

Modelling the Role of Inter-Cultural Contact in the Motivation of Learning English as a Foreign Language

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The research reported in this paper explores the effect of direct and indirect cross-cultural contact on Hungarian school children's attitudes and motivated behaviour by means of structural equation modelling. Our data are based on a national representative survey of 1,777 13/14-year-old learners of English and German in Hungary; 237 of the students learning English with the highest level of inter-cultural contact were selected for analysis. Our model indicates that for our participants, motivated behaviour is determined not only by language-related attitudes but also by the views the students hold about the perceived importance of contact with foreigners. The results of our study also reveal that the perceived importance of contact was not related to students' direct contact experiences with target language speakers but was influenced by the students' milieu and indirect contact. Among the contact variables, it was only contact through media products that had an important position in our model, whereas direct contact with L2 speakers played an insignificant role in affecting motivated behaviour and attitudes.

INTRODUCTION

The interaction of speech communities has been investigated in a number of fields of applied linguistics such as sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and the social psychology of second language acquisition. Contact between various ethnic and linguistic groups (in other words inter-ethnic or inter-cultural contact)¹ has been found to initiate linguistic change (for a review see Kerswill 2006) as well as elicit a large number of discourse accommodations (e.g. Bremer *et al.* 1996; Boxer 2002; Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury 2004). Inter-ethnic contact does not only have linguistic consequences but can influence self-perceptions of identity (e.g. Norton 1997; Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000) and attitudes to other linguistic and ethnic groups (for recent reviews see Dovidio *et al.* 2003; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). Although inter-ethnic contact has been a component of a number of models of second language motivation (Dörnyei 2001), its role in influencing language learning attitudes and motivated learning behaviour is rarely studied (for an exception see Dörnyei and Csizér 2005). Research on this topic is imminent for several reasons. First of all, one of the main aims of learning second and foreign languages (L2) is to be able to communicate with members of other cultures

who do not speak one's mother tongue. This is especially true in the case of students whose mother tongue is only spoken by a relatively small number of people such as Hungarian. In addition, interaction with speakers of other languages creates opportunities for developing L2 learners' language competence (for recent studies elaborating Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis see Duff 2000; Hall 2004; Takahashi *et al.* 2000). The learners' experience of these encounters can influence both their disposition to the target language and their attitude to the process of language learning itself. Inter-ethnic contact is also assumed to affect L2 learners' motivated behaviour, that is, the energy and effort students are willing to put in to learning the L2 (Dörnyei and Csizér 2005). Therefore, as Dörnyei and Csizér (2005) pointed out, 'inter-cultural contact is both a means and an end in L2 studies' (2005: 2).

Our investigation is rooted in two different but related research traditions: the social psychological study of inter-cultural contact and L2 motivation research. The most important subfield of the investigation of the contact-attitude relation within social psychology is called the Contact Hypothesis (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006), in which it is argued that contact changes the attitudes and behaviour of groups and individuals towards one another and, in turn, these changes influence further contact between groups and people. As for the field of L2 motivation, contact was first regarded as a key constituent of motivation by Clément (1980).

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how inter-cultural contact influences language-related attitudes and motivated behaviour in a foreign language context, namely Hungarian, through structural equation modelling. The main research question of our study was how various types of direct and indirect contact situations, as well the importance students attribute to these inter-cultural encounters, influence Hungarian language learners' motivated behaviour, which is one of the most important factors influencing the success of language learning (Dörnyei 2005). Our data come from a national representative survey of 1,777 13/14-year-old learners of English and German in Hungary. From the participating students, we selected 237 learners of English in our sample who had the most intensive contact with target language speakers. Based on their answers to our questionnaire and a review of the literature, we constructed a social-psychological model of language learning motivation, which we tested by means of structural equation modelling. Our investigation is unique in the sense that it covers the various types of inter-cultural contact situations in a systematic way by assessing the role of the perceived importance of contact, direct contact (i.e. when students meet and talk with foreigners), foreign media usage (when students consume cultural products in the target language) as well as indirect contact (when students hear about the target language speakers from significant others).

