

8. Teaching English to Adults in the context of Slovak Educational System

Given the fact that an adult learner of English is every learner who learns English and is over 18 years old, in Slovakia, there is a variety of possibilities for educating this age group.

First of all, it needs to be pointed that in the Slovak educational context, learners of English learn English as a foreign language (EFL) in contrast with some other countries where English is spoken as a second language and their learners learn English as a second language (ESL) this makes a huge difference when it comes to the amount of input and output students are exposed to. Since English is not officially spoken in Slovakia, Slovak students need to seek other opportunities to learn and to speak English. English as a Second language and English as a Foreign Language require different strategies for teaching. Most people don't know the difference between the two and don't consider the difference when they set out to teach English. It's important to know what each one is, so that the different needs of the students can be met. EFL is where the teacher teaches English to students in a country where English isn't the native language. For example, a Chinese student learning English in China would fall under this category. On the other hand, ESL is where English is taught to students in a country where English is the primary language. An example of this is where a Chinese student is learning English in Australia.¹

In Slovakia, various institutions offer language education for adult learners. Among the most important are universities where adult students may take a philology or non-philology major (the second being more common). If a student decides for a philology major, then, English is obviously taught as a core subject whereas in non-philology majors, students can still take the opportunity and learn English as a side subject along with their major. Universities sometimes open the so-called centres for further education where they offer language courses for the public. These courses may be attended by the public, regardless of being the student of the university.

For students who either completed their university education long time ago, or simply decided not to take university studies, there are various options coming from language schools. Based on the ownership, language schools may be divided into two major categories, the state and the private language schools. The state language schools are the language schools which are funded by the state (or by local governments). Students who decide to attend these schools pay a schooling fee, however, this fee is quite low compared to the private school as a part of operational expenses is financed from the local government's budget. State language schools are entitled to organize the so-called state examinations. State examinations are final summary examinations which are taken after completion of a set of courses in state language schools which may take several years. There are several types of state examinations (for further reference, see *vyhláška Ministerstva školstva, vedy, výchovy a športu č.321/2008 Z.z.*)²

¹ <https://www.brighthubeducation.com/esl-teaching-tips/127984-the-difference-between-esl-and-efl/>

² Vyhláška č. 321/2008 Z. z

1. **Základná štátna jazyková skúška (basic state language examination):** may be taken after the equivalent of 525 – 600 hours of schooling. Language level: B2 (CEFR)
 2. **Odborná štátna jazyková skúška (professional state language exam),** e.g. Business English. This exam may be taken after the equivalent of 315 – 380 hours of schooling. Language level: C1 (CEFR). Professional state language examinations are the extensions and may be taken after completing the Basic (B2) or General (C1) examinations.
 3. **Všeobecná štátna jazyková skúška (General State Language Examination).** This exam may be taken after the equivalent of 840 - 980 hours of schooling. Language level: C1- C2 (CEFR).
 4. **Špeciálna štátna jazyková skúška (Special State Language Examination)** taken as an extension after completing the General State Examination after approximately 105 – 140 hours of schooling. These examinations are most frequently taken in translation and / or interpretation. Some state language schools decided to extend their portfolio of exams and, along with the state examinations, they offer preparation courses for international language examinations, e.g. Cambridge English Exams or IELTS (for more details see www.cambridgeenglish.org)³
- Students are admitted to state language schools after completing admission tests (except for the 1st grade where students are accepted without taking an exam because they are complete beginners).

Language education in Slovakia is also provided by private institutions which take various forms from small “language agencies” to big private language schools. The “language agencies” organize most of their classes at their clients’ premises. Overall, private language schools organize language classes of various levels and types of English based on students’ actual needs and the requirements of the market. They may also prepare their students for international examinations. Students are admitted to these schools after completing an admission test. As for the number of students, private language schools prefer to organize small groups or, quite often, they deliver one-to-one classes. Some of the private language schools, usually the high-standard ones are members of international chains of language schools and may operate as their franchise companies (e.g. International House Bratislava is a part of International House World). Quite a special institution is British Council, the institution established by the British government in various countries around the world to help develop English language and culture. British Council provides language courses and administrate international exams. They also work on international projects in different fields.

Activities of language schools are to some extent supervised by the Ministry of Education. For more details see “*Koncepcia vzdelávania v jazykových školách*” or “*Koncepcia vzdelávania v jazykových školách – Akčný plán 2017 - 2020*”⁴

One of the forms of language education in Slovakia is freelance language education. This form may be done by individual teachers who are appropriately qualified and have a licence for the business. These teachers may have their own small classes or deliver most of their classes in clients’ premises.

Questions:

1. What is the difference between EFL and ESL?
2. What institutions currently provide language education in Slovakia?
3. Comment on language education at university level.
4. Characterize language schools and their functioning in Slovakia. They are of two types language schools. Name the types.

³ <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org>

⁴ <https://www.minedu.sk/vzdelavanie-v-jazykovych-skolach/>

5. What are the types of state exams organized by state language schools? Briefly characterize each of them and give the approximate number of hours.
6. Give an example of a world chain of language schools.
7. Which official documents direct the activities of language schools in Slovakia?