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LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND POLICY PREFERENCES: INSIGHTS FROM INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP APPLICANTS TO HUNGARIAN UNIVERSITIES

Annotation. This study examined the attitudes of individuals seeking scholarships to study abroad, exploring whether their views on languages and language policy models vary based on gender, study programs, and countries. An online survey was administered to approximately 130 Hungarian government scholarship applicants from diverse nations. Statistical methods were employed to analyze responses, revealing variations and correlations between demographic and attitudinal variables. Participants expressed preferences for multilingual and monolingual language policies, aligning with their attitudes. The findings indicate that most participants pursued language learning with instrumental motivation, aiming to achieve educational and career objectives. Most participants expressed a desire for a multilingual language policy model in their home countries. While many embraced the proposal to adopt English as the medium of instruction, others maintained a critical perspective, acknowledging both the positive and negative impacts of English and multilingualism. Additionally, participants underscored the significance of preserving native languages in their respective countries.

Keywords: English; language policy; language attitudes; language fluency; demography.

Introduction

Language policy (LP) consists of three interrelated but independently describable components: language practices, beliefs, and management (Spolsky, 2004). In Spolsky's (2007, p. 3) definition, "language practices are the observable behaviors and choices – what people actually do." The second component, language beliefs, is associated with "the values assigned to the [language] varieties and features" (Spolsky, 2007, p. 4). The third component, language management, refers to "the explicit and observable effort by someone or some group that has or claims to have authority over the participants in the domain to modify their practices or beliefs" (Spolsky, 2007, p. 4). In addition to these components, LP addresses to language attitudes, described as "evaluative reactions to different language varieties" (Dragojevic, 2017, p. i).

Understanding language policy requires studying the language attitudes and beliefs of the target population. Language attitudes form language policy (Spolsky, 2018) and nation-building (Rutten, 2019). Attitudes may encompass language variations, language groups, language use, language preferences, and language planning (multilingual LP vs. monolingual LP) (see also Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Baker, 1992, Spolsky, 2004). Positive attitudes toward language can impact learners' academic success (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lysynchuk, 1990; Ellis, 1999; Brown, 2000; Nunan, 2000; Weinburgh, 2000; Csızér & Dörnyei, 2005; Ushida, 2005; Young, 2006; Tella, Indoshi, & Othuon, 2010; Orynbek, 2016), cultural integration (Halliday, 1968), and career development (Przygoński, 2020). In contrast, negative attitudes can lead to language anxiety, learning demotivation, and continuous culture shock in an unfamiliar environment (Mambetaliev, 2019). While attitudes are challenging to observe directly, they can be inferred from behavior 'as the amount of affection for or against some object' (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Expressions of positive or negative feelings toward a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, importance, elegance, and social status (Mambetaliev, 2020).

The role and position of English in international relations and education is growing worldwide. Baker & Hüttner (2019) identified varying English proficiency in different countries, linked to the presence of native English speakers. They also noted diverse attitudes toward English and other languages in these contexts. Muhammad's (2012) study among 2700 students found that female and urban students outperformed male and rural students in English language proficiency tests. They also exhibited stronger positive attitudes toward English.

Some people learn English with instrumental motivation. Many people also find it easy to learn. According to Joseba (2005), English is seen as a tool for accessing information and participating in global communication. Many believe that English is an easy language (Orynbek, 2016) and prefer global media and pop culture in English due to perceived better quality (Korth, 2005). There is a strong belief that most of the world's population will speak it (Graddol, 1997). Some even suggest officially elevating the status of English as the global language of instruction (Mambetaliev, 2021). English is also

considered an asset in the job market (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009). However, some view these beliefs stereotypical (e.g., Pedro et al., 2012). The results are also inconsistent with the attitudinal constructs in English. Although many scholars from countries participating in this study propose that students have positive attitudes toward English (e.g., Al-Quyadi, 2000; Sayadian & Lashkarian, 2010; Almahmoud, 2012; Al Noursi, 2013; Goktepe, 2014; Ahmed, 2015; Muthanna & Miao, 2015; Khalid, 2016; Siddiq, Miri, & Sarwarzada, 2019), some others present the opposite view, stating that they have negative attitudes toward it (Al-Zahrani, 2008; Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi & Alzwari, 2012). For example, Karahan's (2007) participants in Turkey expressed "mildly" positive attitudes but had negative attitudes towards their fellow citizens who use English to speak to each other. Many Yemeni students speak negatively about English because they regard the British and Americans as colonialists (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009, p. 44). Philipson (2016, p. 10) labeled English a "language killer", attributing it to linguistic imperialism by the US and UK, aiming for global dominance. Similarly, students at the University of Ghana resisted learning Russian, perceiving it as imposed by the government (Lomotey & Boasiako, 2020), illustrating how attitudes can shape the perception of learning another language (Ahmed, 2015).

