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KRÓTKI PRZEGLĄD EDUKACJI JĘZYKÓW OBCYCH XXI WIEKU NA WĘGRZECH

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Adnotacja. Różne międzynarodowe badania często wykazują niekorzystny obraz umiejętności językowych i możliwości uczenia się języka na Węgrzech, a niewiele ankiet krajowych. Obecnie głównym regulatorem treści na Węgrzech jest krajowy program nauczania podstawowego, a przepisy dotyczące nauczania języka zostały sformułowane w sekcji Języki obce. Jest to dodatkowo szczegółowo opisane w ramach programów nauczania języków obcych, podzielonych na etapy pedagogiczne i typy szkół. Oba typy dokumentów opierają się na Europejski System Opisu Kształcenia Językowego (CEFR, 2002), co oznacza, że są zgodne z europejskimi trendami i pracują z systemem poziomów i wymaganiami w nim sformułowanymi. Biorąc to wszystko pod uwagę, powstaje pytanie, dlaczego zatem nauczanie języka w węgierskiej edukacji publicznej nie jest skuteczne. Odpowiedź wymaga danych empirycznych dających ogólny obraz pracy w szkole i klasie, a także aktualnej sytuacji i kroków, które można podjąć w celu rozwoju.

Słowa kluczowe: nauczanie języka obcego, procedura, zasady, metody, testy, gromadzenie danych.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE XXI CENTURY FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN HUNGARY

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Abstract. Various international surveys often show an unfavourable picture of language skills and language learning opportunities in Hungary, and few domestic surveys are available. Today, the main content regulator in Hungary is the National Core Curriculum, and the regulations for language teaching are formulated in the Foreign Languages section. This is further detailed in the foreign language framework curricula broken down by pedagogical stages and school types. Both types of documents build on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR, 2002), i.e. they follow European trends and work with the level system and requirements formulated in it. With all this in mind, the question arises as to why language teaching in Hungarian public education is not effective then. The answer requires empirical data that gives an overall picture of school and classroom work, as well as about the current situation and the steps that could be taken for development.

Key words: foreign language teaching, procedure, regulations, methods, testing, data collection.

КОРОТКИЙ ОГЛЯД ОСВІТИ ІНОЗЕМНИХ МОВ XXI СТОЛІТТЯ В УГОРЩИНІ

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Анотація. Різні міжнародні опитування часто показують несприятливу картину мовних навичок та можливостей вивчення мови в Угорщині. Сьогодні основним регулятором змісту в Угорщині є Національна основна навчальна програма, а положення щодо викладання мови сформульовані в розділі Іноземні мови. Це додатково

детально викладено в рамках навчальних програм з іноземних мов, розбитих на педагогічні етапи та типи шкіл. Обидва типи документів ґрунтуються на загальноєвропейській системі відліку (CEFR, 2002), тобто вони відповідають європейським тенденціям і працюють із системою рівнів та вимогами, сформульованими в ній. З огляду на все це виникає питання, чому тоді викладання мови в угорській державній освіті не є ефективним. Для відповіді потрібні емпіричні дані, що дають загальну картину роботи в школі та класі, а також про поточну ситуацію та кроки, які можна зробити для розвитку.

Ключові слова: викладання іноземної мови, процедура, правила, методи, тестування, збір даних.

Introduction. The main goal of the present research was to conduct an exploratory study on the situation and processes of language teaching in Hungarian primary and secondary schools. Data were collected to achieve this goal from two perspectives: first, we examined students' characteristics of foreign language learning, and second, we considered it necessary to collect data on language learning classroom processes, teachers' and institutions' opinions, and organizational issues of language teaching. (Öveges, E., Csizér, K. 2018, 3-4)

Material and methods of research. In the research, we collected data from institution leaders, students, language teachers, and counsellors using quantitative method.

The research participants are: research coordinators of institutions 50 people, heads of institutions 50 people, language teachers 200 people, 7 and 11 grade students a total of 500 people.

