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## Message from the President

Dear NAATC members and friends,

In the summer of '99 I spoke with a number of colleagues in the Czech Republic about formal approaches to Slavic linguistics and about the "communicative classroom." On the first topic, many are interested in discourse theory, cognitive approaches, markedness theory, sociolinguistics, textology, contrastive linguistics, literature and language and even government and binding, among many other areas and approaches. Colleagues have told me they want to pursue new approaches in the background of Czech linguistic traditions; Moravians often mention Grepl and Karlík's *Skladba češtiny* — syntax in discourse context — as a good example. On the second topic I ran into a range of opinions, many strongly against the "communicative" approach, especially when I ventured the idea that this method might also be used to teach Czech to Czechs in schools — namely, to teach writing in academic contexts — and that contemporary primers for elementary school are in a sorry state, with all their dry exercises headed by imperatives that only occur in these books, such as *určete, vyjádřete, doplňte*. On teaching Czech to Americans, I showed colleagues the book I am using, Susan Kresin's *Czech for Fun*, winning positive responses. Friends mentioned Poláková's *Czech for Foreigners* — also a good book, but with many hammeringly repetitive drills and typically long, long lists of words — and just look at the presuppositions behind those two titles! However, in defense of Poláková, at heart I myself don't want to discard time-honored approaches that have helped our students learn to read and write, such as careful presentation of grammar and translation into the target language.

I had an amusing and warm exchange with a teacher at a Masaryk Basic School. He wanted to see something I had worked up on indefiniteness, and I wanted to hear his ideas on language teaching. "Memorize," he said. "Masaryk learned Latin by memorizing the dictionary." "I can't have students do that at Tulane," I said. "And Masaryk taught his students to write in Latin about their own environment. That's 'communicative,'" I went on. "Maybe so. But you Americans have to improve your own Czech. For example, your word order at times sounds Russian or Polish, and your diction is faintly uneven." "Well," I said, ignoring the word order remark, "I'm working on a study of basic vocabulary gradation in Czech to try and understand it better." "You American linguists love to study Czech, but you won't learn it. Take these *skripta* and do the exercises, I'll check them for you. Please return the book." "Well," I said, aware that he was teasing me, "Masaryk had to have his journalistic articles corrected by Gebauer. His written Czech at one point in his life might have been worse than mine." "That's impossible," he said, bristling. "Anyway, Masaryk knew all the songs of the people. You probably don't know any songs, as far as I know. *Tu máte, pane kolego*, take this book and learn it." "Aha," I said, "a 'communicative' strategy! You're a communicativist at heart!" In the end he still wanted my 'Indefiniteness,' but only when I mentioned the examples had been checked by Professor Adamec.

As we look forward to meeting in Chicago at year's end, let's consider the directions we want our organization to take. We have earned another grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, and the *Czech Language News* flourishes. Please bring your ideas and suggestions to our meeting. Very best wishes for a successful year!

George Cummins, Tulane University

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## Common Czech and Standard Czech in Textbooks for Foreigners

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### 0. The Teacher's Dilemma

Lurking at the back of every Czech teacher's conscience is the knowledge that the language we present to our students is fit primarily for writing, not—in most parts of the Czech Republic—for use in ordinary conversations. Of course, this is true to a certain extent for every language, but the situation in Czech is more polarized than most. It is a well-worn fact that the standard variety—*spisovná čeština*, known in English as Literary Czech or Standard Czech (SC)—in its purest form goes virtually unused in private, informal conversation. Instead, Czechs in Bohemia and western Moravia use *obecná čeština*, or Common Czech (CC), while Czechs in central and eastern Moravia use dialects that also differ substantially from SC (while sharing some features with CC). The appearance of SC in conversation marks a deliberate attempt at irony or sarcasm, or a form of intertextuality (citations, conscious or unconscious, of cultural texts; see Hammer 1985, Gammelgaard 1997).

The teacher's dilemma is a stark one, with two conflicting imperatives.

Written communication plays a large role in most courses: students write assignments, they write tests and exams, they copy our writing off the blackboard and read textbooks and texts we give them. The only acceptable mode of written communication is, for the most part, SC. By and large, then, the writing they see and produce should be SC. If we make it otherwise, we will be doing the equivalent of equipping our students with a version of New York dialect but no command of standard English.

On the other hand, the days are long gone when oral communication in Czech was largely a concern only for the few graduate students who could procure a visa to do their archival research. These days, many of the students of Czech will be young Westerners living in the Czech Republic, who are eager to make sense of what they are picking up around them. Of course, some of them will be aiming at the *státnice*, a rigorous written test of irregular forms and agreement patterns that qualifies them for certain types of employment, but many more will be more interested in simply communicating. And many students studying Czech abroad will also be doing so with a view to spending time in the country. In this situation, can we foreign teachers of Czech really send our students off with no knowledge of how the language is spoken? Is it desirable only to admit to our students the existence of *dům*, *káva*, *děkuji*, *s kamarády* when all around them people will be saying *barák*, *kafe*, *děkuju*, *s kamarádama*?

The situation, most of us will agree, requires some compromise from the teacher of Czech as a foreign (or second) language. As a matter of curiosity, I decided to dip into a number of textbooks of Czech for foreigners, to see

the extent to which they introduce non-standard elements. I've included books produced both in the Czech Republic and abroad, at both the beginning and intermediate level. For reasons of space I have not covered all the textbooks available on the market today; nor have I mined each book exhaustively. What you'll find below are some exploratory points highlighted from each book, intended to illustrate various trends and provoke some interest in the topic.

For convenience, I've divided the discussion into books for beginners and those for more advanced students. I've also classified the textbooks as "Czech as a foreign language" (CFL) if they are primarily aimed at students studying outside the Czech Republic, and "Czech as a second language" (CSL) if they are primarily aimed at those learning Czech in a context where it is in everyday use.