In this paper, we first provide a theoretical background to our study, which is followed by a description of our initial hypothetical model and the research

procedures. Next, we elaborate in detail how our model was developed and tested. Finally, we discuss the functioning and the implications of the proposed model.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The roots of research on this topic go back to the post-World War II United States, where inter-racial relations became of central interest, and a large number of research projects were subsidized to find ways to reduce inter-racial prejudice. The seminal work of Allport, first published in 1954, created a theoretical background to this work by reasoning that favourable circumstances, defined by Allport as *equal status*, *common goals*, *co-operation*, and *institutional support*, were necessary for inter-group contact to lead to favourable changes in the attitudinal dispositions of individuals. Allport's work resulted in a wide variety of research projects ranging from naturalistic field work through highly controlled laboratory studies to representative surveys employing nationwide samples, which all aimed to reveal how circumstances affected the outcome of inter-group contact (see, Amir 1969; Cook 1978, 1985; Desforges *et al.* 1991, 1997; Hamberger and Hewstone 1997; Hewstone 1985; Islam and Hewstone 1993; Stangor *et al.* 1996). In his comprehensive review of the literature of inter-ethnic contact, Pettigrew (1998) argued that from the many conditions believed to be necessary for optimal contact in earlier research, only five were essential: equal group status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, authority support, and friendship potential. From a meta-analysis of 515 studies of inter-group contact, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006), however, concluded that 'Allport's conditions are not essential for inter-group contact to achieve positive outcomes. ... Rather they act as facilitating conditions that enhance the tendency for positive contact outcomes to emerge' (2006: 766). They propose that the key to the contact-attitude relation is the general psychological observation that familiarity leads to increase in liking (Bornstein 1989) through the reduction of uncertainty and anxiety (Lee 2001). Therefore, the main mediating variable between contact and attitudes is inter-group anxiety.

In the 1980s, researchers' attention shifted from the question of what conditions are necessary for attitude change to take place, to the issue of how the change itself comes about. Stephan (1987) was the first to propose a detailed model of how contact influences attitudes and behaviour. He argued that social factors (e.g. social structure, historical and current inter-group relations, socialization practice) exert their effect on situational (e.g. nature of the interaction, group composition, task) and personal antecedents of inter-group contact (e.g. demographic characteristics, existing attitudes, and stereotypes). These two antecedents interact with each other and in turn influence mediating variables, which include behavioural, affective and cognitive processes. The mediating variables first have personal

consequences, that is, result in a change in behaviour, cognitions, and affective states, which then lead to societal consequences (for a recent elaboration of Stephan's model see Dovidio *et al.* 2003).

Van Dick *et al.* (2004) tested a somewhat different model of the contact hypothesis on a large variety of the population in Germany and Costa Rica, in which they hypothesized that distal contact opportunities at work, school, and in the neighbourhood would affect the quantity and quality of proximal contact with acquaintances and friends. In their model, proximal contact with acquaintances and friends contributed to the perceived importance of contact, which is a new variable in this model. Perceived importance, which was defined as the personal relevance of the contact experience, was assumed to directly influence prejudice of the out-group. This model was empirically verified by structural equation modelling (a similar model was also developed in a parallel study by Wagner *et al.* 2003).

As for the field of second language acquisition, contact first appeared in Clément's (1980) model as a key constituent of motivation. Clément and Kruidenier (1985) showed that frequent and pleasant contact experience led to an increased linguistic self-confidence in L2 learners, which, in turn, affected motivated learning behaviour in a positive way. High scores on the latent dimension of integrativeness, on the other hand, affected the frequency and quality of contact in a positive way. In another study, Clément *et al.* (2001) concluded that more frequent positive contact experiences not only led to more confident language use but also affected the identification profiles of language learners.

In certain learning environments, however, direct contact with L2 speakers is minimal, yet the L2 community may still be well-known to the learners through indirect contact with it, that is, through the learners' exposure to a range of L2 cultural products and artefacts, such as films, videos, books, magazines, and music. In their investigation of various L2 learning orientations, Clément and Kruidenier (1983) isolated a factor that tapped the 'social-cultural' dimension of L2 motivation, which covered 'an interest in the way of life and the artistic production of the target language group' (p. 285), which can be seen as indirect contact with the target language community (see Clément *et al.* 1994). The presence of this socio-cultural dimension characterized groups living in a multicultural milieu, whereas for the groups in a monolingual setting, the factor included other meanings such as general knowledge about the world and self. Clément *et al.* (1994) investigated different motivational orientations in a largely monolingual Hungarian context, and they isolated a component called English media subsuming the consumption of cultural products in English (British/American/Irish, etc.). This study highlighted the salient role that L2 cultural products play in familiarizing learners with the L2 community and in influencing their attitudes. Based on their longitudinal study in Hungary, Dörnyei *et al.* (2006) developed a model of L2 learning motivation, in which

indirect contact was one of the main variables that predicted motivated learning behaviour.

The results of another recent study in Hungary by Dörnyei and Csizér (2005) indicated a positive linear relation between school children's contact experiences and attitudes to target language speakers. In high-frequency contact situations, however, they found a remarkable decrease in positive attitudes towards the L2 speakers in the case of learners of German (see also Csizér and Kormos in press). This finding is in line with studies investigating the effects of tourism (for a summary see Dörnyei and Csizér 2005), which indicate that up to a certain point, increased contact promotes positive attitudes, but beyond a certain level it works against positive inter-cultural relations (for an alternative finding on the so-called threshold hypothesis see Wagner *et al.* 2006).

