



CZK 20

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<i>re (means back)</i>	<i>re (means again)</i>	<i>re (just the first syllable)</i>

Divide these words into three categories:

- | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------------|--------------|------------|
| react | reforest | recycle | reconstruct | reception |
| readjust | refresh | rediscount | recourse | recite |
| reaffirm | refuse | reflect | recuperate | recollect |
| realign | rebellion | refit | redemption | reconvert |
| receipt | rebirth | reform | redistribute | recover |
| recess | rebound | refute | refer | recur |
| reclaim | rebuff | rebuild | reflect | redesign |
| recompose | receive | rebuke | refract | redistrict |
| recount | recharge | recall | refuel | refill |
| recreate | recline | recant | regain | reflex |
| recurve | reconfirm | recent | recap | refrain |
| redirect | recoup | recital | recapture | refund |
| reduce | recruit | recoil | recast | regard |
| refine | | | recede | |

from JOHNS, J. L.; LENSKI, S. D. *Improving Reading*. USA : Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 2005.

editorial

Dear readers,

I hope you will enjoy this issue, as ever.

If you feel inspired by any of our articles, or whatever else, please feel free to contact us.

You might like to send us your comments or suggestions for articles, or, indeed, the articles themselves.

With thanks

Your editor

Gabriela Oaklandová

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news from the department

On the Road Again

With the first glimpse of the 2008 spring sunshine, some members of our band of linguists went down the highway, goin' places they haven't been recently, seein' things they may never see again. The most active travellers were Renata Povolná and Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova, who presented the first outcomes of their five-year project *Coherence and Cohesion in English Discourse*, sponsored by the Czech Science Foundation. The first stop the small research team decided on was Ostrava, where they took part in an international conference titled *Communication Strategies in Mass-Medial, Commercial and Academic Discourse*, which took place on 10th-11th March. A month later, the two linguists visited Wroclaw, Poland, to take part in a large-scale international conference organized by the Polish Association for the Study of English. On both occasions, they reported the most recent results of their research in academic English, focusing on different features which contribute to the perception of discourse coherence. In Ostrava, Renata Povolná presented her investigation into the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *well*, while in Poland she discussed her analysis of some clausal interactive discourse markers (such as *you know, you see, I mean*) as signals of politeness in different genres of spoken discourse; her studies are carried out using two corpora illustrating British and American English used in academic settings (the *London-Lund Corpus* and *MICASE*). Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova presented the results of her pilot investigation into the evaluation of novice non-native-speaker writing based on the study of a new corpus including

Bachelor's and Master's theses of students of English Language and Literature at our department. In Ostrava, she focused on the role of epistemic stance adverbials as hedges and boosters; in Wroclaw, she dealt with the functions of reporting verbs in self-sourced reporting clauses as markers of authorial stance. Apart from the numerous interesting lectures, presentations and discussions, the two conferences provided many opportunities to meet friends and colleagues old and new, and to plan schemes of cooperation and new projects. So it is highly likely that soon our linguists will be on the road again, goin' places they've never been, seein' things they may never see again ...

Canadian writers in Brno

In July we will have the opportunity to see and hear thirty-one Canadian (and thirty-one Czech) writers. The 9th annual Month of Authors' Readings literary festival will take place in July 2008 in Brno.

The festival has been held since 2000 and it lasts the whole month, presenting a different writer each evening. In 2005 the festival enlarged its scope and changed from a national to an international festival. There are two literary events each evening and, in addition to Czech writers, the festival hosts authors from abroad as guests of honour. The first guest of honour was Slovakia, followed by authors living in Berlin and, last year, writers from Belarus. This year's guest of honour is Canada, and authors both Anglophone and Francophone.

Though the exact programme of the festival and the names of all the guest authors have not yet been posted, some

writers have already confirmed their appearance at the festival. I would like to draw your attention to two of them.

Eden Robinson is a First Nations novelist and short story writer, born in British Columbia. Her first book, a collection of four "long" short stories called *Traplins* (1996), won the Winifred Holtby Prize for the best first work of fiction in the Commonwealth. Robinson's first novel, *Monkey Beach* (2000) won the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize (awarded to the best work of fiction by a British Columbia/Yukon resident). *Blood Sports*, her latest novel, was published in 2006.

Robinson complains that people expect her to write on native issues because she is native. While *Monkey Beach* is set on the reservation and tells the story of the native Haisla community, Robinson's other stories are populated with completely different characters: in her own words, she is especially "fascinated with serial killers, psychopaths, and sociopaths."

One of Robinson's stories, "Terminal Avenue", has been translated into Czech and published in *Vinnitou tady nebydlí*, a collection of short stories by North American Native writers. *Traplins* and *Monkey Beach* are available in the library of the Faculty of Arts.

Lee Maracle is also an aboriginal author and political activist, of Salish and Cree ancestry, and one of the first Native writers in Canada. She is the author of a great number of literary works, ranging through fictional autobiography, novels, poems, short stories, young adult literature, to sociological essays and political speeches.

Five works by Maracle are available in the library of the Faculty of Arts: *Bobbi Lee*, *Indian Rebel* (1975), a fictional autobiography about growing up in the '60s and '70s in Canada as a Native woman; *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism* (1988), an influential non-fiction work on conditions of contemporary aboriginal

women; *Sojourner's Truth & Other Stories* (1992); *Sundogs* (1992), Maracle's first novel; and *Ravensong, A Novel* (1993), a young adult fantasy.

On 3rd April 2008 the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University hosted the *habilitační* [= higher doctorate] lecture of Renata Povolná. The topic of the lecture - *Interactive Discourse Markers in Spoken English* - was closely connected with her current research in different genres of spoken English conducted from the viewpoint of pragmatics, discourse analysis and conversation analysis. Povolná presented her own classification of what she calls interactive discourse markers, such as *you know, you see, I suppose, I think, I mean*, and illustrated their possible pragmatic functions in authentic examples taken from three different genres of spoken English, namely private face-to-face conversation, private telephone conversation and public radio discussions. She stressed the importance of these markers for the smooth flow of spoken interaction and the establishment and maintenance of discourse coherence. In addition, she drew on her results to exemplify the differences between the possible pragmatic functions of the markers under investigation and their dependence on the speech situations in a given genre. In the discussion which followed her presentation, Renata Povolná suggested some possible directions for further research in the functions of discourse markers in spoken discourse.

interview

Czech Students Do Not Care When I Catch Them Cheating

Aaron Collier interviewed by
Anna Sedláčková

He has criss-crossed the USA six times, visited Mexico and Canada, and spent the last Christmas holidays in India. No, he is not an adventurous author of travel books. He is an English teacher. Well, a bit of an unusual one. Not every American packs up their stuff after their Bachelor's exams and departs across the Atlantic Ocean to teach at the Faculty of Education, as Aaron Collier (25) did three years ago. His mom bought him an English-Czech phrasebook with sentences such as Hello, I am addicted to heroin, can you help me find some?

How do you struggle through the language barrier?

In the States I tried to learn a few phrases in Czech like hello and thank you. The phrases about heroin and where I can get some morphine are not very useful for me. An acquaintance of mine who had lived in Prague for a little while said that the most important word I have to know is *pivo*. I study Czech once a week with a private teacher. Passively I understand a lot but I do not practise speaking Czech very often.

Do you make do with English in shops?

I can say that I would like that thing

there in Czech. And I smile and point.

And how about at offices?

Usually I show them a paper, they say blah blah blah and I nod in agreement.

How did it happen that you ended up in Brno?

Many years ago Mike George went to the same college that I went to. The year before I graduated two other people from the same college were graduating and looking for a job. They were calling around different alumni from the college asking if they could get a job somewhere abroad. They talked to Mike, came to Brno and got the job at the faculty. Then a year later I was graduating and they wanted to leave so I replaced them.

At the college you studied something called Liberal Arts. What was it like?

It is a very general education. There are seven liberal arts like grammar, rhetoric, logic, maths, music and two other ones. It is supposed to teach you how to think. You read all of the great books from Western civilization and you talk about them. For example, I read Milan Kundera's *Immortality* and *The Joke*. There are no tests, all you do is read and talk. And maybe write a paper.

You have been teaching at the Faculty of Education for three years. Do you feel any difference between Czech and American students?

(ardently) Ha, a lot of differences! American students are more talkative, they are much more eager to give opinions. When I first came here, I would ask a question and people would stare at me silently for five minutes. Czech students mostly study two subjects at once, which is not very common in the States. So they take twice as many classes but for half as long and learn twice as many things but less deeply. I had just four classes a semester.

When Czech students have so many classes do you think it makes them cheat more at tests?

(laughing) Czech students do seem not to care about getting caught cheating. Some of them are just like Yes, so? When I tell them to stop talking, two seconds later they will be back doing the same thing. And they are studying to be teachers; would they really accept it from their own students? Apparently they would.

How did you cope with teaching as an inexperienced non-teacher initially?

The guys I was replacing had gone through a short course on training to be a teacher and they said it was not worth my time. Looking back on it, I should have done that. Most of it probably was not worthwhile but some sort of preparation would have been good. I was not prepared at all when I came here.

Is it difficult to be a teacher?

It is difficult to be a good teacher. The

first year I was here, well, I feel sorry for the people I taught. I did not know what I was doing and I was afraid to try interesting things. So the lessons were very boring, it was just like Here is the book, let's do the exercises.

How did your family like your moving to Eastern Europe?

My mum has always said that she wanted me to travel, as long as I came back home eventually. She says she is still waiting for that. My father was very supportive. And my brother was interested in the idea but I do not think he really cared.

Had you travelled before coming to the Czech Republic?

I spent two weeks in France with my mother when I was fourteen. I have been to Mexico and Canada. And I have travelled a lot inside the United States; I've criss-crossed the country perhaps six times.

Hitchhiking?

No, mostly by car with my friends. We drove around Texas, Kansas, and Tennessee just to see the country. I also travelled alone with my car full of things when I was getting my stuff from Boston to the university in Santa Fe. It was forty-three hours of driving.

What did you do to entertain yourself during such a long journey?

I listened to music. And to the radio

where they talked about different things, so then I could think about that.

Did you call the radio too?

No, I did not have a mobile phone until I came to the Czech Republic. I was kind of against them. It seemed like I would be forced always to be in touch with people and never have a moment to myself. Why I got it was so that my mother could call me from the States.

How often do you see your family?

In the summers I go home, where I do not do much of anything, I just go to the beach and relax and hang out with friends. It is like when I was at the university in Santa Fe. I would probably talk to my mother on the phone about as often as I do now. But I only fly for ten hours as opposed to driving for forty-three. My mum often tells me to stay in the States but I like my job in Brno. Each year there is a different sort of challenge, which is why I keep coming back.

You do not go home at Christmas?