### 1.0 Textbooks for beginners

Books for beginners share a common set of problems. The desire to induct students gently into the mysteries of Czech bumps up against the need to make them aware of non-standard forms they are likely to meet. This problem is more acute for CSL books than for CFL ones, as students in the Czech Republic will meet non-standard forms everywhere they turn. On the other hand, sticking to SC avoids the difficult issue of how to legitimately choose a variety of spoken Czech to present. Many students will be making for Prague, a bastion of CC, but others may be bound for Brno, Olomouc, or Ostrava, where CC is an alien dialect. SC has the distinct advantage of being supradialectal; it is equally "Czech" in all parts of the republic, whereas other varieties can sound odd coming from a foreigner who, after all, has no "native Czech dialect."

### 1.1 CFL: Spoken Literary Czech

Heim's 1982 *Contemporary Czech* is a good example of an older textbook that takes SC as its focus. It is one of only a few textbooks to make an explicit statement about language varieties. In the introduction, Heim writes:

Since *Contemporary Czech* has the double objective of developing ready fluency and laying a foundation for active use of the language, the sentences and exercises...include elements from both written literary Czech (*spisovná čeština*) and spoken literary Czech (*hovorová čeština*). (5)

Linguists nowadays do not generally accept the existence of *hovorová čeština* (HC) as an independent language variety, but that does not mean it is not a useful pedagogical benchmark. It is reasonably well understood which elements of CC have been allocated a place in SC as well, and dictionaries give answers as to which non-SC words should theoretically be permitted into cultivated SC speech. The variety Heim proposes to teach may or may not be a variety spoken by native speakers, but many would argue that foreigners never truly speak such a variety anyway. As a compromise it is prudent and practical.

In places Heim does show a preference for more elevated forms from SC, rather than those ascribed to HC. For consonantal stem verbs, he puts forth only the infinitive in *-i* for *řici* (36) and *těci* (180), although he allows a formal

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and colloquial variant for *mocil/moct*, *pomocil/pomocit* (70, 72). But he does not cross the line into reactionary conservatism, and avoids old-fashioned features like the infinitive in *-ti* and forms like *píši*, *tlucte*.

In other places his standard does match that of HC, as with verb conjugation. Here he lists (in this order): *pracuju/ pracuji*, *pracujou/pracují*, noting that “*pracuju* and *pracujou* belong to the spoken language; the written language favors *pracuji* and *pracují*” (30). Similarly, we learn that the nominative after *pane* (*pane Machek* instead of *pane Machku*) is “colloquial usage” (38-39). The CC form *cos říkal?* (38), on the other hand, is presented merely as a shortening that frequently occurs, with no hint of a stylistic or contextual differentiation.

Lexical differences that are not so easily pinned down to SC vs. CC are noted, although CC words are relatively rare. We are introduced to both *taky* and *také*, the latter of which is “more formal” (36), and to *hodně* (82) and *moc*, described as “colloquial synonyms for *velmi*, *mnoho* and *příliš*” (184).

Heim makes few concessions to overtly CC syntax, such as the use of subject pronouns, but does admit occasional CC patterns that fit his *hovorová čeština* mold. Thus, although he presents the standard SC agreement patterns for numbers (*dvacet jeden student*, *dvacet dva studenti*) he adds a footnote that “this construction is quite bookish. In everyday speech all numbers take the genitive plural and a singular verb: *ve třídě bylo dvacet jedna studentů*” (69).

Despite Heim’s careful attention to certain of the more acceptable CC variants, there is no doubt that this book teaches SC with a few concessions to the “approved” spoken language. Some of the examples of ordinary language seem a bit stilted, but for the most part Heim’s target audience—Slavists with the eventual need to do research, possibly in the Czech lands—is being fed the formal language necessary for survival in an academic context. If you’re going to teach this audience one particular variety, presenting the most formal system means that people may find your students a bit prissy for saying *to jsou ale velká okna!* (45), but at least students won’t offend their academic advisors in Prague by addressing them with words and forms more appropriate to a booze-up at the local pub. If they spend any time in the Czech Republic, they’ll learn how to do that soon enough.

### 1.2 CSL: Moderating Standard Czech (I)

Parolková and Nováková’s *Czech for Foreigners* is a lively beginners’ textbook often reprinted since the first edition in 1992. It presents a slightly relaxed version of SC: a few CC grammatical and syntactic features that are accepted in SC (*můžu*, *můžou*, pp. 36, 37, and *říct*, p. 139) are presented as the only possible variant, although in other places CC forms are offered alongside SC forms as equally possible variants.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the book presents

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that although the appendices say the alternative feminine forms of *můj* and *tvůj* are “parallel forms with no difference between them” (146), the book uses different conventions for them when it presents them initially: on p. 11 we meet *moje(má)*, where the first would seem to be the better of two, while in the accusative, genitive and instrumental we find *moji/mou*, *mél/mojí*,

only *moci* (37) and *opakuji*, *opakují* (92), although it does use *děkuju* consistently without explanation, as if it were a frozen form.

SC words and CC words are sometimes offered as synonyms (such as *moc*, *velmi*); no stylistic differentiation is made explicit, although it can perhaps be gleaned intuitively from the readings. The dialogues introduce CC words such as *holka*, with no apparent difference from the more strictly SC *dívka*.

In general I liked the tenor of the book for CSL learners. The intent is apparently to provide a simple system that can be elaborated on at later levels. The fusion of SC grammar with a few of the more palatable CC features and a strong dose of CC vocabulary will strike different people different ways. I would have been happier if the presentation were a bit more consistent (see footnote): often I felt that although the book was telling me explicitly that forms were equivalent to each other, or recommending that I use one instead of another, it was giving me another message in the arrangement and use of those forms.

### 1.3 CFL: Moderating Standard Czech (II)

David Short’s *Teach Yourself Czech* presents a similarly “loosened-up” version of SC that mixes relatively formal grammar with selected vocabulary and expression that have a more informal feel. Short is careful and consistent in the sorts of variants he allows: students are always informed when two permissible variants exist, and they are presented in the same order (*moct-moci*, *děkuju-děkuji*) throughout the book. Short glosses over the problem of what the two variants mean by saying that the right-hand one is always the “more formal” of the two (27), but in the context of a beginner’s textbook this simplification is appropriate.