The effect of contact with L2 speakers was also investigated in a qualitative study by Kormos and Csizér (2007), who conducted long interviews with 40 Hungarian school children learning either German or English in primary school (aged 13/14). Students in this study regarded contact situations as being beneficial for a number of reasons and reported that inter-cultural contact helped the development of their language competence and contributed to the increase of energy and effort they invest in language learning and the decrease of their language use anxiety. The interviewees also noted that inter-ethnic contact influenced their attitudes to target language speakers in a positive way.

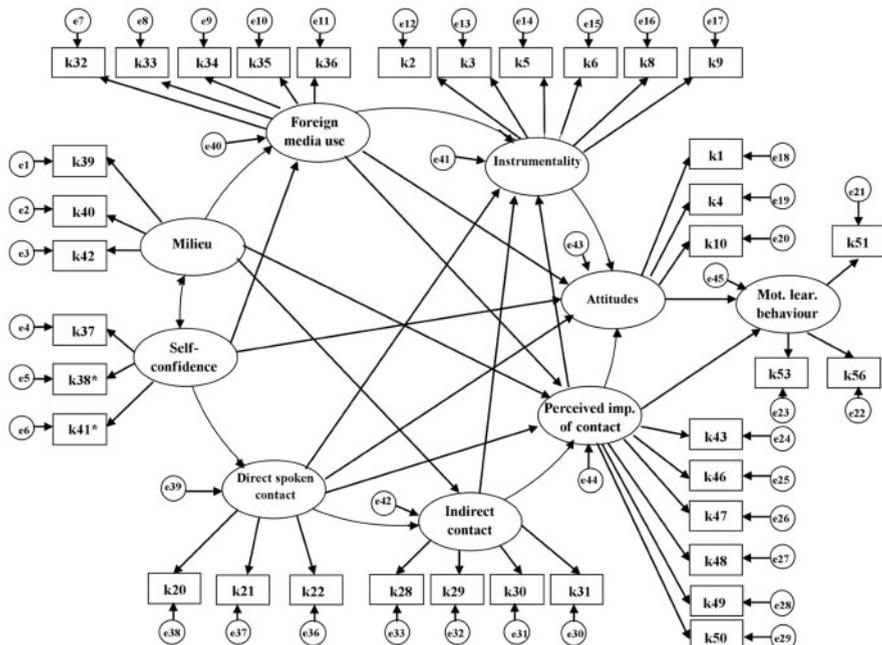
Two new models of motivation have been devised in the past ten years by Zoltán Dörnyei: the process model of motivation (Dörnyei and Ottó 1998; Dörnyei 2000, 2001), which accounts for the dynamic nature of L2 motivation and its temporal variation, and the Motivational Self-System Theory (Dörnyei 2005), which tries to answer the challenge that the changing world of the twenty-first century poses for the Gardnerian concept of integrativeness (Gardner 1985, 2006), the notion of the native speaker (Widdowson 1993) and learners' identification with native speakers (Warden and Lin 2000; Yashima 2000; Lamb 2004). In this study we used a model of motivation, which served as a foundation for Dörnyei's Motivational Self-System theory and included an attitude component similar to inter-ethnic attitudes as conceptualized in social-psychological research (Csizér and Dörnyei 2005). In this model, learning behaviour is influenced by two major factors: the socially constructed utilitarian and pragmatic values attached to language choice and language learning (represented by milieu and instrumentality) and an attitude-related *identification process* within the individual's *self-concept* (including self-confidence and various attitude-related variables). Despite the fact that Csizér and Dörnyei placed integrativeness in a key position in their proposed model, we did not include this construct in our model as integrativeness has recently been found to be a highly problematic construct both in Hungary (Kormos and Csizér 2008) and in other parts of the world (e.g. Lamb 2004). The main reason for problems

with integrativeness is that by the twenty-first century, English has become an international language serving as a lingua franca in a globalized world (e.g. Widdowson 1993; Crystal 2003). Therefore the English language has become separated from its native speakers and their cultures (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). In a recent article, Sifakis (2004) even argues for using the term English as an Intercultural Language instead of English as an International Language, which would express that in the twenty-first century English is most often used in inter-cultural encounters. Integrativeness in the sense defined by Gardner involves the language learners' identification with native speakers of the L2, but in today's world it seems to be more appropriate to talk about a 'World English identity' (Dörnyei 2005) or an 'international posture' (Yashima 2002).

