

## The Language Centre (a retrospective and prospective survey)

**The Language Centre of *Spiru Haret* University** (hereinafter LC) has witnessed a significant evolution in its reputation as an educational and cultural institution, at both national and international levels. Since the June 2002 opening, the Centre managerial team has regarded its activity as a response to the requirements instructed by the present times in terms of the enlarging of and specialization in the plurilingual communication process. Lining up with the globalization- and multiculturalism-related phenomena, the Centre aims to extend and concentrate on *learning foreign languages* through intensive teaching/learning means, which will add on and strengthen the foreign languages learning at pre-, -post- and university levels.

It is not to ignore the fact that our managerial team has paid attention to the changes in the employment market within the context of Romania accession into the European Union in 2007, as well as an already integrated country. Thus, the perspectives of insertion of the Romanian citizens into the national and international labor markets have expanded many times, as the people holding linguistic competence certificates (English, French, German) will find employment in various fields.

The range of positions in need for English, French and German speakers has widened in the economic, trading, medical, law, political and cultural sectors. The need for such people who have a good command of the languages above is surging at the level of the European institutions (see Brussels, Luxembourg, Strasbourg), within the joint companies or the foreign companies located in or outside Romania. Here is why the organization of such courses of dynamic, modern and flexible foreign languages in an institutional framework, under the sponsorship of higher education institutions, i.e. *Spiru Haret* University, is an essential prerequisite.

The goal of LC has been and is still manifold. It takes into account all the acquisition levels of foreign languages, by providing a wide range of module-based courses for beginners, intermediate and advanced learners. The teaching activity is based on a coherent curricular planning, which assures the continuity of the acquisition process by allowing the student to shift from one level or module to another.

Differentiated testing will establish the language knowledge level of each student; these tests will check on the lexical, grammatical and conversational abilities of the student, and they will build as the input that every student brings into a certain module. The goal that the student mentions at the beginning is a criterion in the placement tests for levels and groups of study. Mid-term tests will be given to monitor the progress made by the students.

The modules generally last for three months and include bi-weekly seminars of 90 minutes, amounting to 30 hours. There are also 6-, 12- and 18-hour modules for one-on-one study or small groups, depending on the interest of the candidates. The list of the languages to be taught comprises English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Japanese and Chinese.

The LC managerial strategy stands out by its openness to cooperating with academic institutions in the countries where the above languages are official. These two-way agreements are beneficial for the students who will be granted certificates of an international validity, following a four-skill assessment. The decision makers are the examination boards

from the academic institution in the respective linguistic community (British, American, French, etc). To this end, our Centre has developed strong relations with the *English Philology Institute of Michigan* (USA), based on a partnership contract with the *Hellenic-American Union* (2002-2006), where the students were granted the ECCE Certificates (for competence in English) and ECPE (for excellence in English).

Another reputable cooperation is the one that the English Department has with the British Council in Bucharest, the main organizer of the Cambridge exams. The LC is an authorized testing centre for the ECL tests (certificate of competence in modern languages) and Toefl (testing EFL, 2010-2012). According to the contract concluded with the International Council of Chinese Studies in China, our course in Chinese language has been taught by a native speaker, between 2014 and 2016.

The audience for the LC is extremely varied, among which there are *Spiru Haret* University students. Our classes have always drawn a rising number of other interested people of a wide spectrum of age and professional background, thanks to an exceptional caliber of teaching methods and materials (books for different levels, published by the Cambridge and Michigan universities, along with CDs, audio and video tapes, DVDs) aimed at an assortment of groups, from individual to large numbers. The teaching materials have been supplemented with exercises and tests drafted within LC and by the Faculty of Letters.

An important contribution is brought by the team of young teachers, holders of master and/or PhD diplomas, besides teaching certificates issued by British and American supervisors following yearly instruction courses. They also have ECL certificates, granted for a large variety of languages they have been licensed for.

The LC of *Spiru Haret* University has accommodated an impressive count of beginner, as well as intermediate and advanced students in their intent to advance their language skills in languages for special purposes. The quality of the teaching methodology and the strict selection of students have prompted a high percentage of students with good and very good grades. A tangible consequence is that these people have succeeded to find better employment in the country and abroad, job promotions, etc.

Our Centre has benefitted from its location within the downtown headquarters of *Spiru Haret* University, which provides a convenient study environment, along with additional advantages, such as an easier access to the classroom, to the Faculty of Letters' library and to the multi-media labs.

In a nutshell, the intensive teaching activities conducted up to present have had a notable progress in foreign languages knowledge, visible in the training of USH students as well as the post-university instruction of adults from sundry professional sectors.

General Director  
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