

the messenger

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Match the words with the pictures:

weeding hoe

spade

lawn edger

hoe-fork

spading fork

scuffle hoe

rake

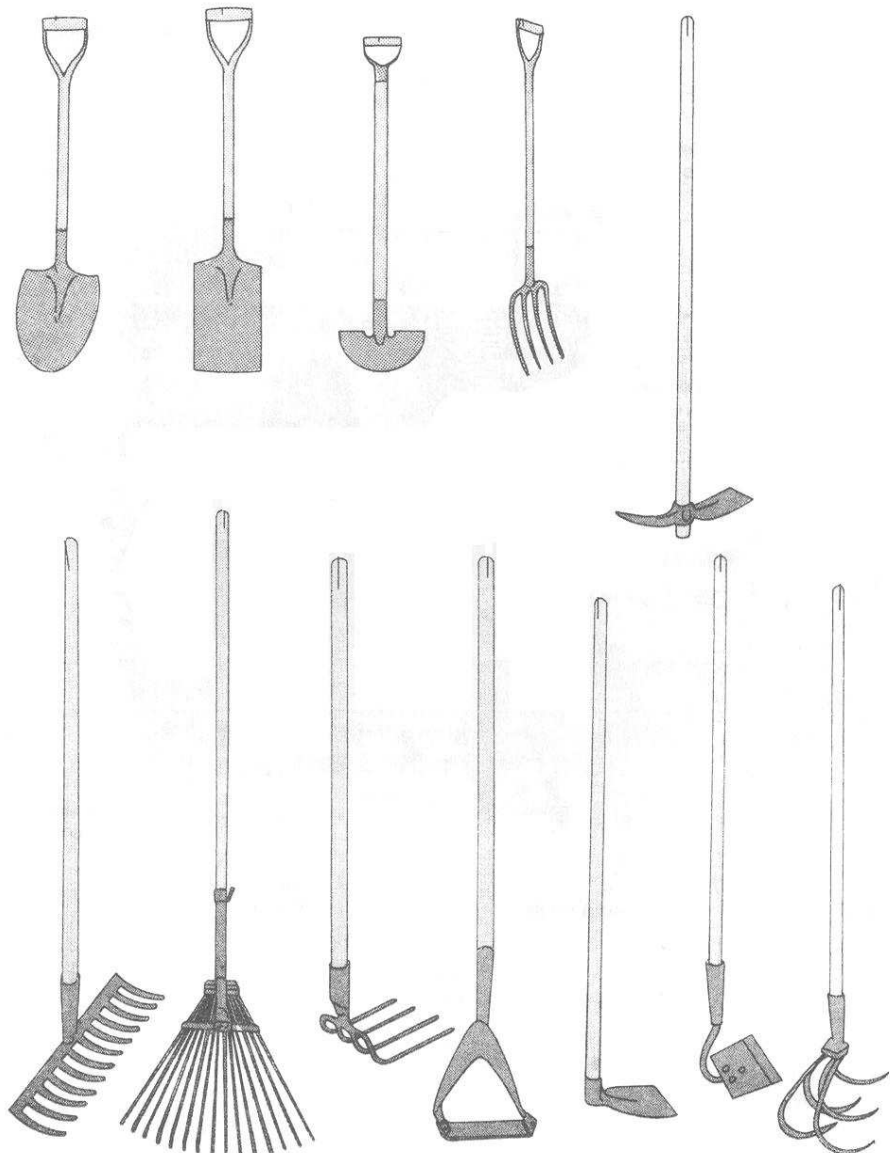
lawn rake

shovel

hook

hoe

draw hoe



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.*

We wish you a very Happy New Year.

With thanks

Your editor

Gabriela Oaklandová

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linguistics pages

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

Part I: Prague School

Martin Adam

The students who have met me in the classes of Functional and Communicative Syntax or Functional Sentence Perspective know that the Prague School has been one of the most prominent topics of my lectures. Some of them may consider this passion of mine ridiculous; others may have been inspired... Anyway, every English student should be acquainted with Prague School teaching, especially those studying at Prague or Brno universities.

In this article (and probably one more to come), I would like to offer a brief outline of the basic data related to the Prague School of Linguistics, its protagonists and teaching.

The Prague School of Linguistics or the Prague Circle (the more precise original label in French is *Cercle Linguistique de Prague*, CLP, or its Czech equivalent *Pražský lingvistický kroužek*, PLK) was officially established on 6 October, 1926 as a scholarly reaction to the linguistic principles and concepts pursued in Europe until that time. Vilém Mathesius had nevertheless formulated the basic platform as early as 1911, during his memorable lecture on the potentiality of language [O potenciálnosti jevů jazykových] held at the Czech Royal Society, Prague.

