

## **Deutsch für Ethnologen und Kulturanthropologen I / Nemščina za etnologe in kulturne antropologe I. Saša Podgoršek. Univerza v Ljubljani, Filozofska fakulteta, Oddelek za germanistiko z nederlandistiko in skandinavistiko, Ljubljana (2015). 163 pp., ISBN: 978-961-237-797-7.**

### **Why prepare textbooks for languages for specific purposes other than English?**

With the increasing provision of English for Specific Purposes and English for Academic Purposes in English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries in recent years, English has undoubtedly strengthened its already dominant position in the field of foreign languages for specific purposes (LSP). At the same time, countries all over Europe are facing multicultural and plurilingual challenges that need to be addressed (in this respect, Slovenia is less and less an exception). Therefore, the recognition of the value of languages other than English by some European universities has become increasingly important. Foreign languages other than English can be studied as independent language and literature study programmes, or as compulsory or elective courses in the format of LSP within non-linguistic study programmes.

Among the universities that have recognized the need for “assistance to foreign languages other than English” in the LSP domain is the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Thus, German, French, and Italian for specific purposes are offered in a few study programmes, for instance Business German, Italian in Business Administration, French in Social and Political Sciences, and German for Public Administration.

At the Faculty of Arts, several first-cycle and/or second-cycle study programmes offer German as an LSP, for instance German for Historians, German for Art Historians, German for Philosophers etc., and, importantly for this review, German for Ethnologists and Cultural Anthropologists. In addition, ESP is taught at several other faculties, for instance Health Care, Social Sciences, and Public Administration.

The publishing division of the Faculty of Arts in particular actively supports LSP and hence the publication of printed LSP textbooks. One direct result of this is the textbook *German for Ethnologists and Cultural Anthropologists I*.

### **Main features of the textbook**

The textbook *German for Ethnologists and Cultural Anthropologists I* is designed for students at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology who have chosen this course in their

freshman year and have basic language ability in German. Hence, the expected entry level of linguistic competence is approximately at A1-A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001). The textbook covers 120 hours of class instruction, supplemented by additional learning materials that are available in a Moodle e-classroom. The textbook aims to consolidate the general communicative competence of students at level A2 and develop it further towards B1. Primarily, however, the goal of the textbook is to empower first-cycle students of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology to start approaching professional disciplinary texts in their various forms (written, modern and historical, visual, video, oral), and develop a basic knowledge of the terminology used in this field.

At the macro-level, the 163-page textbook is divided into seven sections: 1) Following the traces of Germans in Slovenia, 2) Students' everyday life, 3) Social relationships, 4) Cuisine, 5) Tales and legends, 6) A tour through Europe, and 7) Studying ethnology and cultural anthropology. These main sections are followed by three appendices. The first one contains a glossary of names of states and continents together with the names of their inhabitants and related adjectives, and texts about rituals and holidays in the Germanic and Slavic cultural areas, such as Christmas, the Carnival of Basel in Switzerland, and Easter in Austria. The second appendix offers topics related to the most frequent communication patterns at beginner levels. These include groups of typical speech acts for different communication goals, ranging from German "teacherese" for general purposes, terminology lists facilitating the learning of grammar and vocabulary, speech acts for meeting people and taking farewell, to specific topics clearly related to the domains of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, such as descriptions of time, culinary expressions, holidays, clothing, fairy tales, and royal and lower nobility titles. The last appendix contains tables with regular and irregular German verbs in the tenses relevant for A2 level of proficiency.

## **Some methodological features**

The false beginner entry level (A2) of the majority of students profoundly determined the content and level of textual input as well as the goals that the students are expected to meet (i.e., comprehension of specific topics and particular language use). Most textbook sections begin with a spider-gram to be completed with single words, longer (terminological) expressions or language chunks elicited from students, either in German as the target language or the students' first language (mainly Slovenian). Significantly, the target students are members of a mixed ability group in terms of background knowledge of German, with different ethnological and anthropological interests, and varying levels of discipline-specific knowledge.

