

## **LATVIAN LANGUAGE - LATVIAN STUDIES AT ELTE**

Teaching and researching Baltic Languages - Lithuanian and Latvian - commenced at the Faculty of Humanities of Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem (ELTE) in the early 1990s. At the initiative of Prof. András Zoltán, the then Head of the Department of Russian Philology, a Lithuanian lectorate and a Latvian lectorate were established in 1991 and in 1993 respectively. Besides the language classes, the range of theoretical courses in Baltic Studies gradually widened, i.e. linguistics, historical linguistics, and cultural history.

Prof. Endre Bojtár had laid the foundations for Baltic Studies in Hungary, and he had been its sole representative for decades; his expertise, his work, and his publications about the Baltic states have been instrumental in the education of Latvian language and culture.

Our Institute has maintained close and productive relationships with Latvian educational and research institutes. As part of this collaboration, our teachers and students regularly participate in the development of educational reference material (course books, dictionaries) and in translating Latvian literature to Hungarian, both of which pave the way for later research.

The research of Latvian language, as one of the languages of the Amber Road crossing Szombathely, was initiated by János Pusztay, Head of the Department of Uralic Studies at the Dániel Berzsenyi College in Szombathely. Laima Žihare, a journalist, was the first Latvian language lecturer to serve in Szombathely. In 1993, Daina Nītiņa, a Professor of the University of Latvia, and a corresponding member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, took up the functions of Latvian language lecturer in Szombathely. Prof. András Zoltán, the then Head of the Department of Baltic and Eastern Slavic Philology, invited Prof. Nītiņa to teach Latvian at ELTE as well. Hence, in Hungary, two Latvian Studies center operated at the same time: in Szombathely and in Budapest. (In 2013 the teaching of Latvian in Szombathely stopped unfortunately.)

The following Latvian language lecturers worked in Hungary: Daina Nītiņa (1993-1996), Dagmāra Kokina (1996-1998), Inga Klēvere (1999-2002), Liene Jūrmale (2002-2006), Inese Vasiljeva (2006-2007), Lāsma Ģibiete (2007-2009). After the economic recession the post of the Latvian language lecturer was eliminated due to the economizing measures; thus, in 2009, Ričardas Petkevičius, Lithuanian language lecturer, took on the teaching of Latvian as well. In the spring semester of the 2013/2014 school year, Madara Mazjāne helped with teaching Latvian as a volunteer.

The aim of the Latvian language program at ELTE is to provide students with a sound knowledge of Latvian language and culture (which is little known in Hungary at present) so that they become professionals who can help raise awareness about Latvian culture and who can ably utilize their expertise in the fields of education, research, media, economy, or in ministries and public administration managing international relations with the EU member Baltic states.

A Latvian language book, authored by Daina Nītiņa and Aranka Lacházi, plays a central role in teaching Latvian, as well as a Latvian-Hungarian pocket dictionary, edited by Daina Nītiņa & reviewed by Aranka Laczházi, and a Latvian-Hungarian conversation book, authored by Inga Klēvere. Furthermore, Liene Jūrmale and Lāsma Ģibiete both prepared Latvian-Hungarian bilingual literature guides.

