

Multilingualism, culture, museum learning

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ABSTRACT

Language difficulties can be a problem for foreign students studying in Hungary: they see as Hungarians do not speak foreign languages, which hinders the well-being of foreigners. At the same time, students studying at Hungarian universities also have different cultural expectations: it is important for them to gain cultural experiences, expand their knowledge of Hungarian culture and history. Classical public cultural institutions, such as museums, can be perfect places to learn about the culture and history of a country.

The aim of this study is to introduce our research findings whether foreigner students studying at the University of Szeged have to face these problems. Our goal is to find out how important it is to them to get to know Hungarian culture, and whether they think about museums from this point of view and what kinds of language barriers do they have. In our study, we present the results of focus group research with foreign students studying at the University of Szeged.

The results show that the students who took part in the research had language difficulties in Hungary which has affected their knowledge of Hungarian culture and history. They don't usually go to museums to gain more information but they think museums can be great places for this purpose although the students have problems with museums' multilingual aspects.

We have come to the conclusion that foreign students are interested in Hungarian culture but the language barriers are building walls between them and the museums.

KEYWORDS

multilingualism, language skills, culture, higher education, museums, foreign students, museum education, museum learning

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INTRODUCTION

Foreign students play a significant role in the Hungarian higher education sector: the number of foreign students has been growing from the beginning of the 2000's (Czimre, Toca, Hegedűs, & Teperics, 2016). Several researches have been conducted on their motivations, expectations and experiences related to Hungarian culture in recent years.

Expectations and motivations for foreign students

The expectations and motivations of foreign students who study in another country can be categorized in several ways. Cubillo, Sánchez, and Cerviño (2006) developed five categories based on their research. These are: education and training expectations, labor market expectations, social and societal expectations, cultural expectations, and personal development expectations. Mazzarol and Soutar (2012) share a similar view, finding that the image of the target country, the cultural relations between the mother country and the target country, the geographical proximity and the cost of living are important motivating factors. We can see how much cultural factors mean to students, however, the study of Roga, Lapina, and Mürsepp (2015) concluded that the academic quality, the international environment and the cost of living are considered important by the students in Riga who took part in their research. Tillman (2011) highlights the labor market advantage of those studying abroad, while Ho, Li, Cooper, and Holmes (2007) emphasizing the favorable educational costs of studying abroad as a motivating factor. Mucsi, Malota, and Török (2020) break down motivational factors into pull and push factors based on McMahon's (1992) theory: in their view, foreign students have different motivational factors. The stronger the push factors (e.g. cultural interest, desire to learn or personal development), the easier the acculturation will go. Pull factors place high expectations on the host country and institution.

Research has also been carried out in Hungary regarding foreign students. Böcskei, Bács, Kovács, Tarnóczi, and Fenyves (2019) conducted a questionnaire survey among foreign students studying in Hungary. In connection with their studies abroad, based on the results, the students were motivated to learn about the culture and education of a new country, they wanted to have new challenges, a scholarship, they wanted to have low costs of living, opportunities to exercise and learn a language, and they thought Hungary had a great geopolitical situation.

Kéri and Hetesi (2016) examined the foreign students of the University of Szeged (Hungary) using an in-depth interview method. Based on the results, the authors also developed a motivation system. Their research also differentiated the motivational network of students at different levels of education: based on this, the expectations of foreign students in BSc education include the experience of good quality education and study abroad, in the case of MSc students the acquisition of EU diplomas, cultural and historical knowledge, the possibility of further study, while the high quality of research is relevant for foreigners participating in PhD training. In a later study (Hetsi & Kéri, 2018), the authors report the results of their questionnaire survey conducted among foreign students at the University of Szeged in 2016. Similar results were obtained for motivations and expectations just like in the qualitative research: students had the highest educational, cultural, and social expectations, followed by the expectations in the labor market and personal life. At the same time, the authors pointed out that cultural expectations



are influenced by interest in other cultures, and that the cultural, social and labor market expectations of foreign students also play an important role in settling down.

Previous foreign students in the field of economics were also examined at the University of Szeged in 2018 (Kéri & Révész, 2019). In the online questionnaire and interview research, it was found that cultural aspects are also important to the students interviewed: students are loyal not just to their university or faculty but to the city and culture of their studies as well.

