

Czech Language News

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Message from the President

Dear members of NAATC:

With the summer already behind us, I hope that this issue of the *Czech Language News* finds you in good spirits and full of energy at the beginning of the academic year 1998-99. It seems that NAATC has embarked on a new phase. In addition to the growing membership, there have been some new developments in our association.

CLN and NAATC website at Brown

As you may have noticed in this issue of the *Czech Language News*, the editorial office has moved. I would like to express my sincere appreciation on behalf of NAATC to Prof. Janda at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, who has intensively served as editor for nearly two years and her assistant Jill Pommrehn whose administrative help was indispensable. Starting with this issue, *CLN* will be put together by Prof. Levitsky and myself as coeditors and by Margo Ballou as associate editor. Prof. Short has agreed to continue his work as book review editor. Because of Jill's departure from UNC, the NAATC webpage will soon be housed at Brown where some technological assistance will be feasible. Details of further personnel changes including new presidency will be discussed at the upcoming business meeting held immediately after the NAATC linguistics panel "Varieties of Czech" at the annual meeting of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL) in San Francisco. Program updates on this conference can be found at the website:

<<http://clover.slavic.pitt.edu/~djb/aatseel.html>>

NAATC Receives a Grant from the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs

I am pleased to announce that NAATC has been granted a financial contribution from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic to cover some of the expenses to publish this year's *CLN* and a special edition containing papers presented at the 1998 NAATC panels. I would like to thank both Mr. Starý, the former cultural attaché, and Mr. Sauer at the Embassy of the Czech Republic who assisted us at various stages of the grant application. NAATC sends special thanks to Mr. Dubovický, the current cultural attaché at the embassy, who supported our project proposal. NAATC wishes him all the best in his new position and is excited about the support of the embassy in NAATC activities.

Your E-mail Addresses

Our email list has occasionally enabled us to communicate updated information to many of our members. If you haven't submitted your email address (or the email address where we can reach you), please send it to Margo (Margo_Ballou@brown.edu) so we can add you to the list of recipients.

Masako Ueda
Brown University

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Notes on Czech Gender
By George Cummins, III,
Tulane University

Sexual reference is highly morphologized in Czech nominal categories. At the right of the semantic spectrum, the derivation of a feminine base by the use of one or the other productive suffix, *-(k)-yn-ě* or *-k-a*, is automatic in *nomina agentis*. Members of nationalities are capitalized and defined as proper names in Czech, as are members of ethnic groups, natives of cities and towns; all those designating women bear a feminine suffix. This process, called *přechylování*, is normative and in most cases may be somberly debated in the pages of *Naše řeč*. In other semantic categories gender suffixation may be sporadic or lacking. On the far left of the continuum lie strongly expressive words, some of which, as universal epithets, are *vespolná jména*, nouns of inherent gender which may refer to beings of either sex. In the former group, *pitomec* 'dummy,' *vůl* 'ox; idiot,' *blázen* 'crazy person,' are masculine with universal reference. A woman may say of herself *já jsem teda ale vůl* 'that was really stupid of me.' In this category there exist suffixal derivations which defy natural reference, as *babec* 'little old woman,' *žabec* (<*žába* 'frog; little girl'); they are masculine but are used only in reference to females. *Mazavka* 'tippler,' *mluvka* 'chatterbox' are masculine, refer only to men, and have no derivations (for that: *pijačka*, *pijanka*, *žvanilka*, etc.) The universal epithet *potvora* 'unnatural creature; difficult, annoying person, thing or notion; bitch' is feminine but has unlimited reference in Czech. The study of Czech expressive gender belongs to grammatical poetics. A good example is *starý památka* 'the old literary monument,' his students' term for Jan Gebauer, the great philologist and historian of the Czech language. There is metonymy at work here (the old man as keeper of the old monuments) as well as metaphor (the noun is animatized, so to speak, and rendered masculine by the adjective); the suffix effectively makes *památka* into an epicene *nositel vlastnosti* 'carrier of a quality.'