Society comprises members with assimilationist and pluralist attitudes and those holding intermediate views (Razfar, 2012). Bourdieu (1991) described the coexistence of assimilationist and pluralist attitudes as a dialectical relationship in a unity of opposites. Henderson's (2015) study revealed participants simultaneously holding contradictory language attitudes, creating a "*socio-psychological tension*" between additive versus pluralist language ideologies. Assimilationist and pluralist ideologies can co-exist in the same person, representing extremes on a continuum.

Contrasting views exist on the impact of gender on language attitudes. Some argue that language attitudes do not vary by gender (Açıkgöz, 1992; Saranraj, Khan, & Zafar, 2016; Malekmahmudi & Malekmahmudi, 2019; Orfan & Weijer, 2020), while others hold the opposite view (Fishman, 1991). Some suggest that female students have more positive attitudes toward global languages than male students (Gomleksiz, 2010; Kesgin & Mehmet, 2015; Abu-Snoubar, 2017; Paradewari & Mbato, 2018). Additionally, some propose

that women are more favorable toward learning a second language than men (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Spolsky, 1989). However, other studies contradict these conclusions, stating that men are instrumentally more motivated to learn a global language than women (Saranraj, Khan & Zafar, 2016).

This study aims to describe and explain participants' responses to the following questions:

Q1. What are the participants' favorable language policy models for their country – monolingual or multilingual policy?

Q2. What are participants' views on introducing English as an official medium of instruction in their countries?

Q3. How do gender, country, and level of English writing skills affect attitudes toward language policy models and English?

Methodology

Research Instrument

This study used a unique instrument that combined a questionnaire and tests. The questionnaire contained both closed and open questions. The first part of the questionnaire collected demographic information from respondents. The second part consisted of open questions and statements that aimed to elicit attitudes toward the questions. Again, open questions were utilized with the expectation that "subjects may reveal other attitudes, which the researcher may not have anticipated" (Agheyisi & Fishman, 1970, p. 148). This was made possible through the utilization of PHP programming language, enabling the imposition of a time limit or certain open questions. These questions sought to extract information from the participant's working or operational memory and assess their proficiency in the English language.

When referring to the working memory of a participant, it denotes the information readily available to the participant instantly and without deep contemplation in their sphere of life. For instance, when entering a mosque, most non-Arab Muslims automatically pray in Arabic, an action instantly activated during prayer. If asked why they do not pray in their native language, many might be at a loss for words since they rarely contemplate this and are

guided solely by widely accepted beliefs. Typically, the masses are influenced by such a collective ideology. Likewise, the responses to the questions in the tests of this study not only reflect the attitudes and beliefs of an individual participant but also an implicit ideology in their local context.

By simultaneously extracting immediate attitudes and beliefs, the tool evaluates English language fluency due the time constraint. Consequently, the responses to specific open-ended questions turned into an English fluency test.

Participants

The survey in this study targeted random applicants and aspirants of the scholarship provided by the Tempus Public Foundation in Hungary. Out of the 225 applicants who completed the questionnaire and passed the test, 132 participants, including 70 male and 62 females, were selected. The remainder was excluded from the dataset for various reasons, including attempting to manipulate the tool's free English test as determined by IP and response content. The researcher admits that some participants sharing the same IP were unfairly removed; however, the results from the 132 participants and the total 225 did not exhibit a significant difference. Consequently, the decision was made to utilize a smaller database to ensure the results, as attitudes of a large population can be studied by collecting data from a representative sample (Palviainen & Huhta, 2015). The respondents hailed from various regions, including Pakistan, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Europe, South America, Africa, and Arab countries. At the time of the survey, the exact number of applicants was uncertain but currently the scholarship attracts approximately 5000 applicants annually (Tempus Public Foundation, 2023).