In a few places Short makes greater concessions to the existence of a separate spoken norm. For instance, on p. 192 we learn that the pronouns *ony* and *ona* (n.pl.) are “invariably replaced by *oni* in the spoken language,” and that a redundant 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronoun (*Ono to bylo loni v červnu*) sometimes appears in speech. Some CC words—but not all that many—that are sprinkled throughout the book (*kafe*, *radši*, *fér*, etc.). Like Naughton (see below), Short includes an informative section in the last chapter of his book, titled “Selected Features of Low-Style Czech.” Think what you will about the adjective “low-style”—I don’t like its implications—but the treatment is clear and concise. Short avoids giving examples of CC texts, although he does cite individual forms. His terminology (“*ý* is almost regularly replaced by *ej*”, etc., p. 304) implies that we derive CC forms from SC ones, but for students who have been learning Czech from this textbook, that in fact appears to be the case.

A more explicit way of moderating Standard Czech appears in *Čeština hroul/Czech for Fun* (Kresin, Subak-Sharpe and Kašpar, 1997). The authors, clearly sensitive to the confusion students feel when faced with multiple variants of single forms, devote a paragraph in the introduction and numerous explanations throughout the

*mou/mojí*, as if they were in fact equivalents (62-63). It is not clear here why the order differs from the acc. to the gen. and instr., or why the nom. Forms are given with the *-j* form first, while the other cases have the long-vowel form first.

book to stylistic issues. The explanations tie together politeness and language variety, presenting them as facets of an overarching *formality vs. informality*. Here one has more of a sense of plan or design than in some other books: the authors take pains to point out, for instance, that in certain dialogues characters will prefer forms like *představuji* while in others they will use forms like *představuju*. Some more markedly CC forms are presented (for example, *Američani*, p. 55, *o mužovi*, p. 113), but these are clearly marked out not only as informal, but as colloquial. In general, this textbook explicitly explains to students not only what they will hear, but how to interpret it and decide themselves whether to risk using it.

Despite its thoroughness in discussing many colloquial forms, *Čeština hrou* does not present the entire spectrum of CC forms, words and syntax. Again, this is not a negative feature in a textbook for beginners. Certainly, after working with this book, students will have a clear framework and understanding of how the basic systems of politeness and formality function, into which they can fit the CC forms they encounter.

#### 1.4 CSL: Mix and Match

Šára, Šárová and Bytel's 1969 *Čeština pro cizince* was intended for technical students recently arrived from Asia and Africa who needed to acquire the linguistic competence to study at Czech universities. The book tries to balance the students' need to acquire SC for their studies with their need to communicate effectively in their new surroundings. Its major innovation is twofold. First, it introduces many CC elements before their SC counterparts, which come in the second half of the book. Second, it presents conjugation and declension patterns that draw on both SC and CC. In most instances, the CC features selected are those which are most common in conversation, which are found in spoken Czech throughout the country, and whose SC equivalents sound stilted; examples are forms like *děkuji* and *velká auta*, which this book does not mention until its later chapters. Instead, it leads off with the forms *děkuju* and *velký auta*. More regionally limited features, like *mluvěj(i)*, *tvářej(i) se*, which sound markedly "Bohemian," are not introduced, even if doing so would simplify the learning of conjugational patterns. But by the same token neither do some virtually universal features, such as the *-ma* endings in the instrumental, appear in this book. (This might be because the instrumental does not appear until the very end of the book, when other exclusively SC forms have already been introduced. But by the same token, it is puzzling that these particular CC forms were not mentioned at all.)

The authors state that their reason for beginning with certain CC elements was both their ubiquity in spoken Czech and their simplicity compared with SC forms:

Některé gramatické jevy vykládané v 1. části jsou uváděny ve formách běžných pro obecnou mluvenou češtinu. Není to jen proto, že na tomto stupni se student zabývá především mluveným jazykem, ale zejména proto, že tyto tvary jsou více v souladu se systémem, který spěje k jednoduchosti a větší pravidelnosti, takže umožňují větší přímočarost postupu. (6)

This approach sometimes results in strange bedfellows, since in other places it is the SC system that appears

simpler and more logical, and which is therefore introduced. Alongside forms like *velký auta*, *dobrý kamarádi*, *zajímavý knihy* the book gives us *má sestra*, *mou sestru*, but not *moje sestra*, *moji sestru* and *lépe*, *méně*, *více* but not *líp*, *míň*, *víc*. Presumably this is because the CC forms are less transparently related to the original roots (cf. *lépe* - *lepší* and *méně* - *menší*) and to similar paradigms (*má*, *mou* like *krásná*, *krásnou*).

Starting in Lesson 25, the authors gradually introduce SC forms of nom. and acc. pl. adjectives, as well as other SC features. By the end of the book, they have moved fully over to SC.

Their approach has the advantage of giving students easy-to-follow rules that should result in reasonably natural-sounding speech. If the particular features are picked carefully enough, you can avoid giving the book a markedly regional slant; after all, forms analogous to *velký auta* are found to some measure across the entire republic.

The potential disadvantage to this approach is that the student has to learn certain paradigms and then rejigger them later, relegating exclusively to his spoken vocabulary forms he had until now been writing. The approach, bold as it may be, thus makes me more than a little uneasy. Still, this is a textbook produced for a specific need, and it is not entirely fair to judge it outside of that context.

#### 1.5 CFL: The Full Spectrum

The most sophisticated way to handle the distinction is to introduce it explicitly in the textbook. Students are handed multiple forms at various junctures and asked to use one or the other as appropriate. If it's handled sensitively, students should grow aware of the differences as they progress in the language.