Similar research was conducted at the University of Debrecen among foreign students of the Faculty of Economics (Tóth & Kiss, 2017): based on the results foreign students expect a competitive degree and international internship, and consider the appropriate external environment important, i.e. the city where the university is located matters to them, just as the everyday life there and also public safety.

Based on research conducted among the students of the University of Miskolc, it can be said that low tuition and living costs, the development of language skills are important, as well as making new friends and acquaintances, expanding cultural knowledge and travelling around Hungary (Bajzát, 2015a, 2015b). At the same time, it is worth mentioning that low educational costs, learning about ancestral culture or immigration were not of paramount importance to the participants in the research – as foreign students generally considered these factors important in the researches mentioned earlier. This result shows that different preferences can vary from country to country, region to region and university to university.

Erasmus + students around the world – and in Hungary

From the point of view of our research, we consider it important to talk about Erasmus + students who come to Hungary from Europe, so there is no immense cultural distance between them and the host country as in the case of foreign students coming from outside of Europe. In addition, they usually spend one semester in the country, so they may process different challenges differently and may have different expectations than students who complete a full university degree (minimum 2–3 years) in the foreign country.

Erasmus + is one of the largest international mobility programs, which aims to strengthen international relations and develop language skills in addition to learning and developing competences (Tempus Public Foundation, 2019). The Erasmus Student Network (ESN) provides a mentoring network for international students participating in the Erasmus + program, whose members volunteer to help the everyday life of international students (Bifikovics, Malota, & Mucsi, 2020). Due to the short period of study abroad, Erasmus + students are more active, travel more domestically and discover natural and cultural heritage in Hungary (Csapó & Császár, 2021). Although during their Erasmus + studies they can struggle with language difficulties: it is not easy for them to learn another country's language at the short amount of time they are spending there and they are often struggling with adapting to an unknown culture – showed a Turkish Erasmus + research (Dökü, 2013). A recent international qualitative study reached a similar conclusion: in addition to the different cultural similarities, the cultural differences among the interviewed students who had previously participated in the Erasmus + program were very significant (Nada & Legutko, 2022). A quantitative international research also showed that culture and cultural identity is quite important for the Erasmus + students and it also showed that these “students understand European identity as cultural and political one” (Oborune, 2013: 88).



Language difficulties in Hungary

As we have already mentioned above, a lot of research has shown that language difficulties are a serious challenge for foreign students studying in Hungary. As a small proportion of Hungarians can speak a foreign language, life outside university buildings can be considered difficult for foreigner students, which makes their integration more difficult (Hatos, 2012). A similar problem is reported by Berács and Malota (2011), who conducted research among foreigners studying in Budapest. They came to the conclusion that the process of socialization of foreigners is seriously hampered by the fact that they are unable to understand not only the participants of the world outside the university, but often not even their fellow students due to the foreign language difficulties and discouragement of Hungarians. Similar problems were found in their research by Faubl et al. (2021) who conducted research among medical students studying in Hungary. In this case, too, participants said that language difficulties were the biggest barrier to adaptation. We think mostly of English when we talk about a foreign language because most international students speak this language at the highest level after their mother tongue (Börjesson, 2017). Based on the results of the Fourth Global Survey of the International Association of Universities, Egron-Polak and Hudson (2014) highlighted that language problems are the second most common barrier identified by foreign students studying in Europe. This result is also supported by Sebestyén's (2016) research, in which she examined the students of two Hungarian higher education institutions (the University of Debrecen and the College of Nyíregyháza¹): it was concluded that poor foreign language skills may be a barrier to studying abroad.

Based on different researches it can be said that the perception of the Hungarian people evokes mixed emotions in the students. Due to language barriers, students say that Hungarians are too cool, aloof, short-sighted people, bureaucracy and administration are very difficult to manage and the host environment is difficult to get to know (Bajzát, 2015a). Language barriers also make it difficult for foreign students to become cooperating members of a given community or environment (Gregersen-Hermans, 2017). This is especially true for students from outside Europe, who have a particularly long distance between their own culture and the culture of the host country (Mucsi et al., 2020). In addition to all these results, we can also find positive opinions in the literature – despite language barriers. Several authors (Bajzát, 2015a; Dobos, 2011; Malota & Mucsi, 2019; Tóth & Kiss, 2017) report that foreign students have a fundamentally positive view of the Hungarian people: they are kind, polite and helpful.

