



TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE AND CHALLENGES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE GEOGRAPHY TEACHING IN HUNGARIAN DUAL LANGUAGE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract:

Subject teaching in languages other than Hungarian (L2) has been present in bilingual, nationality (minority) and international dual language programmes (DLPs) in more than 150 secondary schools. This linguistic diversity is a less-studied yet valuable feature of the Hungarian education system. Though these programmes differ in their demographic context, pedagogical aims, methodological background and subjects offered in foreign languages, Geography has been a common choice to teach in 10 different languages within a wide range of school contexts. This paper combines a variety of empirical research including detailed spatial and statistical data published by schools and educational authorities, a nationwide survey carried out among teachers (n=76) involved in foreign language Geography education, online interview sessions and years of personal experience in the field. Teacher perceptions reveal not only the achievements of teaching Geography in L2 but also the limitations and challenges of the institutional and pedagogical context in which the development of subject literacy and language competence takes place. Research findings provide new perspectives on the multilingual nature of Geography education, but in a broader sense, they may also contribute to the general research of DLPs too, both within the Hungarian and European contexts.

Keywords: dual language education, foreign languages, Geography teaching, Hungarian education, L2, secondary schools

1. Introduction

Dual language education programmes (DLPs) with subject teaching in foreign languages have been present in various forms in all Central European countries, all of which are home to a variety of ethnic minority groups, a rising number of foreign nationals and

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international students. In these countries, the emergence of bilingualism and dual language education (DLE) during the 20th century stems from the shared historical experience with emerging statehood, territorial changes, redrawn borders, unique demographic patterns and ethnic diversity. The democratic turn and the sociocultural changes following the change of regime during the late-1980s and early-1990s generated a demand for a wider variety of programmes which provide opportunities for the acquisition of foreign languages, including not only a selection of global languages but the languages of national ethnic minority groups as well.

DLE was further backed by the EU accession of these countries during the 2000s, serving as a catalyst for expanding the European dimensions of national education systems, with more international courses, mobilities (Comenius, Erasmus+) and other forms of cultural exchange made available to school staff and students. However, the legal and operational framework in which DLPs have been realised differ greatly across the countries (Marsh, 2002; Eurydice, 2006; Mihály, 2009). Over the last two decades, content and language integrated learning (CLIL) has become widespread in DLE, but there are differences in how deeply it is embedded into the educational fabric of each country due to a variety of factors such as national traditions, changing educational priorities, transforming demographics and public demand. Although the number of DLPs, the range of languages, the spectrum of subjects and the general purposes of DLE all tend to vary greatly across European countries, Geography as a discipline has been assigned a pivotal role in all of them, regardless of country or language.

Hungary was one of the first countries in the Central-Eastern European region to launch DLPs at the end of the 1980s, meaning that several schools have more than three decades of experience in subject teaching in languages other than Hungarian, including Geography. However, most research papers on DLE have a definitive language pedagogy approach (focusing predominantly on language acquisition within bilingual programmes) rather than a subject-specific approach. During the 1990s and early 2000s, an impressive set of research materials was published on the historical and theoretical background of bilingualism in Hungary and the emergence of dual-language primary and secondary schools after the nationwide launch of DLPs in 1987 (Vámos, 1998, 2008, 2017; Kovács – Vámos, 2007; Kovács, 2018). These publications provide maps and in-depth analysis in terms of the spatial distribution of programmes, the language choice and even valuable school-specific information (e.g. motivation behind DLPs; links to nationality groups; range of subjects taught in L2) (Vámos, 1998). These contributions discuss the achievements of DLE on a remarkably wide spectrum and are still considered benchmarks both from a geographical and a pedagogical point of view, even though their content has not been updated or amended since then.

In addition to – and, to some extent, inspired by – these comprehensive studies, there has been a rise in interest in bilingualism and the application of CLIL in primary schools, mainly through the analysis of teaching experience and perceptions (Trentinné, 2014; Bakti – Szabó, 2016; Kovács, 2018; Sherwin 2021). Although these studies tend to contain historical references on the emergence of bilingual education (during the 1990s)

and CLIL practices (mainly after 2000) across Hungarian primary education, they are hardly relevant in the context of Geography teaching in secondary schools. In connection with minority education, mainly historical changes are studied, without any specific focus on subjects, but the role of geographical knowledge in nurturing cultural identity is acknowledged (Márkus, 2007). Some research has been concluded within the context of one specific language or school – Italian and French – to outline their contributions to DLE (Doró, 2005; Pelles, 2006; Papp, 2023), but they lack any subject-specific detail. (In Hungary, subject teaching in L2 is often examined in close connection with the application and the effectiveness of CLIL, even if daily classroom activities and teaching practices are not directly aligned with it.)

In Hungary, relevant literature on Geography teaching in L2 is limited to a few articles, with additional mention in publications with a wider scope. Geography is identified only as one of the subjects taught in L2. Therefore, it is often mentioned as a discipline in which CLIL could be successfully implemented (Bognár, 2000, 2005). Most research papers aim to reflect on broader patterns and changes within bilingual education, but there is hardly any academic interest in studying foreign language subject teaching in general. Prior to this research project, no previous attempts have been made to provide an overview of L2 Geography teaching practice within secondary education. A few university theses have also been available in the field (Pethő, 2005; Kaplár Fehér, 2006; Kis, 2015; Paja, 2019), but these are related to language teaching courses and have not been developed into scientific publications.

Over the last two decades, only four subject-specific papers have been published in connection with this field in Hungarian: two of them in a methodology journal for Geography teachers (Katona – Farsang, 2012; Kapusi, 2021a), one in a conference proceeding (Bakti, 2023) and one in a journal with a more general scope (Kapusi, 2021b).

2. DLE in the Hungarian secondary school context

Within the Hungarian educational environment, secondary school DLPs have been present in three different forms: bilingual, nationality and international programmes. More than 120 secondary schools run DLPs in 11 different languages, offering a very wide range of options to students aged 14-20 to learn subjects in languages other than Hungarian. This spectrum includes modern world languages (English, French, Italian, Spanish) and the languages of ethnic minorities protected by the Constitution (Croatian, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovakian). International programmes are available in three languages. German as a language of education has been present in all three forms at the same time (Table 1). The number and popularity of German-language programmes is justified not only by the country's proximity to German-speaking countries or the economic demands generated by German companies operating in Hungary, but by historical demographic patterns, with German being the most populous ethnic minority group scattered across various regions of Hungary.

