

Chapter 8

Classroom Observation Project

NIKOLOV MARIANNE

1 Introduction

This study meant to gather and analyse information on the teaching situation in Hungary concerning the teaching of English as a foreign language in secondary schools in years 10, 11 and 12. The rationale behind the enquiry is the Examination Reform: a new examination is to be developed for 16-year-old school-leavers and the traditional school-leaving examination at the age of 18 will be offered on the intermediate and advanced level in all subjects, among them modern languages. According to the planned introduction of a new three-level proficiency exam, students will take the Basic Level Exam at the end of year 10, and the Intermediate or the Advanced Level Exams after year 12. The two new exams are to go live in 2002 and 2004 respectively; therefore, enough time was available to explore classrooms. We intended to gain realistic insights into average teaching conditions, pedagogical processes, and task types teachers use in the last three years of secondary school. Classrooms were sampled to reflect schools on the peripheries: non-prestigious schools in mostly disadvantaged geographical areas, where foreign languages are not high on the list of priorities. The aim was to identify what classroom reality is like, how present-day exams influence teaching, and to make sure that task types and levels were realistically set for the new exams. Data from 118 classes in 55 secondary schools were collected and analysed. I hope that the results of this study will provide relevant insights into the teaching situation in Hungarian secondary education.

2 Background to research

The aim of this study was to find out as much as possible about what goes on in classrooms. Therefore, we decided to use classroom observation as a technique to collect data. First, books on classroom observation were reviewed; the most important sources included Allwright and Bailey (1991), Chaudron (1988), Johnson (1995), Johnson and Morrow (1981), Malamah-Thomas (1987), Nunan (1989), Seedhouse (1996), Van Lier (1988), Wallace (1998), and Wragg (1994).

Then, observation instruments described in these sources and used by other exam project staff at the IELE of Lancaster University were scrutinised by a group of experienced teachers participating in the development of the instruments and data collection for this project. As the data we needed to collect did not coincide with any of the traditions described in the above sources, we decided to design new instruments to suit the needs of the Hungarian Examination Reform Project.

3 Research questions

In our project we intended to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the teaching situation like in secondary schools not specialising in English as a foreign language?
 2. How can teachers and students be characterised in average schools?
 3. How many hours are devoted to teaching English to these students?
 4. How much can and do secondary schools build on students' primary school studies?
 5. How much private tutoring do these students get?
 6. What equipment and materials do teachers use?
 7. Approximately how much time and effort is devoted to the development of skills and other areas?
 8. What are the characteristic forms of classroom management?
 9. What is the ratio of teachers' and students' use of English and Hungarian?
 10. What task and text types are used in the observed classes?
 11. How often do teachers claim to use various task- and text-types?
 12. What are students' strengths and weaknesses as perceived by the observer and the teacher?
- We hypothesised that under unfavourable circumstances teachers and students face more serious problems than in schools where intensive language programmes attract children from middle class and professional families.
 - We expected to find hiccups related to continuity of programmes, as most secondary schools not specialising in English cannot afford to launch lower intermediate programmes for children with primary school language learning.
 - We suspected that more children would be put into one group than in prestigious schools, and fewer children would get private tutoring than statistical data for the population suggested.
 - We expected to find a lack of resources and heavy reliance on published materials.
 - As for classroom management, we expected teachers using communicative materials to exploit less teacher-fronted activities and more pair- and groupwork.
 - We hypothesised that teachers would use mostly English with an observer present, and expected to find a direct relationship between the rate of target language use of the teacher and the students.
 - We hypothesised that teachers would use a variety of five to six tasks and texts in a class, and expected a strong relationship between exam preparation in the final year to be closely related to task types of the school-leaving exam.
 - We thought that teachers looking at the list of tasks and texts after class would claim to use many more than observed in a single class.
 - Among students' strengths and weaknesses perceived by the observer and the teacher, we expected not only linguistic but psychological factors (attitudes, motivation and aptitude) to emerge.

4 Method

Seven secondary-school teachers were involved in gathering data in 14-17 classrooms each; in addition, two others volunteered to collect data in three classes, each as part of their job or university assignment. Altogether, nine teachers contributed to the development of the database on 118 English classes in the spring term of 1998. The above mentioned seven teachers volunteered to take part in the preparation of the Examination Reform as enthusiastic counterparts of British Council contractees from various parts of Hungary. After a two-week programme on exam specifications, they participated in the development of the Datasheet for classroom observation, the Observers' classroom observation sheet and the Teachers' list of task types. After discussing with them how to proceed, they were given a short list of the negotiated instructions to make sure that all of them implemented all tasks according to the same guidelines. They had a letter for the heads of schools to allow them to observe and interview teachers, and a letter to the heads of their own schools to allow them to do research by rearranging their timetables if necessary.

5 Participants

5.1 Teachers

Altogether, 107 teachers were observed in 55 secondary schools, teaching 118 classes. Of them, 105 were Hungarian teachers of English, and two were native speakers of English.

According to the Datasheet, teachers whose classes were observed graduated from the following types of teacher training programmes. As Table 1 illustrates, most of them are double majors, and more of them graduated from universities than from college programmes. (The number of teaching degrees is higher than the number of observed teachers, as some of them, for example retrainees, have two.) The number of teachers with post-graduate degrees is surprisingly low (12%), similarly to the number of teachers with in-service education (2%).

Table 1: Distribution of teaching degrees in grammar and vocational schools

Grammar School	College	University	Post-grad degree	In-service course
single major	2	3	3	1
double major	6	20		
retrainee	2	4		

Vocational School	College	University	Post-grad degree	In-service course
Single major	15	6	7	1
Double major	18	19		
retrainee	7	5		

Table 2 illustrates how the 118 classes were distributed in the 55 secondary schools: about two-thirds were in vocational schools, one-third in traditional but non-specialised grammar schools, and a few in the combination of the two. Four trade school classes were also observed in two vocational schools, but in this type of state education foreign languages are not included in the curriculum at present. No dual-language school classes were involved in our study as these are highly prestigious institutions. Observers chose schools not far from their own locations, where they expected to find average conditions. In some cases they knew the teacher or school administrators.

Table 2: Distribution of participating classes according to school type

Grammar	Vocational	Grammar and vocational
35	71	12

The geographical distribution of the 118 groups in 55 schools is illustrated in Table 3. As can be seen, three quarters of the schools are situated in big towns, like Debrecen, Eger, Győr, Pécs, Szeged and Budapest, and about a quarter in smaller towns, like Füzesabony, Keszthely, Sárvár, Zalaszentgrót and Zalaegerszeg. In some schools more than one class was observed.

