

Dear Prof. Hofer

Firstly, I would like to express my appreciation for your scientific background, valuable insights and advice in reviewing my dissertation in its final version. Your time, energy and efforts are highly appreciated. Thank you for highlighting that the PhD thesis went through a dynamic improvement. I completely agree with you about the strengths and weaknesses of the current thesis. I am also thankful for your helpful and constructive criticism.

I was trying to do my best to answer to all of the questions raised during the review process. I am going to reply to your thought-provoking questions one by one:

**Which of the models that explain multilingual acquisition do you find the most appropriate? Please explain why.**

The candidate would definitely choose the Dynamic Model of Multilingualism. The DMM is a multilingual model which is learner-oriented because the learner stands at the centre of language acquisition. A dynamic perspective of the multilingual speakers' learning system combines the learner-oriented system and the changes within the language systems. Language systems are interdependent and cannot be viewed as autonomous within this psycholinguistic model. Language acquisition is acknowledged as a complex and dynamic process.

**How easy/difficult was it to adapt the MCT (Hofer & Jessner 2019) for the Hungarian context? Which issues did you encounter and how did you overcome them?**

Adapting MCT to the Hungarian context was a complex and challenging activity. Firstly, the researcher did a pilot study and analysed the data in order to see whether pupils were capable of solving the tasks which measure pupils' multilingual operations in cross linguistic and metalinguistic awareness.

The first task of PART I needed to be modified to the Hungarian context. In the original test, a vocabulary task requires participants to complete the words and to give the articles of the words. In the new test, a vocabulary exercise was created where pupils needed to complete known words in three languages (Hun, Ger., Eng.). This task needed to be modified in terms of scoring and item numbers in the following way. Concerning scoring, one line refers to one point as one item was 0.5 point. In the empirical research, 18 words are given to the participants and each word counted as 1 point so altogether 36 points can be collected. Task 8 contains French, Italian and Latin languages in the original test. It was reasonable to remove this task as these languages were unknown and unrelated and none of the participants (N=44) could solve the task in the

pilot procedure. Task 11 was also removed from the original test as Latin language was unrelated to the participants. Fortunately, the rest of the tasks could remain as it was in the original test.

**How difficult/easy did the pupils find the test (the MCT)? Did you talk to the children after administering the test? Were there any comments in this regard?** The researcher received only positive comments regarding the MCT from the pupils. I asked the participants to write feedback at the bottom of the last page of the test. I would like to quote a few pupils. The first one: “These lessons made me happy and motivated even though it was sometimes not easy to fill out the test. One of the best tasks was to complete the task where I needed to find out the meaning of the Dutch dialogue.” The 2<sup>nd</sup> one: “I enjoyed completing the tasks. My favourite task was the one in which I needed to fill out the vocabulary chart with the 3 different languages what I already know.” 3<sup>rd</sup> one:” Actually it was so excited to do the Spanish task even though I don’t learn the language. It was funny how I could guess the meaning of the Spanish words and phrases and to do the matching exercise.” The last one: “It was interesting to see how much I have learnt in all of my three languages. I was aware of the grammatical rules even though I had every time problem in my Hungarian grammar classes. It was such a good thing that it was an usual task for me! Thank you!”

**How could children’s attitude towards multilingual learning be leveraged to bring about changes at the wider socio-educational level?**

Recognizing the motivational factors that influence language learners, especially the positive impact of L2 (German) on the motivation to learn L3 (English), is essential when designing language curricula. By strategically sequencing languages and highlighting the connections between them, educators can foster a learning environment that not only builds proficiency but also cultivates long-term motivation and engagement. A curriculum that leverages the motivational benefits of learning languages like German first can create a dynamic pathway to multilingualism, encouraging students to pursue and succeed in learning multiple languages over time.

**You chose not to include all the languages that feature in the MCT. Could you have included other languages (typologically closer to Hungarian perhaps so as to allow for transfer to become observable)?**

Ladin, French and Italian languages were excluded which could be found in the original test. I included Hungarian, English, German, Dutch, Danish, Swedish and Spanish languages in the adapted test.

