1. Research background and problem statement

For many years, the moderate success of foreign language learning in Hungary has been a prominent topic in Hungarian language pedagogical research (e.g. Kuti−Öveges 2016, Öveges−Csizér 2018). Although language learning motivation has been widely investigated (e.g. Csizér−Kormos 2007, Öveges−Csizér 2018), and the need for pedagogical modernisation has been strongly emphasised (e.g. Einhorn 2015a), describing the wider social context has been somewhat neglected. I would like to bring a change with my dissertation, in which I argue that the language ideologies of language learners related to Hungarian should be taken into account during the foreign language learning process, and that a deeper understanding of the educational, cultural and social environment surrounding learners is necessary.

The debate surrounding the 2001 Advertising Language Act (see Kis 2022) has drawn attention to the language ideologies that exist among Hungarian language users. Language purists and language cultivation have been subject to much criticism (e.g. Lanstyák 2003−2004), however, it has also been revealed that their attitudes towards language are still dominant in the Hungarian speaking community (e.g. Domonkosi 2007, Jánk 2016, Jani-Demetriou 2021). Meanwhile, language pedagogical research has focused on the causes of language learning failure (e.g. Kuti−Öveges 2016), nonetheless, the general and Hungarian-related language attitudes of learners have not been included in the scope of the studies. Therefore, in my dissertation I sought to answer whether the beliefs of learners about their first language are related to their language learning attitudes, language learning anxiety and language learning motivation. I also investigated which beliefs about the Hungarian language correlate with the learners' language exam scores.

Relating language ideologies about Hungarian to language learning motives is a novelty. This provides a new perspective on the moderate success rate of language learning in Hungary (Flash Eurobarometer 2018; Language Exam Statistics 2022, see Nyelvvizsga-statisztikák 2022).

1.1. Research questions

In my dissertation I explore three questions. First, I will examine whether beliefs about Hungarian are related to beliefs about foreign languages, language learning motivation and language learning anxiety. I then examine whether beliefs about Hungarian are related to language learning outcomes. Finally, I will present the main topics of the interviews, which I will compare with the quantitative results that answer the first two research questions.

By presenting the research questions specifically, the dissertation seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a relationship between beliefs about the learners' first language and beliefs about language learning?

a) Which language learning beliefs are in correlation with prescriptivism? Is a strong prescriptivist view associated with stronger language learning anxiety? How do language learning beliefs evolve when a learner experiences a strong prescriptive attitude in his/her environment?

b) Which language learning beliefs are in correlation with standard language ideology?

c) Is the fear of assimilation associated with poorer language learning attitudes and lower motivation to learn a language?

d) Are purists less motivated language learners?

e) Is someone who is more linguistically prejudiced a more anxious language learner? How does his/her motivation to learn a language develop?

f) How widespread is the belief that Hungarian is a special language, and what kind of language learning beliefs does this entail?

g) Is there a correlation between beliefs about Hungarian and bilingualism?

h) Which beliefs about the first language go together with integrative and instrumental motivation, and the ideal and ought-to self?

i) Which beliefs about Hungarian correlate with the view that grammar learning is paramount in language learning?

j) Does quantitative research with teachers confirm the student-related observations?

2. Is there a difference between successful and less successful language learners in their beliefs about Hungarian?

3. What are the main differences in emphasis between the results of the quantitative database and the interview corpus and what does this suggest?

2. Research methodology

In my research I used the Mixed Method, that is, I analysed both quantitative and qualitative data. According to Király et al. (2014: 96), this is advantageous because qualitative data can be used to help interpret quantitative findings, and quantitative methods can be used to verify qualitative findings.

To describe language learning motivation, I used Dörnyei's (2009) Second Language Motivational Self System model, and I examined language ideologies about Hungarian based on Lanstyák (2007), Szabó (2007) and Kontra (2009). However, my specific research questions required the development of a new

instrument. The Mixed Method was suitable for this purpose, as I could base the questionnaire on the topics and findings of the interviews.

2.1. Qualitative research

The qualitative data collection was carried out between May 2014 and March 2016. I conducted semi-structured interviews with twenty secondary school teachers in Budapest and twenty-five adult language learners aged between 19 and 38 about changes in our language, the state of language teaching in Hungary and their language learning experiences.

