

Hello –

I am going to summarize my impressions of my online Hungarian Language and Culture Summer Course that I was infinitely grateful to receive a scholarship for from the Cleveland Hungarian Development Panel.

First of all, being part of a group that has the interest in learning this language, and who love the language, is essential when trying to learn. Secondly, simply being part of any type of group during the pandemic is essential when trying to stay happy. So, not even mentioning the quality and quantity of what I learned, just having the emotional foundation of the group was unfathomably appreciated.

Hungarian to me is like a scavenger hunt. The book provided a list of items I was supposed to actively discover, and the class was the most fruitful place to discover them. So, just like reading a list of items to find on a scavenger hunt does not magically cause me to possess the object, just reading the text book did not magically cause me to possess the grammar and vocabulary. No, the book just listed items that I could find in the real world. So the question was - when I did encounter these objects in the real world, would I notice them? Would I be able to grab them without mangling or losing them? It is exciting to find a scavenger hunt item in the real world, it makes it three dimensional, gives it some conceptual reality. And that is what the class provided – an opening into a three dimensional world, an opportunity to find and handle concepts.

Unfortunately, I am not a rocket scientist when it comes to learning a language. I can be shown an item and in my attempt to pronounce it, I absolutely mangle it. I can have a dozen words dumped in my hands and watch them all slip through my fingers, over and over again. When I am instructed in Hungarian to turn to a page number, I feel like I am in a pitch black room and asked how many boxes are in it. A couple times I asked a question, and was told, "you asked that same question yesterday." Yah, as far as scavenger hunt contestants go, I am about the worst contestant there is. But that is not to say that the scavenger hunt isn't fun! Nor that I don't eventually collect all the items, it just takes much more encounters of the same object over and over until I can finally grab it without crushing or losing it.

So yes, the entire activity was absolutely essential to me, especially since I have been living in Hungary for the past nine months, and in order to survive, every day I have to identify and learn to handle the things that I was taught. I am really requiring a large amount of time and effort in order to learn this language, and it was so, so, so good to have this opportunity. I cannot say enough how grateful I was for the patience, the environment, the material, the explanations, and the desire for us all to learn. I am not going to say I mastered the material, I am going to say that I did absolutely invaluable exercises that I am continuing to pursue daily, that I now know certain concepts exist, and that I keep searching to grab hold of these in my never-ending scavenger hunt.

I have amazing notes from the class, that I review over and over, still keeping my eyes open for the items in real life, still trying to create these structures and not have people wince in response.

Still trying to develop an ear for definite and indefinite articles (for example melyek is a definite article, milyen is indefinite), how to use auxiliary verbs like szabad, kell, lehet, or conjugate verbs with potential (-het-), use the subjunctive, use verbal phrases with their prepositions, tack personal endings onto pronouns, tack directional endings onto prepositions, speak about getting married, playing soccer, setting a table, and to top it off: celebrating. 😊

Learning a language can be stressful or it can be fun. It certainly requires a lot of helpful people in the world. The community of the Summer School, the class, and the Cleveland organization, it all makes me feel supported, and I can't express enough how much more faith in humanity I have as a result, and how nice it is to be able to take what I have learned and apply it in real life, to understand people, to understand my environment, ok, not perfectly and I still feel slightly like an idiot when I attempt, but at least I feel like I have enough under my belt to be able to communicate in Hungarian and clarify and not be overwhelmed, and that is really, really important to me, so thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Thank you,

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