In the middle of the spectrum, masculines derived from nonagentives, passivizations, nonconventionalized activities and the like are less subject to *přechylování*; feminines occur only sporadically. Derivations in *-(k)yn-ě* from bases in *-ec* are easily formed, but for many items in this category the language has not developed them. We have *zajatec* - *zajatyně* 'captive,' *trestanec* - *trestankyně* 'man/woman undergoing punishment,' *oslavenec* - *oslavenkyně* 'birthday boy/girl,' but only *oběšenec* 'hanged person,' *utopenec*

'drowned person.' Words denoting structural relationships within social classes are also common gender nouns, such as *sourozenec* 'sibling,' *savec* 'mammal.' Božena Němcová invented a feminine *jedináčka* 'only child, a girl,' but it has not survived; *jedináček* is used. The unmarked masculine base in *nomina agentis*, too, may appear in a usage designating not only the class and all of its members but a female individual as representative of her class. Thus, in discussions of the responsibilities of judges one speaks of *soudci* or *soudcové* (masculine), not *soudci a soudkyně*; this conjunction, however, is appropriate when discussing the social functions of judges. One may say of a woman *ta je dobrý vědec* 'she is a good scholar' when focusing on the notion of good research, but *ta je dobrá vědkyně* when the individual herself is the discourse theme. The vocative focuses strongly on the individual, and in direct address a feminine is usually required: *paní předsedkyně* 'Your Honor' (to a judge). The marked feminine is required for the female agent of any conventionalized public action. In this range, to the right-center of the continuum, any new masculine *must* be given a feminine derivative as soon as women begin to engage in the activity (see Sedláček 1987 on the choice of suffix for a lady marathon runner).

At the sensitive right-most end of the continuum lie feminine surnames--all of them, native Czech and foreign--which are obligatorily formed with the unique suffix *-ová* (there are a few variants and permissible exceptions). Proper names comprise a unique logical and linguistic category; Jakobson called them a cardinal type of linguistic circularity, the code referring to the code. In Czech all personal proper names have some morphological differences from common nouns. Masculine hypocoristics and surnames in *-a* do not distinguish 'hard' ~ 'soft' declensional patterns in Literary Czech and in the Bohemian interdialect. The surnames *Svoboda*, *Píša* and the nickname *Lád'a* have the same declensional endings, essentially those of masculine animates in *-a* with the addition of the proper name desinences as in *Svobodovi* 'the Svoboda family,' *Svobodové* 'the Svoboda men.' Indeed, all personal names decline 'hard' (except in Moravia). *Nataša* has gen *Nataši* like *ženy* (not *-e*, the soft ending, as in *růže*). Feminine surnames are most salient. *Přechylování* is actually required by law, for apparent bureaucratic reasons (Knappová 1979), of all women, married or single. A woman married to the Russian Pavlov is *Pavlovová* (not *Pavlová*); only *paní Holků* or *Martinů*, and a few other variants, may opt to omit the suffix.

In Brno city speech the personal possessive adjective, fem nom sg *-ova*, has merged with surname *-ová* to make a single suffix for feminine surnames as well as all street names in Literary Czech *-ova* (< possessives from male surnames) and *-ová* (< common noun adjectives, such as *Středová*). The Brno suffix is generally *-ová*, but often also *-ova*. For many speakers the nonproductive possessive declension has assumed the role of surname suffix, as in the acc *paní Svobodovu* ~ Bohemian and Literary Czech *paní Svobodovou*. 'Rodina Svobodova'--seen in letter addresses--has the local colloquial possessive suffix in *-ová* (this is not the surname suffix by mistake). Street names are difficult for all Czechs because the oblique cases of the possessive adjective are literary and archaic, though they are seen and heard everywhere in the press and the media. Names of squares and familiar streets are nominalized. As in *Perlovka* (Perlová ulice), *Nerudovka* (Nerudova ulice), and *Karlák* (Karlovo náměstí) in Prague, Brnoites say *v Křenovce* 'on Křenova,' *na Merhautce* 'on Merhautova,' *na Mendláku* 'on Mendel Square' (never *na Mendlově náměstí*). Although in some respects Moravian speech seems closer to Literary Czech than is Bohemian - the fem. oblique adjectival ending *-é* is an example - there is a gulf between the language of the people and that of the literary normativists which no written national culture can bridge.

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**The Literary Archive
of the Museum of Czech Literature
in Prague**

By Alisa Gayle Mayor,
Visiting Scholar, Brown University

The majority of visitors to Prague who make the trek to the hills above Prague Castle are primarily interested in the varied architecture of the Strahov Monastery (Strahovský klášter). This monastery has gained great fame for its dynamic Baroque library rooms, Philosophical Hall and Theological Hall, as well as for the Baroque Church of Our Lady. In a more austere decorated wing of the monastery, however, scholars of the last two centuries of literature, art, and culture in the Czech lands will find riches of a different character. This is the Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature, which contains one of the most well organized collections of personal resources, correspondence, and other media relevant to the history of Czech literature and culture.

