

# WRITING A WELCOME MAGAZINE FOR INCOMING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: A GOOD PRACTICE FOR TEACHING PROCESS WRITING IN A LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT COURSE FOR ENGLISH TEACHER TRAINEES

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## **Abstract:**

The Faculty of Humanities at a Hungarian university did not have a magazine for incoming international students. A few years ago I invited the fourth-year English teacher trainees of a language development course to produce the manuscript for such a magazine to be published by the university by the following semester. The students decided to launch the project by anonymous voting and designed its structure together. They produced the texts based on the principles of recursive process writing through online cooperation and peer assessment in self-selected teams of three. Additionally, every student was asked to find an available and willing international student, to conduct an interview with them, and write it up for the magazine, also with feedback from their teams. The majority of the texts to be published were chosen by another anonymous group ballot at the end of the course. With Faculty support, 250 copies of the 52-page colour magazine were printed and distributed among the incoming international students at the start of the following semester. In this paper, I am sharing my experiences about this project as a recommended good practice.

**Keywords:** process writing, online cooperative writing, good practice, intercultural awareness raising, intercultural communication through interviews

## 1 Introduction

The number of incoming international students continuously increased over the 2010s at the Faculty of Humanities of Pázmány Péter Catholic University<sup>1</sup>, Hungary. They were then mostly Erasmus+ students, before the introduction of the now attractive Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship. The Faculty organised their welcome and ongoing support through mentors, special programmes, and courses on various features of the Hungarian culture, among others. Still, a magazine welcoming them and providing vital information related to their stay in Hungary, given as a welcome gift upon arrival, was noticeably missing.

For some time, I had entertained the idea that texts for the university's public English language communication could be written by English majors as part of their supervised course work, instead of producing texts for the sake of practice, read only by their professors. What could be a better communicative task than writing texts that are actually useful for English language communication between the university and outside parties, for example, on the university website pages? A welcome magazine could be another well-defined task. I just needed to find a course, probably a language development course for English majors, where such a task could fit in, and a group of students who were willing to take the challenge of such a course project.

After several semesters of my offer being declined by other groups, in September 2016 I invited twelve fourth-year teacher trainees of English as a foreign language, attending my C1-level language development course held four hours per week. I asked whether they would be interested in writing such a magazine, to be published if we achieved acceptable quality. It would be part of the course, with one 45-minute class each week dedicated to writing instruction, discussions, and project organisation issues. There would also be homework tasks involving planning, text drafting, editing, and peer evaluation. Altogether four texts would be written by each student, two chosen according to their preferences, and two others allocated to cover all the topics decided upon. Four teams would be formed with three students in each, and every student would be responsible for evaluating the other two students' texts in their teams through online cooperation. Students would then rewrite their own texts following peer and teacher feedback, that is, three readers each. As they had already learnt about process writing, this would be an opportunity to try it in practice, both receiving feedback on their four texts, and giving feedback on altogether eight other texts in their team.

Eventually, we would choose the best 30–40 of the 48 texts, again through anonymous voting, for the publication. I explained this alternative course plan in detail and asked the course members to think about it in their own time, and to discuss it among themselves by the following class. Then, an anonymous vote would decide if they were ready to launch the project or would rather reject the idea.

<sup>1</sup> Because this text discusses the development of a public university magazine, available online (Reményi, 2017), the institution name is not anonymised.

## 2 The Aims of the Project

The project had several aims. The practical aim was to produce the manuscript for a publishable magazine, including vital information about the courses and services offered by the university, the various university buildings and how to commute between them, public transport, phone cards, banking services, and entertainment possibilities. However, as this was a language development course as part of the students' course list, producing the magazine was only one of the aims. More importantly, the course had the following pedagogical aims:

- to develop students' writing skills through practice in journalistic prose;
- to show and lead teacher trainees through a hands-on process writing project;
- to develop cooperation through collaborative writing and peer evaluation;
- to do cooperative writing online, via Google Docs, with real-time co-editing and commenting by the team members, thus providing practice doing online work – this was before Covid, when producing texts through online cooperation was less of a commonplace routine;
- to challenge stereotypes – it turned out during the planning phase that group members were affected by social stereotypes (see below), so one of the aims was to challenge such stereotypes first by discussing them in class, and then by asking group members to sit down with an Erasmus student for an interview and write it up for the magazine;
- to develop students' speaking skills in real-life contexts while preparing and conducting the interviews.

