Eötvös Loránd University

Faculty of Humanities

THESES OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

ISTVÁN LÉNÁRT

INTERCULTURAL LACUNAE IN HUNGARIAN-VIETNAMESE COMMUNICATION

WITH EMPHASIS ON ENTREPRENEURIAL INTERACTIONS

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1. Scope of dissertation, research objectives

In this dissertation, we research the *intercultural encounters* between Vietnamese and Hungarian individuals with a special emphasis on the *entrepreneurial sector*. We aim at gaining a deeper insight into Hungarian-Vietnamese intercultural relations in order to raise the effectiveness of interpersonal communication as well as business contacts between the two countries.

Our research is an action research, which aims at revealing the differences of Hungarian and Vietnamese communication in real-life situations. We intend to share its results with all those who are or will potentially be involved in the development of Hungarian-Vietnamese bilateral economic relations. A subsequent research may develop a communication program that prepares Hungarian individuals for efficient communication, hence for doing business successfully when entering into the Vietnamese environment.[1]

Through a theory originating from the *Russian Ethnospycholinguistic School*, our purpose is to obtain a twofold goal: firstly, introducing *Lacuna Theory* to a wider scientific community besides research conducted mainly in Russian- and German-speaking areas so far; and secondly, contributing to the building of a stronger methodological background to *Intercultural Linguistics* through applying Lacuna Theory in the business field.

We can summarize the main *targets* of the challenge we undertook:

1. Analysing *Hungarian-Vietnamese communication* in general and in the field of *business life* in particular;

2. *Introducing Lacuna Theory* to Hungarian and other researchers in English-speaking countries;

3. Attempting to better elaborate the *methodology of Lacuna research*;

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[1] Our view stands close to that of Labov, who – based on the experiences of his activity as an expert in the Ann Arbor lawsuit – pointed to the ethically dubious nature of the position of a linguist who observes social processes as an outsider, in a "calm and dispassionate" manner. *"If we can answer the needs of the present without compromising that possibility, we may be able to resolve the conflict between the social being and the linguistic analyst. We'll also have a much better chance of getting research support from our fellow citizens. And we may get a satisfactory answer to our own final question as to whether or not we have wasted our time on earth."* (Labov 1982, 166-167.p.).

4. Contributing to the *better standardization of the methodology* of Intercultural Linguistics in general;

5. *Raising effectiveness* of intercultural communication in the Hungarian-Vietnamese relation.

2. Hypotheses

2.1. First hypothesis

Social hierarchy, respect based on status, rank and age are more strongly present in Vietnamese culture than in Hungarian.[2]

2.2. Second hypothesis

Unlike concepts on the notion of family in Hungary and Vietnam influence bilateral communication and result in dissimilar linguistic imprints that can be disclosed by utilizing Lacuna Theory as a research method.

2.3. Third hypothesis

The *time horizon[3]* of Vietnamese entrepreneurs can be described as *"short-term"*.[4]

2.4. Fourth hypothesis[5]

Based on the current *suggestions of typology* in the literature we cannot fully categorize existing lacunas[6]. New types, groups or schemes of classification can be identified based on a mixed methodology elaborated under this dissertation.[7]

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[2] Both the first and the second hypotheses were motivated by the preliminary studies. The respondents expressed their opinion that social hierarchy and a different family model are more strongly present in the Vietnamese language than in the Hungarian. We intended to examine the linguistic imprints and the verifiability of these statements.

[3] The expression *time horizon* is used here as a professional term of finance/controlling (see i.e.: Musinszky 2013, 15-22.p.); we can distinguish between short -, medium- and long-term (planning) time horizons.

[4] Developing the third hypothesis was motivated primarily based on the contradiction identified in the preliminary researches. We found that Hofstede's opinion on the long-term orientation of Asian cultures (Hofstede 2010) is incompatible with the results of our preliminary researches that clearly indicated that Vietnam – at least from in connection with business life – can be characterized by a short-term approach. On the contradictions of Hofstede's research see in detail: Falkné Bánó K. (2014).

[5] The first three hypotheses focus on the questions of content if Intercultural Communication; meanwhile, the fourth one concentrates on methodological problems connected to the theoretical framework. This last hypothesis can be considered as a research objective as well.

3. Applied research methodology

Methodology relies on a *questionnaire-based research* conducted in the form of personal interviews with a target group selected out of a population of around 4000-5000 persons. Interviews were concluded personally after pre-arranging an appointment with the respondents. We selected individuals of dual identity who *graduated from an institution of higher education in Hungary*. We inserted those individuals into the sample who (1) still master Hungarian language at a relatively high level and (2) who are either still active or had just recently retired from business life or from public administration. We closed the research with *638 questionnaires filled in*.

Hungarian language skills were checked by a conversation prior to the interviews to filter out those who had lost contact with Hungary in the previous decades. A self-evaluation of language skills was also inserted into the interviews. Active connections with or interest in Hungary was ensured by choosing members of the *Vietnam-Hungary Friendship Association* for the role of interviewee[8].

In line with the original topic outline, *proverbs* were included in the questionnaires with the objective of revealing linguistic data, statements, observations of interlocutors regarding habits, natural and artificial environments, personal relationships, etc., all of which are deeply embedded in local culture.

A personal, Vietnamese language interview was conducted with respondents. Interviewees had been recruited based on the already-mentioned initial list of the Vietnam-Hungary

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[6] In the theses we use the plural of *lacuna* in the two different forms *lacunas* and *lacunae* with identical meaning.

[7] In the dissertation we presented several attempts of elaborating a complete system for grouping lacunas (Markovina 2011, Ertelt-Vieth 2004, Panasiuk 2006, etc.). In our view none of the typologies present in the literature is able to fully account for all types of lacunas; this induced the setting up of this hypothesis.

[8] We define the research as a questionnaire-based one. We note, however, that it is not far from being a structured interview-based research; the two methods cannot be separated by strict borderlines *("a fully structured interview that is practically a questionnaire"*, In: Sztárayné 2011, 5.p.). In the latter case the respondents may respond to the questions more freely, elaborate their message more in detail, while the interviewer is rather directing the respondent along the pre-structured questions. In the course of the research we used six different sets of questionnaire. Some of those contained exclusively closed questions (i.e.: Questionnaire No. 4: statements), thus can clearly be defined as a questionnaire, while in other cases (such as Questionnaire No. 3: case studies; Questionnaire No. 7: Habits, lacunas) we can rather talk about structured interviews. Consequently, both in the dissertation and in the topic outline we alternately use the terms *questionnaire, interview* and *respondent, interviewee, interviewer*.

Friendship Association. As an addition to the list of initial participants, the so-called *"snowball method"* was applied: all interviewees were requested to recommend one or two additional persons to potentially participate from their own network. Interviews were concluded in the presence of an interview assistant, an undergraduate student of linguistics from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities under Vietnam National University[9].