Scope of the Archive: The Archive consists of nearly 1,600 sets of archival holdings, an extensive collection of photographic materials, videocassettes, and tapes. Individuals and groups represented in the Archive include famous poets and prose writers, artists, scholars, cultural circles, and publishing houses. Just a few examples of those represented are the following:

In the field of literature:

K. H. Mácha, K. Čapek, B. Němcová, J. Neruda, B. Hrabal, K. Světlá, J. Seifert.

In the field of literary criticism:

F. X. Šalda, R. Wellek, B. Mathesius.

In theater and the press:

J. N. Štěpánek, J. Werich, F. Kubka, J. Suchý.

Public figures:

T. G. Masaryk, A. Masaryková.

In the fine arts:

J. Myslbek, A. Mucha.

Literary circles and publishing houses: *Květy* (1879-1915), *Literární noviny* (1952-67), Albatros (1969).

Archival holdings can include anything from manuscripts and rough drafts of literary and artistic works, personal correspondence, business correspondence, newspaper and journal clippings about an individual or group, and photographs and drawings. The archive also continues to collect new materials on living authors and artistic and public figures.

In its series of publications, the Archive has recently produced a two-issue, comprehensive guide to

the archive, and a smaller booklet of Addenda¹. These issues provide a brief description of each set of holdings and will prove extremely useful. The guide and Addenda booklet also provide full indexes so that it will be possible to find an individual or group both in its own specific set of holdings and in the holdings on another individual or group.

The Archive also is connected with the Museum's general **Library**, which consists of over 500,000 volumes. If you are using the Archive for research, be sure to remember to search through this Library catalogue (in a card file form) as well. The collection contains numerous original editions of books and other works, particularly those from the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. The Library also offers magazines, newspapers, and other periodicals primarily on the topics of literature, literary criticism, and art. If another library, such as the Czech National Library at the Klementinum, does not have the exact book or periodical one needs, this Library is also a particularly good place to try. The Museum also has a Department of Art Collections, which collects illustrations from the second half of the twentieth century, various graphic resources from throughout the twentieth century, and art collections of publishing houses. Personal holdings on specific artists, however, are kept and classified in the Literary Archive. One room in a different part of this wing of the monastery also offers a permanent exhibit on Božena Němcová.

Access to the Collections: In terms of gaining access to the collections, I know of no mandatory procedure or set of rules to follow. I wrote a letter in advance to learn whether the archive had any holdings on my particular topic, and I was delighted to receive a most courteous answer stating that they did indeed have the materials and I was welcome to come. I brought that letter with me, and it was enough. For other cases, if you are associated with Charles University for any form of study, you can go to the Foreign Division (*Zahraniční oddělení*) of the Philosophical Faculty to receive an authorization paper.

When you get to the archive, the most important thing is to know what you are looking for on your topic and to be able to explain it clearly to the archivists, who generally are pleased to help.

On the first day you come to the archive, you will probably only be able to look at descriptions (*soupisy*) of the individual holdings, which you must request, and then fill out the order sheets for specific items. The Archive and Library do not store all the materials right in the monastery at Strahov. They have a number of different depositories around the Czech Republic, so after you turn in your order sheets, you may need to wait for several days until the materials are delivered from the depositories. For archives of personal resources that have been fully classified, there will be a detailed booklet with an inventory of the archival holdings on an individual (*soupis osobního fondu*).

Working at the Archive: The Archive provides a small but quite comfortable reading room that adjoins the main archival and catalogue areas. This room contains bookshelves with a good selection of reference materials for those who are using the reading room: dictionaries in numerous languages, encyclopedias, and guides to different periods of literature and art. You may not even need to bring many of your own resources because there is a good chance that you will find what you need in the reference materials there. I do not know whether the reading room has electric sockets to support computers or whether computers are permitted in this Archive. If you need to make copies, there is a copying machine, and the price for making copies has been around the equivalent of 15 cents per page.