In the new edition of *Colloquial Czech*, Naughton presents CC forms as alternate spoken forms right from the beginning of the book. Instead of labelling them all as either "formal" or "informal", he explains each one individually and in brief. His treatment of the forms *děkuju* and *děkujou* in lesson 4 is a good example of how he distinguishes different levels of formality and officiality. The reader is told concisely, with a minimum of disruption, that the former is more generally acceptable than the latter in more formal speech and in writing. Naughton doesn't stop, though, with explaining forms found in both CC and SC. He also notes along the way that the learner will hear forms like *dobrý jídlo* and *nový auta*, without explicitly recommending them for use. Informal language as a system is presented near the end of the book, although by this time the learner has met most of the CC forms at least casually elsewhere. Clearly, Naughton has in mind as his reader not only the classroom-based student, but also the self-taught learner in the Czech Republic puzzling through what he or she has heard that day at work.

The advantage with this sort of approach is, of course, that students are aware of the different nuances available to them right from the start, and don't have to, as it were, "start afresh" after two or more years of Czech. We assume that their sophistication grows as their language skills improve, and that they integrate these distinctions into their speech and writing as their capacity allows.

The sophistication of this approach will undoubtedly raise some protests. Do beginning students really need more

grammar and more choices to make? When each noun already has upwards of eight distinct forms (*stůl, stolu, stole, stolem, stoly, stolů, stolům, stolech*) distributed over seven cases, and students are already struggling to figure out which form goes where, do we really need to add to that welter of forms “spoken” instrumental plurals and, in some instances, other forms as well? There is a case to be made for ignorance being bliss, at least for beginners, although I wouldn’t rush to make it myself; I suspect this argument will mainly be advanced by closet purists.

## 2.0 Textbooks for Advanced Learners

In many ways, the task in writing an advanced textbook is easier. For advanced learners in the Czech Republic, it may be acceptable — and easiest — to assume that students have an acquaintance with CC through their own experience, and to by and large ignore its existence in the presentation of materials and exercises. After all, the main presentation of material has been done in the beginners’

courses, which is where all the most common forms would have been met. And most students who are continuing on with formal education in the language have some vaguely academic goal: a test they need to pass, an author they want to learn to read, the research skills to pursue a higher degree. As a result, the chatty dialogues of beginners’ books are mostly gone, and the grammar and exercises, structured around weightier readings, lend themselves more readily to an entirely SC approach. But even if we assume (rightly or wrongly) that the basic features that distinguish SC from CC already form some part of an advanced student’s consciousness, there are still a lot of pitfalls to be skirted round and dark places to be explained.

### 2.1 CSL: Hear No Evil...

For example, Parolková’s 1998 *Czech for Foreigners II* makes virtually no mention of differences between the spoken and written language. There are occasional references to the fact that certain forms are not commonly used (such as verbal adverbs, p. 70) or are used only in writing (the past conditional, p. 86), but even when there are clear differences between the forms, Parolková doesn’t point them out. When discussing the adjective (*ten*)*týž*, for instance, she advises students that it has an *obtížná deklinace*: “Proto se mu vyhýbejte a použijte raději *ten samý, ta samá, to samé; ti samí, ty samé, ta samá = stejný, stejná, stejné*. Nemělo by vám však překážet při porozumění” (44). Nowhere is there a word to the effect that there is a significant stylistic difference here, and that *tentýž* is a feature of the written language, or, at the broadest, of SC but not CC. Only occasionally do non-SC forms merit a mention, as in the declension of *ruka, noha*, where we are given the alternate loc. pl. forms *rukách, nohách*, labelled *hovorově* (34).

This lack of CC is surprising, given the welcoming, informal tone of Parolková’s writing, but I suspect that a primary target for this book is students preparing for state exams in Czech, as the pages of exercises on orthography testify. In such a case it could well prove appropriate to direct students away from inappropriate language and to issue instructions on what to use and what not to use, rather

than spreading the whole richness of Czech before them and then watching them make a hash of it on the exam.

### 2.2 CSL: Save It for the End?

Another approach is to treat all CC forms in a single chunk at the end of the book. This seems to be the approach, for instance, of *Chcete ještě lépe mluvit česky*, a textbook for advanced users, whose level, I would judge, is about appropriate for a third-year university Czech course. Of its 510 pages, two are devoted to CC, containing an example of a literary text written in CC and an explanation of how to convert SC forms to CC ones. I use the term “convert” deliberately, as it seems to be the authors’ approach as well. For example, they write, “Charakteristické rysy obecné češtiny sledujte v textu: ‚o‘ na začátku slova se mění na ‚vo‘: von, vod, vokno, voblíknout se.” (412) This sort of terminology struck me as acceptable at the beginning level, but made me more uncomfortable in a book for advanced students. Can’t we admit to an advanced student that, if any sort of “conversion” is going on here at all, then it’s from CC to SC and not vice versa?

CC forms are not completely excluded from the textbook. The authors make use of those CC elements that have been accepted for use in SC, employing forms like *můžu, děkuju, blahopřeju, víc, dřív*, while avoiding forms that are marked as only CC. However, at other points in the book we find forms like *mohu* (in a letter), *dřívě* (in conversation). In the keys to one exercise on the plural we meet both the nom. pl. forms *Kanadáné* and *Rakušani*. Inconsistency of this sort is a headache for teachers, and is probably worse than sticking strictly to SC forms.

From the point of view of language varieties, then, the greatest difficulty that *Chcete ještě lépe mluvit česky?* presents is that on those occasions where it does permit variation between SC and CC forms, it does not explicitly differentiate them stylistically or contextually. Presumably this task is left to teachers or to the students themselves; however, ideally, if two forms or synonyms are to be used, we would like the book to indicate why one is preferable in a particular context, or to see some mention of the difference when the grammar is explained. Instead, the textbook seems to present SC and CC forms as simple alternates. This occurs, for example, in the grammar charts, where we are presented with forms like *víc(e), výš(e), níž(e)*, although only *lépe, méně, děle* — evidently the CC vowel change involved in *líp, míň, dýl* was a step too far. Similarly, in grammar sections throughout the book the student is presented with such easily convertible synonyms as *který* and *jenž*; *stejný* and *tentýž*, etc., and is asked to change sentences with one to the other. Nowhere is it mentioned that *jenž* and *tentýž* are exclusively SC forms that would be marked in ordinary speech. In this respect, this textbook — admirable as it is in many respects — fails to account for one of its users’ potential needs.

