Issues in English Language Education

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Introduction

Time to take stock. For three reasons: first, the beginning of a new millennium marks a turning point in time when looking back and ahead feels natural. Second, Hungarian foreign language education abounds in challenges; it seems time to identify what research areas have been covered and where more research is necessary. Third, new rules in Hungarian tertiary education have put pressure on all of us to come up to new expectations and publish more. This book is an attempt to do so.

The chapters of this book illustrate how fortunate I have been in a number of ways. The areas I have explored during my teaching career have all been linked to my work; therefore, I never needed to find a focus for research, as they were all within reach and of special importance for me. Also, the empirical studies in this book, with the exception of Chapters Two and Seven, required no funding at all; they could be conducted without any external support. Chapters Three, Four and Five involved my pupils and myself over the 18 years I worked as a primary-school teacher of English as a foreign language; in Chapters Two and Six my university students collected the empirical data as part of their course assignments, whereas in Chapter Seven teachers involved in the Hungarian Examination Reform Project observed classes and interviewed colleagues. As I have said in the *Acknowledgements* section, I am grateful to all these participants.

The criteria for selecting these studies to be included in this book were the following. Apart from Chapter One, empirical ones were chosen. Previous versions of these papers have been discussed at conferences and in workshops, and expert feedback has been available on them, not only on submission for publication, but also during my habilitation procedure at the University of Pécs in 2000, so hopefully they are of a good standard and they will be appreciated by readers. Second, no co-authored studies are included, though while

developing these chapters I received help from a number of people, as indicated in the *Acknowledgements*.

The length of the chapters varies to a great extent. The longest chapter gives an overview of an area, which has grown enormously in recent years, whereas the shortest one has a narrow focus, which is why it would have been inappropriate to discuss the topic in more detail. The interested reader will not find cross references to studies in this monograph, as each chapter is supposed to be a unit on its own.

As for the content of the chapters, they all enquire into second language acquisition (SLA) and foreign language learning (FLL) in general, and English language education in Hungary in particular. With the exceptions of the theoretical overview of research into early second language acquisition and the study on successful adult language learners, the empirical studies focus on Hungarian classrooms of English as a foreign language.

The first chapter provides a critical overview of the research related to the critical period hypothesis (CPH) and early second and foreign language studies. This area has become extremely popular in the 90s, with early modern language programmes mushrooming all over the world. The chapter analyses not only the issues but also the research methodology applied in studies in which strong support is found for or against early start programmes. The first part of the chapter considers theoretical arguments for the CPH through the neurolinguistic, cognitive, social-psychological and linguistic explanations. Then, empirical studies are analysed from the point of view of which typical claim they aim to support. The final section focuses on recent modern foreign language programmes. The chapter concludes by stating that weaknesses in research methodology make claims extremely hard to maintain. This chapter is meant to contribute to a better understanding of the complexity of problems underlying early start programmes, and to the design of studies with more rigorous research methodology for the future.

The second chapter includes two studies on successful adult learners of English and Hungarian, and is hoped to refute the strong version of the CPH. Altogether, 33 successful adults were interviewed and two tapes were developed with short samples from the interviewees and dummy native speakers of the target languages. These tapes were administered to three groups of native speakers of English and Hungarian in judgement tasks with a follow-up task eliciting clues judges used in deciding whether speakers were native or non-native. The findings of the study challenge the strong version of the CPH, as some of the participants who started language learning after the age of 14 were mistaken for natives. Other outcomes include the typical clues applied by judges and some insights into ways how these successful learners have developed native proficiency.

Chapters Three, Four and Five discuss different aspects of the same groups of Hungarian children's classroom experiences over 18 years. Three groups of Pécs children were involved in a unique learning process with the same teacher (myself) for eight years each. Despite the fact that data had been collected in a systematic way over long years without specific foci, research questions emerged during the process of teaching. These longitudinal studies were conducted in the ethnographic tradition where the teacher, syllabus designer and researcher was the same person and the enquiries were prompted by classroom needs.

Chapter Three looks at the attitudes and motivation of children between the ages of 6 and 14: why they think they study a foreign language, how they relate to school subjects, and what classroom activities they like and dislike. The first part of the chapter considers the literature on motivation from the perspective of child FLL, whereas the second part looks into how the findings of this study may contribute towards a better understanding of the effects of specific pedagogic procedures on motivation.

Chapter Four gives an account of children's strategy use. After a short review of the literature on learner strategies, two specific cognitive strategies are described and analysed. One is related to

mental representations of the spelt, read and pronounced forms of target language words in which the first language plays an important role, as it supports young learners' memory. For the second one, I coined the new term "commenting", which is a combination of guessing intelligently by using linguistic and other clues, and translating. This has emerged as another basic strategy involving the first language, with which children can make sense of what they hear in an unknown language. The findings include ways teachers can scaffold children's language development, and how the mother tongue may contribute to second language acquisition.

The fifth chapter provides insights into the implementation of a process syllabus with children between the ages of 6 and 14; the same teaching experience from the perspective of how the syllabus developed and how negotiation with young learners contributed to motivation and group dynamics. Discussions focus on the specific changes in negotiation due to age; and on how activities, materials and assessment were negotiated and how feedback was obtained and acted upon. As in the previous two chapters, negative outcomes are also carefully listed. The experience on which these three studies are based was limited, as neither the teacher, nor the educational context was typical. Still, most of the implications are hoped to be relevant beyond the classrooms involved in these three chapters, for international readers as well.

The last two chapters represent a step forward in this respect, as they enquire into a variety of classrooms involving many more teachers and learners, the latter of a wider age range: from young learners to adolescents in secondary English as a foreign language (EFL) classes. Both chapters present classroom-based studies, again more in the qualitative research tradition. Data were collected by non-participants; in Chapter Six with the help of tape-recording authentic peer interaction in primary-school classrooms, and with a carefully designed observation instrument and structured interviews in Chapter Seven. These two projects provide evidence that a lot more is to be done in Hungarian foreign language education.

Chapter Six investigates how Hungarian children of 6-14 interact in classrooms of English as a foreign language. Data collected in 111 observed classes are analysed to identify emerging patterns of peer interaction. The chapter discusses when, how, why and in what languages children exchanged information, applied for help and supported each other, and compares the results to various educational contexts reviewed in the first part of the paper. It examines how willingness to interact in the target language is related to proficiency, age and peer pressure. Despite the highly entertaining examples of classroom discourse, the findings are discouraging. Children tend to use Hungarian in pair- and group-work tasks, and it is dubious how this may contribute to their development of target language proficiency.

The final chapter gives a detailed analysis of a classroom observation project related to the Hungarian Examination Reform. Altogether, 118 English classes were observed in 55 schools. Schools were sampled to represent institutions on peripheries: one-third in non-specialised grammar schools, and two-thirds in vocational schools. The findings indicate that half of the teachers were not qualified to teach in secondary schools, all of them felt overworked and underpaid. Although mostly modern teaching materials were used, they were applied traditionally. Supplementary materials included mostly grammar practice and exam preparation materials. Most of the classes were teacher-fronted, levels were perceived as generally low, and both teachers and students used Hungarian excessively. Teachers claimed that students lacked favourable attitudes and motivation. The most frequently used task types included questions – answers, translation, reading aloud, copying from the board, and grammar exercises. Facilities were available but not properly exploited, and classrooms looked unfriendly. The final section of the chapter analyses the limitations of the study and puts forward recommendations for Hungarian foreign language education.

As can be seen from the foci of the seven chapters, only some of the issues in language pedagogy are covered and samples have not

been representative in any of the studies. A lot of further empirical research is necessary to find out more about what teachers and learners do, and to identify the optimum conditions for different age groups to develop in modern languages in the classroom. It would be extremely important to characterise the typical levels of attainment of Hungarian students, and to set realistic aims for foreign language instruction. Also, more research is needed on teachers. As is widely accepted, language learning success is best predicted by two factors: learners' aptitude and motivation. As teachers are key stakeholders in shaping learners' motivation, they play the major part in the foreign language education game. Although no chapter discusses teacher education explicitly, the implications from these studies are hoped to be obvious and relevant.

Chapter One

Research into Early Second Language Acquisition

'For the rest we
must be content with
uncertainty and complexity.'
(Singleton, 1989, p. 265)

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give a critical overview of the research issues related to early modern language programmes. As it seems to be widely accepted that children are better at second language acquisition (SLA) than later starters, it is important to look into the theoretical background and the empirical evidence related to this claim to see to what extent and how they underpin this assumption.

Scholarly discussions on the benefits of early-start programmes focus on three major research areas: (1) the existence of the critical period hypothesis (CPH), (2) immersion programmes in second language contexts, where the dominant language of the social environment coincides with the target language of the educational programme, and (3) foreign language programmes, where the target language is not used for everyday purposes in the social context and its use is mostly limited to the classroom.

Therefore, I will follow this train of thought: first, I will provide a short overview of the theoretical explanations for the existence of a critical period covering the neurolinguistic, cognitive, social-psychological and linguistic explanations. Then, I will look at the research from three perspectives: how empirical SLA studies support 'the younger the better'; 'the older the better'; 'the younger the better

in some areas'. Finally, I will identify and analyse some recent studies on early foreign language programmes. In these discussions I will focus also on how valid and reliable the findings are, and to what extent they are applicable outside the research context.

My assumptions for the literature review include the following:

- The variety of contexts and variables makes it hard to claim that age is one of the independent variables.
- Studies supporting the hypothesis that age is the variable predicting success or failure are hard to find.
- Most studies on age differences lack triangulation, they are qualitative or descriptive or experiential, but a lack of combination of research types characterises them.
- There is a lack of longitudinal studies, though the earlier the programme, the longer period should be covered to evaluate long-term outcomes.
- Researchers might be biased as they are involved in their own projects, therefore replication of studies would be difficult and there is a typical lack of them.
- Also, there is no control over the Hawthorne effect: knowing that they are part of a project may improve participants' behaviour.
- Internal validity may turn out to be problematic: it is hard to tell if there are any other factors affecting the outcomes (e.g., intensity of course, methodology, teacher) or age is the independent variable.
- External validity may therefore be also dubious, as it is almost impossible to predict to what extent results may be applicable outside the actual research context.
- The teacher is rarely considered a key variable in studies on young learners.

- Early language programmes are supposed to be useful not only for language attainment, but also in the long run for attitudinal, motivational reasons, for the development of self-confidence, and self-concept as a language learner. The latter are rarely considered as they are hard to operationalise and quantify. They should be followed up years after early exposure is over.
- It is an accepted assumption that the most important predictors of success in adult SLA and foreign language learning (FLL) are aptitude and motivation. Studies on child SLA do not clarify what role these variables play. Instead, they claim that age, a biological developmental factor, is the best predictor.
- Studies looking into the age factor consider ultimate attainment and the rate of acquisition. In the first area children tend to outscore adults, whereas in the second area adults are favoured. In these studies findings from the host environment are overgeneralised and tend to be taken for granted in foreign language contexts.

The critical period hypothesis

The term 'critical period' is used to refer to the general phenomenon of declining competence over increasing age of exposure and is used to state that there is a period when language acquisition can take place naturally and effortlessly, but after a certain age the brain is no longer able to process language input in this way (Ellis, 1986, p. 107). The most frequently understood period referred to is reflected in Scovel's definition:

In brief, the critical period hypothesis is the notion that language is best learned during the early years of childhood, and that after

about the first dozen years of life, everyone faces certain con-
straints in the ability to pick up a new language (1988, p. 2).

Sometimes the adjectives "optimal" and "sensitive" are used as
well as "critical" in the literature: Asher and Garcia (1969) use opti-
mal, Patkowsky (1980) uses sensitive, whereas Scovel (1988), Sin-
gleton (1989), and others use the term critical period. The slight
contradiction is solved by Scovel's suggestion that the first 15 or so
years of life is a 'sensitive' period for language acquisition in gen-
eral, whereas the same period should be identified as 'critical' for
speech, as in his view only speech is constrained, and other aspects
of language (e.g., vocabulary and syntax) are free from any ultimate
learning limits (1988, pp. 184-185).

The critical period issue has attracted interest from researchers,
and while some argue that even its existence is controversial, others
try to prove its effects. Three different standpoints can be identified
in the literature to illustrate the controversy. The first position states
that only children can attain native-like pronunciation in SLA (e.g.,
Dulay, Burt & Krashen 1982; Scovel 1988; Larsen-Freeman & Long
1991; Johnson 1992); the second finds that the data are ambiguous:
'…one can say that there is some good supportive evidence and that
there is no actual counterevidence' (Singleton 1989, p. 137). The third
position denies the existence of the critical period and states that
'…the learning situation in combination with age-related affective
and cognitive factors could account for some of the variation in
success between child and adult L2 learning' (van Els et al., 1984, p.
109; see also Stern, 1983; Harley & Wang, 1997).

Theoretical explanations

Explanations for the existence of a critical period in SLA have focused on roughly four theoretical perspectives: (1) neurolinguistic explanation; (2) cognitive explanation; (3) social-psychological explanation; and (4) linguistic explanation. These areas of inquiry will be explored successively.

The neurological argument

The first discussion concerning the existence of a neurologically based optimal age for language acquisition was published by Penfield and Roberts (1959), in which they argued that the child's greater ability to learn a language was explained by the greater plasticity of its brains. The evidence cited referred to the child's capacity to recover after injury of the speech areas of the left hemisphere, whereas adults often did not recover normal speech. Later, Lenneberg (1967) also argued that the left and right hemispheres of the human brain become specialized for different functions roughly between the age of two and puberty. This process is called lateralisation, and according to the hypothesis, the end of lateralisation coincides with the child's puberty, after which language acquisition becomes more problematic. Lenneberg has been frequently cited as the first researcher to refer to a neurological basis for a critical period for language learning, although his reference was quite short and he advanced the weak version of the hypothesis:

> Most individuals of average intelligence are able to learn a second language after the beginning of their second decade, although the incidence of 'language-learning-blocks' rapidly increases after puberty. Also automatic acquisition from mere exposure to a given language seems to disappear after this age, and foreign languages have to be taught and learned through a laboured effort. Foreign accents cannot be overcome easily after puberty. However, a person can learn to communicate in a foreign language at the age of forty. (1967, p. 176)

In his view, native-like pronunciation is not impossible to achieve but he was more concerned with the existence of the critical period for first rather than SLA.

The same area of inquiry was further extended by Scovel (1969), who tried to argue the validity of three claims: (1) that even relatively unsophisticated native speakers can identify nonnative speakers by their accent; (2) that the inability to sound like a native speaker might stem from SLA taking place after lateralisation is completed; and (3) that a critical period is defensible only for phonological learning. The 'critical age for phonology' has been called the 'Henry Kissinger effect' (Brown, 1987, p. 46) and the 'Joseph Conrad phenomenon' (Scovel, 1988, p. 65).

Recently, the original claim that lateralisation might be responsible for the existence of the critical period has been extended to other neurophysiological changes:

> …hemispheric specialization, the proportionately rapid growth of the brain compared to body growth, increased production of neurotransmitters, the process of myelinization, the proliferation of nerve pathways in the cerebral cortex, and the speeding up of synaptic transmission… (Scovel, 1988, p. 62)

are listed among the possible factors causing child/adult differences in SLA.

Sokolik (1990) proposed a Connectionist Model as an alternative explanation for solving the 'Adult Language Learning (ALL) Paradox': as adults are considered superior in comparison to children to generalize and extract rules from their experience, adults should be better able to learn a second language.

Several new technical terms are introduced in order to explain child/adult differences: learning rate refers to the speed with which the system learns; the correct set of weights is approached gradually as the training procedure continues through several epochs; a nerve growth factor (NGF) in the brain controls the size of the learning rate. Children are expected to have higher levels of NGF, which may

be responsible for the difference in learning rate. In a hypothetical example, a three-year-old English speaking child and a 25-year-old English-speaking parent are in France, they are both acquiring Feature Xf of French. The younger learner is hypothesised to acquire feature Xf after 10 exposures to the data, while the adult takes 55 epochs to reach the same point (Sokolik, 1990, pp. 689-693). To summarize briefly, the explanation provided by Sokolik suggests that the decreased availability of NGF after puberty is to blame for the child/adult differences in SLA.

It seems that in spite of the new terminology, some contradictions are obvious with this hypothesis: (1) the model contradicts the fact that initially adults develop faster than children; (2) the 'Joseph Conrad phenomenon' is not explained; (3) developmental sequences for both children and adults seem to exist irrespective of frequency in input; and (4) the model does not take psychological and sociological factors into consideration.

On the other hand, Sokolik's explanation is in contrast with another line in neurolinguistic research. As Jacobs and Schumann (1992) summarize the latest findings concerning the neurobiological fundamentals, they state that the brain remains plastic for the lifetime, and the hypothesis that there are multiple critical periods of language acquisition has recently found neurobiological support. In their interpretation '…the cerebral cortex prefers novel stimuli and… neurons tend to habituate (i.e., cease responding) to repetitive and/or non-meaningful stimuli…' (1992, p. 291). This conclusion clearly contradicts the idea of a high number of epochs in the Connectionist Model. The human brain seems to evaluate a stimulus according to its novelty, and the degree to which it is compatible with the goals, needs, self image of the person and emotions are behind every step of SLA (Jacobs & Schumann, 1992, p. 294).

The 90s have seen an increased interest in connectionist models; computerised simulations of second language acquisition have been widely used to explain learning phenomena (Bechtel & Abrahamsen, 1991; Rumelhart & McClelland, 1994; Regier, 1996; Plunkett, 1995;

McLeod, Plunkett & Rolls, 1998). Ottó (2001) proposes an explanation of the initial advantage of adults and the higher ultimate attainment of younger learners as extra input biased learning. He introduces the term Target Language Descriptors (TLDs), including explicit information used to characterise target language phenomena which are either taught to the learner or discovered in the process of language acquisition. In Ottó's model acquisition is seen as a TLD-free process, whereas learning is supported by TLDs. He proposes that the ALL Paradox can be resolved by looking at not only the amount of input, but also by examining the role of extra input in biasing individual learning trials through computerised simulations. In his view, the bias coming from extra TLD input contributes to the speeding up of language development, but it prepares the learner for a different task from what everyday situations require, and results in a trade-off between speed and ultimate attainment for adults. Hopefully, such simulations can contribute to our better understanding of processes underlying SLA in general, and child/adult differences in particular.

Most researchers who argue for the existence of a critical period for SLA interpret the data accumulated in neuroscience as supportive: '…the idea that there exist biological constraints on SLA currently seems the most tenable…' (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, p. 166); or 'the ultimate explanation for the existence of foreign accents is that they are biologically based: they cannot be explained by variables that are derived from personality or environment' (Scovel, 1988, p. 101), while others conclude their review of the literature by stating that there is a '…lack of convincing evidence for a biological barrier to second language acquisition by adults…' (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982, p. 90) and turn their attention to the cognitive, linguistic and socio-psychological explanations.

With the recent spread of new technologies for neuroimaging, discussions on neuroscience have explored how multiple languages are actually represented in the human brain of healthy bilinguals, as opposed to neurological discussions, which traditionally tend to relate

to pathological cases. This interest in the relationship between neurosciences and language acquisition has become salient both in theoretical discussions and in empirical studies. To illustrate the theoretical exchanges of the 90s, a number of linguists have ventured into the area of neuroscience and interpret the findings and implications for an audience of applied linguists (Jacobs & Schumann, 1992; Paradis, 1995; Pulvermüller & Schumann, 1994, 1995; Eubank & Gregg, 1995; Schumann, 1995; Jacobs, 1995; Pulvermüller, 1995).

Besides these heated debates on the evidence accumulating in neuroscience and their relevance for SLA studies, one particular empirical study addressed the CPH in SLA using a special neuro-imaging technique for observing the human brain while it is functionally engaged. Kim, Relkin, Lee and Hirsch (1997) applied functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to determine the spatial relationship between native and second languages in the human cortex. They found that second languages acquired in adulthood are spatially separated from native languages in Broca's area, whereas 'early' bilingual subjects' "…native and second languages tend to be represented in common frontal cortical areas. In both late and early bilingual subjects, the… Wernicke's area… also show effectively little or no separation of activity based on the age of language acquisition" (1997, p. 171). Before this study only indirect evidence was available for topographic specialisation of different languages in multilingual subjects: in various clinical cases multilingual patients' languages were reported to be differently affected. As the authors claim,

> … age of language acquisition may be a significant factor in determining the functional organization of this area in human brain. Human infants, initially capable of discriminating all phonetically 'relevant' differences, may eventually modify the perceptual acoustic space, based on early and repeated exposure to their native languages. It is possible that representations of languages in Broca's area that are developed by exposure early in life are not subsequently modified. This could necessitate the utilization of adjacent cortical areas for the second language learned as an adult. (p. 173)

Bialystok (1998) reviews two more studies looking into the representation of two languages in the brain: in one of the two similar results were found to the Kim et al. study, while in the second no differences were found in the representation of ealry or late acquired languages. She points out two major problems. First, the term of 'bilingual' is used in such enquiries without any "acknowledgement of the multiplicity of meanings and degrees it entails" (1998, p. 509). Second, the findings reflect a simplified assumption about the monolithic nature of language.

To sum up what neuroscience has revealed, it is clear that although the neurolinguistic explanation for the existence of a critical period is contradictory, new perspectives have opened up in SLA research: as early stimulation and increased 'intellectual' challenge can have a positive effect on the brain, further research may reveal more challenging details.

Pedagogical implications based on neurolinguistic research have mushroomed in recent years: coursebook writers and advocates of playful language learning suggest classroom techniques for developing both hemispheres of the human brain and a multiplicity of intelligences in the second language classroom (e.g., Hunter, 1982; Blazic, 1993; Jónai, 1991; Wingate, 1993; Gardner, 1998). As for empirical research supporting claims of favourable outcomes as a result of these innovative techniques, so far none has been found.

The cognitive explanation

The most frequently mentioned cognitive explanation for child/ adult differences is the onset of Piaget's formal operations stage, which is supposed to affect SLA negatively.

Three broad approaches are outlined by Singleton (1989), which seek to account for the critical period in Piagetian terms: (1) the first sees the emergence of language as dependent on cognitive growth; (2) the second accepts the notion of a decline in language learning

capacity after puberty; and (3) the third one argues for the advantage of the greater cognitive maturity.

With reference to the SLA theories Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) hypothesized that formal operations relate directly to conscious language learning only, and as the Input Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of acquisition, in their view, cognitive differences between children and adults can explain only some of the child/adult differences, although cognitive considerations would not explain why children typically outperform adults in SLA in the long run.

A similar cognitive explanation is provided in Wong Fillmore's (1991) SLA model, as she claims that two types of mechanisms figure in SLA: the LAD-type mechanism together with general cognitive skills. Children have more access to the first type, whereas with the advance of age general cognitive mechanisms are more heavily involved in SLA. Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991, p. 163) characterize the same process as a 'trade-off': adults benefit by the ability to think abstractly in the areas of problem solving, but at the same time lose their ability to make use of the LAD for SLA.

Cummins (1980; 1991) and Cummins and Swain (1986) distinguish between basic interpersonal communicative skills (which are context-embedded and relatively undemanding cognitively) and cognitive/academic skills (which are related to context-reduced, cognitively demanding communication). In this model, cognitive maturity interacting with the accumulation of experience in the literate uses of the mother tongue facilitates the acquisition of second language cognitive/academic skills, and this is why adults are found more accurate than children in SLA.

Cognitive approaches have recently emphasised a different distinction between processes interacting in SLA. Skehan (1998) argues for the co-existence of two systems: a rule-based analytic system, and a formulaic, exemplar-based one. In the first one, storage and powerful generative rules operate together to compute well-formed sentences, while in the latter, the central role is played by a

large memory system with some rules operating on chunks. The role of the lexicon and unanalysed chunks has been the focus of recent discussions (e.g., Singleton, 1999; Wray, 1999), and research supports the view that 'when time is pressing, and contextual support high, memory-based communication is appropriate. Where there is more time, and precision is important, the rule-based system can be accessed (Skehan, 1998, p. 90). It has been widely assumed that young children rely more on memory-based processes, whereas adult are more characterised by rule-based learning. This hypothesis is further supported by studies on exceptionally successful adult learners, as most of them seem to possess unusual memory capacity (Skehan, 1998, p. 233; Ioup et al., 1994).

To sum it up, all cognitive considerations posit that child and adult SLA involves different processes: unconscious or LAD type, and more recently memory- or exemplar-based, as opposed to conscious, analytic processes utilizing general problem-solving abilities. Pronunciation is not referred to in the cognitive explanations for the existence of a critical period. Ellis (1986, p. 109) points out the possibility that of all aspects of language pronunciation is the least amenable to conscious manipulation. These explanations might provide an answer for the existence of the 'Joseph Conrad phenomenon'.

Social explanations

The sociolinguistic arguments for the existence of the critical period in SLA focus on the role of attitudes and peer pressure. According to these explanations, young children are not developed enough cognitively to possess attitudes toward races, cultures and languages, as '…most of these attitudes are 'taught', consciously or unconsciously, by parents, other adults, and peers' (Brown, 1987, p. 51). The negative attitudes toward the speakers of the target language or the language itself develop gradually during the school

years. Consequently, child SLA is less influenced by negative attitudes, as children tend to be open to any new learning experience.

Peer pressure also plays a different role in child and adult SLA. Children in the host environment are usually aware of the pressure on them to be like the rest of the kids, and this pressure extends to language, as well. Adults also experience some peer pressure, but their peers tend to tolerate linguistic differences more than children. Native adults provide more positive feedback in foreigner talk than children do (Brown, 1987).

A similar explanation can be drawn from Schumann's Acculturation/ Pidginization Model (1978; 1990). Success in SLA depends on the extent and quality of contact between the learner and the target language culture, which in turn depends on the degree of social and psychological distance between the learner and the language and culture. As children are less aware of social and psychological distance, they bridge the gap with ease, and find many ways of contacting the teacher and peers.

As Singleton sums up the review of the relevant literature in this area:

> There is evidence to suggest that children of around the age of ten are less likely to be hostile to cultures other than their own (i.e. more likely to be integratively oriented) than older (or indeed younger) children. (1989, p. 202)

Krashen's Input Hypothesis provides a different explanation for child/adult differences in the form of the Affective Filter.

> While the filter may exist for the child second language acquirer, it is rarely, in natural informal language acquisition situations, high enough to prevent native-like levels of attainment. For the adult it rarely goes low enough to allow native-like attainment. (Krashen, 1985, p.13)

As a general criticism, Singleton points out a logical problem involved in tying the inhibition of SLA to the affective dimension of the onset of formal operation. He contrasts Krashen's claim that

SLA difficulties are occasioned by the self-consciousness and sense of vulnerability to the judgement of others, which Piagetians associate with the formal operations stage, with their further claim, that these feelings tend to diminish by the age of 15 or 16 (Singleton, 1989, p. 191). In his view, the implication would be that learners are less inhibited at the age of 16 than at 14. In my opinion, the explanation for this phenomenon might be that during this period children become gradually conscious of the fact that the target language is governed by rules and they start employing general cognitive skills in SLA. Once they have gained confidence in using these skills, they become more self-assured again.

The effects of anxiety have also been hypothesized to account for child/adult differences in SLA. Younger children are less worried as they are less aware of language forms and the possibility of making mistakes in these forms. Also, once they focus on the message, mistakes do not concern them greatly. In the host environment, it has been found that learners with lower levels of anxiety tend to learn better, volunteer more in the classroom and socialize with the target language group more easily (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, p. 530).

Dörnyei's (1990) findings concerning the instrumental motivational subsystem of young adult learners in foreign language contexts have revealed that adults have a special factor influencing their learning English as a foreign language, which was identified as 'attributions about past failures'. One explanation for the child/adult differences may be that this factor will not play a crucial role in child SLA, but the danger of developing attributions about past failures is obvious.

How children's attitudes and motivation are different from older learners' was explored in two longitudinal studies, one focused on Croatian children (Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 1993; 1995), the other on Hungarian learners (Nikolov, 1999a). In both educational contexts the status of the target languages was foreign language, as they were not widely available outside the classroom. The most important motivating factors for young children included positive attitudes

towards the learning context and the teacher; intrinsically motivating classroom activities and materials; and integrative and instrumental motives did not play a major role, though instrumental motives emerged with time. Attitudes towards speakers of the target languages were positive in the Croatian study where specific questions tapped into them, but did not emerge in the Hungarian study applying open questions. Assessment was perceived as a threat by children in both studies.

To sum up the socio-psychological arguments for the existence of a critical period, most of the explanations reflect everyday experiences but some of them are hard to falsify. The socio-psychological explanations, however, do not provide an explanation for the existence of the phonological critical period. One plausible answer may be that some adults prefer accented second language proficiency, and they simply do not wish to sound like native speakers (Nikolov, 2000a).

Linguistic explanations

The linguistic explanations concerning the age factor focus on differences in the input children and adults experience during SLA. One of these arguments claims that children typically engage in different kinds of interaction than adults. Some researchers say that children get more 'here and now' and less complex input than adults (Hatch, 1978), while others argue that older learners have an advantage as they are better at obtaining appropriate input. The amount of input is also claimed to be larger for children in research based on the distinction between 'age of arrival' and 'length of residence' in the host environment (e.g., Johnson & Newport, 1989; Johnson, 1992; DeKeyser, 2000).

The other perspective explored in this line is the role of play and interaction with caretakers and peers. As Asher (1981) points out in connection with his Total Physical Response method, children acquire second languages more efficiently than adults because they

learn language through play and physical activities. As the communicative approach promotes, the integration of games and playful activities has contributed towards making language learning more child-like, enjoyable and supposedly more efficient both for young and older learners. The exploitation of multiple intelligences and teaching to both halves of the brain have already been referred to.

In sum, the linguistic explanations for the existence of a critical period reveal a lot of truths but are not enough to account for child/adult differences in SLA.

So far I have considered neuro-biological, cognitive, socio-psychological and linguistic explanations for child/adult differences. The picture is complex and blurred: there seems to be insufficient evidence for the existence of a critical period for SLA but the general claim that children are better at SLA in the long run seems to be supported. In the following review of the research background, four positions will be identified in reference to the beginning of the SLA process in order to explore further evidence for or against the existence of a critical period.

SLA research background to the critical period hypothesis

'The younger the better'

Some studies support the existence of a critical period for SLA but a number of researchers argue against it. 'The earlier the better' position reflects public wisdom or 'folk linguistics' (Rixon, 1992, p. 75), according to which an early start in SLA can be beneficial only because of the experience parents have that the majority of children pick up language very quickly and easily when exposed to it. Some applied linguists also represent this standpoint: Hatch (1983, 197) after reviewing the relevant studies on the age factor decides that despite the contradictory nature of evidence she would like her

own children to start learning a second language 'at the early elementary stage rather than later.'

According to Singleton, the discussion of the notion of a critical period for SLA can be grouped around four divergent positions (1989, pp. 80-138). The first position derives directly from the critical period conception developed in first language acquisition research. 'The younger the better' standpoint reflects the strong version of the hypothesis by positing that younger learners are more efficient and successful than older learners and puberty marks the onset of a decline in SLA capacity. Supporting evidence for this position comes partly from research on foreign language learning and partly from studies on immigrant SLA. Singleton reviews 15 different studies that support 'the younger the better' position. Three of the studies in his review are based on research on instructed FLL and the others were conducted in the host environment, where the starting point of SLA coincided with the time of arrival in the target language country. The children involved in these 'naturalistic' studies started school in the target language and were exposed to language among peers all day and they typically developed native-like pronunciation and proficiency.

The three foreign language acquisition studies reviewed can hardly be compared with either one another or the research conducted in the host environment. The foreign language experiences were not well documented and the claims are hard to justify because of too many variables. Some of the studies reviewed in this section examined adult SLA in the host environment and a strong negative relationship was found between age of arrival and accent.

The other problematic point is testing, as the way language was elicited and learners were tested varied across studies. In some of the studies the testing technique was not mentioned at all, whereas in others children were asked to memorize a few words or to read out a passage; in others, interviewees were to relate a frightening event, or to imitate some words in an unknown language. As these examples illustrate, claims of these studies are hardly comparable.

