The situation of foreign language education in Hungarian grammar schools

Prepared by: Gergő Zoltán Kovács
Sociology BA
Equal Opportunities specialization
Professor of thesis writing seminar
Dr. Andrew R. Ryder
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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... 2  
Abstract ............................................................................................................................ 4  
1. Introduction ................................................................................................................... 5  
  1.1 Research questions ............................................................................................... 7  
2. Literature review .......................................................................................................... 8  
  2.1 General features and policies of the recent public education .................................. 8  
  2.2 Relation to the European Union ............................................................................. 9  
  2.3 Regional differences .............................................................................................. 10  
  2.4 System imperfections and performance shortcomings .......................................... 11  
  2.5 Inclusion issues ...................................................................................................... 13  
  2.6 Social concepts and theories ................................................................................. 14  
  2.7 Teachers’ situation and their training ................................................................. 15  
  2.8 Improvements and strengths .................................................................................. 16  
  2.9 Suggestions, future life-prospects ........................................................................... 16  
3. Methodology ................................................................................................................. 18  
  3.1 Sampling schools ................................................................................................. 18  
  3.2 Methodology of fieldwork .................................................................................... 19  
  3.3 Interviews ............................................................................................................... 19  
  3.4 Questionnaires ...................................................................................................... 20  
4. Findings ......................................................................................................................... 21  
  4.1 Monitoring and division of students .................................................................... 21  
  4.2 Foreign language knowledge affecting life-chances ............................................. 22  
  4.3 Problems in grammar schools .............................................................................. 23  
  4.4 Teacher related issues ........................................................................................... 24  
  4.5 Financing issues .................................................................................................... 25  
  4.6 Resources and materials ....................................................................................... 26  
  4.7 Skills of students ................................................................................................... 27  
  4.8 Motivation and the ideal type of language instruction and acquisition ............. 28  
  4.9 Future research, literature review feedback, theoretical discussion .................. 30  
5. Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 32  
6. Bibliography .................................................................................................................... 35  
7. Appendix ......................................................................................................................... 39
Abstract

In this paper, I intend to explore the main issues of foreign language knowledge in Hungary and its instruction in state-run grammar schools. I do not want to reinvent the wheel, but rather to recirculate crucial information of the Hungarian society in relation to the foreign language situation since it became utterly important in order to be able to work together on our common European future. One of the core parts is desktop research that includes the review of relevant literature. The other foundation of the thesis are interviews with head English teachers, and questionnaires made with their students in three grammar schools located at three economically distinctly developed regions. Key results show that we are far behind the EU average, but we are closing the gap. Problems are multi layered but the solutions must be simple. Grave issues are present, like segregation of Roma, geographical stratification of the society. However, with the involvement of e-devices, the internet and with adequate teaching paired with motivation one can establish stable life-prospects with foreign language skills.
1. Introduction

The thesis presents foreign language knowledge as a key functional element for society since it contributes to its inner cohesion and to its external integrity to the international environment. This paper focuses on the foreign language situation in Hungary. Emphasis is put on public education, and within that on grammar school language instruction. Its structure, key issues and statistics are highlighted. The importance of foreign language skills has gained crucial importance in Hungary in the recent years because one can often encounter situations where it is necessary and useful to know languages. Foreign investment is significant; the language of business, news and information technology is English. Nonetheless, people in the EU can freely cross borders, and we, the nations within, are in one union. That necessitates us to become comfortable with at least one mediating language across our nations. It would truly unite us and enchant us with the most important interpersonal skill, which is to understand each other. All these are crucial to enable us to work together on our common sustainable future.

One could argue that the main goal in a society is order and stability. State-run institutions, like education have the function to serve the best possible functioning of a society. An institution is run only until it has a role and executes it well. When it fails or proves to be unnecessary, it will cease to exist (Haralambos and Holborn, 1990, pp.8-11). In the light of this, education will be examined, in how far it fills its role, how efficiently it operates, what are the weaknesses and how could they be improved. It is worthwhile dealing with this topic since language learning is multiple times profitable, as it is enhancing for the individual and it is a utilizable knowledge in many fields of life. It is so much more the relevant, because people are connected to each other in the greatest part through languages, and therefore multilingualism, the command of other languages on the top of the mother-tongue, comes even more to the foreground.

Mechanisms, such as globalization, which calls for multilingualism, the free movement of persons and labour force within the EU have served as key factors in the process of foreign languages coming to the foreground. These are closely related to the issue of language acquisition and skills, and they stand in a two-way interaction with each other. The internet revolution from the 1990s onwards brought around numerous intertwined and complex issues concerning social life and foreign language skills. It expanded the opportunities of foreign language learning. Basically, those who have
internet access can literally learn any language in an autodidact way from home for free, and they can also spare a lot of time and energy. In a personalized way, we can choose our own methods upon experimenting with various sources corresponding to individual preferences (see more, Jack, 2015). Among most of the Hungarian students, the only factor, which might be lacking is motivation. It would enable them to exploit the infinite self e-learning opportunities.

Our nation’s greatest expectation from the education governing bodies and from the public opinion towards the institutionalized education is commonly the quality and efficient language instruction, providing the competitive language knowledge to the upcoming generations. Hungary takes one of the last places among the EU countries regarding the ratio of adults (over 18) who speaks a foreign language, while more and more people experience that the low level of language knowledge means disadvantage in competition in the globalizing world, even for those who have never left Hungary (Éva et al, 2010).

In Hungary, people who can see the domestic and international economic situation and the opportunities of subsistence clear and sober, and at the same time have the resources, then they urge their children to learn at least one, but rather two or even three foreign languages to get better life chances later in life. The better life chances can be attained through this internationally utilizable cultural capital, called foreign language knowledge. The huge problem is that the Hungarian language is not utilizable outside of the country and the domestic economic situation is desperate for many to make ends meet at home. Those Hungarians, who know foreign languages in Hungary, possess better life chances in terms of self-actualization, education, and workplace and of society. In the process of reaching better life chances, it is inevitable to understand where it starts.

Large financial and hence social inequalities between separate regions are common in Hungary. This ongoing phenomenon was already present, but due to new educational regulations, the middle-class presumably will fade away, therefore society will be sharply stratified into lower and upper classes, and major parts of the country will drift into deep poverty. Even though the first language exam will be financially supported by the government, which is really one kind of a help, the roots of the problem and the real questions remain.
In 2016, the secondary education system went through some structural changes. There are three types of secondary schools through which students can access tertiary education. They are technical college, vocational grammar school and grammar school. In these three types, students can have a so-called matriculation exam that allows them to enter tertiary education, based upon their points. One must note here, that students in technical colleges and vocational grammar schools can leave the school with a professional qualification after three or four years, respectively, without taking the matriculation and they can start their career. They can enrol to an additional one or two-year long training, respectively, which would prepare them for matriculation exam. In contrast, grammar school students prepare in direct line for matriculation, since they do not have the option to have any professional qualification in the meantime.

The most common grammar school type is the 4-year-long one, but there are five, six and 8-year-long ones as well. The 5-year long one is present from 2004 onwards, and it is built upon on 4-year-long ones. The 5-year-long faculties offer an extra (zero) year in the curriculum. That would prepare and train the students’ foreign language skills by instructing them for that year with an increased number of language classes, typically 11-18 per week. This Hungarian speciality is the ‘Year of Intensive Language Learning’ (Nyék: Nyelvi Előkészítő Évfolyam). The Hungarian education has always seen the key of the better language instruction in more classes; however, that is not the key for that.