The interviews with the learners took the form of an individual interview with seven learners, a pair interview with six learners and a focus group interview with the others (12 learners).

Over time, it became more and more important for me to understand the learning process, that is, what kind of language learners students become in their specific socio-cultural environment, therefore, in this dissertation I only analyse the student interviews (n=25).

The interviews were digitally audio-recorded. Following transcription, the 8.1 hour-long audio material about language learners resulted in a corpus of 65,072 words, which I analysed using the constant comparative method (cf. Gelencsér 2003).

In the analysis, I used triangulation, that is, I performed the coding twice, leaving a longer period between the two coding sessions. No significant differences were found between the categories obtained.

The results obtained using the qualitative method were comparable with the findings of the questionnaire study and enriched them on several points due to their ability to give a more in-depth explanation.

2.2. Quantitative research

Quantitative data collection was carried out using a questionnaire. I employed the think-aloud method for questionnaire development and tested the instrument in a pilot study in May 2016 (n=85). The final questionnaire was completed by April 2017 and was filled in by language learners aged 18−24.

The questionnaire contains 30 statements about first language and 56 statements about language learning separately. The students were asked to give a score on a six-point Likert scale after responding to questions about their demographic situation and language learning history (e.g. number of years spent learning a given language, language examination results). In addition, the Hungarian section included 13 standard or stigmatized sentences (e.g. *miatt/végett*) and three spelling variables (e.g. *húszas/huszas*), which students were asked to answer with "Correct.", "Incorrect.", or "I don't know."

The questionnaire was sent to secondary schools and university departments across the country in an online format (Lois 2017a, completed by 434 students) requesting addressees to distribute it to students through the institution's online administration system and closed Facebook groups. This was complemented by a paper-based data collection in Budapest with 79 language learners.

After data cleaning (n=507), I started the analysis using SPSS (19.0) software. Principal component analysis was performed on statements about first language and language learning, while the correlation between Hungarian and foreign language factors was tested by calculating Pearson's correlation coefficient. The significance level was set at 0.05.

The high scoring items, which the vast majority of the students agreed on, were later examined separately, while cluster analysis was performed on the data from the

grammaticality test. Based on the extent to which students followed the standard version in their judgements of grammaticality, two groups emerged. The opinions of so-called standard and non-standard groups about Hungarian and language learning were then compared using a two-sample t-test. Where this was not possible using the normality test (Kolgomorov−Smirnov test), I used the Mann−Whitney test.

Students who had at least an intermediate level of proficiency (B2) in their first foreign language were compared with those who had a basic level of knowledge or had not yet obtained a language certificate in that language using a two-sample t-test. I found differences between them in their beliefs about Hungarian and language learning. I also tested the first research question of the dissertation (see section 1.1. of this thesis booklet) on a database of teachers (n=57), so that the results could be generalised to a larger population. Data from teachers (Lois 2017b) was collected at the same time as data from students.

Spelling variables were not analysed because they lost their relevance to the research topic as the work progressed.

3. Major findings

Based on the quantitative and qualitative data, the main question of the dissertation can be answered by stating that beliefs about the first language are related to beliefs about language learning, language learning motivation and language learning anxiety.

According to the research questions described in section 1.1.:

1. Native Hungarian adult language learners' beliefs about their first language and beliefs about language learning show correlations.

a) The prescriptive view of learners can be interpreted as a contradictory ideology for language learning, because it is associated with a good general attitude towards language learning and high instrumental motivation, but it also correlates with fear of making mistakes. Different beliefs develop if the language learner experiences a prescriptive attitude in his/her environment than if he/she identifies with it. Language learning anxiety is reinforced by the prescriptive view of schools and teachers.

b) It can be shown that standard language ideology is related to ideologies about foreign languages. Pupils who prefer standard sentences have low fear of assimilation and high linguistic self-confidence. Thus, standardisation goes beyond the assessment of Hungarian language variables.

c) Fear of assimilation and fear of foreign words are interrelated and show themselves to be a significant ideology. It correlates negatively with general language learning attitudes, the ideal self, integrative motivation, and is associated with a specific language learner character that emphasizes the importance of grammatical knowledge in Hungarian.

