Cultural value orientation studies in foreign language education in Hungary

Establishing a Hungarian cultural value orientation profile for application in foreign language education in Hungary

Summary of the Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

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2013
LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACH: achievement
ASCR: ascription
C1: home culture, one’s own native culture
COLL: collectivism
CV: curriculum vitae
CVs: curricula vitae
CVO: cultural value orientation
CVOP: cultural value orientation profile
CVOPs cultural value orientation profiles
CVOS: cultural value orientation studies
DIFF: diffuse
EFL: English as a foreign language
ESL: English as a second language
ESS: European Social Survey
EXCL: exclusionism
FEM: feminine
FLE: foreign language education
FLEXUM: flexumility
HC: high context dependent
IDV: individualism
IND: individualism, individualist
INNER: inner-oriented
LC: low context dependent
LTO: long-term orientation
MAS: masculine
ML: motivational letter
MONO: monochronic
MONUM: monumentalism
NEUTR: neutral
OUTER: outer-oriented
PART: particularism, particularist
PDI: power distance index
POLY: polychronic
RQ: research question
REST: restraint
SPEC: specific
STO: short-term orientation
UNIV: universalism, universalist
WVS: World Values Survey
1 Introduction

It is 33 years since Hofstede published his influential and paradigm-setting piece of work on the dimensions of cultures that help us understand why there are conflicts, miscommunication and lack of understanding even among people with the best intentions towards each other (Hofstede, 1980). Since then, the world of business has taken the cultural differences approach as its foundation, and inter-, cross-, and multicultural research abounds (Buckley, 2000). These studies, however, do not make a clear distinction between verbal or non-verbal conduct (Földes, 2007), though some researchers do separate oral and written communicative behavior in their analyses of culture (Hall, 1976). As to language pedagogy, it has mostly focused on the relationship of culture and language learning from the perspective of culture shock and the process of acculturation (Brown, 1986), but neglected the influence of cultural values on verbal behavior in English as a foreign language settings (EFL).

The rationale for studying the role and impact of cultural value orientation studies (CVOS) in foreign language education (FLE) in Hungary stems from personal experience of having lived abroad and faced difficulties despite a high level of language knowledge. Secondly, my interest also resulted from the realization that language teacher education has not focused enough on culture education (Lázár, 2006), while Hungarian language teachers of English must take on a huge responsibility in preparing Hungarian workers for the growing number of possibilities for labor migration within the European Union. Passing exams or simply surviving scarce phone calls with foreigners is a thing of the past, and learners need preparation for real-life, face-to-face situations encountered on a daily basis. In fact – among other things – reports of cultural misunderstandings of language learners with a high level of language knowledge led Byram and Fleming (1998) to claim that a new ideal is needed in foreign language instruction instead of the “native speaker” one, that of the “intercultural speaker”, who interacts in intercultural situations while maintaining communication despite cultural differences and linguistics limitations. The need for research in this area is further supported by Gibson et al. (2007) whose study shows that successful second language performance is not possible without integrating intercultural skills into foreign language education. Finally, the high number of Hungarians working for multinational companies present in Hungary means FLE in Hungary needs to adjust to the needs of this group of language learners working in a multi-/intercultural environment, making the present research into what changes FLE in Hungary even more relevant.

This doctoral dissertation focuses on CVOS from the perspective of their connection with verbal behavior (oral and written) in order to make recommendations on which cultural

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1 The terms multinational or international as well as intercultural and multicultural are used interchangeably in this booklet.
dimensions and how to include in intercultural competence development in FLE in a Hungarian setting. It aims to demonstrate that the application of the concepts of CVOS and their results in FLE help language learners in a multifaceted manner in as much as the methodology of language instruction can be adapted to the Hungarian cultural values so that learning is made easier for them. Furthermore, second language identity (Brown, 2000) is boosted in an integral way, language learners’ past and future experiences related to other cultures are made more comprehensible, which in turn positively influences their attitude towards foreigners and other cultures, which, therefore, ultimately improves and/or maintains their motivation for language learning proper (Holló, 2008). On the other hand, intercultural skills development integrated into FLE with the help of CVOS results in not only higher communicative competence, but also personal development and higher marketability in the labor market.