My mum is Jewish so she does not celebrate Christmas. I could afford to fly home more often even though with the money I make here I am below the poverty line in the States. But the cost of living is a lot lower so I can save money here. During Christmas I travel. Last December I went to India. My friend's sister was getting married in New Delhi.

Is there anything you cannot buy in Brno which you can back in the States?

Nothing important, just different kinds of food like green chilli peppers. In Santa Fe they sell them by the side of the road.

Do you ever go to fast-food chains to feel more at home?

When I first came here I went to McDonald's a couple of times but it was not really like home. It was kind of fake. I could not even order in English.

Do you like Czech cuisine?

Yes, I do, as long as it is not every day because it is very greasy. I like potato pancakes. Waiters are pretty rude here but you get used to it. I went to Greece this summer for a short vacation and the waiters there were really superfriendly. They would sit down at the table and try to be your best friend. It was nice but sometimes I just want to eat my meal. I thought to myself I would be happy to be back in the Czech Republic.

Aaron Marc Collier (1982) gained a Bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts at the University of Maryland in the USA. As a student he familiarised himself with the Czech Republic by way of Milan Kundera's works. At the age of 21 he arrived in Brno and started teaching English language at the Faculty of Education of Masaryk University. He is single. He loves Czech potato pancakes and he misses green chilli peppers.

linguistics pages

The Prague School of Linguistics: a Students' Nightmare or an Inspiration?

Part II: Jan Firbas and Functional Sentence Perspective

Martin Adam

Jan Firbas

Though Jan Firbas (1921-2000) is one of those who faithfully followed the functionalist principles set by the Prague School, both his life and professional career were closely connected with the city of Brno. Born in Brno in 1921, he lived there his entire life and Brno was also his workplace. He received his Master's degree in English and Philosophy at the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno in 1947. After becoming Professor Vachek's assistant and taking his doctoral degree in 1948, he spent a year in England to explore the realm of English phonetics. From 1949 to his death in 2000, Professor Firbas was a member of the Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno.

In spite of his academic, pedagogical and human qualities, Jan Firbas was harshly persecuted by the Communist totalitarian regime (mainly because he came from a Protestant family and lived according to his Christian beliefs). To illustrate this, let us consider the following paradox: Jan Firbas had to wait for ten years to become an Associate Professor and another twenty years - until 1990 - to be appointed a full Professor of English (cf. Svoboda 2003). Regardless of this, he proved to be a true follower of what had been established by the Prague School; as a functional structuralist *par excellence*,

Firbas not only elaborated Mathesius' idea of the functional analysis of the sentence, but also developed the findings into a full-fledged and renowned theory. Thus, he showed that the legacy of the Prague School was still alive.

Text Linguistics

As the theory of functional sentence perspective deals with the domain of what is referred to as text linguistics, it will be necessary to provide the reader with at least a brief outline of this approach towards the study of language.

Text linguistics has played a crucial role in the development of the study of discourse analysis. It views texts as elements strung together in definable relationships (see e.g. van Dijk or de Beaugrande), dealing with the analysis of the 'surface' structures that unify the text (cohesion) on the one hand and the 'deep' semantic relations between the elements (coherence) on the other. These concepts are derived basically from the British discourse analysis approach represented by Halliday. Text linguistics treats the text material from different perspectives; it is, however, unified by an interest in describing language from a higher-level, supra-sentential perspective as well as in the context and by a communicative approach.

Closely related to the study in the field of text linguistics is the theory developed by the Prague (and Brno) School of Linguistics, above all by Jan Firbas - the theory of functional sentence perspective (FSP). Generally speaking, functional sentence perspective explores the topic-focus structures and relationships between the units of information in an utterance. The theory of functional sentence perspective and its analytical methods have long been considered one of the prominent tools of discourse analysis and information processing.

functional sentence perspective. Young Firbas' authority - Professor Vachek - approved of this suggestion. As a result, since 1957 the term, abbreviated as FSP, started its adventurous and happy journey.

The core of Firbas' FSP lies in the functional approach: he claims that every meaningful element of communication is a carrier of so-called communicative dynamism (CD) and hence pushes the communication forward. By the degree of communicative dynamism of an element, Firbas understands its relative communicative value within the utterance in the act of communication. (The topic of CD is treated in detail in the following chapter.)

In other words, the sentence is "a field of semantic and syntactic relations that in its turn provides a distributional field of degrees of communicative dynamism (CD)" (Firbas 1992). According to FSP, sentence elements serve as communicative units with different degrees of CD. The degrees of CD are determined by the interplay of FSP factors involved in the distribution of degrees of CD. The FSP factors (formative forces) are linear modification, context and semantic structure; in spoken language, the interplay of these factors is logically joined by a fourth factor - intonation.

As has been noted above, the theory of FSP represents - in the broadest sense - one of the branches of linguistics dealing with information processing. In consequence, it explores how a piece of information is produced in the act of communication, and also how different elements are given different communicative prominence, i.e. are emphasised (foregrounded) or made less significant (backgrounded) to achieve the author's communicative intention. In any type of discourse, the sender chooses something that is highlighted (in speech: intonation centre / nucleus; in writing: different ways such as the end-focus principle, cleft sentences etc.). For Firbas, the

very moment of utterance (or perception of a sentence) is thus a phenomenon of paramount importance. It is worth noting that most of Firbas' papers on FSP were published in *Brno Studies in English (BSE)*, a renowned journal (established in 1959) edited by the Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno.

To complete the mosaic of the theory of FSP let me name those who carry the torch of Jan Firbas (who died in 2000) and FSP today - teachers and researchers who have pursued the study of the realm of FSP. Above all we should mention in this connection Aleš Svoboda, Professor of English at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ostrava; the name of this devoted follower of Jan Firbas may be joined by two other names: that of Jana Chamonikolasová, a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno, and also - much complimented and honoured to be in such company - the author of this article.

To conclude, let me say I feel I am extraordinarily lucky to have had the chance to know Professor Jan Firbas personally. Firstly, I attended two of his linguistics courses at the Faculty of Arts in Brno from 1997 to 2000 (*Functional Sentence Perspective* and *FSP and Intonation*). Apart from this, I was privileged to have my Master's thesis supervised by him in 2000 and to meet him in his flat for consultations even during his last days. I have been drawing on Jan Firbas ever since I met him for the first time, when negotiating the conditions of my future Master's thesis. And, logically enough, I continue to do so today as a teacher of linguistics.

In one sense, Jan Firbas was an ordinary, humble man, anchored in his Christian beliefs; at the same time, he was an extraordinarily gifted teacher and a highly esteemed linguist of true fame. It is a rare combination.

Upgrade Your Word Power!

Helena Havlíčková

*Imagine there's no grammar
No irregularities.
Imagine there's no exception
This would bring relief!*

This could be a relief for language learners but it would be no relief for the language. In fact the real language would stop existing. Users would suffer from a lack of language creativity, a lack of language humour; they would no longer know the nice feeling one has when discovering new possibilities. Language is a living phenomenon that undergoes change every second. It has not been created by a computer. The computer would be able to create a product with strict rules and no exceptions. Anyway, people who are users of the language have been contributing small bits to the language for centuries, thus creating an adaptable and flexible system which they share and which serves them best in the conditions where they need to use it.

Language (English language, of course, too) has undergone incredible changes over the past few decades. There is a dramatic difference between the word power our grandmothers used and today's vocabulary. The language

has had to cope with the changing situation in the world and in society. It has had to reflect developments in all fields of human life. New words are invented because of developments in the worlds of information technology, media, etc. Computer technology probably seems to be the most aggressive in its expansion, and therefore it affects the language a lot. Terms that were born in the technological environment have penetrated into our daily lives. Instead of writing traditional letters we *e-mail* using *a message board* (a place on a website where a user can write or read messages) and we send *text messages* using mobile phones. We *update* information; we *delete* items we do not need anymore. We use abbreviations to save space and time (ASAP, BTW ...). We have *bloggers* and also *hackers* nowadays, and *a mouse* does not have to be the aim of a cat's hungry chase. The *bloggers* have their *weblogs*, *websites* that belong to them and where they write about things that interest them and list other websites that they think are interesting. If we want to be in, we have to accept the fact that if we use a ten-year-old vocabulary we will not impress. Even the word *robot* seems to be as old as the pyramids in Egypt. Well, where are the words that belong to the modern outfit? To boost your vocabulary read at least some of them:

A *gamer* is a person who likes playing computer games, taking advantage of *uptime* (the time during which a computer is working). He will be happy with the *sim*, which is a computer or a video game that simulates an activity

such as flying an aircraft or playing a sport. The *gamer* is mostly young. A *silver surfer* on the other hand is an older person who uses the Internet regularly, while someone who is starting to use the computer and finds surfing the *Net* confusing is a *newbie*. The *newbie* probably is not a millionaire thanks to *dot-com*, which is the name for the Internet business. At least *emoticons* may be smiling at him, which may make the atmosphere relaxed. On the other hand he may lose his temper with the *banner ads* appearing across the top or bottom or down the side of a page on the Internet. If the computer goes wrong, he will call in a *techie*. When he *upgrades* the computer he has to *upload* all the *data*. He is always in a hurry and thus the *Plug and Play* system is what fits him like a glove. It is a system which makes it possible for a piece of equipment, such as a printer, to be connected to a computer and to work immediately without the user having to do anything. At the end of his diploma thesis he will list his sources in a *webliography*. He will discuss computer problems with his mates using *technobabble*. When one image changes smoothly to another on his computer screen, they *morph*. Perhaps they are dreaming about *CGI* - computer-generated imagery. Meanwhile *clip art* ought to do. The expression *clip art* covers pictures and symbols that are stored in computer programmes or on *websites* for computer users to copy and add to their own documents.

Well, did you know all the *technobabble* words mentioned above? If so, you must be *computerate* and

nothing could be easier for you than using a *double-click* or finding *downloadable* data. You must be aware of the existence of a *graphics card*, that is a circuit board that allows a computer to show images on its screen, even if you have no *ICT* at school (the study of the use of computers, the Internet, video, and other technology).

This is language and computers living in symbiosis. From now on *Home is where you hang your @*. And *There's no place like <http://www.home.com>*. *You can't teach a new mouse old clicks*. *Too many clicks spoil the browse*, anyway.

And finally:

Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him to use the Net and he won't bother you for weeks.

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Pleased to meet you, Prof Ritt!

Irena Headlandová Kalischová

A grey November morning, three well-trodden steps, a dimly lit entrance hall, and by the reception, a cat snuggled comfortably in a padded basket ... If you were one of those who bent and stroked its head, then you know the venue; for the rest of you, we are heading for room C21 at the Faculty of Arts at 1, Arne Nováka. It is Thursday 22 Nov 2007, 11.40 am.