Data Analysis

In the study, an assumption was made that attitudes can be inferred from intentions, motivations, or regarding language. Once a relationship between attributes and objects was established, attitudes, beliefs, and

preferences could be calculated. The evaluation of statements or arguments for attitudes was established by inferring meanings in various responses. Therefore, this study frequently employed inferential belief formation formulas to define attributes of objects because the values of variables could be obtained indirectly through inference from various attributes. In other words, attitudes toward statement (a) could be obtained from statement (b) or a set of other statements. For example, a statement (a), such as "Mother's tongue is important for children's academic development!" may influence the evaluation of another statement (b), like "Our children need to study math in their mother tongue!" Therefore, parents' evaluation of (b) might lean toward positive values favoring mother tongue education in the scaling system (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, pp. 60–61).

As with other reports, such as Cooper & Fishman (1977, p. 15), the responses were assigned numerical code values. Attitudes toward LP models were measured on a five-level scale, where preferences changed from monolingual to multilingual. Additionally, a different system measured attitudes and motivations toward learning the mother tongue and English. In this system, the categories were arranged along a gradient of attitudes from instrumentality to affectivity. The closer was the category to the left side of the system, the more it was instrumental, the closer a category was to the more instrumental it was; the closer it was to the right side, the more affective.

Content analysis of answers to an open-ended question on attitudes to English was done using NVivo, a software program for classifying, sorting, arranging, analyzing, and visualizing textual, audio, video, and image data. It could perform word frequencies for text data in various languages. The software displayed respondents' most frequently used words (Table 1). The program presented the most frequent words in bolder fonts and the least used words in smaller fonts. The graph illustrated that most respondents believed English is the global language used for communication in many countries. Most respondents considered English an easy-to-learn language. Therefore, most of them supported the idea of using it as the medium of instruction globally. They believed that having English as a common language unites people worldwide and eliminates communication barriers. Many thought that many people already accept it as a language of education and business.

Additionally, English was viewed as a necessary tool for studying abroad.

The relationships and differences between and within variables were tested using appropriate statistical tests. Before employing these methods, the data were meticulously prepared, and each response was accurately codified to ensure proper order and intervals between values when required. The test conditions allowed participants to express their ideas freely, while the limited time facilitated automatic implicit attitudes.

Results

Participants exhibited a relatively similar level of English writing proficiency, as Pearson's Chi Square test did not identify a significant difference in the results of the English writing fluency test across different sexes, ages, degree programs, and regions. A post hoc analysis employing descriptive statistics revealed slightly higher test results for women ($M = 107$, $SD = 40$) compared to men ($M = 105$, $SD = 41$). Additionally, younger participants (under 20 years old) achieved better results ($M = 112$, $SD = 42$) than their older counterparts ($M = 103$, $SD = 41$). Moreover, participants from East Asia ($M = 119$, $SD = 38$) and South Asia ($M = 122$, $SD = 39$) exhibited superior results compared to others ($M < 102$, $SD < 40$).

Table 1 displays the results of a word frequency count by participants in descending order. These words capture participants' linguistic attitudes, encompassing beliefs and motivations. Most respondents believe that English serves as the global language for communication in numerous countries. Consequently, most of them endorse the idea of using it as the global medium of instruction, viewing English as a common language that unites people globally and eliminates communication barriers. They perceive English as widely accepted for education and business, considering it an essential tool for studying abroad.

Examining the results in Table 1, many words reflect instrumental motivation, as participants view English as a global language useful to learn. English is not only seen as the source of "knowledge", "science", and "education", but also as the language of "communication". The belief that the English language is the language of the future is prevalent. Some words convey

attitudes containing beliefs about specific distinctive features of the English language, such as the perception that English is an "easy" language. The table also frequently includes words reflecting attitudes containing integrative motivation, asserting that English can "unite" people and eliminate communication barriers.

Despite agreement on these conclusions by many participants, some expressed the importance of preserving other languages. Table 1 presents attitudes containing beliefs and motivations about the native language. Some participants believe that the mother tongue holds significance and that different cultures must be "preserved", with primary education for children being available in the mother tongue. Certain participants expressed reservations about introducing English as an official language, deeming it a "bad" idea due to potential harm to the mother tongue. Interestingly, most participants critical of official multilingualism scored high on the English fluency test.