1.1 To reiterate the points outlined above the central focus of this thesis is to gain insights into the following broad research questions

1) How does foreign language knowledge affect life-chances?

2) What are the problems in the foreign language education in grammar schools?

3) What measures are needed to be taken to improve the situation?

To achieve this goal, firstly I did desktop research by scanning and selecting the most relevant literatures. After that, I made a content analysis of ‘Foreign Language Measurement Test for 8th graders in English’ to get familiar with the monitoring process of pre-secondary school students. Lastly and most importantly, I examined three grammar schools of distinct strengths, corresponding to their regions’ economic development. The fieldwork consisted of conducting interviews with head language teachers and taking questionnaires with their students.
2. Literature Review

One could argue basically, that Hungary’s foreign language knowledge situation is not promising. In international comparisons, the country takes rear places. The language education is varying from region to region and from school to school, but in general, it is heavily stratified and the education at many grammar school is clogging, mostly due to financial shortages. Although, we can find problems, which could be fixed without extra financing, it would only take some extra effort, which often only means that one’s job should be adequately performed instead of doing it recklessly. Governmental acts put extra burden on the educational system and inclusion issues are not progressing significantly either. However, those who have the ambition and the utilities to learn (book or internet access), can reach well above what a public school can provide.

2.1 General features and policies of the recent public education

The following statistical data outlines the proximity of the system. In the school year started in 2012/2013, altogether 190 thousand students were attending grammar schools (4, 5, 6, and 8-year long ones). In 2016/2017, this number was 182 thousand. The female to male ratio in 2016/2017 in grammar schools, is 56,5% to 43,5% respectively. There were 894 grammar schools, 6,469 classes, 18,260 teachers in 2016/2017. It equals to 28,1 students on average to one class, and 10 students to one teacher. (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2013a; 2017)

In Hungary, since 2006 it is required to have one upper-intermediate (B2) language exam to get a university degree. A new governmental enactment operative from the 1st of January 2020 set the university admission requirements for the most populous social layers to an unreachable level, given the circumstances. Regarding the admission to tertiary education, it prescribes the following. Students are expected to have at least one B2 upper-intermediate language exam to be accepted to tertiary education from 2020, formerly there were no restrictions in this respect. Probably, to balance this out and to motivate students a bit, a new policy operative from January 2018 covers or supplements the fee of the first language exam of upper-intermediate or advanced levels for citizens under 35 with a maximum 35.000 HUF (~130 USD). In addition, there is another governmental act, which would require one advanced level matriculation exam of a compulsory subject needed for the admission. Formerly only some university faculties required the advanced matriculation as an admission requirement. The combination of
these two regulations will most probably exclude a large number of students from tertiary education, and this way from a degree, which is just as expected from young adults to have as a certification of being an intellectual as it was the matriculation exam a few decades ago.

2.2 Relation to the European Union

The Barcelona European Council in March 2002 called for action "to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age". This "Barcelona objective" was launched in 2002 by the EU's heads of state and governments. The European Union’s “plus two-language” policy aims that every EU citizen should learn to communicate on two other languages other than their mother tongue. One of the two languages should be a global language like English, and the other one should be a language of any bordering country’s language. Maybe the most well-known and popular program for this is the “Erasmus+” since 2014. Basically, it offers language-exchange programs for students between universities across EU countries, which greatly contributes to the so-called immersive learning.

Figure 1. - Two Thirds of Working-Age Europeans Know a Foreign Language. (Statista, 2013)
This European finding shows that Hungarians score at the very bottom of the list of speaking at least one foreign language, namely just 37% of the population. In contrast to the EU average, which is 66% among people aged between 25-64. Almost in half of the EU member states, more than 80% of the people speak at least one foreign language.

A publication (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2013b, pp.38) shows falling numbers in the overall number of language exams year by year, both successful and unsuccessful ones. However, one underlying reason can be the declining population, which alone does not account for the regressive tendency. Contrarily, the country beats other developed countries in the number of language classes in public education (see pp.16/2.8), and even separated groups, so-called streamed classes (classes of students are split into smaller language groups according to their level of knowledge and they are taught separately) are provided for students with various levels of knowledge in elementary and secondary schools. This fact alone let us assume that the underlying cause for problems lies not in capacity issues, but in efficiency problems, that is there must be disharmonies in the educational system.

2.3 Regional differences

According to an expansive domestic study in the field of language knowledge, there are significant differences among schools between Budapest, county towns, towns and villages. Almost in every measurement, they perform in the same descending order. Points of students attending schools in larger settlement types were higher at every section of the measurement. The following graph illustrates the language level differences in test points by settlement types prior to entering secondary education.

![Figure 2](image)

*Figure 2. - Number of schools reached good and poor results in the ‘Foreign Language Measurement’ sorted by settlement types. (Office of Education, 2016)*
The following two graphs show that as we go to less populated regions in the country, the more poorer the languages skills of the students and most probably that is due to poor education. The main sufferers are the poor communities overall the country, but even more desperate is the situation for multiple disadvantaged minority groups who are mainly squeezed out to outskirts and to villages in rural areas. However, the integrity of every Hungarian citizen into one social group as a nation, including Roma people as well, would be essential for the well-functioning of the society (See section: Inclusion issues for a deeper discussion of the Roma).

Figure 3. - Average points reached by the students sorted by settlement categories (the place of the school, not the residence of the student). (Office of Education, 2016)

A survey examining the salaries of teachers (Merces, 2010) shows that the salaries of teachers are varying widely between counties. It is lowest in Baranya in the Southern Transdanubia with 156 200 Forints (611 USD) per month, and the highest in Vas county in Western Transdanubia with 199 600 Forints (780 USD), and in Pest county it is 186 200 Forints (728 USD). The very low salaries in some regions is self-evidently followed by the demotivation of teachers and consequently the demotivation of students as well. In addition, it causes people moving to Budapest or to the Western part of the country, where the salaries are a bit better, or more and more often to abroad. Due to this work migration for better life chances, the vicious circle triggers and the rural areas are being deteriorated at a double speed. English or German teachers are probably in an even better position to move to get a better-paid job or move abroad.

2.4 System imperfections and performance shortcomings

Let us first have a quick view on a grave issue. Parts of the current Hungarian education system are getting close to collapse. Data shows that on the labour market
people who have a matriculation exam are more successful. Their employment rate is higher; they earn more and they are constrained in a lower proportion to do unskilled and semi-skilled labour. Due to the actual government education policy, more than a thousand young people between 15-19 left schools, since the government lowered the age limit of compulsory schooling in 2012 from 18 to 16. In the school year 2016/2017, only 82 percent of people between 15-19 attended school or university, while one decade before this ratio was almost 90 percent (Anita, 2017).

To understand better the foreign language situation in grammar schools, we must take into consideration the preliminary elementary school performances. A thorough representative survey (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2016) made with 157 thousand students in May 2016 investigating English and German language knowledge, reveals that 77 and 73 percent of the 6th class students accomplished the A1 language level in English and German respectively, prescribed in the curriculum. Among students from the 8th class, only 54 and 43 percent reached the targeted A2 English and German levels, respectively. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) identifies six levels; these are A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. The A1 is the ‘beginner’ and the C2 is the ‘proficiency’ level. Hungary’s results are just too poor to catch up with the EU in a foreseeable time.