We are here to attend the second in a series of lectures given by professors of the English department at the University of Vienna. This particular one is on the Historical Development of English Phonology, and it is delivered by Prof. Nikolaus Ritt.

I suppose the expectations of the audience may vary from listener to listener; personally, I find the topic rather tricky. It is almost tempting to think that in this field of study there are no new horizons to be discovered, as the subject matter has been dealt with in numerous works by numerous linguists. You can take any book on the historical development of English and find several chapters covering all the changes in the sound system that have taken place in the course of the centuries. "Just lists and tables of sound X changing into sound Y if situation Z," some may conclude dismissively. Well, not quite ...

Precisely at this moment the mastery of the lecturer asserts itself and makes the audience alert and attentive, not giving them a chance to tune out. The talk is anything but a dry, monotonous account of facts; on the contrary, Ritt dispels this very notion light-heartedly with one of his opening lines, "I won't be telling you about all these changes because, quite honestly, I'm not interested in them myself!"

Instead, what follows is a vivid picture not only of the historical situation but mainly of the consequences as we encounter them today. The basic overview of sound changes is supplemented by ample examples of contemporary, not archaic vocabulary. Ritt acts as a guide taking the audience on a phonological tour, making comments about his favourite 'exhibits', such as "/l/ unfortunately *hasn't* made it to the present day", (e.g. in *palm* /pɑ:m/), or "Consonants have had a very *sad* history - they were either lost or changed into vowels ...". Gradually, one begins to visualize the consonants as admirable figures fighting a losing battle and finally yielding to their fate of "backgrounding, deletion, loss or cluster simplification". As Ritt observes, it "makes one *melancholic* to think about it ...".

One of the most recent instances of unfortunate consonants suffering yet another blow to their integrity, may in fact ring a bell with many a Czech speaker: take the pronunciation of dark l /ɫ/ in *milk* as /mɪɫk/ in Estuary English, and that of /l/ in *šel* /šɛ̃ɫ/ or *hlava* /ɦɫava/ in the South Moravian dialect

around Uherské Hradiště or Lanžhot. (A coincidence? Another feature of globalization? Or just a case of speaker-friendly change based on the principle of least effort?)

The next stop on our journey is the vocalic system and one of its mysteries, well, THE mystery: the Great Vowel Shift and its origin. We know it is to blame for the major discrepancy between Modern English spelling and pronunciation, but we do *not* know what caused it. Was Otto Jespersen right to believe that it all started from the top (the Drag Chain theory) or was it Karl Luick (with his Push Chain theory) who puzzled it out? No one knows. The least we can do though is appreciate the fact that thanks to what happened in the past we can never mistake /i:/ for /ɪ/ in the present!

The last part of the lecture, titled "Refining the picture", tries to bridge the apparent gulf between historical sound changes and current ones by taking a closer look at the nature and characteristics of language change in general. We find out that although these changes are regular and systematic, they do not occur gradually or evenly, but rather the opposite. If you think of any close-knit community (villages, small towns, remote areas etc.), you might agree that these tend to be conservative. It is the job of *innovators* (people with loose ties, who do not feel under such pressure to conform, e.g. commuters) to introduce anything new; *early adopters* (open-minded, flexible language users) begin to integrate the new element into their own usage, and only then can the change start spreading

across the board. This is where the socio-psychological dimension comes in with a number of aspects, such as speaker- vs. listener-friendliness, covert vs. overt prestige, high vs. low social strata, gender, etc.

And that is it. The 90-minute tour which stops on the time axis at points distant as well as close, with an excellent guide and a busy itinerary, is over. It was a perfect example of a perfect blend of theory and practice, a complementation of what we know from books and what we know from real life.

To me, this was an academic event *par excellence* which manifested ever so clearly the true nature of *academia*: knowledge and communicative skills on the one hand, an inquisitive mind and a desire to learn on the other, and a mutual passion for the subject, all co-existing in happy symbiosis.

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REVIEW

Miššíková, G. (2007) *Analysing Translation as Text and Discourse*. Praha: JTP

Renata Povolná

Analysing Translation as Text and Discourse by Gabriela Miššíková from the Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia, is an interesting and valuable contribution to translation studies since it attempts to bring some coherence into this highly interdisciplinary area, while enriching it with recent developments in the fields of stylistics, pragmatics and discourse analysis.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I - *Aspects of Discourse in Text Analysis* - explains Miššíková's understanding of some basic concepts, such as text and discourse, stylistic and translation analysis, and their relationships. The author concentrates on the comparison of various approaches to stylistic analysis. While recommending an interdisciplinary approach to the study of style, she emphasizes the relevance of pragmatics to translation analysis of both literary and non-literary texts and holds the view that "the implementation of a pragmatic dimension brings into focus the speaker's intentions, the meanings s/he intends to express between the lines, as well as the

importance of context and contextualization in the spoken variety of language and the concept of intertextuality in its written variety" (p. 33). It follows that the nature of the analysed text and the aims of the analysis determine the selection of methods to be used. The author explains what is to be understood as style in translation analysis and what aspects of style should be highlighted within a modern conception of translation theory.

Part II - *Analysing, Translating and Interpreting Texts* - focuses on the pragmatic dimension of stylistic analysis. While viewing the text "as a discourse between the writer and the reader" (p. 51), Miššíková comments on specific discourse features and uses Lessing's short story *In Defence of the Underground* as a sample material for her analysis, in which she proves that exploring the pragmatic dimension of stylistic analysis entails respecting and exploring to the full the natural qualities of human communication. The author also explores potential applications of teaching pragmatics to students of English who specialize in translation and interpretation and states that an adequate command of pragmatic competence can provide "a solid basis for adequate development of translation strategies and interpreting skills" (p. 79). Finally, she stresses the role of non-verbal communication and its culture-specific and context-based character, while relating it to the concept of communicative competence of a (non-native) language speaker.

Part III - *Pragmatic Dimensions in Translation Analysis* - focuses on various

pragmatic factors which affect translation as a process and a product, such as interpretation of indirect speech acts, recognition of irony and ambiguity, and representation of background knowledge. The first chapter explores the stylistic means of a short story, namely *Junk* by Burgess. While exploring the role of background knowledge in the understanding of the original text and its translation, Miššíková proves that its role in the two texts is better studied separately, which acknowledges her idea that they should be viewed as two more or less independent discourses. The second chapter presents conversational and translational analyses of maxim hedges in literary texts, namely Burgess's novels *Junk* and *Heroin*. Based on Grice's conversational maxims, the author stresses the meta-linguistic role of hedges which function as "indicators and cues helping the translator to infer the meaning which is the likeliest one in the given context of a conversation" (p. 106). The author concludes her analyses by stating that, in contrast to the source texts, the translations show a tendency to greater explicitness/directness and descriptiveness. The last chapter included in Part III investigates maxim hedges in political discourse. In her analyses of the pre-prepared and spontaneous speeches delivered by Tony Blair and Mikuláš Dzurinda in 2007 and 2006 respectively, Miššíková attempts to identify conversational strategies employed by the speakers, while focusing on the specific usages of hedging expressions and intensifiers. Her findings show that "hedges related to Grice's conversational maxims (esp. those of

quality and quantity) should be interpreted and analysed in their close interaction and complexity, since they have to be studied in the particular context of communication and seen as pragmatic realisations of the cooperative principle in speech" (pp. 148-149).

Miššíková's publication promises to be beneficial and inspiring to both linguists and translators since its chapters make it clear that texts involve writers communicating with readers, and, moreover, translating a text into a target language does not mean just changing the words in the text, but involves targeting new readers with different needs and background assumptions. That is the reason why this book can be of great interest to all involved in translation studies, since it takes into consideration various context-dependent aspects of the interaction between writers and readers that a translator has to grasp in order to construct a consistent interpretation of the message into the target language.

Note: The book will be available in the Faculty's study room as well as in the library.

literature pages

READING GROUPS and all about them

Lucie Podroužková

Reading groups are in. There are an estimated 50,000 reading groups in Britain and over 500,000 in the USA. They feature on television (see Oprah's Book Club or This Morning with Richard and Judy), on the radio (James Naughtie's BBC Radio 4 Bookclub), in magazines (e.g. listings in YOU magazine), bookstores (special offers and selections for reading clubs) and even online. Since 2005 there have been six English reading groups in the Czech Republic, too.

What are they?

In a general sense, a reading group, readers' group, readers' club or a book club describes a gathering of people who meet regularly to discuss books. Reading groups differ in degree of formality, membership rules, frequency of meetings and choice of venue, in the politics of discussion, the strategy of selecting books, refreshment policy and many other aspects.

Although largely ignored or looked down upon by traditional literary institutions, readers' clubs have become

a significant factor in reflecting the nature of and shaping the general readership.

The criticisms levelled at reading groups are that they tend to be female-only projects, that they do not reach a certain necessary degree of academic erudition, that they are driven by consumerism and that they open up a space for gossip on the pretext of discussing literature. Even if this were so, such dismissals would fail to recognize not only a large body of the reading public but also a significant cultural practice, an oversight which even classics like the works of Jane Austen poke fun at:

Mr Bennet was glad to take his guest into the drawing room, and when tea was over, glad to invite him to read aloud to the ladies. Mr Collins readily assented, and a book was produced; but on beholding it, (for every thing announced it to be from a circulating library,) he started back, and begging pardon, protested that he never read novels. /.../ "I have often observed how little young ladies are interested by books of a serious stamp, though written solely for their benefit."
(*Pride and Prejudice*, 263)

How did they come about?

Reading employs paradoxical dynamics. The act of reading is a private, individual activity, which asks for a great deal of concentration and proficiency in reading skills. When we read, we enter the world of the book, which is governed by its own laws and which sets itself up apart from what is happening around us.

At the same time, we are naturally inclined to share our reading experience with others. Our first encounters with books have a distinctly social dimension: as children, we are read to by and then learn to read with a parent, teacher, etc. In pre-television times, reading was an important social activity, frequently resorted to as after-dinner entertainment:

Oh! Mama, how spiritless, how tame was Edward's manner in reading to us last night! I felt for my sister most severely. Yet she bore it with so much composure, she seemed scarcely to notice it. I could hardly keep my seat. To hear those beautiful lines which have frequently almost driven me wild, pronounced with such impenetrable calmness, such dreadful indifferences! (*Sense and Sensibility*, 17)

From the extract it is obvious that Marianne evaluates a gentleman's quality according to his ability to transform his private reading experience into a public performance. Unsurprisingly then, it is a man capable of reading out loud with feeling, passion and animation who captures her heart (and nearly destroys it).

Nowadays, when public reading does not rank among common pastimes, with the exception of increasingly popular authors' readings, the reader nevertheless remains part of a large audience, in the sense that he or she supports "a huge infrastructure of writers, publishers, libraries and bookshops" (Riel, Fowler, 8).