Directions: The Literary Archive and Museum of Czech Literature are located at the Strahov Monastery (Strahovský klášter) at the following address:

Památník národního písemnictví/
Muzeum české literatury
Literární archiv
Strahovské nádvoří 1
118 38 Praha 1--Hradčany
Telephone (from within Prague):
Operator--24 51 11 37
Fax (from within Prague): 53 70 63

A Final Note: As you work in the Literary Archive, you will notice that it offers one of the most compelling views of Prague's Hradčany and Malá Strana. The very setting of this Archive on the Strahov hill above most of Prague's historic district and the experience of working there can offer a model for one of the best ways to work with Czech literature and culture--even though you may be focusing on one particular phenomenon of the nineteenth or twentieth century, you will always be reminded to view your topic within the panorama of varied styles and

¹ *Průvodce po fondech literárního archivu PNP. Literární Archiv (Sborník Památníku národního písemnictví) 26: 1-2 (Praha: Památník národního písemnictví, 1993); Dodatky k Průvodci po fondech literárního archivu PNP (1988-1995) (Praha: Památník národního písemnictví, 1996).*

accomplishments that the centuries and much hard work have preserved all around you.

Czech at Brown: Past and Present
 By Alexander Levitsky, Chair
 Department of Slavic Languages,
 Brown University

During the last academic year the Department of Slavic Languages celebrated its 50th Anniversary at Brown. One of the outcomes of this celebration was to anticipate our Department's role in shaping the direction in which Brown University is moving into the 21st century. Working with the university administration, the Department has resolved to make every effort to maintain Czech studies as an integral component of its program. Collaboration and support from the Brown community made possible the recent housing of the *Czech Language News*.

Needless to say, our current strengths would not have come about without our colleagues' commitment to Czech in the past. The dual tradition in Czech and Russian began with Prof. Henry Kučera's arrival in 1955. Prof. Kučera received his Ph.D. from Harvard and is a specialist in linguistic theory, comparative Slavic linguistics and computational linguistics. He holds dozens of national and international academic honors and honorary degrees; he is a member of numerous honorary foundations and a recipient of multiple fellowships and grants. Among his hundreds of publications, his books *The Phonology of Czech* (1961), *Computers in Linguistics and in Literary Studies* (which was published in four printings between 1969 and 1975) and his collaborative works with W. N. Francis, *Computational Analysis of Present-Day American English* (1970) and *Frequency Analysis of English Usage: Lexicon and Grammar* (1982), and with G. K. Monroe, *A Comparative Quantitative Phonology of Russian, Czech, and German* (1970) place Prof. Kučera among the finest scholars in our field. Thanks to Prof. Kučera's efforts, Brown became a primary locus for advanced Czech studies in the United States.

The increasing stature of the department helped attract some of the strongest scholars of Kučera's generation to Brown. Among them were Prof. Antonín Dostál (1906-1997) and Prof. Thomas G. Winner (1917). With a Ph.D. from Charles University, Prof. Dostál came to Brown in 1969 after his homeland had been occupied by Soviet-bloc forces and the continuation of his distinguished service as vice-president of Charles University was no longer possible. A long-time editor-in-chief of *Byzantinoslavica* (a

leading journal of Byzantine studies), Prof. Dostál was a member of the Société de linguistique de Paris, Academies of Sciences in Palermo and in Prague, and served as vice-president of the International Association of Byzantine Studies. His *Studies of Verbal Aspect in Old Church Slavonic* (1954), *The Development of the Dual Category in Slavic Languages* (1954), a critical edition of *Clozianus* (1959), and *Historical Grammar of Czech* (1967) were probably his most important contributions to Slavic philology.

The Slavic department equally owes its strength in Czech studies to Prof. Winner. A specialist in semiotics and modern Russian and Czech literatures, Prof. Winner had a joint appointment with the comparative literature department at Brown and served as editor of the popular Brown University Slavic Reprint Series. He holds numerous prestigious degrees and has received multiple fellowships and grants from such societies as the American Council of Learned Societies, the Ford Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. He has published a host of studies devoted to structural poetics, semiotics, drama, modern literatures of the Slavic world, and avant-garde art. For their outstanding achievements in promoting Czech studies, Prof. Winner and Prof. Kučera received honorary degrees and awards from such Czech academic institutions as Charles University in Prague and Masaryk University in Brno, and from the Czech government.