Table 3: Geographical distribution of observed classes

Budapest	City	Small town
19	66	33

5.2 Students

According to information the observed teachers gave concerning the strengths and weaknesses of their students, quite a number of the learners come from lower middle class and working class families. Teachers claimed that their aptitude is typically low, and they often labelled students' attitudes and motivation towards school and languages as problematic. No other information was collected on the students' background; therefore, these comments must be handled with care.

As for the distribution of students' groups across years, as Table 4 indicates, most of the classes were in Year 10, where the brand new Basic Exam is to be introduced in 2002; a similarly high number of classes were in Year 11 and fewer in Year 12.

Table 4: Distribution of observed classes according to school year

Year	10	11	12
class	49	42	27

Table 5: Number of students in groups in the observed classes according to school year

Year 10			Year 11			Year 12		
Average	min.	max.	Average	min.	max.	average	min.	max.
14.28	5	22	15.12	9	34	13.92	8	20

The number of students in groups ranged from 5 to 34, with an average of a little less than 15 students in a group. In Year 12 the average was the lowest across the three years, with a maximum of 20 students in a group (see Table 5).

6 Materials

Three instruments were used for data collection:

- The Datasheet was designed to collect objective information on teachers, students and the educational context.
- The Observers' classroom observation sheet included a list of task- and text-types most typically found in teaching materials, with a special emphasis on Hungarian foreign-language classes (for example: oral reporting and translation). Eleven oral, 22 writing, 6 listening and 10 reading tasks, and 23 text types were listed. Two open questions intended to elicit information on students' strengths and weaknesses as perceived by the observer, and some space was left open for other notes.
- The Teachers' list of task and text types included the same lists and in addition to them boxes for teachers to tick how frequently (never, sometimes and often) they applied a task or text. The same open questions were put to teachers to identify students' strengths and weaknesses.

Besides these instruments, observers were encouraged to take notes, and put down everything they considered important. As a final task, they wrote an evaluative summary on their experiences along the focal points of the Datasheet and the observation instrument, including the evaluation of the instruments and the observation task.

7 Procedure

First, schools to be visited were identified. Criteria for choosing institutions included the following:

- No specialised intensive foreign language programmes were involved.
- Institutions were vocational, trade or general grammar schools.
- Years 10 and 11 were prioritised as we expected teachers in year 12 to be less willing to welcome visitors.
- Schools on peripheries were preferred.
- School administrators and teachers had favourable attitudes towards our project.
- Observers could time-table and physically manage visits.

Then a letter was sent to the heads of schools informing them of the aims of the observation and asking them for support. Heads of observers' schools were also requested to make it possible for colleagues to schedule visits to other schools.

Observers did not discuss the project before class, but informed teachers that students would be observed for the Exam Reform Project, because we wanted to find out what students knew, how relevant some task and text types would be, and teachers were asked to help by allowing observers in. After the class the observer and the teacher filled in questions 1-12 on the Datasheet together, thus providing a frame for a structured interview. Then, the teacher was requested to fill in the Teachers' list, indicating how often a task or text type was used, and to answer the open questions. The observer remained in the room and provided explanations to dubious items. If teachers showed interest, information on the Exam Reform was shared with them.

Finally, observers filled in the Observers' sheet based on their drafts and notes, and when all observations had been accomplished, they wrote their reports along the focal points of the questionnaire, adding anything they found important. Numerical data from 118 instruments were entered into a computer and analysed in Excel.

8 Results and discussion

First, we will discuss findings on teachers, on the materials they used, on their management skills, the tasks and texts they used, and the technical facilities at their disposal. Then, we will focus on students, analysing their strengths and weaknesses as perceived by the observers and their teachers.

8.1 Teachers

Here we will discuss results concerning teachers based on the statistical analysis of the Datasheet, and in a separate section on the interviews and observations.

We have found that almost half of the observed teachers graduated from colleges, although according to regulations, secondary schools are not supposed to employ college graduates (except for 3-year programme single majors), as a university degree is required for teachers in secondary institutions. In spite of this fact 50 out of 107 are college degrees (Table 1). This tendency is more typical of vocational schools: 40 college degrees compared to 30 university degrees. In grammar schools the rate is 10 to 27. These numbers can be explained by the higher prestige of grammar schools compared to vocational ones.

As altogether 63 are double major degrees, holders of these qualifications must come from the relatively older generation, as a single degree is a recent type. Most probably institutions employ teachers with unsuitable qualifications because they have no other applicants, or their staff have tenure. These teachers are required to upgrade their teaching degrees in post-graduate university courses in a couple of years if they want to keep their jobs. As only two teachers have participated in in-service courses, this type of education does not seem to be popular, or perhaps teachers did not understand the term “in-service”. Post-graduate degrees, however, are held by ten teachers. Relatively few teachers are retrainees; more (12) are employed in vocational schools than in grammar schools (6).

As for the variety of activities and teachers’ methodological backgrounds, in what follows data will be analysed according to the questions on the Datasheet and the results of the observations on task and text types.

8.1.1 Teaching materials

Now let us consider what course and supplementary materials teachers claimed to use with their groups. As Table 6 illustrates, course titles were more frequently listed than supplementary materials. Both in grammar and vocational schools the top winner is *Headway*, followed by *Hotline*.

Table 6: List of frequency of course and supplementary materials teachers claimed to use

Grammar Schools		
Course material	Supplementary material	No of group
Headway (Soars and Soars)		16
	A Practical English Grammar (Thomson)	7
Hotline (Hutchinson)		6
	English Grammar in Use (Murphy)	5
Blueprint (Abbs and Freebairn)		4
	GCSE (Jobbágy)	4
Access to English (Coles and Lord)		2
Angol (Budai)		2
	Stories for Reproduction (Hill)	2
Streetwise		2
	Success at First Certificate	2
	Társalgási témák (Horváth)	2
Vocational schools		
Headway (Soars and Soars)		26
Hotline (Hutchinson)		20
	GCSE (Jobbágy)	11
Streamline English		7
Grapevine		6
	1000 Questions 1000 Answers	5
Angol (Budai)		4
	English Grammar in Use (Murphy)	4
	Grammar Practice Exercises (Budai)	4
	A Practical English Gr. (Thomson)	2
	Angol nyelv alapfokon (Bartáné)	2
	Angol nyelvtani gyakorlatok (Dévainé)	2
	Living English Structure (Allen)	2
	Társalgási szituációk ... (Némethné)	2

On the whole, monolingual British publications outnumber bilingual Hungarian ones among course materials in both school types, and the rates are very similar: 30 to 2 in grammar schools, and 59 to 4 in vocational schools. (Only 86 teachers put down titles.)

