

I cannot even begin to express the gratitude that I have the CHDP and their generosity. I can only hope that this written summation of my experiences from the past two summers at Debreceni Nyári Egyetem shows how much this experience means to me. I started learning Hungarian because I fell in love with a Hungarian and I hope that someday Hungarian culture is not solely hers, but something we both share. I've visited Hungary three times and I am completely fascinated by the language, history, and culture of this beautiful country. I hope to be a lifetime learner of the Hungarian language and definitely plan on attending Debreceni Nyári Egyetem next summer as well.

My first summer at Debreceni Nyári Egyetem I was brand new to the language and mistook the Hungarian phrase "itt less," for the English phrase "eat less" and almost got into a very big fight with a Hungarian tour guide whom I thought was telling me to stop eating my snack. My biggest accomplishment after two weeks was finally being able to pronounce "Egészségére" without assistance. Armed with false confidence, I traveled to Balaton to meet my girlfriend's family. I brought with me a roll of flashcards with daily phrases that I could show to her parents if they didn't understand me. In the first hour of meeting them I realized just how little of the language I truly knew. The language sounded like a beautiful melody instead of recognizable syllables. I was extremely lucky that her brother and mother spoke English well enough to converse with me on their own. However, her father's English is not as good and he needed another person there to translate on his behalf. I was amazed that my inability to speak to him directly never affected his desire to get to know me or prevented him from trying to use the few English words he did know to communicate with me. His efforts inspired me to throw myself into my Hungarian studies for the next year until my second summer at Debreceni Nyári Egyetem.

In the course of a year I was able to self-study and moved up to the B1 level for this past summer at Debreceni Nyári Egyetem. For the first time I took a class completely in Hungarian and was able to sit and understand what was being said. While I had attended the extra programs the previous year, I had a whole new understanding and appreciation this year. I felt far more connected to the culture through my improved language skills.

I am honored and humbled to have been able to learn this language with such dedicated and passionate teachers. Every summer Debreceni Nyári Egyetem provides teachers that really understand second-language education. As a second language educator myself, I understand and sympathize with the ability to teach a language in your second language, and yet all of my teachers have been able to do this flawlessly. I'd also like to especially point out my teacher from this past summer Ms. Erika Gal, who has spent countless hours outside of her designated teaching hours designing exciting and engaging lesson materials. She is never hesitant to help out a struggling student during breaks. She always shows genuine interest in her students and their lives. She takes every opportunity to expose her students to Hungarian culture and customs. She simplifies complex grammar and patiently waits for her students to understand the concepts before moving on to the next topic. Despite feeling ill during the course, she showed up every morning with a smile on her face and her usual positive attitude. Of course, all of the teachers at Debreceni Nyári Egyetem are superb, she is exceptional, and I will forever owe my Hungarian language success to her outstanding efforts this past summer.

Another important aspect of Debreceni Nyári Egyetem is not only the ability to provide excellent classroom, but also a supportive environment. The aim of the program is internationally minded and students are able learn Hungarian alongside others in similar situations. I know for sure I am not the only student who was learning for love and we have since formed a little support group to help motivate and inspire each other to continue despite hardships and challenging Hungarian grammar.

For this and for so much more I would like to thank Debreceni Nyári Egyetem. I would also like to take this time to truly thank the CHDP for their generosity. Thank you for taking a chance on me. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to learn more about the world around me and get exposed to new experiences. Thank you for supporting me in my dream to study and learn more about Hungarian language and culture. And finally thank you for making my time in Hungary the most enjoyable experience of my life. I really appreciate all the kindness the CHDP showed and I hope to be able to continue to work with the CHDP in the future.

I have had moments while learning Hungarian when I want to quit in frustration. I have had times when I can't pronounce a word, or it takes me two minutes to plan out what I want to say. I have felt left out of conversations or frustrated when I order something incorrectly in a restaurant. But throughout my difficulties, I have never met a Hungarian who wasn't supportive of my learning process. My girlfriend dedicates time and energy to checking my homework and practicing vocabulary with me. The moment I understand something or say a simple sentence the look of pride on her face makes everything worth it. I'd like to share with you one important moment of my summer that really stands as a testament to the impact Debreceni Nyári Egyetem has had on my life. This past summer was my third time visiting Hungary and during my first two visits I was unable to communicate directly with my girlfriend's father without assistance, but in my most recent visit we were left alone and were able to communicate with each other directly for the first time. It wasn't a long conversation but seeing how much more comfortable he was around me now that I could speak some Hungarian meant the world to me and I owe that moment Debreceni Nyári Egyetem and the CHDP. Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Abby Hoyt