The evidence supporting 'the younger the better' position is weakened (1) by the above-mentioned critical remarks, and (2) by the two studies mentioned by Singleton (1989, p. 92) according to which the 'French in Scottish primary schools' and the 'Irish in the primary schools' programmes did not result in overwhelming success.

'The older the better'

The second standpoint, 'the older the better', states just the opposite of the first one: older language learners are more successful and efficient than younger children. The position is supported by three types of studies: (1) studies based on experimental formal instruction; (2) studies on primary school second language teaching programmes, and (3) second language immersion programmes. The research reviewed ranges from adults to children learning natural and artificial languages and they were tested in a variety of ways, ranging from TPR activities to listening tasks.

Two studies are worth looking at in detail, as their findings are relevant to the focus of our inquiry: child SLA in the classroom. One of them is the research on the teaching of English in the early grades of Swedish primary schools. Ekstrand (1978) describes the experiment, in which over 1,000 children between 8 and 11 were exposed to 18 weeks of English instruction based on an audio-visual methodology. The pronunciation of 355 randomly chosen children was tested in an imitation task and their listening comprehension was measured in a task based on translation from a tape. Ekstrand found that results of both tests improved almost linearly with age.

It is obvious that the results according to which older students outscored younger ones can be explained by the teaching and testing techniques. The teaching method was not suitable for the younger age group and the testing technique was inadequate for young learners favouring cognitive/academic language skills, as reflected in the results.

The other study I will look at is the 'French in the Primary' programme, which was evaluated in Burstall et al. (1974). The scheme aimed at providing instruction in French as a foreign language to all pupils from the age of 8 in selected primary schools in England and Wales during the period 1964-74, with a total of 17,000 pupils. The research was conducted both comparatively and longitudinally, and the overall evaluation indicated a progressive diminution of the advantage of early or extra exposure to French. As Burstall et al. (1974) claim, the evidence for older learners' superiority seems to be supported by several results:

> When the experimental and control pupils were compared at the age of 13 the experimental pupils scored significantly higher than the control pupils on the Speaking test and on the Listening test, but the control pupils' performance on the Reading test and on the Writing test equalled or surpassed that of the experimental pupils. When the experimental and the control pupils were compared at the age of 16, the only test on which the experimental pupils still scored significantly higher than the control pupils was the Listening test. The two groups of pupils did not differ in their performance on the Speaking test, but the control pupils maintained their superiority on the Reading test and on the Writing test. (1974, p. 123)

In this research the control groups consisted of 11-year-old beginners from the same schools, whereas in a different study within the same programme

> …experimental pupils were compared at the age of 13 with control pupils who had been learning French for an equivalent amount of time, but who were, on average, two years older than those in the experimental sample, the control pupils' performance on each of the French tests was consistently superior to that of the experimental pupils. (Burstall et al., 1974, p. 122)

Similarly to the Swedish example, the teaching methodology must have favoured older learners and, on the other hand, the nature of the tests in this research can be blamed. These two examples illustrate the contradictory character of the findings in the area of

short-term experimental studies and research based on primary school second language teaching programmes. It is dubious whether they really support the hypothesis they were meant to.

The third source of arguments favouring older learners is represented by findings concerning immersion programmes, in which the target language is employed as a medium of instruction for part or most of the curriculum as opposed to teaching it as a school subject. Harley (1986) analysed the results of a wide-ranging research project investigating the effects of different immersion programmes in Canada. Her own study involved 3 groups of 12 English children: children in the first group experienced 1000 hours of a French total immersion programme starting in the kindergarten; in the second group children in grade 8 experienced a roughly equivalent programme; whereas the third group consisted of 8th graders who had been exposed to an early French partial immersion programme from the 1st grade. The focus of the study was the acquisition of the French verb system. The testing techniques included a structured interview, a story repetition task for the older learners and a translation task. According to Harley's findings, the late immersion group outperformed the other groups and the early partial immersion group (after much longer exposure to French) performed better than the late immersion group in general terms, but the lead was limited and not fully consistent. The results of Harley's own (1986) research coincide with the findings of other immersion studies, and support the faster acquisition rate among later beginners. Here again, the testing technique and the focus of investigation, which aimed at accuracy rather than fluency, must have played a role in the results obtained.

A recent study, co-authored by the same expert, sheds more light on problems in research design. Harley and Hart (1997) set out to investigate the relationship between language aptitude and SLA among learners whose intensive L2 exposure began at different ages. This research design is similar to the previous study but adds a new dimension to it: learners' aptitudes, defined along recent trends in

cognitive approaches to SLA. The authors hypothesised that in late immersion starting in adolescence there would be a positive relationship between language performance and an analytical dimension of language aptitude, while in early immersion beginning in first grade a positive relationship would be found between L2 outcomes and memory ability. They also hypothesised that early immersion students' aptitude would increase as a result of their early exposure to L2. Altogether 65 eleventh graders were involved in the study: 36 early immersion children received 50% of their daily instruction in French, while 29 late immersion students began their French studies along the same pattern in 7th grade. Prior to their late immersion, these children had attended a "regular core French program of 40 minutes a day from grade 4" (Harley & Hart, 1997, p. 385). This means that these students also started French quite early, and had two years of what would be described in foreign language contexts intensive L2. This early exposure to French is simply ignored by the authors, though students must have developed some proficiency in two years. This period was not controlled in any way. Also, in the discussion of the results the authors admit that the late immersion group was 'a more select group of higher aptitude learners in the first place' (p. 395); therefore, their finding no increase in aptitude for the early immersion group may still indicate an increase.

As for the testing techniques used for L2 outcomes, students were tested on a Vocabulary Recognition test, where they were to cross out words they claimed they did not know on a list of 100, of which 34 were pseudo words. Whether they could have used them, was not assessed. On a listening comprehension test multiple choice items were used on five texts, of altogether 17 items. A cloze test and a writing task were based on one another. Once they filled in 25 words, they were to write an essay on the topic of the text they had just completed. Writings were assessed for task fulfilment and accuracy. Neither fluency nor vocabulary was scored. In the oral test students were to repeat 14 sentences one by one after a tape, and then, to describe four cartoon strips, to be scored 'on the number of lexically

appropriate verb types used in describing the four cartoons. Grammatical errors were ignored, and there was no maximum score on this task' (Harley & Hart, 1997, p. 388). Sentence repetition was scored on correct recall, while the scoring of the oral description task is not clear: if grammar errors were ignored, how did students score for appropriate verb types? On the whole, the testing techniques seem to be highly problematic.

Based on detailed statistical analyses, the authors claim that "early immersion students' L2 outcomes were much more likely to be associated with a memory measure than with a measure of analytical language ability, whereas the opposite was the case for the late immersion students, for whom analytical language ability was the only significant predictor of L2 proficiency" (Harley & Hart, 1997, p. 395). In the light of the obvious weaknesses of their research design, such claims seem unfounded; more and more rigorous studies are needed to answer research questions related to 'the older the better' position.

Singleton (1989, p. 137) concludes his overview by claiming: it is not '…possible to conclude from the evidence that older second language learners are globally more efficient and successful than younger learners'. Since then the picture has become even fuzzier and more complex.

'The younger the better in some areas'

The third position assumes that children are better than adults only in certain areas of SLA: at acquiring accent and basic interpersonal communication skills. The strong version of this hypothesis states that an authentic accent is not available unless SLA begins before the critical age (the 'Joseph Conrad phenomenon').

The practical question raised against this strong version is whether there are exceptions that contradict the case. Scovel (1988, p. 176) admits that the existence of even a few exceptional adults who can pass as native speakers of a language which they have acquired after

their adolescence challenges the strong version of the critical period hypothesis. 'If there are exceptions, either my version of the critical period hypothesis is discredited or… it is simply too strong and should be scaled down from a theory to a general principle about language acquisition' (Scovel, 1988, p. 176). His arguments against having to do so are very convincingly elaborated. He points out that the evidence from anecdotal information is misleading, as most foreigners tend to be complimented rather than really taken for a native by speakers of the target language. "When they say, 'I'm amazed that you sound just like a native!' they are really saying something like 'You speak my language brilliantly — especially for a foreigner!" (Scovel, 1988, p. 177). He goes on to assume that '…there are a few adult exceptions to my claim that people cannot pass themselves off as native speakers if they have acquired a language after puberty, even though there is no empirical evidence that such individuals exist' (Scovel, 1988, p. 179). His explanation for this vague chance concerns the small number of these exceptions that could constitute only a tiny portion of the population, and would involve about 1 out of 1,000 adults.

Two projects aimed to challenge the strong version of the critical period hypothesis by identifying successful learners of a second language who started SLA after puberty and have been able to achieve native proficiency (Nikolov, 1994, 1995, 2000a; Bongaerts et al., 1997). The earlier one was conducted in Hungary and it consisted of two studies. In the first study, out of 20 adult speakers of Hungarian with various first languages, who started learning the target language after puberty, two were generally, and four were often mistaken for native speakers in a listening task by three groups of Hungarian judges. In the second study involving 13 Hungarian speakers of English one was generally, and four others were mistaken for a native speaker by half of the native judges. The other project also involved two studies; they both examined highly successful Dutch learners of English. Similarly to the previous project, native judges were used. In the first study 22, and in the second 33 adults

were involved. In both studies native judges were typically unable to tell native speakers of English from Dutch speakers of English. The findings of these two projects and another study investigating two successful learners of Egyptian Arabic (Ioup et al., 1994) have provided further evidence against the strong version of the critical period hypothesis.

As far as the original hypothesis is concerned, according to which young learners are better in certain areas of SLA, Singleton (1989) re-examines the studies that indicated greater success for younger learners on phonetic/phonological performance and points out that even in studies which seem to indicate that younger learners acquire native accent the evidence is for a trend rather than for a rule. As for the acquisition of basic interpersonal communication skills, he concludes that a large number of studies are not very obviously supportive of the notion that younger learners acquire BICS more readily than older learners. In reference to the claim according to which young children are generally better at acquiring BICS than CALP, Singleton's conclusion contrasts younger learners with adults and not child acquisition of the two types of skills.

To sum up the findings concerning the third position, the evidence does not consistently support the hypothesis that younger learners are inevitably more efficient than older learners in the phonetic/phonological domain.

'The younger the better in the long run'

The supporters of this position state that children appear to be much more successful than adults in acquiring the phonological system of the target language, and many of them eventually attain native-like accents. Most children are ultimately more successful than adults in SLA, but they are not always faster. Adults appear to progress faster than children in the areas of syntax and morphology, at least in the early stages of the process (Dulay et al., 1982, pp. 94-95). The studies most frequently cited to support this view

were conducted by Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle (1978). In a series of studies they tested English-speaking learners living in the Netherlands. The testing techniques involved Dutch pronunciation, auditory discrimination, morphology, sentence repetition, sentence translation, sentence judgement, vocabulary, story comprehension and story-telling. The results of these tests revealed little age-related difference in relation to phonetic/phonological skills, but in the area of general competence adult and adolescent beginners had a distinct initial advantage over younger learners, the adolescents achieving the highest scores. However, this initial advantage progressively diminished with longer residence in the host environment, and some younger learners overtook older ones.

These findings are obviously in contrast with Harley's (1986) summary concerning the foreign languages in the elementary schools (FLES) programmes and the evaluation of the 'French in the Primary' programme (Burstall et al., 1974) that older learners eventually catch up with those who started SLA at a younger age. This contradiction must be explained by the differences in the length of time and in the intensity of exposure. In a naturalistic SLA environment a certain period of time means much more exposure to the second language and more chances for SLA than in the classroom. Also, continuity is never mentioned in these studies. As is known from pedagogical research, false beginners of any age lose their motivation: initially they are bored in beginner classes as they can make no progress, then they either progress with the group or start lagging behind for attitudinal, motivational reasons. The most important pedagogical issue is the question whether early classroom exposure to a foreign language is beneficial.

The summary I can agree with is given by Singleton. The careful wording leaves both ends open:

> Concerning the hypothesis that those who begin learning a second language in childhood in the long run generally achieve a higher level of proficiency than

those who begin later in life, one can say that there is some good supportive evidence and that there is no actual counterevidence. (1989, p. 137)

Obviously, this statement applies to second language contexts. As far as foreign language instruction to young learners is concerned, even less evidence has accumulated. As will be shown in the overview of early foreign language programmes, recent enthusiasm is rarely underpinned by facts.

As for the common belief that children tend to acquire languages 'easily', the theoretical background seems to back up the folkwisdom. Unfortunately, most of the experiences with successful child SLA come from studies conducted in the host environment and these cases are overwhelmingly impressive. How much young learners benefit in foreign language classes is a different issue. My argument refers to negative classroom experience, which, in contrast with the generally positive expectations concerning child SLA in the host environment, may have less favourable results.

Conclusions concerning the CPH and their relevance for early foreign language programmes

Two points seem to be obvious from the review of the literature on the CPH. One concerns the smorgasbord of factors interacting in the studies supporting or rejecting the hypotheses involved. Psychological and sociological variables, teaching methods, materials, and most importantly teachers are not taken into consideration. These problems are further complicated by inconsistencies of research design and elicitation techniques of target language outcomes. These facts contribute to the contradictory interpretations of the different studies.

The other point is related to early foreign language instruction: there has been no systematic research on the question in what circumstances and to what extent child FLL is efficient. Natural

settings are favourable for young children as young learners tend to surpass adults in the host environment. Most probably, classroom instruction which provides children with chances for similar 'naturalistic' SLA are more relevant than some of the methods used in the studies in which adults or older students outperformed younger learners.

Studies on immersion programmes are closest to the foreign language context. As has been shown, although the arguments researchers use for late immersion seem to be strong, weaknesses in research design cast some shadow on them. Therefore, it is impossible to decide whether early or later immersion programme models should be favoured. Although none of the studies explore this plane, it is possible that an early start contributes to young learners' attitudes and motivation, which later ensure good proficiency. In other words, most probably it is not the actual early language gain that matters in the long run. SLA is a life-long enterprise; both proficiency and willingness to maintain it and develop it further are crucial.

Pedagogical considerations

To sum up the findings in SLA research concerning the critical period hypothesis, it seems that most experts have doubts about the strong version implying definite limitations for adults as opposed to young learners. Native proficiency in SLA can be available to both young learners and adults, but this aim is not as important as suggested by the studies reviewed. I believe that both SLA and FLL at an early age can be beneficial in the long run, but there are certain pedagogical considerations to be borne in mind. The issue of an early start and the role of foreign languages in the education of young children have always provoked a variety of views. To refer to just a few examples, Comenius in his Magna Didactica, published around 1630, said that foreign languages

should not be taught until the child was ten years old, and language learning should not take more than two years. Locke, however, was for an early start and believed in natural language learning. In 1693 he wrote: 'As soon as he can speak English, 'tis time for him to learn some other language' (cited in Howatt, 1991, p. 291).

For centuries, extreme versions of these two tendencies have influenced foreign and second language teaching to children. In the last few years, there has been a growing interest in both child SLA in general and in the teaching of foreign languages to young children all over the world. In this final section, an overview is given of recent research on early foreign language programmes. In these programmes, as will be seen, exposure to the target language is limited, as it is available only in the classroom.

Early foreign language programmes in the 1990s: Issues and implications

The 1990s have seen an enormous boom of interest in early foreign language instruction all over the world. The publication of scholarly state-of-the-art reviews (e.g., Rixon, 1992; Kubanek-German, 1998) and studies focusing on international comparisons of early foreign language programmes as well as conferences, special interest groups, workshops and special examinations designed for young learners all indicate the enhanced interest. In this section some of the issues emerging from the above sources, and most importantly from Edelenbos and Johnstone (1996), Blondin et al. (1998) and Nikolov and Curtain (2000) will be discussed. The first two surveys look into early language instruction practices in the European context, while the third one gives an overview of 18 countries from all over the world. On the whole, it can be stated that although the educational contexts of early programmes vary to

a great extent, all take the assumption "the earlier the better" as a point of departure for granted.

Most countries accept the folk wisdom and, as has been demonstrated, often dubious, findings from SLA contexts without considering questions like the amount of exposure to the target language, the teachers' competences and continuity of programmes. As is clear from the overviews, a limited variety of target languages characterises early programmes: in most countries English is taught (e.g., Austria), but for example, in Switzerland (Fretz, 2000) and Belgium (Housen, 2000) heated debates are typical, while in Australia (McKay, 2000) a wide range of languages has been on offer. In the case of immigrant children, the question of what language is to be developed also emerges.

In most countries not all children have early access to a foreign language: although typically almost nothing is said about selection, in most contexts only a minority of the age groups are placed in early foreign language programmes, mostly on parental demand. Research in this domain has revealed that in Hungary, for example, 5% of the students never get a chance to learn any foreign language (Nikolov 2000b); formally because of learning difficulties, but often because in small villages schools do not start a language early and when pupils transfer to a bigger school, they would already lag behind the others. On the other hand, in Germany a number of pupils with learning difficulties get early foreign language instruction geared towards their needs (Kubanek-German, 2000).

The first language is rarely considered in research, though in Germany, for instance, immigrant children are placed in German as a second language programmes, while Turkish and Italian are also on offer as foreign languages (Kubanek-German, 2000).

The social background of children and parental support are not addressed explicitly as variables, although a recent study looking into the performances of 14-year-olds in four foreign languages at the end of their primary school studies revealed that it was impossible to decide whether parents' educational background or the intensity of

early programmes was a better predictor of children's proficiency (Bors et al., 1999), as these two were the only significant factors.

In most studies, experimental programmes with enthusiastic teachers produce good results; but when programmes become more widely spread, there is less research and often funding is also withdrawn. No studies are available on why, if any, programmes fail.

The problems identified in SLA studies are typical for research on early foreign language programmes: testing techniques vary and are often highly problematic for the age group. The issues typical across countries include the following:

Continuity and transfer

A lack of continuity characterises programmes in variety of areas. Since the Burstall et al. report (1974) there has been nothing new, as educational history repeats itself: transfer from early programmes is problematic in all reviewed countries from Poland to USA, and from Hong Kong to Canada, as continuity is not ensured.

Continuity is lacking not only for particular languages (i.e., children cannot go on studying the foreign language of the primary years) but also in the area of methodology and integration of what children already know and are good at. Absolutely no research has been found into how secondary schools build on existing L2 proficiency.

A lack of continuity of support and ownership is also typical. As case studies on specific countries illustrate, ministries sponsor programmes for a while, but when the novelty element, specialist teachers and special in-service training are gone, support caters only for actual teaching but no further research. The following examples are typical: in Italy in-service teacher training supported the introduction of early language programmes but enthusiasm has been going down with the spread of practice (Gattullo & Pallotti, 2000; Hill, 1999). In Croatia, a full project including the teaching of a

variety of languages, research and teacher training came to a sudden end as the ministry withdrew support (Vilke & Djigunovic, 1999). In Scotland without specialist teachers the whole initiative has become very different from the original project (Blondin et al., 1998).

Aims of instruction and comparability of programmes

Similarly to SLA studies and research on immersion programmes, outcomes of early foreign language instruction are almost impossible to compare. First, they cannot be compared to immersion or bilingual programmes, as they differ in the amount and quality of exposure immensely. Children are exposed to the target language ranging from full time over years in SLA contexts, to about half of the school day in partial immersion programmes, in contrast with one or two times for 20 or 45 minutes a week. Second, foreign language programmes are hardly comparable to one another as they vary in aims and conditions enormously. Even the setting of realistic aims and expectations has proved problematic. Some programmes lack any kind of output goals, they tend to function for the sake of teaching a foreign language.

Aims of early foreign language programmes rarely involve attitudinal and motivational perspectives for young learners, despite the fact that most probably in the long run it is not the actual language gain that matters, but learners' attitudes towards language learning and their own perception as successful learners. Also, somehow all children are assumed to be more similar to one another than adults: less individual variation is expected among children.

On the other hand, expectations are often irrealistically high or simply inappropriate. Aims are mostly conceptualised in L2 achievement, and checked on tests, which are not always in harmony with teaching methods. The positive example could be Sweden where standardized tests on English are administered in year 5 to all students (Sundin, forthcoming). Other countries look for innovative techniques, like the language portfolio, but whether it can solve any

of these problems, as hoped in Austria (Jantscher & Landsiedler, 2000), remains to be seen.

Testing outcomes is problematic in other ways as well. There has been research on teaching techniques for young learners, but what task types are appropriate and efficient for testing children is an under-researched area. As the programmes aim to develop listening and speaking, these are the skills to be assessed but they cost a lot. Also, who should administer tests, how and when are delicate issues. In some countries, unwillingness to introduce evaluation and testing (e.g., Germany) has been widespread, while in other countries assessment is part of the general curriculum from grade 1, so L2 is also graded (e.g., Hungary).

One of the arguments for an early start is to develop children's positive attitudes. It is widely assumed that early foreign language instruction will, as a rule, contribute to children's favourable attitudes. There are counter examples from recent history, for example from Eastern European countries where, although Russian teaching started early (at age 9 or 10), negative attitudes also emerged at an early age. As for more recent examples, experts have identified a lack of Austrian pupils' motivation on the compulsory introduction of early English instruction (Jantscher & Landsiedler, 2000). One particular research project combined enquiries into linguistic and psycholinguistic outcomes. The Croatian study (Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 1993; 1995) is a good example of a ministry-sponsored, research-based, continuous programme, where attitudes, motivation, L2 outcomes in various languages were looked into on a big sample. Unfortunately, decisions in language policy have put an end to this project (Vilke & Djigunovic, 1999). Research on Hungarian students has proved that the most important motivational factors function on the classroom level: the teacher's role is extremely important, together with intrinsically motivating and cognitively challenging tasks.

Finally, there are no feasibility studies looking into early and later-start foreign language programmes. It would be important to know if there is a limit below which nothing should be done.

Key players: Teachers of young learners

Teachers and teacher education emerge as the most frequently mentioned stakeholders in early foreign language programmes. Despite the fact that all countries identify teacher education as the corner stone, a relatively low level of research characterises all educational contexts. Discussions range from the differences between specialized classroom teachers versus specialist teachers, for example in Italy, UK, Austria, while in other countries the lack of any qualification is typical. For example, in the Czech Republic 76% of primary teachers were unqualified in 1996/97 (Faklova, forthcoming), in Hungary 64% of primary school language teachers are Russian retrainees (Nikolov, 2000b), in Poland there are simply not enough teachers (Komorowska, 2000), whereas in Belgium native teachers of the target language are not allowed to teach (Housen, 2000), or in France technology is to counterbalance teachers' lack of proficiency.

The general pattern involves classroom teachers with low proficiency but appropriate methodology and familiarity with the curriculum, as opposed to the specialist teacher, who is more proficient, tends to focus in the class more on the target language but applies less appropriate methodology. In most contexts minimalist solutions are paired with high expectations. The relatively low prestige of the early L2 teacher in the state sector is often in contrast with the higher prestige in the private sector.

In-service training programmes prepare teachers for the job, but there is not enough research on what teachers actually do in the classrooms before, during and after methodology treatment. Mostly cross-sectional enquiries are applied (e.g., Gattullo, 1999; Nikolov, 1999-b, 1999-c), but no longitudinal studies are available.

It is surprising that there is no study on how teachers' proficiency, and especially pronunciation, influences young learners' language development. This is all the more shocking in the light of the arguments discussed in relation to the critical period hypothesis. One might wonder how children's pronunciation will be influenced by the teachers' non-native oral skills.

Teaching materials

Strangely, most educators do not perceive a serious problem here, despite the fact that most materials are international publications, except for a few countries, for example, Sweden and Croatia. Research is lacking into how whole-language, task-based, learner-centred, activity-based materials are used. There seems to be a consensus on what is appropriate methodology for young learners, but researchers tend to take the implementation of such methods for granted. There is a lack of classroom observation studies on what actually happens in young learners' classrooms and on how materials and methodology influence outcomes.

Stories, context-embedded activities, focus on meaning and learner autonomy are also taken for granted to ensure success with children, but almost no research enquires into how these principles are put into practice. There is rarely any mention of how innovative methods fit the particular educational contexts and the general curriculum (Páli, 1999). In Hungary research on negotiation as part of the syllabus with young learners has found that it is crucial for innovation to fit the educational context (Nikolov, forthcoming-c).

One particular emerging issue relates to the content of young learners' courses. Grammar teaching – in the form of awareness raising – is slowly oozing back into early programmes as well, some publishers are coming out with colourful grammar practice books for young learners.

The aptitude of young learners is a generally under-researched area. Children are expected to develop basic interpersonal commu-

nication skills more easily, but cognitive academic language proficiency is also necessary in the long run to be able to use L2 literacy skills. It would be important to explore how context-embedded, cognitively undemanding tasks can be shifted towards cognitively more demanding ones.

Finally, there is not enough empirical research on how children interact with their peers and their teacher while doing tasks appropriate for their age. Good examples of how teachers and peers can scaffold pupils' learning are hard to find (e.g., Gattullo, 1999; Kierepka, 1999; Nikolov, 1999b).

Implications for future research

Finally, a list of questions might be useful to give directions for further research. Longitudinal research is necessary and comparative studies in a variety of contexts. The questions below involve issues researchers should try to find answers to if we want to avoid what happened after the previous boom of interest in early language programmes: disillusionment.

- What programmes are successful and in what sense?
- How can optimum conditions and good classroom practice be characterised?
- What are effective teachers like?
- What are realistic expectations for language attainment, attitudes and motivation, and other personality features?
- How does the lack of continuity influence longterm outcomes?
- What intensity is necessary for what aims?
- How do individual differences influence outcomes in such programmes?

- How do most important variables in child FLL interact in various educational contexts?
- What is the role of the mother tongue?
- How can language exposure outside the classroom contribute to young learners' development?

Conclusions

It is generally accepted that children should have access to foreign languages from an early age, as '…there are no strong reasons in children, or in the normal structure of children's learning, for refusing to teach them second languages' (Brumfit, 1991, p. 12). However, the arguments for an early start should be considered together with the possibility of a negative outcome.

In the previous survey it became clear that the claim that younger learners are more efficient and successful in all respects and at all stages of SLA is hard to sustain in its simple form. The implications of 'the younger the better in the long run' position are that the advantage for younger children can be expected to manifest itself only after a long period of time, after school-leaving age.

The arguments for early instruction can be summarized around the following points: (1) the lesson to be learnt from neuroscience and psychology suggests that early stimulation is generally favourable (in the area of sports, music and arts this fact has long been accepted); (2) studies in child and adult SLA research indicate that the length of exposure may influence SLA in a favourable way: the longer the exposure to language learning, the better; (3) the general curriculum for learners expands with age: one of the areas of knowledge that could be acquired early is second languages; (4) our world is becoming more international every day, child SLA can encourage the early understanding and appreciation of different cultures, values and the development of positive attitudes towards the speakers of the

target language; (5) bilingual studies have revealed that multicompetence has an effect on metalinguistic awareness and other parts of cognition (Cook, 1992, p. 564; 1995); therefore, early SLA may add a new dimension to general cognitive development, may influence the mother tongue in a favourable way through raising awareness and may encourage the acquisition of other languages (Batley et al., 1993).

Arguments against an early start are also to be considered. One of the traditional worries concerns the negative influence of child SLA in the host environment but research on early bilingualism has revealed that there is

> …an impressive array of evidence accumulating that argues plainly against the common-sense notion that becoming bilingual – having two linguistic systems within one's brain – naturally divides a person's cognitive resources and reduces efficiency of thought or language. Instead, one now can put forth a very strong argument that there are definite cognitive and language advantages to being bilingual. (Lambert, 1990, p. 212)

This statement refers to the case of French and English in Canadian immersion programmes (Harley et al., 1990) where both additive and subtractive features are involved. Additive bilingualism refers to situations where both languages are supported and develop in parallel. Subtractive situations are characterized by a gradual loss of the first language as a result of increasing mastery and use of the second language. In the process of one language replacing the other, children may be seriously limited in both languages and appear as 'semi-linguals' (Diaz & Klinger, 1991, p. 175). In most of the studies that have reported positive effects of bilingual programmes children have been identified as 'balanced' bilinguals, which is the result of additive situations, where children develop simultaneously in the two languages. The pedagogical implications clearly demand that the mother tongue should be developed in parallel with the second language (Krashen, 1999). In foreign language situations this prerequisite is generally fulfilled by the curriculum.

Other negative outcomes in child SLA in the classroom may result from inadequate conditions. Among these conditions the most crucial ones are related to the following areas: (1) social factors, among them attitudes towards the target language, its speakers and language learning in general; (2) educational factors, such as the content and methodology of the programmes, physical surroundings, continuity, scheduling, frequency, and last but not least, the teacher. Unfortunately, it is common practice that the younger the learners are, the least educated the teacher may be. Although these issues are discussed in detail in other sources (Brumfit et al., 1991; Rixon, 1992), further elaboration seems necessary, as some of these have emerged as most significant in recent research on early foreign language instruction.

If any of the requirements are missing, second language instruction should not begin at an early age: a negative experience may adversely affect children's attitude to the target language and to language learning in general.

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Chapter Two

The Critical Period Hypothesis Reconsidered: Successful Adult Learners of Hungarian and English

> "…when they say,
> 'I'm amazed that you sound just like a native!'
> they are really saying something like
> 'You speak my language brilliantly –
> especially for a foreigner!'"
> (Scovel, 1988, p. 177)

Introduction

The critical period hypothesis (CPH) claims that there is a period during which learners can acquire a second language easily and achieve native-speaker competence, but after this period second language acquisition (SLA) becomes more difficult and is rarely entirely successful (Lenneberg, 1967). Researchers differ over when this critical period comes to an end. The strong version of the CPH claims that an authentic accent is not available unless SLA begins before the critical age (e.g., Scovel, 1988; 1995; DeKeyser, 2000). Long (1990) suggests that the acquisition of native-like accent is not possible by learners who begin learning the target language after the age of six; Scovel (1988) argues that the critical period for pronunciation is around puberty, whereas in Krashen's (1985) view, acquisition is always available to adults as they have continued access to Universal Grammar. As for the pedagogical implications, several authors argue for the teachability of phonology in adulthood (e.g., Pennington, 1998).

Recently, extreme positions have also been put forward (Pinker, 1994; Skehan, 1998) relying on evidence not only from SLA but also evolutionary biology. Skehan's summary (1998, p. 232) illustrates the widening of the scope of these discussions:

1. The evidence for a critical period is strong. It is based on multiple sources: second language acquisition, the acquisition of ASL, acquisition by the hearing-impaired whose problems have been corrected, and the problems that feral children encounter who are exposed to language after the onset of puberty. None of these sources of evidence has to bear the explanatory burden alone.
2. The evidence is consistent with a gradual decline in a language capacity which is complete by the onset of puberty.
3. Explanations for the onset and close of the critical period based on evolutionary biology are the most convincing, since they suggest reasons why a language learning ability would benefit survival chances.

In contrast, in Singleton's interpretation, '…the evidence does not consistently support the hypothesis that younger learners are inevitably more efficient than older learners in the phonetic/phonological domain' (Singleton, 1989, p. 137).

Discussions concerning the relationship between the CPH and accent do not go beyond pronunciation and presume that native-like proficiency is available for late beginners in other areas of language (e.g.: grammar, vocabulary (Singleton, 1999), use of idioms or writing), whereas accent referring to the particular way of speaking will tell whether the speaker is a native speaker. Traditionally, research on foreign accent has been concerned with segmental phenomena, but recently there has been a growing interest in the role of nonsegmental phenomena (stress, intonation, rhythm, speaking rate and voice quality; e.g., Munro, 1995).

As Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) point out, the issue of age is an important one in SLA research for educational policy-making and for language pedagogy. It is a challenging one for any learner who starts SLA after puberty, especially with limited contact with the target language. The recent boom of interest in an early start of foreign languages all over the world indicates that despite the contradictory evidence from research, parents and stakeholders tend to favour an early exposure to modern languages (Blondin, Candelier, Edelenbos, Johnstone, Kubanek-German & Taeschner, 1998; Curtain & Pesola, 1994; Dickson & Cumming, 1998; Edelenbos & Johnstone, 1996; Nikolov & Curtain, 2000). This paper focuses on exceptional adult learners' SLA, and challenges the widely held view according to which success, including accentless proficiency, is available to early starters only.

