compulsory education, the NAT based the set of skills to be mastered by students on a wholly international reference frame designed by the Council of Europe: the CEFR. The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, abbreviated as CEF or CEFR, was released in 2001, quickly followed by a Hungarian edition in 2002, under the name *Közös Európai Referenciakeret*, or KER. The CEFR, in theoretical terms very much in line with the EU ideals of promoting multilingualism and the paramount importance of lifelong learning to achieve that goal, "describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 1). The CEFR describes six reference levels of proficiency described via can-do statements: A1 – Breakthrough, A2 – Waystage, B1 – Threshold, B2 – Vantage, C1 – Effective operational proficiency, C2 – Mastery. These levels constitute the fundamental reference points of

language learning in Hungarian education: the minimum requirement for the first foreign language is A2 level by the end of grade eight, and B1 level by the end of grade twelve. Only one foreign language matura is compulsory is at the standard level, B1. A2 is the minimum requirement for the second foreign language upon finishing grade twelve. Prospects of admittance into higher education may be increased by state approved language exams: intermediate exams follow the standards of the B2 level, while advanced exams are on par with the C1 level described in the CEFR. At least one successful intermediate exam will become mandatory for entrance into higher education starting in the year 2020.

The first foreign language chosen to be studied must be one of the following: English, German, French or Chinese. Seemingly a peculiar list, it actually aligns with the languages considered most useful by Europeans, including Hungarians (European Commission, 2012, p. 69), only missing Spanish from the top five. The choice in second foreign language is free. Students may also study in dual-language schools, or enroll in a Year of Intensive Language Learning [Nyelvi előkészítő évfolyam], abbreviated as YILL [NyEK], an entire additional schoolyear between grades eight and nine focusing on language learning.

The start of the first foreign language education is optional – as in, it is for the schools to decide – from grade one at age 6, but is only compulsory from grade four. Thus, most Hungarians start language learning around age 10, which, according to Öveges (2016), lags behind most EU Member States where foreign language learning typically begins around age 6 to 9, concluding that the Hungarian system fails to live up to the oft-repeated tenet of early-as-possible language learning. A similar trend follows the second foreign language learning process: it is optional from grade seven, but only compulsory from grade nine in grammar schools [gimnázium]. Consequently, a 2016 Eurostat survey showed that Hungary is last in the EU in terms of early involvement in studying a second foreign language: merely 6.3% of

lower secondary school students participated in learning a second foreign language, an abysmal rate compared to the 59.9% of all Member States.

Relevant shortcomings. Kákonyi (2016) claimed that despite attending significantly more language classes than the EU average, the primary factors in successful language learning are still the students' inherent talent and socio-economic background. This opinion is backed up by a recent European Council recommendation which stated that "The influence of the socioeconomic background and school location on educational performance is among the strongest in the Union." (2016, 299/51), adding that performance gaps only "widen over time" (2016, 299/51), and implying that the system is most unable to facilitate the lifelong learning process for those most in need.

According to Bengtsson (2013), Hungary does "poorly in comparison to other countries on most measures" (p. 346) in terms of implementing successful lifelong learning policies, and the reasons for that can be traced back not only to vague policy action and lack of financing, but also to the often-silent resistance of main stakeholders in education such as schools and teachers accustomed to outdated methodology incompatible with lifelong learning ideals (p. 348). The classroom is not only considered by people to be the most effective place to learn a language according to both Hungarians and the rest of the EU (European Commission, 2012, p. 107), but it is also the only language learning environment every citizen is legally obliged to attend. It is therefore of paramount importance to use this environment effectively by establishing competences and practices that enable the students to continue language learning beyond the walls of the classroom. While statements such as "we teach most effectively when we help our students learn how to learn...not what to think and make and do" (Nash, 1994, p. 789) may have been repeated numerously in the past decades – including aforementioned EU documents –, it is questionable if teaching methods accommodating those lines of thinking, such as self-regulated learning and tasks are truly

practiced in Hungarian classrooms. In a study of lifelong learning attitudes during compulsory schooling, Istance (2003) already warned that traditional curricula are highly unsuited for the internet age (p. 93). Today, at a time when the internet exists ubiquitously in all our lives, especially for teens in compulsory education, the "radical changes in school structures and methodologies" (p. 93) Istance called for fourteen years ago have still not fully materialized in Hungarian classrooms.

As discussed earlier, enduring motivation is a key to successful lifelong language learning. Yet, it seems that the motivation to learn is already shattered by the time students leave compulsory education. A very telling piece of data can be found in a 2008 survey by Nikolov, Ottó and Öveges: the survey found that 41% of 332 teachers surveyed identified students' affective competences such as motivation and attitude as a main inhibitor of successful language learning (p. 54), yet the study also noted that – despite academic research and education policies suggesting otherwise – in teachers' perceptions, improving this situation is not their role or responsibility (p. 99). When the same survey asked schools for suggestions to boost foreign language education, out of the 1302 received responses, only 69 responses were concerned with enhancing student motivation (p. 32), and merely one school identified a need for a positive and motivating classroom environment (p. 33). Perhaps in Hungarian classrooms, the observation made by Travers in 1978 is still too true: "school is more likely to be a killer of interest than the developer" (p. 125).

Research Design and Method

The research operated under the following conclusions based on relevant literature discussed in detail in the previous chapter:

- The European Union embraces multilingualism as one of its principal ideas, and, treating all languages within the Union as equals, defines proficiency in three languages for all its citizens as a goal objective.

- Acknowledging that acquiring proficiency in two foreign languages is a task too massive to be achieved during compulsory schooling, the European Union advocates participation in lifelong learning, a cradle-to-grave approach to education.
- While Member States are free to decide their own education policies, Hungary subscribes to the sentiments of the Union, and pursues the same goals through its own education policies.
- Despite the preceding, the foreign language proficiency of Hungarian citizens ranks as the worst Member State in the Union.
- Participation in lifelong learning plays a crucial role in successful language learning. Participation is primarily facilitated by sustained motivation and learner autonomy.
- Hungarians are the least likely to participate in formal adult education in the Union. They are also less likely to be involved in language learning through non-formal or informal methods than fellow EU citizens.
- The reasons behind Hungarian lack of participation in lifelong language learning are numerous, ranging from broad social issues to classroom proceedings unsuited or even adverse to successfully preparing students to become lifelong language learners.

Research Justification

There is a near universal agreement both on the theoretical and policymaking level over the idea that successful language learning requires continued, lifelong learning. The two main fields relevant to the research of successful lifelong language learning are, obviously, language learning and lifelong learning. However, despite the agreement on the interconnected nature of the two fields, there seems to be a distinct lack of interconnected research. On one side, research regarding student attitudes toward language learning is focused on present, therefore, on classroom-related learning and motivation; thus, they do not tend to account for learning following high school graduation, the future aspect of lifelong

language learning. On the other side, research regarding attitudes to lifelong learning is focused on adults' learning and motivation, and thus, it does not account for the necessity of compulsory schooling, the present – from the high school student perspective – aspect of lifelong language learning.

The research aimed to serve as a bridge between the two thoroughly researched fields by exploring the question: is today's Hungarian high school youth indeed prepared to successfully continue learning foreign languages after the end of compulsory education in a manner consistent with national and supranational policies?

Design and Approach

Investigating this question called for descriptive research design. This approach is coherent with the research topic, not only is it agreed that the "descriptive studies have an important role in educational research" (Knupfer & McLellan, 1996, p. 1198), but the lack of existing research specifically investigating the current research question makes most other approaches incompatible. A descriptive research design was further justified by considering the innate limitations of the current research: despite the current lack of means for a more comprehensive research, the results may still serve as a worthy addition to academic discourse, as "descriptive research can act, for example, as a first step in a more detailed and complex study" (Given, 2007, p. 253).