Readers' clubs first began to spread

in the USA of the seventeenth century, and they were so successful that a century later almost every American city had one. In Britain so-called literary societies grew and became very popular, especially in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Browning Society, for example, founded in 1881, had around 200 adherents, including G.B. Shaw. Shakespeare clubs and societies were the favourites by far, rivalled only by Bible-reading clubs. Admittedly, these societies were sometimes associated with snobbery. For women, however, they were a substitute for further education, which otherwise was inaccessible to them. A woman was generally not considered capable of intellectual improvement, or, if so, only within limits. Women's reading groups set about demonstrating that women were equal and rightful members of society. This, in essence political, mission is reflected in the parliamentary procedures the book clubs of the time practised, and the elaborate minutes, slogans, mottoes and yearbooks they produced (Long).

What are they like?

Contemporary British and American reading groups are usually informal by nature and devoid of political agenda. Even for specific readers' clubs such as gay reading groups or African American women's reading groups, books remain the primary focus. What motivates people belonging to a reading group is a desire for "adventures in reading" (Hartley, xii) and in the case of many women members, a wish "to discuss

something else than potty-training.” (Hartley, 21)

Although some of the longest-running groups are men's (one has been going since 1764, another since 1799), it is certainly true that all-women groups predominate. This is not in any way surprising as research shows that women tend to read more than men and are more likely to want to discuss their reading. Most frequently, reading groups have between six and fifteen members and meet every six to eight weeks, either in the members' homes or libraries, cafés and other public spaces. They usually read one book for each session, which is then discussed. However, some book clubs choose to read up to three books per meeting, or agree on a genre or topic only. There are genre-specific or one-author readers' clubs and there are reading groups based only on a single book: one group has been reading Joyce's *Ulysses* together for the last fourteen years, covering two pages per session and discussing them in a great depth (Hartley).

Both Hartley and Long agree in their respective research that choosing a book to read is both the most difficult and the central aspect of the reading group phenomenon. Virtually all reading clubs admit that success is never guaranteed: "People's thoughts on a book are never predictable, even after fourteen years" (Hartley, 80). Some reading groups prefer having their books chosen for them, by a specialist, local bookseller or according to magazine listings, so that no one gets the blame for the wrong choice. Others accept the "risk-taking and flying blind as part of the

pleasure" (Hartley, 54). Most reading groups do some kind of research: they follow reviews and literary awards, establish a contact with the local library or the bookseller, invite presenters and browse the Internet. Interestingly, for reading groups it is not the books best liked but those provoking most heated arguments which define the most successful and memorable reads.

Although the majority of reading groups claim they will read anything, fiction prevails. Generally speaking, readers' groups engage only to a limited extent or not at all with non-fiction, poetry and drama. They opt for good mainstream fiction, steering clear of both the literary avant-garde and popular culture (Long, 60). The former may prove a frustrating and inhibiting reading experience, and many reading groups make a point of not being "very intellectual" (Hartley, 90), although the fact that modernists, especially James Joyce, appear to be very "reading-group friendly" authors undermines such claims. The latter, especially romances, may be read by some women members privately, but would offer very little food for discussion.

Reading groups usually concentrate on contemporary fiction, with an occasional classic thrown in. Even within these bounds, Hartley's research shows an enormous variety of authors and titles: in the 2,816 books listed there were 698 authors and 1,160 titles.

In the US, some reading groups have evolved into therapy: "We have become the story" (Hartley, 114). In Britain, most readers' clubs would disagree strongly with this. Reading literature

remains their primary concern although they too, appreciate the emotional support and long-term friendships their clubs generate.

Reading groups maintain a certain distance from academia. They are "about reading in community rather than academy" (Hartley, 138), advocating reading for pleasure rather than schooled reading. At the same time, they provide a space for self-improvement, a space in which their members are free to explore their identity and "engage in collective reflection and dialogue between texts and lives" (Long, 60).

Reading groups in the Czech Republic

In 2003 Helena Kovaříková from the British Council's literature department invited Rachel van Riel, the director of the Opening the Book agency, to lead a series of workshops. Over the course of two years Rachel worked with librarians from the British Council's partner libraries, and the success of the project prompted the establishment of six English reading groups (in Liberec, Olomouc, Brno, Pardubice, Ústí nad Labem and Ostrava). These reading groups have been meeting for nearly three years now, and they are prospering. Most members combine an interest in reading with a keenness to read in and speak English. Some of them come on a regular basis, while others visit occasionally. The books that are read, mostly contemporary British fiction, are selected by the groups themselves and circulate round the

country. The surprising and good news is that the participants are recruited from all walks of life and include young people as well as pensioners. Maybe after all and despite the all-too-frequent complaints, there are avid readers among us still.

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methodology pages

American Food and Literature: A Tasty Combo for Exploring the English Language

Rita Collins

Most English-language student course books have a unit that covers food. Students pick up expressions such as “fish and chips” and “hot dog” to demonstrate that they are aware of certain cultural norms. But the description of food in these course books could be compared to reading a shopping list; the discussion of food is rarely very exciting. It never conjures up images of a table filled with mouth-watering fare. It never makes you wonder about how a particular dish might taste or what sweet potato pie smells like hot from the oven. Unfortunately the course book units on food are often limited to the names of fruits and vegetables with the occasional dialogue thrown in that has very dull people ordering the least appealing items on a menu. Yet there is so much more to be explored and savored in the realm of culinary delights when studying the English language. If you serve a discussion of regional cuisines along with some delightful literature, it will make any student sit up and take notice. Taking the idea a

step farther by preparing food as part of a lesson would make a truly memorable experience for any group of learners.

Perhaps you are feeling a bit confused at this point. You might have wholeheartedly concurred that course book units on food are generally boring. You might even have had your interest piqued by the thought of sweet potato pie. But you suspect that the notion of combining food and literature is going too far. After all, the study of literature is an academic discipline while cooking is such an ordinary activity. Food is something that everyone consumes daily - definitely not worthy of university research. Yet try to imagine your life without the foods that are an integral part of your culture: your grandmother’s dumplings, your aunt’s famous cookies, and the potato pancakes sold at the Christmas market. When discussing any culture, food is invariably mentioned. Thus understanding a culture’s culinary aspects is elemental to understanding the culture itself. While learning about English-speaking cultures and their literatures, one invariably comes across references to food. Pick up a novel and before you are fifty pages into it, you will surely find mention of someone eating. It could be Jack Kerouac sitting in a diner having the apple pie and ice cream that got him across country or Huck Finn camped out on the river sharing cornbread with Jim. From the Bible to Proust to Agatha Christie, any book that describes human life will include food.

Perhaps now you are ready to concede that there is a possible

connection between literature and food, and within the scope of this paper, American literature and American food. There are countless examples of what types of food are found in literature, and as the US has such a rich mixture of geographical regions and ethnic diversity, the foods in American literature are also amazingly diverse. There are the tempting Chinese meals described in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* and the Southern recipes given in *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistlestop Café* by Fannie Flagg. Sherman Alexie describes the magic of fry bread for his readers and Sandra Cisneros alludes to tamales in *The House on Mango Street*. Students and teachers have a choice when reading these books and noting a reference to a particular food. They can either continue reading along oblivious to what that dish might really be like or they can take the opportunity to explore the novel in more depth by exploring the food.

As cornbread is often mentioned in American literature, that will serve as an example. From Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, published in 1884, to *The Cornbread Gospels*, published in 2007, cornbread is a staple in many parts of the US. Dragonwagon explained what we eat develops from the physical and human environments, an inextricable convergence. Every bite, whether we know it or not, is a word in the ongoing story of the world: place, people who live there, choice, accident, history - good and bad, easy and hard. That's life; that's food. Love, pride, strong opinions, sustenance, survival, celebration, war and peace, division and healing: this is

the true delicious conundrum and communion in every satisfying bite of Southern cornbread (11).

To understand what cornbread is, one must investigate the confluence of the Native American and the European cultures in the New World. The development of different types of cornbread over the centuries in North America followed not only geographical differences but also the adapting of how corn flour was used according to the tastes of various groups. In *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*, Gabaccia traces some of these early influences beginning with the founding of St. Augustine (Florida), three expanding European empires - centered in France, England and Spain - pushed their way from opposite directions into the territories already inhabited by approximately four million natives on the continent of North America. A fourth empire, the Dutch, took up temporary residence along the Hudson River. The Dutch and English traders in turn transported ten million West Africans to the Americas over the next two hundred years, selling most of them into slavery. All of these groups had developed traditions of eating that marked them as culturally different one from the other. All, on the other hand, had a recent history of selectively adapting new foods even before they confronted one another on North American soil (13).

Obviously learning more about cornbread provides not only insight into literary passages, but also lessons in American history and geography. In English-language classes this can be expanded even farther with discussions

about vocabulary (ingredients, verbs, adjectives) and cultural differences such as types of measurements and cooking styles (what exactly is a cast iron skillet?). Cornbread is also ideal for turning any lesson into a multisensory experience. All the ingredients required to make cornbread are available at a typical supermarket. Depending on the facilities available, a teacher can prepare a batch of cornbread with the students, give out copies of the recipe so students can make it at home, or the teacher can bring some to the lesson. Imagine having a class discussion on Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* while learners sample some delectable cornbread.

The examples of literature and food offered above are for intermediate or advanced learners of English. Young children or those students whose English is at a lower level can use literature and food to explore the target language, too. Erica Silverman's *Big Pumpkin* is a children's book that features a witch, a variety of other scary characters and a pumpkin that eventually is transformed into pie. *Sixteen Runaway Pumpkins* by Dianne Ochiltree is another easy book that offers practice with general vocabulary, including numbers and the words for various animals. It also features making a pumpkin pie. One creative website offers teachers ideas for learning centers or skill circuits using pumpkins. A teacher can easily incorporate literature, food and language-learning into these activities. And, although the ingredients for making pumpkin pie are a bit more challenging to assemble, it is possible to make one

without too much effort. A recipe adapted for Czech shops is available on the Moodlinka course page mentioned above.

The next time you introduce some treasure of American literature or start a class discussion about American culture, consider offering your students an actual taste of the culture as well. If you are not skilled in cooking (or don't have the time), ask if there is anyone in the class who would enjoy trying a new recipe. Not only will offering your students food make the lesson sweeter, but it will enhance their understanding of the topic and remain a part of their memory as well.

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42nd Annual International IATEFL Conference and Exhibition in Exeter

Světlana Hanušová

The 42nd Annual International IATEFL Conference and Exhibition was held at the University of Exeter in Devon on April 7 - 11 this year. I had the pleasure to be one of its 1,600 participants.

