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and Globalisation:
A Hungarian Perspective

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Motivation, Language Attitudes and Globalisation

A Hungarian Perspective

Zoltán Dörnyei, Kata Csizér and
Nóra Németh

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Introduction

Many conditions are needed to learn a second language (L2) successfully but most teachers and researchers would agree that motivation is one of the key factors that determine learning achievement. Therefore, defining and exploring L2 motivation and researching the characteristics of motivated learners have traditionally occupied an important place on the research agenda of both applied linguists and language educators. This volume contains the results of the largest ever L2 motivation survey, involving over 13,000 language learners on three successive occasions: in 1993, 1999 and 2004. The survey took place in one particular country, Hungary, and the sample represents young teenagers from the whole cross-section of the nation. The examined period covers a particularly prominent time in the country's history, the transition from a closed, Communist society to a western-style democracy that became a member of the European Union in 2004, just weeks after we completed the third phase of our investigation. Thus, our study provides a 'motivational flow-chart' describing how the significant sociopolitical changes affected the various language attitudes prevailing amongst Hungarians and their motivation to learn five different target languages: English, German, French, Italian and Russian.

The results of the three phases of the survey have provided a wealth of data and we have been reporting various aspects of our findings in several publications over the past 10 years, both in Hungarian and English. We covered a variety of issues ranging from the changing perception of specific target languages to the attitudinal impact of intercultural contact, from the effects of schooling on motivation to the different language profiles of successful and unsuccessful learners. However, these results have not been brought together in a single volume to allow readers to consider them in relation to each other and therefore providing such a summary has been the main purpose of writing this book. Having said that, the material in this volume is far

from being a mere compilation of already published results. We have included in the analyses new data, the results of the third phase of the survey (2004), and thus this volume extends all our previous studies by adding almost 5000 new learners to the sample. We have made various predictions and formed certain hypotheses in our earlier publications about the possible or likely directions of future changes in Hungary and now, with the 2004 data available, comparing these predictions to the actual changes has been an exciting and intellectually enjoyable task.

Why Hungary? Why is this Relevant for Non-Hungarians?

Although the target of these investigations is a small European country, Hungary, we believe that the obtained results are not confined to this specific context but have wider implications. In many ways, Hungary can be seen as a laboratory in which, for various political/historical reasons, certain processes took place with unusual intensity and speed, completing a transformation much faster than in other contexts. Therefore, observing the L2-specific consequences of this transformation can shed light on broader and longer-term tendencies worldwide. More specifically, there are two aspects that make this context worthy of general interest. First, as will be elaborated on below, the large-scale socio-political changes that took place in Hungary (along with other East European countries) after the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989 had a substantial and pervasive language impact, the like of which has never been documented empirically in the L2 literature. Second, we found that the collected data provided valuable insights into the actual operation of language globalisation, an area which has attracted much attention in the L2 literature over the past decade but in which conceptual discussions have been far more numerous than studies backed up by empirical data. Let us look at these two issues in a bit more detail.

(1) *Language impact of the socio-political changes:* The collapse of the Communist rule in Hungary in 1989 initiated unprecedented changes in the history of the country. After the first free elections for some 40 years in 1990, the closed, Communist society was radically transformed into an open, market-oriented democracy. By the end of the 1990s the process had been completed: the privatisation of the economy had been finalised, resulting in a proportion of private enterprise that is comparable to the situation we find in Western Europe, and Hungary had also joined the NATO. Furthermore, in May, 2004, Hungary – along with several other post-Communist countries – was accepted as a full member of the European Union, thereby joining a very elite ‘club’.

Such a huge transformation had considerable language-related consequences, particularly in view of three powerful processes that took place:

- Russian, the compulsory first foreign language taught at every level of the Hungarian educational system before 1990, was replaced by a variety of western languages for the schools to choose from.
- Foreign television channels (mainly German-speaking but also some in English), as well as international videos and films became widespread within a few years after the changes.
- The country opened up its borders and there was a dramatic increase in foreign (mainly West European) influence both in terms of two-way tourism and economic relationships; the latter can be well characterised by the fact that in the 1990s many job advertisements in Hungarian papers were published in English or German because the multinational corporations which moved into the country wanted to screen out applicants who had insufficient foreign language proficiency.

