

## ERFAHRUNGSBERICHT SOMMERSPRACHKURSE IM ÖSTLICHEN EUROPA

Hochschule in Bayern:	LMU München
Studiengang:	Geschichte Europas und Südosteuropas
Sprachkurs im östlichen Europa:	06.07. bis 24.07.2020
Bezeichnung des Sprachkurses:	39 <sup>th</sup> Summer School of Slovene Language
Kursort im östlichen Europa:	Online
Sprachkursniveau:	fortgeschritten

### Course organisation and registration

Thanks to the scholarship (provided by the BAYHOST partner country Slovenia), I attended the 39<sup>th</sup> Summer School of Slovene Language from 6 to 24 July in 2020. It was organized by the Centre for Slovene as a second and foreign language (hereby the Centre) at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. Due to the coronavirus situation, the summer school was held online this year, enabling students to attend the course from home. Probably due to the change to online teaching, the course was also lengthened from the usual two weeks to three weeks, with the hours of teaching increased from 40 to 60. The course registration process was the same as the previous years, through filling a form on the site of the Centre. A few days later, the Centre sent me the letter of acceptance and a written placement test.

### Placement Test

The written test consisted of connecting pictures to the corresponding statements, filling the gaps in dialogues, and completing sentences. After sending in the written test, an online placement interview was held. In the interview, I was first asked to introduce myself in Slovene. Although the online one-on-one format created a stressful atmosphere at first, I became relaxed when the interviewer simply continued our conversation with questions related to myself, instead of testing me with separate tasks. It enabled me to speak more naturally and confidently, and I perhaps overachieved in this placement test.

### Textbook delivery

The Centre informed us that it would send us the textbooks by mail after the placement test, and the textbooks should have arrived by the start of the course. My classmates all received their textbooks, but I have never received mine even months after the course finished, probably due to international mail disruption by the pandemic. The Centre solved the problem by sending me pdf-version of the textbook (in several instalments, corresponding to the teaching progress). I was asked to sign a declaration that I should not reproduce or share the textbook. The pdf also had my name on the page

margins to ensure that I would not violate their copyrights. I think the organisers handled the use of e-version of textbooks very professionally. However, using the pdf-version was still not as smooth as using the actual book, because it took more time and efforts to make notes and write answers on the pdf.

### **Classes**

Our classes took place from 9am to 12:30 pm in Ljubljana time. There were also evening classes intended for groups of students from the Americas. I was placed into the highest group – group 10. The classes were held in Slovene. English was only used as a last resort for explanation, although the teacher welcomed our attempts to compare certain features in Slovene and other languages that we spoke. The teacher especially highlighted a few subtle differences between Slovene and the closely-related Serbo-Croatian, since our group have two speakers of the latter language. We used a C1 level textbook mostly for its readings. Its texts included journalistic or scientific articles, and were about sophisticated topics such as EU politics, global warming and language regulation. There were also literary texts such as poems which were related to Slovene national culture. We learned many new words and also about difference of similar words from reading. Besides serving as a source for learning vocabulary, each unit also contained one or more grammar points. The teacher also sent us additional grammar exercises. The grammar rules we learned were rather complicated and at times subtle, such as verbal aspects and uncommon usage of prepositions. They might sound boring, but our group mostly enjoyed learning them, because they sometimes made Slovene a very precise language: For example, there are three different prepositional constructions for “no movement”, “movement from” and “movement to”!

We also had quite a few conversation sessions, usually on topics related to the textbook texts. We were divided into break-out rooms on Zoom, mostly one-on-one. It was not only good for practising the language, but also gave us an opportunity to socialise a little. Otherwise, we had no contacts with each other, unlike in a normal summer school where we could meet outside the classroom and even explore Ljubljana together. It was a strange feeling that we were still somehow distant from each other after three weeks of summer school. Another disadvantage of online teaching is that the one-on-one sessions were occasionally awkward when neither of us were able to express and understand very well in Slovene, and then we simply did not know what to do because the teacher could not be in all break-out rooms at the same time, unlike in a normal classroom where the teacher could overhear all groups and then quickly turn to the groups that had difficulties.

### **Cultural programme and other activities**

The accompanying programme of the summer school was heavily reduced this year due to the pandemic. The only official cultural programme was three Slovene films, one for each week of the school. The Centre sent us the link and the password on Vimeo. Each film was only available from Tuesday to Thursday of that week, which means I didn't always manage to find the time to watch them.

Additionally, we were offered opportunities to watch the public lectures of the 56th Seminar of Slovene Language, Literature and Culture, which took place online at the same time as our summer school. Those lectures were about Slovene national symbol, word order, poetry, urban development ... It was hard for me to understand everything but they were all interesting topics.

Overall, I was very content with the summer school. My Slovene improved rapidly, and I became more confident speaking the language by the end of the course. I feel grateful to my teacher for my progress, and to the Centre and BAYHOST for the opportunity to learn Slovene during the pandemic.