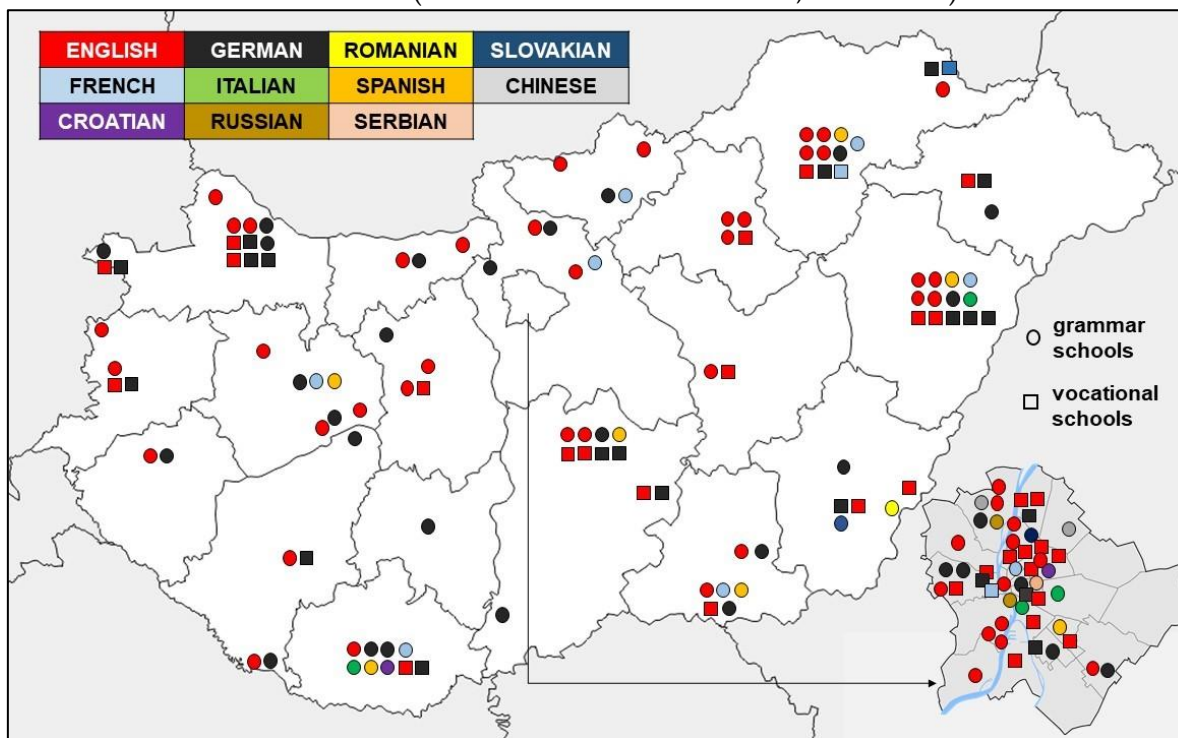
Table 1: Comparison of the different features of secondary school DLPs in Hungary (self-edited)

type of dual language programme*	BILINGUAL	NATIONALITY	INTERNATIONAL
aim of programme	enabling wide access to learning world languages	promoting nationality languages and maintaining cultural identity of ethnic minority groups	providing access to high-quality education based on international standards and foreign curriculum
language of teaching (other than Hungarian)	English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Chinese	Croatian, German, Romanian, Serbian, Slovakian	English, French, German
type of secondary schools with dual language programmes	both in secondary grammar schools and vocational secondary schools	only in general secondary grammar schools	in general secondary grammar schools and purpose-built international schools
number of subjects taught in foreign lang.	3-5 subjects in most schools	at least 50% of the subjects	all of them (except for L1, L2, etc.)
curriculum	Hungarian	Hungarian	British, American, Austrian, German, French, international (IB)
administration / regulation	state (with a few privately funded grammar schools)	state	private (but: intl. programmes in 2-3 state schools are tuition-free)
location	decentralised network (every county, Budapest, several towns)	Budapest + smaller towns in areas with higher % of ethnic minorities	Budapest + two regional centres (Debrecen, Győr)
number of programmes (2010-2023)	~140**	17	15
Geography textbooks available in the foreign language	very limited / partially available (depending on the language), mainly imported or adapted by teachers	partially available (translated versions of Hungarian textbooks or imported from abroad)	available in all schools, written specifically for the given educational programme / curriculum
foreign language Geography teachers	almost all Hungarian speakers with 2-3 native speakers	mainly native speakers or teachers belonging to the same ethnic minority	both native and non-native speakers of the language of teaching
* Note: Certain schools offer dual language programmes in two or more foreign languages. In addition, a few schools run two programmes (bilingual and international, bilingual and nationality) under the same roof. ** Note: Numbers tend to fluctuate due to newly launched or recently abandoned programmes.			

Geography has been a very common choice to teach in all three types of programmes since the late 1980s. As of 2024, around two-thirds of schools offer this subject in one of the languages mentioned above, making Geography the most often taught science subject in L2 across DL schools. The majority of these schools run DLPs in which certain subjects (3-5, depending on school decisions and staff availability) are taught in L2.

In bilingual and nationality education, Geography teaching in L2 follows national curriculum requirements and serves mainly as a medium in which the main educational goal of the programme (achieving a higher level of language competence) is realised. On the contrary, the direct purpose of international education is not the acquisition of L2 (although a certain level of language proficiency is required), therefore, significantly less or no attention is paid to the development of linguistic competence within the classroom. The national geography curriculum does not specify any guidance or recommendations on how the subject should be taught in L2, whereas international programmes – which do not follow the Hungarian curriculum – can rely on curricula which reflect a more practical and flexible approach to teaching methodology.

Figure 1: Distribution of secondary schools offering DLPs in 2010-2023 (based on individual research, self-edited)



Source of base map: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ac/Hungary_location_map.svg

Since the launch of modern DLE, the number and diversity of DLPs have steadily increased to involve more than 120 educational institutions, both grammar and vocational schools. Their spatial distribution shows a balanced network of institutions, the vast majority of which are state-run (Figure 1). Decentralisation was one of the key factors in the allocation and establishment of DLPs at the end of the 1980s. However, their popularity soon generated interest across the entire education system, boosting schools and local governments to launch their own programmes, and providing an even wider access to bilingualism. As such, the introduction of DL schools has become a common regional development tool all across Hungary, destined to increase regional competitiveness (Teperics *et al.*, 2016, Vámos, 2017).

Due to its central location, multinational population and traditional plurality in its education, Budapest offers DLPs in all languages except Romanian. Regional educational centres (Debrecen, Pécs, Szeged, Miskolc or Győr) are also characterised by linguistic diversity, relying greatly on their universities and teacher training centres to provide these schools with potential staff supply. Certain county seats also have DLPs in three different languages (Kecskemét, Békéscsaba, Veszprém). Although students have the opportunity to join these programmes in every county, the number and distribution of programmes and schools show great differences. As a consequence of the success and traditions of their DLPs, smaller settlements have also developed into minor educational centres with regional spheres of influence.

Schools with DL nationality education are located in regions where a higher percentage of inhabitants belonging to the given minority group lives, predominantly in the agglomeration of the capital city and the areas along national borders. In terms of minority languages, Croatian (one school in Budapest, one in Pécs), Slovakian (one in Budapest, one in Békéscsaba), Russian (two in Budapest), Serbian (one in Budapest) and Romanian (in the border town of Gyula) bilingual education has also been present for decades.

Although most DLPs run in grammar schools, bilingual education has also been significant in vocational schools: they are almost exclusively German or English language programmes, present only in some towns (mainly county seats) and a selection of counties. This is a unique feature of Hungarian public education as vocational schools with bilingualism are not typical in other Central European countries. Vocational DLPs and career-related skills development at the same time, students can finish secondary education with language exams and certificates of professions in their hands, a great entrance to the job market. Due to recent changes in vocational education, Geography is taught as a separate subject only in vocational schools with Economics or Tourism profiles, while in other schools, it has been replaced by Integrated Science or another science subject aligned with the profile of the school.