The motivation behind the present study stems from the fact that our interview study was qualitative in nature and as such had limited generalizability, and therefore we decided to test its main findings with the use of a questionnaire on a representative sample of students. In our research we used structural equation modelling to investigate how various types of direct and indirect contact situations as well as the importance students attribute to these inter-cultural encounters influence Hungarian language learners' motivated behaviour. Our previous interview study was instrumental in wording the items of the contact scale for the present investigation, and helped us devise an initial hypothetical model, which is schematically presented in Figure 1.

The criterion measure of our study is *Motivated learning behaviour*, one of the most important antecedents of achievement in language learning (Dörnyei 2005), which was defined as effort expended to achieve a goal, a desire to learn the language, and satisfaction with the task of learning (Gardner 1985). Since in our study we were interested in the attitude-contact relationship among L2 learners in a foreign language context, we have decided to use a clear attitude variable, called *L2-related attitudes*, measuring students' dispositions to the L2, its cultures, and speakers. Another component of our model is *instrumentality*, which entails the perceived pragmatic benefits of L2 proficiency and reflects the recognition that for a high number of language learners, it is the usefulness of L2 proficiency that provides the greatest driving force in the process of SLA. In a number of previous studies, instrumentality was found to be one of the most important latent dimensions affecting motivated learning behaviour (Dörnyei and Clément 2001). In addition, *linguistic self-confidence*, which expresses the belief that the mastery of an L2 is well within the learner's means, and *language learning milieu* representing the social influence of the learners' immediate environment were also included in the model, as these variables provided important background to students' motivation in previous Hungarian studies (Dörnyei *et al.* 2006).

In the initial model tested in this study, L2-related attitudes are hypothesized to be directly linked to motivated learning behaviour, an



LEGEND:

Self-confidence

- K37: Sure to be able to learn a L2 well
- K38: Would feel anxious to speak a L2
- K41: Learning a L2 is a difficult task

Foreign media use

- K32: watches English speaking films
- K33: reads English books
- K34: reads English Internet pages
- K35: watches English speaking TV
- K36: reads English newspapers/magazines

Direct spoken contact

- K20: Meets L2 speakers during holiday abroad
- K21: Meets L2 speakers in neighbourhood
- K22: Speaks L2 with foreign friends

Attitudes to language, culture & speakers

- K1: Like L2
- K4: Would like to know the culture
- K10: Would like to meet L2 speakers

*Originally worded negatively but reversed prior to analysis.

Milieu

- K39: L2s are important school subjects
- K40: Parents think L2s are important school subjects
- K42: People around me think it is good to know a L2

Indirect contact

- K28: See foreigners
- K29: Teacher speaks about L2 community
- K30: Family member speaks about L2 community
- K31: Friends speak about L2 community

Instrumentality

- K2: Become knowledgeable
- K3: L2 important in the world
- K5: Useful for travel
- K6: Useful for career
- K8: Useful if exam
- K9: Useful for hobby

Motivated learning behavior

- K51: More hardworking than others
- K53: Enjoys L2 learning
- K54: Always prepares homework

Perceived importance of contact

- K43: More contact will help to get to know of how people live
- K46: It is good to use the foreign language with tourists
- K47: More contact will make me want to learn the language
- K48: More contact means that I will work more to practice
- K49: More contact means that I prepare for contact situations
- K50: More contact means that I will be less anxious when speaking with foreigners

Figure 1: The initially tested model

assumption justified by extensive research carried out in Hungary with a student sample of a similar age to the one involved in the present study (Dörnyei *et al.* 2006). Dörnyei *et al.*'s research showed that attitudes were important antecedents of motivated learning behaviour for 13/14-year-old children in Hungary. Based on studies in social psychology (e.g. Wagner *et al.* 2003; van Dick *et al.* 2004), we also assumed that perceived importance of contact would mediate between various contact variables and language-related attitudes. Perceived importance of contact was also presumed to be directly linked to motivated learning behaviour (Stephan 1987). As no previous research was available on the influence of the different contact variables, we assumed that all contact variables had a similar role in shaping students' views on the perceived importance of inter-ethnic contact, their L2-related attitudes and motivated learning behaviour. Based on our previous qualitative research in Hungary, we hypothesized that self-confidence would shape how often students were willing to engage in direct contact with English speaking people (Kormos and Csizér 2007) as well as how often they were prepared to use English language media products (Dörnyei *et al.* 2006). Based on Clément's theory of language learning motivation (e.g. Clément 1980; Clément *et al.* 1994), we supposed a link between self-confidence and language-related attitudes. On the basis of Dörnyei *et al.*'s (2006) work, instrumentality was hypothesized to be related to language-related attitudes. As the perceived utilitarian benefits of a language depend on social factors, we postulated that perceived importance of contact and indirect contact would be influenced by the students' milieu. Finally, Clément's work and previous Hungarian research (Csizér and Dörnyei 2005) made us propose a link between self-confidence and milieu.