The research question was explored by collecting data in the following topics deemed most pertinent to lifelong language learning based on the overview of literature:

- attitudes toward languages and multilingualism;
- current, desired and projected foreign language proficiencies;
- foreign language use within and outside compulsory education;
- beliefs regarding continued lifelong language learning;
- lifelong learning skills and competences provided by compulsory education.

The collected data was then analyzed in the context of earlier research regarding attitudes toward language learning and lifelong learning and relevant education policies. Descriptive research often utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Knupfer & McLellan, 1996, p. 1196), and the current research is no exception. The study gathered data from various sources and perspectives, which were then organized into patterns that emerged after analysis.

Participants and Setting

Considering the design with the inherent limitations of time and budget available, a cross-sectional sample was deemed the most appropriate. Consequently, the research was focused from two major angles: the age-group and location of the participants. The participants were all in their tenth year of education, so between 16 and 17 years of age. On one hand, members of this age group are still very much considered children, from both the point of view of policymaking entities as well as surveys that might sway those said policymakers to certain action, and as such, they tend to be exempt from studies regarding lifelong learning participation. Related studies tend to only include adults, sometimes from age 18, including tertiary education in the research, but more often focus is only on adults aged 25 and up, concentrating on their tendencies and attitudes toward lifelong language learning. However, as discussed earlier, lifelong learning is decidedly meant to encompass all periods of life, including those in compulsory education. As also discussed earlier, compulsory schooling is the only part of the lifelong learning process that is directly in the hands of Member State governing bodies, and as such, it is imperative to understand where students stand on adult learning before entering adulthood.

On the other side of the age spectrum, a decision to survey tenth year students and not younger students was decided as it is perhaps not fair to make conclusions on the Hungarian lifelong learning initiatives based on the attitudes of primary school students, but by grade ten, students have been, at least in theory, taught according to the EU ideals of lifelong language

learning for a whole decade, as EU member citizens. Nearing the end of their compulsory education, they probably have, as supposed members of the learning society and future contributors to the knowledge-based economy, formulated ideas on how to proceed forward after their graduation in year twelve, or year thirteen in the case of YILL students.

Geographically, the study was limited to schools in the Hungarian capital Budapest, part of the planning and statistical region Central Hungary [Közép-Magyarország]. Central Hungary is one of seven such regions in Hungary, generally regarded as the most developed region in the country in almost all considerable features. As discussed earlier, socio-economic backgrounds weigh especially heavy in Hungarian education, and therefore, it is safe to assume that participants of this study are, in general, more privileged from this aspect than their peers in other regions. Indeed, the region seems to marginally outpace the rest of the country in lifelong learning participation: 4.2% of the region takes part in lifelong learning (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 2013), the largest percentage of any region in Hungary, though still considerably below even the weakest regions of all Western or Nordic Member States.

Despite the similarities, the three classes are markedly different in their perceived academic strength, which provides a more heterogenous sample of responses for the research. The participants of the research are: a class without specialization from the ELTE Apáczai Csere János Gyakorló Gimnázium, a trainee grammar school of the Eötvös Loránd University, generally considered to be one of the strongest and most prestigious secondary schools of the country; a YILL class specializing in German language from the Szinyei Merse Pál Gimnázium, considered an above average grammar school; and a class with IT specialization from the Szent Benedek Szakközépiskola, an academically average high school.

Methods of data collection

Instruments. In the interest of increasing the validity of the research, a multi-method approach was used to gather information in all three schools: from the perspective of the

students, using an online questionnaire; from the perspective of the teachers, using an interview form; and from the perspective of a third party, utilizing classroom observation.

The crux of the research was an online questionnaire filled out by the students of each class. In order to increase the external validity of the results, the questions were based on earlier research – discussed in detail in the previous chapter – studying different, but applicable aspects of the current thesis: the *Special Eurobarometer 386 – Europeans and their Languages: Report* by the European Commission (2012); *Idegennyelv-ismeret* by Szénay (2005); and *Az idegennyelv-tanulás és tanítás helyzete és fejlesztésének lehetőségei a szakképző intézményekben* by Nikolov, Ottó and Öveges (2008). Some questions were rephrased, re-worked to fit the context of the current study. For example, questions regarding the value of language competence at the current workplace of the participants (Szénay, 2005) were re-worked to inquire about how students believed future employers would value language competence. Questions regarding situational language were adapted to include future, hypothetical situations as well.

Descriptive research characteristics dictate that questions offer a limited set of answers (Given, 2007, p. 251), intended to ensure the validity and reliability of the research. As such, closed questions took up most of the student questionnaire, many of them in the form of interval Likert response scale questions using a 1 to 5 scale, but a small number of similarly easily quantifiable questions such as dichotomous questions and a cumulative scale question were also included. A small amount of questions was open-ended, requiring a very short, written answer. The questionnaire was created in Google Forms, a free online tool for creating questionnaires, and as such is easily replicable by anyone. All questions in the questionnaire were designated as mandatory, eliminating the possibility of incomplete entries. In addition, the online data collection method eliminated any potential human error in quantifying the responses.

Designed to boost the validity of the data gained from the student questionnaire, two additional, qualitative methods of data collection were also implemented. An interview with the class language teacher asked questions parallel to the ones in the student questionnaire in a more concise and open manner. For example, the multiple Likert-scale questions regarding the presence of various classroom methods intended to build language learner autonomy and learning strategies were condensed into a single question: "What methods and activities are used in the classroom to prepare students for future autonomous language learning?". This form of data collection allowed the teachers, who were more academically versed in the subject at hand to give more detailed answers that were still comparable to student opinions. Classroom observation focused on activities pertaining to autonomous learning, later compared with student opinions on how they intended to use foreign languages in the future.

Procedures. To minimize confirmation bias, the classroom observation was carried out first, followed by the interview with the teacher. The data gained from these two methods was then analyzed in the context of the results from the questionnaire to ascertain whether classroom practice and the perception of the class teacher were in sync with the attitudes of the students regarding lifelong language learning. The three classes were also evaluated against each other, to gain a deeper understanding of the differences and similarities between the different classes.

The data collection took place from March 8th to March 17th, 2017. A single researcher sitting at the back of the class took notes regarding the focus of the observation throughout a single class. At the end of the class, the questionnaire was assigned as mandatory homework for all students, ensuring that the result will be a representative picture of the class and thus increasing the validity of the research. Following the class, the interview with the teacher took place, taking up about 20 minutes. Further ensuring validity of the research, data was collected using the native language of the participants, Hungarian, and translated into English

to present the results only after the data analysis is complete. Examples of the instruments are attached as appendices.

Methods of Data Analysis

As the research was intended to explore student attitudes toward lifelong language learning, the data analysis began with evaluating the responses of the students, collected via the online questionnaire. The large number of quantifiable questions in every area provided a good opportunity for basic statistical analysis, such as taking the arithmetic mean and standard deviation of Likert-scale questions, to serve as a starting point. The more qualitative instruments of the study, namely the teacher interview and the class observation results were analyzed later to find data supporting or contradicting the trends emerging from the student questionnaire. The results were analyzed as a whole, as well as on a school by school basis where appropriate. The findings were also compared to previous research in the given areas.

Limitations

Descriptive research is concerned with finding answers to the *what is?* but is not suited for answering *why?*. In the terms of the current research, this meant that the data was only able to show what the attitudes of high school students toward lifelong language learning were, and not why those attitudes existed. However, further analysis of the resulting data in the context of other, relevant studies and policies may help in forming useful hypotheses toward answering the question of *why?*.

Highly limited access to potential willing participants prohibited the current research from embarking on a proper quantitative study, and therefore it relied on additional qualitative data triangulation to provide appropriate validity and reliability. Notwithstanding, the student questionnaire mostly built on quantifiable answers that were easily compared to both available, large-scale surveys of the general populace, and could also serve as a basis for future research investigating the lifelong language learning attitudes of high school students

with a different set of participants. Limited access to classrooms also limited the scope of the classroom observation method of data collection, and as such, only focused on the aspect of activities conducive to autonomous learning. This shortcoming is easily rectifiable in future studies if multiple classroom visits are made available to the researcher, or if multiple observers are made available for a single classroom visit.