As of the beginning of 2024, from the contacted schools shown in the school distribution map above, 85 offered Geography in L2 within the last five years, slightly exceeding 70% of all DL schools. Even though there has been a minor change in the number of schools (some abandon, others introduce new DLPs), the status of Geography has remained unchanged, emphasizing the relative importance of this subject to DLE.

3. Materials and methods

3.1. School database

All findings presented in this paper are the result of a two-year long research process during which different types of data on schools, teachers and Geography teaching practice were collected and analysed. In order to collect practical details on the school experience of Geography teaching in L2, a database has been created, including all schools with DLPs and contacts to former and present-day Geography teachers.

The websites of each school have been examined to find information about the teachers (name, groups, email address or other contact) and about the role of Geography in the school's DLP (weekly number of lessons, any reference to thematic breakdown of content, shared resources on topics, competition results, any "evidence" of Geography being taught in L2). However, school websites tend to provide a varying combination and range of subject-specific information, which made it quite challenging in certain cases to find out any detail on whether Geography has been actually taught in L2 or who the teachers may be. In terms of the "visibility" of DLE, schools vary greatly: the ones with higher levels of visibility tend to provide more information on subjects taught in L2. Therefore, in several cases, a range of other documents (timetables, annual planning,

qualifications of teaching staff) had to be studied for relevant details in order to overcome the information gap. In case of schools with a lack of information published online, school directors were directly contacted to support the research with names and contacts of their colleagues.

Furthermore, other resources were also studied to retrieve additional data relevant to the research, for instance, the official school database provided by the Hungarian Educational Authority or the mailing lists of Hungeocontest (the only national English language Geography competition of Hungary) and the Association for Bilingual Schools (a voluntary association representing bilingual schools).

3.2. Teacher perception survey

The centerpiece of the research is the teacher perception survey, which was designed to explore the professional background and the different aspects of daily teaching practice of practitioners who teach – or had previous experience in teaching – Geography in L2. The survey was aimed at respondents who taught Geography in any L2 in Hungarian secondary schools for at least one year prior to the survey. It was carried out between August 2022 and January 2023, mainly during the autumn term of the 2022/23 school year. All teachers (n=76) were contacted in person or directly by email. Despite the limitations of the narrow research scope and the information gap obstacles mentioned above, direct contact was preferred over other forms of data collection, which strengthened the personal dimensions of the survey and led to new professional relationships.

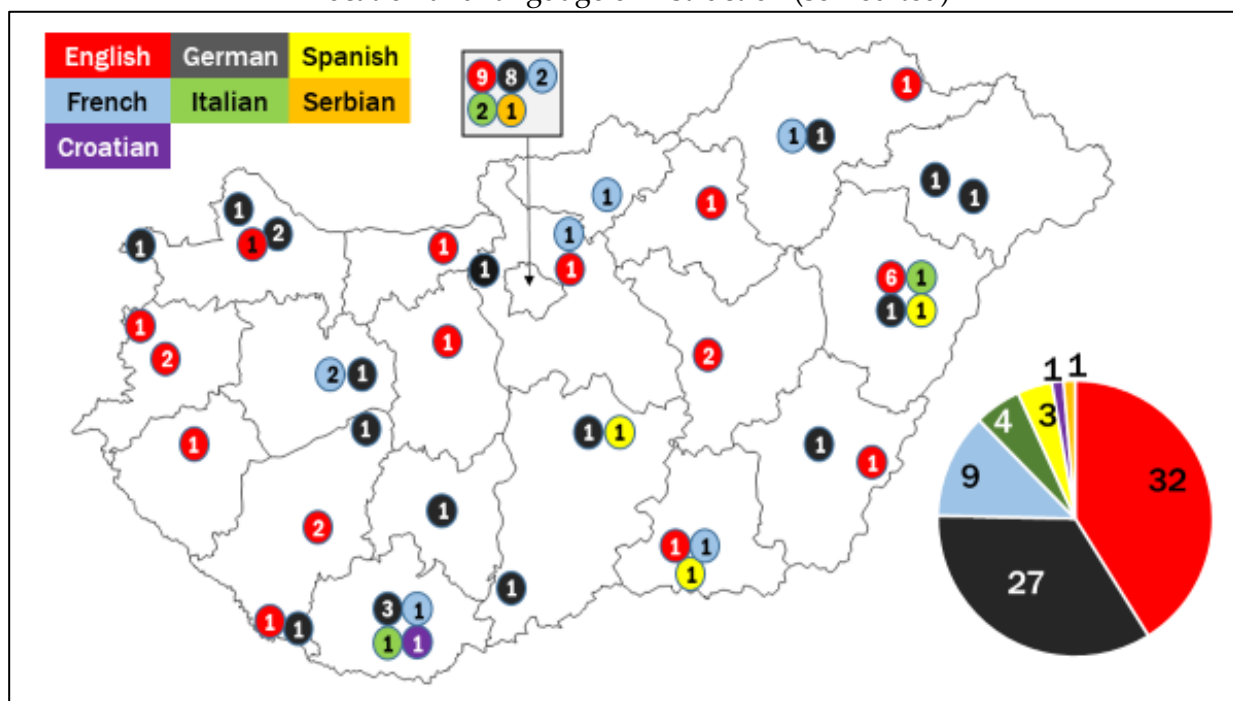
The primary purpose of the survey was to collect a wide variety of data on teaching experience and teachers' perceptions of foreign language Geography teaching. A Google Form questionnaire with 120 items was devised in order to cover the entire spectrum of the daily teaching practice of respondents representing a variety of school types and languages. Respondents were asked to provide details in connection with various aspects of their teaching practice, including content development and resource materials, classroom language use, the conceptual understanding and application of CLIL methods, the role of foreign language Geography final examinations (Matura) and the importance of teacher training, networking and publications.

The structure of the questionnaire allowed for the collection of a great amount of quantifiable data supplemented by commentary and criticism. The majority of the items included statements (measured on a 0-4 Likert Scale), multiple choice and short answer questions, while a number of open-ended questions were also added to provide respondents more freedom to formulate their opinions, observations and even recommendations in connection with the research.

Geographically speaking, there were 22 respondents from Budapest, 37 from county seats and 17 from other settlements. Teachers from every county have been involved in the research, representing 7 out of the 10 foreign languages, which correlates with the distribution of schools (Figure 2). The number of respondents teaching in English and German also reflects the dominance of DLPs in these two languages. In terms

of French, Italian and Spanish, almost all the contacted colleagues decided to participate. One respondent has been teaching Geography both in English and German within the same school, while there were five schools from which two teachers participated in the survey. Regarding nationality education, the relatively low number of respondents is justified by the small number of schools in general, although teaching experience in the languages of ethnic minorities tends to differ significantly from that of teachers working in bilingual grammar schools or international education.

Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by school location and language of instruction (self-edited)



Source of base map: <https://d-maps.com/m/europa/hungary/hongrie/hongrie46.gif>

Considering the number, location and experience of respondents, this sample is heterogeneous and geographically balanced, ideal for large-scale data collection. Approximately 75% of the contacted teachers participated in the survey, which is more than planned or expected, justifying the success of the more direct communication and data collection approach. Only a handful of colleagues rejected to take part, mainly due to personal reasons (e.g. lack of time; leaving education). Although the survey was carried out in Hungarian, three native speaker teachers also participated. In case of questions needing clarification, follow-up questions in English were sent by email (mainly in connection with features of the Hungarian education system clear to Hungarian teachers, but probably less known for non-Hungarian speakers).

Several respondents considered the survey worthy of sharing with other previously uncontacted teachers, which had a measurable impact on the outreach of the research, but it also proves the existence of some small-scale language-specific network

among teachers, particularly in German (due to a more established cooperation), French and Spanish DLPs (due to the smaller number of schools).

3.3. Online interview and videoconferencing sessions

As a follow-up to the teacher perception survey, a number of online interviews have been concluded with teachers to add more depth to the collected data and to provide respondents with opportunities for networking and potential collaboration. As part of the dissemination of the survey findings, online videoconferencing events (via Google Meet) have also been held for teachers interested in the research. During these conferences (each involving 10-16 participants), teachers have been encouraged to provide feedback on the previous stages of the research and to raise issues the questionnaire did not cover.

As a result of this initiative, a resource development project has been started among colleagues teaching Geography in English, and further thematic online events and teacher training workshops are also planned, with fellow colleagues as presenters, as well as the university course on the theory and practice of Geography teaching in L2, designed for teacher trainees and pre-service teachers.

In addition, a number of new teachers have begun teaching Geography in L2 since the conclusion of the perception survey. Some of them have already shown interest in participating in this research. Interestingly, two colleagues were not willing to take the survey but were open to interviews.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Overview of respondents

Both the school database and survey findings prove that foreign language Geography teachers in Hungarian secondary schools are a diverse group of professionals (Figure 3). Respondents represent different generations of teachers ranging from novice teachers to colleagues with four decades of experience (2-42 years), starting their careers well before the Internet age and the widespread digitalisation of education. Interestingly, the age structure of respondents is somewhat younger than what is typical of Hungarian teachers in general. Survey data show a balanced distribution by age, gender and qualifications, with a slight majority of female teachers. More than 70% of respondents are employed – or have previous experience – in bilingual grammar schools, the most common type of institution with DLPs. In the case of 11 teachers, multiple answers were recorded: they are teaching – or have previous experience – in two different DLPs (bilingual/international or bilingual/nationality).

Respondents represent different generations of educators. On average, they have a teaching experience of 20.06 years with 13.1 spent in teaching Geography in languages other than Hungarian. 55 teachers have spent at least half of their career years in teaching Geography in L2. There are younger respondents teaching Geography in L2 from the very beginning of their careers. However, many respondents also have experience in

teaching Geography in Hungarian or teaching other subjects in L2 (e.g. History, Civilisation/Cultural studies, Integrated Science, vocational subjects). Teaching the given foreign language as a separate subject seems to be a bit more common for participating teachers than teaching Geography in Hungarian.

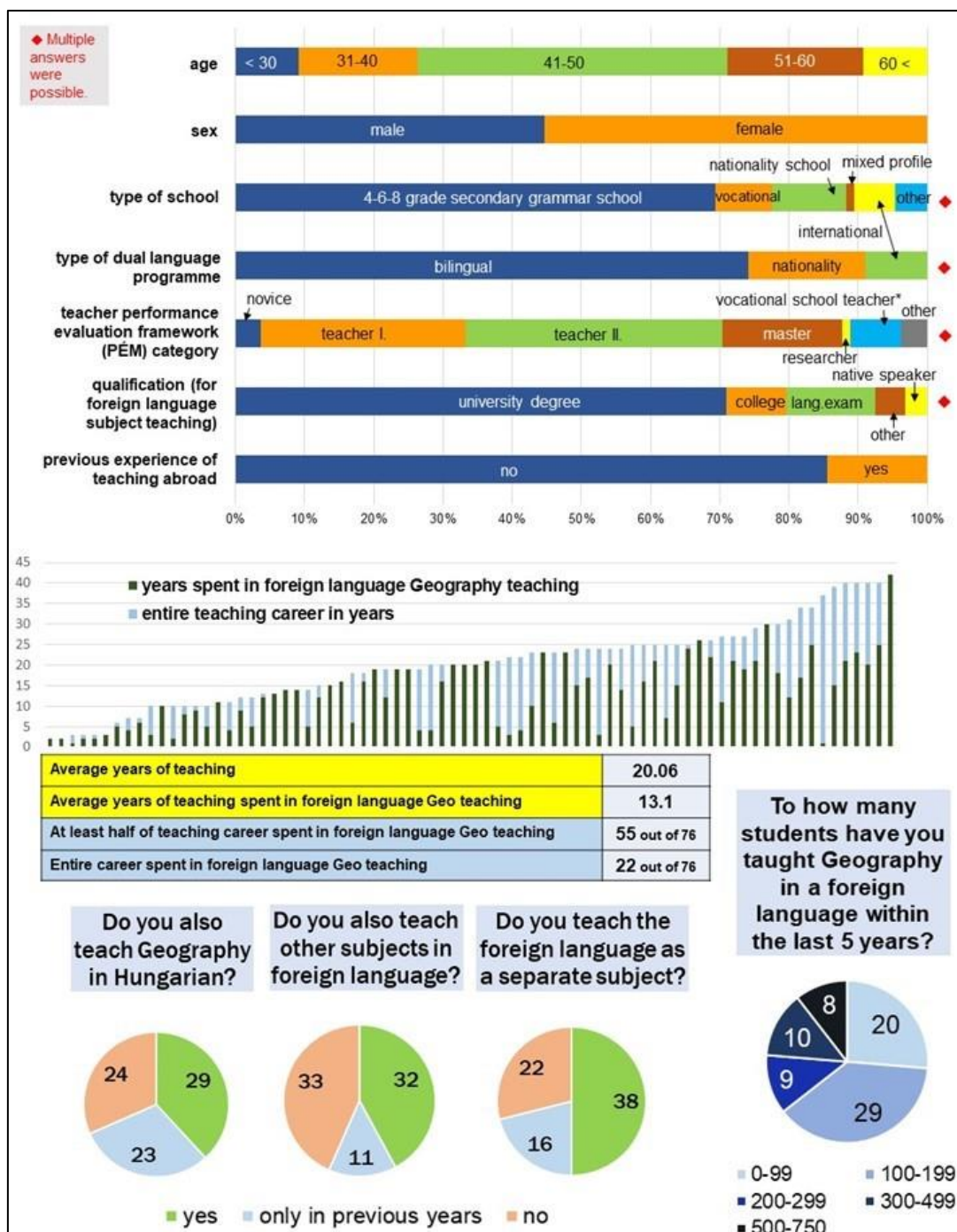


Figure 3: Profile of respondents' professional background and teaching experience

While most respondents have university qualifications in Geography and Language teaching, a small group of teachers indicated language examinations (C1) as proof of their proficiency, which may be in connection with recent changes in

qualifications for teaching subjects in L2, meaning that a language major is no longer required for teaching. Although only 11 colleagues gained teaching experience abroad, quite a few respondents have recently participated in teacher training courses and job shadowing visits under Erasmus+ mobility to expand or revise their teaching practice.