METHOD

Participants

The participants of the survey were 237 students of English, 41 per cent of whom were boys and 59 per cent girls; 54 of the respondents lived in Budapest, the capital of Hungary, 98 in other large cities; and 85 participants attended elementary school in villages. The students typically started learning English between the ages of 7 and 10. They were all between 13- and 14-years old and attended the final, eighth, grade of the primary school system. This means that they studied within a relatively homogenous curricular and organizational framework (i.e. the national primary school system). By sampling students from this cohort, we did not need to be concerned with the modifying influences of various specialized school types. The participants of the study reported in this paper have been selected from a national representative survey ($N=1,777$, with 1,078 students learning English and the rest German), which sampled students evenly from each main region and type of settlement (stratified sampling). We computed

a composite contact scale (Cr. Alpha = .78), and selected students from the top 20 per cent range of the scale. The limitation of the sample was necessary because our previous analysis of the data (Csizér and Kormos 2008) has shown that students generally have very few inter-cultural contact experiences. Therefore we selected students who definitely took part in encounters with speakers of English and English-language media products. Thus, this sub-sample consisting of 237 students meets the generally advised sample size of around 200 for structural equation modelling (Thompson 2000), and the impact and role of inter-cultural contact can be investigated.

Materials

The questionnaire consisted of 71 items. Apart from eight open-ended items at the end of the questionnaire asking about students' foreign language learning background, all items used 5-point rating scales. The items of the questionnaire came from two sources. First, some questions were borrowed from the questionnaire used in the survey reported in Dörnyei *et al.* (2006). Other questions were designed based on the results of Kormos and Csizér's (2007) interview study. We piloted the questionnaire with 100 students prior to the main study.

The main variable groups in the questionnaire were as follows:

- Items concerning the target languages (English)(five-point rating scales where 5 represented 'very much' and 1 stood for 'not at all'):
 - Language-related attitudes, that is, the attitudes students display towards the L2, its speakers and cultures.
 - Instrumentality, that is, to what extent students attach pragmatic values to the learning of the language.
- Items concerning the direct and indirect aspect of cross-cultural contact (five-point scales where 5 represented 'very much' and 1 stood for 'not at all'):
 - Direct spoken contact describes students meeting and talking with foreigners both in the target language country and in Hungary.
 - Direct written contact includes students writing snail mail and e-mails as well as chatting on the Internet.
 - Indirect contact, that is, seeing foreigners but not talking to them and receiving information on them from others.
 - Media usage, which covers students watching L2 TV programmes, films, reading magazines.
- Items using Likert scales (five-point scales):
 - Linguistic self-confidence covers how confident students are in L2 learning and use.
 - Language learning milieu, that is, the extent of the parents' support and the friends' attitudes toward L2 learning.

- Perceived importance of contact, why students find it important to be involved in inter-cultural contact situations.
- Motivated learning behaviour, that is how much effort learners invest into L2 learning, how persistent they see themselves as language learners, and the enjoyment students derive from L2 learning.

Procedures

Data collection for this study followed the established routes of earlier, similar studies conducted in Hungary by the authors. We first approached the selected schools via an official letter from Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest (which hosted the project), providing information about the purpose of the survey and details of the actual administration of the questionnaires. Once permission was granted by the principal of the school, we contacted the form-masters of the selected classes individually, asking for their co-operation. The questionnaires were filled in during class time, with a representative of the university always present to provide the introduction and oversee the procedure. Answering the questions took the students approximately 20 minutes on average.

We applied Structural equation modelling (SEM) to evaluate the relations between the various latent variables investigated in the study. The analyses were carried out with the help of the software AMOS 4.0. First, *measurement models* were drawn up in accordance with the earlier factor analytical results reported in Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) and Dörnyei *et al.* (2006) on similar datasets and our earlier findings concerning inter-cultural contact (Kormos and Csizér 2007). Following this, the various latent variables were combined into a *full structural model* on the basis of theoretical considerations as well as the correlational and regression analyses conducted in the previous phases of the research. To assess the overall model fit, we have used indices most often advised in the SEM literature (Byrne 2001), and as well as the chi-square statistics and the CMIN/df (chi-square divided by the degrees of freedom), we report additional indices: Comparative Fit Index (CFI) (Fan *et al.* 1999; Hu and Bentler 1999), the Bentler–Bonett normed fit index (NFI), the Tucker–Lewis coefficient (TLI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Browne and Cudeck 1993; Fan *et al.* 1999; Hu and Bentler 1999), and the Parsimony-adjusted Comparative Fit Index (PCFI).