As our Department rapidly joined the most respected centers of Slavic studies in the country, it began to prepare scholars with expertise in Czech and Russian. Our graduate program has produced Ph.D. dissertations dealing with a wide range of topics in Czech: phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics, and Czech literature. Some of our recent graduates, such as David Danaher, Tatyana K. Macauley, and Lisette Saint Germain, have been successfully placed in various departments and countries using the skills and knowledge acquired in our graduate program. Their dissertation titles are listed in our 50th anniversary brochure, which can be obtained by writing to:

Box E
 Dept. of Slavic Languages, Brown University
 Providence, RI 02912

During the last several years the department has reached out to its undergraduate students in response to increasing interest in the Czech language and literature and other Central European literatures. Thanks to the efforts of Prof. M. Ueda, Czech became available for the first time to *both* undergraduate and graduate students at the beginning and advanced levels. The

program at Brown was further consolidated by support from the ACLS grant and Mellon Fellowship that enabled the department to invite Prof. Petr A. Bílek from Charles University. A tenured faculty member at Charles University with an impressive publication record, and a specialist in Czech and Central European literature, Prof. Bílek helped enrich our offerings and redevelop our focus on Central Europe. His lectures on Kundera, Literature of the Other Self, or Literary Modernism in Central and East European Literatures gave both undergraduate and graduate students a new perspective on this underrepresented part of the world. It is also necessary to mention in this regard that during the difficult times of budget curtailments and retirements the Brown community has been supportive of our efforts to maintain and expand the Czech studies program in the form of undergraduate teaching assistantships and graduate student proctorships. Support from the university administration made it possible for Brown to build a collection in Czech studies that is currently one of the nation's strong research holdings.

The department has started sending its strongest students to enroll directly at Charles University and has initiated close contacts with other study-abroad programs in the Czech Republic, such as Collegium Hieronymi Pragense in Prague. Students in our Czech language program continue improving their Czech at the Summer School of Slavonic Studies at Charles University, and some of the graduates of our language program actively work in the Czech Republic. In addition, some members of our faculty, such as Prof. Levitsky, Prof. Shapiro, and Prof. Ueda, maintain contact with Charles University in Prague.

Below are courses offered in Czech studies in the past three years. The language courses taught by Prof. Ueda also feature native speaker undergraduate teaching assistants who meet with students to practice conversation.

- Czech I & II (First-year Czech)
- Advanced Czech Language and Culture
- Czech Society and Literature in Translation
- Writers of the Other Europe: Literature and Society in Post-War East Europe
- Slavic Contributions to Literary Theory
- Comparative Analysis of Czech and Russian
- Language Variations in Russian and Czech

Besides these courses, our regular faculty members, such as Prof. Levitsky and Prof. Terras, have offered independent studies in Czech, exemplified by the student-professor collaboration described below, and/or courses with Czech components. The Department also

builds links to other academic units at Brown, e.g. the History and Political Science Departments and the Watson Institute of International Studies.

With a long tradition couched in fine scholarship, Czech studies has been an indispensable part of the graduate and undergraduate programs at the Department of Slavic Languages at Brown. The Department appreciates the recognition of our program by the Dean of the Faculty, who provided a special grant to support this newsletter and sincerely welcomes the arrival of this international newsletter for Czech teachers to further strengthen the Department's curriculum through cooperation with NAATC and the Brown community.

Professor-Student Collaboration

By Abbott Gleason,
Brown University

Alison Rosenthal, a Brown University senior, and Abbott Gleason, the Keeney Professor of History at Brown, collaborated on a joint project, which resulted in a long conference paper, given at the University of London in April, 1998. The conference was entitled "Another Transition: Politics and Culture in Central Europe, 1945-49." Rosenthal's and Gleason's paper was called "The Communist Coup in Czechoslovakia: Western Policy and Response." Rosenthal read some material in Czech and made an extensive survey of the British press between 1946 and mid-1948. Gleason handled documents on the Russian and American sides and the American press.

The paper took a rather gloomy view of both the Czech democrats and Anglo-American policy makers. In sum, it concluded that the Western side had no real policy in Czechoslovakia during or after World War II and was prepared from early on, at least tacitly, to concede all important decisions about Czechoslovakian internal matters to the Soviet Union. When the coup came, however, it galvanized the Western determination to defend at almost any cost what it regarded as its own sphere in Western Europe.

