

Department of Foreign Languages

Annual Activity Report 2003

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The Department of Foreign Languages of Masaryk University Brno serves the entire university providing foreign language courses for students of non-linguistic disciplines at MU faculties. A new language department was also set up on 1 September 2003 at the Faculty of Sports Studies.

Teachers and foreign lecturers from the eight sections of DFL focus on language skills for specific purposes and the teaching of academic skills in English, German, French, Spanish and Russian to students of bachelor's, master's and doctoral programmes of full-time and combined study. At the Faculties of Arts, Medicine, and Law, Latin specialist terminology is also taught. The Department also provides Czech courses for foreign students, and organises the teaching of integrated language courses and specialised subjects in cooperation with the appropriate faculty departments. Twice a year, the DFL organises an international TOEFL exam in English and since 2002 holds intensive preparatory courses for this exam.

In 2002/2003, the Department introduced a year-long intensive study programme of English especially aimed at students who graduated from secondary school. The Department has acquired accreditation for this from the Czech Ministry of Education.

An important part of the Department is the multimedia Self-Access Centre in the building of the MU Rector's Office, in which students and university staff have access to materials, learning programmes, textbooks, dictionaries, worksheets, video programmes, CD-ROM, DVD and satellite that serve to expand their knowledge of both everyday and special-purpose language. The study room gives students an opportunity for independent study over and beyond the obligatory curriculum.

The teachers from the Department carry out research activities and take part in conferences at home and abroad, and also in grant projects. In 2003, the main grant project was "The interdisciplinary multi-media and computer language programmes and courses for MU Students with an emphasis on tutorial approach to teaching" under the Transformation and Development Projects of the Czech Ministry of Education. International co-operation between the Department and the University of Aberystwyth in Wales is supported by a grant from the SOCRATES programme and is continuing successfully.

In 1997, the Department was admitted to CercleS, an international organisation of European language departments. The Department was active during the foundation of the Czech and Slovak Association of Language Centres at Universities (CASAJC). The Association became a regular member of CercleS in January 2001. This association became a full member of CercleS in January 2001. The mission of the association is to support the education and research of foreign languages at universities on the basis of modern didactic methods. In the academic year 2003/04, selected teachers of the Department cooperated within the CercleS in the pilot project of European Language Portfolio testing for universities.

Also in 2003, the Department continued in its close cooperation with the British Council. In recent years, the British Council has given DFL significant support with its grants, and made it possible for selected teachers of English to become national instructors of ESP (English for Specific Purposes). The British Council also initiated the establishment of the new professional organisation AMATE (Association of Methodologists – Association of Teacher Educators), in which the teachers of English from DFL take part.

The Department of Foreign Languages currently has 60 employees, of which 6 are foreigners teaching English at the various faculties of Masaryk University.