<div align="center">**Dissertation evaluation**</div>

<div align="center">**Bilingual written word recognition of learners of English in a vocational secondary school**</div>

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General evaluation

This dissertation sets out to investigate the bilingual written word recognition of a group of English learners at a vocational school in Western Hungary. This is a topic that merits attention, especially with a participant group type that is less often researched. The author shows the ability to carry out her own research, however, there are serious shortcomings as regards the planning and the final product, even though there are some improvements made to the text compared to the previous version.

The author seems to be in difficulty finding focus and coherence. This goes for the content as well as the academic writing aspects of her dissertation. The major section titles do not always match the most commonly accepted ones for a dissertation (introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, conclusion) or do not have the main functions of these. The general research aims formulated in the abstract and on page 2 go well beyond the ones suggested by the title and would need several additional dissertations to be answered. The lack of coherence is evident at text level as well with text fragments of 1-2 sentences put one after another without connection in all chapters.

The use of sources is weak. In-text citation formats are mixed with unjustified footnotes listing webpage links even if these hide journal articles or dissertations that should be cited as the other sources. It is unclear why some sources are listed as "Further sources" using an unconventional format, making it extremely difficult for the reader to track sources. A third list of "internet sources" also include illustrations from published articles, but also non-academic sources (such as the Wikipedia and thefreedictionary.com) that should be avoided in a dissertation. Long quotations should be embedded in the discussion of the running text or formatted as block quotations, rather than serve as independent paragraphs. The language of the text would need additional English language and academic writing development, although some signs towards improvement are seen. A general final editing and formatting would have added a better general impression to the text, eliminating, for example, section titles appearing at the bottom of pages.

Review of individual chapters

In the following sections I will point out only some of my main critical remarks regarding individual chapters.

Introduction

This chapter seems to fuse traditionally two independent chapters, the introduction and the literature review. This was changed after the in-house defense, to include what was originally

named as foreword, but the modifications did not improve readability. The introduction should indicate the significance of the problem, contextualize the study, and provide an introduction to its basic components. These are largely missing from the two pages that can be considered as the introduction. The first page mentions instructed vs natural bilingualism, cognitive advantages of bilingualism, implicit and explicit learning, followed by a paragraph-long quotation on individual differences. This does not set the ground for the research aims formulated on page 2. As pointed out above, the research aims seem to go beyond written word recognition. I could identify several sub-aims, quoting from the text (focus underlined):

1. I focus on a multifactoral analysis of Hungarian secondary vocational school students' English written word recognition.
2. I used linguistic, non-linguistic, standardized and own tests to investigate whether linguistic creativity at the word level is in harmony with the school achievements of undermotivated students coming from underprivilidged circumstances.
3. I would like to find the leading, non-linguistic factors, which must principally be developed in language teaching and learning, and within this in word recognition, in an average vocational school in Hungary, in order to achieve better results in foreign language learning.
4. I initiated this research to discover any possible correlations between linguistic and non-linguistic factors of L2 word recognition in a Transdanubian secondary school, where most of the students are from disadvantaged SES background.
5. If I find answers to my questions and fulfill my aims, I hopefully will be able to highlight the aspects of foreign language teaching and learning, which are essential for non-elite students in achieving better results in languages, in an average vocational school.

Numbers 3 and 5 seem to be teaching implications, the main problem is that the dissertation did not discuss or systematically collect data on language teaching in the given teaching context or in general.

This section would also be the place to explain the role of the researcher in planning and conducting the study and her assumptions, beliefs, and possible biases derived from her involvement with the participating students.

Sections starting from 1.1 would count as the literature review. It consists of 22 highly fragmented subchapters listing several possibly relevant topics, however, their relevance is difficult to judge in the lack of a clear introduction. The review seems more like a catalog of topics than a synthesis and integration of relevant literature. The sections are problematic both for the breadth of review (i.e., insufficient number and range of resources; minimal empirical research, failure to explain key terms) and the depth of review (i.e., use of non-scholarly material; inability to offer a critical analysis of sources, inability to connect statements).

Statements in the review are often vague and loosely connected. Example from p. 9: "Results of OECD-PISA show that education is not always successful. Children, who do not have many opportunities for successful language acquisition, have difficulties in education to catch up." Which PISA tests, which countries? L1 or L2? The mixed and non-standard citation formats and the lack of text coherence make the job of the reader even more difficult.

The last subsection covers the research goals and hypothesis. However, these are not sufficiently embedded and foregrounded by the reviewed literature and only appear as a list. RQ1 seems to be closely connected to the title, while RQ 2 and 3 have broader aims. The terminology used (*L2 achievement in school, linguistic test results, linguistic and non-linguistic types of fluency)* are not specific enough and are not properly introduced in the previous sections to comprehend the research goals and coherence behind these questions.

Please further elaborate on what these terms mean, how they connect to the research aims formulated in other sections of the thesis and in the title.

Methodology

Section 2. 1 introduces participants, and Chapter 1 also offers some information on the students (diglossia, motivation). The underprivileged status of the students and the school, undermotivation and diglossia seem to be key characteristics of the students, however, the data collected do not fully capture these aspects (see more comments on the instruments below). It would have been important to know whether participant selection was based on the above main criteria or it was a convenient sampling, based on student availability.

