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JOURNAL OF EARLY YEARS EDUCATION

*Languages, Inclusion, Cultures and Pedagogy:  
Research and Good Practices I.*

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*Szemle:* Lencse Máté

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## Borítóterv

Császár Lilla, M. Pintér Tibor

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Felelős kiadó:  
Márkus Éva dékán

gyermeknevelés@tok.elte.hu  
<http://gyermeknevelés.elte.hu>

Szerkesztőség címe:  
1126 Budapest, Kiss János altábornagy u. 40.  
telefon: 00 36 1 487-81-00

Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem,  
Tanító- és Óvóképző Kar

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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*

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# **Languages and Cultures in Teacher Education**

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# The importance of raising the intercultural sensitivity of university students

Furcsa, Laura – Szasztkó, Rita

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This paper describes the theoretical background of the planning and implementation process for an intercultural sensitivity training programme targeting foreign students based on the experience of a previous intercultural projects (Furcsa, 2009; Szasztkó, 2018). At Eszterházy Károly University (EKU) (Eger, Hungary), foreign students come from different countries to study in various fields and participate in a programme tailored toward raising intercultural awareness each semester. The authors of the present article actively contributed to the design and implementation of this special training programme developed for the incoming students at EKU. The main objectives of this intercultural sensitivity-raising programme are to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of various cultures, focus on the issues of biases, stereotypes, discrimination, acculturation, problem-solving, skills development, and team building, all aspects that comprise focal points of this paper.

*Keywords:* intercultural sensitivity, international mobility, social issues

## Previous intercultural research projects on the Campus

Students' cultural *awareness*, a term used as a synonym of *sensitivity* in the present context, can be increased by using online communication tools. Our previous project (Furcsa, 2009) aimed at improving intercultural awareness in a series of e-mail discussions between Hungarian prospective teachers of English and American teacher students. During the project, students discussed topics referring to cultures, languages, and pedagogical issues by means of two cases studies focusing on cultural differences. The study revealed that communication with peers who come from different cultural backgrounds contributes to changes in attitudes and strategies used to address different viewpoints. In short, this type of dialogue enhances cultural awareness. Students gained knowledge about both the target as well as the native culture, and their discussion, argumentation, negotiation with peers and reflections upon their own culture supported the process of active knowledge construction through communication. In this project, students worked in pairs, which enabled them to learn from one another's personal experiences by listening to the partner's points of view while articulating their own views. This directed exposure to intercultural communication contributed significantly to the enhancement of students' intercultural competence and acquisition of first-hand

knowledge about the other culture. Our conclusion of this project emphasised that facilitators had to be well-trained and needed to guide participants so that discussions would be genuinely engaging and stimulating.

A small-scale pilot classroom investigation (Szaszkó, 2018) held during an English language development course for college students (N=12) at EKV also confirmed that carefully chosen films (including certain elements of intercultural issues, e.g. empathy, intercultural conflict, racism, stereotypes, ethnic traditions, acculturation/assimilation conflict, the history of the target country, etc.) can also lend themselves to improving various intercultural competences integrated with linguistic and social skills development (Pelgrum, 2008). That is, films together with various types of complementary exercises tended to raise the participating students' language learning motivation while also enhancing their cooperation and intercultural awareness.

### **International student mobility in Hungary**

In Hungary, globalisation, global changes, and a rapid increase in student mobility has created new challenges for higher education institutions where students had previously been more homogeneous in terms of students' nationality and language. Over the past few years, an intense surge in international student mobility has been observed in many countries. Internationalisation is one of the most important factors in determining quality of education and is therefore a priority strategy for universities. An essential driver in increasing the level of internationalisation is mobility, an area that has grown significantly in numbers in recent years.

The OECD (2018) defines the term of 'internationally mobile student' in the following: "An internationally mobile student is an individual who has physically crossed an international border between two countries with the objective to participate in educational activities in a destination country, where the destination country is different from his or her country of origin" (OECD, 2018, p. 38). In Hungary, international students are usually enrolled as regular students for one semester and expected to attend the classes selected, which are mainly taught in English. *Figure 1* shows the countries of origin for incoming students, the destination countries for Hungarian students studying abroad, and most important indicators of mobility of international student mobility in Hungary.

Over the years, Hungary has witnessed a growing trend of incoming student mobility. A vast majority of students arrive in Hungary within the framework of the Erasmus+ study abroad programme created by the European Commission<sup>1</sup>. The Erasmus+ international initiative aims to support education, training, youth, and sport. To present, it has enabled over four million Europeans to gain experience in various European contexts in the related fields. Furthermore, Stipendium Hungaricum (2021) and the Scholarship Programme for Christian Young People Hungary Helps (2021) launched by the Hungarian Government are two further scholarship programmes through which international students

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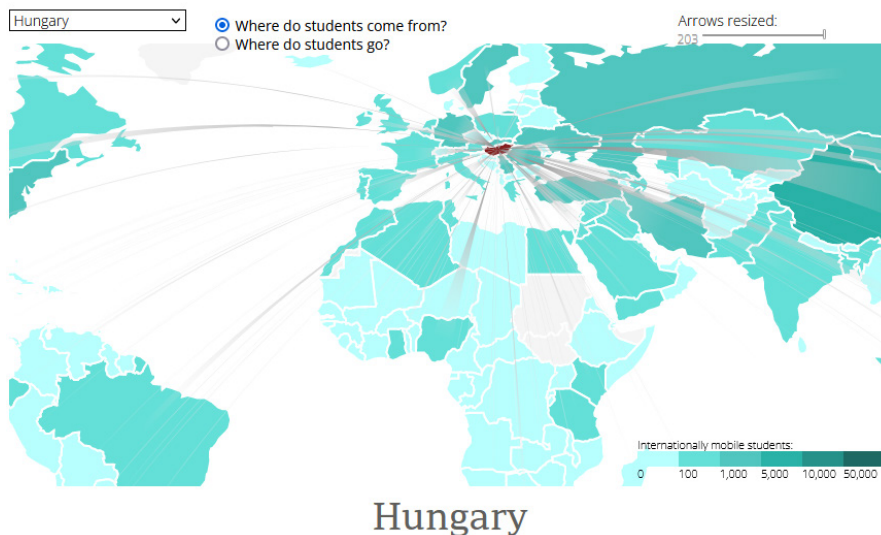
<sup>1</sup> European Commission. Erasmus+: [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about_en) (01 March, 2021)

can study in various disciplinary areas at the higher education level in Hungary. These programs have been created to enhance the internationalisation of Hungarian higher education regarding study programmes, course contents structures and designs, research, and network building.

### Figure 1

*Global flow of tertiary-level students in Hungary*

(Source: *Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students*. <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow>, downloaded: 01 March, 2021)



## Competences for active communication in a different cultural context

For both the incoming students and the institutional staff and professors, the prerequisite of the training programme was to formulate what the most important competences for communicating and participating in a foreign educational context are. We were following the understanding of global competence proposed by Council of Europe (2016, p. 35). This model proposes decomposing this macro term into the smaller components of

- *skills*: analytical and critical thinking, empathy and flexibility, ability to interact effectively in situations of cooperation and conflict-resolution,
- *knowledge and understanding*: knowledge and critical understanding of global issues (history, politics, etc.), intercultural communication and the psychological concept of self,
- *attitudes*: openness toward and respect of people coming from other cultures, global-mindedness, tolerance, and responsibility,
- *values*: accepting human dignity, cultural diversity and principles of democracy and equality as basic values.

Within this framework, each dimension of the management process that foreign students undergo as they transition culturally during their interaction with people from other cultures can be handled separately and can be defined as a main target of the intercultural training activities.

### **Social issues and identity in mobility**

The phenomenon of international student exchanges includes a complexity of social issues such as, “students make autonomous choices about their international study, picking from thousands of courses of study, motivated by any number of peer, family, economic, and cultural influences, yet in this complexity there are discernible trends” (Shields, 2013, p. 2). A relevant trend in investigating international mobility concerns the identity of international students. Dolby and Rizvi (2008) argue that international students develop their identity within the context of mobility. Young people participating in an exchange program do not see themselves neither as immigrants nor as tourists, “but consider themselves to occupy an entirely different space” (Dolby & Rizvi, 2008, p. 2). In case of international students, their identity is influenced by their own cultural identity and distinctiveness, moreover, they view themselves as belonging to a more complex and cosmopolitan reality.

### **The intercultural factors of the sensitivity training for foreign students**

The intensive 60-hour intercultural awareness raising training programme under discussion was designed to gain insights into the following areas of sensitive intercultural concerns: *cultural biases, stereotypes, discrimination, acculturation, problem-solving, skills development, and team building*. During the course design, these components were selected based on the literature since the intercultural issues listed above are widespread throughout the world regardless of country, ethnic group, language, etc. Apart from the relevance and significance of the highlighted intercultural topics, the time constraints of the course also had to be taken into consideration when selecting its key factors. The following contains a brief presentation of the named intercultural factors.

#### ***Cultural biases***

According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology (2021), cultural biases imply the interpretation and judgement of phenomena based on people’s own characteristic beliefs, values, and further peculiarities stemming from their social group or community. As a result, they tend to create their views and make decisions about others without any (deeper) information about them or exposure to them. The phenomenon of cultural bias is also closely related to prejudice. Nemetz-Robinson (1985) also states that certain cognitive biases could be responsible for the negative perception of exposure to another culture or a member of another ethnic group, such as first impressions experienced

due to limited information and access to the target culture. Furthermore, Nemetz-Robinson discusses how and why various forms of intercultural contact may influence intergroup relationships by emphasising the impact of cognitive biases. That is, encounters with other cultures can determine how a person interprets and judges the members of another cultural group. Nemetz-Robinson also draws attention the roles of cues and schemas during intercultural contacts. Cues imply the perception of the other's physical appearance, behaviour, verbal characteristics, language, paralanguage, and the context of exposure. Schemas regard cognitive structures involving a person and event, through which information is processed Nemetz-Robinson (1985).

### ***Stereotypes***

According to the social identity theory, stereotyping can be considered the outcome of cognitive processes. Kramsch defined stereotypes as “conventionalized ways of talking and thinking about other people and cultures” (2000, p. 131). Also, Tauguri emphasises that “stereotyping is the general inclination to place a person in categories according to some easily and quickly identifiable characteristics such as age, sex, ethnic membership, nationality or occupation, and then to attribute to him (her) qualities believed to be typical of member of that group” (Tagiuri, 1969, p. 426).

Furthermore, Brown and Hewstone (2005) draw attention to the fact that, in order to banish stereotypes, people need to reorganize their perceptions, behaviour, and emotions by reformulating their original categories in their minds.

### ***Discrimination***

Discrimination can be conceptualised as “the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age or sexual orientation” (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2021). Furthermore, discrimination is often orientated towards an individual due to the social group that person belongs to. It is a typical phenomenon that discriminatory attitudes and actions tend to imply certain disadvantage, harm, or wrong toward the individuals at whom discrimination is directed (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2020). It must be emphasised that stereotypes can be characterised by both negative and positive attributes and prejudice can involve beliefs that can lead to negative feelings, e.g. dislike, fear, condescension, anger or even hatred. As a result, stereotyping and prejudice can lead to having a positive attitude towards the members of the ingroup, and discrimination against outgroups.

### ***Acculturation***

Acculturation is the process during which a person or a cultural/social group adjusts to another culture and behaviour of that culture due to an intercultural exposure (Berry, 2019). Various models have been constructed to reveal the complex nature of acculturation. In the present context, the four-fold bilinear model (Berry, 1997) is highlighted and selected to be explored during the present intercultural sensitivity training programme. This model consists



of two dimensions: 1) retention-rejection of native identity and culture, 2) adoption-rejection of dominant/host culture. Consequently, the four emerging stages of acculturation in the model are 1) assimilation (adopting the cultural norms of the dominant/host culture), 2) separation (rejection of the dominant/host culture), 3) integration/biculturalism (adopting the cultural norms of the dominant/host culture and maintaining original culture and 4) marginalisation (rejection of both the dominant/host and original culture). When discussing acculturation, the phenomenon of culture shock must also be highlighted. Culture shock is characterised by Oberg's (1960) phases:

1. honeymoon (the positive perceptions of the other culture),
2. negotiation (realising the differences between the old and the new culture),
3. adjustment (acclimatisation and the development of new routines), and
4. adaptation (feeling comfortable in the host culture, the stage of biculturalism).

### ***Problem-solving, skills development and team building***

During different forms of intercultural encounters and intercultural communication situations, various problems can emerge due to reasons of different nature such as language barriers, stereotyping, culture shock, etc. Therefore, a complex, holistic attitude (Kisné Bernhardt, 2012) is essential to develop problem-solving skills, skills development, and team building.

#### **Figure 2**

*Examples of transversal competences*

*(Source: Sá & Serpa, 2018, p. 28)*

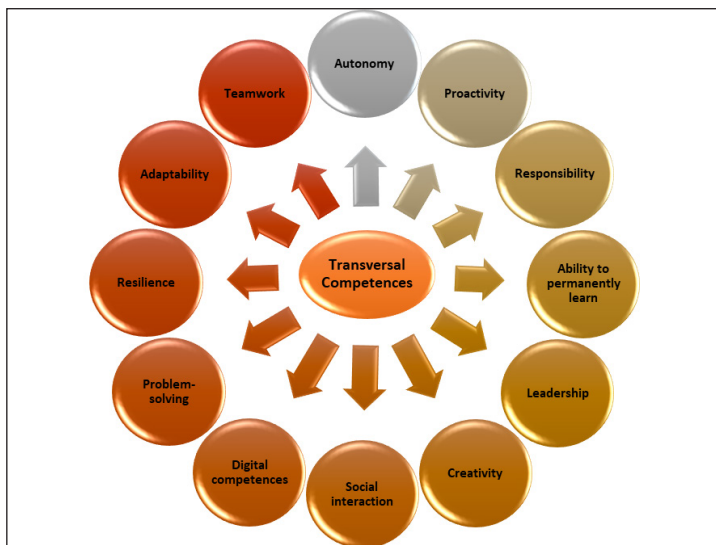


Figure 2 displays the components of transversal competences, which include among others social interaction, problem-solving, adaptability and teamwork, elements that are particularly relevant for our intercultural awareness course.

Also, the European Commission (2019) draws attention to the significance of the constant improvement of the key competences for lifelong learning, i.e., multilingualism, cultural awareness, and expression. A discussion of the structures, methods, techniques, and tasks regarding problem-solving, skills development, and teambuilding are beyond the scope of the present paper.

### Summary

The present study undertook to provide and discuss the theoretical background to a 60-hour, short-cut intercultural sensitivity training programme designed for international students at EKU. The authors were actively involved in the design and implementation of this training programme. In this paper, our goal did not include the introduction of the course regarding its structure, contents, and course description. The aim of this theoretical review was to provide an extract of the overview of the literature that was examined prior to, during, and subsequent to the design of the course. The main areas of exploration included competences necessary for efficient intercultural communication, social issues of mobility, and identity. Finally, the factors that would be key to the course contents were conceptualised, namely: cultural biases, stereotypes, discrimination, acculturation, problem-solving, skills development, and team building.

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# Prospective teachers' attitudes and relations toward the culture of English-speaking countries regarding their specialisation

Bernhardt, Renáta – Furcsa, Laura

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By using spontaneous metaphor research, our paper investigates prospective primary school teachers' attitudes and relations toward the culture of English-speaking countries and learning English as a foreign language. Metaphors reveal people's subconscious ideas and understandings towards their beliefs and attitudes, in this case, towards the culture of English-speaking countries. The participants consisted of student teachers specialising in English (N=12) or another specialisation (N=20). In addition, students' English proficiency was also reflected in this grouping, which helped to demonstrate the effects of prior English knowledge and experiences. An elicitation sheet with the unfinished sentence, "Foreign language learning is like ... because ..." was used as the tool of data collection. The data were analysed qualitatively by coding, categorising, and finalising the metaphors. The present paper focuses exclusively on the data in connection with the concept of culture while analyses of the other concepts are described in Kisné Bernhardt and Furcsa (2020). The findings of the metaphor research revealed different attitudes according to teacher students' specialisations and therefore contribute to a deeper understanding of selecting appropriate approaches to English teaching. In our paper, we first describe the importance and role of cultural beliefs in language teaching, then we focus on various aspects of metaphor research. The sociocultural dimension of metaphor research aims at investigating the involvement of sociocultural factors in the process of conceptualisation. In the second part of the paper, the findings of our metaphor research are presented.

*Keywords:* English culture, teacher education, metaphor research

## The cultural beliefs of language teachers

Culture can be interpreted as an evolving concept which has an important effect on the teaching practices and attitudes of prospective language teachers. In this paper, this dimension of language teaching is analysed from a qualitative aspect with the aim of shedding light on what trainee teachers believe as regards this aspect. The primary aim of this research was to uncover students' relations towards culture and to investigate what impact these views have on the incorporation of culture in classroom practices.

The importance of culture and its roles in language teaching and learning have been emphasised in language pedagogy. Weninger and Kiss (2013) categorise three stages in dealing with culture. The first stage (1950–1990's) emphasises the facts to be learnt about the target language culture. The second stage, specifically the communicative era (the 1990's), highlighted the relationship between language and culture with culture viewed as a key component of language learning. Furthermore, the notion of intercultural communicative competence was introduced. The last stage (2000's) confirms a transnational approach in a globalised world. It is widely accepted nowadays that language and culture are interrelated and the interdisciplinary concept of intercultural competence includes the socially and culturally appropriate usage of language. Language education requires language teachers to be interculturally aware and competent users of the language who move beyond the limits of teaching grammar and vocabulary (Szaszkó, 2010).

### **Sociocultural implications of metaphors**

Metaphors can be interpreted as reflections of respondents' socio-cultural contexts as they are affected by their cultural background, a phenomenon that reveals basic attitudes and beliefs. In this respect, metaphors can be seen as an integration between cognitive and socio-cultural factors. Gabillon (2005, p. 243) argues that the beliefs and attitudes produced by learners represent their socio-cultural contexts that are formed through sociocultural experience, including educational experience. More precisely, the cognitive and socio-cultural perspectives constitute a continuum as *'these two approaches should not be considered as mutually exclusive but rather points on a continuum where classical cognitive orientations are placed at one end and sociocultural orientations at the other'*. In this framework, beliefs are interpreted from a cognitive perspective as constant phenomena which are resistant to change. However, from a socio-psychological perspective, learner beliefs are viewed to be both stable and changeable. These concepts may give a more precise view of the structure of the respondents' beliefs and mechanisms.

### **Investigating cultural beliefs through metaphors**

Trainee teachers' beliefs towards culture are based on their prior experiences and knowledge accumulated from personal experiences and educational background in a complex way. Each student brings a complex set of perceptions that plays a decisive role in formulating their beliefs concerning the process of learning and teaching. These beliefs have an important effect on their success in language learning, and later, on their language teaching practices. However, it is difficult to gain insight into what shapes teachers' mindsets: one possible solution is to investigate the transformation of these mental conceptions into metaphorical perceptions. The present study intends to relate participants' underlying assumptions about their concepts towards the culture of the English-speaking countries into metaphorical perceptions.

Metaphors are used to study aspects of the subconscious, containing tacitly held beliefs (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphors are cognitive constructs which outline human thinking about the world. Metaphors are not seen as being merely a linguistic phenomenon, but rather a manifestation of representation and thought. This paper investigates the metaphorical conceptualizations of prospective teachers of English in connection with relations towards the culture of the English-speaking countries based on the established principles of the cognitive theory of metaphor recommended by Lakoff (2006, p. 185) stating that, '*the locus of metaphor is not in language at all, but in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another*'.

Metaphors allow us to describe abstract concepts (ideas, thoughts, and emotions) in concrete, familiar, and tangible domains. Moreover, metaphors are a means for comprehending and drawing inferences about these concepts. The complexity and interrelatedness of these concepts can be represented in the form of a metaphor grid (used for instance in Trentinné Benkő, 2016). Metaphors are valuable tools to reflect participants' beliefs and raise awareness of the underlying links between these concepts. The abstract idea of culture and the respondents' relations towards culture become more concrete through the cognitive process of substitution and similarity.

### ***Student teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward foreign language learning***

Metaphor as a qualitative research method has become widespread in the last few decades to raise awareness of theoretical expectations. In our empirical research, the metaphors that were spontaneously evoked in reference to the concepts of foreign language learning (N=32) could be distributed into six conceptual categories called target domains or secondary metaphors. According to the results, twelve spontaneous metaphors selected in four categories could be distinguished among the group of student teachers who have specialised in English Language teaching (STEL): *discovery, elixir, hobby, challenge*. There are twenty unfinished sentences in the sample of student teachers who have specialised in other subjects (STOS) and their metaphors fall into the following five categories: *discovery, elixir, hobby, pain, puzzle*.

As *Figure 1* represents, three conceptual frameworks are based upon similar notions and opinions in the whole sample. The research group (STEL) (*number 1*) and the control group (STOS) (*number 2*) are represented in different colours in *Figure 1* below<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The concepts numbered 1, 2 occurred in both the research and the control group.

**Figure 1**  
*Target domains and metaphors of the source domain*

Foreign Language Learning (Source domain)		
<i>Target domain/ secondary metaphor</i>	<i>Subconceptual category</i>	<i>Metaphor</i>
<b>Discovery (1,2)</b>	<i>Culture (1)</i>	journey, new equipment, superpower
	<i>Knowledge (1)</i>	learning (N=2)
	<i>Culture (2)</i>	yin/yang, ticket, adventure, journey
	<i>Improvement (2)</i>	ripening, bird, neverending story
	<i>Possibility (2)</i>	magic, gift
<b>Hobby (1,2)</b>	<i>Happiness (1)</i>	sunshine, hiking
	<i>Worship (1)</i>	hobby
	<i>Hobby (2)</i>	sunshine, rollercoaster
<b>Elixir (1,2)</b>	<i>Elixir (1)</i>	air
<b>Challenge (1)</b>	<i>Basic condition (2) Need (2)</i>	coffee before a sport match, IT, swimming
	<i>Practice (1)</i>	singing, playing musical instrument
	<i>Challenge (1)</i>	experiment
<b>Pain (2)</b>	<i>Torture (2)</i>	winter, dentist
<b>Puzzle (2)</b>	<i>Analysis (2)</i>	highway code, competition, mystery (N=2)

Upon comparing the research and control groups, the following similarities and differences can be discussed. The most common type of responses characterised the process of foreign language learning as a form of discovery and innovation. There are three similar target domains (*Discovery*, *Hobby*, *Elixir*) referring to the idea of how pleasant, important, and enriching language learning can be (e.g., ‘sunshine’, ‘new equipment’, ‘journey’). The target domain of *Discovery* dominates in both the research and control sample and the richest descriptions and most vivid ideas can also be found in this category. The attitude of the research sample can be described as predominantly positive towards language learning.

The differences of the notions transferred by the metaphors can be grouped into the categories of *Challenge*, *Pain* and *Puzzle*. As for student teachers specialising in English language teaching (STEL), metaphors of language learning were described as a challenge or process and an activity in which an excessive amount of practice is needed. The ideas of language learning suggested by the control group include negative meanings referring to the difficulties and complications of learning (‘dentist, winter’). Learning can also be described by metaphors suggesting thoughts of ‘route where obstacles appear, a competition of winners and losers’ (‘highway code, mystery’).

### ***'Culture' as a subconceptual domain***

Prospective teachers' attitudes and relations toward the culture of English-speaking countries through the concept of 'Foreign language learning' (FLL) was further investigated. In our metaphor research 'Foreign language learning' as a source domain (key concept) is a viable and important resource for gaining of a deeper understanding of the educational process. Primary student teachers' experience and knowledge of the language learning situations, indicated by metaphors, reveal relations to the educational system.

The metaphors of 'Foreign language learning' as a source domain have a variety of individual representations. Improved Metaphor Analysis (IMA) has been applied to provide a clear cognitive construct for the student teachers' way of thinking (Fábián, 2013). IMA follows the basic principles of metaphor analysis techniques (Vámos, 2003), highlighting a model with a focus on the importance of creating a new unit (target domain) as the secondary metaphor. 'A further merit of creating metaphors lies in the fact that it suits the investigation of beliefs and attitudes related to complex concepts even more' (Fábián, 2013, p. 1027) and it applies to the research process and analysis presented below.

As was stated by the procedure of data process in our research, the student teachers' metaphor-related concepts can be divided into propositions.

The contents of each proposition were explored carefully and rearranged into new categories, in which each new category is featured based upon the shared meaning of the included propositions. The newly created secondary metaphors retain the original visual representation of the target concept. Finally, the contents of the target domain have been analysed to establish the conceptual meaning of the characteristic features (Fábián, 2013).

Since metaphors must be studied for how they present the world rather than simply for what they say about that world, '*Culture*' - as one of the subconceptual domains and at the same time as a secondary metaphor (source domain) in the conceptual category of '*Discovery*' - consists of seven explanations of '*Foreign language learning*' (source domain).

Regarding the metaphors of student teachers specialising in English Language (STEL), two subcategories of '*Discovery*' can be distinguished as '*Culture*' and '*Learning*'. The subgroup of '*Culture*' indicates different views and notions concerning the concept of foreign language learning. It can be viewed as a tool that helps one become familiarised with new cultures and people in the world according to the metaphors of both student teachers specialising in English Language (STEL) and those specialising in other subjects (STOS).

Spontaneous metaphors which belong to the category of '*Culture*', given by STEL, are the following: 'journey' (2) and 'superpower' ('*journey, because it is an opportunity to get to know new cultures*'); '*a new tool, because it helps us learn about a new culture*'; '*a superpower, because I am understood and can understand people in the world*').

The subgroup of '*Discovery*' in the sample of STOS include concepts representing language learning as *Culture*, *Improvement* and *Possibility*. According to the three conceptual subdomains the approach of foreign language learning provides the chance of '*Discovery*' and is regarded the most important by this group of students.



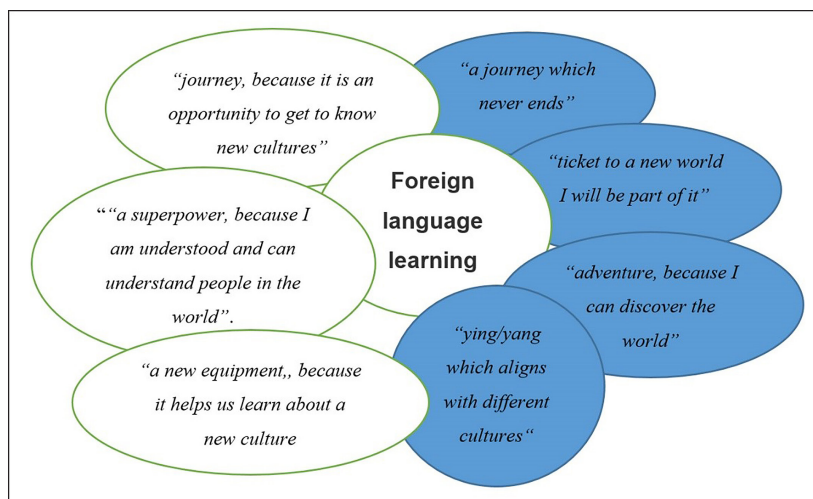
The subconceptual domains of ‘Culture’, ‘Improvement’ and ‘Possibility’ demonstrate language learning as an adventurous, exciting, and effective process. The concepts of ‘Culture’ subgroup: ‘yin/yang’, ‘journey’, ‘ticket’ or ‘adventure’ focus on new and unknown traditions, mysterious places (*‘yin/yang which aligns different cultures; ‘a journey which never ends; ‘adventure, because I can discover the world; ‘a ticket to a new world I will be a part of’*).

According to Jensen (2006), metaphors are commonly categorized as: active, inactive, dead, and foundational while their significance to educational research must be understood. In our research the theories of spontaneous metaphors are mainly active metaphors because active metaphors ‘convey metaphoric connection between the topic term<sup>2</sup> and vehicle term<sup>3</sup>’ (Jensen, 2006, p. 110) and salient characteristics of both terms can be described, furthermore the metaphoric resonance between the two concepts can be determined.

In active metaphors, the topic term (‘Foreign language learning’) must be interpreted through the vehicle terms. The target domain (*Culture*) characterises the source domain (‘Foreign language learning’) as it is described by the following metaphors (*Figure 2*). While these opinions take the form of a variety of utterances from simple structures to complex sentences at this stage, we introduce the concept of proposition, which is the smallest meaningful unit of the argument that supports the metaphoric statement. According to Simsek (2014) the concepts of ‘Culture’ domain tend to be mainly interactional (compare structural or functional metaphors in Simsek, 2014). Metaphor according to the source domain is a process which connects people and provides the opportunity to get information about new places and showcases cultural diversity. (See *Figure 2*)

**Figure 2**

*Metaphors of ‘Culture’ (target domain)*



<sup>3</sup> source domain

<sup>4</sup> target domain

## Summary

Investigating prospective teachers' attitudes and relations toward the culture of English-speaking countries regarding their specialization, the results show that the concept structure of 'Foreign language learning' (source domain) is dominated by a cultural aspect. Based upon the spontaneous metaphors of the research and control group, the structure of the source domain has the following features in common:

- FLL ('Foreign language learning') is characterised by intercultural features, the encountering of cultures (differences, infinity, discovery, learning and understanding);
- FLL is an activity that provides relaxation and enjoyment;
- FLL bears knowledge about and curiosities of the world;
- FLL has practical purposes: essential, understanding and being understood;
- FLL requires practice (only in the group of STEL);
- FLL is challenging: it is based on rules and is a continuous improvement (only in the group of STOS).

As the previous structure indicates, metaphors refer to different elements of the key concept ('Foreign language learning'). During the process of learning a foreign language, students create and modify the meaning structure of the 'Foreign Language Learning' and the prototype of the target concept. One of the most important features of metaphor research is that prospective teachers use these metaphors to express themselves even as these concepts remain largely unconscious. As such, metaphors indicate a great deal about students' hidden thoughts and emotions towards 'Foreign language learning'. As stated by Fónagy (2000), a metaphor is like a Rorschach test as it can also express what we do not know and thus exceed our intentions.

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## Celebrating languages and cultures

### Nurturing the non-formal language learning environment in teacher education

Árva, Valéria – Trentinné Benkő, Éva

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This article gives an account of the development of an event designed to motivate teacher trainee students to learn languages. The event was planned and organised by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at the Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education, Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE TÓK). The department's intention was to play a proactive role in enhancing students' language education by crossing the boundaries of formal foreign language courses. The initial concept was to hold a language fair like a pop-up event that would be easily noticeable throughout the building, flexible for participants and cater to the students' individual needs. Entitled 'Drop everything and learn/teach languages', this event was held on September 26th, the European Day of Languages, as introduced by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2001, the Year of European Languages (Council of Europe, 2001). The European Day of Languages aims to draw attention to the importance of language learning, promote the rich linguistic and cultural diversity of Europe, and encourage lifelong language learning in and out of school. The title of 'Drop everything and learn/teach languages' was additionally inspired by the 'Drop Everything and Read' programme initiated to promote sustained silent reading.

*Keywords:* language learning, higher education, motivation, learner autonomy, non-formal learning

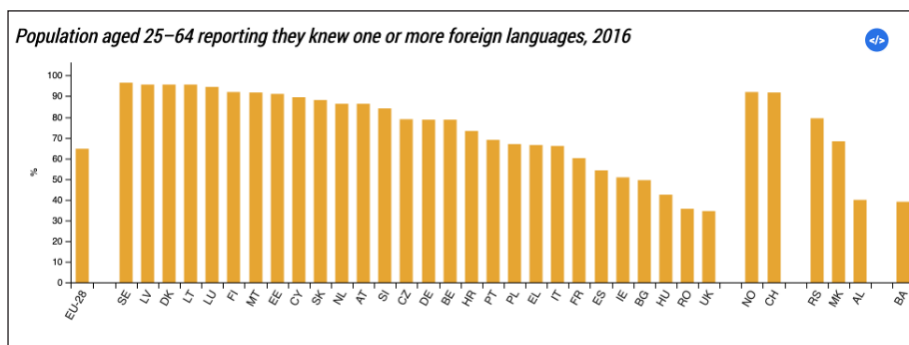
#### **Status Quo: The language learning situation in Hungary and Europe**

According to Eurostat (2016) the number of citizens who are able to speak foreign languages is fairly low in Hungary. While in the EU 64.6% of the adult population (aged 25–64) claimed to speak at least one foreign language, in Hungary this figure was significantly lower, at only 42.4%. (see Figure 1)



**Figure 1**

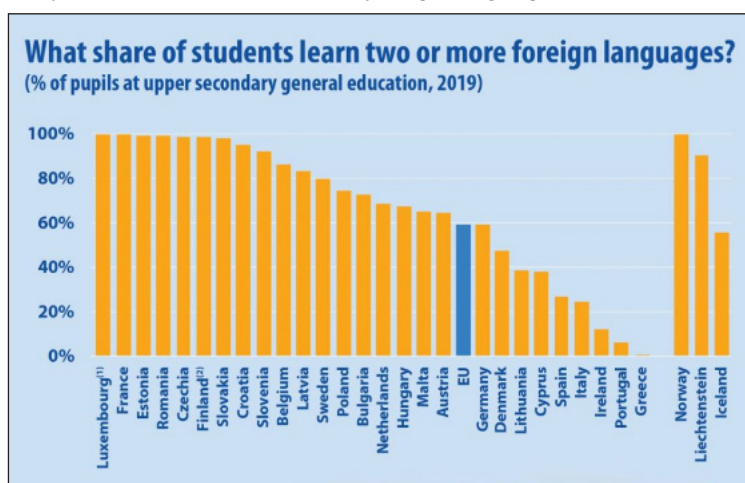
*The language learning situation in Hungary (Eurostat, 2016)*



The Eurostat (2019) statistics show that at the secondary level, on average almost 60% of students learn at least two foreign languages in the EU. The Hungarian average, which rose between 2014 and 2019, approaches 70%. (Figure 2)

**Figure 2**

*What share of students learn two or more foreign languages? (Eurostat, 2019)*



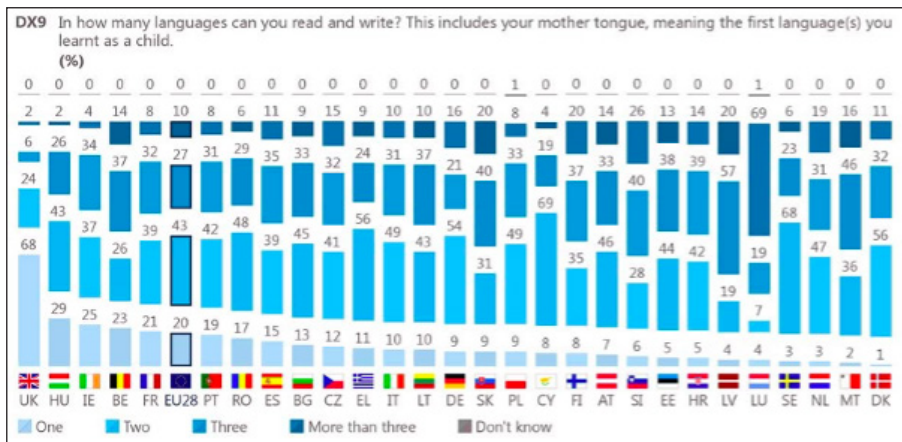
While the number of secondary students learning languages is relatively high, the efficiency of learning may be questionable. A recurring problem at ELTE TÓK and in Hungarian higher education in general is that, even though the B2 level language certificate is a pre-requisite for graduation, a significant proportion of the student population does not master a foreign language at the legally required B2 level. The reason for their insufficient language knowledge may either lie in the failure of language education at secondary level or the possibility that these students lack the opportunities, financial means, or internal motivation to acquire a foreign language at the required level.

The 2018 Flash Eurobarometer survey results (Flash Eurobarometer, 2018, pp. 41–63) show some significant key findings concerning young Europeans’ language knowledge, language learning, and motivation to improve their language competencies. According to this study, most young European citizens (80% of the 8,153 respondents) can read and write in more than one language. Still, only two-thirds declare themselves able to follow a course of study in more than one language, including their mother tongue(s). A substantial proportion of young adults (43%) can use two languages, while 27% can read and write in three languages; every tenth person (10%) has a command of more than three languages. One-fifth of the respondents (20%) cannot read and write in more than one language. However, there is a considerable variation between the countries’ language command as illustrated in Figure 3.

The lowest rate of language knowledge is indicated in the United Kingdom, where over two-thirds (68%) of the respondents have only one language at their disposal. The second lowest result belongs to Hungary, where 29% of the polled population can read and write in only one language (Flash Eurobarometer, 2018, pp. 41–42).

**Figure 3**

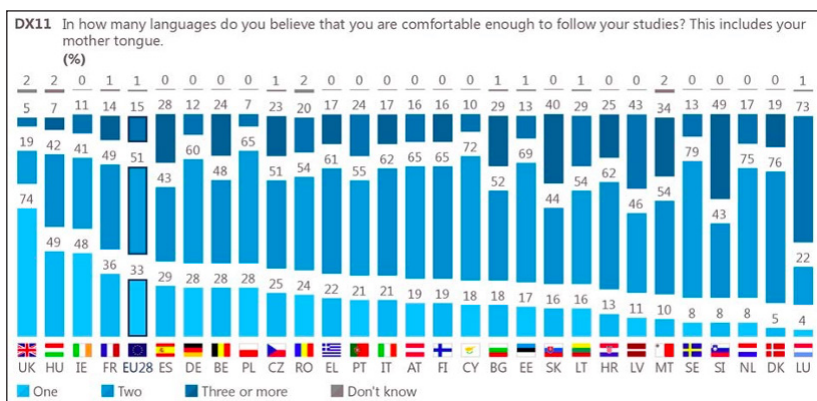
*The number of languages young students can read and write in (Flash Eurobarometer, 2018, p. 42)*



The poll (Flash Eurobarometer, 2018, p. 43) also surveyed the number of languages respondents would be comfortable studying in. In this question, Hungarian young adults demonstrated the second-lowest answer rate again, with 49% of the respondents claiming they could only study in one language, i.e. their mother tongue. The United Kingdom (74%) and Ireland (48%) also displayed negative results. At the same time, young people in Denmark, Luxembourg, Sweden, Slovenia, and the Netherlands would be far more willing and able to pursue their studies in more than one language. In most of the 28 polled European states, the most significant proportion of respondents claimed that they would feel comfortable conducting their studies in two or even three languages. (Figure 4)

**Figure 4**

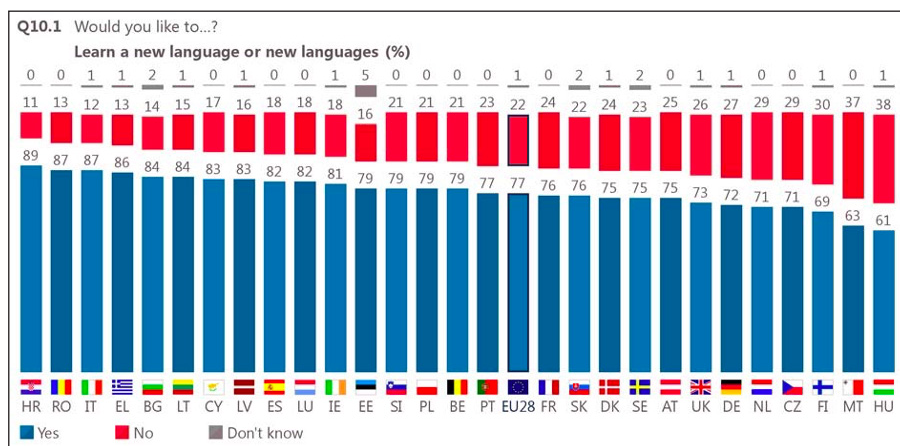
*Ability to study in more than one language (N=8,153) (Flash Eurobarometer, 2018, p. 54)*



Regarding the respondents' motivation towards languages, a large majority (84% of 8,153 young Europeans) would like to improve their command of a language they already have some knowledge of, whilst 77% declared their wish to learn a new one (Flash Eurobarometer, 2018, p. 53). In Hungary, 61% of those polled expressed their intention to learn a new language, the lowest ratio among the surveyed nations. (Figure 5)

**Figure 5**

*Motivation to learn languages (Flash Eurobarometer, 2018, p. 54)*



Unfortunately, only a few studies have been published in connection with students' language aptitude in Hungarian higher education. According to a 2010 study, 61% of the students admitted to higher education had a B2-level of language knowledge (Nikolov, 2011). A more recent study from 2017 (Hámori & Ujj, 2017) gives similar estimates: the authors claim that 53.6% of recently admitted university students hold a B2 level of language knowledge. However,

the figures gathered among students entering teacher training are less promising: their foreign language competence seems to be significantly lower as only 39,4% of first-year teacher trainees hold a B2 language examination (Hámori & Ujj, 2017). The language situation at ELTE TÓK seems to be significantly better than the Hungarian average, as according to statistics from the Faculty Registrar's Office, roughly 60% of first-year students hold a B2 or C1 level language examination certificate (ELTE TÓK, 2022).

Beyond the state requirements for attaining an advanced-level degree, foreign language knowledge for university students is necessary for practical reasons, too. First, internationalisation is a growing feature of higher education whereby students can take part in mobility programmes at universities within and beyond the EU. Spending a semester or completing a practice period abroad significantly increases the competitiveness of young graduates in European job markets. Finally, after graduation, language competence is a key pre-requisite for life-long learning and professional development, too.

### **Foreign Language Education at ELTE TÓK**

Attended by 1,500 to 1,600 students, the Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education trains primary (grades 1–4), kindergarten (ages 3–6) teachers and early childhood educators (ages 0–3). The primary teacher trainees specialise in one subject, which they can teach in grades 1–6 as well. One of their options is to learn foreign languages (English or German). There are also two minority language programmes for primary teachers: German and Serbian. The rest of the students specialise in other subjects, such as music, science, or Hungarian, and will not teach any foreign languages. Kindergarten education students may choose Hungarian-English bilingual kindergarten education as their specialisation and work in bilingual kindergartens after graduation. Here, too, there are programmes for prospective kindergarten teachers intending to work in German or Serbian minority language institutions. Early childhood educators study the basics of early childhood language development and complete courses in English or German for specific purposes.

The English, German, and bilingual courses in the BA programme provide experiential learning for future language specialists of young learners. TÓK offers an inspirational target language and pedagogical environment, where foreign language courses are practical, with a focus on the students' personal experiences, unique backgrounds, and supporting them to develop through reflective and creative activities. Specific attitude-forming elements that strengthen their prevailing positive views and beliefs upon entering the training are part of students' foreign language education. This student-centred holistic approach and tolerant atmosphere entail a variety of competence-based activities that are based upon a harmony between theory and practice, subject content and foreign language integration, and cooperative work forms.

The teaching staff at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature aim to provide a meaningful, positive, and memorable personal experience that will also provide a model for students to follow when pursuing their



future profession. To achieve this aim, special attention is devoted to offering non-formal learning and professional socialisation. The department organises events that enhance foreign language-learning motivation and contribute to on-campus internationalisation, encourage Erasmus mobility, and raise intercultural awareness. Thus, the foreign language specialisations and the optional bilingual courses provide students with vital professional and personal competencies.

As was previously mentioned, non-language specialist students in the primary education programmes will be qualified to teach all school subjects, except for foreign languages. Although their syllabus does not contain any compulsory foreign language studies, they can take a great variety of optional language and professional courses in German or English. These courses enjoy a great deal of popularity among the students.

### **Language learning motivation and learner autonomy**

While designing and executing the language learning event ‘Drop everything and learn/teach languages’, the idea of developing language learning motivation, attitude, and learner autonomy was a priority since they are instrumental in successful language learning. Dörnyei (2005) and Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) claim that these are essential factors in determining second language (L2) success rate. According to the results of a wide-scale study conducted by Csizér (2007) among 13 to 14-year-old pupils, L2 motivation is enhanced by positive attitudes formed towards language learning. Nikolov’s (1999) research among primary pupils between six and fourteen years of age also found that positive learning attitudes towards the learning context and the teacher were the most important factors in enhancing their motivation. Intrinsic motivation proved to be more important for the pupils than integrative or instrumental motivation (p. 53).

A survey among Hungarian university students in Budapest by Csizér and Kormos (2007, 2008) found that the participants’ language learning motivation was high and mostly integrative. The authors underlined the need for autonomous learning in this age group because they attend language courses with a low number of contact hours and will later need the knowledge of languages for continuing professional development (CPD). Not surprisingly, the most motivated language learners were students in the fields of economics and law. Motivation was the lowest among students who were not expecting to come into contact with English speakers in their professional context. Unfortunately, the sample of the study did not include teacher trainees. A more recent study by Novák and Morvai (2019) focused on the foreign language learning attitude of higher education students from three universities in eastern Hungary. Their research results showed that those students whose parents were poorly educated were motivated only to the extent of passing the language examination required by the educational system. Students who already held a language examination certificate were motivated by other factors, for example their interest in the culture of a language. Novák and Morvai (2019) also found

that Master's degree students used the foreign language for practical purposes, such as mobility or socialising. While the aforementioned research provides some insight into university students' motivation and attitude to language learning, limited research has been carried out to examine the motivation and attitude of primary and preschool teacher trainees in Hungary or abroad.

The concept of learner autonomy is mostly examined and discussed within the context of formal education and is defined in different ways. For instance, Hedge (2000) offers three definitions. Her first definition is that learner autonomy can be described as a more aware, independent, and effective mode of classroom study. Second, she describes learner autonomy with resource-based learning in the institution. However, this kind of learning, which used to be offered by self-access centres, has probably been overtaken by internet-based activities. The internet and mobile IT tools provide access to a previously unimaginable range and quantity of authentic language and language learning materials. Hedge's (2000) third definition touches upon the capacity to carry on learning independently throughout life. Harmer (2007) claims that giving learners agency in their own learning can help sustain their motivation (p. 394). Cotterall (1995) believes that learner autonomy should be an essential goal for all forms of learning. On a practical note, Harmer (2007) suggests that learner autonomy can compensate for a lack of classroom time. Language teachers in higher education frequently experience a lack of time and recognise the beneficial effect that the conscious development of learner autonomy may exercise upon their students' learning outcomes. A study by Öztürkl (2019) reports the effects of a course aimed at promoting learner autonomy among pre-service EFL teachers in Turkey.

Oxford (2001) argues that conscious language learning strategies help learners become more autonomous and ready to assume control of their learning activities. She makes the case that while positive attitudes and beliefs can increase motivation and help language learning, negative attitudes and beliefs reduce motivation. Because the number of language lessons is fairly low at ELTE TÓK, it would be desirable if students were helped to take more responsibility for their own learning and develop the capacity for lifelong language learning. Unfortunately, increasing the number of language classes or launching courses to develop their capability for independent learning is beyond the means of the Faculty. On the other hand, developing and nurturing positive attitudes toward language learning seems to be feasible by means of out-of-classroom activities, such as 'Drop everything and learn/teach languages.'

### **Drop everything and learn/teach languages**

Having reflected on the language situation at the Faculty, the Department of Foreign Languages decided to organise a language learning event at ELTE TÓK that would provide positive experiences for participating students. Activities were selected on the basis that they satisfy several criteria, i.e., meet real learning needs, provide opportunities for oral language practice, offer

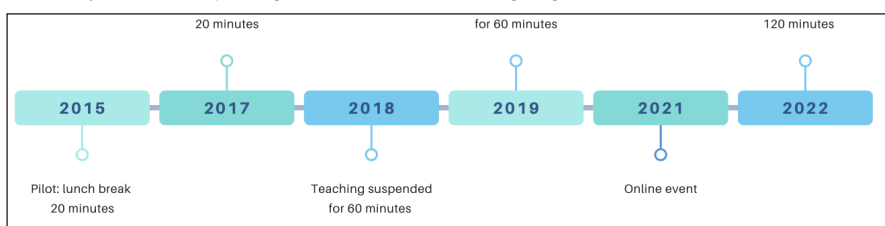
cultural information about target language cultures, demonstrate the creative and playful side of language education, open the window on new languages and cultures, and at the same time offer a view on early childhood language education. The language specialist students were to be not only participants but also active organisers and co-teachers in this event.

Language learning stations were planned to advertise foreign languages and the importance of learning them. All visitors were able to experience a broad range of foreign languages and cultures, such as English, German, Serbian, French, Russian, Italian, Spanish, Swedish, Catalan, Chinese, Romani, Farsi, and Ukrainian. Students were able to decide to take a mock language examination, learn in playful and interactive mini-language lessons from their peers, play board and card games with the primary pupils from the neighbouring practice school, sing French chansons, participate in Scottish dancing, taste the international guest students' typical national dishes, and see the FL students' creative works and posters in the form of an exhibition. The Department of Foreign Languages and Literature intended to motivate everyone to learn several foreign languages.

As was mentioned earlier, the event 'Drop everything and learn/teach languages' mainly targeted non-language specialist students. At the same time, the programme proved an excellent opportunity for language specialist students to apply and demonstrate their knowledge and skills in language pedagogy while gaining first-hand experience in the concept of teaching outside the classroom. In other words, language specialist students participated in planning, preparing and delivering language learning activities. Their active role offered a learning experience for them as future teachers in that they had the opportunity to practise language teaching outside the classroom. The student-teachers interacted with their fellow students, their teachers, and even the children who were paying a visit from the neighbouring primary school. Hopefully, after their positive experience of teaching beyond the classroom, the students will follow this example when they start teaching, and create opportunities for teaching outside the classroom, too.

### Figure 6

*Timeline of Drop everything and learn/teach languages events*



Similar to a kind of a marketplace in its layout and concept, this language teaching event was first held in 2015 in connection with the European Day of Languages on September 26th. It was organised in a small scale, pop-up fashion and scheduled for the long break between classes in the area outside

the specialised foreign language classrooms. Three languages were involved: English, German and Serbian. The goal was to give a personalised, language learning opportunity to non-language specialised students who were passing by during their break. The next 'Drop everything and learn/teach languages' event was held two years later, in 2017. (Figure 6)

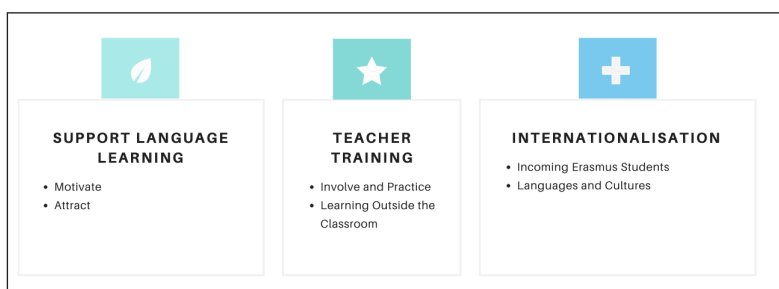
Having organised two events and accumulated valuable experience, the organising team outlined several changes including a more extended time period and access to more parts of the building in an effort to approach students more effectively. The range of activities and languages was extended and several cultural institutes were also invited. A 60-minute time slot was allocated to the event. The first-floor corridors in the building were furnished with desks, where the students could set up their activities. Keeping most of the activities outside the classrooms made it possible to have an open-access space.

A wide-scale advertising campaign targeting the students and staff preceded the event. In the morning, students entering the building were handed a leaflet with the programme and a 'passport'. Participants were instructed to have their document stamped at five stations as proof of participation and fill in the short feedback form on the back.

The teachers of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature worked on the language-learning games and activities together with the language specialist students. It was possible to integrate the preparatory work into the language development and language teaching methodology courses. A new feature of the event was the participation of three cultural institutes: The Japan Foundation, The Goethe Institute and Institut Francais de Budapest. The teacher trainer of a state-accredited language examination company was invited to hold an exam preparatory session.

**Figure 7**

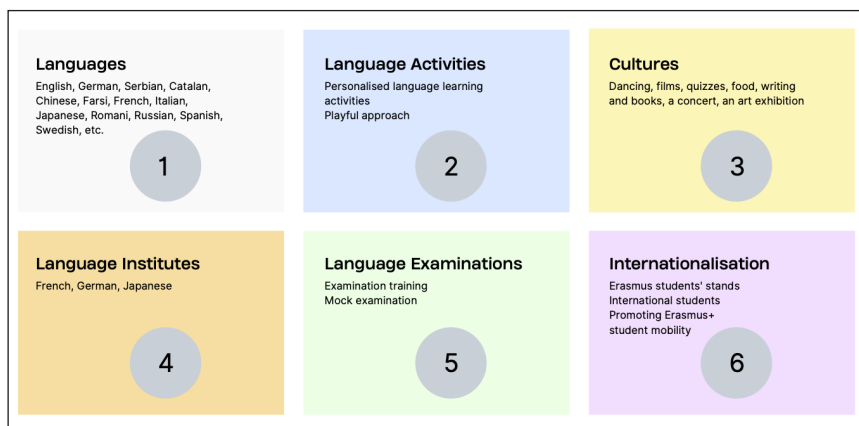
*Main goals of Drop everything and learn/teach languages*



'Drop everything and learn/teach languages' assists many underlying goals (Figure 7) by motivating language learning, providing cultural experiences, giving language learning opportunities, providing support to pass the language examination, offering a model for beyond-the-classroom experiential learning, and exhibiting the way our students are trained for teaching languages to young and very young learners. In the following section, the activities will be

presented in groups according to the goals they were meant to achieve. This annual event aims to achieve its goals through a wide range of activities, which can be classified into six main categories. (Figure 8)

**Figure 8**  
*Range of events*



### Plurilingualism

In addition to activities organised in English, French, German and Serbian, 'flash language classes' were held in Japanese, Catalan, Italian, Chinese, Spanish, Russian and Swedish. These fifteen- to twenty-minute language tasters aimed to place new languages and cultures on the students' horizons. One of the goals of the European Day of Languages' is to raise awareness of the linguistic diversity of Europe. In general, most of our students were only studying English or German and had never had the chance to try their hand at other languages. These sessions created opportunities to experience a new language and generate an interest in learning it. By exposing our students to multiple languages, we followed the EU guidelines (Council of Europe, 2001) concerning the idea of plurilingualism in Europe. Plurilingualism in Europe entails not only the 26 official state languages, minority, regional, and indigenous languages of Europe, but also the non-European languages featuring as a result of immigration (Council of Europe, 2020). Presenting the idea of plurilingualism is essential in order to convey the message of linguistic diversity and the significance of multilingualism. The latter has a key role in contributing to mutual understanding and keeping up mobility within the EU (p. 102).

Language specialist students planned the English, German, and Serbian language learning stations for teaching vocabulary, tongue twisters, cultural studies, IT games, and activities that in turn demonstrated how learning could be achieved through play even for adults. At the Serbian station, visitors could learn the basics of the Cyrillic alphabet, a phenomenon Hungarians are unfamiliar with since Russian ceased to be a compulsory language in education.

### *Cultural diversity*

A country's culture may attract a person to learn its language(s). The three cultural institutes had stands that offered quizzes and games in their culture and language. For instance, the typical Japanese papercraft activities and a New Year's game at The Japan Foundation were extremely popular. The French stand offered the unique cultural experience of a concert with a student teacher who played the guitar and sang French chansons. Since our students are trained to work with young children, they usually have an affinity for visual arts, music, and games, a fact that means such activities can play a motivating role in their language studies. The participating institutes offered information about their educational and cultural activities in Budapest, thus expanding the students' horizon regarding what is available in the capital city in terms of language learning and cultural activities in French, German, and Japanese.

The incoming Erasmus students studying at the Faculty also contributed to the cultural activities by introducing their country, language, culture, cuisine, and their home university. Direct communication between fellow students from different countries has two advantages: it provides short-term motivation to use a foreign language and is likely to increase long term motivation for mobility. By spending a term abroad, students can improve their foreign language skills, learn about a new culture, and experience a different educational context.

### *Supporting language learning*

The programme also aimed at giving an insight into the department's teacher training practice. The organisers found this very important for two reasons. First, it is vital to share information with the Faculty about the principles along which our training programmes are implemented and our students are educated. Second, it is essential that our non-language specialist students also become aware of the main principles of teaching languages to young learners.

An exhibition was organised from the works of language specialist students. Mind maps and other forms of artwork portraying bilingualism, the ideal bilingual teacher, and the use of nursery rhymes in early childhood language development and bilingual science education were put on display. The aim of this exhibition was to spread information about how our students are trained for early childhood language education; this exhibition was open for a month.

Visitors could try playing the board games used in early childhood language development or games created for nursery rhymes by the preschool trainees, watch English language children's films and cartoons. They were also invited to learn nursery rhymes and songs, become engaged with IT activities, Scottish dances, and visit a book exhibition.

Children from the neighbouring practice school paid a visit and participated in the activities. Their presence created an invaluable experience for the language specialist students, who were able to experiment with a learning-beyond-the-classroom situation. In this regard, 'Drop everything and learn/teach languages' managed to complement the students' language teaching methodology and pedagogy studies.

Since several students plan to pass the state certified language examination during their studies at the university, there was enormous interest in the language examination training session, called ‘Speaking Show’. This opportunity involved the presentation of a mock oral examination being taken by two peer students.

### ***Reflections: lessons and challenges***

The informal feedback on ‘Drop everything and learn/teach languages’ was overwhelmingly positive. Over the years, we furthermore managed to raise the event’s profile as it has increased in its volume and variety of activities while additionally attracting a growing number of participants.

The event managed to serve the needs of both language learners and future language teachers. Its goals can be listed in two main categories: language learning and language pedagogy (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Language Learning and Language Pedagogy Goals*

<b>Language Learning</b>	<b>Language Pedagogy</b>
Motivating language learning	Motivating and supporting language teaching
Language practice	Teaching experience
Culture learning	Learning about sharing intercultural knowledge
Non-formal language learning	Experiencing teaching outside the classroom
Getting to know new languages	Motivating learners to learn languages
Learning children’s culture in other languages	Forming learners’ attitudes towards other cultures
Language examination skills training	Developing language competences, learning about exams
Participating in active learning	Creating language teaching materials
Gaining information about Erasmus+ mobility	Gaining information about e-twinning

Representatives from cultural institutes were impressed by the enthusiasm and interest of TÓK students. They were happy to return in 2019 and promised to continue to come in the future as well. During the Covid-induced period, the event was organised in an online format on Teams. The event’s main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and possible threats are listed in the preliminary SWOT analysis presented in Table 2. As shown, the event offers significant benefits in professional and personal fields, while the limited number of negative features refer to mainly organisational elements.

**Table 2**  
*SWOT Analysis*

Drop everything and learn/teach languages ...	
Strengths	increases language learning and language teaching motivation observes European Day of Languages helps students to join their future professional community encourages learning outside the classroom celebrates diversity and plurilingualism supports lifelong learning and autonomy corresponds with the EU suggestions attracts and engages Erasmus students and international cultural institutions enhances on campus internationalisation has become a tradition
Weaknesses	place in timetable not popular with everyone too early in the semester needs to attract more students requires a great deal of preparatory work
Opportunities	finding a new date in the academic calendar: Faculty Day in April better advertising: Student Council's support and using social media extending the event collecting more systematic feedback measuring its effect
Threats	timing issues indifference from students student / teacher fatigue

'Drop everything and learn/teach languages' has reached the point where it has become a standard event at ELTE TÓK (see Appendices A, B, C, D, E) even though it was held online during the pandemic situation. The brief feedback sheet on the 'passports' was sent back by a high number of participants at the end of the event and turned out to be overwhelmingly positive. The students described their experiences as useful and motivating. The Faculty staff and the representatives of the participating cultural institutes also concluded that the energy, time and work invested into the organisation of the event resulted in an invaluable linguistic and cultural experience. The authors hope that this event will have a positive effect on the professional development of the language specialist teacher trainees. Furthermore, the event is expected to support the language learning of university students through developing their learner autonomy. Finally, it is hoped that the event will contribute to on-campus internationalisation.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A European Day of Languages



### Appendix B Posters of the event



## Appendix C

### Programme of the 2019 event

#### Drop everything and learn/teach languages!

Event	Description	Place
<i>Guests of honour:</i>		
<b>Goethe Institut</b> Mini Germany in Ráday Street	Goethe Institut presents: learning German language and culture	First Floor main staircase
<b>Institut Francais de Budapest</b> Mini France by the Danube	Institut Francais presents: learning French language and culture	First Floor
<b>The Japan Foundation</b> The Land of the Rising Sun in Budapest	The Japan Foundation presents: learning Japanese language and culture	First Floor
<b>Euroexam</b>	B2 Language Examination Show – Live B2 Oral Language Examination	Room 100
<b>German</b>		
German language learning stations	Expand your vocabulary and practice grammar in a playful way.	Corridor outside rooms 107-123, First floor
German language games room	Playful language learning with boardgames: Tabu, Blinde Kuh, Dobble and more	Room 113
German tongue twisters and proverbs	If you want some challenges and want to find out what they mean ...	Corridor outside rooms 107-123
German civilisation stations	Test your knowledge of German cultures, sights and gastronomical specialities	
German minorities studies stations	Learn about the customs of the German minority groups in Hungary	
Social development in German	Board games in German	Room 130
<b>English</b>		
English-speaking cultures through play and games	Which English-speaking countries are you familiar with? What do you know about their cultures? Why is it important to get to know the culture(s) of a language? Test the games made by our students and expand your knowledge of the world.	Corridor, outside Room 123, First floor
Language learning stations: English language first aid	Would you like to have a chat with a friendly English teacher? Do you have any problems in grammar? About irregular past forms? Do you know how to compose an English sentence? Come, we're here to help you!	Corridors outside rooms 127-13, first floor and at main staircase, second floor

Rhyming in English – how do they do it in kindergarten?	Wanna have quick success in learning English? Come learn some nursery rhymes. If a kindergartener can easily do this, you will succeed, too. Try the language learning toys of our kindergarten students.	Room 119
Learn English with gadgets: 21st century English classes	Should we ban or use them? IT applications in language teaching in the 21st century.	Room 108
Let's play music!	Language learning with the help of music.	Room 127
Funny English words	How to build a cool English vocabulary: Play Kahoot games with Sára	Room 19
English language games den	Learning languages is easier when you play	Room 129
Maisy, Charlie, Lola and others: cartoons and animated films for children	Come inside, watch these films and meet the most popular English- speaking cartoon and animation heroes.	Room 128
<b>Serbian</b>		
How would you read in Serbia?	Find out about the Serbian alphabet with Nikola	Room 128/1
<b>French</b>		
French songs – mini concert	French chansons sung by Rachel Makkos	1st floor
French culture	Quiz about French culture	1st floor
<b>ERASMUS</b>		
Enter the world of Erasmus	Erasmus+ helps to bring the world to us and to enter outside the world – meet the Italian, Swiss and German Erasmus+ students at the Faculty. Learn about their language, culture and university.	Ground floor
<b>More languages! Language tasters with the help of students, teachers and staff at ELTE TÓK</b>		
Japanese	The Japan Foundation	First floor
Catalan	Núria Medina Casanovas, Universidad de Vic	Room 124
Italian	Leila Szabó, colleague	Room 121
Chinese	Fanni Bíró, student	Room 121
Spanish	Maria Teresa Reyes, Dept. of Foreign Languages	Room 118
Russian	Kiss Gabriella, Dept. of Foreign Languages	Room 117
Swedish	Poros Andrea, Dept. of Foreign Languages	Room 117
<b>Book exhibition</b>		
Destination: Collect stamps in your passport and collect a sweet Serbian baklava in Room 123		

### Appendix D Photos from the event



## Appendix E

### Summary of activities at ‘Drop everything and learn/teach languages’

Title	Activity	Motivational Goals	Organisers	Target Audience
Language games	Trying out games for language learning	Increasing awareness of the importance of playful language learning	Language specialist BA students	Non-language specialist university students, staff and school children
Language practice activities	Planning and trying out language practice exercises	Allowing language learners to practise a specific language area	Language-specialist BA students	Non-language specialist university students, staff and school children
Cultural activities:	games, quizzes, concerts, decorations, dances	Learning cultural information Increasing cultural awareness How culture can be used for language teaching	Cultural institutes, Language specialist BA students	Non-language specialist university students, staff and school children
Scottish dances	Learning traditional Scottish dances	Experiencing other cultures	Teaching staff of Department of Foreign Literature and Languages	All university students and staff
Erasmus students’ presentations	Posters, games, cultural information, food tasting	Learning about cultures, gaining motivation to spend a term at a university abroad	Incoming Erasmus guest students	All university students
Flash language classes	Short lessons in different languages (about 10)	Creating interest in languages and language learning	Staff and students	All university students and staff
Language games /toys exhibition	Trying out toys for language learning	Informing about playful language learning in early childhood	Language specialist BA students and staff	All university students Primary school children

Student poster exhibition	Displaying posters language specialist students prepared as coursework	Spreading information about a) teaching languages to young children and b) what approaches to language teaching the language specialist students study	Language specialist BA students and staff	All university students and Faculty staff
Examination skills training	Learning examination skills	Training students to pass a B2 language examination before graduation	Outside trainer	Non-language specialist students
Book exhibition	Foreign language publications: coursebooks, children's literature and literature	Creating interest in reading in foreign languages and in English/German children's literature	Department of Foreign Literature and Languages	All university students and staff
Erasmus stand	Learning about other cultures and universities	Using a foreign language. Receiving information about Erasmus partner universities	Incoming Erasmus students	All university students
eTwinning stand	Learning about a platform of collaboration	Professional development, part of teacher training	Outside trainer from Ministry	All university students
SEK Stand	Learning about an international school in Budapest	Learning about a school that is different from schools in public education	SEK teachers	English specialist students



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# Locating the position of non-formal learning: theory and practice<sup>1</sup>

Gulyás, Barnabás – Déri, András

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Our article argues that, while learning continuously surrounds us, being aware of its importance is not necessarily possible through formal learning opportunities alone. By briefly introducing the concept and main principles of non-formal learning, we illustrate how reflection, a key process of learning, can be effectively involved in the design and implementation of educational practices. By means of a case study investigating a project that aims to develop university students' intercultural competences, we show how the principles of non-formal learning can be included in formal, higher educational settings and how this approach and methodology can be fruitful in developing personal, social, and cultural competences. The case study also refers to the reflective competence of the facilitators of the project and how they have developed the content through their own learning processes and feedback from the participants.

*Keywords:* non-formal learning, reflection, learning preferences, case study, higher education

## Introduction

Thinking about education, teaching, and learning naturally raises the questions of teaching, learning modes, and methods. Trends related to the priorities of inclusive education, the recognition of the importance of lifelong learning, and the emergence of digital technologies have been and are influencing discourses on the context and content of education. However, the recognition of learning outside formal learning environments is still subject to policy recommendations<sup>2</sup>, a factor suggesting that the visibility of non-formal and informal learning has yet to improve.

Our article argues that, while learning continuously surrounds us, being aware of its importance is not necessarily possible through formal learning opportunities alone. We believe that non-formal learning provides space and opportunities

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<sup>1</sup> The article is an edited, extended, and updated version of an educational material prepared by the authors for the Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership project *Alliance3 – School, family and community Alliance against early school leaving*.

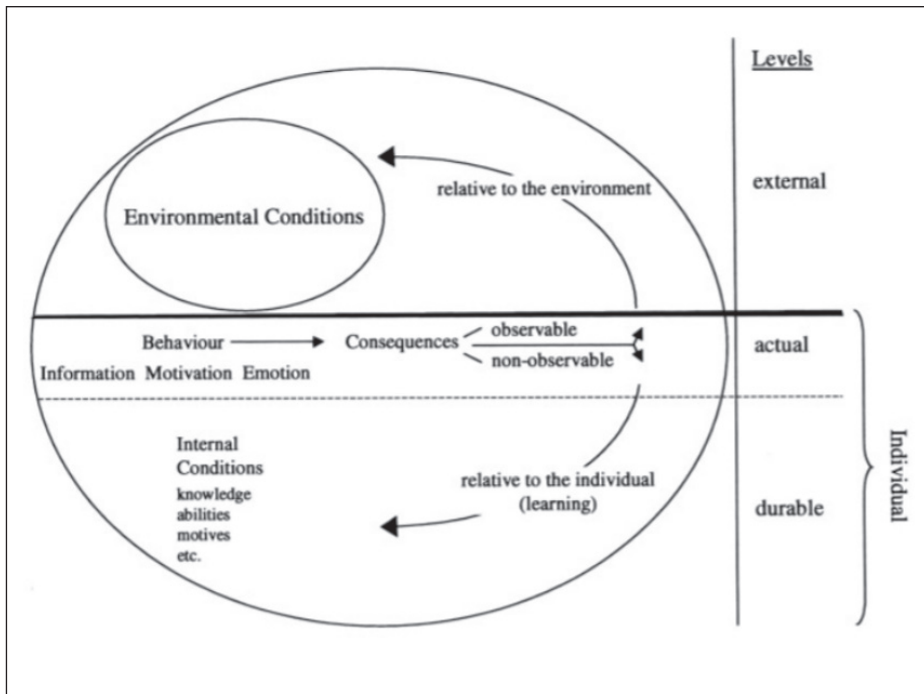
<sup>2</sup> In the European Union, the most important policy document is the *Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning*





for realising the importance of learning. A key element to understanding the means of effective learning processes is reflection, and as such, is a quality that demands deeper explanation. Reflection is the construction of meaning. ‘Not only is reflection the bridge between information and wisdom, it is the process that turns information and knowledge into wisdom’ (Carroll, 2010, p. 24). Even when it happens in a group setting, as it relates to individual learning, reflection upon learning new things is always an individual process. Yet thorough reflection often needs to be somewhat structured or guided. Although learning might happen in a number of environments and modes, it definitely needs an active and reflective relationship between the individual and the social environment.

**Figure 1**  
*The process of learning*  
(Source: Straka, 2002, p. 151)



According to Straka (2002), ‘learning has taken place if, and only if the individual-relative consequences of the interaction between behaviour, information, motivation and emotion lead to a permanent change in the internal conditions of the acting individual’ (Straka, 2002, p. 151). This article demonstrates how learning can take place outside a formal learning environment, where there are no formal tests or classical certificates to oblige and *officially* recognise the learning process and outcomes. We will mostly focus on non-formal learning, as this is a methodical way of learning (as opposed to informal learning) even if its visibility and general recognition is not as widespread as that of formal learning.

We also provide an example of how the methodological approach of non-formal learning can be implemented in a formal, higher educational context.

### Concepts, contexts, and definitions

As was previously outlined, we mostly aim to describe the nature and *modus operandi* of non-formal learning, an approach that can be both remarkably easy and a genuinely difficult challenge, too. It becomes difficult when we aim to approach a variety of scholarly understandings, as there are many and these often possess different *foci*, or contradictory meanings. It becomes easy when certain policy documents are examined, although this approach could also become challenging if undertaken as a comparison study of different countries. To somehow overcome these difficulties, we will build upon the European Union framework for life-long learning and non-formal learning and interpret some of the scholarly literature related to these interpretational frames.

At least three umbrella terms are often used in connection with non-formal learning, and all of these terms require some clarification. They include lifelong learning (LLL), experiential learning, and youth work. According to the currently used EU definition, lifelong learning ‘means all general education, vocational education and training, non-formal learning and informal learning undertaken throughout life, resulting in an improvement in knowledge, skills and competences or participation in society within a personal, civic, cultural, social and/or employment-related perspective, including the provision of counselling and guidance services’ (European Parliament and the Council, 2013).

As Nina Volles (2016) points out, the concept of lifelong learning has undergone two conceptual shifts since its emergence:

- (1) from ‘adult’, via ‘recurrent’ and ‘permanent’ to ‘lifelong’ – stressing the idea of a cradle-to-grave approach; and
- (2) from ‘education’ to ‘learning’ – reducing the focus on structures and institutions, and increasing the emphasis on the individual at the centre of the educational process who has the responsibility of taking charge of his/her own learning (Volles, 2016, p. 344)

Volles (2016) notes that the practical relation of the EU to lifelong learning has shifted from a humanistic approach that was characteristic of European discourses originating in the 1960s and ‘70s and focused on the development of human personality, solidarity, and democracy. Today LLL takes the form of a utilitarian, neo-liberal perspective “characterised by economic determinism that changes the relationship between civil society and the state and places more responsibility on the individual” (Volles, 2016, p. 360). As a very critical approach notes,

employability seems to be the only LLL objective that is compatible with neoliberalism. The Commission promotes it as the dominant goal in the majority of the policy documents analyzed, overshadowing the remaining three

objectives, since all policy proposals and criteria set to measure performance revolve around employability ... individuals lacking the education that will allow the pursuit of personal fulfilment, active citizenship, and smooth integration into society will always be limited to the role neoliberalism reserves for them: the role of the consumer. (Mikelatou & Arvanitis, 2018, p. 507).

Although these interpretations perhaps imbue LLL with a sense of narrow mindedness, we want to underscore that its underlying concept is often the reason and foundation for many non-formal learning activities. LLL therefore presents a good cause and explanation for the necessity for such activities.

Another umbrella term, under which non-formal learning is often mentioned both in policy documents and in scholarly literature, is *youth work*. The 2010 resolution of the Council of the European Union defined youth work as the following:

Youth work takes place in the extra-curricular area, as well as through specific leisure time activities, and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes and on voluntary participation. These activities and processes are self-managed, co-managed or managed under educational or pedagogical guidance by either professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders and can develop and be subject to changes caused by different dynamics.

Youth work is organised and delivered in different ways (by youth-led organisations, organisations for youth, informal groups or through youth services and public authorities), and is given shape at local, regional, national and European level, dependent for example on the following elements:

- The community, historical, social and policy contexts where youth work takes place,
- the aim of including and empowering all children and young people, especially those with fewer opportunities,
- the involvement of youth workers and youth leaders,
- the organisations, services or providers, whether they are governmental or non-governmental, youth-led or not,
- the approach or method used, taking into account the needs of young people,
- in many member states local and regional authorities also play a key role in
- supporting and developing local and regional youth work. (European Commission, 2010, C 327/2)

Beyond this information, the resolution notes that youth work

complements formal education settings – can offer considerable benefits for children and young people by providing a wide and diverse range of non-formal and informal learning opportunities ... youth work should provide the opportunity for young people to develop a wide range of different personal and professional skills, free from stereotypes as well as key competences that

can contribute to modern society. Therefore it can play an important role in developing autonomy, empowerment and entrepreneurial spirit of young people. In transmitting universal values regarding human rights, democracy, peace, anti-racism, cultural diversity, solidarity, equality and sustainable development, youth work also can have added social value... (European Commission, 2010, C 327/2)

Although a such widespread content analysis of the policy documents outlining youth work has not been done, in the case of lifelong learning, we can suppose that the perceived neoliberal shift of the concept of LLL is much less present in these fields. The reason for this can lie in the stronger involvement of the actual target group and practitioners in shaping the policy directions, such as can be seen in the example of regular conventions on youth work. Held online, the most recent one in Bonn, 2020, enabled a number of professionals to gather and reflect about the situation of youth work and shape policy contexts, too. Another reason can be found the community aspect of youth work that is a very strong characteristic of it. Generally, the lack of legislative context surrounding youth work in many European countries creates a special atmosphere within which youth work has developed and improved naturally and in *ad hoc* ways. The stakeholders of these processes are often from a variety of different contexts and the content and development of youth work often lacks strategical thinking (see e.g., Dunne et al., 2014).

Before continuing to the conceptual framework, two elements must be mentioned: the role of the Council of Europe and the recognition of youth work. The Youth Department of the Directorate of Democratic Participation within the Directorate General of Democracy has contributed greatly to both the intellectualization and the mainstreaming of youth work. Its 2017 Recommendation on Youth Work defined the concept in the following passage:

Youth work is a broad term covering a wide variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually. Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation. Youth work is quintessentially a social practice, working with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating young people's active participation and inclusion in their communities and in decision making (Council of Europe, 2017, p. 2).

The second, notable element comprises the actual recognition of youth work. Despite (or in addition to) the pursuit of definitions and finding common understandings on the European level, "it should be recognised that at the local level youth workers are often seen merely as 'playing with children'... in large parts of society there is no clear understanding of youth work or its impact on young people and the wider community" (Zentner & Ord 2018, p. 20).

The third contextual element or umbrella term to be mentioned is experiential learning. This article does not aim to delve into the questions of definition, as

there is an extensive literature on the subject (see e.g., Kolb, 2014). Here we settle with the following interpretation from Beard and Wilson (2018):

- *Experience* is central to the learning process and it takes centre stage.
- The *experiential* dynamic is fourfold: *of* and *for*, affecting the whole person in terms of their *inner* and outer *world* experiencing
- There must be a certain *quality* to experience so as to engage the learner, and be *memorable*.
- The *conditions*, for learning, and learner *motivation*, active *engagement* and *immersion* are significant ...
- Learning flows, and is derived from other *experiences* ...
- Experience is a complex composite, made up of information from the constantly changing interacting inner world and outer worlds ...
- Experiential learning acknowledges the issues affecting power and control: learners take responsibility for their own learning.
- Experience acts as the bridge unifying typical dualisms such as action and thought, doing and knowing, body and mind, nature and person, practice and theory (Beard & Wilson, 2018, pp. 12–13).

The many definitions and directions of experiential learning seem to agree that it can be understood as learning by experiences and/or learning by doing; the differences between these definitions are more observable when it comes to the understanding of the concept and process of learning.

Non-formal learning is often associated with experiential learning (see e.g., Norqvist & Leffler, 2017), however, the latter might happen in all educational contexts. ‘Informal experiential learning is described as incidental learning and everyday experiences, often learning “on your own”... Non-formal learning experiences are planned by instructors and include goals, but are less structured and occur outside of formal educational setting.... Formal experiential learning is connected to classrooms in schools and universities, occurring in classrooms or laboratories, using experiments, projects, and other hands-on activities’ (Hedin, 2010, p. 108). This final comment already takes us to our main question: how to understand the differences between the three ways and spaces of learning: formal, non-formal, and informal learning.

Instead of separately and exhaustively listing characteristics of each type of learning, we offer a systemic approach wherein the different aspects are complete as a whole. As a guide through this complicated context, we anchor our understanding to the approach within the perspective that the *individual*, i.e., the *learner* is in focus. Thus, in our understanding, the learner is the key to all of the aforementioned three types, even though the ways of learning are *different*.

In formal learning, we follow a structure that is designed for the learners (not inclusively or necessarily together with them) and there is often less flexibility in different aspects (environment, content, requirements, etc.). This characteristic is understandable given the approach’s formal nature which is often shaped by official (government or organisational) policies. When it comes

to standardised, universal educational contents (such as theories, procedures, definitions, etc.), formal education is a feasible way for transferring these forms of knowledge. By considering different learning needs and linking these to their own learning styles, formal learning can still offer a certain flexibility for its learner to perform in the best way. What does this mean? During the process of teaching, it is more than possible to allow learners to decide on their own about how they prefer to learn. 'Learning style is the format in which a student learns and the most favourable way in which a person receives, processes, and stores information.... Learning style can also be considered as the most effective way to explain how a student concentrates, remembers old information, and stores new information' (Dutsinma & Temdee, 2020).

Different learning preferences can also be taken into consideration within the formal setting given that it is a matter of planning. The VARK modalities, a theoretical framework that provides a widely used typology of learning preferences (see e.g., Fleming & Blauwe, 2006), offer a clear framework for how students and teachers perceive learning information.

**Table 1**

*Summary of the learning preferences proposed by the model*

*(Source: Robertson et al., 2011, p. 37)*

Learning style	Characteristics
Visual	Preference for using visual resources such as diagrams, pictures and videos. Like to see people in action
Auditory	Need to talk about situations and ideas with a range of people; enjoy hearing stories from others.
Reader/Writer	Prolific note-taker; textbooks are important; extensive use of journals to write down the facts and stories.
Kinaesthetic	Preference for hands on experience within a 'real' setting and for global learning

The authors refer to learning styles, but, as Fleming (2012) argues, a 'learning style would indicate preferences for a wide range of learning behaviours such as preferences for learning at a particular time of day, or in a particular temperature or lighting as well as structural options such as learning with others or with adults or peers or alone or in mixed groups. VARK is about people and their learning and it focuses on modalities that they might prefer when learning' (Fleming, 2012, p. 1).

It should also be noted that the author of the concept also acknowledges multimodality: 'Life is multimodal so it is unlikely that any population with VARK data will exhibit more than 40% as having a single preference. And, a single preference is indicative of the strength of one of the modalities not an indication that the other three VARK modalities do not exist' (Fleming, 2012, p. 1).

Formal learning can be also less result-oriented and thus less stressful for the learners when focus falls more on the process. In alternative pedagogies, this process-oriented approach is often more welcomed; even in the field of higher education, a growing number of projects and propositions aim to

downgrade the importance of grading. As a 2014 article of a journal focusing on life sciences education puts it: ‘accuracy-based grading may, in fact, demotivate students and impede learning. Additionally, the time-consuming process of instructors marking papers and leaving comments may achieve no gain, if comments are rarely read by students. One wonders how much more student learning might occur if instructors’ time spent grading was used in different ways’ (Schinske & Tanner, 2014, p. 165).

While informal learning is a constant, diverse and rich arena surrounding each learner, it is often not reflected or recognized in its importance. Because of its nature, informal learning is often unintentional but can be planned as well, such as when spontaneously attempting something to ascertain whether we are able to do it (running 1000 meters in less than five minutes). When learning informally, it is important to be able to understand and assess the individual achievements of it. Parts of this come naturally: through socialization we learn about ourselves. We furthermore learn about the social world around us and the norms and expectations that guide our everyday actions.

As more complex situations emerge, the more important it is to reflect upon them. For instance, obtaining a visa demands an understanding of complex information and most likely requires knowledge of a foreign language, etc. While we learn during this process, we perhaps do not reflect upon its stages in favour of realizing its success: the approval of the visa is a sign. Travelling is often referred to as a medium of informal learning. While getting acquainted with new cultural and social contexts, ‘there is plenty of information to process and travellers, both for survival and for pleasure, are likely to acquire new perspectives and skills’ (Pearce & Foster, 2007, p. 1286).

Non-formal learning is a way to be guided and supported in the constant learning that surrounds us, with a clear purpose. One competence to which non-formal learning can make a valuable contribution toward acquiring is learning to learn, a valuable skill for anyone who often struggles with studying. In the process of non-formal learning, we are exposed to situations and activities that purposely enhance learning. Very often this happens through experiencing first and then reflecting upon what happened. Non-formal learning thus can be understood as ‘Purposeful but voluntary learning that takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations for which teaching/training and learning is not necessarily their sole or main activity.... The activities and courses are planned, but are seldomly structured by conventional rhythms or curriculum subjects’ (Chisholm, 2005, p. 49).

All in all, we believe that a humanistic approach to lifelong learning might create a useful and valuable framework for the concepts, environments, and modes of learning. We also believe that non-formal learning can provide powerful methods to develop the competence of learning to learn. As Kloosterman (2014) notes, educators might feel the need to become the facilitators of learning. ‘Supporting learners in a process in which they walk their own unique learning path, deciding themselves what and how to learn, means a radically new role for educators.... The “new” educator ensures that the different paths learners take are pleasant, motivating and challenging. The

“new” educator also helps facilitate each individual learner to negotiate their chosen path’ (Kloosterman, 2014, p. 280). This also shows that non-formal methods can provide means for inclusion (see e.g., Argyropoulos & Kanari, 2019) and empowerment (see e.g., Ravenscroft, 2020) in education.

### **A case study about non-formal learning in a university setting**

As was stated previously, different ways or methods in learning are not alternate but can complement one another. Based on this and the need for better recognition of non-formal learning, a pilot project titled *Among Others* was designed in the early 2010s. The main aims of the project were to introduce non-formal learning methods to students in higher education institutions with the aim of developing intercultural competences in future educators and youth workers. By doing so, the long-term goal is to enhance cross-sectoral cooperation between youth work and the higher education sector. Initiated in Poland, by 2014 this project had become international, as the funding scheme of Erasmus+ Youth allowed more opportunities for the coordinating National Agencies to cooperate under the framework of a strategical partnership<sup>3</sup> (Kielak et al., 2018).

The involvement of Eötvös Loránd University’s Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education started in 2015. After joining this international network, the Faculty started to offer a seminar in an elective course format for incoming Erasmus+ students and Hungarian students. The content was designed in cooperation with other Hungarian institutions (University of Debrecen and University of Szeged) with the support of Tempus Public Foundation as the National Agency coordinating the Erasmus+ (including its youth chapter). Tempus Public Foundation (and its predecessors) has launched a working group consisting of lecturers and experienced facilitators in non-formal education. Thus, at each university a co-managed approach was suggested from the beginning that also offered an unintentionally informal learning opportunity for the professionals involved.