The Streatham Campus, which is situated on a hill above Exeter, offered a beautiful setting for the conference. We enjoyed a view of the sea (about 10 miles away from Exeter) from the top floor of the tallest building. The daffodils and primroses in the parks were unfortunately covered with ice and snow on the day we arrived, as the British weather was even more unpredictable than usual.

For those who could not travel to Exeter the British Council prepared a unique opportunity to watch some presentations and read roving reporters' comments and participants' discussion postings on <http://exeteronline.britishcouncil.org>. The website is still available and anybody is welcome to register for free to participate. It is fairly easy for our colleagues and students to use as the British Council has used the virtual learning environment Moodle for this.

Traditionally, the first day of the conference is devoted to pre-conference events organized by different SIGs (Special Interest Groups in IATEFL). I decided to join the one organized by the Young Learners SIG as I was attracted by the topic of differentiation in the

primary classroom. The most thought-provoking part of the event was probably Mario Rinvolucrí's talk about differentiation in receptive skills, which, in Mario's words, is quite natural as everybody employs their own perception and imagination when reading or listening and thus creates their own images and stories in their minds. The implication for teachers that Mario suggested, is obvious and logical: "*Let's not de-differentiate.*"

Every day of the conference began with a plenary session held in the Great Hall, which seats up to 1,400 participants. At the two of these I attended, Alastair Pennycook, Professor of Language in Education at the University of Sydney, spoke about "*Changing Global ELT Practices*", and Zoltan Dorneyi (a psycholinguist of Hungarian origin, currently a Professor at the University of Nottingham) presented his new conception of "*Motivation and the Vision of Knowing a Second Language*".

It is usually quite challenging to choose from the array of presentations in parallel sections. This time I preferred the sessions led by those renowned authors of our "state exam methodology books", James Scrivener, Penny Ur and Jeremy Harmer. All of them are brilliant speakers and wise teachers. I hope all our students have a chance to listen to their presentations one day. I was very impressed by James Scrivener's presentation, in which he revisited Neil Postman's "*Teaching as a Subversive Activity*" (published in 1971). It was interesting to realize how many ideas presented in the book are still very relevant to our school system. Consider the following description of the vaccination theory of education: "*A subject is something that you take -*

when you've taken it, you've had it - and if you have had it you are immune to it and need not take it again."

Penny Ur discussed the appropriate model for the teaching of English as a lingua franca (ELF). She defined ELF as "*English when and wherever, used for purposes of international communication.*" In her words, a lingua franca is "*a language of a fully competent ELF speaker, who may or may not be a native speaker*". There are problems, however, concerning the codification of a standard ELF. Penny Ur concluded that the codification cannot be the work of one person. She predicts that the author of such a codification will be WIKI and plans to launch one while enjoying her retirement.

Are good language teachers born or made? Jeremy Harmer started an interactive discussion session with this provocative question and many more similar questions followed. All the participants got "*voting eggs*" and were asked to participate actively and express their opinions on what makes a good language teacher.

The book exhibition reflected new trends in ELT. Many titles concerned ELF (*English as Lingua Franca*) and CLIL (*Content and Language Integrated Learning*). I returned home with a long list of books we definitely have to purchase for our library. Actually, the three methodology books required for our state exams might soon get a fourth "sibling", as Jill and Charles Hadfield (authors of the popular *Communication Games*) recently published their "*Introduction to Teaching English*", which seems to be extremely inspiring.

The conference organizers offered a number of evening events, too, including the popular storytelling with Andrew Wright, this time accompanied by Alan

Maley, who was reading poems. A real treat, and a highlight of the whole conference for me, was the evening event where David Crystal, the author of the famous encyclopaedias, performed "*Language Plays*" with his wife and son, in which they shared their unique sense of "linguistic" humour.

My own presentation, in which I summed up the results of an action research study into differentiation in EFL which I conducted together with our combined single-subject Master's students, was luckily scheduled for the Tuesday. After the presentation I felt hugely relieved and was able to start looking forward to the rest of the conference. However, I was surprised to be approached for an interview by people from the British Council who are now preparing a new website where teachers from all over the world will share their experiences. I must confess I worried about the video recording of the interview. Then on the Thursday morning, when I met the other teachers who were waiting for the same interview, I immediately realized how petty my concerns were. The charming young lady next to me had to negotiate an audio instead of a video recording. The reason for this shocked me - she did not have her headscarf, which would certainly lead to very serious ramifications in her country. The popular saying is true: travelling does broaden our horizons ...

translation pages

Stephen Butler Leacock in the Translation Seminars

Stephen Butler Leacock was born in 1869 and it was said in 1911 that more people had heard of Stephen Leacock than had heard of Canada, his place of study, work and first success. Also, between the years 1910 and 1925, Leacock was the most widely read English-speaking author throughout the world.

In the translation seminar at the English Department, we keep asking ourselves the unique question: What is a translation? And our answer (or should we say, our search for an answer?), continues to elude us as the language develops new possibilities, generations, skills, and, of course, translators' tastes. We have been publishing corpus translations to see the tiny details that make translations real pieces of art.

In winter term 2007 we translated a famous, almost 100-year-old story, aiming for a very modern way that would still reflect the distinctive features of Canadian society at the end of 19th century.

This was not easy, but the new translations are really great. Enjoy them.

MaN, on behalf of the students of the translation seminar, winter 2007.

A Christmas Letter Stephen Leacock

(In answer to a young lady who has sent an invitation to be present at a children's party)

Mademoiselle,

allow me very gratefully but firmly to refuse your kind invitation. You doubtless mean well; but your ideas are unhappily mistaken.

Let us understand one another once and for all. I cannot at my mature age participate in the sports of children with such abandon as I could wish. I entertain, and have always entertained, the sincerest regard for such games as Hunt-the-Slipper and Blind-Man's Buff. But I have now reached a time of life, when, to have my eyes blindfolded and to have a powerful boy of ten hit me in the back with a hobby-horse and ask me to guess who hit me, provokes me to a fit of retaliation which could only culminate in reckless criminality. Nor can I cover my shoulders with a drawing-room rug and crawl round on my hands and knees under the pretence that I am a bear without a sense of personal insufficiency, which is painful to me.

Neither can I look on with a complacent eye at the sad spectacle of your young clerical friend, the Reverend Mr. Uttermost Farthing, abandoning himself to such gambols and appearing in the role of life and soul of the evening. Such a degradation of his holy calling grieves me, and I cannot but suspect him of ulterior motives.

You inform me that your maiden aunt intends to help you to entertain the party. I have not, as you know, the honour of your aunt's acquaintance, yet I think I may with reason surmise that she will organize games - guessing games - in which she will ask me to name a river in Asia beginning with a Z; on my failure to do so she will put a hot plate down my neck as a forfeit, and the children will clap their hands.

These games, my dear young friend, involve the use of a more adaptable intellect than mine, and I cannot consent to be a party to them.

May I say in conclusion that I do not consider a five-cent pen-wiper from the top branch of a Xmas tree any adequate compensation for the kind of evening you propose.

I have the honour to subscribe myself,

Your obedient servant.

Stephen Leacock
Vánoční dopis

(jakožto odpověď mladé dámě,
která mě pozvala na dětskou párty)

Vážená slečno,

dovolte mi, abych vděčně avšak rozhodně odmítnul Vaše milé pozvání. Bezpochyby to myslíte dobře, ale politováníhodně se mýlíte.

Vyjasněme si jednou pro vždy. Nemohu se již ve svém zralém věku účastnit dětských her tak bezstarostně, jak bych si přál. Vždy jsem měl a mám skutečnou slabost pro hry typu Na schovku nebo Slepá bába. Ale již jsem dospěl do věku, kdy mě zavázané oči a desetiletý statný hrošík šťouchající mě do zad dřevěným koníkem a křičící: „Hádej, kdo tě praštil!“, dokážou vydráždit až k touze po pomstě, která by skončila jedině zločinem v nepřítomnosti. Ani nemohu ložit po čtyřech s předložkou na zádech a předstírat, že jsem medvěd, aniž by mi to způsobilo bolestivý pocit méněcennosti.

Stejně tak nemohu blahosklonně přihlížet na smutný výjev Vašeho mladého duchovního přítele, pana Reverenda Uttermosta Farthinga, jak

se oddává dovádění a vystupuje jako bavič večera. Takové ponížení jeho svatého poslání mě rozesmutňuje a nemůžu jinak, než ho podezřívát z nekalých úmyslů.

Sdělujete mi, že Vaše staropanenská teta Vám hodlá pomáhat se zábavným programem. Jak víte, nemám tu čest znát Vaši tetu osobně, přesto si myslím, že se mohu domnívat, že bude organizovat hry, hádankové hry, ve kterých po mě bude chtít jmenovat asijskou řeku na Z. Když neuspěji, přiloží mi na krk horký talíř jakožto fant a děti budou tleskat. Tyto hry, moje drahá mladá přítelkyně, vyžadují přizpůsobivějšího ducha, než jsem já a nemohu svolit k účasti na nich.

Snad mohu na závěr říci, že utěratko za pět centů jakožto vánoční dárek nepovažuji za dostatečnou kompenzaci takového večera.

Je mi ctí se podepsat jako

Váš oddaný služebník.

*translated by Kateřina Audyová,
Translation Seminar B*

Stephen Leacock

Vánoční dopis

(v odpovědi mladé dámě, která poslala pozvání na dětskou slavnost)

Madam,

dovolte mi velmi vděčně, nýbrž rozhodně, odmítnout Vaše laskavé pozvání. Nesporně je vše dobře míněno, ale ve svých tvrzeních se nešťastně mýlíte.

Necht' pochopíme jeden druhého jednou provždy. Ve svém pokročilém věku se nemohu účastnit dětských sportovních her tak nespoutaně, jak bych si byl býval přál. Chovám, a vždy jsem choval, nejupřímnější zaujetí pro hry jako Chodí pešek okolo nebo Na slepou bábu. Ale již jsem dosáhl jistého věku, kdy nechat se bít desetiletým silákem do zad holí a se zavázanýma očima hádat, kdo mě to praštil, ponouká mě k odplatě, jež by mohla vyústit v nebezpečnou kriminální činnost. Velmi mně trýzní i to, že už se nemohu plazit po rukou a kolenou s kobercem přehozeným přes ramena a předstírat, že jsem medvěd, a to vše bez nejmenšího pocitu vlastní blbosti.

Ani už nemohu blahosklonně hledět na to smutné divadlo Vašeho

mladého přítele, duchovního, ctihodného pana Třeštíka, jak na sebe svým podivným skotačením poutá pozornost celé slavnosti. Takové ponižování tohoto svatého povolání mě rmoutí a nemohu, než jej podezřívát z postraních nekalých úmyslů.