A more satisfactory version of the “explain at the end” approach is found in Bischofová, Hasil, Hrdlička and Kramářová, *Čeština pro středně a více pokročilé* (1997), with a target audience of approximately the same level as *Chcete ještě lépe mluvit česky?*. This book has a chapter at

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the end about the Czech language, containing a short essay on varieties of Czech and what CC items correspond to in SC.<sup>2</sup> It is less colorful than the passage in *Chcete ještě lépe mluvit česky?*, but for that represents a more accurate and measured approach.

The textbook lays the ground well in advance by making consistent note of stylistic and register differences throughout. In the first chapter, for instance, students are asked to complete an exercise: “Řekněte, jaký je stylový rozdíl mezi následujícími tvary: děkuji - děkuju, děkují - děkujou, píší - píšou, píší - píšou, mohu - můžu, mohou - můžou, říci - říct, dělati - dělat.” (11) A further exercise on style follows in a later chapter. When features exclusive to SC are introduced, we are informed if they are bookish or characteristic of particular styles. Under comparative adverbs, we are told that, “frekventovanější jsou kratší tvary (dál), tvary zakončené na -e mají knižní ráz (dále)” (59).<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Where from Here?

I will qualify my conclusions by saying that I don't see the treatment of standard and nonstandard language as a litmus test for choosing a textbook. There are far more important and relevant issues, both philosophical (approach, number and quality of exercises, compatibility with the teacher's teaching style) and practical (availability, price), all of which are discussed regularly on the pages of *Czech Language News*. Why, then, should we care how textbooks treat language variety?

First, each of us, as a teacher of Czech, needs to have a clear picture of where CC and SC belong in the language learning process. To do that, we have to have reflected on our students' goals in learning Czech and on our own concept of the “good native speaker.” Who do we want our students to sound like? Who should they write like? Are these goals realistic, and if not, what part of them do we sacrifice, given that we see our students a few hours a week and that Czech commands at best only part of their attention?

Second, we need to have a thorough look at the presentation of CC and SC in the materials we give our students, because what we say to them and instruct them on is inevitably only a complement to the authority of what appears on the printed page. If we're to use a different approach from the one in our chosen textbook—or if the textbook has no clear approach, or is muddled—we need to be ready to mediate what the textbook tells them in a clear and consistent fashion.

Third, the use of *hovorový* as a term is rife in all these books. It has migrated quite far from the original sense of “spoken standard language” which we first saw in Heim and which is enshrined in Czech linguistic tradition. Many books seem to use it as a shorthand for anything inadmis-

sible in formal writing and speaking which is not shockingly vulgar. Such a simplification is easily justifiable at the beginners' level. The more advanced the audience is, the less easily it sits. We need to have a clear idea what we mean by *hovorový* when we teach, what the authors of our textbooks mean when they use it, and what the potential discrepancies are between those two views that could confuse or mislead students.

Fourth, the general difficulty textbooks have in articulating a consistent approach to the issue of CC vs. SC forms mirrors a deeper inadequacy in the way these terms are used. After all, if what's CC was CC, and what's SC was SC, and that was all there was to it, then we could simply label everything as “formal or informal” or “written and spoken” and presto, our students would demonstrate a flawless command of Czech registers.

The problem, as the textbooks amply demonstrate, is that all pairs of terms, including “CC” and “SC,” cover up a much finer layering of differences. All the textbooks include certain CC elements (e.g. *děkuji, píšou, moct*) that have been legitimized for use in written Czech. Other CC features (e.g. *říct, ze třech, dvacet jedna studentů*), even if now found in SC, seem to enjoy a more marginal existence, sanctioned in some textbooks and ignored in others. Certain non-SC features (e.g. *Angličani, o mužovi, ono prší, student co jsme s ním mluvili*) seem to make their way into textbooks anyway as admissible “colloquial” variants, for use only in speech; while still others (e.g. *dobry jídlo, čistej papír, nový auta*) are presented only by Naughton (and sometimes by Šára as well) in the body of the textbook, with others reserving them for an appendix-like chapter or banishing them completely. Those elements exclusive to SC and almost never found in ordinary spoken Czech suffer similarly divergent fates. Some (e.g. participles, verbal adverbs) are consistently explained as literary or bookish, while others (e.g. *tentýž, více*) are often left without comment. And this is before we even mention vocabulary, with its everpresent cultural baggage.

The textbooks examined here embody a wide range of approaches to the questions above. The tension we all sense in trying to evaluate them comes from our own conflicting desires. We want to show students the wealth of stylistic and communicative options Czech contains without overwhelming them. If we take the time to ask what the authors were aiming at and how it matches our own understanding and goals, many of the textbooks discussed above can help us do just that.

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<sup>2</sup> The chapter deals not only with morphology and phonology, but with the lexicon as well. Here I had a difference with the authors. Linguistically it made me uneasy to see words like *akorát* and *šuple* listed alongside *kočka, teplouš* and *kámoš* as “hovorové výrazy”; I would have thought that students at this level could handle finer distinctions.

<sup>3</sup> Here, curiously enough, *líp* and *míň* are marked “(hov.)”, while *dýl* is marked “(nesp.)” This difference is not clarified.

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### Multi-module Czech Language Instruction

by Masako Fidler,  
Brown University

#### 1. An Email from a Student

Part of a language teacher's responsibilities is to identify students who may be starting to have problems and to get them in your office for a talk. This must be done by the middle of the semester or even earlier. When I discovered one such student, I contacted him via email, the procedure that is perhaps the least frightening. The reply I received, however, was something that I had not expected. Here is the gist of the letter:

*The combinations of language skills and cultural knowledge that students may wish to acquire are almost infinite ... How would one create teaching materials that provide different options in the acquisition of language and realia, while maintaining one's academic integrity?*

Dear Professor Fidlerová,  
I just wanted to let you know that I am taking Czech pass/fail. If I did not have that option here, I would have never taken the class because I do not have enough time in my schedule. I am majoring in two subjects, and Czech is not one of my requirements. I have an extremely heavy course load this semester, and I thought Czech would just be something light and fun. I am not doing that badly in the class, I have a B average and all I need to do is get a C to pass the course. I am a senior and I have to devote most of my time to my senior seminar and to my thesis. I decided to take Czech because I am going to Prague for a few months after graduation in May, and I wanted to know a few basic things before I went. I am very busy right now with trying to get myself into law school and trying to graduate with honors. [...] I really do not have the time necessary to get an A in this course, I just want to pass.