The institutional data sheet was a data collection tool in Excel format, in which we asked about the framework of school language teaching in order to get to know the work of the grades involved in the research at the group level. In compiling the online Heads of Institutional Questionnaire, the main goal guided us to find out what heads of institutions see about the state of language teaching in their schools, what they see as their achievements, problems, and what tools they have at their disposal to motivate language teachers. With the help of the open-ended questions, we wanted to ensure that the leaders of the various institutions could tell what they saw as the key of effective and efficient Hungarian language teaching. Unlike the other data collection tools, the two student questionnaires were paper-based. This was necessary because we assumed that not all schools had the conditions to complete the questionnaire in groups online, and we hoped that a higher response rate could be achieved using paper-based questionnaires. The printed questionnaires were completed by the students as part of a 45-minute lesson.

Data analyses were performed using SPSS for Windows 22. Descriptive statistical procedures were used to analyse the quantitative results. Analyses of the open-ended questions were prepared using a thematic method, and then the results were obtained by comparing and verifying the results.

Results and discussion. In the institutional datasheets, the answers are group and not learner level, i.e. students in each language group are treated together. Regarding the number of languages learned and the organization of language groups, it can be said that in the 7th grade, students learn almost exclusively one foreign language. The language groups were largely non-band-organized and in all of them students learn either English or German, French does not appear in the representative sample. The most typical number of students in the primary school language groups is 11-15 people. In terms of number of lessons, following the minimum requirements of the framework curricula, the most common practice is 3 lessons per week in primary school groups and 4 lessons per week in grammar schools. In this grade, a language group is typically taught by a language teacher from that language and their work is not assisted by a native teacher. The main way of dividing into language groups is level assessment. According to the respondents, the vast majority of the groups are at A1 level according to CEF, the highest presumed language level is B1. In the case of 11th graders, the range of languages learned is much wider than in primary school and according to the regulations, grammar school students are obliged to learn two languages and vocational high school students learn only one foreign language. In vocational grammar schools, the second foreign language is not typical. Most students learn English and German, but Spanish, French and Italian also appear as second languages. The size of the group is most often 11-15 people in this grade, but the proportion of groups with smaller and larger numbers is significant here too. The number of lessons in the first and second languages of grammar schools is 3 lessons per week in most cases, and in vocational grammar schools 4 lessons per week for the first foreign language. The presumed language level of 11th grade students is diverse: in addition to the expected B1 minus B1 level, many have marked A2 as the first foreign language, which is below the standards, but there are also many groups where they are presumed to be B2 or higher. Groups are usually taught by a language teacher from that language and do not have a mother tongue teacher. The groups are mostly included with a level surveyor. (Csizér, K., Dörnyei, Z. 2005, 19-36).

Based on the results of the institutional data sheet, the following suggestions can be made:

Range of languages: the current picture seems appropriate to ensure the transition between stages of education in principle, as the range of languages learned in primary school is available in all secondary schools examined.

Number of languages: the role of the second language should be considered in primary and secondary schools. Although it is possible to teach two foreign languages in both types of schools, there are few examples of this in reality. If the intention of education policy is for pupils to learn two foreign languages in accordance with the European language learner ideal and European practice, this must be redesigned in such a way as to ensure the transition between school stages. (Csizér, K., Kormos, J. 2012, 3-17).

Group size: it would also be useful to regulate the maximum number of language groups so that there are no more than 20 groups who hinder effective language learning. Promoting banded language lessons could be a solution. Limiting the minimum number of language groups is not recommended, as this would make it more difficult to teach less chosen languages in a given place.

How to get into a language group: it is worth further strengthening the currently most common level survey, providing further training on appropriate tests and methods. Ensuring continuity between training phases is key to ensuring that human and other resources are not wasted and that student motivation is not reduced as a result of restarts and stalled developmental curves.

Number of lessons per week: the minimum of 936 lessons provided to us, even considering that this includes years of experience and play in primary school, does not seem to be a small number. Nevertheless, a higher number of lessons can be of help, but only if language teachers and institutions receive central help (in-service training, etc.), because it seems that hourly efficiency is the most problematic in Hungary.

Starting language learning: the number of language lessons could be further increased by bringing forward the compulsory start of language learning. We are very far behind European countries with a start at the age of 9-10 (several countries have recently brought the start forward, such as Slovenia, where language proficiency indicators are significantly better than ours). It would be ideal to bring forward the start of compulsory language learning to Grade 2, but at least one year, i.e. Grade 3.