Oznamujete mi, že Vaše staropanenská teta má v úmyslu Vám na slavnosti pomoci se zábavou. Jak víte, neměl jsem ještě tu čest seznámit se s Vaší tetou a myslím, že se mohu důvodně domnívat, že bude pořádat hry, hádankové hry, při kterých mě vyzve, abych jmenoval řeku v Asii začínající na Z a poté, abych pykal za svoji neznalost, mi položí mi horký talíř pod límec, načež děti zatleskají ručičkami.

Tyto hry, moje drahá přítelkyně, vyžadují přizpůsobivějšího ducha než je ten můj a tedy nemohu dát souhlas k tomu, že budu předmětem zábavy slavnosti.

Závěrem mohu říci, že nepovažuji utěratko na pero za 5,50 Kč v koruně vánočního stromku za dostačující odškodnění za takový večer, jaký nabízíte.

Mám tu čest znamenati se
Váš oddaný služebník

*translated by Markéta Krafková,
Translation Seminar B*

travel pages

Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore

Gabriela Čížková

Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore are situated in the region of Southeast Asia, and together with Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines, Brunei and Indonesia they represent an area incredibly rich in culture, tradition, history and above all natural beauty.

Limited by time and our around-the-world tickets, we chose to explore these three, although we knew that each of the countries in the region had something unique to offer. Our trip started in the Thai capital of Bangkok, from where we made our way across the Malay peninsula in order to reach Singapore, a city-island on its southernmost point. It didn't take us long to realize that we would have to postpone our next flight; there was so much to see and do that the month we originally planned to spend in Southeast Asian wasn't even nearly enough.

Thailand

Thailand is without a doubt the most popular Southeast Asian holiday destination at the moment. Its beautiful national parks, exotic islands, great nightlife, delicious food, low prices and easy travelling are just some of the things that make this country attractive to many tourists and travellers from around the world. Relative safety and friendly people, most of whom speak at least some English, just add to the fact that it

is a great place to visit without too much hassle. Thanks to all this and especially as we were coming directly from India, everything seemed almost too easy and very often we were joking that travelling in Thailand was a little bit like going on a package holiday.

We weren't the only ones to discover that because the influx of tourists has increased considerably in the past few years and unless you are the partying type, escaping from the crowds of western twenty-somethings will probably be the hardest task that you face.

Bangkok was packed with them. The area around the famous Khao San road is a haven for backpackers and it is here that you will find absolutely everything you might need - from cheap hostels and travel agencies, bars, cookery classes and second-hand shops to markets where you can buy skis or even a fake ISIC card. The place becomes really alive at night, when the bars and clubs turn on neon signs and music and the locals take out their stands to sell fried rice and noodles to all the hungry party-goers. Not only the Khao San road but the whole city wakes up with the dawn, and whether you are by a flea market or in a red light district, you won't get to sleep until the early hours of the morning. All this makes Bangkok a very exciting place, but unfortunately, the congestion, pollution and crowds will soon drive you away.

Although there were tourists almost everywhere in Thailand, Bangkok was an extreme. There are uncountable places that are unspoilt and far away from civilisation - from the mainland's pristine rainforests and beautiful beaches to paradises like the islands off-shore. We

spent the month in Thailand trekking its jungles, swimming in the sea, lazing around on beaches, going to temples, eating and simply exploring everything we could. We were swept off our feet by Thailand's breathtaking beauty, but it was the people that impressed me there the most.

The atmosphere in the streets, especially in villages and smaller towns, is very peaceful, with a sense of contentment in the air. People are very cultured, show lots of respect for others, and the smile is an important part of life. For Thai people, anything worth doing should have an element of 'sanuk', or fun, and they will try to approach even work and unpleasant tasks with a positive attitude. In most situations, they would rather smile to avoid embarrassment to themselves or others than become involved in an argument.

It is not only an inner beauty that the Thais possess. When Ondřej forbade me to take a hair dryer on the trip, he got a warning that only one look at all the beautiful Thai ladies, with their long, black and, above all, straight hair, would get him into trouble. I couldn't keep my promise, though. Although Ondřej did admire them, I had to as well - they are all really stunning.

We were lucky to arrive in Thailand right at the time of Sonkran, the celebration of the Thai New Year, the year 2549 after the birth of Buddha. Tradition has it that on this day water will wash away bad luck, and so people celebrate by sprinkling it on each other. In reality, this seemingly innocent sprinkling means pouring and throwing as much water on as many people as

possible, and it is not unusual for the whole city to get involved in a huge water fight. Unless you have locked yourself at home that day, you would be very naïve to think that you can stay dry. Somebody threw a bucket of ice-cold water at us the minute we left our hostel, which didn't leave us any option but to fight back. As we were to observe, there were many ways to do that - the use of any kind or size of container, from pots, buckets and plastic bags to hoses and water guns, was allowed. We chose the last option and, like many others, jumped on a scooter and hit the streets with aim of shooting everything alive...

Never in my life had I seen anything like it. Not just one street or block, but literally the whole town took part. Without exceptions, people were having enormous amounts of fun trying to get each other and passers-by wet. By the end of the day, water was dripping from our clothes but we agreed that this was by far the best New Year's celebration of our lives and the one thing that's definitely worth going to Thailand for.

Malaysia

Malaysia is a Muslim country, and the main difference we noticed after crossing its border was that women covered their heads with scarves. Other than that, it seemed to be as friendly and as relaxed as Thailand.

We weren't sure where to start. The beaches were tempting but since we had already spent so much time on beaches in Thailand, it seemed to us that we should focus on other things. Fortunately, we didn't. In a little town near the border,

we met a Czech couple who had just returned from Pulau Perenthian Kecil, a tiny island in the South China Sea. These guys swore that they hadn't been to a better place in their lives. We couldn't resist seeing this beauty for ourselves.

Pulau Besar and Pulau Kecil, two of the group of coral-fringed Perenthian Islands, are situated just off the north-eastern shore of Malaysia. It took about half an hour to reach them by speed boat and as we approached, we could clearly see the beautiful lagoons of crystal-clear water and the white, sandy beaches with coconut palms and banana trees. For a minute we really thought that we were about to enter paradise.

Pulau Perenthian Kecil, the island that we chose, is the smaller of the two and the majority of it is covered in jungle. The main beach is one kilometre long and it is here that you will find several wooden huts providing accommodation, food and a little bit of entertainment for travellers. The rest of the island is uninhabited. The nature is unspoilt, and with this comes a lack of comfort with which most of us might find it difficult to cope. A lack of fresh water, electricity generated for only two hours a day and not a single paved road are just a few of the things that you should be prepared for. And you can expect plenty of sand, mosquitoes, heat and sun, all of which can make you suffer. Fortunately, there is one place to escape to - the sea.

Snorkelling is an absolute must on Pulau Kecil. When I first plunged my head into the water, I felt very similar to how I felt when we took that first rickshaw ride in Delhi - struck by amazement - except that under water I couldn't have my

mouth open with awe. There were fish everywhere; to be honest, until then I didn't know most of them existed. Pick a size, shape or colour: it was all there, from cute little goldfish to the harmless but scary-looking parrot fish that was bigger than me. We saw a school of squid looking strict as policemen, a ray gliding through the water like a bird, octopus, turtles, sea urchins with half-metre-long spikes, huge clams, and even a little clown fish that most children would know as Nemo. The sea bottom changed, it seemed to me, with every metre we swam; it was always very scary but exciting to see what was hiding behind all the rocks, corals and sea weed. The most frightening thing we saw was a shark. The locals reassured us that this kind of shark is harmless to people, but when one actually appeared out of nowhere right in front of me, elegant and with a menacing look, my heart almost stopped. But as with all other the wildlife we encountered under the water, it hardly paid me any attention at all.

That day I almost had a heart attack twice. Later in the afternoon, on a short walk to a different beach, I heard something move behind me. How big my surprise when I turned around and saw, instead of the little bird or mouse I was expecting, a dinosaur staring at me from behind the bushes! Well, it wasn't exactly a dinosaur, but a monitor lizard about two-and-a-half metres long, big enough to make me run and scream. It must have been very funny, because my escape made Ondřej laugh quite hard. Several months later, in the Sequoia National Park in the US, Ondřej had exactly the same experience, only with a

bear. He wasn't laughing then.

The nature of Malaysia is definitely unspoilt and paradise-like. But experiencing this paradise was sometimes more painful than it might have seemed. From the Perenthian Islands we headed to Taman Negara, one of the world's oldest jungles.

This wilderness is a haven for endangered animals like elephants, tigers, leopards and rhinos. But don't expect to see any of these the minute you enter: the jungle is so dense that you could be standing within metres of an animal and never know it. Only to get a glimpse of a wild animal you would have to walk for hours, even days, to get as far away as possible from the park headquarters, and even then you would have to be extremely lucky. The best chance a traveller has of spotting a wild animal is to spend a night in one of the hides scattered around the jungle.

Ondřej dragged me through the jungle in order to do just that, for which I am grateful now; but at the time I hated him. Ninety per cent humidity, uneven surfaces, mud, mosquitoes and the omnipresent heat were all things that made this 'walk' extremely exhausting and unpleasant. Soaking in your own sweat, you are constantly walking up and down hills, clambering over fallen trees, roots and streams, trying very hard, but with little success, to avoid the leeches, which stick to you and suck your blood before you know it. And we did all this with a backpack filled with sleeping bags and food and water for two days.

The hide was very simple, with just a few benches for use as beds, but it had a nice view of the place where animals

come to drink. In a diary kept there, we read that several people who had stayed there before us had spotted elephants and rhinos, but to our disappointment we weren't that lucky. Although we hardly slept, we saw nothing but a rat in the hut. In spite of this, the night in the jungle was an amazing experience. The sound of animal cries, especially at dawn and dusk, can really send shivers down your spine.

In Taman Negara I finally had to admit to Ondřej that he was right about the hair dryer. It was there that I realized that even a comb was completely useless.

The population of Malaysia as a whole is very diverse - with notable Chinese and Hindu minorities - and it is amazing to see how peacefully these people can live with each other while maintaining their own cultures. This mixture of nationalities is most visible in big cities, and Kuala Lumpur, or KL as everybody calls the Malaysian capital, is definitely one of these. Chinese shops alternate with Indian eateries, and in the streets there is a mix of people of various origins and cultures. In a restaurant you can choose your meal from a menu written in Chinese while sitting next to a group of Muslim women and listening to music from Bollywood films coming from next door.

KL is a city of two million people that 150 years ago was only a little town. With some of the world's tallest skyscrapers, a futuristic above-ground tube, ten-lane highways, and luxurious shops and restaurants, it is like a city from a science-fiction film. Despite all this, it has managed to maintain much of its character. It has plenty of colonial

buildings in its centre, a vibrant Chinatown with street vendors and night markets, and a bustling Little India. It is this contrast between the ultramodern and the traditional that makes it truly unique.