Results and Discussion

The questionnaire was filled out by all eighteen students of the class from Szent Benedek Szakközépiskola, all twelve students of the class from Szinyei Merse Pál Gimnázium, and, with three students absent during the data collection period, twelve students from ELTE Apáczai Csere János Gimnázium, for a total of forty-two student responses. In addition to the questionnaire, one class observation sheet from each of the three classes and notes from the three class teacher interviews were used as sources of data. The results were organized and discussed per the research topics.

Attitudes Toward Languages and Multilingualism

The significance of languages. Students were asked to evaluate the importance of various language proficiencies on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 meaning not important at all and 5 meaning extremely important. These languages were the four languages available to be chosen as a first foreign language in Hungarian education, with the addition of the Hungarian language. English emerged considerably ahead of other languages, with a mean score of 4.90. In the two grammar schools, every student rated the importance of English as a 5 out of 5. One teacher agreed that English is the most important language, comparing learning English to learning to drive a car: a basic skill in modern society. The other two teachers believed there are numerous foreign languages that would be equally useful for today's youth to learn, but both conceded that English tends to be used as a lingua franca in international work

environments more and more frequently, even if the company is not based in the anglosphere. Hungarian, the native language of all students who filled out the questionnaire, placed second with an average of 3.74. Noteworthy was the clear inverse proportionality of the school's academic strength and the perceived importance of Hungarian: the average score in Apáczai was 2.58, 3.50 in Szinyei and 4.67 in Szent Benedek. German placed third with an average of 3.45, perhaps expectedly elevated by the German specialization YILL class in Szinyei, where the mean of students' grade for the importance of German was 4.17. In contrast, grades for French, with an overall average of 2.79, were markedly higher in Apáczai, with a statistical mean of 3.58. The only non-official EU language, Chinese, received the lowest grades, an average of 2.45.

Students were also asked to name any additional languages they credited as particularly useful: Spanish was mentioned by nine students (21%), Italian by eight students (19%), Portuguese and Swedish by one student each (2%). Some non-EU languages also received mentions, most prominently Russian, referred to by nine students. Japanese and Latin also received one vote each. It is also questionable if English and Spanish were judged to be important because of their role in the European Union, given that most English and Spanish speakers live outside the EU. Perhaps related is the fact that only seven students (17%) agreed somewhat or agreed fully that the value of English language proficiency will diminish if the United Kingdom leaves the European Union.

In general, despite contrasting with the EU idea of all official languages being equal, the students' grades were absolutely in line with the European average: English was considered by far the most important foreign language, followed with some distance by German and French, with Spanish and Italian being additional EU languages considered important (European Commission, 2012, p. 69). However, it is doubtful that these languages being official EU languages played a major, if any role in their perceived significance.

Multilingualism. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning complete disagreement and 5 meaning complete agreement, thirty-six students (86%) tended to agree (4) or totally agree (5) that every European citizen should be able to speak at least one foreign language. No student expressed partial (2) or full disagreement (1). The mean of the answers was 4.52. This is completely in line with the European average, as 87% of all Europeans and 85% of Hungarians tended to or totally agreed with the same question (European Commission, 2012, p. 113). The answers were considerably less enthusiastic in regards to the desired EU goal: when asked if they agreed that every Hungarian citizen should be able speak at least two foreign languages, the mean of the answers were only 3.21, as thirteen students (31%) either tended to (2) or totally disagreed (1) with the statement. The answers were also far less unanimous: in mathematical terms, the standard deviations were 0.73 and 1.17, respectively. Only 40% of students tended to agree or agree completely with the question, which, perhaps surprisingly, is considerably behind the 72% of Europeans and 65% of Hungarians who gave the same answers to this question (European Commission, 2012, p. 114). It is also evident that the YILL class in Szinyei agreed with this sentiment the most, giving a 3.93 average. In comparison, the means were 3.17 in Apáczai and 2.78 in Szent Benedek.

Current, Desired and Projected Foreign Language Proficiencies

Only seven students (17%) identified a language other than English as their strongest foreign language, all seven of them claiming that to be German. Not surprisingly, all seven students were from the German YILL language specialization class from Szinyei. However, five students in that German specialization class already felt that their strongest foreign language was English, despite it only being their second foreign language. The class teacher in Szinyei similarly noted that English proficiencies among students tend to become the highest by the end of high school even if it is only their second foreign language, being taught in a much lower volume in schools. Perhaps this is a sign that the common view of second

foreign language education in Hungary being generally much weaker than that of the first foreign language is mistaken, incorrectly interpreting a discrepancy between English and non-English language education given that the first foreign language is more likely to be English than others.

Thirty students (71%) wished to eventually achieve a C1 or higher level of proficiency in their strongest foreign language. Ten students (23%) were aiming at a B2 level of proficiency, and the remaining two students (5%) were aiming at a B1 level proficiency. Two students, both from Szent Benedek, presumed they will not reach B1 proficiency level – the minimum level required by the NAT in at least one foreign language for a successful school matura – by the end of high school. Thirty-four students (81%), including all students from the two grammar schools, expected they would achieve at least B2 level proficiency by the end of high school education. Fourteen students (33%), about half the number of students who set their goal proficiency at C1 or higher, believed they could reach that level by the end of their high school education. These goals and expectations are significantly higher than those in a study by Nikolov, Ottó and Öveges (2008) surveying students of similar age across Hungary (p. 70).

Desired proficiency levels in a second foreign language were slightly lower compared to the first foreign language. Only eleven students (26%) were aiming for C1 proficiency or higher, with the plurality of the students, nineteen (45%) targeted for the B2 level. Unlike with the first foreign language, there were six students (14%) who did not wish to reach even a B1 level proficiency. Expected proficiency levels by the end of high school were markedly lower than they are for the first foreign language. Merely two (5%) thought they would achieve C1 or higher proficiency levels. The contrast was similarly stark on the other end of the spectrum: seventeen students (40%) believed they would not reach the B1 proficiency level by the end of high school.

The teachers in Apáczai and Szinyei stated that all their students targeted B2 level, the level of the intermediate language exams in their first foreign language, and about half the students did so in Szent Benedek. Most students in Apáczai were said to complete an advanced language exam requiring C1 levels of proficiency by the end of high school. About three students per class were expected to do so in both Szinyei and Szent Benedek. The teachers noted the presence of a significant gap between B2 and C1 levels, overcoming which requires high levels of motivation and willingness to learn. The teachers reckoned there was a much higher deviation in acquired proficiencies in the second foreign languages, as students were generally less motivated to learn them. In the two grammar schools where two foreign languages are taught, the teachers expected all students will be able to reach B1, the proficiency level of a standard matura. B2 level or higher in second foreign languages were very uncommon in Szinyei, and a minority in Apáczai as well.

It is interesting to note that 86% of the students aimed to reach at least B1 proficiency levels in two foreign languages. While the EU does not officially attribute a CEFR proficiency level to their definition of being able to communicate in a foreign language, the *Special Eurobarometer* survey carried out by the European Commission defines language competence as languages in which a person is "able to hold a conversation in" (2012, p. 12). Comparing this definition with the CEFR descriptions of the levels, it is safe to say that a B1 level would qualify as proficiency in the eyes of the *Special Eurobarometer*. As such, the amount is significantly higher than the Hungarian rate of 13%, as well as the EU average of 25%, and would actually place as first in the EU (European Commission, 2012, p. 14). Even when calculating by the proficiencies students expect to reach in a few years by the end of high school education, the rate of people with proficiencies in two foreign languages would be 60%, still good for fourth place in the EU rankings, behind Luxemburg, the Netherlands and Slovenia. Unfortunately beyond the scope of the current study, it would be crucial to figure

out to what extent this discrepancy between student expectations and national reality is due to students' overestimation of their own future progression, or to the study's sample of students being indeed far above the national mean. This data is also notable in comparison to the previously established fact that these same students did not necessarily share the sentiment that all Hungarians should be able to speak two foreign languages, yet they were motivated to reach that goal personally and believed they will do so.