![Figure 4. - The percentages of students who passed on the test sorted by language and class. (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2016)](image)

A study shows, that the correlation between the level of English or German language knowledge of Hungarian students in the 6th and 10th class and the time spent on language learning is weak. The correlations are between 0,25 and 0,29. The connection
between the weekly class number and the level of language knowledge is a bit stronger, that is between 0.39 and 0.43. The level of the students’ language knowledge correlates mostly with the level of education of their parents, it is between 0.45 and 0.54. This connection is among both 6th and 10th graders is stronger with English than with German (Nikolov, 2007, pp.56).

As to the content and language integrated learning, one must note that in universities there are no obligatory language courses (Nikolov, 2011, pp.1054), and some of them do not even offer any elective language courses either. Thus, the level of knowledge at the time of the entrance will degrade, and though the students might have a language exam required for obtaining the thesis, their actual knowledge might decline below that once achieved level. The universities do not provide adequate opportunities to improve the foreign language knowledge of their students.

In 2016, altogether 39,7 thousand students got a tertiary education degree. Other 6,7 thousand students who took a successful final examination could not get the degree because they lacked a B2 upper-intermediate language certification. This number is closely identical with the number in the previous year (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2017).

2.5 Inclusion issues

A key issue, which must be solved in Hungary, is school segregation between Roma and non-Roma. Officially, there are around 315,583 Roma people living in Hungary, according to the last census, which took place in 2011, but there was 1.46 million people who did not respond, therefore their actual number can be higher. Thus, Roma is the largest minority group of the total 9.8 million population. A study conducted on school segregation (Kertesi and Kézdi, 2012, pp.6) points out the following: “A standard index of segregation shows that ethnic segregation more than doubled in areas with more than one school (Kertesi and Kézdi, 2012), from below 0.10 to above 0.20.”

Another proof for that is a study (European Commission, 2015, pp.10), and it reads that ”45% of Roma children in education are placed in segregated schools or classrooms.” Segregation is already at a level that causes and will cause even more serious social problems in the close future. Due to social exclusion, Roma are getting into multiple disadvantaged situation, their social contacts and cultural capital will be restricted, and they will not get proper education, workplaces and healthcare just to
mention a few. Under such circumstances, it is no wonder that they are more likely to commit crime than their non-segregated Roma or non-Roma peers. This way, the entire process reproduces itself through social reproduction and the segregation will be kept.

The harsh real-life situation is that non-Roma people protest against Roma sending their children to regular “integrated” elementary schools. If the Roma still do, the counter party is liable to take out their children from that school and send them to another one, a phenomenon called ‘white flight’ (Human Rights Watch, 1996, pp.63-68). It is straightforward outrageous, and many humanitarian associations and European and Hungarian committees for the equal human rights are protesting strongly, but results do not show up as expected.

A study (Olga, 2011) reveals that the quality of mother-tongue knowledge affects how a person will be able to acquire foreign language skills. In some cases - more frequently among segregated Roma students - the difficulty of foreign language exam tasks might exceed the difficulty of native language tasks, those what we expect from students in schools.

2.6 Social concepts and theories

There are sociolinguistic findings of educational failure (Bernstein, 1972) and the concept of the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973). They explain connections between language disadvantage and educational performance. Children from various social backgrounds have distinct levels of language skills, which can consecutively affect their later academic successes. The distinct levels and qualities of preliminary knowledge among school children prescribes the pace of learning by a head-start (Laura, 2013). That means cultural capital functions as a catalyst in preliminary language learning. Cultural capital reproduces itself throughout the phase of career establishment, and resulting in more cultural capital, which is a kind of social advantage, thus language knowledge becomes in the end a privilege of the well-to-do.

The finding of Bernstein (Giddens, 2006, pp.840-841) suggests two separate ways of speech. They are the ‘restricted-code’ for the working class and the ‘elaborated-code’ for the middle class. Working class children usually think and speak in a simpler way, with poorer vocabulary and grammar, because they were raised in such environment. In contrast, the middle class parents raise their children to think and speak through the elaborated-code, that is the use of more complex sentences, wider vocabulary. It enables
them to comprehend ideas that are more complex more easily, and since in schools the language of instruction is the elaborated-code, the middle class children are in advantage over lower class children in comprehending and producing knowledge.

Social class self-evidently plays a very important role in the learning process. Valuable insight can be gained (Haralambos and Holborn, 1990, pp.62) on the concept of social class while reading the following passage. “Although social classes change over time, they are able to reproduce themselves to the extent that they can maintain their distinctive position in the social structure within and across generations. The direct transfer of capital from one generation to the next is the primary way in which reproduction takes place, because it ensures that wealth will remain in the family. Economic assets are also converted into ‘social and cultural assets’. It is important that the children of the upper class attend the ‘right’ sort of school (a public school) and preferably one of the top public schools. It is in these schools that personal contacts begin to be built up and these helps to produce the ‘old-boy networks’ (a network in which men help through their influence others who attend the same school, which they also did). This involves personal ties between those in elite positions in society. The business class and the establishment are not totally closed to outsiders. However, it is necessary to undergo the appropriate socialisation in the institutions, to gain acceptance in either of these groups.”

2.7 Teachers’ situation and their training

As to the old-fashioned, outdated ways of teaching which is still widely present, the Prussian method is the most dominant, which should be phased out. It was introduced in 1811 by Wilhelm von Humboldt when he was assigned to be the Prussian culture minister. It became widespread because it made the education of the huge masses possible; it centralized the curriculum and standardized teachers and their methods. It was also popular at that time because the industrial revolution required an obeying and standardized social class for the factories, and this Prussian education system was well suited for that purpose. Naturally, the teacher training bears similar characteristics and thus reproduces the Prussian method.

The public opinion holds that the education is being intentionally and systematically downgraded by the state together with the health care, to keep the population oppressed, uninformed, obeying and thus exploitable. The reasons for that are
multi-layered. There can be stronger interests, which influence the state, or simply a combination of financial shortages and improper allocations of them. It should be obvious that education is the most important institution in creating and maintaining a well-functioning society. Besides, the curriculum for instance does not prescribe enough mandatory classes of history, geography, which hinders the development of a shared cultural and national identity. Rather, the government spends disproportionately enormous amounts on the development of Budapest and on other larger cities but leaves the rural areas stalled and undeveloped.

There are several aspects in the method of language instruction in which language teachers fail (Nikolov, 2008). They speak during the class mainly in Hungarian. The children get few tasks and everybody the same type which are seemingly boring. They teach the class frontally. They emphasize grammatical rules. The children must memorise words without context. The teacher asks a question and a student, or the students answer together, then the teacher either accepts the answer or corrects it and they move right forward to the next task. Most of the teachers corrects instantly the verbal mistakes of the students, then make the student repeat the good answer.

2.8 Improvements and strengths

The ratio of the speakers of a foreign language has significantly increased. At the beginning of the 1990s, it was 12% and by the census in 2001, it increased to 19%. The European findings show that the number of those who know at least one foreign language has increased from 25% in 2001 to 29% in 2005. Among Hungarian respondents 42% stated in 2006 to be able to have a conversation on a foreign language, and 27% on 2 languages. (Eurobarometer, 2001, 2005, 2006)

In Denmark, students learn in full classes their first foreign language through 6 years in 510 classes, in Austria through 9 years in 630 classes. In Hungary, the secondary school graduates learnt in streamed language groups at least through 9 years minimum in 984 classes (3 per week) (Key data… 2005, 74). In grammar schools, the average class number is 1363, in vocational colleges 1240 (Vágó, 2007).