In order to explore the possibilities of how the results of CVOS may assist the integration of intercultural competence development in foreign language education in Hungary, the following research questions were pursued (for the sub-questions of these main ones in detail see the dissertation):

1. What cultural dimensions should be used when establishing the cultural value orientation profile of Hungary?
2. What is the cultural value orientation profile of Hungary in the light of the existing foreign and Hungarian research and literature?
3. What is the cultural value orientation profile of Hungary in the light of curricula vitae and motivational letters written by Hungarian learners of English as a foreign language in higher education?
4. What is the cultural value orientation profile of Hungary in the light of interviews conducted with foreigners working with Hungarians on a regular basis and Hungarians working with foreigners on a regular basis?
5. What is the composite cultural value orientation profile of Hungary from the data of the literature review, the curriculum vitae and motivational letters, and the interviews?

As the dissertation followed a qualitative research approach, and as it is an exploratory study, data sources are very diverse. This required several different methods of data collection and analysis, as well as interpreting the results in answer to the research questions.

The dissertation provides a summary of the relevant literature of the dissertation topic, covers the issue of research design and research questions, details the methods of data collection and data analysis together with piloting the instruments that were applied in the research, explains the triangulation procedure which included a document analysis in cultural value orientation studies researching Hungary (study 1), an empirical study analyzing more than 50 curricula vitae
and motivational letters written by Hungarian learners of English rhetorically and culturally (study 2), and finally a qualitative study to establish the Hungarian cultural value orientation profile based on interviews with 14 foreigners and 14 Hungarians (study 3). Furthermore, the results of the research are discussed, recommendations are made for successful intercultural competence development within the foreign language classroom setting, and the questions of trustworthiness and limitations are addressed.
2 Theoretical background

2.1 Culture and cultural value orientation studies

The theoretical background focused in more detail on the literature of culture and cultural value orientations. Although there are many definitions for the construct of ‘culture’ in different fields of research (see Kramsch, 1998; Chick, 1996; Brown, 1986; and others), the dissertation uses Hofstede’s (1991) definition for its clarity, according to which, culture is “the thinking, feeling and acting of a group” (Hofstede, 1991, p. 4).

Studies concerning culture have focused on many of its aspects, and it is impossible to box them into one research field. Culture has been investigated from the point of view of the society (Mead, 1928/49; Malinowski, 1965; Habermas, 1965), cognitive processes (Rogoff, 1990), verbal and nonverbal communication (Hidasi, 2004; Canale 1983), literary criticism (Inkeles and Levinson, 1954; Kramsch, 1998; Oxford and Anderson 1995), linguistics (Chick, 1996; Hatch (1992), pragmatics (Savignon, 2001; Richards and Sukwiwat, 1987; Bachman, 1996; Tarone and Yule, 1989; Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989), psychology (Rokeach, 1968; Matsumoto, 2007), and language teaching (Schumann, 1986; Brown, 1986; Byram, 1997), not to mention anthropology (Nida, 1954; Herskovits, 1948; Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Hall, 1973; etc.), intercultural communication studies (Dahl, 2005; Boromiszsa, 2003), and business management studies (Adler, 1983; Kirkman, Lowe, and Gibson, 2006; Child, 1981; Peterson, 2001; Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998). The present dissertation focuses on culture from the perspective of foreign language education and social-psychology, in as much as it claims that the misunderstandings between people from different cultures stem from the differences of the values of their home cultures that they acquire during their socialization process, and that addressing these value differences consciously in the framework of foreign language education will result in culturally and linguistically more apt behavioral patterns displayed by language learners and language users.