Only four students (10%) disagreed completely or disagreed somewhat with the notion that they possess better than average talent for learning languages. All four of these students were from Szent Benedek. In comparison, 27% of Hungarian adults considered their talent for language learning to be subpar (Szénay, 2005, p. 72).

Foreign Language Use Within and Outside Compulsory Education

Foreign languages learned by students. All students were studying English at school. The students at Szent Benedek were not studying a second foreign language formally. As the other two schools are grammar schools, learning a second foreign language was compulsory for them. Unlike with the first foreign language, the NAT does not restrict the choice of the second foreign language, and indeed, a wide variety of second languages studied in schools were reported: similar to Hungarian and European statistics (European Commission, 2012, p. 21), English, German and French were the three most popular foreign languages. Russian and Latin also received multiple mentions. In addition, Hebrew was mentioned once. Notable was the complete absence of Europe's fourth most popular foreign language, Spanish (European Commission, 2012, p. 21) from schools.

Spanish, however, was present as a language only learned outside of compulsory education: three students (7%) claimed to be studying it. Other languages learned only outside compulsory education process were German for four students (10%), Chinese for two students (5%), as well as Italian and Swedish for one student (2%) each. Comparing these results with

the languages perceived to be most useful by Europeans (European Commission, 2012, p. 69) reveals a correlation: the seven languages considered to be most important by Europeans were all being studied by at least one of the students regardless of availability in school, while merely three students were studying a language absent from the list, namely Latin, Swedish and Hebrew.

Eleven students (26%) were studying a language only outside of formal, compulsory education. On a surely related note, a similar number, ten students (24%) agreed somewhat or agreed fully that they wanted to learn a language in school that was not made available by their institution. It is noticable that the majority, seven (17%) students were from Szent Benedek, academically the weakest of the three schools observed, no doubt in part because this was the only school observed where a second foreign language was not being taught in the school. Eleven students (26%) were only studying languages as a part of their compulsory education, and did not partake in learning languages through other channels.

More than half of the sample, twenty-three students (55%) were studying English both as a part of their formal, compulsory education and through non-formal or informal channels outside of school. Other languages being learned through multiple channels were French and German by three students (7%), and Russian by one student (2%). The dominance of English in this category is perhaps attributable to both the higher availability of English language material in their lives outside school, mainly through the internet, technological gadgets or media, as well as the students' view that English is overwhelmingly more important than other languages.

Situations of foreign language use. Understanding what situations and environments students envision as targets for foreign language use are crucial in establishing a curriculum in schools that teaches students language skills with real-life applications, and thus, creating a learning environment conducive of continued lifelong learning instead of school-long learning

focused on tests such as the matura. To gain a better understanding of the topic, students were presented a list of foreign language use situations, out of which they had to choose any number they assumed they would encounter after compulsory education.

Highest on the list of mentions is the situation of spending holidays abroad; thirty-seven students (17%) identified this situation as a likely application of foreign language use in their lives. While at a much lower rate, The *Special Eurobarometer* similarly named holidays abroad as the most common way in which foreign languages are used, with 50% of Europeans using their foreign language skills in such situations (European Commission, 2012, p. 49). Close second, according to students, was internet use with a frequency of thirty-four students (81%). Thirty-three students (79%) believed they will use foreign language proficiencies for consuming media excluding the internet, for example watching foreign language films in their original version without Hungarian dubbing or subtitles. Again, these were much higher rates than European averages, where these two situations took second and third place with respectively 37% and 36% of the surveyed noted them as situations in which they use foreign languages (European Commission, 2012, p. 49). All teachers interviewed deemed internet and media related language use to be the primary motivating factor of language learning for students. It is interesting to observe that these targets of language use rate especially high even though a good amount of these two categories do not necessarily require foreign language skills: almost all films and television shows receive Hungarian dubs or at the very least Hungarian subtitles, and the most popular internet sites such as social media outlets like Facebook or Instagram are available in Hungarian.

Thirty-three students (79%) believed they will use foreign languages to communicate with foreign language friends and acquaintances, excluding work-related colleagues. This exceptionally high percentage compared to European averages is perhaps explained by the fact that today's students are very social media savvy, and as such, they may already have an

extensive international network of acquaintances, establishing and maintaining relationships primarily on social media using foreign languages. Another reason could be that the location of the schools surveyed was Budapest, a very popular tourist attraction, with Apáczai and Szinyei located in extremely tourist-heavy areas, and because of a daily life amongst many foreign language speakers, these children perceived communication with foreigners to be a more frequent situation than their more rural counterparts.

Working or studying abroad was perceived as an avenue of foreign language use by thirty students (71%). While only a small minority of Europeans actually use foreign languages to work or study, these situations were considered to be some of the main advantages of learning a foreign language: 61% of Europeans consider the ability to work in another country to be a main advantageous aspect of language proficiency, making this aspect the most incentivizing reason for language learning (European Commission, 2012, p. 62). Even higher than the European average was the 71% of Hungarian respondents who shared this opinion, the exact same rate as among the students surveyed. The situation of studying abroad is of perhaps evident motivation for college-bound students, as both applying to a foreign university upon finishing school, or international programs like Erasmus provide ample opportunity for studying in a foreign country.

Twenty-five students (60%) presumed they will use foreign languages as part of a job in Hungary. While 53% of Europeans thought the situation of using foreign languages in the work environment to be a main incentive in learning foreign languages, Hungary notably trailed in this category with only 40% in agreement (European Commission, 2012, p. 62). The reason behind this might be that in terms of actual use in the workplace, merely 17% of Hungarians claimed to use foreign languages at work more than occasionally (Szénay, 2005, p. 67). On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 meaning complete disagreement and 5 meaning complete agreement, students' agreement with the notion that language proficiencies are valued skills

by employers was very high, with a 4.48 mean of the answers. Remarkably, no students disagreed completely (1) or even just disagreed partially (2) with this statement. The clear majority of the students, with the answers averaging a score of 4.29 out of 5, also agreed that it is more important for employees in high level or leadership positions to be proficient in foreign languages. These opinions highly opposed the views of Hungarian adults in the workforce: only 27% of them believed highly or somewhat that employers value foreign language proficient employees more, the same amount reported that language proficient employees are more likely to be promoted to higher positions, and only 26% assessed that language proficiency certification improves the chances of getting hired (Szénay, 2005, p.68).

Sixteen students (38%) felt foreign language use will be directly related to their field of studies in higher education, such as pursuing degrees in tourism, the service industry, language teaching, and so forth. Oddly, only thirty-three students (79%) said the high school matura will be a situation for foreign language use, even though exams in at least one foreign language is required for a successful matura. While possible, it is highly unlikely that students in schools of this caliber plan to not participate in the high school matura, and as such, this non-unanimous result is either due to some students already having succeeded in their language matura exams ahead of time, or simply, they are not yet aware that a foreign language exam is necessary. This was corroborated by the teacher interview from Szinyei and Szent Benedek: both teachers thought that at this age, students did not yet think about the matura exams, and doing well on those exams was not an important factor in language learning motivation.

Eight students (19%) expected they will use foreign languages in all of the aforementioned situations. No students provided additional situations they feel to be missing from the questionnaire. Overall, the perceived ways to use foreign languages in the future was ranked similarly, but at substantially higher percentage rates than the European averages of

actual foreign language use in adulthood. Whether this is due to the sampled students significantly overestimating their future language use, or due to these students indeed becoming more active language users than the European average cannot be ascertained by the current research.

Lifelong Learning Skills and Competences Provided by Compulsory Education

Institution roles. Students agreed with the notion that languages were among the more important subjects in school, with a response average of 4.52 out of 5. No students disagreed completely (1) or even slightly (2) with the statement. Teacher interviews substantiated this: the teachers in Szinyei and Szent Benedek claimed that if the students cared about any subject, it was the foreign language, particularly English. The teacher from Apáczai, a grammar school with very high academic standards, supposed that all students were motivated to learn languages at the beginning of high school, but eventually students with scientific sensibilities lost motivation after achieving a certain level of proficiency they considered to be sufficient to support their science-oriented studies.