Process writing was conceptualised following the guidelines by Seow (2002), who emphasises the organic nature of guiding students along their journey to produce a written text, instead of the more traditional teaching technique of concentrating only on the product, i.e., the final text. Process writing includes the steps of *planning* (pre-writing), followed by *drafting* – *revising* – *editing* in a recursive way, with rewriting being done on the basis of self-evaluation, peer- and teacher feedback, and, finally, *publishing*. In this case, the latter could result in an actual publication, provided the quality of the texts met the requirements and the timeline was strictly followed. Both Seow (2002) and Hyland (2009) emphasise the recursive, interactive, and social nature of the process approach, which was to be followed in this project, with the ultimate goal to achieve the best possible text versions – referred to as “performance-oriented” by Seow (2002, p. 316). In the following sections, I will describe the details of the project according to the steps of process writing.

## 3 The Planning Phase

### 3.1 Collaborative Decision Making

In the second class, we voted anonymously to decide if the group was ready to undertake the project in the following way. First, I summarised the plan as described in the previous class, then asked the question “Would you like the group to write a magazine in this course?”, distributed paper slips, and asked students to write yes or no. My policy was that, unless the vote was a unanimous ‘yes’, I would not proceed with the project because even one or two students could become adversarial if they were forced to participate. However, as it turned out, the group members voted unanimously to launch the project.

Therefore, the project was launched immediately. As a first step, four teams of three were formed by self-selection, to work in collaboration throughout the course. I was hoping students had already contemplated this among themselves and, indeed, they came up with their team preferences right away.

As a second step, we started brainstorming the optimal structure of the magazine. We needed to decide what sections to include, and in which order. We needed to consider what types of information incoming international students would find important for their wellbeing in Hungary. We had to decide how long the texts should be, and what the possible and preferable genres were that readers would find enjoyable. We aimed to create a magazine that readers would be ready to read from cover to cover. That also meant envisaging who the Erasmus students were, what they were like, and what they would be interested in.

This first round of brainstorming by the newly formed teams was done using a starting-from-scratch, inductive approach, as some of the students might not even have seen a university magazine for international students beforehand. After they had reported their discussion results to the rest of the group, I showed them a few printed magazines that I had collected elsewhere, to serve as a basis for another round of team brainstorming session: students were asked to consider what aspects or texts they found useful in the magazines, and whether they found anything inspirational that they had not previously considered. They were also asked if they had noticed anything negative, such as overly long texts or an excessively official or authoritative tone.

By the end of the brainstorming session, the first version of the magazine’s structure was decided upon: there must be a section about their studies at the university, another one about Budapest, then one about Hungary, and there should be something about the Erasmus+ programme, as well as a welcome message at the beginning. Texts should be maximum 500 words long. Their homework was to list the working title of ten useful texts that should be included in our magazine, irrespective whether the student wished to write them or not. The list had to be sent to me a few days before the following class, and I would prepare a Google spreadsheet including the main sections we agreed on in class, incorporating all the suggestions from the homework topic lists and excluding repetitions and overlaps.

In the third class, the structure was discussed and finalised, and students were asked to volunteer to write their first two texts by writing their name on the shared online structure list next to the topics they would be happy to write about. Clashes over the most popular topics were solved with the possibility of writing alternative texts. Figure 1 shows the topic structure and the author name columns (this is the final, 14 December version; names are blurred). The plan was to distribute the remaining, less popular texts later as students' third and fourth texts. But after the second class, I decided that each student should write only one more text on one of the remaining texts, which meant that some texts remained unwritten and had to be dropped from the contents.