Our case study demonstrates how the course was developed at ELTE<sup>4</sup>, and how the principles of non-formal learning can be implemented at a university setting. The course builds upon a modular system developed by the Polish partners<sup>5</sup>. The modules were adapted to our settings to adjust to the best solution for educating future primary school teachers and kindergarten educators. The Polish modules are built upon single training activities, each

<sup>3</sup> Erasmus+ and particularly its Youth chapter promotes cross-sectoral cooperation, thus it offered a base for *Among Others* strategic partnership project. The network has been created by interested National Agencies of Erasmus+ Youth and became a unique good practice among youth work practitioners and academics. The Youth chapter of the Erasmus+ programme offers a wide variety of mobility and learning opportunities for young people from the age of 13 years and promotes non-formal education.

<sup>4</sup> The authors of this article are the facilitators of the course at ELTE University.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.miedzyinnymi.org.pl/en/for-higher-education-institutions/conceptual-design-of-the-workshops/modules/>



requiring certain contact hours: we instead organised six workshops spanning 180 minutes throughout the semester. This time frame required adaptation of the modules in a way that allows us to foster intercultural competence through exploring concepts of culture, non-formal learning, and human rights. Since the beginning, the course has been held in English, thus participants were also offered a chance to improve their language skills.

The existence of the course allowed facilitators to participate in a learning process not only through applying the principle of mutual learning but because the Among Others course is a reflective practice – it strongly builds upon the reflections of both participants and facilitators (Kolb & Fry, 1975; Schön, 1983; Brookfield, 1998; Batsleer, 2008). While continuously seeking improvements in the content, performance, and applied methodologies, the course was developed throughout every semester till reaching its final format by 2019. The facilitators became more aware of some elements of the course that needed more improvement (eg., including more theoretical input related to concepts, clearly stating the course requirements for participants, and having quality time for reflection) and by the process of our reflection we had summarised our implicit knowledge and experiences that became the basis for the new course structure as of 2019. Undoubtedly, the participants and their feedback given in different forms (partially related to the impact assessment of the project) also fed the development of the content. Yet the practice of constant reflection also had an impact on the course format. From 2019 we developed four modules:

- *Introduction* (The content focuses on the methodological approach *cf. non-formal learning* and introducing European youth programmes for participants. The module emphasises the importance of learning and self-awareness as themes.)
- *Intercultural learning* (The module focuses on different concepts of culture and provides context for developing intercultural competence *cf. European Training Strategy's Competence framework*. The activities encourage participants to share and discuss about their own perceptions and values regarding culture and diversity.)
- *Human Rights Education* (This part of the program concentrates on perspectives and definitions of human rights, and it also challenges participants to understand and become aware of their own bias and stereotypes.)
- *European mobility possibilities and self-directed learning* (Unlike the other modules, this has a horizontal approach by building most of its content to each workshops *cf. reflection and assessing learning outcomes*. As one of the objectives is to promote European youth programmes, the module also fosters and encourages participants to participate in and initiate their own projects in the future.)

The Among Others seminar at ELTE has reached over 100 participants from various countries from China to Ireland. The seminar itself is still an elective course at the Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education, but mandatory for

incoming Erasmus+ students. In 2021, a Hungarian-language version of the course was launched at ELTE's Faculty of Education and Psychology.

The seminar strongly builds on non-formal learning methods and aims to offer an opportunity to become more sensitive and aware of intercultural competence. It also aims to help participants in their personal and professional development. Building upon the characteristics of non-formal learning described above and as an implication of our reflective practice related to our classroom experiences, we collected the main principles we apply during Among Others seminar. These include the following:

– *Voluntary participation*

*The learners themselves decide if they want to take part in the learning activity.* Once participants have enrolled in the course (for some of them, especially the Hungarian participants, this is already a result of individual choice) the formal, higher educational rules must apply and attendance is taken into consideration for course completion. Voluntary participation thus more applies to the right to say no and that it is up to participants how much they get involved in group discussions. Learners are thus encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. The voluntary nature appears in the course of our workshops in a different way, too. Participants are free to design a 'final project' that enables the reception of a formal grade. This helps overcome the controversy regarding voluntariness and the formal requirements, as the final project is completely free to choose and develop, as long as it has connections with the topics and approach of the workshops.

– *Non-hierarchical nature*

In the non-formal learning process, all participants are *equal*, and there is *no hierarchy* among anyone, including the facilitators of the learning process. This means that we seek a mutual partnership among all those involved and we value the fact that everyone can contribute to their own and others' learning process. For those participants who are used to more formal learning settings, these conditions might be challenging, thus not only the content, but the context of non-formal learning must be set, too. From the beginning the facilitators try to use inclusive language and practices, e.g., by actively participating in the activities *together* with the participants.

– *Self-assessment*

It is important to identify learning outcomes. In the process of Among Others this is done collectively, although the learning achievements are not always the same. At the seminar we create an open space for reflection and leave time for processing to provide means for gathering from the learning process later on. In the course of non-formal learning, it must be kept in mind that learning is a process, it does not happen immediately. Taking part in an activity does not necessary mean that we already understand and learn from it. Sometimes this aspect needs more time and because a large part of non-formal learning is about the individual. Reflection is a key element: at the end of the workshops and through a planned longer break between workshops during the semester we provide space for participants to digest and reflect upon their experiences.

It is clearly visible that youth workers and facilitators of non-formal learning in the European (especially European Union) context have a similar view on the core principles. For reference, Kloosterman and Taylor (2012) described the characteristics as follows:

- voluntary participation – people choose to be involved and want to be there;
- curriculum is focused on the participant – their learning needs are central to the process;
- the group is a source of learning – in addition to the curriculum;
- assessment starts from self-assessment – people judge their own progress first – before any external assessment;
- any certification of learning is only implemented if the participants want it (Kloosterman & Taylor, 2012, p. 9).

In this understanding is an active, learning is voluntary and creative relationship with the learning environment and occurs on both the individual and group level.

### **Participants of the learning process**

Finally, as an interpretational note to the terminology that has been used in the case study, we briefly introduce the participants to the learning process. The terminology is not accidental as the principles of non-formal learning usually distance the practitioners from using the conventional narratives of *students* and *teachers* as this implies a hierarchical relationship between the parties. Thus, practitioners usually talk about learners or participants (especially when talking about specific projects or training courses), and facilitators.

#### ***Learners***

In non-formal learning processes, the largest category of those involved is that of the learners. Regardless the technical role, we believe that everyone is a learner in the process. It is important to mention that usually a group context is preferred in non-formal learning activities. Factors related to inclusion, motivation and reflection could be mentioned as reasons for this: 'Reflecting in a group enables other perspectives to be offered and considered; unlike solitary reflection, it is more likely to facilitate learning' (Goodall, 2015, p. 49). This might vary in the numbers of participants, even in bigger events a non-formal learning activity can be carried out with enough learning supporters. The learners have their own individual as well as group process; the more diverse settings we use during the non-formal learning program, the more one can benefit from participation. (For example: a variety of small, diverse-mixed group activities, peer-to-peer activities and individual times gives different learning experience to everyone.)

### ***Facilitators***

In non-formal learning processes, there are participants/learners with a special role in supporting the learning process generally. They are the facilitators whose role it is to support the learning process and take into account the needs and styles for each learners. They foster mutuality among the learners and give directions, mainly in the form of reflection. According to a manual of the Council of Europe, a facilitator is someone who acts as:

- a consultant who designs work sessions with a specific focus or intent;
- an adviser who brings out the full potential of working groups;
- a provider of processes, tools and techniques that can get work accomplished quickly and effectively in a group environment;
- a person who keeps a group meeting on track;
- someone who helps to resolve conflict;
- someone who draws out participation from everyone, to ensure that the full potential of the group is achieved;
- someone who organises the work of a group;
- someone who makes sure that the goals are met;
- someone who provides structure for the work of a group;
- someone who is empathetic;
- someone who organises space and time (Klocker, 2009, pp. 37–38)

To better understand the position of the facilitator, it might be helpful to differentiate different roles in learning assistance, as is shown in the following table:

**Figure 2**  
*Roles in learning assistance*  
(Source: Titley, 2002, p. 14)

<b>Educational roles</b>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Trainer</i>	<i>Facilitator</i>
<b>Process</b>	Less important	Important	Important
<b>Task/content</b>	Central role	Important role	Co-responsible
<b>Educational methods</b>	Often frontal	Methodological mix	Methodological mix
<b>Communication style</b>	Mainly input	Range depending	Minimal input
<b>Power</b>	Absolute	Absolute-shared	Shared
<b>Examples</b>	School teacher	ICL trainer	Conflict moderator

The role of the facilitator is crucial: while they also fully take part in the process, their attention is more on the other participants than merely on themselves.

### **Summary**

This article aimed to clarify the meaning and approaches of different ways and structures of learning. We once again underscore that our understanding of the concepts of formal, non-formal and informal learning are mainly shaped by the frameworks developed and used by the youth programmes of the European

Union and the Council of Europe. We believe that both practically (as a lot of resources, programmes and scholarly materials are accessible under these frameworks) and theoretically these understandings might help practitioners to better understand the different ways of how learning might happen. We do not want to suggest that any type of hierarchy exists among formal, non-formal and informal learning modes, environments and outcomes. Instead, we content that the context and aims of learning and the characteristics of the learners must be taken into consideration when planning and assessing learning. While in many cases formal methods are crucial for transferring knowledge to the *students*, when it comes to competences such as personal, social and learning to learn, citizenship, or cultural awareness and expression (to use the vocabulary of the EU key competences to lifelong learning – see European Council, 2018), a non-formal approach to learning can be a powerful addition to the formal learning environment, especially when it comes to motivation and integration of the learners.

We also believe that a strong focus on reflection and reflective practices might not only boost the quality and longer-term effects of learning from the perspective of students: reflection can be taken into consideration and applied by facilitators, too. A constant, dialogical, and methodical monitoring of the success of the participants' learning process and of the teaching/facilitating modes can contribute positively to course development.

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# Teaching, learning, training, and researching throughout Europe – Languages and cultures in contact

Lipóczi-Csabai, Sarolta – Szabó, Ildikó

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Since the early 1990s, the Kecskemét College Teacher Training Faculty has been involved in important bilateral and multilateral projects targeting cultural and linguistic themes. Due to new challenges in pedagogy, didactics and ICT competences in higher education, the projects' aims and objectives as well as the list of participating countries of the projects have changed. Our study introduces and analyses those pre-EU and EU projects that focused on teaching pre-service teachers, training in-service teachers based on the research results garnered through cooperation with our partners, and learning from one another's educational and cultural settings. This study has a twofold goal: through the introduction of how cultures and languages enriched one another in several intercultural projects, we aim to record a very rich period at Kecskemét College Teacher Training Faculty.

*Keywords:* intercultural teaching programmes, pre- and in-service teacher training, curriculum development, offline and blended courses

## Introduction

Since the early 1990s, both students and lecturers at Kecskemét College Teacher Training Faculty have been involved in important bilateral and multilateral projects targeting cultural and linguistic themes. The first step to launching this collaboration comprised establishing bilateral contacts to get an insight into our partners' cultural background and exchange experiences regarding innovations in foreign language teaching and pedagogical methods. Due to new challenges in pedagogy, didactics, and ICT competences in higher education, the aims and objectives as well as the list of countries participating in the projects have changed. Our study introduces and analyses those pre-EU and EU projects that focused on teaching pre-service teachers, training in-service teachers based on research results garnered through cooperation with our partners, and learning from one another's educational and cultural settings.

The first multilateral project analysed in this study aimed at improving students' intercultural competences at a time when Hungary had not yet joined the EU. The European seminar held at this time could be regarded as the



forerunner of some upcoming EU projects at Kecskemét College. This seminar was followed by several EU projects discussing various topics. The present study focuses on those collaborations that examined the topic of foreign language teaching in pre-service teacher training, literacy in in-service teacher training, and designing blended courses for continuous professional development. Our study has a twofold goal: by introducing how cultures and languages enriched one another as a result of several intercultural projects, we aim to record a very rich period at Kecskemét College Teacher Training Faculty<sup>1</sup>.

## **A Hungarian – Austrian intercultural student and teacher mobility model (1990–2000)**

### ***Framework conditions***

Between 1990 and 2000, approximately 400 students took part in pedagogical and civilisation exchange studies and arts programmes. In addition, five joint volumes and several studies were published on the outcomes (Jakab et al., 1999, p. 123). The exchange programme was supported by applications submitted to the Austro-Hungarian Action Foundation and local sponsors. The objectives of this cooperation were to improve language learning, renew pedagogical methods, expand subject content, conduct joint research, develop curriculum activities for trainers teaching German as a foreign language, and hold intercultural exhibitions and concerts for representatives of the fields of arts.

### ***Results of the Austrian – Hungarian partnership***

Among the bilateral projects, the longest and most effective cooperation was the intercultural relationship with the Krems Pedagogical Academy (Sági & Szinger, 2019, p. 143). This fruitful partnership and its common outputs were published in several publications. The ‘management’ of the partnership had a good strategy given that they worked in a visionary manager style.<sup>2</sup>

During the practical training sessions held in Austrian schools, pre-service teacher students from Kecskemét became familiar with new teaching methods, e.g., cooperative techniques, project, drama, and experience pedagogical methods, techniques that gradually replaced frontal education in Hungary after the change of regime. Students were given consultation classes to discuss these ‘new’ methods. In return, pre-service teacher Austrian students could test their intercultural teaching skills in Hungarian schools. Language learning did not only mean learning German for Hungarian students: Austrian students were also given introductory lessons in learning Hungarian.

The objective of each lesson – that was also observed by the partners

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<sup>1</sup> Kecskemét College Teacher Training Faculty was the legal predecessor of John von Neumann University Faculty of Pedagogy, and merged into Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary Teacher Training Faculty on 30 July, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> The members of the management team on the Hungarian side were Edit Jakab and Sarolta Lipóczi-Csabai while Austria was represented by Friedrich Striberny.

– was to expand the content of the subjects. The research and subject development work was carried out in the field of language and literature teaching methodology by Hungarian-Austrian authors who worked in pairs. As a result, three textbooks and two volumes of studies were created jointly. As cultural areas without language barriers, music and fine arts were included in the successful programme.

### ***Evaluation of the first partnership programme***

This bilateral relationship was carried out with a high level of international professional interest. For their scientific achievements, organisational and teaching activities in the framework of the Krems – Kecskemét Inter-Institutional Relationship, its coordinators were recognised by the Ministers of Education and Culture of the two countries. In a study published on the tenth anniversary of the relationship, Friedrich Striberny, (1999) the Austrian coordinator of the programmes, pointed out that one of the aims of the programmes was to develop a sensibility to another culture; this goal was achieved at a high level. Based on his further statements, an important aspect in teacher training in Austria is that anyone who wants to represent intercultural educational goals as a teacher must also act interculturally during their studies (Jakab et al., 1999, p. 122). The fulfilment of this requirement was also supported in a report made by Johannes Fonatsch, Stefan Dellacher, and Thomas Fraissl. These students from Krems expressed their admiration for the landscape and their respect for Hungarian people (Jakab et al., 1999, p. 124). From the perspective of time, it can be stated that the Krems – Kecskemét relationship preceded Hungary's accession to the EU, but its goals, content, and impact on the participating students were as important as student EU programmes. That is why it can deservedly be called a type of 'small-scale, Hungarian-Austrian Socrates/Erasmus project'.

### **The development of intercultural competences in a European student mobility model (1996–1998)**

With the launch of multilateral EU projects in 1995, Kecskemét College already had a cooperation agreement with 36 institutions from 17 countries (Rigó, 2019, p. 70). The cooperating teacher training institutions significantly contributed to the growth of the members of the affected generation within the framework of international cooperation. 'Growing together in Europa means more than just the introduction of the Euro and a policy of economic agreement. On the contrary, this process takes place in the heads and hearts of people who are not only resolved to peace among neighbours but who also have an interest in their neighbouring country.' (Lipóczy & Oomen-Welke, 1999, p. 9) The development of European competence meant education for Europe, international cooperation, common thinking, getting to know and appreciating each other's culture.

The first multilateral project of Kecskemét College – a TEMPUS-Project – was implemented to carry out the principle of *'European student mobility*

*in order to develop their intercultural competence*.<sup>3</sup> This project was meant to link the different objectives and possibilities of the partners from countries in Europe: Austria, German, Hungary, Italy, and Spain. The aim was to implement the programme within a *TEMPUS Mobility Joint* European project. The common interest was a better understanding of social and professional life throughout Europe via schools, teacher training institutions, and economic spheres. The two major axes around which the participant built the project were the Network for Student Mobility and European Studies. The Network comprises 18 students from EC institutions who had teaching practice and job experience in Hungary in different schools. Roughly 12-15 students from two Hungarian colleges studied at least a semester or two at the host institution. The course entitled *European Studies* or *European Seminar* for future teachers involved many segments of the educational, cultural, economic and political life of Europe and was elaborated according to the training needs of Hungarian higher education institutions in cooperation. This learning experience enabled students to discover their own Europe by working independently on different projects held in courses in both home and host countries.

The transversal educational principle of the application is the principle of the European dimension, which can be incorporated anywhere where the traditional individual professional and subject themes can be supplemented and expanded with elements of a cross-border educational aspect that sensitises the culture of other countries (Lipóczi & Oomen-Welke, 1999, p. 216). The following sections contain a few examples.

### *'Who are the Europeans?' Seminar on Europe*

At the beginning of the programme, an international group of educators participating in the competition mobilised the geographical, historical, social knowledge, experience, and ideas of students from the five countries within the framework of an introductory seminar. The seminar sought answers to the questions, 'How to define Europe?' 'Who are the Europeans?' Although Hungary was not a member of the EU at that time, in 1996 the Hungarian answers revealed that Hungarian students felt European by birth due to their culture. Based on their answers, the geographical location, religion, and culture of their country were what made them so. From an economic point of view, Hungarians had been enduring years of austerity, yet they were still looking to the future with confidence.

### *Languages in Europe in the project*

Several approaches were taken as regards the topic of languages. As a first step, the students interpreted graphics reviewing the languages of the world, Europe, and the languages of the countries participating in the project in internationally

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<sup>3</sup> Members of the project management included Éva Kruppa (international manager), Friedrich Striberny (Austria), Ingelore Oomen-Welke (Germany), Sarolta Lipóczi (Hungary, Kecskemét), Fausto Minciarelli (Peruggia), Mária Koperniczky Torma (Hungary/Kecskemét), Mercedes Costas Costa (Spain), Erzsébet Drahotá-Forgács (Hungary, Szeged).

mixed groups. The groups used *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language*<sup>4</sup> as an important literature source. Then came the discussion of the concepts surrounding bilingualism and multilingualism. The seminar also contained a comparative linguistic part. The presentation, 'European Language Hierarchies on the Way to a United Europe' (Janurik, 1999, p. 17) familiarised students with why Europe had not become a homogeneous, monolingual continent. It was further emphasised that Europe's linguistic future depends on how Europe finds common languages that make communication between Europe smooth. The cross-cultural language of Esperanto could have become a world language if it had become a mediating language on the Internet (Janurik, 1999, p. 21).

With their requirement of possessing strong language skills, fiction texts also offered many opportunities for common thinking. It was easy to find topics that addressed multiple nations in world literature. In this case, ancient Graeco-Roman theatre, the tragedy of Faust, as well as works depicting prejudices and enemies were chosen.

### *The situation of minorities*

At least some partial knowledge regarding the different situations of minorities in the countries participating in the project was available. Participants in the competition thought that the European Union should certainly be sensitive to the situation of minorities. The complexity of the topic and the diverse situation of minorities in each country required studies and serious discourse. The project provided students with a comprehensive knowledge of 'Ethnic, Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Problems in the Carpathian Basin', a topic that illustrated some of the relevant problems related to this issue and the efforts being made to address them based on some examples taken from historical and modern Hungary (Földes, 1999).

### *Educational systems and methods as a topic in the TEMPUS project*

An international comparison of educational systems and methods was an instructive and professional topic. In Hungary, in the years following the political transition from state socialism to democracy, the modernisation of education began as a result of the transformation of the entire education system and a renewal in pedagogy. A thorough analysis of teaching methods was also a part of school visits, during which the application of project, drama pedagogical, and other modern techniques were already present. Music, fine arts, and sport are disciplines that convey and connect cross-border thinking and feelings between different nations. It was worth taking advantage of its potential.

### ***Lessons to be learnt from the first two intercultural teaching programmes at Kecskemét College***

It can be concluded that both projects were implemented before Hungary became the member of the European Union. The Krems – Kecskemét project series was

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<sup>4</sup> Crystal, D. (1997, 2010). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Languages*. Cambridge University Press. dt. 1993 Frankfurt a. M. Campus

based on the coordinating instructors' ideas and concepts regarding education while its financial background was largely provided by the foundation of the Ministries of Education in the two countries. The TEMPUS Mobility Project was implemented following a call for proposals, taking into account the EU concept. Among the goals achieved by the two projects, the following ones are to be highlighted:

1. acquisition and extension of knowledge on intercultural topics (Candalier, 2007, p. 1–140) (geography, history, civilisation, attitude to the past, customs, school systems, teaching methods, languages, language learning for understanding between the peoples of Europe)
2. improving intercultural competence (including critical thinking, culture-specific knowledge, tolerance, improvement of observation, interpretation, comparison skills, interest, openness),
3. understanding, acceptance, tolerance, recognising and eliminating one's own stereotypes.

The student reports completed in the project show that the participants of the seminar experienced interculturality and European dimension as a personal experience by making friendships (Dósa et al., 1999, p. 209). A participant from Barcelona wrote, 'I particularly think that no one should be deprived of the opportunity to come into contact with that wonderful land and its charming people' (Almendros, 1999, p. 214). It should be mentioned that student visits have been integrated into the Socrates/Erasmus programme which provided students with even greater opportunities to develop their intercultural competences and resulted in upcoming intercultural dialogues, new projects.

### **Towards new horizons: partnerships after joining the EU**

In the 2000s, interaction between languages and cultures has also been carried out by Kecskemét College and partner institutions in international linguistic, didactic, literary<sup>5</sup> and literacy projects. This series began with the *Janua Linguarum* project<sup>6</sup> and was followed by Primary and Secondary Continuity/PRI-SEC-CO7 project (Lipóczi, 2011), a project in language teaching methodology with an interactive platform (Szabó & Lipóczi-Csabai, 2014) and literacy projects.

### **Challenges in European in-service teacher training: obstacles and solutions in reports from teacher training institutions**

After the millennium Kecskemét College switched areas of focus from initial training to in-service teacher training when joining international projects.

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<sup>5</sup> Literary projects, like the worldwide Kästner-project, the project 'War in Children's Literature', Modernisation in the European Children's Literature, etc. will be introduced in a future publication from Sarolta Lipóczi-Csabai.

<sup>6</sup> Candalier, M. (2004). *The gateway to languages*. ECML, Graz. <http://archive.ecml.at/documents/pub121E2004Candelier.pdf> (Accessed: 27 January 2021)

<sup>7</sup> More information on the project can be found on its website: [prisecco.ph-freiburg.de/en/home/](http://prisecco.ph-freiburg.de/en/home/) (Accessed: 27 January 2021)

Teaching and training materials were developed, country reports on the implementation were written, platforms to share the common products were created. Although the projects were different in their scope, outputs, and partners, the working method was mainly the same. The participating countries or institutions used their national educational culture as a point of departure to explore the topic and collect already extant materials before seeking commonalities. Common goals were identified and joint strategies were developed to reach these. The outcomes of these projects were produced in the national languages; in 2006, Kecskemét College Teacher Training Faculty entered the first international project in the field of literacy in (ADORE<sup>8</sup>) (Steklács, et al., 2010) by looking for good school practices all over Europe.

In the first step of the two-year project, various position papers were prepared and reported on the special needs of struggling adolescent readers in relation to each country's national, social, cultural, and linguistic environments, with special regard to the national characteristics of reading research and reading instruction. This process was followed by designing and implementing an in-service teacher training course (BaCuLit<sup>9</sup>) in 2011 (Steklács, et al., 2011), the follow-up of which comprised an international association organised to promote this knowledge among teacher trainers (ISIT<sup>10</sup>) in 2014 (Szabó & Szinger 2015b). In the ADORE project the aim was to identify good practice examples in Hungary, while in the BaCuLit project a teacher training curriculum on cross-curricular literacy was developed. Based on this experience and its rewarding results, Kecskemét College entered the ISIT project and was involved in developing a blended learning course in the area of literacy.

During the last phase of the BaCuLit project, the implementation opportunities for the curriculum in the seven participating countries were analysed based upon a method called 'mainstreaming reports' that was carried out by national experts. These reports from Germany, Hungary and Romania revealed the most promising opportunities for implementing the curriculum. As a follow-up, a comparative analysis of implementation strategies promised further rich insights and interesting research about implementing innovative concepts into national continuous professional development (CPD) systems (Szabó & Szinger, 2020, p. 54–58). The ISIT-consortium could identify some common (transnational) and/or specific (national) obstacles as well as

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<sup>8</sup> ADORE (Teaching Adolescent Struggling Readers in the European Union. A Comparative Study of Good Practices in European Countries) project was a SOCRATES Programme: initiating a multidisciplinary dialogue between reading researchers to produce case studies and suggestions in reading instruction for EU policy makers, funded between 2006-2009. The involved countries were Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Poland, Germany, Norway, Hungary, Italy, Switzerland, and Romania. The adviser and evaluator was Prof. Dr. Donna Alvermann from University of Georgia, Department of Language and Literacy Education. Hungary was represented by János Steklács, Ildiko Szabó and Veronika Szinger (Kecskemet College Teacher Training Faculty).

<sup>9</sup> BaCuLit (Basic Curriculum for Teachers' In-Service Training in Content Area Literature in Secondary Schools) was an in-service training course developed within the Comenius Multilateral project bearing the same title, funded 2011–2012

<sup>10</sup> ISIT (Implementation Strategies for Innovations in Teachers' Professional Development) was a Comenius Multilateral project, funded 2013–2015.

opportunities for implementing CAL-courses (Content Area Literacy courses) in the participating countries and developed some general and specific recommendations addressing teacher trainers, training institutions, and policy makers. It was very interesting to see the commonalities and the national specific conditions of successful implementation for the course developed by three EU-countries with different educational policies. Much was learnt from each other's insights, suggestions, and recommendations.

In all implementing countries, the lack of time for participating in CPD emerged as a major obstacle. As schools have to invest in substitute teachers during participants' presence in training programmes, principals are reluctant to allow teachers the long-term participation required by CPD during school hours. Possible solutions proposed by the ISIT trainers include,

1. an 'appetiser strategy' that offers a small unit of a course, e.g., a 'one afternoon demo version' in order to get teachers interested in learning more;
2. a blend version of weekdays and Saturdays or weekdays and summer schools;
3. a blended learning course combining face-to-face with e-learning units.

In some implementing countries, the size of regions to be covered by CPD is an additional challenge. Two solutions have been taken into account:

1. it is the teacher trainers who travel to the schools (in the case of whole-staff-training);
2. the course has to be offered as a blended-learning course.

In all participating countries teachers or principals showed some reluctance to the 'innovative' offers provided by CPD. Too often they have been disappointed by CPD courses that bear attractive titles but contain no interesting content relevant to their daily practice. In other instances, top-down decisions made staff obliged to attend courses that did not meet their needs. Possible solutions are:

1. to take care of high quality offers and continuous quality monitoring;
2. to build teachers' confidence in the quality the course offers on a long-term basis;
3. to strive for scientific evaluations underscoring the positive effects of the programme.

In all participating countries, there was a lack of awareness surrounding the importance of content area literacy and the required qualifications for teachers in all subjects. The educational agendas and topics as well as the involved teacher training programmes and institutions change in accordance with political changes and often do not allow for the necessary continuity of educational reforms. Possible solutions must build upon continuous awareness-raising measures regarding the importance of literacy issues.

The certified BaCuLit trainers in Germany, Hungary, and Romania developed different strategies for implementing CAL-elements into their PD-practice. The qualified trainers who filled in the logbooks initiated careful adaption to the conditions of the respective country or region and witnessed a high amount of creativity. On a general level, the following key success strategies

could be identified. Implementing the programme in several phases of teacher education was the correct action to take. For instance, in one German federal state, the BaCuLit course was developed as a certified additional qualification for teacher trainees to be piloted, training multipliers in preparation. In several institutions, a systematic step-by-step planning of implementation on different levels within relevant institutions was performed. Careful information on the part of decision-makers at teacher training institutions turned out to be a key success factor in sustainable implementation of the programme.

In all countries, attempts were made to integrate BaCuLit elements into existing programmes or initiatives. In Hungary, the national initiative to develop a new generation of textbooks for all school subjects was used to integrate content area literacy elements and assignments into these textbooks; in Germany, national or federal literacy programmes and the respective structures (ProLesen, BISS: Bildung in Sprache und Schrift, "Lesen macht stark") were addressed; in Romania curriculum reforms and national assessments were taken into account for implementing CAL elements.

Several trainers raised the essential question of how to gain the expertise necessary for a facilitator. They decided to test parts of the programme in their own teaching practice at the schools or teacher seminars where they worked and thereby gained experience and self-confidence in their role as trainers. Their own learning process could be said to have been 'self-scaffolded' since they asked themselves questions that could be followed in their logbooks.

Several trainers discovered the opportunity of offering colleagues and clients 'mini-training sessions' containing characteristic elements in order to create an 'appetite for more'. These mini lessons turned out to be highly effective. In short, innovative PD programmes must be designed in a way that allows flexible adaptation to different needs, e.g., the needs of teachers at different levels (primary/secondary schools) or different types of schools, e.g., high schools versus vocational schools. For example, a CAL-course 'light' for in-service vocational teacher training and for CPD in the natural sciences was found to be the most suitable format in one federal state of Germany. In other institutions, a 'complete package' was designed for a teacher training college.

An essential element for successfully implementing innovations into teachers' PD is building cooperation and networks between different institutions or organisations. In Romania, several Teacher Training Houses developed a collaboration in order to have the BaCuLit course accredited. In Hungary, a national BaCuLit Association has been structured as part of the Hungarian Reading Association. In Germany, several trainers from different federal states decided to cooperate in order to develop additional modules for the BaCuLit course, e.g., an additional module on 'BaCuLit for students with migration background/with German as a second language' and to produce synergies between fields. Depending on national conditions the accreditation of the developed course turned out to be essential (in Hungary and Romania).

Several trainers recommended training the whole staff of a school as an optimal way to put the programme into practice. Although this was felt to be the most effective way to implement CAL into the daily classroom practice of teachers, it



needed personal and financial resources in order to be put into practice. Ideally, innovations in teachers' PD need a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches on school, local or national levels. Policy makers, curriculum designers or school principals have to provide the necessary legal and financial resources for enabling teacher participation in innovative courses. These kinds of courses will only create change in school and classroom practice if the teachers themselves are motivated and engaged in putting educational school programmes into practice.

### **A common strategy in teachers' professional development: developing a blended course**

As it turned out from trainers' logbooks in ISIT country reports, in many European countries the time for face-to-face learning in teachers' CPD is limited to a few days per year and thus privileges 'one-shot-approaches' that are not effective in changing classroom practice. The National Report on Hungary for the ISIT Project (Szabó & Szinger, 2020, p. 97–100) also highlighted some specific conditions of education policies in Hungary that were similar to the aforementioned situation. The concept of an ISIT course was already meant to combine synchronous and asynchronous learning settings in the training, a factor that was very much appreciated by the participating trainers. The ISIT project partners therefore initiated BleTeach (Blended Learning in Teachers' Professional Development – Developing a Blended Learning Course in Content Area Literacy for Secondary Teachers)<sup>11</sup> project to explore and analyse the most promising formats in blended learning offers in CPD with the aim of developing and implementing a blended learning course (BLC) for secondary teachers (and teacher trainers). BleTeach pursued two main objectives:

1. a general objective: modernising structures of teacher education by integrating digital learning opportunities into teachers' professional development;
2. a specific objective: developing a model blended learning course (BL-course) in CAL to be included into the regular course programme in a number of European teacher training centres.

Blended learning can make professional development far more affordable and convenient for teachers because they do not have to travel too often and they can participate in a course either without missing teaching time or with the least absence. Compared to conventional professional development programmes, it is also good for schools because they do not have to arrange for substitute teachers. Beyond these advantages, a blended learning course allows participants to deepen their knowledge to a greater extent as they can reread, rewatch or relisten to the resources. Furthermore, these trainings can be more self-reflective as forums while communication-based activities

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<sup>11</sup> BleTeach (Blended Learning in Teachers' Professional Development – Developing a Blended Learning Course in Content Area Literacy for Secondary Teachers) project was an Erasmus + project under KA 2: Strategic Partnerships with partners from five European countries and guest participants from the Russian Federation between November 2015 and April 2018.

make participants weigh their entire learning process. By doing so, they can revise their practice, make alterations, and gain individualised feedback from both their tutor and peers. Self-reflection can also be strengthened by the asynchronous nature of blended courses because participants can access materials on their own schedule. The learning-by-doing approach of blended courses additionally improves the ICT competences of the participants.

Designing a blended course in CPD does not mean only including both face-to-face and online sessions into one, integrated unit. It also means considering issues of designing learning activities different from traditional in-service teacher training course (Szabó & Szinger, 2015a). To design a successful blended learning course, the BleTeach project published a handbook on success factors in blended learning offers for teachers' in-service-training, a source that is available in Hungarian as well (Szabó & Szinger, 2020).

Meanwhile, the participating countries designed a Master Version of the blended course in English. The title of the course is "Improving Disciplinary LEARNING through Literacy (IDEAL). The project approach was to agree on a basic English Master Version of the course and give all national teams the flexibility to adapt this Master Version and modify, reduce and/or complete it according to specific national conditions and needs. Two guiding principles underlay this transformation (rather than translation):

1. in terms of conceptual decisions, each team was free to decide either to delete modules from the master version that were not needed in the national version, or to supplement the master version with additional modules that responded to national needs or requirements;
2. in terms of material and references, each team was requested to use as many national materials, textbooks, curricula, and research resources as possible. This principle could make the national versions of the course much more attractive for national teacher training institutions to implement as they were now supposed to be much more responsive to national conditions and needs.

By following these principles, both the national context of education and linguistic needs or challenges of each country could be taken into consideration. The national resources to create a common European training course were collected and then selected for inclusion into the master course. Resources available only in one of the national languages were translated into English, if they were to be used in the master version. The whole process of creating a common course was very similar to a dialogue between educational cultures. At first, a collection of best practices and high-quality research was created by the national participants; then each nation adjusted these resources to their expectations. The national versions could either use the master course as an inspiration or not use any of its items.

All teams worked on their modules for the English master version in tandem with their national versions. The master version of the IDEAL course was not implemented at all, as the project partners represented non-English speaking countries. The national versions of the IDEAL course are not publicly available due to copyright restrictions as well as didactical considerations. The Hungarian

course is 'BaCuLit Blended – A tanítás és tanulás sikerességének támogatása a tantárgyi szövegek feldolgozásán keresztül blended kurzus formájában.' The target group for the BaCuLit Blended-course are secondary school teachers across all school subjects, meaning teachers of grades five to twelve or thirteen in general or vocational education. Here is a short overview of the modules in the BaCuLit Blended course (Szabó & Szinger, 2020, p. 101–108):

- a) Module 1: Basic (key) concepts of BaCuLit (Engagement, Metacognition, Interaction);
- b) Module 2: Text diversity and text structures;
- c) Module 3: Vocabulary instruction;
- d) Module 4: Teaching reading strategies;
- e) Module 5: Formative assessment.

As a conclusion, it can be said that all partners felt inspired while developing the course and finding the right response to a common challenge; at the same, developers were encouraged to use one another's efforts and products.

### **Training the trainers to meet digital challenges in higher education in Europe: lessons to be learnt from the AduLeT-project**

Even though blended learning, online learning, and training have recently become crucially important, many teachers (or even lecturers in upper education) do not feel confident in such environments. A lack of formal training and support of digital skills is still characteristic of faculty training. The AduLeT project<sup>12</sup> was a cross-cultural cooperation involving exchange in connection with country-specific TEL (Technology Enhanced Learning) situation at universities on the European level. One of the project outcomes addressed barriers to basic TEL usage at universities and provided further insights into the reasons why educators are hesitant to include TEL-based teaching methods in their daily teaching practice. To identify barriers for implementing ICT in higher education, the project applied a research methodology called Group Concept Mapping (GCM). Forty-nine, upper education, experienced instructors with different educational backgrounds from Finland, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain generated 87 ideas about barriers for implementing ICT in learning and teaching. Then, a sub-set of 28 participants individually sorted these ideas into more general categories and rated each barrier on the basis of importance and level of ease/difficulty in usage. This analysis showed the following six categories of barriers: lack of organisation support; teachers' lack of knowledge and skills; lack of time; lack of hardware and software; students' lack of knowledge, skills and motivation; and lack of reward and recognition<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> The AduLeT (Advanced Use of Technologies in Higher Education) project ran between 2017 and 2019. More information on the project can be found on its website: <https://sites.google.com/site/aduleteu/> (Accessed: 10.02.2021)

<sup>13</sup> Detailed description of the survey analysis is available at AduLeT platform: <https://cop.aduleteu/research-publications> (Accessed: 10. 02. 2021.)

According to Hungarian respondents (Szabó, 2020), lack of time was found to be the most important barrier. This was followed by lack of hardware and software, a circumstance that was held as difficult to solve. As a barrier, teachers' lack of knowledge and skills is crucial in Hungary, albeit not the most important one. Students' lack of knowledge, skills and motivation is in the final third of the importance scale, but the easiest to overcome. Lack of organisation support is regarded as the least important barrier, however, it is not the easiest to solve.

Although there were differences between the level of importance for each barrier in the participating countries, it was revealed that both technological and pedagogical support from the institutions is very crucial. Although the problem is common, the technological, methodological or even working contexts display great variation among the six AduLeT countries representing several cultural regions of Europe. By sharing knowledge, case studies, research results, and the methods applicable with TEL tools, lecturers can improve the diversity of their teaching approaches, adapt them to different learning scenarios and subjects according to the students' needs. This knowledge can contribute to the usage TEL based methodologies and more strategic and integrated use of TEL tools and create a continuous cultural exchange in virtual educational settings.

### Summary and conclusion

The European projects introduced in this study have had a great impact on generations of pre- and in-service teachers, their vision on Europe, methodological culture, and professional development. This approach is transmitted to their students during their teaching practice and career. This study has collected those examples and good practices that aimed at developing cooperation between European countries so that they could appreciate different cultures via learning from one another while developing common frameworks that could be used in their nationally, culturally, and linguistically diverse educational environments. Kecskemét College Teacher Training Faculty and its accessing institutions, Pallas Athene University, John von Neumann University Faculty of Pedagogy, were very active in developing and implementing programmes and projects that promoted multilingual and multicultural cooperation in educating the teachers of the future.

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# Intercultural curriculum design in early childhood education

Bajzáth, Angéla – Bereczkiné Záluszi, Anna  
– Darvay, Sarolta – Lehmann, Miklós

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The IECEC+ Project 2018-1-HU01-KA201-047763 (2018-2021) aims at strengthening collaboration among different European institutions working within (or in relation to) early childhood education (ECEC) settings. The general objectives of the project are to contribute to the integration of disadvantaged children and improve the quality of institutional education and care in early childhood. The immediate goal of the project was to learn about the intercultural competencies of professionals working in the field and to assess their training needs in the areas of early childhood education. The Italian, Spanish, Belgian, and Hungarian early childhood educators involved in the projects have gained experiences that can be incorporated into an inclusive early childhood education environment. Based on these experiences, a pilot training was designed and tested for improving early childhood educators' attitudes towards intercultural and inclusive practices. The effect of the pilot training was monitored by means of observational data. The IECEC project also aimed to study and make available successful experiences, good practices and innovative solutions.

*Keywords:* interculturalism, inclusion, ECEC, nursery

## Introduction

This article is intended to present the research and work of researchers from Eötvös Loránd University Budapest, Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education (ELTE TÓK) and early childhood education professionals at the Józsefváros Joint Nurseries (JEB) in the 8<sup>th</sup> district of Budapest. Within the framework of European Union-funded, Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnerships, the authors joined forces as a part of the project entitled, 'IECEC - Intercultural Early Childhood Education and Care: Curriculum Design for Professionals'. This initiative contributes toward ameliorating and broadening quality services and developing the knowledge and competency of early childhood educators while focusing on children with disadvantaged background and the fight against exclusion.

The project created a professional joint think tank with the aim of sharing practical experience that helps make the work of early childhood teachers both multidimensional and individual. The partners in the project are ELTE TÓK,

Galileo Progetti Nonprofit Kft. (Hungary), Józsefvárosi Egyesített Bölcsődék (Hungary), Università di Firenze (Italy), Arca Cooperative Sociale (Italy), Erasmus Hogeschool (Belgium). The participants prepared a comparative analysis of early childhood education in four countries: Hungary, Italy, Belgium, and Spain. In this article, we present some of the stages of this exciting and uplifting work that was conducted in a spirit of unifying both theory and practice. Deployed as part of a team effort in collaboration with the academic world, these efforts targeted problem analysis, multiculturalism, organisational development, and the establishment of professional communities oriented towards practice on the one hand, and the renewal of educational work in nurseries on the other.

Intercultural approaches are complex and multidimensional given that they not only involve a dynamic and interactive understanding of cultures and societies but also demand the processes of critical self-reflection regarding the concepts, beliefs, and practices related to cultural values and cultural diversity. The multifaceted dimensions of pluricultural societies and inter- and intracultural interactions requires developing a progressive, in-depth awareness of these interlinking and complex realities. Designing an intercultural curriculum for ECEC professionals requires different dimensions (both theoretical and practical in nature) and also requires provision of a sufficiently solid approach to the various aspects that are involved in intercultural theory and practice (Wagner et al., 2017).

In addition to this, educators need self-reflective and self-critical practices and a comprehension of the structural aspects that affect the biographical and everydayness dimension of the cultural subjectivities, including those of the educators themselves. It is important to avoid reducing interculturalism into a purely technical and abstract dimension<sup>1</sup>. To achieve these goals, we planned and tested a pilot training for ECEC professionals who are in contact with children under the age of three. Our partner in testing was The Józsefváros Joint Nurseries (Józsefvárosi Egyesített Bölcsődék, JEB) in Budapest's 8th district (known as Józsefváros) which operates under the auspices of the Local Government. The social composition of the population residing within the 8<sup>th</sup> district is rather heterogeneous and contains a mixture of highly skilled professionals and socio-cultural disadvantaged. The district is divided into eleven quarters. The architecture of the quarters is significantly different in that it features both modern and historic architecture, but also has slum of socially degraded housing stock. Neighbourhood population is a separate indicator in terms of housing status, educational attainment, and income.

In Hungary, parents can send their children to the nursery closest to their place of residence, a factor that allows researchers to view nurseries as a kind of 'cross-section' of a given quarter. In Józsefváros, the social situation of the families who send their children to the nurseries is different. JEB operates

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<sup>1</sup> The IECEC+ Project 2018-1-HU01-KA201-047763 aims at strengthening collaboration among different European institutions working within (or in relation to) ECEC settings. It has the objective of developing a new intercultural curricular program targeting ECEC practitioners and learners working at pluricultural contexts.

seven member nurseries, all found in different geographical locations in the district. These early childhood services can accommodate children who are from 20 weeks to three years in age. The environment is familiar and suitable for current professional requirements. As regards the characteristics of the care area, JEB provides professionally thoughtful, high-quality obligatory and voluntary services that focus not only on children under the age of three but also on their surrounding families through various programs. JEB also runs the Sure Start Children Centre (Józsefvárosi Biztos Kezdet Gyerekház). The Sure Start Children Centre's network strives for the social integration of children under the age of five who display sociocultural disadvantages and their families.

During our pilot training conducted within the framework of the 'IECEC Erasmus+ project', early childhood educators gained insights into the theory and practice of holistic thinking that emphasises the goals of environmental and social sustainability, the recognition and appreciation of aspects of environmental education in nursery schools, inclusion, child diversity, and freedom from exclusion.

Institutional provision of early childhood education and care is characterised by diversity, which includes the need for adaptable and flexible practices that reflect the needs and interests of children and families. An important institutional challenge is to create pedagogically 'rich' spaces that address the differences, similarities, and diversity of children and families (Silva et al, 2020).

From time to time, flexible and reflective practice requires a rethinking of the institution's built and natural environment (including spaces and materials) in a variety of ways that are flexible yet also reflect the value system of sustainability. In this paper, we will describe four of our project's main aims in examining: (1) early childhood spaces for intercultural education, their needs and requirements; (2) the role of literature in both caring for disadvantaged children and practicing intercultural education; (3) the design of a sustainable and green environment for inclusive education; and (4) art activities in support of the formation of cultural identity.

### **Nursery spaces – supporting intercultural education**

The project's theoretical background is based on the recognition that early childhood education makes the greatest contribution to later education and good learning outcomes, thereby helping children to achieve success in learning and social adaptation later in life. The American economist James Heckman won the Nobel Prize for his research showing that early support makes a significant contribution to children and young people's success in coping with the challenges they face in school and later in life. In other words, the development that occurs in a child's early years delivers the greatest return on investment. Other research confirms that children learn most between the ages of 20 months and three years. This is also an important finding in helping vulnerable and disadvantaged families (Silva et al., 2020).

Research is needed to identify and clarify which early interventions strengthen children's cognitive and affective skills. Children's language or



mathematical competences, their interactions with children and adults, their social relationships (social competences) as well as the ability to acquire and develop creative and artistic competences (for example through play) are all equally important areas. Children's learning and development must therefore be understood and supported from a broader perspective. Both the 2009 Eurydice report and the 2014 Eurydice/Eurostat Key Data report have shown that the quality of early institutional education has a positive impact on children's later school performance, social adaptation, and skills acquisition. Research clearly shows that high-quality early childhood education and care leads to significantly better performance that can translate into up to a one- or two-year advantage based on international tests of basic skills such as PISA and PIRLS.

Early childhood education's positive effects are particularly apparent among disadvantaged groups, including migrant and low-income families, for whom access to quality care can make a big difference in helping children lift themselves out of poverty and family dysfunction. Supporting children from different socio-cultural backgrounds in early childhood education is crucial for later learning outcomes. Early childhood education and care that complements the central role of the family has a deeper and more lasting impact than any subsequent intervention. A child's earliest experiences form the basis of all later learning; when a solid foundation is laid in the early years, later learning is more effective and more likely to continue throughout the child's life.

Early childhood is the period of life when education has the greatest impact on development and is most effective in reversing the effects of disadvantage. Research shows that poverty and family dysfunction are most closely associated with poor educational outcomes. By the age of three, large differences in cognitive, social, and emotional development can already be observed between children from affluent versus poor families; if not addressed separately, the differences tend to widen by the age of five (Bereczkiné Záluszi, 2017).

Learning environments have an impact on different learning experiences. The appropriate design of learning environments in early childhood education institutions influences children's later social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes. Together with the design of spaces in the nursery, the usage of appropriate colours and objects also influences children's learning and the processes of establishing and maintaining relationships with parents.

Any environment cannot be viewed as fixed, given that our circumstances are shaped by our social activities. The spaces we use have a significant impact on our quality of life, our behaviour, and our social relationships. Appropriate design of the built environment can also serve educational purposes by bringing people closer to their own living space and helping them better navigate their surroundings, for example. The aim of environmental education is to develop complex, creative learning based on action and experience.

As was mentioned previously, supporting children from different socio-cultural backgrounds in early childhood education is crucial for later learning outcomes. Early childhood education and care that complements the central role of the family has a deeper and more lasting impact than any subsequent intervention. A child's earliest experiences form the basis of all later learning.

If a solid foundation is laid in the early years, later learning is more effective and more likely to continue throughout an individual's lifetime. The design of learning environments in early childhood also influences later socialisation outcomes. The design of the spaces in the nursery determines both the learning of children and the way they interact and relate to their parents (Bereczkiné Záluski, 2018).

To study the optimal design for learning environments, we have created a joint course for Bachelor and Master students at the Faculty of Teacher Education and Early Childhood Education at ELTE and the Moholy-Nagy University of Arts and Design to create supportive nursery spaces<sup>2</sup>. We started from the belief that students in education would share what they know about early childhood learning with the arts and design students while future designers would gain and insight into designing spaces and objects geared toward weighing and meeting users' existing needs. In the long term, the course also aims to reduce the risk of early school leaving. We based this collaboration on the premise that, if our environments reflect the interaction of different cultures, then our environments also affect the way communities live together (Keszei et al., 2019; Kovács et al., 2019). Within the course, we identified four themes to be addressed: arrival, eating, hygiene-related tasks, and free play. For each of the four topics, we created small groups that were divided to include a mixture of student teachers and student designers working on a given topic. The course is led by one lecturer each from ELTE-TOK and MOME while a colleague from a nursery school provides professional, practical support.

The aim of the course is to support early childhood experience in the context of institutional education. The basic principle of the course is that later learning and creativity can only be effectively supported if the foundations for this are already established in early childhood education. The course aims to develop an innovative approach. During the course, teacher and design students will jointly design nursery spaces based on age-appropriate learning and experiential learning while using inter-professional learning methods to help students experience interdisciplinary learning and consciously design integration. In early childhood learning, it is important to design the classroom, including the equipment to be used, a consciously chosen selection of toys, and a deliberate array of colours and shapes. Providing optimal conditions for the external learning environment can contribute to the development of intrinsic motivation that meets personal needs. Through its exploration of early childhood learning and the design of learning environments, the course will allow students to gain experience in innovative learning environments and navigate their own research with confidence.

By working as a team, sharing their experience in design and pedagogy, and understanding and supporting each other, students will create learning environments that are inspiring to explore and safe to experience for young

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<sup>2</sup> The instructors of the course are Ákos Levente Lipóczy DLA Head of the Design Institute, Associate Professor, researcher, and creative learning expert; Angela Bajzáth PhD, Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education; our professional consultant, Erika Báder, Sure Start Children Center (Biztos Kezdet Gyerekház).

children. The results of the course will be shared with students from both universities and practitioner colleagues with whom the students have worked and consulted during the course of examining problematic issues.

### **Literature project in The Józsefváros Joint Nurseries in Budapest**

In Hungary, regulatory mechanisms support inclusion at the level of documents, but it is up to each institution to devise the way in which it is the most capable of implementing inclusion (Bajzáth, 2018, p. 35). The high quality and receptive early childhood education, covering everyone and available to anyone, obviously can only partly compensate for the disadvantages suffered in a family. For disadvantaged children it is only possible to achieve long-term, positive effects with a comprehensive strategy, working together with other initiatives of other policies (healthcare, housing, employment, etc.) (Darvay, 2018, p. 14). What sort of education arriving child receive at the institution is mainly up to the educator's level of motivation (Bajzáth, 2018, p. 28). It is very important that the professional staff at the nurseries keep abreast of the latest phenomena in children's culture, including paradigm shifts in children's literature and new experience techniques in methodology. When adequately prepared, staff can then create spontaneous situations that serve as a fertile ground for children's aesthetic receptivity. The way children relate to books and literature depends to a great extent on the experience-centeredness of literary education in educational institutions, the loving atmosphere they experience there, and the professional knowledge of early childhood educators. Naturally, the role of parents and the home environment is paramount in conveying the first literary experience, but for children attending nursery it is the early childhood educators' and caregivers' responsibility to select the best gems of literary culture for the nursery's daily program and present these in an emotionally rich manner, thereby allowing the aesthetic experience to unfold during daily activities.

Creating early literacy experience in response to children's needs and supporting literacy skills in a multi-faceted fashion as part of the daily routine requires an appropriate level of professional knowledge among educators who furthermore embrace new information. Young children's interest in algorithms in the internal and external world expressed in short rhythmic texts is conspicuous at an early age: they perceive and enjoy the cadence of lines in traditional nursery rhymes, songs and games, and verses that also stimulate them to move. Beyond poetic genres, the frequency of storytelling and the aesthetic quality of tales determine the intensity of interest in literature evolving in early childhood. Out of the many approaches to examining the genre of children's tales, it is mainly psychological studies that points to the fact that the symbolism of fairy tales and the attitudes of heroes coincide with children's view of the world. It can therefore be said that the motifs of fairy tales are in harmony with the process of children's psychological growth.

Educational research addresses the linguistic and cognitive development related to fairy tales and the role of fairy stories in developing social

competences. Psychologists, literacy researchers, and education professionals have paid increasing attention to the specific issue of how to counterbalance young children's time spent by visually centred acquisition of information by emotions-dominated, intimate literary experiences in institutional education. Thanks to the work of publishers and many dedicated editors, new children's books have been published in recent years. In the spirit of effectively supporting emerging literacy, the availability of new children's books and high-quality publications provide an impetus to literacy processes in early childhood. To support childhood emotions, it would be desirable to make these good publications available to the largest number of children.

There is a consensus in that appropriate literacy skills development and speech support in early childhood should use anthologies of children's literature that provide aesthetically rich material for a modern approach as well as for developing targeted motivations and experience techniques. In the Erasmus I.ECEC project, the staff of Józsefváros Joint Nurseries in Budapest collaborated with the lecturers at ELTE TÓK to focus on exploring the relationship of the family environment to culture while exploiting the multitudinous opportunities inherent to education arts. In the framework of ongoing self-training, early childhood educators contribute to enriching the literacy habits of families by offering a wide range of valuable pieces of literature and serving as positive examples. By involving parents in literary education, the loving atmosphere of active quality time spent with their children and the intimate moments shared at this time is further enhanced by the experience of absorbing the power of art.

As a further element in promoting literacy habits, the concept of the 'notebook project' was presented in workshops organised by the institutions. Early childhood educators and parents were invited to familiarise themselves with a set of nursery rhymes and poems that had been chosen based on professional recommendation. Participants then expressed their emotions in connection with the works in point intuitively, in a creative process. The steps of the creative process were the following: 1) Selection of favourite excerpts; 2) Justifying the choice; 3) Discussing different possible interpretations of the pieces; 4) Activation of the selected work's vocabulary by sharing impressions and experience; 5) Expressing the emotional imprint of the work using visual techniques. Not only did participants experience the strength of literature, they also received a model for creative self-expression and the realisation of art as a personal experience (Bereczkiné Záluszi, 2018, p. 89).

The next stage in the progression of the literature project was 'Literature notice boards to guide parents'. By recommending the best quality anthologies, children's periodicals, and websites for children's literature, nursery educators brought outstanding Hungarian and foreign books in the children's books market as well as experience-based methods of processing literature, and contemporary children's culture closer to families. Hand-made by the working groups, notice boards were mounted on the walls of the institutions for the information of parents. They contained specially labelled pockets with the printed words of the pieces spontaneously recited in the course of daily work.

In this way, traditional and contemporary nursery rhymes, children's poems written by classic and modern poets, the best pieces of Hungarian folk stories, and tales by contemporary authors were brought within easy reach of parents. The recommended excerpts represent the multifaceted nature of children's literature in our days and draw from a wide choice of works published by illustrious old as well as recently established publishers. The educators' choice contains an abundance of contemporary texts that are suitable for deepening the emotional relations forged between the adult and the child due to their aesthetic value and diversity (Bereczkiné Záluszi, 2018, p. 87). The message of the JEB project is that professional preparation and expertise in children's literature coupled with appropriate motivating techniques can multiply the literary experience of children aged 0-3.

### **The importance of the nursery environment in the process of intercultural education**

Education for sustainability should start in early childhood. Thus, nurseries for young children play a key role in shaping values, attitudes, skills, and behaviour. This formative experience in turn supports the achievement of social and environmental sustainability goals, such as interculturality, equity, compensation for social and health inequalities, and the use of natural resources (Davis & Gibson, 2006; Wells & Lekies, 2006). Institutional services for early childhood education and care are characterised by diversity, which includes the need for flexible practices ready for transformation that reflect the needs and interests of children and families. It is necessary for institutions to change with children and families, while exploiting the guiding principles and educational tasks that determine the identity of each service (Urban et al., 2012).

The institution is open to the diversity demanded by children and families, which is more important than ever for ECEC services in Europe (EU COM, 2019, C189/11.). It is the responsibility of the early childhood educator to evaluate and redesign the program of the institution, considering the needs of the children and families. An important institutional task is to create pedagogically 'rich' spaces that can deal with the differences, similarities, and diversity of children and families. Due to the age and psychological characteristics of young children, it is necessary to create safe spaces suitable for meeting the educational needs of children, e.g., offering 'stimulating action' versus 'no action' places where children can alternately play, relax or hide. Within a group room, thought must be given to designating 'we' and 'I' spaces, such as places where they can meet or gather in a small group, as well as individual spaces/places (table space, personalised bed, wardrobe, etc.). It is also necessary to create safe and hygienic spaces for care, e.g., the creation of 'care' spaces for bathing, eating, sleeping, relaxing (a place that is neither too noisy nor overly crowded, etc.). With their furniture, materials and colours, interior and exterior spaces become a learning tool that is useful for exploring the world and gaining experience. It is essential to design the service pedagogically, which includes care of the objects, the decoration of areas and

the choice of materials, thus creating coherence in the internal dimension of education (Silva, 2018).

Based upon needs and possibilities, it is necessary to create spaces for families, e.g. a sofa, corner, or even a separate room, where parents can sit and meet. From time to time, flexible and reflective practice necessitates a rethinking of the institution's built and natural environment, including spaces and materials that should be used in multiple, flexible ways while reflecting the values of sustainability. The Important basic values of education for environmental sustainability include a respect for life, care for and sense of community, harmony with living beings and the environment, creating harmony, protecting our environment, and our sense of responsibility for the future (which is already present in childhood). An important model comprises the formation of the nursery environment's ecological culture, a factor that must be established according to the principles of the entire institutional approach. The issue of environmental and social sustainability and its function in early childhood education is an important part of the basic program that must be incorporated into the institution's own professional protocol, including each element of the service, from the built and natural environment to all areas of institutional education work. While doing so, the physiological characteristics of early childhood must be taken into account. The defining task of early childhood education is to shape emotional attitudes, according to which children can be most encouraged primarily through adult models and through tales and games (Bereczkiné Zálászi, 2017).

Education for sustainability enables educators and children to promote responsibility, respect the natural environment, and be active participants in the opportunities offered by everyday life. Educators and children work together to learn about the environment, promote the sustainable use of resources, and develop and implement sustainable practices. The role of the educator is crucial in this process. Regular training should be provided to all employees (Salonen et al., 2018; Varga & Havas, 2018, Varga & Könczey, 2019).

It is the responsibility of educators to make sustainability education a part of everyday practice. For young children, education for sustainability ideally begins by learning about inanimate and living nature. However, in parallel with the growth of urbanisation and the development of technology, people have tended to lose their personal connection with nature. The relationship of nature in early childhood has changed, resulting in a change that means a lack of nature in most cases. Fewer and fewer children experience the phenomena and wonders of nature in their immediate vicinity. Education for environmental sustainability for young children ideally begins with learning about inanimate and living nature (Darvay et al., 2020).

Studies show that children who play in nature in their early childhood years are more likely to grow up environmentally conscious compared to other children. Further research suggests that children who meet the natural environment with family members and teachers are more likely to become nature-conserving, nature-respecting adults (Chawla, 2020). Out of curiosity comes learning, out of learning respect, and out of respect comes a commitment to nature and advocacy. In the formation and understanding of the human-nature relationship,

the direct experience of nature is crucial. Nature is important in all aspects for the development of children, whether intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually or physically. In recent decades, there has been a growing scientific interest in the impact of outdoor play and learning on a childhood development and the evolution of their relationship with nature. Especially in early childhood, playing in nature is important in developing creativity, problem solving, and the ability to develop emotionally and intellectually. The natural environment provides optimal learning opportunities for the development of age-appropriate cognitive processes. This realisation has encouraged designers, developers, and educators to change their modern built environment so that children can make a positive connection with nature. Unstructured, free play brings cognitive, social and health benefits to children. Numerous studies confirm the importance and positive impact of outdoor play and learning for all ages, but especially among young children (Dowdell et al., 2011; Lundy & Trawick-Smith, 2021).

The basic tenet of environmental psychology is the approach with which one views man and his environment in a system. The child's actions and behaviour take place in a physical environment that influences the events unfolding there and subsequently cannot be interpreted without one another (Düll, 2015). The nursery building and garden, as well as the spaces outside the institution, provide many opportunities for children to get closer to nature. Creating a natural environment and using natural materials is one way to create sustainability. Gardening in the herb or vegetable garden and composting provides an opportunity to involve children successfully. However, this is just one of many options in teaching sustainability.

For many years, the 'Green Nursery' program has been present in the daily environment of many Hungarian nurseries. By devoting special attention to environmental protection and environmental education, the aim of the program is to establish an environmentally conscious approach and forms of behaviour. Nursery professionals take significant steps to ensure that Hungary's extant, high-quality, recognised environmental education not only adheres to international standards but also forms one of the cornerstones of early childhood education.

The EU Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care is structured around five broad areas: access, staff, curriculum, monitoring and evaluation, and governance and funding. One of the basic principles of quality is to provide care that encourages participation, strengthens social inclusion, and accepts diversity (EU COM, 2019, C189 / 11). Nor can it be forgotten that, in the institutional system of early childhood education, i.e., the nursery, the priority is that the parents know their children to be as safe as possible in the institution, and that the parents have an equal partnership with the nursery.

### **Establishing cultural identity through art education**

It is commonly known that art is present in the environment of children from the earliest period. Rhymes and songs, for example, play an important role even in the period before language acquisition while pictorial representations shape the child's visual environment, first as still, then later moving images.

However, these elements are not only important for artistic inclusion or cognitive development (in terms of linguistic and visual cognition), but also determine the child's cultural environment while simultaneously contributing to the development of a central component of identity. In this regard the role of music as a joint activity is obvious (c.f. Frith, 1996) but other art forms have the same effect through their cultural and artistic tradition.

Stuart Hall (1997) describes this issue well when he examines how the process of cultural identity formation can be characterised and what kind of difficulties can appear. According to his theory, the cultural aspects of the emerging personality provide a connection between the inner world of the growing child and the external environment around him or her, and these traits are created because of cultural influences. Culture provides a wide range of symbolic tools (including tools related to language, communication through language, and other channels such as images, films or a wide variety of cultural products) that help the child develop his or her own identity. Such tools can be discovered everywhere in today's world and are present in the environment of young people, whether at home or in institutional education: children interact with these cultural products from an early age, and institutions and families seek to adapt them, according to the child's cognitive and affective development. Hall (1997) emphasises the concept of identity in sociological sense, which explains why culture and social practice play a prominent role in his theory. Based upon this perspective, identity unfolds during the interaction that occurs between the individual and society. As a result, identity has some internal centre, but the socio-cultural elements in the child's environment with which (s)he comes into contact have a decisive influence. Undoubtedly, childhood is the most sensitive period in this respect, therefore institutions involved in early childhood education have a definite impact in this process; it is also worth bearing in mind that the evolution of identity may continue throughout one lifetime as a result of subsequent new influences (Hall, 1997).

However, Hall (1997) also describes another interesting problem in his theory. In his view, the cultural diversity of present societies may be an obstacle to the formation of identity because the definite points of reference disappear to a large extent. Similarly, the effects of globalisation prevail against the socio-cultural attachments defined by tradition, both in the individual's micro and macro environment (Hall, 1997). With regard to young children, it seems possible that the diversity and complexity of the effects of the cultural environment make the initial formation of cultural identity uncertain in the early years. It is easy to see that in today's environment, symbolic tools and symbol sets are in constant motion, change, multiply significantly, and depend on the preferences of those involved in upbringing and education. However, it is useless to have a multitude of cultural products even if children are not yet able to choose from them properly – it can therefore be stated that the responsibility of educators increases greatly in this area. Thus, the flexibility that is ubiquitous in culture nowadays (both in offline and online environment, c.f. Goldman et al., 2008), is both an advantage and a disadvantage for education: it is an advantage for the educator to manage diversity and strengthen a sense of tolerance, but it is a disadvantage for children who are striving to construct their own cultural identity.



Without establishing a cultural identity, a significant factor in children's personality development becomes precarious. This uncertainty is indicated by Vivero and Jenkins (1999; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011) in the notion of 'cultural homeless', meaning children and young people who feel they do not have cultural identity and group attachment, yet would lay claim to both. The phenomenon occurs both among families who move frequently and children living in a multicultural community but can also be observed as a specific impact of the digital environment. Szabo and Ward (2015) write directly about an identity crisis at later ages, when cultural diversity constantly questions the system of beliefs, convictions, and commitments that are essential to fixing identity. It would be a mistake to condemn multicultural environment as an obstacle to personality development; the error is rather in its handling and in an excessive ethnocentric viewpoint. Regarding early childhood education, this problem may draw attention primarily to the special tasks of the educator – among other things, to the tasks that can be related to certain elements of art education.

The observations of the IECEC research made it possible to create accurate descriptions of the cultural-artistic aspects of the activities conducted by early childhood educators. The cultural elements used in some games and activities contribute to the strengthening of the children's cultural identity by means of art. In a community with several children from different cultural backgrounds, specific needs can be articulated in the field of cultural education. The results of the research highlight that joint art activities offer an opportunity for the emergence and strengthening of the individual cultural background, insofar as the educator has an encouraging effect on the acceptance of differences. It also applies that art education has a dual task: it needs to respect and strengthen individual cultural traits in personality, and at the same time facilitate the formation of common cultural traits through the group and community.

### Summary

The IECEC+ Project 2018-1-HU01-KA201-047763 aims at strengthening collaboration among different European institutions working within (or in relation to) ECEC settings and reaching the objective of developing a new intercultural curricular program addressed to ECEC practitioners and learners working at pluricultural contexts. The IECEC+ project attempts to provide an adequate basis for educators and other professionals working at ECEC institutions in the context of pluriculturalism. In highly diverse European societies, early schooling is crucial for the children and their families. This project not only aims at achieving a better understanding of intercultural needs at the ECEC level but also hopes to discover good practices to implement them in the IECEC curriculum addressed to education professionals and BA students from three European countries (Hungary, Italy & Belgium). The project has developed the Pedagogical Framework to have a more grounded basis in designing the curriculum<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> This project emerged out of the results obtained in our previous project (Erasmus KA2 Strategic Partnership MECEC+, 2016-1-HU01-KA201-022945) in cooperation with the Leadership of

Especially important for the rationale of this project is the social and economic contexts that some children and their families, due to their conditions as migrants or members of other cultural minorities, face in their daily lives. Such conditions often have future implications for their lives, and include for example early school leaving, poor working conditions, difficulties in residence or economic conditions, linguistic or administrative barriers, etc. (Council Recommendations C189/4, 2019; European Commission, 2014). Upon analysing the data presented in the Eurydice Report 2009 and Eurydice/Eurostat Key Data Report 2014 (European Commission, 2014), it becomes clear that having an appropriate early childhood education and care education is vital for future social and cognitive development in later years and that inadequate early childhood education has negative consequences for children (European Commission, 2014). As a result of our project, we were able to outline a complex framework within which ECEC services can (1) design proper environments that are inspiring to explore and safe to experience for young children; (2) introduce motivating and inclusive tasks by means of children's literature; (3) shape a sustainable and green environment for inclusive education; and (4) shape and strengthen children's cultural identity through inclusive art activities.

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# Developing cultural awareness in Ethics in Hungary

Fenyődi, Andrea

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In Hungary, the 2012/13 academic year saw the introduction of Ethics [etika], a newly designed subject, into the national curriculum for primary education. Aiming to promote learners' understanding of individual and social values by means of its subject-matter covering major aspects of the world of human relations, Ethics both directly and indirectly teaches about culture. This paper gives an insight into the character and implementation of the subject while presenting some practical ideas regarding how to develop primary children's cultural awareness. My analysis contends that the weekly Ethics lesson accomplishes this goal by providing a discursive approach for students to reflect on their personal experience or any knowledge gained in other school subjects. Students can form and express their opinions about news, current events, human behaviour or analyse their own personal dilemmas or genuine conflicts. The variety of the methodological tools promotes learning about culture both implicitly and explicitly from a young age while enabling learners to practise the skills that are needed for displaying cultural sensitivity.

*Keywords:* primary education, Ethics, morality, culture, methodology

## A short history and description of the subject

### *The implementation of Ethics*

As a new academic subject, Ethics was introduced into Hungarian public education in September 2013. The Public Education Act of 2011 had decided on creating and starting a new subject of moral development under the name of 'Morality' [Erkölcstan] for forms 1-8 in lower and upper primary schools. The subject was to be taught to children who favoured it, as it was optional to choose either 'Morality' or 'Religion and morality' [Hit- és erkölcstan]. The latter was a new subject, too, and it was the responsibility of churches and denominations both to provide teachers and decide on the aims and content for this subject. Throughout the schoolyear, one lesson per week was incorporated in the timetable for either of the subjects. Prior to this introduction, the study of Ethics [Etika] and Human Studies [Emberismeret és etika] had been present in the local curricula of primary schools as optional one-term modules usually held in the seventh year.

The main objectives and the basic content of the new subject were defined by the National Core Curriculum published in 2012. Issued at the end of 2012, the framework curricula were then expanded to elaborate the subject-matter



and various pedagogical details, such as the principles and approaches of teaching, suggested methods, and the special attributes of the subject. The targeted stages of development and the units of content were arranged in a system of two-year cycles. Subsequently, a significant change was carried out by a certain modification of Public Education Act 2012, when the name of the subject was replaced by 'Ethics' in 2015<sup>1</sup>. This fact may indicate the uncertainty and ambivalence that had surrounded the new implementation: the words 'morality' or 'moral' might have aroused anxiety in many educators and parents who had presumably supposed that the subject aimed at enouncing moral judgements or truths to students while the word 'ethics' had more connotations of discussion. Nonetheless, the new name was also criticised, especially when the subject content was contrasted with the subject-matter of ethics as a branch of philosophy. Many educators expected the two to be alike, however, Ethics incorporated 'too much' of personal, life management, or mental hygiene issues. As a matter of fact, it is important to assert that this subject neither is classical ethics, nor pure morality or human studies: it is special in terms of content. Although its main focus is on various ethical issues and aspects of human behaviour, it also incorporates some topics that have appeared in other subjects with either less emphasis or not at all. Therefore, the weekly Ethics lesson provides an opportunity for students to reflect on any knowledge they have gained in other school subjects. They can also form and express their opinions about news, current events they have heard of, or people's behaviour, and have the opportunity to analyse their own personal dilemmas or even real conflicts. The introductory part of the framework curricula – which is referred to as 'recommendation' – offers a wide range of teaching methods and techniques to enhance the core activities of the subject, which are reflection and discussion.

Naturally, in the system of educational objectives, numerous classical moral principles and values appear. However, these are regarded as social and pedagogical values, which might be viewed as the optimal forms of attitude and behaviour of human coexistence. As Pálvölgyi (2009) categorised them, these include the protection of life (helpfulness, empathy, courage), respect for human dignity (trust, tolerance, acceptance), the protection of communities (responsibility, love, care), the administration of justice and freedom (decision-making power, self-determination, self-assertion), striving for harmony (activity, creativity, open thinking), the protection of intellectual and material goods (honesty, moderation). According to the 2012 framework curricula, the teaching methods and techniques (such as games, structured debates, project work, research, role play, creating group rules, applying communication techniques) also help students understand the core values of human society and identify with them, develop self-knowledge and attentiveness towards the others, deepen the knowledge and understanding of the world.

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<sup>1</sup> See Act LXV of 2015 on Modification of Act CXC of 2011 on Public Education [2015. évi LXV. törvény a nemzeti köznevelésről szóló 2011. évi CXC. törvény módosításáról. 17§ 10., 28. Magyar Közlöny, 2015/77, 6917–6926]

### *Learner-centred approach*

The recommendation was a significant part of the curricula. Not only did it describe the methodology of teaching Ethics, but it also presented a definite learner-centred educational approach that is determined by some essential attributes. These grew from the constructivist epistemological theory, infant developmental psychology, and moral psychology. In this regard, learners of all ages are considered as partners who observe, interpret, ask questions, and take an active part in shaping their own knowledge. As the framework curricula 2012 put it<sup>2</sup>:

The aims of the development are to enrich the meanings of the moral categories determining the person's behaviour year by year, to experience and reflect on moral values at an age-appropriate level, and to rearrange the new knowledge if necessary. This all has to be based on personal experience, reflections, and the opinion-forming of the learners. [A fejlesztés célja a magatartást meghatározó erkölcsi kategóriák jelentéstartalmának évről évre való gazdagítása, az életkornak megfelelő szinten való megtapasztalása, tudatosítása, illetve szükség szerinti újrendezése. Mindennek személyes tapasztalatokon, reflexiókon és véleményalkotáson kell nyugodnia.] (para. 8)

The subject does not regard learners as recipients of statements, but as active – thinking, asking, pondering, trying, arguing – participants in the learning process. [Az erkölcsstan a tanulókra nem közlések befogadóiként, hanem a tanulási folyamat aktív – gondolkodó, kérdező, mérlegelő, próbálkozó, vitatkozó és útkereső – résztvevőiként tekint.] (para. 9)

Since moral education begins in early childhood within the family, then continues in kindergarten and expands through more and more influences from the environment – including peer groups or the media –, children do not enter the school as a 'blank slate,' either on the first day or later. They all bring their extant moral order, which can be more or less explicit by this time. [Mivel az erkölcsi nevelés már kisgyermekkorban, a családban elkezdődik, majd az óvodában és egyre táguló környezeti hatások között folytatódik – ideértve a kortársi csoportokat és a médiát is –, a gyerekek sem az első napon, sem pedig a későbbiekben nem „tisztalapként” lépnek be az iskola kapuján. Valamilyen ösztönösen és/vagy tudatosan már meglévő erkölcsi rendet hoznak magukkal.] (para. 10)

It can be understood that the curricula attempted to intertwine the social and personal aspects of morality, thereby bringing it closer to young learners while emphasising its everyday function and importance, too. As values, beliefs and knowledge are always individual and it is the individual who makes judgement or decision, self-reflection and self-development are essential parts of development.

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<sup>2</sup> In the paper, the excerpts from Hungarian educational documents have been translated by the author. Since these official, legal documents have not been translated into English, the Hungarian original has also been provided.

### *Structure of the content and methodology*

The content of Ethics originates from Human and moral studies, which, before 2013, would have been a subject module in the upper-primary grades. This subject had been developed by István Kamarás et al. in the 1990s, who called it a Hungarian pedagogical innovation (Géczi & Kamarás, 2007; Kamarás, 2013). In the framework curricula 2012, the topics were structured upon six main themes: first the focus is on the individual, the self (1st), then moves to the peers and personal relationship (2nd), next to groups and communities (3rd), then it shifts to society, nations, cultural communities, and the humanity (4th), next to the living and non-living world (5th), and in the end, to human thinking and the spiritual world (6th). The central questions for each field are: what is my relationship with them? What do I know and think of them? How do I interpret them? What questions do I have about them? The authors of the framework curricula had taken the challenge to formulate the detailed content in questions, for instance ‘How can I express if I love someone?’, ‘What connects the members of my groups?’, ‘What is the reason for regarding someone an outsider?’, ‘How can I contribute to the preservation of the values of nature and wildlife?’ As was mentioned before, these main units were organised in a system of two-grade cycles, in which all the six foci appear in every pair of years, partly through the same questions (e.g. ‘What is love? What is friendship?’ – theme 2); mostly with different questions, which help students elaborate and extend the previously gained knowledge (‘For what purposes do we use objects?’/ ‘Why is technology being developed?’/ ‘What benefits and dangers can we meet when using technology?’ – theme 5; ‘Why are we curious about the world?’/ ‘To what extent can we explore the world?’ – theme 6).

The importance of this approach and this structure – which is referred to as a ‘spiral system’ – is that educators can tailor the general content to the interests and needs of different age and study groups. On the one hand, the recurring questions will presumably generate more and more elaborate answers as children get older and more experienced. On the other hand, the alternating questions within one topic can introduce more complex issues and aspects of the world. As a result, *flexibility* appears as one of the essential teaching principles in the curricula, so that teachers can reorganise the topics of the curriculum or the syllabus if, for example, some interesting, challenging or current issue arises. This may happen even during a pre-planned lesson, in which case the teacher is advised to switch the focus of learning to that question.

Although the value of this approach is that it is remarkably learner-centred, it also requires an advanced level of proficiency in methodology on the part of the educators. In other words, the educator must be ready to plan flexibly and be open to and interested in learners’ ideas. The curricula also emphasises that a change is needed in the teacher’s role: it is recommended that they ‘step back’, and, instead of controlling the process of teaching, they facilitate learning by providing interesting materials, challenging issues, and questions. Their voice, their answers to the questions, their opinion about controversial topics are not



the 'correct answer' or 'the truth' but a part of the group's debate. To enable this type of approach, the teacher and students must coexist in a friendly, trustful atmosphere in class; by its very presence, this kind of an atmosphere can simulate a more effective and respectful way of human cooperation.

### *Alterations in 2020*

To summarise the history of the subject described so far, it can be stated that the new subject was created in 2012, as its main characteristics were established in this year's educational documents. By 2018, the coursebooks for all the eight forms of primary school had been developed and issued and the content and tasks these publications included represented the aforementioned principles. However, as a result of changes in education policy, a new National Core Curriculum and framework curricula were issued in 2020, in which minor alterations in focus and content structure were carried out. The documents kept the system of content with the six main themes and the spiral structure, and more emphasis was given to the role of the family, personal emotions, Hungarian traditions, and Christianity. Nevertheless, the pedagogical approach has become different in some significant aspects: it lost some of its discursive nature, content diversity, and, what is more, the idea of the thinking, asking, exploring, self-reflecting child is less apparent. The language used in parts of the framework curricula 2020 reveal this:

The basic goal of the subject Ethics is to form and stabilise individual and community identity; to create cooperation between individuals and groups. This process is helped by presenting the moral principles rooted in cultural traditions, social rules, and developing socio-emotional skills. [Az etika tantárgy alapvető célja az egyéni és közösségi identitás formálása, stabilizálása, az egyének és a csoportok közti együttműködés megteremtése. Ehhez járulnak hozzá a kulturális hagyományokban gyökerező erkölcsi elvek, társas szabályok megismertetése, az egyén gondolkodásában formálódó, a szocio-emocionális készségek fejlesztése.] (para. 1)

In this curriculum, the primary goal is emotional and moral education, through which it is essential to form children's beliefs and have them act for the consolidation of their conscientious behaviour. [Ebben a tantervben elsődleges az érzelmi, érzületi nevelés, a morálfejlesztés, amely során a gyermekek cselekedtetése, meggyőződésének formálása elengedhetetlenül szükséges a lelkiismeretes magatartás megszilárdulása érdekében.] (para. 19)

This might seem a step back to a more teacher-centred way of education, as if the teacher were indispensable for the children to understand and accept human values. This idea, in fact, is expressed in the National Core Curriculum 2020: 'Every student needs help and guidance implemented with a pedagogical attitude that promotes development, especially the development of social skills and thinking skills.' [Minden tanulóknak a fejlődést segítő pedagógiai attitűddel megvalósított segítségnyújtásra, iránymutatásra van szüksége, különösen a társas képességek és a gondolkodási készségek fejlesztéséhez.] (p. 361)

However, the documents also refer to the importance of learners' individual knowledge and attitudes, recommend using cooperative techniques in class and mention the debate as a basic method of development, as it is expressed in the National Core Curriculum (2020):

Ethics, by its very nature, is also interpretive, and different opinions about facts necessarily result in debates. [Az etika természete szerint értelmező jellegű is, a tényekről alkotott különböző vélemények szükségszerűen vitákat eredményeznek.] (p. 359)

The applied pedagogical methods and techniques create such conditions that let students wonder at phenomena in the world, ask questions, justify their own opinions, and listen to the opinions of others. Among the modes of work, cooperative group work, individual and group project tasks play an important role. [Az alkalmazott pedagógiai módszerek olyan feltételeket teremtenek, amelyek lehetővé teszik, hogy a tanulók rácsodálkozzanak a jelenségekre, kérdezzenek, igazolják saját véleményüket és meghallgassák mások véleményét.] (p. 361)

The subject ... provides conceptual tools and skills development opportunities for them to examine and construct their identity and world view. [A tantárgy ... a tanulóknak készségfejlesztési lehetőségeket és fogalmi eszközöket biztosít ahhoz, hogy megvizsgálják, felépítsék identitásukat, világszemléletüket.] (p. 361)

### *Culture in Ethics*

As will be described in detail, culture is a naturally related focus in Ethics and can be examined by means of various topics at different levels. The framework curricula 2020 list the sixth theme as 'The impact of European culture on the values of the individual'. This unit covers the discovery and interpretation of the moral values in Hungarian and European culture, partly through traditional stories, customs or rites, partly in everyday life.

However, all the aforementioned changes in the educational documents have certainly affected the content and objectives as regards teaching about culture and developing learners' cultural awareness. Unlike the preceding curricula, in this case neither the concepts of 'diversity', 'multiculturalism' or 'plural cultural identity' nor those of 'coexisting cultures', 'migration' and 'inclusion' are referred to. Belief, religion, and churches are a highlighted issue in both 2012 and 2020 curricula; while the first introduced the major world religions, the second narrows the topic to Christian religions.

The same year the second curricula appeared, the state publisher of the coursebooks started to revise the Ethics textbooks. In these new editions, the altered pedagogical approach can be seen even more clearly: the pictures and the texts show less diversity; the number of questions and cases to discuss was reduced, and the amount of informative and evaluative text was raised instead. The effect of these changes is that the coursebooks provide fewer opportunities for learners to study the heterogeneity of cultural aspects or the variegation of human thinking. For these reasons, in this paper, as examples of developing cultural awareness through Ethics, we will present some extracts taken from Ethics coursebooks which were accredited to the 2012 curricula.

## *Culture and cultural awareness*

### *The concept of culture*

It might be claimed that *culture* is one of the most controversial concepts in terms of definitions. The various interpretations of the concept emerged from human history, as it was going through its own evolution. The aspects of 'high culture' and 'low' or 'mass' culture, or the 'visible' culture (artefacts, buildings, customs) and 'invisible' culture (ideas, beliefs, habits) are combined in definitions. The word has a connotation of 'perfectness' (Arnold, 1869), that is to say, culture is something that raises human above nature and immorality. It also evokes the notion of society, and the power that a growing, organised community of people can gain. In history, mostly the prosperous and dominant societies have been referred to as 'cultures,' the ones that developed socially and intellectually, and also managed to acquire the resources for artistic development. These interpretations of culture mostly refer to the 'high' aspect, however, they also helped justify the oppression or misuse of other societies. As more egalitarian perspectives started to spread in the 20th century, the meaning of *culture* broadened and came to embrace the everyday aspects of the life of socially lower classes (Williams, 1958/2014), or traditional individual communities (Geertz, 1972), as well. The new comprehensive view corresponds to one of the classic definitions developed by anthropologist Tylor (1871/1891), who states that 'Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society' (p. 1). Adaskou, Britten and Fahsi (1990) summarised the content of culture and divided it into four categories, which are aesthetic, sociological, semantic, and pragmatic senses. Aesthetic sense includes art, literature, media; sociological sense refers to interpersonal relations, organisations, habits, traditions; semantic sense refers to the special context and concepts; and pragmatic sense covers social, linguistic, and paralinguistic skills for successfully contacting and communicating with others. This system incorporates almost all elements of the human environment and suggests how difficult it can be for a person to explore and understand not only his or her own culture but to learn another one. A further assumption that makes learning complicated is that a culture one lives in and belongs to is, in fact, a blend of cultures existing in parallel or within each other, if we consider, for example, different subcultures.

Tylor (1871/1891) also claimed that culture can be researched and understood on general principles, and, despite the fact that he believed in 'lower tribes' and 'higher nations' (p. 1), he points to the similar features of any culture. This thought could be a step towards the presumption that, if diverse human cultures share common basic features, there can be one human culture, the roots of which go back tens of thousands of years in ancient history. This idea became supported in the twentieth century, as findings of research in anthropology, evolutionary psychology, social psychology, also human and animal ethology outlined the fundamental attributes of human thinking and

behaviour, which had been going through evolutionary development and selection (see, for example, Trivers, 1971; Pinker, 1997; Csányi, 1999) and can serve as the frame of particular cultures. By means of either experience or education (i.e., taught by some expert), a person can recognise that there can be various habits or responses from other people to the same functions, but beyond that he or she can also understand that elements and functions are the same in different cultures.