The paper was also very critical of President Beneš, who staked everything on being a junior partner of the Soviet Union. When politics within the nascent Soviet bloc suggested to Stalin a crackdown and the imposition of totalitarian rule, Beneš had no other answer than total acquiescence.

The paper will be published as part of a conference volume in the year 2000.

**M. Čechová, J. Chloupek,
M. Krčmová, E. Minářová:**
Stylistics of Contemporary Czech
Reviewed by **Ivana Bozděchová,**
Charles University, Prague

Stylistics of Contemporary Czech (Stylistika současné češtiny, nakl. Institut sociálních vztahů, Kafkova 42, Praha 1997, 282 pp. ISBN 80-85866-21-8) (henceforth *SCC*), aims to present those topics in stylistics which are considered basic by the authors, rather than any comprehensive theory or an entire conceptual framework. Their approach is based on the theory of functional styles elaborated by Czech and Slovak functional stylistics between the two wars and since 1945. Newly included, however, is a necessary introduction to communication theory as a whole, as well as to the theory of standard language and to sociolinguistics. *SCC* represents a new, revised edition of the same authors' *Stylistics of Czech (Stylistika češtiny*, Prague: SPN, 1990). To a certain extent it follows textbooks of stylistics and clarifies stylistic terminology. Attention is paid to more than the sphere of stylistics of standard-language texts: emphasis is placed on an author's deliberate choice of specific linguistic means according to the specific features of a particular situation, and on the aim of the communication, as a result of which the full resources of the whole national language can be exploited. To help readers to orientate themselves and in order to demonstrate the variety of contemporary Czech there are chapters on the current Czech language situation.

Style is considered to be the integrational, yet differentiating principle of communication structure. Six functional styles are distinguished - the style of spoken texts, technical style, administrative, journalistic, rhetorical and literary styles. This classification has been subjected to more detailed analysis than in the first edition of *Stylistics* (1990).

SCC is designed primarily for university students of Czech, language teachers, editors, and anyone else with an interest in Czech. It can be used as a practical tool for creating or correcting texts - there are chapters on the practical application of stylistic knowledge and on the processes of text creation and reception; these could be profitable to both writers and readers. Special attention is given to the spoken journalistic genre, with attention paid to both official and off-the-cuff speeches. Non-standard linguistic means are recorded, such as colloquialisms and even slang expressions. Today more than ever it is important that consideration be given to

the language of journalistic texts, as these have a major influence on the development of people's taste and linguistic abilities. We therefore welcome the book's new approach, for example, to the language and style of commercials and advertisements. There are many illustrations, with explanatory comment, taken from the Czech daily press and from administrative texts. In this respect, in particular, the book should be of great practical value. There are also valuable references: a list of readings for specialists in stylistics.

The contents are well arranged into 12 chapters with carefully numbered subdivisions. An index at the end of the book lists the principal terms and concepts in alphabetical order and directs the reader to the relevant pages. The first five chapters deal with more general topics (stylistic terminology, differentiation and stratification of the Czech language, factors of stylistics, the stylistic aspects of text structure, the stylistic characteristics of means of expression from all levels of the language system); the following six chapters describe individual functional styles and their spheres, norms, genres, and the means they employ. The final chapter is devoted to problems of methodology.

Any study of a language and its linguistics should, as a matter of course, lead to and be concluded by, a study of its stylistics. Although *SCC* was written originally for Czech readers, we believe that it could be used also in Czech-as-a-second-language acquisition teaching and learning, especially at more advanced levels. It can serve as a source of valuable theoretical information (such as its account of the Czech language situation, which is sometimes difficult and rather confusing for foreign students) as well as for practical instruction and inspiration.

**Susan Kresin, Hope Subak-Sharpe,
Filip Kašpar.**
Čeština hrou (Czech for Fun)
McGraw-Hill, 1998, 499 pp.
Reviewed by **Charles E. Townsend,**
Princeton University

The title of this book by Susan Kresin, Hope Subak-Sharpe and Filip Kašpar (henceforth *KSK*) is perhaps the worst thing about it, because it is utterly misleading. *Čeština hrou* is not fun and games; it is a dead serious and in many ways excellent elementary textbook. Still, just because the book is serious does not mean it is not fun; in fact, it has a nice light and, sometimes, humorous touch to it.