Background to research

This research was designed to challenge the strong version of the CPH and is based on successful adult learners at the English Department of Janus Pannonius University, Pécs in the spring semester of 1993. The aim of the study was to find out if adults who started SLA after puberty could achieve native-like proficiency and could be misidentified as native speakers on a tape. Besides this aim I also wanted to find out what motives and strategies these successful learners used. The case studies were conducted by two groups of students in "The Critical Period Hypothesis" course of the Department of English. Fourth- and fifth-year English major students participating in the course were required to identify adults in their communities all over Hungary, whose second language proficiency was thought to be outstanding.

This research focus and design is strikingly similar to the enquiries described in Bongaerts, van Summeren, Planken and Schils (1997)

indicating that the synthesis of the background literature and the research questions offer a logical framework for enquiries. In both studies highly successful learners were carefully chosen: in the present study Hungarian learners of English and learners of Hungarian with a variety of first languages, while in the Bongaerts et al. (1997) study Dutch learners of English were targeted. Similarly to these principles, another study also focused on successful adult learners. Ioup, Boustagui, El Tigi and Moselle (1994) investigate two adult learners of Egyptian Arabic in an untutored setting.

Participants

In the present paper, altogether 46 case studies were prepared but 13 of these had to be excluded from the final data either for the bad tape quality or because the interviewees started SLA between the ages of 12 and 14.

The age of the 33 successful learners ranges from 20 to 70, falling into two major groups: In Study 1, 20 learners of different mother tongues have been acquiring Hungarian in the host environment; whereas in Study 2, 13 Hungarians have been learning English as a foreign language and have stayed in the host environment for a relatively short period (see Table 1).

These learners are hypothesised to form a homogeneous sample from the point of view of the CPH as they all started SLA after puberty, at the age of 15 or later as adults. This paper reports on the 20 learners of Hungarian (Study 1) and on the 13 case studies of Hungarian learners of English (Study 2).

Table 1: Interviewees in Study 1 and Study 2

Number of study	Mother tongue	Target language	Number of interviewees
Study 1	Russian	Hungarian	5
	American		5
	British		4
	Bulgarian		1
	Spanish		1
	German/English		1
	Laotian		1
	Finnish		1
	Polish		1
Study 2	Hungarian	English	13

The measuring instrument

After identifying successful learners with a good command in the target language a structured interview was developed combining elicitation techniques used in other studies on the CPH (e.g., Bongaerts et al., 1997; Ioup et al., 1994; Johnson, 1992) and some more creative tasks in order to reveal as much as possible concerning the SLA process, personal differences and social background.

The structured interview was composed of three sections:

- first, interviewees were informed that they had been identified by others as good speakers of the target language and they were asked to talk about their language learning experience:

when they started, how they tried to improve, whether they had ever been mistaken for native speakers;

- then, they were asked to describe an embarrassing moment in their life or a happy moment they remembered with pleasure;
- finally, they were to read out an authentic passage in the target language.

The first task was to establish a positive atmosphere by praising the interviewees' proficiency and to provide information about the language acquisition process. The storytelling task followed the sociolinguistic tradition of Labov (1962), and most of the participants linked it to their language experiences. All participants felt flattered by being chosen and were talkative and informative. The interviews had a friendly atmosphere, and ranged in length from 19 minutes to 35 minutes. The reading task focused on one academic skill only, and in many cases the accents shone through more strongly than in the conversations. Participants tended to consider reading a threatening task and some of them read relatively poorly.

Course participants tape-recorded and transcribed all interviews, and in pairs they chose two short passages in each interview where the speakers could most probably be identified as native speakers. These samples were listened to by all group members and the more successful ones were chosen after a vote.

Then, the very same storytelling task was conducted with native speakers of Hungarian (Study 1), British and American English (Study 2), and samples of their talk were mixed at random with non-native speakers' texts. Samples of native speakers were carefully selected so that they did not sound hypercorrect: they included similar features to non-native talk: hesitations, slang, repetitions, regional dialects and other features of natural discourse, whereas cultural references were excluded.

Finally, two tapes were produced: on the first one there were 28 speech samples from 20 learners (Table 2) and eight native speakers

of Hungarian (Table 3) of about 35 seconds each randomly mixed; whereas on the tape for Study 2, there were speech extracts from 13 learners (Table 4) and eight native speakers of British/American English (Table 5).

Comparing these participants and measuring instruments to those used in Bongaerts et al. (1997) both similarities and differences become obvious: In the Dutch study three groups of learners of English were used: native speakers of British English, EFL experts of British English, and Dutch university students of English. None of the EFL learners had received instruction before the age of 12. These groups are similar to the participants in the Hungarian project, however the age before they were exposed to second language instruction was lower in the case of the Dutch EFL learners (age 15 in the present study). Also, the sociolinguistic status of the target languages differs in the Dutch and Hungarian context. Bongaerts et al. (1997) applied four different tasks: one for speaking spontaneously and three for reading aloud. Participants talked about a recent holiday abroad; and read out a short text, a list of 10 sentences and 25 words. Speech samples of 10-16 seconds were rated for accent by inexperienced native speakers of British English on a five-point scale. In the Dutch and Hungarian projects the speaking task and reading of a text were similar, in the latter the speech samples were longer (about 35 seconds), and three groups of judges were used. Another important difference is that in the Dutch study only idiomatic, error-free English samples were used in the extracts to be judged, and in a follow-up they also controlled for Received Pronunciation and excluded regional dialects. In other words, in the Dutch study steps were taken to control for some of the variables, whereas in the present study more authentic features were maintained.

Judges

In the second part of the research in Study 1 three groups of Hungarian native speakers were asked to judge the samples on the first tape, and in Study 2 three similar groups of English native speakers were used to judge the extracts on the second tape.

In Study 1 (learners of Hungarian), the members of the three groups of Hungarian judges were the following:

- 13-year-old children (8 boys and 6 girls),
- 22 English major university students not involved in the CPH course (17 women and 5 men between the ages of 22 and 29), and
- 22 teachers from the Russian retraining programme of the English department (all women whose age ranged from 26 to 44).

In Study 2 (learners of English) the groups of English judges consisted of:

- 13-year-old children (7 boys and 8 girls),
- 9 postgraduate students majoring in French and Psychology (2 men and 7 women, between 22 and 26), and
- 12 postgraduate students majoring in German and French (2 men and 10 women between the ages of 22 and 46).

In both studies the children came from a typical city school in Pécs, Hungary and Leicester, England; whereas the university students and retrainees attended foreign language teacher training courses at either Janus Pannonius University, Pécs or of Leicester University. All judges volunteered for the listening task, were interested in it and wanted to listen to the samples again after filling in the forms in order to know 'the right answers'.

Tasks

All judges were to tick whether the speakers on the tapes were native speakers of Hungarian and English, respectively. All listeners had two seconds after each sample for making their decisions, but after a second listening they were asked to put down after each sample why they thought the speakers were native or non-native.

The hypothesis (mostly based on intuition) was that out of the 20 speakers of Hungarian as a second language a minimum of four (a Russian, a Bulgarian, a bilingual German/English woman and an American man), and out of the 13 native Hungarians speaking English a minimum of two (both men) would be mistaken for a native speaker. I found the Hungarian speakers of English harder to predict but I knew that some of them had been identified as native speakers in conversations, though Scovel may be right in pointing out that compliments are frequent in this respect: "…when they say, 'I'm amazed that you sound just like a native!' they are really saying something like 'You speak my language brilliantly – especially for a foreigner!'" (Scovel, 1988, p. 177).

It was also hypothesized that children and adults would follow different clues for deciding whether the taped samples were native speakers of their mother tongue. British judges were supposed to be somewhat better at the task as they are more used to hearing foreigners speaking their mother tongue than are Hungarians.

Results and discussion

First, I will provide a detailed analysis of the judgement tasks in Study 1 and Study 2 (Tables 2 and 3), then I will look at how the most proficient speakers became so good.

The numbers in Table 2 indicate how many of the judges (in what percentage) claimed that these 20 non-native speakers of Hungarian

were native speakers: for example, Russian learner of Hungarian number 18 was judged as a native Hungarian by eight children (57% of the children's group), by three university students (13% of the second group), and by two Russian retrainees (10%); on average 22% of the 58 native judges.

The most successful learners of Hungarian are the following: Participant 9, a German and English bilingual woman who was suspected not to be Hungarian by only one child, and Participant 5, a Bulgarian woman correctly judged by only two of the judges (a child and a student). Participant 9 is an elderly lady who moved to Hungary at the age of 21, got married and has worked as a part-time guide for almost 50 years, whereas Participant 5 is a young Bulgarian actress who married a Hungarian but did not want to give up her profession and has developed her proficiency within three years.

Over two thirds of the judges took Participant 12 for a Hungarian. He is a middle-aged English man, a teacher of English married to a Hungarian, who needed the L2 to be able to communicate with his in-laws and students. Two other participants were often mistaken for native Hungarians: Participant 6 is a Russian woman teacher over 50 with a Hungarian family, she has lived in the country for about 25 years, while Participant 10, a Polish student has had access to Hungarian for about a year.

Table 2: Study 1: Number and (percentage) in each group claiming that non-native speakers of Hungarian are native speakers

Part.	Mother tongue	Children n=14	Students n=22	Teachers n=22	Group average
	Target language: Hungarian		Native judges		
1	English	2 (14%)	3 (13%)	0 (0%)	9%
2	Laotian	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	1 (.5%)	5%
3	Finnish	6 (43%)	11 (50%)	8 (36)%	43%
4	English	3 (21%)	0 (0%)	1 (.5%)	7%
5	Bulgarian	13 (93%)	21 (95%)	22 (100%)	**97%**
6	Russian	8 (57%)	17 (77%)	10 (45%)	**60%**
7	American	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (.5%)	0.2%
8	English	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0%
9	Germ/Eng.	13 (93%)	22 (100%)	22 (100%)	**98%**
10	Polish	6 (43%)	17 (77%)	10 (45%)	**57%**
11	American	2 (14%)	11 (50%)	3 (13%)	28%
12	English	6 (43%)	20 (91%)	16 (73%)	**71%**
13	Russian	5 (36%)	13 (59%)	3 (13%)	36%
14	Russian	1 (.7%)	9 (41%)	3 (13%)	22%
15	American	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (.5%)	0.2%
16	American	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0%
17	Russian	1 (.7%)	3 (13%)	2 (10%)	10%
18	Russian	8 (57%)	3 (13%)	2 (10%)	22%
19	American	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0%
20	Spanish	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0.3%

The Bulgarian and the German/English woman were expected to be among the best, but Participants 11 and 13 were also expected to be ranked very high. I will try to explore the probable reasons for judges not considering these two native-like.

As for the Hungarian learners of English, the most successful learner is a 23-year-old teacher of English (Participant 3 in Table 3): he was judged by 89% of all judges to be a native speaker, only three children and one of the PGCE students suspected him. Participants 11 (56%), 9 (50%), 8 (47%) and 10 (42%) were also relatively highly ranked, but they impressed their judges less than in Study 1. Participant 11 is 40 years old, whereas Participants 9 and 10 are 26, Participant 8 is 23; the first four are male teachers of English, the last one is a fifth-year female student of English. They all started their second language studies in secondary school at the age of 15 and have studied a term in the US. They were hypothesized to be among the best speakers of the target language.

This study has revealed some details concerning what factors play an important role in achieving native-like proficiency: the case studies indicate that all the people who have been frequently mistaken for native speakers definitely strive for accentless proficiency, and these findings are strengthened by Bongaerts et al. (1997) and Ioup et al. (1994). These successful language learners share intrinsic motivation in the target language and seem to be proud and conscious of their achievement. Language is either part of their profession or they have very strong integrative motivation to become bona fide residents of the target language society. A point raised by Cook (1995) needs to be added, though. He points out that accent is the least important aspect of SLA proficiency, and speakers who fail to achieve native-like accent lose nothing important. However, Bongaerts et al. (1995) found that native speakers may seek to avoid further interactions with speakers of heavy accents, and argue for the importance of accentless proficiency.

Table 3: Study 2: Number and (percentage) in each group claiming that non-native speakers of English are native speakers

	Target language: English		Native judges		
Part.	Mother tongue	Children n=15	Students n=9	Students n=12	Average
1.	Hungarian	3 (20%)	0 (0%)	4 (33%)	19%
2.		2 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6%
3.		12 (80%)	9 (100%)	11 (92%)	**89%**
4.		0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	3%
5.		0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0%
6.		0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0%
7.		3 (20%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	11%
8.		13 (87%)	3 (33%)	1 (8%)	**47%**
9.		2 (13%)	7 (77%)	9 (75%)	**50%**
10.		11 (73%)	1 (11%)	3 (25%)	**42%**
11.		7 (47%)	9 (100%)	4 (33%)	**56%**
12.		5 (33%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	17%
13.		1 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3%

The case studies of these most successful language learners have provided detailed information on how they have managed to become so good. All of the successful participants try to find chances for improving their second language proficiency; they are outgoing characters and like to socialize. All are avid readers in the target language, listen to the media and try to feel at home in the culture as well as in the language. For pedagogical reasons the two most impressive cases are worth describing. The German/English woman

started her Hungarian through reading 'penny books' borrowed from the local library. First, she read these simple romances and then 'everything else available'. She never received any formal Hungarian instruction, similarly to the two successful speakers of Arabic in Ioup et al. (1994). Participant 3 among the Hungarian learners of English started to develop his L2 proficiency outside school by listening to BBC programmes on the radio, when input in the target language was hardly available in Hungary. He started by guessing meaning from the context and soon he sounded like any BBC announcer. He has found pleasure in entertaining, and thus, misleading his listeners. He has spent altogether a semester abroad.

A major difference between these successful learners and the Dutch EFL learners needs to be pointed out. All Dutch participants received intensive phonetic training both in the perception and in the production of the speech sounds of British English. Bongaerts et al. (1997, p. 463) hypothesise that 'this may have been one of the learning context factors that contributed to their success'. The present study does not support this assumption, as conscious training was available only to Participant 3.

In the following section I will consider further findings on the judgement tasks on non-native speakers of Hungarian and English by three groups of judges.

In Study 1 (Table 2) teachers were more realistic in their judgements than either students or children. The reasons are probably twofold: Russian teachers recognized Participants 6, 12, and 18 more frequently than either of the two other groups, and Participants 14 and 17 more often than the other adult group as they are familiar with the Russian accent. The other reason may be related to the teaching profession. Teachers are more critical listeners and less tolerant towards mistakes. This hypothesis is supported by findings of two other studies: on Chinese speakers of advanced English (Hadden, 1991) and English speakers of elementary Japanese judged by teachers and nonteachers (Okamura, 1995), where definitions for

different criteria were included in the questionnaire for both teachers and non-teachers.

In order for Study 2 to be an absolute mirror study of the first, I should have included a separate group of teachers, but unfortunately, though both groups of postgraduate students included teachers with extensive teaching experience, these could not be identified as questionnaires were filled in anonymously. Some clues, however, were given in the follow-up task. (The special group of Russian teachers was simply not possible to replicate, as the retraining programme was specific to the socio-educational context of post-communist countries.)

All judges were asked to comment on why they thought the interviewees were foreigners or native speakers. As a general strategy, they all used fluency and intonation as a clue and content was also considered. Children considered the lack of fluency, false starts, paraphrasing and hesitation as the most important indicators of non-native speakers, whereas all adult groups also paid attention to grammar. The most important support for this conclusion is given in the following examples. In Study 1 although the tape quality of the samples of Participants 8 and 10 (see Table 2) was relatively poor, the Polish speaker was quite often mistaken for a Hungarian because of his fluent talk and flat Hungarian-like intonation, whereas the English woman was easily identified because of her fragmented talk. In Study 2 children used clues like 'sounds familiar to me', 'no hesitation', 'keeps repeating himself', 'different'; while adults wrote 'fluent', 'too pronounced', 'over-elaboration', 'needs time to think'. These findings are in line with what was found in Hadden (1991) and Okamura (1995) claiming that non-teachers identified pronunciation and fluency as the major criteria. On the other hand, they contradict what Munro (1995) claims to have found when using unintelligible samples.

Another finding concerns how judges listened for meaning rather than for linguistic features. Speaker 12 (Table 2) talked about meeting a Hungarian of '56 (*ötvenhatos magyar*) in a train: adults thought a

foreigner would not use this expression. Speaker 18 mentioned someone she helped to prepare for a language exam, which indicated to adults that she must have been a foreigner, whereas children did not use this clue. Participant 8 (Table 3) described her experience in a gay bar, which English children thought was 'a subject a foreigner would not talk about in English'. Participant 11 talked about his ruptured ulcer, which adult judges considered 'big words'. Participant 3 was ranked high because of the use of slang and idiomatic expressions. Such phenomena are discussed by Skehan (1998, pp. 38-39), claiming that native speakers are sensitive to such choices, and emphasises the importance of native-like selection from the target language lexicon.

As for the hypothesis that British judges are more used to non-native speakers of English, support has been found in the fact that English judges in all three groups provided more and more detailed reasons. In Hungary foreigners speaking the language are still relatively rare and considered to be curiosities rather than everyday phenomena. On the other hand, based on the findings of the present study it is not possible to draw conclusions on whether native speakers of English are better judges and can identify foreigners more successfully. Similar problems were faced in Bongaerts et al. (1997), where in the follow-up study they controlled both speakers and judges for regional accents. It must be noted that the most successful Hungarian learners of English in our study had an American accent, while the others varied. Among the dummies six spoke regional British accents and two were Americans.

It was also hypothesized that children would follow somewhat different clues in the judgement tasks. As Tables 4-7 indicate, the rank order correlations between the groups in each study are quite similar: there are high correlations between the three groups of assessment of Study 1 (Table 4), quite high correlations in Study 2 (Table 6), but in both cases the children's groups have lower correlations with adult groups. In the case of the native speakers' samples the correlates are lower. However, this is not surprising, as in

Study 1 children differ more from both groups of adults than in the case of non-native speakers (Table 5), whereas in the study on English L2 negative correlations were found between children and adults (Table 7) and a low correlation between the two groups of students.

Table 4: Pearson correlations of three groups of Hungarian judges in the study on 20 learners of Hungarian based on Table 2

	Children	Students
Students	0.8454	
Teachers	0.8127	0.9053

$p < .05$
n=20

Table 5: Pearson correlations of three groups of Hungarian judges in the study on 8 native speakers of Hungarian based on Table 8

	Children	Students
Students	0.6361	
Teachers	0.5160	0.9577

$p < .05$
n=8

Table 6: Pearson correlations of three groups of English judges in the study on 13 learners of English based on Table 3

	Children	Students 1
Students 1	0.6642	
Students 2	0.7600	0.7186

$p < .05$
n=13

Table 7: Pearson correlations of three groups of English judges in the study on 8 native speakers of English based on Table 9

	Children	Students 1
Students 1	-0.4364	
Students 2	-0.5520	0.5421

p< .05

n=8

Table 8: Study 1: Number and (percentage) in each group taking native speakers of Hungarian for non-native speakers

	Target language: Hungarian		Native judges		
Part.	Mother tongue	Children n=14	Students n=22	Teachers n=22	Average
1.	Hungarian	2 (14%)	3 (13%)	7 (32%)	**21%**
2.		4 (28%)	2 (10%)	3 (13%)	16%
3.		0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.5%)	0.2%
4.		10 (71%)	3 (13%)	5 (23%)	**31%**
5.		1 (0.7%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.5%)	0.3%
6.		0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0%
7.		5 (36%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.5%)	10%
8.		1 (0.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0.2%

The study produced some unexpected results: native speakers were also sometimes mistaken for non-natives, as illustrated in Tables 8 and 9. In these surprising cases both children and adults typically followed the clues of hesitation and false starts. Speaker 4 (Table 8) was the most problematic in this respect. She stopped and para-phrased two times in the sample and sounded overexcited. The

plausible explanation is that once judges are asked to listen carefully they will use the same clues for native speakers as well. On the other hand, the above mentioned features are natural in discourse but not salient in everyday conversation.

Table 9: Study 2: Number (and percentage) in each group taking native speakers of English for non-native speakers

	Target language: English		Native judges		
Part.	Mother tongue	Children n=15	Students n=9	Students n=12	Average
1.	British English	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0%
2.		1 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3%
3.		1 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3%
4.		0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0%
5.		0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (16%)	6%
6.		0 (0%)	1 (11%)	1 (8%)	6%
7.	American	0 (0%)	2 (22%)	1 (8%)	8%
8.		0 (0%)	1 (11%)	1 (8%)	6%

Conclusions

The original aim of this research was to challenge the strong version of the critical period hypothesis by identifying successful learners of a second language who started SLA after puberty and have been able to achieve native proficiency. Out of 20 learners of Hungarian two participants have been generally and four others often, while out of 13 learners of English one participant has been generally and four others have often been mistaken for native speakers in a listening task by three groups of native judges. By these results I think it has been shown that the strong version of the CPH cannot be maintained. Further research is necessary to find out if these findings are true for target languages other than Hungarian and English.

As a result of the survey of the case studies I found that these successful language learners want to sound like natives, they share intrinsic motivation in the target language, which is often part of their profession, or they are integratively motivated. These findings are in harmony with what other studies have found (e.g. Bongaerts et al., 1997; Ioup et al., 1994; 1995) despite the differences in the languages involved.

These exceptionally successful learners work on the development of their language proficiency consciously and actively through finding chances for communicating with speakers of the target language, reading and listening extensively, though in contrast with the Dutch EFL learners intensive training in phonology has not been found typical. On the other hand, the findings of a recent study on advanced adult learners of German contradict both the present study and the study on Dutch learners. Moyer (1999, p. 98) found that few of their successful learners of German wanted to sound native or even to improve their phonology.

As for the length of exposure, it seems that extensive stay in the host environment is not a necessary prerequisite, as all the Hungarian

learners of English in the sample had spent only a limited time abroad.

It has been found that strategies for identifying native speakers seem to vary according to age and background. The general findings support the claim that native speakers rank fluency and intonation very high in judgement tasks. Therefore, pedagogical implications include an enhanced emphasis on fluency if learners intend to achieve native proficiency.

The limitations of this study are manifold: the tasks were artificial, natural speech samples from authentic contexts would have provided even more convincing extracts, but such data were impossible to gather; relatively short samples were used in the judgement task; only three groups of judges were used; samples from the reading tasks have not been contrasted with the storytelling samples; and this research has not revealed cases who do not intend to sound like natives, therefore the case studies involved exceptionally talented adults. Still, it is good to be able to hope: adults are not all hopeless cases.

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Chapter Three

Hungarian Children's Foreign Language Learning Motivation

> "Why do you learn English?"
> "Because the teacher is short."

Introduction

Children are generally considered to be motivated to learn foreign languages. However, research on attitudes and motivation in child second language acquisition (SLA) in the classroom is hard to find. The research discussed in this paper looks at the attitudes and motivation of Hungarian children: why they think they study a foreign language in the primary school. The long-term inquiry detailed in what follows was conducted in the ethnographic tradition for over 18 years, it was triggered by classroom needs, was initiated and implemented by the teacher herself.

Although motivation is usually considered by teachers to be either the most, or one of several equally important factors in SLA, it is not easy to define. As Brown (1987, p. 114) pointed out, 'motivation is probably the most often used catch-all term for explaining the success or failure of virtually any complex task.' Most sources agree that motivation is an inner drive, an incentive, a desire, a need that makes people act. Still, several sources on SLA (e.g., Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982; Stern, 1983; Ellis, 1985; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991) provide a definition related to the field, whereas some recent ones touch upon more general contexts (van Els et al., 1984; Brown, 1987; Dörnyei, 1990, 1994a; Skehan, 1989; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Clement, Dörnyei & Noels, 1994; Ellis, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994).

According to Crookes and Schmidt (1991), research on motivation in applied linguistics has been limiting in two senses: the approach has been almost exclusively social-psychological and it has not distinguished between the concepts of attitude and motivation. In their view, the failure to distinguish between social attitude and motivation has made it difficult to link findings in SLA with psychological mechanisms of SL learning and language pedagogy. This seminal paper triggered off a renewed interest in research on psycholinguistic factors in SLA. As Gardner and Tremblay (1994b: 524) summarize the claim of the 'motivational renaissance': '…what is needed is empirical research….'

Within this review the literature on motivation will be considered from the perspective of child foreign language learning (FLL). Implications for child FLL will be discussed on the basis of the long-term study on factors determining attitudes and motivation among Hungarian children. Although the limitations of our study will be outlined, it is hoped that findings will contribute towards a better understanding of the effects of specific pedagogic procedures on motivation.

Motivation in SLA

The role of motivation in SLA has been linked to attitudes, and research on attitudes and motivation has traditionally been associated with the names of Lambert and Gardner. Gardner and Lambert (1972) suggested a distinction between instrumental and integrative motivation: instrumental motivation refers to motivation to acquire a language as a means for attaining some pragmatic, utilitarian goals, such as getting a job, travelling abroad, getting to university, reading special materials; whereas integratively motivated learners intend to identify themselves with the target language group and want to become part of the target language society. Following several discus-

sions (e.g., Au, 1988; Gardner, 1988; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991), Gardner & MacIntyre (1993) presented a slightly modified view by claiming that 'the old characterisation of motivation in terms of integrative vs. instrumental orientations is too static and restricted' (1993, p. 4) and they concluded that in some cases instrumental motives may play an even more important role. In a more recent discussion Gardner and Tremblay (1994a, p. 361) emphasize that the distinction made was between an integrative orientation and an instrumental orientation but not motivations. Therefore, they wonder why researchers claim that the contrast between instrumental and integrative motivations is a central feature of Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model. Dörnyei (1994b, p. 517) rightly points out that the use of terminology has been contradictory as 'motivation' appears to be the broader term, whereas in Gardner's conceptualisation, 'motivation' is part of the 'integrative motive'.

As for the relevance of these discussions for FLL contexts, it is important to find out if integrative motivation is limited to bilingual and bicultural contexts and what role instrumental motivation plays. It is also crucial to reveal what differences may be identified in the types of motivation of adults and young learners.

In FLL situations, instrumental motivation and other motivational factors have been hypothesized to play an important role in the case of young adults (Dörnyei, 1990; Coleman, 1995). Although both studies emphasize the role of instrumental and integrative motivational subsystems in adult FLL, they point out the importance of classroom factors: success in learning the foreign language, the influence of parents, friends and teachers, and attributions about past failures were shown to contribute to FLL attitudes and motivation.

A younger population was examined in a study conducted by Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1994) applying social psychological constructs to the acquisition of English in the unicultural Hungarian setting. A total of 301 17-18-year-old students answered a questionnaire assessing their attitude, anxiety, motivation toward learning English, and their perception of classroom atmosphere and cohesion.

In addition, the teachers of the 21 groups of learners rated each student on proficiency, classroom behaviour and evaluated the relative cohesion of each class group. The first goal of the study was to examine whether the orientation pattern indicating the prominence of the instrumental orientation in Dörnyei's previous study (1990) characterized the secondary-school population. The other goal was to identify the components and to assess the importance of the integrative motive for L2 proficiency.

In the factor analysis summary of orientation items Clément et al. (1994, pp. 431-433) identified and analysed the relationship of five factors:

- A general xenophilic orientation concerning the role of English in making friends with foreigners in general rather than native speakers of English;
- Identification orientation concerning identification with the American and the British;
- Sociocultural orientation related to an interest in cultural aspects of the English world;
- Instrumental-knowledge orientation suggesting that being more educated and knowledgeable is related to success in studies and work; and
- An English media factor related to the use of English in the media.

'One striking difference from the solution obtained by Dörnyei (1990) is the emergence here of an "identification" orientation' (Clément et al., 1994, p. 432).

In their view, the results support the existence of a tricomponent motivational complex. The first component is the integrative motive and it is associated with a number of orientations including the instrumental-knowledge orientation. This integrative motive showed little relationship to the evaluation of the teaching environment,

suggesting that in the FLL context the language teacher and the course are not perceived as linked to the target language community. The second major component of L2 motivation is linguistic self-confidence which influences L2 proficiency directly and indirectly through the learners' attitude toward and effort expanded on learning the target language. The third component is identified in the appraisal of classroom environment. The authors suggest that these three major components of L2 motivation contribute to foreign language behaviour and competence in an interactive manner.

The classroom-related discussion on motivation in SLA was reopened by Oxford and Shearin (1994), followed by Dörnyei (1994a, 1994b), Gardner and Tremblay (1994a, 1994b) and Oxford (1994, p. 514) stating: 'We are at a key point in time regarding research on language learning motivation.' Most of these sources argue for the relative importance of career-oriented motivation and cultural-merging motivation for language learning and intend to help foster further understanding of L2 motivation from an educational perspective.

In his recent summary of the L2 motivation construct, Dörnyei (1994a) puts forward a framework of three levels: the Language Level, the Learner Level, and the Learning Situation Level. The most general level is the Language Level where the focus is on orientations and motives related to various aspects of the L2 culture, speakers and the usefulness of proficiency in the target language. This general dimension can be described by two broad motivational subsystems in the Gardnerian tradition: an integrative and an instrumental motivational subsystem. On the Learner Level, two motivational components are identified: need for achievement and self-confidence, forming fairly stable personality traits. The third level of L2 motivation is the Learning Situation Level, made up of intrinsic and extrinsic motives and conditions where three sets of motivational components are identified:

- Course-specific motivational components concerning the syllabus, the teaching materials, the teaching method, and the learning tasks;
- Teacher-specific motivational components concerning the teacher's personality, teaching style, feedback, and relationship with the students including the affiliative drive to please the teacher, authority type, and direct socialization of student motivation (modelling, task presentation, and feedback); and
- Group-specific motivational components concerning the dynamics of the learning group, including goal-orientedness, norm and reward system, group cohesion and classroom goal structure.

Dörnyei's article (1994a: 280-282) includes a useful checklist of how to motivate L2 learners. These pieces of advice are relevant for the foreign language classroom but very difficult to implement. As will be seen, in child FLL the most important role is played by the learning situation level.

The questions relevant for child FLL are manifold: what motivational subsystems can be identified; are they similar to or different from the ones in the studies focusing on adults and secondary-school students; in what ways and to what extent does need for achievement influence motivation; and how does motivation change with age/time?

Motivation in child FLL

The most important questions related to motivation in child FLL are linked with the learning context and how teachers can gain and maintain children's interest in the classroom. Various contexts will be looked at: Israel in Olshtain et al. (1990), Britain in Burstall (1980),

Croatia in Mihaljevic Djigunovic (1993 and 1995), and a study of three groups of Hungarian children between the ages of 6 and 14.

EFL in Israel

Motivation was one of the factors beside aptitude researched by Olshtain, Shohamy, Kemp and Chatow (1990) in Israel. They examined 196 Hebrew speaking children in their third year of English as a foreign language (EFL) from three different schools in Israel. The children represented seven classes: two classes with a disadvantaged student population, two classes with a population of regular students from a well-established socio-economic status background, and three classes with a mixed population of disadvantaged and regular students. Disadvantaged students (altogether 101) were defined according to three factors: father's level of education, ethnic origin, and family size. Advantaged students (95) were selected from a school in a well-established neighbourhood in a city.

The instruments used included a questionnaire of 50 questions and learners' answers were evaluated along four scales. Attitudes toward English-speaking people were tapped by children, indicating to what extent they agreed with statements like 'I would like to meet native speakers of English and get to know them better'. Attitudes toward the English language were measured by stating if they agree or disagree with statements like: 'One cannot succeed in life without English'; or 'English is an easy language to learn'. Attitudes toward the learning situation were investigated through multiple choice questions like: 'If due to budget limitations the school decides to cut down the number of English classes per week; you will be pleased to have less homework, or you will be sorry to have less chance to learn English'. Personal motives were explored through statements like: 'English will be important for my future career in life' (Olshtain et al., 1990, pp. 42-43).

In their findings, Olshtain et al. (1990) emphasize that the affective variables, as realized in the attitudes and motivation

questionnaire, explained relatively little with respect to achievements in FLL: the motivation/attitude factor contributed only 13% of variation in the case of disadvantaged and 6% of regular students' FLL achievements. Another interesting finding is that, in their view, advantaged students do not exhibit so much dependence on attitudes and motivation as disadvantaged ones do.