By looking at the numbers of students, we can also assume that thousands of secondary school students study Geography in L2 at any moment, underlining the popularity of Geography as a subject choice to be taught in L2. A third of the respondents have taught Geography to at least 200 students over the last few years, including 8 teachers working with more than 500 students, which is a remarkably high ratio of students per teacher. This may be justified by the fact that certain schools and DLPs run parallel classes (e.g. two or three per grade), making Geography teaching in L2 a full-time commitment to these colleagues.

4.2. Teacher perceptions

Most items of the questionnaire focused on how teachers perceive their roles, competences and the challenges of Geography teaching in L2 (Figure 4).

Regarding self-definition, 64% of them consider themselves Geography teachers rather than language teachers, even though several respondents actually teach a foreign language as a subject. The vast majority of respondents do not only identify the values of teaching and learning Geography in other languages, but seem to enjoy the challenges of teaching the subject in L2. There is a near-unanimous view both on the worthiness and the motivating nature of foreign language subject teaching. This attitude may stem from their possession of the required linguistic and methodological competence to be able to expand students' geographical knowledge through the development of their language skills. This alignment is key to the success of DLPs as the lack of stable language use and subject-specific terminology would definitely undermine teachers' credibility even if their geographical competence was very high. According to the results, respondents find these challenges quite motivating, with 68% of them actually preferring teaching Geography in L2.

Responses also reveal that most teachers (76%) need to prepare more for their lessons, but opinions are much more divided on the timeframe for covering the same subject curriculum content as in lessons held in Hungarian. While 56 % of teachers acknowledge that teaching units require more time to cover in L2, they do not seem to cover less content, though they may be selective in terms of covering units in detail, shortening or even skipping certain content areas in order to avoid topics which they consider difficult to discuss in L2 (63%). Interviews also reiterated that the compromise of discussing certain syllabus topics in more depth at the expense of others has become quite a common practice among respondents.

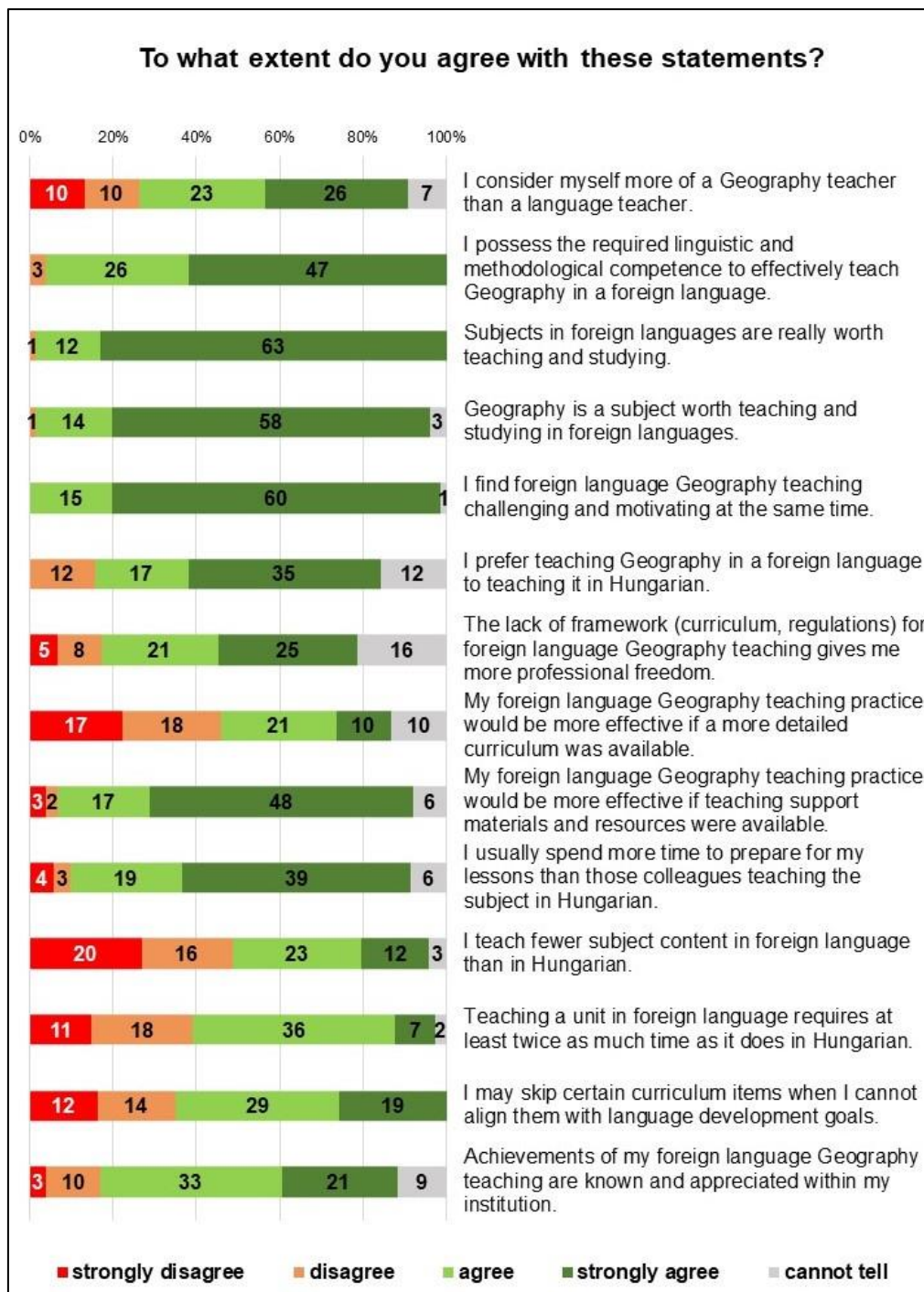


Figure 4: Teachers' perception of their teaching roles and achievements

Although the lack of an operational framework (curriculum or exam requirements available in L2) and well-adapted teaching resource materials has been a huge limitation since the introduction of DLPs, a visible cluster of 46 teachers find methodological freedom and motivation in it. Though 85% of respondents say their teaching practice would be more effective if teaching resource materials were available, only 41% would require a more specific curriculum for that purpose.

It is worth noting here that the framework behind DLPs mainly regulates operational aspects, but it does not contain any subject-specific assistance to teachers or schools. While exam papers have been made available online since the launch of the two-tier final examination system, neither any existing Geography curricula nor final exam requirements (including the required terminology, key concepts and topographical place names) have been translated to any of the foreign languages (Kapusi, 2021b, 2022). Although a handful of teachers and schools do have partially translated versions of the curriculum and exam requirements for internal use or for sharing with others, these attempts are very isolated. The reference documents teachers would consult during their daily work are available in Hungarian only, which means additional difficulties for schools employing non-Hungarian teachers.

