

Students' accounts and experience of the MA New Language course

I was told before arriving in London at UCL that I was insane for even trying to take Hungarian. "It is the third hardest language in the WORLD!" someone had told me. "Right behind Arabic and Japanese!" I had great anxiety and hesitation before starting my lessons. My language background consisted solely of my native tongue, English, and French, which I had taken for 6 years in school. As I walked into the classroom on my first day of Hungarian the first thing I noticed was how diverse the class was. To break it down, the class consisted of two people from China, one Uzbekistani, two Frenchmen, one German, a Moldovan, and myself, from America. All of us had different reasons for taking the class with different linguistic backgrounds. I soon found out that not only was Hungarian harmless, but we all ended up quite enjoying our classes.

Of course Hungarian is no easy task. We each worked constantly on our translation skills, grammar memorization, vocabulary expansion, and general pronunciation (which was unnatural to most of us). But our professor, was infinitely patient, often having to repeat herself as we stared at what she had written on the board with incredulous gazes. By the end of one year we could all have simple conversations, translate small articles on topics from the urbanization and renewal of Hungarian city centers to political and historical documents. Of course we kept our dictionaries and grammar books close by, but it was not the impossible feat that people had warned me of.

So now I am at Corvinus University, in Budapest, taking the 2nd year of my IMESS Masters. The teacher has, so far, been quite pleased with our basic knowledge and pronunciation. Upon arriving in this city we were able to go to the local market and order products in Hungarian: "Kérek egy banánt!" And we were able to manage getting our monthly student metro cards. Basically things have been working out and we are continuing our Hungarian with very little anxiety about the possibility of failure. So for those of you just starting Hungarian, and those that have a bit of fear over the idea of learning this complex language, just take a deep breath and realize that it might not make sense at first, but you have a year or two to embrace the language and it will happen.

IMESS student, 2007-9.