RESULTS

The final model

After the initial model had been submitted to evaluation using maximum likelihood estimation, we found that although the hypothetical model provided acceptable model-data fit indices (e.g. CFI=.981), there were several relations that turned out to be not significant. These were removed

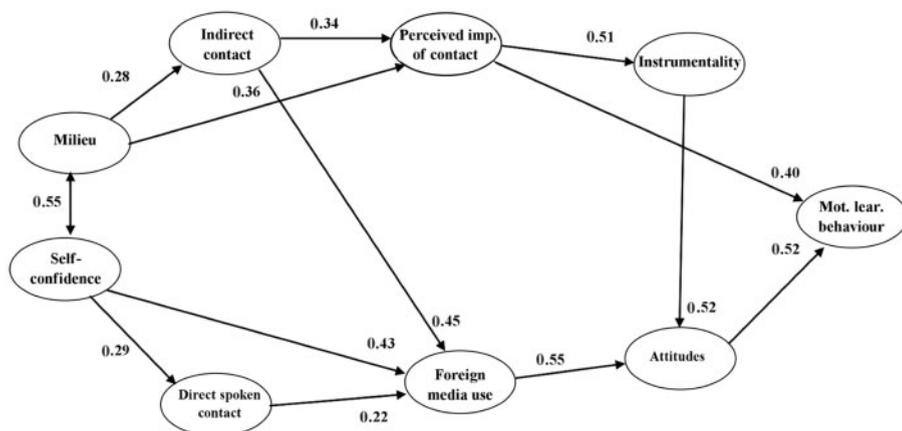


Figure 2: The schematic representation of the final model with the standardized estimates

Note: $\chi^2/df = 1.782$, CFI = .982, NFI = .961, NNFI = .980, RMSEA = .058, PCFI = .857

from the initial model. In addition, one extra path was added to the final model linking Indirect contact to Foreign Media Usage. Thus, the final model contains 13 significant relations (for more information on the measurement models see Appendix). Figure 2 contains the schematic representation of the final model with the standardized estimates.

The Chi Square/df ratio is under the usually recommended value of 2 ($\chi^2/df = 1.868$) (Byrne 1989); but as we pointed out earlier, it is advisable to rely on more than one fit index, therefore, we have also focused on alternative fit indices. These all indicate a very good fit (CFI = .982, NFI = .961, NNFI = .980, RMSEA = .058 PCFI = .857), and thus we can conclude that the model in Figure 2 provides an adequate representation of our data.

DISCUSSION

The most important feature of our model is that the criterion measure, that is, motivated behaviour, is directly affected by only two latent concepts: language-related attitudes and perceived importance of contact. The influence of language-attitudes on motivated learning behaviour comes as no surprise in the light of Kormos and Csizér's (2008) study with different groups of secondary school students. They found that one of the most important latent variables influencing how much effort students were willing to invest in foreign language learning is their attitude toward language, culture, and speakers. The fact that the perceived importance of contact plays an almost equally important role in shaping students' motivated learning

behaviour, however, is noteworthy. Our model also shows that contrary to our expectations, perceived importance of contact does not influence language-related attitudes, and it has a direct influence on motivated behaviour. This finding seems to be in contrast with van Dick *et al.*'s (2004) and Wagner *et al.*'s (2003) model, in which the perceived importance of contact indirectly affects behaviour through the mediation of attitudes. The direct influence of the perceived importance of contact on learning behaviour in our study is also interesting from the point of the view of the Contact Hypothesis, since it suggests that it is not only inter-ethnic attitudes alone that might influence behaviour, but also the attitudes attached to the importance of interacting with speakers of other ethnic groups.

The difference between the findings of social-psychological research and the results of our study is probably due to the conceptualization of perceived importance of contact. Van Dick *et al.* (2004) and Wagner *et al.* (2003) defined perceived importance of contact somewhat vaguely as the personal relevance of engaging in inter-group contact, whereas our construct is wider in the sense that it involves how the students in our preliminary interview study viewed the importance of contact (Kormos and Csizér 2007). In our research the perceived importance of contact included students' beliefs that contact opportunities are important in enhancing motivated behaviour, in getting to know the culture of the L2 speakers as well as in decreasing anxiety. These different meanings of importance might explain why this scale plays a significant role in our model. As the model reveals, perceived importance of contact is closely related to instrumentality. Our results indicate that those students who regard contact opportunities important in the process of language learning also attach more importance to the pragmatic benefits of language learning.

Another interesting implication of our model is that the perceived importance of contact is entirely socially constructed, as it is affected by milieu and indirect contact, which involves teachers' and parents' accounts of what the target language speakers and their cultures are like. This means that for teenage Hungarian learners of English, it is not the contact experience itself that influences perceptions about the importance of engaging in inter-cultural encounters, but the views the students' immediate environment holds about the role of language learning and the amount of inter-cultural information students get at home and school.

