

Book Review



**Tichy, Ellen & Ilse, Viktoria (eds.) (2014):
Deutsch in Mittelosteuropa nach 1989. 25
Jahre Germanistikstudiengänge,
Deutschlehrerausbildung, DaF-Lehrwerke
und DaF-Unterricht. Frankfurt am Main:
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Reviewed by Krisztina Sebestyén²⁸

We know that nowadays English is the lingua franca in Europe but it wasn't so many years ago. There are many countries in Central and Eastern Europe, in which German language had an important role beside Russian in the Soviet era because "German was the only Western language, which was an official language of the state in the Eastern bloc" (p. 72.). Nowadays English is the first foreign language in these countries too, but German has a significant role as well. This volume is also about the actual role – after the political changing – of the German language in the following eight countries of Central and Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Estonia, Poland, Moldavia, Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

The volume was edited by Ellen Tichy, who is a teacher at the Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu and Viktoria Ilse, a research worker at the Ludwigsburg University of Education. The volume collects 18 papers with total 23 authors from these eight countries. The number of the papers is not equal from each country. There are one paper about Estonia and the Czech Republic; two-two papers about Bulgaria, Moldova, and Slovakia; three-three about Poland and Romania and four papers about Hungary. The topics of these papers are the followings: study of Germanistic, teacher training in German as a foreign language, German as a foreign language course and exercise books, foreign languages in the schools, as well as German as foreign and technical language teaching (p. 6.). But not all of these topics are discussed concerning every country in this volume.

²⁸ Krisztina Sebestyén, University of Debrecen, Debrecen (Hungary), kriszti.se@gmail.com

The case of Bulgaria is a good example for highlighting the main topic of this book. This country is the only one whose papers are about German as a “medical” language. It is important in teaching German as foreign language in Bulgaria to learn terminology and to talk about special country-information because the aim is to reach proficiency in German and – if it is possible – to work in Germany after the university (p. 14.).

Opposite to Bulgaria, it is important to know more foreign languages in Estonia. It is prosperous to learn two languages in elementary school and then at least one more in secondary school. These languages are Estonian or Russian – it depends on the teaching language of the school –, than English and in the most cases German as a third foreign language for the students (p. 46-49.).

The main point concerning the German language in Poland is the teacher training of German as a foreign language. The teacher trainings welter at the universities and in the “foreign language colleges” (p. 55.). The universities provide philological and theoretical trainings meanwhile the colleges offer practical trainings. The main difference is between the two types of institutions in the Bachelor-Master system. The teachers with Bachelor degrees can teach in elementary schools while the teachers with Master degrees can teach in secondary schools too. There are more problems with the German language’s teaching and learning in Poland: (1) the quality of teaching German as a foreign language isn’t high enough, (2) the further education isn’t obligatory for the teachers and there are lots of course books on the market from which it isn’t easy to sort out the best ones (p. 64., 91.).

The case is the same in Estonia, and the proficiency of speaking more foreign languages is important in Moldova too. The reason is mostly that there are many foreign companies in the country and people need to know more foreign languages (p. 124.). German usually is the second or third foreign language in the schools and lots of students learn it at universities because it is obligatory to learn at least one foreign language at the universities in Moldova (p. 103.).

We can say more about foreign languages in Romania too because a significant German minority lives in this country. But there are a lot of people who learn German as a foreign language in the schools as well (p. 129-130.). The reason of this can be – similarly to Bulgaria – that lots of people go abroad for better working conditions and salaries. Therefore it would be important to have different curricula for German as a mother language and for German as a foreign language but there isn’t any marked difference in the curricula in teacher training (p. 130-131.). The other problem is that only a few students attend teacher training and the quality of the training is quite low in this country (p. 150-151.).

It is important to learn more foreign languages in Slovakia as well. From 2011 there has been a rule that the students must learn English firstly in elementary school (p. 188.). Another foreign language is also obligatory in this country from the 6th class. The students learn two foreign languages in grammar schools too (p. 189.). Differently from the previous countries the authors from Slovakia mention the situation of the course books on German as a foreign language. The main interesting thing is that all of the books (Slovakian or international, etc.) are allowed to be used but the Slovakian ones are for free while the others are not (p. 170.). The other difference from the previously mentioned countries is that there is a paper which is about course book evaluation.

The next country is the Czech Republic, which has only one paper in this volume. This is about the situation of German as a foreign language among the other languages. German is not so popular as it had been many years ago in this country and the students have German as a second or third foreign language in the schools (p. 203.). This situation is similar to the Estonian and the Moldavian cases.

The last four papers are about Hungary in this volume. We can read that the teacher training is philological – just like in Poland – and the Bachelor-Master system is used in Hungary too but from 2013 there is an undivided system of the teacher training as well (p. 210.). As in the other countries in this volume, German can be the second foreign language after English and this means that there are lots of course books on the book market (p. 248.). These can be national and international books as well (p. 251.) but there are no price differences (like in Slovakia). As in one of the Slovakian papers we can read about course book evaluations concerning Hungary too, but it is another difference among the course books: are the books used for learning grammar or are they used for practising communication (p. 251.)? Grammar proficiency is quite important in the foreign language exams for example in high school graduation or in other language exams (p. 229., 265.). There is an interesting difference between the Hungarian foreign language learning methods: it is not the same method if the student learns for a general exam or he/she learns for a technical language exam. Needless to say it can be an advantage on the labour market to complete at least one of these examinations (p. 233-234.).

As a summary the followings can be said: it is an interesting volume about the situation of the German language in eight countries after the political changing. There isn't a uniform sketch for the introduction of all the countries that means the papers cannot be compared with each other fully. We can read the main characteristic points of the situation of the German language's learning and teaching methods. In each country something else is important so this diversity is more interesting than the well calculated rows of the standpoints. This volume can be recommended for scientists who would like to get a line

on this topic but this volume can be a good beginning for a comparison among the countries too.