The students in the grammar schools deemed their schools provided foreign student exchange programs, while the students in Szent Benedek reported their school did not offer them such an opportunity. The teacher interviews confirmed these assertions, and the teacher from Szinyei added that German exchange programs were the most prevalent. Nikolov, Ottó and Öveges (2008) similarly found that 24% of Hungarian high schools provide a student exchange program to German speaking areas, while only a mere 7% provides such access to English speaking territories, and 18% does so for any other area (p. 23). As understanding foreign languages and cultures through European mobility is such an important, oft-repeated aspect of EU educational initiatives, it is sobering to see that not all Hungarian students seem to get such opportunities even at an average high school in the most prosperous region of the country. Six students (14%) maintained they already have bad experiences regarding language

learning. Such claims came from both Apáczai and Szent Benedek, academically the strongest and the weakest schools surveyed. While the percentage of students with bad experiences seems relatively low, it would be crucial to eliminate such negative experiences from compulsory education, given that these bad experiences are considered a main reason why students lose motivation for continued lifelong learning.

The foreign language class. Class teachers mentioned several techniques and activities designed to facilitate autonomous language learning they were regularly using in the classroom. Groupwork and pair discussion were being used in all schools. Internet use was also implemented in all schools, albeit in different ways. In Szent Benedek, internet use mostly pertained to classes themselves, such as watching Youtube videos or doing online group games through language learning websites and software. In Szinyei, the teacher alleged the ICT background in the school was not sufficient to be used during classes, but as homework there were regular assignments that require internet research and even creating presentations. Home assignments requiring internet use were also present in Apáczai, books and other material facilitating autonomous learning regularly shared, mainly before large exams or if a student was absent for a longer period. The teacher also mentioned that peer evaluation and correction was frequently being used in classes.

While pair discussions and group activities were largely absent from all three classes during observation, the rest of the claims by teachers regarding classroom activity were clearly present. In Szent Benedek, the language class was held in an IT room, with every student having access to a computer, and consequently, the class utilized Youtube videos and online applications such as Quizlet, but homework was only assigned from the workbook. In Szinyei, even a grammar-heavy class included many cultural references, and the teacher encouraged the students to consult the internet for understanding them. Students were asked to try a difficult task alone, but could get help from their peers if needed. Students were also

prompted to do research of their own in finding correct pronunciations. A Quizlet task was mentioned as homework assignment. In Apáczai, a longer video was shown to the class, based on which the students had to autonomously work out answers and formulate opinions, that were later discussed by the class. Homework included online reading material. In general, based on the admittedly very limited observations, considering the means accessible, these three classes conduct plenty of activities conducive to lifelong language learning.

The majority of the surveyed students (64%) considered the level of education in their strongest foreign language is appropriate to their current and desired skill levels. The remaining fifteen students (36%) all felt that the level of education was too low for them to properly progress. The school with the most such responses, seven was Szent Benedek, the weakest school from an academic standpoint and the school with the lowest predicted and desired expectations regarding their first foreign language. As for the second foreign language, only being taught in the two grammar schools, only one student (2%) reported that the level of education was too low, the rest judged the level of education is appropriate for them. No students felt the level education to be too difficult in either of their languages learned in compulsory education.

On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being the worst and 5 being the best grade, student satisfaction with the work of their language teachers averaged out to 3.29, with a high standard deviation, 1.31. Interestingly, school averages were quite similar, but the makeup of these averages was quite different. In Szent Benedek, the teacher received the same number of (1), (4) and (5) grades. In Apáczai, a majority of the students rated their teachers' work a (5), but all other grades were given out as well at least by one student each. In Szinyei, no one graded their teachers work (1) or (2), but more than half the students only rated their work a (3).

Students were split on whether tasks and activities in language classes are more interesting than activities of other subjects, an average of 2.76 on a five-point scale. It is

striking that each school reported a similar score collectively, but in every school, each grade from 1 to 5 was present, perhaps meaning that this question is up to personal sensibilities rather than teaching skills or class curriculum.

In Apáczai, every student appeared to agree (4) or completely agree (5) that there were more tasks and activities involving speaking skills than tasks limited to writing, while in Szinyei, every single student had a neutral opinion (3) on the issue. In Szent Benedek, the answers averaged out to 3.11. On a similar note, students in Apáczai were more likely to agree that tasks to be done in school or given as homework often utilize the internet, with a mean of 3.25 out of 5. In comparison, Szent Benedek student responses averaged out to 2.33, while Szinyei averaged a mere 2.17. High grades in these areas would be significant in instilling an attitude and proper motivation toward lifelong language learning, given that as previously discussed, most students aim to use their language skills in communicative environments such as foreign travel, work abroad or communicating with friends as well as internet use. Frequent use of internet-related tasks is also crucial because the skill of autonomous learning is a necessity for continued lifelong learning in adulthood, and as discussed earlier, the internet today plays a pivotal role in successful autonomous learning. In a more general inquiry regarding autonomous learning, student responses were split: a plurality of students somewhat agreed (4) that language classes in their school provided them with ample new skills and competences that enabled them to continue learning languages autonomously after graduation.

Overall, the questionnaire inquiries regarding classroom activity received answers with generally high standard deviation in every school. This is notable given that unlike quests into motivation or future language are independent from student to student, the classroom environment is shared by all students in a class, yet standard deviation is significantly smaller in most questionnaire items pertaining to those topics. Perhaps this

implies a high subjectivity of classroom events from the student perspective, which consequently would be a warning to not take teacher and third party class observations as necessarily representative opinions either. Another important aspect is that questions regarding classroom activity received answers and grades quite similar to average Hungarian high schools (Nikolov, Ottó and Öveges, 2008) despite the sample of students generally scoring above the Hungarian average regarding inquiries about language learning motivation and language use outside the classroom. Perhaps this means that the class teachers, curriculum and compulsory education in general are not primary contributors of the generally above average language proficiencies and more positive learning attitudes of these students.

Beliefs Regarding Continued Lifelong Language Learning

Fourteen students (33%) either strongly believed (5) or somewhat believed (4) that they will begin learning a new foreign language after finishing high school. This data should be viewed in light of the previously discussed responses telling that 60% of students expected they will achieve at least B1 proficiency levels in two languages by the end of their high school education. In addition, most the fourteen students with such motivations were from Szent Benedek, the only school out of the three where only one foreign language was being taught within the schools. Only five of the fourteen students were learning two languages in their grammar schools already. Perhaps these were the students with the highest linguistic inclinations, but contrasting that thought, only two of these students rated their talent for learning languages 5 out of 5, and only one of the students had plans to enroll in a higher education field of study directly related to foreign languages. One distinct connection between these five students, however, is that all of them considered the level of their first foreign language teaching to be too low compared to their own skill levels.

