

**The problems and features of teaching the Mari language at a university
(exemplified by Eötvös Loránd University)**

Abstract

Elena Vedernikova (Eötvös Loránd University)

The Mari language, a minority Uralic language, is offered as an optional course at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) at both BA and MA levels, with student enrollment fluctuating annually. This variation often influences the design and content of the teaching curriculum. The experience of teaching Mari over the past three years (2021-2024) has provided valuable insights into the challenges and unique characteristics of teaching this language, which may also parallel those encountered in teaching other Finno-Ugric languages at ELTE and other institutions.

In contemporary educational settings, language instructors are increasingly expected to adopt a differentiated approach to teaching. This necessity extends beyond language instruction, encompassing a broader pedagogical shift toward engaging and personalized learning experiences. For university-level instructors, the dual challenge of fostering language acquisition while integrating scientific analysis and comparative linguistic study presents a complex, yet rewarding, task. Teachers are tasked not only with facilitating language learning but also with encouraging critical analysis of the Mari language in relation to other Uralic languages, thereby transforming the learning process into a dynamic and intellectually stimulating experience.

This paper will explore the pedagogical principles employed in teaching Mari as a minority language at ELTE, outlining the structure of the teaching programs at both the BA and MA levels. Additionally, an overview of the teaching materials, most of which have been developed by the author, will be provided. The paper will also discuss the effectiveness of current teaching methods and techniques in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes, while addressing the broader challenge faced by minority language educators in the context of the global dominance of languages like English and Spanish (García, 2006: 161).

References

García, Ofelia. 2006. Minority Languages: Education. *Minority Languages: Education*. Columbia University, USA. pp. 159-162.