It seems that the attitudes and motivation of Hebrew children learning English as a foreign language were found to make a relatively small contribution to success in EFL because the questions reflected the traditional view along the instrumental-integrative scale of motivation. This scale will not predict efforts and activity in the classroom. Moreover, some of the questions were most probably beyond the grasp of the age group of 11-12. Perhaps open-ended questions and more emphasis on the learning situation would have revealed different motives and would have identified a higher contribution of motivation to success in EFL. As for the difference between advantaged and disadvantaged students' language proficiency and motivation, most possibly parents play some part of the role of the learning situation level (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Skehan, 1989).

The British primary French research project

The large-scale primary French research project (Burstall, 1980) involving over 17,000 children between the ages of 8 and 13 sought to evaluate the reportedly favourable effects of an early start in FLL in selected primary schools in England and Wales during the period 1964-74. The findings revealed a strong relationship between the pupils' socio-economic status and their level of achievement in French, where high mean scores tended to coincide with high-status parental occupation and low mean scores with low-status parental occupation. Similarly, around puberty there was a positive tendency for the percentage of pupils with favourable attitudes towards learning French to increase with social status.

Another finding of the same study indicated a strong relationship between school size and level of achievement. Pupils in small rural schools consistently maintained a higher level of achievement in French than those in larger urban schools. This surprising result is explained by the author by the fact that pupils in small schools tend to form closer relationships with their teachers, and this early establishment of good teacher-pupil relationships can explain the higher level of achievement in French and the subsequent development of positive attitudes towards further learning (Burstall, 1980, p. 89).

These findings support the importance of the learning situation level in child FLL, although actual classroom-based research was not included in this large-scale study either.

Foreign languages in Croatia

The Zagreb Project 1991 (Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 1993) intended to examine the attitudes and motivation of 336 seven-year-old children learning English, French and German in experimental classes and to explore their parents' views on language learning. A follow-up study (Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 1995) was conducted to look at changes in attitudes and motivation of the 281 pupils three years later.

Young learners were interviewed individually on various aspects of foreign language learning, whereas their parents filled in questionnaires. Some of the questions were open (e.g., What do you do in your FL classes? Which is your favourite subject in school? or Why is it good to know the FL you are learning?), while others offered alternatives (Do your parents like the FL you are learning? Did you know this FL before you started in school?).

The results in both studies reflected children's enthusiasm towards foreign language classes in general, and especially towards playing, although in the case of seven-year-olds foreign languages were not among children's favourite subjects, as maths was the top winner in all groups. Foreign languages as favourites were more frequently mentioned (by 29% of the children instead of 12%) in the

follow-up study. The explanation offered by the author refers to the possibility of young learners considering FL classes as time spent pleasantly but not like other classes. In contrast to this claim, when children were asked what they liked and disliked most in the FL classes, some controversial data resulted. The rate of seven-year-old children voting for playing was the following: in classes of English 82%, German 63%, French 80%, whereas in the answers given to the very next question 39% in English, 27% in German and 45% in French classes disliked playing. In the follow-up study the rate of likes for playing ranged from 70% in English, 60% in German to 48% in French classes, while playing was disliked by 11% in English, 26% in German and 24% of French learners.

These numbers are very hard to interpret as no example is defined or described for playing or teaching in either of the studies. It seems that often what teachers label and introduce as "games" and "playing" turn out to be boring and disliked by young learners. Consequently, more detail on classroom procedures would have been necessary to find out what children indicated by the positive and negative answers. Classroom observations should have revealed the background to the wide range of percentages in likes and dislikes in the different foreign language classrooms. In spite of the above conflicting data, Mihaljevic Djigunovic (1995) concludes that the general finding of the follow-up study reflects that children's positive attitudes extended to most of the classroom events.

Croat children were asked how they graded themselves on a 1 to 5 scale. At the age of seven learners evaluated their knowledge of the FL very highly (average of 4.6), which decreased to 4.3 in the second study. In the author's interpretation, this tendency must be due to learners' becoming more objective and realistic, as well as more accommodated to the evaluation system.

When asked about the possible benefits of knowing the particular FL, in both studies the overwhelming majority of the children referred to "communication" and "travel", while the factor of "increasing one's general knowledge" increased with age. Thus, the

summary of the second study claims that the young learners in the three FL programmes are instrumentally oriented and that they see vocational rather than cultural value in knowing the FL.

Some questions aimed to find out about children's attitudes towards native speakers of the target languages: who they are and what they are like. The answers of the younger age group learning English and French indicated that the majority made neutral comments, whereas learners of German had mostly positive views. In the follow-up study a high increase in the positive evaluation was noted in the English and French groups, while attitudes towards German speakers did not change. Mihaljevic Djigunovic (1995, p. 28) contrasts these results to those obtained by Lambert and Klineberg (1967) on children's views of foreign peoples claiming that children tend to associate "different" with "bad", while in their Zagreb study learners tended to view foreign people as different, but at the same time interesting. However, she fails to point out the major differences between the two social contexts in which the inquiries were conducted: the study of foreigners in North America tends to focus on newcomers in a multiethnic society, while in the Croat context children mean tourists or the exotic, interesting people they see on TV or hear about in class.

The vast majority of the Zagreb pupils came from supportive families where parents and other family members spoke foreign languages and took an active role in their children's FLL. Most parents attributed success to aptitude and motivation, and ranked the role of the teacher in the development of attitudes and motivation very high.

To sum up, it is clear from these findings that with the exception of the Israel study in which motivation was supposed to have played a minor role in FLL, across the age groups under investigation the learning situation level played a major role in the development of favourable attitudes towards the target languages, language learning in general, and success in FLL. In spite of the fact that the inquiries reviewed here differ greatly in the amount of attention paid to the

actual classroom context, and none of them explored or integrated classroom observation into the research procedures, the importance of the learning situation level is supported.

EFL in Hungary: The Pécs project

Description of the background

The original study started in 1977 and sought to develop an EFL syllabus for children between the ages of 6-14. The first teaching experiment involved 32 children for the first five years and only 15 of the same class for the rest of the programme, until the end of the eighth grade. The second eight-year teaching and research programme started in 1985 with 26 children involved for the first two years, and 15 children for six more years. The third group started learning English in 1987 with 26 children for the first two years, 15 from the 3rd grade and these children left school in June 1995. The early groups of big size were randomly split into two due to hiring new staff. In these studies the teacher, the syllabus designer and the researcher has been the same person and, apart from time passing and experience gained during this period, this person (the author) has been constant. The physical surroundings and the class teachers in the 1st and 2nd grades were the same, in the other grades only some of the teachers, whereas others varied.

As the aim was to design, pilot and further develop an EFL syllabus for children, it was essential to find out about their attitudes and motivation. The syllabus was based on stories and tasks related to them, and procedural in character: it developed through discussions with the learners (Nikolov, 2000). Children were involved in negotiation throughout the 8 years and motives were continually studied informally and annually formally. The research questions related to motivation included:

- Why do children think they learn English as a foreign language?
- What factors motivate them to do so, in what ways and to what extent?

The Pécs study did not follow the research tradition on attitudes and motivation outlined in the first part of this paper for various reasons, and weaknesses of the inquiry are foreshadowed by this fact. The reasons were related to the teacher's inexperience and the unavailability of resources in Hungary. It was the author's very first teaching experience after graduation from college, she was not familiar with the theoretical background or the questionnaires used in other studies as books and articles published abroad were neither included in the syllabuses of teacher training programmes nor available in libraries.

The reason why the teacher started to inquire about children's attitudes, motives, likes and dislikes was related to educational and personal background. The purpose of the project was to develop and pilot materials, tasks and teaching techniques for children between six and fourteen without any previous experience or resources. The author perceived the situation as a professional and personal challenge and tried to rely on the learners as authentic sources of information on what they needed and why. Thus the Pécs project has tried to implement what Oxford and Shearin (1994, p. 16) miss from research on attitudes and motivation claiming that they have rarely '…seen an L2 teacher administer a motivation survey or discuss students' goals…. Even less often have we found teachers tracking the changes in students' motivations over several years. Actual motivations of students, in our observation, are infrequently employed for establishing the nature of classroom activities….'

These shortcomings were avoided as the inquiry was initiated and driven by pedagogical interests and needs. Thus, this study differs from the ones reviewed previously in the following areas: first, it was

triggered off by classroom needs; second, children were involved for an eight-year-long period; third, the research questions formed an integral part of a process syllabus; and finally, the teacher herself conducted the survey.

Participants

Altogether 84 subjects were involved in the long-term study, 45 children (20 girls and 25 boys) for the full length of eight years. Out of the first group of 15 (1977-85), five children came from disadvantaged families and the parents of only two children had learnt English, whereas in the second (1985-93) and third (1987-95) groups two and three subjects came from disadvantaged families, with five and six English background parents, respectively. The rest of the children came from middle class families, where parents wanted their children to study English. The school is situated in a not very well-established neighbourhood and is affiliated to Pécs University.

Instrument

A special instrument was developed to assess attitudes in general, to the learning situation and motivation. This was a questionnaire, which consisted of open questions in Hungarian and was administered in the spring of each academic year. It was presented in the mother tongue throughout the 8 years in order that it was not looked upon as a test in any way. Students were not required to give their names and they were given enough time to write as much as they liked.

The questionnaire included the same six open questions for the eight-year-long periods (see Appendix for questions in Hungarian):

- Why do you learn English?
- What are your first three favourite school subjects?
- What are the school subjects (if any) you dislike?

- What do you enjoy doing the most in English classes?
- What do you dislike (related to English)?
- If you were the teacher what would you do differently?

The first question was meant to reveal what motives children refer to and how these reasons for FLL change over the years. The second and third questions sought to discover the place of English among other school subjects; whereas the fourth and fifth questions tried to elicit what tasks and activities learners tend to enjoy or dislike in the English classes. The last question asked for suggestions and criticism.

After the administration of the questions, there was a follow-up session in Hungarian where the teacher summarized children's opinion as reflected in the answers, tried to clarify problems and the groups discussed suggestions. These sessions were always highly appreciated by the children. The length of time devoted to talking in class in the mother tongue was unusual for them, and they perceived these occasions as special because their own views and suggestions were in focus. Discussions and involvement in the learning process were not new to learners as the story-based syllabus was also negotiated continuously. Children were regularly asked in the target language as part of the classroom routine to make decisions on various aspects of procedures concerning who wanted to participate; who worked with whom; what story and activity was to be done; what the sequence of activities and tasks should be; assessment and self-assessment. Before and after classes, as well as in extra-curricular activities, the teacher was always available to establish, maintain and enhance a good personal relationship with children. On these occasions, the teacher would speak in Hungarian.

It is important to note that learners usually forgot about these specific sessions and were pleasantly surprised when asked the same questions a year later. They took the questions seriously, wanted to

be helpful and regularly checked upon how their wishes were granted.

The written answers of the children in each group were collected and stored until the end of the project. The teacher kept notes on the follow-up discussions and other types of feedback regularly. The children's written answers were grouped and analysed afterwards in order to see if any patterns emerged, to what extent they were similar to and different from one another.

Results and discussion

Reasons for learning English

The first question addresses the issue of why children think they learn EFL. The answers to the question "Why do you learn English?" can be grouped into four broad types:

- the classroom experience;
- the teacher;
- external reasons; and
- utilitarian reasons.

Answers indicating what learning EFL is like will be considered under classroom experience as different from the answers commenting on the teacher. Although the teacher's role is generally also part of the classroom experience, the answers seemed to indicate that special attention should be paid to it. External reasons relate to answers suggesting motivation coming from the family, and utilitarian reasons will be considered separately (see Table 1).

The answers reflect fairly similar reasons for 1st and 2nd graders (age 6-8); children in the 3rd, 4th and 5th grades (age 8-11) also tend to give similar answers to each other, and learners in the last three grades provided reasons along the same lines as each other.

The youngest learners (age 6-8)

The 84 children in the first two grades gave the following reasons: Classroom related answers included 3 types: a) 'because it is so good (fun)','so interesting', 'because we just play' (65 times out of 158 answers) b) 'because I like it', (14 times) c) 'because it is easy', 'because it is easy to get a reward', 'I am good at it' (18). (The numbers indicate how many times the same reason was mentioned. Some children gave two reasons. Altogether 158 reasons were considered, and some of the answers were hard to evaluate because of spelling errors.)

The answers relating to the teacher included three types of statements: a) 'because the teacher is nice and kind' (aranyos) (38); b) 'because the teacher has long hair', 'because the teacher is short' (!) (4); and c) 'because the teacher loves me' (3).

Among family related external motives the following were listed: a) 'I am teaching my mother/sister/brother' (5); b) 'because my brother/sister/cousin also learns English' (7). Utilitarian reasons were represented by statements like: 'my mother said if we went to Italy I would interpret' (4).

In all three groups there were more references to the teacher and to enjoyment in class at the end of the first grade than at the second, and there were more references to rewards in the second year than in the first. All the answers included the word 'because' (mert, 'mer'), in Hungarian indicating looking back on the experience and not ahead: for example, three children wrote 'because I am learning it and it is good'. All the answers given by this age group were positive statements.

Answers of 8-11-year-olds

The answers of 3rd, 4th and 5th graders to the same question included similar reasons but the differences are also obvious.

The classroom experience was mentioned in 88 answers out of 169 answers containing 197 reasons of the following five main types:

'because the classes are good, interesting' (41), 'not boring' (32!), 'because we only play and listen to stories' (7), 'we can do what we like' (4), 'it is easy to get a reward' (4).

The teacher was typically mentioned together with other reasons: 'she does not shout' (24), 'she is not angry' (7), 'she is kind, nice' (17).

External reasons were more frequent and different from younger learners, sometimes tongue in cheek: 'because I got signed up' (22), 'I am teaching my mother' (1).

Utilitarian reasons were also more frequent and varied: 'so that I will be able to talk' (18), 'it will be useful' (13), 'when we travel abroad it will be good' (3). In giving these reasons children tend to look ahead into the future and they typically mention either very general points or specific situations where the knowledge of English will be useful.

Answers of 11-14-year-old children

In the final three years, children tend to give more homogeneous answers, and the emphasis is shifted. Altogether three groups of 15 children had a chance to give their reasons each year but because some learners were missing at times, only 134 answers were given to the questions and they provided 220 reasons for learning EFL.

Classroom related answers are frequent: 'you don't need to be afraid/ worried/ frightened (e.g., 'nem kell rettegni' (21), 'classes are good', 'not boring' (39), 'different from other subjects' (11), 'we just play and do stories' (9), 'we don't get bad grades' (7), 'it is not a problem if I do my homework here' (6).

Table 1 gives the number and percentages the types of answers given across the three 8-year periods. The teacher is less frequently mentioned, only in addition to other reasons and in a less enthusiastic way: 'the teacher is fair (rendes), good (jó)' (29).

Table 1: Reasons why children think they learn EFL across three groups of Hungarian learners

	Grade 1,2 6-8 year old 84 children/ 154 answers/ 158 reasons	Grade 3,4,5 8-11 year old 62 children/ 169 answers/ 197 reasons	Grade 6,7,8 11-14 year old 45 children/ 134 answers/ 220 reasons
Classroom-related reasons	96 61%	88 44.6%	93 42.2%
Teacher-related reasons	46 29%	52 26.3%	31 14.2%
External reasons	12 7.5%	22 11.5%	5 2.4%
Utilitarian reasons	4 2.5%	35 17.6%	91 41.2%

External reasons are very rare: 'because I got signed up' (6), but utilitarian purposes are typical: 'so that I know it' (44), 'because it is important to speak a foreign language' (16), 'it will be useful' (11), 'in order to be able to talk when I travel abroad' (13), 'because English is an international language' (5), 'because Russian will not be useful' (3). Children who gave only one reason tended to write a very short one: 'so that I know it', 'so that I can talk'.

Comparing the three groups

The comparison of the three groups of learners has revealed more similarities than differences. The first group gave more reasons related to the teacher, whereas the other two groups provided more reasons related to the classroom. This must have been due to two factors: on the one hand, most probably teaching techniques improved with time, and on the other, the teacher's own children were also involved in the second and third groups. With these changes the

closer "peer-like" relationship with the first group became more "teacher-like".

Numbers and percentages indicate a steep increase of utilitarian reasons but the third group gave more such reasons than the first two groups. From the very first year, boys in the third group tended to provide more and quite short utilitarian reasons than children in the first and the second groups. The ones who gave only one, a pragmatic type of reason ('so that I know it') all came from the third group. Their parents seem to be more keen on their language learning than the parents of the children in the other two groups. Also, it seems to be important that most of these children identify with this external parental wish. It is to be added that the family pressure on some of the children in the third group was very strong as their parents wanted them to take an intermediate language proficiency exam after the eighth year. In this exam the emphasis is on accuracy rather than fluency, and it became available to 14-year-olds only in the case of the third group.

Several general tendencies are reflected in the answers given by the three groups of learners. Classroom related answers are most frequent throughout the eight years but negative, comparative statements with other classes and teachers overtake positive ones from the 3rd grade. The reason for this phenomenon must be due to negative experiences in other school subjects as the same tendency can be traced in the answers related to the teacher's qualities.

The answers reflect a general positive attitude to the learning context, activities and tasks, and an intrinsic motive for participating in classes is present. This is connected to the strong emotional link to the teacher, which gradually weakens with time in all the three groups over the eight-year periods.

The role of negotiation

It is important to note that children in all three groups took negotiation with the teacher very seriously. They were obviously biased in the first few years as they tended to admire the teacher, but in the upper grades this admiration gradually developed into a balanced acceptance and criticism. The tendency of "trying to please the teacher" was very rarely observed in the anonymous answers, children took their suggestions and comments seriously, and appreciated the fact that they were always involved in decision making. They became gradually aware of the fact that this way of involvement was neither requested nor tolerated by other teachers and some of the parents were also quite critical. These factors together with the teacher's interest in the children contributed to the development of a strong sense of cohesion and friendship.

Extrinsic motives

Extrinsic motives in the form of rewards, grades and approval seemed to be very important for young children, but as they were easily available in these classes, in the long run they lost significance and knowledge as an aim in itself took the leading role. The status of school grades is very contradictory in Hungarian schools. Parents pressure children to get top grades, and progress is generally associated with a grade five, while a lower grade indicates problems. As a result of the high academic requirements of the curriculum, relatively low marks tend to be given in the 3rd and 4th years and become typical in the upper classes. Therefore, some teachers often use assessment as a means of establishing and maintaining discipline in the classroom. In Hungarian schools testing mainly focuses on rote-learned material, it is infrequent, and results are final.

Self-assessment and learner involvement in the process of evaluation are not generally employed by teachers, so children in the Pécs study perceived these techniques as unique; this fact also contributed towards a good relationship between the teacher and the

students. Throughout the years of FLL achievements represented by good grades, rewards and language knowledge all serve as motivating forces: children feel successful and this feeling generates the need for further success. They are motivated to participate actively and enjoy classroom activities, for they are aware of the availability of success. They trust their own ability and consider tasks as challenges.

A comparison to Croat children

When comparing these findings to other studies, both similarities and differences can be identified. As with the Zagreb studies, there is no information on how the Croat learners evaluated themselves after the age of eight, but they ranked their achievement very high according to the grades they assigned themselves in the interview at the ages of six and eight although the average grade decreased slightly over the two years. This decrease in their self-assessment grades most probably reflected the growing academic demand in the area of "knowing about language" as well as the formal and informal feedback provided by teachers.

The emergence of instrumental-knowledge motives

As with the findings of the Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1994) study, the motives identified in our study relate to the instrumental-knowledge orientation and linguistic self-confidence. As reflected in the children's answers, instrumental motives for FLL emerge before and strengthen around puberty but the reasons are vague and general. Most of the children are aware of the fact that English will be useful in their adult life but not all of them give this as a reason for studying it.

These claims are in contrast with the findings of the Zagreb study, as the majority of Croat children referred to communication and travel as the reason why they considered the learning of a foreign language to be good for them, while Hungarian children did not emphasize this factor. This difference may be due to the way the

answers were elicited in the two studies: in the Pécs study the question was general and open, asked by the teacher herself in her own classes, while Croat learners were asked various and more specific questions in the presence of a stranger in unusual circumstances. On the other hand, our findings are supported by the fact that the answers related to the factor of increasing one's general knowledge also increased in the follow-up Zagreb study. The utilitarian answers given by 41% of the older Pécs learners reflect the general xenophilic orientation identified by Clément et al. (1994), as they did not refer to native speakers when in their answers like "so that I can talk", they emphasized the importance of English in making friends with foreigners in general, rather than native speakers of English.

Lacking integrative motives

No trace of integrative motivation was found in the answers to the open question in the Pécs study. Attitude towards speakers of the target language did not emerge in the data, although children in the first group (1977-85) met some native guests in the classroom and eight of them had a chance to participate in an exchange programme with Devonian children during the 8th school year. Children in the second (1985-93) and third (1987-95) groups had native teacher visitors almost every term and the second group was taught by a part-time native volunteer for a term. Also, the story-based syllabus provided children with a smorgasbord of authentic materials from target language sources, representing both British and American culture in a favourable and attractive way.

The above claim concerning the lack of reference to native speakers is supported by the results of various other inquiries. In the Zagreb studies, in which direct questions aimed at eliciting answers related to attitudes towards native speakers, the majority of six-year-olds characterized speakers of the target languages neutrally, and two years later this phenomenon changed only slightly, when about two-

thirds of the answers were positive, and one-third neutral. Further support is given to our claims by Clément et al. (1994), as the integrative motive identified in their research showed little relationship to the teaching environment, suggesting that learners do not perceive the teacher and the course as linked to the target language community.

Similar results were found in a study focusing on why the most successful students in a nation-wide English language proficiency competition studied the target language, and how they achieved their outstanding results (Nikolov, 1996). Altogether 78 students (13- and 14-year-olds) commented on why they studied English, thus providing 147 reasons. Fifty-nine of them emphasized intrinsic motivation: they liked the language, and six of these students found studying it easy. Pragmatic reasons were given by 51 students: 36 referred to English being generally useful and necessary, eight to being compulsory, seven mentioned concrete reasons, like "it's the language of computers". The role of English as the means of international communication was emphasized by 32 answerers, only one of them mentioning another culture. Although altogether 32 of these students had visited Britain or the US and most of them had had contact with British or American teachers, there was no reference to native speakers of the target language.

English among other school subjects

The second and third questions in the Pécs study aimed at finding out about the place of English among other school subjects. Children found these two questions the most challenging and they tended to spend a long time elaborating on the answers. The findings reveal overall enthusiasm towards English as a school subject, but the place of English related to other subjects changes with age.

Table 2: Numbers and percentages of favourite school subjects

School subject	6-8 year old Grades 1, 2 152 answers 190 favourite subjects	8-11 year old Grades 3, 4, 5 169 answers 309 favourite subjects	11-14 year old Grades 6,7,8 134 answers 352 favourite subjects
English	152 (80%)	169 (55%)	130 (37%)
P. E.	33 (17%)	33 (11%)	28 (8%)
Reading	5 (3%)	21 (7%)	
History		42 (14%)	59 (17%)
Biology		17 (5%)	46 (13%)
Maths		23 (7%)	31 (9%)
Music		4 (1.3%)	
Geography			29 (8%)
Practical Work			7 (2%)
Chemistry			4 (1%)
German			7 (2%)
Hungarian Literature			5 (1%)
Hungarian Grammar			2 (0.6)
Russian			2 (0.6)
Art			2 (0.6)

As the numbers and percentages in Table 2 and Table 3 illustrate, children identified many more favourites than disliked subjects, the number of both popular and unpopular ones gradually increased over the years, but children became more critical in the final years as over half of the answers included negative choices as well.

Table 3: Numbers and percentages of disliked subjects

School subject	6-8 year old Grades 1, 2 152 answers 16 disliked subjects	8-11 year old Grades 3, 4, 5 169 answers 154 disliked subjects	11-14 year old Grades 6, 7, 8 134 answers 199 disliked subjects
Writing	8 (50%)		
P. E.	5 (31%)	14 (9%)	22 (11%)
Reading	3 (19%)		
Hungarian Grammar		107 (70%)	49 (25%)
Maths		31 (20%)	44 (22%)
Art		2 (1%)	13 (7%)
Physics			29 (15%)
Chemistry			29 (15%)
German			9 (5%)
Russian			4 (2%)

In the first two grades, all children in all three groups placed English as 1st or 2nd among favourite subjects. Out of 152 answers 114 put English as first and 38 as second, whereas 33 answers rated physical education, and 5 reading as first. Very few (16) children listed any subject as disliked: writing by 8, reading by 3, and physical education by 5.

In grades 3, 4, and 5, out of 169 answers 108 rated English as first, 35 as second and 26 as third. The other favourite subjects became more varied: history got 42 votes, biology 17, P. E. 33, maths 23, reading 21, music 4 votes among the first three favourite subjects. Nobody mentioned English among the subjects they disliked, but Hungarian grammar was mentioned in 107, maths in 31, P. E. in 14, and art in 2 cases.

In grades 6, 7, and 8, altogether 134 answers were given and with the exception of four 8th graders in the last group each putting a different subject as their favourite, all learners mentioned English

among the favourites: English was the first in 76, second in 44 and third in 10 answers. The other subjects among the 3 favourites were history (59), biology (46), geography (29), maths (31), P. E. (28), practical work (7), chemistry (4), German (7), Hungarian literature (5) and grammar (2), all from the last group in the 8th grade), Russian (2) art (2). In these grades most children mentioned more than one disliked subject: Hungarian grammar (49), maths (44), physics (29), chemistry (29), P. E. (22) art (13), German (9), Russian (4).

The general conclusion on motivation is supported by these findings as the majority of learners involved in the study listed English among their three favourites. From the 5th grade on a change occurred in all the three groups, as other school subjects tended to take the leading role beside English: history and sciences.

The question of how much children wanted to please the teacher of English by ranking the subject high must be considered here. As they were not required to write their names on the sheets, they seemed to give genuine answers. Also, the teacher frequently observed these children in other subject classes and both their classroom behaviour and the range of grades they achieved in other subjects seemed to provide support to the claim that the answers reflected the children's real opinions. Learners appreciated school subjects highly when they considered the material interesting, they were actively involved, the teacher was just and it was possible for them to be successful.

It is worth comparing these findings to the Zagreb studies as Croat children were also asked about their favourite school subjects. On average only one-third ranked a FL first, but a slight increase was observed in the case of English and French over the two years. The answers of the learners obtained by external interviewers were not analysed alongside data from actual classroom observation, as the Zagreb studies did not include any descriptive or comparative analysis of classroom procedures or teaching materials. Comparing these results to the feedback of the three groups of Pécs children, Hungarian learners showed a significantly higher level of enthusiasm towards

English in the first two years of their study and this positive attitude was maintained throughout the eight years.

A similar tendency is described by Clément et al. (1994), who claim that the appraisal of classroom environment is one of the three most important motivational components. As will be seen, answers to specific questions on liked and disliked classroom activities further support the claim that children in the Pécs study were intrinsically motivated and challenged by tasks and activities.

Mother tongue and other foreign languages

One unexpected result reflects the negative attitude towards Hungarian grammar. This finding may be partly due to the fact I experienced in classroom observations that in all three classes the teachers of Hungarian in the 3rd and 4th grades had undemocratic and aggressive personalities and teaching styles. The other reason for frustration relates to the Hungarian literature and grammar syllabuses for these two grades. Although mother tongue development is not within the range of this inquiry, these negative tendencies need further studying. As L1 cognitive/academic language proficiency was found to predict success in FLL (Skehan, 1989; Olshtain et al., 1990), negative attitudes towards the mother tongue as a school subject may influence language study in undesirable ways.

Another interesting issue is related to the status of other foreign languages. Russian used to be the mandatory foreign language in Hungarian education before 1989. For the first group Russian was compulsory from the age of nine, for the two other groups a choice was offered at the same age and they opted for German. Gradually German became just one of the school subjects and lost its high status: although it was liked by seven children it was disliked by nine others. The children who voted for German all came from the last group and they were the ones who opted for more grammar instruction. This may reflect parental pressure on the children often men-

tioned in parents' meetings to pass a prestigious proficiency exam in which explicit knowledge of grammar is a priority.

Attitudes towards classroom activities

Questions 4 and 5 sought to elicit detailed information concerning classroom activities. In grades 1 and 2 children listed the following activities they liked: playing games (*jácani*) (98), everything (36), and nine gave a short description of a game. Four children (from the same group) mentioned that they did not like writing.

In grades 3, 4, and 5, children tended to give more specific answers: out of l57 answers to the question on favourite classroom activities 131 mentioned a particular game as well-liked (e.g., Bingo, The big ship sails, Lucy Locket, puzzles, Mr Wolf, and playing cards), 76 mentioned a story title (e.g., 101 Dalmatians, Three little pigs, The three billy goats, Gruff), and only 13 liked playing in general. As for unpopular activities, 34 children referred to tests, the others did not answer the question.

In the final three grades out of l34 answers 23 did not refer to anything as well-liked, whereas nine of these mentioned an activity they disliked. Eleven children said they liked 'everything', 24 enjoyed acting out, 36 good stories, 24 competitions, 21 guessing games, 9 writing stories, 5 liked to 'fool around', and 7 enjoyed going to libraries, resource centres. Altogether 95 answers mentioned disliked activities: 46 tests, 21 acting out, 23 boring stories, and five sitting.

The general tendencies reflected an enthusiasm towards playful language learning activities, intrinsically motivating tasks and materials, and a negative attitude towards tests. The general preference towards "playing" in general became more specific over the years, as learners listed concrete activities.

Comparing the Pécs data to that of the Zagreb studies more contradictory answers were given by the Croat children. After categorizing the children's liked and disliked classroom activities as related to teaching or playing it was found that about 25% of the children

disliked playing in the early years and the rate of disliked teaching-related activities reached 48% in the case of German. As the Zagreb studies do not provide insights into either similarities or differences across classrooms, or what specific activities fitted which category, it is very difficult to evaluate the results. In the Pécs study dislikes towards acting out in all the three groups emerged around puberty when some children, mostly girls, often said in class they felt exposed and preferred to remain in the background.

As far as the negative attitudes towards testing are concerned, it is worth noting that in the first two years they did not manifest themselves either in the Pécs or in the Zagreb studies. Nevertheless, it seems that Hungarian children's anxiety developed gradually over the years, and in spite of the fact that they "did not need to worry" they still identified tests as representing a threat. The reasons for this may be manifold: learners worked in the pedagogical context of the school where unlike in English classes, mistakes were always perceived as signs of deficiencies rather than indicators of development. Although marks in English tended to be the highest of all the subjects, and although children could improve their final grades by retaking all their tasks as many times as they wished, tests were still perceived as threatening and they always would have liked to avoid them.

Children's suggestions and criticism

The final question asked for suggestions and criticism, and the answers strengthen the general results. In the first two grades very few children (17) gave an answer but everyone indicated that everything was good the way it was. In grades 3,4 and 5, 34 children chose to answer, 12 of whom said they would not change anything, whereas 17 would not make children take tests (*nem iratnék*), and five would send naughty ones out of class. In the final three grades 49 children said they would not change anything, 15 would punish children who did not do their homework, 14 would punish naughty pupils, 31

would not require any homework, 13 would do more exciting (horror) stories and seven (all from the last group) would do more grammar.

The increasing demand for stricter classroom norms can be traced from the third year when children, mostly girls, complained about boys not getting punished for misbehaviour, although in the follow-up sessions they usually agreed that punishments like sending notes back to parents, sending naughty ones out of the class or giving them extra tests were not useful tools in other subjects either.

The suggestion concerning more grammar practice in the third group was due to parental pressure, for several parents wanted their children to take a proficiency test at the age of 14; therefore, some follow-up on grammar points and multiple choice exercises was sometimes integrated into the syllabus to satisfy needs. It is important to note that no student ever listed these activities among the favourite ones and the children suggesting grammar practice usually got the blame from the rest of the group.