In the first part of the 20th century the early anthropological thinkers researched cultural values (David Hume and Lévi-Strauss as cited in Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Kluckhohn & Strodtbecker, 1961; Parsons & Shils, 1951; and Inkeles & Levinson, 1954) in an exploratory and descriptive, thus qualitative manner. The dominant questions were how humans relate to nature and to other people (Buckley, 2000). Later empirical work procured a clearer understanding of the nature and type of values and their variations. Hofstede, for example, researched IBM employees’ work attitude in more than 100 countries, which turned into a major work of statistical comparative cultural value survey (Hofstede, 1980). From this massive database he was able to define the construct of ‘cultural dimension’ which is “an aspect of a culture that can be measured relative to other cultures” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 23), and compared the participating
countries on five cultural dimensions. Other huge surveys employing dimensions followed, and rendered additional data that were analyzed statistically: the GLOBE (House et al., 2004); Schwartz’s Theory of Value (1994); Inglehart’s World Values Survey (1997); Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner’s work (1998), and most recently the European Social Survey (2008). At the same time some researchers used either the data collected during these wide-scale surveys and proposed new dimension frameworks from these after diverse statistical procedures (Minkov, 2007), while others used their own, mostly qualitative data collection methods and worked to get to know cultural value orientations from those sets of information (Triandis, 2002; Thomas, as cited in Csath, 2008). On the whole, the field is currently characterized by the effort of collecting data with either quantitative (Hofstede, 1980; Inglehart, 1997; Schwartz, 1994; ESS, 2008) or qualitative (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998; Triandis 1972) methods in quantity, so that complex statistical procedures (factor analysis, ANOVA, correlations, etc., Szokolszky, 2004) may be applied to them to arrive at objective, representative and generalizable conclusions, as it is prescribed by etic scientific approaches. The samples have been matched (Hofstede, 1980; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998), or representative (Inglehart, 2008; ESS, 2008) with participants mainly from the business world at different levels of management (Hofstede, 1980; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998), students (Sagiv and Schwartz, 2000), and other walks of life (Inglehart, 1997; ESS, 2008). The diverse methods resulted in a series of various frameworks which correlate and overlap at some points, and complement each other at other points.

Criticism of Hofstede’s work that formed the basis of the research attempts afterwards entailed the issue of researcher bias (Oshlyansky et al., 2006; Fougere & Moulettes, 2006); the vagueness of definitions; the lack of a basic theory; the use of time-worn data and a less than perfect sample (Cray and Mallory, 1998); the view of national cultures as homogenous, static and historically determined (Holden, 2002); the issue of colonial discourse (Kwek, 2003); the lack of acknowledging the weaknesses of his study (McSweeney, 2002). The need for proper sampling and appropriate level of analysis to get a dimension reflected in the data cannot be emphasized enough (Hofstede, 1995). In addition, a cultural dimension is a construct that does not exist in reality but enables the scientist to compare cultures. Cultural value orientation results must always be interpreted in a comparative manner, as they are never absolute, but are valid only with reference to another group’s, country’s or subculture’s characteristics.

2.2 A case of possible intercultural encounter: the job application process

A possible area of misunderstanding may arise during the job-hunting process. From a discourse point of view, a job application involves writing a curriculum vitae (CV) and a
motional letter (ML) in order to promote the applicant and his or her reasons for applying for a specific position (Seelye, 2005). From a contemporary Hungarian sociological point of view, it usually means applying in English, since 57% of job advertisements in Hungary require a high level of English language knowledge (Hives, 2006). From an intercultural point of view, applicants thus step onto a field with potential intercultural land-mines, given that not only the linguistic tools, but also the schemata and thought patterns of different languages may be different (Kaplan, 1966, 1987). Since the applicants’ success lies mainly in their competence to solve the arising intercultural conflicts, the dissertation focused on these two genres’ cultural and rhetorical characteristics in the text production process. The theoretical background for the genre of CV writing was explored in Furka (2008) in detail. It was found that the literature lacked substantial research concerning CV writing as a genre (Furka, 2008). A survey was therefore carried out in order to establish a template based on which CVs might be rhetorically and culturally analyzed. Based on the resulting template and Swales (1990), a culturally neutral definition of the genre of CVs was proposed which reads as follows:

The class of communicative events of the job application procedure, whose shared set of communicative purposes is to inform the intended audience, in this case employers/HR experts, about the events of one’s life described according to specific categories, and whose schematic structural constrain in content and style are not independent of the language and cultural environment of realization. (Furka, 2008, p. 22)

In addition, research on the genre of motivational letters was also found to be comparatively neglected (for an overview see Furka, 2008), though Bhatia (1993) dealt with it under the expression ‘job application letters’ quite extensively. His discourse analysis of MLs provides a move-step structure of motivational letters consisting of seven moves and three steps, and he mentions the phenomenon of nativization strategies existent in MLs written by South Asian learners of English. This took the form of using self-glorification, target glorification and adversary glorification instead of self-appraisal strategies, which would be the normal strategy in English MLs (Bhatia, 1993).