d) The purist ideology is clearly a part of a phenomenon that rejects anything foreign, consequently, it does not only apply to foreign words. Underlying this defensive attitude towards foreign words is a general rejection that also restrains language learning. A purist language learner with a monolingual approach has a poor general attitude to language learning and is negative towards early language learning. Ideologies about Hungarian are not independent from those about language learning. Language ideologies with elements of nationalist ideology are consistently associated with poor language learning attitudes and low motivation to learn languages.

e) Language bias, similarly to prescriptivism, appears to be a multi-layered ideology regarding language learning. On the one hand, it correlates with general language learning attitude, instrumental motivation and the ought-to self, but on the other hand, it reinforces fear of making mistakes. It is a crucial part of our foreign language learning environment.

f) A typical theme is the emphasis on the richness of the Hungarian vocabulary, with language learners reporting a high level of pride in the Hungarian language. The prouder someone is of their mother tongue, the more likely they are to have a weak ought-to self and integrative motivation.

g) The ideology of double monolingualism is maintained and reinforced by the prescriptive approach. The language attitude of the teachers around the students is crucial.

h) The beliefs of learners about Hungarian are related to their instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, ideal self and ought-to self. Prescriptivism and language bias are associated with strong instrumental motivation and a strong ideal self, but fear of foreigners and monolingual language attitudes hinder language learning.

i) The approach with which language learners regard learning grammar as highly important in foreign language learning relates to Hungarian language ideologies on several points. This can be interpreted as a new academic finding as to why it is so difficult (for learners and teachers alike) to break with traditional language learning methods.

j) The results of the quantitative survey with teachers confirm the findings of the student database. Prescriptivism and language bias correlate with instrumental motivation, while a prescriptive approach also increases language learning anxiety.

2. There is a difference between students with and without at least an intermediate level (B2) language exam in their first foreign language in terms of their beliefs about Hungarian. "Unsuccessful" language learners had stronger fear of anything foreign, were more likely to show monolingual attitudes and had a higher mean score for indicating that their school followed the prescriptive tradition.

3. The shifts in emphasis between the results of the quantitative database and the interview corpus suggest that language learning motivation should be interpreted in relation to other beliefs. The interviews convey a complex picture of the learners' feelings of loneliness, ambivalence and suffering during the language learning process, while also revealing poor attitudes towards learning in groups. Furthermore, monolingual ideology works against the prestige of language learning by making it seem useless and difficult. In the light of these findings, it is worth reconsidering the role of motivation in language learning, while emotions and learner experiences should be taken as decisive factors.

4. Conclusions

4.1. Methodological conclusions

1. I found the use of the Mixed Method effective throughout the research process. With the qualitative methods, the complexity of the beliefs could be grasped profoundly, and the developing of the questionnaire was significantly aided by the parallel interviews. The dominance of the quantitative method is still significant in language pedagogical research (Csizér−Albert 2020: 209), and this might be worth changing.

2. The methods used in the research and the questionnaire developed for this purpose are suitable for examining teachers and older language learners, for which we find few examples in the literature.

4.2. Theoretical conclusions

1. The most significant results of my thesis, which can be considered a novelty in an international aspect, too, is that some beliefs about the first language are in correlation with some beliefs about learning foreign languages, and these beliefs can have an impact on the success of learning a foreign language and can often hinder the process of learning. It has been concluded that when we search for the reasons for the failures of foreign language learning in Hungary, these correlations cannot be ignored.

2. The beliefs about language learning cannot be altered easily, because they are connected to other beliefs and ideologies, so only a slow shift in the beliefs can be expected. The policy of language education and the practice of language pedagogy must know about the correlations of all the beliefs of language learning, so that some adequate steps could be taken forward.

3. Linguistic ideologies are worth investigating continually. Even such frequently analysed ideologies as prescriptivism sometimes need to be revised. The correlation between the prescriptive approach and language learning motivation is a new finding.

4. The Instrumental-Integrative Motivational Theory and the Foreign Language (L2) Motivational Self System provided a good basis for developing the dimensions to be investigated, but I would like to emphasize that deviating from the Foreign Language (L2) Motivational Self System can easily be a characteristic of a community of speakers (see e.g. Thompson 2017). In my research, the elements of the ideal self and integrative motivation were not separated in the data provided by the language learners. Each language community has a unique pattern of knowledge about languages, and theories should allow for this variability.