Conclusions

The results of this study show that the traditional view on motivation in SLA does not provide a relevant framework for common classroom contexts but some findings in the recent revival of interest towards attitudes and motivation support the need to focus on the FL classroom. In the Pécs study the most important motivating factors for children between 6 and 14 years of age included positive attitudes towards the learning context and the teacher, intrinsically motivating activities, tasks and materials, they were more motivated by classroom practice than integrative or instrumental reasons. Knowledge as an aim gradually overtook the role of external motivating factors like rewards and approval. Instrumental motives emerged around the age of 11-12, but they remained vague and gen-

eral. No trace of attitude towards speakers of the target language was identified in the answers to open questions.

The implications for the teacher and syllabus designer are twofold: on the one hand, children are motivated in FLL if they find classroom activities, tasks and materials interesting and the teacher supportive. On the other hand, although the importance of instrumental motivation increases with age, engagement and persistence in learning activities are not directly influenced by this factor: children will choose to pay attention to, engage and persist in learning tasks only if they find them worth the trouble.

Another important finding resulting from this study is the fact that although the percentage of classroom and teacher related reasons decreased with age, the activities children appreciated were all the intrinsically motivating ones throughout the eight-year periods. These tasks gradually shifted from "playing" in general, to more specific and more cognitively challenging tasks. Some children asked for tasks developing cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), mostly under pressure from home, but none of them mentioned these tasks among the popular ones. The above facts provide further evidence of the importance of the Learning Situation Level in Dörnyei's (1994a) model including course-specific, teacher-specific and group-specific motivational components.

Perhaps the most important finding with classroom implications relates to the way causes of motivation were found to vary at different ages. For very young children classes must be fun and the teacher is in focus. The development of self-confidence also seems to play a major role and external rewards slowly lose some of their attractiveness. Instrumental motives emerge but they are balanced by classroom-related motives even at the age of 14.

The limitations of the Pécs study are manifold. The framework is unusual, as teaching the same groups for eight years is not typical in any country. Also, the findings of this inquiry come from a limited number of participants, but the teacher, the school and the syllabus were held constant as far as possible. Further research should reveal

if a wider population of children of the same age group with other teachers and syllabuses develop similar results. Another obvious drawback is identified in the fact that the teacher, the syllabus designer and the researcher were the same person. Although the teacher has been able to provide insights into classroom procedures and the wider pedagogical context, it is impossible for her to regard any of the aspects discussed without personal and professional involvement. Finally, it must be noted that these children were atypical as they were good language learners. To what extent the early foreign language experience had contributed to their success remains an unanswered question.

In spite of the above limitations it is hoped that some interesting and challenging issues have been raised even if readers need to take them with a pinch of salt.

As a final note long-term outcomes should also be mentioned. In the first and second groups more than half of the students had passed the intermediate proficiency language exam in English by the age of 16. Four students from the first group graduated from university as English majors, two of them as double majors in another language they started studying in secondary school. Nine others use English in their jobs daily and three of them passed exams in further languages as well. All the other learners in the later groups are still continuing with English and other modern languages. As they keep contact with one another and the teacher, an attempt was made to find out how the students in the first group evaluated their experience after ten years. Both in their written feedback to questions looking back and in personal discussions they emphasized their long-term commitment to learning foreign languages. They have favourable memories and would like their own children to have a similar experience.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix: Questionnaire in Hungarian

1. Te miért tanulsz angolul?
2. Mi a három kedvenc tantárgyad?
3. Mi az a három tantárgy, amit legkevésbé kedvelsz?
4. Mit szeretsz legjobban csinálni az angol órán?
5. Mi az, amit a legjobban utálsz?
6. Ha te lennél a tanár, mit csinálnál másképpen?

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Chapter Four

Strategy Use in Hungarian Children's Classrooms Through a Story-Based Syllabus

> S1: A fehér a lány.
> T: These are all boys, there
> is no girl in this book.
> These are three billy goats.
> Three boys, like Bálint, Tamás and Feri.
> S2: De nincsen szarva!

Introduction

This paper presents some of the findings of a longitudinal study on Hungarian children between the ages of 6 and 14 learning English as a foreign language. This research was going on for 18 years. The original aim of the study was to develop an EFL syllabus for children, and in the process several factors influencing the classroom acquisition of English became evident. From among these the emergence of strategies will be discussed in this paper.

Background to research: Participants and data collection

Three groups of 15 children were involved in the study: the first group between 1977 and 1985; the second between 1985 and 1993; whereas the third group between 1987 and 1995. Altogether, 45 students (24 boys and 21 girls) participated in the research for eight years each. In the first group five, in the second two, and in the third group three children came from disadvantaged families. In the second and third groups all the parents were eager to put children in

the language programme, unlike in the first one where only about half of the parents were enthusiastic. The school is situated in an average housing estate of Pécs and is affiliated to Janus Pannonius University. The teacher, the syllabus designer and the researcher was the same person (the author). Data on strategies were collected with the help of participant observation based on the teacher's notes, and the continuous analyses of children's oral and written products.

The syllabus

As the aim of the research was to develop a syllabus for children, it had to be procedural and negotiated in character. Children's needs, likes and dislikes were considered and they were actively involved in the development and evaluation of the syllabus (Nikolov, 2000). Two different techniques were used for these purposes: spontaneous reactions were closely observed and evaluated; and explicit oral and written feedback was elicited at regular intervals. The syllabus was content-based (Nunan, 1988) exploiting authentic narrative: rhymes, songs and stories (Garvie, 1990). On the other hand, it was task-based in the sense Long (1985) and Prahbu (1987) use the term: task refers to what "…people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between" (Long, 1985, p. 89).

The real difficulty results from the difference between children's needs and activities at the time of learning the language and their future adult task needs. This type of syllabus provides children with an opportunity to use language for both their presently intrinsically motivating purposes, and, through the development of positive attitudes towards foreign language learning, to further develop their proficiency after leaving primary school. In the story-based syllabus language was graded and sequenced naturally along developmental stages, and the background knowledge of the world, visual aids,

actions, body language and appropriate teacher talk ensured that roughly tuned input (Krashen, 1985) became intake.

In the following I will explore how Hungarian children made use of various learner strategies.

Children's use of strategies

Research on strategies has focused on two broad areas: learning strategies and communication strategies. In learning strategies the learner makes attempts to establish competence in the target language, whereas in a communication strategy the difficulty of the moment is to be solved.

Looking at learning strategies from the linguistic perspective, a contradiction can be identified. The universal hypothesis claims that second language acquisition happens naturally, without mental efforts on the learner's part. Consequently, learning strategies reflect what happens in cases of instructed SLA, or, in Krashen's (1985) terminology, while learning (not acquiring subconsciously) the target language. On the other hand, research on communication strategies does not take acquisition into consideration, but aims to find out how learners manage to solve their problems in certain situations.

Most studies on strategies investigate adults and high school students cross-sectionally. The development of learning and communication strategies in children has not been widely researched, as this is a relatively new area of inquiry. In the next sections both types of strategies will be considered from the perspective of child foreign language learning (FLL).

Learning strategies

Learning strategies – or as they are more recently labelled learner strategies (McDonough, 1999, p. 2) – are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning. In Oxford's (1990) definition, "…learning strategies are operations employed by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990, p. 8).

In Cook's (1993) view, the concept of learning strategies "…goes against the belief that the language knowledge differs from other forms of knowledge…" (Cook, 1993, p. 136). He argues that there is an inherent contradiction between learning strategy research and linguistics, because whatever the strategies might be, they should be language learning strategies, not general learning strategies, as language knowledge differs from other types of knowledge.

In my experience, the younger the learners, the less learning strategies they use, as they tend to rely on naturalistic processes of acquisition. As schooling progresses, children develop their learning skills and the use of learning strategies increases. Some of the strategies are borrowed from other subject areas, and they cannot be regarded as specific language learning strategies. Other strategies are closely related to FLL, and can be identified as language learning strategies.

Two taxonomies will be shortly examined from the point of view of what learning strategies they identify, and which of these are relevant for children in FLL contexts.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) differentiated between three types of learning strategies:

- metacognitive strategies;
- cognitive strategies; and
- social mediation strategies.

Metacognitive strategies are about learning rather than learning strategies themselves. Cognitive strategies "…operate directly on incoming information, manipulating it in ways that enhance learning"; whereas social mediation strategies, or social/affective strategies, represent a broad group that involves either interaction with another person or control over affect (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, pp. 44-45).

The other system of learning strategies was developed by Oxford (1990), in which she identified two broad types:

- direct strategies, and
- indirect strategies.

The direct class is composed of memory strategies for remembering and retrieving new information, cognitive strategies for understanding and producing the language, and compensation strategies for using the language despite knowledge gaps. Indirect strategies include metacognitive strategies for coordinating the learning process, affective strategies for regulating emotions, and social strategies for learning with others. These two types are further divided into six general kinds of learning strategies, resulting in 19 sets of learning strategies (Oxford, 1990, pp. 14-22). As this system is more comprehensible than the one suggested by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), further explorations will be based on this source.

Oxford (1990) divides indirect strategies into three groups:

- metacognitive, or planning/evaluating strategies, such as paying attention, consciously searching for practice opportunities, planning for language tasks, self-evaluating one's progress and monitoring errors;
- affective, or emotional/motivational strategies, such as anxiety reduction, self-encouragement, and self-reward; and

- social strategies, such as asking questions, cooperating with native speakers of the target language, and becoming culturally aware.

On the other hand, direct strategies are divided into the following three groups:

- memory strategies, such as grouping, imagery, rhyming, and structured reviewing;
- cognitive strategies, such as reasoning, analysing, summarizing, and general practicing;
- compensation strategies, such as guessing meanings from the context in reading and listening, and using synonyms and gestures to convey meaning when the precise expression is not known.

In my view, some of these strategies may emerge in the classroom naturally, but most need to be developed through tasks and activities. First, planning/ evaluation strategies will be considered. The most important finding of the research on motivation in child FLL (Nikolov, 1999a) suggests that children will not pay attention unless classroom activities are intrinsically motivating for them. Young children do not search for practice opportunities consciously, although they play games, retell rhymes or stories with pleasure. They are unable to centre their own learning, but if they are involved in decision making in a task-based syllabus, they will gradually develop this strategy. Similarly, children can be involved in self-evaluation successfully. Both of these aspects are considered in the review of the experience on negotiation with Hungarian children elsewhere (Nikolov, 2000). As for monitoring errors, learners can become conscious of their errors gradually, but error treatment techniques should encourage self-correction. If performance is perceived as process

rather than product, children can develop their use of monitor "by feel" successfully.

According to Oxford (1990), emotional/motivational strategies consist of anxiety reduction, self-encouragement and self-reward. With young learners, these strategies first come from the teacher and children can develop responsibility for them. Initially, the teacher is responsible for a relaxed atmosphere in the class, encouragement and evaluative feedback for children, but if children are involved in these processes, they will become conscious of them and employ these strategies successfully. Knowledge in itself as an aim of language learning represents the type of self-reward this strategy involves. One particular aspect of emotional learning strategies is related to the use of laughter (Oxford, 1990, p. 21). Learning can be fun with the help of playful activities and humour, as they lower anxiety. Children also try to be witty in the target language and use humour for involving and impressing peers, as was found in the emergence of creative language use (Nikolov, 1995) as well as in interaction patterns in a large-scale study involving 118 different groups of Hungarian learners (Nikolov, 1999b). In this sense, emotional/motivational strategies overlap with social ones.

Social strategies involve asking questions, cooperating and empathizing with others, and becoming culturally aware. Young children often ask for clarification and verification, but the focus of this strategy tends to be meaning rather than form. Cooperation with peers is most frequently encouraged with the help of pair work and group work.

In my experience, the role of the teacher is very special in FLL contexts, as cooperating with the teacher substitutes the aspect of cooperating with native speakers in Oxford's model (1990, p. 21) and in the SLA theory proposed by Wong Fillmore (1991). Young learners accept the teacher as a model, but this relationship changes over time. As Hungarian children in my classrooms had the same teacher for the full length of their primary English language studies, changes in the teacher's role could be observed longitudinally.

Young children accepted and copied the teacher up to the age of 10-11. This was the age when some children became conscious of some input outside the classroom, and started using these language items (e.g., "can't", "dance", "garage" pronounced differently from the teacher). Peers expected the teacher to react to these "non-standard" examples. As the teacher explained that both ways were acceptable, in most of the cases children decided to adopt the new pronunciation if they identified with the peer, and varieties lived side by side. In several cases new models became available in the classes. In the second group a girl, and in the third one a boy spent a school year in the U.S. On returning to the classes (at the ages of 11 and 10, respectively), they were both perceived negatively by the others as in the learners' opinion, their pronunciation (authentic American) did not coincide with the teacher's. Otherwise, both of them were extremely popular for the information they shared with the others in the mother tongue, but their language use did not become intake for peers. Similar tendencies were identified when, in exceptional cases, substitute teachers were (unjustly) harshly criticized by children in all three groups for their "strange" speech.

This unique status of the teacher as a model weakened with the age of the children. At the age of 12-14 they regularly challenged the teacher, and as they were encouraged and provided chances to check the teacher's answers, it became natural that some children did. The teacher's "authority" was threatened only in one case. A boy in the first group after the 7th grade spent a month in England. He was regarded as an authentic source of information by all his peers and as he replied "yeah" to questions, students wondered what the teacher thought about it. After the explanation of the difference in usage all 15 children in the group gradually switched to using "yeah" instead of the teacher's "yes". Five weeks later one of the girls asked the teacher after class why she kept saying "yes". After the explanation that it was due to personal choice, in the following classes first this girl, then all the other girls switched back to "yes", while boys stuck to "yeah" until the end of the eighth year.

In these examples social strategies overlap with cognitive ones, as learners analyse language, contrast forms and meanings.

Memory strategies are so important in child FLL that some educators place them in the centre of their programme. Recent findings in neurolinguistics support the holistic approach, in which both hemispheres are involved in language learning. The most important memory strategies in child FLL are related to applying images and employing action. These strategies can be developed with the help of drama techniques, music, visual aids and images (Gersie & King, 1990; Jónai, 1991), and total physical response activities.

Two specific cognitive strategies of Hungarian learners

Cognitive strategies are typically found to be the most popular strategies with language learners (Oxford, 1990, p. 43). The importance of cognitive strategies increases with the age of children in FLL. Repetition is one of the strategies changing function with age. Young learners enjoy repeating rhymes, songs, games, and listening to the same story several times, but they are not consciously applying this strategy. This dependence on repetition disappears around the age of 9-10, and few children consider repetition for memorizing a useful learning strategy. In my experience, children using it aim to reduce their anxiety level and raise self-confidence.

One of the most important cognitive strategies Hungarian learners apply – and I heard of similar experiences from teachers of other languages as well – is related to spelling. When the written form of English words is introduced (after children have started using writing spontaneously), no matter if they are encouraged or discouraged, they use their mother tongue strategy: a particular letter corresponds to a particular sound. This way three images are linked to each target language word: the pronounced form in English, the spelt form in English, and the spelt form in Hungarian, which involves the pho-

netic reading of the target word in Hungarian. Children rely on the Hungarian form as an aid in writing. Some of the words become automatic in writing over time (e.g., dog, is, he, went), whereas others (e.g., icicle, suspicious, beautiful, their, gone) remain in this format and are retrieved, when necessary, in the form of "inner speech" while writing. Children can spell with the help of this strategy very well, and in cases of spelling mistakes they either do not have this Hungarian form, or have memorized the form erroneously.

This strategy is different from guessing spelling and using letters of the Hungarian alphabet for sounds resembling Hungarian ones, such as "hör" for "her", or "görl" for "girl". When children at the age of 7-8 are asked to explain why these forms are incorrect, they point out that the word is spelt not "hör", but "her" pronounced in Hungarian, as if it were a Hungarian word. While, in my experience, the use of the Hungarian pronunciation was typical among learners in spite of the teacher never using or encouraging it, the use of Hungarian letters was very rare, and disappeared after one or two trials, when children were asked to help one another.

Another cognitive strategy very often applied by young learners was "commenting" (Nikolov, 1995, p. 176) which is a combination of guessing intelligently by using linguistic and other clues, and "translating" (in Oxford's terminology). Children "comment" in their mother tongue, as they comprehend what the teacher says in the target language, partly to share the discovery feeling with peers, partly to react to the teacher's talk. The teacher needs to understand feedback in the children's mother tongue; otherwise, "commenting" cannot function, as the teacher cannot react according to the children's comments. In other words, commenting enables teachers to scaffold (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) pupils' learning: they provide expert help to the novice as they interact in problem-solving tasks. If the teacher communicates in the target language but relies on children's feedback in the mother tongue, input becomes comprehensible for the children with the help of their own contribution. This learning strategy overlaps with compensation strategies, which

are sometimes referred to as communication strategies, but Oxford (1990, p. 19) identified them as learning strategies. "Commenting" can be characterized as a social learning strategy, for children cooperate with the teacher and their peers with the help of it. The following example of 8-year-old children illustrates these points:

T: This is the story of the three little goats. Here you can see them, the three little goats. One is
S1: A fehér a lány. (The white one is the girl.)
T: These are all boys, there is no girl in this book. These are three billy goats. Three boys, like Bálint, Tamás and Feri.
S2: De nincsen szarva! (But it has no horns.)
T: That's right, because the white goat is a baby goat. Okay? This white billy goat is a little goat, a baby. (gesture)
S3: Kicsi még, de kár, hogy fiú. (Still small, but a pity it is a boy.)
T: I'm sorry, in this story there are three billy goats. Is that a problem?
Ss: No.

This "commenting" strategy is crucial in child FLL for the following reasons: a) children guess meanings by relying on their background knowledge of the world, and their mother tongue; b) it provides all children in the classroom with comprehensible input; c) allows the teacher to build scaffolding on feedback; d) gives children the feeling of success; e) provides learners with a useful communication strategy of guessing intelligently from linguistic and other clues.

In my experience, young children successfully use this strategy. At the beginning of exposure to the target language it is frequently applied, and as the children's competence develops, they rely on "commenting" less frequently. The strategy of commenting in the mother tongue is natural for children in FLL contexts, and it is the most helpful pedagogic tool at the teacher's disposal.

However, switching to the mother tongue should not be identified with "commenting", as the primary aim of codeswitching is

to get help. For more detail on a much larger database on young learners' interaction patterns and the use of L1 see Nikolov (1999b).

Communication strategies

Most studies on communication strategies relate the term to strategies employed when communication breaks down, rather than applying it to the processes when communication goes smoothly. Cook (1993) identifies two camps in L2 research into communication strategies: sociolinguistically orientated research, which considers such strategies in terms of social interaction, and psycholinguisitically orientated research, which considers them as psychological processes. The aim of both camps is to list possible strategies available to learners.

Research on communication strategies has been based on Canale and Swain's (1980) analysis of communicative competence as involving at least the three components of grammatical, sociolingistic, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence involves knowledge about form of the language, and the ability to produce and understand those forms in speech and writing. Sociolinguistic competence involves the ability to produce and understand language, which is appropriate to specific social situations and conforms to the conventions of those situations. Strategic competence is the ability to successfully transmit information in the language, and it is directly tied to the ability to use communication strategies. All three components are inter-related, but they can develop rather independently. Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991) claim that the most neglected component of communicative competence is strategic competence and they argue for the teachability of this area.

According to Tarone and Yule (1989, p. 103), two broad areas are related to strategic competence:

- the overall skill of a learner in successfully transmitting information, or interpreting information transmitted, and
- the use of communication strategies by a speaker or listener when problems arise in the process of transmitting information.

Faerch and Kasper (1983) draw a distinction between two major types of communication strategies: reduction, or avoidance strategies, governed by avoidance behaviour, and achievement strategies, governed by achievement behaviour.

With avoidance strategies learners either avoid a linguistic form they had difficulty with (formal reduction) at the levels of phonology, morphology or grammar, or avoid a language function at the functional, propositional, or modal level (functional reduction).

Achievement strategies explore alternative ways of executing particular forms or functions as learners attempt to solve the problem they confront. Non-cooperative strategies, which divide into three sub-groups, and cooperative strategies, which involve the help of another person and consist of indirect or direct appeals, may effect achievement. In non-cooperative strategies learners try to solve the problem without resort to other people, as they use the following three types of strategies:

- L1/L3 strategies, relying on a language other than the L2 by codeswitching (e.g., Was? Asked in German as L3 to ask for clarification in the English class), or trying out L1 expressions in the L2 with some adaptation by foreignising (e.g., toaletbrush, porcion; They ate the food Nyámm! Who's that trappoling over my bridge? Where *trod* in Hungarian means *trappol*, and the suffix *ing* was added to it.);
- interlanguage strategies, which are based on the evolving interlanguage in the form of substitution (e.g., big monster for giant, sea robber for pirate), generalisation (tree for weep-

ing willow; bird for eagle), exemplification (oranges and apples for fruits), word-coining (inxit for entrance), and restructuring or paraphrasing (I have two… I have one sister and one brother; she is a… she has no mother and no father);

- non-linguistic strategies such as gesture, mime, and sound imitation.

The less proficient the learners, the more communication strategies they need to exploit in order to compensate for the lack of competence. Children can develop their use of communication strategies if they are regularly required to use them in classroom activities. Task-based syllabuses require the employment of achievement strategies, and can serve as the source of strategy training activities. Limited proficiency learners use more non-linguistic strategies and this tendency can be encouraged by the use of mimes and role-play. Different types of guessing games develop interlanguage strategies, such as the use of synonyms and antonyms, substitution and paraphrase. Prediction tasks (in which children are required to guess what would happen next) also require learners to use language creatively by utilizing an array of communication strategies. In this pedagogical perspective, communication strategies can be identified as compensation strategies (Oxford, 1990) under the umbrella term of learning strategies, as they also contribute to the learner's attempts to bring about long-term competence.

Conclusion

In this paper some aspects of child FLL have been discussed. Although children seem to rely on naturalistic processes in the acquisition of the target language, instruction and social processes also contribute. These findings provide support to Wong Fillmore's (1991) model of child SLA, in which social, linguistic and cognitive processes interact with one another.

It has been found that the mother tongue also contributes to the FLL process and children's awareness of both languages increases with age. Certain learning and compensation strategies also exploit the L1, although input on the teacher's part excludes the mother tongue.

The findings offer further implications for the classroom: both naturalistic processes and the mother tongue play a crucial role in child FLL, and this role should be exploited to the learners' benefit. Also, FLL involves more than the acquisition of the target language, as learners' develop cognitively, socially and linguistically at the same time.

In this paper I have illustrated how a story-based syllabus can provide children with opportunities for developing communicative competence in the classroom. Motivation as a basic underlying principle has not been elaborated on in details here (see Nikolov, 1999b), but the implications suggest that intrinsically motivating content and tasks ensure meaningful context for enjoyable language acquisition through instruction. The findings come from a limited number of subjects only but the longitudinal design of the research is supposed to counterbalance this fact. Further research is needed in piloting similar syllabuses with other groups of learners and teachers both in Hungary and with children of different first languages studying other target languages.

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Chapter Five

Negotiated Classroom Work With Hungarian Children

"We do what we like."

Introduction

This short chapter provides insights into the day-to-day implementation of the process syllabus in the teaching of English as a foreign language to children between the ages of 6 and 14. As a wide age range is covered the focus will be on the one hand, on the specific changes in negotiation due to age; and on the other hand, how activities, materials and assessment were negotiated and how feedback was obtained and acted upon.

Participants

Three groups of children were involved in this study, learning English at a primary school affiliated to Janus Pannonius University for 18 years. The first experimental group of 15 children started in 1977; the second group of 15 after the 8-year-long piloting in 1985; 15 children in the third group graduated in 1995. Altogether, 20 girls and 25 boys participated for the full length of period. Out of the first group five children came from disadvantaged families and the parents of only two had learnt English, whereas in the second and third groups two and three subjects respectively came from disadvantaged families, five and six parents had some background in English. Most of the children came from middle class families and their parents wanted them to study Eng-

lish. The school is situated in a not very well-established neighbourhood in the inner city of Pécs, Hungary. Most of the kids lived in the district but many of them commuted from other parts of the town for the sake of the English programme. The teacher, syllabus designer and researcher was the same person (me, myself and I), all findings resulted from action research.

Background to research

Teaching English as a foreign language to young learners was introduced in an experimental class in 1977, initiated by the Ministry of Education, but their support was withdrawn after three years. At that time, Russian used to be the compulsory foreign language; all children were supposed to start learning it at the age of 9-10. However, a few specialized schools introduced English or German, at the earlier age of 8.

Recently, the general situation has changed, Russian is no longer compulsory, and English programmes have mushroomed all over the country (for a summary see Medgyes, 1993). Schools are required to develop their own curricula based on the new National Core Curriculum but procedural syllabuses are not used.

In most cases syllabus design means the adaptation of published teaching materials spiced with some supplementary materials and children are not involved in any kind of decision making. Teachers tend to stick to their syllabuses and learners' needs are rarely taken into consideration. The same syllabus is used with gifted, mixed ability and low ability children but the achievements are different. The vast majority of teachers are not aware of the opportunity for changing the situation: they tend to consider their own syllabuses as prescribed documents.

Another specific aspect that needs elaboration is the system of evaluation. Teachers are required to assess children from the very

first school year. Children get grades; grade 5 is the best and grade 1 means complete failure. Most of the teachers of younger children develop cumulative systems of assessment where children get small rewards, such as red points and after getting five of those kids get a grade five. Negative feedback accumulates along the same principles: lack of homework, inattention, high number of mistakes in tasks results in low grades. Good grades are highly appreciated both by children and parents as these represent progress in studies and grades will determine access to different types of secondary schools at the age of 14. Testing is generally infrequent, consequently a few grades determine the final result at the end of the term. As a result of these facts, children hate and fear tests; usually, high anxiety is associated with testing.

Negotiation in the classroom

Two reasons are mentioned by Breen (1984) for the introduction of the process syllabus: it '… provides the framework within which either a predesigned content syllabus would be publicly analysed and evaluated by the classroom group, or an emerging content syllabus would be designed (and similarly evaluated) in an on-going way' (Breen, 1984, p. 55). In this study, the aim of negotiation with the first experimental group was the design of an emerging story-based syllabus, whereas with the second and third groups the piloted syllabus was evaluated and further developed.

Although some researchers feel that the most likely place for successful syllabus negotiation is 'self-access' study (Bloor & Bloor, 1988, p. 65), in the following review I will argue for negotiation in a group.

The purpose of the early English project was to develop and pilot materials, tasks and teaching techniques for children between 6 and 14. As no ready-made materials or teaching techniques were available

the most appropriate way of developing the syllabus was negotiation with children.

The other reason for proceduralizing the syllabus was the inexperience of the teacher. It was my first teaching experience after graduation from college and although I had never heard of procedural syllabuses or negotiation in the classroom, I had to rely on the children involved as much as possible since the syllabus was to be designed for them. I was personally challenged to find out about children's likes, dislikes, and how they acquired English in the classroom. Negotiation was not used in Hungarian schools and inexperience turned out to be useful: the usual authoritarian, rigid classroom routine could be avoided. As a result of inquiring about children's attitudes, a story-based content syllabus developed with playful language teaching techniques.

Decisions are usually taken by teachers; they determine what students do, how they do it and evaluative feedback is also provided by the teacher. Children have only one choice: whether they participate or not. Breen (1984) looks at three major elements of classroom work where decisions have to be made: participation, procedure, and subject matter. The aspect of student assessment is not involved explicitly in negotiation, whereas it also plays an important role in this study, due to circumstances of the educational background. These four aspects will be explored along the different age range.

Participation

Issues of participation relate to the questions:

1. Who wants to participate in a particular activity?
2. Who wants to work with whom?

As for the choice of participation, young learners often felt shy and wanted to see first how the activity went, or they were unhappy and wished to withdraw. Most of the children had special favourites, some of them disliked one particular activity. There were several boys who never wanted to play singing games as they thought 'Lucy Locket' was only for girls, but they always wanted to play 'What's the time, Mr Wolf?' and other games with a lot of physical movements. After introducing the activity, the teacher can ask children whether they want to participate in that particular game or task. One way of doing this is asking for volunteers, children who want to join in, while the others may choose to do something else, for example, observe, colour or draw pictures. The other way is voting on the activity: children are asked 'who wants to do it?', if the majority votes for it, they are all asked to do it. First, this rule does not work very well with young kids but after a few months, they understand it and they start persuading each other to vote for what they want to do. The most democratic outcome is usually suggested by the children themselves: let's do this first, and then what the others would like. I adapted this principle from their idea and in most of the cases it worked.

The situation was fairly similar up to the age of 11-12; children rarely chose not to participate but in such cases they liked peers to invite them. There were no children who regularly withdrew, except for team competitions. Children who were last chosen by captains developed inhibitions and did not want to participate. An 8-year-old boy suggested that the ones chosen last should be the captains the

following time. This way uncomfortable situations could be avoided and kids did not mind being last.

Around puberty, some girls developed inhibitions and they always chose not to participate in any role play if they were to be watched by the others. I asked them for suggestions and they came up with two rules: only volunteers act out, the ones who don't feel like performing need not; if they still feel they want to be graded on the role play they may choose their audience for the break, sometimes only the teacher.

As for who works with whom children liked to choose their partners and after the age of 8-9 they hardly tolerated pressure. Due to aptitude differences and discipline problems sometimes low achievers or aggressive children were not chosen. Two ways of avoiding embarrassing situations were developed. Children volunteering to tutor a classmate who fell behind got a reward every time their partner improved a subskill. They filled in missing letters, dictated to one another, played guessing games, acted out, developed puzzles for partners and were motivated to collaborate. Sometimes children found this patronizing irritating, mostly boys with girls, but several girls developed long lasting friendship. In most cases, two more gifted girls started working with a less gifted one and during the years the differences disappeared.

The other way is based on coincidence; for example, with a counting rhyme, or numbers picked at random from a hat or ends of strings taken without seeing who the one holding the other end is. Young children enjoy these solutions but with adolescents it may cause trouble when one or more children decide not to participate after finding out who they are supposed to work with. In these cases they usually chose to do another activity by themselves or the group persuaded them to join in. After such occasions, they tended to vote for choosing partners on their own and they came to class with decisions made among them.

Procedure

Several aspects of procedure have been touched upon in the previous review. In these passages, some further ideas will be provided concerning how tasks and activities are negotiated, and in what ways students contributed to the choices.

Young children are usually offered choices: "Would you like to play the card game with the animal cards or the cards of clothes?" "Shall we sit on the floor or do you want to sit on your chairs?" "Would you like a guessing game or a puzzle?" "Shall we play 'Simon says' now, or do you want me to go on with the story first?" This way they felt involved in decision making, and in most of the cases they voted for both, and this way negotiation influenced the sequence of activities. Around the age of 8 some children came up with suggestions: "Let's go on with the story." "I have a puzzle, can I put it on the board?" In these cases we usually had to strike a bargain: they wanted to do something and I said "yes, we can if we do all I think we need to do first". That way we could hopefully save time for the desired activity, which was the best way of avoiding discipline problems due to boredom.

Children often contributed by bringing favourite animals, toys, books; drawing pictures, developing crossword puzzles, fill-in-the-slot tasks, jumbled words or sentences, or by writing their own stories. The only drawback of using children-made materials was that the others sometimes found these tasks unclear or misleading so they argued and disappointed each other. This trap could be easily avoided by consulting children before they presented tasks for the others. Some children developed special expertise in some areas: one girl in the first and second groups produced a crossword puzzle for each class from the second grade up to the last class in the eighth form; another girl in the third group got hooked on word chains and kept producing half a page of them for each class for years. Children automatically got rewards for these extra tasks, although not all of

them were aware of the possibility. A problematic boy in the seventh grade realized only in February (after almost seven years) that he could also get rewards this way and developed eleven puzzles within two weeks, and then one every week.

Up to the age of 10 children never turned any of my offers down. After this age, they sometimes voted against my suggestions and they were even more critical towards peer suggestions. In the fifth grade they tended to decide not to sing songs, or play games with physical movements; in the seventh form they did not want to play Bingo through guessing meanings of words from contexts to be written in the frame, but wanted synonyms and antonyms instead; they suggested doing writing and reading tasks either in pairs (when it was meant to be an individual activity and vice versa), or as homework and go on with the previous activity in class instead. Sometimes they asked for a copy of the next chapter of a story and chose to read it to themselves instead of listening to it, or they didn't want to elaborate on a prediction task as they were too eager to know more of the story.

