

Reactions to the review written by Prof. David Singleton

Dear Prof. Singleton,

Thank you for your thorough review and the time and energy you devoted to read my dissertation on 'Motivation and Attitude of International Students Towards Learning Hungarian. A Macro- and Micro Analyses.' Your insightful comments on the chapters are immensely helpful.

I have responded to your comments individually, indicating exactly how I plan to address each concern and describing the changes I plan to make in case of future publication(s).

I appreciate your recommendation for a successful defense up to doctoral standards and thank you for your interest in this study.

Comment 1:

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.

Response 1:

Thank you for the encouraging remarks. I have always felt compelled to research the phenomenon of international students learning Hungarian in Hungary. This context is quite challenging as Hungarian can be considered L3 or even L4 for some students, and by definition it is neither a second language for most foreign students nor a foreign language, but it is definitely an untypical study abroad context where the language of the environment is Hungarian while the language of instruction is mainly English. Study abroad (or SA) program is a type of experiential language learning as students are exposed to sociocultural experiences and real-world situations (Wilson et al., 2016). SA experience is expected to increase L2/Ln motivation and proficiency; however, empirical research shows that it is affected by a host of individual variables and the motivation and proficiency outcomes show a wide variation (Kinging, 2011; Taguchi, 2016). Dörnyei (2019) notes that the L2 Learning Experience is the Cinderella of the L2MSS because it is broad umbrella term which has never been fine-tuned.

Furthermore, what I found in the literature is a gap in unifying all the motivational theories and related concepts as a magical umbrella, but it seems far fetching and unrealistic. However, The Palgrave Handbook of Motivation for Language Learning (Lamb et al. (eds.) 2019)) gives a very useful overview of the existing theories. While some researchers treat these concepts as static, others urge to consider motivational self-guides as dynamic. With the emergence of the complex dynamic systems theory and the revisited psychological aspect of research on learning motivation, most theories had some criticism. Considering these challenges and uncertainties regarding the context of the study, the theoretical and methodological, I tried to do my best treading these rocky areas.

Comment 2:

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 than motivation.

Nor does the candidate have much to say in 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.

Response 2:

Thank you for pointing out the weaknesses in my literature review. Also, I agree with the comments on the choice of authors and theories. After summarizing the articles and books I had on learning motivation, I grouped them based on relevance and I had different phrases highlighting the same concepts that I mentioned in the tables. I hope I managed to highlight the differences between these concepts and their resemblance to some extent. Thank you for highlighting Dörnyei's "relationship" with the qualitative-quantitative dichotomy and with Gardner's work. Looking at his work on research methodology clearly shows how important he considered qualitative analyses which is confirmed by his soon-to-be-published books at Multilingual Matters:

Mentzelopoulos, K., & Dörnyei, Z. with Trotignon, C. (in press). *Stories from exceptional language learners who have achieved nativelike proficiency*. Multilingual Matters.

Dörnyei, Z., & Mentzelopoulos, K. (in press). *Lessons from exceptional language learners who have achieved nativelike proficiency: Motivation, cognition and identity*. Multilingual Matters.

In the exploratory study, a few students mentioned their amotivation to learn Hungarian then added in the comment section that they enrolled in the course for the mandatory credits, which was considered as extrinsic motivation. Following your suggestion, I looked at the literature on amotivation which is a progressively developing field and I will approach the data from this point of view as well.

Comment 3:

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.

Response 3:

I remember being asked this question at the summer school of Psycholinguistics. Both studies are dynamic. The macro study is based on a cross-sectional design to measure students’ motivational self-guides, and the micro study has a longitudinal design that tracks individual progress. In the literature review, I paid a particular attention to highlight variation and variability in learning motivation. Both studies track the concepts of CDST in groups and within individuals.

Waninge et al. recommended a small-scale study to track all the variables within individuals over time. While I agree that the results from 4 participants are not sufficient to draw conclusions for a larger scale such as the sample size we had for the macro study, the micro study still showed variation and variability as intended and demonstrated change, context and stability. I used the Motometer in my MA thesis project as well and it proved to be a useful instrument to measure changes in motivation, therefore, it was part of the research design from the first moment.

Comment 4:

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.

Response 4:

I totally agree with the comments on the tremendous results that I have. I had the opportunity to broaden my statistical analysis skills and present the questionnaire results as I did. On the long term, I plan on generating more results from the questionnaire that is kept online to collect more data. I would appreciate having your suggestions for future research. The collected data is dense and it still has lots of potential for more fine-grained analyses and interpretation but in the given time-frame it was not possible.

Comment 5:

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.

Response 5:

Thank you for going through my dissertation and highlighting the pros and cons. All the suggestions are very useful to increase the quality of the works before publishing it in a book format.

References

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