I had been aware that—like most instructors of other less commonly taught languages—Czech teachers tend to have classes populated by students of widely varying interests and preparation. In fact, we have had graduate students in

literatures and social sciences, undergraduate students in Russian studies, political science, history, and cinematography, and heritage speakers with varying degrees of proficiency. There had been students with or without the knowledge of any heavily inflexional language. But they had always had one goal in common: although they may have progressed at different speeds, they were all interested in the acquisition of functional language skills in Czech. This student, in contrast, had a totally different goal, but nonetheless a legitimate one: he wanted to learn some *general aspects* of Czech language and realia. Since he recognized that more is expected of students to receive an A, he chose to take the course pass/fail. In fact, the student deserves high praise for persevering and getting exactly what he wants out of a classroom while simultaneously having a clear understanding that the instructor sets a different set of goals.

Such cases may become more prevalent since Prague has become one of the world's most popular places for young people to visit. The Czech enrollment at our university has doubled in recent years, and students come into the Czech language classroom with different expectations. In the coming years, we may see an even more diverse group of people in the classroom. Some may wish to learn the structure of literary and/or spoken language from a linguistic point of view. Some may wish to learn all the practical skills in formal speech situations. Some may wish to quickly acquire the ability to read professional literature. Some may want to learn how to carry out daily conversation primarily with their close friends and relatives. Some may want to learn mainly realia with survival-level language skills. Each individual may be interested in a different aspect of

Czech culture and may wish to study it in varying depths. When one considers all the possible parameters, the combinations of language skills and cultural knowledge that students may wish to acquire are almost infinite.

In such a scenario, how would an instructor respond to ever-so-diverging student needs? How would one create teaching materials that provide different options in the acquisition of language and realia, while maintaining one's academic integrity?

#### 2. Technology and Multi-Module Teaching Material

Teaching materials are usually available in a book format. For multi-module teaching, however, this may not be sufficient. Admittedly, a book format has a great advantage over electronic materials: its stability. For the time being, this is the only medium that can be carried around with ease. It is not affected by power failures, platform and software incompatibilities, and server problems. It is easier for students to highlight and add notes and bookmarks in a book than in an electronic material.

In spite of its advantages, one drawback of a textbook is that it would make module-sensitive approach to language teaching extremely labor-intensive. Materials in a book format (texts, dialogs, grammar explanations, exercises) are created with specific goals. These goals may vary from

book to book: some books may set production of grammatically correct forms as their primary goal; others may focus more on the performance of certain tasks in the language but may have different expectations about students' grammatical, syntactic, and lexical accuracy and stylistic sophistication. Whatever purpose a book should serve, its goals must be clearly stated and fixed. Any attempts to do something different with the same book would require the creation of new materials and drastic customization.

True, one could argue that a book could be accompanied by supplements and appendixes to serve various audiences. But it is not clear whether massive supplementation is possible. Extra materials would necessarily lead to a bulkier volume. Publishers may not be interested in printing textbooks with hundreds of pages unless it is profitable. In addition, changing interests and goals of students would mean frequent changes in the book; this again may not be easily carried out in a book format.

A more serious problem concerns treatment of sample texts and grammar explanations. Ideally, a book has a certain type of target audience and provides annotations and glosses that fit the audience needs. A book that serves more than one type of audience would require a large number of vocabulary and grammar annotations, a situation that could result in cluttered texts. One possible way out is use of electronic materials, possibly in addition to a textbook.

In an optimal electronic format the student (in consultation with the instructor) can choose the module and consequently the type of exercises and materials. The relative ease with which electronic materials can be updated is another great advantage. In a hypertext electronic format, errors can be corrected, annotations and links can be adjusted and new materials can be added as the need arises. Audiovisual materials can also be added as sound and movie files.

Use of such technology may even accelerate the speed at which grammar is taught. An interactive electronic exercise is quite suitable for inflexion drills. If some diagnostic mechanism is available, this will lead the student to the most relevant exercises and grammar explanations.

Upon recognizing the potential usefulness of an electronic format, one is faced with an even more complicated task: determining the basic structure of such material. This resembles a process of making a wish list. What mechanisms and features do we need to enable students to study Czech and Czech realia according to their preferences?

### 3. Parameters for Multi-Module Teaching Material

We have been building an on-line anthology of Czech literary texts (<http://www.brown.edu/Departments/CLS/index.html>). Based on the experience we have had so far, here are some preliminary parameters to be used for multi-module teaching material.

#### (a) Communicative Tasks and Texts

A text or a group of texts that are connected with respect to topics such as getting acquainted, food, leisure time,

work/study, is probably central to the material. The texts should perhaps be ranked hierarchically in terms of communicative tasks: from simple to rather complex, although there should be links that allow students to skip levels. The ranking of communicative tasks requires careful scrutiny: it is necessary to define their degrees of complexity since the level of communicative tasks may not directly correspond to grammatical complexity. Take, for example, recognition of signs and notices, which is generally considered as a simple communicative task; it is not possible to dismiss some materials that may be relevant to daily life merely because they contain forms other than the nominative singular (e.g., the genitive case for *z technických důvodů uzavřeno*) or the non-past forms of a verb (e.g., the past passive participle for *Vstup zakázán*). Each text could be accompanied by audio and/or visual files.

#### (b) Glossing of Texts

Each text should contain links that help comprehension. Such links cannot be created in a uniform manner for all texts. For learners of elementary communicative tasks, detailed grammatical and lexical explanations may not be relevant, whereas learners of advanced communicative tasks would want such explanations and alternative expressions so that they can learn to both recognize and use them with precision.