The Prague School was basically a society of Czech (Vilém Mathesius, Bohumil Trnka, Bohuslav Havránek and Jan Mukařovský) and several foreign linguists (above all Roman

Jakobson and Nikolai Trubetzkoy). As their joint venture, they published a self-contained research programme labelled *Theses* [*Téze*] at the First Congress of Slavic Philologists held in Prague in 1929. The contributions and texts of the members of the Prague School were regularly published in a famous series in the journal *Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Prague* (TCLP), starting in 1929, and later also in *Časopis pro moderní filologii* (renewed in 1991).

The first meetings of the Circle were held in Mathesius' office at 4 Veleslavínova St., which was the temporary seat of the English Department of the Faculty of Arts of Prague's Charles University. Only later was the Department of English transferred to new faculty premises in today's Jan Palach Square. The sessions were characterised by a friendly but modest atmosphere, and led by the honourable figure of Vilém Mathesius, the first Czech Professor of English.

As has been mentioned above, the programme was focused specifically on critical re-evaluation of present-day linguistics: programme theses were inspired by the ideas of structuralism introduced into the world of linguistics by Ferdinand de Saussure (e.g. the dichotomies of the signifier vs. signified, *langue* vs. *parole*, and the concept of the arbitrariness of sign). The Praguean concept of structuralism was, however, complemented by the innovative dimension of the function of different components of the act of communication – every element may perform different functions in different contexts and situations.

Furthermore, the members of the Prague School opposed the traditional (and until that time primary) approach to the study of language – historical (diachronic) linguistics dealing with isolated languages and language phenomena, advocating a synchronic

approach focused on language as a system at a certain stage of its development.

Overall, the teaching represented by the Prague School may be characterised by the label functional structuralism. (Functional structuralism was actually a wise fusion of the two main existing streams of linguistics: structuralism and functionalism). The Prague School was, in other words, directed towards structural linguistics but with a strong accent on the function of an element within the system of language at the very act of communication and with respect to the teleological understanding of language phenomena as means of human communication. The functional approach logically found its counterpart in the above-mentioned synchronic study of language.

The principal linguistic disciplines promoted by the Prague School were phonology and morphology, where the pioneering functional approach was adopted. Let us recall, by way of illustration, the theories of the marked vs. unmarked sign, binary oppositions, potentiality of language phenomena and the oscillation between the centre and periphery. Later on, these prominent disciplines were joined by functional syntax.

Among the advantages of the ideas introduced by Prague School scholars were, besides precious theoretical research, their preoccupation with practical use and the output of the results of their investigations. In the practical field, their interest ranged from the theory of teaching (methodology and pedagogy), compiling dictionaries and grammars, to providing stylistic outlines for students and teachers and writing analyses of poetry.

Main Representatives:

Vilém Mathesius (1882-1945)

- the founding father, chairman and leading figure of the Prague School; great and influential personality, teacher and scholar (functional approach to syntax, synchronic linguistics, oscillation in language)
- suffered from an incurable eye disease (had to have an assistant to read and write for him); Mathesius died of spinal tuberculosis, completely blind.
- published numerous papers and gave many lectures; his work was published posthumously in a collection called *Obsahový rozbor současné angličtiny na základě obecně lingvistickém* (1961) [*A Functional Analysis of Present-day English on a General Linguistic Basis* (1975)]
- was the first to come up with the idea of the theme-rheme structure

Nikolai Trubetzkoy (1890-1938)

- a Russian Prince; due to the events connected with the October Revolution of 1917 he had to leave Russia; after a number of temporary stays he ended up as Professor of English at the University of Vienna
- founder of functional phonology – the theory of binary distinctive features, etc. (published as an avant-garde work named *Grundzüge der Phonologie* in 1939)
- Trubetzkoy met an untimely death in 1938 under torture by the Nazi Gestapo (suffering an attack of angina pectoris)

Roman Jakobson (1896-1982)

- Russian; studied Slavic languages including Czech and philosophy
- a friend and a colleague of Trubetzkoy, he dealt with morphology and phonology (binary oppositions, speech sounds, the theory of the act of communication or the functions of language)
- left Russia in 1920 to live in Prague and Brno (1933-39); in 1939 had to flee Czechoslovakia to settle in the USA (after 1949 he held different academic positions at Harvard University and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

Bohuslav Havránek (1893-1978)