2.3 Cultural value orientation profile

The theoretical overview of the dissertation finishes with the key terms used in the dissertation. One of these is the cultural value orientation profile (CVOP) which requires more attention in order to comprehend the results of the data analysis. Hofstede created a dimensional model from scores on the five dimensions of his database for each country. He defined this dimensional model as “a set of dimensions used in combination in order to describe a phenomenon” (Hofstede, 1991, p. 261). Although in this doctoral dissertation a similar approach
is used when summarizing the results, a cultural value orientation profile is preferred, which is defined as a matrix of the central tendencies of a certain country/nation on a certain number of cultural dimensions describing their cultural characteristics. A profile defined this way yields a more flexible tool that enables combining statistical results with qualitative descriptors in the conceptualization process of cultural differences. In addition, as neither the statistical scores, nor the more qualitative data of the literature review denote absolute characteristics, a profile – just like Hofstede’s model – focuses on the relativity of the characteristics of countries. As the intention of the doctoral dissertation is to make culture clashes more comprehensible and to help the language learners bridge communication breakdown among cultures, such a working tool makes the conceptualization of cultural differences easier not only for learners, but also for researchers, readers, and language teachers alike.
3 Research design and methods

The doctoral research is an exploratory study of the cultural value orientations of Hungary from the point of view of cultural dimension research, such as the work of Hofstede (2001), Hall (1973, 1976), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998), Inglehart (2008), Schwartz (1999), the GLOBE project (House et al., 2004), the ESS (2008), Minkov (2007) and Triandis (2002). Together with written data collected from Hungarian learners of English and interviews conducted with foreigners working with Hungarians, and Hungarians working with foreigners on a regular basis, it investigated which cultural dimensions should be considered, and how, in foreign language instruction in Hungary. The dissertation establishes a triangulated (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) CVOP of Hungary that is lacking in the current state of research to form the basis for the discussion on the possibilities of intercultural competence development in FLE in Hungary.

The CVs and ML study was based on data received from three groups of students in higher education (Budapest University of Technology (BME), Budapest Business School, College of Commerce, Catering and Tourism (KKVF), and Budapest College of Communication (BKF)). The 70 participants were chosen by convenience sampling through teachers of English in higher education institutions (Dörnyei, 2005), and had an average age of 20.6 years, and 9.2 years learning English at average. All students had some type of an intermediate level (B2 level in the CERF system) language exam (Origo, IH, TELC, BME, or similar). The participants for the interviews were chosen by snowball sampling (Dörnyei, 2005) and consisted of eight females and 20 males between the age of 23 and 62, with an average of 10 years of intercultural work experience. They were from countries including Hungary, the USA, Scotland, England, Germany and Japan, and all of them speak English at or above intermediate level, and 11 of them are native speakers of English. Several of them had some level of other language skills. They were partly from the private sector, partly from the world of academia specializing in arts or sciences.