Lifelong language learning barriers. Only five students (12%) either fully disagreed (1) or fully agreed (5) that they will not have enough free time to learn languages once they

are employed, the majority of students had a neutral (3) stance on the matter, most likely meaning that they were not yet sure how their jobs will impact their free time and motivation toward learning. On the other hand, the students were much more confident that their family responsibilities will not take time away from their adult language learning endeavors: sixteen students (38%) disagreed completely (1), and thirteen students (31%) disagreed somewhat (2) with the notion, resulting in a 2.05 average. The lack of concern among students regarding time available for language learning is noteworthy when considering the fact that other than sheer lack of motivation, lack of free time was cited by Europeans as the most prohibitive barrier in language learning (European Commission, 2012, p. 95)

Besides lack of motivation and lack of time, the third major prohibitor of continued, adult language learning is the lack of necessary finances: among Hungarians, the cost of language learning was actually the number one barrier, as 44% of surveyed citizens claimed associated costs to be a discouraging factor (European Commission, 2012, p. 96). In stark contrast, perhaps due to students not yet being aware of their own future salaries or the costs of language education outside schools, only four students (10%) disagreed strongly (1) or somewhat (2) with the notion that they will be willing to finance language learning courses out of their own earnings. The statement received an average score of 3.83 out of 5, showing strong agreement. Predictably, the agreement regarding participation in language learning courses if they were provided free of charge is even higher, with an average of 4.10 out of 5. Oddly, students were slightly less likely to learn languages if they were being paid for it, with an average of 3.93 out of 5. Even more odd is that this was reflected by the much larger scale survey of the European Commssion (2012), finding that 29% of Europeans would be more likely to learn a language if the lessons were free, yet only 19% agreed that they would be more likely to learn one if they were paid for it (p. 84). Nevertheless, it seems most students are motivated to continue learning languages even without the guidance of compulsory

education. This is of special importance, seeing that all teachers maintained it was difficult to establish motivation for continued language learning: as one teacher put it, the need to learn languages may be inherently evident for a group of students, but for the rest, it was almost impossible to turn language learning into something more than a school subject ending at graduation.

Students tended to agree that their parents and other family members were supportive of their language learning endeavors, with a mean of 3.50 out of 5. Interesting to note is that the highest average came from students of Szent Benedek. On a related note, two teacher responses that asserted students with modest socio-economic backgrounds put a much higher emphasis on language learning than their more privileged peers. Two teachers also supposed that family background and support was crucial, and actually becoming more and more a defining element in language learning success, lamenting that their schools were unable to compensate for the differences.

The clear majority of students, thirty-five (83%), considered it easier to learn languages in Budapest, their current location, than in smaller, more rural areas. This seems to be in agreement with data that shows people in the capital and its corresponding region are generally higher educated than the rest of the country. In terms of language learning, perhaps the fact that Budapest is a very popular tourist destination for foreigners plays a part, but it is also likely that the more general differences in socio-economic makeup of Hungarian regions is responsible for the inequalities in language learning potential between Budapest and the rest of the country. Considering the special position of Budapest in language learning, related is the belief among students that they will have opportunities to maintain their language proficiencies acquired during compulsory education after graduation outside of formal education institutions: only one student (2%) thought no such opportunities will be present in the future.

Conclusion

The research explored whether the national and European aspirations toward nurturing a society of lifelong learners is ascertainable in the language learning attitudes of Hungarian high school students. The research looked at three high school classes in Budapest, collecting data through student questionnaires, teacher interviews and classroom observation.

The research found that while students do not share the EU ideals regarding the necessity of multilingualism for all, they nevertheless recognize the advantages of foreign language knowledge for their own selves, and as such are generally motivated to acquire proficiencies at least two foreign languages. Their desired language competences are notably higher than the current competences of European and especially Hungarian citizens. A large portion of students believe they will make significant progress toward their language learning goals by the end of their compulsory, high school education process. Most students study languages outside the boundaries of formal education, but a majority of them only use non-formal and informal methods to supplement their studies of the languages learned through formal education. Students value languages similarly to the rest of Europeans, with English taking precedence over others. Although at much higher rates, the students are motivated to learn languages for reasons similar to fellow Europeans: to be able to use languages during foreign travels, to communicate with foreign acquaintances, to work or study abroad, to use the internet and to consume media in foreign languages.

A small number of students already have negative language learning experiences. Opinions regarding the effectiveness of high school education, such as the class teacher or classroom procedures, are highly varied per individual. Teachers claimed to use several methods conducive to building lifelong learner competences and the class observations back up some of those assertions. Students seem to be motivated and willing to continue their language learning efforts after finishing compulsory education, though only a very small

number of students expect to start learning a third foreign language. Unlike Europeans and especially Hungarians, the sampled students do not yet consider lack of time or finances as major prohibitors of language learning adulthood. The language learning endeavors of students are seemingly not prohibited by their socio-economic backgrounds either: they are generally supported by their families, and believe that residing and studying in Budapest lends them language learning opportunities beyond their counterparts in different regions.

Limitations of scope and resources were most apparent in the research of classroom activities conducive of lifelong language learning. Student responses deviated too highly to identify trends, and classroom observation of just one class per school was not enough to establish reliable conclusions to contrast with the teacher interviews. In future studies, observation over a longer period is recommended.

The research on language learning attitudes of high school students may be expanded in several directions. The present study may serve as a base of comparison for similar qualitative research using a different sample, such as students in a rural area with different socio-economic backgrounds than the relatively privileged students in Budapest. Relying on the questionnaire, the research also lends itself as a basis of large scale research on student attitudes in Hungary or beyond. The research may also be expanded across a different dimension: a longitudinal study of the same sample of students may determine whether the exceptionally positive attitudes toward lifelong language learning fade over time or if the students indeed retain a desire to learn languages, in the words of Seneca: not for school, but for life.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Student questionnaire response example

An example of the online student questionnaire responses sent through the Google Forms layout in its original language, Hungarian.

A válaszok nem szerkeszthetők

Középiskolás diákok gondolatai a nyelvtanulásról

A kérdőív kitöltése kb. 15 percet vesz igénybe.

Életkorod (év): *

16

Nemed: *

- (●) Lány
- ( ) Fiú

Iskolád: *

- (●) ELTE Apáczai Csere János Gyakorló Gimnázium
- ( ) Szinyei Merse Pál Gimnázium
- ( ) Szent Benedek Középiskola

Legmagasabb szinten beszélt idegennyelved: *

Angol

Csoportosítsd az általad beszélt / tanult idegennyelveket

"iskolában tanulás" = általános, illetve középiskolában tanulás. Ebbe beleértendő a feladott házi feladat, házi dolgozat elkészítése is.
"iskolán kívüli tanulás" = ha nyelviskolába jársz, külön tanárhoz jártál, külföldiekkel kommunikálsz, szüleidtől tanultad, külföldön laktál, stb.

CSAK iskolában tanulod/tanultad:

angol

Iskolában ÉS iskolán kívül is tanulod/tanultad:

francia

CSAK iskolán kívül tanulod/tanultad:

Szerinted mennyire hasznos beszélni az alábbi nyelveket?

Angol *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem hasznos	○	○	○	○	◉	Nagyon hasznos

Magyar *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem hasznos	○	○	○	◉	○	Nagyon hasznos

Német *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem hasznos	○	○	○	◉	○	Nagyon hasznos

Francia *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem hasznos	○	○	◉	○	○	Nagyon hasznos

Kínai *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem hasznos	○	○	○	◉	○	Nagyon hasznos

Van olyan idegen nyelv, aminek tudása szerinted kifejezetten hasznos, de nem szerepelt ezen a listán? Ha van, sorold fel őket.

Nyelvtudásod értékelése

Kérlek, az alábbiak alapján pontozz:
5 - felsőfok (C1) vagy még erősebb
4 - középfok / emelt szintű érettségi (B2)
3 - középszintű érettségi (B1)
2 - alapfok (A2)
1 - nagyon gyenge

Milyen szinten szeretnél tudni a LEGERŐSEBB idegennyelveden? *

1	2	3	4	5
○	○	○	○	◉

Szerinted a középiskola végére meddig a szintig fogsz eljutni a LEGERŐSEBB idegennyelvedből? *

1	2	3	4	5
○	○	○	○	◉

Milyen a nyelvoktatás szintje az iskoládban a LEGERŐSEBB idegennyelveden? *

- (●) Megfelelő
- ( ) Túl alacsony
- ( ) Túl magas

Milyen szinten szeretnél tudni a MÁSODIK idegennyelveden?

1	2	3	4	5
( )	( )	( )	(●)	( )

Szerinted a középiskola végére meddig a szintig fogsz eljutni a MÁSODIK idegennyelvedből?

1	2	3	4	5
( )	( )	(●)	( )	( )

Milyen a nyelvoktatás szintje az iskoládban a MÁSODIK idegennyelveden?

