

## **MTA-ELTE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING RESEARCH GROUP**

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We started our work by laying the theoretical foundations our research in order to ensure the construct validity of subsequent data collections. Our most important finding is that the development of a lingua franca-sensitive language pedagogy is particularly important in Hungarian public education, where the number of native speakers is severely limited. We argue that problem-based language learning treats students as language users in the classroom, which effectively supports the language learning process.

To lay the foundations of our research methodology, we conducted a meta-analysis of qualitative studies focusing on individual differences in our research area. Our most important finding is that we have been able to demonstrate that, although qualitative research is gaining ground in our field, this is not accompanied by the methodological rigour that our research will set to achieve.

As a result of combining theory and methodology, four themes were explored in more detail in the first year:

- To investigate individual differences in English language learning, we used qualitative methods to map the classroom flow experiences of language learners in order to identify positive classroom processes.
- Analyses based on data collected in classroom English lessons also drew our attention to the importance of developing self-assessment in relation to writing in public education. Exploring language output, from which we can infer not only language use but also language learning when longitudinal data are collected, was also the subject of our research.
- We have examined the role of language learning strategies in English language learning and found that, for the most part, language learners focus on error correction and grammatical forms, which may not be the most successful strategies for language use focusing on problem-solving. We also examined the longitudinal evolution of some individual variables in different schools, and pointed out that their dynamically changing characteristics can pose challenges for teachers in public education.
- The study of language learning in Hungary cannot be complete without exploring issues related to teacher education. Our results show that the process and content of teacher training often demotivates prospective teachers, resulting in high drop-out rates during and after training.

Based on our theoretical and methodological findings, we developed a new data collection tool and used it to collect data:

- A multi-stage quality assurance process was used to design a focus group interview schedule for problem-based language learning.
- Using the interview guide, we conducted 4 focus group interviews with a total of 12 English language teachers.

- One of our main emerging findings is that the teachers who participated in the focus group interviews used problem-focused learning in a much broader sense than what its definition in the literature implies or the way researchers of the topic interpret it, as they conceptualize students' problems in a much broader sense, including social problems.

We continued our data collection and analysis in the second year of our research.

- We adapted the focus group interview schedule for teachers of the German language and then conducted 3 focus group interviews with a total of 10 German language teachers.
- The main finding of our second focus group interview study is that the teachers' reflections on problem-focused language teaching can be grouped around 4 major themes. They talked about difficulties at the level of German, difficulties related to individual differences, difficulties related to classroom learning, and difficulties related to language use outside the classroom.
- Further research was carried out on language use outside the classroom and the views of public-school teachers on English language learning outside the classroom. In the context of a problem-based approach, teachers emphasised the need to channel language learning outside the classroom into classroom work and to integrate its results into schoolwork. To further investigate individual differences, we looked at students who had been on study abroad trips and found that motivation, language learning strategy and language confidence played a central role in successful participation in study abroad trips.
- To explore the views of Hungarian public-school students, we developed a questionnaire that measured, among other things, their attitudes towards problem-based language learning and their perception of the status of English as a lingua franca. Based on our results (N = 258), we found only one high school in Budapest where we could reliably measure students' attitudes towards problem-based language learning, and there were problems with the interpretation of access to English in all the schools involved; in contrast, a consistent picture emerged regarding the interpretation of language and grammar problems.

30 September 2023

