

## **Evaluation**

of the teaching materials developed as part of

***A project for the improvement of teaching Slovak language and literature in national minority language schools through the methodology of second language teaching (with a special focus on schools using Hungarian as a language of instruction): The Nitra model***

### **General information about the project:**

#### **The name of the project in Slovak:**

Nitriansky model skvalitnenia vyučovania slovenského jazyka a literatúry na školách s vyučovacím jazykom národnostných menšín metódou vyučovania cudzích jazykov (s dôrazom na školy s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským)

#### **The name of the project in Hungarian:**

A nemzeti kisebbségi tananyelvű iskolákban oktatott szlovák nyelv és irodalom tantárgy minőségi javítása idegennyelv-oktatási módszerekkel (különös tekintettel a magyar tananyelvű iskolákra).

**Funding period:** January 2014 to June 2015

The project has set very topical, professionally well-founded and ambitious goals and has achieved them very successfully. The present evaluation has been prepared based on the project materials and on multiple consultations with the project participants.

The goals are very topical since, as is well known, the teaching of the majority language to minority language speaking children is an issue where a lot is lacking in many countries of East Central Europe, especially as regards the teaching of the majority language to speakers of the region's largest minority group, the Hungarians (cf. papers in the edited volume Fenyvesi 2005 on *Hungarian language contact outside Hungary: Studies on Hungarian as a minority language*, Amsterdam: Benjamins), since, very positively, they have schools in many countries where they can study in the minority language as the language of instruction. This is a great advantage as well as, at the same time, a disadvantage, since many of these schools typically come short teaching the majority language to their students while the students' interests would be to learn it as best they can and attain high level bilingualism of the additive kind and be able to use their professional skills in both languages.

The participants of the project organized an international workshop on the topic at the start of the project and have already published papers from it in three languages (Slovak, English, and

Hungarian). The workshop provided a valuable theoretical impetus for the project, which is now also documented clearly in the volume. It is especially commendable that the volume was published in all three relevant languages, thus making the papers, the theoretical approaches and discussions available to the widest possible segments of audience, i.e. the majority, minority as well as international audiences.

The course package developed during the project, “Language pedagogy: The theory and methodology of second language teaching” has been prepared both as a lecture and a seminar, which is a very positive way to approach the course since in the East Central European context of higher education both types of courses exist and it is clearly beneficial to have it ready in both versions. The developed course is firmly based in a general usage-based perspective best suited for a central practical issue such as language pedagogy, and, in particular, in the framework of the most current (1) theoretical approach of functional and cognitive linguistics and provides connection points between this approach and (2) language teaching methodology, also providing a stable grounding in (3) empirically based language description. Having all three of these aspects expertly combined in one course is indeed very rare and speaks volumes about the high level expertise of the project participants. The weekly break down of the topics and materials has been done with care and with both theoretical and pedagogical considerations in mind. It is especially commendable that the perspective adopted in this course is wide and includes cultural issues as well, since language is inextricably tied to culture in many important ways, and to teach the former without the latter constitutes teaching grammar rather teaching language. The focus of the course is going from general issues to particular issues in such a way that the course covers all the important linguistic, cultural, legal and methodological ground that could and should be covered.

The course could be easily adopted in other contexts: for instance, with minor modifications in all of the minority Hungarian contexts in East Central Europe, and with slightly more but definitely easily doable modifications in other European (and possibly in overseas) minority language contexts as well.

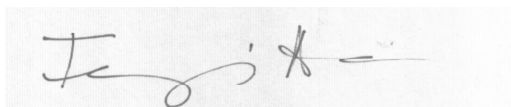
The literature used for the course is sufficient and not too daunting for prospective students either at the BA or the MA level, with the readings carefully chosen. The present reviewer does not have any significant recommendations for modifying the course content or materials.

The course was taught in both of its possible versions, as a lecture and as a seminar, thus testing the project participants’ own materials in the real life educational context for which it is primarily intended. The project participants also developed a questionnaire for surveying student satisfaction with the course as a major device designed to provide feedback on the course. The

questionnaire has been compiled in a methodologically sound way, aimed to elicit comparable responses from subjects (while also allowing them to decline answering if they so wish). As the questionnaire is being administered as we speak and its results will be analyzed in June 2015, it is not possible to comment on its results.

All in all, the output of the project (the collection of papers published in three languages, the course materials, and the students' evaluation questionnaire) reflect the high level professionalism of the project participants, their careful planning, and successful implementation of the project. As the main practical output of the project, the course can be easily adopted in a variety of situations, it serves as a very useful pedagogical tool in itself.

Szeged, May 31, 2015

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Fenyvesi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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