In connection with language problems, the question may arise to what extent foreign students try to express themselves in the language of the host country, in this case Hungarian. According to Hatos (2012) it is a serious integration advantage if the foreign student has a stable knowledge of the Hungarian language. So it not only helps with everyday well-being, but also seriously increases the willingness to settle down and work in the host country. The results of Bajzát's (2015a) research also support all this: apart from young locals, foreign students can only communicate with Hungarian people if they can speak Hungarian. However, the Hungarian language is found to be very difficult, which poses another obstacle to integration. Bajzát (2015b) also points out that the use of the Hungarian language is a serious problem for more than half of the foreign students interviewed during their research, while only 9% of the respondents did not have an obstacle to speaking Hungarian.

¹Since September 1, 2016, College of Nyíregyháza has been operating as University of Nyíregyháza.



So there are barriers to language use on both sides. Among Hungarians mostly young people speak foreign languages but they are not very efficient either, so it is difficult for foreign students to express themselves during their daily activities because very few services are available in English in Hungary. On the other hand, foreign students find it difficult to learn Hungarian, they cannot learn Hungarian (well) so they cannot address Hungarian people in their mother tongue.

Cultural expectations and knowledge acquisition among foreign students

Based on the previously mentioned research and literature, it is clear that the cultural environment, the cultural peculiarities and the culture of an unknown nation play an important role for foreign students when choosing the place of their studies abroad.

In their study focusing on the intercultural knowledge of foreign students, [Czerwionka, Artamonova, and Barbosa \(2015\)](#) found that intercultural knowledge increases significantly with time spent in a foreign institution. Based on their results, this includes elements of everyday culture, such as gastronomy, history, politics, culture and various values. According to [Bohrer \(2014\)](#), learning about the culture of ancestors can also be a motivating factor for foreign students. Summarizing the results of several researches ([Opper, Teichler, & Carlson, 1990](#); [Souto Otero, 2008](#)), [Leutwyler and Meierhans \(2013\)](#) state that cultural and personal aspects are more important to foreign students than professional or educational factors.

The results of a national survey in Hungary in 2010 show that foreign students considered it important to learn about Hungarian history and culture, as well as gastronomy and natural values ([Dobos, 2011](#)). In their previously mentioned research, [Hetesi and Kéri \(2018\)](#) concluded that not only the cultural environment but also the cultural experience is of great importance for foreign students studying at the University of Szeged.

The question arises as to how the above-mentioned cultural experiences are acquired by foreign students in Hungary and how they meet their needs in this direction. If we examine the system of cultural institutions in Hungary, museums seem to be a good solution, which can not only present Hungarian history ([Medgyesi & Hegedűs, 2014](#)) but also bring Hungarian culture closer to foreign students through their various exhibitions and events. Previous researches focusing on foreign students does not provide sufficient in-depth information if foreign students use these institutions or not or what kind of language environment they encounter there – although some authors consider museums to be an excellent opportunity to sensitize foreign students ([Koltai, 2021](#)) as it can be great learning space for Hungarian students as well (even if Hungarian university students can have negative childhood museum visit-experiences [[Hegedűs, 2017](#)]).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the above, it is clear that in the course of previous research on international and Hungarian foreign students, linguistic factors as well as cultural factors emerged in many respects when students decided on their studies abroad. In the course of our research, we are interested in whether the results of previous international and Hungarian research are true for the students studying at the University of Szeged (Hungary). In addition, we go one step further: in previous researches we did not find any meaningful information on whether foreign students use museums to get to know the local culture and to obtain information and whether they



encounter in these museums the phenomenon that appears in many other areas of their lives: foreign language difficulties in Hungary.