Two preliminary surveys preceded this current dissertation, based on two surveys with 13 and 21 respondents, respectively (see Lénárt, 2013a). In the first phase 13 Hungarian businessmen were interviewed. All of them were leading businesspersons from the Hungarian-Vietnamese relation, having done successful entrepreneurial activities for at least several years and having concluded trade and/or investment projects in the above field. In the second survey we interviewed 21 Vietnamese businesspersons living and working in Hungary.

One key result of the surveys was that respondents confirmed the necessity of including the examination of *stereotypes* in the final questionnaires and further sophisticate the results gained. Moreover, stereotyping seemed to be interconnected with lacunae, providing a firm base for lacuna-related studies.

The preliminary studies confirmed the presumption that Vietnamese businesspersons are – or at least are seen as – *thinking on a very short-term* in connection with earning money, gaining profit and building a successful business. The results seemed to be interesting in view of the arguments of Hofstede on the long-term orientation of Southeast Asian countries (Hofstede 2010).[10]

Questionnaires were drafted, tested, then gained their final form in a one-year period between October 2013 and October 2014 in the following steps:

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[9] Interview assistants helped in handling problematic situations such as in the case of translation problems or when the respondent was unable to answer in the Hungarian language or requested further explanation in the Vietnamese language.

[10] According to Hofstede (Hofstede G., Hofstede G.J. and Minkov M. 2010) cultures can be well characterized through the application of scales formed based on pairs of oppositions such as masculinity/femininity, individualism/collectivism, short-term/long-term orientation. The author claims that Southeast Asian countries are typically long-term oriented, that contradicts the results of my preliminary researches.

1. Based on the preliminary studies and the targeted field of research *a questionnaire was assembled*. The questionnaire was drafted in two languages: English and Vietnamese.

2. The questionnaire was *tested on Vietnamese citizens* and corrected to reach an easily understandable format.

3. In January 2014 *online consultations began with Irina Markovina*, Professor of Psycholinguistics of Moscow State Linguistic University and one of the founders of Lacuna Theory, who gave valuable feedback and suggestions on how to modify the content and format of the questionnaires. In September 2014 online discussions were complemented by personal consultations in Moscow at the State Linguistic University.

Primary modifications of the questionnaire included: (1) a *more thorough investigation on Hungarian–Vietnamese mutual perceptions* (this is when part no. 5 of the questionnaire, Associations, gained its final form with five questions including four free-associations on (I) Hungarians, (II) Vietnamese and (III) Hungarian businesspersons and (IV) Vietnamese businesspersons); (2) the *split of the full questionnaire into six parts*: one common part for personal data and five contentual parts as follows: *stereotypes, case studies[11], statements, associations and proverbs*.

At this phase it became clear that instead of one general questionnaire, five separate, specific questionnaires must be applied to gain better results.

4. In early October 2014 as an addition to the previous formats *another chapter was added* to the questionnaires. Besides the indirect approach (using associations, proverbs, case studies, etc.), in this seventh part we complemented the methodology with one more set of questions which had the main objective of using *direct questions about lacunae* that interviewees had directly encountered or experienced.

5. The almost-final questionnaires were *pretested* in late October 2014 *on Vietnamese citizens* to filter out possible mistakes, mistypes or terms, or parts which were difficult to understand.

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[11] In the Hungarian version of the Theses this part is referred to as *esetleírások* ("case descriptions").

6. Interviews started in the last days of October 2014 and the last interview was concluded in June 2015, *reaching the number 638*.

A main concept of the methodology of the survey was to apply different approaches and compile the results, and draw conclusions based on several different methods. Gaining linguistic data related to intercultural differences and similarities is challenging, so for this reason we used six different methods: *stereotypes, case studies, statements, associations, proverbs and habits/lacunae*.

Interviews were conducted anonymously. Participants were requested to provide *basic personal information* such as gender, age, nationality, occupation, name of school, specialization (major), year of graduation, highest level of education, time spent in Hungary and in Vietnam and level of Hungarian language skills based on a self-evaluation.

In line with the studies of Markovina (Markovina, 2011) and research methodology of Ertelt-Vieth (Ertelt-Vieth, 2003), as well as relying on the author's preliminary studies, *auto- and hetero-stereotypes* were collected. The second questionnaire consisted of four case studies from the Vietnam-Hungary relation. All interviewees listened to the short stories about specific intercultural encounters, two of them in business settings, another two with general background), and after each story heard, they were requested to comment. The source of all four case studies is real-life situations.

Our first case study dealt with a misunderstanding based on the lack of knowledge of *addressing forms* in Vietnamese. The Hungarian businessman in the example didn't have knowledge about the fact that Vietnamese usually introduce their close connections *as their siblings* even if they are not relatives by blood. The second case study highlighted another misunderstanding related to time management and connected to religion and superstition as well, namely a Hungarian businessman got angry when his Vietnamese counterpart *delayed signing a contract*, not being aware that the Vietnamese person might not have found the appropriate or lucky date to sign. In the third case study we introduced a story when a mother *disposed of the money of her daughter* without consulting her beforehand. The last case study was a complex situation in the setting of a scientific conference where as an unexpected event, one of the participants suddenly asks the panel leader to allow him to

sing a song. As he was allowed to sing, they interrupted the program of the conference and participants listen to him.

A set of *10 statements* in the form of closed questions were introduced to respondents, five of those related to Vietnamese businesspersons, another five to Hungarian entrepreneurs. Highly stereotypical statements were included from real utterances of respondents from previous researches. This method enabled us to measure the answers on a scale from 1 to 9 the level of agreement/disagreement. The content of the statements included: *(1) business ethics; (2) sensitivity and the role of silence in communication; (3) long-term and short-term thinking (horizon); (4) reliability of businesspersons; (5) differences between Southern and Northern Vietnam; (6) directness of communication; (7) differences in interpretation of private space; (8) polite and gentle manner of communication; (9) overconfidence and showing-off in communication; (10) willingness to cooperate with foreigners.*

Interviewees were requested to freely associate about *(1) Hungary, (2) Vietnam, (3) a Hungarian person and (4) a Vietnamese person*. The topic somewhat overlapped with the questionnaire on stereotyping, however was intentionally planned to complement this latter questionnaire. When requesting respondents to evoke their memories on Hungary or a Hungarian person, then they would be very likely to focus on those fields, experiences and characteristics they remember for the reason of being unexpected or strange for them; therefore, we expected to identify further lacunae through these questions as well.