CEF (Common European Framework of Reference) language levels: Determining the language skills of groups according to CEF, language levels seems to be problematic in the textbooks assigned to them. Based on the framework and effectiveness of foreign language teaching, knowledge and understanding of levels is essential in a public education system where the requirements of all language exams (matriculation, foreign language measurement, and target language measurement) are defined around them. It would definitely be worthwhile to introduce additional training for language teachers to get to know the CEF level system in real terms, presumably on a mandatory basis, without it, it seems impossible to prepare students for language exams. (Közös Európai Referenciakeret 2002, 15)

Along with the results, the following main suggestions are worth considering:

1. **Supporting language teachers in their professional development:** schools should be encouraged to provide space for as many professional events as possible, either through local organization or local cooperation. The exchange of experiences strengthens cooperation, renews and updates the toolkit of language teachers, and strengthens teacher motivation.

2. **Participation in international cooperation:** the opportunities available (Erasmus +, etc.) should be used as much as possible and language teachers should be supported in every way. Participation in such collaboration results in new professional and personal relationships and directly develops language teachers' target language and methodological knowledge. It also has an impact on the work of non-language teachers, as sharing experiences is part of the program.

3. **Language learning extracurricular programs:** language proficiency should not be acquired for the purposes of the lesson, but so that students can use it in real life. One of the key ways to do this is to meet these real-life occasions as many times as possible, to practice their language skills in as many lifelike situations as possible.

4. **Helping students with special language learning needs:** language learning for students with special needs for any reason should be supported. Special educational needs should not be a barrier to language skills, as efficiency and success can be seen with tailor-made methods. Language skills are a source of opportunity and help students to work later (MacIntyre, P. D 2002, 45–68).

5. **Language learning for successful pre-graduates:** the vast majority of students who take an advanced high school diploma from the target language are exempted from learning the language. This can be detrimental in several ways: language skills deteriorate without active use, and the message is that after a level is reached, it is not worth pursuing the target language any further. Language learning is an inherited process, there is no time when there is nothing to add (MacIntyre, P., Gregersen, T. 2012, 193–213).

6. **ICT tools, virtual learning environment:** both heads of institutions and language teachers have further work to do in the use of digital tools. Applying opportunities beyond Facebook allows for very effective learning and collaboration, and language teaching can also be supported with a number of applications and software. Regular in-service training of language teachers with this content seems absolutely necessary in this constantly evolving field.

7. **Students' low motivation:** A recurring result in research in Hungary is that students' low motivation is considered to be one of the main causes and problems of less successful language teaching. It is important to understand that students' motivation cannot be considered static or eternal, it is the language teacher's job to strengthen and maintain it, and to prepare students for how to maintain their own motivation (MacIntyre, P. D. 2002, 45–68).

8. **The right language teacher:** the language teacher is also not considered a static phenomenon, as its effectiveness depends largely on several factors. In addition to centrally provided development opportunities (such as a visit to consultants), institutions and their language teachers should be constantly looking for other opportunities for renewal (such as international collaborations). Language teachers, **like learners, need to take advantage of the many language learning and language use opportunities offered by the modern world, setting a good example for language learners as well.**

Based on the students' answers, the following main findings and suggestions can be made:

9. **Early start:** the responses from the students showed that the vast majority of students start learning the language before the compulsory 4th grade start and this brings with it a number of problems. If regulation were to bring the start forward, planned and supervised education could remedy the fact that, despite the earlier start, language learning is still not successful (Horwitz, E. 2001, 112–126).

10. **Efficiency of language lessons:** language teaching in schools needs to be improved at several points, as evidenced by the fact that the majority of students learn a foreign language privately outside school but the same language they learn in their school. This is an important fact to be remedied because private learning is highly dependent on social background and thus impairs equal opportunities. Language teaching is a matter for the school, this is what the public expects (Dörnyei. Z., Ryan, S. 2015, 150–164).

11. **Following the skills requirements of NBC (National Basic Curriculum) and the framework curriculum, developing basic skills in language lessons:** it was found that the requirements for literacy were not sufficiently met in school language teaching, and the same could be said for improving reading comprehension: students would need more varied and more texts in or for the language class. The situation is not better in the field of speech comprehension either: approximately half of the students do not listen to a wide range of foreign language texts in the language lesson. Overall, students speak little to their teachers and groupmates in a foreign language, especially in life-like situations.

12. **Continuity in language learning:** it is advisable to ensure the continuity of language learning between the different stages of training so that restarting and unnecessary repetition do not discourage learners from learning the language over and over again.