Based on all this, we set up the following hypotheses in our research:

- H1: Based on the works of Cubillo et al. (2006), Mazzarol and Soutar (2012), McMahon (1992), Böcskei et al. (2019) in this topic, our first hypothesis is that the motivations of the examined foreign students who study in Hungary also include cultural motivations.
- H2: Based on the works of Kéri and Hetesi (2016), Hetesi and Kéri (2018), Kéri and Révész (2019), Bajzát (2015a, 2015b), our second hypothesis is that the examined students want to gain knowledge about Hungarian culture and history.
- H3: Based on Koltai's paper (2021) our third hypothesis is that according to the examined students museums can offer excellent opportunity to get to know the history and culture of a foreign country.
- H4: Based on the works of Hatos (2012), Berács and Malota (2011), Faubl et al. (2021), Egron-Polak and Hudson (2014), Gregersen-Hermans (2017), Mucsi et al. (2020), our fourth hypothesis is that the foreign students face serious language barriers to obtaining information in museums, which makes them feel frustrated.

METHODS

Our research was carried out in November 2021 among the foreign students of the University of Szeged. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 24, from Belgium, Spain, England, Jordan, Mongolia, Indonesia and Pakistan. Four students were Erasmus + scholarship holders, majoring in communication and media studies at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. The other students studied Business Administration and Management BSc at the Faculty of Economics and spent their first, third, and seventh semesters at the university. Some of them are exchange students who study here for half a year, some who spend their full BSc here and of course Erasmus + students also came to Hungary for a semester to study. Participants were randomly selected from students of the course called Public Relations – Ways of Institutional Communication which is an elective course at the Faculty of Economics, University of Szeged. We conducted a total of four focus group interviews with a total of 16 students. Students completed a screening questionnaire, participation in the focus group was completely voluntary. The interviews were based on a series of questions compiled on the basis of the literature.

The purpose of using the focus group method was to get to know the students' opinions on our research topic. In other words, what cultural and linguistic difficulties do they struggle with during their studies in Hungary, are there any cultural factors among their motivations? In addition, our study was aimed at finding out whether museums are used to learn about Hungarian culture and whether they encounter language problems when visiting museums.

RESULTS

Motivations to study in Hungary, prior knowledge and expectations

During the research, the students participating in the study were asked why Hungary was chosen as the place of their studies abroad. Among the answers there were financial factors: tuition fees



are relatively low and the cost of living is low as well compared to Western European countries. For several, the possibility of a scholarship was an important reason because without it they would not have been able to fund their studies abroad.

In the case of some students, visas have also appeared as an important motivating element: it is difficult to obtain a visa to a European country, but it is also easier to travel within the European Union with Hungarian visa. Several mentioned public safety: Hungary is considered as a safe country. But of course there was one student who chose Hungary by accident. Only Erasmus + students are influenced by acquaintances: several of their acquaintances studied in Szeged with this program and had very positive experiences and recommended to their peers to choose Hungary. "One of our friends from Belgium came here years ago for doing her Erasmus and she told us that it was a really good experience, a beautiful city and that it was a good location to travel all around" (Student 1).

Interestingly, the cultural factors mentioned in the literature, the knowledge of another culture appeared in a small proportion among the participating students. This motivational factor appeared almost only in the case of students from Indonesia, who said Hungary is "a hidden gem: it's beautiful, [...] I wanted to experience a culture that's different than mine" (Student 4). Based on this, it can be said that Hypothesis H1 has proved its worth: indeed, there are cultural factors among the motivations to study in Hungary, although not to a decisive extent.

As can be predicted from the above, the interviewees knew little about Hungary in advance – this was mainly the case for students from Asia. Their expectations were also different from the students from Europe: "I had a glimpse of expectations about the European countries you see in movies and on pictures. But I forgot there are Western and Eastern European countries so I was a bit disappointed" (Student 5). Students from Europe heard almost just about Budapest and had a negative view of the country due to political storms, European Union contradictions, and because they thought in advance that other people were very grumpy and distant because of the different culture: "I knew about some special problems of special [political] topics. [...] My grandma told me, oh, be careful, but I had no problem to come. [...] We also heard that the Hungarian people were not so friendly, but I think it's normal because we don't have the same culture" (Student 2).