Proverbs were collected in four groups such as: *(1) Vietnamese proverbs on money, (2) Hungarian proverbs on money, (3) Vietnamese proverbs* and *(4) Hungarian proverbs*. Through this questionnaire we hoped to gain valuable linguistic information which could further sophisticate the answerer's view on the two countries and their cultures in general and about business-related activities in particular.

The questionnaire was elaborated with a focus on *habits and lacunae* with the objective to identify lacunae in the most direct way: by asking respondents to enlist them. One possible method was using the notion of *lacuna* in the below interpretation of Ertelt-Vieth: *"Gaps or – using a Latin term – lacunas between cultures refer to something strange, unfamiliar, possibly awkward, possibly memorable"* (Ertelt-Vieth, A. 2003, 2.p.). With this quasi-

definition in mind we asked interviewees to list similar *"strange"*, *"unfamiliar"* or *"awkward"* experiences from the time they spent in Hungary.

Another question was inspired by one of the respondents of our previous research who listed the habits he changed after returning to Vietnam (he mentioned *queuing up* and *saying "thank you" when you receive a gift* in that research). This spontaneous utterance led us to inquire about changed habits after returning to the home country, in the hope of gaining information on lacunae in the Hungary-Vietnam relation from a wider source, a bigger sample.

The next question aimed at gaining insight into intercultural lacunae For this purpose it inquired interviewees to enlist *differences perceived* when living in Hungary. Moreover, in our fourth question we requested respondents to give specific examples of Hungarian-Vietnamese *intercultural differences in terms of communication, behavior and doing business*.

4. Theoretical background

As an underlying theory for our research we chose a method relatively unknown in the European literature, the *Lacuna Theory***.**

In the form of a new theory, an efficient tool for Intercultural Communication research has emerged from the early 1970s, mainly targeting the better understanding and deeper analysis of intercultural misunderstandings. Lacuna Theory first appeared with *lacuna as a well-defined technical term* in the early works of *Russian ethno-psycholinguists* J.A. Sorokin and his fellow researchers I.J. Markovina and E. Tarasov (Földes, 2007, Jolowicz, 2006).

The expression *lacuna* had already been in use in the 1950s by *Canadian translation experts* J.P. Vinay and J. Darbelnet (Anokhina, 2013, 168-170.p.). But while the Canadian School of Lacunology considered lacunas as translation gaps and limited its aims in revealing proper methods to eliminate these gaps in translation (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1958), the *Russian Ethno-psycholinguist School*, in contrast, regarded the question more as an intercultural

problem and used a wider perspective, elaborating the terminology, classification and methodology of lacuna research.[12]

Markovina, the outstanding representative of the Russian Ethnopsycholinguistic School states that communication is possible due to the *common verbal consciousness* of the members of the same linguistic-cultural communities (Markovina 2004, 58.p.). An underlying notion of Lacuna Theory is a binary opposition of the terms *own* and *foreign*. According to Stepanov similarly to the basic cognitive oppositions of space (*up/down, left/right, near/far*) and that of other types (*life/death, male/female, young/old*) *own* and *foreign* serve as permanent principles of a culture and form a basis of the ethnic identity of the individual (Stepanov 2001, 126-143.p.).

In the 1990s, another researcher of great impact, *Pym,* continued the study of lacunae from another aspect. He considered the question of translating lacunae from an intercultural viewpoint and claimed that translational lacunae were the limits of a specific culture; moreover, states that "*The items that most resist translation may be considered good markers of the substantiality and limits of a culture*" (Pym, 1993, 27.p.). In Pym's approach intercultural aspects are more strongly emphasized in comparison with Vinay and Darbenet.

One decade later *Ertelt-Vieth*, one of the most influential scholars of lacunology, whose typology of lacunae has stood the test of time, argued that lacunae were not only markers of a culture but furthermore were good starting points to analyse *intercultural conflicts*. As worded by the author:

> *"You might call the lacuna-model a store of categories that enables us to scientifically register, classify, and analyse the immense diversity of cultural peculiarities. Inductively many different aspects of a conflict situation or even the whole genesis of a conflict can be analyzed." (Ertelt-Vieth, 2003, 6.p.)*

Grodzki, an outstanding researcher and theoretician of Lacuna Theory, introduces the term *"cultural glasses"*, arguing that in an intercultural situation we always experience reality from our culturally determined perspective. *"Everyone in the world wears a pair of cultural*

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[12] The terms *"gap in the text"* and "*Textlücke*" had been widely used in the field of translation studies and literature before Sorokin. He and his followers *"transformed it into an instrument of intercultural research"* (Ertelt-Vieth 2003, 5.p.).

glasses that create a cultural prism once the light of the foreign cultural artifact passes through the lens." (Grodzki, 2003, 13.p.). Lacuna Theory helps us to recognize these *"cultural glasses"* and raises our awareness and sensitivity in intercultural encounters.

Although Lacuna Theory is more and more accepted and widely applied in the international literature of intercultural communication, even recently various terms are used to describe a similar concept. As Mochalova claims in her recent study (Mochalova, 2013, 82.p.): *"In scientific literature we can find various terms denoting differences in languages and cultures contrasted:* non-equal lexicon, casual lacunas, dark places, agnails, лакуны, нулевая лексема, антислова, значимый нуль, слова-реалии, фоновые слова, слова с национально-культурным компонентом, национально-маркированные слова, варваризмы *etc."*[13]

In Hungarian-language literature the most widely used term is *relia*, appearing particularly in *translation studies*, although we can encounter many synonymous expressions, among others: *"'cultural realia,' 'culture-word', 'untranslatable element', 'non-equivalent lexeme', 'culture-specific word', 'ethno-cultureme'"* (Lendvai, 2005, 68.p.). According to Tellinger. under the special term of translation studies *realia* we understand an referred object as well as the word itself typical in a specific speech community. For instance both the object *"gondola"* and the word *gondola* can be understood as realia with the meaning of *a Venetian rowing boat with a specific shape* (Tellinger 2005, 123.p.).

Klaudy discusses in detail the concept of *realia*, both in a narrow and in a broader sense (Klaudy 1999). *"In a narrow sense realia refer exclusively to peculiar food, drinks, clothes, etc. of a certain linguistic community, while in a wider sense it includes names, addressing forms, holidays, terms related to religion, etc."* (In: J. Horváth 97.p.).

The literature of translation studies applies several typologies of *realia*. Barkudarov differentiates between three types: 1. *"words that denote objects, concepts or situations non-existent in the practical experiences of groups of speakers of another language"*; 2.