Each of these three processes would have been expected to make a considerable impact on the population's language disposition, but the fact that they occurred in concert created a particularly intensive course of transformation.

(2) *Language globalisation*: The second issue of interest, the discovery of obvious manifestations of the process of language globalisation, was an unexpected finding in our research programme. When we initiated the project, our main research interest concerned the transformation of post-Communist Hungary and therefore we gave little thought to any potential variance within the emerging new western orientation. However, because of the consistency of the data that we had obtained we could not help noticing that one of the most salient aspects of our findings concerned a powerful process whereby the primary world language, English, gradually sidelined all the other foreign languages traditionally present on the Hungarian language learning scene, including the primary regional *lingua franca*, German. The most recent data gathered in 2004 confirmed the existence of this globalisation process and thus we believe that the Hungarian findings provide a unique blueprint of how and why language globalisation takes place in an actual language learning environment.

There is a third aspect of our study that may warrant wider interest, although this has nothing to do with the location but rather with the sample size. The exceptionally large dataset allowed us to conduct a range of sophisticated multivariate statistical procedures, including cluster analysis and structural equation modelling, and because our investigation involved a multi-occasion (i.e. repeated measures) and multi-language (i.e. the five target languages) design, the data lent itself

to such state-of-the-art analyses. As a result, many of our findings offer novel insights into the area of L2 motivation research.

The Brief History of the Project

Because the collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Block in 1989/1990 was so unexpected, we could only react to the events in a *post hoc* manner: although we soon became aware of the unprecedented social psychological curiosity of the emerging situation, it was only by 1992 that we had obtained sufficient funding to launch the first phase of our data collection. The project was initiated by Zoltán Dörnyei and he invited Richard Clément to act as a consultant in designing the main survey questionnaire. Richard also provided invaluable advice with regard to the whole first phase of the survey that finally took place in 1993. During the first round of data collection the Hungarian research team was aided by two Research Assistants, Emese Nyilasi and Krisztina Kertész. Although this first survey took place somewhat later than we would have liked – about three years after the events started to unfold in earnest – we found that at the time of the data collection the country was still very much in the initial transition period: our data showed, for example, that in 1993 over 50% of the learners in our sample still had to study the Russian language at school, not because it was a compulsory L2 any more but simply because there were not enough trained teachers of western languages available to fill the obligatory L2 slot in the school curricula.

At the very end of the 1990s, we considered the time ripe to conduct the second phase of the survey to assess the longer-term impact of the socio-political changes, and in the last few months of the millennium we launched the second round of data collection. This time Zoltán was aided by (i.e. most of the work was done by) Kata Csizér and Nóra Németh. At this stage the teaching of Russian had been completely abandoned – we did not find a single student who still learnt Russian at school – and the teaching of English and German had become typical. Because the second round of data collection targeted exactly the same population as the first one and utilised the same instrument, the resulting combined dataset provided unique longitudinal insights into the critical first decade of political freedom in Hungary.

In 2004, Hungary faced yet another historic change as in May it was to be accepted as a full member of the European Union. In this case we did have sufficient advance warning and therefore we timed the third phase of the survey for the Spring before the joining took place in order to be able to take stock of the nation's language attitudinal/motivational state prior to this significant event. This round of data collection was conducted by the same research team as the one carrying out the 1999 survey and we

had just completed the data processing before starting to write this book. The logic of our research design suggests that we should have a future, fourth wave of data collection – planned for around 2010 – which will document the effects of Hungary's re-integration into Western Europe.

The Main Focus of our Survey and of this Book

The main focus of our survey was language attitudes and language learning motivation. These two factors have traditionally been examined in their inter-relationship in L2 studies because it was recognised already in the late 1950s (Gardner & Lambert, 1959) that due to the considerable social loading of language, the motivation to learn another community's language is not merely an individualistic affair but is strongly related to various social attitudes prevailing in the learner's community concerning the target language group and towards the sociocultural 'baggage' the L2 carries. The research perspective taken in our book is 'macro-motivational': in order to obtain comparable measures from a large number of diverse locations, only those motivational dimensions were targeted that were generalisable across various learning situations. Thus, we did not assess situation-specific motives rooted in the L2 learners' immediate learning environment (e.g. attitudes towards the L2 teacher; the appraisal of the syllabus and the teaching method; or peer influences); instead, we focused on more stable and generalisable motives that stemmed from a succession of the student's past experiences in the social world.