3.1 Studying the literature on cultural value orientations

First the main theories of CVOS and their results were consulted in order to find out what cultural dimensions should be used when establishing a CVOP of Hungary (RQ1), what the current data for Hungary are (RQ2), and what arguments may be provided for the relevance of CVOS that are under-represented in today’s language teaching practice in the Hungarian foreign language education context (RQ5). To make further data collection and analysis possible and manageable, a starting point was needed among the diverse and overlapping dimensions and categories. By saturating (Dörnyei, 2005) both the primary (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005; Minkov, 2007; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1998; Inglehart 1997; ESS 2008) and secondary (Trompenaars’ work in: Csath, 2008; Falkné, 2006; the GLOBE results in: Borgulya,
international research attempts, and the Hungarian ones (primary: Csath 2008; Falkné 2006 and 2008; Kovács, 2006; Berger, 2005; Borgulya, 2006; Jarjabka, 2003; secondary: the studies of Varga K.; Bakacsi Gy. and Takács S.; Heidrich B.; Primecz H.; as cited in: Jarjabka, 2003), a twelve-dimensional framework was established. As the examined studies used scores (from 0-100; Hofstede, 1980), descriptions (“worried about pensioner incomes”; ESS, 2008), or a degree of a labeling with a description (“high communitarianism - very high emphasis on social networks”; House et. al, 2004) to describe their results, the various types of results were brought to a common platform by transforming them first to a 5-level verbal scale (low, rather low, medium, fairly high, and high) with low being one pole of a dimension, and high being the other. Then they were transformed to a numerical scale (1-5) – 1 marking ‘low’ and 5 denoting ‘high’ – to allow for comparison of the different studies.

3.2 Hungarian cultural value orientations in CVs and motivational letters

As the second step in the triangulation procedure (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), a qualitative examination of two genres of written communication was implemented to find out what the CVOP of Hungary is in the light of more than 50 pieces of curriculum vitae and motivational letters written by Hungarian learners of English as a foreign language in higher education. A job-application task was designed to examine whether the writers’ Hungarian cultural thought patterns are noticeable in their EFL writings as Kaplan already suggested (1966, 1987), and as Bhatia (1993) reported on the phenomenon of the nativization of job application letters in South Asia.

In addition to the writing task, a questionnaire was designed to collect relevant information on the CV and ML writing practices of the participants.

As for the analysis of the CVs and MLs, the CVs were compared to the template established in Furka (2008) and similarities and differences in structure, content and style were examined. The MLs were investigated based on Bhatia’s (1993) motivational letter framework and move structure. For the cultural value orientations the MLs were examined for the strategies of self-representation as several researchers had already reported on the cultural variation of the strategies of self-appraisal, self-glorification, self-degradation and adversary glorification (Bhatia, 1993; Hou and Li, 2011; Sii, 2005), and any other features such as terms, word usage, sentence structure and rhetorical characteristics, in addition to the overall discourse situation reflecting anything from the cultural dimensions of the literature review. The corpus was also analyzed by a second coder to avoid researcher bias (Dörnyei, 2005).

As opposed to the 5-level verbal scale used in the case of the first study, it was not possible here to establish so many levels in the data, only the tendencies towards either end of the
dimension poles. It was thought best, therefore, to turn only the overall tendencies on the
dimensions into the verbal scale, and then into the numerical scale. This numerical data was then
taken into consideration when the final composite mode profile for Hungary was calculated.
Finally, the number of words and the number of sentences were documented to see if they hold
value for the rhetorical and cultural analysis of text production processes. The analysis was open
to any additional characteristic reflecting cultural specifications which were also documented and
categorized.

3.3 Hungarian cultural value orientations reflected in personal perceptions

The third study focused on what the CVOP of Hungary is in the light of interviews
conducted with foreigners working with Hungarians on a regular basis and Hungarians working
with foreigners on a regular basis. It targeted oral and/or meta-communicative behavior in as
much as the interviewees were questioned to map their incidents of cultural clash and
communication breakdown. A 37-item, semi-structured, open-ended interview schedule was
designed after piloting (see Furka, 2011) to tap into the twelve dimensions drawn from the
literature review. The analysis of the interviews followed that of the literature review analysis and
the mean and mode for each dimension represented in the interview schedule was calculated.
With such an analysis the results of the interview study are believed to be compatible with the
Hungarian profile that emerged from the international literature review.

As a final step of the doctoral research, the three profiles for Hungary’s cultural value
orientation from the three different studies were combed together to create a composite profile for
Hungary. Both the means and modes of the analyses were employed in the comparison as the
mean always gives an average picture of a data set and results in softening the effect of extreme
items (Babbie, 1998). The mode, on the other hand, reflects the feature most frequently occurring
in the data set. The latter is highly useful when working with cultural dimensions, where statistical
procedures are difficult to implement due to the diverse sources of data (Babbie, 1998).