Figure 1. The Planned Structure and Topics with the Students Volunteering to Write Them (Student Names are Blurred); 14 December Version

1	Name of topic (genre) – default length: 500 words except intro	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Notes, comments (with your name)
2	1-2: after certain topics means up to 8 students can write about the topic				
3	Interview with a present Erasmus student (1,000 words)	everybody			Andrea: the interview will be placed somewhere inside the magazine
4	Opening article				
5	Visit info, site visit info, etc. bank account info				Andrea: here or at the end? Maybe 1 thing as this is needed
6	Studies				
7	The campuses of the University – where to find what	Carla Daria			
8	The Párizs campus – what is where	Carla Daria			
9	The Signaturn (Budaörs Square, Budapest) – what is where	Carla Daria			
10	The Targovits Building – what is where	Carla Daria			
11	The Budaörs campus – what is where	Carla Daria			
12	Moving around between the campuses	Carla Daria			
13	How to get to work	Carla Daria			
14	Academic life at Párizs: rules and regulations	Carla Daria			Andrea: a good informal student-to-student introduction is in
15	Programmes at the university during the spring term	Carla Daria			Andrea: we are waiting for the planned list of main programme
16	Best courses in English at Párizs	Carla Daria			Andrea: this topic is dropped
17	Study programmes at Párizs (BA, MA, teaching, doctoral)	Carla Daria			
18	Where to eat around the campuses	Carla Daria			
19	Life, programmes (culture, sports) around the campuses	Carla Daria			
20	The Erasmus office: contacts, etc.	Carla Daria			Andrea: you may want to contact the Erasmus office to write
21	The Student Union (re:)	Carla Daria			
22	Budaörs	Carla Daria			
23	Top ten tourist sights	Carla Daria			
24	Moving around in Budapest (buses transport info)	Carla Daria			
25	Relevant programmes in the spring 2017	Carla Daria			
26	Budaörs	Carla Daria			
27	Tourist programmes 1	Carla Daria			Andrea: write next to your name what you plan to cover
28	Tourist programmes 2	Carla Daria			Andrea: write next to your name what you plan to cover
29	Non-tourist programmes (where to go) 1	Carla Daria			Andrea: write next to your name what you plan to cover
30	Non-tourist programmes (where to go) 2	Carla Daria			Andrea: write next to your name what you plan to cover
31	Two things you must do before you leave	Carla Daria			Andrea: write next to your name what you plan to cover
32	Hungary	Carla Daria			
33	Hungarian culture 1	Carla Daria			Andrea: write next to your name what you plan to cover
34	Hungarian culture 2	Carla Daria			Andrea: write next to your name what you plan to cover
35	National holidays (by month): what is March the 15th etc.	Carla Daria			
36	A book review on a recent book in English	Carla Daria			Andrea: write next to your name what you plan to cover
37	Review of a website article in English and in related to Hungary	Carla Daria			Andrea: write next to your name what you plan to cover
38	Review of an app or game (which is in B and is related to Hungary)	Carla Daria			Andrea: write next to your name what you plan to cover
39	Places to visit in Hungary for tourists 1	Carla Daria			Andrea: write next to your name what you plan to cover
40	Places to visit in Hungary for tourists 2	Carla Daria			Andrea: write next to your name what you plan to cover
41	Places to visit in Hungary for tourists 3	Carla Daria			Andrea: write next to your name what you plan to cover
42	Places to visit in Hungary: only locals know about 1	Carla Daria			Andrea: write next to your name what you plan to cover
43	Places to visit in Hungary: only locals know about 2	Carla Daria			Andrea: write next to your name what you plan to cover
44	Hungarian food – a recipe	Carla Daria			
45	Best Hungarian	Carla Daria			
46	Erasmus	Carla Daria			
47	Erasmus programme data at Párizs	Carla Daria			Andrea: you may want to contact the Erasmus office to write
48	Erasmus programme data in Hungary	Carla Daria			
49	The Erasmus programme in the EU	Carla Daria			
50	Only pages: maps, vital phone numbers, websites, etc.	Carla Daria			

I changed my mind about the topic of the fourth texts after an unexpected discussion at the end of the second class about the Erasmus students for whom we were writing the magazine. Some group members thought that Erasmus students must be inquisitive, open-minded, and confident enough if they decided to spend a semester in another country. However, others expressed unexpected negative opinions: “Those students are coming to Hungary only for the parties, the cheap drinks and entertainment.” “They may not come to study or to better understand our culture.” “Those students are coming to Hungary because their Erasmus application was not accepted by a more popular country.” To better understand these negative stereotypes, it should be mentioned that most group members

had not had a course together with Erasmus students at all because English teacher training courses were unpopular among Erasmus students, due to them being held on a campus outside Budapest. Also, not all group members agreed with these stereotypes in the first place. Two group members were also acting as Erasmus mentors at the time, actively involved in international student support, and another group member had been on an Erasmus scholarship abroad earlier.

