Tutored Online Language Courses

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The Institute for Language and Preparatory Studies at Charles University in Prague (ILPS CU) is the only educational centre in the Czech Republic that systematically concerns itself with both the general and specific aspects of language and the specialized preparation of foreigners for studies at Czech universities. In 2004 the institute established the Laboratory of Distant Studies in order to coordinate the development of distant courses. We were introduced to everything this institution has to offer CU students, and not only them, by PhDr. Mgr. Petr Hercik, director of the Laboratory of Distant Studies.



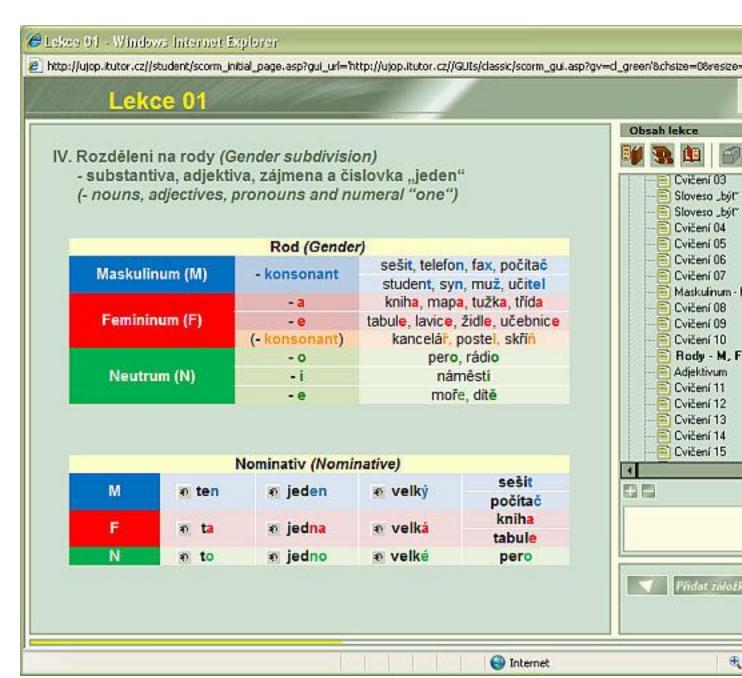
Irrespective of the instruction form, who are your courses primarily intended for?

ILPS CU courses are primarily intended for foreign students who are preparing for studies at Czech universities. A one-year, two-semester Czech course focuses on building-up all language skills and is complemented with instruction of special subjects focused on economics, humanities, technical, natural and medical sciences. Courses are carried out in ILPS study centres in Prague – Hloubětín, Poděbrady and Mariánské Lázně, from the academic year 2010/11 in the Krystal Centre in Prague.

Can foreigners who are not preparing to enter a university also enrol in these courses?

In addition to the preparatory courses, ILPS also offers whole-year, semester and short-term intensive Czech courses intended for the wide **public**. These are six-week, evening and individual courses, preparatory exam courses for applicants for permanent residency in the Czech Republic and Czech Language Certificate Exams. ILPS CU represents Charles University as a full-fledged and exclusive member of <u>ALTE</u> (The Association of Language Testers in Europe) for the Czech Republic and offers **Czech Language Certificate Exams for Foreigners** for four knowledge levels: A1, A2, B1 and B2. (http://ujop.cuni.cz/cce)

Czech language summer courses, the Summer School of Slavonic Studies and a Czech Language Compatriots Course in Dobruška take place in July and August.



Grammatical genders presentation

Do you also offer courses of foreign languages for Czech speaking students?

ILPS provides English language instruction at the Faculty of Science, CU through both face-to-face and distant learning instruction. English, Spanish, French, German, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Mongolian and Arabic language courses are offered to the public. Besides preparation for the PET, FCE and CAE international English certificates, ILPS also offers its own standardized English language exam for Czech state employees.

Besides face-to-face instruction, you also offer online Czech courses. How are they organised?

In addition to face-to-face instruction, at the beginning of the 21st century we followed the latest trend in education and started developing **e-learning courses**. At first, English online courses for Czech speaking students were developed. We now offer courses for pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate and FCE students. A course for elementary English will be available the next academic year; we also offer a Business English course.