3.4 Trustworthiness and limitations of the research methods

For achieving trustworthiness, the techniques of triangulation of sources, triangulation of
methods, analyst triangulation, and triangulation of perspective and theory was adhered to
(Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In addition, due to the sensitive nature of interpretation of the
framework of analysis, inter-rater reliability was also ensured by double coding (Szokolszky,
2004). For transferability, the technique of thick description was used (Geertz, 1973), the research
process was further complemented by inquiry audits for establishing dependability in as much as
reporting was held at regular intervals to avoid misleading interpretation of the data and concluding biased results (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The limitations of the doctoral dissertation entail the issues of the restricted contexts of academia, business, Hungarians living abroad and the expat community in Budapest, which cannot be considered a representative sample for the whole of Hungary. On the other hand, these groups are the ones who are highly likely to be involved in intercultural communication. The second limitation is that the investigation of the MLs covers a single genre of written communicative behavior, which may not render results transferable other forms of written behavior. In addition, the size (52 letters admitted for analysis) and the type (monocultural) of the corpus might lead to a limited understanding of the phenomenon.
4 Results

Three different types of studies were conducted in order to provide a trustworthy picture on the cultural value orientation of Hungary. Firstly, based on the international and Hungarian CVOS literature, a 12-dimensional framework was established to form the basis for further data collection and analysis. According to the literature review, Hungary has a stronger than medium PDI, a stronger than medium tendency for IDV, a weaker than medium tendency for MAS, a medium tendency for DIFF, a weak achievement tendency on the relation to status (ASCR), a tendency towards low context communication (LC) and particularism (PART), and a neutral tendency to the display of emotions (NEUT). Furthermore, Hungarians seem to show outer directedness (OUTER), medium LTO, high UAI, and high POLY.

Secondly, the CVOP that emerged from the CV and ML tasks showed that the discourse context of the job application process seems to be a favor seeking situation in the eyes of Hungarians, where the dimensions of PDI, COLL, some IDV, and HC are characteristically traceable in some form or other in the texts. In addition, the representation of the self shows a holistic approach as it was already suggested in the pilot study (Furka, 2008). This latter result implies a long-term orientation tendency based on Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) and Minkov (2007) who claim that monumentalist cultures (the equivalent of long-term orientation in the Hofstede-paradigm) consider the self as an entity difficult to change or divide into parts. Finally, reader-responsibility, a characteristic writing style of certain cultures described by Hinds (1987) was also detectable.

Thirdly, the interviews with the 14 foreigners and 14 Hungarians provided a picture of Hungarians that is fairly high on PDI, slightly towards COLL, and fairly towards MAS. Hungarians are also rather specific (SPEC), medium on ASCR, but opposed to the literature review profile, they tend towards HC. In addition, they are fairly PART, strongly AFF, fairly OUTER oriented, and slightly LTO. Finally, on the dimensions of anxiety, they tend towards UAI and slightly towards POLY.

After analyzing the three different types of data sources for triangulation purposes, it was possible to merge the three CVOPs into one composite profile. The composite CVOP for Hungary then (RQ5) is as illustrated in a polar diagram below (Figure 1).
The Hungarian CVOP, then, can be compared to the cultural value orientations of the UK and the USA for example. The comparison can be based on Hofstede’s profiles for the three cultures on five dimensions, which can also be presented in a polar diagram below (Figure 2). It is then possible to say that between the UK and Hungary the dimensions of hierarchy, gender, virtue and truth/anxiety are important aspects where cultural differences might occur. Compared to the USA, the Hungarians differ in their values on the dimensions of hierarchy mostly on identity, gender and to some extent on virtue.

Figure 1. The Hungarian composite CVOP mean and mode.