As for supplementary materials, in grammar schools British books are used in 16 groups as opposed to Hungarian materials in 6; whereas the rate in vocational schools is very different: 8 to 26. Altogether, 56 teachers put a title under this heading, some simply wrote “photocopied materials,” a few put “Internet” or “magazines”; therefore, titles could not be included.

Among Hungarian publications the leaders are GCSE (15 groups use it) and Angol (6). The average rate of Hungarian publications among supplementary materials is higher than British ones (24/32). This may be explained by the washback effect of Hungarian exams, as only one of these publications might be considered unrelated to exam preparation (*Stories for Reproduction*); all the others practice grammar in general, or specific testing techniques.

Data in Table 6 indicate that the vast majority of teachers feel the need to supplement course materials: they use additional grammar exercises and various types of exam tasks. Although Hungarian materials are relatively cheap, teachers seem to believe that expensive British publications are still worth buying.

8.1.2 Management

Now we will look at how teachers managed their groups, how much English and Hungarian they used, how much emphasis they put on developing various skills. Then we will discuss what tasks and texts they used.

Table 7: Work management and language use and teachers' degrees

Teachers with university degree				Teachers with college degree			
Work management				Work management			
	Average %	min %	max %		Average %	min %	max %
frontal	63.34	10	100	frontal	55.49	10	100
group	22.81	10	60	group	22.14	5	50
pair	20.67	5	40	pair	24.07	5	60
individual	24.04	5	90	individual	28.80	9	90
Language used by teacher				Language used by teacher			
	Average %	min %	max %		Average %	min %	max %
English	72.15	5	100	English	68.80	10	100
Hungar.	29.65	1	95	Hungar.	32.30	0	90

As for work management, Table 7 illustrates how much emphasis teachers devoted to frontal, group, pair and individual classwork. Teachers with university degrees used more frontal work and less individual work, whereas college-degree holders managed slightly more tasks individually and less frontally. The differences for pair- and groupwork are not so obvious, though college graduates used more pairwork. On average, both groups of teachers devoted a similar amount of time to frontal work compared to the other three types put together, but teachers with college degrees used a little less frontal work and showed more variety in organising students' activities.

Table 8 Work management in Years 10, 11 and 12

	Year 10			Year 11			Year 12		
	average	min.	max.	average	min.	max.	average	min.	max.
frontal	55.49	10	100	66.58	10	100	56.35	10	100
group	21.07	10	40	23.00	5	50	25.91	10	60
pair	25.77	5	60	17.11	5	50	24.00	10	40
individual	25.77	10	90	27.24	5	90	31.05	10	100

The rate of frontal classwork is the highest and of pairwork the lowest in Year 11, whereas individual work was most frequently used in Year 12.

Table 9: Distribution of teachers' use of English and Hungarian according to school-type

Grammar schools			
	Average %	Min. %	Max. %
English	77.66	50,00	100,00
Hungarian	23.00	1,00	50,00
Vocational schools			
	Average %	Min. %	Max. %
English	65.79	5.00	100,00
Hungarian	35.81	0,00	95,00

As for teachers' use of the first and the target language, Table 7 provides information according to teachers' educational background, while Table 9 according to school type. University graduates used 72% English compared with college graduates' 69% on average. When we look at the rate of English and Hungarian language use according to where they teach, grammar school teachers used significantly less Hungarian (23%) than colleagues in vocational schools (36%). Most probably this rate is related to students' levels rather than teachers' proficiency, as the more teachers think students understand, the more they rely on the target language. This claim is supported by data on the lowest and highest rates of reliance on the two languages: while in grammar-school groups the use of Hungarian ranged from 1 to 50%, in vocational-school groups from 0 to 95%. A similar tendency is true for the use of English: in grammar schools the lowest rate was 50%, the highest 100%; whereas in vocational schools 5% and 100%, respectively.

Table 10: Distribution of teachers' and students' use of English and Hungarian in Years 10, 11 and 12

	Year 10			Year 11			Year 12		
	average	min.	max.	average	min.	max.	average	min.	max.
TEACHER									
English	70.08	10	100	68.88	5	100	69.41	10	100
Hungarian	30.54	1	90	32.68	0	95	33.04	2	90
STUDENTS									
English	62.43	30	100	67.31	10	99	64.81	20	100
Hungarian	38.35	1	70	32.69	1	90	36.54	10	80

As for the rate of teachers' and students' use of the target language and the mother tongue across the years, no significant differences can be noted in Table 10. There is a slight increase in teachers' use of Hungarian over the years, while students used their first language in Year 10 the most frequently.

However, it is remarkable that almost a third of teachers' input was Hungarian. Considering that students have limited access to English outside the classroom, this high rate of mother-tongue use seems to be against their interest. Observers noted that teachers tended to use Hungarian for two reasons: to explain grammar and vocabulary, and to translate their own instructions or explanations from English into Hungarian. In one of the groups a teacher kept urging students in Hungarian to reply to her Hungarian questions in English. Observers thought that students would have understood more in the target language than teachers tended to expect them. Except for two native teachers in our sample, no Hungarian teacher conducted a class without switching back to Hungarian.

Now let us consider how the teachers' use of English and Hungarian compares to students' use of the two languages (see Table 11); then we will discuss how much emphasis was put on the development of the four skills, grammar, translation and vocabulary.

Table 11: Rate of students' use of target language and mother tongue

Grammar schools

	average %	Min. %	Max. %
English	67.40	30.00	100.00
Hungarian	33.56	1.00	70.00
Vocational schools			
	average %	Min. %	Max. %
English	63.64	10.00	100.00
Hungarian	36.91	1.00	90.00

As Table 11 shows, about one-third of students' utterances were in Hungarian; and this rate is quite similar to that of teachers'. Whether teachers' language use has a direct relationship with what language students use is an area to be further explored. Our data suggest that grammar-school teachers used less Hungarian than teachers in vocational schools (23% versus 36%, see Table 9), and as Table 11 illustrates, students of the former teachers also used slightly less Hungarian. According to data in Table 10, teachers' use of Hungarian slightly increased each year, whereas students spoke most Hungarian in year 10, and the lowest rate was achieved in year 11.