When viewing it from the cognitive-constructivist perspective, *culture* is not some visible, perceivable, discrete object in the world, but rather a mental construct of each individual, a representation of the human environment they live in, a kind of knowledge. Like many types of knowledge, cultural knowledge can be very practical: it helps to find the appropriate and successful ways of behaviour. A person's familiarity with routines, habits, special meanings of words, visual or audial symbols saves time and energy because it provides information to predict others' behaviour, supposing, of course, that their knowledge and intentions are similar in given circumstances. Naturally, this also means that culture is a social construct because people must observe one another's behaviour, listen to one another, and interpret what they see and hear. Based upon this input, individuals can start to adjust their concepts to approach those held by others. When assumptions and expectations are confirmed by others' actions, this familiarity is complemented by a positive and relaxed attitude. That is why a person is lost and frightened when predictions do not work: culture shock is a threat that our survival is not safe. Liddicoat & Scarino (2013) interpret the notion on an even more complex level:

Culture in such a view is not a coherent whole, but a situated process of dealing with problems of social life. Cultures are thus to open to elements that are diverse and contradictory, and different interpretations may be of the same events by individuals who may be considered to be from the same culture. (p. 29)

The multiple nature of culture – simultaneously stative and dynamic, general and diverse – elicits several questions, such as those of how many cultures may exist, how many of these can a person belong to, how these cultures are related to one another, and if it is possible to separate or categorise the cultures of different societies, nations, nationalities, communities. Attempts have been made to define these abstract, complex, individually perceived, but socially learnt concepts on the basis of some attributes. These interpretations generate controversies and constant debates. One reason for this might be the endeavour to apply the classical (ancient Greek) theory of categorisation, which requires clear conditions to define a category and decide if someone/something is a member or a non-member, although it does not seem to work in case of such complex and implicit notions like culture. It might be worth opting for other theories, for instance the prototype theory, which allows more differences between members (Evans & Green, 2006). However, since the prototype is an 'ideal' or abstract example of the category, which is judged by the individual to have the most typical features, it can easily turn into a stereotype.

The aforementioned questions also become relevant when it comes to teaching and learning about cultures. Some practical implications – which are present in the methodology of Ethics, as well – are the following: complex concepts are not defined by the educators, but rather discussed with the learners for a longer period of time, so that students will have enough time and stimulus to bring to light their explicit knowledge and revise and reconsider their knowledge while learning new issues or understanding others' views. Definitions are not developed only in verbal statements – especially with young learners – but through exemplary situations, similes and metaphors, mind maps, or discussing contradicting beliefs. Using these techniques leads to a second level of learning, i.e., learners can understand the complex nature of both the concepts and human thinking. What is more, this flexible approach can not only teach learners that culture exists in diversity but also that it is neither timeless, static nor perfectly coherent. Subsequently, a culture can change or be changed.

### Figure 1

*Exploring and defining concepts*



A part of the revision unit of Theme 4. The large, detailed picture offers various tasks. Students can choose a situation, describe or dramatise it, and reflect upon it. They can define, explain the words given (community, culture, nationality), or connect the words to the elements of the illustration (Year 6, p. 28). Another example of exploring and enriching various concepts is the task type in which some fictional characters discuss different issues. In the eighth year, in Theme 4, the characters in the book talk about what it means to be a Hungarian. Students compare and reflect on these ideas, and, if they want, form their own expression of identity.

### *Cultural awareness and related terms*

However perplexing it is to define culture or understand its nature, in everyday life we realise the impacts of cultural differences. In fact, this realisation has become a principal issue in the latest decades. As a result of globalisation and a growing human population, many cultures have advanced towards one another and must now coexist within one place or institute. Similarly, *cultural diversity* is also considered a value which should be preserved, and each cultural community has the right to keep their culture. As the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) states:

As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations of international peace and security ... The defence of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity. (p. 4)

In the same document, the international organisation also offers an 'action plan' (pp. 6–7) in which the role of education and teacher education is emphasised in raising 'an awareness of the positive value of cultural diversity'.

Like many terms that are used in several professions and public discourse, *cultural awareness* has slightly different meanings. Fong et al. (2016) state that it is understanding the self's own cultural values, preferences, characteristics, and seeking to learn about those of the others while also considering how the two might affect the relationship. The terms 'cultural competence', 'cross-cultural competence', 'intercultural competence' or 'cultural sensitivity' refer to different models, most of them comprise a three-dimensional structure of beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Byram (1997) describes *intercultural competence* as 'Knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviours; and relativizing one's self' (p. 34). Tennekoon (2015) analyses Byram's five-factor model (1997) as (1) the attitude factor involves the ability of revitalisation, curiosity and openness; (2) knowledge is about knowing the social practices of the self and the others; (3) the ability to interpret, explain and relate contents from different cultures; (4) the skills of discovery, the ability to go into and learn from cross-cultural interactions; (5) critical cultural awareness to evaluate one's own and other cultures. Bennet (1993) describes the process from one's being 'ethnocentric' (the individual's culture is the central world view) to being 'ethnorelative' (the individual's culture is one of many equally valid world views), and its stages are denial, defence, minimalization, acceptance, adaptation, integration.

To improve cultural awareness in primary education, it is important to deal with the three aspects: learners' attitude, skills and knowledge. Knowledge and skills might be regarded as less demanding to improve than attitudes. Learners' abilities needed for being culturally sensitive, such as reflection, self-reflection, effective communication and understanding, critical thinking, evaluation, perspective-taking, or empathy are developed in many fields of education. As for enriching knowledge about culture, educators can provide plenty of topics and facts to present, by means of which students can gain familiarity with the unknown. When the similar features of differing cultures are highlighted, the general features of human culture can be recognised and welcomed as well-known. Although one might view attitudes as the most challenging aspect to change, it can be assumed that broadening knowledge, deeper understanding, positive examples, and growing familiarity with the matter will affect learners' attitudes, too.

### *Developing learners' cultural awareness*

In this section, a short overview will be presented regarding how learners' cultural awareness can be developed in Ethics. This field can be roughly divided into three parts according to content and aims. First, as most of the content of the 2012 curricula was taken from subject Human and moral studies, which teaches about the general attributes of human as a species, we can claim that students become indirectly acquainted with *human cultural universals* throughout the entire course of learning. (This content has become more significant since 2020, when the study of prehistoric times was completely left out of History education in public education. This decision is unfortunate because while dealing with this topic, students can understand that all humans belong to one species that has developed its peculiar characteristics over its long history, such as language and thinking abilities, social predispositions, or the capacity for innovation.) Furthermore, as learners study the dynamics of the common cultural elements and the differences, they also learn about the multiple layers of culture and get prepared for meeting or recalling experiences about subcultures.

In the second field, culture is presented explicitly when students discover and reflect on numerous elements and aspects of some national, ethnic, or religious cultures. The educational goal is to help learners strengthen their cultural identities and understand the cultural environment they live in more deeply. However, some problems and dangers might arise here, as every participant experiences his or her cultural identity in his or her own way, therefore 'familiar' and 'strange' elements are not the same in a study group. Moreover, it can be as difficult to explore and reflect upon one's own culture so as to avoid stereotyping a culture that one does not belong to. Teaching can be more successful if the topic is personalised, that is to say, learners share some experiences and reflections on the cultural aspects of their lives, like family habits, religious and ethnic customs. However, because of the required protection of sensitive personal information, these topics should be treated with great care.

The third way that aims at cultural sensitivity is developing different skills and attitudes of learners. The recommended methods and techniques, for instance structured debates, association games, picture interpretations, case analysis, role play, and the following reflective discussion not only reveal the diversity of ideas and attitudes, emotions, but have learners practise how to deal with them effectively. The teacher can promote this with comments like: 'What an interesting thought, that hasn't occurred to me' or 'I notice you interpret this word a little differently'. Besides this, empathy can be developed through emotional involvement of students – for example when they read or dramatise stories –, and with tasks that require changing perspectives. Acquiring more and more information about a problem can support learners' critical thinking, but also can affect their emotional commitment to an issue.

A special way in which culture appears in the subject is when the students' task is to create a fictional community and describe how it works. The product of this project displays the cultural elements, values, and symbols that learners consider important and decide on by agreement. This imaginary cultural

community can be 'the ideal school,' a group of settlers on an uninhabited island, a family, or even the first human community on a Mars expedition.

**Figure 2**

*Creating and describing a community*



'The Mars colony' is a complex, whole-year project, in which students in groups design the preparations, the choice of travellers, the rules and principles of living together. They also imagine the development of separated communities, which live according to slightly different rules for some time (Year 8, p. 89). In upper classes, each book offers a longer, continuous, creative project suiting to the main themes of the year, for example a structured tale about a royal family, a story about young people's time-travelling, 'snapshots' of the life of a family.

In the next paragraphs, some examples will be described to present the aforementioned ideas. The tasks are taken from Ethics coursebooks published between 2013 and 2018.

*Aim 1: to recognise the diversity of thinking*

When playing various association games, children observe that they can react to the same thing or phenomenon in several ways. After the game, in the reflective phase, the teacher can ask what the reason might be for different responses. For example, when children are asked to choose an animal they would like to become and give reasons for the choice, their answers display different background experiences. The task also helps learners bring their implicit experiences or ideas to the surface.

When associating about images, learners are asked to describe what comes to their mind about a picture, what emotion it evokes in them, or how they interpret what is happening in the picture. While doing so, the group will meet a significant number of differences. It is extremely important that the teacher be open to receiving any answer and not suggest that he or she is expecting a 'correct' or preferred one.



**Figure 3**  
*Reflecting on pictures*



A task from unit 'Trust and help', Theme 2. Children are asked to interpret the situation in the picture and then suggest an action to help the people. Although one aim is to develop their empathy, some learners might express refusal or negative feelings, e.g. 'Why should I help her? She must be clumsy.' 'Why does he think he can move that pile?'. This is the moment when the teacher – instead of 'highlighting what is morally right' – should ask for more opinions to develop a debate among the learners in order that the moral decision can be understood and supported (Year 1, p. 31).

Talking about and comparing students' personal preferences in one group is a natural situation and recognisably strengthens their self-knowledge and tolerance towards one another. However, children should never be forced to utter these self-reflective thoughts in public: they have to have the right to 'pass' in answering. Even certain instructions in the books include the sentence: Share your answers with others only if you want to. Older children are advised to keep a diary in which they can contemplate the issues of the lesson on their own.

Even young learners can design and conduct interviews or questionnaires with each other or people outside the classroom (school staff, family members, etc.). When they summarise and present the data, they will see the divergence or convergence of answers. Various graphic organisers are displayed in the coursebooks to help students visualise the results.

Older students (over the age of 11) can be given some media content to analyse how different sources express their views about the same matter. It can be difficult for the teacher to choose this content, as the style, language, attitude, and statements range from calm and logical to illogical and aggressive. Even so, as children might meet this language and content every day in the media, interpreting them critically is indispensable.

**Figure 4***Reflecting on media content*

A section of a long dialogue among three characters on a fictional social media platform. One of the girls is verbally bullied by another, while the third tries to protect her<sup>6</sup>. These invented situations can include elements of real-life events (Year 5, p. 142)

### *Aim 2: to learn about learners' culture more deeply*

In lower primary forms, the first topic which focuses on this aim is usually 'the place where we live' (Theme 4), because children in the class can have direct and shared experiences. For example, if they live in the same settlement, they can make a map upon which they mark their favourite places. They can create a brochure or an events calendar by searching the town's website for information. These tasks can be included in a longer project for groups; in order to work successfully, students will need to discuss and agree on their ideas intensively.

In Ethics, it is also recommended to invite external guests to present their special knowledge. Upper classes can visit outside places and programs, such as public forums and civic actions. While the previous task focuses on the 'familiar', this stage incorporates a lot of 'new' information.

**Figure 5**  
*Identifying some elements of Hungarian culture*



A frequently used task is to identify the unique elements of Hungarian culture, some of which can be stereotypical. However, if children are asked to present them to a foreigner – explain what they are, why they are important, in what way they are special –, the task gets more depth and gives more motivation (Year 5, p. 92). In year 8, students read about ‘hungarikum’ (i.e. special Hungarian values that are officially qualified and registered), and they suggest more that they would like to be registered. Similarly, through the topic of ‘protected heritage sites’, Theme 4, learners can make their preferences, gain knowledge, strengthen bonds of cultural identity, and, in addition, the institute of World Heritage shows them that we are also part of a larger culture.

**Figure 6**  
*Identifying and understanding some elements of the Hungarian language*



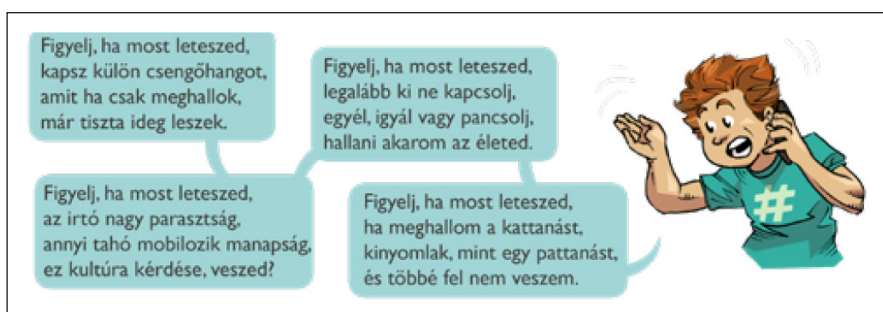
Language is a great tool to explore the elements, structure, or diversity of a culture. This short matching task can indicate that the native language can incorporate loanwords as the native culture integrates new elements (Year 4, p. 17). When discussing the changes of language, the differences in style or slang can help learners understand that culture is always diverse in the present as it was throughout its history. An amusing task for children is to write sentences which are hard to understand for older generations, and the next task is to explain the meanings.

This aim can be supplemented with building the concept of *culture* in general, mostly in an indirect way. As culture includes almost every aspect of life, it is a rich field to explore: learners can search for and reflect upon artefacts, customs, clothes, food, buildings, everyday objects by observing pictures, videos, having

interviews, reading stories, writing articles, etc. They can compare differences and changes appearing in the course of time. Similarly, learners can be asked to invent new elements of culture: a custom, an object or a design in order to understand that culture is changing and changeable. On the other hand, students can notice that some cultural phenomena can be negative, harmful, or morally unacceptable, especially in the realm of behaviour and social interactions. Educators can present fictional or real events, cases, problems, and children can evaluate the participants' behaviour, or debate the solutions to the problems. At a higher level of critical and self-reflective thinking, students can reflect upon satirical, even stereotypical writing and drawings, or they can read about how foreigners see the students' culture.

### Figure 7

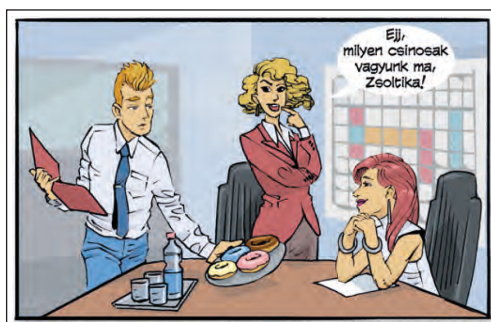
*Literature as a source of ethical issues*



Classical and contemporary literature is a great source of events, problems or characters for Ethics. The coursebooks and teachers' supplementary resources contain numerous poems from modern children's literature, most of which are written about children's life in children's language. In this poem by the contemporary poet, János Lackfi, both the exaggerated style and the content can stimulate a discussion about what behaviour is appropriate in the course of a phone conversation (Year 6, p. 63).

### Figure 8

*Reflecting on satirical visual art*



A provocative cartoon depicting gender inequalities and workplace harassment. The caption says: How pretty you are today, Johnny! Students are asked to analyse the picture and imagine the genders of the characters vice versa. Then they discuss if the situation is acceptable in any

case. Cartoons are a great device to show special, sometimes extreme events, and the characters' postures, faces or movements, also the circumstances can be well-presented. It is easier for students to dramatise the case. The Internet is also a rich source of this type of visual art (Year 7, p. 59).

### *Aim 3: to learn about double or multiple cultural identity*

People belonging to ethnic minorities of a country, or living in two countries alternately can be in a special situation if they experience a natural blend of two or more cultures, while members of the majority might want to decide which culture they are part of. In Ethics, this topic is introduced quite early and usually via the stories of some fictional characters who speak in first person singular and discuss some ordinary situations. In the second year, for example, a child from an English-Hungarian family, a child from a Hungarian family in Ukraine and a Hungarian-Jewish child tell about how they celebrate winter festivals. Beyond the obvious differences, common features are emphasised, such as family life, the importance of special days, the story behind the festival, or presents for children.

#### **Figure 9**

*Presenting historical figures from various ethnic groups*

<b>Név</b>	Clark Ádám	
<b>Született</b>	Edinburgh (Skócia), 1811	
<b>Foglalkozása</b>	mérnök	
<b>Munkahelye</b>	Lánchíd Részvénytársaság, Országos Közlekedési Bizottság	
<b>Lakhelye</b>	Életem nagyobb részében Buda	
<b>Kapcsolat</b>	Széchenyi István	
<b>Családtagok</b>	Feleségem Áldásy Mária. Három gyermekünk született.	

A fictitious social media profile of a famous English-Hungarian engineer, Adam Clark. Learners are probably familiar with the name but might not know his nationality. Their task is to get information about other prominent figures of Hungarian history and create such profiles. Some names are given, mostly of people of various ethnicity. Before giving this task, the teacher should check different sources as it is worth recommending the most reliable ones (Year 6, p. 145).

Nevertheless, the other side of this situation must be also dealt with in class, namely the case when someone meets prejudice, or social exclusion and humiliation from a cultural community. Teachers should never ask children about their own memories directly: the issue can be presented through either fictional or real stories instead, and after that learners can share their experiences if they decide to do so. In the sixth year, for example, students can read about how two famous Hungarian authors, Menyhért Lakatos and Gyula

Illyés were shamed at school: Lakatos for his Roma origin and Illyés for his rural accent. The Roma minority is the largest one in Hungary, so they should be presented in Ethics in a way that avoids stereotypes but also refers to social hardships. Sixth-year students can learn about the compelling successes of Roma people by getting to know about 'The Golden Strap Award', a distinction founded by the Roma Press Centre. The interviews with the nominees reveal their backgrounds, which are often poor and harsh. In addition, students can reflect on what 'golden strap' refers to. It is a metaphor used by poet József Kovács Hontalan in which he claims he has two golden straps on him: one is the Hungarian culture, the another is his being a gypsy, neither of which he wants to give up on.

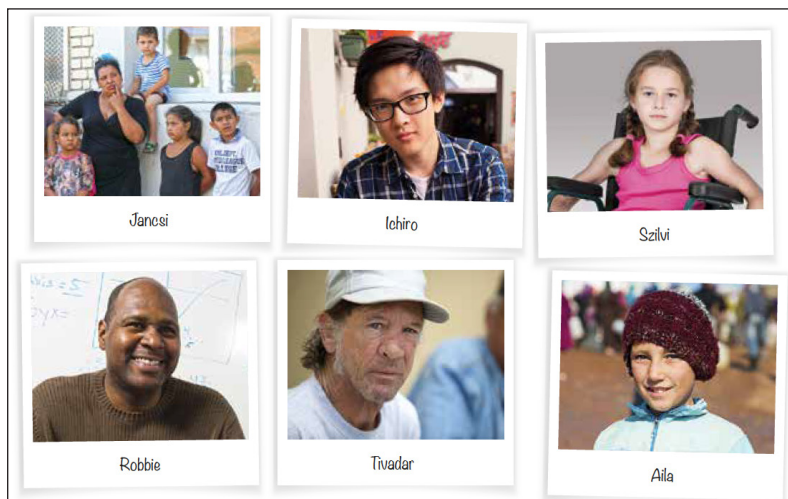
#### *Aim 4: to familiarise with 'other' cultures*

This may be the most important instructional goal when regarding cultural awareness, however, as the first step, educators have to consider what 'our' and what 'other' cultures are like. This depends on the circumstances in which learning takes place and the most typical features of the students' background – with the knowledge, of course, that there are no homogeneous classes. For middle-class students, learning about poverty can widen their understanding; for students from families of lower status, penury can sadly be a general experience. This is the main reason why much of the decision process is delegated to the teachers: the aim is for teachers to tailor the general content of the subject to the classes.

For younger learners, showing pictures of different environmental and cultural elements or telling them about the life of a child can be motivating. Even if characters are fictional, they should be created on the basis of authentic reports. Images depicting the days of a Mongolian shepherd family living in a yurt, a South Sea fishing family or even children living in a refugee camp can make the learners realise that there are many different lifestyles. They can start to talk about the reasons for these differences, try to imagine more details, putting themselves into the characters' places. Pictures arranged around a theme, such as 'schools around the world', 'my favourite toy', or 'what families eat',<sup>7</sup> on the other hand, show some common elements of cultures, as well, like the importance of education or need for play anywhere in the world. This also teaches about universal human culture. Older students can do some research and give a presentation on a culture. It is even more exciting for students to talk about personal experiences.

**Figure 10**

*Presenting characters from various social or cultural backgrounds*



This task is a part of a whole-year-project, in which learners describe the life of some characters. Now, the story brings new characters with pictures and a short introduction of their personalities and backgrounds. These include a Roma family, a Japanese IT expert, a disabled child, an English teacher from the USA, a former homeless person, and a refugee. Learners are asked to role-play how the main characters meet and get acquainted with the new ones (Year 4, p. 41).

Although it might be easier to discuss and research the culture of everyday life, the exploration of deeper, implicit structures and values is more complicated. This is also true of our own culture. A possible way can be comparing the commands of what is 'forbidden,' 'allowed' and 'obligatory' for members of a community. An interesting source for older students can be a series of magazine interviews in which representatives of different churches or cultures give answers to the same moral question. In Ethics, during a discussion about values, students should be made aware that none of the answers will be designated as the true one; however, they can express their opinions and preferences about the issue. To reinforce this idea, they should be asked to use introductory phrases like 'I think...,' 'In my view...,' 'As I see, most people agree...' during the debates.

### Conclusion

In Hungary, the school subject of Ethics offers many opportunities to teach students about culture from the very beginning of their primary studies. During this eight-year-long process, young people can explore the complexity of cultures, how individuals experience their cultural bonds and reflect upon those of others. Culture, in the sense of being a special way of human coexistence, definitely involves the most important human values as guidance to efficient cooperation and entails social and cognitive skills that humans need for living according to these values. Ethics aims at developing learners'

skills as well as broadening their conceptual knowledge. The subject applies a learner-centred pedagogical approach, the essence of which is discussion, self-reflection, gradualness, and flexibility. It also provides a wide range of methodological devices to promote learning in an age-appropriate way.

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# **Languages and Cultures in Early Childhood**

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# Inclusive bilingual early years education by means of the Reggio Emilia Approach

Marton, Vera – Kovács, Ivett Judit – Czachesz, Erzsébet

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In diverse classrooms, bilingual early years education demands an inclusive approach for effective language acquisition. In the Reggio Emilia Approach, all children are viewed to be genuine and unique with individual ways and special rights. This paper aims to identify the aspects of the Reggio Emilia Approach that supports inclusive education. The research was conducted in a mixed-age group within a bilingual setting located in Budapest. Different qualitative research methods were used as data sources, including document analysis, participant observation, and unstructured interviews. The data analysis revealed a broader concept of inclusion in the setting. Through the project-based and experience-based learning fostered by an emergent curriculum, children can discover the world at their own pace. Children can work in micro and macro groups on meaning-making and understanding in activities tailored to their individual needs. The teachers scaffold their learning as facilitators supporting independence, cooperation, and peer-assistance while emphasising community-based learning. In the Reggio Emilia Approach, diversity is celebrated, and each child can be connected to differently. By filling the environment with variables, teachers allow for the inclusion of all children into activities, problems, and thinking.

*Keywords:* inclusive education, early childhood education, Reggio Emilia Approach, bilingual education

## Introduction

Scaffolding and enhancing early years foreign language acquisition is a task that is embedded in the continuous process of supporting the child's holistic development. Due to broad differences in language knowledge, this process demands the constant differentiation of teaching methods even within a general heterogeneous classroom. Diversity is not a problem but rather an opportunity in education. When it comes to a diverse classroom that includes children of different ages or special needs, an equal and inclusive approach is a must.

This paper is about the Reggio Emilia Approach, which is, in itself, an inclusive approach to early years education. In his poem, *The Hundred Languages*, the creator of the Reggio Emilia Approach, Loris Malaguzzi, talks of the way children are creative and active in building their knowledge and how they understand the world not only as it is told but also in one hundred different ways, through all their combined senses and with all their individual personalities and ideas as



factors, genuine to all (Edwards et al., 2012). This is the basis for their approach to children and to education itself. In the Reggio Emilia Approach what they call children with special rights are viewed to be inherently part of the heterogeneous group that is our world.

All education in the Reggio Emilia Approach is based on the idea of the competent child, meaning that each child is capable of so much more than they are frequently given credit for. The focus of education is not only on the outcome but also on the progress itself, and the ways of learning, individual to all. The teacher plays the role of a facilitator in learning and a supporter throughout the progress. S/he sets the stage for the children to encounter cognitive conflicts, then s/he supports them in their struggle to overcome these challenges. This approach enables them to gain their own experiences, connect with others in cooperation, and enhance their thinking and communicate what thoughts and ideas were provoked through the process.

## **Theoretical background**

### ***Inclusive education through project- and experience-based learning***

Project-based learning, 'during which students select, plan, investigate and produce a product, presentation or performance that answers a real-world question or responds to an authentic challenge' (Holm, 2011, p. 1) is not a new learning method. Project-based learning was already used at the beginning of the 20th century by William H. Kilpatrick (Holm, 2011) in American education, and also reform pedagogies in Europe placed a great emphasis on projects, such as those employed by Célestine Freinet, whose classroom looked like a small workshop for children where thought was stimulated through actual handiwork (Mogyorósi & Virág, 2015). Throughout the 20th century, projects have been used in higher education. In the last few decades, this method has also moved into the pre-school and elementary school niches as well. It is a multidimensional education method based on the constructivist learning theory (Nahalka, 2013), which uses more participant involvement, thus resulting in more participant motivation. This technique involves a real-life problem or situation that provides the origin for research in different fields. Children are not taught in a frontal approach, wherein information is passed onto them and demonstrated using objects for the learning to happen. Rather, children are presented with difficulties that they have to understand, organise, communicate, and solve in a process that allows them to gain knowledge that would have otherwise been demonstrated to them. Thus, they struggle through cognitive conflicts and gain knowledge about the way in which they learn.

The teacher changes from a giver of knowledge to an enabler of self-growth and understanding. Children follow a process during which they observe, plan, hypothesize, experiment, and conclude about a given topic. Thus, children have the opportunity to learn self-sufficiency, critical thinking, communication, cooperation, problem-solving, compromise, and many more skills that will better equip them for the challenges they will face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Having the

time and space to experience and solve problems resulting from the experience connected to this memory, children are better able to retain information.

Empirical studies found project-based learning to be successful in promoting more growth in language and concept development than traditional instruction (Ross & Lowther, 2003; Beneke & Otrrosky, 2009; Aral et al., 2010; Holm, 2011, etc.). Research has likewise proven the effectiveness of project-based learning specifically in early childhood (Beneke & Otrrosky, 2009). Since one of its most important features is student-centeredness, in which students define, choose and carry out their projects (Thomas, 2000), many school reform efforts utilise it as their central methodology (Ravitz, 2010). Project-based learning also perfectly fits the inclusive approach. When children drive their own learning based on their environment experiences, the constructive process unfolds in the right pace that is the best for the individual child. Beyond the positive effects on children's social and academic learning and improved motivation, the participation and learning of diverse learners is facilitated. A great amount of empirical data claims the positive effect of project-based learning in developing social competencies, a key factor in the inclusion of children with disabilities. When playing and working together in joint activities with their typically developing peers, children with special needs increase their social and play participation (Walker & Berthelsen, 2008). Professionals and even parents believe that peer interaction in inclusive early childhood settings results in a positive developmental change in their child's social skills, communication, and behaviour (Blackmore et al., 2016). Inclusive education is crucial for each member of a heterogeneous classroom since overcoming biases and learning critical consciousness is a key issue already in early childhood education (Hawkins, 2014).

### ***Bilingual institutional education***

Strong forms of bilingual education mainly target the language majority and its aim is bilingualism or biliteracy (Baker, 2006). Research of bilingualism shows no evidence for harmful effects due to bilingual education while much evidence exists regarding its benefits (Byalistok, 2018). The literature claims, among other benefits, that bilinguals have higher cognitive skills than monolinguals (Dolean, 2015), and their grey matter density from the inferior parietal lobe is higher (Mechelli et al., 2004). Compared with monolinguals, they outperform on attention tests and have better inhibitory control for ignoring perceptual information (Byalistok & Martin, 2004). They also have an improved understanding of communication needs (Genesse et al., 1975). Language immersion children were found to respond to the listener's needs in a much more differentiated way than control group children, presumably as a consequence of their more extensive experience of facing difficulties in communication (Kovács & Trentinné Benkő, 2014).

In Hungary, apart from minority education, bilingual early childhood education is organized and run by private schools, foundations, or companies. These institutions promote language acquisition through play and play-based activities that are, on the one hand, the parents' expectations and on the

other hand, is the requirement of the framework described in the Hungarian Core Program of Kindergarten Education (ÓNOAP, 2012<sup>1</sup>) (Kovács, 2020). Play-based learning is also a key factor in early foreign language acquisition since it is a process similar to the native language acquisition that happens during the everyday routines and activities of young children – of which play is an essential part. Language acquisition is a subconscious process of ability development that is manifested during communicative situations with others (Krashen, 1982a), in contrast with language learning that is a more conscious activity aiming to accumulate knowledge of another language, like grammar, vocabulary, etc. In settings with early years foreign language immersion children ‘pick up’ or absorb the foreign language effortlessly (Hickey, 2014) through meaning-making from the context during interactions with foreign language speaker adults or peers. Meaningful projects in bilingual settings with immersion are the best to provide the ‘comprehensive input’ (Krashen, 1982b, p. 97) necessary to successful language acquisition.

### *The Reggio Emilia Approach (REA)*

The Reggio Emilia Approach took root after World War II in the village of Reggio Emilia, Italy. Here women were shocked and appalled at what fate the world had reached and how everyday people had come to behave. They equated these problems with the lack of critical thinking and responsibility. They came across an educator, Loris Malaguzzi, who joined them in creating a new kind of educational approach and instruction. Malaguzzi and his partners based their ideas of education mainly on the constructivist frame. They followed in the footsteps of Jean Piaget (who Malaguzzi had the chance to observe at the École des Petits and subsequently implemented Piagetian ideas in Italy), Maria Montessori (2011), Rudolf Steiner (2016), John Dewey (1976), Lev Vygotsky (1967), Jerome Bruner (2004), and Lilian Katz (2000). Montessori introduced order, sensory exploration, and an aesthetic experience with natural objects. Steiner’s ideas of moral well-being and focus on the arts and creativity struck a chord. Dewey’s educational reforms pertaining to education for a democratic society seemed just what was needed. Vygotsky’s ideas of social interactions and their role in cognitive development were researched and integrated. His ideas that, through play, one develops abstract meaning were well received. Bruner’s ideas (2004) that children should be left to discover principles by themselves were taken into account. Lilian Katz (2000) was known to introduce the project approach to Reggio at The Compass School in Illinois, USA, which strongly believed in and implemented Reggio-inspired education. From these authors learned the new constructors of the Reggio Emilia Approach, such as Lella Gandini and Carlina Rinaldi. ‘But the educators in Reggio have not just brought in theories and concepts from many places. They have actually reflected on them and experimented with them, creating their own meanings and implications for pedagogical practice’ (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 4).

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<sup>1</sup> Government Decree 363/2012 (XII. 17.) on the Core Programme of Kindergarten Education. <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=A1200363.KOR> (2021.01.08)

They believed critical thinking to be the cornerstone of an independent and deep thinker, so Malaguzzi's *image of the child* is that of a capable, creative, curious, and motivated, responsible learner (Edwards et al., 2012). As each child is a competent learner, they know, not necessarily consciously, what they need to learn, what they can understand, and what interests them. Listening to children helps teachers support their learning. A child learns by doing; this is why play-centred, hands-on learning allows the child to best investigate and express themselves. In his poem, Malaguzzi<sup>2</sup> expresses the richness of children and how they have a hundred languages, 'a hundred hands/a hundred thoughts/a hundred ways of thinking, of playing, of speaking... of listening/of marvelling, of loving a hundred joys/for singing and understanding a hundred worlds/to discover/a hundred worlds to invent/a hundred worlds to dream'. In this poetic, albeit crucial cornerstone of the Reggio Emilia philosophy, Malaguzzi conveys ideas about the valuable ways of learning through multiple intelligences that are inherent to children and how institutions and society strip our young of these, resulting in the blocking of possible capabilities and capacities of their mind. The teacher reaches each child by offering multiple ways of self-expression and dialogue. Tasks and activities are not uniform; they do not have to be completed by all the children. Every child might take part in different ways, and each child's growth is measured according to their own abilities.

The REA is profoundly an *inclusive approach* by making each child a protagonist in his/her own learning, by teachers listening more intensely and with more focus, children solving problems on their own or with the help of their peers, children becoming teachers to one another, children becoming the narrators of their lives, and children learning to ask questions. The children now can not only practice their independence in everyday routines such as dressing and choosing toys but also in their choice of what they learn and how.

What we might call children with special needs, the REA calls *children with special rights*. These individuals are not segregated from society. They are Citizens with Rights, just like everyone else. Due to their condition, they are individuals with special rights, ones that can help and support them in living the life that is available to everyone else. They have special rights to get whatever support they need to be a part of the group and to support their way of learning. In these settings, the aim is not to include some special children in the standard group but to make groups composed of all who have the right to education. 'There is an underlying belief that every human being has an equal yet incalculable value and that even the youngest among them are citizens with rights' (McNally & Slutsky, 2016, p. 9). Every individual is included in their own way of learning, following their own learning curve.

The Reggio Emilia Approach also discusses *the pedagogy of listening*, whereby educators do not tell students what questions should be asked but ask good questions to assist pupils in posing their own questions. In order to ask well placed, open-ended questions that support a child's learning and open

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<sup>2</sup> "No Way, The Hundred is There" translated by Lella Gandini (Edwards et al., 2012, p. 2)

a child's mind, one must first do a lot of listening and hearing. In inclusive settings, listening has special importance since children with special needs might not express themselves in traditional ways. 'Crucial to this approach, then, is the need for the teacher to listen not only to the voice of the children but also to their actions—their other languages' (Vakil et al., 2003, p. 190). Hearing from the actions and words of the students when and how understanding and, therefore, learning has taken place. Listening to these teaching moments allows educators to realize when there are space and openness to learning. The Reggio Approach believes that listening to someone gives a person importance and value and promotes self-confidence, self-worth, and pride. They claim that children are important and worth listening to. According to Malaguzzi a good project needs only a few elements: 'The first is to produce or find an initial motivation which warms up the children. There is always this sort of prologue that starts by sharing information in the group concerning the theme. Extracting it above all from the thoughts and ideas the children have' (Kurada, 2017)

The Reggio Approach also focuses on *experience-based learning*, discussed earlier in this paper. An *emergent curriculum* supports this learning that in Reggio Approach means children are the forming agents in their learning as much as the adults around them. A curriculum is not supposed to be written at the beginning of the school year. The idea behind this is that children learn best when their curiosity is a form of self-motivation, and since it is impossible to know what these curiosities might be without listening to and hearing the children, it is impossible to plan the curriculum in advance. Thus, the pedagogy of listening resurfaces. In the Reggio Emilia view, teachers listen as a means to deepen the search for meaning. Children are happy dropping a ball over and over again because, in this repetitive experience, they can form ideas about how things act and react. They discover rules and understand in very simple experiences complex things like gravity. In the Reggio Emilia Approach, it is crucial to understand how that child is learning in each stage of development. Listening to their questions, helping them come to answers, and then showing them how to communicate these theories allows them to make sense of their experiences and become critical thinkers. 'This is why we, in Reggio, view children as active, competent, and strong, exploring and finding meaning, not as predetermined, fragile, needy, and incapable. For both adults and children, understanding means being able to develop an interpretive story, a narrative that gives meaning to the world around them' (Edwards et al., 2012, p. 234).

The Reggio Emilia Approach uses both *micro and macro group settings* when organising teaching and learning activities. For children who are just learning social behaviour and, by nature, possess egocentric thinking, the rules and guidelines of polite and successful conversation are not easy to master, especially in a large group of people. For them to learn patience when excited is difficult; maintaining motivation through keeping quiet is hard. Shifting children between micro and macro groups allows them to have freer communication with few children and a more pinpointed topic where their ideas and theories, and thoughts have the space to soar. Once they have come



to some conclusions, they return to the larger group, where they share their findings. Others can reflect on this, and they can learn how to have a back-and-forth conversation. This conversation is not between the teacher and the children but rather occurs among the children themselves. Each group is diverse and different, with the children's capabilities and personalities altering each group and its interactions. In Reggio, the idea of the difference in children is not ignored but embraced (Edwards et al., 2012).

The most effective inclusive early years programs are family-centred since the child is embedded in the family context (Vakil et al., 2003). In the Reggio Emilia Approach, *community-based learning*, including the parents, is essential to learning. 'When the family is comfortable and feels it is possible to share their lives with others, they have a much greater desire to be involved with the child and are more likely to be interested in the quality of their relationship with this child' (Edwards et al., 2012, p. 195). In REA the purpose of education is related to creating community, to create a learning environment 'where the child can develop a sense of intellectual autonomy while belonging to a group' (McNally & Slutsky, 2016, p. 10). Constructivist theory shows (Nahalka, 2013) that a child constructs his/her knowledge from his/her environment and the parents of children are a crucial part of that environment. In REA 'knowledge is viewed as being socially constructed, encompassing multiple forms of knowing, and comprised of meaningful wholes' (Hewett, 2001, p. 95). Parents are not consumers of service but should be partners and participants of their child's education. They are expected and supported in taking part in the dialogue about the educational program. From the teachers' perspective, 'the concept of professional development has been extended to include the importance of learning from parents, therapists and the children themselves' (Thompson, 2006, p. 13).

The *involvement of research* is also one of the most important characteristics of REA and is used for various purposes. On the one hand, it strengthens the possibility of critical thinking. In more determined instruction, children might be shown to accept ideas and information from a higher source and taught to take it for granted, not to question it. They are also shown that they probably do not have the information and cannot get it themselves. With research, this changes because children are not given answers but are promoted to find things out for themselves. A teacher's 'goal is not so much to "facilitate" learning in the sense of "making smooth or easy" but rather to "stimulate" it by making problems more complex, involving, and arousing' (Edwards et al., 2012, p. 155). This way, they are presented with the experience that the adult has faith in them that they can manage to further their own learning through research. Also, showing research techniques hands the children tools which might help them to attain knowledge.

Research – collecting documentation – is also the most important tool for approaching work as self-reflective practitioners in inclusive settings (Vakil et al., 2003). 'One could say that *pedagogical documentation*, as used in Reggio, is a *specific attitude about life*' (Edwards et al., 2012, p. 226). Teachers walk around and take notes of the observations throughout the activities, such as movements, moods, non-verbal and verbal communications of the children,

and their own thoughts during the process. In Reggio Emilia, documentation is a tool for the teacher to learn and research the children. They then sit with their co-workers and discuss these observations, which is how they 'develop' the curriculum. In the Malaguzzi Center, Italy, there is a whole research library that goes back to the birth of this approach, to the 1940's, where all the projects can be found that the teachers have done with the children. This material is accessible to all of Reggio Emilia and even outsiders upon request. Although the practices related to the Reggio Approach are different in all settings, the image of the child has remained the same recognition of competency and curiosity.

### ***Research methods***

Our research aims to identify the aspects of Reggio Emilia Approach that support inclusive education. Our research was conducted in a mixed-age group within a bilingual setting in Budapest. The priority of keeping the school's anonymity resulted in the selection of information on special features to avoid the institution's identification. Different qualitative research methods were used to gain a deeper understanding, and data were collected during the 2019/2020 school year period. Document analysis helped to understand the local pedagogical program and the mission of the school. Participant observation in the classroom and informal discussions with the three teachers who work in the bilingual class provided information about the approach in practice. Also, one-on-one unstructured interviews were recorded at the end of the school year to reflect on the experiences of the three teachers regarding the inclusive aspects of the Reggio Emilia Approach. Teachers' reflective journals, observation notes, planning documentation, and children's transcripts were explored by qualitative text analysis, focusing on how the main principles of REA supported inclusive education in the bilingual early years setting. In the data analysis, extracts from the interviews and the documentation material are used.

## **Results**

### ***The context***

The English-speaking group in this pre-school department of the K-12 school was launched in 2015 based on a two-pillar idea. On the one hand, there seemed to be a growing need for families to provide their children with early English education. Hungarian families decided to invest time and resources in their children to provide them with such knowledge early on. Also, a growing number of international families or mixed families began to join the school's community, for whom it was important to provide bilingual education for their children. The second pillar was that the elementary school had previously embarked on a bilingual educational program, where children received ten of their weekly classes in English. These classes begin from the first grade and are taught by native English teachers. Thus came the idea of extending English

instruction to the smaller children in the kindergarten (age 3-7). This way, the bilingual program not only gains interest from outside but can provide an in-house supply of students entering the program.

Due to the fact that this is the only English-speaking group in the kindergarten, it has always been a mixed age group with 20-23 children. It is mostly composed of Hungarian children, but children from mixed families or families who have lived abroad also attend. The children are exposed to English through immersion (Chaparro, 2020). Children know that the teachers understand them even if they speak Hungarian, and there is no rule that they cannot. Teachers often repeat their sentences and questions back to them in English. Music and songs, everyday instructions, and conversation flow in English. Teachers will rarely speak Hungarian when they feel that the children's psychological and emotional development overrides their need for language acquisition. It is a way to support them in understanding social interactions and ideas of truth and honesty, especially when crises arise.

Building upon their Hungarian knowledge to attain the new language is helpful. As teachers report in the interviews, some children do not speak English for months; they observe and only use one or two-word phrases like 'thank you' or 'good-bye', until they are sufficiently comfortable and confident. Then all of a sudden, they start to speak in full sentences. Others talk in a mixture of English, Hungarian, and nonsense, communicating with urgency. Some children from bilingual homes switch between languages easily and quickly, even within the same game. Others need time to switch in the morning and then stay with it all day.

Since children learn English in this group through language acquisition, it is hard for them to translate or talk to parents in English. This makes it difficult sometimes to make the knowledge of children visible to their parents. The teachers share many videos with parents so that children's behaviour in class and the use of language and social interactions become visible. The older children very often help by sharing their better understanding of spoken English to the younger ones who do not yet understand so well. This is also an aspect that gives value and self-confidence to older children.

### ***A responsible learner: Image of the child***

The Reggio Emilia Approach expects to shift ideas within the teachers' minds regarding the image of the child. They have to restrain themselves to listen more and differently, to wait and allow children to make mistakes and learn from them, to allow children to work out their own answers and theories, and to offer the assistance of other children before helping them themselves. During the interviews, the teacher mentioned many examples of this. For example, a child once brought a paper tube to the teacher with a large marble stuck inside. The child was asked to try to experiment and free the marble himself. Other children nearby were asked how they could solve this problem. First, they started to push the marble in with a pencil. This resulted in the marble being stuck in the other side of the tube. More pencils were jammed in the

tube, which resulted in the marble falling out. The child was very happy, but his attention was brought to the fact that now many pencils were jammed in the tube that needed to be freed as well. Another child suggested they needed something longer. They came up with the idea of making a very long 'stick' of markers stuck together, connected to each other, cap to bottom. With this poking device, they freed the pencils. This example shows how much learning, cooperation, problem-solving, and communication development would have been wasted had the teacher just solved the boy's problem.

Children learn best from their peers, especially in a mixed-age group. Seeing that someone equal to them can do something that seems impossible can strengthen the children's belief in themselves and show them that challenges are not unattainable. An example mentioned a little boy who had difficulty to butter his bread. The teachers supported the child by exhibiting a belief that he can solve the problem at hand. He tried a couple of times, then returned with more frustration about not being able to do what he needed. Then he was asked if he can think of someone from the group who could help him with the buttering. He said that Bert could do it. The teacher suggested he might ask Bert then to help him. He did, and Bert happily buttered his bread. In this scenario, not only did the boy experience the faith others had in him, but he saw that another child, evidently not so different from himself, has the ability he himself does not yet possess. Communication was strengthened, and bonds were formed between the children. Bert also experienced that he can be a help to others, making him proud.

The child, as a competent learner, speaks about the fact that a child's interests show the level of development that he/she is at. By relying on and listening to children for new themes and topics of interest, teachers can support them in their individual learning curves, differentiating between the children. They will fixate on things, practicing them over and over again, so by allowing them to bring in ideas, teachers support their unique development. Still, it is very important for teachers to plan and organise, but rather than following their own ideas about what would interest the children, with good listening, they can build on the children's needs. Also, the children's need to express their ideas and interests to the teachers enhances their use of English and allows them to practice and build vocabulary. Through project work it is important, 'to have already in ourselves, as adults, the awareness of what one is doing and what could be done. That means there are already many expectations and predictions or hypotheses on the part of adults. Some of these expectations will be disappointed, others will become greater, lost or found again. We will have to run after some others, during the journey that the children make in the course of the project' (Kurada, 2017).

The teachers also rely on children as capable storytellers. Offering children to tell their own stories themselves gives an opportunity to grasp their experience better and show their abilities of communication. The fact that they can tell their stories shows to them that these stories and the events of their lives, their ideas are important and valued. Teachers also record these stories and transcribe them. They offer children a printed-out version and read

it to them, and they have an opportunity to illustrate their own stories. These illustrated versions appear as documentations for others to see and for the children to revisit (see Figure 1.).

**Figure 1**

*Narrative and drawing of a girl aged 4 (example from a child's transcript)*

There was a little boy, her name is Marci and he offered it a girl and his name was Zoé. And his go out and sometime the girl goes to travel to Greece and very happy and so he comes back and his play together with the boy. Another time the boy go auto the girl house. And there he play together and very good time there and he go then home. And one time he have another girl and he have a birthday and his name is Lea and he has a very pretty two cakes and that was very yummy and so eat it all up in his stomach and then he goes bed and sleep. The end.



Another important aspect of a competent child is the value and ability to ask questions. Good questions, open-ended questions often lead to other questions, and are stepping stones to deepening knowledge. By experiencing this process of formulating questions, answering them, assessing the answers then formulating new questions, they are taught a tool for future studies and learning.

***The emergent curriculum***

The emergent curriculum allows children to achieve higher motivation in the things that are happening in the classroom. It requires cooperation and collaboration between peers, and this, in turn, requires communication. The need for communication pushes them to try and express themselves in English. Discussions of varied topics allow children to hear and learn new vocabulary and be present in conversations when others are looking something up, deepening their passive language skills as well.

Projects can come from anywhere, and the only thing that can make one project better or stronger than the other is authenticity and motivation. Whether the basic idea comes from a teacher or a child does not matter as long as the interest in it is genuine and therefore the motivation of teachers and children is high.

When we did the Jonah project, and we looked at images of whales, the children reacted first in Hungarian, saying that the whales had no teeth. We supported this new knowledge by repeating the observation in English and asking them questions about their teeth. Teeth are a focal point of children this age since the exchange of teeth is happening. So, we had many discussions counting our teeth, telling stories of how we lost our teeth and what happened afterward. Children laughed about how the water now trickles out between the teeth through the holes. All in all children were excited and motivated, accepting new language inputs and repeating them, and by the end of the project each kid showed a definite development. (Excerpt from a teacher interview)

This project is a perfect example of the inclusion that takes place naturally in the group. If we look at inclusion only from the linguistic view, each child has been included and progressed their own knowledge. All steps were valued and celebrated, thus making each child accomplished.

A project, however, can also emerge from the problem of a broken table. Rather than throwing it out or just passing it onto the caretaker to fix it, it can be brought in front of the children to see how they would tackle it. Projects in an emergent curriculum can be short or long while multiple projects can be taking place alongside one another.

### ***The involvement of research***

Research is an integral part of the Reggio Emilia Approach. It is done through experimentation with objects, light, distance, or basically anything that catches the children's interest. Technology is readily used to support children in their hypothesising and experimenting. Images are often used to demonstrate and illustrate the world to the children by observing animals, lands, cultures, traditions that are not accessible to them in their own environment. They hear the teachers and children discuss, point, and illustrate, building on their passive language skills. As children try to express their questions or observations, they activate words and begin to speak. Through the Reggio Emilia philosophy of listening and following an emergent curriculum, the teachers have increased motivation and activity.

### ***Micro and macro group settings***

It is not easy to work together with children of all levels of development, knowledge of English, and concentration abilities. The bilingual group is a mixed age group of 3-7. The variation of children's ages gives a rather great challenge when tackling any given task. The parents' expectations are also different from the teachers of a 3-year-old and that of a 7-year-old. With the Reggio Emilia Approach, the idea of coming in and out of smaller and larger groups has been supported very much. It is not necessarily the age of the children that best groups them. Sometimes the interests of children allow for higher levels of motivation.

What we saw when we visited the Reggio Emilia setting in Italy is that all projects or research topics are done in micro-groups. When the children were doing a yearlong project about the “piazza” (the square), children started noticing how in squares many people sat together and talked. A few children volunteer to discover the way people sit on a bench through clay. Another group observes the same position of the human body but tries to investigate this through drawing. As they sat to model for each other, a child used a digital camera to take pictures of the bodies on the bench from different perspectives and angles. Each small group returned to sit with the whole group once they finished to discuss what they have observed or understood about the problem at hand; in this case, how to portray a sitting form. Each group brought different problems or ideas into the mix. The group that worked with clay had to figure out how to hold up the pieces of heavy clay before the firing and came up with the idea of using things to prop these pieces up with. Each time a group returned to the whole class and had discussions, the children conversed, listened to each other, and offered ideas on how to solve problems. Then new ideas emerged that needed to be researched and now teams were set up according to children’s interests. Everyone understood the process through the constant sharing of information. (Excerpt from a teacher interview)

An example of the effort in using micro and macro groups was with the story of Jonah and the big fish. In this project, this going back and forth between small and large group work was being researched and tried out.

The most difficult part, for now, was revisiting the large group and sharing our experiences. It seems that the pedagogy of listening is not self-explanatory. We first have to teach the children to listen, and sometimes, with such a variety of ages, it can be quite a challenge. (Excerpt from a teacher interview)

Keeping circle time with the children is a difficulty due to the children’s different attention span, different levels of English, and general understanding. Using micro groups and only being together for sharing of the experiences helped a great deal. Circle time was no longer used in the traditional sense of the word. Sharing their theories, observations, and ideas specific to a research were more focused, taking less time. Being in smaller groups allowed the teachers to focus on children’s individual needs and gave a chance for better listening and handling of different lengths of attention spans. As one teacher observed:

We still need to work on the micro and macro group management and the listening in the larger groups. One aspect of this is to work in a way that the teacher is not the central figure of conversation, to whom all answers or questions are directed. Therefore producing a star-shaped conversation model, but rather aiming for children to direct their ideas and words to each other. Perhaps, this would also be easier introduced in the smaller groups, that than we can broaden for the large group settings.” (Excerpt from a teacher interview)

In order to focus children's thinking and open their minds, open-ended questions have to be asked. It is also a challenge for the children since open-ended questions are much more difficult to answer. Expectations of children vary depending on their age and each child's individual language development. An interesting indicator that more open-ended questions were being asked was that children soon were comfortable in understanding the English questions 'Why?' and 'How?' Even though they sometimes replied in Hungarian, their understanding of the question was there which could be seen by the responses that followed it. This very short conversation is such an example from the observation notes.

Here, the children were sitting around, playing with clay. Three children aged 5-6 worked together, originally making a space landscape with asteroids and such. As they kept adding pieces, space turned into the sea, and ships were built. The asteroids (which were dried balls of red clay) turned into cannonballs on the pirate ships. The conversation is about the transformation of these balls. Even though the how question proved too hard for the child to answer in English, he understood the question and responded with that understanding in Hungarian.

T: Are they changing?

D: Yes.

T: How can they change?

D: Űgy, hogy most már vízen vagyunk. (Because we are on water now.)

### ***Community-based learning***

The Reggio Emilia Approach believes that children thrive best in environments where home and school are interlinked and connected. Parents' support means a lot to teachers; in turn they try to support the parents and families as much as possible. They introduced individual parent-teacher meetings for all the families. These meetings are noted, and notes are always sent to the parents as reminders of the topics and perhaps the resolutions discussed.

This year, to enhance our connection with parents in our day to day lives, we asked them how they would see their involvement or what they would be interested in at our beginning of the year group meeting. Many parents voiced that they are interested in how we celebrate the Shabbat each Friday. So we invited the parents to come and join. Many of the parents accepted this invitation and have joined us during the first half-year. We asked the parents to come prepared with a little story to tell the group. (Excerpt from a teacher interview)

Parents are also welcomed to share some personal interest, like they showed about scuba diving or their native country of Italy. These 'presentations' are always helped by the teachers, making it playful, active and interesting for the children. This form of cooperation enables the parents to experience how the class works, which is usually followed by a stronger appreciation of teachers' work. Also, children seeing their parents as part-takers of their lives, showing interest and joy make them proud and feel worth.



In my understanding, the aim of the Reggio Emilia Approach is to give substance and voice to the rights of the children, parents, and teachers for a high quality, participatory education capable of promoting increased awareness to produce a culture of education and not just to offer educational services". (Excerpt from a teacher interview)

### ***Documentation***

Documentation aims to make the learning visible, aims to inform the parents of things happening in the group, aims to allow colleagues to bounce off each other's ideas, but above all; it aims to raise the child into a being of value. *"Through the exhibition of their ideas, their masterpieces, their works, and their pictures, we communicate that what they do is worth something"*. (Excerpt from a teacher interview)

The text on documentation is not a subtitle or a narration of the image that can be seen. It can show cooperation, the road leading to the end-product. Through these pictures, the children can also revisit experiences that they had; they therefore put these documents in a visible place where the children can see them and connect to them. These images also allow them to remember, reuse, and retain the vocabulary connected to a given project. With time, these learning experiences that they have, sink in, and seeing the documentation can enhance the ideas in their heads and enable them to further their thinking of the topic resulting in something called a relaunch.

### **Summary**

The research identified different aspects of inclusive education, which proved to be very fruitful and adaptable to a local Reggio Emilia Approach. This leads to a different, broader concept of inclusion.

Through this different concept of inclusion, whereby we do not refer to the insertion of special needs children into a group but rather talk of an acceptance and celebration of diversity throughout the entire group, a lot can be learnt. In the Reggio Emilia philosophy, every child has the same rights to education, the same right of citizens as all. The fact that someone has special needs translates into that child having special rights that enable him or her to get the support they need to partake in the same education as is available to all. This vision drastically changes the teachers' attitude toward the child, the other children, and the education itself. The same way one sees children accept others who are younger, know less, are capable of fewer things, children also accept and embrace other kinds of differences.

In this particular setting in Hungary, children with special rights have been included. In a curriculum that emerges from the children's interests through project-based and experience-based learning, children can discover the world at their own pace. Children can work in micro and macro groups on meaning-making and understanding in activities tailored to their individual needs. The teachers scaffold their learning as facilitators supporting independence, cooperation, and peer-assistance. With special emphasis on community-

based learning, support is offered to the families regardless of their children's challenges since all children have challenges.

Each child is unique in language, looks, and personality. If a teacher is truly dedicated to researching the children in their group, s/he will find that each child poses a challenge. Each child can be connected to differently; each child has different preferences of learning methods, and each child carries a set of values and ideals brought from home. By filling the environment with variables, teachers allow for the inclusion of all children into activities, problems, and thinking. In short:

The wider the range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense will be their motivation and richer the experiences. We must widen the range of topics and goals, the types of situations we offer and their degree of structure, the kinds of combinations and resources and materials, and the possible interaction with things, peers, and adults. Moreover, widening the range of possibilities for children also has consequences for others. It renders teachers more attentive and aware, and makes them more capable of observing and interpreting children's gestures and speech (Excerpted from an interview between Lella Gandini and Loris Malaguzzi, Edwards et al., 2012, p. 54).

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# Multicultural education in Hungarian daycares

Czirmai, Hanna Zorka – Lo Bello, Maya J.

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The subject of multicultural education remains largely unknown in Hungary despite the many, often volatile changes in everyday life that have arisen due to globalization and migration. This paper contends that children can be shown basic concepts related to multiculturalism, acceptance and tolerance within a daycare environment. The purpose of this study is twofold: while one aspect of this discussion explores to what degree Hungarian society is open to multiculturalism, the other examines what multicultural methods, topics or attitudes can be introduced to children attending daycare, a period that spans the ages of twenty weeks to three or four years old in Hungary. It is the authors' general experience that Hungarian people are fairly open to the idea of multiculturalism, even though educational laws do not mention the importance of teaching multicultural ideas. To support or disprove this impression, a survey was conducted both in English and Hungarian to assess what the general public thinks about the topic of multicultural awareness in daycares. After analysing responses from the survey's 105 participants, a practical session led by a daycare professional-in-training was then used to test the effectiveness of a playful, multicultural approach to introducing certain topics to three-year-old children.

*Keywords:* multiculturalism, inclusion, daycare, early childhood education

## Defining culture, multiculturalism and integration

As a concept, culture cannot be easily defined since it reflects different elements for almost every individual. The following overview contains a collection of some of the research conducted on the topic in order to establish what culture represents for the purpose of this examination. The sociologist, Zoltán Farkas (2005), approached the concept of culture by explaining how the word's etymology changed throughout time. In the beginning, "culture" was a verb used to describe agricultural tasks and only later came to mean the "cultivation" or education of people. In the nineteenth century, culture therefore referred to educated, wealthy and socially advanced people. According to Farkas, three interpretations represent what culture means today: the first concerns an individual's process in intellectual, emotional and aesthetic values. The second refers to a group of people following the same lifestyle in a specific time period. Lastly, the third focuses on the spiritual and artistic aspect of human activities, a perspective which is the most common view. The wider definition of culture can also refer to substantial and symbolical culture (pp. 6–7).



Hungarian uses two words to refer to culture: the first, *kultúra*, is naturally a Hungarianized version of the Latin term, *cultura*. A second, Hungarian term stems from the active verb, *művelni*, i.e., to create, cultivate or even farm. The adjective, *művelt*, can be viewed as a synonym for *kulturált*, or “cultured.” The verb, *művelődni*, describes the act of attaining cultural knowledge or education in a process that can be viewed as a passive one given that this verb form connotes a certain absence of action: the noun, *művelődés*, can be seen as the acceptance of or almost unwitting exposure to culture. To look at how culture is defined in Hungarian, the *Hungarian Explanatory Dictionary* provides three interpretations of culture. The main, more philosophical interpretation views culture as the unity of substantial and intellectual values that humankind has developed throughout its history. The second interpretation refers to individual literacy or civilization; the third is the least important from the point of the present examination, yet is interesting to note as it suggests that the initial definition of culture referred to by Farkas is still in usage today, i.e. culture is a verb that involves agricultural work or the cultivation of foodstuffs (Arcanum Adatbázis Kft., n.d.).

In contrast to Hungarian definitions, the *Cambridge Dictionary* defines culture as a noun that can either refer to a way of life or the arts. As the first definition states, “the way of life of a particular people, especially as shown in their ordinary behaviour and habits, their attitudes toward each other, and their moral and religious beliefs.” The other usage, however, defines culture as “the arts of describing, showing, or performing that represent the traditions or the way of life of a particular people or group; literature, art, music, dance, theatre, etc.” (Cambridge University Press, n.d.) The researchers Godwyn, Hoffer and Gittell (2011) view culture as a type of pattern that belongs to a specific group and is based upon “shared basic assumptions, invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, is to be taught to new members of the group as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems” (p. 313). As an illustration of this process, in many cultures parents warn their children from communicating with strangers. Children are therefore taught to connect safety to the idea of “keeping away from strangers,” just as the surrounding adults have passed on worst-case scenarios that will remain imprinted within these children when they are adults. As parents, these children will then teach the same to their children because their environment supports this idea. If this type of thinking remains the only influence within a child’s environment, the consequence is a mentality that makes no or little differentiation between any type of unknown person or, indeed, unfamiliar environment. Based upon the steps described above which summarize the establishment of cultural values, culture is formed by and for a given group of people who utilise their cultural beliefs in order to answer the challenges of everyday life.

Fredrick (2001) interpreted culture as what moves us, lives in us and is in our environment. Culture can be individual, familial, communal, institutional, societal and global. No matter its origin, in Frederick’s view culture is seen as

humankind's most valuable and important tool, one that contains elements of civilization and tradition. As such, culture is a framework of information, a symbolic system, a source of motivation and emotion. Since culture is difficult to define, there is no certain way to gain a full and clear image of its elements either; in discussions of culture, language or religion, for example, can be categorized as both a source and element. Malota and Mitev (2013) found that the most common approach to establishing what factors are related to culture is to list religion, history, values, social organizations and institutions and language as its common elements. For the purpose of this examination, the educational process described by Godwyn, Hoffer and Gittell best represents the learning steps we – as both researchers and educators – are interested in tracing. Frederick's attention to the significant role culture plays in impacting an environment has informed our classroom approach while Malota and Mitev's summary of what components culture can contain provided the basis for many of our survey questions.

Research by Gollnick and Chinn (2013) defined multiculturalism as, "The condition in which different cultural groups can maintain their unique cultural identities while participating equally in the dominant culture" (p. 10). Since migration rates have increased in Hungary, multicultural ideas have become important for both immigrants and locals. According to Görbe and Zán (2013), by the middle of the 1990s, roughly 300,000 immigrants had come to Hungary. In his research of migration in the twenty-first century, Kincses showed yearly increases in the number of people coming to live legally in Hungary. In 2001, the number of people living in the country was 93,005, while 10 years later (in 2011) the number of immigrants rose to 143,197. According to one source, out of every one thousand individuals living in Hungary today, 8.5 are immigrants. Although these numbers may be small compared to other European countries, they still demonstrate a growing trend. This paper contends that the need for multicultural education has become important in each area of education, no matter the given age group of the child. Whether in daycares, elementary schools, or even training sessions for adults, educators must pay attention to teaching equality and acceptance. The importance of educating people about race, genders, ethnicity, age, religion, special learning needs, different competencies, cultural and society groups is a crucial part to achieving a society where everyone feels safe and respected, no matter his or her identity.

In sociology, multiculturalism is usually referred to as a means for addressing cultural diversity while integration represents the process of minorities becoming incorporated into the system of the host's society. During this process, immigrants adapt to local daily life; education comprises one of the most efficient means to helping non-majority members learn about the host country's customs and cultural norms. It must, however, be emphasized that integration and assimilation are two different ideas. Assimilation is a process whereby the non-dominant group eventually conforms to the existing culture of the dominant group in a way that generally causes members of the non-dominant group to abandon their own culture and adapt as many aspects of the host's culture as possible. These two concepts are reflected in the main

theories concerning multiculturalism. Based on Longley, the “Melting Pot Theory” assumes that different types of immigrant groups eventually meld together to assimilate fully into the majority culture, i.e. the predominant group. This theory involves risks, since it entails a loss of cultural or even personal identity. A more humanistic approach is contained in the “Salad Bowl Theory,” the term given to the conceptualization of a heterogeneous society in which individuals exist side by side in mutual respect of each other’s culture while both integrating into majority society and preserving some part of their traditional culture (Longley, 2019). Compared to assimilation, integration is more of a “balancing act” by means of which a non-dominant group can maintain its original cultural identity while adapting to another culture. If multiculturalism is viewed as a means of preserving cultural diversity, integration provides the approach needed to enable members of minority groups to adopt aspects of the majority culture through intercultural discourse, rather than force. From the point of view of this examination, integration is viewed as the preferred, long-term goal for those coming to live in Hungary.

In this research, the main focus is multicultural integration in Hungarian daycares. In 2018, 2.4 million immigrants from non-27 EU countries entered EU-7 nations, including Hungary (Eurostat). At the beginning of 2018, 156,000 immigrants were residing lawfully and for a lengthier period of time in Hungary, a number equaling 1.6% of the total population. On January 1, 2019, this number was 172,600, resulting in 1.8% of the total population or a 0.2% increase in the presence of immigrants in Hungary (EACEA National Policies Platform). It can be expected that these individuals will start or continue raising a family in Hungary. Their children will therefore need multicultural integration and education while daycares in Hungary do not prioritize multicultural aspects. Daycare providers mostly speak Hungarian (or low fluency levels of spoken English) while supporting Hungarian cultural values in everyday life. Left unaware of the difference between integration versus assimilation, daycare providers can confuse the two and choose assimilation instead. While children primarily learn their parents’ culture(s) at home, in Hungarian daycares children will generally experience mainstream cultural values.

### **The daycare system in Hungary**

Before any analysis can be conducted, it is first necessary to provide some basic information regarding the daycare system in Hungary. Daycares in Hungary are one element of the child-welfare system; their main function is to provide families daily care for their children from the ages of twenty weeks old to three years. As such, daycares are also part of the “early warning system” in Hungary and therefore ensure basic rights and safety for both children and their families. State-run institutions offer professional care for children with trained daycare providers who have completed a university degree in Infant and Early Childhood Care Provision. As far as the types of daycares that are available in Hungary is concerned, early childhood institutions can be



put into the following three categories: state-run or public daycares, church-run or denominational institutions and privately-run daycares that are not funded by the state. Daycares that are funded by churches provide almost the same services as state-run ones do. The only difference is that children who attend a denominational institution also receive religious instruction and learn religious habits, such as praying before eating. Since this type of early childhood institution is supported by a slightly different system, this paper will instead focus on state-run or private daycares.

State-run daycares are financially supported and supervised by the government and include daily supervision for children from the ages of 20 weeks to three years; provision of these services is usually dependent upon the child and his or her family's residency. These daycares are open from 6 am to 6 pm and offer similar nursing and instruction compared to what a family would provide, such as feedings, hygiene, naps and basic education. Beyond these basic services, daycares additionally offer special counseling, periodic child care, children hotels and playhouses. Application is easy and understandable for parents. Non state-run or private daycares could be any type of institution from a workplace nursery funded by a privately-run company or family-operated nurseries. Workplace nurseries care for a group of maximum seven children based on the needs of parents who naturally work for the specific companies that run the nurseries. These daycares must be near the workplace's actual location and providers must participate in training sessions every three years. In family nurseries, there can only be from five to seven children who are being cared for by a provider and a helper. Providers need to do the same trainings that are required for workplace nurseries. Both forms of daycare demand higher fees for their services compared to state-run institutions.

University students pursuing a degree in daycare provision mostly become familiarised with state-run daycares as these have contracts with our university, ELTE's Faculty of Preschool and Primary Education, and allow students to conduct their practice training within this kind of an environment. This paper compares state-run to private daycares for the following reason: although ELTE's programme prepares students for state-run institutions, it is more common to find aspects related to multiculturalism in private facilities. State-run daycare institutions must maintain the rules listed in *Rules of Nursing and Caring in Daycares, Methodological Notes* written by Balogh, Barbainé Bérci, Nyitrai, Rózsa, Tolnayné Falusi and Vokony. Since no English translation of this document exists, a few essential parts have been translated and provided in order to illustrate how state-run daycares provide children and families with support and educational instruction during the early stages of childhood.

As far as fees and costs are concerned, since 2012 parents not only pay for meal costs but also provide a daily fee for caregiving. The latter cost varies based on the parents' incomes and mostly ranges between 0 HUF to 1500 HUF/day. Some reduced rates are available for people in need of them, such as families who receive regular child protection support, have three or more children or have children suffering from a chronic illness or disability. For private daycares, the price for caregiving cost is approximately 450-500 EUR/

school year. State-run daycares focus on accepting children whose parents are not able to give them daily care for different reasons. Children who have social or medical disadvantages or have been placed under child protection are prioritized due to their conditions. Daycares therefore maintain daily, weekly and monthly contact with parents, families, medical personnel, social services and educational institutions. Medical personnel also help children and their families, such as the network of public nurses or pediatricians. In the area of education, the main helpers are educational counseling services, kindergartens, special schools, special services for caring with families and children, special needs education services or pedagogical professional services. Daycares also maintain ties with child protection services, the child welfare system and family support services.

The following table provides a basic overview of the principles that are upheld in Hungary's daycare system mentioned in *Rules for Nursing and Childcare in Daycares: Methodological Notes* (2012).

**Table 1**

*Examples of the established principles for state-run daycares in Hungary*

Principles	Examples in daycares
Respect for upbringing in family	Upbringing is the responsibility of the families and daycare providers must respect that with representing family values.
Respect of children's rights	Daycare providers are responsible for helping children individually to create a healthy lifestyle that takes their needs into consideration.
Unity of nursing and care	Nursing and caregiving belong together, their value lies in this unity.
Equal opportunities	Every child deserves the care and nursing suited to their needs and developmental progress.
Safety and stability	Daycare providers provide a consistent personal and material background to create a safe environment for the children.
Supporting activity and self-determination	Supporting and acknowledging self-determination in every form is encouraged.
Unity in educational ways	Education transmits and provides values to achieve development in children's lives.

### Researching multiculturalism in Hungary's daycares

While the brief overview provided above illustrates the commitment state-run daycares have toward the children in their care, it does not address issues related to cultural integration and multicultural education in nurseries. In our research, the method of triangulation was used to explore how Hungarians view some of the questions (equal access to education, access to native language education, celebration of special, cultural events, the introduction of multicultural education, etc.) to which the growing influx of children originating

from non-Hungarian backgrounds may give rise. As was previously mentioned, in Hungary private daycares are more likely to emphasise any aspects related to multiculturalism due to the fact that the providers are generally fluent in a foreign language. The first part of this triangulation therefore comprises an Internet search of private nurseries or daycares that may offer services more suitable for children who do not speak Hungarian or have additional cultures at home. The second part of our triangulation examines the results of a survey that assesses the opinions 105 participants expressed regarding education in multiculturalism and their attitudes toward people coming from a non-Hungarian background. The third part of our research triangulation addresses the question of whether young children can comprehend cultural differences while including a practical “game” that could become an effective method in developing greater sensitivity toward other cultures.

### The online presence of private daycares in Hungary

In order to locate information regarding these institutions, an online search was conducted. Tags such as “multicultural daycare,” “international daycare” or “English daycare” were used to begin the online search; the word “daycare” was occasionally changed to “nursery” and the option was set for Hungary-based websites. The top results included six daycare facilities all located in Budapest. The information about the facilities were understandable, the websites were easily to navigate and the menus were logical. In addition to this online search, in-service daycare providers were asked if they knew of any institution where multicultural values are evident. While we had hoped more employees of state-run daycares would be aware of the challenges that the children of immigrants face, only two professionals could list daycares or daycare programs that are connected to multicultural efforts. (The latter event referred to tea parties that daycare providers could attend in order to learn about the presence of more cultures in a daycare environment.) The table below summarizes the services provided by these private institutions.

**Table 2**

*Comparison of Hungarian daycares promoting a multicultural environment*

	Daycare 1	Daycare 2	Daycare 3	Daycare 4	Daycare 5	Daycare 6
Location	Budapest, 12th district	Budapest, 8th district	Budapest, 2nd district	Budapest, 2nd district	Budapest, 2nd district	Budapest, 2nd district
Target Age	From 18 months to 3 years	From 4 months to 3 years	From 16 months to 3 years	From 8 month to 2 years	From 14 months to 3 years	From 18 months to 3 years old

<b>Spoken/ Taught Languages</b>	Hungarian, English	Hungarian, English	Hungarian, English	Hungarian, English	Hungarian, English	Hungarian, English, German
<b>Curriculum</b>	Struc- tured play program, socializa- tion, motor skills de- velopment, fine motor skills de- velopment	Follows the British Na- tional Cur- riculum: Early Years Foundation Stage	Developed by inter- national research practices in Britain, USA and Hungary	No infor- mation on the website	No infor- mation on the website	Lists stud- ies which are not avail- able on the website
<b>Cultural Events</b>	Orienta- tion Day, Parents- Teacher meetings, Hungarian Harvest Festival, Halloween, Thanksgiv- ing, St. Nicholas Day, Valen- tine's Day, Carnival, Fashion Show, Easter, Mother's Day, Sum- mer Camp	Back to School, Welcome Party, Hal- loween, Thanks- giving, Open Day, Santa Day, Christmas Shows, In- ternational Day, Char- ity Valen- tine Party, Carnival, Hungarian Day, Easter Egg Hunt, Mother's Day Show, End of Year Show, Summer School	Parents' Evening, Parent- teacher meeting, Orienta- tion Ses- sion, Fam- ily Garden Party, Hallow- een Party, Thanksgiv- ing Day, Christmas Parties, Carnival, Valentine's Day, World Water Day, Earth Day, Birds and Trees Day, Parents' Day Cel- ebrations, Children's Day Cel- ebration, Class Year End Par- ties, Sum- mer School	School Year Opening Party, Santa Claus, Christmas Party, Carnival, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Children's Day, Farewell Party, Summer Camp	Coffee- Morning, Parents' Board, Parents' Session, Halloween Party, Santa's Day, Christmas Party, Pyjama Party, Valentine's Day, Hungarian Carnival Party, Easter Fun, Graduation, Summer Camp	No specific events listed on the website

<b>Extra Activities</b>	Afternoon classes: Arts, Chess, Football, Judo, Karate, Piano, Ball Games, Ballet, Kindermusik, Dance, Robotics	No information on the website	Art, Chess, Extra gym, Yoga, Dance, Football	Karate, Hungarian Folk Dance, Handy Craft, Ballet, Skiing, Yoga	Briefly mentioning that the institute has some extra activities.	Music, Dance, Soccer, Folk Dance, Swimming, Ballet, Judo, Visual Arts, Skating, Piano
<b>Extra Information provided for Parents</b>	Menus (meals), Articles, Application Forms and Guides, Useful Documents, Galleries	Menus (meals), Galleries, Admission Information	Downloadable Contents, Galleries,	Timetable, Documents, Menus (meal), Galleries	Meet our staff, Galleries, Downloadable Calendar	Galleries, Study titles, Articles, Resources in Staff and Equipment Documents
<b>Application Process</b>	Application Form	Nothing available online, need to contact their email address	Application Form	Application Form	Application Form	Upon arranged meeting
<b>Price</b>	450 € / child / school year	Need to contact email address for information	No information on the website	No information on the website	No information on the website	No information on the website
<b>Contacts</b>	Website, Telephone number, email address, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube	Website, email address, Telephone number, Facebook	Website, Telephone number, email address, Facebook	Website, Telephone number, email address, Facebook	Website, Telephone number, email address, Facebook, Instagram	Website, Telephone number, email address, Facebook, Instagram

<b>Extras</b>	Smart Boards, door-to-door bus service	Minibus	Bus Service	Nothing listed on the website	Japanese Website	German Website, Children's Library
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As can be seen in the above table, most private daycares are located on the Buda side of Budapest, meaning that they can be found among the wealthiest districts of Budapest. Only one, Daycare 2, is located in the eighth district, a much poorer (if not the poorest) district of the capital city. Given that this last district is populated the most by immigrants in Budapest today, the need for multicultural daycares is arguably higher here. This statement leads us to the crucial matter of the fees that parents need to pay for childcare. Due to the fact that these private nurseries mostly cost 400-500 €/child/school year, only the wealthy can afford private care. Most private daycares in Buda are housed in large villas found in a green area; the daycares where one of the authors of this paper conducted her practice training was one floor or located in a ten-story, block house surrounded by artificial grass.

Other than Hungarian, most private nurseries provide English and speak to children in English while Daycare 6 also offers German. In the experience of this paper's authors, state-run daycares do not emphasize teaching any language other than Hungarian, although daycare providers may possess some basic knowledge in English that they can use when engaging with foreigners. State-run nurseries do not have an option for foreign language websites; in contrast, Daycare 5 has a website in both Japanese and English. In state-run daycares, the application forms are mostly in Hungarian; as can be seen above, private institutions offer forms in different languages. When perusing the curriculum requirements published by private daycares, the main impression is that they mostly support unstructured play combined with the development of motor skills and speaking.

The celebrations held in private nurseries focus on both Hungarian and international holidays. All of them hold religious events such as Christmas and Easter or more international ones, like Valentine's Day. Some private daycares celebrate special days, for example Water Day or Earth Day. All of the private daycares included in this study provide summer camps and occasions or tea parties where parents and daycare providers can meet. These events and holidays let parents, providers and children enjoy their time in the daycares and makes planning easier for the adults. In state-run nurseries, a yearly plan for events is rare as it is mainly left to daycare providers to decide what celebrations will be held. Extracurricular activities are becoming increasingly popular in Hungary: for the smallest age groups, private daycares provide activities where children can improve their art, motor or cognitive skills. State-run nurseries mostly offer playhouses that are held on weekends and during summer breaks. Contacting and checking the daycares are an important part of deciding among the possibilities. Based on our research, most private daycares have caught up with this change and created Instagram, Facebook and Twitter

accounts, a step that makes their facilities far more attractive to parents who have grown up using technology.

### **A survey of attitudes toward multiculturalism**

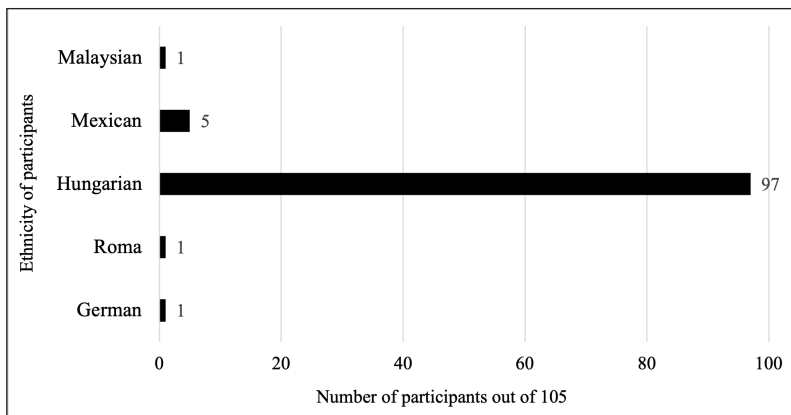
The following survey was conducted in order to evaluate what views residents of Hungary hold in connection to multiculturalism. The survey contained 44 questions including options for multiple choice, the provision of short or long answers, a linear scale and checkbox options. Since participants were asked to express their own opinions to some questions, a few of the survey queries resulted in a variety of answers from almost every participant. In total, 105 people filled out the survey which was uploaded to Google Docs. Both the English- and Hungarian-language version of this survey were shared on the social media profile of one of the authors, Hanna Zorka Czirmai, whose personal contacts then shared the survey on their private profiles in order to reach a wider audience. Some participants emailed the survey to their colleagues. In short, social media and Internet-based resources were used to disseminate this survey. The authors' aim was to assess the following points: how people living in Hungary feel about different cultures, how much is known about multicultural education and what views are held regarding multicultural daycares or whether there is any need for multicultural daycares. When preparing the survey, it was expected that participants would be interested in different cultures while different behaviour/habits would comprise the main challenge in a multicultural environment. We expected participants to be familiar with the concept of multiculturalism but predicted a bit of resistance to the idea of multicultural daycares given that public opinion generally views Hungarian culture as the preferred culture to which children should be exposed.

Out of the 105 respondents, 79 were female and 23 were male; 3 did not state a gender preference. Participants' ages ranged from under 18 to over 50, with an average age between 18-25 years. Respondents were generally from the capital or larger cities. Most did not have children but plan to start one eventually. The results summarized in Table 1 indicated the ethnic composition of respondents. Questions in the second part of the survey focused on culture and the qualities of tolerance and empathy. 24 people stated that they pay attention to multiculturalism; 39 have never considered it while 42 have, but not intentionally. 69% of respondents actively focus on multiculturalism and express an interest in cultures other than their own, while 14% of them claimed not to. Most of the participants who stated an interest in other cultures receive their information from travel, social media platforms and websites. According to this survey, globalization (61 people) and migration (18 people) were listed as the most likely contributors to multiculturalism. Questions in the second part of the survey also focused on culture and the qualities of tolerance and empathy. 24 people stated that they pay attention to multiculturalism; 39 have never considered it while 42 have, but not intentionally. 69% of respondents actively focus on multiculturalism and express an interest in cultures other

than their own, while 14% of them claimed not to. Most of the participants who stated an interest in other cultures receive their information from travel, social media platforms and websites. According to this survey, globalization (61 people) and migration (18 people) were listed as the most likely contributors to multiculturalism. Some respondents listed other options, such as political views, population or manipulation. There were some questions in which respondents needed to choose from a scale of 1 to 5 in which 1 meant “I do not” and 5 “I do.”

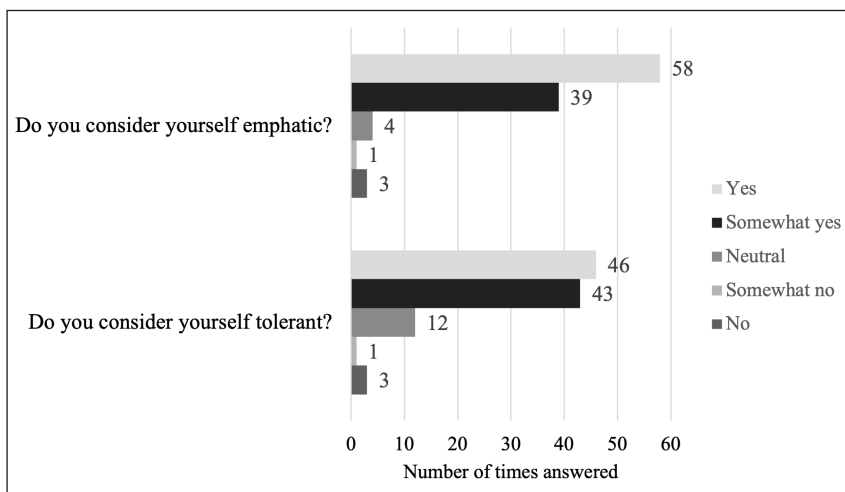
**Figure 1**

*Ethnic composition of survey participants*



**Figure 2**

*The percentage of empathy and tolerance expressed by participants*



The third part of the survey focused on multicultural education. More than half of respondents had never heard of multicultural education. Those who



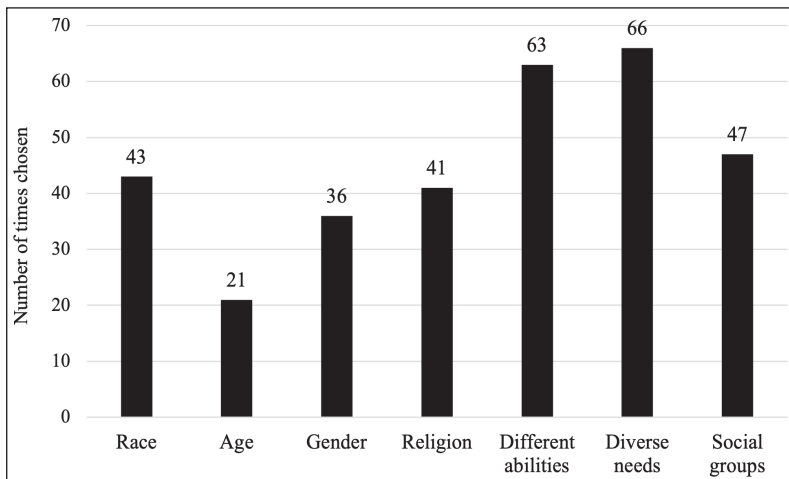
had were given the opportunity to explain how and what they knew. Here are some examples of the answers given regarding their knowledge of multicultural education:

*Question: Have you ever heard about multicultural education? If so, please share your knowledge with us.*

- *“Learning the best in every culture to improve in every way.”*
- *“It’s about educating children in other cultures and acceptance of diversity.”*
- *“Knowing different cultures, ethnically heterogeneous classrooms, befriending different cultures through religion, habits, cuisine, folk arts.”*
- *“Teaching unity for children with different ethnicities religions, social groups. The key is being open-minded and getting rid of racism, discrimination or prejudice.”*
- *“Learning different languages and cultures during high school.”*
- *“There are some institutions where they follow multicultural curriculums and students there are way more tolerant.”*
- *“In Europe, there are already institutions where they teach children about multiculturalism at an early age.”*
- *“Its goal is to teach children acceptance through children from different cultural backgrounds.”*

**Figure 3**

*Results of respondents regarding how education equality could be achieved*



Most respondents thought that the ideal age to start learning about acceptance and equality is as soon as children attend any kind of educational institution, including daycare. The next question referred to whether people felt a need for there to be obligatory classes in schools in order to familiarize students with other cultures. 71 people felt the need for this type of class, while 7 were

uncertain. The remaining 27 people thought this kind of exposure should not be obligatory.