Figure 2. Comparison of the cultural dimension scores of the UK, the USA and Hungary (based on Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov 2010), and the Hungarian composite profile established above.
5 Conclusion

5.1 Novelties

The dissertation with the help of the 12-dimensional framework provided information that contributes to the cultural value orientation research of the Hungarian culture. It firstly corrects some of the tendencies on the dimensions of PDI, IDV that Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) have been advocating, and the very little data available on the dimensions on status (Kovács, 2006; Minkov, 2007; Trompenaars, 1995), context dependence (Borgulya, 2006; Falkné, 2008; Csath, 2008), and emotions (Trompenaars, 1995; Falkné, 2008; Kovács, 2006). Secondly, it establishes Hungarian culture as a high context dependent one, preferring some power distance rather than equality, and being rather collectivist when in a competitive situation such as the job application process. Thirdly, it also offered an analytical tool that helps language learners and teaching experts to identify possible points of difficulties for Hungarian learners of English (or any other language, as a matter of fact), such as reader-responsible writing techniques and holistic self-representation. Finally, the research carried out for the dissertation uniquely revealed that those politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and face saving (Ting-Toomey and Kurogi, 1998) strategies that have mostly been used for spoken discourse analysis; are present even in texts written in English by Hungarians in a way that they reflect the Hungarian cultural value orientations.

5.2 Recommendation for foreign language education

The application of CVOS has penetrated many fields of research and practical areas as well. Business communication and management training abounds in intercultural studies (Buckley, 2000; Rollin and Harrap, 2005; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998), where the latest results are used in business leadership and intercultural competence training (Hofstede, Hofstede and Pedersen, 2002). These trainings also consider types of intelligence as key elements to success in intercultural encounters (Earley, 2002; Goleman, 1996; Neale, Spencer-Arnell and Wilson, 2009). On the other hand, there seems to be a comparative lack of research and analysis of intercultural competence training within language pedagogy (Gibson et. al 2007) and language teacher education (Lázár, 2006; Lessard-Clouston, 1996; Coleman, 1997), which provided the niche for the doctoral dissertation.

The results first of all show that the possible cultural difficulties for Hungarians while learning English as a foreign language (EFL) are:

- acquiring the different linguistic tools to highlight or soften power distance issues
- the willingness to formulate own opinion and not want to blend in the crowd and present oneself in an objective light without glorifying oneself
- being specific enough when it is expected,
• accepting diachronic and synchronic linguistic changes,
• the linear way of structuring thoughts both in speech and in writing, e.g. the use of sequencing structures,
• and, finally, learning to express one without leaving anything to the reader’s imagination (writer-responsibility, LC).

Secondly, Hungarians should be more aware of the differences between the values of the current selection processes and the values of the Hungarian applicants. They should read authentic and successful MLs to establish a mental template that is culturally apt. Practicing self-appraisal, narrowing the scope of the skills of the applicant, and specifically expressing positive opinion about oneself objectively would also be essential. They should produce more writer responsible texts and they need to practice ways of expressing their achievements with dynamic phrases. Finally, shifting the frame of reference should be practiced to make learners understand that presenting oneself from a certain angle or behaving a little different in certain situations does not eliminate the rest of the personality. They need to develop a second identity and understand that the new one is nothing less – or more – than the first one, just different.

5.3 Future research and limitations

It seems to be a logical step to develop language tasks that also involve and focus on changing and/or exploring behavioral patterns rooted in the given culture’s (Hungary’s) dimensional characteristics in achieving the combined aim of raising awareness of one’s own culture, acquiring (factual) knowledge, and developing intercultural skills, and finally, providing personal development and maturation (Holló, 2008). A language training program could be developed where task-based activities are combined with practicing the shifting the frame of reference. Further research may be done to see how emotional intelligence training (Neale, Spencer-Arnell, and Wilson, 2009) can be incorporated into regular foreign language instruction in Hungary. Finally, a more in-depth investigation into the cultural differences of politeness and face saving strategies in motivational letters would be justified, broadened with research into other genres of self-representation as well. Most of all, however, it has to be borne in mind that CVOPs do not substitute the verbal description and explanation of cultures in intercultural misunderstandings, and that individual differences of the representatives of the different cultures must always be allowed.
References