KSK is made up of twelve long chapters, averaging some 35 pages apiece. Though there is plenty of solid grammar in the book, its approach is outspokenly oral. Each chapter has a general theme (Chapter 2: *Nationalities and Languages*, Chapter 3: *Foods and Family*, etc.). Each chapter has Parts 1 and 2. Part 1 begins by introducing new concepts and vocabulary, many illustrated with pictures, and follows them with six or seven well-constructed dialogues. Then comes a series of mostly well laid-out and cogent grammatical explanations, with each point in the series then followed by copious exercises. Part 2 is shorter; it begins with more dialogues, followed by still more grammatical explanations, again each followed by exercises. Finally, a comprehensive vocabulary ends the whole chapter. Chapter 7, for instance, is about holidays, birthdays and gift giving. The grammatical points are dates, the dative case, age, the “going” verbs (*chodit*, *jezdit*) and relative clauses (*kteřý*). First are pictures of presents: vase with flowers, bottle of wine, CD, tie, watch, necklace, and more words without pictures: perfume, sweater, bracelet, toy. Next simple exercises: *Co je dobrý dárek?* Then holidays, Christmas, Easter, and Hanukkah, with a brief Czech dialogue and some cultural material in English (namedays). Next, dialogues, grammar (the months), exercises, grammar (dates), exercises, grammar: dative, itself in many subdivisions (singular, plural, adjectives, pronouns), each followed by exercises. Part 2 offers *chodit* and *jezdit* and relative clauses, each followed by exercises, a cultural note in Czech about Easter and, finally, the vocabulary.

The main weaknesses of *KSK*, I believe, are things that a revision could repair easily, if rather laboriously. First, the presentation of examples is often inconsistent; a grammatical point is made and there is no example for it or, in some cases, exceptions to the rule are discussed instead of the regular patterns. This is always a mistake in a first-year text, where patterns have yet to be learned. Idioms should not be given as first examples. Second, some important parts of the grammar need fuller treatment, e.g., modals. *Mít*, for instance, deserves more discussion, and the gloss of “should” instead of “am to, am supposed to” is an unfortunate mistake. Third, the presentation of vocabulary is at times inconsistent, with a more colloquial and less generic variant often given, e.g., *představit* is glossed as ‘introduce’ instead of ‘(re)present,’ which gives a much more accurate idea of the word as a whole. *Seznámit* is also glossed as

‘introduce,’ where ‘make acquainted,’ which portrays the source adjective *známý*, would have been much better. Still, on the whole, the glosses are accurate and sometimes resourceful. With respect to presentation of grammar, some points are weaker than others. Verbal aspect is rather flimsy and handled inconsistently in the vocabularies (where sometimes just one member of an obvious pair is listed). The treatment should make immediately clear the great importance of the “imperfective only” (*mluvit*, *pracovat*, etc.) type in verbs of state/activity, which are particularly prominent in a first-year text. Where pairs are involved, one member is often left out, and the imperfective is always given first, a mistake, since in prefixed pairs (which are in the majority) imperfectives are derived from perfectives, so that *slibit/slibovat*, for example, is the correct order. Another needlessly weak aspect of the grammar is its presentation of deadjectival adverbs; there is no clear statement that *-ě* is basic, while *-o* is used only in special, restricted meanings. The presentation of verbs itself is also quite primitive. Among other things, the *vidět* and *umějí* types are conflated, and *píšu* and *čtu* emerge as the first verbs of their types, despite the fact that the former, with its infinitive *psát*, is one of the few irregular verbs within a very regular type, while the latter is a very atypical (since it is nonsyllabic) obstruent. The importance of these two verbs in a first-year text is obvious, but they should be listed as the irregular verbs they are, since they make poor models for their types.

All of these matters, however, can be addressed in a revision. The positive features of *KSK* far outweigh the negative. There is a large amount of grammatical material, usually correctly and sometimes ingeniously presented and drilled by copious and well-constructed exercises. The large quantity of thoughtfully worked-out and often lively dialogues is another excellent feature. The cultural material, in both English and Czech, is interesting and accurate. I struggled for years trying to figure out the essentials of the Czech educational system and wish I had been exposed at the beginning to the useful cultural note, in Czech with glosses, on page 199.

The format of the book is attractive and, in these days of no help from the editors in publishing houses, there are relatively few egregious mistakes and misprints. The authors of *KSK* have produced a fine elementary Czech textbook which should find many users.

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