Section offers a review of the instruments used in the study. Table 4 helps the reader navigate between the abundant number of tests. The self-developed questionnaires have the aim to offer valuable information on the language and socio-economic background of the participants, but some of the statement are unable to fully capture these. For example, students' ownership of a mobile phone, an own TV set in their room, a private room, enrollment in private classes and travel abroad may be parental choices independent of the family's socioeconomic status, and cinema and theater attendance is rather low for any age-matching student group. These statements would probably result in similar data from students in secondary school in any large town or city.

The test and interview labeled as language attitude include a large number of general questions from handedness to parental language background. The choice between L1 Hungarian and L2 English preference and proficiency level is rather forced. Diglossia is not fully explored as the term *Hungarian* is used, parents are claimed to be monolingual Hungarians, and being corrected in Hungarian does not refer to the local variety or the standard variety or context of use. The 40 statement in the ICT and writing habits questionnaire could have been reduced to focus more on the role of ICT in language learning in school and outside of school. The statement "how often do you write by phone" could be an erroneous English translation, as it cannot have answers such as "less than an hour". The time of data collection is not indicated, but a reflection on a forced turn to distance education would have been an important addition.

Data analysis and results

This chapter 3 again seems to have a fused role. The data analysis procedure conventionally goes into the methodology section under instruments. The presentation of the results of the questionnaire and interview in sections 3.1.2 through 3.1.5 is very much list-like. Interview data would be valuable, but are not explained in the text. The linguistic test results are supported by tables, however, some of these are directly lifted from the data analysis programs and are not formatted and fully explained in the text for a reader not familiar with these programs and tests. Table 31 is meant to be a summary table including all the

instruments, but the claimed correlation data are unclear and the statistical data behind it are not adequately explained. The text claims that "Returning to the research questions and hypotheses posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to give answers (Table 31.).", but no explanation is given as for which RQs and what answers. A better place for this with more explanation would have been the next chapter where the questions and hypothesis are reviewed one by one.

Discussion

In general, the author seems to have collected a large body of data through various instruments, but their role should have been explored more carefully. The analysis is simple and is lacking synthesis, there is very little connection to other research literature or theory. Concluding statements regarding the students' background are not always grounded in data. Some examples:

> p. 116: "It is fundamental to note about the respondents' SES that most of their parents have secondary school certificate, most of them are factory workers. In these families the good school achievement is not a priority. Only a few of the students go to private classes, and none of them go to theatres or cinemas.".

Elaborate on what kind of additional data collection you would have needed to safely conclude on parental attitude towards and parental support of their children's education.

> p. 117: "Nevertheless, there are a few participants, who feel more self-confident in English than in Hungarian in situations based on communication. The reason behind it maybe originates from the correction. students are expected to Hungarian as their mother tongue since the beginning of their life."

The above statement seems to be a speculation as no data support comes for this from the questionnaires or interviews. Students are likely to be corrected in their L2 English as well. What communicative situations do you refer to and what kind of focused data collection would you need to support your claim?

> p. 117: "Most of the students' preference towards their mother tongue can explain their poor school L2 achievement and low motivation.

Mother tongue here does not include the discussion of diglossia, whether this is the local dialect or standard Hungarian. Regardless of this, this relationship is unsupported. Explain, based on the literature and your own data collection, how L1 dominance influences L2 achievement and L2 learning motivation (or motivation towards learning in general, if this is what you refer to).

> p. 119: "Having seen the contradictory results of my findings and literature background on the effects of ICT usage on scool achievement I think the following aspects should be applied in the following research. Positive effects of ICT was mainly introduced by scientific conclusions for students.

Explain what you mean by *scientific conclusion*. Compare the methods and focus of ICT literature that you refer to and those in your own study and reflect on the possible reasons behind the result mismatch.

Conclusion

This chapter offers a set of concluding statements and recommendations and points out some of the limitations. The conclusion includes some general remarks that would need more clarification, a more careful terminology use, and research support. Examples:

> p. 119: teachers "are advised to apply various and playful language teaching methods supplemented with many forms of ICT, especially in the era of digital teaching in order to provide their students with every necessary component to successful foreign language learning."

What do you mean by *every necessary component*? This is a generally true statement, but does not derive from your collected data.

> p. 119: "The age of appearance of ICT devices and language attitude negatively correlate with L2 school achievement. The earlier ICT devices appear in students' life, the worse L2 school achievment they have."

How do you explain this? Can it be the case that there are a number of interrelated factors that are hidden behind ICT appearance and L2 grades? What can these be?

Summary

To sum, the author seems to be clearly dedicated to her research topic and participant group. The less is more rule would have been useful. She is overly ambitious and shows difficulty in executing her research, drawing conclusions and writing up the dissertation.

In spite of the critical remarks and questions, it is safe to say that this dissertation satisfies the minimal requirements for a doctoral dissertation. I support its public debate and, in the case of a successful oral defense, its acceptance as a partial fulfillment of the requirements of a PhD degree.

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