

ETHNOLINGUISTIC VITALITY, ATTITUDES AND NORMATIVE PRESSURE AS PREDICTORS OF MOTIVATION IN LEARNING AND SPEAKING HUNGARIAN AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN SLOVENIA

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Abstract. The present study examines the motivational context of learning and speaking Hungarian as a second language among the Slovenian-speaking youth in the Dolinsko/Lendvavidék region of Slovenia. Survey data ($N = 119$) was collected among secondary school students in 2012 and analysed with path analysis. The results provided considerable support for the proposed model. Findings and implications are discussed, and suggestions for future research are made.

Keywords: ethnolinguistic vitality, second language learning, motivation, willingness to communicate, minority language, Hungarian in Slovenia

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1. Introduction

Despite the fact that most countries around Hungary have significant Hungarian minorities, only in Slovenia, in the region Dolinsko/Lendvavidék, Hungarian is taught as an obligatory second language for the majority-language-speaking students in schools. This is especially notable as there are only about 7,000 Hungarian speakers in Slovenia while, for example, in Romania they number 1.2 million and in Slovakia 470,000.

In recent years, several studies have addressed different aspects of bilingual education in the region Dolinsko/Lendvavidék from the point of view of the Hungarian-speaking minority (e.g. Kolláth 2012 and Varga 2009). However, few efforts have been made to study the topic from the perspective of the Slovenian-speaking majority. The present research aims to shed some light on the context and experience of learning and speaking Hungarian as a second language among Slovenian-speaking youth. Specifically, we focus on how various components

of second language learning hang together and predict willingness to communicate in Hungarian.

1.1. The vitality of Hungarian in Dolinsko/Lendvavidék

Ethnolinguistic vitality represents the contextually relative demography, status and institutional support of an ethnolinguistic group and is defined as a capacity “which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and collective entity within the intergroup setting” (Giles et al. 1977: 308). From the perspective of ethnolinguistic vitality, Hungarian in Dolinsko/Lendvavidék presents a case in which a moderate demographic capital is accompanied by a relatively high status and institutional support. However, at the national level the vitality of Hungarian is considerably lower because of its low demographic capital.

Today, approximately 7,000 persons or 0.3% of the citizens of Slovenia are Hungarian speakers. The number as well as the proportion of Hungarians has been continuously decreasing since the region became a part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1920 (renamed to Yugoslavia in 1929). In 1921, there were 13,000 Hungarians in the region, while today their number is about 7,000, a decrease of 50% (cf. Bokor 2001). The Hungarian-speaking minority lives in the region of Dolinsko/Lendvavidék near the Slovenian-Hungarian border, where they constitute about 40% of the population. As most settlements in the region are bilingual, there is much contact between the language groups, which has both linguistic and demographic consequences (Bartha 2007, Bokor 2001, and Kolláth 2012).

The Slovene Constitution (1991) guarantees the rights of the Hungarian minority and the official status of the Hungarian language in the region of Dolinsko/Lendvavidék. In consequence, Hungarian is well represented in public administration, state bodies and judicial authorities (Győri Szabó 2008 and Roter 2003). Place names and signs are bilingual, the Hungarian minority has a Hungarian-speaking local radio station, a television programme, a weekly, and several magazines; church services are also bilingual (Kolláth 2005). All educational institutions in the region, including kindergartens, elementary schools and a high school are bilingual (for more, see Kolláth 2012 and Vidmar 2011). For majority- and minority-language-speaking students alike, both languages are compulsory as a subject and as the language of instruction as well. At the secondary school level, students have three L2 lessons a week for four years. However, as bilingual competence is not required

or appreciated at a societal level (Bokor 2001 and Kolláth 2012), Slovenian speakers usually do not have as good skills in Hungarian as Hungarian speakers have in Slovenian (Varga 2009). Importantly, since Slovenian speakers have a considerable amount of instruction in Hungarian, the fact that they cannot speak Hungarian suggests *psychological barriers* to adoption.

Accordingly, even if the Dolinsko/Lendvavidék region represents a case of a relatively high ethnolinguistic vitality for the Hungarian minority group, Hungarian is seeing a decline in usage in the region (Kolláth 2012). Hungarian is increasingly limited to the family and the private sphere of the minority group, while the other domains (such as the public administration or the post office) seem to be more and more dominated by Slovenian (Bartha 2007 and Kolláth 2012).