The fourth section concerned multiculturalism in daycares. The first question asked whether participants believe that the concept of multiculturalism has a place in daycares. 56% of respondents answered positively, 20% negatively and 24% were uncertain. The next question was potentially more controversial since respondents were asked about their opinions regarding children who come from a non-majority ethnic background and whether these children should be cared for in their own language. Nineteen participants thought these children had the right to this and 41 of them did not. The rest (45) remained uncertain. Participants had the opportunity to explain their choices. Some of their answers have been provided below:

**Table 3**

*Some answers given to the question “Do you think a child who has a different ethnicity/ language from that found in the country where he/she lives deserves to be cared for in his/her own language in daycares?”*

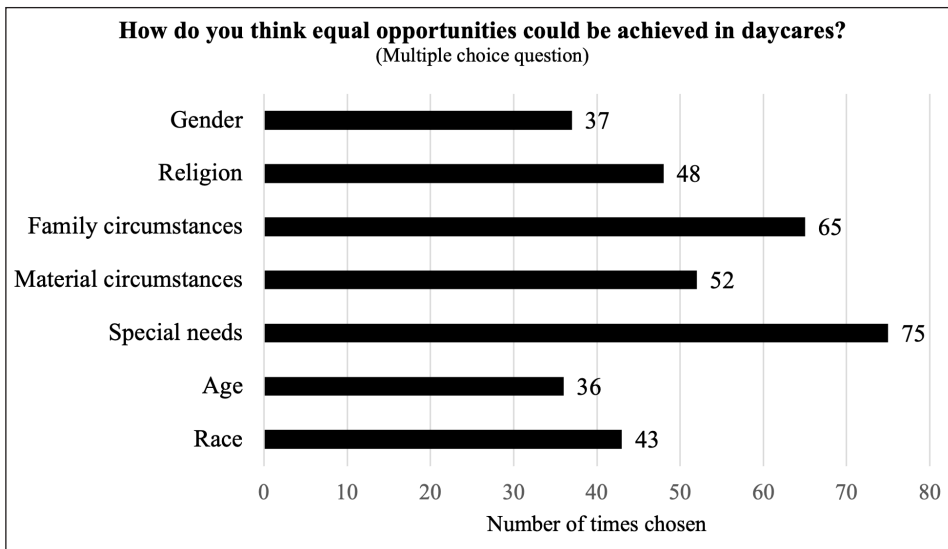
<b>Yes</b>	<p>“Because it’s a part of their personality, so it shouldn’t be oppressed just because the individual is not in his or her usual living space.”</p> <p>“It would give them safety.”</p> <p>“It provides basic needs, helps to improve their identity.”</p> <p>“It should be obligatory, because we need to be open to understand that the children might not speak our language.”</p> <p>“It should be a fundamental right.”</p> <p>“It would serve their development and self-esteem.”</p> <p>“It’s important for children to be able to keep their cultural values.”</p> <p>“We live in a free country, so why not?”</p> <p>“Since we are talking about children at a specific age where they mostly understand their native language, sure, they have the right.”</p>
<b>No</b>	<p>“It could be harmful when it comes to understanding their peers.”</p> <p>“The Hungarian language is the most important. If they come here, they have to speak Hungarian.”</p> <p>“If I were to go to a foreign country, would I get the chance to learn in my mother tongue too? I don’t think so. So why would a child get it here if I can’t either?”</p> <p>“It would cost too much money for the government.”</p> <p>“Who would hire a professional who speaks the specific language? Or how would they find someone who has the educational background of a daycare provider and speaks fluently in a foreign language other than German or English?”</p> <p>“It can be harmful not to know the local language when they grow up to be students in schools.”</p> <p>“If they live in another country which is not theirs, they should learn the local language as soon as possible.”</p> <p>“It would damage the integration process.”</p>

<b>Maybe</b>	<p>“In my opinion, it would only be needed above a percentage of the specific ethnicity.”</p> <p>“They have the right, but I don’t find it crucial.”</p> <p>“It is possible, for example I would learn words from the children’s language, but I would recommend the same from them.”</p> <p>“Since Hungarian children have the chance to hear Hungarian in daycares, minority children would deserve the same even though it would be hard to achieve given the Hungarian circumstances.”</p> <p>“Observing the fact that Hungary is a dictatorial state and every single professional is escaping the country, it would be chaotic to ensure minority needs as far as language is concerned.”</p>
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Even though the issue of language rights was a controversial part of the survey, when respondents were asked whether daycare providers need to learn the children’s cultural background, more than 75% voted yes. Some options were listed in connection to how equal opportunities could be achieved in daycares and respondents were given the chance to list others or express their own opinions.

**Figure 4**

*How do you think equal opportunities could be achieved in daycares?*



Out of all the participants, 83% had never heard of multicultural/international daycares, but the ones who did could list a few of the private daycares featured in the first part of this research triangulation as examples. Participants mostly agreed that private daycares that provide different spoken languages during early childhood should be more expensive than state-run facilities since daycare providers have dedicated more time to educating themselves by learning a foreign language, for example. Some found it unfair to pay for something that should be a fundamental right for minority children. A few participants mentioned how financial issues could hinder parents from

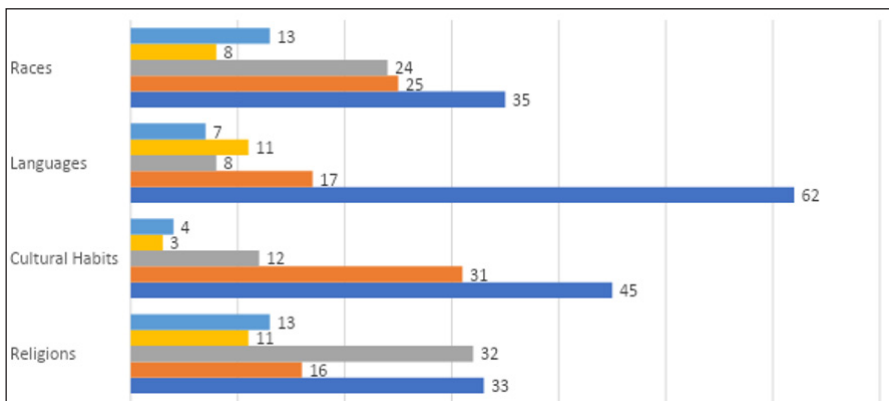
sending their children to a private facility, where children would also have more opportunities in their own language. According to the results, the majority felt that the most useful services a private daycare could provide include exposure to languages, afternoon classes and summer camp.

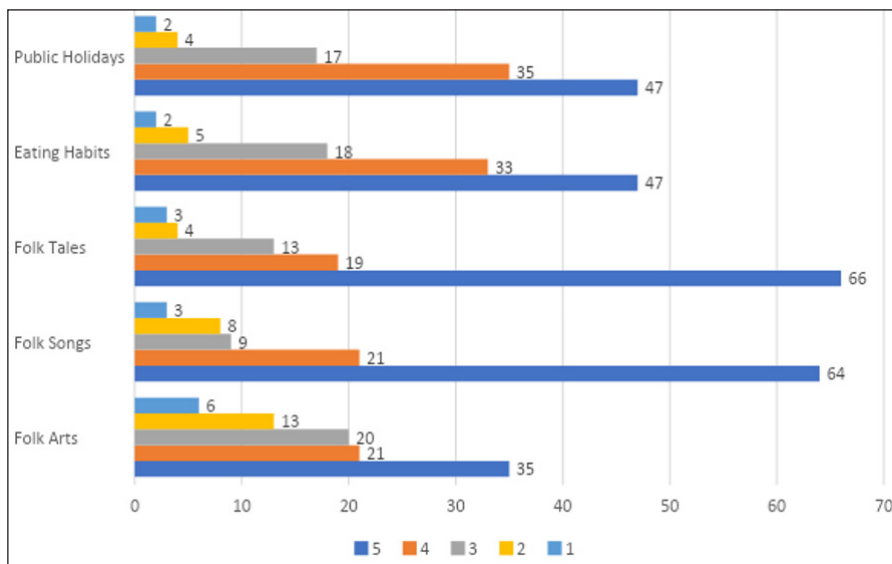
In connection to multicultural daycares, respondents were also asked about the holidays and habits children should be exposed to in daycares. Fifty-six would like the chance to organize holidays based on the ethnic composition of the children's group, 27 people would not want this option and 23 were undecided. The percentage of opinions given in connection with the holidays to be celebrated in daycares can be seen in Table 8. Some respondents added other ideas to the survey such as observing holidays non-Christian religious holidays, minority holidays (such as those held by Roma) or even the celebration of name days.

One of the most important questions in this section regarded whether participants would allow their children to attend a multicultural daycare. Fifty-five participants answered in the affirmative while 27 would not and 23 were willing to consider it. The last section of the survey focused on what knowledge regarding multicultural needs can be or should be expected of daycare providers. To be more specific, we were curious whether parents or future parents would prefer to have their children attend a daycare where the providers are aware of issues related to race, language, religion and cultural habits. With the same structure as before, respondents needed to choose where they stand on how important they find the specific knowledge on a scale of 1 to 5.

**Figure 5**

*Opinions regarding topics deemed important for daycare providers to know*





In the final section of this survey, respondents were asked for their opinions and given the opportunity for free expression. Most of the feedback was positive, while some participants offered advice. The following statements reflect some of the views that were shared.

- *“This idea is really important and actual.”*
- *“Hoping for more multicultural daycares.”*
- *“I’m wishing for Hungary’s improvement in this area!”*
- *“I don’t find the question of multicultural education unimportant, but it has no place in regular education. What I find important is learning basic human behavior.”*
- *“I feel a bit cautious about this topic, so throughout the whole survey I had my doubts, but I’m hoping for a better future for daycares.”*
- *“I believe in gradation, so I wouldn’t start educating them that early. Maybe later on.”*
- *“I can’t see a need for multicultural education because we would lose all the values of our own culture. You have to be loyal and stick to your own, not to other cultures.”*
- *“I think most cultures can unite, but it’s harder when it comes to a Hungarian and an Arab. I find Muslim or Arabs harder to get on well with or to integrate them successfully.”*
- *“In this current situation, Hungarian daycares are not capable of achieving a multicultural atmosphere. If the care is loving and caring at the daycare and they still have the energy to do extra with multicultural aspects, I applaud that. My daycare days were the best I can remember in the Hungarian nursing system. I never wanted to go home from daycare.”*

It can be concluded that the 105 individuals who participated in this survey were mostly open to the idea of multicultural daycares. Respondents believed

themselves to be tolerant and emphatic. Some doubts regarding this opinion appeared when comparing this result to some of the opinions given in long-answer questions, which also contained some negative, hurtful or slightly racist replies. On the more positive side, the survey also revealed a number of people who are interested in other cultures and actively devote time to discovering new cultures. While it had originally been thought that religion or native language would prove the strongest factors to differentiate cultures, the survey respondents surprisingly chose behaviour and habits the most.

Multicultural education was a concept most respondents had either never heard of or only knew little of. Although those who were familiar with the topic gave good explanations of their knowledge, a third of survey participants did not find multicultural education necessary or opted to remain undecided in connection with holding obligatory classes on other cultures. Similarly, opinions regarding multiculturalism in daycares were divided, but the majority felt that the concept has a place in daycares. While it was expected that views regarding the rights of minority children would be controversial, the many positive answers that were given indicate that there are more reasons for hope. According to some survey respondents, the concept of multicultural education is not as popular as wished and is not sufficiently widespread or discussed in everyday life. Addressing the right to equality for special needs children featured at the top of all the needs that comprise steps toward attaining equal access to education. Three fourths of participants expressed the need for daycare providers to learn about the children's cultural background.

The majority of respondents had never heard of a multicultural or intercultural daycare. This could possibly be because daycares are not obligatory since children can stay home until the age of three. The question of the cost for private daycare proved divisive since participants had doubts about parents being able to pay for facilities that would be more fitting to their lifestyle. The emphasis placed on celebrating religious holidays was surprising given the general experience that fewer and fewer people in Hungary adhere to religious views or practice religion. Only slightly more than half of respondents thought that the composition of the daycare group should determine the holidays that would be celebrated, a result that questions an institution's ability to create diversity. In spite of this, 55 participants would allow their children to join a multicultural daycare group.

The survey was admittedly affected by some sociodemographic factors. Age comprised one impacting influence as this survey was mostly filled out by a specific age group ranging between 20-25 years. A possible, underlying reason for this circumstance could lie in the fact that this is the age group that tends to represent itself more on social media and online surveys. For future success, this group is the most important to rely on since sooner or later they are going to become the parents of the children who would eventually attend a multicultural daycare.

### **Learning playfully: the international food game and flag puzzles**

To examine how children who are only three years in age react to information regarding other countries and habits, two games were designed as an activity for their free play time. Both games contained multicultural aspects and were meant to impart informal knowledge in a way that was more about having fun than educating the children. The group contained four boys and four girls in the group, all of whom were three years in age. Most of the children spoke fluently and understood all the words that were used. The children were interested in and motivated to play these new games.

The aim of this first game was to evaluate what effect globalization may have had on cultural aspects, such as eating habits. Photographs of international foods were printed out, laminated and shown to the children in the aforementioned group. These dishes included pizza, spaghetti, taco, sushi, a bowl of rice, a fortune cookie, curry with rice, a croissant, a hot dog, a hamburger and a kebab. With these meals, the intent was to represent Italian, Mexican, Japanese, Chinese, Indian, French, American and Turkish cuisines by showing dishes that are not related to any type of traditional, Hungarian dish. The purpose of the game was 1) to see if the children were familiar with popular dishes from around the world; 2) whether a three-year-old could connect cultural information to a country; 3) to gauge their interest in learning this type of information. As an additional benefit, this game would provide an opportunity to teach them about other culture's eating habits and traditions.

On Monday, the children were asked if they could name each food. After the foods had been identified, we discussed what cuisines the foods belonged to and what they were made of. We repeated the names and looked at the pictures several more times until the children were confident in their knowledge. The following day, Tuesday, the children were asked to line up while the pictures were hidden in places about the group room. The children then had the task of finding the picture for the name of the dish that had been announced. On Wednesday, instead of mentioning the names, they were only given the countries from which the foods originated. Thursday was the last day for playing this game: this time the toddlers were told about the special ingredients needed for each dish and were then asked to look for the picture based on this information.

All in all, the group obviously had a lot of fun, especially while the toddlers were running from location to location, searching for the pictures. The children enjoyed the new information, were eager to learn more about the food's taste, smell and ingredients. When it came to the countries, they could not differentiate among them, but still learned the names. Monday and Tuesday went the smoothest since the exercises for those days were the easiest. On Monday, most of the children instantly recognized pizza, spaghetti, the bowl of rice, the croissant, hot dog and hamburger. Their familiarity with these dishes was expected since these foods appear in almost every Hungarian household; given their previous knowledge, we began to discuss what they knew about them. We spoke about the meals that the children could not identify while mentioning their names, flavor and origin. On Wednesday and Thursday,

the group found it harder to play with the cards but were happier when they succeeded. By the end of the week, the children knew all of the foods, the countries and culture they had originated from and could name most of the ingredients found in the dishes.

A similar game was devised for the following week: in this case the flags for certain countries were printed out and laminated. The card was then cut either in halves or in a puzzle shape. Children in this age group are very attracted to looking for matching pieces or putting together simple puzzles, even if they are not always able to find the missing parts. To make a working area, two tables were pushed together and chairs were placed around them. The children were then asked if they would like to play a puzzle game. They sat down and were shown the whole picture of the flags and asked if they knew what these “rectangles” were. After this, an explanation of what flags are and how they belong to countries was given. All of the flags were closely inspected, including their colours and any designs that were a part of the flag. The flags were then paired with countries before the next part of the game (putting the flag pieces together) was completed.

Once more, the children enjoyed the game. Although it was expected that this game would be more about playing or practicing how to put the pieces together, the children were very proud to recognize the names of some countries that had been mentioned during the international food game from the previous week. Some children already knew what flags were and could even identify the Hungarian flag by naming its colours, a circumstance that indicates the early age at which children are capable of absorbing cultural information. All in all, the toddlers spent approximately forty minutes learning about this flag puzzle.

### **Perspectives for the future of multicultural daycares in Hungary**

As the survey demonstrated, respondents generally viewed themselves as possessing empathy and tolerance, qualities that are essential to having an open mind toward multiculturalism. In contrast to this finding, research performed by ENAR (European Network Against Racism) indicates that 24% of Hungarian adults openly profess to opposing other races; this same proportion believes that the country should not accept immigrants into its society. Similarly, ethnic Hungarians are mainly prejudiced against Chinese, Russians and Roma. Comparing the results of our survey and ENAR’s findings regarding public opinion indicates that the question of how Hungarians will incorporate people from other countries into their everyday lives remains relevant.

In order to start thinking about a future in which multicultural integration is a part of everyday life in daycares, it is also important to understand how Hungary has improved in multicultural education. In 2005, due to migration, Hungary’s Ministry of Education issued a statement with seven points concerning intercultural education for foreign national children in kindergartens and schools. There is an increasing tendency for articles and



research in Hungarian to be published in connection with multiculturalism and methods for achieving a multicultural environment in education. As part of the European Union, Hungary follows regulations that are connected to educational improvement in multicultural views. Regulations, laws and orders, however, make no mention of multicultural or intercultural ideas in daycares. Instead, the discussion of how to help immigrants and minorities has been relegated to schools and kindergartens. According to the law entitled “2011. évi CLXXIX. törvény a nemzetiségek jogairól” (2011 Law for the rights of minorities), Hungary protects all minorities’ rights to practice their culture, religion or access education in their native or hereditary language. However, having rights is not enough in these cases because providing opportunities to practice these rights demands great responsibility and effort.

The first step towards creating multicultural daycares is to consider the major contributing factors, such as the ratio of immigrants and ethnicities in Hungary’s population and their basic needs as regards integration. The support of the government can be a crucial part, too, since only private daycares provide multicultural education. If state-run daycares had the support of the government to pay attention to multicultural education, this circumstance would help the case of many non-Hungarian or half-Hungarian families.

### **Educating daycare providers**

To become a daycare provider or to be able to work with children in the early ages there are courses, trainings and university studies which provide the qualification. The highest level of education in daycare providing is achieving a Bachelor’s Degree (BA) in a university. The training lets the student both learn about nursing, teaching and instructing children with practices and theoretical studies. The main subjects in university studies consist of courses in Pedagogy, Psychology, Health Science, Social Science, Information Technology, Foreign Languages, Literature, Music and Visual Education. Other than a university program, National Qualification Registry (OKJ) trainings to become a daycare provider which is far more practice oriented and contains less exposure to a theoretical background. These two qualifications are the only way to work in state- or church-run daycares. The university program in Infant and Early Childhood provided at ELTE’s Faculty of Preschool and Primary Education includes courses in which issues related to multiculturalism are discussed, such as the topic of mental vulnerability in families. Students must study English or German for two semesters; some students participate in Erasmus programmes. Other than these opportunities, multiculturalism is rarely mentioned as an important or crucial concept for raising young children. The lack of multicultural education at the university level means that those professionals who will later plan the structure of the curriculum do not view multiculturalism as an important aspect of early childhood education or care. One of the first steps in educating providers would be to provide an obligatory course in which educators can familiarise themselves with cultures by focusing on habits, languages and important

holidays. Paying attention to other cultures and values which come with them would create interests in students. Speaking different languages or at least motivating students to learn one during their university years would also help the case of multicultural education. Participating in Erasmus programmes or joining summer camps in foreign countries can be a good opportunity to learn about multiculturalism.

To conclude this discussion, the competencies of a daycare providers should be formulated around positivity, acceptance and tolerance, all qualities that can be promoted when multicultural education contains basic knowledge regarding languages, cultural values and habits. Teaching educators to question stereotypes and be open and accepting should be the goal. Although love for children is a must in this specific area, this quality is still not enough to understand cultural diversity. As a further use for multicultural education, agreements and principles are needed to establish what practices should be followed in daycares. There must be essential points and plans on how to achieve those agreements. For example, if there is a goal to expose children to one, new culture every month, there must be a plan for how and when to learn that specific culture, just as methods have to be developed for how to target a given age group. There might be failures at the beginning and the agreements might need reforming during this initial period, but risks needed to be taken while acknowledging the ratio of success versus failure.

Despite the challenges that introducing aspects of a multicultural approach may entail, children and their healthy upbringing should always be the first factor to consider. Future generations must be prepared for a life outside daycares in an environment that demands a high ability to adapt. In the case of multicultural daycares, both parents and daycare providers need to understand that accepting a culture can be frightening, yet this process also opens an entire new world. The opportunity to achieve a strong educational background in Hungary that includes rather than excludes multicultural education in daycares is a possibility. Even though our survey suggests that more than half of the participants would send their children to a multicultural daycare, there is still a risk of lack of interest. Since multicultural or intercultural daycares are relatively unknown or a new way of education, these institutions are not an everyday topic in public discourse. With qualified and open-minded educators and providers, there is a chance of achieving a reputation for multicultural institutions. Advertisement is a key step toward reaching a wider audience. Affordability is essential, too, since there are families in need of cultural education to help their integration but could not afford a private daycare with high fees. The findings and methods discussed in this study will hopefully contribute to this aim.

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# Focus on multicultural education in early childhood

Czövek, Csenge – Endrődy, Orsolya – Árva, Valéria

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This article gives account of a research project concerning the implementation of multicultural education in two nurseries in Budapest. The research entailed focus group interviews with their teaching staff and collected qualitative data about their professional experience, views, the possible institutional approach to multicultural education, and how they evaluated its integration into their own programmes. Although the significance of multicultural education in early childhood is acknowledged, the field seems to be under-researched in Hungary. The experiences reported were overwhelmingly positive, but since the research context was limited, further investigation is necessary in the area.

*Keywords:* Early childhood education, multicultural education, inclusion, equity, nursery

## Introduction

The recognition of the significance of early childhood pedagogy has recently increased in Hungary. Research has provided evidence that the experience gained at this age may significantly influence children's development. For this reason, we argue that multicultural education plays an important role in the programmes of early childhood education or social care institutions. The present article gives account of a research project conducted in the field of multicultural education in early childhood care in two nursery schools in Budapest. The study aims to explore early childhood care givers' knowledge and professional views on the topic.

## The origin of multicultural education and international perspectives

Intercultural education in multicultural societies was initially interpreted as the educational perspective of minority groups. The dual meaning of the term can already be detected upon the formation of the idea of multicultural education in the 1960s: this approach and moral norm is called multicultural education in North America, whereas in Western Europe the same concept is labelled as intercultural education (Czachesz, 2007). Openness and acceptance between the various social groups is typical in an intercultural society (Göbölös & Endrődy, 2020).



Multicultural education is present in European education. Based upon her professional experience in Italy, Kollár (2000) gives account of two schools that managed to integrate intercultural education into their educational programmes. She provides evidence that the aim of multicultural education is the preservation of the cultures of ethnic minority groups. In Germany two important parallel trends can be observed in intercultural education. Similar to the anti-racist education common in England, the first trend is based on conflict management. The other trend focuses on tolerance and cultural learning. The use of intercultural pedagogy is increasing, gradually becoming the dominant form of education, and has extended its focus beyond minority groups (Czachesz, 2007). In agreement with Czachesz, it can be claimed that cultural learning and tolerance may be regarded as the main values of multicultural education. In Hungary, multicultural education appeared on the horizon of mainstream education after the social-economic transformations that took place during the 1989 political and economic transition period. It was during this era that the specific needs and demands of minorities were recognised and addressed (Torgyik, 2008). Multicultural education has been present in Hungary since this time and has gone through a number of developmental phases. This process of development is still in progress.

The concept of culture needs to be defined when discussing the concepts of multicultural education and intercultural pedagogy. The concept of culture is significant because culture affects human actions, ways of thinking, and behaviour, yet is also a phenomenon that keeps changing and cannot be regarded as a permanent or static concept (Torgyik, 2008). The differences between multicultural education and intercultural pedagogy need to be emphasized because these concepts are frequently used interchangeably by practitioners (Gordon Győri et al., 2014). The role of the teacher is of utmost importance: they continuously need to develop themselves professionally so that, in addition to their theoretical knowledge, they learn about the best practices in multicultural education. The professional attitude of the educational institution can also contribute to the development of children who come from different cultures and that of their caretakers. The educational institution can only be successful in multicultural education if it creates the appropriate supporting environment. This environment is mainly characterised by support and provision of professional help (Göbölös & Endrődy, 2020).

### **Theoretical underpinnings**

Migration processes became intensive in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the resulting conflicts in the Balkans, and the European integration processes. The situation further escalated due to the new war- and climatic change-related migration processes of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These changes have repeatedly drawn attention to the significance of the multicultural society. Learning about local cultures and the colourful activities related to them can help preserve the multicultural heritage of the world; similarly, thematic activities in day care centres can also contribute to the preservation of this cultural heritage (Torgyik, 2008).

Although several possible definitions of multicultural education exist, theoreticians have not yet agreed on any. According to Banks and Banks' definition, multicultural education is a reform movement whose goal is to provide equity and equal educational means for students of any gender, ethnic background or socioeconomic classes (Banks, 2001). Multicultural education is interpreted slightly differently in the journal *Hungarian Pedagogy* (*Magyar Pedagógia*). Bruch (1995) describes it as a problem, or rather as a concern that members of the majority of society feel toward members of minority groups that have historically been discriminated. Today the term is used in a wider sense: it is a term to express the differences between social, gender, economic, and racial opportunities in society (Bruch, 1995). According to Gorski (2006), most researchers have agreed upon several principles:

1. Multicultural education is a political movement that is committed to guarantee underrepresented students' secured environments where they can feel safe and protected.
2. We need school reform in order to reach the goal of multicultural education.
3. We constantly need critical analysis of our own practices and philosophies.
4. We should focus on abolishing educational inequities.
5. Multicultural education is relevant and important for all students and participants in the educational process. (Gorski, 2006)

It is also necessary to discuss the concept of the inclusion index. Although for many, inclusion is traditionally connected to the education of disabled or special needs children, the wider goal of this index is to create a system of education that reaches out to all children. Using this index can aid the definition and formation of schools or kindergartens where everyone is able to find their place according to their own needs. The content of the concept can be broken down into four parts: basic terminology, which catalyses the acquisition of an inclusive attitude, the system, the support materials, and the inclusive process, which supports the practical application of inclusive education (Booth & Ainscow, 2009).

One of the participating nurseries in the research, "Józsefvárosi Egyesített Bölcsődék" (Association of Nurseries in Józsefváros), duly recognised that developing the institution based upon a multicultural approach is prerequisite for the staff's professional development. As part of the developmental process, they searched to answer the question of what multiculturalism means in early childhood education. In order to create a multicultural context and openness towards globalisation, theoretical and practical problems need to be addressed. Such practical problems may include communication with non-Hungarian speaking parents. Last but not least, the issue of sustaining an open-minded attitude among the staff requires further exploration (Bajzáth & Bereczkiné, 2017).

### Previous research

A study by Csapó and Czachesz (1995) examined teenagers' attitudes towards other nations. Data collection was carried out by the EURONET group in 12 countries, a total of 14 samples. The first topic dealt with the most popular

countries among young people. The data revealed that wealthy Western countries are regarded as 'universally popular' but there are also individual preferences that have 'local value.' The results proved that the attraction to Western countries is fairly significant and the young people in Eastern countries are eager to establish contact with Western ones. It can also be seen from the data that the United States leads the list in popularity among the Western countries. In contrast, Germany seems to be regarded as the least popular Western country and this fact may be attributed to its role in history (Csapó & Czachesz, 1995). In order to understand the variables that influence attitudes toward other countries, the level of education, social, and economic status of the individuals need to be considered. At the time of the research project multicultural education only had a very brief history in Western countries and was practically unknown in Central and Eastern Europe (Csapó & Czachesz, 1995).

The goal of the eTwinning (European School Twinning Platform) programme is the establishment of international partnerships between teaching staffs and students at schools in the European Union member states. Part of the Erasmus+ project and supported by the EU, the programme provides an online platform for collaboration. Hungary became part of the programme in 2005. While the students and teachers share their learning materials, they get acquainted with each other's cultures and develop their intercultural competence. The role of the teacher is that of an intercultural mediator responsible for establishing contact between their own students and those of a partner country. An additional benefit to these cooperative projects is that they have the potential to enrich the teachers' methodology 'toolbox' (Lakatosné, 2010). Lakatosné's research confirmed that teachers and students' knowledge about each other's cultures and their intercultural competences significantly developed as a result of e-Twinning projects.

The study in the field of multicultural education by Gordon Győri, Németh and Czachesz (2014) concerns a focus group discussion among 50 teachers from 18 primary schools in Budapest. The study found that 'empathy' was the most frequently used word during the focus group discussion about intercultural teacher competence. The participants emphasised the important role of continuous parental contact in order to promote cooperation in the field of education. The results and conclusion of the study were the following: the teachers felt neglected and left to work on their own. Another topic that emerged during the discussions was why parents had changed schools for their children. The participants seemed to agree that the most frequent reason for this is that if the parent is dissatisfied with the service provided by the school and faces a lack in communication, they take their children to another school. Schools try to employ various strategies in order to face this challenge. (Gordon Győri et al., 2014). The study pointed out that during the focus group discussion about intercultural teacher competence, empathy was the most frequently mentioned topic.

Some studies explore the case of disadvantaged children. One specific research examined the case of a Budapest kindergarten, where 20% of children come from



disadvantaged/underprivileged backgrounds (Herczeg, 2007). This study was mentioned in one of the focus group interviews. As the participants explained, the differences between the level of children's socialisation can be perceived as soon as the child starts preschool/nursery or kindergarten. The reason behind these differences is mainly that they come from families with different lifestyles or cultures. As the family is the primary scene of socialisation, this factor has a deep effect on children's behaviour, communication, and physical appearance. It is manifested noticeably in those Budapest nurseries mentioned in the study by Herczeg (2007). The local child protection agency may take action in the following areas: socio-cultural disadvantages, emotional unstableness, and neglectful parental care. These disadvantages are closely interrelated because those parents who feel frustrated by their own social and financial standards of life tend to ease their tension through aggression or addiction. Parents struggling with the afore-mentioned problems are unable to provide the safe and loving environment much needed for their children's development. A child coming to kindergarten from a disadvantaged background is typically unfamiliar with basic nutritional and hygienic routines. It is often in the kindergarten that they use paper napkins or toothpaste for the first time. In such cases it is the kindergarten that should ensure that the children regularly attend preschool or kindergarten. The role of the caretaker or kindergarten teacher, who accepts and loves the child unconditionally, is critical because this is the only path that can lead to the child's self-acceptance. Inclusive pedagogy and skills development in the kindergarten examined in the study are the only ways to enable children from disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve the developmental level required to enrol into primary school.

### **The focus group interview**

The main data collection tool applied in the current research was focus group interviews. The moderator of the interviews is the researcher, who facilitates the conversation, which is guided by pre-planned questions. Nádasi (2011) classifies the focus group interview as a type of interview which can also be referred to as a group interview. This method is well suited for gathering information about collective knowledge. Through such interviews it is possible to get to know the opinion of both a single individual and the different individuals in a group. During these discussions it is sometimes what is left unsaid that matters (Nádasi, 2011).

The goal of these interviews is not to gain numerical data, but rather to establish qualitative categories and find the relationships between them. Through qualitative research, the researcher will also become more involved in and part of the observation procedure. This arrangement was meant to supply an extra level of support in exploring the researched topic.

### ***Research context and procedure***

The research consisted of two focus group interviews with participants who work as early childhood caregivers. They work in two different institutions

of the Association of Nurseries in Józsefváros in the 8<sup>th</sup> district of Budapest. These nurseries were chosen because they are both in partnership with the nursery at which one member of the research team had spent her teaching practice in Florence, Italy. The first focus group interview was carried out in one of the nurseries/preschools of the Association of Nurseries in Józsefváros in October 2019. Altogether four early childhood caregivers participated in the interview, which was held in the staffroom. The second focus group interview was held one year later, in November 2020 in the Mini-Manó Nursery of the Association of Nurseries in Józsefváros. Here there were two participants. Four questions were asked of the participants in both of the interviews. These questions were the following:

1. Please describe your experience in the field of multicultural education.
2. Why do you regard multicultural education as important in early childhood care?
3. Please describe the process of how the nursery embraced its current approach to multicultural education and what values this approach represents.
4. Which of the features of multicultural education would you highlight and recommend to all nurseries to integrate into their programmes?

### ***Focus group interview with caregivers in nurseries***

The next section of the article gives an account of the results gained from the focus group interviews. The participants are referred to by initials, which are based on their physical appearance. The director of Mini Manó Nursery agreed to the use of her real name and will be referred to as Heni.

#### *The results of focus group interview 1*

##### *Introduction*

Before the conversation, the four participants and the interviewer introduced themselves and briefly described their professional background. V. had completed a vocational training in pedagogy and been working as an early childhood teacher for five years. F. graduated with a BA in Early Childhood Education at Eötvös Loránd University, had been working as a caregiver for two years and joined Játékvár Nursery in September 2019. Sz., who had been at her job for three-and-a-half years had also completed a vocational training course. She had not received her BA degree due to lacking the required B2 language examination. G. had been working in the 8<sup>th</sup> district as a qualified infant caregiver. The interviewer had already received her BA in Early Childhood Education and was a BA student in Kindergarten Education.

##### *1. Please describe your experience in the field of multicultural education.*

There seemed to be agreement among the participants that a child from a foreign country can easily fit into the community of the group in the nursery,

learn the majority language, and adapt to the customs in the country. Each child is entitled to equal treatment at the nursery. In some cases, however, a non-Hungarian infant may need more attention and help than the rest of the group. This special attention is always provided to them. In many cases, the presence of an interpreter or cultural mediator is necessary since the early childhood teacher is not always able to communicate in foreign languages. To illustrate this, they quoted some examples from their own professional experience, when Italian or Chinese parents were accompanied by a translator on their visit. All in all, effective communication is an unavoidable part of a good relationship between the institution and the parents. However, this arrangement is not typical and some early childhood teachers may sense multicultural groups as challenging since they are unable to communicate with the parents in that group as effectively as with Hungarian-speaking parents. In contrast, infants are able to fit into any social environment, even without speaking the same language as the rest of the children and teachers.

### *2. Why do you regard multicultural education as important in early childhood care?*

Early childhood teachers or early childhood teachers practicing multicultural education need to acquire a number of competences that are essential when working with Hungarian children, as well. Such competences include empathy, the ability for self-reflection, and good interpersonal skills. These skills are necessary for interacting both with Hungarian and non-Hungarian families: we live in a multicultural society and the nursery is the space for socialisation. Whatever the children experience outside the nursery appears in the children's behaviour in the groups.

Among others, the aim is to model how to be open to other people and make friends. The participants emphasised that early childhood teachers need to realise that multicultural education is present in many aspects of our life and it is not a question of choice. For example, when a child from a different culture joins the group, the teacher will tell the rest of the children about the customs in the new child's culture. They explain why the child does not eat beef or why the mother wears a veil.

### *3. Please describe the process of how the nursery embraced its current approach to multicultural education and what values it represents.*

The significance of early childhood education and its influence on how a child will manage to progress in their schooling or when they drop out of the education system has been recognised by the European Union. The lack of quality education in early childhood may have a negative impact on the child's school career. Therefore, instead of simple childcare, quality early childhood education has gained priority in nurseries. Nowadays, early childhood education not only involves projects, but literary education and nutrition training have been reformed as well. Children's meals are prepared by using a wide variety of techniques. At the moment, the educational programme of the

nursery does not contain an intercultural component, but its implementation is in progress. By the time of the interview, a needs analysis had been conducted among early childhood teachers concerning a training programme aimed at intercultural skills. They intended to map out the teachers' training needs and how they would be able to acquire those skills. The needs analysis was carried out through a questionnaire circulated among the staff. The questionnaire is the continuation of the IECEC (Intercultural Early Childhood Education and Care) Curriculum Design for Professionals project. The needs analysis had already been completed with the ultimate goal of introducing a training course for the teachers. The procedure had been carried out in cooperation with the Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education, Eötvös Loránd University. A project team in the nursery was involved in completing case studies and designing protocols. The efficiency of each method was tested through observations.

#### *4. Which of the features of multicultural education would you highlight and recommend to all nurseries to integrate into their programmes?*

The composition of children's groups is unique in each nursery and therefore it would be difficult to emphasise one decisive feature. Few studies have been carried out in terms of needs analyses in multicultural education in various nursery institutions. The employment of an intercultural cultural moderator would be beneficial in every nursery. However, in some of our nurseries, which are attended by special needs children only, employing an occupational therapist would be necessary. Multicultural education should be formed according to the specific needs of each nursery.

#### *Second focus group interview*

Mini-Manó Nursery was mentioned and recommended during the first focus group interview. Based on this recommendation, it was decided to make contact and involve their staff in the research. A year had passed since the first focus group interview and several changes had occurred meanwhile; the Covid pandemic had become a part of our lives. Education has gone through dramatic changes moving into the digital world, masks need to be worn in the streets, shops, restaurants, and cafés. Temperature is taken upon entering nurseries, the number of people in closed spaces is regulated and limited, and trainees are frequently not allowed to enter and take part in their teaching practice. Because of these circumstances the group interview was organised and held on an online platform. The director of the nursery, Heni (Vajda Krisztiánné) was flexible; she agreed to support this arrangement fully, which seemed to be the safest for each participant.

#### *Introduction*

Working as an early childhood teacher for 35 five years, A. had participated in a five-week training project in Florence. Heni, my contact, is the director of the nursery. She holds several degrees and has been working as an early childhood teacher for a long time as well.

*1. Please describe your experience in the field of multicultural education.*

Immediately at the beginning of the interview an unexpected piece of information surfaced. Heni explained that her husband is Roma and she has two children who are thus half-Roma and so she has first-hand experience in the topic in her own family. The conversation continued in the direction of inclusion instead of multiculturalism. The two participants explained that, based on their previous experience, they had come to the conclusion that contrasting and emphasising differences is not a good approach. Heni explained that this nursery employs the highest percentage of Roma staff (93%). Inclusive education has an outstanding role to play in the nursery, because several children are of Asian, African American, and Indian descent. In the teachers' experience if they accept the families, understand their cultures, and do not ask too many questions, it is possible to establish a working relationship between the early childhood teacher and the children, as well as the early childhood teacher and the parents. Their motto is "acceptance instead of conflict".

*2. Why do you regard multicultural education as important in early childhood care?*

The second interview question had to be modified, since while answering the first question, it became clear that the discussion was going to divert from its original plans. Inclusive approach replaced multicultural education and the rest of the questions were modified in order to follow this shift in focus.

The policy of the nursery is to help children not to feel different from the others. The guiding principle is that everyone should be sensitive towards the other and be accepted as they are. Every child and parent needs to follow the rules of the nursery, notwithstanding their cultural background. It is important to emphasise that these rules are acceptable for every parent coming from any cultural background. At this point the interviewer asked if there were any problems in communication due to linguistic differences. Heni pointed out that in the nursery all teachers hold a university degree, which by law is only issued to students who have passed a B2 language examination. Therefore, every teacher is capable of communicating with the parents in English. In the rare case when there is a language problem, the teachers encourage the parents to talk to the child in their mother tongue, read stories, sing a song or chant some nursery rhymes with them in this language. This strengthens the mother tongue, which usually helps to ease the child's anxiety.

The interviewer wanted to find out how children from different cultures are socialised in the group. The teachers explained that they do not talk about this to the others, they let the rest of the children in the group experience and explore what the new child is like. In their opinion the different behaviour of the newly arrived child is not the result of coming from a different culture, but rather stems from the difference in their personality. In the teachers' professional experience at such a young age there are no significant differences between cultures, such as in the practice of feeding or using nappies. Heni brought up the example of a young girl from India whom they let eat using her

hands. They did not ask her to change or “correct” her table manners and use cutlery because she would not feel at ease in such a situation. The interviewer wanted to find out if they use songs in foreign languages for the sake of children who come from a different cultural background. In their answer the teachers expressed their views that the nursery does not want to make the transitional phase into the institution even harder and thereby increase the traumatic experience of having to leave their home country. This is a task for the parent of the child to cope with: they need to process the experience together, in a more intimate environment. The goal of the institution is to create an honest, open, and accepting educational environment.

*3. Please describe the process of how the nursery embraced its current approach to multicultural education and what values it represents.*

For the formation of this approach, it is necessary to possess relevant professional knowledge and personal experience (i.e., the participant meant that she had married into a Roma family). The director managed to share these experiences with her colleagues. They had previously frequently held cultural events whereby the parents learnt about each other’s customs and food. However, these events were not always successful. She emphasised that because of her children’s experiences she can better sympathise when someone is negatively discriminated or treated due to their Roma origin. In her opinion, emphasising otherness, or a different background may have the opposite effect of what was originally intended. In their nursery the inclusive system has proved to be successful based on years of experience. They support children to be themselves, have stronger confidence, and this approach effectively prepares them for kindergarten and school. At this point the conversation took a more personal turn and Heni pointed out the following: “People do not act or respond in a way because they are of Roma, Indian or Asian origin, but because this is what they are like as persons.” In order to integrate somebody, a person needs to be accepted. Focusing on otherness may easily take the wrong direction.

*4. Which of the features of multicultural education would you highlight and recommend to all nurseries to integrate into their programmes?*

Once again, the interview question needed some modification. The participants were asked to highlight one element of not multicultural, but rather inclusive education that they would like to see applied in every nursery. They think that the inclusive approach should be applied everywhere. Heni expressed that she does not regard the Roma as multicultural. She did not elaborate on this idea, but instead explained that she regarded the inclusive approach to be the primary goal in every nursery because this approach can strengthen children’s self-confidence. They viewed sensitivity as the most important element in inclusive education.

## Summary

The goal of this research project was to explore the practitioners' knowledge and views concerning multicultural education. This was realised through two focus group interviews. The first area of exploration concerned the professional experience of early childhood teachers. Although some negative perceptions had been expected to surface, all six research participants mentioned positive experiences and examples. They elaborated on the topic of innovation in the field of early childhood education and explained that in order to introduce these innovations, a series of needs analyses ought to be carried out. The reason for this is that in each nursery children come from a unique set of backgrounds, and they each require a tailor-made approach. These needs analyses are instrumental in gaining a clear picture of the situation in the nurseries and planning their multicultural approaches in an appropriate way. Unfortunately, few studies have been published in the field so far.

The participants of the first focus group were all familiar with the concept of multicultural education and they considered it important in early childhood education. The nursery examined through this interview had already recognised the significance of multicultural education. They had already carried out needs analysis among the teachers with the help of a questionnaire and based on its results, they are planning to devise an in-service course. The research project further aimed to involve competent early childhood teachers who would supply relevant answers concerning multicultural education. This expectation proved to be successful since the respondents mentioned several examples from their practice and concepts that support the practice of multicultural education.

The second focus group interview was successful in formulating a number of new goals and questions. The interview focused on inclusive education and emphasised its importance in early childhood education. When reviewing the theoretical background, elements of the inclusion index were often mentioned in the conversation. However, the practical application of this index is not required of the nurseries by law. Every stakeholder, that is, teachers, parents and children, may be included and contribute to inclusive education in their own way. The goals and problem areas in the field of inclusive education outlined in the interview could be the target of a new research project that would focus on the effective application of inclusive education in nurseries, its advantages and disadvantages, and how teachers view the application of this approach. The results of the two focus group interviews have proved that success only occurs when the two approaches, that is, multiculturalism and inclusion, are integrated. The two approaches combined may lead to complete acceptance. However, sensitivity is probably the most important underlying value that can be found in both approaches and is part of complete acceptance. If we are open and receptive towards others, inclusion can be achieved more easily. This is extremely important for the child, who will become able to accept him- or herself more easily. Sensitivity affects communication and cooperation with the children's families. Complete acceptance may be realised not through emphasising differences, but rather by letting these differences flourish.

This research has shed light on the lack of professional literature and research at the examined institutions in the topic of multicultural approach in early childhood education. This gap may be related to the fact that this type of need for early childhood education institutions and teachers has not yet been sufficiently addressed. Although the scope of the research described in this article is limited to a small number of participating early childhood teachers and their institutions, a number of observations can be made. Most of the participating teachers realise the important role the multicultural approach plays in early childhood education. They seem to have internalised the values of multicultural and inclusive education and aim to do their educational work accordingly. They gave account of positive experiences in their reflections. However, significant institutional changes can only be realised if the circumstances, needs, and expectations of a larger number of early childhood educational institutions have been surveyed and processed. The repetition of the present research on a wider scale would contribute to achieving this goal. The results would be more reliable and valid if the research covered a more representative sample that includes different districts in Budapest and other parts of the country.

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# Third-Culture Kids in early childhood education

Kőrös, Noémi Lilla – Trentinné Benkő, Éva

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This paper's purpose is to introduce the Third-Culture Kid (TCK) phenomenon and seek the significant aspects of a highly mobile lifestyle, focusing on their impact on young children learning in the early childhood education programme. Such features include the potential positive and negative consequences of growing up in a multicultural environment. Furthermore, this study dissects the question of whether young children should be directly exposed to cultural awareness at a young age, thereby highlighting educators' crucial role in achieving culturally responsible pedagogy in the preschool context. Triangulation was used based on three methods of data collection. A quantitative survey positioned the voices of 140 Adult Third-Culture Kids (ATCK) in the forefront in order to examine their TCK experience. A qualitative interview focused on ten professional childhood educators' practical knowledge. Finally, a qualitative case study exploring a TCK experience completed the survey. This research offers both a conceptual framework and practical understanding of the complex influence of the TCK lifestyle on children participating in early childhood education.

*Keywords:* early childhood education, Third-Culture Kid (TCK), cultural awareness, culturally considerate classroom, educators' role, globalisation

## Introduction

A study that analyses young Third-Culture Kids (TCKs) is increasingly vital in childhood pedagogy. Research focusing on the impact cross-cultural upbringing has on the personality development of TCKs already exists and has gradually increased over the past few decades. However, current studies seem to emphasise general characteristics of the TCK lifestyle and lack investigation regarding young TCKs just beginning their cross-cultural adventure. Since TCK research is still in its infancy, this paper may provide relevant information for future studies in early childhood education. It can also guide educators, parents, and others interacting with young TCKs to create an environment suitable for acquiring culturally rich experiences.

The study is structured into two main sections: the theoretical background and the empirical research. The theoretical discussion outlines the central notions and concepts that will often be used throughout the paper in connection to the main topic before briefly overviewing the TCK character profile analysis with a focus on the four primary areas of high mobility, cultural exposure,

language acquisition, and relational patterns. Each theme is reviewed based on both the childhood perspective and the consequential negative versus positive outcome this aspect may have on the adulthood identity. The theoretical background also highlights the practical question of cultural diversity in the early childhood programme by covering different approaches and methods.

Our empirical research examines and evaluates the TCK character profile and the practical framework for applying culturally considerate techniques in the early childhood classroom. The study uses the method of triangulation for data collection and features a questionnaire, interviews, and a case study based on the hypotheses and the research questions. The quantitative survey positions the voices of 140 Adult Third-Culture Kids (ATCK) in the forefront with the aim of examining their TCK experience. The qualitative interview focuses on ten professional childhood educators' practical experiences. Finally, a qualitative case study of a TCK experience completes the survey.

## Theoretical background

### *Definitions / Terminology used*

*Culture* is a notoriously complex and challenging term to define. Much of this difficulty is rooted in the many ways it has been used both worldwide and throughout history. A range of possible interpretations arise within the literature, but given its transformative nature, it remains a relative notion for many respected experts (Apte, 1994).

The sociologist Ruth Useem was the first to coin the phrase *Third Culture* and *Third Culture Kid*. Useem referred to the TCKs' home culture or the place they came from as "first culture"; the host culture in which they were currently living was termed the "second culture". As for the region in between, the unique way of life adopted and shared by the expatriate communities, the "culture between cultures" was eventually specified as the "third culture".

*Adult Third-Culture Kids* or ATCKs are those third-culture kids who are at least 18 years old. However, despite the alteration in the term, it is not uncommon to come across the belief that once a TCK, always a TCK.

As Pollock and Van Reken (2009) defined the phenomenon, a *Cross-Cultural Kid* (CCK) has interacted with two or more cultures for a distinct period of time during their childhood. Unlike in the case of TCKs – who are also considered CCKs – the definition does not require individuals to live outside their passport countries. Rather, they receive cultural exposure experience by interacting with different cultures within their environment. Subsequently, CCKs represent any and all nationalities, ethnicities, and economic groups (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

While cross-cultural understanding compares various cultures, *intercultural learning* is established upon the interaction of two or more cultures. It strives to answer the critical aspects of what this intersection conjures (Atamaniuk, 2014). Intercultural competence means being able to open to another way of thinking and learning to communicate with people from different cultural

backgrounds. It is a complex process that requires participants to create a joint base upon which cultural differences are manifested and reconstructed into a cross-cultural medium. *Multiculturalism* is often associated with names such as “salad bowl” and “melting pot”, referring to the concept of different cultures integrating with one another. As a descriptive term, this can be viewed as what Webster’s College Dictionary explains as “the existence, recognition, or preservation of different cultural identities within a unified society” (2010, 3rd definition). Overall, the different concepts of a *cross-cultural*, *intercultural*, *multicultural*, or even a “new kind of” individual essentially all strive to define someone “whose horizons extend significantly beyond his or her own culture” (Adler, 1977, para5). These terms will often be used throughout the study when interpreting different aspects of the TCK phenomenon.

Having a mobile life is not a new occurrence. Correspondingly, TCKs are not a new phenomenon either. Families have migrated and travelled to different parts of the world since the beginning of time. However, their low representation in contrast to the vast majority has made them seem almost invisible until recently (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). There is, however, a global shift. *Globalisation* or the accelerated development of human interaction through a vast network of interconnections (Tomlinson, 2006) is ultimately creating the sense of a shrinking world, where it has become common for people to pursue the experience of a culturally mixed environment (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 28). Not only is the number of people following this way of life increasing, but as many experts in the field, including Useem (2009), have claimed, the relevance of their experience is becoming the more significant aspect. However, experts have yet to map out the exact outcome of today’s increased cultural fusion and to be able to conclude the consequences of our globalising world (Pollock & Reken, 2009, p. 5).

### ***Third-Culture Kid characteristics***

This next part of the study highlights some of the TCK character profile’s shared traits, including high mobility, cultural exposure, language acquisition, and relational patterns. Each section describes its key features, along with a focus on early childhood manifestation and a consequential positive and negative outcome it can likely lead to.

#### ***High mobility***

One of the main characteristics of a TCKs’ life is high mobility; hence, the common term, “global nomad,” is often used to describe individuals who are always on the move. High mobility can be interpreted in several ways. Some TCKs move to different countries every two or three years, while others stay in the same host country from birth until they graduate. Whichever the case, it can be said that “all TCKs experience mobility issues at one level or another” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 64). High mobility is not only restricted to geographically changing homes within a short time but can also mean simply returning to the given passport country for summer break. In other words, either the TCKs are

coming and going or those around them (Moore, 2011, p. 28). Every single leave means the same thing for a TCK: having to say goodbye to friends in the host country, hello to friends and relatives in the passport country, then another goodbye and another hello again. (Pollock & Reken, 2009). To a young TCK, the constant change of home is standard in their experience (Moore, 2011, p. 28) and as much part of everyday life as is anything else. To quote Bolon, “When one is born eight time zones away from one’s passport country, how can being overseas possibly appear difficult?” (Bolon, 2012, para7).

However, despite having the ability to integrate quickly into new environments, children, especially at a younger age, can falsely lull their parents into the impression that there is no problem. One of the main *challenges* of a highly mobile life is that it can drastically influence the child’s home and nationality concept (Hayden, 2006, pp. 48-49) due to the constant change in environment and a range of geographically bound experiences. Downie (1976) attributes this influence to the still ongoing developmental process, ultimately causing a sense of *rootlessness* and inability to grasp the concept of home or create the necessary network of relationships crucial for self-definition. The younger the child, the less involvement he has outside the family, the more influential the parents’ role in adjusting to a move is. Something as simple as taking the time to talk about the day’s activities when they return from school may also help transitional periods.

While living a life of frequent mobility can be a challenge for TCKs, it also provides them with a range of *positive benefits*. With time, many TCKs can overcome the challenges that come with high mobility, thriving instead of the rich memories, and established special bonds with people from all over the world (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001, p. 78). This type of lifestyle also enables them to develop *flexibility and adaptability*. As Vyhmeister (2015) explains, TCKs are used to dealing with problems and used to change; therefore, it does not scare them as much as it should.

### *Cultural exposure*

A highly mobile life brings exposure to a variety of different countries and cultures. Although children may notice fundamental differences in spoken language, visual differences or climate change, they often only have a vague sense of connection between geography and those differences they encounter (Lambert & Klineberg, 1967 and Weil, 1951). Ramsey mentions that it is also not uncommon for children to “sometimes overgeneralise” their cultural observations and be likely to construct specific images representing an entire group based on that attribute alone (Ramsey, 2004, p. 115).

Although children cannot understand culture on a conceptual level, the above statement proves that changes in cultural environment ultimately influence qualities – including “language, behaviour, interactional styles and social expectations” (Ramsey, 2004, p. 116) in young TCKs’ development, even if on a subconscious level. Subsequently, studies show that early childhood is a critical time for using young children’s flexibility in perspective as a means

of developing competencies that dispose of bias against unfamiliar cultures and instead promote a positive attitude towards those of different cultural backgrounds (Ramsey, 2004, p. 116). However, large amounts of exposure towards other cultures can also result in a subsiding level of heritage later on during the developmental years.

Although TCKs absorb knowledge from each destination, they unfortunately often lose sight of their heritage. As a result of the highly mobile life that they live, TCKs have no choice but to adjust to each cultural environment and adapt a “chameleon-like” quality (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). It is also not uncommon to experience some level of grief due to the deficiency or even nonexistence of certain experiences and relationships in the place where the individual grew up (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 100). It may cause a “longing to experience what others in the ‘home’ culture had.” In the identity crisis that may occur within the TCK, this tension “gives rise to a dynamic, passionate, and critical posture” (Adler, 1975, p. 7), along with a range of further self-defining *positive attributes*. Through the first exposure of a second culture at an early age, the development of a *bicultural competence* arises in TCKs that develops knowledge of the values and beliefs represented by both cultures later on in the personal development, with a generally positive attitude towards each group and a significant skillset in *intercultural communication*. Moore attributes this latter competence to the diverse cross-cultural exposure TCKs experience, through which they are also able to gain *high adaptability* (2011, p. 35). Adaptability, which in this sense is a vital skill for citizens of the future to have as it may offer solutions to global problems people cannot even think of.

### *Language acquisition*

Children that are exposed to new environments are likely to face particular linguistic *challenges*. While this can manifest in learning the host country’s language, *holding on to the mother tongue* while lacking the linguistic environment to use it can also be an issue for TCKs (Fukui, 2005, p. 27). Language retention can be challenging and confusing when the primary focus should be on adapting to the new geographical and social circumstances (Fukui, 2005). Difficulty may also arise from the limited proficiency in the language used in the host country’s school, which can ultimately lead to *problems with coping academically and socially*. Despite these mentioned aspects, however, the literature seems to hold a much larger palette for the significant *benefits* of being exposed to different linguistic environments. One of them is that a TCK upbringing can provide the skillset to gaining *fluency in one or more languages* (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 118).

### *Relational patterns*

A highly mobile life inevitably affects the formation of relationships. Melles and Frey (2014, p. 352) speak of the *challenge* that can be manifested in the form of “*parentification*”, in which many children are expected to “take on roles or perform them at a level inappropriate to the child’s level of emotional,

intellectual, and physical development”. Such roles most often manifest in the frequent *loss of friendships* and adaptation to letting go of deep, emotional bonds. With time, this can lead to children feeling a lack of validation in terms of their emotional needs, ultimately learning to ignore their feelings, or even losing touch with them (Melles & Frey, 2014, p. 352).

In the long term, challenges may arise in maintaining *long-lasting relationships*. TCKs learn to adopt a kind of emotional detachment in terms of saying goodbyes in the moment of leaving. Vyhmeister (2015) explains this form of “*quick release*” to be a coping mechanism in response to the complex process, pointing out, “We’ve done it so many times, it hurts to drag it out” (10:00–10:10). The experience of these relational patterns gives TCKs the false impression that their relationships will continue to end in such ways even in adulthood. Consequently, many ATCKs become guarded, protecting themselves from further pain (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), and therefore focusing more “on the inevitability of relationships ending rather than on relational growth, which limits establishing authentic relationships” (Melles & Frey, 2014, p. 353).

Despite having to overcome frequent challenges, the *benefits* that arise in terms of relationships should also be mentioned. On the one hand, TCKs’ mobile lifestyle enables them to build a *rich network of friendships* throughout the world, which can be “useful for all sorts of things – from finding cheap room and board while travelling to setting up business connections later in life” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 132). In contrast to the many friendships that come and go in a TCKs’ life, and the difficulties they face overcoming loss, it can be said that TCKs go to greater lengths than some people might consider normal to nurture relational ties with others. It is especially true to those they have shared a common lifestyle with, giving them a sense of connectedness. Furthermore, due to their cross-cultural experience and the constant change in environment, they learn to adapt to a range of different situations and people, giving them excellent *communication and diplomatic skills* (Duvall & Padmanabh). As has been demonstrated, the TCK character profile brings with it many advantages and drawbacks. Children who embark on a life of high mobility enable flexibility, intercultural competence, and a rich network of friends. However, they also have to face the difficulty of loss, the instability of identity and a constant sense of impermanence due to frequent change.

## ***Creating a Culturally Considerate Environment***

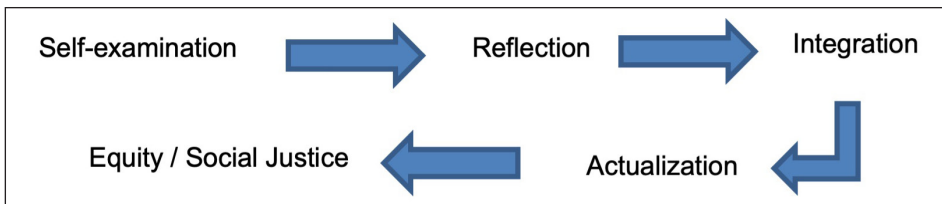
### ***Raising cultural awareness***

To create an environment in which children are motivated to adopt positive attitudes, *educators’ roles* must be defined. Educators bear the prime responsibility of manifesting the ideal culturally considerate model themselves. *Self-awareness* is the “foundation for multicultural awareness and cultural competency” (Anderson & Davis, 2012, p. 11). According to this view, educators have to reflect on their personal views, thoughts, and feelings to shape their professional practice. Anderson and Davis (2012, p. 11) understand

that this does not happen independently and have created a model to display personal and professional growth (See Figure 1.). The first stage concentrates on acknowledging the particular bias (*self-examination*), which – according to Anderson & Davis – is one of the most challenging steps of becoming culturally considerate educators. We are then “forced to admit what we don’t know we don’t know” (*reflection*). A process of cognitive restructuring follows (*integration*), after which we can begin learning various strategies and building the skills (*actualization*) necessary for ultimately placing them in practice (*equity/social justice*).

**Figure 1**

*Model of personal and professional growth*



### *Celebrating cultural diversity*

*Equipment and material* give children the most visible connection with cultures and provide the best means of celebrating cultural diversity (Baldock, 2010, p. 62). Ramsey believes in the importance of providing plentiful opportunities for children to experiment with different cultural elements. Showing photographs of people from different cultures engaging in similar activities – such as cooking, eating or going to school – but in different ways; introducing toys, materials, and tools that represent diverse cultural groups can all be an exciting experience for children (Ramsey, 2004, p. 117). Furthermore, music, dance, children’s literature, and any other cultural activities can be valuable resources in connecting positive experiences to different cultures (Baldock, 2010, p. 64).

*The celebration of various festivals* is widely shared in early childhood settings in order to promote cultural diversity. It can provide not only recognition of the children’s heritage but also develop an “initial [positive] response” towards unfamiliar cultures in general (Baldock, 2010, p. 73). However, it is essential to “incorporate aspects of those other cultures throughout the day and the year, not just on one holiday”. Morning meetings can be an ideal platform for building this kind of cohesion within the group where children can share stories and thoughts with one another. Furthermore, *involving family members* and other professionals in children’s learning is vital in early childhood education.

To conclude this part of the study, it can be said that children gain the most valuable knowledge from the interactions and experience through which they can construct positive connections towards cultures other than their own. By always starting from “something with which the children are familiar” (Baldock, 2010, p. 74), educators can achieve not only cultural awareness but understanding and ultimately respect on a high level.



## Empirical Research

### *Description of the Research*

The research was conducted to grasp certain connections between the distinguished theoretical findings and the inquiry results. In order to stay true to the study topic, two specific aims were placed in focus.

**Table 1**

#### *Research questions*

Research question #1: Do ATCKs see their upbringing as more positive or negative overall?	Hypothesis: Being a TCK is far more of a rewarding and beneficial experience, and therefore we assume that the majority of the affected feel the same way.
Research question #2: Should cultural awareness be raised in the early childhood program? What is the crucial role of educators working with TCKs?	Hypothesis: Cultural awareness should be raised in the early childhood programme to familiarise young TCKs with cultural diversity. The educators' role in this process is to provide a stimulus-rich environment and promote the benefits of being different.

For the research, triangulation was used based on three methods of data collection. *The quantitative survey* positioned the voice of 140 ATCKs in the vanguard in pursuit to examine their TCK experience, centralised around areas such as general geographic inquiries, family, social life, education, and a concluding self-reflection section. *The qualitative interview* focused on ten professional childhood educators' practical experiences, consisting of open-ended questions, and the content of the questions were adjusted to the literature. Finally, the *qualitative case study* of a TCK experience completed the survey.

## Research Findings

### *Questionnaire results: General overview*

Of the approximately 200 questionnaires sent out, 140 responses were received. The high response rate confirms the interest participants showed in the topic. 54% of the ATCK respondents were females, and 46% were males. All respondents were anonymous and completed the survey electronically due to the geographical distance between participants. The youngest respondent was 18 years of age, and the oldest was 34.

To verify participants' understanding of the term at hand, a question targeted a few labels to see whether they could associate themselves with. These included: Third-Culture Kid (113), Cross-cultural Kid (60), Missionary Kid (4), Pastor's Kid (1), Domestic Cross-cultural Kid (10), Corporate or Diplomatic Third-Culture Kid (20), Child of immigrant (0) and High mobile or Globally nomadic (11).

It is important to compare the age from which each individual began their TCK experience. Based on the responses, most participants were born into their

TCK lifestyle, with a slightly decreasing rate followed with later ages. This result is significant because the age factor plays a decisive role in defining the TCK experience (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Subsequently, it can be noted that a large portion of the participants represent the TCK phenomenon in essence.

**Figure 2**

*Distribution of Passport and Host Countries*

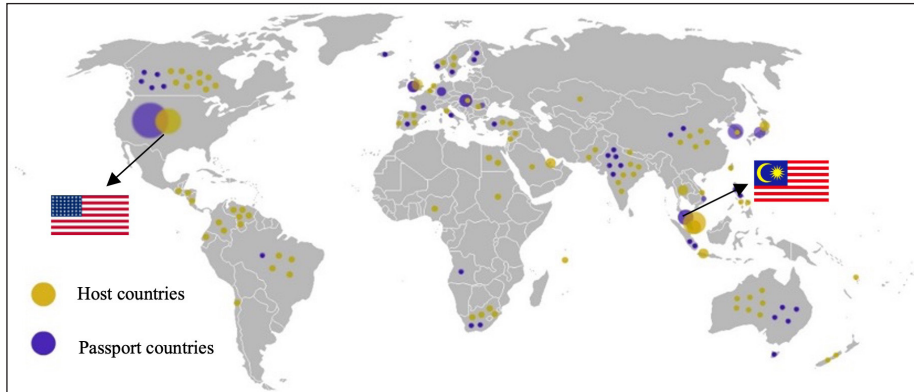
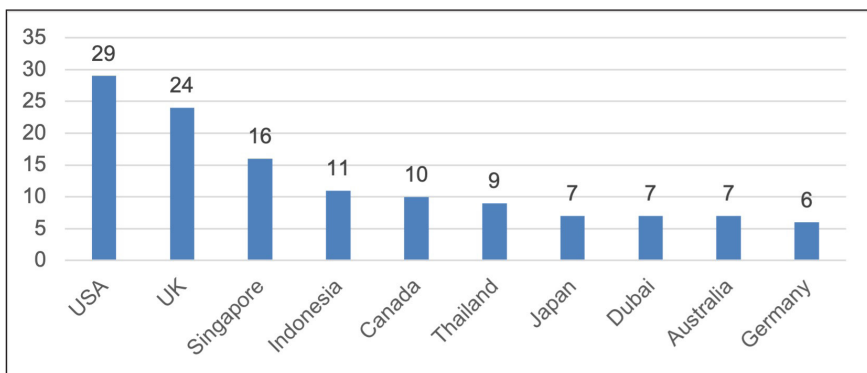


Figure 2 presents the distribution of the participants' passport and host countries, the size and number of dots symbolising the estimated representation. Figure 3 shows the ten most common host countries, without including Malaysia, due to almost all participants having spent a portion of their life there. According to the graph, the second most common host country is the USA, which calls for a sure evaluation concerning this question's phrasing.

**Figure 3**

*Most common host countries (not including Malaysia)*

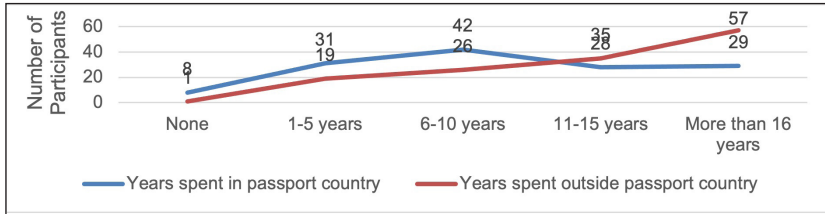


In terms of the total amount of host countries participants lived in, the average number was one, listed by 44 respondents. Thirty-two participants lived in two countries, followed closely by 29, having lived in three host countries. Expanding the number of host countries, 27 participants listed six or more countries. One

person spoke of having lived in nine countries. This assessment is interesting in determining the respondents’ sense of home and self-evaluation.

**Figure 4**

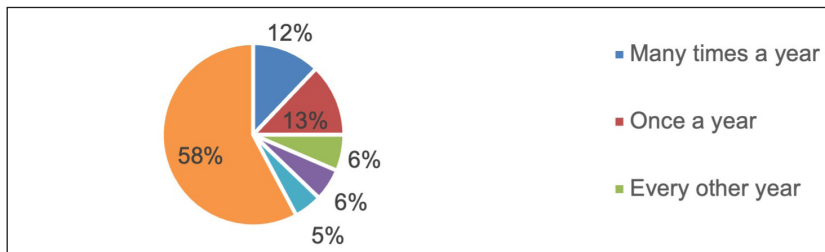
*Years spent in vs. outside the passport country*



It was interesting to compare the ratio of time spent in the passport country instead of time spent outside. As Figure 4 demonstrates, most participants have spent between 6 and 10 years living in their passport country. A clear cross-over can be seen in the 11–15-year section, from which the time spent in one’s passport country is overtaken by the time spent in other countries. This data shows a correlation between the overall number of host countries mentioned earlier.

**Figure 5**

*Frequency of visitation to passport country*



Currently, a surprising 80% of the survey participants are living in their passport countries. 35% visit their homeland at least once a year, while 7 participants go back less than every four years or not at all.

***Family and language use***

As was explained in the literature review, globalisation today is a current and ongoing process. The accelerated connectivity of the modern world increases the tendency to adopt a culturally diverse and mobile lifestyle. It was exciting to assess whether the theory was true only to the survey participants’ generation or whether their parents have experienced a cross-cultural lifestyle earlier in their lives.

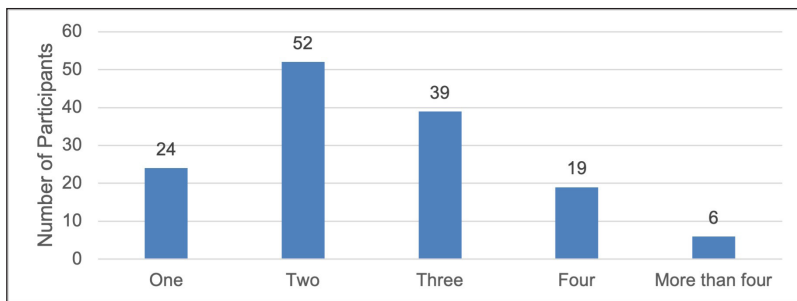
The results show that although most respondents (77%) have parents from the same nationality, 34 participants are of mixed heritage, which is relatively notable compared to the total number. Furthermore, 24 individuals stated that either one or both of their parents also had a TCK upbringing. Upon comparing the

two results, there is approximately a 50% correlation between the parents' TCK experience and their choice to devote themselves to a cross-cultural marriage.

In terms of language use, Figure 6 shows that most of the respondents have acquired an average of two and three languages to date. As the data shows, 64 ATCKs have managed to pick up three or more languages. The number of most spoken languages was six. It is also interesting to note that this particular participant also lived in the most host countries, nine to be exact.

**Figure 6**

*Number of languages spoken*



As Figure 7 shows, 65% of respondents use the language of their passport country at home. An additional 19% supplement their mother tongue with English, and 8% use a different language besides their passport country's language. It adds up to a totalled 90% of ATCKs that maintain their linguistic heritage around family members. Only 14 participants have listed languages differing from their mother tongue as the standard choice within the family. It may be the result of various reasons. The family might have found it practical to switch to the host country's common language, chosen to adjust to the ease of communication within a multilingual family or for any further reason not mentioned.

**Figure 7**

*Language use at home*



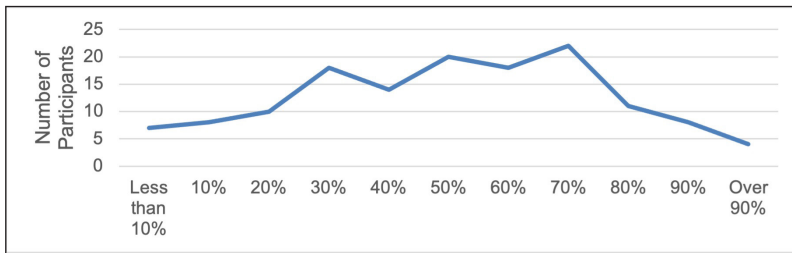
As high mobility is a common characteristic within all TCKs, it is crucial to evaluate the effect mobility has on ATCKs' communication with family members as adults. Respondents maintain primarily face-to-face communication only with their parents and siblings, the statistical emergence of which is scarcely

higher than that of the telephone as a means of keeping in touch. It can be seen that the use of social media is poignant, whereas more dated communication platforms, such as email or even letters, are far less common. It was positively surprising that only 1% of the participants had no communication with their family members.

### Social life

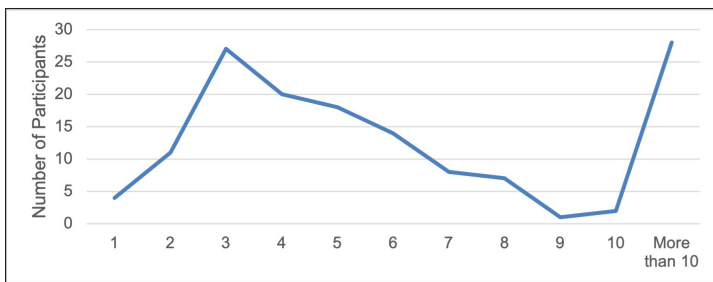
Internationally mobile families often choose to admit their children into International Schools (the exact ratio of schooling concerning this survey’s participants will be seen in more depth in the Education section). As a result, TCKs consequently find themselves among many others who share the same lifestyle. Participants were asked to estimate the percentage of their TCK friends. As Figure 8 demonstrates, this amount ranges most often between 30 and 70%, which can be considered a reasonably high value considering many of them have resided in their passport countries.

**Figure 8**  
*Percentage of TCK friends*



Participants were also asked to list the number of countries in which their close friends are located in. Figure 9 shows an evident correlation with Figure 8 regarding the percentage of friends and their distribution worldwide. The results illustrate that the participants with a low percentage of TCK friends listed fewer countries than those with more. In contrast, those ATCKs who have a higher percentage estimated their friends to be in a wider array of locations.

**Figure 9**  
*Number of countries ATCKs have close friends in*



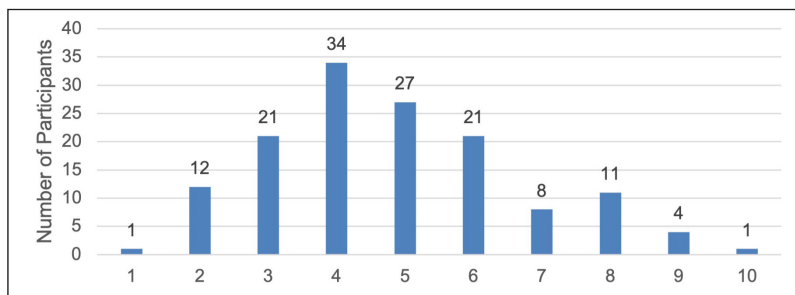
No respondents have general face-to-face communication with their TCK friends. While this result can be seen as somewhat of an apparent consequence of the TCK lifestyle, it can also lead to difficulty forming new relationships throughout adulthood. Based on the findings, most participants admitted to having difficulty with commitment issues.

### *School and education*

It has been mentioned in the previous section that TCKs generally attend international schools in the host countries that they live in. According to the questionnaire participants, around 80% attended international schools. As geographical relocation is a common occurrence in many TCKs' lives, so is the process of changing schools. Based on Figure 10, the ATCK participants have attended an average of four schools during their upbringing, with a few exceptional individuals doubling this number.

**Figure 10**

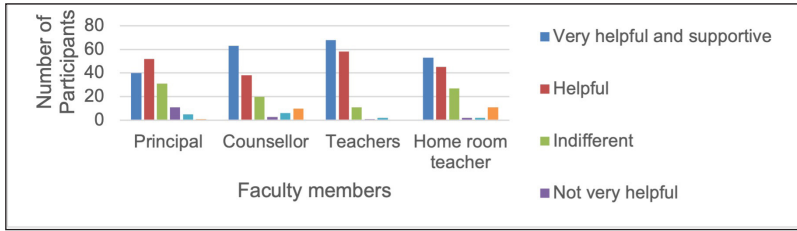
*Number of schools attended*



The process of changing schools can be a difficult time for TCKs. Most of the participants claimed to have found the transitional period challenging but quickly adjusted to their new surroundings. Fifty-five respondents did not find any difficulty in adapting to their new school. Among these individuals, some explained this as a result of being very young, while others were even excited about the new experience. Altogether, 20 participants felt significant difficulty in terms of adaption, three admitting that they never felt comfortable in their school.

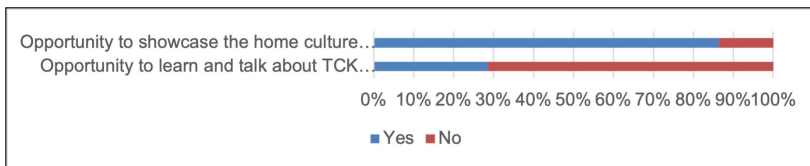
Figure 11 shows the satisfying result, according to which most participants found their schools' faculty members to be helpful and supportive. While others may have found certain members to be indifferent towards them, very few indicated the feeling of receiving no help or even discouragement. The results of the above data show that most schools were successfully able to provide the necessary attention and support the target ATCKs sought at the time. The high attendance to international school environments may also significantly impact the participants' attitude toward faculty members. International schools are professionally equipped and prepared systematically for students that live a highly mobile life. By understanding the quality of their lifestyle, such professionals may emphasise the integration process by differentiating and approaching their educational strengths based on their unique TCK experience.

**Figure 11**  
*Experience with the Host country's school faculty*



Another inquiry made in connection to schooling was the presence of cultural consideration in the curriculum. It was surprising to compare the results of two fairly related questions. On the one hand, Figure 12 reveals that 85% of participants were provided with the opportunity to showcase their home culture in their host countries' schools through holiday celebrations and other events. It validates the general view that international schools emphasise promoting cultural diversity and building positive attitudes towards differences. On the other hand, however, many respondents felt this practice of showcase to lack integration with the daily classes they attended and, with it, the chance to learn and talk about their TCK lifestyle.

**Figure 12**  
*Cultural consideration in the curriculum*

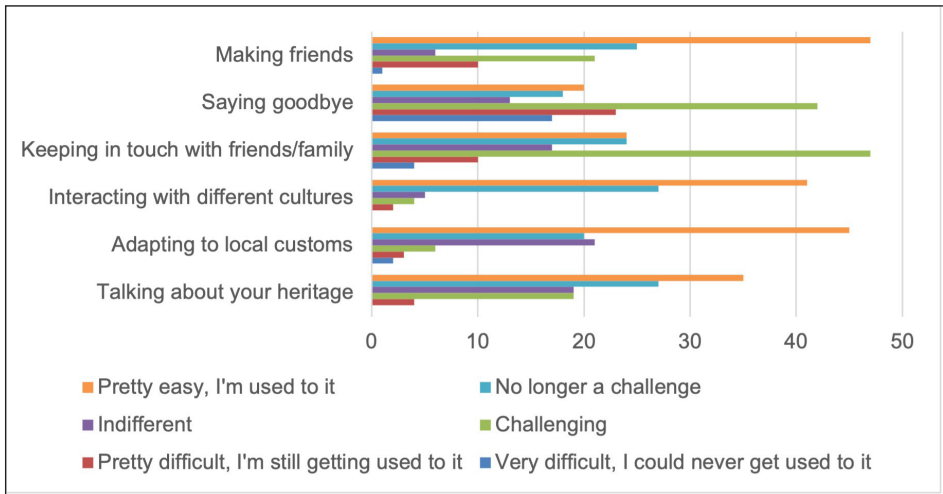


In regard to the previous question, the target ATCKs were asked whether they feel it is essential to raise cultural awareness in school, referring to any aspect of cultural consideration, such as projects, discussions or celebrations in general. 86% of the respondents claimed that raising cultural awareness is vital. Roughly half of the participants believe cultural awareness-raising should be introduced as early as possible, in preschool or at least before second grade.

***Participants' self-reflections***

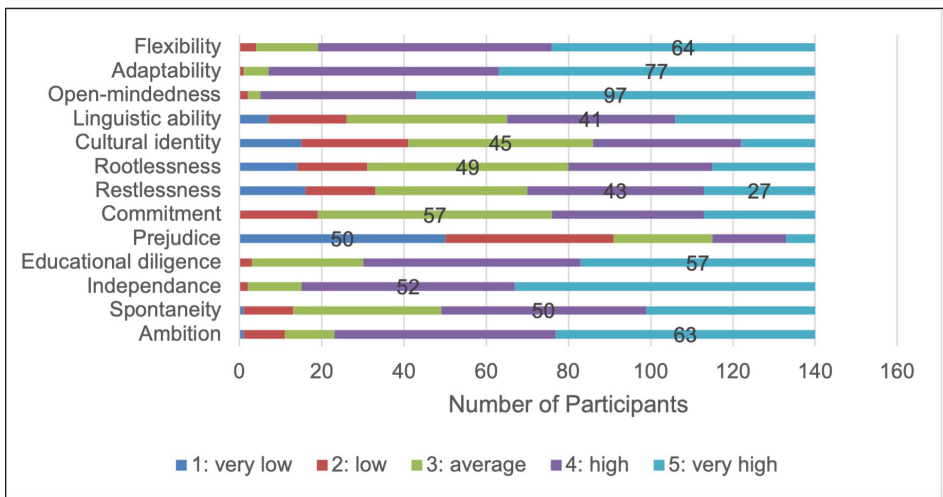
This last section aims to portray participants of this survey as they assess certain aspects of their over-all upbringing. As Figure 13 demonstrates, the majority of the participants have successfully overcome most difficulties of the TCK lifestyle. However, two areas remain that many still find challenging: saying goodbye and keeping in touch with friends and family. As adulthood is the time when childhood experiences are cultivated into the settled mentality, the researcher prompted the participants to rate the different areas of their character profile on a scale of 1 to 5. The reason for this was to test the theoretical findings based on the specific benefits and drawbacks of the TCK life that accumulate and influence the developed personality of ATCKs.

**Figure 13**  
*Ability to cope with aspects of the TCK life*



The results seen in Figure 14 show that ATCKs have adopted several positive traits such as flexibility, lack of prejudice, independence, adaptability, and an even greater sense of open-mindedness through interaction with different cultures. However, their feeling of rootlessness due to the often high mobility level has consequently led to a 50% ratio of restlessness, the need to be on the move, visit new places, otherwise feeling out of place upon not doing so.

**Figure 14**  
*Personality traits on a scale of 1 to 5*





## *ATCKs' definitions of home*

**Table 2**

*ATCKs' definitions of home*

Themes	Definitions
Connectivity and interaction with family, friends and loved ones (52)	“where my family is” / “where my parents are located at the time (36)
	“where I have people that care about me” (2)
	“the place where my friends are always there and where everyone knows me and I know everybody” (14)
Feelings based on memories, comfort, security and emotions (57)	“where the heart belongs” (12)
	“not a matter of geography, it’s a state of mind” (12)
	“where the air reminds you of your childhood” (2)
	“where you feel safe and comfortable” (24)
	“where you feel you belong” (4)
Geographical place based on the current location, country of birth and most time spent (18)	“where I’m happiest” (3)
	“where my mail goes” / “wherever I’m currently paying rent”
	“any place where I am currently living” (9)
	“where I was born” (2)
Others (12)	“where I have spent the most time” (6)
	“everywhere and nowhere” (3)
	“wherever you make it” (3)
	“where I’m not”
	“something I may have in the future”
	“extremely difficult to define”
	“where your journey takes you”
“So many different things. It’s all of the places I grew up, it’s where my parents live, it’s where I currently live. It’s the world (2).” / “this Earth”	

ATCK participants were asked to define their unique understanding of “home”. The answers provided in this table are organized into four different themes according to the responses. While many respondents attributed their definitions to certain connections to people – family, friends, loved ones – it can be seen that the most common descriptions revolved around an abstract notion of feeling rather than a matter of geography.

**Table 3**

*Overall evaluation of the cross-cultural upbringing*

The best part about being a TCK	The worst part about being a TCK
Exposure to diversity, acquiring intercultural communication skills (65)	The feeling of rootlessness, lack/loss of identity, or heritage (36)

Change of perspective, acquiring an open mind (46)	Difficulty fitting in, feeling like an outsider, reverse culture shock (34)
A network of friends worldwide (36)	Goodbyes, leaving friends/family behind, keeping in touch (33)
Unique life experience, lasting memories (23)	Instability, impermanence from constant change, starting over (20)
Traveling the world, seeing new places (18)	Difficulty with commitment (16)

As a follow-up question, participants were asked where they specified their home to be. The results show that a total of 58 respondents chose their passport countries as their idea of home. A further 46 participants listed a host country or their current place of residence. As for the remaining 25 individuals, a variety of responses came up, either expressing difficulty in tackling such a question or providing a complex approach based on their perspective.

Finally, to conclude, participants were asked to give an overall evaluation of their cross-cultural upbringing. With 94% dominance, it is clear that almost all ATCK participants of this survey valued their experience to be a positive one. Examples listed in the “other” field included mixed emotions and one participant who explained that the TCK life is the only life they had ever known, causing an inability to compare it to anything else.

The general statement can be made that the results show clear relevance to the theory regarding the TCK character profile and the outcome of the assessed statistics. Moreover, a solid collective opinion among the majority underlines that the ATCK participants see the genuine worth in the memories and skillset they have gained and have grown to look back on them as an undeniable positive experience.

### Interview results

The following section summarizes the interviews conducted with ten early childhood educators (5 in Malaysia, 5 in Hungary), with their years of experience teaching TCKs spanning from 6-36. The following results are based on their thoughts regarding what it means to create a culturally considerate environment.

Participants all spoke of the elaborate process required to *learn of new students' backgrounds*, be it *cultural* or more focused on the personality traits that represent the given child. Some educators mentioned using transitional files, and others get to know their students by using application- or registration forms. They all underline the importance of observation that can then be used to evaluate their educational needs accordingly. Participants tend to organize orientational meetings with the families at the beginning of the year or after the registration phase. Looking at the different answers, there seemed to be a varying opinion on investigating the child's specific cultural background. While some educators found it essential to research the cultural aspects of the child's family, others saw greater importance in mapping out the child's personal qualities.

When integrating children into their classroom, three main areas were mentioned in terms of methods used: *song and play*, *language support* and *body- and sign language*. After observing the child, the educators assess the given situation and construct the follow-up tasks accordingly. Additionally, they spoke of the importance of using visual elements at the early stage of the year, adding that it is “natural for early childhood teachers to build in gesture and dramatise facial expression to portray a message”. In addition to using body language, it was also common to hear about speaking slowly and clearly with the child. It can be seen that there is a clear pattern among the attitude of educators in terms of integrating a new child. As elaborated, all participants emphasise their body language, clear communication, and the general aim to make the child feel comfortable in the new environment.