Singapore

Our last stop in Southeast Asia was Singapore. It was actually the second time we had visited it. Two months earlier we had a stopover there on the way from Bombay to Bangkok, and although we didn't have a chance to leave the airport then, it was enough to experience another extreme. It took us three weeks in India to get used to the rough conditions, and there, at Singapore airport, even the plastic toilet seat slides inside, gets cleaned and changes itself automatically. Everything was perfectly clean and beautiful, with miniature orchid gardens and waterfalls even in the smoking rooms. It gave us a taste of what the whole city-state is like: very modern, very clean, very organized.

As unbelievable as it may seem, Singapore has zero crime, and it is probably the only place in the world where chewing gum is illegal. The punishments for even small infringements of the law are old-fashioned and very severe, and although they won't chop off your hand if you bring a pack of Wrigley's into the country, the fine is not worth the risk. Unlike KL, Singapore hasn't managed to keep its traditional Asian feel. Little shops and eateries have been replaced by enormous shopping malls, and life is more money-driven. To make up for this, the government is putting lots of effort into

creating a city pleasant to live in by making it green, taking pride in creating what some call a 'city in a garden' with, I have to say, great success. There really are ample gardens and parks, and even the roads in the very centre are lined with giant trees.

Singapore has a very cosmopolitan feel. I am not surprised that, thanks to its pleasant climate, small size, the wide range of things to do and the high standard of living, so many people from around the world find it an attractive place to live.

Southeast Asia is a truly amazing part of the world. If in India I became more aware of what real poverty is, travelling in Southeast Asia opened my eyes to nature protection. Just being close to all the wildlife makes you realize how beautiful and fragile it is, and you can't understand why we keep destroying it. There aren't many places in the world like Southeast Asia; the idea of them disappearing due to deforestation or human waste is frightening, and it makes me angry.

The last challenge we faced in Singapore was buying winter clothes, no simple task when you are in a tropical country. You can't imagine what being cold feels like anymore, and every unnecessary layer of clothes you wear, even for a few minutes, is a nuisance. But it was necessary we did this. We were travelling light, and for the three months in Asia we had lived in shorts and flip-flops. It was almost impossible to imagine but it was true - we were to experience winter again. It was June and our next stop was southern Australia.

McLennan College in Waco, TX., U.S.A.**Šárka Vávrová**

Hi everybody,

I promised to write something about my studies stay in Waco, TX, U.S.A.

I actually got here through luck. In November 2006 I was due to leave for an eight-month trip to South America. But one day before my departure I found a little notice on the board at our Faculty of Education, offering students an opportunity to stay at McLennan College in Waco.

Well, I knew I wanted to go to an English-speaking country to study because my majors are English and German, and I have already spent one year studying at a university in Germany . So I thought going to the U.S. would be another cool experience by which I could improve my knowledge of English.

Although I did not know where Waco, Texas was, I told myself I would never find out if I did not try, so I went to talk to Ms. Lucie Podrouzkova and we had a short interview about me and what my aims there would be.

The day after this I flew with my boyfriend to South America to hike from the southernmost part of the Cordillera Mountains across Argentina, Chile, Peru and Bolivia all the way up to Ecuador.

A couple of months later I got an email with excellent news! I had been accepted to study at McLennan Community College. I was very excited about it and immediately decided to go,

a decision which I do not regret at all. Though at home I study English and German, here in Texas I am studying Spanish grammar and conversation, black-and-white and digital photography, English writing and reading composition, and American crime.

I have to admit that the quality of education here is very, very different from that of Europe, and I will be happy to continue studying at Masaryk University back home. But I am pleased to be here because it offers me more opportunities to do things I always wanted to do but for which I had never had the chance. I have taken part in various photography competitions here and have already won a second prize. I am also a member of the Presidential Scholars group, which allows me to visit different places and participate in some thrilling activities, for some of which I volunteer.

Besides studying I work 15 hours a week for the Office of the College President, Dr. Dennis Michaelis, where I focus mainly on paperwork and computer work. Dr. Michaelis is a very nice, attentive and intelligent man and I really like working for him.

I live at McLennan House on campus and have a rented a car for a year. The college awards me a scholarship that covers my college tuition and fees, the car, books, and housing. In my free time, I do a lot of sport with my American and German friends. This includes cycling and hiking in the various national and state parks. We also go bowling, fishing and deer hunting.

7 DAYS IN BARNSTAPLE February 2-9, 2008

Renata Jančaříková

Between 2nd and 9th February, a group of 18 students from our department had a unique opportunity to improve their English skills and learn more about life in Britain and particularly English primary schools during a 7-day course in England.

The course was organized and provided by an English non-profit organization called SOL (Sharing One Language), which is located in the town of Barnstaple in North Devon in the South West of England. SOL, set up in 1991, has long and rich experience of organizing language courses for students of different ages as well as English teachers. Since our students are teacher trainees, the course was carefully designed in order to suit their needs, i.e. not only to help them increase their confidence in speaking English but also to provide some methodology guidance and above all, first-hand experience of life in English primary schools. The programme therefore included regular classes in the SOL centre in Barnstaple, three visits to local primary schools and also a few fascinating trips.

The lessons carefully prepared and taught by Dan and Yvonne, SOL's full-time teachers, were aimed mostly at speaking skills and expanding the students' vocabulary, and also provided some useful methodology tips. The activities included discussions, group work and games, most of which the students might also use with their own pupils in the future. On top of this, the students were asked to prepare final presentations which concluded the course and were to demonstrate what

progress they had made during their stay in England.

Another important part of the course that most of us really appreciated was the school visits. During three mornings spent in a few local primary schools our students had the chance to observe various lessons (some could even participate in them a bit), talk to the teachers and the children, and thus 'see it all with their own eyes'. Back at home they will certainly share their experience with their friends, pupils and colleagues: they now know what a school uniform looks like, what an assembly is, what it is like in schools where there is no bell, and many other things that are so different from Czech primary schools. As for myself, I am sure I will always remember Mr Reese, a teacher at Pilton Bluecoat Primary School, who could serve as an excellent model for any teacher trainee. Whether he was teaching the children (aged 8 -9) how to play the ukulele, how to write a story or how muscles and joints in the human body work, he did so in interesting and diverse ways, and did not forget to encourage his pupils to be well aware of their strengths and weaknesses. And at 3 p.m. (yes, the children were still at school at that time) he picked up the guitar and the whole class sang about five songs to finish off the day in a pleasant way - no stress, no marks, no bell, and it worked.

It should be mentioned that the whole course was very successful also thanks to the host families. SOL chooses these very carefully since their task is not only to provide full-board accommodation but also support and help, as the evenings and a lot of the students' free time are spent with the families. So, both in the classroom and during their leisure time, students are exposed to English, experience the real English lifestyle and at the same time enjoy themselves.

Apart from the lessons and school visits, the programme included two trips to the coast, a tour of the town of Barnstaple and a short visit to the well-known historical town of Bath. I mustn't forget to mention Tim, SOL's wonderful guide, who contributed greatly to the success of the trips and the course as a whole.

It might seem that seven days is not a long time. Those who haven't had a chance to go through a similar experience might wonder (or even doubt) whether it is possible to make any progress during such a short stay. If you asked any of the students who were in Barnstaple with us, you would definitely receive a positive answer. And you would learn much more -that learning English in England is an unforgettable experience, that Barnstaple is a lovely town, that the English weather is not as bad as you might think and that the people working for SOL are really helpful and friendly and prepared to do their best for 'their students'.

Before we left for Barnstaple, it was a bit hard for us to imagine what it was going to be like since this was the first course of its kind organized for us by SOL. Looking back, I am really glad to say that there was absolutely no need for us to worry as it was a huge success in many regards. To put it simply, it was worth it. IT WAS.

If you want to learn more, see some photos and even listen to Tim (the guide), go to <http://moodlinka.ped.muni.cz/course/view.php?id=1249>

Barnstaple

Written by Miša Latíková, a blind student, who visited Barnstaple with her husband Břet'a

At last we were in the beautiful small town of Barnstaple in North Devon, where we would spend a week improving our English and learning something new about the primary-education system. A little afraid of what was ahead of us, we went to the SOL school and met our teachers Dan and Yvonne, who told us about the plan for the whole week. In the mornings we would visit primary schools and observe classes there, while in the afternoons we would go to SOL and have classes with Dan and Yvonne. In addition to this, we were promised three unforgettable trips, for which the amusing and unforgettable Tim would be our guide.

Our mornings spent in the small primary school in Instow were really marvellous. In the geography lesson the teacher brought a flag of the Czech Republic into class and asked the pupils whether they knew with which countries it shares its borders. Then she drew a map of the Czech Republic on the board, marking the most important rivers and mountains, the capital of the Czech Republic, and even our town, Brno. (She had asked us where we came from before the lesson started.) Having drawn the map, she gave each of the pupils a piece of paper on which were written two or three sentences describing the Czech Republic. Taking turns, the pupils read the sentences in front of the whole class, repeating their reading two or three times. When they knew the sentences by heart, they presented them without the help of the pieces of paper. At the end of the lesson everything was filmed and the pupils were praised for a

good performance.

Another thing which I really appreciated was that the teacher involved us in the classes. She asked us to teach the pupils the Czech words for snow, wind and rain and then chose three pairs, giving different things to each of them. The first pair, for example, was given an umbrella and a glass of water (one pupil poured the water on the umbrella held by the other pupil, who was said 'déšť'); the second pair was given a hat, a coat and a bottle of cream (the pupil wearing the coat and hat said 'sníh' while the other pupil sprayed his hat and coat with cream). In the end everything was filmed as before. We found that both of these video recordings were displayed on the internet, where parents and others can see what their children did in the lessons.

The last day we spent in Instow was one of the most wonderful: in the music lesson the pupils gave a concert for us. We were really surprised how good nine-year old children could be at playing the drums, and we also learned that they were used to giving concerts for their parents and other people. In addition to this, while the other pupils went to assembly (an occasion when all of the pupils in the school meet for religious and/or other purposes), the teacher appointed three of her pupils cooks, giving them the important task of preparing a traditional Czech meal. Although the pupils did not have pork, they prepared real cabbage and dumplings from powder. Having returned from the assembly, each of the pupils was given a small bowl with cabbage and dumplings to taste. It was very funny to watch the pupils make faces and say "ugh!" when they tasted the meal, which was really very sour.

Our afternoon lessons with Dan and

Yvonne were also very interesting: we were introduced to a lot of activities which we ourselves might use in the classroom. The activity which I enjoyed most was one in which one of the students said a word and the next said a word associated with it (e.g. sea, wave, hair, brown, etc.). If a student was not quick enough to say a word, the teacher would hit him/her with a blow-up hammer. Apart from these activities, we had a lot of practice in speaking and vocabulary in these lessons. Every day we were asked to give feedback on our classes: our teachers wanted to know what had happened there and whether we had liked it or not. We learned many new words and also a lot of idioms and proverbs, which are so difficult to learn in English. There was a relaxed atmosphere because our teachers were very friendly and always ready to help us.