1.2. The present research

The present study aims to explain Slovenian-speaking majority group members' willingness to communicate in the minority language, i.e. Hungarian. To generate hypotheses we have integrated the tenets of the social context model (Clément 1980, 1986 and Clément and Kruidenier 1985), the socio-educational model (Gardner 1985 and 2010) of second language acquisition, and the willingness to communicate model (Clément et al. 2003, MacIntyre et al. 1998 and MacIntyre et al. 2001). As mentioned previously, we are looking at the psychological barriers that might be related to adoption, and so we have picked the types of variables out of the previous models to input them into ours. Below, we describe and explicate all the hypotheses included in our model. The schematic representation of the model is depicted in Figure 1.

The first piece in the model is subjective ethnolinguistic vitality (Bourhis et al. 1981). As noted above, ethnolinguistic vitality stands for the overall strength of a language compared to that of its rival language based on factors such as demography, status and institutional support. Vitality has both objective and subjective aspects, and while objective vitality is based on the available data to provide an overall assessment (see section 1.1.), subjective vitality is derived from the perceptions of objective vitality and implies individuals' own assessment of the vitality of their ethnolinguistic ingroup and outgroup (Bourhis, Giles, and Rosenthal 1981). In general, subjectively perceived relative vitality of the rival languages can be seen as a pre-existing condition accounting for ethnolinguistic attitudes and behaviour (for more recent

reviews, see Bourhis and Barrette 2006 and Sachdev and Giles 2012). Indeed, extant research (e.g. Genesee and Bourhis 1988, Harwood et al. 1994, Kraemer and Olshtain 1989, Kraemer et al. 1994, and Ryan et al. 1982) has provided support for the role of subjective vitality in developing language attitudes. Accordingly, we expect that participants who perceive the vitality of Hungarian to be high will have a better attitude towards Hungarian speakers.

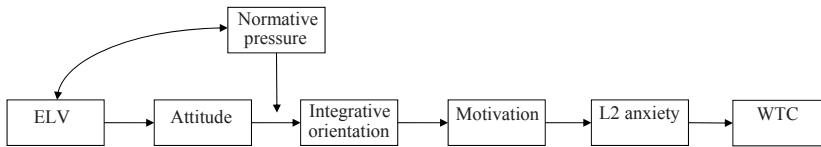


Figure 1. Schematic representation of the proposed conceptual model

Next, we anticipate that a positive attitude towards the Hungarian speakers will lead to a higher integrative orientation in learning Hungarian. Integrative orientation is defined as an affective, attitude-based orientation in second language learning (Gardner 1985, 2010), which implies acquisition of a second language in order to socialize and increase psychological closeness with its speakers. As demonstrated by several studies (e.g. Csizér and Dörnyei 2005), the attitude towards the second language group can be seen as a key precursor of integrative orientation.

While a positive attitude often leads to an increased integrative orientation, it need not always be so. Proponents of the theory of reasoned action argue that individuals are more likely to perform a certain behaviour if important referents, such as family members, friends, teachers and others approve of it (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975, 2011 and Hale, Householder, and Greene 2002). In the context of the present study, this may mean that a positive attitude toward Hungarian speakers can be translated into motivation to learn Hungarian mostly among those who perceive that important others around them have a positive attitude towards learning Hungarian. Thus, we anticipate that attitude will have a greater effect on integrative orientation among participants when there is less normative pressure; while among participants under greater normative pressure, the effect of attitudes on integrative orientation will be small. In addition, we propose a connection between normative pressure and subjective ethnolinguistic vitality. On the one hand, we argue that individuals who perceive the vitality of Hungarian to be higher will

also perceive higher normative pressure to learn Hungarian; in other words, we believe that normative pressure is, at least partly, a product of ethnolinguistic vitality. On the other hand, the subjective perception of ethnolinguistic vitality can also depend on what important others think about learning Hungarian; those who perceive that other people appreciate skills in Hungarian may tend to ascribe higher value to the language (see, Csizér and Dörnyei 2005).

Next, grounded in the socio-educational model of second language learning (Gardner 1985, 2010), we expect that a higher integrative orientation will lead to a greater language learning motivation, which in turn, will lead to lower level of second language anxiety (Gardner 2010). Language anxiety is usually defined as the fear or apprehension occurring when learners have to perform tasks in a target language in which they are not proficient (Gardner and MacIntyre 1993). We argue, that the desire to learn a second language reflects a positive emotion which has the capacity to reduce L2 anxiety; in other words, individuals who are more motivated to learn a second language are also less anxious to speak it.