This marginal treatment has been visible in the case of teaching resources as well. The availability of resources has been scarce since the introduction of bilingualism and depends on the language (Vámos, 2009). There has been no attempt to develop resources adapted to the demands of DLPs. The educational authority – as the state institution responsible for textbook development – shows no intention to provide any assistance, arguing that developing resources for all foreign languages would be an irrationally expensive and time-consuming effort compared to the total number of students and schools involved. This might also explain the teacher responses seen above. This treatment clearly channels the underlying “principles” of uniformity and cost-saving (as the provision of resources in one language would make it mandatory to provide the same for all the others).

During interviews, almost every colleague identified foreign textbooks as inspiration and reference points for terminology and ideas, but these need to be adapted or tailored to the local needs of Geography teaching and curriculum content, which requires a huge amount of time and effort (and it may not be rewarded). The problem also exists within nationality education, but resources are more available in neighbouring countries, and due to thematic similarities, the gap is much shorter to cover content-wise. International education is well-supplied with regularly revised and updated books and study materials, providing teachers and students with a sense of comfort and stability (while saving a lot of time).

Several respondents shared details on their content development practices (presentations, worksheets, mock exam tasks, graphic organisers, quizzes, web-based materials, gamification), which reveals why the lack of resources does not appear as a definite limitation to daily teaching practice or yearly planning. A wider choice of adapted or partly applicable resources would obviously add to the efficiency of Geography teaching in L2. For minority education, a limited range of translated textbooks is actually available, but they are not updated to fit the present-day curriculum, which might not be a major problem for teaching the topics of physical geography, but the dynamically changing nature of socioeconomic topics and regional geography would probably require more thoroughly updated materials. In sum, missing textbooks and

curriculum translations may not be seen as limitations to all teachers, rather a condition that boosts teaching freedom and creativity.

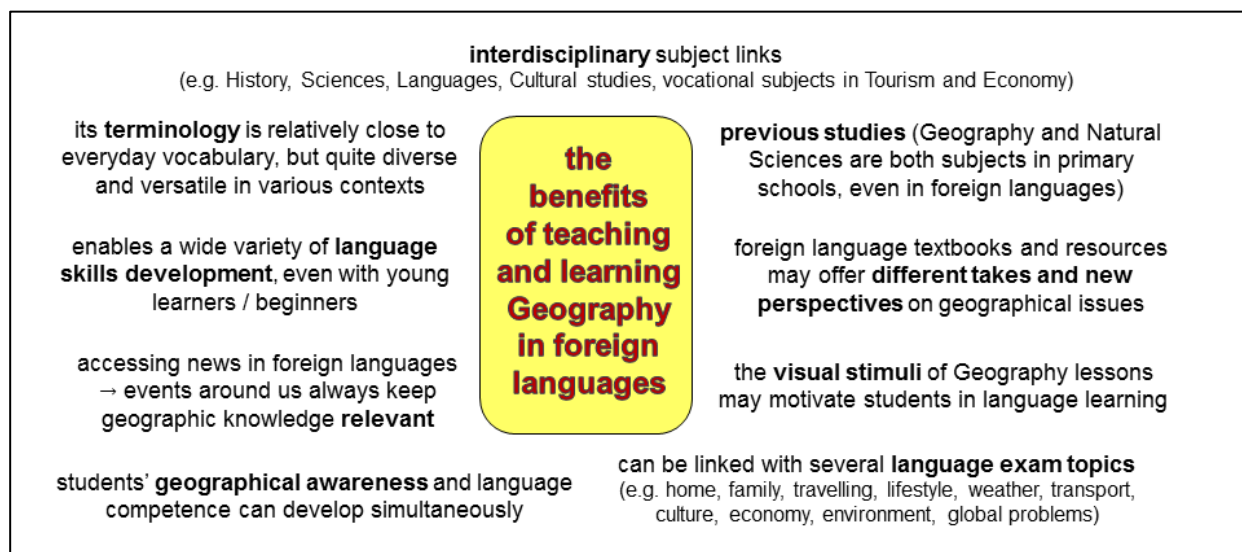


Figure 5: The benefits of teaching and learning Geography in foreign languages in secondary schools (based on responses and personal experience, self-edited)

As seen above, respondents seem to share a greatly consistent view on the values of teaching subjects in L2. When the relative benefits are discussed, teachers consider Geography a very useful subject to teach in L2 (Figure 5). Topics in Geography can be easily linked with several other disciplines, while the relevance of geographical knowledge and the visual stimuli of Geography lessons also seem to have a positive impact on students' motivation, counterbalancing the difficulties of learning the subject in L2. Through the consistent and simultaneous development of geographic and linguistic competence, students are becoming more able to access a wider range of information about the world, which not only shapes their mindset but also supports them in acquiring knowledge and skills via L2 usage after finishing their studies in Geography. This benefit of Geography education in L2 cannot be emphasized enough.

In classroom contexts defined at least in part by foreign language acquisition purposes, both teaching and learning different subjects require effort and motivation. According to teachers, the subject terminology of Geography is diverse, versatile and easier to "digest", enabling students to use its vocabulary both in everyday situations and in other school contexts (e.g. other subject lessons, final exams and language exam topics). In comparison with other environmental and social sciences, Geography is considered to be a less challenging subject choice to introduce at a relatively young age or in groups with lower linguistic competence. It is also a primary school subject, making it easier for students to rely on previously acquired knowledge. In addition to that, bilingual primary schools are quite widespread in Hungary, therefore, students entering secondary DLPs may already have some experience in studying Geography in foreign languages (mostly in German or English).