In 2004 the Laboratory of Distant Studies was established in order to coordinate the development of distant courses at ILPS CU and a decision was made to prepare **Czech courses**, which is the main goal of the institute. The institute entered the International E-learning Association. Our first course resulted from the actual/current needs of foreign students who, for different reasons, were unable to start their studies on time. We developed an Introductory Course of Czech Language for Foreigners, a multimedial version of a face-to-face audio-oral course where students are introduced to Czech as a foreign language. It had been successfully offered until this year when it was substituted with a <u>Breakthrough Czech</u>

<u>Online Course</u> (A1 level, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – CEFR). A course at the A2 level of the CEFR, is currently being prepared. Compliance with CEFR is ensured – authors of the course are experienced specialists in the field of Czech as a foreign language and closely cooperate with our Research and Test Centre.



Listening practice

What sets your courses apart from the competition?

The most typical feature of our e-learning courses is the fact that these are online courses that are **tutor-assisted** at all times – either solely online or blended learning, which is a combination of an online course and face-to-face conversational tutorials. The course remains accessible after the period of tutor assistance until the end of the respective academic year (each course has a fixed study period that is evaluated together with other features in trial pilot courses). For online courses without tutorials, enrolment is available any time during the academic year. Course studies are interrupted for the academic holiday.

An important and unique feature of our courses is the fact that they are **not only system-led but tutor-led too**. The system monitors if students successfully complete at least 60% of the content on each evaluated page in a lesson before continuing to the next lesson. Noting the fact that students can display correct answers in exercises, studying must be monitored by a tutor as well. It is achieved through progress tests that are limited to one session only (unlike the lessons) – students who fail the test must contact their tutor to discuss their mistakes. These tests are placed after every third lesson. It is very important because students must follow the course in the correct order, not randomly – only spiral

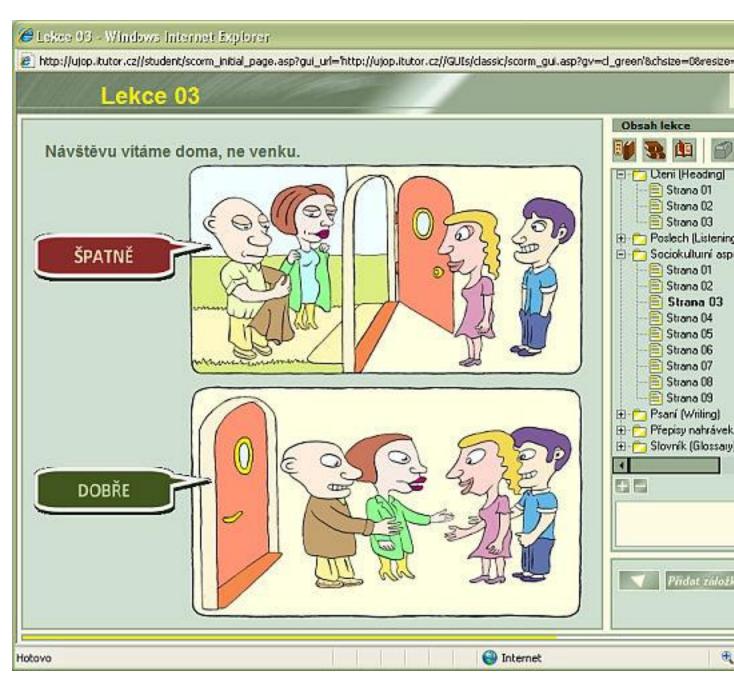
learning can ensure an effective course. On the other hand, experience from e-learning specialists shows that students themselves demand a certain amount of pressure to make sure they do not leave the course before the end.



Vocabulary presentation

What do these courses include?

Course contents focus on vocabulary and grammar presentation and practice, reading and listening comprehension, writing and socio-cultural aspects. We employ the most comprehensively structured, clear presentations through the medium of charts, tables and specific use of designating colours (e.g. to distinguish Czech grammatical genders), and video-recordings. The types of interactive exercises correspond with modern e-learning trends. Illustrations, photos and audio-recordings are all made by professionals. Courses include tapescripts of all recordings, dictionaries and grammar books. Study materials and manuals can also be downloaded in PDF format from the institute's website (http://ujop.cuni.cz/ldv), which also includes our learning management address (http://ujop.itutor.cz) where you can try a Demo English Lesson or a demo for the Czech language for Foreigners course. Username and password is "demo".



Socio-cultural aspects presentation (Lucie Kettnerová)