According to the interviewed educators, there are several areas in which parents can *help their children overcome the possible struggles of a new cultural environment*. They may include language use at home, involvement in the adaptation process, and reading as a means of strengthening the mother tongue. The importance of maintaining the mother tongue came up among several interviewees. Some encourage families not to change much about their home to maintain the family routine, despite changing countries, specifying how this gives the child “something that is always the same, and that makes them feel safer”. One educator found no issue in parents practising the target language at home. Beyond language use, a teacher stressed the value that parents can provide their children by getting to know their home culture.

All interview subjects spoke of the importance of incorporating the *host countries' holidays*. A common theme was the celebration of International Week and incorporating a constant Culture Corner in the classroom. However, the question of cultural representation-based problems seemed to arise within several educators, who claimed certain celebrations should be dismissed due to their religious base. In general, although it can be said that the educators can agree on the importance of bringing together children and parents during whichever festivals they choose to celebrate, it is an excellent opportunity for them to become “aware of their culture and cultural differences as well”.

Participants' opinion regarding the *ability to recognise different cultures* was evidently at odds. Some educators strongly believed in understanding children's portrayal in identifying cultures, explaining that seeing a difference “comes naturally for them because they start seeing it at such a young age”. Others believe children notice what is relevant or specific to them, and it is a different kind of culture than that of which adults' notions define. The first things they notice are skin colour, gender, and foods eaten but tend to focus more on social interaction elements. All educators agree concerning the importance of engaging in conversation concerning such topics.

The question on *raising cultural awareness* was another topic that split the opinion of interviewees. Although all educators attributed great importance to the implicit learning experiences obtained through interaction within the multicultural classroom environment, the attitude towards directly raising cultural awareness varied. Some educators emphasise conversations, while

others believe materials such as toy people, books, and other visual elements that can represent cultural differences to be more effective. From a different viewpoint, in one interview, it was claimed that culture is not very important at such a young age. "It is more about what they like and can do together". While most educators emphasise the importance of play experience, others admittedly recognise that children gain "powerful experiences" from the various talks in the classroom about the similarities and differences.

Based on their experiences, all early childhood educators participating in this interview agree that the *multicultural environment provides numerous benefits* for children living in it. The most common advantage mentioned was the *acceptance* that develops due to exposure to many different cultures. Many participants mentioned prejudice as the negative quality most often eliminated from children's personalities when culturally exposed, replacing it with *tolerance*, flexibility, and the notion that difference is a good thing.

The interviews have presented the participating ten educators' unique experiences and perspectives. Although there was a certain difference in opinion concerning the question of directly raising cultural awareness in the early childhood programme, they all understood the importance of creating plenty of opportunities for children to experience culture through various levels. They might include interactive story times with family members, celebrating festivals, providing culturally diverse classroom materials, or simply promoting the value of difference through play. Finally, all participants agreed that the multicultural environment benefits children in many ways and builds a skillset consisting of tolerance, flexibility, and a general open-mindedness to carry with them throughout their life.

### Case study

The participant of the case study is a female TCK whom we will call Sophie. Sophie was born in Hungary. Both her parents were also born and raised in Hungary, but when she was five years old, Sophie's parents, who are musicians, were offered a job in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Reminiscing on her first impressions of her host country, she still remembers the sights, the smells, the sounds. After a short silent phase spent observing her new school environment and strange, different language inputs, she began to adjust. She made friends and assimilated quickly. Sophie and her family spent most summers visiting family back in Hungary and other holidays exploring their host country's nearby regions. At home, language use was strictly kept to Hungarian, as Sophie's parents understood this was crucial in maintaining her mother tongue.

After ten years, Sophie moved back to Hungary. She described feeling as if she was leaving a part of her in Asia, and the further away they flew, the stronger the feeling became. While she enjoyed her first summer after arriving in Hungary, the feeling of distance connected to her alleged "home" was undeniable and, with time, only became stronger. She experienced a reverse culture shock. In her experience, these feelings first arose when she was

admitted into a local high school. She had a difficult time fitting in. Sophie felt unable to share stories and memories of her past with her new friends, as they understandably could not place themselves in her situation – as she also had difficulty placing herself in theirs.

To fit in, she tried to adopt different qualities and adjust her personality to suit those around her, which made her feel like a hidden immigrant, a term used to describe TCKs moving back to their passport countries and having difficulty fitting in. While it became more difficult to stay in touch with her TCK friends, she grew closer to the new friends she had made. Still, she felt homesick, so she decided to visit Malaysia one summer. During the time that she was there, many aspects of her perspective changed. For one, she realised that most of her friends had graduated, leaving an almost “empty place” that did not feel the same anymore. Furthermore, upon returning, her recurring desire to move back to Malaysia had all of a sudden vanished. As soon as she felt that *control* in confronting her own decisions – which TCKs typically lack due to the constant moves powered by their family’s work motives –, she was no longer trapped in the spiral of homelessness.

From then on, her life became much easier, and she could revisit her roots with an entirely new approach. During the rest of her high school years, she learned of her countries’ history, literature, music culture, and other unknown areas. She pursued her passion for singing and found new hobbies. The *flexibility* and *adaptation* she had attained as a TCK made it possible for her to overcome many new situations and obstacles in the years to come. Furthermore, her early *exposure* to the different surrounding cultures allowed her to understand the value of her own and make the necessary effort to learn about it.

Reflecting on her early years, Sophie spoke of her appreciation for having been granted the privilege to see so much of the world before she could even process any of it; appreciation for her TCK experience moulding her into the person that she is today, past every hardship along the way; and finally, appreciation for giving her purpose in using her experience as a foundation for initiating a path in which she can guide young children in the same situation she was in eighteen years ago.

## Conclusion

Although present literature on the TCK character profile is relatively limited, it provides valuable insight into the highly mobile lifestyle’s significant attributes. It offers a conceptual framework for understanding the complex influence it can have on children. While TCKs may often face difficulty in grasping a sense of belonging, they gain perspective and flexibility. Additionally, while cultural exposure may put heritage at risk, it develops tolerance and intercultural competence. While language retention can be a challenge, TCKs foster ease in learning multiple languages. Finally, although long-lasting relationships may cause difficulty, TCKs build a rich network of relationships and develop effortlessness in making friends. Through reflection on their childhood, ATCK individuals who participated in this research justified their overall positive

attitude towards their cross-cultural upbringing. The early childhood educators who took part in this research validated that implicit learning is the most effective approach in promoting cultural awareness instead of directly teaching culture. Considering the limitation in literature based on preschool-aged TCKs, further research would involve an observational investigation method.

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## Appendix

**Figure 15**

*Cultural representation through dolls (International School Classroom)*



**Figure 16**

*Cultural representation through toy people (International School Classroom)*



**Figure 17**

*Cultural representation through books (International School Classroom)*

**Figure 18**

*Cultural representation through world map (International School Classroom)*







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# Ten months around the world

T. Kruppa, Éva – Gáspár, Adrienn

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For a Bilingual Generation (FBG) is a new emerging enterprise promoting English language acquisition in the early years of childhood education. During their ten-month-long programme, the teachers and children travel around the world and visit the main English-speaking countries where they discover and learn about the local culture, flora and fauna. Studying different countries not only enriches and makes an ESL activity a more entertaining and better experience for the children, it also allows children to observe and marvel at the world's beauties. By the end of the ten months, it is expected that the programme participants will learn to respect other cultures and accept otherness. To this end, the programme encourages children to be curious and open to new experiences. Not only about foreign language acquisition, FBG also provides a complex approach to personality development that takes place in English.

*Keywords:* English as a Second Language (ESL), foreign language acquisition (FLA), early childhood, bilingualism, study program

## The reason behind developing the programme

All children are born with the potential of language acquisition. As there is a similarity between the acquisition of first language and non-native language, all children can become bilingual (Kovács & Trentinné Benkő, 2016).

A means of communication in a multicultural society that promotes understanding and the respect of cultural differences, non-native language learning (NNLL) plays a key role in this time of globalisation (OECD, 2012). Since the Barcelona European Council of March 2002, early foreign language acquisition has become a main objective of EU language education policy. However, Member States (including Hungary) have not made enough effort to progress towards this agreement. Despite the agreement on improving the mastery of basic skills by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age, in Hungary the compulsory instruction of NNLL only begins in the fourth grade of primary education (243/2003. (XII. 17.) Korm. rendelet a Nemzeti alaptanterv kiadásáról, bevezetéséről és alkalmazásáról). Although several pre-primary institutes provide bilingual environments, as there are no elaborated, early foreign language programmes, the institutes themselves need to create their own programmes. Unless they adopt a known programme from abroad, their institutes' credibility can therefore be viewed as questionable (Morvai & Poór, 2006).

While the number of these institutions has potentially grown in the last ten years, we still do not possess statistical data regarding their actual number or the



content, outcome, and quality of the activities. These oversights therefore raise questions regarding the efficacy of early childhood foreign language acquisition in an institutional setting (EMMI Oktatásért Felelős Államtitkárság, 2012). To take a step forward, good practices are obviously needed. By discussing the good practices and research results our programme has reaped, it is our intention to add to the professional discourse surrounding modern pedagogical approaches and promote methodological culture in the field of early years' language acquisition.

During the ten-month-long programme, the teachers and children travel around the world and visit the main English-speaking countries where they discover and learn about the local culture, flora and fauna. Studying different countries enriches and makes an ESL activity a more entertaining and better experience for the children. While letting the children observe and marvel at the world's beauties, they will learn to respect other cultures and accept otherness. FBG's goal is to attain a world without prejudice where the children speak at least to two languages (their mother tongue and another non-native language), an ability that could potentially bring different cultures closer to one another.

Scholars, (e.g. Brown, 1980; Chastain, 1988; Kramsch, 1993; Byram & Morgan, 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Holló, 2008; Bajzát, 2013) strongly emphasise that foreign language learning (henceforth: FLL) and second language learning (henceforth: L2) is thorough when its cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking are taught alongside language-related aspects. In other words, the two sides of any language's 'coin' must be integrated into the student's learning environment in a mutual way.

### Culture and foreign language

First published together in 1879, the words and melody of the nursery rhyme, *Baa, Baa Black Sheep*<sup>1</sup> (Fuld, 2000) have remained famous and beloved by most ESL teachers to this very day. Although little is widely known about the origins of nursery rhymes, most contain some important historical facts about their nation. For example, *Baa, Baa Black Sheep* is about a medieval wool tax, imposed in the 13th century by King Edward I. Under the new rules, the price for one-third of a sack of wool went to the king, while the second third went to the church and only the remaining third to the farmer. It can therefore be stated that when teachers expose children to vintage nursery rhymes, they are engaging them in a centuries-old tradition (Burton-Hill, 2015) and mediating values rooted in another culture (Magnuczáné, 2015).

Language and culture form an inseparable unit that has both pragmatic and linguistic manifestations (Kramsch, 1993). The vocabulary of languages vary from one another for the following reasons. On one hand, words originate from the physical environment a people were surrounded by. Furthermore, a vocabulary of a language also mirrors the process of conceptualisation. Last

<sup>1</sup> Lyrics: Baa, baa, black sheep, / Have you any wool? / Yes, sir, yes, sir, / Three bags full; / One for the master, / And one for the dame, / And one for the little boy / Who lives down the lane. / Baa, baa, black sheep, / Have you any wool? / Yes, sir, yes, sir, / Three bags full.

but not least, the historical background, the mode of life, and the sociocultural milieu of a nation highly effects its vocabulary (Pont HU, 2019).

According to Dorottya Holló, teaching foreign languages should be built upon the 'Integrated teaching of language and culture' model, as the communication is only successful if both the appropriate linguistic and cultural competences are acquired (Holló, 2008).

To develop their critical cultural awareness, students need to be able to compare cultures and analyse the results (Bajzát, 2014). When meeting with other cultures, certain phenomena are going to be explored from another angle in a process that furthers the holistic apprehension of situations and leads to increased open-mindedness. Educating people about cultures may not only develop a more tolerant mind-set but also enhance non-native language learning as well. Teaching in an open-minded and tolerant way may nurture global understanding (OECD, 2012). When comparing our own culture, customs, and mother tongue with that of other countries, we become aware of both the differences and the similarities between them, thereby deepening knowledge regarding our own culture and language (Byram, 1997).

While discovering the flora, fauna, and traditions of English-speaking countries, the children are exposed to some authentic materials that aid them in developing a valid image of another culture. Their language acquisition is built upon these real-life phenomena, a connection that guarantees a high level of motivation and activity on the part of the children (Szepesi, 2016). During the organisation of the learning process, the foreign language is not the main goal, but rather the tool utilised to acquire a specific content.

### **Topics and contents**

At FBG we invite children to join us on a ten-month long adventure throughout which we visit eight different countries. Each month (or in two cases: one-and-a-half months) symbolises a different project, i.e., a journey circumnavigating a specific country. These four- to six-week-long projects are built upon the icons, landscapes, traditions, customs, art, children's literature, and holidays found in each country. It must also be mentioned that each project has its own characters who were created with the purpose of becoming role models for the children. As such, these characters are endowed with the most important moral virtues, such as prudence, justice, benevolence, etc.

#### ***London, England***

Without doubt, England comprises the cradle and heart of the English language. The winding roads and rolling, green hills with old castles are like locations in a fairy tale. This impression is not far from the truth, given that – due to Great Britain's status as a constitutional monarchy – real princes and princesses live there, not to mention the Queen herself! Through the example of the Royal Family, the children learn about the members of a family. When it comes to Buckingham Palace, we naturally discuss the presence of the Queen's Guard standing sentinel in front of it; this example provides the perfect opportunity

to introduce the topic of clothing. One of the main icons of England is the double-decker bus, an iconic way to learn about the theme of traffic. Nor can it be denied that London is famous for its rainy weather: based upon our original game entitled *Mr/Mrs Big Ben*, we visit London's world famous clock tower and ask for a weather forecast from him. From Cheese Rolling contests and Apple Day, to the Maypole and Morris dancing, followed by Halloween and Bonfire Night, England is rich in traditions and customs. Thus England comprises one of the two, six-week-long projects.

### ***United States of America***

USA consists of 50 states, one federal district, and various islands that, together, comprise a federal republic even if each state has its own atmosphere. Our week 'spent' in California mainly focuses on this state's incredibly diverse array of landscapes. From the surf beaches and famous cities to vineyards, rugged mountains, forests, and deserts, California's flora and fauna are very vibrant. During our visit to Hawaii, we make Tiki Masks and flower leis and also learn about the spirit of aloha while discovering some volcanoes. Since Thanksgiving represents one of the biggest holidays in the USA, we visit Old MacDonald's farm for a beautiful thanksgiving dinner and also learn about farm life. Cowboys and Indians have a long history together. We make an attempt to connect the two by means of the topic of horses, wherein we learn about acceptance and kindness. Visiting the Statue of Liberty gives us the opportunity to observe and learn about the body parts. We cannot leave the country without visiting Washington D.C., where the president shows us around the White House, thus initiating children into the parts of the house. The USA forms the second, six-week-long project contained in the programme.

### ***Hungary***

December is the month of Christmas, a holiday that is all about the family and the household. This is the only month when we do not travel abroad. During our Hungary project we celebrate Saint Nicholas, use Advent to prepare and remember the real meaning of Christmas and decorate our group Christmas tree. We learn about the parts of the house while taking an imaginary trip through our own home while we also examine traditional Hungarian clothing.

### ***Canada***

We start the new year by taking a trip to snowy Canada, where children have the opportunity to become familiar with a few winter sports. Because of the cold weather, it is important to dress up properly so we also learn about winter clothing. Of course, the snowy weather is not only for sports like skiing, but for other winter activities like building a snowman, getting into a snowball fight, ice fishing, etc. We close our four-week-long programme with a trip to a grove of maple trees, where we watch how the sap used for making maple syrup is extracted from Canada's famous symbol, the maple tree, and we also taste maple syrup on our freshly made, steaming hot pancakes.

### ***Scotland***

In February, we visit the beautiful world of Scotland where we take a long hike around Loch Ness and observe its natural environment. Meeting Nessie is not only a great pleasure for the children, but also a relief as they realise that it is not a monster after all. Right after our lakeside adventure we take the train to Edinburgh to see a famous bagpipe concert. This event gives the children the chance to get to know some musical instruments, like the traditional Scottish bagpipe. We also observe traditional Scottish clothing during the concert and highlight the fact that not only girls wear skirts. Our final tour in Scotland leads us to a Viking family where we learn about their lifestyle, traditions, and clothing. To close our journey, we take an adventurous ride on a real Viking ship.

### ***Ireland***

To mark the occasion of Saint Patrick's Day, in March we travel to Ireland to visit Dublin's famous Saint Patrick's Day parade. While admiring the colourful and vibrant elements of the carnival, we discuss all the shapes and forms we can find there (shamrock, flag, etc.) During our Irish journey, children have the opportunity to listen to some tales about mischievous leprechauns. We discover all the colours of the rainbow while sliding down one in search of a pot of gold. On St. Brigid's feast day, we get to know and make one of the most famous Irish symbols, a Saint Brigid's Cross. According to Irish custom, this symbol protects the home from any type of harm, including illness. We take this occasion to talk about health and how to stay healthy.

### ***Australia***

The only nation that is also a continent, Australia is a land like no other. Its isolation means that much of its flora and fauna is very different and can be found nowhere else. With their fluffy ears and large, spoon-shaped noses, koalas are one of the most famous icons of Australia. While taking a trip to visit a koala family in the eucalyptus forest, children recall their knowledge regarding family members. The other symbolic animal – on that appears on the Australian coat of arms and on some of its currency – is naturally the kangaroo. There is nothing cuter than a little joey peeking from its mom's pouch, a glimpse of an unfamiliar kind of an animal that makes children especially curious. We learn about their characteristic and unique body parts. We make an attempt to find Nemo at P. Sherman, 42 Wallaby Way, Sydney, in recognition of the famous line from the children's film. Finding Nemo is not easy but other sea animals come to our help, thereby giving us the opportunity to observe and learn about their natural habitats. In their unique artwork, Australia's first people, the Aboriginals, used symbols to record stories about their lives. Dot painting is a well-recognised style used by Australia's original peoples (Caruana, 2013). Although Aboriginal art requires its own introduction, we attempt to use the technique of dot-painting to decorate the walls and share our own stories. The

didgeridoo may be the world's oldest musical instrument. We not only form a band but we make our own dot-painted didgeridoo.

### *New Zealand*

In New Zealand, we learn that the kiwi is not only a kind of fruit but also a very famous bird that cannot fly. This little strange bird introduces the children to a sustainable healthy lifestyle and also expands their knowledge regarding environmentally friendly ways of living. When making our own greenhouse, we pay attention to using only renewable energy sources. While marvelling at the mesmerising landmarks found in New Zealand, we also observe the variety of birds and trees and discuss how we can protect our one and only world, Mother Earth. As poor waste management contributes to climate change and air, water, and soil pollution, by means of good practises we motivate children to recycle more and landfill less. Beyond these activities, we also practice how to herd sheep, as if we were shepherd dogs racing across a never-ending green meadow. To gather, split and move a herd of sheep, we first have to learn directions.

### *Kenya, Africa*

The continent of Africa can boast of quite a few world records. It is home to the largest land mammal, the African elephant, the tallest mammal, the giraffe, and the fastest mammal, the cheetah. Africa has the biggest national parks and wildlife conservation areas in the world (Estes, 1996). When we learn about these wild animals, we visit a local elephant orphanage. The children get to know the daily routine of baby elephants and how to take care of them. During the visit to the elephant nursery, they come to realise that their day is not so different from that of the elephants. Other than its impressive wildlife, Africa is the cradle of humankind. More than 3,000 different groups of indigenous peoples live there who all have their own language and culture. Although these groups may differ from one another in several ways, there is one thing that they all share: a passion for dancing. The local children will show us some moves and in exchange we teach them what the moves are called in English. When it comes to Africa, we have to talk about its various kinds of geography. While more than half of the continent is covered by grassland and savannah, there are also rainforests, a desert, the highest mountain, the longest river, the second largest lake, and the fourth biggest island (Estes, 1996). These world records give us the chance to talk about opposites and learn how to make comparisons.

It is particularly important to mention that repetition plays a substantial role in our programme. Although we travel to different countries each month, we have built our programme in a way that the overlapping similarities give the children the opportunity to repeat, practice, and polish their knowledge about topics as many times as necessary. Positioning the same content within a different context makes children use their vocabulary in various situations (Márkus & Trentinné Benkő, 2014).

## **An English activity at FBG**

An activity at FBG lasts for 90 minutes, a period that may at first seem long, especially in the case of three-year-olds. When creating the programme, special attention was paid to the structure of the activity. It is due to the following reasons the duration of our activities is neither exhausting nor overwhelming for the children.

### ***The rituals of travelling***

We start each of our activities with the same rituals, a habit that we use as a warm-up exercise. Our goal is to energise and ‘tune’ the children to English. First, we search for our destination on our carpet that has a map on it. This convenient aid helps children develop their geographical skills. All group members have their own passports where they can collect flags and stickers by completing tasks and the journeys themselves. We start our imaginary travel by going to the airport. After going through the check-in and gate, we finally depart from Hungary with a song and head to our final destination.

Each project in our programme has its own theme song, most of which are original works written by our teachers. These songs contain the characteristics and icons of the country. We greet the country we are visiting by singing the theme song upon arrival. When writing songs, we endeavour to convey the countries’ special features both in melody and vocabulary. On our way home, these rituals repeat at the end of the activity when we travel home.

### ***Vocabulary – Flashcards***

After landing, we meet some locals (the project’s own characters) who will show us around the country. After their introduction, the new topic is introduced as well with the help of flashcards. We found this method to be the most useful and effective as these cards help us illustrate our sayings in a fun way and support the development of logical thinking, memory, creativity, and observation skills. By means of this approach, the children have the opportunity to acquire the foreign language in a way that is more suitable to their age. Fun games with flashcards lead children to success, which generates positive emotions in them. This sense of motivation arouses their interest and creates a thirst for repetition.

### ***Songs, rhymes, musical games***

It cannot be denied that songs, rhymes, and musical games form the bulk of the activity and play the biggest role of all in providing children with a positive experience that simultaneously increases their confidence in speaking a different language. Singing songs, telling rhymes, and playing musical games activates their vocabulary and spurs their appetite for using the English language.

With the tools of music pedagogy, musical skills like a sense of rhythm, singing skills, and improvisation skills are developed. Music is also a powerful

tool when it comes to language development. When children sing, they practice the pronunciation of words and memorise lyrics. While singing or rhyming, children use the foreign language without even noticing it, a factor that improves their self-esteem in speaking English. These kinds of games also aid the development of rule consciousness and social skills. Songs paired with motions help children practice gross motor skills. In fact, Total Physical Response (Asher, 1969) is one of the methods we use. To mention a further factor, music pedagogy plays an important role in memory development. During these activities children not only learn the song's lyrics but also the rhythm, melody, new foreign phrases, and the rules that apply to each musical game as well.

Although several amazing children's books are filled with songs, rhymes, and musical games, we often find ourselves creating our own material. To reach its goals, our programme requires a special type of children's literature. We compose songs, write rhymes, and create musical games with attention to the process of introducing a new culture. We take great care in making these materials educational, fun, entertaining, and a musical experience. Hungarian children's literature is full of circle games<sup>2</sup> which often contain a dialogue. These dialogues motivate children to speak. Unfortunately, English literature lacks these special kinds of circle games. It was based upon our knowledge of Hungary's unique forms of circle games that we were inspired to create, for example, the *Mr/Mrs Big Ben* game (England) during which the children can conduct a conversation with the Big Ben about the current weather. Another example of this cross-cultural adaptation is the *Maple Syrup Song* (Canada) which shows us exactly where maple syrup comes from. Another song called *Blow Wind, Blow* explains the origins of windstorms or other types of weather-related phenomena.

### ***Arts and Crafts***

In a child's early years, arts and crafts activities offer one of the most effective opportunities for foreign language acquisition as this kind of pastime focuses on the children's actions. Beyond the vocabulary connected to a given topic, during these activities they can learn the names of the used tools, colours, shapes, and a range of practiced movements as well. It is important to awaken their desire to create, use their creative self-expression, and help them experience the joy of creation. Arts and crafts activities develop a sense of direction, fine motoric and graphomotor skills, and enrich children's fantasies.

It goes without saying that arts and crafts play an important part in our programme. At the end of each project, we organise a little exhibition of all the artwork we made throughout the previous weeks with the children. We also invite parents and show them a short slideshow of the videos we made and photos we took during our trip through the given country. This event gives lends a ceremonial sense of 'pomp and circumstance' to the end to each of our journey before we head to a new and exciting land.



### ***Puppet shows***

Mainly as an ending, we build puppetry into our lessons on a weekly basis. Puppetry-based techniques not only develop the child's concentration, memory, and attention but also have great influence on speech-development. While watching and listening to puppet shows, children can broaden their vocabulary and learn new phrases. At the end of each puppet show, we give the children the opportunity to have a little conversation with their favorite story characters. This encourages them to use the foreign language, even if only to ask a short and simple question, like 'What is your favorite food?'. Our puppet shows are built upon a strong basis in dramaturgy. With the aid of puppets, music, and singing, we always strive to create a joyful and humorous environment that imbues children with positive emotions. Most of the time, the projects' own characters are the main protagonists of the stories. For example, in Scotland the children listen to a story in which the Loch Ness Monster is the protagonist. The plot is that all the animals at the lake fear the Loch Ness Monster since she yells a lot. The only thing they do not realize that he is in pain. As it turns out, he stepped into a spike. Only a little turtle has the courage to help him out. In the end, the lake animals finally start calling him Nessie instead of Monster. Another story about a mouse who wants to join a Scottish band. The only problem is that all the instruments are taken, except the bagpipe. These original stories include all the new words and songs, rhymes from the lesson, and present the icons and traditions of the countries.

### ***Physical Education***

Occasionally we do PE as activities that supply the opportunity to learn the names of certain movements, directions, tools, and actions while staying fit and healthy. During the exercises, children hear, learn, and practice different words and phrases such as numbers, colours, adverbs like 'fast' or 'slow', directions such as 'up', 'down', 'left' or 'right' and even parts of the body. Many of the countries we visit have their own traditional dance which we include in our programme as a part of Physical Education.

### ***Reflection***

We always look for opportunities to learn and develop. Thus, we embrace feedback and criticism and always reflect upon our work. We have several methods for reflecting on our teaching experiences. (a) With the help of our digital lesson plans, we always evaluate our teaching and reflect upon its outcomes. (b) After each project, we hold a workshop to analyse and evaluate the work we did with the purpose of identifying and exploring each other's practises and underlying believes. By weighing new ways of teaching, we may discover methods and tools that can improve the quality of learning. (c) We believe that both the highlights and downsides of each lesson should be shared within the enterprise, so we use a voice recorder app on our phone as a journal.

Keeping this app close by is essential in case we become inspired to compose a new song or write a new rhyme or story. (d) We have the permission from the parents to videotape the lessons. This gives us the opportunity to look back at our teaching and notice some things we had not been aware of. (e) From time to time, we give parents a reflection survey.

The popularity of early foreign language programmes is thereby paired with an emphasis on evidence-based instruction and the assessment of young learners' foreign language abilities. As we do not have achievement targets, the assessment is needed for accountability and quality assurance (Nikolov & Timpe-Laughlin, 2021). We prioritise fun and ease in terms of providing anxiety free, positive evaluation experiences (Nikolov, 2016.). Recording the lessons also helps us observe and evaluate the development of the children as well. As the variety of language-related outcomes are strongly dependent on the particular model of language education curriculum (Edelenbos et al., 2006), we combined the descriptors of the English Language Portfolio (ELP), the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for young learners, the Global Scale of English and ours.

### *Future prospects*

Assessments are moving from paper-based assessments to computer-based testing. This shift has many advantages, ranging from more efficient test creation, to faster test delivery and higher student engagement. We work with an engineer specialised in digital- and arcade games to develop a valid, reliable, easy-to-use, age-appropriate and stress-free, on-screen assessment that we can use in Early Childhood Settings. Evaluating the language performance of young children by means of digital tools is not our only plan. We believe that a good and strong collaboration between parents and teachers would highly and positively affect the children's development. This is the reason why we intend to create an English language learning app for children that will mirror our programme's goals, contents, and activities in an online space.

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## Appendix A

### *Photos from the projects*





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# An efficacy assessment of very young EFL learners in Hungary

Kovács, Judit – Noé, Zsuzsanna

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This study presents an area that has to date been little researched: the efficacy of young learners' language acquisition. In Hungary, foreign language training offered for pre-school children is mainly a private enterprise. According to Hungary's National Core Curriculum, public education introduces a foreign language no sooner than the age of 9-10; some exceptions are schools with bilingual programmes. As revealed by their high demand, the extant pre-school language programmes are highly popular with parents. Yet in the absence of official control or supervision, the need to evaluate their effectiveness in the form of private research has arisen. This examination aims to fulfill this very goal.

Keywords: CLIL, pre-school learners, efficacy, evaluation, Hungarian context

## The issue of the early start and its reception

The institutional launch of foreign languages in early public education is a relatively new phenomenon. Until the last decades of the 20th century, the notion of institutional instruction of foreign languages to young learners (aged between 3-10) had not only been uncommon, but widely unwelcome as well. Since such programmes have been present, they have had to face a great deal of scepticism and criticism from numerous stakeholders in education. The criticism mainly came from three sources: a) from the field of pedagogy, claiming language learning is a highly demanding academic subject, and, as such, completely unsuitable for the very young, b) from the societal field, saying that foreign language instruction may have a negative influence on the national identity of the child (the principle of L2 versus L1), c) from the field of biology, stating that the human brain is structured in a way that it cannot store more than one language in it. It was concluded that bilingualism might cause neurotic sicknesses and a split identity.

The negative assumptions and reservations were mostly due to the fact that some decades ago it was unclear what an encounter with a second language meant to young children. The rejection lied in the misconception that foreign languages are learnt at an early age the same way as in later periods of life. The truth, however, is that young learners *learn* neither their first nor second language, they *acquire* them.



### Young learners are different: A look back on the beginnings

Paving the way for early SLA as a discipline was due to two things: The Plowden Report (1967), and the separation of language learning from language acquisition (Krashen, 1981). The idea of 'early start' has its roots in mainstream primary education rather than in language teaching. This process was greatly encouraged by the Plowden Report, which declared some basic principles of how young learners should be taught in the primary years. On the basis of the then-contemporary research findings, the image of a general education curriculum emerged that broke with rigid subject isolation and instead of 'science blocks' arranged the curriculum around certain topics of interest for the age group (Brumfit et al., 1991; Brewster, 1991; Halliwell, 1992; Rixon, 1992). The Report overtly declared that young learners need to be approached differently. This proposed a learner-centred approach in all aspects of education and demanded the children's right to an education that is age-relevant. Instead of traditional teacher-centred, knowledge-transmission-based teaching, it argued for an education that is based on the learners' needs and the way they learn. This new, topic-based view was the first step towards integration, which would end in content-based teaching.

Another decisive step towards early SLA originated in a theory by Krashen, who claimed that language acquisition and language learning are absolutely different. Acquisition comes naturally without any obvious effort, while learning requires tedious work. Acquisition happens unconsciously, requires no prior knowledge of grammar, does not apply previously learnt rules, but places message-transmission in the centre. Its message-oriented character allows for more opportunities for making errors in contrast to the form-orientedness of conscious learning which puts the main emphasis on accurate language use. After some time, practice has proven that an early competence in languages can be obtained through education as well. It has been made clear that young children do neither better nor worse in languages than other learners, they just learn *differently*. It is this 'difference' that makes early childhood language acquisition a special issue under the umbrella term of second language instruction. Teaching English (and other languages) as a second or other language to young learners has become an independent professional field with a sound and ever-growing research literature of its own. In the light of this new approach, young language learners started to be viewed as having their own ways rather than being unfavourably compared to older or adult learners.

### Content and language: making the match

The message-oriented character of language acquisition for the young was the idea behind early CLIL. CLIL, the acronym for Content and Language Integrated Learning is subject-matter teaching in a target language that is embedded in a curriculum. CLIL has become known as the European model of bilingual education, a type of bilingual education in homogeneous regions. Before the late

1980s, this type of provision was only available in linguistically heterogeneous regions. The first programmes began as a result of Canadian immersion and became enormously successful. CLIL started to become the most widely used term for educational bilingualism during the 1990s. Coined by Marsh, the term was first used in 1994<sup>1</sup>. “CLIL refers to situations where subjects, or parts of subjects, are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content, and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language” (Marsh 1994). Some years later Marsh (2005) refers to CLIL as a generic ‘umbrella’ term to refer to diverse methodologies which lead to dual-focused education where attention is given to both topic and language of instruction. Now it is used to describe any educational situation in which an additional (second/foreign) language is used for the teaching and learning of subjects other than the language itself. CLIL can be implemented with very different models.

### **The Hungarian context and its research**

The scale of foreign language programmes in Hungary has been extended in the past couple of years: pre-school children have appeared as learners both in private and public education. Participation of 3-7-year-old learners in EFL is still an under-researched area. One reason behind this might be that a relatively short time has elapsed since the discipline of EFL covering very young learners emerged (Kovács & Trentinné, 2016). Another reason is that the number of children participating in these programmes is relatively low compared to the number of pre-school children in general because development in EFL is not part of public education. Language development for the very young still seems to be the private business of parents and mostly conducted outside the classroom. For this very reason it is exposed to the market in an echo of the concerns voiced by Vámos twenty to thirty years ago, who claimed the same fears regarding the issue of foreign language instruction (2008).

In Hungary, CLIL is now a rapidly developing area for research. Ágnes Vámos herself produced a study of the spread of bilingual education programmes in Hungary (1998), a complete CLIL history of Hungary (2008) and, in collaboration with Judit Kovács, edited a collection of studies on CLIL in Hungary (2008). Other major contributions in this field include studies of Hungarian-English primary CLIL, by Judit Kovács (2006, 2008, 2014, 2018) and teacher training for CLIL by Éva Trentinné Benkő (2014, 2015). In the last decade, Trentinné Benkő has researched in depth different aspects of teachers’ and trainees’ beliefs concerning early institutional encounters with a foreign language in the Hungarian context (2008, 2013/a, 2013/b, 2016).

#### ***Features of the research below***

The research below examines some features of early bilingual programmes in Hungary, most importantly their efficacy. Apart from the novelty, the recent

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<sup>1</sup> Some sources mention 1996, e.g.: Marsh et al.: The CLIL quality matrix Central workshop report 6/2005 (Graz, Austria, 3-5 November 2005).

study has another specific feature: its classroom research character. Classroom research has been present in the last couple of decades proving that non-academic research of language education is also possible and teachers might become researchers through observing and assessing their own learners. The present research shows an example of how kindergarten teachers can be involved in the process of research. Local teachers were actively present throughout the assessment and assisted the research team with note-taking.

The tasks designed for the research are exclusively oral: no literacy is required. The linguistic development of children can only be successful once it is seen as part of their overall educational (cognitive, social, emotional, etc.) development. This is why linguistic skills are also planned to be approached through general skills development.

### *Aim of research<sup>2</sup>*

It is rather difficult to perceive, observe or collect data on pedagogical phenomena. The recent research primarily aims at providing information on what characteristics of an EFL programme are effective in pre-school. Only limited data can be found regarding the effectiveness of early language programmes in kindergartens as the only information provided is from ethnic kindergartens that use other languages than English (Fehér könyv, 2012). EFL programmes have been expanded among pre-schools (mostly private) but because these are new to this field of education, most of the time we cannot even find this feature in the institute's curriculum. The research also aims to reveal information about the attitudes, views, and beliefs held by both institution leaders and practitioners towards their own EFL programme. To provide a larger and refined image of the features of development of young EFL learners, both direct and indirect techniques of research were used.

### *Hypotheses and research questions*

As hypotheses for this research, the following are assumed:

1. An early encounter with languages results in a basic competence of a language if the L2 is delivered in an authentic, activity-based, natural, comprehensible, and enjoyable way.
2. The characteristics of the teacher in early SLL are crucial. Only well-selected, specially- trained and close to native level speaker teachers can make SLA happen at an early age.
3. Institute leaders and practitioners' views and beliefs also determine the outcome of the programme.
4. It is better to start an EFL programme at an early age as its results will only be seen by the end of preschool age (6).

In order to prove the above hypotheses, some research questions were prepared. The children who were assessed all originated from big (age 6-7) group and were at the end of their last year in an EFL programme provided by

<sup>2</sup> The empirical research was carried out by Zsuzsanna Noé.



a bilingual kindergarten. Parallely, a longitudinal study was conducted of one of the learners. The researcher was interested in children's attitude towards L2, their level of understanding, and readiness to speak. This research focuses on the level of listening and speaking from linguistic skills and the level of vocabulary and pronunciation from competences. After assessing the children, it was found that the attitudes, beliefs, and views of professionals and leaders form a fundamental element in success: in other words, it was attempted to investigate the human factor.

### ***Description of the context and research tools***

Most action research techniques can be implemented in various ways. First, it needs to be stated that some parts of the research can be classified as qualitative research as the field of education that the researcher was interested in is not widespread throughout the country and she also tried to measure attitudes and beliefs by means of interviews and questionnaires. The researcher was aware that the dangers of bias are obvious and all such evidence has to be weighed carefully.

This research is based on the principle of triangulation (Cohen et al., 2018) in order to receive the best, presumably precise results (Flick, 2018). Three tools were chosen, partly for carrying out assessment, and partly for evaluating the collected data. These are the following:

A case study that the researcher wrote about one of her students of three years.

A specially designed worksheet (see in Appendix 3) for assessing the achievement of the groups of very young learners. Assessments were carried out by the children's own English teachers to lower the children's stress levels and each dialogue was observed by the researcher.

Interviews about the EFL programme conducted in a semi-structured way with institution principals and some professional representatives specialised in kindergarten education at the local pedagogical centre.

A questionnaire for assessing teachers' views, beliefs, experience, and attitudes towards the EFL programme operating in their institutions.

The above tools were selected on the following bases:

1. When making decisions and designing the research tools, an age-relevant approach was preferred. Tools for measuring pre-school young learners aged 4-6 are unusual and unavailable: it was therefore necessary to compose a worksheet specifically designed to suit our purpose, as well as to determine the set of visual aids (poster, flash cards, toy cars, photos) needed for the tasks. The children were already familiar with the visual aids and nature of tasks. The assessment was carried out in a room with the child, his/her English teacher, and myself present. It was necessary to be present for the purpose of a one-on-one appraisal. In total, fifty children were assessed in total and the researcher was in the room throughout the process to ensure the same criteria were applied in the evaluation.

2. Semi-structured bilingual (as there were native English speakers as well) interviews and questionnaires with teachers (kindergarten principals and teachers of English, Hungarian) were important to get the necessary background information on the basic features of the teaching programme applied, including data on their views on early English development, when they started their programme, how the children were taught, as well as to gain some information on the teachers' competences, experience and the nature of the programme itself.
3. Case study was chosen to provide an interesting illustration. The results will not be statistically generalisable to the whole population of learners and institutions.

The limited number of kindergartens offering English in Hungary makes it difficult to find kindergartens that provide the same conditions. I have chosen both public and private kindergartens from different districts of the capital city (A) and two other towns (B, C).

For the assessment, a kindergarten that has a special EFL programme including native or bilingual English teachers, was selected. The institute currently has five homogenous, bilingual groups. The assessed children in A1 were between ages six and seven from the two graduate (big) groups, comprising a total of fifty students. They have been attending the programme for three to four years. It has to be mentioned that none of the children had access to English outside of the kindergarten, e.g. bilingual family, additional English lessons or English-speaking babysitter. The English programme is embedded in their overall educational programme as part of their daily routine. English teachers work closely together with their Hungarian co-teachers on a full-time, daily basis. The groups function like a bilingual family as both teachers take part in all activities held during the daily routine. There is an environment generated where children experience 'the one person, one language' method as English teachers only speak in English to them. The assessment took place for a week on two groups of twenty-five children and with the help of their English teachers. Twenty minutes were allotted per child. Special care was taken to hold the assessment at the same time each day, in both groups, between 9.30-12.00 in the morning, thereby adjusting the research activity to the daily routine of the kindergarten and the most suitable period of the day, when assessments would be disturbed neither by the daily meals nor the afternoon nap. Assessments were therefore carried out under identical circumstances and took place in a separate classroom specifically arranged beforehand by the researchers. Here photos, flashcards, and posters of toy cars were placed on the table, on the carpet, and on the wall. We made sure to leave sufficient space in the middle of the room for mingling activities. The worksheet was given to the English teachers of each group and they filled them in during the procedure, while the researcher was observing. The presence of the children's own teachers contributed to the calm and relaxed atmosphere in which children could feel absolutely secure. Their teachers briefly told them what was about to happen. Then the assessment began, in which each task was introduced in English, then children received the instructions in English. The instructions were repeated in Hungarian only when

children seemed to have difficulty in understanding them and were either given verbally or non-verbally. (See the sample of the worksheet in Appendix 3)

Also, the three-year case study was carried out in A1 as I also worked there. He had no background or additional access to English as none of his parents speak the language. This was the main reason to select him as most of his peers had had the opportunity to encounter English outside the kindergarten at some stage. Notes on his development were taken every three months while focusing on his approach to the language, level of understanding, motivation, and language production.

Interviews and questionnaires were done in towns A, B and C. Questionnaires were filled out by both Hungarian and English teachers of A1 as I was curious about their views, experience, attitudes, and beliefs toward this special EFL programme. Each teacher of A1 got a bilingual questionnaire and was asked to fill it in within two days and place the forms into a box that was previously assembled in the teachers' room. The estimated time was previously measured that the fulfillment of a questionnaire might be taken and set this interval at fifteen minutes. Fifteen questionnaires (equal to the total number of teachers) were handed out and ten were returned (67%). On each questionnaire, a short preface was written, in both languages explaining the purpose of the experiment, its anonymity, the sort of medium the researcher was to inform them about the results, and an acknowledgement for taking part in my research. (See the sample questionnaire in Appendix 2)

The interviews with principals and professional advisors were accomplished in different districts of the capital city (A2, A3, A4, A5, A6) and two others in two towns not far from Budapest (B, C) via e-mails. Two types of interview sheets were prepared as not all questions apply to both principals and professional advisors. These institutes all have their unique EFL programmes and therefore would be interesting to see their characteristics, also the philosophy of each leader about the teacher's role, early English development, and the programme itself. The interviewees were assured that their identity and answers would remain anonymous as well as their institute. It would be a rather compelling research for the future to observe the educational processes in these institutes and compare the results with what the principals have declared about their programme. It took two months to receive the interviews, but all of them were returned (100%). Some were filled out in Hungarian; therefore, they were translated in order to have the results all in English. (See the samples of both interview sheets in Appendix 1)

For the purpose of efficacy, the teachers' questionnaire consisted of three sets of questions. The first set focused on attitudes and professional vocation of teachers about the programme. The second set emphasised the teacher's realisation of the objectives. The third set explored the possibilities of increasing efficiency. Closed questions, numerical scale (1-5, 1-6), ranking and open-ended response questions were used. The interview questions concentrated on the reasons for starting an EFL programme, opinions about when to start, the efficacy of early English development, the characteristics of their method, and the effective English teacher.

In the case study, the researcher focused on the learner's approach to the language, level of understanding, motivation, and language production. In

the children's language competency test, the researcher focused on gaining a larger view of the level of listening and speaking based on the competences related to linguistic skills, vocabulary level, and pronunciation. Topics such as the weather, animals, colours, geometric shapes, body parts, movement, maths, family, and food were covered.

### ***Discussion of research findings***

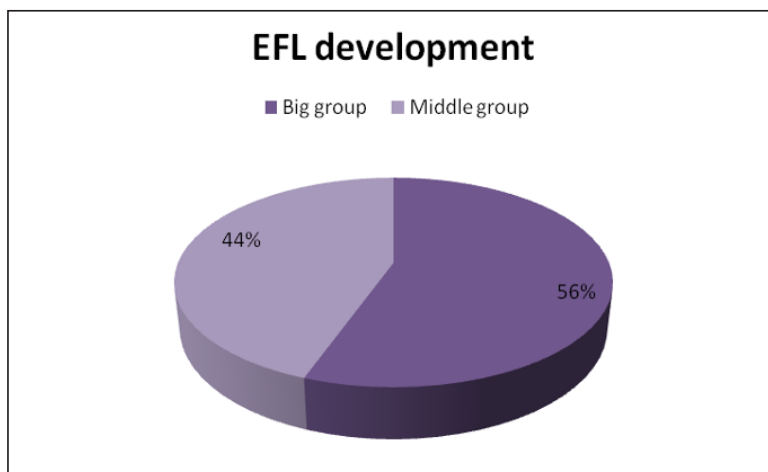
The following answers were received to the research questions:

#### *1. The main beliefs, views and features of successful SLA according to teachers.*

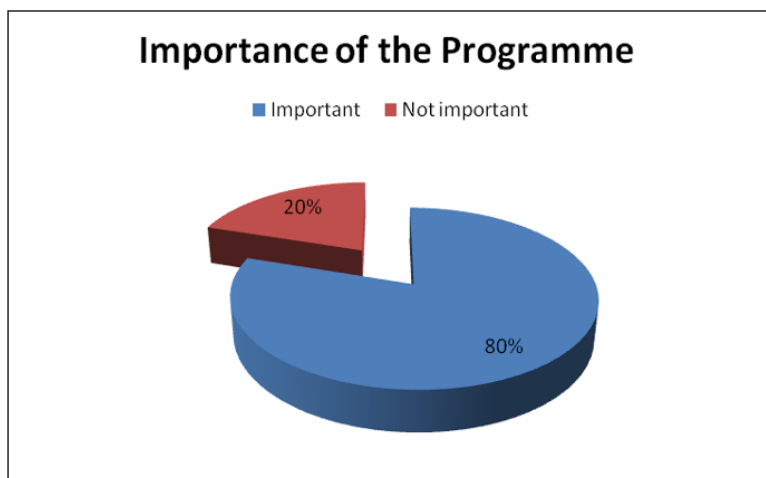
After processing the questionnaire, first it is needed to state the findings for the entire sample. Then a sub-sample was made to investigate whether there is any correspondence between the opinions of teachers of the small (age 3-4) group and the big (age 6-7) group in relation to the degree of students' English development. The question focused on their beliefs as to which group demonstrates noticeable EFL development. Eight co-teachers (both English and Hungarian) were selected from two big, and two little groups. It must be stated that even though only five teachers answered the question completely, the ratio stayed the same at 4:3. Namely, more teachers think that development is mostly noticeable in big group (age 6-7). Fewer teachers think that the development is noticeable in the middle group (age 4-5). The difference in opinions, however, is quite slight. (See Figure 1)

**Figure 1**

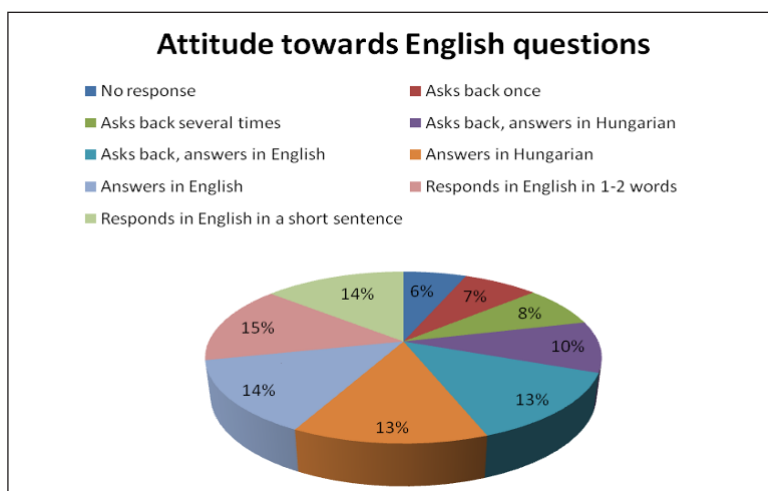
*Results of the teachers' opinions on noticeable increase in EFL development*



The bilingual program has been run since 2001 in A1 kindergarten. Both English and Hungarian employees have been working there for an average of more than five years. Thus, most of them have had the opportunity to take at least one group through the entire pre-school process. Nearly 100% of them consider the programme to be very useful. (See Figure 2)

**Figure 2***Results of teachers' views on the importance of the programme*

Among the educators there were four big, two middle and four small group teachers. There are not any heterogeneous groups in the institution. It can be stated from the fifth question's answers that it is not typical that the children tend not to understand instructions in English rather than ask or respond to questions in English no matter what age group they are. According to the teachers, it is partly true that the children understand the request or question and respond in their mother tongue or in the foreign language. More typically, they understand and respond to the request in a few words or short sentences in the foreign language. (See Figure 3)

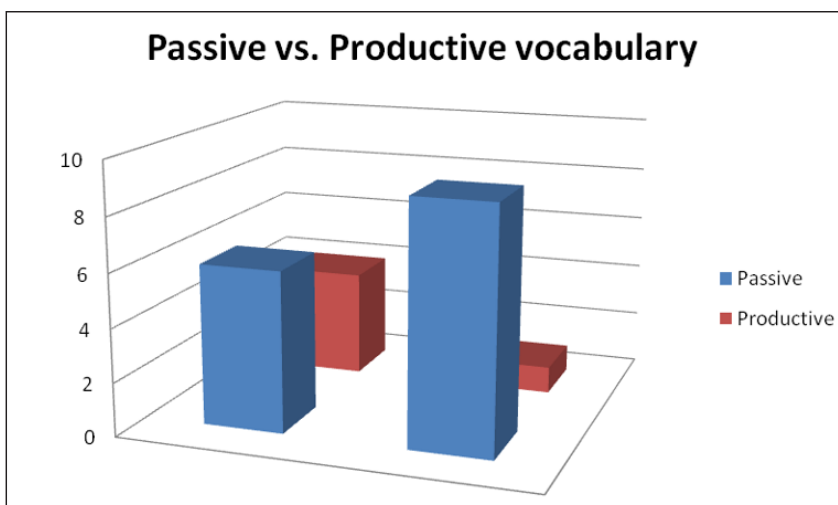
**Figure 3***Results of children's response to EFL*

It turns out that according to the educators the most significant development occurs in the middle (age 4-5) and big (age 6-7) groups. The teachers have experienced that several times a day interaction occurs between the children and the English teacher and the children sometimes hold simple conversations in a foreign language during free play. Children are less likely to use English among themselves during play time.

Although opinions are greatly divided on children's knowledge of passive vocabulary in terms of their differences, the teachers unanimously agree on the big differences in children's level of active vocabulary. (See Figure 4)

**Figure 4**

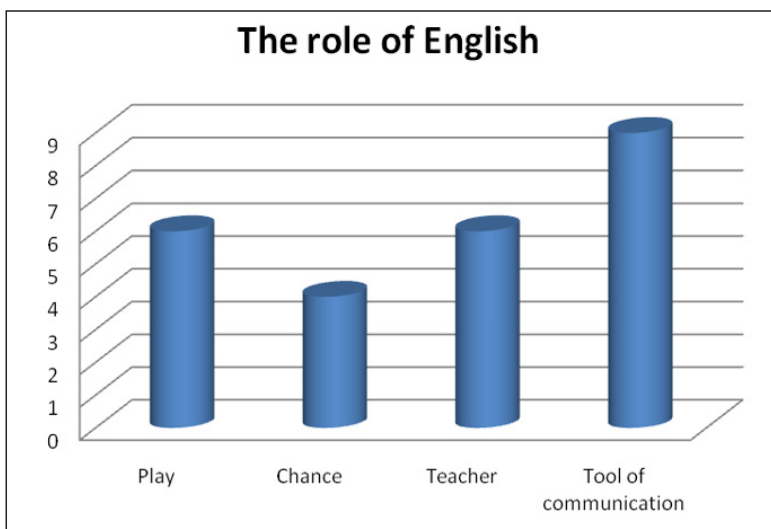
*Results of teachers' opinion on the differences in children's level of passive and productive vocabulary*



According to teachers, the method is successful and the native speaker colleagues are highly skilled, but more types of learning equipment is needed for children to gain more effective language acquisition. Thirty-three per cent of colleagues think that having smaller groups could be more effective in EFL learning. As an answer to the open-ended question that was focused on what the language means to children, the most mentioned category was that English is a tool of communication. The next two main categories mentioned referred to games and the teacher's personality. (See Figure 5)

**Figure 5**

*Results of teachers' opinion on the role of EFL in children's life*



Teachers claim that learners are fond of the English language. The majority believe that the best way of supporting SLA is via songs, poems, rhymes, stories, and dramatisation in order to develop language skills. In addition, teachers see free play and childcare tasks as essential scenes for interaction with the English teacher resulting in continuous communication in the future. It is interesting to notice that the effects of manipulative and movement development activities have not garnered much attention from the teachers. (See Figure 6)

**Figure 6**

*Results of teachers' experience in useful activities in order of EFL learning*



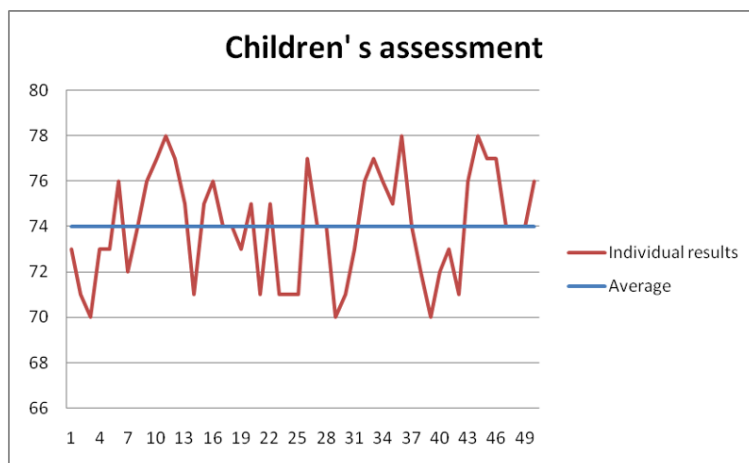
## *2. Children's attitudes towards L2, level of understanding and readiness to speak.*

The result of the children's assessment was extremely successful. Children's production in listening and speaking skills and their level of vocabulary and pronunciation in A1 met high requirements. These skills and competences were measured in the assessment. The children in question had been learning English for three or four years on a full time (8 a.m. – 5 p.m.) daily basis. The reason for their efficacy might be due to the fact that their teacher only speaks to them in English all the time. No code-switching was found during the assessment. All children in A1 were open to responding, had free talk and exhibited low stress levels. They enjoyed being assessed. During the process, English was viewed by them as a natural means of communication. The reaction time between questions and answers was short, which means they gave immediate answers. Children were confident and ready to give answers even when they were not too certain what the exact answer was. They were encouraged to speak freely, without any reservations. Learning how to speak a language can only be learnt through speaking that language. After the evaluation process, each child was asked how they had felt during the tasks. The great majority of children said that they had enjoyed the tasks. They had also been challenged and found it easy to give feedback on their preferences.

## *3. This research also focuses on the level of listening and speaking for linguistic skills and the level of vocabulary and pronunciation for competences.*

Some children performed using nice strategies in Task 3, 5, 6 and 11: when identifying flashcards with their definitions, they managed to focus only on those flashcards the definitions of which they had not heard before, which means they relied on their cognitive skills connected to identifying/sorting out. The level of relying on and using basic cognitive skills, such as guessing, classifying, identifying, and matching was emphasised in most tasks. Scores were calculated for each individual. Based on the results for each individual, there are no significant differences in the level of knowledge among children due to this method. (See Figure 7)



**Figure 7***Results of individual scores of children's assessment*

#### *4. Attitudes, beliefs and views of professionals and leaders to be essential for success*

The interviews conducted with principals and professional advisors were done in the districts of the capital city: A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7 and in town B and C. First, it needs to be mentioned that all of these professionals were extremely helpful, even though we had never met before. From the interviews there is a feeling that strongly emerges while reading them and that is the great enthusiasm that these professionals show towards their vocation. The opinions of the two professional advisors of kindergartens need to be divided as their interview questions were less than the principals' as some questions do not apply to their job.

A4, and A5 are both leader professional advisors for kindergartens in the pedagogical professional centre of their districts. They do not know one another. They were chosen because in one of the districts there is an English bilingual programme that has been run by a kindergarten for a long time. The other person was chosen because there is an EFL programme run by one of the kindergartens, but it is a relatively new experience for all of them. Both institutions are public.

For the question that was related to the advantages and/or disadvantages of ELL as an advantage they both mentioned the age, the age-relevant environment where the language can naturally be acquired, and the presence of the language on a full-time, daily basis. As a disadvantage they mentioned that if the language is presented periodically, e.g. twice a week for thirty minutes, and the crucial role of the teacher (skilled, trained, gives positive reinforcement, enhances motivation). The next question was about the age, namely when EFL learning should start. A4 suggested that ELL should only start after the native language has been established between age 4-5. A5

separated language learning from acquisition and stated that in order to gain effective SLA, it could start right after birth. If we concentrate on learning then, according to A5 it should only start at age 6, when they go to school. She says that the best would be if these two were to build upon one another.

For the question on reasons for the successful method, according to A4 they do not have enough experience as the programme has only been operating since 2019. A4 finds it quite positive that children are more open, but in order to have more relevant experience they need an English teacher who is present all day in the group. A5 claims that only a proper efficacy assessment can offer a reliable answer to that question. A5 thinks the following criteria make SLA effective: deliberate planning, well-organised implementation, specially trained teachers, and the programme has to be implementable into the curriculum. The last question was connected to their opinion on the characteristics of the ideal language teacher. A4 thought that the emphasis is not on what language the person speaks but kindness is key for this age-group. She stated that the most important factors are empathy, a child-centred attitude, a high level of training, competence in methodology, motivation, high level of communication skills, playfulness, and being well - balanced. A5 gave the same answers but she also pointed out two very important factors: a sense of humour and proficiency in English.

The interviews with the principals show a colourful array of opinions. The procedure was done with both public and private principals of institutions in and out of the capital city.

For the first question that was to explore reasons for starting a bilingual programme in these institutes, there was a general point: to create a multicultural environment and the strong belief in the success of early English development. Leaders of private kindergartens considered the fulfillment of parents' expectations as a reason. It was also interesting to learn that only one leader mentioned the importance of language competence in the future, when the children enter the global workplace. Also, another principal mentioned that learning an additional language is a must since Hungarian language makes their speaker be a bit isolated from the rest of the world.

In the second question, the researcher was interested in their opinion on the advantages and/or disadvantages of early English development. Among the six interviewees, only two thought of disadvantages. These were the following: A3 disagrees with the phenomenon when one of the parents starts speaking in English to his/her child even though the parent is native Hungarian. She thinks this is totally unacceptable and can also cause harm as children acquire their first language mainly from their parents. She also stated that she only sees the advantages of institutionalised early English programmes. B saw the lack of well-trained teachers as a disadvantage. She thought that only specially trained educators can make the programme effective. If we examine advantages, mainly the same features can be seen such as the advantageous nature of unconscious learning of a language, extremely good pronunciation, development of cognitive skills, overall personality development, playful nature of SLA, creativity, and low stress levels.

The third question inquired about their philosophy and methodology. In A2, the leader emphasised the importance of a natural bilingual environment and the one person-one language method. Only native English speakers can be teachers there but, according to the principal, they do not teach the language. A3 states that the language is not taught in their institute either, they also create a bilingual environment. In A6, all activities during the day are in English. There is a native speaker and a Hungarian kindergarten teacher who is fluent in English in the groups. In A7, they hold activities bilingually while the English teacher in the group works closely together with the native colleague on a daily basis. She emphasised that cooperation, shared visions, and quality are essential for success in their belief. In B, they also have two teachers in the groups on a daily basis and activities are held bilingually. This leader was the first to mention that English teachers never correct the children's grammatical mistakes to keep the process going naturally. In C, the institute follows a special Montessori curriculum, but any further information on their bilingual method could not be found.

The fourth question was dedicated to exposing their views regarding at what age SLA should start. All but one interviewee declared that basically SLA can be started from birth or as soon as possible. Only the principal of A7 thought that first the mother tongue should be established in order to be able to build a second upon this foundation.

Question No. 5 asked if the programme in their institutes was successful and, if so, the reasons why. These programmes have been run for an average of two years in these kindergartens. All principals believed that they are successful and leaders of private institutes also stated that parents are happy with the service and the results. All interviewees said that, by the age of 5-6, their students are able to understand the English teacher completely and are most likely to continue their studies in bilingual primary schools. According to the leaders, there are many children on waitlists for enrolling into the programme, but they unfortunately do not have sufficient capacity to place them in the establishment.

In the last (sixth) question the researcher was interested in the characteristics of the effective English teacher. The following five features were present in all of their answers: the effective English teacher is creative, specially trained for this age group, proficient in the language, dedicated, and has a good sense of humour.

### ***Case study***<sup>3</sup>

I started to work with this group in September when they were in their first year in the programme and in the kindergarten also. I was responsible for their language development. When I received the group, I had the intention of starting a diary on children's development. I later concluded that I would not be able to concentrate on each one of them as there were twenty-seven children in the group, therefore I picked a child. There were some criteria when selecting one.

<sup>3</sup> The case study was conducted by Zsuzsanna Noé.

These were the following: both parents had to be native Hungarians, neither of whom spoke English and the child had no other access to English than at the kindergarten. This is how I picked 'T' from the group, the designation I will use instead of the actual name. I conducted an ongoing observation on T for the entire time while he attended the institute. T is a boy who started the bilingual programme at the age of three in the kindergarten where I used to work. As the English teacher, I worked in the setting and collaborated closely with my Hungarian colleagues as we created a natural bilingual environment on a daily basis. All activities and tasks were carried out in both languages.

I have decided that I will take notes about T's development every three months therefore three times during the academic year. My observation focused on T's listening and speaking in connection to linguistic skills and the level of vocabulary and pronunciation from the perspective of competences.

The first entry occurred in November: T is a three-year-old boy in perfect intellectual and physical condition. September was a hard time for him as he was settling in but later that month he stopped crying and began to be interested in the environment around him. He does not respond when I try to interact with him. T seems a bit confused and scared when I approach him and usually walks away. By November, he stopped being resistant to me. Although he still does not communicate with me, he lets me sit with him while playing.

The second entry was in the second half of the same academic year in February: T seems to be more open toward me as every time I ask him if I could play with him, he lets me. Now he responds to some of my questions by nodding his head and is able to follow some of my basic instructions in terms of the daily routine.

The third entry occurred in May: T easily follows my instructions and happily joins in to activities. When I ask him a question he responds with a 'yes' or 'no'. He has started to say 'good morning' when coming in in the morning. T also invites me to play with him saying: 'Suzie, play, please'. His favourite game outside in the garden became 'follow the leader' and he often comes up to me saying: 'Suzie, catch me'. T enjoys songs and rhymes and sings them happily. All the words are clearly comprehensible.

After the summer holiday, the fourth entry was recorded in November during the second academic year I spent with the group: T welcomes me with a big hug in September. His mother told me that he missed me and often talked about me during summer. Since September, T is constantly around me trying to interact with me. He easily follows instructions and usually translates them to peers who do not understand. T has grown to love books and brings them in every day to show them to me. While I name objects or animals that I see in the books, he repeats my words and points to things and says their names. He uses one- to two-word answers to my questions and always tries to respond in English; when it seems too difficult then he uses his native language. In October, a big change happened: I was taking decoration off the wall while T helped me when he said the following: 'Suzie, look! This is a pumpkin as well!' I was so surprised that I almost forgot to respond to his comment. From that day on, T uses simple sentences on an everyday basis when communicating with me.

The fifth entry was in February: T plays with me all the time. His favourite game is my snap cards, this is how I taught colours and shapes to the children. Usually four of us play together at the same time.

The sixth entry was taken in May at the end of the second academic year: T is my help when there are some peers who cannot communicate their needs properly. T is trying to translate for me. He loves story-time and is able to respond to my questions during interactive story-time in English. During bilingual activities, he is one of the most active children.

The seventh entry is from November after the beginning of the third academic year: T's mother told me that he loves the English stories that I read so the mother bought those books and T 'reads' them to the family. After the long summer holiday T's speaking skills and vocabulary are at an extremely high level compared to his age and background. T and I started to play board games together as well as other peers. He only speaks in English while playing.

The eighth entry occurred in February during the second half of the academic year: T plays together more with his peers, but often leaves the game, comes up to me, initiates a conversation, then goes back to his friends. His favourite game that he wants to play with me is: 'I am thinking of...' this is a guessing game in which I describe the object and he has to guess what was thought of. He only likes to play when he guesses.

The last entry was about to happen in May at the end of the last academic year we spent together. As I had to hand in my research before that date I made an exception and noted this entry in April: T mostly played with his peers both inside and outside, but every time he approaches me he uses English naturally without thinking. When problems occur, he also comes to me more than to the Hungarian teachers. Not long ago, he was upset about losing a running game. He expressed a rather sad, disappointed face and I asked him what the matter was. T did not respond straight away as he had always done before. After a short time of thinking, he said the following: 'I am sad because S was faster than me.' I advised the parents to place him in a bilingual school next year.

### **Summary of research**

The researcher is both a practitioner and a researcher who is highly interested in the effectiveness of early English development programmes. It is believed that the questions were partly answered. It is also thought that bigger samples or other tools might have been helpful during the research (e.g., observations of groups in different kindergartens therefore we could not generalise at any stage). Based upon the teachers' questionnaire results, we learned that it is important for educators to believe in the programme and that students reach the highest level of development by the end of their kindergarten years. In order to see the differences, it would be useful to assess children from lower age groups. It also emerged that more than half of the children respond in English at some level to the native teacher. Children whose linguistic skills are developed as part of their overall skills can activate all their skills and their own personality when approaching the teacher. This is how they manage

to be successful. It has been proven that the success of very young learners' L2 use lies in a holistic approach, which can only be acquired in a natural bilingual environment. This environment makes the children feel comfortable and more open to the world around them, which provides opportunity to free talk without being stressed, and most importantly, emotional security, while learning unconsciously.

According to the teachers, there are no significant differences in learners' passive knowledge of the language, but there are in productive usage. There are ways of measuring passive and productive vocabulary that was tried with some of the tasks while assessing children. It was found that children's attitude towards L2 is absolutely positive, which the researcher has experienced during the assessment, case study, and the results of teachers' views on this topic. The high level of understanding and readiness to speak was proven by the children's assessment, and as an example in the case study. While making the assessment sheet, the researcher strove to create tasks that would measure the level of children's listening and speaking skills as well as pronunciation and vocabulary. It is strongly believed by the researcher that implementing and making an EFL programme effective is an extremely complex process, and the human factor is crucial: in other words, the personality of the teacher is key. Kindergarten principals, as well as professional advisors, mentioned five essential characteristics of an effective English teacher: to be specially trained for the age group and the purpose, to have a good sense of humour, to be dedicated and creative, and to have proficiency in English. According to their opinions, the features of an effective EFL programme are the following: it has to have deliberately planned and implemented into the Hungarian curriculum, and to have specially trained native or close to native English teachers who are present all day.

## Conclusion

As a result of this research, the first hypothesis of an early encounter with languages resulting in a basic competence of a language if the L2 is delivered in an authentic, activity-based, natural, comprehensible, and enjoyable way is TRUE, since children who were assessed in a playful way, were able to use English as means of communication. To gain a broader picture, my research would be expanded to learners of other institutes.

Since the first hypothesis has been proven true, the second hypothesis of characteristics of the teacher in early SLL are crucial, as only well-selected, specially trained and approximately native-level speaking teachers can make SLA happen at an early age is also TRUE. The third hypothesis regarding whether institute leaders and practitioners' views and beliefs also determine the outcome of the programme has not been proven, as the researcher has not yet had the opportunity to assess the outcomes completely. Although, it is planned to carry out more research in those institutes where principals were interviewed. Based upon the interviews, a possible starting point is that all leaders are dedicated to early EFL programmes.

As a final statement regarding the fourth hypothesis (stating that it is better to start an EFL programme at an early age as its results will only be seen by the end of preschool age (6), it can be asserted that no correlation was found between time spent on ELT in the kindergarten and the quality of results. The key factor to success is that children have access to a well-designed and elaborated ELT curriculum carried out by a skilled English teacher with a clear purpose. This research has been the researcher's first attempt to assess the effectiveness of kindergarten EFL programmes in Hungary. The results of this research may positively influence the issue of early EFL development in Hungary and develop a more professional approach for it. It would be desirable to carry on further research on a wider scale while involving both researchers and practical teachers in order to establish self-reflection.

To attain more refined results to the research questions, some additional factors should be examined. These include the following: the classroom-arrangement habits and educational tools used in the sessions, and the professional background of teachers involved in SLA. Other, less researchable features which might also influence effectiveness comprise the parents' background and local values and customs. These aspects may be investigated in further research.

### List of abbreviations

- L1 – the mother tongue or first language
- L2 – a second language learned after the first
- EFL – English as a Foreign Language
- CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning
- SLA – Second Language Acquisition
- ESL – English as a Second Language: English language instruction for English language learners that includes little or no use of a child's native language; a component of all bilingual education programs.
- ELL – English Language Learner: a student who is learning English as a second language; also called limited English proficient
- ELT – English Language Teaching

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

The interview sheet



The answers of this interview will be used for professional purposes only. Your answers are highly appreciated! / Az interjú válaszait kizárólag tudományos célokra használok! A válaszait szívből köszönöm!

Interview about bilingual programmes in kindergartens / Interjú az óvodai kétnyelvű programokról

1. What were the reasons to start a bilingual programme at your kindergarten? / *Mik voltak az okai annak, hogy az óvodájában elindult egy ilyen kétnyelvű program?*
2. What are the benefits or disadvantages, do you think, of early English development? / *Milyen előnyei illetve hátrányai vannak Ön szerint a korai angol nyelvi fejlesztésnek?*
3. What is your institution's philosophy about early English development? Please write about your methodology. / *Mi az Ön intézményének filozófiája a korai angol nyelvi fejlesztésről? Kérem írjon a módszerről.*
4. What is your opinion? From what age should foreign language development start? / *Ön szerint mely életkortól kellene kezdeni az idegen nyelvi fejlesztést?*
5. Is your method successful? Please write about the reasons. / *A módszerük sikeres? Kérem írjon az okokról!*
6. Please think of 5 essential characteristics of an effective English teacher of children at an early age. What are they? / *Kérem gondoljon 5 olyan meghatározó jellemzőre, mely elengedhetetlen egy kisgyermekkel hatékonyan foglalkozó angol tanárra. Kérem írja le ezeket!*

## Appendix 2

### Teachers' questionnaire

1. Ön milyen munkakörben dolgozik az óvodában?

What's your occupation?

2. Mióta dolgozik Ön itt?

How long have you been working here?

3. Kérem, osztályozza mennyire tartja hasznosnak ezt a kétnyelvű programot az óvodás korúak körében?

egyáltalán nem - 1 2 3 4 5 6 - nagyon fontos

What is your overall opinion rating about this bilingual programme among kindergarten aged children?

not useful at all - 1 2 3 4 5 6 - extremely useful

4. Milyen összetételű a csoportja?

What is your group like in compounds?

homogén - kicscsoport

*homogeneous - little group*

homogén - középső csoport

*homogeneous - middle group*

homogén - nagycsoport

*homogeneous - big group*

heterogén

*mixed age group*

5. Ön szerint mennyire jellemzőek a következő állítások a csoportjára a feljük intézett angol nyelvű kérdésekkel kapcsolatban? Kérem, osztályozza! 1- egyáltalán nem jellemző, 5 - teljes mértékben jellemző.

In your opinion how relevant are the following statements to your group?

Please rate the statements: 1 - doesn't apply at all, 5 - typical.

1 2 3 4 5 nem érti, nem kérdez vissza, nem válaszol

*doesn't understand, doesn't ask back, doesn't answer*

1 2 3 4 5 nem érti, egyszer visszakérdez, nem válaszol vagy reagál

*doesn't understand, asks back once, doesn't answer*

1 2 3 4 5 nem érti, többször visszakérdez, nem válaszol

*doesn't understand, asks back several times, doesn't answer*

1 2 3 4 5 visszakérdezéssel megérti, anyanyelvén válaszol  
*understands through asking back, answers in her native language*

1 2 3 4 5 visszakérdezéssel megérti, idegen nyelven válaszol  
*understands through asking back, answers in English*

1 2 3 4 5 megérti, anyanyelvén válaszol  
*understands, answers in her native language*

1 2 3 4 5 megérti, idegen nyelven válaszol  
*understands, answers in English*

1 2 3 4 5 idegen nyelven válaszol, néhány szóban  
*responds in English usually using one or two words*

1 2 3 4 5 idegen nyelven válaszol tőmondatban  
*responds in English in a short sentence*

6. Tapasztalatai szerint melyik korcsoportban figyelhető meg a legjelentősebb fejlődés? Állítson fel rangsort!

According to your experience in which (age) group can the largest improvement be observed? Please set up a rank!

\_\_ homogén - kicscsoport

*homogeneous - little group*

\_\_ homogén - középső csoport

*homogeneous - middle group*

\_\_ homogén - nagycsoport

*homogeneous - big group*

\_\_ vegyes korcsoport

*mixed group*

\_\_ egyéb: .....

*other: .....*

7. Milyen gyakran jellemzőek a csoportra nézve az alábbi tevékenységek?

Kérjük írja a számot a vonalra!

*How typical are the following activities in your group?*

*Please put the relevant number on the line!*

1 - naponta többször

*couple of times a day*

2 - naponta egyszer

*once a day*

3 - kétnaponta egyszer

*once in two days*

4 - hetente egy-két alkalommal

*once or twice a week*

5 - havonta egy-két alkalommal

*once or twice a month*

6 - soha

*never*

\_\_ angol nyelvű nevelő felé szívesen közeledik idegen nyelven

*the English teacher is willingly approached by children using the foreign language*

\_\_ közös játék során az “angolos” felnőttel idegen nyelven társalog

*during play the child willingly communicates with the foreign teacher in English*

\_\_ játék során a társaival angolul kommunikál

*during play the child communicates in English with his peers*

8. Az azonos korú gyermekek szókincsében lát-e jelentős eltérést ?

Is there a significant difference in vocabulary between children at the same age?

passzív szókincs:

igen

nem

*passive vocab:*

*yes*

*no*

aktív szókincs:

igen

nem

*active vocab:*

*yes*

*no*

9. Ön mit gondol, hogyan lehetne az átlagon javítani? Aláhúzással akár többet is megjelölhet!

*What do you think how could the average be improved? Please underline, you can underline more at the time!*

– más módszerrel

– *with a different method*

– más nyelvi nevelővel

– *with a different language teacher*

– több vagy más típusú tanulást segítő eszközökkel

– *with more tools or more efficient educational equipment*

– egyéb: .....

– other: .....

10. Kérem, fejezze be az alábbi mondatot!  
*Please finish the following sentence!*

Az idegen nyelv a gyerekeknek olyan .....

.....

.....

.....

*Foreign language for children is like* .....

.....

.....

.....

### Appendix 3

#### Children's assessment worksheet

1.
 

a) Hi. How are you?	1p
b) What's your name?	1p
c) How old are you?	1p
d) What's your symbol?	1p
e) Can you tell me the days of the week?	7p
f) What day is today?	1p
	<b>(max 12p)</b>
  
2. What's the weather like?
 

one word answer	1p
more words answer	2p
  
3. Animals (poster)
 

a) What is this? (name 5 animals)	5p
b) What is your favorite animal?	6p
	<b>(max 6p)</b>
  
4. Guessing game
 

I'm thinking of an animal, object, person....(its characteristics) etc.

**(max 1p)**
  
5. Colours (colour cards are presented on the table)
 

a) What colour is this?	5p
b) What's your favourite colour?	1p
c) What is ..... (name of a colour) in this room?	5p
	<b>(max 11p)</b>

6. Shapes (shape cards presented on the table)  
 What shape is this? (circle, square, triangle, rectangle, star, heart) **(max 6 p)**
7. Body Parts  
 a) Show me where your heart is! 1p  
 b) What's this?(Teacher shows 5 different body parts) 5p  
**(max 6p)**
8. Emotional expressions  
 a) Show me your happy, sad, angry, surprised face? **(max 4p)**
9. Movements - Simon says game  
 a) Teacher says 6p  
 stand up, sit down, crouch, turn around, lay down, jump 3 times  
 lift up.....(body parts), stick out your tongue, shake your head  
 close your eyes, open your mouth, put your hands up;  
 b) Now you are Simon! Tell me what to do! 6p  
**(max 12p)**
10. Math  
 a) How many cars can you see? (10) 1p  
 b) (Teacher adds an extra, or takes a car away)  
 Are there more or less cars now? 1p  
 c) (Teacher shows pictures)  
 Which is taller, bigger, and longer?  
 Which is shorter, smaller? 3p  
**(max 5p)**
11. Family  
 a) (Teacher shows a photo of a family)  
 What is this? (family) 1p  
 Who is this?  
 (mother, father, sister, brother, grandpa, grandma) 6p  
 Trentinné Benkő, É. (2014/3). A kétnyelvű fejlesztés és a pedagógusképzés.  
 Neveléstudomány: Oktatás Kutatás Innováció 2:(3) pp. 89–108.  
**max 7p)**
12. Food, fruits, vegetables  
 a) What is your favourite food, fruit, vegetable? 3p  
 b) Tell me 3 more fruits! 3p  
 c) Tell me 2 more vegetables! 2p  
**(max 8p)**

**Total points: 80**



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# The difficulties of becoming bilingual – Hungarian children in the United Kingdom

Nemes, Magdolna

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Between the child and the parent, a bridge is provided by speech, the basis of human communication. In order to create this bridge, the child has to be in an environment filled with speech. However, that environment may offer as communication media not just one but several languages that link the child to other members of the immediate speech community. In our paper, we give an insight into families living in the UK in which one of the parents is a Hungarian native speaker. Within these thirty families, a total of fifty children are being raised in contact with at least two languages in a natural way (2019–2020). Multilingual parenting can be carried out in several ways, for example when the mother's and the father's first language is the same and they both use it when talking to the child, who is exposed to another language outside the home. It is more outstanding, however, when the father and the mother are from different nationalities and use their own language when speaking to the child, but the parent can communicate with the child in a language learned by him/her as well. In our paper, we write about the advantages of being bilingual as well as the sometimes unforeseen difficulties multilingual families might face while bringing up children.

*Keywords:* multilingual families, language acquisition, language retention, code-switching, nurturing Hungarian traditions

## Introduction

Defining bilingualism is rather difficult because several factors must be taken into consideration; this phenomenon therefore has no uniformly accepted definition. According to Skuttnabb-Kangas, bilingualism can be divided into four categories based on the following criteria: 1) the time of the acquisition of both languages (origin) 2) the language knowledge level of the speaker and the characteristics of their language usage (competence) 3) use of two languages in most speaking situations (function) and 4) whether it is decisive for the identity of the speaker (attitude). Bilinguals are those who identify themselves as bilinguals (or with access to two cultures) or whom others identify as bilinguals (Borbély, 2014 p. 25). According to Bloomfield's maximalist definition (1933), *true bilingualism* means that a person has 'a native-like control of two languages', i.e., they can use both with perfect grammatical correctness and without an accent. However, Haugen (1953) believes bilingualism begins when the speaker of one language can produce complete, meaningful utterances in



another language. Diebold, however, claims that a person is also bilingual even if he or she does not speak the other language but understands it; he calls this *incipient bilingualism*. Diebold (1964) believes that a person can be considered bilingual if he or she possesses at least one of the following basic skills in any given foreign language: speech production, speech comprehension, reading, writing (I6).

The above definitions of bilingualism represent two extremes (Bloomfield and Diebold) while the solution is presumably somewhere in the middle. For our present purposes, all persons are regarded as bilingual or multilingual who are able to use two or more languages effectively to succeed in life, even if their knowledge of and speech production in the two languages represent significantly different developmental levels.

In our paper, we briefly review how children can become bilingual within or outside of their families, followed by the results of our survey conducted with part-Hungarian families living in the UK. In our analysis, we also examine code-switching and code-mixing, which is common among bilingual people. Finally, we also discuss families' efforts at language retention and maintaining Hungarian traditions.

### **Becoming bilingual**

Bilingualism can develop in several different ways. Bilingualism can be interpreted as a personal path that is individual in each case rather than a planned process that can be divided into categories based on a pattern. When studying the phenomenon from the aspect of its origin, there are several circumstances that contribute to developing the ability to effectively use a second or third language. As to the origin of bilingualism, the literature distinguishes the following models for language acquisition.

Minority bilingualism (Navracsics, 1999; Klein, 2013) is perhaps the most natural phenomenon in a social context, as there is practically no country on Earth without some kind of ethnic minority (Borbély, 2014, p. 28). According to the principles set out in a document entitled *The Oslo Recommendations*, minority communities have the right to use their own language, publish media content written in that language, operate a minority organisation, practise their cultural and religious customs, and the right for registration in their own language. It cannot be denied that there is pressure to learn the official language of the country as well, especially when the majority society is less tolerant towards the minority language. Immigration (Navracsics, 1999) creates a pressing necessity for language learning. Parents must adapt to their environment on a high level and the effective use of the foreign language is their means to do so. Their vocabulary can improve in an accelerated manner and their language competence may develop spectacularly within a short time. Although children are forced to acquire the language of the receiving country as soon as possible in order to take part in the education process successfully, their mother tongue is usually spoken in the home. Ideally, this additional language helps strengthen family ties, although it must not be forgotten that

the children's language knowledge will strongly be influenced by the parents' linguistic standard and the quality of their language use.

Somewhat similar to immigration is temporary migration (Navracsics, 1999), the purpose of which is usually to establish or stabilise the family's financial situation or maybe gain experience in a given professional area. While it is hard to foretell whether somebody will become bilingual during a temporary stay such as this, it is logical to presume that the longer time one spends abroad and the more they use the language, the more likely they are to become bilingual. However, the 'danger' of such bilingualism is that many language users only gain fluency and effective communication skills in the work-related area. It can also be observed that when those who work abroad form a closed community (e.g., they jointly rent a home and also work together) they do not acquire the language of their environment as they only communicate among themselves. In the event that the immigrants work together with locals, it can occur that the locals will learn the vocabulary used in everyday working situations, as was the case with a Hungarian building team working in Germany: instead of the Hungarians learning German, it was the Germans who had to learn the Hungarian work vocabulary (chisel, trowel, hammer, etc.).

Elite bilingualism (Navracsics, 1999; Klein, 2013) is a specific linguistic phenomenon: speakers undergo a deliberate language learning process in the hope of gaining the benefits of bilingualism. There are families that hire a foreign nanny or baby-sitter who looks after their child(ren) while speaking his/her first language to them. Also, parents can send their children to bilingual or international schools where the language of teaching is different from the majority language of the country. Although the word 'elite' is used to define this kind of bilingualism, nowadays this idea is not necessarily restricted to the cultural elite. When this phenomenon was first studied, the most typical examples were families of diplomats and children of the aristocracy (see also: Nemes 2016, 2018). In the eighteenth century, Russian nobility used to speak French whereas Hungarian nobility preferred the German language. One reason for this was the separation between the 'common' versus 'elite' strata of society, as well as the origin and upbringing of aristocrat families. Some aristocrats did not even speak the national language.

Territorial bilingualism (Navracsics, 1999) is closely connected to geographical boundaries. Together with the boundaries of their language use, a language community's territory is defined by geographical formations, such as mountains, hills, and valleys. In such areas, communication between communities is aided by a shared intermediary language, a so-called *lingua franca*, used in intercultural interactions. In medieval Europe, the Latin language served as a *lingua franca* and was replaced in the seventeenth century by French, which became the main tool of diplomatic and cultural communication for the nations of Europe (Bárdosi & Karakai, 1996). In the twentieth century, as Great Britain and the United States became great political and economic powers, English became the new intermediary language.

Language teaching in schools (Navracsics, 1999; Klein, 2013) is also supposed to contribute to the development of bilingualism, although it is more of an active

and forced learning process than effective language acquisition. Bilingual pre-schools, primary and secondary schools have been popular among parents when sending their children to an educational institution. In today's globalised world, with the expansion of the Internet, it is very easy to get access to foreign language media, whether a moving picture, interactive or written content. One of its advantages is that it supports the acquisition and the passive use of foreign languages (Nemes & Guzina, 2017). Media consumption is largely a deliberate process that requires strong motivation on the part of the user (children and adults alike), such as the desire to research materials related to one's interests, be up-to-date with media products, read literature necessary for one's professional development, etc. Among families aiming for bilingualism, the media is regarded as an effective but not exclusive tool of raising bilingual children.