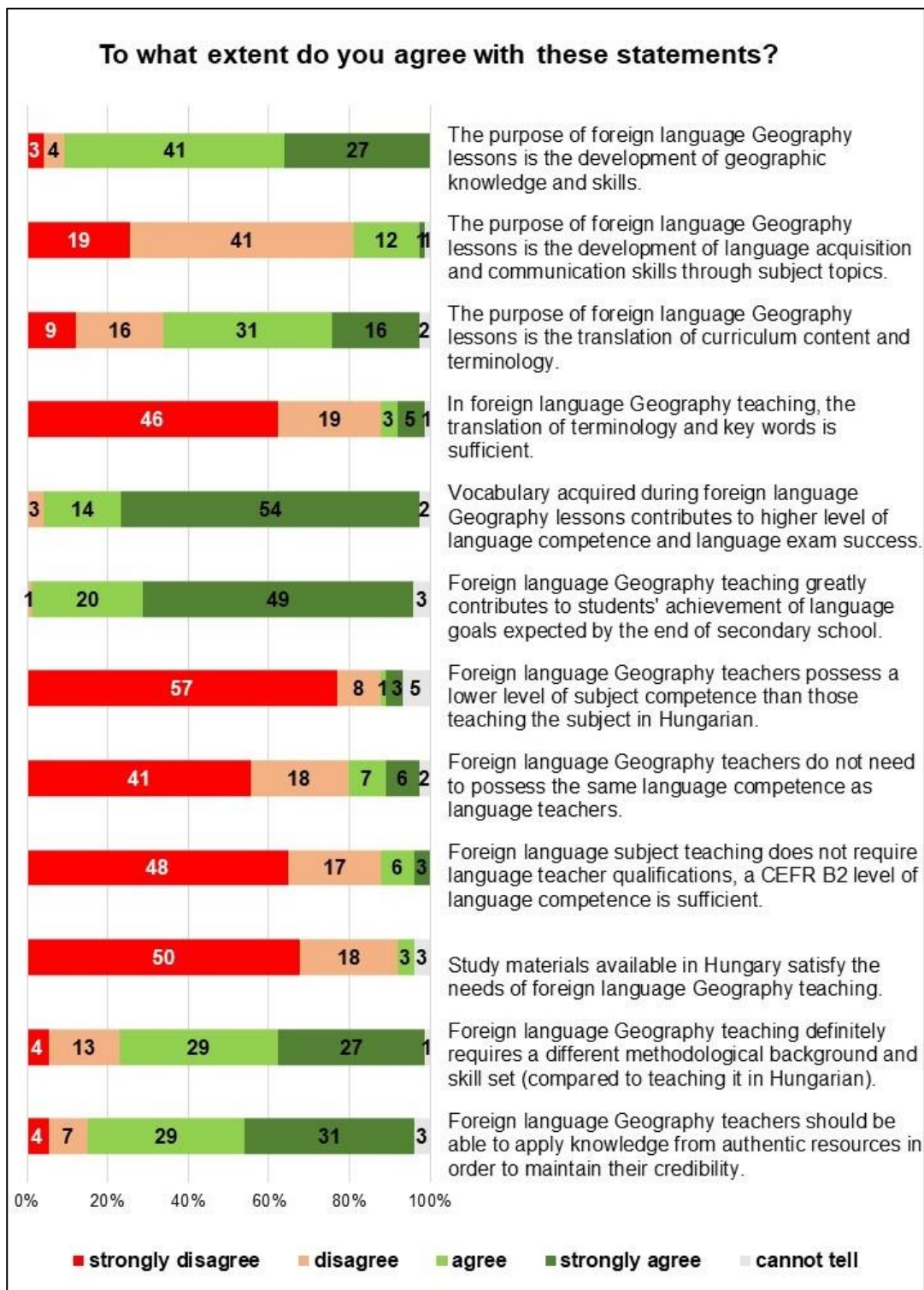


Figure 6: Teachers' perceptions of the role of teaching Geography in foreign languages

Within L2 Geography lessons, language development takes place through the discussion of a variety of geographical themes – but it is difficult to find the balance between subject content and language use. 90% of the respondents tend to treat their Geography lessons primarily as the context of subject-specific knowledge and skills

development, but they also see how Geography education contributes to both individual and institutional objectives of language learning.

Responses are unanimous on the usefulness of Geography vocabulary (93%) and the role of L2 subject lessons in the realisation of language acquisition goals and expectations (94%) (Figure 6). However, opinions are less consistent on how teachers define the main purpose of lessons and to what extent they prioritise the translation of key terms and content over other methods of improving subject-specific literacy. Certain teachers pointed out that the prestige of Geography increases if the subject is taught in L2, because in DLPs, students tend to take subjects more seriously as the higher goal of acquiring language competence is directly attached to them.

Limitations were also identified, such as the narrow timeframe (1-2 lessons per week, depending on grade and school type) or the vast amount of curriculum content they are required to cover. As the Hungarian curriculum is too densely packed with topics, concepts and expectations on student competence – quite challenging to achieve even for those teaching the subject in Hungarian –, some respondents still find it difficult to develop students' language competence without reducing subject content.

Regarding teachers' language proficiency, the vast majority of respondents rejects the assumptions which reflect on their lack of geographic or linguistic competence. According to their opinion, this competence should be proven by graduating from a language major – even though some of them are teaching with an advanced language exam. As most respondents graduated from university as Geography-Language double majors (which is fairly common combination in Hungary), therefore they are qualified to teach both Geography and the given foreign language. Only a very small number of respondents teach without a language degree. 88% of the teachers think that subject teaching in L2 should require pedagogical qualifications (as language teacher), saying that passing a language exam does not prepare or entitle anyone to teach the given language. However, university qualifications do not automatically mean that teachers are properly trained for subject teaching in L2, neither do they provide sufficient coverage on various aspects of DL subject teaching, such as cognitive discourse functions of code-switching.

Teachers are expected to develop their competence in that field in order to maintain credibility, partly by accessing and applying knowledge from authentic resources written in L2. While 75% of the participants acknowledge that Geography teaching in L2 requires methods and skills different from the ones applied in Hungarian lessons, 17% of the teachers still agree that colleagues teaching Geography in L2 do not need to possess the same linguistic competence as language teachers.

When it comes to the status and treatment of DLPs and subject teaching in L2, respondents seem to have generally negative opinions (Figure 7). Responses reveal teachers' dissatisfaction with the environment our public education system provides for these programmes, both in terms of framework and resources (85%) and teacher recruitment and availability (84%). This perception is based on the common decades-long

experience that the educational authority of Hungary does not provide any relevant support for subject teaching in L2.