2.9 Suggestions, future life-prospects

It is evident from the analysis of the connection between the time dedicated to language learning and the level of knowledge that the solution is not to increase the
quantity of the classes. However, regarding any study, most of the language teachers still consider the higher class number as a solution (Nikolov et al, 2009). Considering the connection between self-actualization in life and language knowledge, it reveals that those career starters on the labour market who could make themselves intelligible on another language other than Hungarian, could find a job after graduation within the next 9 months on average with 1.2 times greater likelihood. They are compared to their peers without language knowledge, but identical in every other characteristics (Ágnes, 2014).

In summary, the issue is complex; there are many problems to overcome. Sometimes the solutions in theory are found but their implications to practice is the real collective task. Language requirements in schools are too low. There is often no clear aim of learning a language for the students. Population of Hungary declines so does the number of students. It is harder to get into tertiary education due to newly proposed language regulations. There is a huge gap between EU’s language knowledge and expectations and Hungary’s performance. The more populated a settlement is the more opportunity a student has to quality education, though the competition is sharper (urbanization effect). The background and the role of parents is one of the most influential factor on the child’s performance. The inclusion issues of Roma are getting worse, thus creating and enforcing the vicious circle leading to deep poverty. Initial social position and the cumulative social capital are determining factors in launching a fulfilling life. Education system and teacher training is outdated, salaries and dedication to the profession are poor. There is high number of language classes in schools and increasing share among language speakers in the population. The improvement in the quality of education is necessary. Foreign language knowledge increases the chances of self-actualization in life.
3. Methodology

3.1 Sampling schools

Firstly, as a part of my desktop research, I did a content analysis of the ‘Foreign Language Measurement Test for 8th Graders in English’ (Idegen Nyelvi Mérés 8. évfolyam, angol nyelv) to get an understanding of the monitoring process of the pre-secondary school students. The foundation of the thesis is the examination of three grammar schools in Hungary. In the process of picking schools, the main aspect was to make the schools reflect the different economically developed regions of Hungary. Corresponding to the Central Statistical Office’s figure below, I chose a school from one of the strongest regions. This region is Budapest, it forms an autonomous administrative area separate from the counties. The average salary in 2016 in Budapest falls between 161,000 and 226,030 Forints (639-874 USD), which is the top category out of the five categories determined by the Central Statistical Office. I picked the second region from the middle segment, which is Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county. The average salary there is between 136,000 and 141,999 Forints (540-564 USD) and it belongs to the fourth category. The third region is Nógrád county from the fifth salary category, where the average falls between 118,420 and 135,999 Forints (458-540 USD).

Monthly net income on average, 2016. I-IV. quarter

Figure 5. – Map of Hungary with Monthly net income on average by county per person, 2016. I-IV. quarter, and fieldwork locations. (Hungarian Central Statistical Office)
3.2 Methodology of fieldwork

The grammar schools were selected to represent a high, a middle and a lower-grade school. They correspond to the three differently developed regions and overall represent the situation of the three main social layers in Hungary. The first is a well-developed region, with a strong grammar school from the capital city, Budapest. Its population is 1,759,407 person (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2016, pp.18). It is the Central Hungary region, and at the same time. I could get access to the school thanks to an acquaintance teaching there. There are altogether 623 students and 62 teachers in the grammar school part, so the student to teacher ratio is 10. The second is a medium-developed region, with an average grammar school from the county capital Szolnok. Its population is 72,333 person (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2016, pp.22). It is in the Northern Great Plain region in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county. I selected the grammar school, which I formerly went to, and I consider it a middle grade school. There are altogether 592 students and 55 teachers, so the student to teacher ratio is 10,76. The third one is a low-developed region, with a weaker grammar school from a town called Pásztó. Its population is 10,316 person (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2016, 65). It is in the Northern Hungarian region, in Nógrád County. In this county, there are 6 state-financed grammar schools. I contacted all of them and only this one proved to be statistically representative in student numbers, and only this one accepted my research request. There are altogether 395 students and 46 teachers, so the student to teacher ratio is 8,58.

3.3 Interviews

I conducted 8 semi-structured qualitative interviews with head English language teachers from those schools to get a better insight to the present-day situation of language instruction. I prepared 20 questions, and the interviews took on average 40 minutes, but I had some difficulties to keep up the pace of the interviews to fit into the free time of the teachers (See appendix for interview questions). The conversations could easily drift away from the exact research topic because other related topics were also very interesting and seemed to be relevant as well. Another issue was that the teachers in the same school gave quiet similar answers and I tried to elaborate on further on the same issues with the second or third teacher to obtain something new and relevant. The questions I prepared were mainly open-ended to let them express their views more freely, like “According to you
what lies behind the successes of the successful language learners?” I also asked questions, which required shorter more quantifiable answers, like “Are you satisfied as a teacher?” The teachers willingly gave their opinion and they gave extensive answers, which often covered more of my questions. I did not ask directly their salaries. It would be more appropriate to do it in an anonymous questionnaire. Before the interviews, I handed over a ‘consent form’ and an ‘information letter’ concerning the research ethics, information on interviews and the student questionnaires (See appendix). I used a mobile phone to record the interviews to make myself able to pay more attention to the conversation and to save the exact answers for later use. Fortunately, teachers consented on paper to record them.

3.4 Questionnaires

I conducted a mixed qualitative and quantitative survey with 108 students to obtain information from the students’ perspective as well. Each group with which I made a questionnaire was the group of the teacher with whom I had previously made an interview with, this enabled me to approach the same situation from the two sides. I showed the questionnaire to the teachers beforehand to make them certain, it is appropriate and have their consent. Before handing out the questionnaire, I informed students that it is voluntary, anonymous and they can skip any questions if they wish and that they can ask me freely. On average, they completed it in 10-15 minutes. It consisted of 18 questions (See appendix) mainly with short close-ended questions, and picking a number, like “What difficulties happened in your language learning history?” and “Rate your English language skills (writing, speaking, listening, reading) according to your self-satisfaction. (1: very bad, 5: very good)” The questionnaire took time off the classes, but teachers were helpful and did not rush anyone. The questions were on the paper in both English and Hungarian and students could answer in any of the two languages. A few answers were illegible so in that respect a computer-based questionnaire would be better.
4. Findings

4.1 Monitoring and division of students

According to my desktop analysis, the ‘Foreign Language Measurement Test for 8th Graders in English’ (Office of Education, 2016) only consists of reading and listening tasks. There is no translation, no grammar, no composition, and no oral test. It is just a fragmentation of the language skills, which is required both in a language exam and in real life. There is no active language (productive) skill testing. Students often guess, and thus easily can get higher points, so it does not reflect reality. Tests are standardized for correction schemes, so it can be corrected quickly, and it provides a numerical data in the end. Its structure is like language exam tasks, so in that aspect it can be useful that it prepares the students for that. It is supposed to reflect A2 (elementary) level, which is not enough in 8th grade; it should be B1, which corresponds to intermediate level language exam. After that, B2 would be the upper-intermediate level, and that would be more obtainable then, and thus giving the students one of the key certificates in career life earlier and the access to tertiary education.

The students to teacher ratio varies at the schools. On the one hand, there are some groups with only 6-8 students. There is an established custom in schools to suggest students to take the intermediate matriculation exam in 11th grade and level it up in 12th to an advanced one. Some students take the matriculation exam, and from that point on, they are not obliged to attend English classes. This is a problem because those who do not attend can easily see their English skills deteriorate in a year, as they do not engage in the language in a guided manner on a daily nor on a weekly basis. However, this way they would receive the upper-intermediate language exam free if they score above 60% in the advanced matriculation exam. Therefore, the low group number can be accounted to this. On the other, thanks to the divided groups, the highest number is 20 at each school. However, that is too many, and the ideal number of students would be 11-12 in a group.