Many students wanted to practice English in Hungary during their stay here. However, without exception, they were confronted with the fact that they would not have the opportunity to practice the language in everyday life, only in a university environment (on campus, at university classes, consultations), as very few Hungarians speak English. Some opinions from the interviews: "I thought I would improve my English on a new level but my English did not improve, it even got worse. I've expected people would speak more English here but very few people speak English in Hungary, only youngsters. So we are really struggling with it" (Student 6). Another student said: "It shocked me that people don't speak any English. I was struggling to learn Hungarian so I was googling things, Google Translator is my best friend now. I only use English in the classroom and it's very hard to talk in English with Hungarians. They refuse to talk to me in English. So I always use Google Translate everywhere. Literally everywhere" (Student 7).

Only one of the interviewed students was able to speak and understand Hungarian at an intermediate level. In addition, most students know and use some basic Hungarian words on a daily basis (thank you, hi, bye, etc.), but Google Translate is also the biggest help for them. Only



one person studies Hungarian at the university, the others could not learn Hungarian at university due to financial or timetable problems or gave up learning Hungarian due to the difficulty of the language: “I took one term and I gave up because it was so hard. That’s how I know the basics (Student 5).” An Erasmus + student would have had the opportunity to take a Hungarian language course but she did not go: “I have chosen not to go to the Hungarian class because I’m be sure that I will not use it after my Erasmus” (Student 3). The correlation can be observed that those students who want to live and work in Hungary in the future can and want to learn Hungarian to a greater extent.

Language difficulties can also bring out the cultural differences that foreign students experience on a daily basis. One student said: “Once I went to a male person and asked: can you tell me how can I get to the train station? And he replied: I don’t speak English. Another male said: I don’t know. This was very weird for me because I was living in Pakistan. So, over there, whenever you want to ask something, you go to the same gender. That’s why I’ve asked guys and both of them have turned me away. But when I went to a female she helped me and she didn’t say that I don’t know English or I can’t help you” (Student 7). However, there are students who have reported positive experiences despite language barriers and cultural differences: “We met with an old lady with her dog, me and my friend and we were guessing what she was saying: it was a body language conversation. I knew she was a nice person even I couldn’t understand her” (Student 8). It was interesting to observe during the interviews that students coming from places of different foreign language competencies assessed the lack of foreign language skills of Hungarians differently. Two students from Brussels, the metropolitan area, found it particularly problematic that postal workers could not speak English during postal administration. Although for a student from a small Spanish town this was not surprising at all and she did not expect post office workers to speak any English. It is worth noting that in all the interviews, Google Translate was mentioned as the biggest help with language differences.

Based on the above, it is clear that cultural differences are closely linked to language proficiency or lack thereof.

Culture and museums

In the course of the research we were curious about what comes in mind when the students hear this word: Hungary, and whether among these words and expressions we can find any which is related to culture and possibly to museums. There were no significant difference between students from Europe and non-European countries in terms of associations. Most words were related to gastronomy: palinka, goulash soup, bread, paprika. Natural places such as the River Tisza, the River Danube or Budapest have also appeared. The term museums was not mentioned but an interesting word was said about cultural differences and similarities: cigarettes. The student who not only studies but also works in Hungary said this: “Cigarettes. I worked many places in Hungary and in lunchtime all of them went out to smoke” (Student 10). Thus, this student did not think of an object that was traditionally associated with Hungary, something from a tourist point of view but based on her own experience she highlighted a cultural feature – which is not certain would come to mind to any other foreign student. This also shows that individual, personal cultural experiences greatly influence the image of the country.

The vast majority of students participating in the research were interested in Hungarian culture and history and would like to know more about the country. The most enthusiastic were Indonesian students who highlighted how different Hungary was from their home country and



wanted to know as much as possible so that they could share this information when they would return to their home country. One student put it this way: "I like learning new cultures because I love telling people stories. I hope when I go back to Indonesia I'll be able to tell them a lot of stories because some Indonesians don't know anything about Hungary" (Student 11). Another student was interested in Hungarian history as well but did not want to invest too much energy in obtaining information: "I want to know the history but not so deep because it's difficult. But I'd like to know more about the national holidays for example" (Student 12). In general, students were open to Hungarian culture: "Every culture is interesting because they have their own aspects, new things and I wouldn't mind to try anything within the country. It's very nice" (Student 14).

Of all the participants there was only one student who said she was not interested in Hungarian culture and history, but still felt it was necessary to have all the information. She justified this with the following situation: "I'm planning to study [Hungarian culture]. My friend visited me and we visited Budapest and she was asking a lot of things about Budapest and I couldn't give her any infos so I have to start collecting infos about Hungary" (Student 13). Thus, social compliance can also be a motivating aspect for foreign students.