13. **Textbooks:** play a central role in class work, especially in the upper grades, so developing and selecting them would make a significant contribution to language development. The development and updating of other aids and their adaptation to the age and needs of the students could also be an important training topic (Tankó, 2005, 11).

14. **Individual differences:** language teachers in both teacher education and in-service teacher training should be better prepared to recognize students' individual differences and tailor the learning-teaching process to them. Identifying individual differences (motivation, emotions, beliefs, special language learning needs, etc.) and adapting classroom work to this has been an achievement of recent decades in modernizing language teaching, and perhaps one area where teacher training would lead to spectacular advances in language teaching.

15. **Individual variables influencing language learning:** based on the results of the research, between 7th and 11th grade, the favourable variables deteriorate, while the unfavourable ones strengthen. This unfortunate trend shows that things don't always work properly in classrooms.

16. **Out-of-school language learning opportunities:** today, languages are available to learners in real-world situations, the Internet offers many language learning opportunities, and in addition, real-world language use. The search for information, international contacts and access to foreign language content has become almost limitless, but students need to be prepared for this. They need to be shown how to improve their language skills outside of school, helping them to become independent language learners (Piniel, K., Csizér, K. 2013, 523–550).

17. **Special language programs:** students who prepare for language preparation and bilingual education have better grades and results, so it would be worthwhile to support these trainings with further steps.

Teachers' responses led to the following main conclusions:

18. **Efficiency of language lessons:** teachers see the key to the efficiency of language lessons in increasing the number of language lessons and reducing the number of groups. Teachers say the effectiveness of language teaching would be reduced if other burdens on both teachers and students were reduced (Bandura, A. 1997).

19. **Ensuring the right material conditions in the language teaching process:** in particular, the development of digital infrastructure (internet access, interactive whiteboard, projector, etc.) was called for, without which modern and effective language teaching is really difficult or soon impossible.

20. **Textbooks:** based on the teachers' answers, dissatisfaction with textbooks emerges, the key to achieving modern textbooks is seen in the expansion of the textbook list.

21. **Extracurricular language learning:** Teachers are aware that students can be successful if they engage in language outside of class. This is seen as most effective if there were free and universally accessible online learning materials tailored to the individual and group needs of students to help prepare students for the language exam.

22. **Further training:** As one respondent noted, meaningful and usable further training would also be important, preferably in target language countries. Such in-service training would be particularly important for teachers in vocational high schools and primary schools.

23. **Equipment:** it would be important to equip both teacher training and in-service training institutions and schools with modern equipment so that students can enjoy the benefits of digital tools and the modern world in language lessons as well.

Based on the answers of the consultants, the following suggestions can be listed for the different participants in the language teaching process:

24. **For language teachers:** according to the consultants, language teachers should strive to refresh their language skills and to be able to cope well with students of different abilities. In addition, put more emphasis on real language communication, seize every opportunity to develop their methodological culture.

25. **For language policy makers:** it is crucial that the delivery of education policy information becomes more efficient, as this is the only way for counsellors to become a link between education policy and language teachers.

26. **For higher education and language teacher training:** in the opinion of language consultants, much more should be done in teacher training to integrate ICT tools and to teach a much wider range of content: differentiated education, intensive speech development and everyday communication, learner-centeredness, modern methodology and technical language training. (Óveges E., Csizér K. 2018, 189)

27. **For language advisers:** they should strive to achieve equality and personalization more effectively. It is important that they visit their language teacher colleagues as often as possible and help with development through open, honest communication and long-term, personal working relationships.

Conclusions. According to the consultants, education policy should do its utmost to ensure effective language teaching by providing free in-service methodological training for language teachers. The most important areas of in-service training are: differentiation, communicative language teaching and the development of digital competences for language teachers. According to experts, it is also the responsibility of language teachers to participate in these in-service trainings and to train themselves continuously, but a supportive institutional background is essential for this. According to experts, it is extremely important for language teachers to learn in their target language, i.e. in their mother tongue environment, so that they are not only methodologically but also linguistically prepared. By increasing the number of foreign language lessons, even with the introduction of everyday language teaching, language teaching could be more effective, especially if it takes place in groups of up to 10-12 people. An up-to-date, motivating textbook that is retained and interesting is also important. Experts say changes to the textbook market would also be needed (Öveges E., Csizér K. 2018, 221).

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