Table 1

Summary of frequently used words in open answers

Words	Count	Words	Count	Words	Count	Words	Count
global	34	culture	7	need	4	must	3
world	20	understand	7	way	4	opportunity	3
countries	17	unite	7	know	4	preserved	3
learning	17	knowledge	6	achieve	3	science	3
communicate	16	positive	6	barrier	3	second	3
easy	15	accepted	5	eliminate	3	speak	3
common	14	everyone	5	abroad	3	tongue	3
help	9	different	4	business	3	able	2
many	8	future	4	education	3	bad	2
used	7	important	4	mother	3		

Table 2 illustrates the proportions of instrumental, integrative, and critical attitudes toward English based on sex, program of application, and region or country. As depicted in the table, most participants exhibited instrumental reasons in their attitudes. Sex and the program of application did not result in a significant difference in instrumental attitudes. However, participants from regions where English is more widely used (such as Africa,

South Asia, and Pakistan) displayed lower instrumental attitudes compared to participants in regions where local languages are more prevalent than English (including Arab countries, Turkey, Central Asia, and East Asia).

Female participants demonstrated twice as many integrative attitudes as their male counterparts. Additionally, younger participants held greater integrative attitudes. The highest levels of integrative attitudes were observed among African and Pakistani participants. Some participants expressed critical views towards English, emphasizing the importance of preserving native languages from the perceived imperialistic influence of English. The most critical attitudes were identified among participants from Africa and East Asia. It is noteworthy that most participants from these regions who voiced criticisms identified as Christians and Buddhists. In contrast, participants from traditionally Muslim regions refrained from expressing critical views but indicated a primary need for English due to its instrumental value.

Table 2

Attitudes toward English

		Instrumental	Integrative	Critical
Sex	M	.68	**.16**	.16
	F	.71	**.08**	.21
Study Programs	PhD	.74	**.07**	.18
	Masters	.73	.11	.16
	Bachelor	.68	**.14**	.18
Regions	Africa	.50	**.23**	**.27**
	Arab Nations	.88	.04	.08
	Turkey	.86	.14	0
	Central Asia	.78	.04	.17
	Pakistan	.65	**.15**	.20
	Other S. Asia	.67	**.07**	**.27**
	East Asia	.84	.05	.11

Note. N = 185. NA's excluded.

Table 3 reveals that a significant number of participants (84) prefer more than one language to be official in their countries, compared to those who favor monolingual language policy (48, advocating one nation, one official language).

Pearson's product-moment correlation shows no significant correlation between language policy preferences and English writing skills among participants, $t = -0.57$, $df = 130$, $p = 0.57$. The test also showed that gender does not play a significant role in the preferences of LP models among participants, $\chi^2 = 0.0003$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.99$.

Cramer's V test found differences in the attitudes toward monolingual versus multilingual LP models between countries and ethnicities (CramerV = 0.71). This difference is particularly significant between participants from Pakistan and those from other countries (see Table 1). Most participants in Pakistan preferred the monolingual LP, despite their country having a multilingual policy.

It is noteworthy that English serves as an additional language in most participating countries, except for those in Central Asia. Another characteristic of this dataset is that the number of those favoring a multilingual policy is approximately twice as large. The exception is Central Asia, where English is the second most popular foreign language after Russian.

Table 3

Preferences for language policy models

	Monolingual LP	Multilingual LP	Total
African countries	12	26	38
Arab countries	4	7	11
Pakistan	16	13	29
Central Asia	2	11	13
Southeast Asia	9	17	26
Others	5	10	15
Total	48	84	132

Discussion

The results affirm most findings in previous studies concerning attitudes toward languages, language use, language preferences, and language planning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Baker, 1992; Spolsky, 2004). The data show that attitudes can range from negative to positive (e.g., Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lysynchuk, 1990; Ellis, 1999; Orynbek, 2016), as

well as encompass instrumental (e.g., Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009) and integrative (e.g., Halliday, 1968) motivations. This study also determined critical attitudes, which can consist of concurrent negative and positive attitudes. Additionally, the results confirmed the correlation between language attitudes and language policy (Spolsky, 2004).

Table 1 illustrates that attitudes encompass instrumental and integrative reasons. Furthermore, many participants believe that English is easy to learn, a sentiment corroborated by some previous authors (e.g., Orynbek, 2016). While the majority supports the idea of introducing English as a medium of instruction, some express negativity this proposition, aligning with the findings of previous studies (e.g., Al-Zahrani, 2008; Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009).