#### (c) Exercises Connected to Texts

As in most language textbooks, each sample text could be a starting point for learning specific grammatical and lexical points. Simple exercises involving recognition and production of grammatically correct forms should be interactive, giving students immediate feedback and if necessary revealing the answers. The depth in which a student actively learns grammar and lexicon, however, should probably correlate with the communicative goals set for each level. Texts for students wanting to learn the very basics, however, should not necessarily preclude certain complex grammar phenomena; if the situation requires them, they should be present, but they do not need to be actively used and drilled on. It might be ideal if some diagnostic function is built in a grammar exercise, directing the student to study some portion of grammar explanation.

For students who need to learn the overall structure of the language, it would be useful if grammar exercises linked to texts could be accessed through a grammar index. For example, some exercises involving the instrumental case might be linked to a text about illness (*léčít se čím*), while others might be linked to leisure time (*sejít se s kým*); if these exercises can be accessed under the instrumental case, students can drill or review the case endings in a compact way. Such links would be particularly useful for students who need review in specific areas of grammar. Should the instructor identify some weaknesses in the student's grammar, s/he could send the student to do this particular group of exercises.

#### (d) Grammar Pages

Grammar exercises should also be linked to a page where grammar points are explained. Linking of exercises to this

page would also need to take into account specific communicative goals. The exercises intended for simple communicative tasks would require a minimum amount of grammar, and should be linked to only part of the page. In contrast, exercises intended for complicated communicative tasks that require precise acquisition of grammar should be linked to more parts. Nonetheless, in the former case students should not be blocked from viewing more detailed grammar explanations if they wish. This means that the grammar page might take the form of a nested structure that opens with a simple description but is further linked to more detailed descriptions.

#### (e) Realia

Each topic of the electronic material would be a starting point for realia information. Again, the amount, the type and the quality of knowledge about history, literature, and politics require intensive thinking. The other important issue is the degree to which language acquisition should be combined with acquisition of knowledge.

#### (f) Classroom Setting

Although more flexible electronic materials open different paths to learning Czech language and realia, there still remains a problem as to how to run such multi-module classes. On the one hand, it is not effective to put together all the students who are working in different modules. On the other, it is not realistic to run each single course with a very small number of students at different hours. The actual classroom setting would be somewhat of a compromise: running a class for students who want to reach a certain level of communicative tasks (which will be determined by the instructor), while offering other students independent study courses where some language and realia learning can be done through electronic material. With the availability of materials that provide various options, it would be possible to run such independent study courses without much burden on the instructor. As students become more motivated in learning Czech through independent courses, this arrangement could potentially increase the enrollment in the regular language classroom.

#### (g) A Book

The last thorny question is whether to incorporate the book component, and if the answer is positive, how to do so. If a book should be available, it is necessary to consider minimally two issues: (1) what part of this material should the book constitute; (2) what function it should have. It might be possible to publish some portion of the material in a book format accompanied by a CD-ROM. The CD-ROM may be an extended version of the material placed on the web.

#### 4. Closing Remarks

Clearly, preparation of multi-module teaching materials requires a solution to many methodological problems in addition to problems of technological implementation. Ranking of communicative tasks has been carried out on an abstract level (e.g., by ACTFL), but a more concrete description of each level for Czech is required to determine the nature of texts, links, and exercises, and the way in which all of them are connected. Technical support

from the Center for Language Studies has enabled us to start building the nucleus of this project at Brown. Certain portions of the material have thus far been tested and will be available on the web for the general public in the near future.

#### Karen Gammelgaard, *Two Studies on Written Language* (Meddelelser Nr.74).

Oslo: Universitet i Oslo (Slavisk-baltisk avdeling), 1996, 36pp. (ISSN 0803-2505; ISBN 82-90250-68-1)

#### Karen Gammelgaard, *Spoken Czech in Literature: The Case of Bondy, Hrabal, Placák and Topol* (Acta Humaniora Nr.18).

Oslo: Scandinavian University Press in cooperation with the Faculty of Arts, University of Oslo, 1997, 272pp. (ISSN 0806-3222; ISBN 82-00-12681-1)

(Review copies supplied by author.)

Reviewed by David Short,  
University of London

I am dealing with both these publications together, since there is a thematic, and in part generic, link between them. The common element is the interest, so widespread and productive among non-Czech bohemists, in the colloquial version of the language and the interrelations between it and the standard language. The first of the *Two Studies* ('Derrida, Vachek and spoken vs. written language', pp.7-21) effectively demolishes Derrida, at least in his unfortunate ('ethnocentric') dismissal of Structuralism and general ignorance of its Prague School reflex, which could seduce the uninitiated into misconstruing, by default, the Prague School's attitude to the standard/non-standard language dichotomy. The second study ('Dobrovský's standard language norm', pp.22-36) is a lucid—if partial—description of how Dobrovský stands on a continuum, from Tomsa to Gebauer, of declining tolerance for the incorporation of colloquial forms in the progressively refined version of standardized Czech. The larger book, derived from a doctoral thesis, is a close analysis of the *forms* occurring in a computerised corpus (claimed to be the most comprehensive literary corpus so processed to date) based on two prose works and two works in verse, and the *functions* which they serve. The works are: Egon Bondy's *Pražský život* (1991 edition of a 1951 work), Bohumil Hrabal's *Jarmilka* (1992 edition of a 1952 work), Petr Placák's *Medorek* (1990 version of a 1985 work) and Jáchym Topol's *Vlhký básně a jiné příběhy* (1990 edition of a 1988 work); most originated in samizdat, which is held to predict a high incidence of Common Czech (CC) elements relative to the Standard Czech (SC; 'LC' in the book) norm of 'mainstream' literature. The first and last are the verse texts. (The literary quality of the four works is neither questioned nor appraised.)