- studied Slavic languages, dialects, Czech language culture, dictionaries and, above all, functional styles (deriving from their different functions in the act of communication, he defined the following functional styles: colloquial, journalistic, scientific and artistic)
- during WWII Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno
- author of a monumental work on the development of Czech [*Vývoj spisovného jazyka českého*]

Bohumil Trnka (1895-1984)

- assistant to Mathesius; was interested in the historical development of English ('great vowel shift'), morphology
- author of language textbooks of English, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and shorthand
- established the *Kruh moderních filologů* (an association which still exists today)

Jan Mukařovský (1891-1975)

- literary critic and theoretician (especially admired poeticism, the avant-garde and surrealism); published papers on aesthetics
- Rector of Charles University, Prague (1948-1953); from 1951 a leading figure at the Czech Academy of Science

The Prague Circle was almost destroyed by the events and consequences of World War II; Mathesius died in May 1945, Trubetzkoy did not survive his 1938 interrogation by the Gestapo, and Jakobson fled to the USA. The Circle was officially dissolved in 1952.

The ideas of the Prague School of Linguistics were revived in the 1960s and are still explored today (the Circle was officially renewed in 1989); since the 1960s more emphasis has been put on the study of semantics, syntax and text linguistics. Since its establishment, the Prague School of Linguistics has represented one of the major branches of linguistic studies world-wide, and has provided an inspiration for many; in recent decades, this influence may be best seen in the field of text linguistics and discourse analysis.

The legacy of the Prague Circle was carried on by their pupils and followers, most notably by Mathesius' disciple Josef Vachek (1909-1996), who devoted his scholarly career above all to the study of functional syntax and the historical development of English, and by Jan Firbas (1921-2000), who was to become the true father of the theory of functional sentence perspective (FSP).

(See Part II of this series in the next issue of the Messenger.)

Account manager pro nereklamní příjmy

Helena Havlíčková

Can we earn our living without English? Probably not in Czech conditions. If you are looking for a job, you will be perplexed looking at the advertisements published everywhere. The job of account manager mentioned in the title was advertised in MF Dnes on 19th July 2007. And what about the following job that appeared on the same page: “Pracovník controllingu obchodního útvaru”? Do you need more examples? “Help desk operátorka” or “vedoucí skupiny engineeringu”. Disgusting for a sensitive linguist. Anyhow our aversion will not change the situation. English is sometimes aggressively entering our mother tongue, reflecting the atmosphere in the economy and society. Advertisements need to look attractive, offering a rose-tinted vision of your eventual future job and hiding the things that would discourage you from trying your luck. Well, if you are searching for a job, use the dictionary. If the firm is looking for an executive assistant, what they really want is a secretary. A sales assistant or a shop assistant is a traditional Czech “prodavačka.” We can write quite a long list of “new” professions and their prosaic translations. Look at what can be found in Czech advertisements:

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Cook | = kuchař |
| Front Office Agent | = recepční |
| Head Waiter | = vrchní |
| Junior Manager | = kancelářský asistent |
| Night Auditor | = noční recepční |
| Manager stavebního projektu | = stavbyvedoucí |
| Project Manager | = sekretářka k mailům |
| Receptionist | = vrátný/recepční |
| Reservation Agent | = pracovník oddělení rezervací |
| Sales Manager | = obchodní zástupce |
| Waiter/Waitress | = číšník |

All the terms above were found in texts written in Czech; they appear in a Czech context. Why do good old Czech expressions let English newcomers have their position? Let's try to find the reasons for these language innovations:

- 1 The job offered is not very attractive, and must therefore be decorated with glittering names.
- 2 The firm searching for employees has an international reputation and needs to demonstrate this important fact.
- 3 The Czech word does not cover the meaning precisely.
- 4 The Anglo-Saxon world is dominating the world economy, management and marketing.
- 5 Hardly anybody is willing to work as e.g. “prodavač baget” in a society which enables (or forces?) everybody to pass a *maturita* exam and which pushes the majority of its members towards bachelor's exams. These graduates selling the product mentioned above must be at least “sandwich artists” or “sandwich operators”.