In all seven macro-units there is a constant interplay among activities aimed at the development of learner comprehension and language use, as well as general and domain specific foreign language. Almost all learning steps or sequences of steps display the author's intention to develop some basic general aspects of the general target language relevant to the students while a vast majority of texts has been chosen specifically to target the specific needs of these LSP learners as future ethnologists and cultural anthropologists.

The length of texts included in the textbook is partly related to the language level of students

at enrolment. The textbook thus contains parts or short excerpts from genres pertaining to the field of ethnology and cultural anthropology, numerous passages from historical documents, and short contemporary texts, some of which were written by German exchange students. These texts are accompanied by relevant illustrations and other visual media (for instance, photos taken by the author and her colleagues, and links to videos).

The tasks for developing reading and listening comprehension are relevant for global and detailed understanding of texts and professional topics. In all sections the key vocabulary is systematically introduced and dealt with, often well combined with typical grammatical structures. In addition, some sections contain basic language learning strategy instruction that will provide a scaffolding to assist students with more demanding professional texts from their field of expertise.

The main sections lead students to a good understanding of issues relevant to ethnology and cultural anthropology, and provide the linguistic knowledge pertaining to this specific content. In the pursuit of this goal, each section is further subdivided into several parts which, step by step, develop the mastery of the specific language at this level. Not all sections follow the same pattern: some learning steps are tuned to the communicative needs and specific topics and content (short texts) about ethnological and anthropological matters, which is an important strength of this textbook.

On the other hand, the author strictly follows the principle that grammar explanations and exercises should be explicitly related to text genres, including individual examples from oral or written communication that are all borrowed from the fields of ethnology or anthropology. In the sections that seem to offer general content, texts and/or examples related to German speaking countries and Slovenia are used.

It is evidently important to the author to raise students' awareness of important Slovenian ethnological and anthropological topics (for instance, Valvasor's *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*, the Noordung project, Slovenian cuisine, the pre-historical wheel, etc.), and allow them to recognise and appreciate the elements of the Slovenian culture and society that might be(come) interesting to foreigners. The cultural, historical, and/or linguistic links between the German and Slovenian worlds, exposed also through the author's remarks on the German language itself and presented contrastively yet in search for a common denominator, are undoubtedly another major strength of this textbook.

Generally, the textbook relies on the principles of the communicative approach, with frequent elements of task-based and genre-based methodology, to the extent appropriate to the teaching of A2 level students. Learner-centeredness in the process of learning German as a foreign language is considered through numerous elements of task-based learning (for example, autonomous work of students on ethnological or anthropological topics as mini-project work) where the author anticipated that a deeper insight into a specific topic would be required. Last but not least, many (if not all) methodological decisions seem to stem from the teaching practice of the author, and are well incorporated into the teaching context in line with the local teaching situation, and enhancement of the transference of knowledge to new situations.

## Points for consideration

Tailor-made learning materials will always have advantages and some disadvantages. However, no commercially available textbook for German as an LSP in the field of ethnology and cultural anthropology can be found, especially not one with such regard to the rich cultural and centuries-long historical relationship between the German and Slovenian worlds.

One or two minor points might be considered as opportunities for improvement. Clearly, a textbook that is designed for LSP at a false beginner level would not expect learners to be able to understand authentic, highly professional texts in (academic) German, written or spoken. However, this aspect could call for some more elaboration. In particular, more specific, genre-related input could be included at the expense of grammar exercises. Although the grammar exercises primarily tend to develop the (receptive) recognition of relevant grammar structures and through them better comprehension, any further manipulation of forms will not be among the core professional needs of future ethnologists or anthropologists. These might appreciate even more work on typical professional terminology and more comprehension development of authentic texts instead.

## Conclusion

*Deutsch für Ethnologen und Kulturanthropologen I* is a well-balanced textbook for false beginners in German for specific purposes. Novice teachers, not yet well versed in the field of LSP, could significantly benefit from a series of step-by-step activities: eliciting pre-knowledge, followed by input, and a focus on language structures, all leading to a better understanding of some of the typical genres in the field of ethnology and anthropology. This textbook is an excellent resource to introduce any learner into German as a foreign language in general and into the specific field of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology in particular.

## References

Council of Europe (2011). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Darja Mertelj  
University of Ljubljana, Slovenia