The innovative analysis of the incidence of, and interplay between, CC and SC orthographic, prosodic, phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic features is carried out with commendable thoroughness and imagination. (Important issues here are the need for CC features to be expressed by SC orthographic patterns and the

rules of implication for assessing co-occurrence of selected, especially phonological/morphological features, rules conspicuously broken in Placák.) The repertoire of features described, analysed, quantified (in numerous tables, conspicuous for their clarity) and interpreted (for their literary functions) is much wider than in many similar studies, and attention is properly paid to the varying incidence of features in direct speech as opposed to the general narrative. The author's general conclusion is that 'the application of spoken Czech in literature is deeply intertwined with the creation of aesthetic meaning' (p.251), with the perhaps predictable consequence that 'if spoken Czech forms had not been applied, the texts would have been less convincing works of art' (ibid.). While the author refers only *passim* to the facts and some statistics of the language of certain earlier writers, notably K. M. Čapek-Chod, she cannot reasonably extend this conclusion to them. However, in fairness to Čapek-Chod in particular, who was writing a hundred years ago, when the conscious use of CC forms in literature was in any event relatively unusual and when the late twentieth-century polarisation of 'official' and *samizdat* literature could not apply, the present writer would maintain that the same conclusion might well have been made, and possibly more tellingly. In saying this the undersigned is merely betraying a personal fascination with the language of Čapek-Chod and by no means intended to detract from the breadth, depth and erudition of Dr Kammellaard's analysis. The book, in near-flawless English and with a wealth of typographic variation in the presentation of examples etc., is a worthy successor to the earlier work. Both represent major contributions to our appreciation of the symbiotic nature of the two poles (as conventionally viewed) of the modern Czech language.

Jan Lehár, Alexandr Stich,  
Jaroslava Janáčková, and Jiří Holý,  
*Česká literatura od počátků k dnešku.*

Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny, 1998, 1058 pp.  
495.00 Kč. (ISBN 80-7106-308-8)

(Review copy supplied by author.)

Reviewed by Alexander Levitsky,  
Brown University

One of the least deliberated aspects of the fall of communism was the feverish reinvention of the way with which new approaches in the cognition of the historical processes began to be disseminated. In some countries, revival of the formerly forbidden topics led to the rise of extreme forms of nationalism, wars, and redrafting of geographic borders. In other lands, unaffected by wars, the reappraisal of history still presented considerable difficulties, particularly when it was to be taught in schools. One thing was clear: rapidly unfolding political events made most former textbooks suddenly outdated and useless.

The reviewed book belongs to those which were printed within the last decade and managed, despite time limitations, to place concerns for quality and breadth of information above any counter ideological aims, which were evident, for instance, in the *Dictionary of Forbidden Authors* (*Slovník zakázaných autorů*), published in 1991. It

is, in fact, the first text devoted to a major review of eleven centuries of recorded writings in the lands of Bohemia and Moravia. Yet, despite the aims of the book's authors to be as inclusive as possible and write a truly comprehensive history of the Czech literature in an unbiased way, one of the truly glaring omissions in it was, nonetheless, necessitated by new geopolitical realities: no mention is made (not even a token review) of the literary developments in Slovakia, which formed an integral part of the former Czechoslovak Republic and its literary discourse for most of this century.

Originally planned as a series of four independent volumes (by four authors) for use in the Czech gymnasias as companion textbooks to different periods covered in the standard curriculum, the books came out under one cover in this edition after the breakup of the Český spisovatel publishing house, which was to print them earlier. The resultant giant traces the vicissitudes of the development of Czech literature over its 1,000 pages and has many strengths and some weaknesses. Among the latter, let me just list two. Firstly, apparently out of concern for preserving individual authors' integrity, there is lack of editorial decision on the part of the publishers to cut repetitive treatments of the same topics and writers. Different scholars are permitted to cover some of the same developments in Czech literature under nearly identical subchapter headings, albeit from different perspectives (this applies especially to the first third of the twentieth century). Secondly, in their zeal to be as comprehensive as possible, the authors' "encyclopedic" approach gets in the way of proper elucidation of the truly major voices among the Czech writers and literary critics (such as J. Neruda, K. Čapek, M. Kundera) who get covered disproportionately less within the confines of this volume than their world stature would dictate.

Despite these limitations, the book as a whole is a joy to read and is a good buy for an American university with any program in Czech. It is comprehensive and exhaustive without being too tedious. Despite having been written by different authors, it seems to have a unity of narrative style and of shared purpose: to pass as much substantive information to any serious student of Czech literature as is possible within the confines of one book. Notwithstanding its original design to serve as a textbook, it is far from pedantic or clichéd, as is typical of such texts. It invites students to read more of each author it covers, and it covers a vast array of them. It is well illustrated and accompanied by a bibliography useful to an advanced student of Czech; it has a comprehensive index of names and titles spanning over sixty pages, or over 3,500 individual items, thus serving as an encyclopedia of Czech literature as well. Moreover, it would be a valuable book to translate into English in a condensed and redesigned format, for it could serve as an excellent and informative guide in any class devoted to Czech literature or modern Czech culture. If handled sensibly and updated to include the entire last decade of this century, its translation could easily serve as a much needed companion to the magisterial history of the Czech Literature by Arne Novák, the last major text of such scope available in English and long out of print by now.

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# Czech Language News

*Czech Language News* is a newsletter published by the North American Association of Teachers of Czech. This newsletter is currently housed at the Department of Slavic Languages, Brown University, and serves the diverse and growing Czech language community as a forum for information on research, teaching and organization of Czech language instruction. It is intended to contribute to the promotion of interdisciplinary and international cooperation as well as the integration of theoretical and applied aspects of language study.

The *News* is an open exchange of information and ideas, and the editors welcome ideas and submissions for inclusion in the next issue.

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## Submissions

Czech Language News welcomes submissions of articles, comments, letters to the editor, advertisements, etc. The contributions can be written either in English or in Czech, and should include the name of the author and his/her affiliation. Please include a diskette with your submission to save us time with retyping. The size of the diskette should be 3.5"; both IBM and Macintosh format are accepted, although Macintosh is preferred. Please indicate on the diskette label the type of the operating system and word processor you are using. You can contact the editor at the address shown on the previous page or send an e-mail message to: Masako\_Ueda@brown.edu

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