Honestly, I was grateful for both the positive and the negative opinions: it was wonderful to see that the participants were ready to discuss whatever they were thinking. I found it fortunate that those stereotypes surfaced in the discussion because that meant that they could be tackled: I realised that group members needed to get acquainted with Erasmus students. I turned this idea into a task by asking each student to conduct a face-to-face interview with an international student and write up the interview in 1,000 words as their fourth text, supported by online feedback from their team. I chose the interview with the concept of an intercultural encounter in mind, as a step in the students' intercultural competence development. The idea was partly inspired by Ildikó Lázár's works, including Divéki and Lázár (2024), Huber-Kriegler et al., (2003), Lázár (2020), and Lázár (2022).

Thus, altogether 48 texts were produced (including 12 interviews), with 30 to 40 of them to fit into the planned 48-page magazine. I told the course participants that I would like to delay the application for financial and organisational support from the Faculty leadership to have the magazine published in print (and also online) until I was convinced that the project was going to be worthwhile in terms of both text quality and timekeeping. I set the end of October as the deadline for that decision.

### 3.2 The Timeline

The first version of the timeline for the project was presented to students in the second class and further developed as we proceeded. The final version of the timeline looked like this:

- 15 September 2016: course starts.
- First part of October: first two texts are written and peer-evaluated; interviewees are found, interview dates are agreed upon.
- End of October: interviews are conducted; decision whether to apply for faculty support is made; third texts are allocated.
- Mid-November: interviews are written up; third texts are written.
- End of November: final version (version 2 or version 3) of all four texts is prepared.
- Last class in December: everybody reads all the texts, group voting on texts, title of magazine is finalised.
- Before Christmas: manuscript is submitted to second reader; photos are ready.
- Early January: manuscript and photos are submitted for graphic design; negotiations on graphic design are held; layout with text and photos is completed.
- 11 January: page-proof correction list is submitted.
- 18 January: final manuscript goes to print.



- By 10 February: copies of the magazine arrive from the printer to the international office of the university, to be distributed to arriving Erasmus students during the orientation week.

## 4 Drafting – Revising – Editing (Recursively)

### 4.1 Working on the Texts

Each participant drafted, revised, edited, and finalised three descriptive texts and the interview through online peer cooperation in three-student teams, supported by teacher evaluation. Two topics were self-chosen. Some topics were more popular than others, for example, the greeting article, “Top ten tourist sites”, and “Ten things you must do before you leave” were chosen by three participants each. Clashes over the most popular topics were solved in the following way: up to three students could pick the same topic and write a text each, and the best would be voted for by the group. In fact, this is what happened in the case of one of the topics: two texts were written and one of them was chosen in December by popular vote. Alternatively, a competing party could step back early and pick another text to write – this turned out to be the case with some other topics.

Twelve of the unpopular texts were allocated at the end of October as the third text to be written by each participant. These included “Moving around between the campuses” (the explanation how to commute by public transport between the various university campuses and buildings) or “Libraries” (which libraries are available at university and also for the public). Other unpopular topics were simply dropped, including “Programmes in the spring term at the university” and “Review on a recent book in English.”

As far as giving peer feedback on texts is concerned, team cooperation was supported with guidelines on what to focus on to maximise effectiveness, on the one hand, and to take personal sensitivities into account, on the other. At the beginning of the course, I suggested using holistic evaluation to group members; however, that did not produce useful comments from peers. Therefore, I developed a set of analytic guidelines, focusing on content and task achievement, text structure, coherence/cohesion and style issues, and downplaying the importance of accuracy correction. (It remained the teacher’s job to work on grammatical and vocabulary accuracy, spelling, and punctuation issues.) Peer evaluators were asked not to make general comments but encouraged to be as unambiguous as possible, and asked to suggest specific ways how to modify the text at the commented point. Each peer evaluator was expected to provide at least three comments on each text, following the criteria in the guidelines.

For example, Figure 2 shows an excerpt from a version 1 text on “Two Hungarian spring traditions” with comments in the right-hand column by the other two team members (‘Megjegyzés’ means *Note*). Here, the other team members are providing comments and suggestions about the structure, cohesion, content and vocabulary,

some followed by a confirmation or a further question by the author (Notes 2, 3, 6, 8, 10). For example, Note 1 recommends changing the linking word *however*, while Note 7 includes a suggestion about the rearrangement of the paragraph structure and of content addition: “Here you are talking about beverages[,] maybe you can mention some dishes and then in the next paragraph you should write about the masks. Maybe they are worth their own paragraph.”