In the follow-up interviews some teachers pointed out that students were on a low proficiency level, which is why they needed to talk Hungarian. Therefore, it is possible that teachers adjust their rate of L1/L2 talk to learners' perceived proficiency levels, and as grammar-school students were at relatively higher levels, they triggered more target-language input. This explanation contradicts, though, the slight increase of teachers' rate using Hungarian over the years (Table 10). Perhaps grammar explanations required more reliance on the mother tongue.

Some teachers complained to observers that students were not willing to answer in English, and this fact was pinpointed by most observers. (Lack of willingness was one of the recurring weaknesses of students.) Even one-word answers were often in Hungarian, though they were frequently guessed meanings of vocabulary items, directly elicited in Hungarian. The other reason for the high rate of students' use of Hungarian can be explained by management reasons: in group- and pairwork all students in monolingual groups (pre- and in-service teachers included) tend to switch back to the mother tongue because this is natural for them.

Now we will discuss how much emphasis was put on the development of the four skills, grammar, translation and vocabulary.

Table 12: Rate of tasks in observed classes developing skills and other areas

	Grammar schools	Vocational schools	All
Listening	15.3	17	15.9
Reading	19.6	19.7	20.1
Writing	11.9	15.8	14.2
Speaking	28	23.9	26
Grammar	20.7	28.3	25.7
Vocabulary	16.4	15.5	15.8
Translation	17.5	16.3	16.6
Integrated	20.3	14.9	16.2

As Table 12 illustrates, in the two school types emphasis put on developing the four skills and other areas varied slightly. In grammar-school groups more time and effort was devoted to the development of speaking and integrated skills, whereas in vocational schools more writing and grammar practice was observed. An important difference between the two types of school was in how grammar and speaking were prioritised: in vocational groups grammar ranked first, in grammar schools second; while writing came out the other way round. Most probably this strong emphasis on grammar in vocational-school groups made teachers rely on Hungarian more than in grammar schools.

Table 13: Rate of tasks developing skills in Years 10, 11 and 12

	Year 10			Year 11			Year 12		
	average	min.	max.	average	min.	max.	average	min.	max.
Listening	17.24	5	60	15.79	5	50	12.73	5	25
Reading	20.03	5	60	22.60	5	60	15.63	5	40
Writing	14.24	5	40	13.86	5	60	14.64	5	50
Speaking	25.41	5	95	26.09	2	73	27.08	5	100
Grammar	22.13	5	80	28.33	5	90	27.89	5	80
Vocabulary	15.98	5	66	16.06	2	40	15.24	5	40
Translation	14.23	5	40	17.23	1	40	19.00	5	70
Integrated	15.67	5	40	14.15	5	30	19.58	10	60

When the rate of tasks developing various skills is considered according to years, a decrease can be observed in the practice of the listening and reading skills, while focus on grammar, translation and integrated skills becomes more emphasised in Year 12 (see Table 13). These tendencies may explain why teachers' and students' use of Hungarian did not decrease in Year 12: translation tasks and grammar explanations require heavy reliance on the mother tongue.

8.1.3 Task and text types

Before analysing the data on task and text types, a few words of warning are necessary. As will be seen, there are differences between the frequencies of what observers noted down and teachers claimed to be characteristic of their teaching. Also, the tasks and texts teachers used depended on the choice of the teaching materials, and observers sometimes found them difficult to identify.

First, we will analyse how frequently teachers used oral, writing, listening and reading tasks and various texts (labelled as *observed* in tables), then we will look into teachers' post-observation indication on the frequency of task and text types in their classes (labelled as *claimed* in tables).

Changes in frequency will be also looked at according to years.

We expected teachers to use a variety of five-six tasks in their classes. The vast majority used three-four different tasks, and a few teachers used many more. On average 4.65 tasks per class

were used, but according to observers' impressions, monotony and boredom characterised several classes. This seemingly contradictory finding maybe explained by observers' comments explaining that in some cases they ticked two rubrics for one task, for example, bridging information gaps, and discussion based on a prompt; therefore, the actual task/class rate must have been lower than the calculated average.

Some observers noted that they felt they could see a realistic picture, because teachers obviously did not put on a show for the sake of a visitor. On the one hand, this impression may strengthen the validity of our findings; on the other, as a result of the observer's paradox, we will never know whether classes are typically as monotonous as the ones observers saw, or these were improved versions of what would normally happen. Extreme examples were also experienced: dynamic classes with a variety of tasks involving all students; and a class where 37 minutes were devoted to checking homework with eight minutes left for a new task.

Table 14: Frequency of oral tasks

	Observed	Claimed
Answering questions	106	1.91
Discussion about a picture, a series of pictures	29	1.34
Role-play	27	1.37
Discussion based on a prompt	22	1.01
Summarising text	21	1.25
Reporting (felelés)	20	1.33
Bridging information gaps	19	1.18
Collecting information from maps, charts, tables	10	1.02
Summary of a story of a film/book recently seen/read	5	1.00

In tables 14, 16, 18 and 20 task types are rank-ordered according to frequency of use in the observed classes, while numbers in the column under *claimed* indicate how teachers ticked boxes on the use of the appropriate task. In the *observed* column numbers show how many times the task was observed in 118 classes, whereas in the *claimed* column frequency was calculated as follows: never got 0, sometimes 1, and often 2 scores, and then averages were calculated for teachers' self-reports. Data in this column need to be handled with care, though. Several teachers indicated they were not familiar with the terminology, but when observers gave an explanation, they most frequently ticked *sometimes*. Most probably they wanted to give a favourable picture of their methodological background and ticked *never* only if they clearly rejected the task, for example, copying, although this writing task occurred the most frequently.

The most frequent oral activity turned out to be answering questions, according to observers' comments, in a lockstep fashion, always following the IRF cycle: teacher initiates, students reply and teacher gives feedback. Some of the observers emphasised how boring this type of whole-group activity was, and in a few cases it dominated the class involving only a few volunteers. Answering questions was often part of oral reporting. The next six tasks were applied in one-sixth of the groups, but teachers claimed to use most of these tasks quite frequently. On average two oral tasks were used in classes, which is very low, indicating that students rarely get chances to talk. Also, apart from oral reporting and pair- and group-work tasks, students' responses were on the one-word or short sentence level, as observers noticed. If we add that teachers and students talked a lot in Hungarian (see Tables 10 and 11), very limited oral language practice was going on.