Finally, in line with earlier studies (e.g. Clément et al. 2003 and Yashima 2002), we expect that lower L2 anxiety will enhance individuals' willingness to communicate in the second language; that is, an individual's ability to use the second language when an opportunity arises, which is the ultimate goal of second language learning, (MacIntyre et al. 1998, MacIntyre et al. 2001).

2. Method

Self-report questionnaire data were collected among secondary school students in Lendva/Lendava, in the centre of the Dolinsko/Lendvavidék region in January, 2012. 180 students filled in the questionnaire, but those who speak Hungarian as their mother tongue were filtered from the dataset. The final dataset contained data only from Slovenian-speaking students ($N = 119$) who learn Hungarian as second language. Even if the number of subjects might seem to be small, the participants in this research make up about 90% of the population of students who learn Hungarian as a second language in this region. The average age of the participants was 18 years ($SD = .96$).

2.1. Measures

Subjective vitality. Nine 5-point items (e.g., “How highly regarded are the following languages in Dolinsko/Lendvavidék?”) from the subjective ethnolinguistic vitality questionnaire (Bourhis et al. 1981) were used to assess the subjective vitality of both the Slovene and the Hungarian languages. All the three dimensions of ethnolinguistic vitality, that is, perceived demographic strength, institutional support and status were covered with three items. An aggregate variable was computed for both Slovene ($\alpha = .93$) and Hungarian ($\alpha = .92$). Subjective vitality of Slovene was subtracted from that of Hungarian resulting in a single measure, which expressed relative subjective vitality of Hungarian.

Attitude. The attitude toward Hungarian speakers was measured with four 5-point items from the Attitudes and Motivational Test Battery (AMTB; Gardner 2010). The measure included items such as “I wish I could have more Hungarian-speaking friends”. The compound scale had a good reliability ($\alpha = .74$).

Normative pressure. Based on MacIntyre et al. (2001), four 5-point items measured the degree to which significant others in the lives of the participants (e.g. parents, friends) regarded the competence in Hungarian important. These items formed a scale with acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .69$).

Integrative orientation. Three 5-point items (e.g. “Studying Hungarian is important because it will allow me to be more at ease with Hungarian speakers”) were used from Gardner’s AMTB. The measure had acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .65$).

Motivation. Motivation was measured with four 5-point items from the desire to learn the second language subscale from Gardner’s AMTB questionnaire (e.g., “I want to learn Hungarian so well that it will become natural for me.”). The measure had a good reliability ($\alpha = .79$).

L2 anxiety. Anxiety about speaking Hungarian was measured with four 5-point items From Gardner’s AMTB (e.g. “I am usually at ease when speaking Hungarian”). The subscales were composed to an aggregate scale with good reliability ($\alpha = .74$).

Willingness to communicate (WTC). Nine 4-point items (e.g. “Talk with a Hungarian-speaking acquaintance while standing in line.”) were used based on MacIntyre et al. (2001) to assess how likely the participants were to choose to communicate in Hungarian in different situations. The resulting scale had excellent reliability ($\alpha = .92$).

2.2. Analysis

Using Mplus, our proposed model was tested by path analysis. Multiple fit indices were used to evaluate the fit of the model to the data (the comparative fit index, CFI; the standardized root-mean-square residual, SRMR; and the root-mean square error of approximation, RMSEA). Residuals of the components of the interaction were allowed to covary freely. In the model, subjective vitality entered as independent variable, attitude as mediator 1, integrative orientation as mediator 2, motivation as mediator 3, language anxiety as mediator 4 and willingness to communicate as the dependent variable; normative pressure was proposed as a moderator between attitude and integrative orientation. The interaction was decomposed by the help of the Process Macro (Hayes 2013), and it is depicted in Figure 3.

