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## Foreword

The role of culture in language education has been long recognised and acknowledged. Languages and cultures are intertwined, and when learning a new language, one will come into contact with the related culture(s). The language learner, whose learning experience is complete with discovering, processing, understanding and accepting the other culture(s), will be able to proceed further into understanding the new language and hopefully develop a culturally aware personality. Intercultural competencies help one better understand the new cultures and one's own culture. Taking a step back and looking at one's own cultural background from a distance can help relate to 'otherness' in a more accepting way.

Recently there has been a stronger emphasis on the role of learning about culture in early childhood language development. Language educators working with young children in nurseries, kindergarten and lower primary classes integrate elements of culture and cultural awareness-raising in their classroom work and syllabuses.

The studies published in this volume are arranged around three main themes. First, the role of cultures in teacher education is investigated. In the next section, the studies explore various perspectives of cultures and languages in the pre-school context. The final section examines the role of literature in linguistic and intercultural dimensions.

### **Section 1: Languages and Cultures in Teacher Education**

In Furcsa and Szaszó's study, pre-service primary school teachers' attitudes and relations toward the cultures of English-speaking countries and learning English as a foreign language are investigated through spontaneous metaphor research. Their study focuses on the role of cultural beliefs in language teaching. Bernhardt and Furcsa's article describes the theoretical background of implementing an intercultural sensitivity training programme designed for international students at Eszterházy Károly University (EKU). This topic has great relevance at a time when internationalisation is of utmost importance in higher education. Árvai and Trentinné Benkó's paper gives an account of the rationale and development of an event called 'Drop everything and learn/teach languages' for teacher trainees at ELTE TÓK. The ultimate aim of the annual programme is to increase student teachers' motivation to study languages and cultures and promote the linguistic and cultural diversity of Europe. Gulyás and Déri's study concentrates on developing the intercultural competencies of Hungarian and Erasmus primary and pre-school teacher trainees through non-formal learning in a higher educational context (ELTE TÓK). Lipóczy-Csabai and Szabó's report is about pre-EU and EU intercultural

projects that involved primary pre-service and in-service teachers at a teacher training college. Next, from Bajzáth et al.'s study we can learn about a European collaboration project run by early childhood institutions, whose goal was to increase the intercultural competencies of professionals working in this field. This section concludes with a study by Fenyődi on how primary children's cultural awareness is developed in Hungarian Ethics classes.

## **Section 2: Languages and Cultures in Early Childhood**

The studies in the second section are connected by the relatively novel field of intercultural issues in pre-primary foreign language education. According to the survey by Marton, Kovács and Czachesz, the inclusive approach of bilingual early years education is supported by the Reggio Emilia Approach: the authors give an account of the research project in support of this statement. Two further studies are included, which both report on multicultural education in daycare institutions in Hungary. The first one by Czirmai and Lo Bello argues in favour of showing children basic concepts of multiculturalism, acceptance and tolerance. The second one by Czövek, Endrődy and Árva reports the implementation of multicultural education in two Budapest nurseries. Both of these studies demonstrate positive experiences among the participants. Another empirical research is presented on the Third-Culture Kid (TCK) phenomenon by Kőrös and Trentinné Benkő, discussing both the positive and negative consequences of growing up in a multicultural environment, which is becoming increasingly common these days. The next article by Kruppa and Gáspár examines how young children who live in their own L1 environment, are able to acquire languages through participating in cultural learning in a 10-month-long programme. By the end of this course, the children are expected to learn to respect other cultures and accept diversity. Noé and Kovács present the results of a study examining the efficacy of preschool children's language learning. The concluding piece in this section by Nemes investigates a topic that has recently gained considerable significance in Hungary: the author reports on her research about the advantages of being bilingual and the difficulties multilingual families might face.

## **Section 3: Languages, cultures and literature**

The overarching topic of the final section is literature to link language with culture. The first study, written by Poros, introduces a course on teaching literature for undergraduate students. What makes this course framework special is that it has been planned by taking into consideration the various linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the mix of international preschool participants. By including fairy tales, projects, language learning and international cooperation between a British and a Hungarian university, Bethlenfalvyné Streitmann gives an account of how a story-based method can inspire students' creativity, and develop their critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills. While the positive role of authentic

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children's books in early language development is usually taken for granted, the paper by Palkóné Tabi argues that Hungarian children's books in English can also be used successfully. Kopházi-Molnár in her article examines how rewritten tales are constructed through the example of the fairy tale Cinderella, suggesting that these newly created stories are 'redundant' since they are usually formed as an extension of the original tale. Questions of identity are examined in the next two studies. The first one by Kitzinger focuses on the poems of Hungarian-American poets, while the second one by Podlovics explores the use of the Welsh language and the identity of Welsh people. It is claimed that the natural language acquisition in the bilingual region of Wales should also be considered for the reader in the Hungarian context. The last piece of the section by Hoványi reflects on the nature of reading and vision as analysed in a comparison between Caravaggio's work entitled Narcissus and a famous narration of the myth describing Narcissus and Echo as found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

As editors, we can only hope that the reader will find the issues discussed relevant to their professional interest and will enjoy reading the papers in the present volume

*Éva Trentinné Benkő & Valéria Árva*