Table 15: Frequency of oral tasks across years

	Year 10 49 groups	Year 11 42 groups	Year 12 27 groups
Answering questions	45	34	27

Reporting (felelés)	7	8	5
Discussion about a picture, a series of pictures	14	8	7
Collecting information from maps, charts, tables	5	2	3
Discussion based on a prompt	9	8	5
Summary of a story of a film/book recently seen/read	4	1	0
Role-play	13	8	6
Bridging information gaps	9	5	5
Summarising text	10	6	5

As for the frequency of oral tasks in Years 10, 11 and 12, some changes can be observed, but we need to bear in mind the different numbers of groups in each year.

As for tasks aiming to develop writing skills, 152 tasks were used in the 118 classes; one or two were applied on average. Although, according to teachers' self-report, copying was the least used one, this was the most frequent (24) writing task observers ticked. (Copying words from the board into vocabularies was excluded.) Translation from English and Hungarian also featured high on the list, and the two put together outscored copying (28). The other most frequently observed writing tasks were substitution drills in printed materials and other typical testing techniques, whereas creative tasks were infrequently applied. Looking at the claimed frequency of task types we have reason to suppose that teachers provided a realistic picture: among the first five tasks translation from English to Hungarian (1.66), gap filling (1.39) and translating from Hungarian (1.34) were listed. These are typical language examination techniques; therefore, they indicate a washback effect. Describing pictures, people and events is an oral exam task, but it was applied as a writing task.

Table 16: Frequency of writing tasks

	Observed	Claimed
Copying	24	0.50
Gap filling (different cloze-types, C-test)	15	1.39
Translating texts from English into Hungarian	15	1.66
Arranging words into sentences	14	1.47
Translating texts from Hungarian into English	13	1.34
Describing pictures, people and events	12	1.47
Matching and arranging language elements	12	1.32
Writing short notes, memos, diary entries	8	0.81
Using given elements (e.g. pictures, words)	8	1.08
Dictation	6	0.79
Creating short texts with the help of given but incomplete lists	6	0.95
Data filling: completing forms, questionnaires	6	1.28
With a given ending or beginning	3	0.55
Arranging sentences into paragraphs	3	0.95
With the help of guiding points	2	1.07
Writing formal and informal letters, invitations	1	1.13
Writing instructions, directions	1	0.72
With the help of pictures	1	1.00
Arranging paragraphs into passages	1	0.82
Summarising English text in Hungarian	1	0.98
Writing postcards, greeting cards	0	1.08

In sum, the writing tasks most frequently observed and claimed to be used are language-focused ones. They reflect the grammar-translation and audio-lingual traditions and are typical testing techniques in school-leaving and proficiency exams. Writing tasks, similarly to the other productive skill, remained on the one-word or sentence level: in gap-filling exercises students took turns word by word, and when translating, sentence by sentence.

As Table 17 illustrates, there were too few task-types in each year to draw conclusions on, but obviously exercises expected to function as tests were used more frequently in year 12: translation and arranging words into sentences.

Table 17: Frequency of writing tasks in years 10, 11 and 12

	Year 10 49 groups	Year 11 42 groups	Year 12 27 groups
Copying	12	8	4
Dictation	1	3	2
Create short texts with help of given but incomp. lists	5	1	0
data filling: completing forms, questionnaires	2	1	3
writing short notes, memos, diary entries	3	4	1
writing postcards, greeting cards	0	0	0
writing formal and informal letters, invitations	1	0	0
writing instructions, directions	1	0	0
Describing pictures, people and events	5	3	4
with the help of pictures	1	0	0
with the help of guiding points	2	0	0
with a given ending or beginning	2	0	1
using given elements (e.g. pictures, words)	6	2	0
Matching and arranging language elements	4	5	3
gap filling (different cloze-types, C-test)	9	2	4
Arranging words into sentences	3	7	4
Arranging sentences into paragraphs	1	2	0
Arranging paragraphs into passages	0	0	1
Translating texts from English into Hungarian	7	4	4
Translating texts from Hungarian into English	3	5	5
Summarising English text in Hungarian	1	0	0

Tasks focusing on the development of the listening skills (Tables 18 and 19) were used in 16 groups only; in every seventh class on average. This is an extremely low rate, and teachers' self-report data in Table 18 further strengthen this claim. As Table 19 illustrates, in year 12 the listening skills were not practised at all in any of the groups, and a decrease can be seen in the number of listening tasks from year 10 to 11, although not enough data are available to draw conclusions.

Table 18: Frequency of listening tasks

Listening tasks	Observed	Claimed
Sequencing pictures to heard text	7	0.92
Connecting pictures to heard text	6	1.04
Marking on pictures, according to the text	2	0.80
Following routes on a map	1	0.73
Drawing, following instructions	0	0.75

Table 19: Frequency of listening tasks in Years 10, 11 and 12

	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
sequencing pictures to heard text	5	2	0
connecting pictures to heard text	3	3	0
following routes on a map	1	0	0
drawing, following instructions	0	0	0
marking on pictures, according to the text	1	1	0

Also, bearing in mind that classroom management was frequently in Hungarian, students have very limited access to oral language. According to observers' notes, listening was typically

combined with sentence by sentence translation to check comprehension. They noted that teachers did not exploit classroom language for management as a way of improving students' listening comprehension. Reasons must be manifold: first, there is no listening component in the school-leaving exam, so teachers do not make students practise listening; second, although schools are equipped with facilities, they are often unavailable (see more on this issue in the section on facilities); third, coursebooks include insufficient listening materials but teachers do not use supplementary listening tasks. In sum, listening seemed to be the most neglected skill in the observed groups.

Table 20: Frequency of reading tasks

	Observed	Claimed
Reading aloud	64	1.72
Matching pictures to text	21	1.19
Arranging events or stages in a process in order	7	1.13
Matching phrases or sentences to gaps in a text	7	1.15
Multiple matching	6	0.98
Sequencing sentences or paragraphs to form a text	4	1.06
Multiple-choice	3	1.14
Matching headings, headlines to different texts	1	1.06
Matching opinions to people identified in a text	1	0.72

Reading was practised 114 times in 118 groups; reading aloud was the most frequently used task. Matching pictures to text was applied on 21, whereas seven other sequencing or matching tasks on 29 occasions. Although reading aloud is not an exam technique, over 50% of the reading tasks was of this type. The rest on the list were communicative tasks in the coursebooks, while reading aloud was applied with any text students came across in class. According to observers' notes, reading aloud tended to be quite time consuming and was most often combined with translation to check comprehension.