The finding that direct contact is not related to the perceived influence of contact runs counter to the results of previous studies in social-psychology (van Dick *et al.* 2004; Wagner *et al.* 2003), which concluded that inter-ethnic contact had a direct effect on perceived importance of contact. This might partly be due to the different conceptualization of the construct of the perceived importance of contact, and also to the different setting in which these studies were conducted. Studies in social-psychology involved

inter-group contact between ethnic groups living in the same country, whereas in our research the out-group is foreign visitors of the country, with whom, even if our sample represents those students who had frequent contact, the students generally did not have the chance to enter into prolonged contact. If we consider the most important conditions for a change in attitudes to take place—equal status, common goals, inter-group co-operation, authority support, and friendship potential (Pettigrew 1998)—for our participants, it is only authority support that is fully ensured (see the high mean values for the milieu scale). In addition, as the interview data of our previous study (Kormos and Csizér 2007) indicated, most direct contact experiences of this age group involve encounters with tourists, in which visitors and hosts do not have equal status (Hamberger and Hewstone 1997). Our interviews also revealed that students' direct contact experiences hardly ever offer the possibility for inter-group co-operation and working for common goals. Moreover, the encounters are generally so brief that they cannot help establish friendship either. It seems that for the surveyed Hungarian students, the lack of prerequisite conditions as outlined in previous social-psychological studies is the cause for the minimal role of direct contact in influencing attitudes to language learning.

Our model suggests that for young learners in a foreign language setting such as Hungary, the effect of direct contact is primarily constrained to foreign media use. Students who engage in inter-cultural encounters involving the L2 and those who receive information on L2 speakers and their cultures from their immediate environment seem to show more interest in the cultural products of the L2. This result suggests that in a foreign language setting, both direct and indirect contact have the potential to raise students' interest in using the L2 through L2 cultural products and various means of L2 speaking media. Self-confidence also seems to play an important role in L2 media use. Our model indicates that L2 learners need to be confident in their abilities in the L2 to use L2 cultural products frequently.

Language-related attitudes are in a central position in our model, as they subsume the effect of several variables. First, instrumentality is the key antecedent of language-related attitudes, a result which is similar to Dörnyei *et al.*'s (2006) finding concerning the same age group of Hungarian learners. This indicates that even for relatively young teenage learners, the pragmatic benefits related to learning English have an important role in influencing attitudes to the L2 and its speakers. In our model instrumentality is not directly related to the effort learners are willing to invest in language learning; therefore we might hypothesize that instrumentality plays a role in affecting motivated behaviour through the internalization of instrumental values into language learning attitudes. In addition, the extent to which students engage in the consumption of English-language media, a component that has been traditionally associated with integrative orientation in foreign language settings (Clément *et al.* 1994) also contributes to students'

displaying more positive language-related attitudes. This finding highlights that in a foreign language setting such as Hungary, indirect contact by means of exposure to English-language media products such as television, magazines, and the Internet, might take over the place of direct contact and might exert significantly more influence on attitudes to target language speakers and their culture than direct spoken contact.

Milieu is also an important factor in our model as it affects the perceived importance of contact as well as self-confidence. This means that the extent to which family members and friends value the knowledge of English very strongly predicts not only how important learners find meeting foreigners but also how the students see their own potentials in language learning. This important role Hungarian language learners' milieu seems to play in our model is also in line with the findings of our qualitative interview study conducted on the role of parents in influencing L2 learning motivation (Kormos and Csizér 2005). Among previous conceptualizations of the construct of L2 motivation, it is only Noels' (2001) heuristic model that attributes a similarly important role to the family and school environment. The similarity of the two models in this respect is also noteworthy because Noels based her model on data collected from school children in the bilingual Canadian environment, which is very different from the mainly monolingual Hungarian setting.

CONCLUSION

The research we reported in this paper investigated the effect of direct and indirect inter-cultural contact on Hungarian school children's attitudes and motivated behaviour by means of structural equation modelling. Our model indicates that in the case of school-aged children who learn the language in a primarily monolingual classroom setting, motivated behaviour is determined not only by language-related attitudes but also by the views the students hold about the benefits of meeting foreigners. Another finding of our study is that, as opposed to the predictions of theories of social psychology, the perceived importance of contact was not related to students' direct contact experiences with target language speakers, but was influenced by the students' milieu and indirect contact. In our Hungarian setting, it seems that benefits associated with inter-cultural contact are formed by the students' teachers, parents, and significant others in their environment. This indicates that both teachers and parents have an important role in establishing and maintaining L2 learners' motivation. Our research also reveals that the conditions for changes in attitudes and behaviour to take place as a result of inter-cultural contact are not given for young Hungarian language learners as direct spoken contact occupied a peripheral position in our model. This supports Hamberger and Hewstone's (1997) work; they also found that superficial contact experiences with tourists in one's host country did not contribute to enhanced inter-cultural understanding. Among the contact