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[13] As Mochalova continues: *"In Russian linguistics words denoting concepts, objects, phenomena that are typical only for a certain linguistic community, and have no analogues in other languages, are determined by the following terms: "bezekvivalentnaya leksika" (L. Barkhudarov, E. Vereshchagin, V. Kostomarov), "realia", "ekzotizmy" (S. Vlakhov, S. Florin), "culturemy", "ksenonimy" (V. Kabakchi), "words for the national-specific realities" (A. Fyodorov)."*

"words that denote objects representing characteristics of a certain nation's material and spiritual culture" (such as national dishes, clothes, shoes, etc.); and 3. *"words and idioms denoting political institutions and social events typical to a particular nation"* (1975 Barkhudarov, 93.p.). The Bulgarian authors Vlahov and Florin distinguish between three main groups such as: 1. *geographical*, 2. *ethnographical* and 3. *socio-political* realia (Vlahov, Florin 1980, 51-69.p.).

Tellinger uses a term akin to *realia*, namely *ethno-cultureme*. As the author states: *"In the Russian literature even in the '70s and '80s a broader interpretation of the term realia was formulated, which nearly coincides with the new notion – of ethno-culturemes. This latter term means a broader interpretation of realia."* (Tellinger 2014, 123.p.).

Following the definition of Sorokin and Markovina the term *lacuna* refers to *"phenomena of a culture that have no equivalents in another culture regarding both linguistic as well as cultural specifics"* (In: Jolowicz 2006, 74.p.). Antipov gives a compound and clear definition when claiming that *"lacunas are items that exist in one culture and not in another"* (Antipov et al. 1989, 85.p.[14]). In line with the definition of Grodzki (Grodzki 2003) and Dellinger[15] (Dellinger, 1995a) *"Lacunas[16] are single specific objects or events and specific processes and situations, which* 'run counter to the usual range of experience of a speaker of another language'*".*

Dellinger adds that lacunas are usually perceived as *"something incomprehensible, unusual (exotic), strange (unknown), erroneous or inaccurate in a text"*, but lacunas can also be characterized as *"superfluous, astonishing (peculiar), unexpected"* or *"unpredictable"*. Grodzki defines lacuna as follows (Grodzki 2003, 13.p.): *"Lacuna refers to items in a culture or in a cultural text that are not fully understood by non-members of that culture."*

With reference to Ertelt-Vieth and Grodzki, Dashidorzhieva defines lacunas as: *"Lacunas are elements or aspects of texts including cultures that do not correspond to the experiences of individuals of another culture"*. (Dashidorzhieva, 2011a, 1.p.). Anokhina states in a similar

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[14] In: Grodzki 2003, 35.p.
[15] The definition is from Grodzki (Grodzki 2003, 13.p), who uses the , clause from Dellinger in quotation marks (Dellinger 1995a).
[16] The plural form of *lacuna* varies in different sources: *lacunas* and *lacunae* are both applied. We will also use both forms in identical meaning.

manner: *"The cultural and linguistic specifics in one culture can correspond to the 'zero equivalent' in another."* (Anokhina 2013, 5.p.).

Ertelt-Vieth gives a comprehensive definition of the term lacuna (Ertelt-Vieth 2003, 14-15.p) and she lists five points stating that *"every result of intercultural research [...] that complies with the definition given in the first three points may be called a lacuna"*.

The author specifies the term by the following characteristics:

1.) *"Lacunas are elements or aspects of a text that do not correspond to the experiences of subjects of another culture."*
2.) *"Understanding of texts in the broadest sense, including cultures, is an active, creative and perspective-oriented process."*
3) *"Lacunas do not describe stable meanings but depend on the respective conditions of the actual encounter of exponents of at least two cultures or cultural levels at a given moment in time."*
4) *"According to their substance we have mental lacunas, lacunas of activity and lacunas of objects."*
5) *"Culture specific connotations and evaluations we call axiologic lacunas [...]."*

Grodzki emphasizes the linguistic aspect of the theory when stating: *"Lacunas refer to perceived or unperceived 'gaps' in cross-cultural texts (in which there is a non-equivalent lexis or other poorly understood cultural items)."* (Grodzki 2003, 13.p.).

Another concise definition of the meaning of the technical term lacuna in linguistics by Rohn is as follows:

> *"In the linguistic context the term Lacuna refers to a linguistic feature that exists in one culture but not in another. In a wider context, the term is used for any incident in which something exists in one culture but not in another, including values, attitudes, knowledge, experience, or expectations. Lacunae provoke astonishment, irritation, perplexity, annoyance, but also curiosity and fascination in cross-cultural encounters."* (Rohn, 2010, 89.p.)

Rohn's definition draws the attention simultaneously to numerous aspects I consider highly important. The author deals with both the wider and the narrower interpretation of the technical term lacuna, he places the question into a linguistic context (at the same time he does not restrict it only to those phenomena that can be grasped by linguistics), and he also

covers the reactions observed when perceiving a lacuna. Due to its complexity, subtlety and expressivity we use the above definition of lacuna throughout our dissertation.

5. Research findings

5.1. Social hierarchy reflected in language (hypothesis no. 1)[17]

We found evidence that in the role of Hungarian personal pronouns, in Vietnamese addressing forms, *kinship terms in particular play a key role in communication.* Kinship terms – examples of Hungarian-Vietnamese lacunas themselves – serve as indispensable units of communication when defining the mutual relation of interlocutors, reflecting their relative age, social status and gender as well. We found that the most commonly emphasized virtues in Vietnamese proverbs are *respect of the elderly and that of teachers*. Our case study on kinship terms showed that "*The reason of misunderstanding is lack of knowledge of Vietnamese addressing forms between younger and older*"[18].

5.2. Linguistic imprints of different concepts of family (hypothesis no. 2)

The importance of family as the essential unit of society in Vietnam was highlighted among the stereotypes on Vietnamese businesspersons where 11 respondents identified *a good businessperson* with someone who *has a happy family*, scoring number 5 in this question of the survey. Another description of a good businessperson provided by interviewees was: an individual who *combines work and family life well*.

In Vietnam social communicative interactions are interconnected with the usage of *kinship terms*. Within the highly hierarchical and strictly regulated Vietnamese family, addressing another family member must be done by proper kinship terms. When researching for

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[17] The questions discussed in both 5.1. and 5.2. have a considerable literature, for instance, in interactional sociolinguistics and in the analysis of discourse strategies. In our dissertation the questions were approached through the application of the Lacuna framework that offers a more complete, more detailed approach. The closest theory when compared to lacuna research is the study of realia and the theory of ethno-culturemes. However, none of those proved to be able to muster an apparatus as well elaborated as that of Lacuna Theory. In Klaudy and Tellinger, for instance, the idea of a wider interpretation of realia and ethno-culturemes appears; however, the authors rather limit the field of the research to translation studies, while intercultural aspects are secondary, subordinate to those of translation studies.

[18] Quote from a respondent

lacunas by identifying differences between Vietnamese and Hungarians, we found the utterance that *"Vietnamese have more levels in language",* meaning Vietnamese language applies a richly layered system of kinship terms, suitable for expressing respect towards age, gender, social status.