The trips we made were also wonderful, especially because of our guide Tim, who was an excellent narrator and explained everything in a very simple and clear way so that everybody could understand without difficulty. As well as Barnstaple we visited a lot of neighbouring towns, such as Braunton, Ilfracombe, Combe Martin, Lynton and Lynmouth, and Landmark. Landmark has its own theatre, which looks like two chimneys, and Combe Martin has a remarkable pub which resembles a pack of cards.

What I enjoyed most was walking on the Atlantic coast and picking up seashells on the beach.

For me, the visit to Barnstaple was full of pleasant experiences; I met a lot of interesting people, gained a lot of inspiration for my future teaching and improved my speaking in English very much. It had only one disadvantage: it was too short!

My First Time in the UK

Květa Šimová

My decision to go on an English course in Barnstaple was quite quick. I wasn't sure what to expect, but I was curious, as I always am when going to unknown places.

When we arrived in Barnstaple we were allocated to host families. There were two of us staying with Mags and Stew. I'm quite shy, but there were no problems with communication. If I didn't say anything for a while, Mags or Stew asked me something and I had to answer.

Driving on the left-hand side of the road, very narrow streets and "hobbit's" houses: these were my first impressions of England.

Next day we went to SOL and got information and the programme for our week in Barnstaple. Then we spent Sunday afternoon on a trip to the ocean coast with our guide Tim. Tim knows everything that has happened in and around Barnstaple. He was an interesting guide and it was easy to understand him. Everyone told us there are always very big waves in the ocean and the surfers use them a lot. But we didn't see anyone there.

It was a good experience for me. I'd never seen an ocean before and when I had seen the sea it was only with a sandy or a stony beach. This coast was broken and rocky. Beautiful.

Some of us went down the steps to be closer to the water, but the ocean was quicker than we realised and gave a bath to our shoes and trousers.

We had observation in different primary schools on the next three mornings. We (my flatmate and I) went to the Pilton Bluecoat Church of England Junior School, whose pupils were from 7 to 11 years of age. I stayed in one class

for all three mornings, because I wanted to see the same children with one teacher. The teacher, Mr Rees, was really good and he explained to me everything I wanted to know. He told me that children in the UK attend primary school from the age of five, after which they have to be at school every day from 9 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. Their lessons are 30 mins long and in the morning they usually have two Maths lessons together.

One other unusual thing - nobody wore slippers. All the children and teachers wore shoes or boots.

The school was quite big and there were two or three classes for each year. I was surprised when I saw the children changing classrooms for Mathematics. The better mathematicians from both classes were put together with one teacher and the worse ones were put in the other class with another teacher.

After Mathematics they had a 15-minute Assembly every day. The first Assembly I saw included a story about bad habits. Two brothers who had bad habits - they were thieves - once stole a sheep. People from the village hunted them down and branded the letters "ST" on their foreheads. Everyone knew it meant Sheep Thief. One of them emigrated to another country, where no one knew what it meant and the second one stayed in the village. He started to be good and help those around him. After many years and many good turns nobody knew what the letters meant and someone, once, thought they meant Saint. The story was very well done: the Head Teacher used two boys as actors and showed the others how difficult it is and how long it takes to persuade people to believe that someone can change his habits.

Tuesday's Assembly was a singing Assembly, so the children sang hymns together. The last Assembly we saw was on Ash Wednesday, and the teacher from my class had a presentation about Lent and also about things we really need or do not need for our lives.

Though I am not a believer, the Assemblies were nice, because the children could meet every day and spend a short time all together.

The children had one break in the morning, after which they had two lessons, usually Singing, P.E. or English. For P.E. and Singing (and later for lunch, too) they used the Assembly Hall. In the time after break and before lunch the children who were not so good at English had spelling practice with a classroom assistant. It was really very important. Their spelling was completely different from the spelling I had known before. The lesson took only 10 or 15 mins and they spelled words from the same sound group. They also had a small exercise book where they had written all the words they had already learned. These pupils missed part of next lesson, but no one was upset about this.

After lunch they had English Literacy or Reading, French, Art or Science. I saw a very nice Literacy lesson and a less nice Reading lesson: the children took 15 minutes reading silently whichever book whatever they wanted to read. If they didn't want to read they just pretended to be reading. The worst readers went one after the other for one-to-one reading with the classroom assistant for about 5 mins during Science or another afternoon lesson. Then they were supposed to have French, but the French teacher didn't turn up so they started with Science. They didn't use any student's books. They only used exercise books with their own handwritten texts about their projects. The lesson I saw was about muscles and how they work. The teacher used rope, rulers, the children and himself for demonstration. The pupils used rulers and a big sheet of paper on which, in groups, they drew arms with muscles. Some of the children asked me about the spelling of the word "muscle" and the others just wrote "musule". No one corrected them. Nor did the teacher or the classroom assistant correct them when they wrote

holding their pencils the wrong way.

Everything looked quite free and the children didn't look tired at the end of the long school day. Although we had to stay at school only during the morning, we were invited to stay there for whole school day. So we stayed.

We also had language courses at SOL every day, where we played games and got to know new idioms, pronouns etc. At the end of the course we had group presentations, which were great fun, and we got certificates.

We went with Tim on the Thursday to the twin towns of Lynton and Lynmouth. Lynton is on the cliff and Lynmouth is at the bottom. We got to know about a local railway, heard a story about Hewitt's house and were given lots of other information about the towns and the special water-powered clifftop railway which joins them. The towns are about 200 metres apart but you need to go about 700 metres up or down the steep incline or about 7 km by car. We finally saw a surfer in Lynmouth.

One day before our departure we went back to the centre of Barnstaple with Tim and finally did our shopping. Next time I will take a bigger suitcase!

As fish and chips is presented in English books as the typical English food, I had to try it in an English pub. It was similar to our fried fish and chips, but the chips weren't as thin as ours are and the fish was tasty and not so oily as fried fish. Now I can tell the children that they serve it with green peas and sour tartar sauce.

Before our departure we went to Bath, to see another town. There I managed something I didn't in Barnstaple. I got lost! I usually get lost in unknown places because I lack a sense of direction. So I didn't disappoint myself.

We got to the airport in Bristol in good time and our flight back was fine. There were no clouds so we saw land throughout the flight.

I really enjoyed my first stay in England, and the most important thing I learned there is: "Czech English is as good as French or German or any other English." Don't worry and SPEAK!!! Our English is always better than their Czech!!!!

Barnstaple

Jitka Berková

Why did I decide to go to Barnstaple? Simply because I love England and I love English. Although I have been to England several times I really appreciated another opportunity to go with the SOL organization. I hadn't heard about SOL before, but after the week I spent in Barnstaple I must say they are very well organized and wonderful people besides.

Our programme in the county of Devon was varied and full of work, pleasure and new experiences. I and two friends of mine spent a week with the Taylor family. Alan and Pippa Taylor made us feel like members of the family. I would like to use this space to thank them very much.

Our three mornings at primary school watching lessons and pupils, talking to teachers, learning new methods, being a part of the class, was a great

opportunity for us. I really enjoyed it and I was very impressed by the teacher and children. They were very well behaved and there was a very pleasant atmosphere in the classroom. I have learnt some tricks I will definitely use in my lessons. And I am sure my school wasn't particularly special because most of my colleagues had the same feeling, as they said during feedback every day with the SOL teachers.

There are some differences between the Czech and the English school systems, of course, but it is always good to compare and learn new methods and attitudes.

We had two half-day trips around Barnstaple, we went to the seaside, and we tried to explore Devon a bit. Luckily we had Tim as our guide - a wonderful man who knows a lot. He gave us so much information and treated us to a nice English sense of humour. Devon is a beautiful part of England with its own rhythm of life - there is no rush.

The most important people were our SOL teachers Daniel, Yvonne and Grenville. They made us work very hard, but I was grateful for that because I learnt a lot. They were exacting but friendly and nice.

Our flight back to Prague was full of sunshine, not typical English weather, but I think that was as good as our stay there. I spent a nice week and I hope I will go back.

poetry pages

Where do all the teachers go? (the view of a poetic idealist)

Where do all the teachers go
When it's four o'clock?
Do they live in houses
And do they wash their socks?

Do they live with other people?
Have they mums and dads?
And were they ever children?
And were they ever bad?

Did they ever lose their hymn books?
Did they ever leave their greens?
Did they scribble on the desk tops?
Did they wear old dirty jeans?

Do they wear pyjamas
And do they watch TV,
And do they pick their noses
The same as you and me?

Did they ever, never spell right?
Did they ever make mistakes?
Were they punished in the corner
If they pinched the chocolate flakes?

I'll follow one back home today
I'll find out what they do.
Then I'll put it in a poem
That they can read for you.

Peter Dixon

Teachers (the views of realists)

(4.roč.magisterský)

If you want to teach
You shouldn't be a witch!
Sometimes it's good,
And sometimes it's bad,
But never be sad!

Kristýna, Tereza, Lukáš

Teacher's Ode

Working as a teacher
Means a terrible future
Shouting creatures every day
Oh, I want to go away
Lack of respect
Lack of money
Oh, it used to be so funny.
Bye, bye children
Bye, bye school
I was acting like a fool!
There must be a happy end
Welcome to retirement!

Josef Kováčik, Jan Domkář

Pockets full of greens
Free time is what I see
Being a teacher seems
An ideal job for me!

Adam Kunc

Greens= prachy (Amer)

Whenever I am frustrated
I become creative.

Lenka Šmídová

We are stressed every day
But we have a long holiday
Time-consuming preparation
Makes effective education.

*Barbara Kopicová, Hana Dopitová,
Libuše Dufková*

Teachers have a long holiday
But are frustrated day after day.

Paulusová, Sedláčková

Teacher's Destiny

We have to prepare for a long time
But we can affect our children's minds
The same is derived from the Egyptian
slave,
Now they take care of children that
cannot behave.
Just after you fill in one form,
They set you another norm.
Salary as pocket money
But sometimes it can be funny.

Kopuleťá, Špalková

The teacher is afraid of administration
And fed up with time-consuming
preparation
He feels everyday frustration.
He should take care of every child
And it makes him sometimes wild.

Pavel, Petra, Pavla

Publish or Perish

E.T.

Publish or perish is what they say
Which makes me think: "oh hey
Why not waste some time
Creating a pretty rhyme?"

Oh blimey, this writing hurts
Isn't it funny
That "words, words, words"
Can earn us money?

If all do perish
What's the reach?
If all just publish
Who will teach?

the messenger

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