As for how many reading tasks were used in different years, Table 21 shows that the rate of tasks developing the reading skills decreased from year 10 to 12, although reading aloud remained the most characteristic in all three years.

Table 21: Frequency of reading tasks in Years 10, 11 and 12

	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
reading aloud	31	21	12
multiple-choice	1	1	1
multiple matching	4	2	0
arranging events or stages in a process in order	6	1	0
matching phrases or sentences to gaps in a text	4	0	3
sequencing sentences or paragraphs to form a text	4	0	0
matching headings, headlines to different texts	1	0	0
matching opinions to people identified in a text	1	0	0
matching pictures to text	11	7	3

Looking at the frequency teachers self-stated (in columns under *claimed*) across the four skills in Tables 14, 16, 18 and 20, the most popular task is answering questions (1.91), followed by reading aloud (1.72), and translating texts from English to Hungarian (1.66). The least popular self-reported task across the four skills was copying (0.5), but it turned out to be the most often observed writing task. These four task types represented 39% (209 occasions) of all observed tasks out of the total of 539.

Table 22: Frequency of text types

	Observed	Claimed
Fables, simple stories	19	1.27
Parts of books	17	0.78
Notices, captions	14	0.79
Picture descriptions	14	1.31
Newspaper articles	11	1.20
Monologues	11	0.78
Interviews, reports, TV or radio programmes	10	1.19
Dictionary entries	9	0.81
Graphs, diagrams, charts, tables	8	0.9
Menu cards	6	0.93
Instructions, directions	6	1.16
Personal notes	5	0.96
Advertisements	4	1.08
Formal or informal letters	5	1.32
Schedules, time-tables	2	1.03
Tourist information	2	1.07
Announcements (e.g. at airport/railway station)	1	0.99
Postcards	1	1.09
Telephone related texts (e.g. information, answering machine)	1	0.88
Forms	0	1.00

Among text types, 20 items were listed and the procedures for both observers and teachers were the same as for skills. The most often observed texts were fables, simple stories, and they were ranked third by teachers. The texts teachers ticked as the most popular were formal or informal letters, and picture descriptions, but they were seen in only three and 14 groups respectively.

There is no information on the authenticity of the texts, but according to observers' notes, most texts came from the coursebooks and few authentic texts brought by either the teacher or students were exploited. Such materials included pictures and articles from magazines and wordcards. Texts for listening were rarely ticked (29 times out of 118), supporting the low results on the development of listening comprehension (Table 18 and 19).

Table 23: Frequency of text types in Years 10, 11 and 12

	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
notices, captions	7	0	7
advertisements	2	1	1
menu cards	3	3	0
schedules, time-tables	1	0	1
newspaper articles	9	1	1
parts of books	4	5	8
graphs, diagrams, charts, tables	3	2	3
personal notes and messages	2	2	1
announcements (e.g. at airport/railway station)	1	0	0
formal or informal letters	5	0	0
interviews, reports, TV or radio programmes	5	4	1
instructions, directions	3	3	0
forms	0	0	0
postcards	0	1	0
picture descriptions	9	2	3
fables, simple stories	9	7	3
dictionary entries	4	4	1
monologues	5	4	2
telephone related texts	0	1	0
tourist information	0	1	1

As Table 23 illustrates, the least variety in texts was found in year 12 groups; eight texts in the 27 groups came from books; they were mostly photocopied materials preparing students for the school-leaving examination.

To summarise what has been found on task and text types, the following general features seem to characterise classrooms:

- The most frequently used tasks include answering teacher's questions in a lockstep fashion, reading aloud, translation and copying.
- Coursebooks and supplementary materials (Table 6) tend to be used in an eclectic way, exploiting techniques of the grammar-translation and audio-lingual method.
- The most frequently used tasks focus on language.
- The most neglected skill is listening; no group practised it in Year 12.
- Management language and teacher talk are not regarded by teachers as input for developing listening comprehension.
- Most interaction in the groups was observed on the one-word or sentence level.
- The most often applied texts are stories, mostly used for reading aloud.
- Listening and reading comprehension tends to be checked by sentence by sentence translation.
- Task variability decreases over the years; it is mostly testing techniques that are focused on in Year 11 and 12 classes.
- Observers found the vast majority of classes monotonous and boring because of lack of variety of tasks.

In the next section we will provide insights into how schools are equipped.

8.2 Technical facilities

As far as facilities are concerned, schools are equipped with most of what teachers might desire. As Table 24 illustrates, out of 118 observed classes in the vast majority boards and tape-recorders were available, though the latter were often of poor quality. VCRs and TVs were provided in most of the schools, but access to them was often difficult and complicated; therefore, they were rarely used. Although the availability of computers and OHPs is very high in schools, language teachers have either no access to or no expertise in using them. The number of language labs is relatively high, but no class was conducted there.

Table 24: Distribution of technical facilities in three types of schools

	Board	OHP	Tape-rec.	TV	VCR	Lang. lab	Comp lab
Grammar school classes (35)	35	26	35	33	34	5	30
Vocational school classes (71)	65	54	65	58	58	20	50
Grammar and vocational (12)	12	6	12	9	9	3	10

All observers pointed out that classrooms were not equipped with any electric appliance, and teachers had to carry with them all appliances they wanted to use. As teachers revealed in the structured interviews, equipment tended to be locked up in store- or staffrooms and they had to make efforts to have access to them. This was the most important reason teachers gave for not using them. Unfortunately, we did not ask for statistical data on how often teachers used what would have been available, but observers' notes indicate that equipment was not properly exploited.

Observers described classrooms mostly in negative terms: no decorations or resource materials at all, and special language rooms were rarely used. As for size, two extremes were identified: either students in small groups, sometimes five, were scattered in huge rooms seated in traditional rows, or they were squeezed into tiny ones with no room for moving about. No classroom was rearranged for the English class, and none of the physical contexts were characterised as pleasant.

8.3 Students

So far we have considered data from the perspective of teachers, classroom processes, materials and facilities; here we intend to characterise students participating in the project. Information in this section is based on teachers' feedback, as well as observers' impressions and findings.

As for the English learning history of the students, as Table 25 illustrates, numbers vary widely. The ones who learnt English in the primary school had three classes on average, typically ranging from two to five, but numbers for primary-school years are not reliable as teachers had no access to statistical data but sometimes guessed, and most of them never cared to ask their students. Boxes were often left empty as teachers had no idea. On the other hand, data for years 9-12 can be expected to reflect reality, as teachers are familiar with the curricula of their schools. As can be seen, with the exception of year 9 the average number of hours per week in vocational and combined schools exceeds that of grammar schools, although in some grammar schools English is taught in 6-8 hours, whereas no vocational school offered a programme in more than 5 hours.