- (●) Megfelelő
- ( ) Túl alacsony
- ( ) Túl magas

Szerinted milyen területeken fogod majd hasznosítani az idegennyelv-tudásod?

Akármennyit bejelölhetsz!

Szerinted milyen területeken fogod majd hasznosítani az idegennyelv-tudásod?

- [x] Nyelvvel kapcsolatos felsőoktatási tanulmányok (pl. anglisztika, turizmus-vendéglátás, stb.)
- [ ] Érettségit teszek belőle
- [x] Külföldi munka / tanulás
- [ ] Nyelvtudást igénylő munka hazai cégnél
- [x] Idegennyelvű emberekkel, ismerősökkel való kapcsolat (munkán kívül)
- [ ] Külföldi utazás során
- [x] Internet (idegennyelvű oldalak)
- [x] Média fogyasztása (pl. filmek eredeti nyelven felirat nélkül, stb.)
- [ ] Egyéb: .....

Mennyire értesz egyet az alábbi állításokkal?

Az idegen nyelvek a fontosabb tantárgyak közé tartoznak. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	○	○	◉	Teljesen igaz

Főleg a felvételi/érettségi miatt tanulok nyelveket, ezért érettségi/nyelvvizsga után már nem fogok azzal a nyelvvel aktívan foglalkozni. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	◉	○	○	Teljesen igaz

A középiskola elvégzése után (akármikor) el fogok kezdeni egy számomra teljesen új idegen nyelvet tanulni. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	◉	○	○	Teljesen igaz

Felnőttként nehezebb nyelvet tanulni, mint most, a középiskolában. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	○	◉	○	Teljesen igaz

A nyelvtudás fontos szempont a munkaadók számára. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	○	○	◉	Teljesen igaz

A vezetői pozícióban lévő dolgozóknak fontosabb a magas szintű nyelvtudás, mint az alacsony rangú dolgozóknak. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	○	◉	○	Teljesen igaz

Munka mellett nem lesz időm a nyelvtanulásra. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	◉	○	○	Teljesen igaz

A családom miatt nem lesz időm a nyelvtanulásra. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	◉	○	○	Teljesen igaz

Hajlandó leszek saját keresetemből nyelviskolai kurzust fizetni. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	○	◉	○	Teljesen igaz

Ha lenne rá lehetőség, felnőttként is igénybe vennék ingyenes nyelvoktatást. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	○	○	◉	Teljesen igaz

Tanulnék nyelvet felnőttként, ha fizetést kapnék érte. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	○	○	◉	Teljesen igaz

Ha kapnék egy jó tananyag csomagot, önmagamban is képes lennék elsajátítani egy idegen nyelvet; nem lenne szükségem nyelvórákra bejárni. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	◉	○	○	Teljesen igaz

Iskolai kereteken kívül is lesz arra lehetőségem, hogy szinten tartsam a nyelvtudásomat. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	◉	○	○	Teljesen igaz

Minden európai állampolgárnak legalább egy idegen nyelven kéne beszélnie. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	○	◉	○	Teljesen igaz

Minden európai állampolgárnak legalább két idegen nyelven kéne beszélnie. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	◉	○	○	○	Teljesen igaz

Jó a nyelvérzékem, könnyebben tanulok nyelveket, mint az átlag. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	◉	○	○	Teljesen igaz

Az angol nyelvtudás veszíteni fog az értékéből, ha az Egyesült Királyság kilép az EU-ból. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	◉	○	○	○	Teljesen igaz

Budapesten könnyebb nyelvet tanulni, mint egy kis faluban. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	○	○	◉	Teljesen igaz

Mennyire értesz egyet az alábbi állításokkal?

Ha több idegennyelvet tanulsz és különböző érzéseid vannak a kettő iránt, kérlek "átlagold" az érzéseidet.

Rossz tapasztalataim vannak a nyelvtanulással kapcsolatban. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	◉	○	○	○	Teljesen igaz

Igazából egy másik nyelvet akartam tanulni, de arra nem volt lehetőség az iskolában. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	○	◉	○	Teljesen igaz

Az iskolám szervez külföldi cserediák programot. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	○	○	◉	Teljesen igaz

Az iskolai nyelvórákon érdekesebb feladatok vannak, mint a többi órán. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	◉	○	○	Teljesen igaz

Az iskolai nyelvórákon sok olyan dolgot megtanulunk, ami segít később önállóan nyelvet tanulni majd. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	◉	○	○	Teljesen igaz

Az iskolai nyelvórákon gyakoriak az internetet igénybe vevő feladatok (akár órán, akár házi feladatként). *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	○	◉	○	Teljesen igaz

Az iskolai órákon több a szóbeli, mint az írásbeli feladat. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	○	◉	○	Teljesen igaz

Elégedett vagyok a jelenlegi iskolai nyelvtanárom munkájával. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	◉	○	○	Teljesen igaz

A családom nagyban segíti a nyelvtanulásomat. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Egyáltalán nem igaz	○	○	◉	○	○	Teljesen igaz

Most már csak a Küldés gombra kell rákattintanod! :) Köszönöm, hogy kitöltötted a kérdőívet! - Papp Dávid

Appendix B – Translated student questionnaire

An English translation of the online student questionnaire form.

High school students' opinions on language learning

Filling out the questionnaire takes approximately 15 minutes.

* Required

1. Age (years): *

- ◯ 14
- ◯ 15
- ◯ 16
- ◯ 17
- ◯ 18

2. Gender: *

- ◯ Female
- ◯ Male

3. School: *

- ◯ ELTE Apáczai Csere János Gyakorló Gimnázium
- ◯ Szinyei Merse Pál Gimnázium
- ◯ Szent Benedek Szakközépiskola

4. Your strongest foreign language: *

- ◯ English
- ◯ German
- ◯ French
- ◯ Spanish
- ◯ Italian
- ◯ Russian
- ◯ Chinese
- ◯ Other

Categorize the foreign languages you are studying / learning

"learning in school" = learning in primary or high school. This category includes homework and home projects as well.
"learning out of school" = e.g. going to a language school, seeing a private teacher, communication with foreigners, learning from parents, living abroad, etc.

5. learning ONLY in school:

6. learning BOTH in and out of school:

7. learning ONLY out of school:

How useful would you rate proficiency in the following languages?

8. English *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not useful at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Extremely useful

9. Hungarian *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not useful at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Extremely useful

10. German *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not useful at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Extremely useful

11. French *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not useful at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Extremely useful

12. Chinese *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not useful at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Extremely useful

13. Are there any foreign languages you consider particularly useful, but did not appear in this section?

Grading your own language proficiency

Please grade according to the following:
5 - advanced language exam (C1) or stronger
4 - intermediate language exam / advanced matura (B2)
3 - standard matura level (B1)
2 - basic (A2)
1 - very weak

14. Which level would you like to achieve in your BEST foreign language? *

1	2	3	4	5
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

15. How far do you think you will get in your BEST foreign language by the end of high school? *

1	2	3	4	5
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

16. How would you grade the level of language education in your high school class of your BEST foreign language? *

- ◯ Appropriate
- ◯ Too low
- ◯ Too high

17. Which level would you like to achieve in your SECOND BEST foreign language?

1	2	3	4	5
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

18. How far do you think you will get in your SECOND BEST foreign language by the end of high school?

1	2	3	4	5
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

19. How would you grade the level of language education in your high school class of your SECOND BEST foreign language?

- ◯ Appropriate
- ◯ Too low
- ◯ Too high

In what areas do you think you will use your foreign language competencies?

You can check as many boxes as you feel appropriate!

20. *Check all that apply.*

- [ ] Higher education studies related to languages (e.g. English, Tourism, etc.)
- [ ] High school matura
- [ ] Working or studying abroad
- [ ] Job at a Hungarian employer requiring foreign language competencies
- [ ] Communication with foreign friends and acquaintances (outside of work)
- [ ] Trip abroad
- [ ] Internet (e.g. foreign language wesbites)
- [ ] Media consumption (e.g. movies in their original language without Hungarian subtitles)
- [ ] Other: _____

How much do you agree with the following statements?