Based on the above, it can be said that Hypothesis H2 has also come true: all students want to get information about Hungary – even those who are not fundamentally interested in Hungarian culture and history.

Sources of information

An important question is how a foreign student can get information about the culture and history of a country where people speak very little foreign language. During the interview, we asked the students where they get/got their information from about the culture and history of Hungary.

Most students mentioned the Internet as a source, as information is also easily available in English – or if the information is only in Hungarian they can translate it with their browser or copy it into Google Translate very easily. Several mentioned obtaining personal information when asking English-speaking Hungarian students or their teachers about various topics related to the culture or history of Hungary. There is also a course related to the latter, which Erasmus + students can take: 'Introducing to Hungarian Culture', the essence of which is to acquaint students with the most important Hungarian customs, traditions and holidays. Indonesian students who are not advertised for this course missed such classes from university education, although they also have the opportunity to take a similar course. The aim of the course 'Living Abroad, Reflecting the Intercultural Experiences' is similar: to compare different cultural habits within the course.

There were students who was missing the analysis of cultural connection points during the 'Hungarian Language and Culture' class: "We were having [...] compulsory Hungarian language classes and I actually spoke to the professor that can you please tell us more about... because the name of the course was actually Hungarian Language and Culture for beginners, but we were only focusing on language. So I asked him that can we actually bring some aspects of culture into it? Because it would be really nice to know about the country where you actually study and little bit about its history... And I have found out about my fair share of Hungarian history. The ottoman occupation, that the Habsburgs, Trianon and... But not from my professor. He just gave us very brief glimpse into it" (Student 7).



There is a special group of students coming from the Erasmus + program for whom ESN organizes various programs and they have student mentors of Hungarian origin who can be reached and asked at any time. One student highlighted the role of the internal informant: “So I asked a lot [...] from the ESN mentors and students. So I’ll be like, oh, how does this work? And why is this like this? And [...] oh, I want you to explain. How is this? So I try to find information from row sources, from people who are from here. [...] Living in the country in like maybe an impartial way but it’s the eyes of the outsider. So I like to have the eyes of The Insider: I want the real information” (Student 2).

Museums as information resources

At this stage of the interview we had not yet consciously asked about the museums: we were wondering if students mentioned museums as a source of information. We came up with an interesting result: two of all the participants mentioned museums, but in a slightly more figurative sense. It is worth noting that both mentions are related to an organized group trip. The Indonesian student mentioned a visit to Gyula Castle Museum organized by the Faculty of Economics. The students participating in the Erasmus + program mentioned a trip to the Ópusztaszer National Historical Park. In this park you can get to know traditional Hungarian crafts and old buildings, in addition to Hungarian culture and history.

Summarizing the interviews we can say that there are those who seek information individually on their own initiative, there are those who take part in activities where they share information with them and there are those who take courses on the topic of Hungarian culture and history.

In the next stage of the interviews, we specifically asked whether students thought it was possible to obtain information about the culture and history of Hungary in museums. Most of the answers were yes, but when we asked if they had visited a Hungarian museum we received negative answers, except for the two group trips mentioned above. There was only one student who consciously visited a museum in Szeged and one student who visited a museum in Budapest.

It was very interesting that a student from a non-European country said that she did not know whether foreigners should be allowed to go to the Ferenc Móra Museum which is situated in the center of Szeged, so she did not even think about the museum in this aspect: “I think for me why I didn’t think about the museum was because I firstly didn’t know that foreigners can actually go inside” (Student 16).

Among the students who otherwise wanted to use museums as a source of information, the question of money and language barriers also arose: “In my country all the museums are cheap or free but here it’s expensive. In my country we can also get a guide. But here some of the guides don’t know English or we have to pay more for a guided tour and the info is in Hungarian so it’s kind of hard for me... It’s like what’s the point of going to a museum when you cannot get any information?” (Student 13). It is also worth noting that although the students had been studying in Szeged for several months or years and most of them wanted to get more information about Hungarian culture and history, and they thought that the museum was suitable for such activities, they did not visit the Ferenc Móra Museum in Szeged. The museum is located in downtown of Szeged, in an inaccessible place, next to one of the bridges. It is interesting that only one of all the students has ever visited this museum, which presents not only Szeged, but also the culture and history of Hungary through several exhibitions.