A second point we would like to make here is that our main objective in this book is not to offer a comprehensive review of past research on L2 motivation or language globalisation and neither is it to provide detailed theoretical analysis of these complex issues. We will, of course, present a great deal of theoretical discussion in the following chapters but this will be based on our own findings rather than that of others. Readers are referred to recent reviews of the relevant literature – for example, Dörnyei (2005) on L2 motivation and individual differences in general or Maurais and Morris (2003b) on language globalisation – that can serve as starting points in exploring the broader domains. Thus, our book is intended to be an extended research report, one that reports on an exceptionally large-scale study conducted at a special time in a special place. In accordance with this aim, the material presented in the following chapters will contain a great amount of data; however, because we realise that not everybody shares our enthusiasm for figures and statistics, we have made a real attempt in this book to translate our results into the language of the more normal, non-mathematically inclined majority: readers will find dozens of diagrams and schematic illustrations throughout the chapters and the statistical concepts will also be explained in simple terms.

The Structure of the Book

We structured the material in this book loosely around four key studies written by us – Dörnyei and Csizér (2002, 2005) and Csizér and Dörnyei (2005a, 2005b) – but we need to reiterate that these publications only analysed the data gathered in the first two phases of the survey, without covering the 2004 findings. After a relatively brief theoretical overview (Chapter 1), which also describes the research site, Hungary, we present a detailed methodological summary of our investigation (Chapter 2), and this is followed by five discussion chapters: Chapters 3 and 4 provide a general description of the main findings of the survey, and in the subsequent chapter (Chapter 5) we introduce a new L2 motivation theory, the ‘L2 Motivational Self System’, that was inspired and empirically supported by our findings. In the last two analysis chapters (Chapters 4 and 5) we examine two novel issues in the L2 motivation literature: (1) the motivational profiles of successful and unsuccessful language learners and how learning one language can interfere with another; and (2) the motivational impact of increased intercultural contact between members of the L1 and the L2 communities. Finally, the Conclusion draws the various lines together, thereby outlining the bigger picture.

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Such a huge enterprise could not have been carried out without the contribution of a great number of research assistants and contracted field workers. Special thanks are due to Emese Nyilasi and Krisztina Kertész, who were Senior Research Assistants during the first phase of the survey, to Valéria Szabó, János Hos and Miklós Nagy, who were particularly active at the various data collection stages of the project, and to Robert Nagy for his help with the data entry. We are indebted to Richard Clément (University of Ottawa, Canada) for his role in ‘co-launching’ the project in 1992 and his ongoing help during the 1990s. We would also like to acknowledge the generous help by Eszter Dombóvári and Mátyás Gede (Eötvös University, Budapest) in preparing the maps in Figures 1.1 and 2.1.

We are grateful to the Principals and Heads of the schools in our sample for allowing us access to the teachers and pupils in their schools. We thank the patience and cooperation of those teachers whose lessons we disrupted with the administration of our questionnaire and the more than 13,000 students who completed the instrument (with much enthusiasm, especially when class quizzes were cancelled because of our arrival). Without their invaluable support this book could not have been written.

As mentioned earlier, we have published several papers and book chapters analysing various aspects of the survey and some of the data was also used in Kata Csizér's PhD dissertation (2004). We would like to thank all the colleagues in the field who, anonymously or not, reviewed our earlier relevant articles and book chapters and also parts of the manuscript of this book – we have learnt a lot from their comments and the current text has improved greatly as a result of their suggestions. Last but not least, we would like to thank Marianne Nikolov, who as an external examiner of Kata's dissertation provided detailed and insightful comments.

Finally, we are grateful to Tommi Grover from Multilingual Matters, who supported our book project right from the beginning, and David Singleton for his help and encouragement as Series Editor. It may sound banal, but without such committed publishers and editors there would be no academic books, particularly not of this research kind!

Chapter 1

Background Information and Theory

In accordance with the profile of this book, this chapter cannot offer a comprehensive review of the theory and research associated with the complex issues addressed. Instead, we first provide some background information about the research site, Hungary, and then introduce certain key theoretical constructs to help to contextualise the topics addressed later. For a more detailed account of the particular topics, please refer to the works cited in the text.