Under point 5.4. (evaluation of the results of statements) of the dissertation we found evidence that the close, family-like behavior of Vietnamese is present in everyday communication. Usual ways of entering into verbal interaction with each other – with a function of greeting each other – include the phrases: "*Have you eaten yet*?", "*Where are you going?*" and *"What are you doing?"* These forms usually show care and respect towards the partner and in no circumstances express any form of impoliteness or overcuriosity. *"Vietnamese people often ask close persons some questions related to private life"* as worded by a respondent. This behavior and some connected topics might be considered as strange or unexpected for Hungarians when communicating with Vietnamese and can even lead to misunderstandings or conflict. Vietnamese, moreover, tend to "*build their sibling-like close relationships*" outside of the family as put forth by a respondent. This includes communication in school, media, the workplace, other fields of social life and basically in all spheres of interpersonal communication.

From the *entrepreneurial perspective* Vietnamese seem to lay emphasis on family connections, even tend to prioritize those in a business contexts. In line with the utterance collected in the preliminary research (*When Vietnamese businessmen see a profitable business opportunity, they prefer to solve the funding within their own circles, and are reluctant to involve a foreigner),* we collected comments in connection with this statement. We found that 41% of the respondents agree that Vietnamese are *"reluctant to involve foreigners, they want to gain all profit"*, they *"don't like to share profits"*, *"they prefer to stand on their own feet"* or *"want to keep the highest profit possible internally"*.

5.3. Time horizon (hypothesis no. 3)

Although Vietnam is often considered as a generally long-term oriented country, in line with its Confucian values, we proved that the opposite is true for the country as:

A./ Vietnamese auto-stereotypes clearly indicated the view of short-sightedness;

B./ Respondents expressed strong belief that Vietnamese businesspersons are short-term oriented;

C./ We found that respondents generally agree that *Vietnamese businessmen are interested in a short-term financial return*[19]: 37,5% of them confirmed consent with the statement while almost no disagreement was expressed. Most typically, participants of the survey either explicitly agreed or indirectly gave reasons for such behavior;

D./ Some remarks further coloured and sophisticated the results such as: *"Vietnamese are short-sighted, the term 'instant noodle' is applied in all social and business activities"*;

E./ Replies given indicated a difference between the Southern and Northern regions when claiming: *"Southerner businessmen prefer long-term projects, Northerners go for short-term goals"*;

F./ Responses for the free-association test about a Vietnamese person also indicated short-sightedness of Vietnamese;

G./ One of the differences identified when inquiring about differences between Vietnamese and Hungarians on the personal characteristics level was the assumption that Vietnamese usually have *"short-term goals"*. We can confidently state that Vietnamese are characterized as short-term oriented both in business life and in general.

5.4. Classification of lacunas (hypothesis no. 4)

We stated that even though the most complex and widely accepted classification by Ertelt-Vieth sets a highly useful framework for differentiating between diverse lacunas (namely mental, activity and object lacunas within the Y-shaped Model), it still *cannot cope with laying down a fully consistent system* for classifying lacunas. In our personal view the introduction of the second, axiological dimension of lacunas[20] as a basic classification

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[19] This statement can be found under the third question of the fourth questionnaire with the original wording as follows: *"Vietnamese businessmen are only willing to make any efforts if the project offers a very short-term financial return."*

[20] According to the classification system of lacunas of Ertelt-Vieth, the second dimension is the so-called axiological dimension. As the author claims, axiological lacunas *"denote culture specific connotations and evaluations of differing phenomena"* (Ertelt-Vieth, 2003, 54.p.).

concept is contradictory. In contrast with Ertelt-Vieth we argue that *all lacunas are* per se *axiological and* per definitionem *bear cultural connotations.* Hence, we propose elaborating a classification system that is able to account for all possible lacunas in a consistent framework.

Based on the differences when *comparing life in Hungary and Vietnam* (see seventh questionnaire, first question) we identified 175 lacunas and grouped those into the following 18 categories[21]: *personal characteristics; life/society; communication; physical environment; behavior; business/economy; environment protection; attitude towards law/rules; work/study; food/cuisine; habits; mindset/emotions; traffic; housing; methods; gender; history; relation to elderly*. In our view the *two principal aspects that need to be added* to the previous researches are as follows: 1./ Values connected to religion, traditions and gender; 2./ Ad hoc topics of the scope of the specific study (i.e.: economic, artistic, connected to certain scientific fields etc.).

When researching on the *differences between Hungarians and Vietnamese in the field of communication behavior as well as doing business* (seventh questionnaire, second question) we revealed 120 discrepancies. We discovered that the most significant difference lies in *higher consciousness of time/better punctuality* of Hungarians, a *more planned and "scientific"[22] way of life*. Environmental questions were highlighted; Hungary is considered to be a cleaner place with inhabitants of *higher awareness of environmental protection*.

Lacunas in this same point (seventh questionnaire, second question) were grouped into six different topics such as: *doing business*; *communication*; *personal characteristics*; *lifestyle/society*; *cuisine* and *language*. We stated that *language* can also be considered as a subgroup of communication, this taxonomy did not yield further groups of lacunae (apart from the dichotomy mentioned in the next paragraph).

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[21] Those categories mentioned were developed by the author, taking into account the results of the research. Most of the categories –along different organizing principles –have already appeared in previous literature. This above grouping was set up on an empirical basis, based on the concrete findings of the research.
[22] "*Scientific*" ("*khoa học*") lifestyle that is a lacuna itself was mentioned by numerous respondents. They understand it as a better planned and organized way of life.

Below we selected some examples of lacunas related to a highlighted topic of the dissertation, that of business life: Hungarians are *less close* (*less friendly and sociable*), they *rarely negotiate at a meal or party*, they *speak straight on the topic*, they are *straighter, patient*, they *want to widen the relations* and they *work according to a planned schedule*. Meanwhile, Vietnamese people are *closer* (*more friendly, more sociable*), they *often negotiate at a meal or party*, they *beat around the bush*, they are *less straight, sometimes not honest*, and *Vietnamese businessmen only want to sell*.

Lacunas discovered were divided into two basic categories according to the form of utterance of the answerer: (1) *oppositions* of representatives of the two nations and (2) *unilateral statements* about either Hungarians or Vietnamese.

The 55 cases of *strange or unexpected situations* evoked by respondents (see: seventh questionnaire, third question) we grouped into *19 main categories* as follows: *language; discrimination/stereotyping/ generalizations; general characteristics; cheating/misleading; complex situations; relation to parents and old teachers; society/life; arguments (language and behavior); behavior at public places; housing; climate; clothing; cooking; gender roles; invitation; payment; traffic and driving; way of walking; others*. Besides groups already mentioned or overlapping with previously enlisted ones we hereby draw the attention to some groups such as:

1./ *discrimination/stereotyping/generalizations*;
2./ *cheating/misleading*;
3./ *housing*;
4./ *complex situations* have been identified.