5. Finally, I would like to stress the importance of language learning experiences in language learning. I agree with Csizér and Kálmán (2019: 227) who argue that the study of language learning experiences should not be limited to the specific representation of the teacher, the curriculum and the learner group, but should take into account more complex emotional processes. The relevance of this direction is confirmed by my qualitative research results.

4.3. Pedagogical implications and the responsibility of linguists

The pedagogical implications of this dissertation are manifold. While the role of teachers and linguists in shaping attitudes is of paramount importance, it should also be recognised that the power of social reality outside the school and the researcher is even greater.

1. Most importantly, language learning cannot be disconnected from the educational, cultural and social context that surrounds it, so if we want to characterise it or try to improve its effectiveness, we also need to consider the context. There is a need for research to give greater prominence to the traditional and strong ideologies that shape societal thinking about languages and language learning. We can only speak of a supportive learning environment if, in addition to the specific learning environment, the pedagogical environment, educational policy and common social norms all support language learning.

2. Similarly, but focusing on language ideologies, the findings of this dissertation show that if we do not address the Hungarian-related beliefs of language learners, an area that is dominant in language learning remains unexplored.

3. Non-language teachers are also responsible for the general approach of learners towards languages. Therefore there is a need to consolidate modern, scientifically based beliefs on Hungarian language among teachers and students alike (cf. Margócsy 2006a, 2006b, Lois 2016: 133−137), and teachers' language studies should be supported, too. This measure could probably diminish the tendency of giving over the monolingual ideology which is very characteristic until this day.

4. It is also worth emphasising the public role of linguists, since a misconception of a certain belief might take an institutional form. For example, the foreign travel programme for ninth and eleventh graders (Language Learning Abroad Programme 2022, see Külföldi Nyelvtanulási Program 2022) is certainly based on the belief that even a short period of time spent in the target language environment can make a huge difference to language learning. In such cases, the social engagement and action of linguists is of paramount importance (e.g. Reményi 2021).

5. Finally, some definite recommendations can be made based on the results of the interview corpus, which suggest that language learning in schools needs to be reconsidered. It is necessary to win students over by setting precise objectives and showing the benefits of learning in groups. Non-language teachers also have a major role in this respect. It is important to make learners aware that A1, A2 and B1 levels are also valuable and that there are situations in which they can be used. They should be made aware that learning is a way of life and can also be a leisure activity (cf. Einhorn 2015b: 35−36). Greater cross-curricular interaction should also be ensured, which can contribute to the feeling of being surrounded by foreign languages.

4.4. Further directions for research

1. The basic question of the dissertation – how language ideologies about the first language are related to ideologies about second, third (etc.) languages – can be investigated in any speaking community and can be used to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of language learning. It would be particularly interesting to look at specific factors, such as language bias and prescriptive attitudes, in such detail as to identify which elements of language learning motivation tend to move in a positive and which in a negative direction.

2. I consider it important to further investigate the relationship of beliefs about first language with language learning anxiety. My own research could be a starting point for an investigation that takes a more differentiated view of anxiety: for example, it could be raised whether certain beliefs about Hungarian are more associated with debilitating anxiety (in which the learner avoids contact with the foreign language) or rather facilitating anxiety (in which the learner increases the energy invested in language learning).

3. I emphasise the role of language learning experiences in language learning and recommend a more in-depth investigation of these. Shao et al. (2019: 8) consider the role of emotions in the well-being and performance of language learners as fundamental, and examine, for example, hope, hopelessness, pride, anger and shame as relevant factors. The study of emotions should also be given more space in motivation research, and research should be conducted that focuses on how emotions, attitudes and motivation relate to each other. In the Hungarian language community, instrumental motivation would be worth investigating from such a perspective, because I have often felt in my work that instrumental motivation of learners is high, but that it is not a sufficient driving force for learning.

4. Finally, a broad study of the learning environment, including a social perspective, is recommended for further research. This is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of language learners and to explore how the effectiveness of language learning in Hungary can be improved.

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