The term 'family bilingualism' (Navracsecs, 1999; Klein, 2013) means that in the given family, two parents who come from different countries and speak different languages are raising children together. This form of bilingualism consists of complex cause and effect relationships and family types since the family as the primary socialisation scene plays a key role in the children's development. The child has different emotional and communicate relations with the parents which motivate him to acquire their first language.

In the vast majority of cases, family bilingualism occurs when the parents of different mother tongues realise that their children will benefit greatly from knowing both languages. Family bilingualism can be divided into different family models on the basis of three main aspects developed by Riley and Harding (Nemes, 2016).

- Do the parents speak each other's mother tongue?
- What is the relationship between the languages used by the parents and the language of the community?
- The parents' language use with each other and the children

In the context of our paper, it is worth devoting a few lines to one of the most popular methods that parents hope to lead to bilingualism. The OLOP (One Language–One Parent) method is a child-rearing technique based on parental division of labour along the lines of language, whose purpose is to approximately balance the language input in the home (Klein, 2013). The first child-rearing process based on the OLOP-method was documented by Ronjat who, similar to other researchers of the age, also observed and experimented on his own children. He believed that children can develop their competence in both languages without the languages interfering with one another while the OLOP method would ensure the children's connection with both languages from birth. According to the writer, if used consistently, the OLOP method can be an effective tool in developing bilingualism and also seems to be the best method for creating balanced language input for children. At the time, theorists believed that associating each language with a different person was the only way to prevent bilingual children from confusion of the languages. However, this early notion has been proven to be false (Byers et al., 2013, p. 4) as several factors have to be met to achieve bilingualism. The condition for

the effectiveness of the method is for both parents to spend approximately the same amount of quality time with the children. Also, the quality of the language input plays an important role in the development. Children acquire language as a communication unit in the family, therefore, in the case of two languages, both languages will become a part of communication provided that each parent consistently speaks his or her own mother tongue to them. Otherwise, it may happen that the child will use one of the languages passively, that is, understand it but not speak it (Borbély, 2014).

The development of children's linguistic codes are influenced by the environment surrounding them, which first means the immediate family and later the wider social community they grow up in. Researchers mostly agree that in the linguistic development of bilingual children, three main phases can be distinguished. 1) In the first phase, the child's vocabulary includes elements of both languages but words of equivalent meaning from both languages are rarely present. 2) When two-word sentences appear, they will include words of both languages. The degree of language mixing decreases steadily with age. As the vocabulary expands intensively, words with the same meaning appear in both languages, but the child uses a single set of rules for a long time. 3) The development of two separate language rule systems, approx. from the age of five. Also, some surveys report language delay affecting mainly vocabulary in case of bilingual children, although this seems to be a temporary disadvantage (Borbély, 2014).

However, there is no consensus among researchers on exactly how the process of building vocabulary takes place. According to those supporting the hypothesis of a unified language system, a bilingual child does not differentiate between the two language systems in the initial stage of language acquisition but uses a hybrid system. During linguistic development, this hybrid system will gradually be separated. According to the hypothesis of separate language systems, the child can already distinguish between the two language systems at an early stage of linguistic development. From the beginning of language acquisition, an independent brain centre develops for each language, so they are acquired independently of each other. According to this hypothesis, the reason for mixing words is that two imperfect language systems are evolving side by side. That is, when an appropriate language tool is not available in one language system, the child will automatically turn to the other language. Research also points out that it is not necessarily the lack of lexical knowledge that is responsible for mixing language systems, but rather the ease or difficulty of retrieval. The bilingual child may know the necessary word in both languages, but may use it more often in one, so (s)he will be able to retrieve it from the mental lexicon faster.

In the case of bilinguals, speech development is not necessarily delayed, but rather it takes more time for speakers to decide in which language to respond to whom and in what situation. Research has also revealed that bilingual children may know fewer words in each of their languages compared to their monolingual peers, yet this difference disappears when we calculate bilingual children's conceptual vocabulary across both languages (cited in Heinlein

& Williams, 2013, p. 8). A conceptual vocabulary means that, when adding together the words known in both Hungarian and English without taking cross-language synonyms into consideration twice, then bilingual children know approximately the same number of words as their peers. Nor should it be forgotten that monolingual children may also start to speak later, a phenomenon that stems from the fact that every child develops at his or her own pace regardless of whether they are spoken to in one or two languages. In general, the mother's language will be the child's mother tongue; even if the mother speaks two languages to the child, one will still be more dominant and will become the child's mother tongue. In early childhood, the mother typically spends more time with the child, so her language is dominant. However, this may change as the child goes to kindergarten and then school, at which time the language of his/her wider environment becomes dominant.

Later in life, second-language acquisition in childhood appears to yield positive results in all respects. Bilingualism gives speakers an advantage that not only allows them to know another language, but also maintain a better position in terms of culture and traditions compared to an individual who knows and uses only one language. Bilingualism has no detrimental effect upon cognitive development. As is especially true of knowledge acquired during childhood: the child is given the gift of another language with which (s)he can express himself/herself in the same way as his/her primary mother tongue (I9). Bilingualism is on the rise in many parts of the world as more and more children are exposed to two languages from an early age (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams 2013, p. 1). Speaking more than one language is important for travel, employment, speaking with members of one's extended family, making friends from different backgrounds, and maintaining connection to family and culture. Several studies have shown that bilinguals have non-linguistic advantages when it comes to social understanding, sensitivity to certain features of communication, memory, and other cognitive advantages (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2013, p. 3). As for the cognitive development of children, according to some research, bilingualism has positive effects on children's problems-solving skills, creativity, and working-memory throughout their lives. However, some surveys were not able to prove either the pros or the cons of bilingualism at an early age (Borbély, 2014).

There are basically two forms of childhood bilingualism based on when and how the child acquires the two languages. We speak of simultaneous bilingualism when a child acquires the two languages parallelly before the age of three. This is mostly the case in bilingual families, where the child is in contact with both languages from birth. This usually happens with the application of the *one language – one parent* (OLOP) method, when the parents consistently speak their own language to the child. This is regarded as the most widespread method that parents hope will lead to bilingualism. In situations where the parents spend the same amount of time with the child, OLOP can be a great way to ensure equal exposure. On the other hand, when exposure is limited to the weekend or occasional visits of grandparents, the method is unlikely to lead to balanced language input. Afterwards, perfectly balanced language exposure will not necessarily lead to later bilingualism as the

language of the community has a great influence on the children. The language of the community where the child lives is known as the *majority language* while the less widely spoken language is known as the *minority language*. As children grow, the majority language becomes more important as it is the language of the preschool, school, and (later on) work, etc. In contrast, the minority language is used in the home with the members of the family (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2013, p. 5). This is why parents provide opportunities for children to play with other kids in the minority language. What is more, previous research indicates that if children hear two languages from the same bilingual parent they are *often* able to learn two languages since the *one language – one parent* method is not necessary nor sufficient for successful bilingualism (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2013, p. 4).

Another form of childhood bilingualism is sequential bilingualism, wherein the second language is learned during childhood after the acquisition of the first. Some researchers think the child has to be exposed to the new language by the age of three (Borbély, 2014). There is no consensus among researchers regarding this so-called ‘critical age’; however, experience suggests that the sooner the process begins, the higher the level of language competence will be and after the teenage years it seems impossible to overcome the effects of the first language’s effect on accent (Borbély, 2014). Many emphasise that age is only one of the factors influencing the successful acquisition of a second language. The language learning environment and other subjective factors such as the quantity of exposure to each language and the quality of language input (as well as motivation, attitude, etc.) also play an important role. Thus, it is more expedient to talk about sensitive periods instead of a critical age in relation to the acquisition of a second language. It has been established that there is an ideal age to acquire certain language levels and structures. Hahne’s research made it clear that younger children tend to adapt to the syntactic structures of the second language more easily than older children. On the other hand, older learners seem to be better at learning vocabulary and pragmatics (cited in Klein, 2013). Nikolov (2004) underscores that it is possible to achieve native-like proficiency even after adolescence. She adds that, in the case of children, the process of language learning matters a lot. Moreover, when working with children it is important to motivate them, encourage them to form a positive attitude to the new language, and improve speaking skills.

In the case of children growing up in a bilingual family, the parents’ decision and consistency will determine whether they become simultaneously versus sequentially bilingual or monolingual. The process is largely determined by the communication customs created in the family and the parents’ sense of identity. This factor is also considerably influenced by the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the broader environment. While there is no ideal age to start learning a second language, the environment where the child grows up plays an important role in the child’s successful language learning process. Children do not learn more quickly, indeed they learn a language in a different way than adults. Peltzer-Karpf-Zangl suggest that preschool-aged children are eager to speak, therefore it is beneficial when they are encouraged to speak in the

second language. If a language difficulty occurs, they are easily able to bridge it with nonverbal cues, onomatopoeic words, literal translations or even made-up words (cited in Klein, 2013). Also, children talk about specific things and generally do not need to change verb tenses or use complex syntax or vocabulary. Bilingualism and cognition are complex issues that depend upon themselves as well as several other factors (Klein, 2013).

Linguistic socialisation by no means ends in childhood: especially for bilinguals, this aspect is a lifelong process. Bilinguals are constantly faced with the challenges of language retention and language shift. The relationship between languages can be multifaceted and interference phenomena include code-mixing and code-switching. If bilingualism is balanced and usage of the two languages is well distinguished, the phenomenon of interference will be less pronounced. Interference phenomena can also be detected among simultaneous bilinguals. Code-mixing in children is not significantly different from that in adults, yet its incidence is higher among children in whose environment adults also mix the languages (14). For bilingual children, successful linguistic socialisation also means that they are aware of their bilingualism and know that they can choose one or the other communication system in their possession according to the given situation and/or person. During the linguistic socialisation of bilinguals, the linguistic effects of communication between siblings and contact with peers as well as the language(s) of education all play a key role.

### **The process of language acquisition of Hungarian children living in the UK – the study**

In the course of our research, we conducted interviews with Hungarian families living in the UK. To suit our research purposes, we looked for Hungarian families living in the UK with at least one preschool-aged child or cases in which the child had lived in the UK between the ages of three and six. The semi-structured interviews usually took 30–35 minutes to complete and contained questions related to the language development of the bilingual child, integration into the kindergarten, and language retention. Some interviews were conducted in person, but we also used some advances in modern technology, such as Skype or Facebook. Finding the families posed some difficulties because it was important for us that one of the parents be Hungarian. During the interviews, a personal relationship was established with the interviewees who could also answer other questions that arose during the interview. We tried to take a more linguistic perspective when asking parents to remember code-switching situations and family stories in connection with their bilingual children's language development. All the examples in our paper come from our empirical research recalled by parents used in natural and spontaneous speaking situations. During the study that took place between 2019 and 2020, we contacted thirty families raising a total of fifty children (1–18 years). There were also children in the interviewed families who had first gone to kindergarten in Hungary and then to a kindergarten in the UK. A number of works have been written on bilingualism, most of which focus on its benefits. Little does the literature deal with the difficulties and problems

arising during the process: in our research, we also asked parents to tell us what difficulties the appearance of the second language caused in their child's life and how it affected the child's speech development.

As was mentioned before, literature on raising bilingual children has focused almost exclusively on its advantages. Previous research indicates that code-switching is a natural phenomenon among children brought up in families using more than one language. When we started our research, it was hypothesised that Hungarian children living in England also code-mix from an early age. Another aim of our study was to determine whether families with at least one Hungarian-speaking parent use the one-person-one-language method as it is a very popular strategy for raising bilingual children. We also hypothesised that one of the languages used within the family would be Hungarian. Finally, we investigated the role and importance of retaining Hungarian language and traditions. We assumed that families with Hungarian ties find it relevant to keep in touch with Hungarian relatives, celebrate Easter and Christmas in accordance with Hungarian customs, and introduce Hungarian folk tales, nursery rhymes, books, and cultural heritage in general to their children.

Upon reviewing the information on the parents' educational background, results show that the majority of respondents are graduates while the minority have secondary (technical) school or vocational school diplomas. Twenty of the mothers have university or college degrees; four have a secondary technical school diploma while two of them completed secondary school and two vocational school. Out of the fathers, seventeen have completed tertiary education, five have a diploma in vocational education while two have technical school certificates and two secondary school diplomas.

The majority of respondents have been living in the UK for a longer period of time and work full time; some of the mothers are homemakers. There may be several reasons for why the women stay at home, e.g., if the family cannot afford a private kindergarten for their child(ren) during the day, thereby making it necessary for women to remain home. When examining the roles of women versus men, we found that nine mothers stay at home, six work part-time and ten work full-time. All of the men in the study work full-time (100%).

Before conducting the interviews, we had assumed that the Hungarian language was spoken within the family and English outside the family. However, in addition to Hungarian and English, the Spanish, Portuguese, German and, in two cases, Slovak languages were also present among the surveyed families. Five of the interviewed parents stated that they considered it necessary to introduce the third language. They believe that the first language of both parents is important, but these are not the same as the language of the community (English), which the child will need in everyday life. One Hungarian father has a Portuguese wife and, along with English, three languages are constantly present in the children's lives. *'I am the one talking to the children in Hungarian, we have Hungarian storybooks, they talk to their grandma on Skype, but the problem is that I don't get to spend much time with them because of my work, so English goes perfectly, they also speak Portuguese nicely, but Hungarian is a bit of a "minority" language in our home'* (Interview 14).



Our research revealed that the parents made a conscious decision to raise their children to be bilingual. They also agreed who should speak to the child(ren) in which language. The *one parent – one language* method was chosen by 22 couples; two reported that the two languages could not be used simultaneously because the child insisted on only one language. Here is the account of one of the mothers: *‘The youngest one doesn’t want to speak Hungarian, he understands what is said, he can even read, so I don’t force it.... The difficulty was that I spoke to them in Hungarian, and they answered in English’* (Interview 19). Another mother said, *‘We’d planned that I would only speak English and István only Hungarian, but somehow it didn’t turn out that way’* (Interview 1). In families where one parent is Hungarian and the other is not, it was mentioned as a disadvantage that puns, humour, and language jokes could not be enjoyed together. In these families, the father typically does not speak Hungarian, so he missed the metaphors and symbols in literature, poetry or music that can only be understood in Hungarian. For the same reason, the ‘funny’ stages of children’s language development cannot be shared by the parents, either (Interview 26).

Even in families where the mother tongue is Hungarian and both parents are from Hungary, the language of the home is not always Hungarian (10 families). In nine cases, two languages are spoken at home: *‘My husband only talks in English and I talk in English and Hungarian, but I prefer to speak Hungarian if my husband is not at home’* (Interview 6). In the same vein: *‘We, the parents, always speak Hungarian to each other, the girls also speak it to us, although they often switch to English in these days of adolescence. Among themselves, the children only speak English and switch to Hungarian if necessary’* (Interview 28). We also saw an example of one parent providing the child with both language inputs due to the other’s busy schedule: *‘I spoke English and Hungarian alternately [to the child], but I messed up a little at the beginning because I didn’t set up a system for him when to have Hungarian and when English, and I mostly spoke to him in English; I tried telling stories, looking at pictures, and saying words in Hungarian. The bedtime story was not always told in Hungarian’* (Interview 6). In one family, the mother speaks to her child in three languages: *‘I sometimes speak Hungarian to her, but rather English or German. We want to move to Germany soon, so it’ll probably be the most dominant for him’* (Interview 13).

Among the interviewed families, some speak Hungarian at home and switch to English when they go out. *‘We only speak Hungarian at home, because my partner and I are both Hungarian’* (e.g., Interviews 19 and 29). In these families, the child learns the language of the community when (s)he first goes to kindergarten. Hungarian-speaking parents try to help their child learn English by reading storybooks in English, as the following example shows: *‘At that time, we deliberately tried to speak both languages, we often read English bedtime stories so that he could adapt to the kindergarten faster, but at the same time we also taught him Hungarian because there were times when his Hungarian was getting worse’* (Interview 3). Regarding home language use, we can also see that there are families where they only communicate in English at home: *‘My husband is English, we speak English at home’* (Interviews 16 and 19).

Based on the literature, we also hypothesised that bilingual children do not begin to speak later than their monolingual peers. We divided the children included in the study into two parts: the first group included children whose speech development had not yet begun before moving to the UK (10 children, plus the 20 children who were born after moving to the UK). In the case of these children, some parents reported that they started speaking later than their monolingual peers. One mother reported that her child was only using baby-talk even after the age of two (e.g., *guli-guli-guli, bababa, hajaja*). He would sometimes utter a word or two, but had not really start talking yet. The parents said they were worried at first and even asked professionals if it was normal for a child not yet to speak at the age of two (Interview 6). Another child used Hungarian and English side by side: *‘Little Bende’s first word was “még”. And to make everyone understand what he wanted, he added “more”. Since then, he has been using the two words together (még-more)’* (Interview 5).

The second group included children who had already started using Hungarian as their first language before moving to the UK (20 children). Their parents continued to speak to them in Hungarian, but they also tried to introduce them to English (e.g., through picture books, English stories) so that they could hear it as often as possible. *‘We spoke Hungarian to her as a baby, but I taught her a lot of songs, poems and rhymes in English’* (Interview 29). Three of the parents also attended playhouses regularly, thereby motivating their children to learn and use English by giving them the opportunity to meet English-speaking children. Some parents reported that after moving to the UK, their child’s speech development was somewhat halted, which they attributed to the fact that the child was suddenly ‘dropped’ into an English-speaking environment. As one mother reported: *‘In the first few months, there were problems with English in the kindergarten when our daughter couldn’t say what she wanted, which made her shy, but it only lasted a month or two. From her point of view, she said that about three months later, she learned English out of anger because the other children didn’t play with her because she couldn’t communicate’* (Interview 3). Although the three-year-old child’s Hungarian language competence was appropriate for her age and she was able to express herself in Hungarian, the new language did not yet give her the opportunity to do so.

One mother recalls, *‘Jázmin first learnt Hungarian, she didn’t speak English yet. This was a great disadvantage for her, because she did not feel comfortable in the kindergarten in the first few weeks as there were many things she didn’t understand’* (Interview 29). In Interview 30, the parents state that *‘Sári had some difficulties after about 4 months. Everybody had told her in encouragement that children would learn the new language quickly. Aged 7, she had a completely different idea of this. She thought it’d be a really short time, maybe a month or two. When she realised it wasn’t so easy and she couldn’t make it in such a short time, she was rather desperate. When we explained to her how the adults had meant it, she calmed down.... What made things a little easier was that a Hungarian girl came to her class, who had been living in the UK for about a year and a half, and her English was better. She encouraged Sári to speak.’*

Parents also related that when they moved to the UK, their child did not want to speak English at first: *'Biborka, my 10-year-old daughter, had already learnt English at home for two years in a bilingual elementary school. We thought it would be the easiest for her – and for sure, she understood a few things at school already on the first day. But she wouldn't speak for half a year! The formerly chatty little girl, with whom the main problem at school was talking too much, suddenly became completely silent at school. For a breakthrough, we had to invite her English friend to our home. There was nothing else to do but talk to her. By the end of the two-hour visit, we were astonished to realise that our child was speaking English! Her English friend was equally surprised: "Gee, Biborka is so talkative!"'* (Interview 5) One mother tried to speak English to four-year-old Zsóka as much as possible, *'but she is very stubborn and doesn't want to speak English, she insists on the Hungarian language. She has extra lessons in the kindergarten because she doesn't want to speak English. She understands everything but she does not want to use it'* (Interview 10). One parent says that the children started school immediately after moving to the UK, where *'they were thrown in at the deep end. Both of them were shy and didn't dare to speak English, even though they knew some words, for example those having to do with eating and drinking'* (Interview 30).

The parents related that English kindergartens helped the children adapt linguistically: teachers gave 20–30-minute extra lessons to the newly arrived Hungarian children (Interview 22). In Interview 30, parents related that, in school, teachers had a very kind and flexible attitude to the children that helped them relax. *'Dani became braver in using English after about a year. He had understood a lot before that, too, but he would rather play with his classmates silently, so he took longer to learn the language than Sára, who was talking to her classmates more.'*

Six parents emphasised that their children *'soaked up'* the English language *'in a jiffy'* (Interview 5). Children corrected their parents' and their siblings' English, too. *'My big daughters were very funny. Now they already teach the little ones and correct them if they mix something up'* (Interview 14). Some children prefer speaking English to Hungarian: *'We noticed that if she was asked a question in Hungarian, especially by strangers, she would automatically answer in English'* (Interview 11). Some, however, switch between languages: *'Bende answers in the language that is spoken around him. In Hungarian to us, but if the Spanish teacher is here, he complains about a pain in his "cabeza" when he hits his head'* (Interview 14). It is natural even for siblings growing up in the same environment to display different linguistic development. *'In our family, Sára speaks English best. The school and her friend helped her a lot'* (Interview 30). One mother noticed that, for her daughter, English gradually came to the fore: *'Now she already thinks in English, it's easier for her to play in English, and she prefers watching stories in English, too. When she talks in Hungarian, she first composes her sentences in English and then translates them into Hungarian in her little head. Therefore, she speaks Hungarian more slowly and she has to think more. Sometimes she even mixes the two languages'* (Interview 29). Another mother, however, observes that her children do not

translate from one language to the other but think and interpret the world in the given language (Interview 26).

Ten of the parents reported that children did not like talking about schoolwork in Hungarian because they did not have the necessary vocabulary, which made them uncomfortable (e.g., Interview 28).

### **Examining the appearance of code-switching and code-mixing**

Code-switching and code-mixing are a natural part of bilingualism. Code-switching has several definitions, the most common of which is the following: ‘Code-switching is the alternate use of two or more languages within the same utterance or discourse’ (Bartha, 1999). That is to say, the speaker may use words of a different language (*guest language*) within the same sentence in the *matrix* or *base language*. This happens more often while children are still learning both languages and they cannot think of a word in the language they are actually speaking, so they ‘borrow’ it from the other language. For example: ‘*Anya, egy bottle vizet kérek*’ [*Mummy, please give me a bottle of water*]. ‘*Csak magyarul beszélünk itthon, all the time*’ [*We only speak Hungarian at home, all the time*] (Interview 22). ‘*Annyi, annyi minden van itt, I don’t want any gift. All right*’ [*There are so many things here, I don’t want any gift. All right*] (Interview 23). While hiking in the forest, one child warned, ‘*Ez egy veszélyes bug*’ [This is a dangerous *bug*] (Interview 30).

There may be various reasons for code-switching. For the speaker, both languages are active as (s)he uses them on a daily basis, therefore the languages are in connection with each other. As a result, one of them may sometimes interfere with the speaking process and code-switching occurs. It may also occur when a topic, character, location, or quote arises in the conversation that the speaker cannot express in the given language, so (s)he continues to communicate in the language that has been passively present so far (I7). As bilingual children get older, the topic becomes a more important factor in code-switching due to life experience. In this case, the absence of lexical knowledge may be responsible for a switch that is based on the experience they are talking about; for example, children talking about their day at school and the weekend. In the case of Hungarian children living in the UK, code-switching means children use English words or phrases from English in place of those in Hungarian within a single sentence. Similarly, they can also switch between languages based on changes in the speech situations wherein the topic (e.g., school life vs. family weekend) or the members of the conversation change (e.g., they talk to their English friends at school or talking to their parents). It has also been reported that code-switching behaviour can change depending on the level of stress in the environment (Basnight et al., 2007, p. 80), an element that is obviously present in a child’s life who recently moved to a new environmental and linguistic context.

Code-mixing is relatively common among bilingual children, especially if the parents are also bilingual even though they have agreed on using the OLOP method. Some parents worry about this, but research says bilinguals cope with

code-mixing from an early age (Heinlein & Williams, 2013, p. 6). Also, code-mixing may lead to cognitive benefits as the speakers have become familiar with switching languages back and forth (Heinlein & Williams, 2013, p. 6).

For adults, the trigger may be the desire to demonstrate social or intellectual superiority or as a defence mechanism (Basnight et al., 2007, p. 70); for children, a more thorough knowledge of the given topic in the other language will lead to code-switching. A typical example: *'A nagymama beengedte a házába a farkast, [The grandma let the wolf into her house] after that the wolf have devoured the grandma.'* Also, children and adults may code-switch when there is no identical translation in the target language (*I had fun with my padtárs. We had a giant pogácsa.*) or it has better translation in one language (e.g, *my .... elzsibbadt a lábam*) (Basnight-Brown & Altarriba, 2007, p. 70).

In the case of code-mixing, the speaker inserts a full word into the utterance or inflects it according to different grammatical rules. In such cases, the speaker typically applies the grammatical rules of the dominant language to the words borrowed from the language that is passive in the given speech situation. A typical example for code-switching at word level is when a Hungarian-English bilingual child code-switched to English: *'Kérek szépen bread-et!'* [*Can I have some bread, please?*]. A Hungarian mother remembered the following sentence: *'Anya, amikor a two-hoz ér a nagymutató...'* [*Mummy, when the big hand gets to the two*] (Interview 23). Another memory by a mother: *'Anyu cooking nekem eggs, vagy now akarni menni....'* [*Mummy cooking eggs for me or now wanting to go*] (Interview 6). And another: *'Anyu, add már ide a milk-et'* [*Mummy, give me the milk*], *'Ki fogja a szőlőt harvestolni?'* [*Who will harvest the grapes?*] or, when hurrying on the way to school: *'Ne wasteold az időt!'* [*Do not waste the time*] (Interview 7). In the aforementioned sentences, the children code-switched at word level in a natural environment due to greater cognitive and emotional availability of words.

Code-mixing requires a higher bilingual competence, which may suggest that when it happens, the two languages are on the same level or close to one another, therefore code-mixing happens more often (17). Some parents noticed that their children would use Hungarian syntax when saying English sentences. *'For both of my children, English is their second language. When they make sentences in English, they put them together as if they were Hungarian sentences, that is, according to Hungarian rules'* (Interview 25). In four cases, parents reported that they also used the languages in this way, that is, mixing Hungarian with English. *'Unfortunately, we talk to our child in a mixed language; sometimes we mix English words into our Hungarian'* (Interview 9). Another comment describes this as, *'Total chaos.... Unfortunately, we mix words, too, if they don't come to mind in one language, or just out of laziness'* (Interview 10). In Interview 28, the parents said that their daughters *'find it funny to mix the two languages in one sentence because we, parents are even more mixed up. My husband tries to avoid this mixing, but it's sometimes difficult. I would sometimes also explain something to the girls in English, or maybe in both languages.'*

Children also engaged in code-switching and code-mixing, as was recalled by a father: *'Because of the many languages, they were mixing the words of all*

three. They would say interesting sentences, which started in Hungarian and ended in Portuguese, with some English words thrown in' (Interview 14). A Hungarian mother answered that 'Since we've been out here and the children are learning English, they've been mixing a great many English words into their sentences because they don't know enough English words to put a sentence nicely together... I've noticed that they can't express themselves in English as well as in Hungarian, and it sometimes makes them anxious and therefore mix the languages. Sometimes they miss the Hungarian environment' (Interview 12). In another interviewed family, parents believed that code-switching was more deliberate than accidental. The children switched to Hungarian when they did not want their mates to understand them. With the expansion of their vocabulary, they did less and less code-switching but rather circumscribed the word that they did not know or did not come to their mind, so communication became easier. *'It would sometimes happen that the appropriate word didn't come to their mind, then there was mixing (words or even half sentences) and laughing. As time passed, they made fewer and fewer mistakes'* (Interview 30). Two of the families claimed that they did not notice their children mixing or having mixed the two languages.

### **Attempts at language retention**

Before conducting the interviews, we had thought that retaining the Hungarian language would not be a problem while living abroad. Our research has made it clear that it is important for the surveyed parents to retain their Hungarian language (and other mother tongues) (25 families). Parents are very creative and purposeful in using several different methods to retain their languages.

It seems that Hungarian is most often used in the home, which gives children an opportunity to hear it continually, thus compensating for an all-English language input during the rest of their day in school or kindergarten. One of the parents says that *'We were worried that they would forget Hungarian'* (Interview 30). Besides, families often spend the summer and other school holidays in Hungary, where communication with family and friends helps the children practise their Hungarian. In Interview 10, the parent claims that, *'Hungarian is only necessary for the sake of relatives, because I don't want to go home, I would like my child to grow up here.'* Families sometimes entertain Hungarian relatives and friends in their UK homes. *'We are trying to bring relatives out here to nurture traditions, as we don't have much leave to go home'* (Interview 11). Every family uses Skype, Viber or social media (e.g., Facebook) to keep in touch with family members in Hungary. Parents usually provide Hungarian-language storybooks, videos, cartoons, and music to their children, as reported by a mother. *'They love Hungarian Folk Tales [a popular cartoon series], watch them with their mouths open, and also like Hungarian folk songs very much, which they also dance to'* (Interview 15).

One of the interviewees reported that, in order to retain their mother tongue and alleviate homesickness, they attend a Hungarian Weekend once a month. At Hungarian clubs, children can meet their Hungarian mates

and there are also several teachers among the parents who help each other's children to learn the basics of Hungarian literacy.

A mother of three reported that Hungarian was not easily retained, despite her providing books and stories on videos to her children. *'Actually, it is exceedingly hard to retain a language. Even though we had bought books and DVDs, after a day's work, homework, extra lessons and other activities it's rather hard for everyone to make time for them'* (Interview 5). It also happens that children speak English even to their Hungarian friends living in the UK, whose Hungarian is also good, because *'if the friend has been living here for a long time, she has been going to school here, then English will almost certainly be the preferred language'* (Interview 28).

One of the families moved back to Hungary after four years in the UK (Interview 30). The parents reported that the children had no problem with everyday/colloquial Hungarian, but the Hungarian grammar and literary language required in school posed a challenge. They used English word order and often made mistakes in conjugation; therefore, reading and writing did not go smoothly, either. *'They still have problems with expressing themselves in Hungarian, especially Dani. Sári adapted easily, but sometimes she, too, makes mistakes. The extended family (grandparents, cousins), Hungarian education, new schoolmates and friends all helped them improve quickly.'* Children retain bilingualism almost automatically. Sári and her English friend keep in touch via Skype and she also talks to her cousin living in the UK in English. Sometimes, Sári and Dani, too, talk to their sister Lilla, born after returning to Hungary, in English. Parents believe that *'bilingualism can only be retained with practice. For example, we deliberately create an English environment around us by listening to stuff or watching movies in English. Even for our youngest child, I put on the video story in English whenever possible. They like reading in English and, given the opportunity, they also speak it to each other.'* The parents report that for the children, bilingualism was hard to achieve but it is worth it in the long run because it improves several skills, such as problem solving, intercultural communication, different thought structures, acceptance, team work, and flexibility.

### **Nurturing Hungarian traditions in the UK**

In the final chapter of this paper, we find it important to discuss whether the Hungarian families living hundreds of kilometres from their homeland nurture Hungarian traditions and how and to what extent they keep Hungarian customs. In the interview, six parents emphasised that they considered it important to acquaint their children with Hungarian history. Fostering family ties plays an important role not only in the acquisition of the mother tongue but also in the transmission of cultural heritage. Spanish, English, Slovak, German, or Portuguese grandparents will certainly relate different memories to their grandchildren than Hungarian ones, thus connecting the child to their own historical and cultural background.

Among the interviewed families, holidays show a very vibrant image. Some families celebrate birthdays in the UK, but always travel home to Hungary for

Christmas and Easter. Some of the families who spend Christmas in the UK celebrate with Hungarian customs. *'We celebrated Christmas and Easter here and I tried to do everything like at home. I cooked traditional foods. At Easter, we painted eggs together with the boys and they sprinkled their grandma via Skype'* (Interview 12). Other families celebrate in the UK with English customs. In one family, they *'agreed to hold an English Christmas. We eat traditional food in our own country and out here [in the UK] we keep the English customs'* (Interview 14).

### Summary

Research demonstrated that children are born to be able to learn the languages of their environment without confusion or delay (Heinlein & Williams, 2013, p. 10). Parents have to ensure opportunities to speak and hear the language and promote motivation and ongoing language usage opportunities for the children. The children included in the study adapted well to their new environment, new language, to the actual "new world". The parents reported that after a while, the children's English language skills were more developed than the parents' and children would teach certain terms to their parents. The parents tried to choose a high-quality kindergarten close to their home.

When speaking of bilingualism, it is not a negligible aspect how the child is affected by being torn out of the Hungarian-speaking environment and moving to an English-speaking environment. According to the interviewed parents, children were not only disturbed emotionally by the separation from relatives and friends, but also by the fact that they could not express themselves in English as fluently as in Hungarian, which frustrated them. Children record many experiences unnoticed, but at the same time it is necessary for parents to consciously create opportunities for their children to meet speakers of the language used in the family, e.g., their cousins, grandparents, and family friends, in order to develop children's language competence. It is important that children receive language input not only from the parent, but also from speakers of the language of different ages, occupations, and educational backgrounds. For children up to the age of 5–6, communication with parents is the primary medium of linguistic socialisation, so it is worth the parent's while to watch or read a story together with their child in order to discuss an unfamiliar word, phrase, or more complex scene.

Literature about the development of childhood bilingualism has studied code-switching patterns in the natural speech of children and we also asked our respondents to provide us with examples of this phenomenon. Also, the research literature suggests that children's code-switching patterns do not really differ from those observed among adults (Basnight-Brown & Altarriba, 2007, p. 77). However, one highly debated question is the age at which a child can begin to code-switch. An interesting result of examination of a two-year-old Norwegian-English bilingual child indicated that even very young children are able to develop some sort of language awareness of their two languages (cited in Basnight-Brown & Altarriba, 2007, p. 77). Another research examined



two-year-old French-English bilinguals' code-switching behaviour over a time frame of 18 months. It became clear that, over time, the children violated one of the constraints less frequently, a change that points to a developmental change in code-switching (Basnight-Brown & Altarriba, 2007, p. 78). Unfortunately, our respondents could not tell us when their children started code-switching even though they remembered several examples of them switching. It can, however, be stated that our respondents reported more code-switching behaviour in the beginning of the language learning process. Previous research offers a descriptive account of the various aspects of code-switching and the variety of its influences. The parents involved in our research suggested that their bilingual children code-switched to Hungarian when the words were harder to retrieve in English. As time passed and the children became more familiar with the new language, they made fewer and fewer mistakes. Future research should more thoroughly examine the relationship between age, mode of acquisition, nature, and the frequency of code-switching among Hungarian-English bilingual children. Also, this study failed to show code-switching from the listener's perspective, a factor that appears to be rather interesting.

Our findings provide strong evidence that the 'one-person-one-language' strategy is common among the families involved, yet families still have to consider what strategies they can use to promote early bilingual development. As we could see, most families used the OLOP method, although in several families it was impossible to provide a balanced exposure of languages in the early years. Moreover, a third language was also introduced in five families. It was hard for some parents to speak English to their children at home, which might help them learn English. Parents were also challenged when the child did not want to accept the new language, even though each family eventually overcame this initial difficulty. In other cases, what proved difficult was the incorporation of the Hungarian language into everyday life in the UK. *'Simply because outside our home everybody speaks English and sometimes it may appear rude and lame to insist on Hungarian by all means. What's more, it can sometimes have really embarrassing results'* (Interview 5). For the children, it is natural to speak in two languages, as this is the way they are growing up. Parents report that their high-school children *'are also a little proud of it, because they can have an advantage over their classmates in language lessons'* (Interview 28). For siblings, their mother tongue/first language may even become some kind of secret language that their environment does not understand.

Closely related to language is culture: the preservation and nurturing of Hungarian traditions are present in different ways in the lives of families living in the UK. Our study confirmed that all of the involved families find it important to strengthen family relations and introduce Hungarian literature, history, traditions and culture to their children. The habits of the parents are also important for children; for example, if the Hungarian father watches football every weekend, after a while, his children will follow suit and keep track of the results (Interview 27). In the future, as a continuation of our research, we would like to include more families in our research as well as survey the bilingual child-rearing practices of Hungarian families living in other European countries.

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## Appendix

Details of families participating in the survey

Families	Family models	Age of child(ren)	Languages spoken by parents
Family 1	two parents	5, 3	English-Hungarian
Family 2	two parents	1	English-Hungarian
Family 3	two parents	10, 3	English-Hungarian-Spanish
Family 4	two parents	6, 1	English-Hungarian-Slovakian
Family 5	two parents	13, 11, 5	English-Hungarian
Family 6	single parent	4	English-Hungarian
Family 7	two parents	6, 1	English-Hungarian
Family 8	two parents	3	English-Hungarian
Family 9	two parents	4	English-Hungarian-Slovakian
Family 10	two parents	4	English-Hungarian
Family 11	two parents	14	English-Hungarian
Family 12	two parents	4 (twins), 1	English-Hungarian
Family 13	two parents	7	English-Hungarian-German
Family 14	two parents	12, 10, 5, 3	English-Hungarian-Portuguese
Family 15	two parents	6, 3	English-Hungarian
Family 16	two parents	3	English-Hungarian
Family 17	two parents	1.5	English-Hungarian
Family 18	two parents	7, 4, 3,	English-Hungarian
Family 19	two parents	18, 16, 7	English-Hungarian
Family 20	two parents	4	English-Hungarian
Family 21	two parents	2	English-Hungarian
Family 22	two parents	5	English-Hungarian
Family 23	two parents	4	English-Hungarian
Family 24	two parents	6, 3	English-Hungarian
Family 25	two parents	5, 3	English-Hungarian

Family 26	two parents	8, 6	English-Hungarian
Family 27	two parents	6, 2	English-Hungarian
Family 28	two parents	14, 12	English-Hungarian
Family 29	two parents	4	English-Hungarian
Family 30	two parents	10, 8, 3	English-Hungarian

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# **Languages, Cultures and Literature**

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# On creating a framework for teaching children's literature in ELTE TÓK's international pre-school programme

Poros, Andrea

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This study discusses pre-school teacher training of an exceptional kind in Hungary while additionally providing an overview of the underlying situation. In the light of current thinking in teacher education with a special focus on teaching literature for undergraduate students, a framework for the children's literature course shall be introduced. The proposed framework takes the course requirements into consideration adapts the course material to the background knowledge and future needs of the English language Pre-School Education Programme students. Such a course had not existed earlier. The operative course documents and requirements had exclusively been written in Hungarian and specifically designed for the Hungarian Pre-School Education Programme students and context.

*Keywords:* teacher training, pre-school, course design, children's literature, international course, interculturality

## Introduction

In 2019, the Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education at ELTE University (Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, henceforth referred to as ELTE TÓK), in Budapest, Hungary implemented a new Pre-School Education Programme for international students from all around the world. Given the different backgrounds of the students in terms of education and previous knowledge, the available Hungary- and Hungarian language-oriented course descriptions put the educator into a rather difficult but at the same time challenging situation: both a solution and a match had to be found to support teacher education and prepare students to be able to conduct literature sessions in the kindergarten classroom.

A vast amount of literature has been written recently focusing on and analysing teacher training and teacher development. An abundance of studies examines the theory of teacher training and teacher development in various circumstances. However, there still seems to be uncertainty in this field of study. There appear to be too many approaches and aims which all consider themselves to be the only right way. The implementation of the various teacher training programmes especially designed for better results are brought forth and theory does not seem to be applied as our knowledge concerning how learning teaching takes place is rather limited.

Still, practising teacher educators should have an understanding of the learning teaching process in order to be able to assist and help their trainees to embark on their never-ending learning teaching 'journey' thus enabling them to design fitting courses for the trainees and at the same time fulfil the requirements of the courses. Trainers cannot prepare their students for every single aspect since all teaching situations are different and unique, but some basic underlying issues, useful tips, acting as a role model and the trainers' own experience can be conveyed.

An ideal training programme should provide trainees with subject knowledge – which builds a firm foundation for teaching – and also survival strategies, i.e. methodology, which are thought provoking and can (and should) ideally be not only adjusted, but constantly improved by the trainees while always keeping their own teaching situations and circumstances in mind. A training programme (and especially the specific courses) should reflect the above view: however, this is only the beginning. The more teachers teach, the more aware they become of the fact that teaching, in reality, is a maze from which the exit appears elusive. As such, it is also true that teaching provides such a complex profession that there will never be end of learning teaching. There are so many tools of the trade to be mastered that one's lifetime does not seem to be enough for it only some parts can be learned during one's training, the rest comes in and with practice.

This paper outlines the *Children's Literature and Its Methodology I* course taught at ELTE TÓK. The aim of the course is to improve and facilitate learning teaching as well as provide both theoretical and practical subject knowledge for the future careers of trainees who possess international backgrounds and will teach in pre-schools all around the world.

In the first section of the paper, the scene shall be set by giving a brief overview of the kindergarten teacher training programme with a focus on the course, *Children's Literature and Its Methodology*. In the second section, teaching literature for undergraduate students and its relevance to the Hungarian context shall be examined with a view to its practical application in the proposed children's literature course. In the third section, the rationale behind the course and the training materials together with some thoughts and ideas for developing a framework for the course will be compiled. It is intended that the framework will essentially be practical so as to meet the content requirements of the university, the pre-school classroom conditions, and the expectations of the trainees. Last, the course's implications shall be elaborated upon and a conclusion drawn.

### **Pre-service pre-school teacher-training in Hungary**

This section gives a brief overview of pre-service pre-school teacher-training in Hungary with a special focus on the kindergarten teacher training programme specialising in bilingual kindergarten education. It also focuses on areas which are important to consider when designing the Children's Literature and Its Methodology course which spans over three semesters for the international group of students.

## The Hungarian context

In Hungary, children go to kindergarten after they have turned three and continue on to school around the age of six. However, going to school may come later and slight differences may occur based upon when a child becomes mature enough for school. Children must have turned six before starting school. Kindergarten teachers in Hungary are trained at universities or colleges offering Pre-School Education Programmes, which are – at the moment – available at thirteen different higher education institutions in the country.

Pre-School teacher training programmes last for three years and total six semesters. During their training the students study various modules in pedagogy, psychology, education, music and its methodology, native language and its methodology, children's literature and its methodology, mathematics and its methodology, environmental studies and its methodology, physical education and its methodology, and, last but not least, visual skills and its methodology. Their training also has a practical part starting from the very first semester (see detailed plan of the training in Appendix 1). The programme document describes exactly what courses/modules and how many credits (altogether 180 credits) students need to accomplish throughout their studies to obtain a BA degree in pre-school education. In the document it is also stated that the mandatory courses taken as a part of the B.A. programme are combined with elective specialisation courses. These specialisation courses allow students to explore a chosen area in more depth. These specialisations vary from institution to institution in Hungary. In this paper the specialisations offered at ELTE TÓK shall be described.

### Pre-school education programmes at ELTE TÓK

In the previous section, the structure of pre-school education programmes in Hungary was briefly discussed. Now let us turn our attention to the specialisations offered at ELTE TÓK. The Faculty provides specialisations within its Pre-School Education Programmes, such as *'Aiding Pre-School-School Transition'*, *'Education of Young Children'*, *'Education for Sustainability'*, *'Diversity and Acceptance in Pre-School'* or *'Complex Motor Skills Development'*. As was mentioned before, this encompasses access to a special training within the main programme that is, all in all, worth twenty-four credits. Among the different specialisations we also find the *English-Hungarian Bilingual Specialisation*. This bilingual pre-school education specialisation is an option exclusively taught at ELTE TÓK. The specialisation was implemented in 2006 and can be studied in either full-time or long-distance courses.

ELTE TÓK offers two Pre-School Education Programmes differing in one salient detail: one programme in which the language of instruction is Hungarian (except for the English specialist courses) and one where the language of instruction is entirely English welcoming students from all over the world (henceforth referred to as the international programme).

Students opting for the Hungarian-English bilingual specialisation are selected from those applicants who have already been admitted to the Faculty's



Pre-School Education Programme at ELTE TÓK. These students are filtered based on their language merits. If they do not fulfil the requirements, they can still opt for other specialisations. It is the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature who organises both the oral and the written admission tests. Thus, only the best English-speaking students are accepted to the Hungarian-English Bilingual programme. According to the six reference levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages<sup>1</sup>, the students who are granted a place in the bilingual specialisation are required to speak English at least at a B2 level. Students are therefore at an upper-intermediate level and are confident speakers of English. The international group students undertaking the Pre-School Education Programme entirely in English also take an entrance examination and are screened on the basis of their English language skills and completed secondary school studies, however this process takes place before they are admitted to the Faculty. After having been accepted to the programme for the international group students, the bilingual specialisation is the only option for them concerning specialisations.

The students either opting for the Hungarian-English Bilingual Specialisation or starting the Bilingual Education Specialisation in the case of the international group both attend the same courses and study the following three modules:

1. *'English-Language Preparation for Bilingual Education Module'*
2. *'The Theory and Practice of Bilingual Education Module'*
3. *'The Methodology of Bilingual Preschool Education Module'*

(See Appendix 1 for the Hungarian-English Bilingual Specialisation and Appendix 2 for the Bilingual Education Specialisation). The English bilingual training starts in the first semester with language development ('English-Language Preparation for Bilingual Education Module') grounding training and practice ('The Theory and Practice of Bilingual Education Module'). Only after having gained basic knowledge in bilingualism and improvement in their English skills is the methodology component introduced ('The Methodology of Bilingual Preschool Education Module'). The bilingual arts (1x45) and PE (1x45 min) courses in the fourth semester comprise two lessons (2x45 min) per week and in the fifth semester include four lessons (2x90 min) of science (1x90 min) and music (1x90 min) per week.

The international programme was implemented in 2019 and in 2020 September a second group commenced the programme. Beginning in autumn 2021, the Faculty also offers an international long-distance course. (Such courses already exist in the programme for which the language of instruction is Hungarian). Recruitment has already begun for the 2021/2022 academic year.

In this part of the paper specific modules of the Kindergarten Education Programmes have been discussed with a special focus on the bilingual specialisation only offered at ELTE TÓK.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/level-descriptions>

## 2019 September: Redesigning the Children's Literature Course

In September 2019, as was mentioned earlier, the international students commenced their Pre-School Education Programme. The Department of Foreign Languages and Literature was given the opportunity to first teach the *Native Language Children's Literature and Its Methodology I* course as a part of the international programme. The module is part of the mandatory training that students undertake. The opportunity was given because the educators at the department had already had both experience in teaching children's literature in English and the necessary qualifications.

It was clear from the very first lesson that the course description provided in Hungarian would not work with the international group. Some alterations in the course content needed to be done to suit both the general requirements of ELTE TÓK and the students' background knowledge and future needs alike, i.e., to enable them to integrate theory and practice in their future kindergarten teacher career.

Before redesigning the course an attempt to review current thinking in teaching literature with a special focus on teaching literature for undergraduate students had to be made in order to incorporate the knowledge gained into the redesigning process of the new course.

### Current thinking in teaching children's literature

This section reviews current thinking in teaching children's literature and therefore shall focus on areas which are important to weigh when redesigning the children's literature course. In the recent years the quality of education worldwide has been put under a magnifying glass and evaluated. This means not only governmental tests or competitions in different subjects where representatives of several countries match their strength in their subject knowledge, but also students' evaluations of university courses at the end of the semesters. This immediately focuses attention on the methods used and consequently on the mediators of the knowledge: teachers. Last but not least, these evaluations focus attention on the training they have undergone. In 1987, Calderhead added an important factor to the description of teacher training when he said that concern had been expressed about the adequacy of the teachers' preparation for the classroom and for their ongoing development. This means that not only the training itself is crucial, but continuously updating and developing our teaching also plays an important role in the educational process.

Before having a thorough look at current thinking in teaching children's literature the term itself needs to be defined. Regarding children's literature, there appear to be an abundance of definitions (Hunt, 1994; Harris & Leung, 2006; Nodelman, 2008; Pearson, 2011; Ewers Grenby & Immel, 2013) in the research literature. A rather narrow definition defines children's literature as a collection of books written, read by children or about children. Different authors describe what children's literature is according to how broadly the term

is perceived by them, and what different theoretical position the particular authors take. Children's literature, however, appears to be far more than books simply being written for or about children. In their definition, Glazer (1986) and Schneider (2016) add that nobody would deny that books for children only comprising illustrations are also pieces of children's literature (e.g., Raymond Briggs' *The Snowman*). The term children's literature undoubtedly comprises a good range of genres such as poems, nursery rhymes, chants, jingles, tongue-twisters, stories, fairy tales, folktales, etc. This range also contains a lot of different kinds of books concerning their format from toy and board books, through wordless picture books to picture books, etc (Glazer, 1986). Hunt (1994) gives a very detailed introduction to the different perceptions of the term. Ewers (2012) states that his work does not intend to discuss the term itself but the way it is investigated in order to be able to define the term, children's literature. Ewers finally comes to the conclusion that children's literature is literature suitable for children and young people (Ewers, 2012, p. 139), but this is only one aspect of this multifaceted term. Hunt (1994), Pearson (2011), and Grenby & Immel (2013) suggest that children's literature should be defined by its intended audience. However neither childhood nor the child is easy to define (Grenby & Immel, 2013, p. xiii). Harris and Leung (2006) take a different position and approach the question from the language teachers' point of view and give a definition of children's literature in the English primary classroom as what texts to use for shaping and sharing experiences and 'to create vital patterns of language without any prior intent to control vocabulary or grammar structures' (2006, p. 74).

At the Faculty children's literature is taught in two senses. Firstly, as native language, secondly as English children's literature where the basic aims appear to be the same but in the case of English children's literature an additional focus is added: it has to aid second language acquisition as well, that is vocabulary, pronunciation and language development beyond the main aims of using literary pieces such as children's psychological, cognitive, social and language development, with the ultimate aim to support children to become readers. For our purposes a definition is needed that is broad enough to comprise all the elements. For this reason, I turned to Schneider (2016, p. 24) as a starting point, who defines children's literature as a 'collection of texts that are specifically written and/or illustrated for and/or about youth as well as texts that are not specifically written and/or illustrated for and/or about youth but which youth choose to read, view, and/or write. Adults are welcome to read children's literature too-many do.' To this definition I would also add that, besides reading, viewing and/or writing they may also choose listening to and telling or chanting various genres of children's literature to develop socially, psychologically cognitively, to improve their language skills both native and second language with the underlying aim to later become readers. To sum it up, children's literature appears to be a complex term and a multifaceted entity which comprises different genres, illustrations, the audience and actions taken.

## Teaching literature

It is a widely shared opinion that encountering children's literature in early childhood is inevitable and has several advantages on the development of children. Besides building bonds between the parent(s) and the child(ren), improving children's imagination and creativity, developing problem solving skills, it has several therapeutic values as well (Boldizsár, 2019, p. 318–319). With the help of rhymes, chants, jingles, lullabies and tales, children can also learn a lot about their mother tongue. Children's first encounters are with songs, rhymes and simple poems which are short, and complex texts (Kovács & Trentinné Benkő, 2008, p. 117) with the help of which they are introduced to rhymes and rhyming words and can play with and manipulate the language. Later, while listening to tales' expressions, proverbs can be acquired developing their vocabulary in consequence of which enabling them to express feelings, emotions, and their thoughts in a better, more sophisticated way. When going to kindergarten children all get exposed to children's literature in forms of rhymes, songs, poems and to the different types of stories from fables, fairy tales to folk tales etc. with the help of which their knowledge of their mother tongue besides various cognitive skills will develop.

During the learning teaching process, students not only study the different genres of children's literature, but also the methodology of how to approach children's literary texts in the kindergarten and assist children in becoming readers. According to the Faculty documents, the subject content of the *Children's Literature and Its Methodology* Module should include rhymes, jingles, children's poems, folk tales, fairy tales, picture books, children's stories, and authors of the literary pieces Hungarian and international (mostly European) alike. The aims of the three courses are to make students aware of the contribution of children's literature to educational aims and also to equip students with the necessary methodology needed for both designing and implementing session plans in the kindergarten classroom. There are, however, no procedures stated of how to deliver the course in the faculty documents. There are two lessons per week: one lecture and one seminar. The lecturer-educator decided to deliver the course in an interactive, workshop-like form.

With the knowledge gained, let us turn our attention to the implementation of the children's literature and its methodology course for the international group.

### ***The Children's Literature and Its Methodology Course***

On implementing the international Pre-School Education Programme – to which students from all over the world who have graduated from secondary school and speak English at least at a B2 level are welcome – some organisational issues and questions regarding the content of the course were faced.

In the first international group starting their course in September 2019, there are seventeen students: five Chinese, one Ukrainian, one Persian, one who is half Hungarian and half Italian, and nine students of Hungarian background.

One student with Hungarian background was brought up in Luxembourg, thus did not go through the Hungarian education system. We can state that nearly half of the group had a different background concerning their studies and knowledge, especially knowledge in literature. The general training course descriptions for the *Children's Literature and Its Methodology* courses work perfectly well in a programme intended for Hungarian students. The students all share common knowledge not only of kindergarten, elementary school but of secondary school literature studies where there is substantial focus on literary terms and concepts. Students have heard and read more or less the same pieces of literature and have been asked to perform literary analyses, which mean examining all the parts of a novel, play, or poem, such as characters, setting, tone or message and to see how the author uses these elements to create a certain effect on the reader. We can conclude that the Hungarian-background students come to the Faculty with a well-founded and shared knowledge, that is, a common ground that the *Children's Literature and Its Methodology* course can start off from.

In the very first lesson it became clear that the international group could not by all means be treated the same as an average homogeneous, Hungarian group. The course had to be replanned, reconstructed, and a totally new approach had to be adopted based on understanding, empathy, and patience. First of all, steps needed to be taken to explore what the international students had brought with them to the course: a common ground, from where the course could be started had to be established. Basic literary terms and the expressions required to be able to talk about literature needed to be taught. The core curriculum (see Appendix 1) clearly shows that the children's literature module is divided into three courses in the general part of their training as opposed to the bilingual module where only two semesters are devoted to bilingual English children's literature. By the end of the general children's literature course, students are expected to have a well-grounded knowledge of children's literature genres, the culture of childhood, and the aesthetic features of the language of literature. They also learn the basics of the psychology of children's literature interest and learn the methodology of how to keep children's curiosity alive by raising attention, the sustenance of attention, and motivation. Furthermore, they learn the connection between children's literature education, language and communication and cognitive development, and, last, but not least, the methodology of how to help children become readers. By the end of the module they are to have obtained all the methodology and skills necessary to plan children's literature sessions in the kindergarten, formulate the aims of the activities, and adapt them to age of the children. During the courses, a wide range of genres from poems, nursery rhymes, chants, jingles, fairy tales, folk tales, and tales are discussed and as stated in the Hungarian requirements by the end of the first semester twenty poems, rhymes and stories are to be learnt by heart.

Bearing in mind all the background information and the requirements from the side of the Faculty and the cognition, the culture, and circumstances (henceforth referred to as CCC) from the side of the students the *Children's*

*Literature and Its Methodology I* course had to be redesigned and adapted to make the match. The premises of the educator's planning were the following:

1. The material and the requirements of the module are officially stated: the international group students are to study exactly the same modules of the so-called mandatory training modules as the Hungarian students;
2. The Hungarian and Hungarian-related materials found in the previous course descriptions of the Children's Literature Modules for Hungarian students can only be used if the literary pieces stated have an English translation/ or translation in the mother tongue of all the students in the group. In our case four additional languages (Ukrainian, Chinese, Italian, and Persian).
3. At home these students would study children's literature and its methodology in their mother tongue;
4. The studies at home to some extent would be mother tongue-related in their content;
5. The students are young adults who are far away from their homes, full of worries and anxiety;
6. As an educator the lecturer also serves a mission. A mission to transmit Hungarian culture, in this case Hungarian children's literature despite the difficulties of not having too many children's literary works translated into English. The training of the students takes place in Hungary, thus Hungary-related topics need to be discussed as well;
7. The course was to be delivered in an interactive and workshop-like form. Yet another aim was to provide experiential learning situations for the students in the lessons and for the educator to provide a model of how to deal with literary pieces in the kindergarten;

When designing their course, the lecturer had the seven premises listed above in mind, which worked as the framework of the course. First of all, the main question was what steps were to be taken to fulfil the requirements of the course designed and used by the Department of Hungarian Language and Literature in the case of students from so many different backgrounds. Also, if the students were to study this course in their homeland, they would most probably do this in their mother tongue. For that reason, during the preparatory stage (when basic concepts and literary terms were discussed) students were also asked to compile a glossary with the English literary expressions, a definition in English plus a mother-tongue equivalent for the terms. At this stage of their studies, mother-tongue support was necessary to relieve anxiety and frustration of not knowing how to express themselves in the world of children's literature. By using this method, a firm language foundation was built up for the literature course. A starting point from where the course could commence as Swales describes discourse community: 'a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursal expertise' (Swales, 1990).

One must not forget that by being admitted to ELTE TÓK or any university, students enter a new discourse community, the language of which they need to learn. This not only refers to the language of literature courses, but to that used in all subjects. This takes time and the fact must not be forgotten that

the international students are not only entering a new discourse community, but they are doing it in a foreign language. Instructors need to be patient, understanding, and provide a good deal of support. This is also true in the case of the students who are Hungarian for whom a programme of this type is also very difficult as they face hardships in studying all the subjects in English at a university level. However, it is not only the discourse community the students have to enter, there is the anxiety and worry factor as well. They are very young, in most of the cases it is their first time that they are a long way away from their families and not only learning teaching, but also learning everyday survival strategies as well. An amicable atmosphere needed to be created based upon empathy and understanding to help them get through this beginning period. This view is supported by Tomlinson when writing about what a teacher sees in class is a bare tip of what is really there: Students have their own background story and life: 'I really understand for the first time that if I think I'm preparing lessons for the faces in front of me. I'm making a costly mistake. My students live beneath the surface, and I have to do whatever I can to see beneath that surface so I am prepared to reach them where they live' (Tomlinson, 2017–2018, p. 89). The further the students progressed in the literature course, the more their anxiety was relieved.

Since we are talking about the mandatory training of their kindergarten education programme which was designed by the Department of Hungarian Language and Literature, a significant part of the course focuses mainly on mother tongue-related literature, i.e., Hungarian children's literature in our case. A lot of material for the international literary content of the course, that is, authors and their pieces of work, can be found in English which was a great help.

The literary texts, writers, poets in the previously taught Hungary-related children's literature courses could only be transferred to this course if translated into English or into all the languages of the students. The lecturer decided to rely merely on the material found in English. In addition, the educator also finds it very important to transmit Hungarian culture since the course takes place in Hungary and this cultural transfer can be done with the help of children's literature. There appear to be a good number of enthusiastic bilingual kindergarten and primary school teachers in Hungary who have translated an abundance of rhymes from Hungarian to English, the translation of which make them citable as well<sup>2</sup>, or English rhymes to Hungarian. However, there is a collection of Hungarian songs and rhymes written and compiled by Mama Lisa by the title *Hungarian Kids Songs & Rhymes Ebook*. It is a beautiful collection of Hungarian children's rhymes and songs translated into English. Sadly, they can neither be sung or cited in English, but is a very useful and beautiful piece of material. Children's poems by Hungarian well-known authors can also be tracked on the Internet<sup>3</sup>, like the famous Brambleberry by Weöres Sándor, some poems by Ágnes Nemes

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rhymetime.hu/our-favorite-hungarian-rhymes-in-english-1/>  
<https://www.rhymetime.hu/our-favorite-hungarian-rhymes-in-english-2/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.magyarulbabelben.net/works/hu/We%C3%B6res\\_S%C3%A1ndor-1913/Galagonya/en/24302-The\\_brambleberry](https://www.magyarulbabelben.net/works/hu/We%C3%B6res_S%C3%A1ndor-1913/Galagonya/en/24302-The_brambleberry)

Nagy or Károly Tamkó Sirató<sup>4</sup>, who are highly recommended authors in the course description designed by the Department of Hungarian Language and Literature. With the help of the description and the available materials an insight into Hungarian children's literature authors, their literary works and children's poetry could also be presented. However, the focus of the course was children's literature of all kinds.

Based on the fact that the international students would have studied the course in their mother tongue at home in their home countries, it was also assumed that their course contents would have comprised, to some extent, mother tongue-related children's literature, that is, learning about all the poems, stories, nursery rhymes, etc. in their own language. To find the match, the educator (while providing both theory and practice elements) came to the conclusion that some time had to be devoted to Persian, Ukrainian, and Chinese traditional and contemporary children's literary pieces and authors. To mention some children's literature writers in a list that is by no means complete who were discussed in the course: the children's book authors writing in Farsi, Samad Behrangi, Nazanin Mirsadeghi, and Mahmud Kianush, regarded as the founder of children's poetry in Iran, were a part of the course. Vsevolod Nestayko, a modern Ukrainian children's writer who is considered the country's best-known and best loved Ukrainian children's literature writer, 'joined' the course as well. From the Chinese children's literature authors some works by Luo Binwang (駱賓王 or 骆宾王) and Li Bai (太白) were examined. As one of the requirements, students had to compile a file with fifty mother-tongue poems, jingles, lullabies, etc. to be learned exclusively in their mother tongue.

A basic foundation of knowledge of children's literature (genres, authors, etc.) was combined with an introduction to very young learner methodology of how to deal with poems, jingles, lullabies, rhymes, i.e. children's poetry in the kindergarten classroom. (The methodology of using stories in the kindergarten is the content of the following children's literature course). The course was carried out in an interactive, workshop-like way where students could do presentations on compulsory readings in the research literature and the lives of authors in forms of PPT presentations. They were also asked to provide quizzes for the presentations to test their peers' competencies in the readings. After having been provided with several practical presentations of how to lead children's literature sessions in the kindergarten, the trainees were asked to lead micro-teaching sessions where they taught rhymes to their peers with all the necessary stages, visuals and instructions needed. With the help of experiential learning, the students underwent the lecturer-trainer promoted the process of learning and also learning teaching.

One of the final requirements was also to create a children's literature poster (displayed in the methodology classroom at the Faculty) where the background, the history of a mother-tongue nursery rhymes, the stages of how to present them and use them with kindergarten children, and an idea of an art activity closely related to the nursery rhyme with all the stages and instructions. The

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.magyarulbabelben.net/works/hu/Tamk%C3%B3\\_Sirat%C3%B3\\_K%C3%A1roly-1905/Vir%C3%A1g%C3%A9nek/en/23812-Love\\_Song](https://www.magyarulbabelben.net/works/hu/Tamk%C3%B3_Sirat%C3%B3_K%C3%A1roly-1905/Vir%C3%A1g%C3%A9nek/en/23812-Love_Song)



piece of art accompanying the nursery rhyme had to be made and the poster presented in front of the class. At the end of the course, before the examination, as a revision of the course, a group poster (see Appendix 4) had to be created in groups of four (three groups of four and one group of five) during the last lesson based on all the material covered in the course. The key words, terms, concepts, and some pictures related to the course content were provided by the lecturer. The students were asked to add their own thoughts and ideas to synthesise everything learnt and formulate a general message of the course. By completing the *Children's Literature and Its Methodology I* course the students took one step in learning teaching and the learning continuum.

### Conclusion

When introducing the International Kindergarten Education Programme, the educator teaching on the programme had to face not only the fact that courses are entirely taught in English, a common language for all the students enrolled on the course, but also the different backgrounds, different educational systems, and most of all, the different knowledge of literature the students had brought to class. The factors of CCC therefore had a large impact on the redesigning of the course. The courses originally designed for the Hungarian students needed to be reconstructed and adapted to the faculty requirements, the CCC and the needs of the students as the original course descriptions could not be used. With the help of the course, a basic foundation for using children's literature literary pieces in kindergarten were laid. By working on different literary texts, students' language skills had also been improved, thus two of the elements of the content knowledge needed for a bilingual kindergarten career were improved.

Due to limited space, the background of '*Children's Literature and Its Methodology 1*' course of the international pre-service kindergarten education programme has barely been presented. Yet, even this short paper has managed to highlight its complex nature and the hardships faced when re-designing the children's literature course. After having taught the course, it seems useful to draw a conclusion and make some recommendations. Unfortunately, before the course there were no inter-departmental meetings during which the experience of previous children's literature courses held as a part of the mandatory training could have been shared, the details carefully worked out and the content of the course agreed upon. The students opting for the bilingual specialisation have a total of five semesters of children's literature, with three held during their mandatory training and two in their bilingual modules. In the future the five courses could be redesigned for the needs of the international courses and the material adjusted. Nevertheless, collaboration between the two departments would be needed to design a logically constructed, five-semester-long, spiral curriculum (Drew, 2019) in which key concepts are presented repeatedly, but with deepening layers of complexity.

As a further recommendation, it would also be desirable to spend the whole first semester (of the six) on improving academic skills and the students' language skills

in order to relieve anxiety and prepare them for studying the programme entirely in English. This could be done by rescheduling those courses which improve their English language skills and introducing academic skills as a new module.

To conclude, apart from the CCC and the related hardships, the course appeared to be successful based on the feedback received from the students. They liked the *Children's Literature and Its Methodology I* course and enjoyed the syllabus. The students also found the content relevant and useful for their future pre-school teaching career. However, this course was only the first of the five children's literature courses they are to study, and the course only allowed them to engage with the subject matter to a minimal degree. In conclusion, it must have been the educational content, the subject matter, and its cross-international, intercultural features that spoke to all nationalities in the group that engendered the relative success of the course.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

[https://www.tok.elte.hu/dstore/document/1434/NOK\\_taj\\_2020.pdf](https://www.tok.elte.hu/dstore/document/1434/NOK_taj_2020.pdf)

### Appendix 2

[https://www.tok.elte.hu/dstore/document/457/stipendium\\_programme\\_structure.pdf](https://www.tok.elte.hu/dstore/document/457/stipendium_programme_structure.pdf)

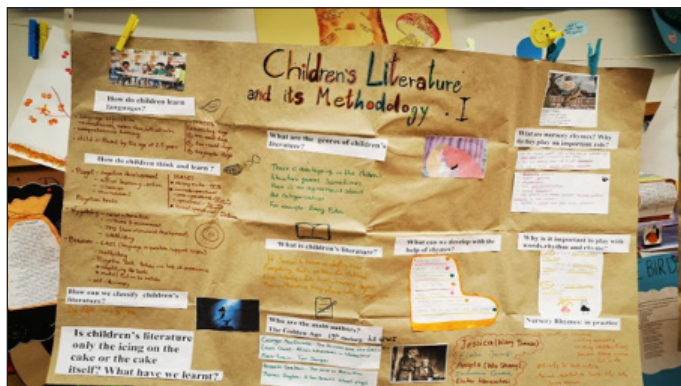
### Appendix 3

Students' Posters (A, B, C, D)

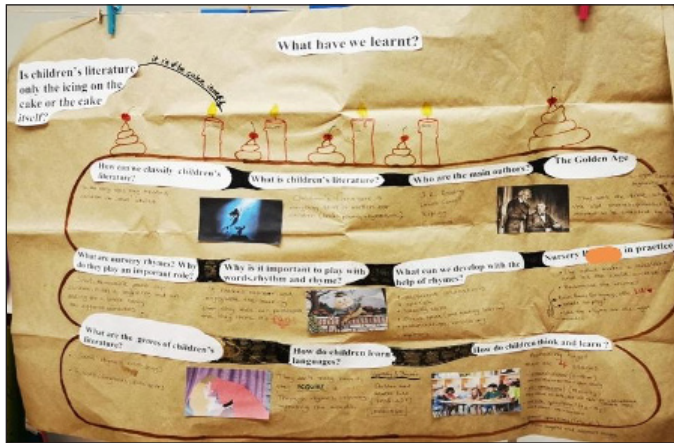
A



B



C



D





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# Project-based language learning through folk and fairy tales

## The story of a tale project before and during the pandemic

Bethlenfalvyné Streitmann, Ágnes

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Project-based learning is one of the most effective ways to help students acquire the four key competencies of twenty-first-century education: creativity, critical thinking, effective communication, and collaboration. Launched by Apor Vilmos Catholic College in 2015 in cooperation with the University of Winchester, *The Tale Project* is based on a ‘four Cs’ foundation. The project method inspires our students’ creativity and develops their critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills while encouraging them to learn and work effectively as part of a group. Developing foreign language competencies, pedagogical, and art competencies also belongs to the emphasised objectives for cooperation between the two institutions. The project covers the content area of *Intercultural Dialogue through Folktale Traditions*, and in each academic year, English and Hungarian students work on different stories and tale-cycles. The 2019/20 academic year was a turning point in the history of the project. Since the Covid-19 lockdown in March, 2020, we have been obliged to explore and apply the new innovative methods offered by online education, virtual exchange, and alternative ways of communication.

*Keywords:* intercultural dialogue, folktale traditions, project-based learning, storytelling, early foreign language development

### Beginnings

Over the past few decades, talent support and research has become one of the most crucial educational issues in Hungary. Teachers have a great responsibility and many tasks in promoting talent and developing the potential possessed by their students. As is known, discovering resources in young people is not enough: talent fostering must be intertwined with improving different skills and competences such as communication and presentation skills, social and emotional competences, self-monitoring skills, and many others. Developing intercultural competence, one of the so-called key competences, is also essential.

While there are skills and competences there are also several ways to develop these in order to promote talent successfully. One such way is to



bring together the students of two teacher training institutes from different countries. Students can work together to collaborate in research, learn about one another's cultures, share their knowledge, and, finally, meet in person when visiting each other's institutions. This is exactly what two teacher training institutes, The University of Winchester and Apor Vilmos Catholic University, a member of the National Talent Support Network, decided to do by launching a joint project.

The idea was born at an international conference held in 2015. Jonathan Rooke and Agnes Streitmann, two lecturers from different institutions but with a shared enthusiasm for children's literature, realised that despite studying in two different European countries, some of the tales the students analysed were the same. Some commonality could clearly be found in the approaches and analytical tools. The question arose of whether students from Hungary and England study folk and fairy tales together: could a selection of folk and fairy tales be made that would enable each class of students to study and compare at their respective institutions? What would students discover about how the same folk and fairy tales were understood while cultural differences enriched a variety of ways of representing the stories? How would English and Hungarian students teach the same tales to young children in school? As an initial step, appropriate tales were selected and a project plan was outlined. An art teacher, Andrea Székely from AVCC, was also invited to participate, and an international research project was born covering the content area of 'Intercultural Dialogue through Folktale Traditions'.

### **Intercultural dialogue through tales of different cultures**

Folktales represent a literary genre that abounds with all kinds of values and addresses commonly shared psychological, moral, and cultural issues in a delightful imaginative way. Tales offer solutions and suggestions regarding how to 'grow safely into maturity...they confront the child squarely with basic human predicaments' (Bettelheim, 1989, p. 8), and assert that, by struggling courageously, obstacles can be overcome. Furthermore, folktales both address, express, and satisfy the basic needs of the human psyche. Not only do they serve as an outlet for expressing the child's formless anxieties or violent fantasies, they also make children aware that people all around the world share the same universal feelings such as love and hate, envy and pride, sorrow and joy.

In folktales, important existential issues and conflicts are conveyed in a brief and pointed way that enables children to grasp the meaning of these questions in their most essential form. Several scholars argue that the universal, regular, recurrent themes found in folktales originate from the fact that they are rooted in rituals of tribal cultures that addressed significant moments of transition in human life. These moments of transition concern such crucial issues as birth, becoming a young adult, courtship, love, marriage, giving birth, aging and death, and are depicted in a symbolic form. The famous folklorist, Arnold van Gennep, depicts these moments of transition as rites of passage and argues that these transitions of human life have the same structure all around the

world: separation – transition – incorporation. (Van Gennep, 1999). These moments of transition are usually accompanied by serious existential anxieties; folktales, which can be considered ‘encoded representations’ of these tribal rituals, also offer solutions and suggestions for how to deal with the problems accompanying these moments of transitions (Van Gennep, 1999, p. 102).

If we consider only the psychological and anthropological aspects of folktales mentioned above, we can say that they represent universal issues that do not relate to time and place. Folktales express universal feelings and address basic human themes. Although this is true, the opposite can also be stated. As Andrew Teverson asserts, ‘fairy tales like myths and legends, take different forms at different times, and the forms they take reflect the places in which they have settled, and the particular historical moments in which they have been recorded, interpreted and preserved. Fairy tale is not universal or timeless; neither is it innocent of history and politics. On the contrary, it speaks powerfully of the times in which it has been told’ (Teverson, 2013, p. 7).

In addition, a folktale speaks powerfully of the places in which it has been told. For example, due to the commercial activities of medieval merchants in the Mediterranean region, tales from the East blended into the European tradition, resulting in affinities between Oriental and European tales. Yet significant differences also exist between these two traditions. Despite ‘crosscultural contamination’ (Zipes, 2001, p. 845), we can definitely distinguish the typical motifs, meanings, plots, characters, and settings of European folk tales from those of Oriental ones. As Ildikó Boldizsár, a well-known Hungarian folklore scholar and editor of best-selling fairy-tale anthologies, asserts that Arabian, Persian, Kashmir, Egyptian, Japanese, Chinese and Hindu tales are more pointedly educational compared to their European counterparts. Their moral message is more exact and offers wise pieces of advice (Boldizsár, 2015). It can therefore be concluded that folktales are universal and timeless, but also historically bound. Tales share the same universal, traditional values and are simultaneously specific, historically, and culturally bound. They convey common truths and values and also represent different kinds of cultural heritage, customs, and traditions. These factors mean that folk and fairy tales of different nations and cultures can be effective ways of promoting intercultural dialogue.

Educational institutions have a great responsibility in familiarising students with their own tradition and culture. It is essential that they make young people ‘aware of their own roots and provide points of reference which allow them to define their own personal place in the world’ (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2013, p. 22). The first reason for this is because they should respect ‘the human person who seeks the truth of his or her own being’; secondly, self-awareness, or an awareness of one’s own tradition and culture, can promote the process of recognising the equivalent dignity of a person from a different culture and faith (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2013, p. 22). Pedagogical institutions are called upon to encourage their students to learn about and respect other people’s culture and faith and, on the basis of this knowledge, start a dialogue with individuals from different cultural heritage backgrounds. These values inspired the University of Winchester and Apor

Vilmos Catholic University to launch the tale project to compare and share different folk tale traditions and explore associated pedagogy.

### **Project objectives**

One of the main goals of the project is to offer participating students the opportunity to gain international experience by meeting and pursuing project activities together with students from the partner institution. The project also emphasises the intercultural aspects of folk tale tradition by means of students investigating similarities and differences. Beyond research and knowledge exchange, students are further encouraged to explore folk tale traditions as rich contents for expressing their thoughts, ideas, and feelings concerning human relationships, social changes, and the connection between the past and present. By collaborating with primary schools from each country, the project makes it possible for students to compare diverse pedagogical practices. By inviting different cultural institutions and organizations to participate – for example Kabóca Puppet Theatre in Veszprém, the Budapest Story Museum and the Animation Film Studio of Kecskemét on AVCC's part – the project offers a truly versatile project experience.

For Hungarian students, the project also offers the possibility to develop their English language skills through offering the benefits of integrating language development with content learning. Studying folk tale traditions in English provides the students with a meaningful context and a cognitively engaging and demanding content that inspires students to enhance their level of English proficiency. Students can become aware of the versatility of using the English language as a tool during the creative process facilitated by the project.

Beyond developing English language competence and promoting linguistic confidence, students are encouraged to develop their pedagogical skills by doing pedagogical work. They acquire the innovative pedagogical approaches related to early childhood education which they can use in a school context and gain experience in applying different storytelling techniques, puppetry, and drama activities in teaching English as a foreign language to young learners. During the project, we make our students aware of the fact that the main aim of early foreign language teaching is to make children enjoy being in the foreign language context: to make them motivated, get them involved, and keep them engaged. Students learn that children at an early age basically explore the world through their senses and the actions and interaction they encounter in meaningful situations. It therefore follows that classroom activities should be play-based, action-centred, and accompanied by a lot of non-verbal communication and repetition.

### **Project work long before the pandemic**

The in-college work at AVCC is based on two talent-fostering optional courses: the Storytelling Course taught by Agnes Streitmann in English, and the Art



Course offered by Andrea Székely (2019) in Hungarian. The storytelling course comprises both textual analysis and the exploration of pedagogical applications aimed at primary school children. It familiarises students with different kinds of storytelling techniques, analysis tools, graphic organisers that support children in understanding the structure of a story and how to organise information and ideas efficiently. During the course, students become acquainted with analytical grids for making comparisons and grouping the motifs, functions, and meanings of tales. They also perform stories using *kamishibai*, prepare story maps, story mountains, story strings, and story dices. They learn how to apply objects like story pebbles or story discs to their pedagogical work with children, how to put together a story sack for a storytelling project activity. Artistic aspects are also emphasised in both institutions. The advantages of integrating storytelling with music by performing stories using musical instruments are also discussed; project activities led by students in English and Hungarian primary schools always include puppetry, drama, and art and craft activities (Streitmann & Székely, 2019; Streitman, et al, 2021).

Students are also encouraged to investigate the ways tales are represented in diverse cultural forms by means of picture books, media adaptations, images, and illustrations. For sharing both research findings, and pedagogical experiences, a project website has been created that contains project activity plans, powerpoint presentations, videos, research papers, film links, and records of pedagogical practice from students of both universities. For online informal communication, students created a closed Facebook page.

In parallel with the English and Hungarian students' cooperation, there is also primary school work. In the autumn term students prepare project activity plans covering the topics agreed upon at the beginning of the academic year, and lead project activities in their home countries. Primary partner schools host the students and assist them in their practical classroom work with children. During these project activities in their home countries, students experiment with ideas for teaching children about folk and fairy tales.

Having refined these ideas, they prepare to share the finalised classroom pedagogical techniques with their partner students during the project weeks held in Winchester and Vác during the spring term. The most significant event of the project in the spring term is this international exchange: Hungarian students travel to Winchester in March while the English students arrive at AVCC in April. During these project weeks, students participate in inspiring and enjoyable thematic programmes and lead project activities at primary schools in Vác and Winchester.

From its inception, the project has aimed at experimenting with new media for communication and research sharing and fusing these new technologies with traditional European storytelling approaches to explore exciting pedagogical opportunities for student teachers and their pupils in the classroom. The use of tablet technology, e.g., Apple iPads, has become a significant part of both the English and the Hungarian students' learning experience. They explore the possibilities of using the app I Can Animate to enable children to script and make digital puppet shows based on the fairy and folk tales.

Pedagogical approaches that are reliant upon different ways of adapting Hungarian folk tales have become relevant and valuable sites for knowledge exchange. The different folk tales of the imaginative cartoon series entitled *Hungarian Folk Tales*, an adaptation that represents the rich tradition of Hungarian animation, have also been welcomed by the English students. Hungarian filmstrips comprise another interesting way to adapt folk tales in Hungary. Once popular in the 1960s and 70s, the beginning of the new millennium has seen a revival in Hungarian filmstrips that are once more available in bookshops; several can also be found in English. Given that it does not exist in England, Hungary's vibrant tradition in puppetry is also of great interest to Winchester students.

### **Changing times: traditional and digital storytelling techniques in early foreign language teaching<sup>1</sup>**

Tales belonging to the same folk tale cycle have always been favoured in the project. Students have done research and pedagogical work on tales of animal bridegroom fairy-tale cycle, on different *Jack and the Beanstalk* variants, on *The Gingerbread Man* and other tales belonging to the *Fleeing Pancake* type of tale. One of the most popular and successful topics with both the students and the school children has been the *Cinderella cycle*, which we worked on in the 2017/18 academic year. As a fairy tale, *Cinderella* offers various possibilities of repetition through recurring thematic and language elements, and we were lucky enough to find an absolutely appropriate script for our purposes in Sarah Phillips' wonderful book entitled, *Drama with Children*. (Phillips, 2010). The script is suitable for children still at an elementary level and whose active use of English is very limited. The dialogues contain several simple phrases and sentences from everyday life that are repeated frequently.

In the autumn semester, students dramatised the tale in the form of a hand puppet performance relying basically on Sarah Phillips' script (2010), which was slightly simplified, shortened, and adapted to the style of the play. In the second one they applied the technique of stop motion digital storytelling and adapted the text to the needs of the animated version.

The basic questions concerning the puppet performance were the following: what kind of puppets should be used in what kind of setting; what kind of drama techniques are best to apply? Although this was a puppet performance, the meaning of the word 'puppet' was extended: although students played the roles with real puppets, they also used different objects and materials that they thought suitable for the play. Finding the right objects and materials to be used as props and scenery, discussing together the appropriate techniques, making decisions: all these activities were part of a creating process that was intended to provide a practical basis for their later pedagogical work. The conventional idea of a hand puppet performance concerning techniques, setting, and

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<sup>1</sup> The edited version of the article was written together with Andrea Székely and published in the Journal of the Comenius Association, 2019. No. 28.

scenery was subverted given that students used their hands the opposite way, their fingers were the arms and legs of the characters. There was no curtain, the tale was performed on a table, a tablecloth represented the floor, and by replacing, changing the various dotted, patterned tablecloths, students were able to manage the changes of the locations in an easy, playful way. The dots indicated the seeds (millet, lentil...), and different patterns represented different locations. These technical solutions all aimed at embedding the performance into the magical atmosphere that forms an integral part of fairy tales.

In the second semester, we applied a different storytelling technique: stop motion animation. Choosing a different method to dramatise the tale offered students a new encounter with the literary material and the opportunity to rethink the topic, script, images, and suitable expressive tools. Applying various dramatic approaches to the same material also highlighted the advantages of using different kinds of pedagogical methods in their future work as teachers. Furthermore, preparing animated films is in line with young people's way of thinking, interest and creativity; we could also rely on their expertise in this field.

Concerning the theme, we emphasised the same two motifs centred around in the puppet performance: the motifs of *dancing* and the *quest for the owner of the shoe*. This time, students were supposed to use different materials, a new logic of the images, and needed to work within a significantly shortened and altered text.

Several other challenges had to be faced: first of all, the appropriate types of materials had to be selected. We watched several animation films, collected ideas, and discussed them. This analysis was followed by experimenting with different kinds of materials, for example, sand, paper, or plasticine. Finally, we decided to use natural materials we could find in the college garden, such as leaves, flowers, branches, or seedpods. The next step was to choose what kind of flowers, leaves, or seedpods could symbolise the different characters in the most expressive way, such as the material to use for representing the shoe, an iconic object in the tale. In order to do this, we held a 'casting session' for selecting the right type of plant for a particular role, analysed the plants, and tried to explore their special features. Then followed an art and craft activity: we had to create the characters from the chosen plants. Every phase of the working process had to be planned in detail and the task had to be accomplished quickly because the plants grew dry or withered and only one portion of the plants could be used at once.

Concerning the text, the logic of filmmaking was only partially followed. As one of the main areas of the whole tale project is investigating different ways of conveying tale texts to young learners of English, we focused on the text. We relied heavily on the basic dramatic text used in the hand-puppet performance, but changed the dramatic concept and the scenes. At the very beginning it became obvious that the original script was too long and needed to be shortened. The question arose of which scenes, locations, characters, etc. should be removed. Would there be pictures that could carry the entire meaning of a scene without any text at all? How is it possible to express the relation between the characters in a visual language? Last but not least, how

can we convey magic or enchanted transformations in a spectacular way? The working process was a continuous rethinking of synchronising images and text. While filming, the text changed a minimum of three times.

Applying two different techniques to tell the story of *Cinderella* had several benefits for the students in view of their study skills. Comparing the two kinds of representational modes, identifying similarities and differences, selecting, grouping, studying motifs, functions and meanings, analysing the working processes were aspects that they became engaged in. Acquiring these learning processes provided them with the experience and knowledge they would then have as a basis for their future careers in education.

Observing, contemplating nature, and integrating nature and technology were also beneficial for students in view of their future pedagogical work. While preparing the stop-motion *Cinderella* version, students became aware of the advantages of using natural objects in digital storytelling. They experienced how it is possible to connect children to nature applying digital technology.

The images of the animated film were inspired by the forms of nature and created from natural objects. Students were looking at plants, identified different species, and some of these objects became characters in the film. While observing nature in search of appropriate 'plant-characters', students were actively learning about nature. Searching for, investigating, experimenting, and identifying: all of these activities naturally open the door to the development of creative thinking while enriching the imagination. If we use natural objects in digital storytelling, film locations can be a garden, a park, the school yard, or a place connected to an excursion. Thus, storytelling, technology, and environmental education can become integrated.

Several aspects of time are worth paying attention to as well. Plants have their own life span: as time passes, they acquire different shapes and forms that we must take into consideration. Yet changes and transformations can also offer new opportunities for integration into the dramatic concept as significant motifs. Furthermore, making an animated film – even a short one – takes a long time and therefore requires patience, care, accuracy, and dedication. These are useful skills and knowledge for both university students and school children. Last but not least, there is the opportunity to disseminate the film among friends, family members.