We discussed the *changed habits* of respondents (seventh questionnaire, fourth question) after returning to Vietnam from Hungary. Among the 141 changed habits revealed, we found some atypical results below:

1./ *habit of saying sorry and thank you*;
2./ *using a handkerchief*;
3./ *nibbling food on the street*;
4./ *being less curious about others' issues*.

Taking the above into consideration we can state that due to the different categorizations in each of the four questions discussed (seventh questionnaire, 1-4 questions), we *could not set up a fully consistent new typology of lacunas*. However, we *sophisticated current categorization with several suggestions* such as: the *elimination of the axiological dimension*; the *addition of lacunas connected to religion, traditions and gender*; the differentiation between *single and multiple/complex lacunas* (see in detail: 6.3.). We drew the attention to some *atypical lacunas* such as discrimination/stereotyping/generalizations or lacunas connected to cheating/misleading*.

6. Recommendations

6.1. Lexical lacuna as focal point of research

A substantial implication of the results of our research is the presumption that the further study as well as the more precise classification of lacunas from the Intercultural Linguistic point of view must be done based on *lexical lacunae*. These are the most tangible artifacts of linguistic studies.

As Gibson states (Gibson 2010, 25.p.) Intercultural Communication needs to be grasped along nodes connecting points of different sciences such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, linguistics, etc. Finke adds (Finke 2002, 39.p. In: Földes 2007) that linguistics should be considered as a network rather than an autonomous, separate field as well. In all circumstances, if Intercultural Linguistics would like to use Lacuna Theory as a consistent method of describing intercultural communication from the linguistic aspect, then as a first step a clear and concise definition as well as a coherent classification of lexical lacunas is needed.

6.2. Extension vs. narrowing of the Lacuna Model

The Lacuna Model underwent a theoretical shift after 1977 (in this year Sorokin published his first relevant article) when out of a tool of unlocking translation gaps it became a key method of analysing intercultural communication (see Anokhina, 2013). In the light of the

literature and research introduced in the dissertation, it is worth considering as a realistic option to further extend the content of the theory, as well as to widen its scope of research a second time. In case we compare two languages, thus two cultures, at the same time, we find that when examining their lexemes the phenomenon of lacunarity is always present. As a consequence, we can consider *ad absurdum* all lexemes to be lacunas in the intercultural context.

In Markovina's example the author compares the meaning of the English/American word *friend* and the Russian word *друг* (Markovina 2011a). Markovina states that the Russian language users associate the word *друг* with the following terms: *faithful, old, true, devoted, bosom-beloved, cordial/warm-hearted, childhood, faithfulness, protection, help, warmth, happiness*[23], while members of the American speech community connect *friend* to *acquaintance, companion, colleague, buddy, neighbour, ally, foe, girl, good, enemy*. Consequently, the meaning of the two words is considerably different in intercultural context[24], therefore, Markovina advises that in an intercultural communication event or when translating such items these discrepancies must be taken into account (Markovina 2004, 60.p.).

Thus, in addition to the relatively easily recognizable variant of lacunas (in the Vietnamese-Hungarian relations, for instance, the word *hiếu,* which is discussed in the dissertation, means filial piety and cannot be matched with a lexical equivalent in Hungarian), we can observe that (similarly to the Russian-English/American pair of lexemes *друг-friend*) in the case of numerous further pairs of lexemes culturally dependent semantic differences can be identified.

There is no doubt, however, that making the definition of lacunas boundless (that is to say that we consider each pair of lexemes a lacuna) would make it difficult, or in some cases even impossible to conduct further research. It is indisputable that in the case of a pair of languages (a pair of cultures) certain lacunas are stronger than others. In our view in the

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[23] I find it very interesting to note that according to Markovina (source: personal, verbal communication), the Russian equivalent of the American word *friend* really is not *друг*, but rather *знакомый* or *приятель (приятельница)*.

[24] The common semantic core of the word can be described according to Panasiuk (Panasiuk 1999, In: Grodzki 2003, 52.p.). as a *denotative meaning* while cultural *connotations* are layered onto the denotative meaning (Markovina uses the term *ethnic verbal consciousness,* In: Markovina 2011a).

case of a stronger lacuna, in the place of a lexeme we can find a complete *hiatus/vacuum*[25] in the other language (see for instance the Vietnamese verb *nhậu* that means: *to eat, drink and go out with friends and business partners and try to find business opportunities*). Meanwhile, we can also discover pairs of lexemes with a lower degree of lacunarity (see, for example the comparison of the lexemes *друг-friend* in the Russian-English/American relation above).

In our view, on the one hand, it is appropriate to broaden the Lacuna Model and examine all pairs of lexemes of intercultural background (where one side or that pair may be a zero-element as well) from the aspect whether they can be regarded to a higher or lower extent as a pair of lacunas[26]. At the same time we find it necessary to continue research along a narrower interpretation of the lacuna-concept, with the aim of contributing to the linguistic work in the following areas: *compilation of cultural dictionaries* (see section 6.8.), *editing lacuna-based business manuals* (see section 6.9.) *and description of cultures with the help of lacunas excerpted from artistic texts* (see 6.10.).

6.3. Multiple/complex lacunas

As pointed out in various parts of the dissertation, in real-life situations lacunae typically *do not appear in an isolated manner*, but usually several lacunas are simultaneously present. We set forth such an example among the case studies about a Hungarian female participant of a scientific conference who experienced a shocking scene when another participant of the event sang a song during the panel discussions.[27] In this situation it seems to be unavoidable to embed the analysis of the situation in a complex setting.

The general background of the mentioned case is a *scientific conference* with its specific rules and protocol, the Hungarian participant is *female (gender dimension)*, the *social role of*

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[25]As Lendvai states, lacunas can be considered as *"semantic vacuums"* megfogalmazásával élve a lakúnákat (Lendvai 2012).

[26] It is worth to note that from the approach of translation studies, in the field of the research of realia both Klaudy and the Bulgarian authors Vlahov and Florin draws similar conclusions: *"According to Klaudy even though the wider interpretation might be riskier, it is a more interesting and diverse area, as we can examine what kind of extra-linguistic information the translator needs in his/her translating activity. Vlahov and Florin, the Bulgarian researchers mentioned by her also prefer the broader interpretation [...]"* (Horváth 2007, 97.p.).