Figure 2. Peer Comments on a Version 1 Text; Excerpt (Names are Blurred)

**Busójárás**

The so-called **Busójárás** (Boosho-ya-rush) is probably one of the most well-known **carneval** in Hungary due to its reputation of being flamboyant and vibrant. According to a legend, the catholic citizens with Croatian-origins of **Mohács** (a town in South-Hungary) scared off the invading Turkish army by wearing grotesque masks and wearing big woolly cloaks. Also, there is another story which claims that the **Busó(s)** wanted to chase only the winter away. But, some locals say that the fest, in fact, is an occasion of paying homage to the battle of **Mohács** of 1526. However it was, one thing is for sure, **Busójárás** is celebrated every year in February to entertain people coming from all over the country.

The celebration lasts for six days and includes folk music, dancing and parading. So, a lot of things that an Erasmus student should try while staying here in Hungary. For example, as you are getting familiar with Hungarian vernacular culture, you should start the fest with some folklore dancing. To boost your mood, **Pálinka** (fruit brandy) or mulled wine (optional) tasting is strongly advisable. Besides tasting better and better beverages, let's not forget about eating either. Not only can you have your favourite Hungarian soups and donuts but also you can try a typical Croatian bean-soup which will **guaranteedly** blow your mind. If you want to feel like a local, you can choose from the wide range of masks available at the festival. All of them are made by self-organized groups of **Busós** who pass their tradition of mask carving from father to son.

**Busójárás** is must see while you are here in Hungary. It is not only us who say this. Check out the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of the UNESCO where the traditions of **Busójárás** were inscribed on in 2009.

**Locsolkodás (Sprinkling)**

**Peer Comments:**

- Meggyes [1]:** However it is not the best linking word. (As I know it means Although from etymology...)
- Meggyes [2]:** I meant to write: "Although it's not". What is your suggestion?
- Meggyes [3]:** a busó
- Meggyes [4]:** Even if we don't know how it was
- Meggyes [5]:** Maybe you should add that this is a kind of carnival in the very first sentence so that the reader has a clearer opinion about this.
- Meggyes [6]:** Yes, maybe carnival is a better word than fest.
- Meggyes [7]:** Here you are talking about beverages maybe you can mention some dishes and then in the next paragraph you should write about the masks. Maybe they are worth having their own paragraph.
- Meggyes [8]:** You are right. I should write more about typical Hungarian dishes. I didn't want to write a lengthy paragraph since we have a limited space in the magazine. How long do you think it should be? As far as I know, we agreed on 400 words.
- Meggyes [9]:** You should correct this sentence with the following, or I am not sure if this sentence is needed or not.
- Meggyes [10]:** I am referring here to UNESCO. What is your suggestion?
- Meggyes [11]:** not only us but also the UNESCO

This version of the text underwent several re-writing and editing rounds, and Figure 3 shows how this text finally appeared in the published version. For example, the first version of the text – still containing mistakes – starts with the following two sentences:

The so-called Busójárás (Boosho-ya-rush) is probably one of the most well-known carnival in Hungary due to its reputation of being flamboyant and vibrant. According to a legend, the catholic citizens with Croatian-origins of Mohács (a town in South-Hungary) scared off the invading Turkish army by wearing grotesque masks and wearing big woolly cloaks.

In contrast, the published version, while content-wise almost identical, demonstrates enhanced syntactic and lexical complexity, and is also more grammatically accurate:



Busójárás (Booshaw-yah-rush) is probably one of the most well-known carnivals in Hungary due to its flamboyance. Legend has it that the Croatian citizens of Mohács (a town in South Hungary, 200 kilometres from Budapest) scared off the invading Ottoman army by wearing grotesque masks and big woolly cloaks.

