Report on Alaeddine Khelife's Ph.D. Thesis:
MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TOWARDS
LEARNING HUNGARIAN MACRO- AND MICRO ANALYSES.

David Singleton

Overview

This is an impressively researched, wide-ranging and, in general, coherently written thesis.

Any flaws which characterize its general approach to the topic are not, on the whole, the fault of the candidate but tend to reflect the gaps in coherence which disfigure the research domain of L2 motivation in general. Some of such disfigurements are indeed alluded to explicitly by the candidate.

The empirical dimension of the reported research is courageously ambitious. In some respects it might be said to be excessively ambitious, but as one of the few attempts to date to come to grips with the learning of Hungarian by non-Hungarians in Hungary it merits credit for its first steps along this rocky path.

Review of the relevant literature

The candidate has done quite a reasonable job of reviewing the content of the literature bearing on his topic. All of the "big names" in L2 motivation have had their work critically summarized, although the connections and contradictions between their claims could perhaps have been more comprehensively handled.

In particular, the relationship between quantitative and qualitative approaches probably could have been more fully discussed. The collaboration between Dörnyei and Ushioda, for instance, demonstrates that such a relationship is possible, although some of Dörnyei's later work seems to indicate a view that "number-crunching" is less revealing in this area than was once imagined. This whole area might well have been explored more comprehensively by the candidate in the context of the research review, especially since such a discussion would have better prepared the ground for the later setting out of the particulars of his research approach .

More might also have been made, for example, of Dörnyei's changing relationship with Gardner's work, which started out as condemnatory and ended up to a large extent reconciliatory. Thus, notably, there was period early in his career when Dörnyei more or less completely dismissed Gardner's claims, but the latter's idea of integrativeness was one to which Dörnyei in the end warmed to. This reconciliation might have been worthy of more comment.

With regard to the candidate's treatment of the intrinsic versus extrinsic definitions of motivation, as he reports, intrinsic motivation is usually defined as describing the undertaking of an activity for its inherent satisfaction while extrinsically motivated behaviour is defined as describing behaviour driven by external rewards or punishments. The candidate fails to mention that Ushioda sees both types of motivation as interacting in different ways with learner autonomy or that Noels et al.'s treatment of extrinsic motivation (referred to by Dörnyei) is defined in terms of regulation rather that motivation.

Nor does the candidate have much to say his literature review about the phenomenon of the complete absence of motivation – "amotivation". This is a pity since amotivation could be very relevant in a consideration of the classroom language learning of a difficult language in a foreign environment.

The last four paragraphs of the above indicate, by way of example, some theoretical areas which the candidate might have discussed and which he may wish to explore in his future publications. As indicated earlier, however, I am satisfied that his command of the relevant research literature is broadly satisfactory.

Design and evaluation of the research methodology

The care taken by the candidate with the design and evaluation of the research approach and instrumentation in his methodology is in many ways exemplary, and the plan he proposes appears to promise much. In particular, the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches is in line with some of his earlier discussion and is certainly in tune with the current *zeitgeist*. A question-mark perhaps hangs over the matter of the relative perceived importance that might be attributed by readers of the thesis to the candidate's macro-study

versus his micro-study on the basis of their treatment in its pages. We shall return to this point a little later.

The candidate's preparation of his macro-study instrumentation was almost breathtakingly careful. The instrument for the macro-study was a cross-sectional nation-wide survey, where the questionnaire design was based on material gleaned from a widespread reading of the literature on anxiety, attitude, and motivation. The questionnaire was drafted also on foot of weekly consultations based on situation assessment derived from students' responses regarding their reasons for enrolment and the challenges they faced. In addition, it was informed by a peer-review consultation with fellow researchers regarding the validity and clarity of the questions. Following adjustments, there was then a second peer-review, and, based on the feedback received, further ameliorations were then implemented.

The instrument utilized for the detailed micro-study dimension was based on the "motometer" designed by Gardner for single measures of state motivation throughout the academic year. This had been adapted by Waninge et al. to detect motivation variance within a lesson. The "motometer" is composed of ten figures shaped as a thermometer with a percentage-based scale from 0 to 100, with each figure being prompted every five minutes. Motivation was defined in terms of effort and enjoyment reported as experienced. Each feedback sheet had a section below the "motometer" for the recording of qualitative comments on students' experience.

The question-mark referred to above relates to the number of participants who were subjected to the "motometer" probe – namely, four. This number is very small and does not seem to allow for the kind of spread of results which one might look for even in this kind of micro dimension. The danger may be that, given the massive amount of effort that clearly went into the above-described nation-wide survey, the "motometer" research might be interpreted as an after-thought and as of little import.

Discussion of results

There is a veritable superabundance of results deriving from the processes utilized in the above-described investigation. These results are recounted in very full detail. This is of

course as it should be. Questions arise, however, as to the extent to which the candidate has succeeded in "distinguishing the wood from the trees".

Any reader of the thesis will be interested not only in the fine *detail* of results but also in the general significance of the results in question. When attempts at deducing the overall significance of such results have been made, what have emerged are very often clichés. What is missing in the candidate's account is a level of recounting results between technical fullness and simplified résumé. Such a level will certainly be required if the candidate has ambitions, for example, of turning the thesis into a book.

Conclusion

The author of the thesis has produced a work which is definitely of doctoral standard. My opinion is, therefore, is that he should certainly be awarded a Ph.D.

If he intends to publish some or all of the thesis, he should be aware that the text will require substantial revision in places.