21. Foreign languages are among the more important school subjects. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Completely agree

22. I primarily learn foreign languages to get better scores on my matura exams, so I will not actively use or study foreign languages after my matura. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Completely agree

23. I will start learning a completely new foreign languages (at any point) after finishing high school. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Completely agree

24. It will be more difficult to learn languages as an adult, than now as a high high school student. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Completely agree

25. Foreign language skills are valued by employers. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Completely agree

26. High level foreign language proficiencies are more important for people in leadership positions than for low level employees. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Completely agree

27. I will not have the free time to learn languages as an adult due to my job. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Completely agree

28. I will not have the free time to learn languages as an adult beacuse of my family. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Completely agree

29. I will be inclined to spend my own money for a language course. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Completely agree

30. If as an adult, I got an opportunity to learn languages for free, I would take it. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Completely agree

31. I would learn languages as an adult, if I got paid in exchange. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Completely agree

32. Given a quality set of textbooks, I would be able to learn a language on my own, without attending classes. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Completely agree

33. I will have opportunities to maintain my foreign language skills outside school. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Completely agree

34. Every European citizen should speak at least one foreign language. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Completely agree

35. Every European citizen should speak at least two foreign languages. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Completely agree

36. I learn languages easier than the average person. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Completely agree

37. The value of English language skills will decrease if the United Kingdom leaves the EU. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Completely agree

38. It is easier to learn languages in Budapest, than in a small, rural village. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Completely agree

How much do you agree with the following statements?

If you learn multiple foreign languages in school and have differing opinions toward them, please try to take an "average" of your opinions.

39. I have negative experiences regarding language learning. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Completely agree

40. I wanted to learn a language that was not available in my school. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Completely agree

41. My school offers foreign exchange programs. *

- ◯ True
- ◯ False / I don't know

42. Language classes in school feature more interesting tasks than other subjects. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Completely agree

43. During our language classes in school, we acquire skills that will later help us learn languages on our own. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Completely agree

44. Activities for the school language class frequently require internet use (during class or as homework). *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Completely agree

45. Oral tasks during the school language class are more frequent than writing tasks. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Completely agree

46. I am satisfied with the work of my current language teacher in school. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Completely agree

47. My family supports my language learning efforts. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Completely disagree	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Completely agree

Please click the Send button :) Thank you for completing the quiestionnaire! - Papp Dávid

Appendix C – Classroom observation notes

An example of the notes taken during the class observation. The notes were originally taken using English.

Classroom observation

School: Szinyei Merse Pál Gimnázium

Date: 2017. 03. 17. 5th period

Observation: activities conducive of autonomous learning

Homework check (10 mins)

previous homework: check on the internet to understand cultural references (Gutenberg bible, radio, phone call, fax machine, walkman, Lumiere cinema, Marilyn Monroe) culture discussed2

„consult the internet" -> „this is really important for your future studies"

Grammar explanation, passive (10 mins)

Tasks using newly learned passive voice in workbook (7 mins)

difficult task ->„try it alone"

students are allowed to ask for help from each other if they get stuck

Tasks on custom handout (15 mins)

learn words related to films (even though it is a grammar lesson) „really really important"

„use the knowledge you have" autonomous work

End of class, assigning homework (3 mins)

find the correct pronounciation of this word „do some research"

quizlet homework

no organized pair activities during class / no groupwork during class

Appendix D – Original teacher interview transcript

An example of the language teacher interview transcripts in its original language, Hungarian.

Tanári interjú

Iskola: Szinyei Merse Pál Gimnázium

Időpont: 2017. 03. 17.

Tanár: Tick Vera

Melyek a leghasznosabb nyelvek a mai fiatalok számára?

bármilyen idegen nyelv
angol mint az autó vezetés, mindenkinek tudnia kell

A diákok szerint milyen jelentőségű a nyelvtanulás a többi tárgyhoz képest?

jelentősebbek között, ha valamit akkor ezt tanulják
gyakorlatiasabb tudásra tesznek szert, nem csak a könyvet magolják
jellemző, hogy nem a tagozatos (német NYEK) nyelvből, hanem angolból hozzák a nyelvvizsgákat

Mi motiválja a diákokat a nyelvtanulásra?

internet, facebook, social media, filmek
nem jellemző, hogy felvételire bele gondolnak 9-10be

Meddig jutnak el első / második nyelvből a diákok középiskla végére? Nagy a szórás?

középfok mindenki első nyelvből
felsőfok kb. 3 ember, plusz motiváció kell ami jellemzően nincs meg, nagy a szakadék a felsőfok és középfok között
második ha nincs egyéb segítség akkor érettségi, de nyelvvizsga stb nem jellemző

Jó ötlet-e két idegennyelv tudást elvárni mindenkitől? Ez mennyire reális?

jó ötlet, középiskola végére nem reális a legtöbbnek, NYEK tagozattal sem
angol akkor is gyakran jobban megy ha nem az az első nyelvük

Érettségi, felvételi után hol fogják használni a nyelvet a diákok?

munkahely, külföldön tanulnak tovább, egyetemi mesterszak feltétele

Jellemző az iskola az iskolán kívüli idegennyelv-használat a diákok körében? Az iskola miben segíti ezt elő?

jók között jellemző: internet, chat, fórumok, játékok, filmek
olvasás nyári feladat
van cserediák program, német nyelvű területekre jellemzőbb

Mennyire jelentős a családi háttér és a hozott képesség?

iskola jellemzően középosztály, alsó középosztály
háttér nagyon jelentős, és a jelentőség nő is
az iskola nem tudja kompenzálni
szegényebb gyerekek felkészültebben mennek nyelvvizsgázni

Az órákon milyen elemek, tevékenységek készítik fel a diákokat a későbbi önálló nyelvtanulásra?

groupwork, pairwork
youtube (ICT nem alkalmas, nincs wifi, videókat letöltve kell behozni saját gépen)
házi feladat: ppt prezentáció készítése, kutatás

Appendix E – Translated teacher interview transcript

An English translation of Appendix D.

Teacher interview

School: Szinyei Merse Pál Gimnázium

Időpont: 2017. 03. 17.

Teacher: Vera Tick

Which languages are the most important for today's youth?

any foreign language is useful
learning English is like learning to drive a car, everyone has to learn it

How important do students consider language learning to be compared to other school subjects?

among the more important ones, if they study anything they study languages
they acquire more applied skills instead of just memorizing textbook information
students tend to pass early language exams in English first, even if they have a German specialization

What motivates the students to learn languages?

internet, facebook, social media, movies
they tend not to think about matura exams at this age yet

What level of proficiency do they acquire by the end of high school? Is there high deviation between students?

everyone reaches the level of an intermediate language exam (B2)
advanced language exam (C1) about 3 students, reaching that level needs additional motivation they usually do not possess, there is a large skill gap between B2 and C1
second language proficiency is enough for a basic matura (B1), anything hihger than that is uncommon

Is expecting proficiency in two foreign languages a good idea? How realistic is this goal?

good idea, but not realistic for high school education, not even with a YILL class
English skills tend to end up stronger even if it is not their first foreign language

Where will students use their foreign language skills after high school graduation?

work, higher education abroad, requirement for university master's degrees

Is foreign language use outside school boundaries common among students? How does the school facilitate language use through these channels?

common among better students: internet, chat, forums, video games, films
reading as summertime assignment
foreign exchange program, mostly for German speaking territorries

How important is the students' family background and talent for language learning?

students in the school tend to be middle-class, lower middle-class
background is very important, and becoming even more important these days
the school struggles to compensate that
students from lower class families prepare harder before attempting language exams

What tasks and activities does the class provide that may prepare students for autonomous language learning in the future?

groupwork, pairwork
youtube (no proper ICT background, no wifi, videos need to be downloaded and brought in using personal laptop)
homework: creating ppt presentations, research