Table 25: Distribution of hours per week according to school type and year of study

Year	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Grammar schools										
Average	4.00	2.33	3.25	3.50	3.42	3.58	3.84	3.61	3.33	3.64

Min.	4	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	2
Max.	4	4	5	5	5	6	8	6	5	5
Vocational schools										
Average	3.00	2.58	2.90	2.95	2.58	2.63	3.75	3.94	3.74	3.86
Min.	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
Max.	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5
Combined grammar and vocational schools										
Average	3.00	3.33	3.67	4.00	4.33	4.33	4.36	4.00	4.09	4.57
Min.	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	2	2
Max.	3	4	4	5	5	5	6	5	5	6

The recurring complaints on weekly hours in the interviews are related to two issues. First, teachers consider two or three hours per week a waste of time, and they claim that their students with low aptitude and weak support from home cannot develop at all. Second, schools do not provide continuity of primary-school programmes. Students come from various schools and most of them are put into beginner groups again. The majority of children had English prior to secondary studies, but they were not streamed. In some groups children with five to eight years of English were put together with beginners in the first year of their secondary education. In the interviews teachers pointed out that they could not rely on learners' primary-school experience because of its variety, and these children needed to work in mixed-level groups.

A similarly confusing picture emerged on extracurricular activities. Teachers were asked to indicate how typical extracurricular activities were in their groups. If they indicated *nobody* the groups scored 0, if *some* 1, if *the majority* 2, and if *almost everyone* 3. As the averages in Tables 26 and 27 indicate, extracurricular activities in our sample are not typical. Private tuition is the most frequent activity, but numbers seem to be below what has been indicated in other sources: Dörnyei, Nyilasi and Clément (1996) found that 40% of the eighth graders attended private language classes, whereas Gázsó (1997) reported 60% for primary school children and 40% for secondary students, all school subjects included (Chapter 1).

Table 26: Distribution of students participating in extracurricular activities according to type of school

	Nobody (0)	Some (1)	The majority (2)	Almost everyone (3)	Average (0-3)
Grammar schools					
Private tutor	18	17	0	0	0.49
Language school	28	7	0	0	0.20
School club	28	6	0	1	0.26
Vocational schools					
Private tutor	35	32	0	0	0.48
Language school	59	8	0	0	0.12
School club	62	5	0	0	0.07
Grammar and vocational schools					
Private tutor	6	5	0	1	0.67
Language school	10	2	0	0	0.17
School club	10	2	0	0	0.17

As Table 26 shows, teachers estimate that in 54 groups some of their students get private tuition, in 17 they attend a language school and only in 13 groups have learners access to extracurricular activities organised by the school. One exception was a group of grammar-school students attending “fakultáció,” a school-sponsored exam preparation course. The interpretation of these data is problematic for two reasons. It is impossible to quantify *some*; and very often parents hire private tutors or send children to language schools because they are not satisfied with school teachers. Therefore, it is possible that teachers do not know that their students are tutored elsewhere.

Table 27: Distribution of students participating in extracurricular activities in Years 10, 11 and 12

	Nobody (0)	Some (1)	The majority (2)	Almost everyone (3)	Average (0-3)
Year 10: 49 groups					
Private tutor	28	21	0	0	0.43
Language school	45	4	0	0	0.08
School club	46	2	0	1	0.10
Year 11: 42 groups					
Private tutor	25	17	0	0	0.40
Language school	38	4	0	0	0.10
School club	35	7	0	0	0.17
Year 12: 27 groups					
Private tutor	10	16	0	1	0.70
Language school	18	9	0	0	0.33
School club	23	4	0	0	0.15

As for how many students participated in extracurricular activities in different years, the highest rate in averages characterises year 12 students. The commonest type of extra-curricular activity is private tutoring, followed by attendance of language school courses. Support provided by schools in extra classes is not typical in any of the years.

8.3.1 Students' strengths and weaknesses

In our study a lot of qualitative data were collected on students. Both observers and teachers were asked to identify students' strengths and weaknesses. Observers described a similar number of features in the two categories, whereas a few teachers simply left the questions unanswered, and most of them tended to identify more weaknesses than strengths. In both categories two types of features emerged. Linguistic ones: "speak correctly", "understand new grammar immediately", or "no accuracy"; and psychological ones: "shy to speak", "relatively diligent", or "lack of self-confidence."

As can be expected from the survey on task types, students often seemed to be good at reading aloud, answering questions, translation from English to Hungarian, and grammar drills. Observers tended to come up with more specific comments ("understand teacher's instructions," "able to do controlled exercises," "use Hungarian a lot"), whereas many teachers' comments were very general ("lack of motivation," "grammar," "careless").

The most important strengths and weaknesses identified by observers and teachers were related to students' attitudes, motivation, willingness and aptitude. In the interviews many teachers elaborated on difficulties related to students' low school achievement, aptitude, and lack of instrumental motivation. They complained about the lack of willingness on part of the students, but none of them related this to how intrinsically motivating the tasks used were for their students. The typical negative characterisation of students included that they did not put enough effort and interest into language studies. According to observers, a lot of teachers sounded helpless and disillusioned about their groups. In a few groups teachers faced serious discipline problems. In about half of the observed classes several students in the back rows were never involved in any of the activities; teachers and their peers neglected them.

Students were characterised as fluent, creative and hard-working in 12 classes. They were often praised for their rote-learning abilities. Co-operation with peers and the teacher was mentioned in five classes. Listening skills were emphasised as strengths in six groups by observers and in five by teachers; as a weakness in only one group by a teacher. On the other hand, students were claimed to be good at speaking in 12 classes, whereas the speaking skills were identified by teachers as weak in 27.

Two issues have emerged from these findings: one related to skills development, the other to teachers' perceived roles in forming students' attitudes and motivation. In the discussion on what tasks teachers applied it became clear that listening comprehension was generally neglected. It seems that teachers are not aware of the role of listening skills in the development of speaking. They expect students to be able to produce speech as a result of rote-learning, reading and translation, without providing them with enough input for listening, and they want them to be able to speak as a result of practising speaking.