Subject matter

Students were involved in making decisions on what we worked with. As the syllabus was based on stories, children had been contributing through suggesting stories, like their own picture books to be told, or a new story book to be used, and through choosing from my offers. In the first 2-3 years they enjoyed listening to the same story several times and they voted for their choice and we retold the ones most of them wanted. Again, it usually meant deciding upon sequences, as they tended to want what is offered. In the fourth, fifth and sixth grades they still felt happy with the teacher's choice and suggested their own books less frequently, mostly because they realized that the books had to be in English

and they had limited access to them. When a story was finished, children were asked how much they enjoyed it and why. As for the next choice, they either wanted something exactly like the one we had just finished or something completely different. Sometimes they suggested a pop song or wanted to do a project on a particular topic.

I needed to make sure that wishes of both boys and girls were granted: after "Cinderella", "The Wizard of Oz" or "Babysitting is a Dangerous Job", which are 'girlish' stories, they tended to vote for a story for boys, like "Pinocchio", "Doctor Dolittle" or "Run for your Life". As negotiation became routine in the classroom the teacher had to be prepared for the possibility of her offers being turned down. I tried to read "The Hound of the Baskervilles" to all three groups in the seventh year without success. Every time I offered it in a choice of three novels, another story was always chosen.

Sometimes children suggested the type of story they wanted: in January they wanted a horror story, so they chose from "Dracula", "Frankenstein" and "The Canterville Ghost", but after it they voted for a detective story rather than either of the other two.

Once you start negotiation you cannot stop and sometimes children can give you headaches. In the sixth grade, we worked on "Jack and the Beanstalk"; we dramatized it, put it on stage, parents came to watch their children. After this success, it seemed the right time for evaluation and asked learners for their opinion, how much they had benefited by the experience. All the children sounded enthusiastic until one of the boys, a very scholarly one, raised his hand and said this in Hungarian, "I wonder how useful Jack and the Beanstalk is going to be if I want to travel to the USA?" All the kids gaped at me and I asked him what his suggestion was. He wanted 'proper' grammar instruction, like the other classes in school. I was still thinking about the most relevant answer when the other children commented, 'When Jack went up to the other world and asked the way, it was like in New York', and another one added, 'If you don't like Jack and the Beanstalk you can join the other group and do

Project English.' After this incident we regularly did some follow-up tasks on grammar points but this poor boy got the blame every time.

Assessment

As children were to be given grades, they were involved in the negotiation of assessment procedures as well. First of all, they needed to assess themselves. At the age of 6 they were asked after each class whether they thought they had deserved a reward. They looked at each other and then the ones who had considered it and still thought they deserved one drew the reward (red points, little hearts) in their notebooks, which were used for drawing and keeping track of rewards. Each child was responsible for the 'bookkeeping' of his or her rewards. In the first year, it sometimes happened that a kid got so pleased with drawing rewards that they somehow multiplied. The others usually noticed it and then I asked this person to count carefully and keep as many as he or she was sure to have deserved.

Every month children were asked how they assessed themselves, and they liked to comment on each other, as well. This was part of the general assessment procedure when they were asked about classroom activities, materials, and the teacher. As for testing, they were asked to suggest the time of testing, they could ask for more practice in certain areas, and they often suggested what should and what should not be included in the test. I always graded them on their first trial and if children felt they wanted to give it another chance they could try again, self-correct and the better result was the only valid one. From the very first moment of writing they were asked to check their own work and self-correct. I indicated how many problems there were in what areas and they needed to find the mistakes and correct them. Sometimes they asked to be allowed to use sources and in most of the cases they could do so, except for tasks when they

needed to remember accurately. Tests were evaluated on the spot and children checked their own results in a different colour. This was very useful for sorting out misunderstandings or solutions I never thought of but were creative and acceptable. Final grades were also negotiated and children were supposed to suggest them, but the others also had a say.

Role of mother tongue

As negotiation was almost impossible in the target language, in the initial stages Hungarian was used. Children understood the routine questions in English after one or two times but they would answer in the mother tongue, and this second phase lasted some years. In the last 2-3 years children were able to discuss, bargain, and argue in English and this was part of the language syllabus. If they could not express what they wanted to say, they switched back to Hungarian, but I always answered in English.

Formal feedback

Towards the end of each school year, children were asked to fill in a questionnaire in Hungarian, anonymously. The following five questions were asked:

- Why do you learn English?
- What are your first three favourite school subjects?
- What are the school subjects (if any) you dislike?
- What do you enjoy doing the most in the English classes?
- What do you dislike (related to English)?
- If you were the teacher, what would you do differently?

The first three questions were meant to tap attitudes and motivation towards English, whereas the other questions aimed to elicit concrete information on what activities children liked, disliked and in what ways the teacher was to adapt to their needs. A detailed analysis of the findings can be found in Nikolov (1995); here only findings relevant to negotiation are put forth.

One of the reasons why children thought they studied English was that they felt they did what they liked. As for the question inquiring about suggestions and criticism, results differed according to age. In the first two grades, very few children gave an answer and all of them indicated everything was good the way it was. In grades 3, 4 and 5 about half of those questioned were pleased with everything, whereas some would not make children write tests and others would send naughty ones out of the class. In the last three grades half of the kids would not change anything, some would punish the ones with no homework and naughty children, many would not require a home assignment, five children (all from the third group) would do more grammar, more horror stories and some would allow eating during class.

Conclusion

The time has come to consider outcomes. Children acquired a lot of language, developed a favourable attitude towards English, the teacher, and language learning in general. They became self confident and responsible for their own learning.

But there were negative outcomes as well. As English was the only school subject where negotiation was integrated, children often faced rejection as they tried to come up with suggestions in other classes. Some parents criticized the 'nontraditional' way, wondered if 'freedom' was not harmful, and worried that the child would not learn English 'properly'. After eight years most of the children went

to different secondary schools and their new teachers perceived their suggestions as irritating or cheeky and their behaviour as conceited. Some of the children grew too critical towards their new circumstances.

On the whole, I feel negotiation was successfully applied with these three groups of children. To achieve this, I had to be willing to take risks, to plan ahead and to find pleasure in the development of a new syllabus and negotiation with children.

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Chapter Six

'Natural Born Speakers of English': Code Switching in Pair and Group Work in Hungarian Primary Classrooms

P2: What's your name,..... seven.
What's your name?
P1: I'm seven.
(Somlyódi & Vándor, 1995, p. 6)

Introduction

This chapter looks at how Hungarian children interact in foreign language classrooms. Data collected in 111 observed classes are analysed to identify emerging patterns of peer-peer interaction. Issues of when, how, why and in what languages children exchanged information, applied for help and supported each other in 37 foreign language classrooms will be discussed and compared to sources representing various educational contexts reviewed in the first part of this paper. The issue of how far willingness to interact in the target language is related to proficiency or to age and peer pressure is explored.

Background to the research

The last decade has seen a shift of interest towards classrooms, and lessons have increasingly been perceived not only as pedagogic events, but also as social events (Prabhu, 1992). Classroom research on how interaction shapes second language learning has so far "contributed little to our understanding of how interaction affects

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acquisition" (Ellis, 1994, p. 607), although work in pairs and small groups is one of the essential features of communicative language teaching. Long and Porter (1985) argue that pairwork and groupwork are useful as they increase language practice opportunities, improve the quality of student talk, help to individualize instruction, establish a positive affective climate, reduce anxiety, and motivate learners to learn. Also, negotiation is generally supposed to provide the kind of input and opportunities for output that promote second language acquisition (Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos & Linnell, 1996), although the benefits of small-group use of communicative activities "…may be more limited than had previously been assumed" (Pica & Doughty, 1985, p. 132) even in second language contexts.

Studies on peer interaction in young learners' foreign language (FL) classrooms are hard to find, as most of the research comes from (1) second language/bilingual classrooms in the host environment where instruction is provided only in the target language; (2) immersion programmes where the school curriculum is fully or partly in the target language; or (3) foreign language contexts where the target language is one of the school subjects. These contexts vary not only in the amount and quality of input children are exposed to, but also in the extent to which learners, or learners and teachers, share the mother tongue. When discussing the topic we also need to bear in mind a very different approach represented by research on language loss, and the efforts made to identify the roles of native languages for minority students (e.g:, Krashen, 1996; Lucas & Katz, 1994; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995). In such educational contexts special efforts are made to provide learners with chances for using their native language, whereas in immersion and foreign language contexts first language use is perceived as a problem to be avoided. Finally, another important source of information comes from research on pupil-pupil classroom talk in the mother tongue.

In this section I will try to provide a short overview of what has been found so far concerning child-child interaction in second language, immersion and foreign language classrooms, and what

distinctive features of peer interaction have been identified in the use of the first language in primary schools in content teaching.

Wong-Fillmore (1985; 1991, p. 52) identified three components necessary for children to acquire a second language in the host environment:

1. Learners who realize that they need to learn the target language and are motivated to do so.
2. Speakers of the target language who know it well enough to provide learners with input and the help they need for learning it.
3. A social setting which brings learners and target language speakers into frequent enough contact to make second language acquisition (SLA) possible.

Wong-Fillmore found that children who scored high in measures of sociability and communicative need were generally good learners, but only in social settings where they were outnumbered by speakers of the target language, and where they could interact freely with one another.

In foreign language learning (FLL) contexts the situation is different, and the components are to be modified in the following way:

1. Young learners who do not need the language and do not realize that they may need it in the future but are open to new experiences in general, and whose parents may be motivated for the child to learn the target language.
2. Teachers who know it well enough to provide the learners with access to the language and the help they need for learning it.
3. A classroom setting within the social setting which brings learners and teachers/peers into frequent enough contact to make FLL possible (Nikolov, 1994, pp. 57-62).

Second language classrooms

Children's bilingual language practices were analysed in a fourth-grade classroom over a 14-month period in the US (Pease-Alvarez & Winsler, 1994). The study combined an ethnographic and a quantitative perspective based on extensive field observations and interviews. The teacher was a native speaker of English not speaking the children's Spanish mother tongue. It was found that although as language minority children progressed through the grade, their use of their native language at school tended to decrease in the English-only milieu, but they "used considerable amounts of Spanish when conversing about nonacademic topics and when participating in small-group instructional events" (Pease-Alvarez & Winsler, 1994, p. 530), in spite of the teacher's reliance on English only. Interestingly, the great majority of the children spoke to themselves in English, and seldom code-switched in their private speech while working on cognitive tasks, but 15% of the children's speech with their teacher contained some Spanish.

The following language pattern variation was found as a function of activity: "on task" discussions on academic tasks were usually first in English, then children chatted with a classmate in Spanish about an unrelated topic ("off task"), and then returned to the task usually in English again.

A special aspect of pair work, peer tutoring, was observed and analysed in a second-language classroom of a primary school by Flanigan (1991). Native or proficient non-native children were asked to instruct new pupils in their classes in the use of computers. The modifications they used consisted of repetitions, expansions, explanations, rephrased questions and comprehension checks, but these children did not simplify their talk grammatically or lexically to a level beneath their own achieved L2 competence, and they did not exaggerate their volume or tone of voice.

Immersion programmes

As far as immersion programmes are concerned, one of the most persistent problems identified by Tarone and Swain (1995) in Canadian immersion programmes is that older students tend to use the target language in the classroom less frequently than in earlier years, particularly when talking with each other. In their view, a sociolinguistic perspective is needed to examine classrooms where diglossia is the norm: The second language is the superordinate or formal language variety, and the native language is reserved for use in informal social interactions as the vernacular language style. They argue that using the target language is cognitively harder than to use the mother tongue, although according to their research, younger immersion children use the target language more frequently than later on during their studies, and they tend to use it for academic topics and the first language for social interactions. They suspect that the academic language of the immersion programmes prevents children from getting enough input in the vernacular style, although even children in two-way immersion classrooms tend to rely on the majority language vernacular in peer-peer interactions. They hypothesize that "preadolescents and adolescents need a vernacular style as a way of signalling their identities" (1995, p. 160). As the only complete vernacular language at children's disposal is the native language vernacular, they rely on it. By the fifth and sixth grades, they prefer using the native language in peer-peer social discourse, and the target language becomes the institutional language of academic discourse.

Foreign language contexts

Linguistic inquiries into bilingual speech production look at code-switching where data are typically collected in informal conversations between the researcher – usually a native speaker of one of the languages with a good command of the other language – and several bilinguals. Poulisse and Bongaerts (1994) investigated unintentional first-language use of three groups of Dutch learners of English, distinguishing between intentional language switches (further categorized as self-directed and other-directed) and unintentional switches (which were not preceded by signs of hesitation or did not stand out from the rest of the utterance by a marked intonation). They involved university students (age 19-22) after 8 years of English study, 15-16-year old students after 5 years of studying English, and 13-14-year-olds after 3 years of English instruction.

Poulisse and Bongaerts (1994) found that the use of L1 words during L2 production was frequent and proficiency-related: 60% of the Dutch words were function words and only 40% content words. According to their explanation, reduced automaticity of speech production may have played a role in the case of beginners, and monitoring may have focused more on content words. This finding is in contrast with the immersion classroom observation according to which adolescents with higher proficiency tend to switch back to L1 more frequently than younger and less proficient learners.

To contrast studies on children and older learners, a different study may highlight differences related to age. Adult beginners' discourse was analysed by Johnson (1995, pp. 117-120) in a meaning-focused task in pairs. Although all students of English as a foreign language shared Czech as a first language, no code switching was observed as students negotiated with each other. No wonder Johnson's conclusion is optimistic: "student-student interaction in second language classrooms will more than likely have a positive impact upon

students' opportunities for both classroom learning and second language acquisition" (Johnson, 1995, p. 128).

I have serious doubts about these findings, as in my own classrooms with the most motivated adults on the advanced level – even in methodology seminars, where pre- and in-service students and teachers of EFL – typically switch to Hungarian in pair and group work, except for the pair closest to the tutor. It seems simply unnatural to talk the target language for managing a task, setting the scene, discussing details when participants share the mother tongue. Further empirical research is necessary to reveal patterns in adult peer-peer interaction in foreign classrooms.

As far as children in the foreign language context are concerned, Nikolov (1994, pp. 161-167) describes how young learners between the ages of six and fourteen gradually begin to use the target language creatively for their own interpersonal communicative purposes and considers changes in the role of the teacher as a model. Young learners follow the teacher as a model without any criticism, even when she makes mistakes they will not want to accept that the teacher may be wrong. Children around puberty gradually realize that the target language represents institutional discourse and voluntary users are often labelled as trying to please the teacher. This is one of the reasons why children around the ages of 11-14 tend to use less English and switch back to Hungarian in spite of their good command of the target language. By using the mother tongue they indicate to one another that belonging to the peer group is more important than behaving according to classroom norm reflecting the authority of the teacher. The fact that children do not code-switch in writing is one of the arguments supporting this claim: when submitting a written paper to the teacher, peers are not part of the audience, whereas in oral contributions children are anxious not to be judged by the others. This explains why some of the children in my own classes from the age of 11-12 did not want to perform any role play before the rest of the class and wanted to choose their audience. Even in an ideal situation when the same teacher taught the learners

for the full length of their eight-year studies, in case a peer represented an authentic model of the target language in the vernacular style (using "yeah" instead of the teacher's "yes" after a short stay in Britain), children started following the peer model and wondered if the teacher should not do the same to avoid losing face (Nikolov, 1994, pp. 173-174).

Interaction in the mother tongue

When analysing British primary-school children's classroom talk in the mother tongue, Fisher (1993) found that pupil-pupil talk generally lacked the eliciting and reformulating features of teacher-pupil talk. Also, although the range of features occurring in pupil-pupil discourse varied across and within groups and was dependent on various contextual factors (including the nature of the task, the pupils' perception of the task, as well as their skills and previous experience), children's talk in the mother tongue generally fell into three categories: (1) disputational talk, which can be characterized as an initiation in various forms (e.g., suggestion, instruction), followed by a challenge (a rejection or a counter suggestion), resulting in a lack of clear resolution or a resolution which does not build directly on the previous utterances; (2) cumulative talk, in which initiations are accepted either without discussion or with additions or some amendments; and (3) exploratory talk, in which the initiation is challenged and counter-challenged, but with suggestions developing from that initiation. Progress occurs when children jointly accept one of the suggestions or a modified version of it (Fisher, 1993, p. 255).

In the analysis of the data collected in foreign language classrooms I would like to see how far the findings of these studies are relevant for Hungarian children, as one of the aims of this study is to find out to what extent foreign language classrooms are similar to and differ-

ent from the second-language educational context, immersion programmes and first-language primary school content classrooms.

According to Chaudron (1988, p. 109), studies on interaction between learners reveal no clear trends in differences between classroom organizational structures, but the critical factor appears to be the language task. Most probably the task is one of the crucial factors in determining how learners interact, but the status of the first and the target languages is also very important.

The present study

The present study is an attempt to evaluate to what extent the findings of the above-mentioned studies are relevant for the case of Hungarian pupils learning English as a foreign language.

Participants and data collection

Data were collected during the 1995-1997 academic years by trained pre-service English majors of Janus Pannonius University who wrote seminar papers on their projects. Altogether 111 classes were tape-recorded in 37 randomly chosen groups all over Hungary. Children's interactions during pair- and groupwork were transcribed and analysed. Each group was observed and taped three times.

Table 1: Distribution of number of groups and observed classes across grades and age groups

Grade and **age** of children	1st 6-7	2nd 7-8	3rd 8-9	4th 9- 10	5th 10- 11	6th 11- 12	7th 12-13	8th 13-14
Number of groups observed	2	2	7	7	9	4	2	4
Number of observations	6	6	21	21	27	12	6	12

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of data collection across school grades and age groups. It was impossible to observe an equal number of classes in each grade, thus very young (six- and seven-year-olds) and older children (12- to 14-year-olds) were less frequently tape-recorded than the age groups in between.

Hypotheses

It was hoped that – in spite of the observer's paradox – pupils would provide valuable empirical data on how they interacted with one another in foreign language classes. I hypothesised that in controlled tasks they would use the target language more frequently, whereas in less controlled circumstances they would rely more on the mother tongue. I also hoped to find out how peer interaction changed with age and the development of proficiency. It was also hypothesised that some teachers would be more successful at scaffolding children's learning and examples of 'good practice' would be found in the data. The inquiry into children's learning was meant to represent qualitative rather than quantitative research design in the non-participant ethnographic tradition.

Patterns of interaction in Hungarian FL classrooms

In all 111 classes, children were enthusiastic, motivated to participate and well-behaved. They all seemed to be interested in what was required from them, and also in the observers' aims and the equipment used for tape-recording their talk, but the latter focus soon lost its novelty value and children seemed to behave naturally.

Irrespective of age, level and task, whenever children were expected to work in pairs or small groups they typically switched back to Hungarian and used the first language more frequently than English. The pupil-pupil talk recorded and transcribed was rarely overheard by the teacher, so observers were able to get useful insights into how children interacted when the teacher was not around. On the whole, more first language talk or silence characterised the observed children than talk in the target language either in controlled teacher-fronted activities or during individual or pairwork. The teacher's use of the target language did not influence the extensive use of the mother tongue in pairwork across all age groups, although some useful examples have been found where teachers scaffolded children's learning successfully by integrating pupils' mother-tongue talk into their target language discourse. On the other hand, older learners tended to use the target language more frequently in cases where the teacher refused to use Hungarian but was prepared to provide help in the target language having understood pupils' Hungarian talk.

In my analysis, I will focus on the pupil-pupil interactions observed in the 37 different groups. Further analysis will be necessary to clarify the roles teachers' talk and teacher-pupil interaction play.

The following patterns emerged:

Generally, in controlled practice children gave the required answers or repeated after the teacher without interacting with one another. Consequently, in these cases more target language was used than in less controlled tasks. How much of the rote-learnt texts

repeated by the children was understood and represented comprehensible input to peers is a question to explore in further research.

In these classrooms, children were 'disciplined', did not initiate conversations and tended to work quietly and individually relying on the safe pattern of the IRF (teacher initiation – learner response – teacher follow-up) cycle so typical of the institutional discourse type (Seedhouse, 1996) of classroom communication.

When pupils said something, these examples fell into the two wide student talk categories according to the Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories (FLINT):

- student talk – response initiated by the teacher
- student talk – initiation reflecting students' own ideas (Allwright, 1988, p. 60).

Most of the children's discourse can be characterised as "on task", whereas "off task" talk was very rare in our data. Children in the lower grades did not use cumulative or exploratory talk even in Hungarian, as no such opportunities were provided in the tasks. On the other hand, 13-14-year-olds did provide examples of cumulative as well as exploratory talk in the target language when they negotiated meanings, supported each other's learning or wanted to show off to one another.

The above wide categories relate interaction to classroom tasks, and the data can be further classified as below (see Appendix for transcription conventions following van Lier, 1988).

- Pupil asks peer for help and/or clarification

The examples in this category include only on-task talk; the aim of discourse is to come up to the teacher's expectations by fulfilling the task without asking the teacher for help, as it can be provided by a peer as well.

Extract 1 (class of 7-8-year-olds reading aloud)

1 T: Péter, read on.
2 P1: Hol tartunk most? (Where are we?) ((P1 turning to neigh-bour))
3 P2: Itt. (Here.) ((points to paragraph))
4 P1: ((reads on))
(Fóti, 1995, p. 7)

Extract 2 (13-14-year-olds in whole-class activity)

1 T: Let's have some ideas about newspapers.
2 P1: ((whispering to P2)) Hol van a könyvben? (Where is it in the book?)
3 P2: A hatvanadik oldalon. (On page sixty.)
4 T: May I ask you not to open your books?
(Pék, 1996, p. 11)

In Extracts 1 and 2 Pupil 1 applied for help in a teacher-fronted activity, as P1 was not paying attention and wanted to avoid trouble. In Extract 1 P1 would not be expected to be able to ask for help in the target language, whereas in Extract 2 he should have been able to do so in English but did not. In both examples P1 got the required answer in Hungarian quickly. Similar exchanges were frequent but rarely mutual: it was usually the same pupil applying for help. Fortunately, only one example of refusal was found in the data (Extract 5) indicating that children tended to be supportive to one another.

Extract 3 (9-10-year-olds in pair work)

1 P1: Hogy van az, hogy nincs? (How do you say I don't have?)
2 P2: I have no pet.
3 P1: I have no pet.
(Kovács, 1995, p. 3)

Extract 4 (9-10-year-olds in group work)

1 P1: Cat az kutya? (Does cat mean dog?)
2 P2: ((nods))
(Kovács, 1995, p. 3)

Extract 3 and 4 illustrate how children apply for help in pair work when one of them (P2) is supposed by a peer (P1) to know more English and to be willing to help. P2's answers supported this expectation, though in Extract 3 not only was the requested help given, but P2 gave an expansion; the full correct answer to the controlled task, while P1 was trying to come to the right solution by piecing it together from two analysed components while thinking in Hungarian. In Extract 4 it seems that P2 was not listening to the question.

Below is the only example of a peer refusing to help:

Extract 5 (8-9-year-olds filling in gaps)

1 T: Now you have to fill in the gaps, fill in with the missing body parts.
2 P1: Ezt nem értem mit kell csinálni. (I don't understand what to do.) ((whispering to P2))
3 P2: ((working in notebook)) Hagyjál már békén, ne lökdöss már! (Leave me alone, stop pushing!)
(Merza, 1997, p. 3)

Here P2 did not want to share the instruction in Hungarian, although the teacher was quite tolerant of peer interaction. Finally, P1 did not ask anyone else but simply copied what P2 was doing.

- Pupils instruct and discipline each other

The vast majority of examples here come from on-task pupil-pupil talk, except for the following two examples in which P1's comment is not related to a task but classroom norm:

Extract 6 (6-7-year-old girl telling off a boy)

L1: Szép a cipőd, csak nem a széken! (Your shoes are nice but not on the chair.)
L2: ((takes feet off the chair))
(Kutas, 1997, p. 5)

Extract 7 (10-11-year-old girls in reading activity)

1 L1: Olvasd már! (Read it!)
2 L2: Jó. Tiszta kócos vagy. (Okay. Your hair is all untidy.)
3 P1: Kezdd már el! (Start reading!)
(Tavali, 1996, p. 7)

While in Extract 6 P2 behaved as requested, in Extract 7 P2's comment was considered irrelevant, and P1 focused back on the reading task, thus forcing P1 to act as required.

In the following extracts children of various ages echo the teacher's expectations by wording their instructions in a peculiar way in Hungarian. In the taped sessions teachers did not use the same expressions in Hungarian but it is possible that in other classes they did. All the examples in this category were related to the management aspect of the tasks, thus children were fulfilling one of the roles of the teacher.

Extract 8 (class of 6-7-year-olds is very noisy in a guessing game)

1 P1: D-O-G ((spelling word to be guessed))
2 P2: Dog!
3 T: Is it a dog?
4 P1: Igen. (Yes.)
5 T: Right.
6 P3: Yes, nem igen. Angolul kell beszélni. (Yes, not igen. You must speak English.)
(Somlyódi & Vándor, 1995, p. 4)

Extract 9 (class of 6-7-year-olds guessing an animal in a covered picture)

1 P1: Is it a fish?
2 P2: No, it isn't. Aki nyavalyog, azt nem választom. (I will not choose the ones who whine.)
3 P3: Lécci... (Please...)
(Somlyódi & Vándor, 1995, p. 9)

While in Extract 8 the register in Hungarian could be that of a teacher, in Extract 9 the vernacular style of P2 (turn 2) is answered in the same style by P3, which would not be acceptable with a teacher. Although it is also possible that children were repeating the teacher's language, this expression was not heard during the observation. In addition, Extract 8 reflects children's desire to speak the target language and they warn one another to do so, whereas in later years they tend to use the mother tongue. In Extract 8 children are absolute beginners and yet they still wish to speak English and try to persuade one another to do so. Obviously, some of the children as early as at the age of 6-7 realise that speaking English represents institutional discourse, and having to speak it in class is one of the rules.

Extract 10 (9-10-year-olds reading in pairs)

1 P1: Ezt olvasd el, ami előtte van. (Read what's before it.)
2 P2: ((not reading))
3 P1: Na, Mátéka, te kezdesz. (Well, Mátéka, you begin.) Come on.
(Györők, 1996, p. 6)

In this extract, P1 first told P2 what to do and when he did not do so P1 first asked him to start reading by using his name (Máté), adding an unusual diminutive suffix reflecting perhaps patronizing or friendship, and added in the target language 'Come on' as an encouragement, or perhaps using the teacher's expression, knowing that he would be able to understand it.

In the following examples children start out negotiating in Hungarian how to manage the task, and then shift both focus and style to discuss the content as real communication in the two languages.

Extract 11 (10-11-year-olds in controlled pair work)

1 P1: Jó, akkor kérdezz. (Okay, you ask.)
2 P2: Te kérdezz. (You ask.)
3 P1: Na jó. (Okay.) How long do snake live?
4 P2: Snakes live..... várjál csak..... 80 years. Most te kérdezd tőlem a rinocéroszt. Nem, inkább kérdezd a pacit. (Snakes live ..... wait.... 80 years. Now you ask me the rhinoceros. No, you'd rather ask the horsie.)
5 P1: How long do horses live?
(Mózes, 1995, p. 9)

After deciding in turns 1-3 whose turn it was, P2 was trying to focus on horses by suggesting to P1 what to ask. The negotiation went on in the mother tongue with a child language vocabulary item 'paci' used for horse indicating a special interest in this animal, whereas the dialogue to be practised continued in English repre-

senting the academic on-task language, where 'horse' was used as an equivalent. This may be an example supporting the claim made by Tarone and Swain (1995) that children code-switch as they lack the necessary language. On the other hand, after negotiating the choice of animal children switched back to English.

Extract 12 (10-11-year-olds in guessing game)

1 P1: Are you afraid of bees?
2 P2: ......
3 P1: Mondd már meg, hogy miért félsz! (Say why you are afraid!)
4 P2: Miért? Mert megcsíp. Sting. (Why? Because it stings. Sting.)
5 P1: Are you afraid of snakes?
6 P2: Yes, I am.
7 P1: Gondoltam. Igen..... and why? (I thought so.... and why?)
8 P2: Why, why? Sharp teeth.
(Tóth, 1995, p. 9)

Here again children first focused on the prescribed task in English and when P2 got stuck P1 tried to give an instruction and paraphrased the English question in Hungarian. P2, as if prompted, asked back and gave an answer in the mother tongue and then the verb required in the target language. P1's turn 5 indicated acceptance of the answer and the rote-learnt dialogue went on. In turn 7 P1 again commented on the truth value of the answer and continued the conversation. P2's answer focused on the reason representing genuine communication.

In these stretches of discourse children seem to distinguish between the uses of the two languages similarly to learners in immersion programmes and bilingual classes, as they use the vernacular style represented by Hungarian for interpersonal communication, and the target language for the academic task. English is rarely integrated into their social language use.

Sometimes the content of the question is so challenging that children start a private conversation on the topic in Hungarian:

Extract 13 (8-9-year-olds in teacher-controlled dialogue)

1 T: Do you like .... coffee?
2 P1: ((to P2)) Attól függ, milyen kávé. (Depends on what coffee.)
3 P2: ((to P1)) Én mindent szeretek. (I like everything.)
(Mándy, 1996, p. 7)

An unusual comment was taped in a first-grade class. Private tutoring is quite frequent in secondary schools, and it seems that some parents hire private teachers as soon as their child starts primary school. Children were practising new vocabulary items, and the pupil addressed had previously boasted of knowing it all from a private teacher called Annamária. The reference to the private tutor is definitely sarcastic, and the learner used Hungarian vernacular style, as it was unavailable in English.

Extract 14 (7-year-old reproaching a peer)

L: Látod, hiába tanultad te már azt az Annamária nénidnél, mi is tudjuk! (You see, you learnt it in vain with your Aunt Annamária, we also know it.)
(Mándy, 1996, p. 7)

• Pupil provides support by giving explanation

While only Extract 14 represented serious criticism towards a peer in our data and just one request was turned down (Extract 5), being helpful and supporting one another was typical among the children.

Extract 15 (class of 6-7-year-olds about to sing a song)

1 T: Girls be quiet, just the boys!
2 Girl 1: Csak a lányok? (Only girls?)
3 T: ((nodding)) Attila, why don't you sing it?
4 Girl 1: Te fiú vagy. (You are a boy.)
5 T: Aren't you a boy?
6 Boy 1: Én nem énekelek. (I am not singing.)
7 Girl 2: Kiesett a foga. (He has lost his tooth.)
8 Boy 2: Lány vagy? (Are you a girl?)
9 Boy 1: Nem. Én énekeltem. (No. I was singing.)
10 T: No, you haven't sung!
(Somlyódi & Vándor, 1995, p. 5)

In turn 4 Girl 1 was trying to be helpful presupposing that Boy 1 (Attila) would now understand the instruction of the teacher. Girl 2 had more insights into Boy 1's difficulties and implied that without front teeth he was not able to sing. Boy 2 wanted to tease him and got a negative reply. In turn 9 Boy 1 answered 'no' in reply to turn 8 and only then to turn 3. Obviously, he was more sensitive to peer criticism than to the teacher's comment.

Extract 16 (class of 9-10-year-olds singing)

1 P1: De mindenkinek kell énekelni. (But all must sing.)
2 P2: De én nem tudok. (But I can't.)
3 P1: De tudsz. Egyszerű. Meg kell próbálni. (But you can. It's simple. You must try.)
4 P2: ((starts singing quietly with the others))
(Darázs, 1997, p. 4)

In this example, P2 was not singing with the others, so P1 first acted as a teacher, then provided support and succeeded in persuading P2.

Extract 17 (class of 6-7-year-olds colouring and writing)

1 T: What colour is this?
2 Ls: Orange.
3 P1: Ide kell írni, hogy orange. (You have to write orange here.) ((pointing to workbook page of P3))
4 P2: Nem írni kell, hanem rajzolni. (You don't have to write it but draw it.) ((leaning over to P3))
5 P3: Ide a szivárvány mellé? (Here beside the rainbow?)
6 P2: ((demonstrates what to do and P3 does so))
(Somlyódi & Vándor, 1995, p. 8)

In Extract 17, three children interacted as P2 overheard P1's discussion with P3. As the teacher did not tolerate a lot of Hungarian, finally P2 demonstrated the activity.