Figure 3. The Published Version of the Text in Figure 2; Excerpt

## Two Hungarian spring traditions

### Busójárás (The coming of the Busó)

Busójárás (Booshaw-yah-rush) is probably one of the most well-known carnivals in Hungary due to its flamboyance. Legend has it that the Croatian citizens of Mohács (a town in South Hungary, 200 kilometres from Budapest) scared off the invading Ottoman army by wearing grotesque masks and big woolly cloaks. Another story claims that the Busó wanted to chase only the winter away. But, according to some locals, the feast is an occasion to pay homage to the Battle of Mohács (1526), in which the Ottoman army inflicted a crushing defeat on the Hungarian forces. However it was, Busójárás is celebrated every year to entertain people coming from all over the country. In 2017 it will be held between 23 and 28 February.

The Mohács festivities, featuring odd wooden masks, last for six days and include folk music, dancing and parading - in other words, a lot of things that an Erasmus student should experience while in Hungary. For example, as you are getting familiar with Hungarian traditional culture, you should start the feast with some

volunteers who pass their tradition of mask carving from father to son.

Busójárás is a must see while you are here in Hungary. It is not only us who say so. Check out the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, where the tradition of Busójárás was inscribed in 2009: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/lists>.

the girls of the village of marriage-age and poured the content of the bucket on them in order to help them preserve their chastity.

By now, the tradition has changed a lot, but the gist of locsolkodás remained the same. On Eastern Monday (17 April in 2017), women of all age wait for sprinklers, while decorating eggs with flower motifs. When lads arrive at the house, they are requested by



In most cases, the initial texts turned out to be quite different by the time they were revised once or twice. Often it was not the second but the third version that I read carefully to prepare it for a “final” editing by the author. This was followed by the review of an independent second reader.<sup>2</sup> After that, the authors corrected their texts again, and finally the page-proofs still needed some minor but careful corrections by the authors and myself before going to print. (Needless to say, I still found a few typos in the published version.) All rounds of improvements and corrections were useful not only for the practical purpose of the publication but also for getting participants acquainted with the process of preparing a manuscript for publication.

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Tamás Karáth for his careful editing work.

## 4.2 The Interviews

The interviews turned out to be probably the most interesting part of the project. I introduced the task with the conviction that to overcome negative generalisations and stereotyped views about another group of people, the best way is to get acquainted with someone belonging to that group. Despite some initial uncertainty about how best to find a willing interviewee, the interviews became a success for each of the 12 participants. In a few cases, the relationship between interviewers and interviewees continued: some students met after the interview and continued to be friends.

To reach the international students, the Faculty's international office provided us with the email addresses of interested Erasmus students, and group members emailed them to request an interview. There was some ghosting and rejections, but finally every single group member managed to secure an appointment with an international interviewee and conducted a recorded interview during October. In the meantime, the interview questions were developed in an early October class by brainstorming, and each interviewer was free to choose alternative questions if they wished. The interviews were to be recorded with the interviewees' prior consent, with a suggested target length of 15 minutes. However, in reality, most of the interviews lasted 30 minutes or more. I drew the interviewers' attention to my previous experience: during an interview, time often flies, but producing a short written version can then be quite an effort, requiring much of the content to be sacrificed and only certain parts selected, with further reductions for stylistic reasons.

Writing up the interviews was indeed challenging for most participants. I recommended starting by not transcribing the whole text first, but taking notes with timestamps to overview the topics discussed. Then, for the second listening, students should select the most appealing parts, keeping in mind that the rest would need to be cut out. Not more than five to ten minutes of the interview could be included in the 1,000-word written version, and those parts had to be edited for clarity of expression and to avoid repetition, while ensuring that the content of the interviewee's message is carefully retained. Unfortunately, I could not include a class activity to practice this important task in journalistic prose, due to time constraints.

As most interviews were much longer than expected, the authors found it quite difficult to delete some parts. However, they managed to save the interesting parts by sharing their content with the group in a closed course blog. For example, one interviewer wrote about a discussion with her French interviewee about wanting to go on an Erasmus scholarship to Paris. Overall, the interview experiences became a central discussion point in the group, also in the course blog and during the classes, showing how meeting international students in person was changing group members' ideas into lived and nuanced experiences.

The finalised, written interviews were sent to the interviewees for possible modifications and their consent to publish the text, including their first names. Some negotiations followed between the interviewers and interviewees, and finally all texts were granted consent.

Early in the course, I had explained to the participants that not all the 36 descriptive articles and 12 interviews could be included in the magazine. In December, we would vote for the best 30 or so texts, thus sharing the responsibility for selection. What happened was that 24 texts were chosen by the participants to be published at an editorial conference at the end of the course, and I selected another nine texts to include (two texts were eventually merged). Only four full interviews could be included, but snippets from five other interviews were placed in various sections of the magazine, related to the article on the same page.