### **Project work during the pandemic: developing the 4 Cs through tales, drama, and picture books<sup>2</sup>**

Although the project covers the content area of *Intercultural Dialogue through Folktale Traditions* and basically focuses on this theme, every academic year English and Hungarian students work on a new topic based on the four key competencies of twenty-first-century education: creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. Students conduct investigations, share

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<sup>2</sup> The edited version of the article written together with Jonathan Rooke and Andrea Székely and published in the *Journal of the Comenius Association*, 2021. No. 29.

research findings and pedagogical experiences, discuss, and reflect on each other's ideas to achieve a shared goal through collaboration and carry out project activities together to create products connecting to the topic. Project work is designed and built according to Bender's principles of project-based learning (Bender, 2012). In the 2019/20 academic year the project, faced the difficulties posed by the pandemic quarantine restrictions, but successfully overcame these challenges. In September, the initiation phase was marked by establishing the foundation for the project topic, which was dedicated to Developing the 4 Cs via folk and fairy tales by using objects and images. Students were encouraged to identify the topic to be investigated within this framework while bearing in mind that the main questions are: what, why, and for whom?

In the autumn term, the pedagogical work of the Hungarian students centred around the Hungarian folktale entitled *The Mayor's Clever Daughter*. Students presented it first to Hungarian primary-school pupils (possessing a pre-intermediate level of English) and then to English primary-school pupils (native speakers) during the project week in Winchester.

In the beginning of the enquiry phase, students were encouraged to participate in discussions promoting in-depth understanding of the complexity surrounding the issue of 'being a clever girl/woman' today and how this quality was represented in the past. During the discussions, students were asked to express their views and to communicate them persuasively while respecting the opinions of others.

Students investigated the text to search for passages that can inspire children's creativity, critical thinking, and elements in the tale that may be irrelevant, incomprehensible, or inconceivable for children. Students shared their personal impressions, drew on their pedagogical experience concerning this issue, and came to the agreement that the text contains some erotic scenes that are not suitable for young children. In addition, some of the riddles in the tale are out of date and would not engage children while the narrative part was judged as being too overwhelming. A few dialogues, however, were viewed as possessing the ability to render the performance dynamic.

Having outlined the problems concerning the text and preparing a script based on dialogues, students set out to do research on the formal possibilities of adaptation in the context of puppetry, animation, and theatrical performances. After receiving the guidelines, students worked cooperatively and defined the research processes themselves. They investigated the possibilities offered by object animation (Ellinger, 2017), a technique that explores the dramatic power of everyday objects. They additionally familiarised themselves with the rules of table-top puppetry and how to apply them creatively. On the basis of an analysis of their symbolic meaning, students followed the processes of collecting and selecting objects. Finally, students decided to place the story in a new context using kitchen utensils and everyday objects and substituted child-friendly riddles.

During the project week in Winchester, Hungarian and English students collaboratively prepared to carry out the project activity with English primary-

school children. The English students learned new methods of engaging children with a fairy tale by communicating the story in different ways and developing their responses using creative activities.

The Covid-19 lockdown in March prevented English students from meeting the Hungarian students in Vác as the project-week at AVCC was cancelled. We had to use online platforms and new learning strategies, throughout which personal experience became even more important. The situation inspired us to find a new topic and demanded even more creative alternative patterns of thinking, problem-solving, and methods of communicating so we could collaborate effectively during these challenging circumstances.

Finally, we decided to investigate *Otthon*, a silent book by a Hungarian artist, Kinga Rofusz (2018). There were several reasons for choosing this book during the lockdown. Firstly, as a silent book without any text at all, it supported critical thinking and creativity by inspiring students to create their own stories entirely via illustrations. We thus expected to collect as many stories as there are project participants. Secondly, the title and its theme home was thought to evoke new associations and symbolic meanings concerning the concept of 'home' during the quarantine period while inspiring new ways of interpreting the feelings and emotions related to the condition of staying at home. The theme provoked questions such as, 'What does home mean during this period? How does this connect to the book and how does it inspire thoughts on this concept of home?' (Rofusz, 2018)

Rich themes to discuss critically included change, home, and moving. The range of emotions invited questions about what reaction texts awaken in readers, the authors' point of view, and how the text positions the reader (Roche, 2015). Discussions about what the pictures mean, how and why the author constructed them, evolved into rich analyses focusing on perspective, tone, positioning, size, and colour (Moebius, 1986).

As the project went online, we had to determine which platform would be the right fit for our needs. In the end, we used several: students joined a class on Google classroom and also collaborated with each other using Zoom and Skype for their online meetings. While sharing information, using newly acquired knowledge, and making decisions, students finally created their own online products. They produced filmstrips based on their own stories and stop-motion video scenes reflecting their emotions evoked by the theme. When performing the stories, they utilised different kinds of storytelling and drama techniques in their rooms or home garden, thereby incorporating nature in the product. They collaboratively authored and created digital storystrings while using a variety of online platforms to write, design, film and edit story sections. In conclusion it can be said that students were able to create an innovative shared outcome that drew from the original book itself using the 4Cs.

The scene is now set for a new form of intercultural project incorporating the participants' experiences concerning online education, virtual exchange, and new ways of communication. We had already aimed to develop our digital competence to be able to fuse new digital technologies with traditional storytelling approaches and explore new pedagogical opportunities for

our students both during their in-college work and during their primary school work. What has proven successful in the cooperation between the two institutions so far should be preserved as sustainable work is a priority. However, becoming familiar with new innovative models for collaboration and effectively adapting them into our own context is also inevitable.

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# Great assets: Hungarian children's books in teaching English to young learners

Palkóné Tabi, Katalin

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The publication of more and more translations of Hungarian children's books into English in the past two decades calls for the reconsideration of what children's literature can be used for the English language classroom. This paper examines two Hungarian children's books, Veronika Marék's *The Ugly Little Girl* and Dóra Igaz's *Pali elkésik / Pali is Late*. By exploring the teaching opportunities these books offer in the context of storytelling in TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners), this paper argues that Hungarian children's books in English can be used just as well as any authentic (i.e., British-American) books in language teaching. Moreover, the Hungarian culture expressed in the language and content of these books can make primary pupils more motivated and prouder of the Hungarian literary contribution to the international scene.

**Keywords:** Hungarian children's literature, lower primary pupils, EFL, intercultural competence, identity

## Introduction

It is a commonplace, yet true statement that we construe the world around us through stories. Although literary texts have always been part of education, storytelling as an educational tool in second language teaching only started to be recognised from the 1980s. Together with a growing interest in early language acquisition, this relatively late realisation has since undergone a spectacularly rapid process of professional development. Today there is no need to defend the argument of using authentic (i.e., English by origin) stories and picture books in language teaching, especially in TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners).

What does need reconsideration, however, is the concept of 'authentic literature' in the language classroom. As a result of the changed status of English as a lingua franca and the effects of globalisation on the book market, a great number of Hungarian children's books have been published in English over the last two decades. It is important to recognise the teaching potential in these books. Therefore, after a brief literature review related to the broader context, storytelling in ELT (English Language Teaching), this paper aims to re-evaluate the term 'authentic' literature and examine the methodological possibilities found in integrating Hungarian picture books into the English teaching syllabus.



## Storytelling as an educational tool: a historical and methodological perspective

The use of stories in ELT is an 'old yet new' methodological device in language teaching. When searching for reasons, we must look to the scientific and educational trends shaping ELT professional discourse in the second half of the twentieth century. The growing popularity of the holistic approaches of alternative pedagogies and Piaget's and Vygotsky's constructivist theory contributed to a more learner-centred language teaching methodology. The *communicative approach* (Littlewood, 1981), which became popular over the 1970s and early 1980s, and the theory of the *natural approach* (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) paved the way for *content and language integrated learning* (CLIL) and *bilingual education* (Krashen, 1989), methods that became widely recognised by the end of the 1990s. In addition, another paradigm shift known as the *narrative turn*<sup>1</sup> occurred in the humanities and social sciences from the 1970s to early 1980s. Beginning in the early 1980s, these theories all pointed towards a renewed interest in storytelling as a device of language teaching. By the mid-nineties, several resource books (notably, Ellis & Brewster, 1992; Wright, 1995; Zaro & Salaberri, 1995) discussed the methodological considerations of storytelling while simultaneously providing a wide range of activity and lesson plan ideas.

Morgan and Rinvulcri (1983) were among the first to advocate the use of the ancient oral tradition of storytelling in the second language classroom by using an outline (i.e., 'story skeleton') that could help learners acquire a second language virtually unconsciously and naturally because stories connect them to their common human experience and thus engage the whole person (p. 1). Similarly, Zaro and Salaberri (1995) highlight the connection between storytelling and Krashen and Terrell's natural approach theory. Working with stories is inherently communicative and thereby forms a great starting point for successful language learning (p. 3). Listening to a good story means *acquiring* the language naturally rather than learning it formally (p. 4).

Ellis and Brewster (1992) emphasise that stories are motivating because children identify with the characters and the plot, a process that connects the imaginary to their own real world (p. 186). Comprised of rich language, stories build vocabulary and grammar structures naturally and nearly imperceptibly, thereby preparing children for more formal and conscious language learning in the future. They can acquire learning strategies such as tolerating a lack of understanding, guessing meaning and comprehending keywords and elements of the plot based upon context and illustrations. Storytelling can provide a springboard for follow-up activities that involve many other subject areas, from maths through drama to music. This creates cross-curricular links between English and other subjects (p. 187). Stories also improve children's social and language skills through communication and sharing experiences with the storyteller (the teacher) and one another. In short, storytelling not

<sup>1</sup> For a good overview, see Barbara Czarniawska's book, *Narratives in Social Science Research*, SAGE publications, 2004.

only improves their listening and speaking, but also their cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills (pp. 190–191).

The English teacher and professional storyteller, Andrew Wright (1995), offers many practical tips on how to choose a story, perform it, and the advantages and disadvantages of telling versus reading a text (pp. 13–24). He also suggests means for organising teaching material in the form of a *story bag* (picture cards, puppets, etc. for a certain tale), a *story pack* (activities for before, while, and after reading) and setting up a *reading corner* in your classroom (p. 26).

Twenty-first century publications also discuss aspects like visual literacy, intercultural competence, diversity, modes of reading, empowerment, and creativity (Bland, 2013) as well as inclusion, differentiation, and information technology (Ellis & Brewster, 2014). While the first book edited by Janice Bland is recommended for those interested in recent research in the field, the latter one, *Tell it Again – The Storytelling Handbook for Primary English Language Teachers* by Ellis and Brewster (2014), is a definitive guide for practising teachers who wish to include stories in their classroom work.

Fortunately, some excellent Hungarian research also promotes and furthers the above findings. Judit Kovács (2009) was the first to address the topic of using literature in early language teaching for a Hungarian readership in *A gyermek és az idegen nyelv* ['The Child and Foreign Language'] (pp. 139–153). This volume was followed by publications including both theoretical and practical approaches to early language acquisition in the Hungarian context (Márkus & Trentinné Benkő, 2014; Márkus et al., 2017). Éva Trentinné Benkő has done much for the dissemination of practical teaching materials. Together with Judit Kovács (both teachers in the primary teacher training programme at ELTE, Budapest), they have authored two important publications in English: a book on the theory and practice of CLIL in Hungary (Trentinné Benkő & Kovács, 2014) and a textbook for pre-service teachers on the theory and methodology of using children's literature in TEYL (Kovács & Trentinné Benkő, 2017).

This overview aimed to demonstrate how educational thinking has evolved regarding the use of children's literature, especially stories, in the last four decades. All the aforementioned volumes discussed the use of authentic, mainly British-American, works. However, a growing number of Hungarian children's books available in English has become present in both domestic and international book markets. Taking into account why and in what forms these works have appeared is the first step to investigating how they can be used in TEYL.

### **Hungarian children's books in English**

Arguably, the rich resource of British and American stories (including readers, authentic and bilingual books alike) available in Hungary since the early 1990s

has been a great aid for English language learners in Hungary.<sup>2</sup> This plethora has recently been complemented by the wide range of Hungarian children's books translated into English under the aegis of two Hungarian publishers, Móra and Pagony. It is worth comparing their selection from an ELT point of view.

A well-established publisher and pioneer in the publication of Hungarian children's books in English, Móra Publishing House offers books in English by classic authors like Éva Janikovszky, Veronika Marék, and Ervin Lázár. These authors all belong to the canon of Hungarian children's literature and have ensured generations of children the pleasure of reading. Perhaps this was the reason why Móra decided to reach out to international audiences as their primary targets<sup>3</sup> to promote these classics in English. For the same reasons, however, these books can be motivating for Hungarian children learning English because they firstly represent high quality stories written in an excellent style. Secondly, it is likely that children will know them from home.

Another prominent publisher of children's books, Pagony Publishers, started out as the first bookshop dedicated to children's books in 2001.<sup>4</sup> Today, it represents several contemporary children's authors, such as Judit Berg, Erika Bartos, Adrienn Vadadi, Erzszi Kertész and Dóra Igaz, just to name a few. It has lately launched *I can read!/Most angolul olvasok!*<sup>5</sup>, a bilingual reader series as part of their Hungarian graded reader series, *Most én olvasok!*. The aim of the publishing house has been to bring contemporary children's authors closer to young readers. The bilingual readers come with professional pedagogical support in the form of carefully selected headwords and vocabulary activities. As Judit Kovács, the professional consultant of the series, explained, it was their express objective to prepare the after-reading activities with a holistic approach in order to reflect children's learning needs in early language acquisition. The task-based activities reinforce children's thinking skills while enabling the acquisition of complex vocabulary and grammar structures (Hagyni kell..., 2020).

Móra's classic stories and Pagony's bilingual series represent two main directions in the foreign publication of Hungarian children's books, an aim that makes them worthy of further investigation regarding the methodological potentials of using Hungarian children's books. To give examples, I will refer to two works in particular: Veronika Marék's *The Ugly Little Girl* (transl. Andrew C. Rouse, ill. Veronika Marék, Móra Publishing House, 2013)<sup>6</sup> and Dóra Igaz's *Pali elkésik – Pali is Late* (transl. Anna Bentley, ill. Ildi Horváth, Pagony, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> The merits of Libra and Oxford bookshops in this area cannot be overestimated.

<sup>3</sup> 'It is very important for us to show foreign language speakers how colourful Hungarian literature is and give Hungarian families living outside of Hungary the opportunity to get to know these wonderful works in Hungarian.' [https://mora.hu/content/2020/9/NewsItemFile/hungarian\\_literature\\_in\\_english\\_for\\_children\\_2020.pdf](https://mora.hu/content/2020/9/NewsItemFile/hungarian_literature_in_english_for_children_2020.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://kiado.pagony.hu/foreign-rights>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pagony.hu/sorozatok/most-angolul-olvasok-i-can-read> – I am grateful to Judit Kovács for calling my attention to this series.

<sup>6</sup> First edition: *A csúnya kislány*, Móra Könyvkiadó, 1965.

Marék's *The Ugly Little Girl* opens on a Soviet-style housing estate, a typical type of housing prevalent in Hungary since the 1960s, when the original work was published. The characters, a group of children, live in the same tower block of flats. The children are preparing for a fancy-dress party where the Ugly Little Girl, who does not even have a proper name, wants to be a fairy. The other children laugh at her because she is so scruffy and ugly that they cannot imagine her as a beautiful fairy. In her sorrow, the girl runs to the forest where she undergoes a magical metamorphosis with the help of some hedgehogs. When she returns, she eventually takes part in the party as a fairy, to the joy and surprise of her friends. Marék uses the children's community as a frame from which the main character escapes and then returns to. This story can serve as a good starting point for the discussion of topics including low self-esteem, the role of peer-esteem in identity formation, and the transforming power of love, benevolence, trust, and compassion. Exploring topics such as these will conceivably promote greater self-confidence, especially necessary during the period of settling into a new classroom community.

Igaz's *Pali is Late* is the story of hectic urban life within which children and adults alike suffer from a constant lack of time. The plotline is organised against the backdrop of the children going to school and often being late. The scenes alternate between home and school with the experience of city congestion in between. The antagonist is a strict form teacher who appears in the story as a menacing timekeeper who stands at the school gate every morning and tells off the late-comers. The twist in the story comes when the children notice one day that even the form teacher can be late. When she arrives at last, she kindly admits, 'Oh dear! I'm the one who's late today!' This admission is a relief to all the children. Igaz's good-humoured and empathetic story helps children improve their skills in accepting a different perspective, handling the mishaps of everyday life, and learning about tolerance and generosity.

I believe that it is their *Hungarianness* that distinguishes these publications from other authentic (i.e., British-American) materials. Therefore, in my analysis, I will focus on the cultural implications of their language and content. TEYL experts agree that early language teaching should target the whole person, thereby using language acquisition as an opportunity to shape children's personalities, identities, and their knowledge of the world. The latter is particularly relevant given that language is the most important vehicle of transmitting culture and values.

### **An intercultural approach to appreciating our national culture in a global context**

To understand how Hungarian books in English can teach children about their own culture, we must examine the educational conditions that provide a framework for this. Primary school is the place where children become better acquainted with the characteristics of their own national culture. The Hungarian Literature and Linguistics curriculum framework of the 2020 Lower Primary Core Curriculum puts a special emphasis on this issue. In particular,

the content area entitled “My place in the world” features learning outcomes that include the development of children’s national identity and respect for cultural values (OH, 2020b, pp. 40–41). The recommendations here place emphasis on knowledge about Hungarian culture.

Children’s knowledge of other cultures, which can be English culture in our case, is foregrounded in the Living Foreign Language curriculum framework for fourth graders. This emphasises the importance of openness to other nations and foreign worlds that can improve pupils’ positive attitudes towards cultural differences as well as their tolerance and intercultural awareness (OH, 2020a, p. 2).

I believe the competencies presented in the Hungarian and the English language curriculum frameworks are two sides of the same coin. John Donne’s famous adage from 1624 is perhaps more valid today than ever: “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main” (Donne, 1624, p. 108). We cannot fully understand a culture unless we see it in relation to other cultures. The practicing English teacher, Judit Szepesi (2014), points out that children are excited to learn about English culture because they feel they can contribute a lot to it based on their own previous experiences (Donne, 1624, p. 259). We can assume that the same is true for children reading a Hungarian story in English.

A story set in Hungary includes a range of cultural ideas both content-wise and language-wise that appear differently when pupils read or hear the story in English. Encountering their own culture in the language of another culture creates a critical distance that helps them notice and evaluate the characteristics of Hungarian life. At the same time, it may give pupils a reassuring sense of familiarity. In Marék’s *The Ugly Little Girl*, the tower block of flats located on a Soviet-type housing estate, the home of the children in the story, conveys this sense of familiarity. In Igaz’s *Pali is Late*, the atmosphere of the streets (*the green man at the zebra crossing or the tram*) and the school with the strict, although somewhat negatively stereotyped, character of the form teacher (with her grey clothes and untidy grey hair in Ildi Horváth’s illustration) accomplishes the same.

If we look at the linguistic differences, comparing the Hungarian and English versions of the text can help children discover the creative meaning transfer in literary translation and understand the idiomaticness of language. Discussing why the characters are called differently in English (*Big-belly Pete* for *Pocak Peti* or *puss-cat*, *Miaow* for *Mióka cica* in Marék’s book) can teach pupils about how the two languages work.

It is also worth discussing how a translator works. Andrew C. Rouse (the translator of *The Ugly Little Girl*) has proved several times<sup>7</sup> how sensitively and precisely he grasps Hungarian humour. He follows Marék’s language and style as closely as possible. Anna Bentley is an emerging translator who has also proved her talent before.<sup>8</sup> Her rendering of *Pali is Late* diverges a bit more from the original text (e.g., “*Felkelni!*” is more impersonal and therefore

<sup>7</sup> Rouse translated all Éva Janikovszky’s books.

<sup>8</sup> Bentley translated *Arnica the Duck Princess* by Ervin Lázár.

stricter in style than the playful "*Wakey, wakey!*") but this kind of a decision is precisely in line with the editorial team's specific intention to produce authentic English texts. Whether on a lexical or structural level, the language differences can help children realise the impossibility of word-for-word translation. By teaching English to children through these Hungarian books, we can furthermore encourage them to be proud of Hungarian literature's contribution to the global literary scene.

At this point, it is noteworthy to say a few words about the changed status of the English language over the last few decades, a circumstance that is closely related to the phenomenon of globalisation. What the British linguist, David Crystal, could only predict in 1997 (as cited in Wandel, 2003, p. 72) has become a reality by now: in our global and digital era, English has become a lingua franca that is greatly detached from British-American culture. Today, more than two thirds of those speaking English speak it as a second language.<sup>9</sup> Reinhold Wandel (2003) claimed that this must have consequences in ELT, too. He suggests that the development of intercultural awareness should become a part of ELT (Wandel, 2003, p. 73). Although his suggestion focused on postcolonial cultures, I believe it could be extended to the inclusion of other cultures and their cultural products on their own merits. Any nation's literature that is available in good ('authentic') translation can be used in ELT. The translator's proficiency is the only criterion.

### Methodological opportunities

Hungarian children's books in English translation can be used in the same ways as any other English books. However, as I have argued before, using these books with Hungarian children can also have some additional methodological benefits. One of these is raising awareness of the characteristics of our own culture. Ideally, pupils should have a good command of English to discuss cultural issues but, in lieu of this, cross-curricular collaboration is a good solution. In accordance with the traditions of bilingual education, the class teacher can work together with the English teacher on the same book in the Hungarian Literature and the English Language classes. Alternatively, if the lower primary class teacher can also teach English, he or she can use the methodology of CLIL.

Krashen (1989) suggests that the first language background information to a literary work could enhance the comprehension of English input (p. 50). Before reading the story in English, the teacher can explore children's background knowledge related to the story. This can later support the reading experience. Depending on children's level of English, this can be done in English or Hungarian. Pupils could be introduced to the author, plot, characters, style, and different themes of the story. If the pupils are already familiar with the author and the book in Hungarian, all the better. One of the great advantages

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<sup>9</sup> English is spoken by approximately 16% of the world, out of which 11% speak it as a foreign language. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/>; <https://www.statista.com/chart/12868/the-worlds-most-spoken-languages/>

of using Hungarian books is that the extant background knowledge can make language learning easier.

Reading or listening to the story in English can happen in different ways. The teacher can use traditional storytelling techniques, or the pupils can do extensive or intensive reading depending on language level and teaching objectives (see more on this in Bland, 2013; Ellis & Brewster, 2014; Price, 2017). A monolingual book has the advantage that pupils can focus on one text at the same time. This is closer to an authentic reading experience in which the student needs to rely on context for better understanding. Monolingual reading also suggests that understanding every single sentence is not the point. If children get a good grasp of the basic storyline, they will enjoy it. What Ellis and Brewster (2014) say about children's reception of authentic (i.e., British-American) children's literature in TEYL is also true for Marék's story: 'Children have the ability to grasp meaning even if they do not understand all the words; clues from intonation, mime, gestures, the context and visual support help them to decode the meaning of what they have heard' (p. 14).

A bilingual edition, on the other hand, has the advantage of understanding more of the text. This can particularly be useful when reading the story alone (the publisher's primary intention with the series was to encourage independent reading in English), or when working on the story together in the classroom. Reading the story simultaneously in English and Hungarian, switching between the two pages of the opening, can save time in looking up new words in a dictionary. Although the translation, as I mentioned earlier, is a literary one and not word for word, this convenience can be of great help.

The repetitive narrative style also aids comprehension. In Marék's story, for example, the emblematic objects of cleanliness appear at the beginning of the story (see *Figure 1*) and return one by one in the forest scene when the hedgehogs help the little girl get washed. The children's ideas for their costumes in the fancy-dress party also appear twice: firstly in the beginning, when they all make a drawing of what they want to be, and secondly when they all come together for the party. So, on a lexical level, children can learn words like *soap, wash-basin, towel, toothpaste, glass, toothbrush, flower, pussy-cat, ball, mushroom, and butterfly*. In Igaz's story, 'being late' serves as a repetitive element. Pali's family and friends are often late for work or school. Pupils can learn the phrases *Sorry, I'm late* and *on time*.

After having read the story, different types of follow-up activities can deepen children's comprehension by improving their language skills. In the case of Igaz's *Pali is Late*, these activities could be the ones found at the back of the book. These playful matching, reordering, true-or-false and gap-fill exercises revise phrases and sentences from the story. With some adult help, children can easily attain a sense of achievement. The exercises also make use of the illustrations, elements that play an important role in early language acquisition because they complement the narrative information non-verbally and thereby facilitate language comprehension. At the same time, the teacher must be careful not to fall back on the pre-set exercises too often otherwise children will lose interest. Creative activities like dramatisation or arts and crafts can be effective because they combine verbal/linguistic intelligence

with bodily/kinesthetic and spatial/visual intelligences in accordance with the holistic approach of early language acquisition.

### Conclusion

In this paper, I argued that Hungarian children's books in English translation have a place in TEYL for several reasons. In our globalised world, the English language has got somewhat detached from its original British-American culture, and works as a lingua franca connecting people all over the world. Although more than twice as many non-native people speak English compared to native speakers, Hungarian still has a lot to do in terms of making primary pupils understand the significance of speaking English. Using stories is a very good way to enhance children's motivation since they can relate these tales to their own experiences. This is particularly true when we use stories from our Hungarian literary culture. In the last two decades, several Hungarian children's books (both classic and contemporary titles alike) have appeared on the Hungarian book market in monolingual and bilingual editions. These books can be used just as well in the English language classroom as any other English storybook, with the added values of teaching children about cultural and intercultural issues related to content and language. Children can get a sense of pleasure from the fact that the situations, places, and characters are familiar to them. I also suggested that reading Hungarian books in English could also broaden pupils' horizons regarding and appreciating their own culture in a global context. Among numerous others, Veronika Marék's and Dóra Igaz's books are suitable for the purposes of language learning for the merits of their narrative style and the supportive dialogue between picture and text. I hope that this paper will inspire further research in this field, thereby encouraging more and more primary teachers of English to experiment with Hungarian children's books in their classrooms.

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# Fairy tales or fairy fakes?

Kopházi-Molnár, Erzsébet

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When adults (or children) want to find really good fairy tale books, doing so is not as simple as it seems. Although bookstores are full of children's books, only some are worth reading. As a result, potential readers are often helpless since they cannot decide which book to choose or what qualities a good fairy tale should contain. Many rewritten versions of tales show some similarities based on the ways they have been adapted. Naturally, the modern versions are not of the same quality and range from quite good versions to absolutely bad ones. This paper will analyse how one particular type of rewritten tale is constructed through the well-know story of *Cinderella*. In this paper, the tales that have been created on the basis of an original are viewed as 'redundant', because they seem to be a kind of extension of the tale, one containing subsequent stories added to the basis. These books are sold as tales, although we will see that they do not meet the requirements of tales at all.

*Keywords:* classical fairy tales, rewritten versions of tales, redundant stories, ways of adaptation

## Introduction

Nowadays it is not an easy task to make an appropriate selection among fairy tale books. Although multitudes of illustrated fairy tales can be found on the shelves of bookshops, many adults feel helpless when it comes to which one to buy. They often make a decision based on appearance, thinking that if there are a lot of nice colourful pictures in it, the book must be perfect. While some look for classical tales, others who are more rushed for time are attracted by the title of the book that also suggests how long it takes to tell a tale (i.e., 5-10 minute tales). This type of fairy tale books certainly do not contain the original stories, but rather their abridged versions. Adaptations and either shorter or longer rewritten stories offer readers a better or worse modern version, a factor that is not necessarily weighed before making a purchase. Nor does it not necessarily follow that purchasers will think about the consequences, such as whether they should tell the children the tale they bought or give them to read it at all. It is a very difficult task for laymen to decide if it is a good tale they have chosen or if it is a tale at all. While many rewritten versions are available, only few notice that not all of these are stories which meet the criteria of tales.

In this paper we will examine a special type of rewritten versions of tales that comprises the inclusion of a short story added to the original plot while

using the characters of the original tale, their characteristic features, and more or less the background information forming the core of the plot. Consequently, this kind of a 'rewrite' can be regarded as a proliferation of the classical tale. Through short stories based on a classical fairy tale, we will demonstrate how these stories are structured and what kind of tale these quasi-tales result in. In this paper, this type of a tale will be referred to as a 'redundant tale' since they go beyond the original story, as if these quasi tales were a kind of extension or continuation of the original story.

### **Rewritten versions of fairy tales and their categories**

In his book entitled *Morphology of the folktale* published in Leningrad in 1928, the Russian researcher of fairy tales, Vladimir Jakoblevich Propp (1999), was the first scholar to approach texts – especially fairy tales – by means of morphological analysis. As he did not conduct a historical research of tales in this work, he only attempted to describe them. His research was based on the assumption that similar actions were attached to different characters. As the actions and their function do not change, it can be examined to what extent they can be regarded as recurring, constant components of the tales. He determined these functions to be the constituent parts of tales. Not every function can be found in every tale, yet the sequence of their occurrence is still strict. This is why Propp (1999) drew the seemingly presumptuous conclusion that all fairy tales contain the same structure.

According to the model of the tales established by Propp (1999), the structure is the following: after the starting situation one character is missing. The enemy appears, he/she picks up information and tries to deceive his/her victim. The victim believes in the misleader and he/she thereby plays into the enemy's hands. After this the tale can go into two directions: either the victim becomes the hero, or the victim and the hero are two distinct characters, and the latter one helps the former. Then, the hero meets a 'benefactor', who puts him/her through an ordeal. He/she takes a positive or a negative view and attains some form of supernatural help. He/she starts a fight on the spot of the intervention, the betrayer loses the fight, the conflict comes to an end. The hero turns back, but the enemy chases him/her, until finally the hero manages to get rid of him/her. The tale ends with the hero's homecoming and wedding. Based upon this analysis, Propp (1999) concluded that the logic in narrative structures was based on centuries-old rules and provided a basis for tales, including those born from the original stories at a later stage (Propp, 1999).

Among Hungarian researchers of tales, it was János Honti (1962) whose works published during the 1940s examined the characteristic features and worlds of tales. It is beyond doubt that his credit was to realise that,

construction, editorial work can happen in the continuation of the life of the tale as well. In other words, with the words that have already raised the question once: there are cases of reconstruction of tales. What is more, we have to say that these cases do not play a subordinate role in the history of the tale.... In the

tale the requirement for structure, besides the requirement for the expression of the world of the tale, is an equal partner and it should remain the same lively driving force in the creation of the tale as the worldview of the tale itself (Honti, 1962, pp. 53–54).

According to Honti (1962), a main idea or a motif in the worldview of the tale is suitable for the creation of a new tale by means of editing. Honti (1962) further argues that, to use a mathematical comparison, further editing either happens based upon multiplication or addition. However, it is the original episode in the structural development that constitutes the core of everything and preserves its importance throughout. By referring to multiplication, Honti means that an action, episode, or a character is multiplied, while addition means naturally some kind of added element (Honti, 1962).

In connection with rewritten versions of tales, Ildikó Boldizsár (1997) has already pointed out that ‘on the one hand, fairy tales are given to the story-tellers as fixed forms, the individual gets them as a “cultural heritage”, and they are not created during one-time creative act. On the other hand, they are “open works of art”, inasmuch as they offer infinite possibilities for continuous and re-use, artistic freedom that maintains the strict structural rules’ (Boldizsár, 1997, p. 184). Boldizsár (1997) herself has set up categories for this process, the basis of which is the relationship with miracle. According to her categories,

reduction, amplification, fortification, weakening, substitution according to religious conceptions, substitution based on the principle of reality and modification belong to revised fairy tales; inversion, inner substitution, substitution based on the principle of reality, literary substitution, modification, substitution of unknown origin belong to deformed fairy tales; substitution based on the principle of reality, modification, inner assimilation, assimilation based on the principle of reality, assimilation according to religious conceptions, literary assimilation and specialisation and generalisation belong to assimilated fairy tales. It can be seen that substitution and assimilation according to beliefs or archaic substitution and assimilation do not belong to any of the groups, so they have to be regarded as the exclusive characteristics of the ground-form, while substitution and modification based on the principle of reality could be found in all four groups (Boldizsár, 1997, p. 206).

In her study, Margot Blankier (2017) established another categorisation when she examined the adaptations of fairy tales from the point of view of the ‘hypotext’ versus the ‘hypertext’, namely the original text versus the text derived from that. Hypertexts may form a network. While basing her analysis on concepts by Jack Zipes (1981), Blankier (2017) came to the conclusion that rewritten versions basically form two types are either duplicates or revisions. ‘Whatever modifications it may make, the deep structure – the essential story, though not necessarily the structure or signs – of the tale is preserved, and thus the duplicate is essentially the same as the source: the sensibilities of the original tale are merely repeated, with only superficial modifications.

“Revisions,” on the other hand, are created with the intention of producing something new’ (Blankier, 2017, p. 112).

After basing her categories on the relationship between the ‘hypotext’ versus the ‘hypertext’, Blankier (2017) also defined six categories. She called the first one ‘celebration’, due to the fact that original narrative displays an undefined, nostalgic, and idealised historical past. The second type is labelled ‘adjustment’ in reference to the modification of certain elements in the source text. The third category is ‘Neoclassical imitation’ since it contains a combination of an appreciation for the past and satirical comments on the present. Blankier’s (2017) fourth category is ‘colonisation’, which goes hand-in-hand with the clearing and redesign of the source text, as a result of which the narrative enters a new cultural milieu. ‘Analogue’ rather evokes than recreates the source text while ‘parody’, whose purpose is quite often humour at the expense of the source text, can result in a text more critical than humorous. In connection with her categories, Blankier herself admits that it is almost impossible to create an exact taxonomy as there are too many unique cases of adaptations. It is therefore more practical to examine them separately.

According to a recent research<sup>1</sup> based on Propp’s morphological examination (1999), if we take a closer look at the modifications and structural transformations within the different types of rewritten tale types, then the conclusion can be reached that original stories may fall victim to rewriting in several ways. Story derivations display certain similarities that can be grouped according to total or partial overlap between the morphological elements or their absence. Based on this observation, rewritten versions can either overlap completely, or they can be adaptations of classical stories. ‘Hypercorrected’ versions may come into existence or over-modernised versions may be born that can be shortened or extended (redundant) (Kopházi-Molnár, 2016). This latter type will be analysed and presented through some written stories based on the film, *Cinderella*, produced by Walt Disney Studios.

### ***Cinderella the fairy tale***

The genesis of the *Cinderella* story goes back to historical times. ‘The orally transmitted versions of tales cannot be followed before the 1790s due to the lack of transcription, although as a preachment parable – seemingly taken from folklore – we have knowledge of one of its versions from the beginning of the 16th century in Kaysersberg’s preaching book in 1514. The presence of the tale in orality is manifested mainly in sparse references before the 1810s’ (Hermann, 2012, p. 130)<sup>2</sup>. Before the Brother Grimm’s revision, the story can be found in Charles Perrault’s work in 1679 in a slightly different form than the later one. In this version *Cinderella*’s father marries a haughty woman whose two daughters have the same characteristic features as their mother. In this story the heroine is the embodiment of absolute good: in spite of the torment

<sup>1</sup> The present study is part of a PhD dissertation wherein modern rewritten types of tales have been categorised and their reception has been surveyed among children.

<sup>2</sup> All the Hungarian sources cited in this study have been translated by the author.

and humiliation she endures, she does not want to take vengeance at the end of the story, but instead tries to help her stepsisters make advantageous marriages. The Brothers Grimm's tale treats the stepsisters in a much more inhumane manner, a factor suggesting a completely different concept regarding the whole story.

Similar to other classical fairy tales, many researchers have tried to interpret this tale in several ways. Bettelheim's (2000) approach to the Cinderella story is based on the fact that, as one of the most well-known and popular tales, it contains discernible truth for small children. At its core lies sibling jealousy, the basis of which can be explained with the help of linguistic interpretation: 'the word "cinderella" was used for the disadvantageously distinguished sibling, both for boys and girls. In Germany for example some stories were told, in which the cinderella boy becomes a king in time.... We know many expressions in German wherein some equivalents of "have to live in ashes" refer not only to humiliation, but sibling rivalry as well, and the sibling who is going to get ahead of the others who have humiliated him/her' (Bettelheim, 2000, p. 245).

According to Bettelheim (2000), this explains why there are stepsisters instead of sisters in this tale, as this circumstance makes the heroine's bad situation more easily acceptable and understandable. Yet the child has real problems not so much with the siblings but as with the parents who prefer one of the other siblings, setting him/her before the heroine and placing greater value in him/her than the protagonist. This is why both boys and girls are impressed by this tale. Bettelheim (2000) tries to reveal the deeper motives of sibling jealousy in connection with the tale, one of which may be that the child cannot comprehend that his/her disadvantageous position in the family comes from his/her age, which will change in time. The other reason can be traced to the fact that there are some periods in the child's life when he/she feels that because of his/her secret thoughts or actions he/she deserves misery and humiliation, while his/her siblings are free from them, so he/she hates them. The idea occurs in connection with Bettelheim's other interpretations of tales that contain hidden, psychological problems that the tales refer to, but they only appear in a disguised form, therefore children react to them unconsciously. In case of Cinderella, when Oedipal disappointment happens, the child blames him/herself for it. He/she has to fight with dirtiness and a sense of guilt – and completely alone. At the same time, this hidden message is also the strength of the tale, as it gives the listener of the tale hope – even if not on a conscious level – that everything will change for the better.

Similar to other classic tales, the story of Cinderella has a lot of versions. Bettelheim mentions Cox's name (Bettelheim, 2000, p. 254), who compared 345 versions of the tale and set up three groups accordingly. The first one contains versions wherein the heroine is maltreated and found with the help of a kind of footwear; in the second group of tales, the father would like to marry off his daughter, who ends up escaping. In the third group, the father feels that his daughter does not love him sufficiently and exiles her. An exception is Basile's *Cat-Cinderella* tale, the first written version in the Western world.

In this tale, Cinderella kills her stepmother (or mother), and as she remains unpunished for her deed, it seems that the two women are the same person. At the same time, it also seems that she may have only imagined committing her crime. In this story there is no evidence that the stepsisters maltreat her, it is the result of her fantasy as well.

According to Bettelheim, in the Cinderella stories that are well-known today, the stepsisters take an active part in Cinderella's torture, why they are punished in the end. However, in these stories no misfortune befalls the stepmother, in spite of the fact that she supports the stepsisters' torture of Cinderella. It can be said that the story suggests that Cinderella's maltreatment by the (step)mother is right, i.e., the girl somehow deserved it, while the same is not true of the stepsisters' behaviour (Bettelheim, 2000). Furthermore, in the beginning of the tale the heroine is in a respected position, where she falls from. It has been referred to above that the father, the stepmother and the sisters have key roles in that they are all the embodiments of the (oedipal) power relations within the family. The story is able to evoke other thoughts as well, which may as well be seen as 'actual' problems, for example jealousy between siblings.

The Cinderella story has two well-known versions today. Perrault's and the brothers Grimm's versions differ from each other in several ways. Generally speaking, the tale by the former author is softer, more permissive, while we can find a tougher, more determined heroine in the Grimm version, just as the plot also contains some harsh acts in the end of the tale. Maybe this is why Linda T. Parsons (2004) thinks that the basic difference between the two tales can be found in the behaviour of the two heroines. As numerous adaptations of classical tales surround us today, Parsons (2004) considers it essential to decode the messages. She calls fairy tales historical documents, as we can follow the changing value system of the society in them. 'Fairy tales in the patriarchal tradition portray women as weak, submissive, dependent, and self-sacrificing while men are powerful, active, and dominant.... Women are positioned as the object of men's gaze, and beauty determines a woman's value. In stories with a male protagonist, the helper often gives him strength, knowledge, or courage, while female protagonists are most frequently given beauty' (Parsons, 2004, p. 137). This means that women (princesses) do not have to do anything in particular: they only have to be beautiful and the prince will choose them. According to Parsons (2004), this act is preceded by great suffering, the reward of which is the prince and the safety of marriage. At the same time, the example of the princesses suggested that this is the way the world works in a patriarchal society.

This train of thought is supported by the fact that the female characters of fairy tales are either passive and beautiful, or strong and disgusting. If the passive but beautiful heroine has helpers, then they are not human creatures but rather strong and determined fairies or wise elderly ladies. The conflicts are always generated by witches or similar harmful characters, for example stepmothers. Based on Parsons (2004), it follows that it is unnatural for a woman to be strong and determined. Weak heroines usually endure their

misery alone, exposed to other women's torment and manipulation. Parsons (2004) thinks that we also have to bear in mind that the situation described in fairy tales that originate from a patriarchal society is no coincidence: their birth is tightly connected to the events and actions of female existence, namely to activities like spinning or weaving, during which – as Parsons (2004) calls them – these 'maternal documents' were born.

With their simultaneous aim of reproducing social values, fairy tales likewise influence how children imagine their own position in the family or the world in general. Parsons (2004) also points to the fact that the subordinate female roles regarded as part of a traditionally patriarchal situation have changed due to the adaptation of tales, a process that might lead to a simple inversion of gender roles. Instead, it frequently leads to comic rather than determined characters due to a neglect in bestowing powerful features upon female characters who could have taken the shaping of their fate into their own hands. This element is particularly important from the point of view of the reader/recipient of the tale, because '[r]eaders expect characters to behave in what they consider to be culturally appropriate ways and will resist texts in which characters do not do so.... We can only take up reading positions that exist within our discursive histories. Therefore, we must know the discourse within which the text is written if we are to recognize and understand the text' (Parsons, 2004, p. 141).

As was noted above, the two best known versions of the Cinderella story today are Perrault's story, which was the basis of the Disney film in 1950, and the Brothers Grimm's. The two tales portray the heroine in different ways, thereby revealing that they had been remodelled to follow two different traditions. In Parsons' (2004) opinion, Perrault's tale was obviously born out of a patriarchal discourse targeting an aristocratic audience:

Messages about women and submissiveness, dependence, and beauty are embedded in this version of the tale. Cinderella submits meekly to her servitude. When her work is done, she voluntarily takes up a position in the cinders. When the upcoming ball is announced, the stepsisters consult Cinderella because of her good taste, and she willingly gives them excellent advice and offers to help style their hair. She toils away happily and selflessly. She is so self-sacrificing that at the end of the tale she not only forgives her stepsisters' cruelty but arranges advantageous marriages for them (Parsons, 2004, p. 144).

Cinderella behaves accordingly throughout the whole story. She is not only incapable of action, but also of expressing her wishes in words. She gets a beautiful dress with the fairy's help, indicating that she cannot function alone. In this story, when the prince sets out in search of Cinderella, the girl has to put on her beautiful dress again before meeting the prince. This sign means that her value is a result of her beauty, not her actions to gain the prince. In other words, she merely has to be obedient, beautiful, and kind even to those who have maltreated her.

The heroine in the Brothers Grimm version is active compared to the depiction found in Perrault's tale. This Cinderella tries to take her fate in hand



and overcome her miserable situation by expressing via words and deeds how badly she has been treated by both her stepsisters and stepmother. Unlike the previous tale, this story is rooted in matriarchal tradition because the whole story begins with the mother's (symbolic) death. Parsons (2004) thinks that the girl's power derives from her dead mother who helps and takes care of her life even from beyond the grave, the symbols of which are the tree and the bird. In the course of the story, the heroine expresses her wishes several times and is brave enough to ask for help. Instead of being beautiful and passive, she is active and natural, as can be seen in the moment of finding the owner of the shoe: she does not have to put on a nice dress for the prince to see her inner beauty and values. The stepsisters get their punishment at the end of this story because their jealousy and wickedness reap their just reward.

Because of the latter moment, several people have criticised the Brothers Grimms' tale by saying that there is too much violence in it. Maria Alcantud-Diaz (2012) subjected the Grimms' version to linguistic analysis to prove that violence appeared on both lexical and grammatical levels and suggests a linguistic intervention, not a new phenomenon. Alcantud-Diaz mentions previous linguistic changes which at least attempted to reduce the inequalities between genders, if not terminate them and examined this *Cinderella* tale on the basis of this concept. After listing the different parts of speech (nouns, adjectives and verbs) that bear notions associated with violence, Alcantud-Diaz found during her analysis of verbs and verbal collocations that there were many violent scenes in this tale in which either human beings (mainly the stepsisters and the stepmother) or birds commit violent actions. Furthermore, she distinguished active and passive characters in the tale who either enacted violence or 'only' assisted in it. She places the stepmother and the stepsisters into the first category, while the father occupies the second one.

Alcantud-Diaz concludes that, 'some tales like *Cinderella* (the original version) contain an excessive amount of words and collocations related to violence to be suitable for children taking into account that language might reflect, create and help sustain violence and cruelty...certain ways of expression, might in my view encapsulate or even strengthen violence and cruelty in children and even to cause anxiety' (Alcantud-Diaz, 2012, p. 61). In view of the points described above Alcantud-Diaz further states that 'violence and children are two issues the existence of which should never meet' (Alcantud-Diaz, 2012, p. 66). No matter how much it is supported statistically, this reasoning is scarcely sound, particularly not in the case of stories told orally and received in the course of telling a tale. It would be a gross simplification to equate the violence found in *Cinderella* serves as a model for a child to commit the same violent actions.

In short, Alcantud-Diaz does not prove anything when she states that the Grimm Brothers' *Cinderella* has too much violence and too many phrases connected to violent actions. When we listen to a tale, a much more complicated system is activated.

While listening to the tale, the child pays attention not only to the parent telling the story but inwardly as well, where the story comes alive in his/her mind's eye and he/she creates phantasy pictures corresponding to his/her own wishes. At this time the child does quite intensive inner work: he/she imagines what he/she can hear and draws his/her own story in an inner image. It helps him/her process his/her tension, negative feelings accumulated during the day and tame fears which he/she could not or did not dare formulate yet. His/her personal relationship with the storyteller makes it possible to feel emotional safety, relax, indulge in the floating state of mind in which he/she can animate his/her inner imagery and create the inner movie. Daydreaming and all kinds of actions which trigger fantasy activities go hand-in-hand with inner imaging, in this wise playing, the tale, contemplation, daydreaming, and later reading as well. The process of making inner pictures is called elaboration, which is the healthy and successful processing of information, emotional tension stored in our memory or subconscious (Kádár, 2012, pp. 50–51).

Alcantud-Diaz's statements are rather valid for the reactions triggered by films for children when we ponder that,

the films for children are the clones of the films for adults concerning their actions. Fugitives and chasers, murderers, weapons, cruel machines alternate on the screen.... But why should children be brought up in a glasshouse? No doubt, they cannot be isolated from culture either, they must get acquainted with frightening or unpleasant facts as well. However, the child believes easily and considers as true that which is apparently nonsense for adults. For the little child animation is not less real than the true scenes, and he/she can hardly understand what he/she can see on the screen, does not happen in reality.... Making children's adrenaline levels fluctuate does not contribute to inner harmony (Vajda, 2014, pp. 202–203).

The difference is that while the child is listening to the tale, his/her imagination is activated, by means of which he/she processes the tension, problem experienced in the real world. When watching a story, the child receives visual information instantly, which is more likely to encourage imitation (of even a violent action) than listening. 'The child must follow the action in his/her imagination, he/she is not its doer but its witness. Unlike playing, the tale requires not imitating but imaginary empathy, passive participation' (Mérii & V. Binét, 1985, p. 245).

### **Subsequent *Cinderella* stories**

Several subsequent stories have been based on the children's animated film which was, in turn, a combined 'Disney-Perrault' story. One version figures in the book entitled *24 Histories pour le soir en attendant No 1*, published in Hungarian by Egmont Kiadó under the title of *Az egerek lakomája (The Mice's Feast)*. The other ones (twenty, to be exact) can be found in the book, *365 mese lányoknak (365 Stories for Girls)*, a publication by Kolibri Kiadó. This paper

first examines *The Mice's Feast* version compared to the Perrault-based Disney film in order to show how a redundant rewritten version is structured. When reexamining the adaptation categories mentioned above, we can conclude that its story is based on some kind of analogy since it only hints at the story and does not really remodel it. If we look at the modern tale, we can say that there is no direct correspondence between different moments in the tales, therefore the new story seems to be an extension of the original. Given that the basic story does not mention Christmas, this episode-like 'side-track' may be inserted in time when the ball has not been mentioned yet. Still the children recognise the plot, and maybe accept it as a Cinderella story, because the characters and the basic situation (a story about a poor, maltreated young girl living under unfavourable conditions) are somehow familiar. The characters in the modern tale admittedly come from the Disney film (similarly to the tales in the book entitled *365 Stories for Girls*), as this small book is naturally illustrated. Just as the cartoon characters reappear, the stepsisters' names have not been changed either. It also seems as if the mice, dog, and birds had been taken from the film, too.

The table below (Table 1) provides a summary of Propp's structural parts in the original and modern version of the Cinderella story:

**Table 1**

*Structural comparison of Cinderella and Cinderella and the Mice's Feast based on the categories by Bárdos (2018) and Propp (1999)*

Structural part	Cinderella	The Mice's Feast
1. Lack or damage: change of the starting situation	Cinderella's mother dies, her father remarries, she gets two wicked stepsisters	On Christmas Eve, Cinderella is sad at home alone with the mice and thinking of past Christmas celebrations.
2. The hero's outset: spatial movement	Cinderella asks for a beautiful dress	Cinderella is bringing a Christmas tree with the help of the mice and the dog
3. Meeting the donor/helper	Cinderella gets a nice dress, shoes, and a coach from the fairy to go to the ball.	The mice prepare a headdress as a surprise for Cinderella, in which she looks like a princess
4. Another spatial movement	Cinderella goes to the ball on all three occasions, but always goes home at midnight.	Cinderella is going to the cellar for apples as she would like to make some apple pie
5. Fight with the enemy (solution of a hard task)	Cinderella leaves her shoe on the stairs of the castle, but the prince is going to look for her.	Cinderella lets out the cat locked upstairs and makes him promise not to touch the mice.
6. The pseudo-hero's appearance and unveiling	First the prince tries the shoe on the stepsisters, but it fits neither of them.	The cat and the mice draw a truce.

7. Nuptials	The shoe fits Cinderella, the prince marries her, the stepsisters also find partners on the wedding day.	Christmas is spent in an idyllic state with a humble feast.
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As we can see, every moment has some kind of a parallel. By utilising the basic motifs, the sum total of the parts results in a modern tale that structures the Cinderella story around a pseudo-problem set in simple, everyday circumstances: poor Cinderella is alone at Christmas, only the animals can help her endure the situation. In spite of her sadness, she is able to overcome her circumstances while bringing about a state of reconciliation among the creatures around her. Meanwhile, she is beautified by a simple headdress (!); at the end of the tale, she can enjoy the atmosphere of a quasi-idyllic Christmas.

As the classical departure point of the tale, the original neglect or conflict is no more than Cinderella being at home alone at Christmas because her stepsisters are spending the holiday with rich relatives. As a matter of fact, mourning over past Christmas celebrations serves for the further depiction of a bad mood, as well as the fact that the whole story takes place at Christmas, the celebration of love. Those who are lonely, feel even more sorrowful in this period, therefore tale's opening is based on sympathy. The second moment of the tale, the spatial movement does not mean the same as in tales in general either, that is some kind of spiritual pathfinding, a departure on the road to adulthood, or maybe the search for destiny. In the given situation the spatial movement has a practical aim: a Christmas tree has to be brought because it is Christmas time.

Since presents also belong to Christmas, the third structural unit, in which the mice give Cinderella a headdress as a surprise gift, joins the logic of the plot, too. In the original tale – and in the Disney story in particular – it is very impressive to transform a poor girl into a princess: this scene cannot be eliminated here, whether Cinderella feels like a princess because of a simple headdress or not. Another spatial movement, which would describe the hero's second departure, is simply translated into Cinderella going to another place in the literal sense of the word: she goes down to the cellar for some apples to make some pie. Nor does the fight with the enemy bring any cathartic experience; moreover, the cat is not her enemy, but the mice's. The cat promises not to disturb them, which means that the heroine (Cinderella) fights a successful battle with the pseudo-enemy (the cat). When the pseudo-enemy, appears in the next structural unit, it respects the truce with the mice, which means that it is far from unveiling. Nothing special happens in the last part of the tale either: an idyllic Christmas is created with a humble feast, which would be the equivalent of a wedding feast. To summarise very briefly: this version is didactic and miserable. The illustrations of the tale are taken from Disney's film, which means that if the children look at the pictures, they will accept that it is a Cinderella story, even it has nothing to do with the original tale.

Out of the fifteen basic motifs in the original fairy tale, only five appear in the modern tale, albeit in a distorted form. This implies that the original story

has lost its substance. Twenty other, similar tales can be found in the book, *365 Stories for Girls*. In the case of eleven stories, it can be said that they can be inserted into the course of the story, and nine stories seem to be continuations of the plot. We will first look at those stories which can be perceived as extensions of the basic plot and are structured around the following (pseudo-) problems:

1. A tiny friend: after sewing them some clothes, Cinderella finds new friends in the mice;
2. Kind sisters: in Cinderella's dream, the Fairy Godmother sprinkles the stepsisters with a dust of happiness, so Cinderella addresses them nicely and as a consequence, the stepsisters are enraged;
3. Good night, Gus!: Gus is a new friend of the mice and this is the first time he has come to sleep with them, so Cinderella tells them a bedtime story;
4. The princess of housework: while doing the housework, Cinderella is dreaming of floating in a bubble, but at the same time she is a bit worried that she has not done enough housework;
5. Mice and rice: Cinderella sets her stepsisters free who have been stuck into the doorway and Lucifer's paw, too and at the same time she tells that she consoles herself with her dreams and dances when she is scared, which is why the stepsisters pour a bowl of rice onto the floor and tell her to pick it up because she is too happy;
6. The dance lesson: Cinderella realises before the ball that she cannot dance, but the mice show her how to do it, so she practises with the broom;
7. Birthday surprise: the mice bake a cake and the birds decorate the room because they think it is Cinderella's birthday, but it turns out in the end that she has not got a birthday that day;
8. Dressed for affright: two mice decide to sew a new dress for Cinderella from sackcloth, but it is not beautiful at all and Cinderella thinks they have made a new scarecrow;
9. The great cat-astrophy: Cinderella cannot go to the flower parade, because she has to take care of a lady's cats, who are very naughty and shut the mice onto the roof, so Cinderella rescues them by climbing out and bringing them down with the help of the wash line;
10. A patch for a princess: Cinderella is preparing a patchwork quilt for herself, but one of the stepsisters likes it so much that she wants to take it, but one of the mice frightens her and she runs away;
11. Lucifer's bath: before the ball the stepsisters do not like the idea that Cinderella can go to the ball as well, so she has to bathe the cat beforehand, which is why Cinderella lets the dog in, who chases the cat until it jumps into each stepsister's bath and has a bath there.

Nine more stories contain events which happen after the original tale has already ended, as if they were continuations to the story. These are the following:

1. The missing slipper: one of the mice has taken Cinderella's slipper and is sleeping in it, but Cinderella does not want to wake it up and decides to have breakfast in bed;

2. The fancy dress ball: Cinderella is organising a fancy dress ball and invites the Fairy Godmother, too, but Cinderella cannot find her anywhere, but she realises in the end that the Godmother is constantly changing her fancy dresses with a spell;
3. Spring festival: Cinderella organises a spring festival, but the ladder is broken and the gardener cannot put the flower garlands on, so the birds help him;
4. Heart of a champion: Cinderella takes part in the royal horse-show with her old horse, who has not got enough self-confidence, so the Fairy Godmother conjures glass horseshoes, which helps to win the race;
5. A princess in disguise: Cinderella starts work in the palace in disguise so as to hear the problems the employees complain about, which she makes right, so everybody takes a liking to her;
6. The lost mice: the new housekeeper drives the mice from the palace, but the gardener takes them to the stable to keep them warm, where they are found by Cinderella and her husband, who take them back to the palace, where they will have an own warm room;
7. A scarf for everybody: Cinderella knits scarves for the birds, the mice, and finally the prince, because it is very cold in the palace;
8. Cinderella's miraculous wedding: Cinderella has a wedding dress made for her wedding like her mother's and she is wearing her mother-in-law's veil and beads as well on the occasion, so everybody likes her very much;
9. Perfect presents: Cinderella orders presents for her little friends, but in the end she realises that the presents are nicer if she makes them herself.

Yet it must also be said that these stories display some common features besides the pseudo-problems presented in them. Several tales contain interferences with the original tale, meaning that some events evoke moments of the fairy tale, for example the glass horseshoe (Heart of a champion), new dresses with the help of a magic spell (The fancy dress ball), pouring some rice onto the floor (Mice and rice). These familiarities make the stories even more acceptable as a Cinderella story. This effort can be seen in all the stories, in some places in quite a direct way. In spite of their inclusion, the stories do not become real tales. What can be learnt from the bare bones of the tale? Broadly speaking: nothing. According to Ildikó Boldizsár 'from the seemingly unimportant insertions or distractions to explanations...all proceedings change the meaning of the tale somehow... Alteration of some motifs starts a "chain reaction" and if the interferer does not realize that the result will be a meaningless and unintelligible text. Rationalisation, raising awareness, didacticism and direct motivation are alien to fairy tales. If everything is expressed directly in the tale, not only the magic of the tale disappears but the possibility to show the essential problems of life in a symbolic form' (Boldizsár, 1997, p. 196).

When Bettelheim (2000) summarises the Grimm Brothers' *Cinderella*, he states that this tale represents those stages of personality development by means of which the individual reaches self-fulfilment. As it is a real fairy tale, it accomplishes this aim in a form that allows everyone to understand what is needed to become a complete human being. The story displays how the psyche works, what kind of problems we have, and how to solve them (Bettelheim,

2000, p. 284). A story which contains only familiar characters occupied with their everyday concerns in oversimplified ways cannot offer a solution to the listener's serious problems in life. It can be observed that adaptations of the Grimms' version is less common than Perrault's, a version that turns up over and over again and can be regarded as a 'softer' version. What is more, even the 1950 Disney film was expanded into subsequent ones in the same style (2002: part II. – Dreams Come True; 2007: part III. – Twist in Time). Similar to other Disney films, Cinderella has developed into an industry with its comics, video games, relics, and personal articles, not to mention the Disney Parks (eg. Disneyland, Tokyo, Paris or Shanghai) where her character comes to life.

Another aspect must be born in mind. When discussing fairy tales, we tend to think about them on an exclusively literary basis, which is absolutely incorrect. The analysis and interpretation of fairy tales and their meaning take us to several fields. According to Péter Büki (1995), we can summarise it briefly in the following way: 'The aim of art, and of folk tales as well, is neither only entertainment or education, nor delectation, but the representation, experience, and processing of the tiring events of life on an artistic scale' (Büki, 1995, p. 50). In other words, fairy tales have a place not only in the academic field of literature, but in psychology as well. Nor can we forget that the stories of tales are

social representations, "ways of creating the world", which continuously go through changes due to the effects of historical time. Both intentional (conscious) and unintentional (subconscious, unconscious, half-conscious or insensible) processes play a role in their creation and reception. They transmit complex (everyday, scientific, artistic) knowledge. They unite and connect practical (pragmatic) cultural content and which is beyond pragma (transcendent, mythological, spiritual, mental etc.), and the acquisition ways transmitting and receiving it. The fairy tale is not the grasp of reality but the grasp of the quintessence of reality. On this level it is a model which transmits the interpretation of the world from generation to generation. Diminishing the complexity of the world, it provides a model for the events of life. In this sense, it helps the mental, psychic, spiritual survival as well (Tancz, 2009, p. 47).

Annamária Kádár (2017) lists the resources which can be learned from the fairy tales in the following: resilience, namely flexible resistance ability, the state of learned helplessness, stable, reliable, and predictable environment, a followable model, quality time experience, from which she considers the first one, namely resilient behaviour, to be the basis of the rest. She presents its five levels as well: emotional stability, good problem-solving skills, the inner sense of self, well-developed resilient skills (e.g., belief in our own strengths and abilities) and the ability of serendipity, namely the ability to find valuable things. Tibor Vidákovich (2009) experientially proved that the developmental effect of fairy tales on children could be traced regarding the furtherance of the development of correlation handling ability because the usage of the correlations found in fairy tales helps predictive thinking, i.e., the development

of predictive abilities. Tibor Vidákovich's experiment points out that in case of children aged four to eight, the furtherance of the development with fairy tales makes a big difference in teaching of the content of different subjects during the integration of capability development (Vidákovich, 2009).

Regarding another role fairy tales play in education, Trentinné Benkő, Árva, Medina-Casanovas, Canals-Botines (2021) state that it can be important to use them in foreign language lessons as well, because 'children's literature is also a means for transmitting information regarding children's culture in English-speaking countries. Finally, children's literature can provide emotional support to young and very young learners of English' (Trentinné Benkő et al., 2021, p. 43).

Fairy tales are important not only from the point of view of individual development, but they have an important socialisation role as well. 'The content found in folk tales is valid and relevant psychologically, at the same time it is general, important and it reflects descriptions, solutions concerning the whole life of the community.... Folk tales, as peculiar stories, are suitable for the support of personality development, the forming of the community and in various senses for the facilitation of education' (Kovács & Stiblar, 2014, p. 47). The tales help through the identification with the hero the listeners of the tale by experiencing the tale to cope with the problems of real life more easily, to find a way in their own life for the reproduction of the idyllic state lost in childhood, to find their welfare and happiness. This identification has a remedial effect during growth. We must not forget one thing: 'It is very important that this "remedial" effect of tales through identification works only in case of "good" tales. Because of the fact that adults (including one part of writers as well) do not necessarily understand this symbolic language of tales, they re-write them because they find them too frightful, they reshape them because they find them too abstract, they shorten the tales because they find them too long, which lose their magic because of that' (Gyenes, 2009, p. 134). Jack Zipes also points out that attempts to 'improve' tales have been made with clear indications. 'From the beginning, pedagogues, clergymen, publishers, and the government controlled children's literature and printed books to promote their interests. [T]hese individuals and groups always sought to set their own socialised models for the socialization of the young. The context of the texts and disputes remained decisive' (Zipes, 1981, p. 20).

## Conclusion

The spread of rewritten fairy tale books, like the ones mentioned above, started in Hungary especially after the change of the political system, although the process itself had appeared decades earlier abroad. As Dominic Strinati (2000) points out in his work, the appearance of so called 'mass culture' goes back to the era of industrialisation and urbanisation, which served to create 'atomisation'. This means that 'an atomised and anonymous mass which is ripe for manipulation, a mass market for the mass media which can only be catered for by forms of mass culture. These processes entail mass production industries



and mass markets which both encourage the spread of mass culture. For this approach, the main determinant of mass culture is the profit its production and marketing can make from its potential mass market. If it can't make money than it is unlikely to be produced. ... From this point of view, there is no real difference between material and cultural products' (Strinati, 2000, p. 11). That is how the phenomenon called 'mass culture' came into being. It is regarded to be a kind of tool for manipulating an audience made up of passive consumers of mass-produced cultural (and other) goods. Strinati also calls attention to the fact that mass culture is motivated by commercial exploitation. 'The picture is of a mass which almost without thinking, without reflecting, abandoning all critical hope, buys into mass culture and mass consumption. Due to the emergence of mass society and mass culture it lacks the intellectual and moral resources to do otherwise.... Culture has to be mass produced for this audience in order to be profitable' (Strinati, 2000, p. 12). That is exactly what we can observe in the case of the *Cinderella* tales examined in this paper. Both modern books are carefully and colourfully illustrated, offering stories for the consumers who mostly look for something 'nice' for their children. Strinati calls this technique 'a standardised, formulaic, repetitive and superficial culture, which celebrates trivial, sentimental, immediate and false pleasures at the expense of serious, intellectual, time honoured and authentic values.... Mass culture is therefore a culture which lacks intellectual challenge and stimulation, preferring the undemanding ease of fantasy and escapism. It is a culture which denies the effort of thinking and creates its own emotional and sentimental responses, rather than demanding that its audiences use their own minds, make an effort, and work out their own responses' (Strinati, 2000, p. 14).

Since the rewritten versions are chosen for the children by the adults, it can be assumed that these stories have actually been created to attend the needs of those adults who, on the one hand, think that they can condition their children for the solution of certain situations with the help of these tales. On the other hand, they also hope they can entertain them with these stories. Arnica Esterl (2007) is not too optimistic in her article concerning rewritten versions of tales, as she writes that in case of these stories 'the entertainment value is the only standard determined by adults: the representation must be edgy, loud, tricky and funny. Irony and sarcasm form the content, which is alienated in most cases so as to be interesting.... The fairy tale market of marketing strategies and the arena of the manipulation of children's souls have come into existence' (Esterl, 2007, p. 98). The author's further views also explain this phenomenon:

At the beginning of our new century the parents who are thinking about the future of their kids can see a lot of ominous signs on the horizon. The questions of the society which throw new light upon the child's existence in the future penetrate into kindergartens and schools. It is a problem to educate the children according to the requirements of the information society of the future, the parents worry about employment possibilities, they are afraid of social degradation in the cruel cut-throat competition of winners and losers,

they are in dread of the existential insecurity of old age. The solutions praised or offered show how to train the children purposefully in a way that they are totally bereft of all possibilities of childish fantasy and real creativity even in their entertainment and games.... The pattern of the way of thinking behind these concepts regards the child basically as an adult who has not been programmed properly yet (Esterl, 2007, pp. 100–101).

Why is it important to condition or program the adults of the future – the children of today? As Tímea Antalóczy (2001) states, ‘Modernisation, the consumer society, “new age thinking” or the values carried by postmodern mentality are closely related to the all-time political, economic, technological situation, and interests’ (Antalóczy, 2001, p. 70). The media has a decisive role in this as it behaves as a cultural mediator; one of its main roles is to create values and a world view. As could be observed, the above stories had a lot in common: their problems are quite simple, the characters are restricted to those in the film, they are all short and easily understandable. Children do not have to think about the situation too much, they get a problem which is communicated directly, instead of in a symbolic form. Thus, they are quite similar to soap opera series. Tímea Antalóczy and Imre Szíjártó (1998) have observed in general a connection to soap operas given that ‘the pictorial representation is quite poor, the life situations portrayed in them would be schematic. Separately none of the inducing effects seem to be remarkable. Yet there is some concord on the whole, yet not fullness, which derives from the juxtaposition of the individual elements. After all, the soap opera is the genre of the complexity of effect’ (Antalóczy & Szíjártó, 1998, p. 58).

It appears that the stories presented above helped the development of future cultural consumers who need to learn to think in a schematic way. We are all consumers in the society. As John Fiske (1990) says, ‘popular culture is made by the people, not produced by the culture industry. All the culture industries can do is produce a repertoire of texts or cultural resources for the various formations of the people to use or reject in the ongoing process of producing their popular culture’ (Fiske, 1990, p. 24). The main point here is rejection: we do not have to accept these stories as tales (only the Hungarian translation uses the expression ‘fairy tales,’ the original title contained ‘stories’). Children do not enjoy tales that do not inspire their imagination or contain an obstacle or hard situation to handle. As far as can be seen, it is adults who instead have to learn not to be afraid of classical tales and choose a book which tells a tale in a highly symbolic form and touches their hearts. Or they simply have to recollect memories of their childhood when they listened to their favourite classical tales. They have to learn not to be afraid of anything frightening in tales or listen to or read articles about the horrors of fairy tales. While genuine fairy tales are not frightening and will not do any harm, a number of their adaptations certainly will.

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# Culture in language: Bilingualism and identity in the poems of American-Hungarian poets

Kitzinger, Arianna

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Today, when there is a revival of examining and understanding bilingualism, we often conduct research on bilingual education while scrutinizing the effect of the phenomenon on the individual and the society. Most research aims to highlight how a foreign language can be acquired and how it forms a 'bilingual pair' with L1. However, there is less exploration into the other direction, i.e., how L1 behaves in a foreign context and how identity is re-structured in a new setting. It is not only a linguistic but a social question as well that can especially be reflected in literary works. This year, when we celebrate the sixty-sixth anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, this paper intends to commemorate the many poets who emigrated to foreign countries as a result of this conflict by examining aspects of their language usage and cultural identity.

*Keywords:* bilingualism, biculturalism, emigration, identity, acculturation strategies

## Introduction

In the history of East-Central Europe, the year 1989 is a dividing line. Due to the political shift from state socialism to democracy, not only were political systems re-organised, but also social and cultural relations had to be revisited from a different angle. Examining this shift is valid to literary history as well because this year marked the introduction of previously unknown poets and writers while it also negated literary works once viewed as 'fundamental' according to the old canon.

Hungarian literature is in a special situation given that it is formed by three main categories of authors: the first group comprises those who live within Hungary's borders. The second consists of those who have remained in their native country as members of Hungarian minority groups and write in Hungarian yet live beyond Hungary's borders. This paper examines the third group which includes those writers who emigrated to nations that are culturally and linguistically distinct from Hungary. While authors from the first two categories are generally well-known in Hungary, the names of the authors who emigrated to the West still have to be (re)learnt. It is also necessary to give a definition of what is a Hungarian or an emigrant writer. In his *Lexicon of Hungarian Emigrant Literature*, Csaba Nagy defines all those born within



the historical, pre-1920 territory of Hungary as Hungarian. He defines an 'emigrant' as a person who emigrated from Hungary's territory (Nagy, 1990).

Emigration from Hungary to the New World is usually categorised into five waves that were caused by economic and political changes or conflicts following the years of 1848, 1919, 1938, 1945, and 1956. Until the end of the twentieth century, very little was known about the literary works, organisations, periodicals, and events held by those who tried their 'luck' on the American continent. The debate regarding their classification surrounds the question of whether they have been accepted by Hungarian main-stream literature as active participants or have been excluded from enriching the literature of the Western diasporas. Béla Pomogáts (2002) states that 'Western Hungarian literature has not been integrated properly, at least not in the way it would deserve'.

Demolishing borders does not automatically mean that only the works of the best literary and aesthetic values will arrive in Hungary from Western emigrants. This fact is well-known fact by the editors of anthologies who feel it their mission to introduce twentieth-century emigrant literature. 'But ... we also need courage to show the voice of not only the greatest but the small poets as well, even if they are a little childish, stumbling or express themselves in a strange way. Do not condemn them: "funny" might also be interesting' (Horváth, 1998, p. 7–8).

The aim of this study is to find not only the 'funny', but also the characteristic elements in the anthology entitled *The Creed of American and Canadian Hungarian Poets*. The anthology was edited by Calvinist pastor and priest, Loránd Horváth, in 1998. The analysis will be done from the special linguistic and literary aspects of bilingualism and identity.

## Themes

All the poets of the anthology contributed to the literature of the twentieth century and were welcomed to the North American continent<sup>1</sup>. Although most settled in the USA or Canada, a few emigrated to South America (Brazil, Argentina).

The title of the volume, *Amerikai és kanadai magyar költők hitvallása* (*The Creed of American and Canadian Hungarian Poets*), already suggests the themes which, from a solid religious perspective, confess about the lost versus the new country, forced emigration, the power of the Hungarian language, and outstanding historical personalities and moments. Beyond these topics, religious holidays and the landscape of the lost land (including discussion of the host country's landscape, to a lesser extent) are mentioned. Above all, the "characteristic" emigrant life is introduced through human fates: a hundred and five poets' *ars poetica* contained in thirteen chapters. While topics might change, the root remains the same: experiencing emigration in either a state of resignation or rebellion. When examining the volume, two special spheres of thought interweave throughout the whole volume, namely the question of languages and identity. The anthology expresses a perpetual search for them.

<sup>1</sup> Originally, the poems were written in Hungarian. Here the English translation is provided by the author of this essay.

## Languages

### *Bilingualism*

In case of emigrants, it is necessary to analyse the usage of the mother tongue and the language of the receiving country in a parallel way. Emigrants face the phenomenon of *diglossia* at a very early stage. In emigrants' lives, the mother tongue (the code used before emigration) becomes 'degraded', i.e., it loses its prestige in the new environment. Institutions (schools, offices) which used the mother tongue cease to exist: their language is new to the emigrant. The two categories introduced by Ronald Wardhaugh describe this phenomenon in the following way: the mother tongue slips from high variety (H) to the low (L). In the case of emigrants, a new code has to be learnt. The two codes often interfere with one another, therefore emigrants, similarly to other bilingual speakers, switch codes. Code-switching is often involuntary and may depend either on situations (situational) or on topics (metaphorical) (Wardhaugh, 2006). According to Poplack's (2001) classification it might appear beyond the sentence, between sentences, and in the sentence.

Literary bilingualism shows genre-specific features. Novels and plays might be written in a foreign language (the Polish Joseph Conrad wrote his novels in English, the Roman Ionescu his dramas in French), yet it is difficult to find an example of poetry written in a foreign language. No example of this can be found in *The Creed of American and Canadian Hungarian Poets* either. Poems were written in Hungarian, although bilingualism is indirectly present between the lines. There is only one exception, a poem by Anna Bedőné Tóth, who writes about code-switching in a humorous way. She emigrated to Canada in 1966 and collected her impressions about this linguistic phenomenon in Nanaimo, in 1994. Mixed languages have their own names: for instance, the mixture of English and French in Quebec is called *Franglais*, or the combination of English and Mexican Spanish in Texas is called *Tex-mex*. Similarly, *Hunglish* is the special name for mixing Hungarian and English.

The poem, *What Have You Become, Our Mother Tongue? (Mivé lettél édes anyanyelvünk?)* is a thesaurus of examples for the Hunglish language. The text is crammed with words used in everyday life. These must be the words and expressions which emigrants meet already at the very beginning of their new life. They are connected with family life (*kids, holiday, piano lesson*), household (*shopping, grocery store, vacuum*), traffic (*car, insurance, speed*), and the names of food (*Irish stew, turkey, Chinese food*).

English words are emphasised in the poem with capital letters. They become even more alien by giving them Hungarian suffixes in the original Hungarian version:

I didn't FEEL GOOD, I even MISSED CHURCH, My head HURT badly.	Nem FEEL-eltem GOOD-ul, El-MISS-oltam a CHURCH-öt is, A fejem HURT-ölt vadul.
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Mixing the isolating English language with the agglutinating Hungarian shows clumsiness. However, by using this technique much humour is stressed: after

three pages of Hunglish, readers obviously feel the homelessness mirrored in the capricious switching of languages.

As we have already mentioned, in the case of bilingual speakers code-switching is often involuntary, just as a trilingual German–French–English speaker asserts, ‘In theory I refuse code-switching, because it causes the loss of ethnicity. In practice, however, I often switch without noticing’ (Navracsics, 1999, p. 29).

Paradoxically, it happens to the poet herself, who criticises code-switching:

In Canada we often eat TURKEY  
at EASTER-TIME,  
and cholesterol gets HIGH  
because of smoked ham.

Kanadában TURKEY-t eszünk  
Gyakran EASTER-TIME-kor,  
HIGH-ra megy a koleszterol  
A füstölt sonkától.

She probably does not notice that in Hungarian, cholesterol is not known as *koleszterol*, but rather as *koleszterin*. This detail reveals another aspect of how widely known loan words can cause further confusion as they cross languages, even though one would think that their form and meaning would remain international.

This poem is obviously not worth our attention because of its aesthetic values. Yet, it focuses on an important question: *Is there a limit to code-switching?* The poem presents a snapshot of the process of *code switching* → *language shift* → *linguicide*. The speaker is in a stage of bilingualism wherein the mother tongue is beginning to be forgotten, yet the speaker has still not acquired a proper level of skill in the foreign language, as is shown by the combination of English basic vocabulary + Hungarian suffixes. This transition period is called *semilingualism* (in Swedish original: *halvspråkighet*). Although the phenomenon is not at all new, the term only came to be in use in 1968 when a Swedish linguist was conducting research among the Finnish minority in Sweden (Hoffmann, 1991).

Indeed, semilingualism easily leads to neglecting, then losing the mother tongue if speaker does not act on it consciously. Semilingualism can be found risky from two aspects as it has an effect in two directions. Firstly, it will result in uncertain mother tongue use in everyday practice. Secondly, it will also hinder the process of learning the new (foreign) language due to mother tongue intrusion. Even bilingual speakers acknowledge the trap of code-switching: ‘it can also be dangerous to switch too often, when someone is already forced to switch in order to be able to speak at all’ (Navracsics, 1999, p. 29).

If code-switching is broadened into an unlimited process by the speaker (or a speakers’ community), language shift will take place, resulting in the ultimate death of mother tongue. This outcome can often be observed among second- or third-generation immigrants. Fear of this phenomenon is present in the poems of the anthology which are not bilingual but are about bilingualism.

In his poem entitled, *Question and Answer (Kérdés és felelet)* Endre Haraszti gives an account of a conversation between father and son. The son represents the second generation with his simple question:



If we are in this land  
and I spend my days among English people.  
Why do I have to learn Hungarian?

Ha már itt vagyunk e földön  
S napom angolok közt töltöm.  
Magyarul tudni mért kell nékem?

Before answering, the father draws his son's attention to the previous two generations by recalling the revolution of 1848 ('hussars,' 'The National Theatre' – 'huszárok,' 'Nemzeti Színház'), his own schooldays ('Bocskay<sup>2</sup> cap' – 'Bocskai-sapka'<sup>3</sup>), and, through the family's female members, the continuance of mother tongue ('cradle song' – 'bölcsődal'). As a contrast to mother tongue usage, rationality plays the main role in gaining a command of the foreign language: 'English word is useful to you' ('Az angol szó fontos tenéked'). In the Winnipeg autumn, the Hungarian flag appears as the metaphor of Hungarian word. Finally, the boy's reaction to the explanation manifests in the form of an accepting handshake.

Bertalan Mindszenty uses bilingualism on the pretext that he could write about homelessness in his poem, *Fata Morgana in Pennsylvania* (*Pennsylvániai délibáb*). The narrator is daydreaming about the 'miracles of childhood' ('gyermekévei varázsát') while walking in the forest, using the foreign language in a situation:

They greet me: "How do you do."  
I answer: "Fine. How are you".

Rám köszönnek: "How do you do".  
Én felelek: "Fine. How are you".

In this example of bilingualism, the new language is only the symbol of formal politeness. In contrast, the 'melody of mother tongue' ('anyanyelv muzsikája') can be heard from across the ocean.

Not everybody in South America can familiarise themselves with the new language either. In his poem, *Those Whom God Wants to Punish* (*Akit az Isten büntetni akar*), Ferenc Pintér for instance is terrified of losing mother tongue in his poem:

A bird on a twig  
is singing in a foreign language.  
Your heart is broken:  
your grandchild has spoken to you  
in a foreign language....

Madár az ágon  
Idegenül dalol. Szíved elborul,  
Idegen nyelven szólt hozzád  
unokád....

## ***Mother tongue***

Whether emigrants learn the language of the receiving country or not is not a cardinal question in the poems. The new language is seen from a practical point of view. Poets are much more worried about how they will manage to preserve their mother tongue in the foreign environment. Most of the emigrant authors are very carefully and consciously striving to keep their mother tongue. They feel they have to meet double requirements: they have to learn the language

<sup>2</sup> Written with a 'y' by the Americanised author instead of the original Hungarian 'i'

<sup>3</sup> A 'Bocskay cap' was used as a part of the school uniform for boys until the end of the Second World War; 'Bocskay' refers to the name of a prince of Transylvania who was a leading figure in the anti-Habsburg uprising between 1604-1606

of their new homeland while both maintaining and developing their mother tongue far away from home. Sometimes writers find very inventive methods to keep mother tongue alive. György Ferdinandy, for instance, who originally published his works in French before returning to writing in Hungarian, then became fluent in Spanish upon emigrating from France to Puerto Rico, 'was reading books, while consulting his dictionary, about mushroom-growing, goose-feeding and information technology, because this was how he could develop his vocabulary' (Erdélyi & Nobel, 1999, p. 214).

Linguistics and its related fields approach the concept of mother tongue from several different aspects. According to Skutnabb-Kangas (1984), it is not enough to take origin as a criterion into account. Competence, function, and attitudes are also important criteria. As far as attitude or identification is concerned, it is worth distinguishing external and internal identification, i.e., which language one identifies with as well as based upon which language the individual is thought of as a native speaker. The poems of the anthology designate Hungarian as the mother tongue. If we follow Skutnabb-Kangas's classification (1984), in the case of first-generation emigrants not only origin but also internal identification counts. This phenomenon can be observed in László Bónis's poem, *Hungarian Refugees' Litany (Menekült magyarok litániája)*, which also identifies mother tongue as the language of the nation:

Save us [from the fate]  
that our children forget  
their Mother's language,  
the Homeland's language!

Hogy gyermekeink elfeledjék  
Édesanyjuk, a Haza nyelvét,  
Ments meg minket!

How much emigrant poets fear of the death of mother tongue is shown in a poem which was written in the USA and worries about the language left behind in Hungary. Gyöngyi Péterffy is different from the other poets in the sense that she did not emigrate because of political or economic reasons. Neither did she leave home with the classic emigration waves, but rather because she followed her husband to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in 1993. As a member of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, she is very sensitive to the political changes in the Carpathian Basin and follows the region's changing language policies with special attention. In her poem, *Screaming (Kiáltó szó)*, she protests against the Slovakian and Romanian education laws which are unfavourable to minority communities. As a member of this minority, Péterffy is 'homeless' from two points of view, as state that leads her to expressing herself passionately and with dramatic punctuation:

For whom and for what means  
Can this **linguicide** serve a purpose?!

Minek, kinek használ  
Ez a **nyelvgyilkosság**?!<sup>4</sup>

Indeed: 'If an animal species is endangered, people organize movements. If, due to violent assimilation, a language becomes extinct, who will shed a tear?', asks Zsolt Lengyel (2006).

<sup>4</sup> Bold type in the original text.

Immigrants also have to face the different language policies of North American countries. Although dominant groups are made up of native speakers of English both in the USA and in Canada (core-English speaking countries), the approach to multilingualism and monolingualism is quite different. At the same time, both nations are receiving countries where the relationship among languages, because of immigration, can never be static (Phillipson, 1992).

Canada seems to take the fact of constant immigration, from the point of view of languages, into account to a greater extent. As far as linguistic rights are concerned, the French language has successfully rivalled that of English in the recent fifty years; currently, members of indigenous groups receive compensation from the Canadian government.

In the early history of the United States, diversity of languages, i.e., multilingualism, was regarded as a value. By the end of the eighteenth century, language policy changed into a different direction according to which one language, the English language, was supported, i.e. the USA demanded that newcomers speak English. The established powers preferred 'to found a New Eden rather than a New Babel' (Barron, 1996, para4), and thus sought to compel its immigrant to acknowledge the rules and regulations of their new state. In 1981, a proposed English Language Amendment<sup>5</sup> was voted down (Barron, 1996) and the United States still does not have an official language. English, however, is considered the *de facto* national language.

If in the question of mono- and multilingualism the USA keeps its well-known 'melting pot' position, Canada enforces the 'mosaic-principle'. However, this does not mean that majority language policies keep immigrants from organising their own literary or artistic groups and circles. As can be seen in the case of the volume under current discussion, writers can also publish in their own mother tongue.

To maintain the mother tongue is a key issue among Hungarian immigrants in America, too. The anthology dedicates a separate chapter to this topic, entitled *Mother Tongue, Our Eternal Home* (*Örök hazánk az anyanyelv*). The central topic of the poets is the unconditional insistence on mother tongue, which is described in ecstatic images:

words are becoming holy (Zoltán Noéh: <i>Involved in Secrets and Wonders</i> )	a szavak szentekké lesznek (Noéh Zoltán: <i>Részese titkoknak és csodáknak</i> )
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János Sömjén, who lived most of his life in emigration, puts his uncertainty into words at the beginning of his poem:

I don't yet know where to seek the word and in which language will my last word be born. ( <i>To My 85th Birthday</i> )	Még nem tudom, hol kell keresni Milyen nyelven fog megszületni Az utolsó szavam. ( <i>85 éves születésnapomra</i> )
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<sup>5</sup> An amendment to the Constitution which proposed English to become the only official language of the USA.

The interdependence between language and homeland and the equal sign placed between the two does not simply refer to the language as such. Poets additionally confess about their views of life, their attachment and affection, in one word: about their *identity*.

### ***Identity***

Identity has different aspects in psychology, sociology, and history. In this literary-linguistic examination we focus on *national-cultural identity* and how it is mirrored in the poems of the Hungarian emigrants of the discussed volume.

As we have noticed above, emigration results in a necessary bilingualism. At the same time, we must not forget that 'language is always used within a cultural environment' (Hoffmann, 199, p. 28) which leads to *biculturalism* as well. What makes the analysis subtler is the fact that bilingualism is not automatically accompanied by biculturalism. Therefore, in our case it is important to explore what the emigrant poets' attitude to their old and new culture is.

With the encounter of the cultures personal attitude (rooted in history, traditions and customs or outside circumstances) will decide how the individual adapts to a new culture. Acculturation strategies can be followed in the table below. (*Table 1*)

**Table 1**

*Acculturation strategies on the basis of Berry (2008)*

	High value on one's own culture +	Rejecting one's own culture -
High value on majority culture +	<b>integration</b>	<b>assimilation</b>
Rejecting majority culture -	<b>segregation/ separation</b>	<b>marginalization</b>

The table will help analyse the question of identity.