Extract 18 (6-7-year-old girls practising prescribed dialogue)

1 P1: Hello.
2 P2: Hello.
3 P1: I'm Alexandra.
4 P2: I'm Orsi.
5 P1: What's your name?
6 P2: What's your name?
7 P1: Én kérdezem tőled, hány éves vagy. (I'm asking you how old you are.)
8 P2: What's your name,..... seven. What's your name?
9 P1: I'm seven.
10 P2: Hello.
11 P1: Hello.
12 P2: Good bye.
13 P1: Good bye.
(Somlyódi & Vándor, 1995, p. 6)

Extract 18 illustrates how children try to come up to expectations. They practised the rote-learnt dialogue as a whole class activity, and now they were supposed to act it out in pairs. They memorised unanalysed chunks of the target language and knew some of the meanings of what they were saying. In turn 7 P1 wanted to help by translating for P2, but they still did not get the question right. Note, that in Hungarian 'Hello' may be used both when meeting and when leaving someone. Thus, in turns 10 and 11 the girls said good bye in Hungarian, and then in English.

Extract 19 (class of 6-7-year-olds after looking at picture books)

1 T: Shut your books. Shut your books.
2 P1: Csukd be a könyved.(Shut your book.)
3 T: Shut it.
4 P1: Csukd be! (Shut it!) ((exchange repeated 2 more times))
5 T: People, shut the book. Ágnes, shut your book!
6 Ls: Ági, csukd be a könyved!! (Ági, shut your book!!)
(Somlyódi & Vándor, 1995, p. 6)

In this example, first only one child tried to help Ági by translating the teacher's instructions word for word. In turn 6 several students shouted out the same instruction, and she shut her book. Neither the teacher, nor the children mimed the activity.

Extract 20 (10-11-year old girls preparing for pair work)

1 T: Okay, Janka, would you like to be a shop assistant?
2 P1: ((whispering to P2)) Eladó? (Shop assistant?)
3 P2: ((whispering to P1)) Aha, akarsz eladó lenni? (Yes, would you like to be a shop assistant?)
4 P1: No.
(Somogyi & Baksa, 1995, p. 9)

Similarly to Extract 19, a peer translated for P1 but only after she applied for help. Although P1 only wanted to check a single vocabulary item (shop assistant), P2 confirmed the question and translated the whole of turn 1 of the teacher, using unnecessary expansion similarly to Extract 3. In turn 4 Learner 1 switched back to English.

Extract 21 (10-11-year-old girls in a guessing game)

1 P1: Has it got long neck?
2 P2: Yes, it has.
3 P1: Bird?
4 P2: Yes.
5 P1: Has it got a ... hosszú vagy rövid a csőre? (Is its beak long or short?)
6 P2: Rövid.
7 P1: Akkor ostrich. (Then it is an ostrich.)
(Tóth, 1995, p. 8)

A similar cycle can be identified in Extract 21, but here peers were working in pairs without the teacher overlooking them. In turn 5 P1 switched to Hungarian to bridge a gap. Also, P1 combined two questions in one and in turn 7 gave the name of the bird from the limited choice learnt in English introduced by a Hungarian word. They said what they could in the target language, and what was beyond them in the mother tongue. They creatively integrated their background knowledge of biology unknown to them in English.

- Pupils correct one another

Sometimes children corrected one another both in teacher-fronted activities and in pair or group work. In the observed classes only a few examples of peer correction were found. The majority of teachers corrected all the errors on the spot and did not invite chil-

dren to do so. Other teachers neglected errors, paraphrased for pupils and corrected them selectively. On the whole, young children did not seem to be sensitive to each other's errors and rarely noticed them. As will be seen in the examples of 13-14-year olds, children become both more critical and sensitive in later years.

Extract 22 (class of 6- 7-year-olds focusing on spelling)

1 T: Let's find, let's find words..
2 P1: Yeah...
3 T: er:::... with 'v', 'v'.
4 P2: villa (fork)
5 P3: Ez nem jó. (It is no good.)
(Somlyódi & Vándor, 1995, p. 9)

In Extract 22 P3 spontaneously replied to P2 as the answer was in Hungarian but the teacher did not take any notice.

Extract 23 (9-10-year-olds in controlled practice in pairs)

1 P1: I have breakfast at half past three.
2 P2: Nem ebéd? (Not lunch?) ((following English syntax))
(Horváth, 1997, p. 14)

Children practised a rote-learnt dialogue in Extract 23. Although P2 asked back in the mother tongue, turn 2 follows the syntactic rules of the target language as a verbal suffix is missing (Nem ebédelsz?).

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- Students manage task

Hungarian was exclusively used for task management purposes. Some of the examples are quite short, others are lengthy.

Extract 24 (10-11-year-old girls changing roles)

1 P1: Which wine would you like sir?
2 P2: A bottle of red wine.
3 P1: Most megint csere. (Now change again.) I'd like the menu please.
(Horváth, 1997, p. 5)

In spite of the difference in length, Extract 24 and 25 show the same pattern: negotiation on task management always happened in Hungarian, while the task itself was performed in the required target language. As can be seen in Extract 24, children are aware of the institutional features of their discourse: they are doing a restaurant activity to practise language and they swap roles using Hungarian, as this is not part of the task.

Extract 25 (three 9-10-year old boys discussing role-play task)

1 P1: Na, én leszek a Mutt. (Well, I'll be Mutt.)
2 P2: Ki lesz a rádiós? (Who will be the reporter?)
3 P3: Én leszek a rádiós. Én leszek a rádiós meg a... (I will be the reporter. I will be the reporter and the...)
4 P2: Én leszek a rádiós meg az apa. (I will be the reporter and the father.)
5 P3: Én leszek a rádiós meg a Mutt. (I will be the reporter and the Mutt.)
6 P1: Akkor figyelj. Te vagy az apa meg a rádiós. Nem, a Bence a rádiós, te meg az apa meg Mutt. (Then listen. You are the father

and the reporter. No, Bence is the reporter and you are the father
and Mutt.)

7 P3: Én vagyok a Mutt. (I am the Mutt.)

8 P1: Csönd! Ne... (Quiet! Don't..)

9 P3: Jól van. (Okay.)

10 P2: Na... Animal pictures, free in packets. ((they start acting out
prescribed role-play))

(Görbicz, 1996, p. 16)

Extract 25 does not represent an extreme stretch of classroom
discourse as in several cases children spent even more time staking
out roles and managing tasks in Hungarian than actually imple-
menting them in the target language. In the above example only
one turn was in English out of 10. Also, it is important to note that
the language necessary for this particular negotiation would have
been at the children's disposal but it never occurred to them to talk
in English.

   In my view, this is the turning point in children's use of the target
language. Speaking English means using the language of the institu-
tional context represented by the teacher. Around puberty children
start identifying with peers rather than teachers and that is the reason
why they tend to use the target language less and less. Learners vol-
unteering an answer in English in my own classes in the seventh and
eighth grades were often perceived by peers as trying to be teacher's
pets and children regularly commented by saying: 'Kis pedál, azt
hiszed más nem tudja?' 'Kis okos, puncsos.' (You swat, you think
others don't know it? How smart, clinger/pleaser.)

   The last example represents the oldest age group in our data base.
In Extract 26 eighth graders were preparing a role-play using condi-
tionals.

Extract 26 (13-14-year-old boys preparing a role-play)

1 P1: If you....

2 P2: Mit nézel arra, én a Drávavölgyivel vagyok. (Why are you looking there, I am with Drávavölgyi.)

3 P3: Én meg a vizilovakkal. (And I'm with the hippos.) ((laughs))

4 P1: I will cut your grass.

5 P2: Mi? (What?) ((laughs)) What?... You stupid.

6 P1: If you wouldn't go from my field with your machines.... I will..

7 P2: Micsoda? (What?)

8 P1: Ha nem viszed te... el a gépekkel... (If you don't take it away.... with the machines...)

9 P2: Jó, értem, én azt értem, csak azt nem értem... (Okay, I understand, I do, I just don't understand...)

10 P1: Err::.... I will damage your car.

11 P2: If you damage ..... my car nincs is autóm ((laughs)) (If you damage......I don't even have a car.)

12 P1: Nem baj, akkor is megrongálom. (It doesn't matter, I will damage it anyway.)

13 P2: If you damage my car.... I will... burn your house. ((laughs))

14 P1: If you burn my house .... ((laughs)) I will kill you. ((laughs))

15 P2: If you kill me... ((laughs))

16 P1: Akkor te már megdöglöttél ((laughs)) (Then you have kicked the bucket.)

17 P2: Then I call the police. ((laughs))

18 P1: If you call the police ... er::... I will tell them ... you broke my arm.

19 P2: (unintelligible)

20 P1: Nem értem ám mer makogsz. (I don't understand 'cause you're stuttering.)

21 P2: Akkor sakkozzunk. (Then let's play chess.)

22 P1: Okay, play chess. Készen vagyunk Gabi néni. (We are ready Miss Gabi.)

23 P2: A ló kezd, hat lépésben mattot ad a királynőnek. (The Knight starts and checkmates the Queen in six moves.)
24 T: Are you ready?
25 Ss: Yes, yes.
(Kusz, 1997, p. 14)

P1 and P2 kept challenging each other, both in Hungarian and in English. Obviously, their language competence would have allowed them to use English only, but they kept switching codes. Turn 3 refers to the title of a film using the same pattern as the second part of turn 2. In turn 7 P2 seemed to apply for help and when P1 translated for him in turn 8 (the translation is not grammatical in Hungarian), he refused to accept it, so P1 went on in English. The discourse carried on on two planes: one representing the language task spiced with code switching, and the other representing the competition between the two boys. They were both consciously breaking classroom norms by using Hungarian, and finally decided to give up the task and started playing chess in Hungarian. P2 indicated the end of the formal task by suggesting in Hungarian that they should play chess in turn 21, to which P1 replied in turn 22 in English, then indicated to the teacher in Hungarian that they were finished with the role-play.

Conclusions

It is hard to tell how much the observers' presence influenced classroom processes. In some cases children were obviously not used to pair- or groupwork and their teachers devoted minimal time to them, while in other groups learners interacted with one another with ease, as part of their routine. Also, classrooms were different in the amount of Hungarian tolerated: in teacher-fronted

activities in some cases no interaction took place at all and several children did not say a word.

On the whole, interaction and the amount of input in English were on a surprisingly low level, and I have doubts as to how much of the latter was comprehensible for all the learners. This may be one of the reasons why some teachers did not use pairwork in their classes. Further research is necessary to find out how interaction, the amount of input in the target language and success in FLL are interrelated.

The teacher's use of the target language did not seem to influence how much the children relied on the mother tongue, and further analysis is necessary to reveal patterns in this area. Learners used mostly Hungarian in peer-peer interactions, except for the rote-learnt or prescribed dialogues to be practised. Children in both teacher-fronted and pairwork activities used English more often in controlled tasks, but even in these cases task management, applying and providing help, clarifying problems happened in the mother tongue. There seem to be two threads running through the data: Hungarian vernacular style was used in 'on task' social activities, like negotiating roles, disciplining and helping one another and exchanging ideas on how to do a task. Also, there was a sub-thread of this -- one related to group dynamics. The target language was used mainly as the formal language variety in the actual language-focused activity, and children seemed to be aware of these distinctions.

As for how patterns of interaction changed with age, children from the very first year of the FLL experience distinguished between the institutional discourse to be accomplished in the target language, and all the rest was perceived as manageable only in Hungarian. They used Hungarian in peer-peer interaction even when in the upper grades the necessary language competence would have been at their disposal; at around the age of 11-12, a definite decline was observed in learners' willingness to use the target language. In my view, the reasons for this phenomenon are not linguistic but social and psychological: belonging to the group is more important for learners

than accommodation to classroom norm and the teacher's expectations. Communicating in Hungarian with native speaking friends is just natural.

According to Tarone and Swain (1995), children do not use the target language as they lack the vernacular style in it. To me this seems to be one of the reasons, but more importantly, learners subconsciously indicate what is spontaneous for them, and whose expectations they wish to come up to. Communicative FL teaching materials do in fact provide input in the vernacular style, sometimes they even over-emphasise this aspect. Similarly, such input is available in two-way immersion programmes, as well as in the FL context in the media.

One of the ways of integrating the language necessary for informal social interactions may be available while using negotiation in the classroom: children are involved in decision-making in various areas, they need to vote, argue for or against each others' suggestions, while using the target language for meaningful social purposes (Nikolov, 2000).

The weaknesses of this study are manifold: the classrooms were randomly chosen, and the same contexts were observed only three times; the observers were novices to the field; no quantitative analysis of the data was conducted. As children tended to use Hungarian, data were insufficient to identify what strategies they used to modify their input for each other in the target language; most frequently they applied translation, repetitions and expansions, but it is hard to estimate how frequent or useful these strategies were in the long run. As for code-switching, all of the examples could be classified as unintentional switches, but not all of them were related to proficiency. There were many more content words than function words in the data, but statistical analysis was not possible. The teacher's role was not explored in any detail, though hopefully valuable insights will be gained in further analyses.

Finally, I would like to point out some of the pedagogical implications. For me as a primary school teacher of English with extensive

experience with similar children, most of the data sounded like what I had heard in my classes, but never had a chance to tape-record. I am shocked by how infrequently children in the corpus heard or used English, and feel worried about the possible outcomes. In such circumstances teachers have to do everything to counter-balance for the lack of input. It is as if by magic that some children will still develop. Or else, they must be 'natural-born speakers of English.'

Acknowledgements

Appendix: Transcription conventions

The conventions are based on van Lier (1988, pp. 243-244) and are as follows:

T	teacher
P1, P2,	identified learner
LL	several learners simultaneously
/yes/yah//ok//huh?///	overlapping responses
.,..,....., one second	pause; three periods approximates one second
?	rising intonation
!	strong emphasis
OK. Now.	a period indicates falling intonation
So, then	a comma indicates low-rising intonation
the:::, er:	one or more colons indicate lengthening of the preceding sound
((points to book))	double brackets indicate comment on classroom events
Igen. (Yes.)	brackets indicate translation into English of previous Hungarian utterance
Well, yes.	capitals are used both for proper names and to indicate beginnings of sentences

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Chapter Seven

An Observation Project of Disadvantaged EFL Classrooms

> Through describing, analyzing, and interpreting
> the teaching we observe, we can construct and
> reconstruct our own teaching and thereby
> learn about ourselves as teachers.
> (Gebhard, 1999, p. 58)

Introduction

This study meant to gather and analyse information on the teaching situation in Hungary concerning the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in secondary schools in years 10, 11 and 12. The rationale behind the enquiry is the Examination Reform: a new examination is to be developed for 16-year-old school-leavers and the traditional school-leaving examination at the age of 18 will be offered on the intermediate and advanced level in all subjects, among them modern languages. According to the planned introduction of a new three-level proficiency exam, students will take the Basic Level Exam at the end of year 10, and the Intermediate or the Advanced Level Exams after year 12. The two new exams are to go live in 2002 and 2004 respectively; therefore, enough time was available to explore classrooms. We intended to gain realistic insights into average teaching conditions, pedagogical processes, and task types teachers use in the last three years of secondary school.

Classrooms were sampled to reflect schools on the peripheries: non-prestigious schools in mostly disadvantaged geographical areas, where foreign languages are not high on the list of priorities. The aim

was to identify what classroom reality is like, how present-day exams influence teaching, and to make sure that task types and levels were realistically set for the new exams. Data from 118 classes in 55 secondary schools were collected and analysed. I hope that the results of this study will provide relevant insights into the teaching situation in Hungarian secondary education.

Background to research

The aim of this study was to find out as much as possible about what goes on in classrooms. Therefore, we decided to use classroom observation as a technique to collect data. First, books on classroom observation were reviewed; the most important sources included Allwright and Bailey (1991), Chaudron (1988), Johnson (1995), Johnson and Morrow (1981), Nunan (1989), Seedhouse (1996), Van Lier (1988), Wallace (1998), and Wragg (1994).

Then, observation instruments described in these sources and used by other exam project staff at the IELE of Lancaster University were scrutinised by a group of experienced teachers participating in the development of the instruments and data collection for this project. As the data we needed to collect did not coincide with any of the traditions described in the above sources, we decided to design new instruments to suit the needs of the Hungarian Examination Reform Project.

Research questions

In our project we intended to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the teaching situation like in secondary schools not specialising in English as a foreign language?
2. How can teachers and students be characterised in average schools?
3. How many hours are devoted to teaching English to these students?
4. How much can and do secondary schools build on students' primary school studies?
5. How much private tutoring do these students get?
6. What equipment and materials do teachers use?
7. Approximately how much time and effort is devoted to the development of skills and other areas?
8. What are the characteristic forms of classroom management?
9. What is the ratio of teachers' and students' use of English and Hungarian?
10. What task and text types are used in the observed classes?
11. How often do teachers claim to use various task- and text-types?
12. What are students' strengths and weaknesses as perceived by the observer and the teacher?

- We hypothesised that under unfavourable circumstances teachers and students face more serious problems than in schools where intensive language programmes attract children from middle class and professional families.
- We expected to find hiccups related to continuity of programmes, as most secondary schools not specialising in English cannot afford to launch lower intermediate pro-

grammes for children with primary school language learning.

- We suspected that more children would be put into one group than in prestigious schools, and fewer children would get private tutoring than statistical data for the population suggested.
- We expected to find a lack of resources and heavy reliance on published materials.
- As for classroom management, we expected teachers using communicative materials to exploit less teacher-fronted activities and more pair- and groupwork.
- We hypothesised that teachers would use mostly English with an observer present, and expected to find a direct relationship between the rate of target language use of the teacher and the students.
- We hypothesised that teachers would use a variety of five to six tasks and texts in a class, and expected a strong relationship between exam preparation in the final year to be closely related to task types of the school-leaving exam.
- We thought that teachers looking at the list of tasks and texts after class would claim to use many more than observed in a single class.
- Among students' strengths and weaknesses perceived by the observer and the teacher, we expected not only linguistic but psychological factors (attitudes, motivation and aptitude) to emerge.

Method

Seven secondary-school teachers were involved in gathering data in 14-17 classrooms each; in addition, two others volunteered to collect data in three classes, each as part of their job or university assignment. Altogether, nine teachers contributed to the development of the database on 118 English classes in the spring term of 1998. The above mentioned seven teachers volunteered to take part in the preparation of the Examination Reform as enthusiastic counterparts of British Council contractees from various parts of Hungary. After a two-week programme on exam specifications, they participated in the development of the Datasheet for classroom observation, the Observers' classroom observation sheet and the Teachers' list of task types. After discussing with them how to proceed, they were given a short list of the negotiated instructions to make sure that all of them implemented all tasks according to the same guidelines. They had a letter for the heads of schools to allow them to observe and interview teachers, and a letter to the heads of their own schools to allow them to do research by rearranging their time-tables if necessary.

Participants

Teachers

Altogether, 107 teachers were observed in 55 secondary schools, teaching 118 classes. Of them, 105 were Hungarian teachers of English, and two were native speakers of English.

According to the Datasheet, teachers whose classes were observed graduated from the following types of teacher training programmes. As Table 1 illustrates, most of them are double majors, and more of them graduated from universities than from college programmes. (The number of teaching degrees is higher than the number of

observed teachers, as some of them, for example retrainees, have two.) The number of teachers with post-graduate degrees is surprisingly low (12%), similarly to the number of teachers with in-service education (2%).

Table 1: Distribution of teaching degrees in grammar and vocational schools

Grammar School	College	University	Post-grad degree	In-service course
Single major	2	3	3	1
Double major	6	20		
Retrainee	2	4		

Vocational School	College	University	Post-grad degree	In-service course
Single major	15	6	7	1
Double major	18	19		
retrainee	7	5		

Table 2 illustrates how the 118 classes were distributed in the 55 secondary schools: about two-thirds were in vocational schools, one-third in traditional but non-specialised grammar schools, and a few in the combination of the two. Four trade school classes were also observed in two vocational schools, but in this type of state education foreign languages are not included in the curriculum at present. No dual-language school classes were involved in our study, as these are highly prestigious institutions. Observers chose schools not far from their own locations, where they expected to find average conditions. In some cases they knew the teacher or school administrators.

Table 2: Distribution of participating classes according to school type

Grammar	Vocational	Grammar and vocational
35	71	12

The geographical distribution of the 118 groups in 55 schools is illustrated in Table 3. As can be seen, three quarters of the schools are situated in big towns, like Debrecen, Eger, Győr, Pécs, Szeged and Budapest, and about a quarter in smaller towns, like Füzesabony, Keszthely, Sárvár, Zalaszentgrót and Zalaegerszeg. In some schools more than one class was observed.

Table 3: Geographical distribution of observed classes

Budapest	City	Small town
19	66	33

Students

According to information the observed teachers gave concerning the strengths and weaknesses of their students, quite a number of the learners come from lower middle class and working class families. Teachers claimed that their aptitude is typically low, and they often labelled students' attitudes and motivation towards school and languages as problematic. No other information was collected on the students' background; therefore, these comments must be handled with care.

As for the distribution of students' groups across years, as Table 4 indicates, most of the classes were in Year 10, where the brand new Basic Exam is to be introduced in 2002; a similarly high number of classes were in Year 11 and fewer in Year 12.

Table 4: Distribution of observed classes according to school year

Year	10	11	12
Class	49	42	27

The number of students in groups ranged from 5 to 34, with an average of a little less than 15 students in a group. In Year 12 the average was the lowest across the three years, with a maximum of 20 students in a group (see Table 5).

Table 5: Number of students in groups in the observed classes according to school year

Year 10			Year 11			Year 12		
average	min.	max.	average	min.	max.	average	min.	max.
14.28	5	22	15.12	9	34	13.92	8	20

Materials

Three instruments were used for data collection:

- The Datasheet was designed to collect objective information on teachers, students and the educational context.
- The Observers' classroom observation sheet included a list of task- and text-types most typically found in teaching materials, with a special emphasis on Hungarian foreign-language classes (for example: oral reporting and translation). Eleven oral, 22 writing, 6 listening and 10 reading tasks, and 23 text types were listed. Two open questions intended to elicit information on students' strengths and weaknesses as perceived by the observer, and some space was left open for other notes.
- The Teachers' list of task and text types included the same lists and in addition to them boxes for teachers to tick how

frequently (never, sometimes and often) they applied a task or text. The same open questions were put to teachers to identify students' strengths and weaknesses.

Besides these instruments, observers were encouraged to take notes, and put down everything they considered important. As a final task, they wrote an evaluative summary on their experiences along the focal points of the Datasheet and the observation instrument, including the evaluation of the instruments and the observation task.

Procedure

First, schools to be visited were identified. Criteria for choosing institutions included the following:

- No specialised intensive foreign language programmes were involved.
- Institutions were vocational, trade or general grammar schools.
- Years 10 and 11 were prioritised as we expected teachers in year 12 to be less willing to welcome visitors.
- Schools on peripheries were preferred.
- School administrators and teachers had favourable attitudes towards our project.
- Observers could time-table and physically manage visits.

Then a letter was sent to the heads of schools informing them of the aims of the observation and asking them for support. Heads of observers' schools were also requested to make it possible for colleagues to schedule visits to other schools.

Observers did not discuss the project before class, but informed teachers that students would be observed for the Exam Reform Project, because we wanted to find out what students knew, how relevant some task and text types would be, and teachers were asked to help by allowing observers in. After the class the observer and the teacher filled in questions 1-12 on the Datasheet together, thus providing a frame for a structured interview. Then, the teacher was requested to fill in the Teachers' list, indicating how often a task or text type was used, and to answer the open questions. The observer remained in the room and provided explanations to dubious items. If teachers showed interest, information on the Exam Reform was shared with them.

Finally, observers filled in the Observers' sheet based on their drafts and notes, and when all observations had been accomplished, they wrote their reports along the focal points of the questionnaire, adding anything they found important. Numerical data from 118 instruments were entered into a computer and analysed in Excel.

Results and discussion

First, we will discuss findings on teachers, on the materials they used, on their management skills, the tasks and texts they used, and the technical facilities at their disposal. Then, we will focus on students, analysing their strengths and weaknesses as perceived by the observers and their teachers.

Teachers

Here I will discuss results concerning teachers based on the statistical analysis of the Datasheet, and in a separate section on the interviews and observations.

We have found that almost half of the observed teachers graduated from colleges, although according to regulations, secondary

schools are not supposed to employ college graduates (except for 3-year programme single majors), as a university degree is required for teachers in secondary institutions. In spite of this fact 50 out of 107 are college degrees (Table 1). This tendency is more typical of vocational schools: 40 college degrees compared to 30 university degrees. In grammar schools the rate is 10 to 27. These numbers can be explained by the higher prestige of grammar schools compared to vocational ones.

As altogether 63 are double major-degrees, holders of these qualifications must come from the relatively older generation, as a single degree is a recent type. Most probably institutions employ teachers with unsuitable qualifications because they have no other applicants, or their staff have tenure. These teachers are required to upgrade their teaching degrees in post-graduate university courses in a couple of years if they want to keep their jobs. As only two teachers have participated in in-service courses, this type of education does not seem to be popular, or perhaps teachers did not understand the term "in-service". Post-graduate degrees, however, are held by ten teachers. Relatively few teachers are retrainees; more (12) are employed in vocational schools than in grammar schools (6).

As for the variety of activities and teachers' methodological backgrounds, in what follows data will be analysed according to the questions on the Datasheet and the results of the observations on task and text types.

Teaching materials

Now let us consider what course and supplementary materials teachers claimed to use with their groups. As Table 6 illustrates, course titles were more frequently listed than supplementary materials. Both in grammar and vocational schools the top winner is *Headway*, followed by *Hotline*.

Table 6: List of frequency of course and supplementary materials teachers claimed to use

Grammar Schools		
Course material	*Supplementary material*	No of groups
Headway (Soars and Soars)		16
	A Practical English Course (Thomson)	7
Hotline (Hutchinson)		6
	English Grammar in Use (Murphy)	5
Blueprint (Abbs and Freebairn)		4
	GCSE (Jobbágy)	4
Access to English (Coles and Lord)		2
Angol (Budai)		2
	Stories for Reproduction (Hill)	2
Streetwise		2
	Success at First Certificate	2
	Társalgási témák (Horváth)	2
Vocational schools		
Headway (Soars and Soars)		26
Hotline (Hutchinson)		20
	GCSE (Jobbágy)	11
Streamline English		7
Grapevine		6
	1000 Questions 1000 Answers	5
Angol (Budai)		4
	English Grammar in Use (Murphy)	4
	Grammar Practice Exercises (Budai)	4
	A Practical English Grammar (Thomson)	2
	Angol nyelv alapfokon (Bartáné)	2
	Angol nyelvtani gyakorlatok (Dévainé)	2
	Living English Structure (Allen)	2
	Társalgási szituációk ... (Némethné)	2

On the whole, monolingual British publications outnumber bilingual Hungarian ones among course materials in both school types, and the rates are very similar: 30 to 2 in grammar schools, and 59 to 4 in vocational schools. (Only 86 teachers put down titles.)

As for supplementary materials, in grammar schools British books are used in 16 groups as opposed to Hungarian materials in 6; whereas the rate in vocational schools is very different: 8 to 26. Altogether, 56 teachers put a title under this heading, some simply wrote "photocopied materials," a few put "Internet" or "magazines"; therefore, titles could not be included.

Among Hungarian publications the leaders are *GCSE* (15 groups use it) and *Angol* (6). The average rate of Hungarian publications among supplementary materials is higher than British ones (24/32). This may be explained by the washback effect of Hungarian exams, as only one of these publications might be considered unrelated to exam preparation (*Stories for Reproduction*); all the others practice grammar in general, or specific testing techniques.

Data in Table 6 indicate that the vast majority of teachers feel the need to supplement course materials: they use additional grammar exercises and various types of exam tasks. Although Hungarian materials are relatively cheap, teachers seem to believe that expensive British publications are still worth buying.

Management

Now we will look at how teachers managed their groups, how much English and Hungarian they used, and how much emphasis they put on developing various skills. Then we will discuss what tasks and texts they used.

As for work management, Table 7 illustrates how much emphasis teachers devoted to frontal, group, pair and individual classwork. Teachers with university degrees used more frontal work and less individual work, whereas college-degree holders managed slightly more tasks individually and less frontally. The differences for pair-

and groupwork are not so obvious, though college graduates used more pairwork. On average, both groups of teachers devoted a similar amount of time to frontal work compared to the other three types put together, but teachers with college degrees used a little less frontal work and showed more variety in organising students' activities.

The rate of frontal classwork is the highest and of pairwork the lowest in Year 11, whereas individual work was most frequently used in Year 12.

As for teachers' use of the first and the target language, Table 7 provides information according to teachers' educational background, while Table 9 according to school type. University graduates used 72% English compared with college graduates' 69% on average. When we look at the rate of English and Hungarian language use according to where they teach, grammar school teachers used significantly less Hungarian (23%) than colleagues in vocational schools (36%). Most probably this rate is related to students' levels rather than teachers' proficiency, as the more teachers think students understand, the more they rely on the target language. This claim is supported by data on the lowest and highest rates of reliance on the two languages: while in grammar-school groups the use of Hungarian ranged from 1 to 50%, in vocational-school groups from 0 to 95%. A similar tendency is true for the use of English: in grammar schools the lowest rate was 50%, the highest 100%; whereas in vocational schools 5% and 100%, respectively.

Table 7: Work management and language use and teachers' degrees

Teachers with university degree				Teachers with college degree			
Work management				Work management			
	Average %	min %	max %		Average %	min %	max %
frontal	63	10	100	frontal	55	10	100
group	23	10	60	group	22	5	50
pair	21	5	40	pair	24	5	60
indiv.	24	5	90	indiv.	29	9	90
Language used by teacher				Language used by teacher			
	Average %	min %	max %		Average %	min %	max %
English	70	5	100	English	68	10	100
Hung.	30	1	95	Hung.	32	0	90

Table 8: Work management in Years 10, 11 and 12

	Year 10			Year 11			Year 12		
	aver.	min.	max.	aver.	min.	max.	aver.	min.	max.
Frontal	55	10	100	67	10	100	56	10	100
Group	21	10	40	23	5	50	26	10	60
Pair	26	5	60	17	5	50	24	10	40
Individual	26	10	90	27	5	90	31	10	100

Table 9: Distribution of teachers' use of English and Hungarian according to school-type

Grammar schools			
	Average %	Min. %	Max. %
English	78	50	100
Hungarian	22	1	50
Vocational schools			
	Average %	Min. %	Max. %
English	65	5	100
Hungarian	35	0	95

As for the rate of teachers' and students' use of the target language and the mother tongue across the years, no significant differences can be noted in Table 10. There is a slight increase in teachers' use of Hungarian over the years, while students used their first language in Year 10 the most frequently.

Table 10: Distribution of teachers' and students' use of English and Hungarian in Years 10, 11 and 12

	Year 10			Year 11			Year 12		
	aver.	min.	max.	aver.	min.	max.	aver.	min.	max.
	TEACHER								
English	70	10	100	68	5	100	68	10	100
Hungarian	30	1	90	32	0	95	32	2	90
	STUDENTS								
English	62	30	100	67	10	99	64	20	100
Hungarian	38	1	70	33	1	90	36	10	80

However, it is remarkable that almost a third of teachers' input was Hungarian. Considering that students have limited access to English outside the classroom, this high rate of mother-tongue use seems to be against their interest. Observers noted that teachers tended to use Hungarian for two reasons: to explain grammar and vocabulary, and to translate their own instructions or explanations from English into Hungarian. In one of the groups a teacher kept urging students in Hungarian to reply to her Hungarian questions in English. Observers thought that students would have understood more in the target language than teachers tended to expect them. Except for two native teachers in our sample, no Hungarian teacher conducted a class without switching back to Hungarian.

Now let us consider how the teachers' use of English and Hungarian compares to students' use of the two languages (see Table 11); then we will discuss how much emphasis was put on the development of the four skills, grammar, translation and vocabulary.