In the school in Budapest, there is no language faculty, there was but it required too many teachers and classes, now language classes are divided up according to skills. From the 9th grade, the students are sorted into six distinct levels. Students are put into these groups from three classes – streamed classes. In the two other schools, the division is similar; the difference is that students are put into four groups, which leaves heterogeneity higher. The six group levels are approximate to the six levels of the
Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) from A1 to C2. English is the obligatory first foreign language for everyone in each school. It is up to collective agreement in all the three schools which teacher gets which groups. All groups have their positive aspects but also their difficulties as well. Two teachers taught Russian in the 1980s, but the obligatory Russian education ceased. There is an obligatory second foreign language education in all the three schools with the opportunities of Russian, German and French.

4.2 Foreign language knowledge affecting life-chances

According to my informants, firstly it must be settled that using a language is a skill, a competence and not a plain lexical knowledge. A separation should be made between English and other foreign languages. English has become a basic competence like being able to write and read or handling a computer on a basic level. It is very hard for people without foreign language knowledge to locate themselves in the labour market, mainly in the economic sphere. The real language knowledge is required and not a paper one. Other languages are additional benefits. Language knowledge in life opportunities is very important. The labour market narrows down for those who does not know a foreign language. It plays a significant role and employers look for workforce who has existing and utilizable language knowledge. On job interviews, it is more likely to have a conversation as a proof of knowledge and not the paper, but surely, some employer requires the certification as well.

Building on the ‘use it or lose it’ principle, students who are interested in a language can acquire the language efficiently. However, those for whom this natural interest has not formed, usually start to drop behind and over time this difference is going to be so distinct with the rest of the group or the community that they completely loose interest and completely fall out of the habit of dealing with a foreign language on a regular basis. Thus, one could argue that there are two huge distinct groups among people and students. The first group consists of those who establish the habit of language learning and engage in the language regularly and thus develop a utilizable knowledge. In the second group are those students who drop out of this flow, this process. A pedagogue declared that those who performed well and wanted to learn the language those after a while will be happy and satisfied to have done so. People who for any reason dropped out reported to have regretted that they have not put more effort into language learning.
4.3 Problems in grammar schools

A number of teachers informed me that children sometimes lack homework and it fits into a student-teacher relationship and over time, this absent homework will be made up for. According to an informant, there are not so many serious problems in the grammar schools, the position of the language teachers is very good, children are motivated, they have interest in the language, they know it is important, the English is unavoidable, and the teacher is not the only source of knowledge. It is not only the class where children learn but they learn from many places and the children are very smart.

Group dynamics is important for effective classes and it normally builds up. Behavioural problems mostly occur in classes where the number of students is high, and the number of weekly classes is low. In that setting, group dynamics cannot build up and both the students and the teachers must catch up with the material repeatedly. In addition, some topics are not liked, and then usually the most active students are contributing regularly so they help to keep up the dynamics.

The greatest problem is that appliances are mainly financed from money from the schools’ own foundation. However, the schools’ financing is centralized through the ‘Klebelsberg Institute Maintaining Centre’ (KLIK) and the development ought to happen through the central maintainer but it did not really happen. It occurred only recently that some electronic appliances have arrived from the maintainer, and it would be great if the schools could receive earlier support from the maintainer. According to one teacher, the teachers' preparedness could be better, and their appreciation from the public is low. Outsiders, mostly parents do not see the complicatedness of the teachers’ job. Therefore, they keep on complaining upon what they hear back from their children. Moreover, parents tend to indulge and call teachers to account of their teaching actions and methods.

The 2020 government regulation which would limit the accepted students to higher education only to those who have an upper-intermediate (B2) language exam is found to be a poor and a repulsive decision by the teachers and only one teacher found it useful. Most teachers said that for their children it is not a problem, but many children will be excluded from higher education and this is controversial and has aroused concerns. Teachers informed students of this regulation and they will put extra emphasis and efforts to minimize the number of short fallings. Some students are otherwise excellent in other subjects but for some reason are not so good at languages. The teachers do not see the
point why to punish them this way. Teachers do not see the new regulation as being justified, but rather as a step directed to reduce the number of graduate people with higher qualification.

Most teachers claimed that children are tired and overburdened, they have too many classes and they are often here in the school until 4 or 5 in the afternoon, that is 8 classes at least. This problem is only worsened by the governmental regulation from 2013, which obligates schools to have PE classes every day. In addition, some students also do sports or some musical courses, which takes extra time.

4.4 Teacher related issues

Unfortunately, the teacher community has been impacted upon negatively three different ways because the profession has not been attractive to the most talented for decades due to the lack of financial appreciation. The low wages cause further negative impact. This has changed somewhat, but unfortunately the current situation is still unsatisfactory. In the first round, people who choose to be pedagogues are not the most talented ones. In the second round are those who are really going to be teachers after graduating. Career starting colleagues are earning very little, roughly the salary of a skilled worker's minimum wage. Therefore, unfortunately, the best graduates usually choose other courses instead of teaching. In the third round are those, who leave their teacher career in the meantime.

According to my informants, pedagogues from the three schools love the profession, it is satisfying for them for several reasons. When a class succeeds, children work, the atmosphere is good for both sides, communication happens and altogether the 45 minutes spent pleasantly. There are similar feedbacks among the colleagues. The teachers initially wanted to be teachers and two came back willingly to their own schools to teach. They receive altogether successful, positive feedbacks in class reunions. The greatest success is when students take successful language exams and matriculation exams.

Teachers argued that they are overwhelmed, and their burnout is present. They often have 20-25 classes per week. It does not occur only because of the classes, but also because of additional burdens, like creating the portfolio together with caring for the family and taking the professional examinations. Altogether, there is too much required of their time. The hidden key process for quality teaching is that each class ideally requires
at least one or two hour preparation at home. Without preparation, it is impossible to give quality classes; it is the natural part of it. Of course, it is every teachers’ dream, just to go to classes and teach, but that does not work. There are so-called ‘just pick up and teach’ textbooks, which are promising, but it cannot work. Who teaches so, without a decent preparation, does a bad job, a poor language instruction.

4.5 Financing issues

All my informants exclaimed, “The majority of the pedagogue community is not satisfied with the salaries.” As being a pedagogue, they do not consider it proportional to their performance and value creation. In the 1990s, an exchange programme with Austrian teachers revealed, that their salary was double or triple that of the Hungarian teachers’. Even though, Hungary was not an EU member back then, the difference has remained. The ideal salary is not an exact amount of money floating in front of the eyes of the teachers. They do not consider it repeatedly, because one does not do teaching for a living but because it is a profession, and one does it either willingly or in no way. Maybe, if they earned less even then they would do it. Of course, it would be nicer to have double the salary that they get now and that would come in handy, they admitted. They were also aware of the teacher salaries when they chose this career.

Teachers explained that a great many of people cannot make a living from their earnings as a teacher. A teacher considered the situation lucky because the spouse earns well. For example, a pedagogue couple gets along with difficulties with their salary and can hardly provide that standard of living for the family, which desired. The income of a pedagogue is not sufficient for what is normally desirable for such a person who pursues such a mental profession to have their needs satisfied; traveling, going to the theatre, reading, being open to the world. Some teachers must have a part time job as well, and often give private classes or work in a language school on extra to make a decent living.