A Thumbnail Description of Hungary

Hungary is a relatively small country in Central Europe with a population of around 10 million (for a map, see Figure 1.1). Situated largely in the Danube Valley and surrounded by the Carpathian Mountains, the greatest internal distance within the country does not exceed 320 miles. Hungary has had a rather turbulent history. Founded by the Magyar tribes migrating from the East in the 10th century, the country soon adopted Christianity and became a thriving feudalist kingdom, reaching its peak in the 15th century. Hungarians like to remember this 'Golden Age' when, for a brief period, the illusion of grandeur was within arm's reach and the Hungarian army achieved success after success – something that is so difficult for us to imagine because Hungarian forces have not won a single major battle or war since then. After these glorious days Hungary became a buffer state between the expanding Ottoman and Hapsburg Empires (the Danube Valley offered an ideal battle ground) and in 1526 the country was conquered by the Turks. They were expelled by the Hapsburgs after 150 years but this 'liberation' did not lead to freedom but rather to a 400-year Hapsburg domination with regular and consistently unsuccessful Hungarian uprisings.

Being on the losing side in World War I meant that the territory of Hungary was reduced substantially, to about one-third of its original size. Partly to regain the lost land, Hungary allied with the Germans in World War II and when our allegiance became too reluctant in 1944,

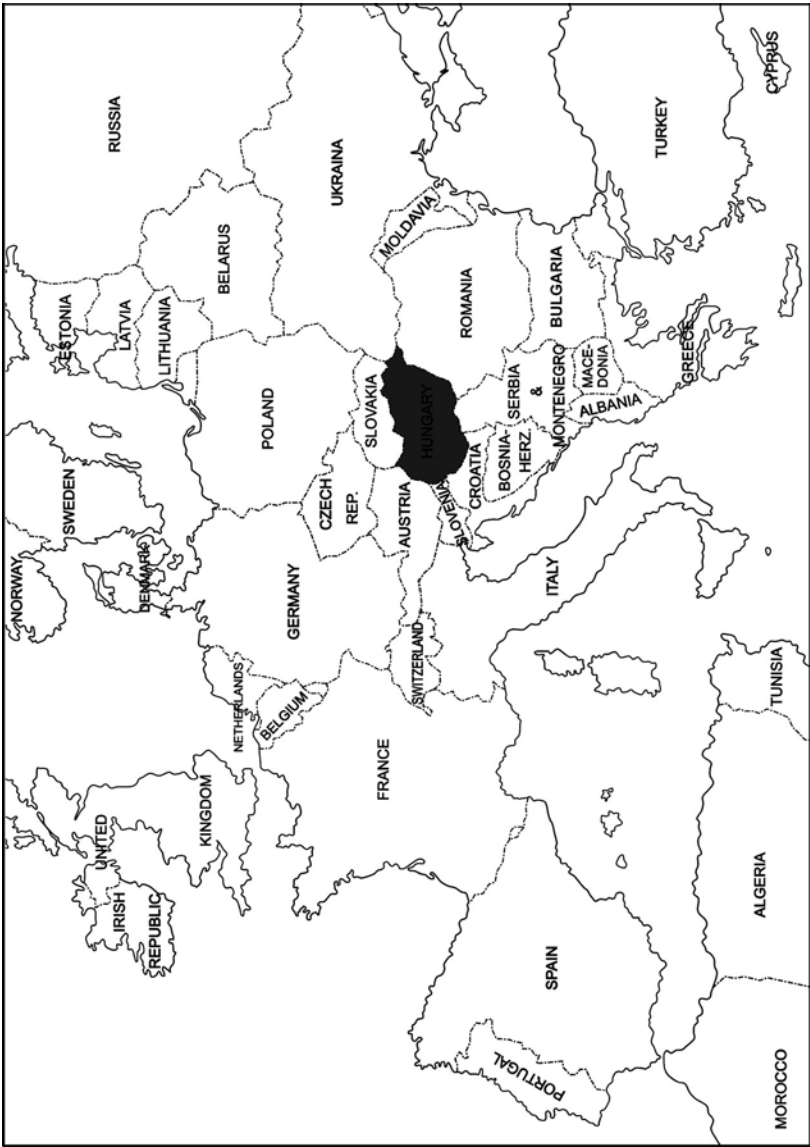


Figure 1.1 Map of Hungary within Europe