Table 11: Rate of students' use of target language and mother tongue

Grammar schools			
	average %	min. %	max. %
English	67	30	100
Hungarian	33	1	70
Vocational schools			
	average %	min. %	max. %
English	64	10	100
Hungarian	36	1	90

As Table 11 shows, about one-third of students' utterances were in Hungarian; and this rate is quite similar to that of teachers'. Whether teachers' language use has a direct relationship with what language students use is an area to be further explored. Our data suggest that grammar-school teachers used less Hungarian than teachers in vocational schools (23% versus 36%, see Table 9), and as Table 11 illustrates, students of the former teachers also used slightly less Hungarian. According to data in Table 10, teachers' use of Hungarian slightly increased each year, whereas students spoke most Hungarian in year 10, and the lowest rate was achieved in year 11.

In the follow-up interviews some teachers pointed out that students were on a low proficiency level, which is why they needed to talk Hungarian. Therefore, it is possible that teachers adjust their rate of L1/L2 talk to learners' perceived proficiency levels, and as grammar-school students were at relatively higher levels, they triggered more target-language input. This explanation contradicts, though, the slight increase of teachers' rate using Hungarian over the years (Table 10). Perhaps grammar explanations required more reliance on the mother tongue.

Some teachers complained to observers that students were not willing to answer in English, and this fact was pinpointed by most observers. (Lack of willingness was one of the recurring weaknesses

of students.) Even one-word answers were often in Hungarian, though they were frequently guessed meanings of vocabulary items, directly elicited in Hungarian. The other reason for the high rate of students' use of Hungarian can be explained by management reasons: in group- and pairwork all students in monolingual groups (pre- and in-service teachers included) tend to switch back to the mother tongue because this is natural for them.

Now we will discuss how much emphasis was put on the development of the four skills, grammar, translation and vocabulary.

As Table 12 illustrates, in the two school types emphasis put on developing the four skills and other areas varied slightly. In grammar-school groups more time and effort was devoted to the development of speaking and integrated skills, whereas in vocational schools more writing and grammar practice was observed. An important difference between the two types of school was in how grammar and speaking were prioritised: in vocational groups grammar ranked first, in grammar schools second; while writing came out the other way round. Most probably this strong emphasis on grammar in vocational-school groups made teachers rely on Hungarian more than in grammar schools.

Table 12: Rate of tasks in observed classes developing skills and other areas

	Grammar schools	Vocational schools	All
Listening	15.3	17	15.9
Reading	19.6	19.7	20.1
Writing	11.9	15.8	14.2
Speaking	28	23.9	26
Grammar	20.7	28.3	25.7
Vocabulary	16.4	15.5	15.8
Translation	17.5	16.3	16.6
Integrated	20.3	14.9	16.2

When the rate of tasks developing various skills is considered according to years, a decrease can be observed in the practice of the

listening and reading skills, while focus on grammar, translation and integrated skills becomes more emphasised in Year 12 (see Table 13). These tendencies may explain why teachers' and students' use of Hungarian did not decrease in Year 12: translation tasks and grammar explanations require heavy reliance on the mother tongue.

Table 13: Rate of tasks developing skills in Years 10, 11 and 12

	Year 10			Year 11			Year 12		
	aver.	min.	max.	aver.	min.	max.	aver.	min.	max.
Listening	17	5	60	16	5	50	13	5	25
Reading	20	5	60	23	5	60	16	5	40
Writing	14	5	40	14	5	60	15	5	50
Speaking	25	5	95	26	2	73	27	5	100
Grammar	22	5	80	28	5	90	28	5	80
Vocabulary	16	5	66	16	2	40	15	5	40
Translation	14	5	40	17	1	40	19	5	70
Integrated	16	5	40	14	5	30	20	10	60

Task and text types

Before analysing the data on task and text types, a few words of warning are necessary. As will be seen, there are differences between the frequencies of what observers noted down and teachers claimed to be characteristic of their teaching. Also, the tasks and texts teachers used depended on the choice of the teaching materials, and observers sometimes found them difficult to identify.

First, we will analyse how frequently teachers used oral, writing, listening and reading tasks and various texts (labelled as *observed* in tables), then we will look into teachers' post-observation indication on the frequency of task and text types in their classes (labelled as *claimed* in tables).

Changes in frequency will be also looked at according to years.

We expected teachers to use a variety of five-six tasks in their classes. The vast majority used three-four different tasks, and a few

teachers used many more. On average 4.65 tasks per class were used, but according to observers' impressions, monotony and boredom characterised several classes. This seemingly contradictory finding maybe explained by observers' comments explaining that in some cases they ticked two rubrics for one task, for example, bridging information gaps, and discussion based on a prompt; therefore, the actual task/class rate must have been lower than the calculated average.

Some observers noted that they felt they could see a realistic picture, because teachers obviously did not put on a show for the sake of a visitor. On the one hand, this impression may strengthen the validity of our findings; on the other, as a result of the observer's paradox, we will never know whether classes are typically as monotonous as the ones observers saw, or these were improved versions of what would normally happen. Extreme examples were also experienced: dynamic classes with a variety of tasks involving all students; and a class where 37 minutes were devoted to checking homework with eight minutes left for a new task.

In tables 14, 16, 18 and 20 task types are rank-ordered according to frequency of use in the observed classes, while numbers in the column under *claimed* indicate how teachers ticked boxes on the use of the appropriate task. In the *observed* column numbers show how many times the task was observed in 118 classes, whereas in the *claimed* column frequency was calculated as follows: never got 0, sometimes 1, and often 2 scores, and then averages were calculated for teachers' self-reports. Data in this column need to be handled with care, though. Several teachers indicated they were not familiar with the terminology, but when observers gave an explanation, they most frequently ticked *sometimes*. Most probably they wanted to give a favourable picture of their methodological background and ticked *never* only if they clearly rejected the task, for example, copying, although this writing task occurred the most frequently.

Table 14: Frequency of oral tasks

	Observed	Claimed
Answering questions	106	1.91
Discussion about a picture, a series of pictures	29	1.34
Role-play	27	1.37
Discussion based on a prompt	22	1.01
Summarising text	21	1.25
Reporting (felelés)	20	1.33
Bridging information gaps	19	1.18
Collecting information from maps, charts, tables	10	1.02
Summary of a story of a film/book recently seen/read	5	1.00

The most frequent oral activity turned out to be answering questions, according to observers' comments, in a lockstep fashion, always following the IRF cycle: teacher initiates, students reply and teacher gives feedback. Some of the observers emphasised how boring this type of whole-group activity was, and in a few cases it dominated the class involving only a few volunteers. Answering questions was often part of oral reporting. The next six tasks were applied in one-sixth of the groups, but teachers claimed to use most of these tasks quite frequently.

Table 15: Frequency of oral tasks across years

	Year 10 49 groups	Year 11 42 groups	Year 12 27 groups
Answering questions	45	34	27
Reporting (felelés)	7	8	5
Discussion about a picture, a series of pictures	14	8	7
Collecting information from maps, charts, tables	5	2	3
Discussion based on a prompt	9	8	5
Summary of story of film/book recently read/seen	4	1	0
Role-play	13	8	6
Bridging information gaps	9	5	5
Summarising text	10	6	5

On average two oral tasks were used in classes, which is very low, indicating that students rarely get chances to talk. Also, apart from oral reporting and pair- and group-work tasks, students' responses were on the one-word or short sentence level, as observers noticed. If we add that teachers and students talked a lot in Hungarian (see Tables 10 and 11), very limited oral language practice was going on.

As for the frequency of oral tasks in Years 10, 11 and 12, some changes can be observed, but we need to bear in mind the different numbers of groups in each year.

Table 16: Frequency of writing tasks

	Observed	Claimed
Copying	24	0.50
Gap filling (different cloze-types, C-test)	15	1.39
Translating texts from English into Hungarian	15	1.66
Arranging words into sentences	14	1.47
Translating texts from Hungarian into English	13	1.34
Describing pictures, people and events	12	1.47
Matching and arranging language elements	12	1.32
Writing short notes, memos, diary entries	8	0.81
Using given elements (e.g., pictures, words)	8	1.08
Dictation	6	0.79
Creating short texts with help of given but incomplete lists	6	0.95
Data filling: completing forms, questionnaires	6	1.28
Writing with a given ending or beginning	3	0.55
Arranging sentences into paragraphs	3	0.95
Writing with the help of guiding points	2	1.07
Writing formal and informal letters, invitations	1	1.13
Writing instructions, directions	1	0.72
Writing with the help of pictures	1	1.00
Arranging paragraphs into passages	1	0.82
Summarising English text in Hungarian	1	0.98
Writing postcards, greeting cards	0	1.08

As for tasks aiming to develop writing skills, 152 tasks were used in the 118 classes; one or two were applied on average. Although, according to teachers' self-report, copying was the least used one, this was the most frequent (24) writing task observers ticked. (Copying words from the board into vocabularies was excluded.) Translation from English and Hungarian also featured high on the list, and the two put together outscored copying (28). The other most frequently observed writing tasks were substitution drills in printed materials and other typical testing techniques, whereas creative tasks were infrequently applied. Looking at the claimed frequency of task types we have reason to suppose that teachers

provided a realistic picture: among the first five tasks translation from English to Hungarian (1.66), gap filling (1.39) and translating from Hungarian (1.34) were listed. These are typical language examination techniques; therefore, they indicate a washback effect. Describing pictures, people and events is an oral exam task, but it was applied as a writing task.

In sum, the writing tasks most frequently observed and claimed to be used are language-focused ones. They reflect the grammar-translation and audio-lingual traditions and are typical testing techniques in school-leaving and proficiency exams. Writing tasks, similarly to the other productive skill, remained on the one-word or sentence level: in gap-filling exercises students took turns word by word, and when translating, sentence by sentence.

As Table 17 illustrates, there were too few task-types in each year to draw conclusions on, but obviously exercises expected to function as tests were used more frequently in year 12: translation and arranging words into sentences.

Tasks focusing on the development of the listening skills (Tables 18 and 19) were used in 16 groups only; in every seventh class on average. This is an extremely low rate, and teachers' self-report data in Table 18 further strengthen this claim. As Table 19 illustrates, in year 12 the listening skills were not practised at all in any of the groups, and a decrease can be seen in the number of listening tasks from year 10 to 11, although not enough data are available to draw conclusions.

Table 17: Frequency of writing tasks in years 10, 11 and 12

	Year 10 49 groups	Year 11 42 groups	Year 12 27 groups
Copying	12	8	4
Dictation	1	3	2
Create short texts with help of given incomplete lists	5	1	0
Data filling: completing forms, questionnaires	2	1	3
Writing short notes, memos, diary entries	3	4	1
Writing postcards, greeting cards	0	0	0
Writing formal and informal letters, invitations	1	0	0
Writing instructions, directions	1	0	0
Describing pictures, people and events	5	3	4
Writing with the help of pictures	1	0	0
Writing with the help of guiding points	2	0	0
Writing with a given ending or beginning	2	0	1
Using given elements (e.g., pictures, words)	6	2	0
Matching and arranging language elements	4	5	3
Gap filling (different cloze-types, C-test)	9	2	4
Arranging words into sentences	3	7	4
Arranging sentences into paragraphs	1	2	0
Arranging paragraphs into passages	0	0	1
Translating texts from English into Hungarian	7	4	4
Translating texts from Hungarian into English	3	5	5
Summarising English text in Hungarian	1	0	0

Table 18: Frequency of listening tasks

Listening tasks	Observed	Claimed
Sequencing pictures to heard text	7	0.92
Connecting pictures to heard text	6	1.04
Marking on pictures, according to the text	2	0.80
Following routes on a map	1	0.73
Drawing, following instructions	0	0.75

Also, bearing in mind that classroom management was frequently in Hungarian, students have very limited access to oral language. According to observers' notes, listening was typically combined with sentence by sentence translation to check comprehension. They noted that teachers did not exploit classroom language for management as a way of improving students' listening comprehension.

Table 19: Frequency of listening tasks in Years 10, 11 and 12

	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Sequencing pictures to heard text	5	2	0
Connecting pictures to heard text	3	3	0
Following routes on a map	1	0	0
Drawing, following instructions	0	0	0
Marking on pictures, according to the text	1	1	0

Reasons must be manifold: first, there is no listening component in the school-leaving exam, so teachers do not make students practise listening; second, although schools are equipped with facilities, they are often unavailable (see more on this issue in the section on facilities); third, coursebooks include insufficient listening materials but teachers do not use supplementary listening tasks. In sum, listening seemed to be the most neglected skill in the observed groups.

Table 20: Frequency of reading tasks

	Observed	Claimed
Reading aloud	64	1.72
Matching pictures to text	21	1.19
Arranging events or stages in a process in order	7	1.13
Matching phrases or sentences to gaps in a text	7	1.15
Multiple matching	6	0.98
Sequencing sentences or paragraphs to form a text	4	1.06
Multiple-choice	3	1.14
Matching headings, headlines to different texts	1	1.06
Matching opinions to people identified in a text	1	0.72

Reading was practised 114 times in 118 groups; reading aloud was the most frequently used task. Matching pictures to text was applied on 21, whereas seven other sequencing or matching tasks on 29 occasions. Although reading aloud is not an exam technique, over 50% of the reading tasks was of this type. The rest on the list were communicative tasks in the coursebooks, while reading aloud was applied with any text students came across in class. According to observers' notes, reading aloud tended to be quite time consuming and was most often combined with translation to check comprehension.

As for how many reading tasks were used in different years, Table 21 shows that the rate of tasks developing the reading skills decreased from year 10 to 12, although reading aloud remained the most characteristic in all three years.

Looking at the frequency teachers self-stated (in columns under *claimed*) across the four skills in Tables 14, 16, 18 and 20, the most popular task is answering questions (1.91), followed by reading aloud (1.72), and translating texts from English to Hungarian (1.66). The least popular self-reported task across the four skills was copying (0.5), but it turned out to be the most often observed writing task. These four task types represented 39% (209 occasions) of all observed tasks out of the total of 539.

Table 21: Frequency of reading tasks in Years 10, 11 and 12

	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Reading aloud	31	21	12
Multiple-choice	1	1	1
Multiple matching	4	2	0
Arranging events or stages in a process	6	1	0
Matching phrases or sentences to gaps in a text	4	0	3
Sequencing sentences or paragraphs to form a text	4	0	0
Matching headings, headlines to different texts	1	0	0
matching opinions to people identified in a text	1	0	0
matching pictures to text	11	7	3

Table 22: Frequency of text types

	Observed	Claimed
Fables, simple stories	19	1.27
Parts of books	17	0.78
Notices, captions	14	0.79
Picture descriptions	14	1.31
Newspaper articles	11	1.20
Monologues	11	0.78
Interviews, reports, TV or radio programmes	10	1.19
Dictionary entries	9	0.81
Graphs, diagrams, charts, tables	8	0.9
Menu cards	6	0.93
Instructions, directions	6	1.16
Personal notes	5	0.96
Advertisements	4	1.08
Formal or informal letters	5	1.32
Schedules, time-tables	2	1.03
Tourist information	2	1.07
Announcements (e.g., at airport/railway station)	1	0.99
Postcards	1	1.09
Telephone related texts (e.g., answering machine)	1	0.88
Forms	0	1.00

Among text types, 20 items were listed and the procedures for both observers and teachers were the same as for skills. The most often observed texts were fables, simple stories, and they were ranked third by teachers. The texts teachers ticked as the most popular were formal or informal letters, and picture descriptions, but they were seen in only three and 14 groups respectively.

There is no information on the authenticity of the texts, but according to observers' notes, most texts came from the coursebooks and few authentic texts brought by either the teacher or students were exploited. Such materials included pictures and articles from magazines and word cards. Texts for listening were rarely ticked (29 times out of 118), supporting the low results on the development of listening comprehension (Tables 18 and 19).

As Table 23 illustrates, the least variety in texts was found in year 12 groups; eight texts in the 27 groups came from books; they were mostly photocopied materials preparing students for the school-leaving examination.

Table 23: Frequency of text types in Years 10, 11 and 12

	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Notices, captions	7	0	7
Advertisements	2	1	1
menu cards	3	3	0
Schedules, time-tables	1	0	1
Newspaper articles	9	1	1
parts of books	4	5	8
Graphs, diagrams, charts, tables	3	2	3
Personal notes and messages	2	2	1
Announcements (e.g. at airport/railway station)	1	0	0
Formal or informal letters	5	0	0
Interviews, reports, TV or radio programmes	5	4	1
Instructions, directions	3	3	0
Forms	0	0	0
Postcards	0	1	0
Picture descriptions	9	2	3
fables, simple stories	9	7	3
Dictionary entries	4	4	1
Monologues	5	4	2
Telephone related texts	0	1	0
Tourist information	0	1	1

To summarise what has been found on task and text types, the following general features seem to characterise classrooms:

- The most frequently used tasks include answering teacher's questions in a lockstep fashion, reading aloud, translation and copying.
- Coursebooks and supplementary materials (Table 6) tend to be used in an eclectic way, exploiting techniques of the grammar-translation and audio-lingual method.
- The most frequently used tasks focus on language.

- The most neglected skill is listening; no group practised it in Year 12.
- Management language and teacher talk are not regarded by teachers as input for developing listening comprehension.
- Most interaction in the groups was observed on the one-word or sentence level.
- The most often applied texts are stories, mostly used for reading aloud.
- Listening and reading comprehension tends to be checked by sentence by sentence translation.
- Task variability decreases over the years; it is mostly testing techniques that are focused on in Year 11 and 12 classes.
- Observers found the vast majority of classes monotonous and boring because of lack of variety of tasks.

In the next section we will provide insights into how schools are equipped.

Technical facilities

As far as facilities are concerned, schools are equipped with most of what teachers might desire. As Table 24 illustrates, out of 118 observed classes in the vast majority boards and tape-recorders were available, though the latter were often of poor quality. VCRs and TVs were provided in most of the schools, but access to them was often difficult and complicated; therefore, they were rarely used. Although the availability of computers and OHPs is very high in schools, language teachers have either no access to or no expertise in using them. The number of language labs is relatively high, but no class was conducted there.

Table 24: Distribution of technical facilities in three types of schools

	Board	OHP	Tape-rec.	TV	VCR	Lang. lab	Comp lab
Grammar school classes (35)	35	26	35	33	34	5	30
Vocational school classes (71)	65	54	65	58	58	20	50
Grammar and vocational (12)	12	6	12	9	9	3	10

All observers pointed out that classrooms were not equipped with any electric appliance, and teachers had to carry with them all appliances they wanted to use. As teachers revealed in the structured interviews, equipment tended to be locked up in store- or staff-rooms and they had to make efforts to have access to them. This was the most important reason teachers gave for not using them. Unfortunately, we did not ask for statistical data on how often teachers used what would have been available, but observers' notes indicate that equipment was not properly exploited.

Observers described classrooms mostly in negative terms: no decorations or resource materials at all, and special language rooms were rarely used. As for size, two extremes were identified: either students in small groups, sometimes five, were scattered in huge rooms seated in traditional rows, or they were squeezed into tiny ones with no room for moving about. No classroom was rearranged for the English class, and none of the physical contexts were characterised as pleasant.

Students

So far we have considered data from the perspective of teachers, classroom processes, materials and facilities; here we intend to characterise students participating in the project. Information in this section is based on teachers' feedback, as well as observers' impressions and findings.

As for the English learning history of the students, as Table 25 illustrates, numbers vary widely. The ones who learnt English in the primary school had three classes on average, typically ranging from two to five, but numbers for primary-school years are not reliable as teachers had no access to statistical data but sometimes guessed, and most of them never cared to ask their students. Boxes were often left empty as teachers had no idea. On the other hand, data for years 9-12 can be expected to reflect reality, as teachers are familiar with the curricula of their schools. As can be seen, with the exception of year 9 the average number of hours per week in vocational and combined schools exceeds that of grammar schools, although in some grammar schools English is taught in 6-8 hours, whereas no vocational school offered a programme in more than 5 hours.

Table 25: Distribution of hours per week according to school type and year

Year	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Grammar schools										
Average	4.00	2.33	3.25	3.50	3.42	3.58	3.84	3.61	3.33	3.64
Min.	4	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	2
Max.	4	4	5	5	5	6	8	6	5	5
Vocational schools										
Average	3.00	2.58	2.90	2.95	2.58	2.63	3.75	3.94	3.74	3.86
Min.	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
Max.	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5
Combined grammar and vocational schools										
Average	3.00	3.33	3.67	4.00	4.33	4.33	4.36	4.00	4.09	4.57
Min.	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	2	2
Max.	3	4	4	5	5	5	6	5	5	6

The recurring complaints on weekly hours in the interviews are related to two issues. First, teachers consider two or three hours per week a waste of time, and they claim that their students with low aptitude and weak support from home cannot develop at all.

Second, schools do not provide continuity of primary-school programmes. Students come from various schools and most of them are put into beginner groups again. The majority of children had English prior to secondary studies, but they were not streamed. In some groups children with five to eight years of English were put together with beginners in the first year of their secondary education. In the interviews teachers pointed out that they could not rely on learners' primary-school experience because of its variety, and these children needed to work in mixed-level groups.

A similarly confusing picture emerged on extracurricular activities. Teachers were asked to indicate how typical extracurricular activities were in their groups. If they indicated *nobody* the groups scored 0, if *some* 1, if *the majority* 2, and if *almost everyone* 3. As the averages in Tables 26 and 27 indicate, extracurricular activities in our sample are not typical. Private tuition is the most frequent activity, but numbers seem to be below what has been indicated in other sources: Dörnyei, Nyilasi and Clément (1996) found that 40% of the eighth graders attended private language classes, whereas Gazsó (1997) reported 60% for primary school children and 40% for secondary students, all school subjects included (Chapter 1).

As Table 26 shows, teachers estimate that in 54 groups some of their students get private tuition, in 17 they attend a language school and only in 13 groups do learners have access to extracurricular activities organised by the school. One exception was a group of grammar-school students attending "fakultáció," a school-sponsored exam preparation course. The interpretation of these data is problematic for two reasons. It is impossible to quantify *some*; and very often parents hire private tutors or send children to language schools because they are not satisfied with school teachers. Therefore, it is possible that teachers do not know that their students are tutored elsewhere.

Table 26: Distribution of students participating in extracurricular activities according to type of school

	Nobody (0)	Some (1)	The majority (2)	Almost everyone (3)	Average (0-3)
Grammar schools					
Private tutor	18	17	0	0	0.49
Language school	28	7	0	0	0.20
School club	28	6	0	1	0.26
Vocational schools					
Private tutor	35	32	0	0	0.48
Language school	59	8	0	0	0.12
School club	62	5	0	0	0.07
Grammar and vocational schools					
Private tutor	6	5	0	1	0.67
Language school	10	2	0	0	0.17
School club	10	2	0	0	0.17

As for how many students participated in extracurricular activities in different years, the highest rate in averages characterises year 12 students. The commonest type of extra-curricular activity is private tutoring, followed by attendance of language school courses. Support provided by schools in extra classes is not typical in any of the years.

Table 27: Distribution of students participating in extracurricular activities in Years 10, 11 and 12

	Nobody (0)	Some (1)	The majority (2)	Almost everyone (3)	Average (0-3)
	Year 10: 49 groups				
Private tutor	28	21	0	0	0.43
Language school	45	4	0	0	0.08
School club	46	2	0	1	0.10
	Year 11: 42 groups				
Private tutor	25	17	0	0	0.40
Language school	38	4	0	0	0.10
School club	35	7	0	0	0.17
	Year 12: 27 groups				
Private tutor	10	16	0	1	0.70
Language school	18	9	0	0	0.33
School club	23	4	0	0	0.15

Students' strengths and weaknesses

In our study a lot of qualitative data were collected on students. Both observers and teachers were asked to identify students' strengths and weaknesses. Observers described a similar number of features in the two categories, whereas a few teachers simply left the questions unanswered, and most of them tended to identify more weaknesses than strengths. In both categories two types of features emerged. Linguistic ones: "speak correctly", "understand new grammar immediately", or "no accuracy"; and psychological ones: "shy to speak", "relatively diligent", or "lack of self-confidence."

As can be expected from the survey on task types, students often seemed to be good at reading aloud, answering questions, translation from English to Hungarian, and grammar drills. Observers tended to come up with more specific comments ("understand teacher's instructions," "able to do controlled exercises," "use Hungarian a lot"), whereas many teachers' comments were very general ("lack of motivation," "grammar," "careless").

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The most important strengths and weaknesses identified by observers and teachers were related to students' attitudes, motivation, willingness and aptitude. In the interviews many teachers elaborated on difficulties related to students' low school achievement, aptitude, and lack of instrumental motivation. They complained about the lack of willingness on part of the students, but none of them related this to how intrinsically motivating the tasks used were for their students. The typical negative characterisation of students included that they did not put enough effort and interest into language studies. According to observers, a lot of teachers sounded helpless and disillusioned about their groups. In a few groups teachers faced serious discipline problems. In about half of the observed classes several students in the back rows were never involved in any of the activities; teachers and their peers neglected them.

Students were characterised as fluent, creative and hard-working in 12 classes. They were often praised for their rote-learning abilities. Co-operation with peers and the teacher was mentioned in five classes. Listening skills were emphasised as strengths in six groups by observers and in five by teachers; as a weakness in only one group by a teacher. On the other hand, students were claimed to be good at speaking in 12 classes, whereas the speaking skills were identified by teachers as weak in 27.

Two issues have emerged from these findings: one related to skills development, the other to teachers' perceived roles in forming students' attitudes and motivation. In the discussion on what tasks teachers applied it became clear that listening comprehension was generally neglected. It seems that teachers are not aware of the role of listening skills in the development of speaking. They expect students to be able to produce speech as a result of rote-learning, reading and translation, without providing them with enough input for listening, and they want them to be able to speak as a result of practising speaking.

The other point is connected to students' attitudes and motivation. All teachers complained about these features as prerequisites

students should possess to a high extent for teachers to rely on. They seem to be unaware of their own responsibilities in forming and maintaining students' favourable attitudes and motivation in and outside the classroom. As observers' general overviews reflect, the majority of these classes were far from motivating or interesting, and this fact seems to be responsible for the vicious circle. Students are rarely thrilled by unmotivated teachers asking them to do boring tasks class after class. It should be the teachers' task to involve learners, to give them chances for getting favourable feedback and the feeling of achievement to participate in meaningful classes.

Conclusions and recommendations

In this final section we will attempt to answer the research questions posed at the beginning, then we will reflect on the strengths and limitations of our enquiry. Finally, recommendations will be put forth.

For the purposes of triangulation we used a structured interview with teachers while filling in a datasheet, a checklist filled in by observers after sitting in classes, and the same checklist filled in by teachers. Besides quantitative, qualitative data were also collected with the help of open questions, as well as by observers' feedback on the observation experience.

It is hoped that the 118 observed classes have provided an overview of what is going on in Hungarian secondary institutions not specialising in English. The picture seems quite discouraging. As observers noted, few teachers are motivated or feel successful. According to observers, a lot of teachers seem unaware of what is going on in their classroom, and their methodological and language proficiency is below the levels they expected to find. On the other hand, good language proficiency and teaching effectively did not always coincide with each other.

Although all teachers involved in our study were qualified, the teaching degree of 50 did not qualify them to teach in secondary education in the long run. Observers found most teachers over-worked, underpaid and disillusioned.

Most of the classes were teacher-fronted; pair- and groupwork was not widely used. Both teachers and students used the mother tongue excessively. Although this is a natural tendency on part of the students, teachers' extensive use of Hungarian may reduce students' language learning opportunities. Levels in grammar-school groups were perceived as somewhat higher than in vocational schools, but the general impression was that levels were low in both types of school.

The majority of groups used British communicative coursebooks as core syllabuses; yet these materials were exploited traditionally and eclectically. Supplementary materials were mostly Hungarian publications, focusing on grammar and exam preparation, representing an exam washback effect.

Tasks observed in classes involved mostly questions-answers, translation, reading aloud and grammar exercises in the form of substitution drills. The development of listening comprehension was the most neglected skill area. Classroom English was not considered a part of the syllabus. What teachers did and what they claimed to do did not always coincide with each other; some task and text types were not familiar.

Facilities in schools were not properly exploited: equipment were available, but efforts were needed to access them. Classrooms were mostly barren and unfriendly.

Since students do not come to school with favourable attitudes and motivations, teachers' responsibilities are higher here than in more prestigious educational contexts, where parents have a more favourable influence on their children's attitudes. Most observed teachers were not aware of how classroom activities and teachers as models could contribute to the development and maintenance of students' motivation and found fault only with learners.

Teachers participating in this study rarely think about their learners' strengths and weaknesses or their own responsibilities. When asked, they scratch the surface and do not see where and how action could be taken.

On the other hand, all observed teachers were pleasantly surprised to be involved in the project and showed interest in outcomes. About half felt threatened, others challenged by the new exams and said changes in education in general, and in school-leaving examinations were overdue. They all appreciated first-hand information on the planned exams and observers concluded that such involvement of grassroots teachers would be favourable in the long run.

Observers were asked to provide feedback on the research instruments and the project itself. On the whole, they said the datasheet and lists were easy to administer but weaknesses were also identified. Among them the following were mentioned by more than one colleague:

- There was no rubric for checking homework, pronunciation practice and some other traditional tasks.
- Teachers sometimes asked for examples of task types.
- Rates for skills were sometimes misleading: for example, in a class 80% of class time was devoted to oral reporting and it showed as speaking on the sheet with no indication of any more detail.
- Similarly for what language students used, when they read drills one by one from the workbook it came out as high on using English.
- Teacher-talk time and student-talk time were not recorded.
- Some of the terminology was new to teachers: for example, bridging info gaps, multiple matching, cloze-type, caption, prompt, and notices were unknown to many.

- Task and text types were biased towards communicative teaching as they were taken from sources of "good practice," whereas reality did not reflect this expectation.
- Teachers asked for an additional category to be added between never and sometimes. For this reason some teachers put a tick on the line!
- Observing one class was not enough to decide upon students' strengths and weaknesses.

In addition to the above limitations, some more need to be added.

- Students were not asked in any way, only observed.
- The study was cross-sectional; there was no chance to observe any change in processes.
- Groups were chosen to represent different types of non-prestigious language learning contexts, but they cannot be considered a truly representative sample of the population.
- Observers were briefed before the project and involved in the development of the instrument, but no trial period was available.
- No piloting of the instruments preceded the enquiry.
- Classes were not tape- or video-recorded, or transcribed; therefore, observers' judgements cannot be followed up.

In spite of all these limitations it is hoped that some important trends have been discovered and they will contribute to a better understanding of what is going on in Hungarian classrooms where English is taught.

Finally, I put forward the following recommendations.

- As many teachers will need to get post-graduate university degrees in the near future to be able to keep their jobs in

secondary schools, such degree courses should aim to improve teachers' language proficiency, methodology and awareness towards how languages are learnt. Both linguistic and psychological planes are to be explored; and classroom-based research techniques should be used in teacher education programmes.

- Teachers need to be involved in the Examination Reform, they are keen to know plans. Their attitudes now seem to be positive, therefore public relations activities need special attention.

- Levels in some schools where the project was implemented are strikingly low. It is crucial to consider how these children will be able to get support to be able to pass new exams.

- Teachers need help in developing and maintaining students' motivation towards studying languages.

- Physical conditions in schools are discouraging, the facilities available are not exploited. School administrators should tackle these problems.

- The minimum number of hours per week devoted to language studies should be reconsidered.

- Teachers and students should exploit input available outside the classroom.

- Primary school foreign language programmes will not contribute to students' language development unless secondary institutions can provide the continuity of studies.

- First-year students in secondary schools will become demotivated and fall behind their beginner peers if put in beginner groups. Therefore, they must be streamed according to their levels.

- British publications do not seem to satisfy the expectations of Hungarian teachers. More relevant coursebooks are needed reflecting Hungarian needs and traditions.
- Hungarian publishers should come up with course materials integrating teaching courses and exam preparation.
- More practice of extensive reading and both extensive and intensive listening practice are necessary in classrooms.
- Teachers should be made aware of how classroom management in the target language contributes to students' language learning.

Acknowledgements

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