

Admittedly, the instructor could maximize the informal atmosphere, e.g. by using *ty*-forms to enhance rapport in the classroom. This strategy, however, does not seem to be commensurate with the expected linguistic behavior in the Czech context. In addition, it may easily lead to further fictiveness: if the instructor's goal is to teach Standard Czech, students will be using this formal speech register in a supposedly very informal peer speech situation.⁵ Clearly, it takes much effort on the part of the teacher to juggle between the two cultures where different pragmatic principles operate. In the case of Czech, it is perhaps his/her task to be sufficiently accessible and friendly while maintaining the relatively formal linguistic register,⁶ with the understanding that there may be some limit to removing the cultural context of the native language.

This difficult task brings us to the general issue of what language teachers do in their classrooms. In contemporary language teaching the majority view seems to be that language teaching cannot be separated from teaching of culture. This approach challenges a layman's view that language teaching is nothing more than mechanical drills in grammar. The reason why this view still prevails outside the language teaching circle is perhaps that language classrooms (especially on the elementary level) are seen as providing only anecdotal cultural information (rather than original literary, linguistic or cultural analysis, or detailed account of history and political science). In fact, sometimes this type of basic cultural information is considered as *the* cultural component in language courses even by language teaching professionals. But perhaps integrating culture in a language classroom is actually a much more complicated procedure, when we consider culture as including pragmatic reflexes that sharply differ from the students' own. The language teacher's major contribution in teaching a foreign language is probably in having students *experience* this tension that exists between the native and the target cultures as they are manifested in their native language and the target language. This experience cannot be provided by any courses taught in the students' native language.

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⁵ Considering the historical development of the language and debates on the Czechness of the language by purists and their efforts to maintain the codified language, adherence to the codified language by out-group members (i.e. language learners) may be considered to a certain extent as expression of respect towards the target culture as well.

⁶ In fact, I have recently encountered a marginal, yet interesting innovation among a small number of Czech speakers in their high-teens. While *ty*-forms are a default among their peers, these young speakers are using *vy*-forms to address their close and special friends; they explained this innovation by their need to show how much they respect and care about one another.

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Announcement

The Department of Modern Languages, European Studies, the Komensky Club, and the University of Nebraska at Lincoln Humanities Council are proud to announce the visit of the Czech Ambassador, Alexandr Vondra, on August 4-6.

On August 4th, 2000, the Ambassador will deliver a lecture entitled "**Czech Republic on the Threshold of the 21st Century.**" The lecture will take place on City Campus, at the Nebraska Union, at 3:30 PM. His Excellency, Ambassador of the Czech Republic to the USA, will also visit the Wilber Czech festival on the 5th of August.

One fifth of the population in Nebraska is of Czech descent. The state organizes more than fifteen Czech ethnic festivals a year. Instruction of Czech at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln goes back to 1907.

František Daneš - 80 let.

Compiled by Alena Nejedlá and Jana Papcunová.

Introduction by Světlá Čmejrková.

(Lingvistické bibliografie – Menší řada sv. 8.)

Prague: Ústav pro jazyk český AV ČR, 1999, 43p.

ISBN 80-901673-5-7.

Reviewed by David Short,
University of London

František Daneš (b. 1919 in Písek) is a name that should be familiar to all readers of *Czech Language News*, hence there is perhaps little need to re-introduce him here. This brief notice is above all to advise those whose notice it might otherwise escape that his colleagues at the Institute of the Czech Language have produced this valuable research and reference tool, a comprehensive bibliography of Daneš's work, covering the entire period since his name first appeared in print (1948), pp. 7-42. It ends with the year of his eightieth birthday and includes four titles which were at the time 'forthcoming,' and coincidentally reveal the international impact of his work; of the four, two are to appear in Germany, one 'at home' in Prague, and one in Hong Kong. The first six pages contain Světlá Čmejrková's brief biography of this leading Czech linguist with his 'individual functionalist and humanist vision of linguistics' (p.6), and a discursive appraisal of the high points in his career as teacher, scholar and editor and the main lines of his research in general linguistics and the intonology, syntax, semantics and socio-linguistics of Czech. The spiral-bound book is printed in A4 format, on the right-hand pages only; as a frontispiece it has a fine photograph of the celebrand.

EuroTalk Interactive: Learn Czech,
London: EuroTalk Limited, 1999.