The teachers I interviewed, normally take part in vocational trainings two to three times a year. They consider them useful, it recharges and improves them, and they get smart ideas and meet old acquaintances. It is always a good thing and they look for these opportunities, it turned out. Normally, the textbook publishers provide these opportunities. The school in Budapest is also a trainer institute, so there are also sometimes trainings in place. From time to time, colleagues give trainings, but they are not compatible for the other colleagues since it interferes with the personnel relationships.
The schools do not cover nor finance these events; there are no allowances for it. Who had to take vocational exams had to finance the courses completely out of their own pocket, often more hundred thousand Forints.

4.6 Resources and materials

The resources are adequate, regarding weekly class numbers. There are usually 3-4 contact classes on separate days with a group in a week. Most teachers think it is enough to prepare students for exams but only if the student also cares about it. One becomes a successful language learner when s/he does not only do the homework but adds her/his own effort according to her/his interests at home. Many students read books in English or watch movies in their original English and then they use it. It characterizes the generations nowadays. In general, when one is open to the world and has the opportunity then this number of classes should be enough.

One teacher exclaimed, “Another important thing is where the teacher gets the ammunition to teach. Tasks should be up-to-date, relevant and they should motivate and challenge the students. Ideally, they should be not too easy, neither too difficult, to achieve the so-called flow-experience.” If in the beginning, a child receives bad impulses, poor education, it does a lot of harm. It demotivates them, fixes bad structures. The teacher draws the most from how s/he was taught, what s/he liked as a student, what worked with her/him. In addition, it is very important to get as many hours as the student can to learn efficiently from a teacher.

Ideally, teachers learn the best on vocational trainings of native English speakers’ and excellent Hungarian colleagues' lessons. Of course, teachers do not completely take over everything, but these basic experiences help a teacher to teach later in their own way, in their own style. Teachers do not read the curriculum. What really influences the teacher's teaching method is what s/he experienced as a student, the workshops, show lessons s/he attended, and the exams (graduation, language exams) that students need to prepare. Teachers pay attention to these, they shape their work. Therefore, it is not the official central documents, which influence them in how they teach.

All the teachers are satisfied with the quality of textbooks, which come with CDs and online interactive materials. There are no obligatory books prescribed by the National Base Curriculum (Nemzeti Alaptanterv) to work from, and there is a wide variety of choice with excellent quality. Main publishers are ‘Oxford’, ‘Longman’ and ‘MM
Publications’. Colleagues praise them as well, teachers choose the books for themselves freely. The textbooks are not considered by the teachers either student nor teacher-centred. It is important to suit both sides. Books must be chosen carefully according to the group’s level, and one must add extra materials which are up-to-date usually from the web. One cannot and should not build solely on the book and proceed only with it. A textbook is only a base to build on and the teachers also have desire to create.

4.7 Skills of students

The four basic language skills are very important, particularly the reading and speaking. Children nowadays are much better at listening than earlier. They are more exposed to English. What teachers really can improve is writing and speaking through such tasks and text-types. Children are already receiving the language passively mostly through the internet, but they mainly build up passive skills as they listen and read. The task of the schools should be to transform those passive skills into active skills through a lot of practice to make the students comfortable with producing a language that is writing and speaking. Altogether, all skills are emphasized just as in exams. There are no separate oral tests but during the classes students are graded, and there are often individual or group presentations and project works relating to general topics like the environment, health, culture which help students to become an independent language user.

The information obtained both from teachers and students points out that the weakest language skill among students is unequivocally writing. The problem is not with spelling but with the creation of a comprehensive text. It is the hardest for them, the children of today do not like to write long texts. It is a slow process, it requires intense attention, they must continuously check, abide to rules and formal requirements must meet. Therefore, they must pay attention to many things simultaneously and children nowadays are not so thorough, and they like to be over things quickly. Formerly, listening and speaking was the hardest (in the 1980s), but now it is not the primary problem. Students like to speak, and formerly passive knowledge was more typical but now the active knowledge comes to the foreground.

In the school in Budapest, towards the end of the grammar school years, most students take upper-intermediate B2 or even advanced C1 level language exams. Some children have already an upper-intermediate language exam when they get to grammar school, usually those come from elementary schools with two languages of instruction.
This high heterogeneity explains why it became necessary to have 6 groups instead of 2. The language skills among students are too diverse, some 9th graders start with upper-intermediate or advanced books, and teacher can proceed with them very well.

The following graph shows the accumulated data that I gathered from 108 paper-based questionnaires from students. Each school separates itself at every skill from the others. The levels of all the four skills measured in Budapest outperforms the levels of the four skills in the rest of the schools. Szolnok outperforms Pásztó in the same way. The order in the strengths of the four skills are everywhere the same except Pásztó, in the following descending order: reading, listening, writing, and speaking. In Pásztó, the only difference is that ‘writing’ comes before ‘listening’ in strength. The strongest skill in all the three schools is unequivocally ‘reading’ and the weakest is distinctly ‘speaking’.

Figure 6. – Last year grammar school students' self-evaluation of their four basic language skills on a scale from 1 to 5. (Own research, 2018)

4.8 Motivation and the ideal type of language instruction and acquisition

The motivation of the children mainly derives from the recognition of the importance of the language. They want to study abroad afterwards or to take part in scholarships and exchange programmes. They enjoy English classes, so they do not have to learn much because they acquire the language unconsciously and playfully. However, some are not proceeding so well, but the majority do. Children often speak about
themselves, which they like, and teachers utilize it to make them speak of their own life, how they see the world, of their own thoughts. This age group likes this creative communication.

This natural motivation and interest can be awakened through impulses and incentives, but it cannot be forced. Obviously, family background is important, and specific personality traits are also required to achieve the effective learning process. That is, to be open and to be receptive. The teachers’ role is also important, no to put a child to shame, but to praise and raise them. Their support is essential to create an atmosphere where students dare to speak. Teachers encourage students that it is not a shameful thing to tell a personal story to the others. Students should be taught not to laugh on each other, and that mistakes can be made, they are not long-lasting problems, since mistakes come and go as students develop. These are altogether key factors for the students and for some it works for others not so much. These are individual ways, which must be experienced by the students to unlock their full potential.

One teacher noted, “A successful language learner is interested in the world and wants to be good at English. S/he looks for opportunities, and does not just learn vocabulary, but uses it in the everyday life. When something interests them, for instance in biology, then they look it up on the web.” There, the most information is in English and there is a higher chance that they will find the information they need in English than in Hungarian. When students do not understand a few words then they look it up. Many students have friends all over the world through the internet and often chat with them in English. It is a great motivation to understand and make oneself understood in a foreign language as a human being.

Teachers often give pair-works and try not to give too many ‘frontal’ (formal teacher centred) classes to provide the students with more opportunities for practicing the language and communicating. In the school in Budapest, when they read something in English in a topic, then they willingly talk about it in English, this way they develop. Children often communicate in English between themselves, and in breaks they speak in English with their teachers as well, since the teachers only communicate with them and give lectures to them in English.

Community is very important, having an enjoyable time, talking. In the school in Budapest there is a so-called ‘practicing’ culture, which affects teachers and students as
well through practicing events, like inviting guests from Hungary and abroad. They attend classes often; therefore, they must be up-to-date to know what they want, what they do, why they do. It is a driving force that makes them to get the best of themselves and of the children. Openness to the outer real world is a very good thing and it would be great to have this applied in other schools, because it gives a significant stimulus to students.

