

Czech courses for seniors: you can learn a language at any age



Photo: Jan Suchánek / Centrum pro cizince JMK

Entire families came to us in the refugee waves, including Ukrainians in retirement age. For seniors, it is oftentimes a great challenge to get to know the new culture, surroundings, and especially the language. The Centre for Foreigners of the South Moravian region opened special language courses just for them.

Establish friendships

The courses are aimed at introducing the seniors to the language, but also to give them the opportunity to talk to others in the class, meet new people and establish friendships. Courses are very practical and focus mainly on conversations. Clients will automatize certain phrases which they can then start using in real life and in that way participate in society.

Basic mistakes

Petra Lipenská, a teacher of one of these courses for seniors,

focuses on basic mistakes that cause miscommunication. But she does not focus on grammar too deeply; she believes that intricate grammar rules are not important for everyday life. She also practices pronunciation with the students.

Teach by playing

"I try to eliminate fear of speaking. I prefer to 'teach by playing', where apart from traditional materials I incorporate various games and pictures. I think that it's better to know the basics well and then build up by systematically enhancing the vocabulary. In this sense, my approach to the course is not that different from other courses with adults, just the flow of the classes is slower," she says.

Connected to memories

What is typical for senior courses is not only the slower tempo of lessons, but also the topics.

"Seniors sometimes want to talk about things that are connected to their memories, to family, and with their life. They oftentimes have a great need to share what they've experienced. In these ways the lessons can differ from those with younger people," says Radim Ošmera, course methodologist.

Practical topics

Teachers also focus on practical topics. Students learn how to describe food, clothing, and similar dialogues. They also learn what they can find in Brno, which tram goes where, and how much does a ticket cost. They practice real Czech, which waits for them the moment they leave the classroom.

Yearning to learn

"I really like their directness, their yearning to learn, playfulness and diligence. I appreciate their care and effort. I really admire

them," teacher Lipenská says about her students. According to her, they always have their homework, and they aren't afraid to ask clarifying questions during the classes. "I think that the most important thing is that I am interested in their world, and I am trying to show them ours, so they can find their place in it. The courses have great meaning, and I am happy that we are doing them," she adds.

The third Czech language course

The Centre for Foreigners JMK will be opening already the third Czech language course for seniors from Ukraine this March. The lessons will take place every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon.

Centre for Foreigners
www.cizincijmk.cz