**How did the teachers at the school think about the intervention? Did you receive any feedback from them? Do they see the added value of 'doing multilingual'?**

Most of the teachers were not happy that I did the intervention however they allowed me to do the testing. I did not receive feedback from them as they weren't there at the time of testing. They only agreed to do the testing but they would not like to be involved in the process. I am not sure whether they could see the added value. I didn't have the chance to talk to the teachers after the testing phase.

**You write that you were not given permission to interview the teachers at the schools. Can you provide more information on that?**

It is absolutely true I couldn't make an interview with them. They only agreed to test the pupils. Neither the teachers' interview nor the lesson's observation was not allowed at the schools.

The justification of the lack of permission was that teachers were complaining about losing their privacy in the sense that their teaching methods and attitude would be discovered.

**Do school get to decide whether they teach English or German as L2/L3?**

The National Curriculum regulates the amount of foreign languages that pupils can acquire in the primary school context. Schools can offer the variety of languages to the pupils from which participants can choose whether they would like to acquire English or German as L2. The Eurydice (2023) mentions that „pupils are required to learn one foreign language during their years spent in the primary school context based on the new National Core Curriculum (2020)”. Regarding L3, the new National Curriculum (2020) does not provide pupils to learn a second foreign language officially.

**How (in concrete terms) do teachers, curricula, ministerial documents influence language learning in the school system in Hungary?**

As far as the curricula is concerned, the National Core Curriculum and the Local Curriculum (schools' curriculum) regulate foreign language learning. The Hungarian Ministry for Human Resources published the *White Paper on the National Strategy for the Development of Foreign Language Teaching from Kindergarten to University* (EMMI, 2012), a guideline for raising

awareness of the problems in foreign language education. One of the central recommendations of the White Paper is for language learners and their parents to promote German as the second language (L2) and English as the third language (L3).

As for teachers, the dominant teaching approach remains monolingual, focusing heavily on the use of a single language —usually the target language — in instruction, even when teaching a third language (Horvath & Jessner, 2020; Szabó & Failasofah, 2022). Foreign language teachers should fully embrace the multilingual environment that language policies aim to promote, and not to limit the opportunities for students to develop proficiency in multiple languages simultaneously.

**How can the findings of this study be brought to attention of stakeholders and can the findings (at all) initiate changes in local school practice?**

Publishing the findings as a journal article can capture the interest of stakeholders. In addition, it would also be beneficial to publish the adapted test booklet (MCT) in Hungarian to promote multilingual assessment in the local context. However, it depends on the fact whether stakeholders would like to focus on the importance of holistic language testing and additional language learning.

I believe in the fact that my study fills a void which might lead to introduce further initiatives in the Hungarian foreign language education. There are not so many studies incorporating a comparative study with regard to English vs. German as L3 in the primary school context. In my way of thinking, findings can reflect upon the fact that it would be wise to reintroduce teaching two foreign languages even in the primary school context. Pupils could learn two foreign languages based on the former regulations which was beneficial. The study served a solid basis of learning German as L2 and English as L3 and not vice versa which resulted in enhanced multilingual awareness and motivation in the acquisition of an L3. The findings should pave the way to initiate changes in the Hungarian school practice.

**What changes would you say are necessary in order for a ‚multilingual turn‘ to eventuate in the Hungarian education system?**

Schools might consider encouraging students to learn more complex languages like German early in their education to maximize the cognitive benefits for subsequent language learning and overall multilingual awareness. The PhD study suggests that initial language choices will

influence students' motivation and success in learning additional languages, offering insights for motivational strategies in multilingual education.

**How likely are such changes to come about in the near future?**

I wish that positive changes would happen in the near future.

**How does your study contribute to advancing research and increase our understanding of multilingual learning and development?**

The benefits of early and extended exposure to a second language (L2), particularly German, before introducing a third language (L3) suggests that language curricula should prioritize early and intensive L2 instruction, especially for languages like German, which has been shown to positively influence the acquisition of English as an L3. The impact of L2 exposure on multilingual awareness suggests that language educators should not only focus on language proficiency but also on cultivating students' awareness of their multilingual capabilities. This could be manifested through metalinguistic activities and reflection tasks that can enhance ability to navigate between languages. More attention needs to be paid to incorporate multilingual awareness training in the Hungarian foreign language classroom.

Your kind attitude and your constructive comments are highly appreciated throughout the review.

With gratitude,

Noémi Szabó