The key of the effective language education is the efficient and conscientious teacher. Language learning can be started at any age, but the sooner is the better. The number of language classes should be higher at lower classes and over time, they could be lowered gradually, so the distribution of classes through the years would look like a pyramid.

4.9 Future research, literature review feedback, theoretical discussion

The content analysis of some widely used textbooks could be useful in uncovering whether the tasks are connected to technology usage, whether they call for group activities and creativity, or if they serve as a base for conducive and immersive learning at all, and most importantly if they centred around teachers or students. Another issue is the available data concerning the salaries of teachers by regions/counties is very limited. It would definitely worth doing research in this area in the future to discover additional valuable information.

In the literature, one could read that many minor problems in education could be solved without extra financing. These would not solve the main problems, but with small fine tunings, a more effective system could be laid out. Firstly, the motivation of the teachers and students must be refreshed. The relationship between them is too formal which affects negatively on their performance. With more informal and personal teacher-student relationships there would be less discipline problems, both sides would feel more motivated and integrated into the common goal. The key decisive issues are in elementary school. The number one priority must be to give the most efficient and utilizable education to primary school children. It would be really a game-changer as the general knowledge of the nation is based upon these years of schooling. The EU is a huge leap ahead of us on average, but one must be cautious in drawing a very negative picture of Hungary. Many nations’ languages are similar to each other and they stem from the same language family, thus their situation is much easier regarding learning and speaking foreign languages. Hungary has its unique situation in that respect. We are completely
isolated from every language surrounding us. However, since the advent of the Internet and from the democratic transformation in the 1989/90s, the youth has shifted gear and realized how crucial are the foreign language competencies in the world to be competitive and to be able to create a comfortable and satisfying future and living for themselves.

Two other interconnected and grave issues are the regional stratification of the country and the poor situation of the Roma communities, who mainly live in undeveloped countryside regions. These two correlate strongly and reinforce each other. The regional stratification is mainly due to the fact that Budapest is the capital with an eight times greater population than the second largest city in Hungary, Debrecen. Budapest being the largest and most populated city has outstandingly the highest Foreign Direct Investment among all the cities in Hungary. It results in better market and labour possibilities for the people, and at the same time that attracts people from the countryside and also from abroad. The gap between the countryside, the larger cities and Budapest could be closed through serious state intervention. Firstly, the decreasing population must be solved to generate sufficient supply of labour force. Secondly, public education and health care must be financed in the first place. School buildings and the teacher training should be restored and improved as well. Thirdly, the too high number of settlements in the country have to be reduced and clustered into larger more populated towns and cities. That would ease bureaucracy, administration, public utilities, transportation and other welfare services.
5. Conclusion

Curricula, teaching and learning opportunities can be improved through a number of ways. However, the starting point is the same in each case. The reallocation of the national budget with main priorities on education would be a key first step in reforming this institution. When the financial resources are available, then more extensive and more precise social policymaking must follow. This is a second-stage reallocation of resources and incentivization of pedagogues and students. The greatest emphasis must be put on elementary schools in terms of improvement, because it lays down the basic skills and knowledge for people. If the whole system works under too high pressure because there are substantial difficulties of the employees, then it is impossible for the institution to perform at its best. Clearly, there are already too many subjects for children to learn and they are overwhelmed, together with teachers. The curricula should be rethought and selected because due to the race with robot technology, the labour market does not require lexical knowledge in the first place anymore but applicable competences. Schools must concentrate more on this paradigm shift to suit students with useful labour market skills and more importantly with long-lasting and humanistic life-and interpersonal skills.

Unfortunately, there is a great degree of wasting taking place globally. It is not the interest of the capitalist market to give away products free. Products are rather wasted, because then consumers have to buy them and cannot access them freely, and this way profit is generated. The market is neither socially nor environmentally embedded. That is, the main aspect which counts and kept in the first priority is profit-making. As long as that is the case, any other aspect can only come second. As a result, among many consumer goods, thousands of used laptops are wasted in the country. Instead, they could be handed over to poor families and to children with close to zero resources and efforts. Internet coverage is almost 100% throughout the whole country. Handing over free laptops and a few gigabyte of free data to the deprived social groups must be at the top of the agenda. Today we live in the information era, and information is what holds value from now on. A vast amount, almost infinite amount of knowledge is freely available on the internet for everyone. It is one of the greatest tools mankind ever invented. It is so powerful that anybody who has the motivation can achieve a great many things in life with its help. At this point, it must be emphasized once again that all a person needs in order to achieve something is intention and opportunity. Probably, intention resides in
most of us, the only thing we lack are the resources, the opportunity to have access to this gold mine of knowledge.

The small-town grammar schools, which are performing very well, compared to their regional average, should be extended while keeping the standards, like the school in Pásztó. Extra buildings with colleges could be built and more motivated and conscientious teachers should be hired to attract students from the undeveloped surroundings. This way, more children could be given access to the quality education system and can be provided with the opportunity to unlock their full potential all the way up to the higher education. The basics are always determined in the family and in the elementary school, therefore it would be important to continuously raise the poor, to decrease income inequalities at the bottom. The only possibility to make this happen is the centralized state intervention and a great investment in the public education system and in the teacher training program. More motivated, better paid pedagogues with better methodological skills must be trained who are not racist and at the same time can discipline children peacefully but firmly.

There is a recent advantage of English becoming a globally spoken language from an economic perspective. Transactional costs can be lowered. Since a great many people know English very well and this trend is going to widen, a lot of products which were originally produced in English do not need to be translated to so many languages. For example, in the case of the board games. They are widely available in English, but the market for those which have been translated for instance to Hungarian is just a marginal number compared to the English ones. Accordingly, there are software products, applications and textbooks which intend to teach a specific language in English. There, the translation costs can be saved as well. The amount of money which could be gained by translation to reach a wider market, slowly nears the costs of translation itself, and when the translation will be more expensive than the possible market gain, then less and less products’ language and description will be translated from English.

All problems should be treated ultimately at its root and not only by easing the symptoms. Two things are certain; there is a shortage of quantity and quality in education. The former means an under-skilled work force. There is a low fertility rate and the population is shrinking. The overall standards of living should be sufficient to enable decent life chances, more financial redistribution would be necessary through balancing wages in the country. The two building blocks of a country is inevitably the public
education system and public health care system. Ideally, they are meant to enhance the youth and preserve the elderly. As long as there are austerity policies which severely restrict these two key institutions’ living-space and potential, effective and enduring improvements cannot be expected in any spheres in the life of the nation. These two institutions would serve the majority of the people. There are always exceptions, the very poor and the very rich. The bottom end, usually one tenth of the involved population, is very often excluded from education. It is due to several factors like geographical location of birth, persisting living conditions of the given region, low social capital, low social status, poor financial situation and family background. The top one tenth choose private schooling or they initially live in a wealthy region and there public education is usually much better than the average.

As we can see one basic problem is segregation, both financial and geographical, the two together creates social segregation. Wealthy communities mostly create for themselves a secure and generative environment. In contrast to deprived communities, who cannot do other but to resort to their insecure and stagnating if not degenerative environment. If geographical segregation were smaller, then the region and thus the schools would be more balanced because the common just tax burden distribution. Ultimately, I find that the root cause for segregation is the high level of individualism and the selfishness which fuels it. It stands sharply against the fact that one of the most human and most instinct characteristic of ours is being empathetic and helpful. We must have more integrated, stronger and more active social solidarity towards each other. What tool we use in order to achieve that is up to us but could necessitate profound economic, social and cultural change in our society.
6. Bibliography


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Figure 3. – Office of Education [Oktatási Hivatal]. (2016). Average points reached by the students sorted by settlement categories (the place of the school, not the residence of the student). In: Summary of results - Foreign Language Measurement 2016. [Eredmények Összesítése - idegen nyelvi mérés, 2016].