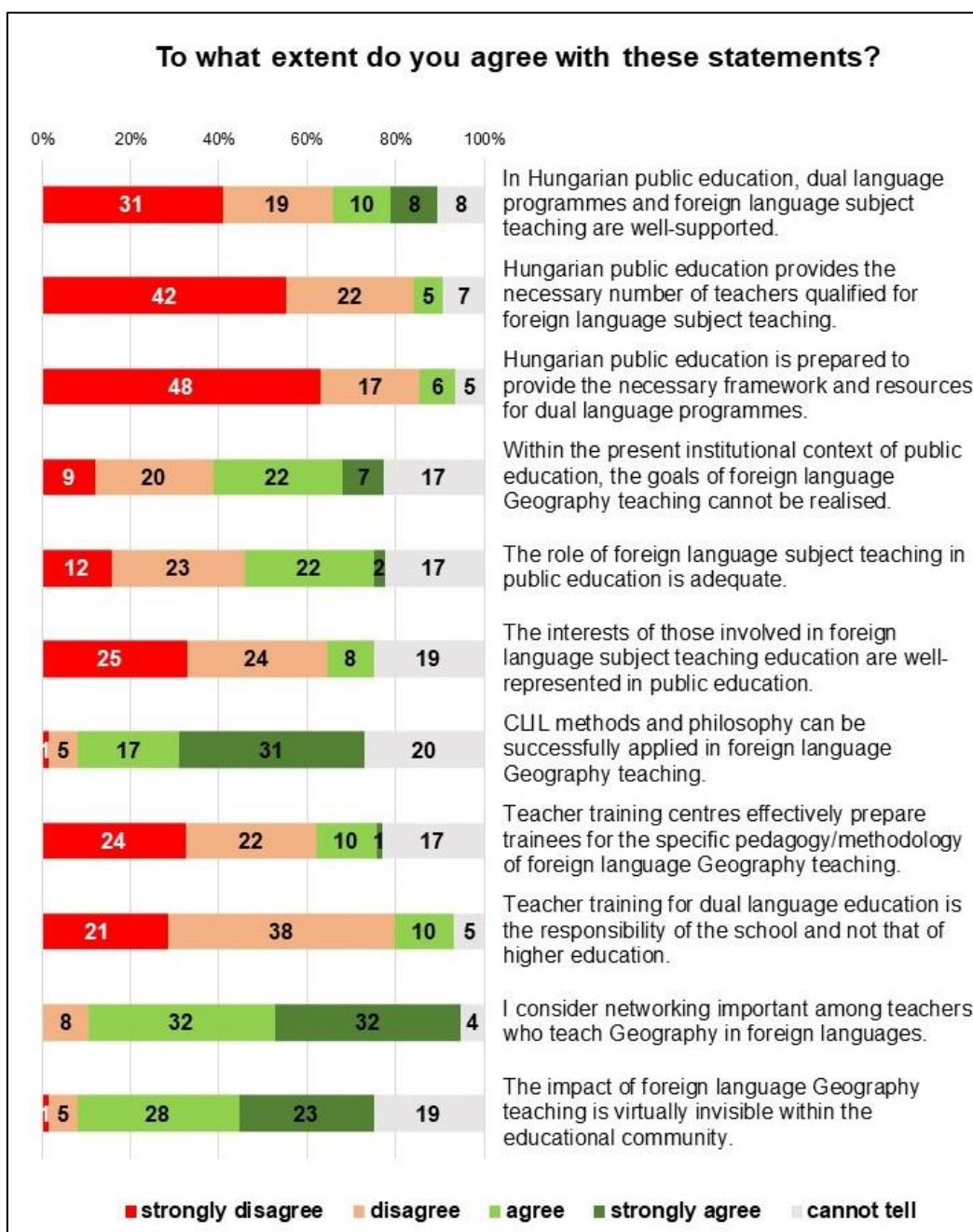


Figure 7: Teacher perceptions of the treatment of Geography teaching in L2

However, there seems to be some inconsistency in teacher opinions: two-thirds of the respondents are not satisfied with the support and representation of DLPs and foreign language subject teaching, but there are quite a few teachers (22-25%) who seem to be undecided (or they did not want to disclose any opinion). Responses regarding the fulfilment of goals of Geography teaching in L2 show the most divided picture, which might be justified by the wide age range and varying levels of experience of the teachers. Experienced colleagues tend to base their assumptions on decades of teaching practice in

DLPs within ever-changing conditions and educational contexts. Recently recruited teachers with less professional insight may only see the segments of the picture relevant to their daily work.

The assumption that teacher training centres do not effectively prepare trainees for the specific pedagogy and methodology of subject teaching in L2 (only 15% of the responses stated the opposite) was reiterated by colleagues during interviews and videoconferences. According to them, graduates may need more professional guidance compared to what higher education institutions are able to provide. (In certain schools, this gap may be filled with local informal in-service teacher training.)

In addition to fairly negative opinions, 17 respondents seemed to avoid disclosing any comments on this statement, which may be justified by their lack of information on the contents of teacher training modules (or by the fact that their schools do not welcome pre-service teachers for practice). Responses on the application of CLIL methods are fairly positive (65%) or undisclosed (26%), suggesting that teachers either have some conceptual understanding of how CLIL may support Geography teaching in L2 or they are practically unaware of them.

It is worth pointing out that there has been a lack of university courses focusing on DLE and foreign language subject pedagogy in the last 10-15 years. Existing courses mainly discuss DLPs and the application of CLIL at the primary level, while secondary school teachers are not offered any relevant course options, strengthening both in-service and pre-service teacher demand for training opportunities. Responses give the impression that teachers who use consciously integrate CLIL in their teaching practice seem to know this philosophy from contexts outside the realms of teacher training (e.g. language courses, study trips, job shadowing).

As expected, teachers involved in international education gave less negative responses. Only a very few respondents are working completely independently from the Hungarian public education system, therefore, they are necessarily able to relate to some of the statements, but in terms of teacher roles and lesson practices, their answers are in accordance with the perspectives of the rest of the teachers.

According to 67% of responses, the achievements of Geography education in L2 are not visible in the teaching community, while 84% of teachers seem to lack networking and platforms to exchange ideas with fellow professionals. These scores do not only represent a need for more cooperation and publications, but justify the relevance of this research as well.

5. Conclusion

There are several reasons why Geography has become a common subject choice to be taught in L2 in DL classrooms all across Hungary, regardless of location, language or school type. The majority shares a fairly congruent view over the role Geography plays in secondary education, but they are very critical of the procedural regulations and the

attention given to the needs of DLPs in general. Some statements were supposed to be provocative, but fewer statements turned out to be ambiguous or divisive than expected. Although Geography has been taught in L2 across a great number of schools, there might still be major differences in the school environments in which DLPs are managed, leading to different levels of satisfaction. In addition, many teachers seem to show less interest in the operational context of dual language education or they have less insight due to a lack of teaching experience, therefore, they might not be able to judge these statements.

Research findings reveal several common points of teaching practice across the country, but they also shed light on the factors determining how effectively teachers are able to align the demands of the subject curriculum with the aims of language education within their practice. Although the alignment of the aims of the Geography curriculum and the methods of foreign language teaching is quite demanding (especially for young teachers without any previous experience or training), the vacuum of specific regulations also liberates them to some extent. A great number of teachers have learned how to counterbalance the lack of attention mainly by "interpreting" missing regulations as a source of freedom in the choice of content, methods and classroom practices. This dedication is a key contributor to teachers' self-development, which fuels autonomy and creativity in a remarkably underserved educational context full of inconsistencies.

Opinions and attitudes of respondents teaching in different regions, schools and languages may differ, but they tend to share a common desire to connect with other teachers, discuss and exchange ideas and find inspiration in them. There seems to be a definite interest in establishing a community of practitioners teaching Geography in L2 in the form of potential future networking.

6. Recommendations

This paper attempts to give an overview on the findings of a research into a field that has not been studied before in Hungary. Its novelty lies in its drive to examine DLPs through the lens of Geography, a popular subject considered to be ideal for developing language skills, intercultural competence and scientific literacy in several ways.

In addition to providing sufficient data for in-depth analysis, the research also turned out to be a self-reflection tool, offering a more personal and school-specific insight into how teachers perceive their roles and identities, what daily practice they have developed over their career and how critical they are of the environment in which their programmes have been run. Since Geography teaching in L2 is an integral part of DLPs, therefore its efficiency should be evaluated in relation to the success of DLPs in general.

The multilingual nature of subject teaching not only strengthens the European dimensions of the Hungarian education system but also widens the spectrum of research into bilingualism. Therefore, its achievements would require more attention and visibility from all stakeholders of public education. By connecting researchers, teachers, teacher training centres and representatives of educational authorities, the achievements of dual language subject teaching could be channelled into projects and initiatives which could

not only respond to the issues detailed above but may contribute to the improvement of language education practices across the country.

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Ethics statement

All personal information obtained during this research aligns with academic ethical guidelines. Participation was voluntary, and the author provided anonymity to participants. The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

About the Author

The author has been teaching Geography in English in dual language and international secondary school programmes for 17 years. The author's primary research interest is the multilingual nature of Geography education both in the Hungarian and the European context. He is also a PhD student at the University of Debrecen, Hungary. He has also been involved in teacher training, textbook development and national geography competitions.

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