3. Results

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations of the variables are listed in Table 1. Corresponding to the objective ethno-linguistic reality (see section 1.1.), the participants perceived the vitality of the Hungarian language as considerably lower than that of Slovenian.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations among the variables

	<i>M(SD)</i>	Attitude	Normative pressure	Integrative orientation	Motivation	L2 anxiety	WTC
Subjective vitality	-1.29 (1.10)	.33**	.30**	.33**	.20**	-.29**	.16
Attitude	2.87 (.81)		.56**	.59**	.53**	-.55**	.42**
Normative pressure	2.87 (.83)			.65**	.56**	-.49**	.40**
Integrative orientation	3.25 (.89)				.67**	-.61**	.47**
Motivation	3.02 (1.00)					-.62**	.46**
L2 anxiety	2.95 (.69)						-.59**
WTC	2.41 (.80)						

Note. Attitude, normative pressure, integrative orientation, motivation and L2 anxiety were measured on scales of 1–5; vitality was measured from -4 to 4 and WTC was measured from 1 to 4. ** $p < .01$

In addition, they reported a rather neutral attitude towards the Hungarian minority, and a moderate level of integrative orientation, motivation, L2 anxiety and willingness to communicate.

The correlation analyses demonstrated a medium to strong correlation between almost all variables. Of importance, subjective ethnolinguistic vitality was significantly related to all other variables except for willingness to communicate. Participants, who perceived the vitality of Hungarian to be higher, reported a more positive attitude toward Hungarian speakers, a higher level of integrative orientation, motivation and normative pressure, and a lower level of L2 anxiety.

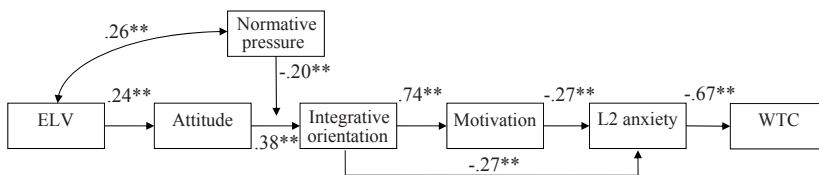


Figure 2. Results of the path analysis

The model had a good fit, $\chi^2(15) = 20.01$, $p = .17$. RMSEA = .05, CFI = .98, SRMR = .06, and explained 33 % of the variance in WTC, $R^2 = .33$, $p < .01$. Coefficients are unstandardized regression coefficients (B)

** $p < .01$

The results of the path analysis are summarized in Figure 2. The initial model had a poor fit, $\chi^2(16) = 31.69$, $p < .01$, RMSEA = .09, CFI = .94, SRMR = .10; modification fit indices suggested a path from integrative orientation to L2 anxiety to improve model fit. Given that this path is consistent with the literature, it was added to the model. As a consequence, the final model was found to fit the data well, $\chi^2(15) = 20.01$, $p = .17$. RMSEA = .05, CFI = .98, SRMR = .06. The model explained 33% in the variance of WTC, $R^2 = .33$, $p < .01$. The indirect effect of subjective vitality on WTC via the chain of mediators was significant $B = .01$, 95% CI [.00, .02]. Additionally, significant interaction between attitude and normative pressure demonstrated that normative pressure significantly moderated the path between attitude and integrative orientation. As also shown by the simple slopes illustrated in Figure 3, the effect of attitude on integrative orientation was stronger among participants perceiving lower normative pressure, $B = .54$, $p < .01$, while it was smaller or even insignificant among participants perceiving high normative pressure, $B = .21$, $p = .08$.

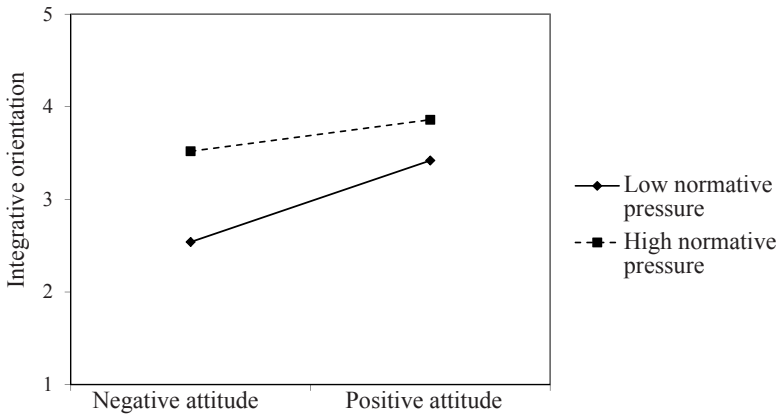


Figure 3. Predicted values of integrative orientation based on normative pressure and the perceived relative vitality of Hungarian