Figure 5. – Hungarian Central Statistical Office [Központi Statisztikai Hivatal]. (2016). Monthly net income income on average, 2016. I-IV. Quarter.

Figure 6. – Own research. (2018). Last year grammar school students' self-evaluation of their four basic language skills on a scale from 1 to 5.


7. Appendix

Information letter for interviews:

(Date)

Dear Mr/Ms/Mrs (Name),

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my BA degree in the Institute of Sociology at the Corvinus University. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

This study will focus on the situation of language education and on the learners’ attitudes in grammar schools in different settlement types in Hungary.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 30-40 minutes. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded but if you are unhappy with this I can make written notes. Only I and my examiners will have access to the recording. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at +36/70-202-0644 or by e-mail at gergosmith306@gmail.com. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Andrew Ryder, Faculty of Social Sciences and International Relations at e-mail andrew.ryder@uni-corvinus.hu.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Sincerely,

Kovács Gergő
Consent form for interviews:

I have read the above information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Kovács Gergő of the Department of Sociology at Corvinus University.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be tape recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the dissertation and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

YES NO
I agree to have my interview tape recorded.

YES NO
I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research

YES NO

Signature

__________________________
Interview questions to teachers:

1. How do you see foreign language knowledge affecting life-chances?
   Hogyan látja, az idegennyelv-tudás hogyan befolyásolja az életbeli lehetőségeket?

2. What are the problems in educating foreign language in a grammar school?
   Milyen problémák adódnak a nyelvoktatását illetően egy gimnáziumban?

3. What measures should be taken to improve the situation?
   Milyen intézkedéseket kellene hozni hogy javuljon a helyzet?

4. Are you satisfied as a teacher?
   Elégedett Ön tanárként?

5. In what have you meet your preliminary expectations and goals set out as a teacher?
   Mennyiben teljesültek a várakozásai és céljai tanárként a pályán?

6. What would you do in your personal teaching method differently?
   Mit csinálna az Ön saját oktatási módszerében másképp?

7. What would you change in the school’s or national’s language education system?
   Min változtatna az iskolai vagy a nemzeti nyelvoktatási rendszerben?

8. Are you satisfied with your teacher salary?
   Elégedett Ön a tanári keresetével?

9. (How much is your salary?)
   Mennyi az Ön keresete?)

10. Do you consider it proportionate in connection with your performance and value creation?
    Ezt arányosnak tartja a teljesítményével és az érték teremtésével?

11. (What would be an ideal salary for you in the same situation, for the same work?)
    Mennnyi lenne az ideális kereset Ön számára ugyanebben a helyzetben, ugyanezért a munkáért?)

12. Do you take part in vocational trainings?
    Részt vesz szakmai továbbképzéseken?
13. What problems do you see among the students in language classes?
Milyen problémákat lát a diákokkal kapcsolatba a nyelvi órákon?

14. Are resources sufficient? Number of classes per week, quality of books.
Az erőforrások megfelelőek? Heti óraszám, könyvek minősége.

15. Are you happy with class sizes?
Elégedett az osztálylétszámokkal?

16. What are your motivations to teach languages to students?
Mik a motivációi a gyerekek nyelvtanításában?

17. What motivates children the best?
Mi motiválja a gyerekeket leginkább?

18. How do you see it during the classes, what are the weakest language skills of the students in classes? Why could it be?
Az órákon hogy látja, mik a leggyengébb nyelvi képességei a diákoknak? Ez miért lehet?

19. According to you what lies behind the successes of the successful language learners?
Ön szerint a sikeres nyelvtanulóknak miben rejlik a sikere?

20. Any other remarks or positive or negative aspects we did not touch upon?
Bármiféle megjegyzés vagy pozitív vagy negatív szempont amit nem érintettünk?
Survey questions to students:

1. How does foreign language knowledge affect self-actualization in life?
   Az idegennyelv-tudás hogyan hat az életbeli érvényesülésre?

2. What are the problems in the foreign language education in the grammar school?
   Mik a problémák az idegennyelv oktatással a gimnáziumban?

3. What measures are needed to be taken to improve the situation?
   Milyen intézkedéseket kellene tenni hogy javuljon a helyzet?

4. Rate your English language skills according to your self-satisfaction. (1: very bad, 5: very good)
   Értékelj saját angol nyelvi képességeidet saját magaddal való elégedettséged szerint.
   (1: nagyon rossz, 5: nagyon jó)

   Writing / Írás 1 2 3 4 5
   Reading / Olvasás 1 2 3 4 5
   Speaking / Beszéd 1 2 3 4 5
   Listening / Hallott szövegértés 1 2 3 4 5

5. I have successful language exams in… (B1: intermediate, B2: upper-intermediate, C1: advanced)
   Sikeres nyelvvizsgám van… (B1: alapfok, B2: középfok, C1: felsőfok)

   Language / Nyelv 1.: Level / Szint: B1 B2 C1
   Language / Nyelv 2.: Level / Szint: B1 B2 C1

6. In the upcoming 6 months I will take language exam in…
   Az elkövetkező 6 hónapban nyelvvizsgát fogok tenni…

   Language / Nyelv: Level / Szint: B1 B2 C1

7. What other language(s) do you learn?
   Milyen más nyelveket tanulsz?

8. Beyond school tasks do you learn language? How?
   Az iskolai feladatokon túl tanulsz nyelvet? Hogyan?

9. Why do you learn foreign language(s), what are your goals?
   Miért tanulsz idegen nyelv(ek)et, mik a céljaid?
10. According to you, which languages and at which level should a 20-year-old Hungarian young adult be able to use foreign language(s)?

Szerinted egy Magyar fiatal felnőttnek 20 évesen milyen nyelveken és milyen szinten kellene tudnia?

Language / Nyelv 1.: Level / Szint: B1 B2 C1
Language / Nyelv 2.: Level / Szint: B1 B2 C1
Language / Nyelv 3.: Level / Szint: B1 B2 C1

11. What difficulties happened in your language learning history?

Milyen nehézségek adódtak az eddigi nyelvtanulásod során?

12. Where do you use your foreign language knowledge in everyday life?

Hol használod az idegennyelvet a mindennapjaiban?

13. From who and what kind of support, inspiration do you get for language learning?

Kitől és milyen támogatást, ösztönzést kapsz a nyelvtanuláshoz?

14. What is the general situation and attitude towards languages in your family?

A családodban mi az általános álláspolgárlás az idegennyelvekkel szemben?

15. What would you do differently in language classes as a teacher?

Mit csinálnál másképp a nyelvórakon tanárként?

16. Does the school fulfil your language learning needs? If not, why not?

Az iskola eleget tesz a nyelvtanulási igényeidnek? Ha nem, miért nem?

17. Will you continue your studies?

Folytatni fogod a tanulmányaidat?

18. Did you know that from 2020 it will be obligatory to have at least one B2 level (intermediate), general, complex language certification or other equivalent document to get into the tertiary education?

Tudtad hogy 2020-tól a felsőoktatásba való bejutáshoz kötelező lesz legalább egy B2 szintű (középfok), általános nyelvi, komplex nyelvviszga vagy azzal egyenértékű okirat?