[27] According to Script Theory applied in social psychology, in Western cultures singing is not a part of the script of a conference, meanwhile it can be a part of a script of a friendly gathering for instance (see more in detail about the Script Theory in: Tomkins 1987).

singing and music differs in the two countries. Consequently, we need to take a minimum number of three lacunae into consideration when analyzing the situation. These types of lacunas we name *complex or multiple lacunas*.

6.4. Mixed methodology[28]

A key methodological concept of the current study included *applying various research methods.* These included open and closed as well as scaled and non-scaled questions, case studies giving the interviewees the opportunity to freely express thoughts, associations (based on the methodology of Markovina and the Russian ethno-psycholinguistic school), proverbs (as valuable imprints of culture in language), statements from utterances of respondents for the preliminary studies and last but not least a special set of questions to reveal intercultural lacunas.

As Intercultural Linguistics is a young science without a well-established methodological background, we find it essential to raise ideas and concepts in this field. The majority of the topics raised confirmed the usefulness of this approach (i.e. analyzing the time horizon of entrepreneurs or mapping interpersonal communication).

6.5. The Lacuna Paradox

Following Labov we call it the *Observer's Paradox* when the observation itself distorts the results of the research: *"The aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain this data by systematic observation"* (Labov, W. 1972 209.p.). The personality and mindset of the person conducting the research can significantly influence the results of the research. Hofstede, for instance, was criticized that even in his cross-cultural researches the formation of the questionnaires and the research objectives were deeply connected to his *"culturally programmed"* mindset.

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[28] We understand mixed methodology in a way that in the framework of an essentially questionnaire-based research we applied six different survey research methods to detect the lacunas. In a methodological interpretation, each of the six cases means a questionnaire; however, in all of the six cases the mechanism of detecting lacunae was different.

In our dissertation we identified a similar deficiency – we named it the *Lacuna Paradox* – which is present in all cases of intercultural comparisons when we use at least two languages in our research. Results of the survey will necessarily be distorted due to the lacunas within the survey itself (i.e. in the questionnaires, in the utterances of respondents, etc.). Our study was even more affected by this phenomenon as we used a third language, English, as an intermediary language between Hungarian and Vietnamese. We mentioned a handful of examples in the dissertation, including the adjective *nhiệt tình* (*enthusiastic*: in a meaning of *helpful and wholehearted*), the adjective *khoa học* (*scientific:* in the meaning of *a specific lifestyle connected to health and a theoretically correct way of living*) or the adjective *gần gũi* (meaning*: close* in the meaning of *friendly, relying on each other, helpful*). All of the above examples illustrate that the lexical items cannot accurately be translated into another language, because they too can be regarded as lacunae.

6.6. Marked versus unmarked lacunas

Lacunas can be *explicit* or *implicit* (Schröder 1995, Grodzki 2003; In: Jolowicz, 2006, 64.p.) depending on whether their presence is noticed or remains hidden during or after the communication event. We cite hereby some of the research findings: an *explicit lacuna* is, for example, when a Vietnamese person asks directly about the age of his/her conversational partner, which may sound odd or indecent to Hungarians, while an example for an *implicit lacuna* can be (if the Hungarian partner has no knowledge of this practice) that Vietnamese people often use the occasions of meals for doing business.

We think that similarly, another bipolar classification of lacunas needs to be introduced; thus, we hereby oppose *marked versus unmarked lacunas.* Representatives of the first type are such lacunas that have a linguistically perceivable form; meanwhile, the latter category is not marked in language.

An example of a linguistically unmarked lacuna is as follows. A group of tourists is on the way from Hanoi to Ha Long Bay by bus. On the way the bus stops by for a lunch break. All passengers sit down, whereas at one table a group of six is preparing to eat together, including three Vietnamese, two Hungarians and one Italian person. After 10 minutes of waiting a big bowl of soup is served. All Europeans are hungry and start to eat, while the

Vietnamese wait patiently. Both parties feel a bit embarrassed as the others do not behave according to their culturally accepted and expected manner.[29]

The Europeans do not understand why the Vietnamese refuse eating soup (as for them it is usual to eat soup as first dish), while Vietnamese feel offended that their table-mates cannot wait for the further dishes (in Vietnam a company of people share all different types of food and eat them in parallel. Furthermore, soup is usually consumed at the end of the meal, before fruits). This pure situation – although interpersonal communication is present, it does not take direct linguistic form; thus, we consider it an example of unmarked lacunas.

6.7. Further application of Lacuna Theory in Intercultural Linguistic research

In full consent with Földes (Földes 2007a) we find *the Lacuna Model to be a promising tool* for unlocking cultural differences and for avoiding intercultural misunderstandings. Briefly, it can be one of the potential theoretical and methodological tools of Intercultural Linguistics in general. As Földes claims, the Lacuna Model is one of the four most potential frameworks of future research on intercultural communication besides *the constructivist approach* (Drescher, 2004); *the structuralist semiotic approach* (Greimas, 1995) and the *research of cultural scripts* (Goddard, Wierzbicka, 2004). We hereby add that to further research *functional cognitive linguistics* can serve as an important background, examining the differences in the construction of situations, based on the alteration of points of view.

With this current dissertation we aimed to introduce this method to Hungarian as well as other English-speaking professionals, as until now this effective tool was not present *in mainstream Intercultural Research discourse* (except from Russian-speaking areas and scarcely in some German publications).

6.8. Compilation of cultural dictionaries

Lexical lacunae can be used as the most direct and tangible indicators for cross-cultural differences. A way of further research in intercultural linguistics (also helping to shape this science and its methodology) lays in the field of *lexicology* by the cumulation of cultural

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[29] The situation is explained by *Script Theory* (mentioned in chapter 6.3.) as a consequence of the culturally different scripts (Tomkins 1987).

dictionaries. From the linguistic perspective lacunology could benefit from specific lacuna-dictionaries, where each item can be respected as a pool of information regarding characteristics of the given culture.

Compiling dictionaries of lacunae in specific relations where the entries are explained to a wider audience is a potential path of the future application of Lacuna Theory in Intercultural Linguistics. *The Dictionary of Traditional Vietnamese Culture* (Hữu 2012) is a good initiative to cumulate such lexemes; moreover; several cultural dictionaries published in Hungary including the *French-Hungarian Cultural Dictionary* of Peter Adam (Adam 2004), the *American-Hungarian* and *English-Hungarian cultural dictionaries* of Istvan Bart (Bart 2000, 1998), the *German-Hungarian Cultural Dictionary* of Miklos Gyorffy (Gyorffy 2003), the *Japanese cultural lexicon* of Laszlo Gy. Horvath (Gy. Horvath 1999), the *Russian-Hungarian Cultural Dictionary* of Andras Soproni (Soproni 2008) and *100+1 Yiddish Words* of Tamas Raj (Raj 2010).[30]

6.9. Business Manual based on lacunas

Besides dictionaries, assembling a practical *manual for businesspersons* in the Hungary-Vietnam (or in another) relation *based on intercultural lacunas* would raise effectiveness of bilateral economic interactions. Instead of the widespread *Do's and Don'ts* approach that frequently strengthen stereotypical approach of the new, unknown culture, a Business Manual listing out lacunas with examples and case studies could contribute to the success of publications and trainings in the field of intercultural management.