### ***Old identity***

When observing the poems closely, it becomes apparent that these poems are much more about the old home with its landscape, people, values, and historical figures compared to the new land. Poets carry the image of the old country wherever they travel or settle down. Mostly they do this with a very intense sense of nostalgia:

As a child I lived there under a blanket of poverty. Yet looking back, it was as soft as velvet, and I cherish its memory in absolute purity.” (Olga Titonelli: <i>Thoughts on Home</i> )	Ott éltem mint gyermek, a szegénység takarója alatt, de visszaemlékezve oly puha volt mint bársony, s így emlékemben tisztán őrzöm azt. (Titonelli Olga: <i>Hazai gondolatok</i> )
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The longer the distance becomes, the stronger the positive emotions are toward the country poets had to leave. The authors tend to neglect what happened to them in the old home or why they had to flee. Their sense of Hungarian identity has deep roots that interweave the personality and keep it enclosed in a set of different strata that settle and imprison the self like ‘the shirt of Nessus’ as Iván Béky-Halász describes this feeling in his poem, *You Are Hungarian*.

*Fidelity* is a self-explanatory value that is embedded in the personality and which poets do not want to get rid of. They write about it bashfully as if to a lover:

I have never been disloyal to you I carry you within Eternal Hungary (Ida Bobula: <i>Song of Exile</i> )	Sohasem lettem én Hűtelen tehozzád Hordozlak magamban Örök Magyarországon. (Bobula Ida: <i>Bujdosók éneke</i> )
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Or:

Like the gusty wind carries the kisses of meadows, I have taken you with me, my Land. (Tamás Tüz: <i>My Land</i> )	Mint zúgó szél a rétek csókját, hazám magammal hoztalak. (Tüz Tamás: <i>Hazám</i> )
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The ‘Holy Trinity’ of *fidelity*, *mother tongue*, and *identity* appear as pure synonyms in the poets’ interpretation: these are the values that must be kept. Moreover, they have to be passed on to the next generation.

Identity is often described with heroic elements (‘if necessary, I will die for the Land’ – József Kovácsy: *Ars poetica for the Homeland*) and lifted up to celestial heights (‘Your name is gilt bright/ by Archangelic orders’ – Ádám Makkai: *On the Name of Hungary*).

To show cultural continuity poets gladly insert well-known, sometimes sacred, literary texts (here: lines from poems of old times) into their *ars poetica*. Thus, we find a paraphrase of Vörösmarty’s *Appeal* in Irén Négyessy’s poem, *To Thy Country Be Faithful*:

To thy demolished Country be faithful even when you are dead, Hungarian.	Légy híve még holtodban is tépett Hazádnak Magyar.
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Sharing the same history is also a part of national identity. The volume deals with two major events of Hungarian history: the Revolutions of 1848 and 1956. As the former does not figure among these twentieth-century poets’ first-hand memories, we will instead focus on the poems connected with the 1956

experience. In his poem, *Hungarian Students in '56*, Ferenc Mandalik pays tribute to the young people who took part in the revolution. First, he focuses on Hungary before widening his image to include all the students of the world who, in his opinion, should celebrate Hungarian young people as martyrs of both the homeland and those citizens of the world who long for freedom. Roller (2001) remembers the revolution in the following description: 'In Budapest, the unarmed marching youth, (secondary school and university students and Workers) marching for freedom, was a heart-warming phenomenon of the emerging revolution' (Roller, 2001, p. 36).

In parallel with *celebration*, another topic, *accusation* appears in the poems. László Segesdy issues a charge against the West in his poem, *Listen, Nations*:

There was not a heart that would have  
beaten for us.

Nem volt egy értünk dobbanó szív is.

Poets view the 1956 Revolution not only as the issue of a small European country, but also as an instance of liberty and an opportunity to abolish the two different world orders, thereby bringing about the end of the Cold War. Whether these charges are true or not, taking them into consideration will lead us closer to understanding why Hungarian emigrants found it very difficult to leave their country and why it was not easy for them to integrate into a new society either in Europe or beyond.

If we look back to the Table of Acculturation (*Table 1*), we will notice that emigrant poets put a high value on their own culture. Whether they managed to become integrated (according to the evidence found in the poems) or lived in separate enclaves is the issue of the next chapter.

### *A New Land*

Before examining the related poems, it is worth examining some basic statistical data about Hungarian emigration (Hungarian, 2021). It can be declared that Hungarians live throughout the entire continent of North America, even if a significant number have only been counted in six countries. According to a census taken in 2018, 1,396,000 inhabitants declared themselves Hungarian in the USA, which shows a decrease in comparison to 1980 when the number was 1,776,902. At the same time, this declaration of identity does not mean that they all speak Hungarian at home. The number of Hungarians is lower in Canada (348,085), Argentina (40–50,000), Brazil (80,000), Venezuela (4,000) and Uruguay (3,000).

The question about Hungarians' characteristic features might arise. According to Zoltán Dávid, historian and demographer those individuals display their affiliation with a Hungarian identity who 'declare themselves a user of the Hungarian mother tongue, feel that they are Hungarian, speak the Hungarian language in their family, and are members of the Hungarian cultural community' (Kósa, 1991, p. 71).

Although this paper does not examine the history of emigration or immigration, it is interesting to recall the words of St. John de Crèvecoeur

(1989) who, in 1782, wrote the following words about immigrants' homeland: 'A country that had no bread for him...with jails and punishments.... No! Urged by a variety of motives, here they came" (Crèvecoeur, 1989, p. 119). In the case of Hungarian emigrants, the 'variety of motives' can be seen from history. As was previously discussed, many felt strong ties to their homeland in spite of their equally strong reasons for leaving it. At the time of leaving home and arriving in a new country, the following questions might arise, *What does the new land mean to the emigrants? Can they become Americans? Can they find their place in this 'teeming nation of nations'?* (Whitman, 1885) Or we can quote Crèvecoeur again: '*Ubi panis ibi patria*'<sup>1</sup> is the motto of all emigrants (Crèvecoeur, 1989, p. 120). *Is this true in their case too?*

As regards their country of origin, when examining the poems in the volume under discussion, it can be observed that the poets appear to be in a state of transition. Within this state, they experience different forms of homelessness, loneliness, dispersion or even a feeling of exile. They are 'between two homes' as Irén Négyessy confirms in her poem, *I Thought (Azt hittem)*.

As was observed before, poets want to experience their Hungarian identity in a continuum. To maintain their cultural identity, they often quote or paraphrase from Hungarian literature. This is also the case when they write about their situation in the new country. In *The Song of The Thrown-Away Stone (Az eldobott kő dala)* Sándor Domokos uses the motif of the stone known from Endre Ady's *The Thrown-Up Stone (A föl-földobott kő)* and *The Ballad of Kőmíves Kelemen's Wife*. Wass Albert alludes to the *kuruc* 'hiding era', thereby making it clear that history repeats itself and what happened to Hungarians during the Rákóczi War of Independence in the eighteenth century (i.e., exile) has happened to the Hungarians in the modern age as well.

After these bitter parallels and intense feelings toward the old homeland, one might not expect a positive image of the new land the emigrants have settled in. The picture is critical indeed: although poets admit to the beauty of the American continent, not much positive emotion is shown while describing it. The image by the poet, Sándor Petőfi, regarding the Carpathians comes to mind: 'I may admire you, but I cannot love you' (*The Great Plain*). The description of the dramatic beauty of the Niagara Falls and the Cruz del Sur of South-America or the jolly stereotypes of hard-working farmers in Texas and Canada are overshadowed by the very harsh critic of consumer society where Mammon, the dollar-God (József Csinger: *Jonas in Ninive*) reigns in the form of Mercedes cars and haughty skyscrapers.

The harsh difference between old and new home seems to be settled in two ways. On one hand, Albert Wass offers a solution in his poem, *The Creed of Homelessness (A hontalanság hitvallása)*, wherein he overcomes the difficulties caused by emigration with an overall belief in God, human beings, and general values:

<sup>1</sup> From Latin: "Where there is bread, there is (my) country".

I am homeless,  
because I believe in Good, Truth, Beauty,  
in every religion and every folk,  
and in God who overcomes.

Hontalan vagyok,  
mert hiszek a jóban, igazban, szépben,  
minden vallásban és minden népben  
és Istenben, kié a diadal.

As Miklós Tamási suggests in his poem, *Totem Poles (Kopjafák)*, death may provide both peace and a solution. He finds similarity in the two symbols, the Indian totem pole and the ancient Hungarian, carved headboard (*kopjafa*). While Loránd Horváth describes a frightening *danse macabre* in the pulsating rhymes similar to the Kalevala (*Kopjafa – Totem Pole*) and the contrast between cultures becomes extremely sharp ('Magyar babák festett lázban/ Áttáncolnak angol házba!' – 'Hungarian dolls in painted fever/ Dancing over to English houses!'), Tamási combines the ancient symbols in a gentler picture which gives more prospect: 'vallani és vállalni/ maradtál itt' – 'you have stayed here to confess/ and to undertake things'.

As far as the problem of integration versus separation is concerned, the poets in this volume experience separation in both their everyday life and their inner thoughts. The question is, *How much do they manage to keep the values of the left land with this attitude of separation?*

### **Confrontation**

This volume offers ample evidence of how strongly the poets cling to their Hungarian identity, how much they desire to preserve their values and pass them on to succeeding generations. At the same time, this insistence might be an obstacle to integration as well. With this attitude, emigrants unavoidably come into conflict with the culture of the host country.

There are a lot of poems about the sharpening contrasts, very often in a simplified form, as if it were not worth altering the change of fortune provoked by emigration, as if the only way were to live a new life according to predestination:

Your life has fallen on a foreign ground,  
where it cannot reach fulfillment.  
(Ernö Németh: *Prophecy*)

Idegen földre hullott életed  
Nem juthat el a beteljesülésig.  
(Németh Ernő: *Prófécia*)

What remains is the lingering longing for the lost home. Homesickness is a leading motif in these poems as there is no end to recollections of the Hungarian landscape, family, and memories, all of which are shown from a very positive aspect. In the poets' eyes the new land, even in the best-case scenario, can only be emotionally indifferent.

The memory of my homeland/  
has excluded all other beauty from my eyes  
(József Csinger: *Faded Wind-Rose*)

Hazám emléke szememből/  
minden más szépséget kizárt  
(Csinger József: *Hervadt szélrózsa*)

Confrontation, however, is not only limited to the contrast of new and old home. It is even more interesting to see how emigrants, fighting fiercely to keep their Hungarian identity, are gradually losing their own homeland. Therefore, it is also to speak about a *double confrontation* composed of, on the one hand,



the contrast between the old home and the host country and, on the other hand, the difference between the home they left and the home in the distance that has changed with the passage of time.

Most of the generation that left their home after the war was given the chance to return after the political changes that occurred in the 1990s in Eastern Europe. Nowadays some emigrants lead a double life by commuting between the old and the new home; others remain alone with their bitter memories of a single visit to their ex-home. The sense of alienation can be overcome neither by the guest nor the host:

<p>I have been longing to come home for long years, but at home I have rights no more! Homesickness brought me home and it still tortures me! I feel hospitality almost a burden!</p> <p>(József Csinger: <i>As a Guest in My Country</i>)</p>	<p>sok éve már, hogy hazakívánkozom, de idehaza nincs már többé polgárjogom! Hazahozott a honvagy s itt is tovább emésztl már-már tehernek érzem a vendégeskedést!</p> <p>(Csinger József: <i>Vendég hazámban</i>)</p>
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The sense of homelessness experienced by emigrants is similar to semilingualism: they have not managed to integrate in the new home, but the old home belongs to them no more.

## Conclusion

The anthology can be considered a representative survey of bilingualism and identity as manifested among Hungarian emigrants. Using the Hungarian language and belonging to the Hungarian culture does not cease to exist on the other side of the ocean. On the contrary: based upon these poems, insistence on maintaining the mother tongue and Hungarian identity is emphasised.

The major reasons for this can be observed in the following facts:

1. The measure of *cultural<sup>2</sup> distance*. The simple formula, according to which the bigger the distance between the mother country and the target country, the more difficult integration is, seems to be justified in this case, too. If we take Burchell's and Homberger's (1989) conclusion into consideration, it can be observed that out of those who emigrated to the United States<sup>3</sup>, people from the British Isles were in the least difficult situation, a circumstance that was at least partly due to the common language.

2. *The history of the mother country*. Hungarians, who, compared to Americans, have a long history, are bound to their country and its culture, language, and literature by a thousand strings (See section entitled *Old identity*). This circumstance can be regarded as a fact that makes integration more difficult and separation easier in the new country.

<sup>2</sup> Besides cultural differences linguistic, political, religious, and economic differences should be taken into consideration as well.

<sup>3</sup> This does not refer to pioneers, but emigrants who went to the United States later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

3. The fact of *forced emigration*. It can be considered the most relevant reason, the root of integration failure which results in a sense of homelessness. As we observed, most of the poets of the anthology did not leave their home voluntarily. Until the 1990s, most of them did not (as a voluntary choice) or could not (due to political reasons) return to their country. Some were even charged as war-criminals or dissidents. It must also be understood that a great number of emigrants did not intend to stay abroad for a long time: ‘We did not want to leave our homeland forever. The hope of returning lived in our hearts and minds. This hope slowly vanished...’ (Roller, 2001, p. 40). Whether the eagerly awaited return meant that emigrants ‘regained’ their home or it only made a brief visit paid to a greatly loved, but no longer familiar land, this contrast clearly lingers between the lines of the poems.

Obviously, this anthology cannot provide a proper and overall answer to the questions of emigrants’ bilingualism and identity. It is also important to note that the poets who ‘confess’ belong to the first generation of immigrants whose life and career is always more difficult compared to their children’s. Due to these facts, we might address the questions regarding language and identity with the help of a few lines by Albert Wass contained in the anthology:

Our roots are preserved by  
a superstitious magic in the East  
and in this foreign spring  
fading will slowly kill me.  
(Albert Wass: *In a Foreign Spring*)

Gyökerünk keleten őzri  
valami babonás varázs  
s ebben az idegen tavaszban  
lassan megöl a hervadás.  
(Wass Albert: *Idegen tavaszban*)

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# Has what was “Too far for you to see”<sup>1</sup> come any closer? Language and identity in Wales

Podlovics, Éva Lívía

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This article examines issues of language usage in Welsh and the identity of this region’s residents. The stress is upon *people* and *language* as they are inseparably inter- and entwined when forming one’s *identity* (Evans, 2018, p. 7). In accordance with this approach, I focus on three aspects (of this *people*, *language*, and *identity*): 1) the “diachronic”<sup>2</sup> analysis of the Welsh language; 2) bilingual language use in general and in Wales in particular; 3) the recent period and research that slowly led to Welsh becoming an official language, effective in 2012.<sup>3</sup> In this paper I will discuss what has happened since the poet, R. S. Thomas, captured the feelings and thoughts of his era while expressing his worries for his nation’s fate in the poem, *The Welsh Hill County*.<sup>4</sup> I believe that my inquiry suits the environment of languages and cultures as the success story of an almost extinct language that survived its foretold death may provide valuable insight into the actual problems minority groups fighting for their rights face.<sup>5</sup> What is more, I find this question important from the viewpoint of a second language teacher: the way we acquire languages in a naturally (albeit sometimes hostile) bilingual region can furnish further ways to enhance language learning abilities of students. The role played by the Welsh in Wales and the UK serves as a good example of the above interests.

**Keywords:** bilingualism, Wales, identity consciousness, language acquisition, diachronic language analysis

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<sup>1</sup> The quoted line is a direct reference to the lesser known Welsh poet and patriot R. S. Thomas, and his poem, *The Welsh Hill County*. The poem’s first stanza reads: “Too far for you to see / The fluke and the foot-rot and the fat maggot/ Gnawing the skin from the small bones,/ The sheep are grazing at Bwlch-y-Fedwen,/ Arranged romantically in the usual manner/ On a bleak background of bald stone...”

<sup>2</sup> In this case I refer to a diachronic language analysis that examines such events in history without which the Welsh identity and language would not have survived.

<sup>3</sup> Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/1/part/1/enacted>, Downloaded: 21. 05. 2021.

<sup>4</sup> The poem can be found here: Thomas, R. S. *The Welsh Hill County*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11da18FioIQ>.

<sup>5</sup> The complexity of how the question of minority language usage - and autonomy- has been handled in Wales might prove a resource for the treatment of minorities either within or beyond Hungarian borders. For example, the case of Szeklers living in Transylvania, Romania, points to the necessity of such positive examples. See here: Attila Szoó (2020), „Brussels should pay attention to the Szeklers” – *Day of Szekler Autonomy*, <https://transylvanianow.com/brussels-should-pay-attention-to-the-szeklers-day-of-szekler-autonomy/>. Downloaded: 21. 05. 2021.



## Introduction

In this study, I highlight some significant turning points in preserving Welsh as a language in Wales and the language's more current use. The language usage of a country existing within a larger conquering country is inseparably connected to the nation's history, including the different laws that – throughout the course of time – either allowed or forbade the public usage of Welsh. More interestingly, an undeclared, unofficial, and therefore unclarified form of bilingualism has shaped the usage of English and Welsh in the region. By detailing the aforementioned aspects, I will highlight the changes that have occurred since R. S. Thomas articulated the decay of his people. I will also refer to research in this field and some contemporary legal and governmental activities that have been forming the present use of language since Welsh was declared an official language in 2012. My inquiry centres upon the view of the language teacher of students, the expert who wants to make use of success stories, and the constant learner of English as a second language.

### Historical, diachronic aspects of a people, and a language

In the formation of Wales, the first significant change was brought by the Celts who appeared in the British Isles around 700 B.C. The Celts 'are the ancestors of many of the people in Highland Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and Cornwall today. [...] Celtic languages, which have been continuously used in some areas since that time, are still spoken.' (McDowall, 1992, p. 7). Throughout the turbulent history of the different people living in the Isles, the next important step in preserving the Welsh language occurred between 942–948 during the reign of Hywel Dda (Hywel The Good), a successful ruler who brought many Welsh territories under his control and also *codified the law in Welsh*.<sup>6</sup> The next important points in creating and preserving the language are strongly connected to those leaders of Welsh society who either united their lands or created a national feeling with their heroic struggle for the people. The first to mention is the unity of Welsh as a people and their territories under the reign of Gruffydd ap (son of) Llewelyn in 1057 (McDowall, 1992, p. 18, 32). However, this unity and independence did not last long. After the violent death of one of the consecutive high kings, Llewelyn ap Gruffydd (or Llywelyn the Last) in 1282, the following Welsh kings had to pledge loyalty to the king of England. The first to accept their oath was Edward I, Edward Longshanks, who also made his infant son the first Prince of Wales. This has been a lasting tradition since 1284. Then, around 1400, the new leader Owain Glyndwr started a lasting but finally unsuccessful uprising against the English. Although, his deeds ended in vain, due to his actions 'the idea of a Welsh nation' (McDowall, 1992, p. 52)

<sup>6</sup> BBC, Cymru Wales, [https://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/history/sites/themes/society/royalty\\_hywel\\_dda.shtml](https://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/history/sites/themes/society/royalty_hywel_dda.shtml), Downloaded: 01. 02. 2021. The King invited lawyers and leaders from his kingdom to a place called 'Ty Gwyn-ar-Daf', meaning the 'White House on the Taf' now known as Whitland, to create a unified code for Wales. These 'Laws of Hywel' are shown in illustrated slate plaques around the gardens of Whitland that show the customs, life and activities of medieval Welsh people. Hywel Dda, Canolfan Centre, <https://www.hywel-dda.co.uk/>. Downloaded: 01. 02. 2021.

was born as he 'created a feeling of national identity' (McDowall, 1992, p. 52).<sup>7</sup> Later, during the Tudors, another important change occurred when the Bible was translated into Welsh in 1588 during the reign of Henry VIII.<sup>8</sup> After the aforementioned fights for national independence, these salient actions made it possible for Welsh to survive in physical, lasting form. Notwithstanding, the period was also controversial because Wales joined England under one administration between 1536 and 1543. As a result, 'English law was now the only law for Wales.... English became the only official language, and Welsh was soon only spoken in the hills.... Welsh was not allowed as an official language' (McDowall, 1992, p. 76).<sup>9</sup> Consequently, many stopped speaking Welsh even though poets and singers did not. Known as *eisteddfods*, their gatherings have been taking place since 1170 to the present day (McDowall, 1992, p. 76).

While the language was able to survive throughout the centuries, at many points its continued existence was only possible through great effort on the part of those who still spoke it. During the 1901 and 1921 censuses, the data revealed a relatively steady number of Welsh speakers. However, after World War II Welsh started to decline and became spoken less and less. According to census data, in 1951 29% of the population spoke the national language. By 1981, only 19% of the population spoke the national language (McDowall, 1992, p. 176).<sup>10</sup> As a consequence, in a radio lecture the playwright Saunders Lewis foretold and envisioned the disappearance of the language.<sup>11</sup> This prediction prompted the formation of the Welsh Language Society (Cymdeithas Yr Iaith Gymraeg), a nationalist party established in 1962. Its new party members campaigned for reforms of language use. (Members of the Party took serious measures and went on hunger strikes to reach their aims.) Another strong national political force had been formed earlier, in 1925. Plaid Cymru, the Party of Wales,<sup>12</sup> was

<sup>7</sup> His appearance caused turmoil, as he was also proclaimed Prince of Wales similarly to the successor of the present English king. Finally, he could not win against the English, even though, his revolt was worthwhile and remembered.

<sup>8</sup> By Bishop William Morgan. See: Llywodraeth Cymru-Welsh Government <https://learnwelsh.cymru/about-us/welsh-language-fast-facts/>, Downloaded: 01. 02. 2021. The National Library of Wales, Welsh Bible 1588, <https://www.library.wales/discover/digital-gallery/printed-material/1588-welsh-bible#c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-882%2C-1%2C4726%2C4026>, Downloaded: 21. 01. 2021.

<sup>9</sup> This law replaced the earlier system rooted in the Middle Ages, when the Welsh laws of Hywel Dda were used all over Wales. (See e. g. Eryri Snowdonia, <https://www.visitsnowdonia.info/welsh-language>. Downloaded: 01. 02. 2021.) Some sources state that, against all odds, the Act of Union in 1536 helped Wales preserve and improve an independent cultural identity. Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Welsh-Language-Society>, Downloaded: 01. 02. 2021.

<sup>10</sup> The numbers, in reflection of census data are the following: the 1901 census showed that about 930,000 Welsh spoke the language, at approximately 50% of the population; the 1931 Census showed that 37% of the people (about 909,000) spoke Welsh, while the 1981 Census showed a huge decline to 19% (about 500,000) Welsh speakers (Baker 1985:1), also in A Vision of Britain through Time, <https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/EW1921GEN/11>. Downloaded: 21. 01. 2021.

<sup>11</sup> His famous talk is audible in the original language. Saunders Lewis, *Tynged yr Iaith/ Fate of the Language*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7ntVx4m3YU>. The transcript of the talk is here: <https://morris.cymru/testun/saunders-lewis-fate-of-the-language.html> Downloaded: 21. 01. 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Welsh-Language-Society>.

founded with the aim of achieving a complete parliament for Wales with direct international representation. (The first Welsh member was elected in 1966 to the British Parliament!) In spite of the work of these parties, Welsh people rejected London's offer of limited self-government in 1979,<sup>13</sup> an outcome that shocked patriots and caused a deep and long-lasting rift.

As to the present state of affairs, it is true that Wales is a constituent unit of the UK and there are issues determined in London by the British government and Parliament (which also has Welsh members). Additionally, as a result of lasting debates regarding independence, there is also a Welsh governmental body (the National Assembly for Wales/Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru) that has gained increasing responsibility since its establishment in 1999, in Cardiff.<sup>14</sup>

### **Biculturalism means bilingualism?**

In the previous section, I outlined the complicated and difficult history that hindered the Welsh from sustaining their aim of using their mother tongue. At present, regarding their bicultural environment there have been many recent changes in legal matters to support bilingualism in the region.<sup>15</sup> To define bilingualism, we have to see that it has many angles and viewpoints. As Baker says: 'A variety of definitions of bilingualism and ways of classifying bilingual people are possible. Scholars talk about societal and individual bilingualism, subtractive and additive bilingualism and co-ordinate and compound bilingualism' (Baker, 1985, p. 66). Navracsics also emphasises the versatile approach of it as research can detect the educational/language policy viewpoint of bilingualism, the representation of languages in the brain, the

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Downloaded: 01. 02. 2021. This party is generally supported by Welsh who speak their original language.

<sup>13</sup> History of devolution, Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament, <https://senedd.wales/how-we-work/history-of-devolution/>, Downloaded: 21. 02. 2021., An Assembly for Wales/Senedd i Gymru, Executive Summary, 15.

<sup>14</sup> See, BBC, Cymru Wales, [https://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/culture/sites/aboutwales/pages/national\\_assembly.shtml](https://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/culture/sites/aboutwales/pages/national_assembly.shtml), Downloaded: 01. 02. 2021. Since 2011 the Welsh body has not asked for permission from the British Parliament on a case-by-case basis as their law-making practice has been extended to direct law-making. The National Assembly was not able to levy taxes until the Wales Act of 2014, which regulation has also been outgrown. (Encyclopedica Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Welsh-Language-Society>, Downloaded: 01. 02.2021. Recently, the facts about legislation are the following: if Bills (draft laws) are considered and passed by the Senedd (National Assembly) and given Royal Assent by the Monarch, they become 'Acts of Senedd Cymru'. The Senedd is able to pass any Acts that are not dependent on the UK Parliament by the Government of Wales Act 2006 (amended by the Wales Act 2017), Senedd Cymru, Welsh Parliament, <https://senedd.wales/senedd-business/legislation/>. Downloaded: 01. 02.2021.

<sup>15</sup> In the 2011 Census, out of 2,955,841 people, 2,871,405 declared their proficiency in English while 672,828 can understand Welsh, and 672,828 can speak, read, and write in Welsh. (Based upon these numbers, the aim of increasing the numbers of Welsh speakers is very obvious.) Office for National Statistics, <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/QS205EW/view/2092957700?cols=measures>, Downloaded: 01. 02. 2021. Office for National Statistics, <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/QS206WA/view/2092957700?cols=measures>, Downloaded: 01. 02. 2021.

grammar competence, the psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and the holistic approaches (Navracscics, 2001). After a lot of viewpoints, we can rely upon one, concluded by Grosjean (1992): 'Bilingualism means the regular use of two (or more) languages, while bilinguals are those who need and use two (or more) languages in their every days' (Bartha, 1999, p. 38).

The Welsh are regionally surrounded by English speakers; a fact that is further supported by the *lingua franca* position of English in the world. Obviously, the latter two factors do not strengthen people's patriotic attitudes towards Welsh, in spite of the fact that they have the opportunity to make use of their bilingual environment. Nevertheless, the present legal system greatly supports the usage of Welsh. In this respect, it is important to know that the language became *compulsory* at schools. After the Education Reform Act in 1988, Welsh instruction was included in the national curriculum *for all learners* from 5–14 (Key Stages 1–3) in 1990. From September 1999, it became *compulsory for Key Stage 4* (14–16) learners too. Strengthening school children's competency in the language is a main idea of language-supporters who want to enlarge the number of speakers to one million by 2050.<sup>16</sup> They believe, the gathered efforts will enable children to use the language in all circumstances (from classical to the digital platforms) (Welsh in Education, Action Plan 2017–21).<sup>17</sup> Additionally, with lessons taught in the two languages, bilingual education serves the purpose of Welsh political aims too: excelling in both of them is not only restricted to language usage but to reconciliation of feelings as well.

The concept of bilingualism perfectly exemplifies English speaking Welsh, or Welsh speaking English people in Wales. We all agree that getting to know and use two (or more) languages regularly is a real asset. From this aspect, the European Union suggests to its member country citizens learning two more languages other than their mother tongue.<sup>18</sup> Obviously, these ideal

<sup>16</sup> Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers, <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/cymraeg-2050-welsh-language-strategy.pdf> Downloaded: 21. 05. 2021. To reach their aims, supporters work together on a new curriculum for developing language skills; greater teacher capacity and research into effective pedagogies; communicating with parents and carers about the benefits of learning the language and about how they can support their children.

<sup>17</sup> In reaching their aims they introduced Welsh-medium schools (their number in 2019 was 420 with about 67,000 learners and 49 secondary schools totaling 35,000 students (out of the total 1,569 schools, see in Welsh in Education, Action Plan 2017-21), dual-stream primary schools (the parents choose the conduct of language either English or Welsh), transitional primary schools (Welsh medium with significant use of English - more than half of the curriculum is in Welsh), predominantly English Medium primary schools but with significant use of Welsh (between 20-50%), predominantly English medium primary schools (less than 20% is taught in Welsh). (Defining Schools according to Welsh Medium Provision, (2007), <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/defining-schools-according-to-welsh-medium-provision.pdf>. Downloaded: 15. 01. 2021.

<sup>18</sup> 'The EU encourages all citizens to be multilingual, with the long-term objective that every citizen has practical skills in at least two languages in addition to his or her mother tongue', Europeans and their Languages, Special Eurobarometer 386, 4. 2012. [https://ec.europa.eu/comfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_386\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/comfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_386_en.pdf). Downloaded: 01. 02. 2021. Within this document we can find a remark recognising Hungary's at then present state: 'Those



expectations are more easily accomplished in countries where more languages are spoken (e.g. Luxembourg or Wales); where minorities are in huge numbers; or in countries that have overlapping formerly owned regions.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, language learning is easier if the languages are close to each other, namely, they belong to the same language family, e. g. Flemish to Dutch, or the Romance languages stemming from Latin, etc.

When comparing the surrounding positive bi- or multilingual and cultural influences and real-life situations of these countries/nations to less fortunate monolingual countries the difference can be amazing. Monolingual countries mostly rely on their educational system and develop it as much as they can, therefore, it is fortunate if the educational system is supported by governmental decisions.<sup>20</sup> From this respect, the case in the Hungarian education system is that compulsory introduction of second language learning begins at ten years of age, while recommendations, reports and studies all favour lowering the starting age. One solution to this 'problem' is bilingual, or CLIL schooling.<sup>21</sup> The benefits of the latter are stated by Trentinné 'pre-primary foreign language teaching and the concept of educational bilingualism have clearly intertwined with each other recently. Hungarian children attending bilingual (or CLIL = Content and Language Integrated Learning) programmes from an early age have access to foreign languages a lot earlier than their peers who take part in mainstream education encountering the first foreign language only in their 4th grade i.e. at the age of 10' (Trentinné, 2016, p. 1).

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countries where respondents are least likely to be able to speak at least two languages in addition to their mother tongue are Portugal and Hungary (13% in each), the UK (14%) and Greece (15%); *ibid.* 15.

<sup>19</sup> e. g. Present Slovakian, or Romanian regions (among others with Szeklers) formerly belonging to Hungary speak the official language of their present country and try to preserve Hungarian too. About Hungarian as a minority language and its use by the borders in complexity we can read here: Kontra Miklós and Hattyár Helga (2002, Eds), *Magyarok és nyelvtörvények*.

<sup>20</sup> In the case of the monolingual Hungary, a lot of efforts were collected to enhance the language learning abilities of children in the last decades. Improvement of methods and schools were needed in the educational system to tackle with the unsuccessful language learning/teaching. A compiled volume in this topic is edited by Éva Márkus and Éva Trentinné Benkő (2014), *A korai idegen nyelvi fejlesztés elmélete és gyakorlata*, highlighting the nursery, the primary and the training focuses, while another edited by Éva Márkus, Tibor M. Pintér, and Éva Trentinné Benkő (2017), *Jó gyakorlatok a korai idegennyelvi fejlesztésben Oktatás, fejlesztés, kutatás*, contains the good practices of early language education.

<sup>21</sup> One of the most effective ways is the bilingual use of the mother tongue and a second language at schools with integrating more subjects and real language purposes from early on. The further specification of this field is called CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), that is according to some experts an immersing bilingual development, or by others the newest phase of revolutionary communicative language teaching. (Trentinné, 2014, 2016). Nevertheless, almost exclusively in Hungary at ELTE TÖK, not only are primary school teachers but, also pre-school teachers given the possibility of earning the necessary CLIL-knowledge ('using languages to learn and learning to use languages') to apply in schools, kindergartens and nurseries (Trentinné, 2016).

## Questions of autonomy and language usage in connection with declining a favourable offer

In the previous section I summarised the different viewpoints of bilingualism with the concept of Grosjean. In the following, I will show what happened around 1979 in Wales. During this period, UK Labour Governments (of 1974-1979) wanted to introduce devolution (or Home Rule) to Wales and Scotland but this aim was not successful since it did not receive the necessary support through referendums in the territories (Blick, 2014). This circumstance plainly means that in 1979 Welsh decisively rejected setting up the Assembly of Wales.<sup>22</sup>

The results were shocking to those who cared for Welsh as a language and a culture (Thiec, 1997; Apple, 1979). It showed that, despite the efforts of many patriots, the original Welsh language was declining and close to extinction. One explanation of the event is as follows: it 'almost certainly was because many of them did not welcome wider official use of the Welsh language' (McDowall, 1992, p. 76). To clarify and better the situation, Bangor university professor Colin Baker generated a computer analysis of the 1981 Census data right after the rejected referendum. (He also questioned the scheme and formulation of the national poll questionnaire). In his analysis he gave his warning and concluded the worrying situation: 'Taking the last nine Censuses into account, the statistical prediction is of extinction in the year 2026. [...] The present trend *is* towards extinction. There can be no real optimism until the Census figures show a levelling or an upturn' (Baker, 1985, p. 167). This was the opinion of other researchers, too. Aitchison, Carter, and Williams say, 'It is for this reason that relatively minor movements in population can greatly disturb the balance. Comparing the spatial pattern for 1981 with those of previous censuses underlies the continuing erosion and areal fragmentation of the Welsh-speaking heartland (Cymru Gymraeg Welsh Wales) and the expansion of Anglicised Wales (Cymru Ddi-Gymraeg)' (Aitchison et al., 1985, p. 14). These conclusions contained serious warnings that had to be considered in the future.

Further in his analysis, Baker scrutinised and openly questioned the national poll process and its questionnaire form. In doing so, he collected the weak points of the census to express his doubts about different measures and the results of it (this approach also hints at doubts surrounding the '79 referendum and its dubious questioning. Instead of asking straightforward whether Welsh are in favour of the establishment of a Welsh Assembly, they asked, 'Do you want the provisions of the Wales Act to be put into effect?' which supposed the background knowledge of matters which people were clearly lacking (Thiec, 1997).) First, he expressed the *ambiguity* and (hidden bias) of the questioning (readable and answerable in English and Welsh). As he explains: the question, related to all persons above three years of age was, 'Can the person speak Welsh?' If the respondent answered yes, the census then asks if the person

<sup>22</sup> 'In Wales, however, the devolution proposals were clearly and massively rejected with a two to four majority against the Assembly: 20.3% of the people who took part in the referendum voted "Yes" (i.e 11.8% of the registered voters) while 79.7% voted "No" (46.5% of the registered voters)' (Thiec, 1997).

speaks English as well and, furthermore, whether the person reads and writes Welsh, too. However, according to him, these questions do not specify the language level (beginner or fluent) of the answerer and, therefore mislead. Nor were the Welsh and English language variants of the questionnaire used equivalently: the first asked about the ability (can the person speak Welsh), while the second about the function (does the person speak English) of a language, and so they could have been answered differently by even one person if asked in the two languages. Another questionable point of the census was that it limited the participants only to Wales and so excluded those who lived elsewhere in the U. K., let alone in the U. S., or in Canada (Baker, 1985, p. 5).

Baker also mentions some *psychological factors* that might have influenced the answerers, e.g. the *social desirability response effect* (answer only positively instead of honestly), or the *experimenter effect* (unintentional enumerator influence on respondents. If someone does not feel being Welsh, due to lack of the language, it might have led to the denial of the truth.) A further psychological response mechanism is the *acquiescent response* to distort results (refusing negative answer).<sup>23</sup>

All in all, these limitations of the questionnaire caused over- and underestimations and quite successfully undermined beliefs in official data. The author's conclusion is that: 'Whether the final effect is one of exaggeration of the health of the Welsh language or of underestimation is unclear' (Baker, 1985, p. 6). In conclusion, all the aforementioned possible alterations refer to that seemingly *factual data* of the census are uncertain, and so they are not reliable. To what extent they can be uncertain, he refers to the 1971 *Irish census data*, in which 28.3% of the population declared themselves being able to speak Irish (about 816,000 people), while the Committee of Language Attitudes Research found the totally different result that 9.3% (277,000 people) of the population was really being able to speak Irish at that given time (Baker refers to Greene, 1981).

In this section I attempted to demonstrate how one single but nationwide event can influence a community, how it is interpreted by researchers and what they predict for the future. After seeing these events, we cannot wonder why it has taken so long since the 1960s to popularise the language enough to have it become official in the country.

### **Recent issues. Is Welsh difficult to acquire? How do people in Wales feel now?**

In what follows, I will summarise some contemporary research regarding the process of Welsh language acquisition among infants and the feelings and state of mind of the English and Welsh individuals living in the region of the Welsh-speaking heartlands.

First, I will examine the results of an experiment, regarding language recognition of children being raised in monolingual English/Welsh or bilingual

<sup>23</sup> For example, in the case of 2,340 children above three years of age, data were collected that they could read and write in Welsh. This is obviously not true but rather an expectation of the parents, quasi wishful thinking (Baker, 1985, p. 5).

English-Welsh families (all of whom live in Wales). This survey investigates the untrained (natural) word form recognition of children between the ages of nine and eleven months in the different language environments. The results rely upon the behavioural (a turning of the head) and neurophysiological (event-related potentials, ERPs) reactions observed in the studied children. (ERP is a procedure of recording brain responses from the surface of the infant's scalp). These reactions are very important steps when acquiring language itself.<sup>24</sup> Recognising word forms is a complex process already built upon previously accomplished steps in the brain. The experimental process was connected to first hearing, then segmenting the familiar sounds and syllables, then indicating recognition by turning the head (a signal of brain activity). A lack of movement on the part of the infant was taken as an indication that the word forms were not familiar. (It is also combined with the creation of sounds by the children who gradually improve their own speech.)

An experiment by Vihman, Thierry, Lum, Keren-Portnoy, and Martin shows that behavioural responses (head turn),<sup>25</sup> due to mother tongue familiarity effects were detectable in the case of eleven-month-old *monolingual English* children. At eleven months, these responses were not statistically recognisable in the case of *monolingual Welsh* children.<sup>26</sup> *Bilinguals* also responded quite early (at eleven months) in both languages to the word forms of the familiar languages but not to as significant a degree as was observed in English (or French) monolinguals. (The neurophysiological findings also underpin the behavioural results.)<sup>27</sup>

Due to researcher's findings, differences between the two languages can be seen on 'the accentual, grammatical, and sociolinguistic' levels (Vihman et al., 2007, p. 475). The researchers point to three possible explanations for the differences in word recognition among Welsh monolingual children. According

<sup>24</sup> A similar inquiry is reported by Judit Gervain in her article: Mechanisms of speech recognition and language acquisition in the case of infants. (2011). Gervain argues that infants recognize grammar patterns earlier than was considered, but also underpins the idea of *mother tongue speech filtering through even in the foetal position of a baby*. Her examples suggest the capacities of babies and their *ability to differentiate* among heard languages, as they filter words from the influx of speech and are able to recognise the basic word order of their mother tongue before producing words (Gervain, 2011, p. 918).

<sup>25</sup> 'In a series of cross-linguistic studies it has been established that groups of infants respond with longer attention to untrained *familiar* than to phonotactically matched rare words by 11 months in both French (Hallé & Boysson-Bardies, 1994) and British English (Vihman et al., 2004), although at 9 months they do not yet show the effect (Vihman et al., 2007, p. 476).

<sup>26</sup> Only at twelve months of age did they show the effect of recognizing Welsh words by means of an easier test. A more complex test only revealed a tendency to recognise familiar words. The first findings were already shown by Vihman and DePaolis in 1999.

<sup>27</sup> As the researchers summarise it, 'word learning in a bilingual community is subtly different, depending on the language(s) spoken to the child. For the dominant language, the time course appears to be the same as in a monolingual setting (e.g., French in France). For monolinguals exposed directly only to the minority language, we see a delay and a difference in the attentional response. Rare or unknown words held infant attention in a way that did not obtain for children learning the dominant language of the community, perhaps because these infants are "flooded" with unknown words, and have thus learned not readily to dismiss them' (Vihman et al., 2007, p. 492).

to them, although Welsh and English are trochaic languages (displaying a strong-weak accentual pattern), the *accent in Welsh* is different. For example, the vowel of the first accented syllable is short, the middle consonant is longer, and the vowel of the final syllable is long. As a result, the second (or third) part is stressed, unlike in English words where the stress is on the first syllable. (e. g., Welsh *bwni* (bunny)/buni/ is pronounced as [hɒni]). This can be one underlying reason for later recognition.

Furthermore, depending on *grammatical gender*, the beginning of Welsh initial consonants changes, meaning that the beginning of a word can only be figured out later by a child given that this type of recognition demands quite a complex neural process. Another factor is the *sociolinguistic situation* of Welsh people. They usually all speak fluent English, while the opposite is not true of English speakers.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, children's word recognition of unfamiliar words might have happened, namely, they recognised the not-very-unfamiliar English words since they, as UK residents, are exposed to English speech.)

As a summary of the experimental results, it can be concluded that due to the different accentual, grammatical, and even sociolinguistic characteristics of languages, children may acquire a language detectably and naturally later on as a result of a language's specialty or level of difficulty.

In what follows, I continue with the social and personal aspects of the people living in one of the heartlands of Wales, in Caernarfon, Gwynedd. The author Williams states that language forms our attitude and identity as well as being part of a specific group is ascribed to the person (Williams, 2009, p. 65). However, personalities who incorporate language into their identities, can cause problems if they must live by the scenario of a minority-majority embeddedness within a society. 'It is thus to be expected that sites where language plays a particularly salient role in attitude and identity are those where different language groups come into contact', (Williams, 2009, p. 65). The author's intention is to show this mutual cohabitation and language usages via interviews and the interpretation of three episodes that characterise English/Welsh co-existence. Although Williams describes the phenomenon of parallel language based on the term *diglossia*, this term is neither neutral, nor evidence of social consensus, but rather a reflection of structural conflict between opposing interests (Williams, 2009, p. 67). Williams further states that, over the course of time, English took control of the principal governmental and administrative institutions in Wales as a *colonising force*, and its effects are still recognisable in the country.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> In the 2011 census, out of 2,955,841 people, 2,871,405 declared their proficiency in English, 672,828 understood spoken Welsh, and 630,062 can speak, read or write Welsh. Office for National Statistics, <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/QS205EW/view/2092957700?cols=measures>, Downloaded: 01. 02. 2021. Office for National Statistics, <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/QS206WA/view/2092957700?cols=measures>, Downloaded: 01. 02. 2021.

<sup>29</sup> As Williams says, 'Wales displays evidence of its colonial history', (Williams, 2009, p. 65). In my opinion, it is appalling that Williams in his 2009 study still emphasises the colonising effects of the English language that can be felt in Caernarfon.

In his article, the author analyses some events (the caravan, football, and car park episodes),<sup>30</sup> and includes six interviews as the data of his survey. These data provide a great scope of interpretation that supports the view of Williams. In connection with the first episode, it is interesting to note that (in one of the heartlands of Welsh-speaking Wales), a strong opposition against a minority and its language is very much visible and filled with hatred as evinced by the burning caravan event. The second episode refers to the slow change in administrative matters, and also the non-recognition of Welsh as an important and official language of Wales. The case might have been an impetus for the Official Languages Bill in 2012. The third episode displays a positive judgement from the Welsh' point of view and was therefore welcomed by them.

The interviews took place with Welsh-speakers (four people) and non-Welsh-speakers (two people). The non-structured questions asked about the beliefs, feelings, and behaviours as *constituents* of the interviewees' attitudes towards Welsh matters in the town. Regarding their analyses, it is clear that these attitudes all reflected the importance of in-group membership (Welsh speaker) and out-group membership (English), that was distinctively featured by the frequent use of the personal pronouns, *we* and *they*. In conclusion, Welsh vs. English individuals still thought of themselves as separate groups in 2009.

Williams's conclusion regarding his varied episodes and interviews underpin his supposition that the present state of affairs is 'a conflict theory of language use in language contact situations, rather than consensually underpinned diglossia' (Williams, 2009, p. 85). However, the author also expresses his hopes regarding the future of the heartland, from which the revival or the 'revitalisation of attitude' towards the language, may depend upon the presence of a *bilingual community*.

## Summary

In my study I conducted a diachronic analysis of the present situation of Wales, a country whose turbulent history led to difficulties in preserving identity and language. Following this, I sought answers in connection with the possibilities of bilingualism in general and in Wales in particular. Later, I showed the warnings of a factual data analysis that also included caution about reading these data. In the last section of this study, I addressed some more contemporary issues regarding experiments about language acquisition, and also textual analysis. The

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<sup>30</sup> The *caravan episode*: the newly formed (2001) Welsh language and culture pressure group Cymuned ('Community'), parked a small touring caravan in a field near to a busy traffic site close to Cearnarfon with messages to speak Welsh, and affordable house prices for Welsh. In one night, the caravan was turned over and a few months later it was set fire and burnt down. A similar episode happened is the 2006 *football episode*, when the secretary of the Caernarfon and District football league, John Prichard, was banned from holding meetings in Welsh since the association had ostensibly an English policy. After complaining about this treatment based on FIFA standards and the case's subsequent nation-wide status, the Football Association of Wales (FAW) accepted Welsh as a means of communication and started to encourage Welsh lessons for members. The *car park episode* concerns an attendant who charged £2.00 for Welsh and £4.00 for English speakers.

experimental results pointed out that Welsh is a difficult language to learn, but bilingual users of Welsh and English do not lag behind compared to monolingual language learners. The question posed in this paper's title asked whether the situation of the Welsh language and identity of people has changed since the creation of *The Welsh Hill County* written by the Welsh poet, R. S. Thomas. To answer this, I summarised some deeds of the Welsh governmental body to clarify the effort being made to revitalise the national feelings of Welsh society. As a result, the Assembly accepted the general, nation-wide Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 to make Welsh an official language. This measure was followed by the National Assembly for Wales (Official Languages) Bill in 2012, including amendments.<sup>31</sup> The Positive Planning Implementation Plan 2015,<sup>32</sup> Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers (2017),<sup>33</sup> Education in Wales: Our national mission, Action plan 2017–21 (2017)<sup>34</sup> are all middle- or long-term plans serving the region's well-being, language usage, and cultural development.

Having seen the efforts of this nation, I conclude that the state of the country has changed greatly and bilingualism is a far more focused target now. However, as there have been positive legal actions that advance the lasting aim of cultural and language preservation, it can be asserted that the growing number of declared Welsh speakers means that the sustainability of language, culture, and identity is no longer a dream, but rather a reality.

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<sup>31</sup> About the mutual use of official languages, see the following document: National Assembly for Wales, Official Languages Scheme, July 2013, Downloaded: 01. 02.2021. Assembly Commission. <https://senedd.wales/NAfW%20Documents/About%20the%20Assembly%20section%20documents/ols/ols-en.pdf>, Downloaded: 01. 02. 2021.

<sup>32</sup> Welsh Government, Positive Planning Implementation Plan 2015, [https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/positive\\_planning\\_implementation\\_plan.pdf](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/positive_planning_implementation_plan.pdf), Downloaded: 02. 02. 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Welsh Government, Cymraeg 2050, A million Welsh speakers. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/cymraeg-2050-welsh-language-strategy.pdf>, Downloaded: 02. 02. 2021. That is the aim of the society to have the abundance of Welsh speakers in Wales.

<sup>34</sup> Welsh in Education, Action plan 2017–21, <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/welsh-in-education-action-plan-2017%E2%80%9321.pdf>, Downloaded: 21. 02. 2021.

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# Theoretical parallels in the exercise of the power of vision and reading

## A comparative study of Ovid's and Caravaggio's *Narcissus*

Hoványi, Márton

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*'O utinam a nostro secedere corpore possem!  
Votum in amante novum: vellem quod amamus abesset!'*  
(*Met. III. 465-466*)<sup>1</sup>

This paper 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*. In lines 428–429 of Book IV in Ovid's poem, *Narcissus* yearningly approaches the image of his own love as reflected in the water's surface and touches the water. In Caravaggio's depiction, this gesture not only shows how vision can create illusion, but also breaks the illusion through the perception of touch that renders the object of desire unperceivable and, thus, unreachable. Since *Narcissus*'s face does not reflect the experience of breaking the illusion, Caravaggio offers an interpretation of Ovid's narration which suppresses the tension between perceptions via the domination of vision. The painting appears to claim that desire may remain unbroken based on vision even if *Narcissus* experiences the opposite. In contrast, the linearity of the narrative in *Metamorphoses* relays these two moments to the reader, one after the other. Additionally, in Ovid's version, the nature of visuality and perception appears within the story of *Tiresias*, the blind seer. Therefore, Ovid's thematization of vision becomes contextually connected to the literary motifs of blindness and foreseeing. The helplessness inherent to *Narcissus*'s physical sense of vision and *Tiresias*'s ability to foresee the future despite his blindness creates an opportunity for viewers and readers alike to ponder the potential of reading and vision in literature and art.

**Keywords:** comparative literary and cultural studies, literary theory, Caravaggio, Ovid, *Narcissus*

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<sup>1</sup> "Oh, I am tortured by a strange desire / unknown to me before, for I would fain / put off this mortal form; which only means / I wish the object of my love away." Throughout this paper, I quote Ovid's *Metamorphoses* from the following publication and English translation: Ovidius 1922, Ovidius 1892. I refer to the text giving the number of the book and lines within *Metamorphoses*.



**Figure 1**

Caravaggio: *Narcissus at the Source*. 112x92cm (c. 1599), oil on canvas.  
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Palazzo Barberini



One of Caravaggio's early paintings, *Narcissus at the Source* fits into the category of portrait-like pictures, a significant detail particularly regarding the interpretation of the myth of Narcissus (Rényi, 1999, p. 11). A painting 112x92 cm in size and created around 1599, this work is currently found in Rome, in Palazzo Barberini. It was hung on the wall of one of the chambers of the Barberini family so that the composition may be seen at its best. Viewers can see the figure of Narcissus at eye-level, and the figure's shining face immediately attracts attention. Thus, in a process that is similar to reading and in accordance with the theory of how to approach a painting developed in the Renaissance, the viewer's glance starts examining the picture from left to right (Uspensky, 1975, pp. 33–39). The represented image reminds the viewer of the lines of Book III of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Many versions of Narcissus' story are contained there, a factor that makes the picture thematically familiar. Yet, the moment that Caravaggio immortalised is not a typical one. Enchanted by the vision of his reflection, the youth's gaze is already enraptured by love. He not only touches the water surface with his left hand, but also lightly dips his fingers into the water. Despite the fact that his touch obviously breaks the illusion, the gaze does not reveal disillusionment, but rather the opposite. The peculiarity of the painting is that it is connected to lines 428–429 of Book III of *Metamorphoses*, which describes Narcissus feeling the desire of love precisely when he touches the water's surface. In the history of representations of Narcissus, Caravaggio's

depiction is very rare; to my knowledge, until the nineteenth century this is the only painting to have depicted this particular moment.<sup>2</sup>

The significance of the captured moment can be comprehended by means of comparing it to Ovid's text. In the literary text, after Narcissus arrives at the source, he first quenches his thirst in an act of taste during which the sensation of touch also takes place. Following this, the reflection that appears on the water's surface influences the perception of sight, thereby creating an internal image in the character that becomes the target of desire. According to the text, this process is followed by the moment captured in Caravaggio's painting: touch, which at first does not lead to any realisation at all, and only later enacts change on the level of the cognitive function torn from desire. These elements are further complemented by the sensations gained from hearing and sight.

While reading this prominent literary excerpt, the central significance of the faculty of sight is noteworthy. As was mentioned before, owing to the internal line of the picture's horizon and its composition arranged based upon the golden ratio, the first glance at Caravaggio's painting is also directed to Narcissus' face. Disappearing into the darkness, his gaze is asymmetrically framed by his two arms and thereby places *the process of seeing* into the visual centre. This impression is only reinforced when, looking at the reflection from a distance, we observe that the painting's composition recreates the shape of an eye. These parallels force the reader/viewer to pose the question of what particular significance *seeing* has in the story and painting of Narcissus. Both in the case of the painting and the text, *seeing* is related to (self-) interpretation. It seems as if Narcissus' gaze is in fact drawing attention to the vital importance of hermeneutics.

In addition to the hermeneutical significance of *seeing* and our awareness of the myth's tragic outcome (a fate suggested throughout by the dark tones in the painting and the narrator's sinister prolepses in the text), we must clarify who possesses the ability to see. In Ovid's work, the first character to have 'seen' (*'vidit' in praesens perfectum*) Narcissus was Echo, who glimpsed Narcissus and fell in love with him. The same event occurs within Narcissus himself, whose object of love becomes the same Echo's the moment he glanced at his own reflection. Because of the mirroring structure of the text and the painting – produced on the basis of repetition – in the course of interpretation, it may seem that the reflection is real and capable of seeing. All this is put into an essential frame in Ovid's text: the myth of Narcissus is found within the story of Tiresias foreseeing the future. (Met. III. 314-336; 509-528) Since it is precisely this framing story that reveals why Tiresias, one of the most famous prophets, was blinded by the Gods, his contextualising figure also emphasises the issue of blindness, in addition to the question of seeing: who is blind and in what sense? Beyond the evident motif of Tiresias' blindness, who is mostly far-seeing, Echo is blind because she cannot see and understand Narcissus' narcissism. In both Ovid's and Caravaggio's work, Narcissus' hermeneutical glance is blind to reality: on the one hand, he remains blind to the physical

<sup>2</sup> A traditional iconographical example is: Poussin: *Narcissus and Echo*, 74x100cm (1629–1630), oil on canvas. Louvre.

reality of the nature of water, and, on the other hand, fails to recognise himself in his own reflection. In Ovid's version, Narcissus is a character who only arrives at partial recognition; he can partially see yet remains partially blind. Although Caravaggio's Narcissus touches the water, contrary to the case of the apostle Thomas from the Gospel, it is not belief that results from his touch, but rather the untouchedness of his gaze blinded by desire.<sup>3</sup> As possibilities of for interpretation and misunderstanding, sight and blindness draw either the reader or the viewer into the myth of Narcissus in so many instances and in such a complicated way that it is reasonable to ask whether our own interpretive process is blind or not. The moment when, before realising the painting's title, visitors standing in front of Caravaggio's work in Palazzo Barberini recognise the myth of Narcissus or, owing to this, reread Ovid's text, it might be their own prejudices or viewpoint that might lead the interpretative intention to misunderstanding. The most important sign of blindness may be the static anchoring of the hermeneutical circle: "I finally understood the work of art". Full of hubris, this fictional sentence contains a driving force that subsequently encourages us to suspend interpretation and cease magnifying the infiniteness of mirroring found either within the text or painting by putting the two works of art beside one another. Yet paradoxically, we can recognise ourselves as interpreters whose task – like Narcissus' – is to understand what we have seen exactly by acknowledging the interminability of interpretation.

In addition to the thematic correspondence, the reason why we can pair Ovid's text with Caravaggio's painting lies in the visual reflection, the several anticipations, references and thought rhymes in the text. Based on repetition, its parallel structure invites us to do the same. In most cases, the viewpoints and voices intertwined in the mirroring structure are distinguishable from each other by close reading. However, parts can be found where the passive form of the verb renders it impossible to identify the voices. Located in line 424 in a scene that comes just before the instance immortalised by Caravaggio, an example of this is the verb *miratur*, meaning 'looking with admiration'. Because of the verb's passive structure, linguistically it is not clear who admires whom: is it Narcissus admiring his reflection, or conversely, is the literary text bringing the reader's viewpoint into radical closeness to Narcissus' viewpoint? In the latter case, the subjects become unidentifiable in a process that simultaneously dissolves and unites with one another by means of duplication. This twofold

<sup>3</sup> The visual representation of seeing or blindness is also radical in Caravaggio's oil painting entitled *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* painted at the very beginning of the 1600s. The painting refers to seeing in belief by depicting Thomas's eyes remaining in shadow and staring into the void beside the body of Christ, while the disciple identifies his Master by putting his finger into Christ's wound. Instead of eyesight, tactile sensation leads to spiritual recognition. To this extent, blindness in the physical sense and meeting the unknown are associated very similarly in the story of Narcissus and Thomas according to Caravaggio's interpretation. Although Narcissus' touch is soft, while Thomas' is rough, both connect to the body of the other (Jesus) or of the character believed as the other (Narcissus' reflection). In addition, both characters of Caravaggio do more than connecting when they offend borders by their touch. The wound of Jesus' body is revealed to the apostle as the sign of torture aiming at desacralization, while the untouchedness of the water of the source ceases to be the symbol of innocence due to Narcissus' touch.

vision finally summarises the internal conflict of Narcissus' personality. In Caravaggio's work the same splitting and duplication of the subject is revealed to us on the left of the centre line. If we were to upend the painting in our minds, the range of colours used is the only element that would distinguish this area from the original pattern.<sup>4</sup>

In the throbbing of the quantitative verse of *Metamorphoses*, the rhythm continuously invites the reader to reflect upon the aspect of time. The motif of Tiresias' blindness represents past and future, while Narcissus, stuck in self-love instead of reality, represents the frozen present.<sup>5</sup> However, the gestures in the examined painting show an even more precise picture. Sunk in the present, Narcissus' left hand touching the water surface may be interpreted as a movement originating in the present, but directed towards the desired future. Thus, since the painted figure's face and upper body positioned on the left side of the picture do not perceive sobering reality, the tension between the two states can be construed as if Narcissus' face and the unstable position barely supported by his right arm conveyed the fragile moment of balancing. In other words, the present is in contrast to the aerial movement of the left hand, which might refer to the experience of the future and intensifies the viewer's traditional perception of past and future owing to the Western custom of reading from left to right.

Observing Narcissus' own means of understanding, what we have previously anticipated can now be asserted: experiences and hermeneutics were organised into a hierarchical order in Caravaggio's picture. Narcissus does not believe what he has experienced by touching; thus, this type of perception is subordinate to the ability of seeing. However, the dominance of *seeing* should not result in blindness in the interpretive process. Vision, more precisely, the narcissistic interpretation of vision rules over the hermeneutical possibility of *seeing*. The consequences of this hierarchical structure are permanent: interpretation stands in the way of reality. While we approach the figure of Narcissus as active receivers and, as such, interpreters of a work of art, we have to ask the provocative question: can we see, read, and, finally, understand reality, or are we captives of our own interpretive tastes? The possibility of falsehoods in our misjudged readings of texts and blind viewings of paintings stares back at us from the mirror that is the work of art. What is more, the acknowledgement of this is also in parallel with the phenomenology of the creation of the work of art. As Derrida points out, blindness is an unavoidable part of drawing or painting, since it is impossible to see the blank paper, canvas or unfinished painting and the model to be depicted at the same time (Derrida, 1993, p. 44-45). Just as this mandatory blindness can be acknowledged on account of painting, the aporia that the understanding of writing exclusively happens by reading (while the two can never happen simultaneously) is sustained throughout the writing process. This is why every piece of writing is

<sup>4</sup> In Rainald Raabe's opinion, more differences could be found between the two figures (Raabe, 1996, p. 58).

<sup>5</sup> Ovid refers to the moment when the present becomes frozen permanence by comparing Narcissus' figure to a statue in one of the climaxes of the narrative.

exposed to the fact of not being read until the first reading, which is a trivial parallel to Derrida's artistic blindness. Exposed to the insensibility of blindness, the state of not being read or state of deafness, art exclusively owes its ability to be experienced to its own composition and individual interpretation. This radical fragility gains a remarkably important role in the threefold relationship of author, work of art and receiver (Derrida, 1993).

In interpreting the central figure of Narcissus, we cannot avoid the recurring motif of water. Thus, we may pose the question independently: what story underlies the role of water in Ovid's text and Caravaggio's painting? Several readings on the nature of water are possible in *Metamorphoses*. Our first insight into the source comes from the narrator's perspective: '*fons erat inlimis*' (Met. III. 407), which means that the water source seems transparent. The description of the story of the source completes the narrator's own perception in the following lines, in which the reader is informed that no man or animal has ever touched its surface. As such, this source can be viewed as the symbol of untouched virginity. In the moment represented by Caravaggio, precisely this untouchedness ceased, which, owing to Ovid's original description, can also be associated with sexual intercourse. In Narcissus' perception, water first appears in its materiality when the hero quenches his thirst with it. As a drink, water is still transparent from the point of view of visuality (Met. III. 416), although the narrator anticipates the awakening of a new desire following the slaking of thirst in a previous line: '*dumque sitim sedare cupit, sitis altera crevit*'. After the smooth water surface is stirred by touch, Narcissus does not perceive it anymore as transparent, but rather as a medium behaving like a mirror. The tragic instance is that the reader and the viewer of the painting have been aware of the reflective nature of water from the start, while Narcissus still considers the nature of water transparent and is looking for that whom he wishes to glimpse beyond the water's surface. The illusion seen in the water behaving first as material, then a transparent medium and presently a reflective medium should finally break in the moment represented by Caravaggio, when water starts behaving as a border.

The topic of border and crossing borders offers individual modes of interpretation that reflect on several approaches mentioned so far. The hand sinking into the untouched water surface in Caravaggio's painting and the kissing of the water's surface in Ovid's poem imply sexual contact and the unfulfillment of autoerotic desires. In connection with water, Narcissus has not yet crossed the border of recognition in the painting. In *Metamorphoses*, following the moment represented in the painting, Narcissus partially crosses the border of recognition; however, since this has not alleviated his desire and his tragic fate has already been sealed, we should mostly consider the disclosure of the subject's internal borders, the splitting of the *self* and the *ego*. Narcissus' personality tragically splits between reality and desire, a circumstance that eventually leads to his own death. All this is related to the hierarchy of seeing and vision, especially if we first believe Narcissus and, accepting the transparency of water, also assume a seeing figure on the other side of the mirror. This interpretation is supported by the fact that when the two gazes

meet, Ovid's text describes the twin nature of the eyes.<sup>6</sup> Both in the painting and the text, the clarity of the temporal borders and the impossibility of their crossing are just as important, as has already been mentioned in connection with the character of Tiresias and Narcissus' desire. Moreover, when comparing the two works of art, we may also perceive crossing intermedia borders, an act that eventually leads to the borders of our own interpretive process. The identification of borders, recognition of crossing borders or the lack of either ability may highlight the point wherein we lose the sense of reality – as happened to Narcissus – or, in our case, recognition of the work of art.

In conclusion, it can be stated that seeing and reading compete with one another in search of interpreting Narcissus' story. The basis of their exercise of power against one another lies in the story of the interpretive prejudices of Narcissus and his readers or viewers. This is why the mirror encourages us to look into ourselves and sincerely acknowledge that we need to reread the story and continually revise our own interpretations. We will only do so, however, if our aim is to experience ourselves as someone who understands. This is no more than a performative repetition of the above, about which we may calmly pronounce the verdict: it is redundant. Yet the stake, it seems, is how precisely this 'redundancy' can be turned into the indispensable domain of aesthetical discourse. Could this be accomplished by sustaining repetition?

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<sup>6</sup> In Latin pointing out the twin nature of eyes may at once refer to the paired organ of seeing and to Narcissus' and his reflection's eyes in the experience of mirroring. This impossibility of choice reveals the same structure based on repetition and made infinite which has already been discussed. Due to its nature, repetition suggests identicalness in space, while in its temporality it calls for a history of origin. Thus, at first glance, the copy may always lead the interpretation to the theory of equality. Yet, its genealogy organises the experience of temporal succession into a (patriarchal) hierarchy. This hierarchy, which totalised the difference between the original and the forgery in the classical world of paintings in an aesthetical, ethical, and materialistic sense, was relativised with unexpected speed in the middle of the twentieth century in the artistic movement of pop art or the intertextuality of postmodern literature. This new legitimacy of repetition has, however, remained just as threatening to human relationships today, as it was fateful in Ovid's story.





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## Authors

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**Árva, Valéria** (Ph.D. in Language Pedagogy) is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education, ELTE, Budapest. She teaches Language Development for Bilingual Primary Teachers, English Language Children's Literature, Pronunciation Development and ESP for Infant Caregivers courses. Her research interest is in early childhood language development, bilingual kindergarten education, English language children's literature and teaching ESP. She is currently a member of the European Project entitled Writing for Inclusion (WIN Project), 2020-22. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6346-6241>; [arva.valeria@tok.elte.hu](mailto:arva.valeria@tok.elte.hu))

**Bajzáth, Angéla**, Ph.D., works at Eötvös Loránd University's Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education in Budapest. She lectures on family sociology, children's rights, and safeguarding. She researches intercultural education competencies and educational innovation. One of her current research projects is to develop a learning environment to train Culturally Competent Educative Professionals through a practice-based methodology. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0644-0029>; [bajzath.angela@tok.elte.hu](mailto:bajzath.angela@tok.elte.hu))

**Bereczkiné Záluszkai, Anna**, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor at ELTE TÓK and a Hungarian-Russian-French high school teacher. Her research interests include children's literature, early childhood literature, and Francophone culture. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0499-2599>; [bereczkine.anna@tok.elte.hu](mailto:bereczkine.anna@tok.elte.hu))

**Bernhardt, Renáta**, Ph.D., is a Senior Lecturer at Eszterházy Károly Catholic University, Jászberény Campus, Hungary. She conducts teacher training seminars and an obligatory course-unit for students specialising in pedagogy. She holds courses on the theoretical issues related to education, didactics, pedagogical consultancy, and research methodology. Her research interests involve innovative pedagogical practice, cooperative learning, and pedagogical concepts of teachers. She presents at conferences and writes articles and chapters in both English and Hungarian. She is Chair of the Hungarian Pedagogical Society in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1902-6388>; [bernhardt.renata@uni-eszterhazy.hu](mailto:bernhardt.renata@uni-eszterhazy.hu))

**Bethlenfalvyné Streitmann, Ágnes**, Ph.D., is a Professor at Apor Vilmos Catholic College. Her research interests lie in the fields of project-based language learning, second language acquisition in early childhood, English children's literature, storytelling techniques in teaching young EFL learners, and intercultural dialogue

through stories. As Head of International Relations at her institution, she is in charge of the internationalisation policy at Apor Vilmos Catholic College. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7952-6608>; [streitmann.agnes@avkf.hu](mailto:streitmann.agnes@avkf.hu))

**Cs. Czachesz, Erzsébet**, Ph.D., is Professor Emerita at the Institute of Intercultural Psychology and Education, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary. Her research interests and publications cover the fields of reading comprehension, linguistic and cultural diversity, bilingual and intercultural and inclusive education. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3235-6875>; [czachesz.erszebet@ppk.elte.hu](mailto:czachesz.erszebet@ppk.elte.hu))

**Czirmai, Hanna Zorka** is a graduate of Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education with a Bachelor's degree in Infant and Early Childhood Education. Her main research topics are early childhood education, infant care, and multicultural education in early ages. She is professionally motivated to support the first multicultural and widely inclusive daycare in Hungary with specific curricula focusing on acceptance. ([hanna.zorka@gmail.com](mailto:hanna.zorka@gmail.com))

**Czövek, Csenge** received her degree in pre-school education from Eötvös Loránd University. Her passion for early childhood education originates from an eight-month internship spent at a nursery in Florence, Italy. Here she acquired the skills and methods deemed essential for the Tuscan approach to early childhood education. Relying on her experiences there, she completed and submitted a research project to the Student Scholarly Circle competition, where she attained third place. Currently, she works as the Vice Nursery Principal of Játékvár, the perfect work environment for studying the effects of multicultural education due to its students who come from various cultural backgrounds. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4351-1874>; [jatekvar@bolcsode-bp08.hu](mailto:jatekvar@bolcsode-bp08.hu))

**Darvay, Sarolta**, Ph.D., human biologist, is an Associate Professor at the Department of Natural Sciences at Eötvös Loránd University's Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education. She also lectures at the Department of Biology of the Pedagogical Faculty of J. Selye University. Based on her qualifications she is a teacher of biology and geography and has a dr. univ. and PhD degree in Human Biology and has habilitated in Education Sciences. Her several decades of professional activity have mainly been conducted with an emphasis on health education, health promotion, and sustainability education in undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate education and research. She is an active participant in several international research projects. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9862-015X>; [darvay.sarolta7@gmail.com](mailto:darvay.sarolta7@gmail.com))

**Déri, András** is a sociologist, youth researcher, and Assistant Lecturer at the ELTE Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education. He mainly teaches courses related to sociology and social policy. His research interests include social inequalities, online communities, generational theories, and non-formal learning. He has been involved in various projects related to youth work and youth policy analysis and is currently a member of the Hungarian working group of the EU Youth Wiki. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6716-5895>; [deri.andras@tok.elte.hu](mailto:deri.andras@tok.elte.hu))

**Endrődy, Orsolya**, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary at the Department of Intercultural Psychology (Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology). Her research interests are early years, iconography, childhood studies, and cross-cultural comparative analysis. Among others, she is editor of the Hungarian Educational Research Journal. Her first monograph was published in 2015 by Eötvös Publishing with the title *Conceptions of Childhood in the Renaissance - an Iconographic Analysis*. Among her publications, several examine Narratives of Childhood in Japan and Hungary. Her latest publications are related to the topic of Early Childhood in Global Context; she focuses on kindergarten system analyses in Asia and Africa. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6432-1095>; [endrody.orsolya@ppk.elte.hu](mailto:endrody.orsolya@ppk.elte.hu))

**Fenyődi, Andrea** is an English teacher and lower primary teacher, a Ph.D. student, and author and editor of numerous Ethics coursebooks. She is an Assistant Professor at Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education, Budapest and has taught courses in English-language teaching methodology, grammar, language development, early language development for early childhood educators, and children's literature. Her research fields include teachers' beliefs, learning and teaching strategies, and learning theory. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0262-8438>; [fenyodi.andrea@tok.elte.hu](mailto:fenyodi.andrea@tok.elte.hu))

**Furcsa, Laura**, Ph.D., is a Senior Lecturer at Budapest Business School, University of Applied Sciences, Department of Communication. She graduated from Eötvös Loránd University with a major in English and German Languages and Literature and from Miskolc University as an economist. She also has a degree from Corvinus University as sociologist-economist and completed her PhD at Eötvös Loránd University's Language Pedagogy Doctoral School. She has participated in several social and educational research projects and curriculum development. Currently, she holds courses on different aspects of communication and culture. She is a regular reviewer and contributor to conference presentations, professional journals, and doctoral dissertations. Her publications cover a wide range of topics and reflect her professional interests in the social characteristics of communication and language development. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8036-4004>; [furcsa.laura@uni-bge.hu](mailto:furcsa.laura@uni-bge.hu))

**Gáspár, Adrienn** is co-director of FBG (For a Bilingual Generation), a language programme founded in 2020 that offers English-language instruction for children. As a bilingual kindergarten teacher, she encourages children to be curious and open to new experiences. Not only about foreign language acquisition, at FBG she also provides a complex approach to personality development that takes place in English. It is her intention to add to the professional discourse surrounding modern pedagogical approaches and promote methodological culture in the field of early years' language acquisition. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7284-3726>; [english.fbg@gmail.com](mailto:english.fbg@gmail.com))

**Gulyás, Barnabás** is a social worker, community and civil development expert, and Assistant Lecturer at the ELTE Faculty of Education and Psychology.

His research interests include the organisation and quality of youth work, organisational and informal learning in youth work, social belonging, and local identity. He teaches courses related to community development and youth work, youth policy. He is also active as freelance trainer of international youth work activities. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8026-7765>; [gulyas.barnabas@ppk.elte.hu](mailto:gulyas.barnabas@ppk.elte.hu))

**Hoványi, Márton**, Ph.D., S. T. L. is a literary theorist and Catholic theologian. Born in Budapest in 1986, he received his first Ph.D. degree (summa cum laude – 2017) from the Faculty of Humanities of Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in comparative literature. His dissertation was on Péter Hajnóczy's oeuvre. He received his Licentiate of Sacred Theology (summa cum laude – 2017) from the Faculty of Theology of Pázmány Péter Catholic University (PPKE). Now he is a Ph.D. candidate at the same University (PPKE). He has carried out research work in Belgium (K.U. Leuven) and in the U.K. (University of Oxford). He published his first book entitled *Prophetic Counterparts in The Brothers Karamazov* in 2015. He has delivered talks concerning his research topics at Harvard University (Cambridge/MA), University of Pittsburgh (PA), Georgetown University (Washington, D.C.), KU Leuven (Belgium), University of Oxford (UK), Hungarian Academy of Science (Budapest). He was a Visiting Research Fellow at Yale University from 2018 to 2019. Currently he is a Senior Lecturer at Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest, Hungary). His fields of research are: the theology of desire, theological hermeneutics and the relationship between deconstruction and constructive theology, comparative literature, literary theory, F. M. Dostoevsky, and Hungarian prosaic works in the 20th and 21st century. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0399-068X>; [hovanyi.marton@tok.elte.hu](mailto:hovanyi.marton@tok.elte.hu))

**Kitzinger, Arianna**, Ph.D., originally graduated as an educator of Hungarian and English Language and Literature. She wrote her BA and MA theses on Finnish and American literary themes, then defended another MA thesis on the language policy of the EU. In 2015, she completed her PhD in Linguistics at Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest with a dissertation on the challenges of multilingual and multicultural education. Her new research topic is the socio-linguistic effects of the political transition in post-communist states during the 1990s. At present she is an Associate Professor and Head of the Human Sciences Research Centre (HSRC) at the Benedek Elek Faculty of Pedagogy, University of Sopron. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8025-9885>; [kitzinger.arianna@uni-sopron.hu](mailto:kitzinger.arianna@uni-sopron.hu))

**Kopházi-Molnár, Erzsébet**, teaches in Veszprém at the Institute of Educational Science of the Faculty of Modern Philology and Social Sciences of University of Pannonia. She graduated from the University of Szeged as a Russian-English Language and Literature secondary school teacher. At the beginning of her career, she worked in a secondary school in Nagykanizsa before teaching at Kaposvár University for more than thirty years and taught English literature, children's literature and language teaching methodology to lower primary school students

and kindergarten students. Her main interest is modern re-written tales and their reception among children. She has been a language teacher of English and a language examiner for decades. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6526-1469>; [kophazie@gmail.com](mailto:kophazie@gmail.com))

**Kőrös, Noémi** is a teacher and musician born in Budapest, Hungary. She spent the majority of her childhood in Malaysia, where she studied at an international school until the age of 15. This gave her the linguistic fluency that would later aid her English teaching studies and career. She completed her Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education at ELTE TÓK. Inspired by her own multicultural upbringing, her major field of research has focused on observing the connections between children of different cultures and the possible implication of an educational system in which cultural awareness can be encouraged at a young age. After her time at university, Noemi taught English at kindergartens both in Hungary and Barcelona. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0150-2657>; [korosmimi@gmail.com](mailto:korosmimi@gmail.com))

**Kovács, Ivett Judit**, Ph.D., graduated from Eötvös Loránd University, (ELTE, Hungary) with a degree in Hungarian Literature and Grammar and Literary Translation; she completed her doctoral degree at ELTE, Doctoral School of Education. She is a Senior Lecturer at ELTE, Faculty of Education, and also works as a university lecturer at Apor Vilmos Catholic College. Her research interests include international and bilingual early years education, intercultural teacher communities, professional learning, and the organisational culture of educational institutions. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9670-5472>; [kovacs.ivett@ppk.elte.hu](mailto:kovacs.ivett@ppk.elte.hu))

**Kovács, Judit**, Ph.D., was based at ELTE Faculty of Primary Education as Associate Professor. She gained her Masters at ELTE and at the University of Leeds, U.K. She received her PhD in Applied Linguistics and completed her habilitation in Young Learners' Education. Her main fields of research are early second language acquisition, early CLIL (content and language integrated learning), and the teacher education essential for these fields. Both her publications and teaching activity are known in Hungary and beyond. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2363-0710>; [dr.judit.kovacs@t-online.hu](mailto:dr.judit.kovacs@t-online.hu))

**Kruppa T., Éva** is a doctoral student at ELTE PPK, Éva Kruppa is writing her dissertation on institutional early childhood non-native language acquisition in the Hungarian education system. As an instructor at ELTE TÓK's Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, she has crafted an innovative course entitled Games in Early Childhood. Éva Kruppa is also co-director of FBG (For a Bilingual Generation), a language programme founded in 2020 that offers English-language instruction for children. By exposing children to different cultures and countries via the English-language course, 'Ten Months Around the World', Éva Kruppa aims to promote diversity and respect for other languages and identities. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9767-5298>; [kruppa.eva@tok.elte.hu](mailto:kruppa.eva@tok.elte.hu))

**Lehmann, Miklós**, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor, Vice Dean of Research and International Affairs and Chair of the Department of Social Sciences at Eötvös Loránd University's Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education. He obtained his PhD in Cognitive Science and his research investigates the cognitive and social effects of the digital environment, including cultural diversity and the representation of cultures in technology-centred societies. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0002-7943>; [lehmann.miklos@tok.elte.hu](mailto:lehmann.miklos@tok.elte.hu))

**Lipóczi-Csabai, Sarolta**, Ph.D., is Professor Emerita at the Pedagogical Faculty of the Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Kecskemét. She was Professor and Head of the Institute for Modern Languages, and the contact person for different international projects at the University Kecskemét. She completed her PhD in Literature Science (1998). Her research interests and publications fields include Theory and History of the Hungarian and German Children's Literature, Literature Didactics, Foreign Language Didactics. Although her publications are mainly published in Hungary, Austria (Präsens Edition) and Germany (Peter Lang, Fillibach), she has held lectures in different countries in Europe. She has been a Member of the Joint Statement of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences since 2005. (<https://orcid.org/000-0002-1849-9554>; [sarolta.lipoczi@gmail.com](mailto:sarolta.lipoczi@gmail.com))

**Lo Bello, Maya J.**, Ph.D., is a Senior Lecturer of English Language and Literature at Eötvös Loránd University's Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education, Budapest, Hungary and Director of ELTE TÓK's BA International Programme. In the field of education, her main research interests include intercultural communication and fostering cultural awareness via contemporary English literature. She is also active in the area of Romani Studies. In both English and Hungarian, she has published a range of studies in the subject of periodical studies and the oeuvre of the Hungarian critic, Miksa Fenyő. Her academic and literary translations have appeared internationally. She is currently Technical Editor of the e-journal, Hungarian Cultural Studies. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1571-1123>; [lo.bello.maya.jean@tok.elte.hu](mailto:lo.bello.maya.jean@tok.elte.hu))

**Marton, Vera** is a pre-school teacher who has been working in international kindergartens for the past 15 years and is presently employed at Lauder Javne Kindergarten. She participated in studies in Reggio Emilia at the Loris Malaguzzi International Center in 2019. She has also studied with Mara Bier, the director at The Partnership of Jewish Learning and Life in Maryland. She has been researching and studying the Reggio Emilia Approach since taking part in conferences in Maryland and Reggio Emilia. Her thesis entitled Bilingual education in an early years setting: An analysis of a Reggio-inspired practice, was written on this topic. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2842-1945>; [martonv@lauder.hu](mailto:martonv@lauder.hu))

**Nemes, Magdolna**, Ph.D., is a teacher of Ethnography and Hungarian Literature and Grammar with a Master's degree from the University of Debrecen and a PhD. She obtained a professional qualification as a teacher

of English Language and Culture (University of Miskolc, 2012) and as an English-Hungarian translator in Social Sciences and Economics (University of Miskolc, 2017). In 2011 she launched a special programme in the teaching of English to young learners for Early Childhood Education BA students at the Faculty of Education for Children and Special Educational Needs of the University of Debrecen. Her main research areas are bilingual children; the difficulties of becoming bilingual; language learning; linguistic socialisation and the effectiveness of early English. She regularly takes part in conferences where she gives papers about her research projects and publishes scientific papers. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1007-1323>; [nemesm@ped.unideb.hu](mailto:nemesm@ped.unideb.hu))

**Noé, Zsuzsanna** is an educator with seventeen years of experience. She attained her BA at ELTE, Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education, then received her Masters at ELTE in Education Science and has recently graduated as Teacher of English MEd from the University of Pannonia. For years, she worked abroad and gained experience in second-language acquisition classrooms. She is currently based at Lauder Javne School, Budapest. Her main fields of research are early second language acquisition, the teacher's role in efficacy, and CLIL (content and language integrated learning) classroom management. She regularly publishes and holds workshops in this area in Hungary and abroad. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6607-2144>; [noesusan@gmail.com](mailto:noesusan@gmail.com))

**Palkóné Tabi, Katalin**, Ph.D., has been teaching English and Literature since 2003. After researching the relationship between Shakespeare's text and the theatre for ten years, she turned her interest towards TEYL through children's literature and cooperative forms of teaching. She has been teaching English children's literature, EFL, and intercultural competence at Apor Vilmos Catholic College since 2016. Her areas of research include early language acquisition, innovative teaching methodology, and cultural values in education. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0067-4585>; [tabi.katalin@avkf.hu](mailto:tabi.katalin@avkf.hu))

**Podlovics, Éva Lívía**, Ph.D., graduated in English and Philosophy at the University of Miskolc. As a student, she had been digging deeply into both of her fields, therefore, English art and history, and Aesthetical, Philosophical theories still belong to her interest. As an Erasmus student, she went to Finland. After graduating, she continued her doctoral studies during which she improved her German in order to enhance her Philosophy studies, started a Translating and Interpreting course in English and German, and travelled to Austria on different scholarships. Since 2014, she has been working at the Comenius Teacher Training Campus of the University of Eszterházy Károly in Sárospatak. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1104-3682>; [eva.podlovics@unithe.hu](mailto:eva.podlovics@unithe.hu))

**Poros, Andrea** is Assistant Professor at Eötvös Loránd University's Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature. Poros teaches EFL methodology, English children's and juvenile literature, grammar, bilingual music, and visual art lessons. She is pursuing her Ph.D. in Scandinavian Studies. The topic of her thesis is Ellen Key's role as a

writer in the Modern Breakthrough, 'Det Moderna Genombrottet,' movement, the relationship between her and the nineteenth-century Scandinavian women writers, and Ellen Key's reception in Hungary. Her main fields of interest are language pedagogy, history of education, bilingualism, English children's literature, Scandinavian women's literature at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2026-2628>; [poros.andrea@tok.elte.hu](mailto:poros.andrea@tok.elte.hu))

**Szabó, Ildikó**, Ph.D., teaches the Methodology of Mother Tongue Education in Kindergarten and Primary Teacher Education at the University of Pécs. She is involved in pre-service and in-service teacher training. Her research field is literacy education and bilingual education. She has also worked as a principal of primary schools. She has taken part as an expert in several international research projects on language teaching (CuTiFoLa, pri-sec-co, MOLAN, INTACT) and reading literacy (ADORE, BaCuLit, ISIT, ELINET, BleTeach). (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2394-5237>; [szabo.ildiko2@pte.hu](mailto:szabo.ildiko2@pte.hu))

**Szaszko, Rita**, Ph.D. is Associate Professor, Head of Information and Communication Department at Eszterházy Károly Catholic University (EKCU), Jászberényi Campus, Hungary. She conducts teacher training seminars for students specialising in teaching EFL from forms one to six in primary school. She holds courses in English descriptive grammar, language pedagogy, English-speaking cultures, and EU studies. Her research interests focus on the effects of intercultural contact on foreign language learning motivation, intercultural communication, and primary-school bilingual education. Currently, she is interested in the application of online platforms as teaching support tools. She holds presentations at conferences and writes articles and chapters in both English and Hungarian. She is also a member of the editorial board of a Hungarian-English journal at EKCU. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2774-1947>; [szaszko.rita@uni-eszterhazy.hu](mailto:szaszko.rita@uni-eszterhazy.hu))

**Trentinné Benkó, Éva**, Ph.D., is Associate Professor at Eötvös Loránd University's Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education, Budapest. She holds an MEd in TESOL (UK, Leeds) and a doctoral degree (ELTE PPK). Her PhD dissertation topic is teacher training supporting early CLIL. Her taught courses include TEYL, children's literature and CLIL methodologies. She also has ten years of experience in primary EFL teaching and mentoring. She co-authored EFL coursebooks and *World at Their Feet: Children's Early Competence in Two Languages Through Education*. Her research interests include TEYL, CLIL, teacher development, and qualitative research methods. She is currently a member of the European Project 'Writing for Inclusion' and the MTA-ELTE research group focusing on primary digital language education. (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0525-7361>; [trentinne.benko.eva@tok.elte.hu](mailto:trentinne.benko.eva@tok.elte.hu))