As museums can be suitable sources of information for foreign students we wondered whether universities organize foreign language museum opportunities for foreign students or whether teachers individually offer museum exhibitions and programs to foreigners. In each case, we received a negative response – since ESN does not fall into this category.

Based on the above, it is clear that Hypothesis H3 has proved to be right: the museums are an excellent opportunity for students to learn about the history and culture of a foreign country.

Museums and foreign languages

As we have analyzed from several aspects before, it is a serious challenge for foreign students that Hungarian people do not speak any foreign language at all or to a very small extent. Therefore, the lack of bilingualism may also arise in relation to museums: all but one of the interviewed students visited Hungarian museums and museum institutions (the Gyula Castle Museum and the Ópusztaszer Open-Air Museum are also included). Therefore, we considered it important to ask what language difficulties were experienced in the museums.

All students have already faced the problem that there was no information in the foreign language they understood in the museums: „I just stare at a picture and my only option is to translate it to my own language by using Google Translate” (Student 8); „I’m so clueless. I just stare at the pictures and then I become so bored” (Student 11); „I literally wanted to translate everything in the exhibition with Google Translate but in the middle of it I get bored and I just left” (Student 10); „It’s actually frustrating for me, because it’s a chance for me to know more but they are not giving me the chance. It made me hesitant to go to any museums” (Student 9); „It is really frustrating, especially if you know, like... if you see something really cool and you just want to know how is it here now or why and then you can’t have any information.” (Student 6); „When I cannot understand the description of a painting, because I know they are adding something important. So my mind is... I don’t know what it says, but I know it’s important so it gets me more frustrated” (Student 14).

One of the students reported a solution that helped him, as the teachers accompanying them on the group trip translated the texts to English: “For example we went to Gyula there was no English [...], only Hungarian. However, our teachers were with us and then they translated. They said that this is this, and this is what’s happening here and stuff like that” (Student 7). Thus, if there is no information in English, guided tours in English can bridge this gap that students need.

Students were asked to what extent they were frustrated by the lack of foreign language texts in museums on a scale of 1–10. Each of the respondents indicated a value between 8 and 9, so they were particularly frustrated in such situations. However, the majority of students would recommend that their fellow students visit museums for information if the information were also available in English.

Based on the above, we can say that Hypothesis H4 has come true: foreign students encounter language barriers when visiting museums, which causes them some serious frustration.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The method of our research was the focus group interview, which is not suitable for generalization as a qualitative method, but it still yielded interesting results for the foreign students studying in Hungary.



Among the motivations for studying in Hungary there is a small amount of cultural motivations among the students. They come with serious expectations regarding language development, which cannot be fulfilled: all the students participating in the research reported examples of hitting walls in Hungary due to language barriers. We have obtained interesting results in connection with obtaining information about Hungarian culture and history. The students interviewed have a need for information, but they also run into walls in this regard. It was interesting to see that students from different countries and cultural regions value the importance of this differently. There was a strong need for this type of information, especially from students from further afield, like Indonesia. Interesting thoughts also appear regarding the sources of information, as students still prefer English-language sources. The majority of students are receptive and open to obtaining information in person from Hungarians living in Hungary and not indirectly through articles or books. Museums have hardly been identified by students as a source of information at first but they are considered a good place to seek and receive information about Hungary. However, they also agreed that there were serious language barriers in museums, as multilingual texts were not typical there either. This phenomenon is causing serious frustration among students – most of them have mentioned the importance of the Google Translate program, without which they would not go to a foreign museum.

Thus, our research has limitations due to the focus group methodology but the study is completely suitable for gaining an insight into the foreign language problems of Hungarian museums, foreign language and the acquisition of historical and cultural information. In the future, it would be worthwhile to continue the research with a questionnaire survey not only at the University of Szeged, but also with a national perspective. In the large university Hungarian cities, museums have a serious potential to bring foreign students culturally closer to Hungary, to the Hungarian people and to make them feel better and better understood by the locals.

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