6.10. Description of cultures by lacunae from artistic texts

Additional *research on artistic texts* (novels, poems, tales, legends, etc.) seems to be an excellent field for examination. In the Vietnamese context the classical example, one of the best-known pieces of Vietnamese literature both inside the country and on the international level, *The Tale of Kieu* from Nguyễn Du (1820) is a rich oeuvre containing a wide range of cultural specificities of Vietnamese culture.

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[30] Although the authors do not explicitly mention the Lacuna Theory, they explain numerous lacunae in independent word articles.

If we observe the brief summary of the epic poem *The Tale of Kieu* (Du, Nguyễn, Wikipedia 2015), we can sort out cultural peculiarities including: *"visiting her ancestors' graves, she meets and connects with the grave of a dead performer"; "Kim has to go back home to mourn a relative for half a year"; "Kiều decides to sell herself to Scholar Mã to free her family, therefore showing her deeply rooted filial piety"; "Kiều's beauty attracts many men, including Thúc Sinh, who uses his wealth to buy Kiều out of the brothel and marry her, although he already has a wife named Hoạn Thư''; "tells her henchmen to kidnap and force Kiều to become a slave in her house"; "never dares to reach out to her in front of his first wife"; "She goes to a Buddhist temple"; "ending her cycle of bad karma"; "The tension between Kieu's impulsive tendencies and filial piety is evident; due to a karma from the evils of previous life"; "There is a constant struggle between Confucian and Buddhist beliefs throughout the poem".*

The above key phrases of the plot of *The Tale of Kieu* were presented here to demonstrate *the richness of classical texts of a certain culture in lacunas*, consequently arguing for the systematic study of these texts *applying Lacuna Theory for unlocking lacunas.*

6.11. Research on networks of lacunae

In the course of our research interferences between lexemes have been identified, such as the Vietnamese noun *xúc xích,* which is a transcription of the French work *saucisse* (English: *sausage)*, with similar but slightly different meaning when contrasted with French or English.

We compared different meat products in the Hungarian and in the Vietnamese language. Besides envisaging the fact that different languages use different terms as well as dissimilar classification systems for meat products, and the realities are also not identical (in terms of the products themselves, their physical appearance, ingredients and manufacturing methods), we realized that the same categories (i.e. meat products) can be contrasted in certain geographical areas. Both terms and classification methods can be analysed and contrasted, consequently *homogenous territories as well as networks of similar expressions can be identified* that can be a fruitful field of research in lacunology.

6.12. Additional researches on intracultural lacunas in Vietnam

In our view the *further study of intracultural lacuna[31]* in Vietnam could yield valuable additional results. As seen above (see 4.3.) *Northern and Southern Vietnam* seem to differ both culturally and linguistically, thus could be a rich area for future research.[32]

On several occasions during the history of Vietnam the northern and southern parts of the country worked partially or completely independently (i.e.: They formed two separate countries between 1954-1975), and although interlocutors of the northern and the southern dialects mutually understand each other, linguistic imprints of different cultural influences can well be traced. While the north has always been strongly influenced by China, the southern part of the country has been more Westernized, more open and more liberal and culturally stands closer to the European and North American countries.

6.13. Lacuna studies through slang and swear words

A study of *slang and swear words* could also serve as an efficient tool of lacunology. We demonstrate the above with two examples: *cụ* and *bão*. The first example demonstrates the usefulness of swear words and expressions in Vietnamese. The word *cụ* in itself is a lacuna, as it refers to the great grandfather or great grandmother (in European languages including Hungarian, there is no separate lexeme for great grandparents). A slang expression *"Địt cụ[33] [34] mày[35]!"* literally means "Make love[36] to your great grandfather!". We presume that

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[31] Similarly to Kehrwoche (a habit to clean the inside and outside of a house on a weekly basis, practiced by Schwabians in Germany, see: Wikipedia, Kehrwoche), an example took from Ertelt-Vieth (Ertelt-Vieth 2003, 8.p) intracultural lacunas in the relation of Northern and Southern Vietnam should be further studied.

[32] Several contrastive studies have been executed in this field; let us just mention the work of Lý Tùng Hiếu, *Language – Culture in Saigon and Southern Vietnam*, containing cultural and linguistic comparison between the two parts of the country.

[33] One of the unique characteristics of Vietnamese language is its richness in lexemes denoting different generations. Up to nine generations can be named by separate lexemes such as: *ky* or *cố* (great great grandfather) *cụ* (great grandfather) *ông* (grandfather) *cha* (father) *con* (child) *cháu* (grandchild), *chắt* (great grandchild) and *chút* (great great grandchild) (Thêm 2008, 239.p). In most of the languages throughout the world one or two generations in both directions can be named by different lexemes. The phenomenon obviously refers to the extremely high importance of the family in Vietnam as well as to the habits of commemorating the death of two generations above till the grandparents' level. (We also add one point to the work of Thêm – which is in our view one of the most precious and invaluable compilations of Vietnamese culture – that even a 10th generation is differentiated in Vietnamese language, which is *chít* (great great great grandchild).

[34] In today's Vietnam it is considered to be desirable and lucky to have four generations living under the same roof. Although recently families have been getting smaller, especially in urban areas, this approach is incorporated by a high proportion of Vietnamese.

through the further study of slang as well as swearwords and expressions we will gain insight into another valuable layer of lacunae from a specific register of language which may not be reflected in similar researches as we have done hereby.

Our second and final example is *bão* (*cơn bão[37]*) which has the core denotation *storm*, meanwhile in Vietnamese slang it refers to a specific event when people flood the streets with their motorbikes to celebrate a big event such as a victory of the Vietnamese national football team. On these occasions, people, especially younger generations, gather and cruise across downtowns of bigger cities, usually waving national flags and drawing the attention of passersby by honking. This notion cannot be understood without sufficient knowledge of Vietnamese culture (such as most Vietnamese use motorbikes in their daily routine and they often cruise around town for fun or as a free-time activity).

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[35] The addressing form *mày* is another example of a lacuna applied in slang: this is a rude way used as an equivalent of the personal pronoun *you*.

[36] We used above an euphemistic translation *(make love)* of the verb *địt* which should be more precisely translated as *fuck*.

[37] The classifier word for *bão* is *cơn*, usually applied for nouns denoting weather phenomena as well as for some types of emotions (especially strong and negative feelings).

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