## 5 Publishing: the Happy Ending

In the meantime, I submitted my request to the Faculty leadership. In November, they welcomed the initiative and provided financial resources and organisational support for the graphic design and printing. The manuscript was to be prepared before Christmas, so that the work of the second reader, followed by final editing and proofreading could be scheduled before the January printing deadline. The visual material required additional attention: because of copyright issues, the group members decided not to use images downloaded from the internet but to take the photos themselves. A few hundred images were collected by the students in December, and eventually 65 were selected to be included in the magazine (with a further eight photos received from the university's collection). As I came down with the flu in early January, all that work was done by the wonderful students in the group.

Finally, *Guide-U: A Magazine for Erasmus Students at Pázmány* (Reményi, 2017) was published on 52 colourful pages, including altogether 32 articles<sup>3</sup> and 73 colour photos (out of which 65 were taken by the group members themselves). It came out in print in 250 copies just in time for the international student orientation week, in February. The magazine includes the following parts:

- a welcome text to the university (including a group portrait);
- two texts on the Erasmus+ programme: one about the advantages of the student mobility programme written by an Erasmus alumna group participant, and another about how Erasmus works at this university;
- vital information, including local SIM card packages, Eduroam wifi and banking;
- twelve university-related texts: the most important rules of academic life (crucial semester dates, class attendance and exams), course selection possibilities, the use of the online studies administration system Neptun, a guide to the various campuses of the university and how to commute between them, a guide to libraries at and close to the university, where to eat around the university buildings, where to have fun nearby, and a text about the student union;

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful for this unforgettable project to the group members and authors: Lilla Berényi, Dávid Demeter, Gergely Fekete, Richárd Fodor, Dániel Gazdik, Hanna Horváth, Boglárka Ilenczfalvi-Szász, Erika Kucséber, Eszter Majtényi, Tünde Szeles, Lujza Szopkó and Ádám Varga. (I also wrote an article myself and co-authored a few others.)

- the following section is about Budapest, including six texts on public transport, ten must-see sights, special programmes in the spring of the publication, hidden treasures of Budapest, popular parks (“Escape to the green!”) and favourite hiking places around the city;
- the final section is about Hungary, with six texts: some ordinary and out-of-the-ordinary tourist destinations, some public holidays and the historic events they commemorate, two spring traditions, some basic expressions in Hungarian, the characteristics of the Hungarian cuisine, and a checklist and fill-in table to collect information about 33 Hungarian food specialities;
- four full interviews with then-present Erasmus students, two from Germany, one from Italy and one from Armenia, and snippets from five other interviews with Belgian, German, Dutch, Polish, and Armenian students, interspersed through the magazine.
- The front and back inner covers show a map of central Budapest and of the main public transport lines, respectively.

## 6 Conclusion

What are the lessons learnt from this project? Let me revisit the pedagogical aims listed above to evaluate the outcomes.

- One of the aims was to develop students’ writing skills through practice in journalistic prose. The participants’ general writing skills were certainly developed by writing and re-writing four texts, in addition to evaluating eight other texts in their teams at least twice. As most participants had not had any experience in journalistic prose, that subskill was also developed.
- Another aim was to lead the teacher trainees through an actual process writing project, hands-on. By the end of the course, they had a much clearer understanding of the nature of process writing.
- Cooperation among team members also developed through the various rounds of peer evaluation.
- As far as online cooperation is concerned, co-editing and commenting on each other’s texts provided practice opportunities in Google Docs.
- Some social stereotypes about Erasmus students, held by some group members, were challenged through the interviews: sitting down face-to-face with a flesh-and-blood Erasmus student, asking them questions and then reflecting on their answers while writing up the interview, probably changed their mindset a little. The interviews were also useful to practice speaking in a real-life context.

To summarise, the Erasmus magazine project was an immense effort, and not something that could be easily reproduced in the framework of a university course. (Since then, I have

tried to offer the project to two of my language development courses, with no success.) Nevertheless, it is still commendable. It was a memorable project not only for me, but also at least for some of the participants because of the practical output of the magazine, and the various language-related developments and social and intercultural effects on the participants.

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