

Review of dissertation:

**Exploring the multilingual mind: Metalinguistic abilities and language learning motivation in Hungarian trilingual learners decoding an unfamiliar language system**

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This thesis sets out to explore the relationship between multilingual awareness and language motivation inspired by Dörnyei's seven motivational constructs by unraveling Hungarian secondary school students' use of their multilingual background to decode texts in an unfamiliar language. In more detail this study explores whether a heightened level of meta- and cross-linguistic awareness correlates with stronger decoding skills, and how this awareness is connected to the motivational constructs.

The data stem from 134 Hungarian high school students, speakers of L2 English and L3 French, who are enrolled in a Hungarian-French bilingual program. Participants were administered the Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire (LEAP-Q), a language motivation questionnaire, an English proficiency test, a French proficiency test, a reading comprehension test in Italian, which is an unfamiliar language to them, and a retrospective questionnaire, investigating the process of decoding the novel language.

The candidate presents a thesis with a focus on multilingualism acquisition in trilingual learners, thereby exploring the relationship between multilingual awareness and motivation. The theoretical perspective is well grounded in a presentation of state of the art work in the field with particular foci on multilingual awareness and motivation.

The thesis is well and clearly structured. With regard to methodology it is a remarkable piece because it addresses the crucial relationship between multilingual awareness and motivation, thereby working with quantitative and qualitative data revealing new insights into the complexity and dynamics of third language learning in the Hungarian school context. The research hypotheses are clearly formulated and the methodology is chosen accordingly. Furthermore the candidate provided detailed statistical analysis of the reported results. The conclusions and suggestions based on the conclusions can be seen as firmly supported by the results.

The results show a significant relationship between metalinguistic abilities and the ability to decode an unknown language. Students with heightened

metalinguistic abilities show greater success in deciphering the Italian texts, as they reflected on similarities between their previously learnt languages and the Italian language at lexical, structural, morphological, and phonological levels. Linguistic self-confidence is shown to have a robust connection with metalinguistic and crosslinguistic thinking and reasoning. L2 and L3 proficiency also correlated with the students' ability to decode the unfamiliar language structures. Furthermore, the findings reveal a complex motivational profile, where students, despite being enrolled in a French bilingual program, exhibited greater motivation towards learning English, due to its global dominance across various platforms, social media, and educational resources.

The thesis presents new additional information in the field of multilingualism as it provides further evidence of the interplay and interdependence of complex factors in multilingual learning. With its focus on Romance languages and the support of English in decoding processes it adds valuable evidence to the field. Together with the strong focus on motivation new insights into the learning processes can be shown. These innovative results have not been published and will definitely contribute to the field of research on metalinguistic awareness in language learning.

In the last chapter the candidate discusses implications of the results of her study for (multilingual) education by providing some useful details on multilingual approaches to language teaching.

**I am very pleased to recommend this thesis for approval. The candidate has produced a first-rate thesis which qualifies her as a very competent, well-trained researcher.**