variables, it is only contact through media products that has an important position in our model. In previous Hungarian studies the consumption of foreign language media products was not examined, and our research reveals that this variable should not be neglected in further explorations of motivational dimensions of L2 learning. The importance of contact through cultural products calls attention to the fact that the mere frequency with which students read, listen to, and watch English language media enhances language learning attitudes. Therefore students in a foreign language setting should be encouraged to use this opportunity not only because it provides them with input for language learning but also because it contributes to more positive attitudes to the language, its speakers, and their culture. The differential role of direct and indirect contact through media products also indicates that for this young generation, English is primarily a medium for getting to know the world outside Hungary with the help of cultural and media products. This calls attention to the fact that English serves as a lingua franca in our Central-European setting, and as a consequence, students should also be taught the linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic characteristics of international English (Seidlhofer 2005).

Naturally, our model is not a universal model of L2 learning motivation as its structure is largely influenced by the fact that school-age children participated in our study. In the case of adults, we might hypothesize that the role of milieu may be less central. Moreover, the geographic position of Hungary and the primarily monolingual setting also contributes to the diminished role of direct contact. It has to be pointed out that this model refers to English language learning motivation, which due to the status of the English language in today's globalized world might be very different from the learning of other languages such as German and French (for the role of contact in learning German in Hungary see Csizér and Kormos, in preparation). In addition to studying the role of contact for different age groups and in various settings, future research could also investigate how an increased level of motivated learning behaviour might shape students' contact experiences and linguistic self-confidence. Qualitative research involving the observation of behaviour and attitudes of students engaging in inter-cultural contact situations as well as further interview and diary studies conducted with students who frequently experience contact would also provide more insight into the role contact plays in foreign language learning.

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APPENDIX

The measurement model describing Milieu and Self-confidence: correlations, standardized regression weights and selected fit measures.

Milieu ↔ Self-confidence	.54*
Milieu → k39	.62*
Milieu → k40	.80*
Milieu → k42	.55*
Self-confidence → k37	.84*
Self-confidence → k38f	.40*
Self-confidence → k41f	.34*
<i>Selected fit measures</i>	
Chi square/degree of freedom	3.37
NFI	.994
NNFI	.989
CFI	.996
PCFI	.379
RMSEA	.100

*The relationship is significant at the 0.05 level.

The measurement model describing contact-specific variables: correlations, standardized regression weights and selected fit measures.

Direct spoken contact ↔ Indirect contact	.20
Direct spoken contact ↔ Foreign media usage	.39*
Direct spoken contact ↔ Perceived importance of contact	.26*
Foreign media usage ↔ Indirect contact	.61*
Foreign media usage ↔ Perceived importance of contact	.13
Perceived importance of contact ↔ Indirect contact	.44*
Direct spoken contact → k20	.22*
Direct spoken contact → k21	.70*
Direct spoken contact → k22	.52*
Foreign media usage → k32	.68*
Foreign media usage → k33	.53*
Foreign media usage → k34	.53*
Foreign media usage → k35	.54*
Foreign media usage → k36	.57*
Indirect contact → k28	.33*
Indirect contact → k29	.31*
Indirect contact → k30	.63*
Indirect contact → k31	.69*
Perceived importance of contact → k43	.49*

Perceived importance of contact → k46	.37*
Perceived importance of contact → k47	.65*
Perceived importance of contact → k48	.78*
Perceived importance of contact → k49	.44*
Perceived importance of contact → k50	.46*

Selected fit measures

Chi square/degree of freedom	1.473
NFI	.982
NNFI	.992
CFI	.994
PCFI	.750
RMSEA	.045

*The relationship is significant at the 0.05 level.

The measurement model describing Attitudes, Instrumentality and Motivated learning behaviour: correlations, standardized regression weights and selected fit measures.

Attitudes ↔ Instrumentality	.78*
Attitudes ↔ Motivated learning behaviour	.77*
Instrumentality ↔ Motivated learning behaviour	.45*
Attitudes → k1b	.72*
Attitudes → k4b	.51*
Attitudes → k10b	.60*
Instrumentality → k2b	.54*
Instrumentality → k3b	.45*
Instrumentality → k5b	.48*
Instrumentality → k6b	.62*
Instrumentality → k8b	.56*
Instrumentality → k9b	.57*
Motivated learning behaviour → k51	.53*
Motivated learning behaviour → k53	.65*
Motivated learning behaviour → k56	.43*

Selected fit measures

Chi square/degree of freedom	3.73
NFI	.979
CFI	.986
PCFI	.645
RMSEA	.100

*The relationship is significant at the 0.05 level.

NOTE

¹In this study we use the two terms inter-ethnic and inter-cultural interchangeably.

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