4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the motivational context of learning and speaking Hungarian among young Slovene speakers in Dolinsko/Lendvavidék, Slovenia. Our results offered considerable support for the conceptual model we proposed. Specifically, as expected, the perception of higher vitality of Hungarian as SL contributed to a better attitude toward Hungarian speakers, which increased the degree of integrative orientation in learning Hungarian. Furthermore, and in consistence with the assumptions of the theory of reasoned action (e.g. Fishbein and Ajzen 2011), we found that attitude had a greater effect on integrative orientation among those who were under smaller normative pressure, that is, whose social network supported Hungarian less. This finding suggests that integrative orientation is greatest when a person has a positive attitude toward Hungarian speakers *and* perceives a supportive attitude toward learning Hungarian among people whose opinion is important to him or her. This piece of results is particularly valuable since, to our knowledge, no other study has documented the combined effect of attitude and normative pressure in the context of second language learning before. Moreover, we also found that subjective vitality and normative pressure are not independent constructs; rather they are significant correlates, which are mutually influenced by each other. Vitality perceptions are related to how important others appreciate skills in Hungarian, while other peoples' opinion is influenced by the ethnolinguistic vitality of the language.

Additionally, our results demonstrated that a high integrative orientation was related to greater motivation, which, in turn, decreased L2 anxiety and resulted in a higher willingness to communicate in Hungarian. Thus, these results are consistent with the findings of other researchers (e.g. MacIntyre et al. 2001, Clément et al. 2003, and Yashima 2002), and confirm the psychological background of willingness to communicate also in the Slovenian context.

Furthermore, our results also highlighted the prominence of subjective ethnolinguistic vitality as a contextual determinant of second language learning. As it could be seen, subjective vitality was both directly and indirectly related to the attitudinal and language learning variables. Although these sorts of relationships have been theoretically well established for a long time (Clément 1980 and Giles and Byrne 1982), few studies have examined the prominence of subjective ethnolinguistic vitality in second language learning, and empirical findings have been inconsistent. In fact, most studies conducted in the area could not substantiate the postulated relationship between subjective vitality and the other constructs at play (Labrie and Clément 1986, Clément 1986, and Kam 2002; see also Cenoz and Valencia 1993). Therefore, our findings are imperative because correlational analyses revealed that vitality is significantly connected to attitudes, integrative orientation, normative pressure, motivation and language anxiety, while path analysis could substantiate the place of subjective vitality as an independent variable in our model. Thus, we suggest that researchers should confirm the relevance of subjective vitality as a predictor of second language learning. Of note, decades of research have shown the importance of subjective perceptions of ethnolinguistic vitality in language maintenance and loss (e.g. Giles et al. 1990, Landry and Bourhis 1997, Leets and Giles 1995, and Yagmur et al. 1999). Especially in contexts where language learning is meant to promote the retention of linguistic diversity, such as in the context of the present study, vitality perceptions should not be overlooked in second language research. Although the present research utilized ethnolinguistic vitality as a predictor variable, it should be kept in mind that the process outlined in this paper may be bidirectional: greater use of Hungarian among Slovenian speakers may strengthen the societal position of the Hungarian language and enhance its presence in different domains and functions, which, in turn, can make Hungarian a more vital language in the region than it is today.

Notwithstanding the limitations of the study, such as using a cross-sectional design and self-report data, we regard our findings

notable. Indeed, we provided empirical support for the importance of ethnolinguistic vitality in second language learning, and showed how attitude toward second language speakers and normative pressure may interact to predict motivation. In addition, we presented data from a region where no earlier studies had examined the motivational context of learning and speaking the minority language among majority-language speakers.

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Kokkuvõte. Enikő Marton, Nicholas Joyce ja László Vincze: Etnolingvistiline vitaalsus, suhtumised ja normatiivne surve motivatsiooni argument-tunnustena ungari keele kui teise keele õppimisel ja rääkimisel Sloveenias. Artiklis uuritakse motivatsiooni õppida ja rääkida ungari keelt teise keelena sloveeni keelt kõnelevate noorte hulgas Dolinsko/Lendvavidéki piirkonnas Sloveenias. Küsitlusandmed koguti 119 keskkooliõpilaselt 2012. aastal ning neid analüüsiti teeanalüüsi abil. Tulemused toetasid autorite esitatud mudelit. Artiklis käsitletakse tulemusi ja järeldusi ning antakse soovitusi edasiseks uurimistöök.

Märksõnad: etnolingvistiline vitaalsus, teise keele õppimine, motivatsioon, suhtlустаhe, vähemuskeel, ungari keel Sloveenias