The results revealed that instrumental attitudes predominate among participants, consistent with previous studies conducted in the global south. Table 2 demonstrates that attitudes can vary by gender, study program, and region, a phenomenon previously discussed by many authors (e.g., Açıkgöz, 1992; Saranraj, Khan, & Zafar, 2016; Malekmahmudi & Malekmahmudi, 2019; Orfan & Weijer, 2020; Fishman, 1991). Notably, this study found that male participants have more integrative attitudes toward English than female participants (Table 2). However, the results do not support the findings of some previous studies suggesting that men are more instrumentally motivated to learn a global language than women (Saranraj, Khan & Zafar, 2016).

The data demonstrate that higher English writing fluency corresponds to more critical attitudes regarding language policy and greater concern for preserving the native language. Regionally, participants from Africa and South Asia, where English serves as the official language, express more critical views about further reenforcing English in their countries. Another observation is that the higher the program of study, the stronger integrative attitudes become.

Ethnic diversity in participating countries emerges as a factor explaining the general preference for multilingual LP. Many respondents hail from ethnic minorities in their respective countries, suggesting that minorities aim to elevate their languages to official status and prefer multilingual policies.

Most respondents from Africa, Arab countries, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia prefer a multilingual policy. In contrast, most Pakistani

participants favor a monolingual policy for their country, particularly Urdu speakers (15 out of 21). This pattern in Pakistan may be influenced by the dominance of the ethnic group represented by most participants or by ongoing socio-psychological dynamics in the country.

There are also supporters of a monolingual policy with English among Africans whose first language is English. This echoes the phenomenon observed in Pakistan. Additionally, it's noteworthy that most participants from Africa adhere to the Christian religion.

Conclusion

The study of the attitudes of individuals aspiring to receive a scholarship for studying in Europe, particularly in Hungary, revealed several intriguing characteristics within this cohort. Initially, the participants demonstrated a roughly similar level of English writing fluency. However, female, and younger participants exhibited superior performance in the test compared to their counterparts. Regionally, participants from East Asia and South Asia outperformed those from other regions. Secondly, the predominant motivation for learning English among most participants was instrumental. Third, a noteworthy observation was that a higher level of English proficiency correlated with increased critical perspectives among participants regarding the incorporation of English as the official language of education. They expressed concerns that such a policy might detrimentally impact native languages. Lastly, participants from regions where English holds the status of the official and primary language tended to favor a monolingual policy with English.

Limitations

Some respondents from Middle Eastern and African countries interpreted the question about attitudes toward English as a suggestion for action or, even worse, as a promotion of English. Therefore, in future studies, it is essential to consider this cultural specificity when formulating questions. This consideration becomes particularly crucial if the researcher is an outsider to the participants' regions.

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KALBINĖS NUOSTATOS IR POLITIKOS PASIRINKIMAI: TARPTAUTINIŲ STIPENDIJŲ KANDIDATŲ Į VENGRIJOS UNIVERSITETUS ĮŽVALGOS

Anotacija. Šiame tyrime nagrinėjamas užsienio šalių kandidatų, siekiančių gauti stipendiją studijuoti Vengrijos aukštosiose mokyklose, požiūris į kalbas ir kalbų politikos modelius pagal lytį, studijų programą ir šalį. Internetinėje apklausoje dalyvavo apie 130 įvairių šalių studentų, siekiančių gauti Vengrijos vyriausybės stipendiją studijuoti šalies aukštosiose mokyklose. Atsakymams analizuoti buvo taikomi statistiniai metodai, kuriais nustatyti demografinių ir požiūrio kintamųjų skirtumai ir koreliacijos. Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad pagal savo nuostatas kandidatai teikia pirmenybę daugiakalbei ir vienakalbei kalbų politikai. Dauguma tyrimo dalyvių kalbų mokėsi dėl instrumentinės motyvacijos kaip priemonės išsilavinimo ir karjeros tikslams pasiekti. Dauguma dalyvių taip pat norėtų, kad jų šalyse būtų taikomas daugiakalbės kalbų politikos modelis. Taip pat nustatyta, kad dauguma dalyvių palankiai vertina anglų kaip dėstymo kalbą savo šalyse. Tačiau kai kurie jų kritiškai vertina anglų kalbos ir kalbų politikos modelį bei teigia, kad anglų kalba ir daugiakalbystė gali turėti ir teigiamą, ir neigiamą poveikį. Jie taip pat pabrėžė gimtųjų kalbų išsaugojimo svarbą savo šalyse.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: kalbų politikos modeliai; anglų kalba; požiūris į kalbą; demografiniai veiksniai; kalbų mokėjimas.