Reviewed by Karen von Kunes,
Yale University

The 1999 CD-ROM *Learn Czech* in the EuroTalk Interactive series is easy to use. Immediately after the opening of the program, the color picture of the round CD changes into a pizza shape, divided thematically, with each slice containing a topic to learn and practice. One is naturally expected to begin with First Words and then move clockwise to cover the topics of Food, Colors, Phrases, Body, Numbers, Time, Shopping, and Countries. Each topic within the pizza-slice division is constructed on the same principle: Word Practice, Speaking Practice, Easy Game, Hard Game and Printing Picture Dictionary. In addition, each unit within these practices is uniform; the mechanical aspect of the practice makes both the learning and practicing easy and unexciting. This means that, regrettably, the challenge to the adult learner is, except for the task of memorizing words and phrases, rather modest. On the other hand, the simplicity and game-type structure is fun for kids; inevitably, adults tend to be impatient with it because they feel that they are being brought down to the level of the learning style and strategy targeted at and appropriate to children.

As for the content of each unit, it contains basic useful and practical words and phrases accompanied both by pictures and English equivalents. The Czech pronunciation is clear, accent-free, and is simulated by two figures, a man and a woman, whose mouths move as words are enunciated. Unfortunately, their mouth movements are not synchronized with the sound, which is particularly obvious with monosyllabic words, which on the screen seem to be enunciated as polysyllables.

One of the major drawbacks of *Learn Czech* is its lack of cultural adaptation. The series is evidently based on a different language, items in that language being replaced by Czech equivalents. This has led to some confusion and resulted in grammatical mistakes: the numeral 'jedna' (one, feminine) is attached to a picture of a tomato, though 'tomato' in Czech is of neuter gender and thus the numeral ought to have been given in the neuter form, i.e. 'jedno'. A similar inconsistency appears with the numeral two.

Another problem that betrays that the work is a mutation based on another language is the usage of certain words which are infrequent in Czech, such as 'grep' for grapefruit, 'mango,' and others. While some Czechs may be familiar with these words and fruits, many would not

recognize them because these exotic fruits are hardly available on the Czech market outside the largest towns and cities. Genuine mistakes include singular 'hrozna' for the plural 'hrozny' (grapes), while in the section on Shopping, there are some inappropriate choices of words, such as the archaic or military 'opasek' for the neutral 'pásek' (belt).

The Body section within the division of Word Practice does not give written English equivalents; instead it is based on viewing different parts of the body following the pronunciation of each word in Czech. On occasion this can lead to confusion, the viewer having a hard time in recognizing what is what, especially when small parts of the body, such as an ankle or toe, are shown. In addition, given the differences between Czech and English in the domain of hands, arms and fingers and feet, legs and toes, the matching terminology is not always clear from the pictures alone. Similar pictorial confusion may arise in the division of Countries. A country is named in Czech while only a flag of that country appears on the screen. In the Easy Game and Hard Game sections, the testing is based not on English equivalents, but on recognition of the countries'

national flags. Thus, the learning process becomes more complex since in order to provide the correct answer, the viewer must recognize the flag, as well as the name of the country. The most striking irony is that this section lacks the very name for the Czech Republic itself—yet another consequence of the mechanical copying of the series and the failure to attend to country-specific realia. The viewer is enabled to learn the Czech names of far-distant countries, but not of the country whose language he is

learning. Such cultural inconsistencies are reflected at many levels.

The section dealing with phrases is the most difficult. It does not represent any cumulative knowledge of the words learned, offering instead random, practically motivated phrases for use in a language-survival situation. The phrases are given in masculine forms only, with the inevitable consequence that if a female speaker uses them in the past tense, she will use them incorrectly. The phrases may also be difficult to repeat, given the particular difficulties of Czech pronunciation, or, specifically, the appearance in Czech of several sounds that are likely to be absent from the learner's mother-tongue. The learner is ill-served by the total absence of any introduction to pronunciation; s/he is left to his or her own devices based merely on hearing and imitation.

In spite of these deficiencies, this CD-ROM could be of some benefit to those who wish to gain some initial familiarity with basic Czech words and phrases. Given that so few visual and computer-oriented self-access aids are available for learners of Czech, *EuroTalk Interactive: Learn Czech* has its merits.

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