The other point is connected to students' attitudes and motivation. All teachers complained about these features as prerequisites students should possess to a high extent for teachers to rely on. They seem to be unaware of their own responsibilities in forming and maintaining students' favourable attitudes and motivation in and outside the classroom. As observers' general overviews reflect, the majority of these classes were far from motivating or interesting, and this fact seems to be responsible for the vicious circle. Students are rarely thrilled by unmotivated teachers asking them to do boring tasks class after class. It should be the teachers' task to involve learners, to give them chances for getting favourable feedback and the feeling of achievement to participate in meaningful classes.

9 Conclusions and recommendations

In this final section we will attempt to answer the research questions posed at the beginning, then we will reflect on the strengths and limitations of our enquiry. Finally, recommendations will be put forth.

For the purposes of triangulation we used a structured interview with teachers while filling in a datasheet, a checklist filled in by observers after sitting in classes, and the same checklist filled

in by teachers. Besides quantitative, qualitative data were also collected with the help of open questions, as well as by observers' feedback on the observation experience.

It is hoped that the 118 observed classes have provided an overview of what is going on in Hungarian secondary institutions not specialising in English. The picture seems quite discouraging. As observers noted, few teachers are motivated or feel successful. According to observers, a lot of teachers seem unaware of what is going on in their classroom, and their methodological and language proficiency is below the levels they expected to find. On the other hand, good language proficiency and teaching effectively did not always coincide with each other.

Although all teachers involved in our study were qualified, the teaching degree of 50 did not qualify them to teach in secondary education in the long run. Observers found most teachers overworked, underpaid and disillusioned.

Most of the classes were teacher-fronted; pair- and groupwork was not widely used. Both teachers and students used the mother tongue excessively. Although this is a natural tendency on part of the students, teachers' extensive use of Hungarian may reduce students' language learning opportunities. Levels in grammar-school groups were perceived as somewhat higher than in vocational schools, but the general impression was that levels were low in both types of school.

Although the majority of groups used British communicative coursebooks as core syllabuses, these materials were exploited traditionally and eclectically. Supplementary materials were mostly Hungarian publications, focusing on grammar and exam preparation, representing an exam washback effect.

Tasks observed in classes involved mostly questions-answers, translation, reading aloud and grammar exercises in the form of substitution drills. The development of listening comprehension was the most neglected skill area. Classroom English was not considered a part of the syllabus. What teachers did and what they claimed to do did not always coincide with each other; some task and text types were not familiar.

Facilities in schools were not properly exploited: equipment were available, but efforts were needed to access them. Classrooms were mostly barren and unfriendly.

Since students do not come to school with favourable attitudes and motivations, teachers' responsibilities are higher here than in more prestigious educational contexts, where parents have a more favourable influence on their children's attitudes. Most observed teachers were not aware of how classroom activities and teachers as models could contribute to the development and maintenance of students' motivation and found fault only with learners.

Teachers participating in this study rarely think about their learners' strengths and weaknesses or their own responsibilities. When asked, they scratch the surface and do not see where and how action could be taken.

On the other hand, all observed teachers were pleasantly surprised to be involved in the project and showed interest in outcomes. About half felt threatened, others challenged by the new exams and said changes in education in general, and in school-leaving examinations were overdue. They all appreciated first-hand information on the planned exams and observers concluded that such involvement of grassroots teachers would be favourable in the long run.

Observers were asked to provide feedback on the research instruments and the project itself. On the whole, they said the datasheet and lists were easy to administer but weaknesses were also identified. Among them the following were mentioned by more than one colleague:

- There was no rubric for checking homework, pronunciation practice and some other traditional tasks.
- Teachers sometimes asked for examples of task types.
- Rates for skills were sometimes misleading: for example, in a class 80% of class time was devoted to oral reporting and it showed as speaking on the sheet with no indication of any more detail.
- Similarly for what language students used, when they read drills one by one from the workbook it came out as high on using English.
- Teacher-talk time and student-talk time were not recorded.

- Some of the terminology was new to teachers: for example, bridging info gaps, multiple matching, cloze-type, caption, prompt, and notices were unknown to many.
- Task and text types were biased towards communicative teaching as they were taken from sources of “good practice,” whereas reality did not reflect this expectation.
- Teachers asked for an additional category to be added between never and sometimes. For this reason some teachers put a tick on the line!
- Observing one class was not enough to decide upon students’ strengths and weaknesses.

In addition to the above limitations, some more need to be added.

- Students were not asked in any way, only observed.
- The study was cross-sectional; there was no chance to observe any change in processes.
- Groups were chosen to represent different types of non-prestigious language learning contexts, but they cannot be considered a truly representative sample of the population.
- Observers were briefed before the project and involved in the development of the instrument, but no trial period was available.
- No piloting of the instruments preceded the enquiry.
- Classes were not tape- or video-recorded, or transcribed; therefore, observers’ judgements cannot be followed up.

In spite of all these limitations it is hoped that some important trends have been discovered and they will contribute to a better understanding of what is going on in Hungarian classrooms where English is taught.

Finally, we put forward the following recommendations.

- As many teachers will need to get post-graduate university degrees in the near future to be able to keep their jobs in secondary schools, such degree courses should aim to improve teachers’ language proficiency, methodology and awareness towards how languages are learnt. Both linguistic and psychological planes are to be explored; and classroom-based research techniques should be used in teacher education programmes.
- Teachers need to be involved in the Examination Reform, they are keen to know plans. Their attitudes now seem to be positive, therefore public relations activities need special attention.
- Levels in some schools where the project was implemented are strikingly low. It is crucial to consider how these children will be able to get support to be able to pass new exams.
- Teachers need help in developing and maintaining students’ motivation towards studying languages.
- Physical conditions in schools are discouraging, the facilities available are not exploited. School administrators should tackle these problems.
- The minimum number of hours per week devoted to language studies should be reconsidered.
- Teachers and students should exploit input available outside the classroom.
- Primary school foreign language programmes will not contribute to students’ language development unless secondary institutions can provide the continuity of studies.
- First-year students in secondary schools will become demotivated and fall behind their beginner peers if put in beginner groups. Therefore, they must be streamed according to their levels.

- British publications do not seem to satisfy the expectations of Hungarian teachers. More relevant coursebooks are needed reflecting Hungarian needs and traditions.
- Hungarian publishers should come up with course materials integrating teaching courses and exam preparation.
- More practice of extensive reading and both extensive and intensive listening practice are necessary in classrooms.
- Teachers should be made aware of how classroom management in the target language contributes to students' language learning.