The adverts usually explain the future employer's requirements in the text below, which allows you to discover a bit about the meaning. Yet sometimes even the requirements fail to uncover exactly what the job involves. Just try to guess what these jobs are:

Account Manager pro státní správu a samosprávu
 Applications Administrator (help desk + CRM)
 Area Sales Manager
 Asistentka prodeje office sector
 Associate Financial Analyst
 Brand Manager Senior
 Broker
 Business Analyst
 Business Solution Specialist
 Callcentrový manager
 Consultant pro oceňování podniků
 Customer Relationship Developer
 Customer Service Representative
 Customer Service Senior
 Disponent
 Draftperson
 Engineering/Maintenance Manager
 Finanční controller
 Junior Net Developer
 Key Account Manager pro prodej ohnivzdorných materiálů
 Koordinátor logistiky
 Management Trainee
 Manažer kompletace
 Marketing koordinátor
 Marketing Manager
 New Country Developer
 Operátor Callcentra
 Prodejce junior
 Project Coordinator
 Quality Engineer
 Sales Forecaster
 Sales manager pro šroubovací techniku
 Sales Representative – existing customers
 Sales Representative – new customers

Senior analytik
 Senior Brand Specialist
 Senior Finance Controller
 Sortimentní specialista
 Supervisor
 Telesales Account Manager
 Territory Manager pro oblast Čechy
 Tooling Engineer
 Travel Consultant
 Warehouse Coordinator

Uh-huh! Have you chosen your future job? Have you ever dreamt about professions like these? They all come from Czech adverts. Word for word. "Jobs and Professions" – this traditional topic in English textbooks will have to be adapted.

Nevertheless, as far as sticking to Czech traditions is concerned, one oasis still exists. "Učitelské noviny" continues to publish old-fashioned advertisements in time-honoured style:

„ZŠ ... v Praze ... přijme od 1.9.2007 učitele angličtiny. Možnost ubytování. Kontakt ...“

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 ManMark ECONOMY, s r.o., Praha
 Pracovní noviny, červenec 2007, roč.IV,
 ManMark ECONOMY, s r.o., Praha
 Učitelské noviny 27/2007, Gnosis, spol. s r.o.,
 Praha
<http://www.jobmaster.cz/> (7.8.2007)

methodology pages

Beneficial Ideas of Phonics-based Approaches

Pavel Richter

This introductory article is based on my bachelor's work, in which I try to come up with several ideas for how to incorporate the most beneficial elements of a phonics-based approach into an everyday English lesson. The phonics-based approach which I chose as my inspiration was the Orton-Gillingham approach. However, I realised later that in a Czech-speaking environment it was impossible to use these kinds of approaches with only slight modifications; therefore I focused on a few components from Orton-Gillingham which could be beneficial in English lessons even in Czech schools. As we do not have enough room here to describe particular activities and how they function in an English lesson, I intend this article as an introduction to this field.

Here, I will give a very brief description of the approach so that we know what we are discussing. The Orton-Gillingham approach, invented in the 1930's in the US by Samuel Torrey Orton and Anna Gillingham, was originally designed for young children with dyslexia to teach them to read. Its essential idea is to teach children the basics of word formation before whole meanings. The approach has never been regarded as a mainstream one and even in the US it is now used only at a small number of public schools.

The fundamental components which I am going to discuss here, are: "multisensory", phonological awareness, phonemic awareness and phoneme-grapheme correspondence. These components were chosen intentionally

as I am confident of their positive and beneficial influence regarding teaching English to any learner, not only to young or very young ones. Moreover, these elements can be quite easily incorporated into an everyday English lesson, so teachers do not have to be hesitant to try some activities or games which make use of this philosophy in their lessons. These activities have many merits, not least the fact that they can be used in a very short time and introduced at the beginning of a lesson (as an introductory activity), in the middle (for an upsurge of interest in a class) or even at the end (as a conclusion or a reward).

What is "multisensory"? Being multisensory means that children use their eyes, ears and motion in the process of acquiring new information, in other words children's brains use various pathways for obtaining a new piece of information. Thanks to multisensory techniques, children will use their stronger points in the learning process to compensate for their weaker ones. For example, difficulties in reading, recognition and remembering particular letters can be reduced when teaching children with dyslexia. Concerning dyslexic children, kinaesthetic-tactile activities (activities using motion and touch) seem to be the most effective, as these stimulate strong learning channels in the students (Schneider, Crombie, 2003). Now a question might be raised. How do we incorporate other senses into this process? Orton-Gillingham uses sight, hearing and motion (seen as a sense here). But there are other senses such as touch, smell and taste. It is difficult to think what to do with the sense of taste, but I believe that touch and even smell can be used within a lesson.

Phonological and phonemic awareness are quite broad terms and both relate to the understanding of words and sounds in words. The main difference between these two is that phonological awareness is connected with the ability to separate sentences into words, words into syllables and syllables into

particular phonemes. When a child's phonological awareness is relatively well developed, he or she will also be aware of the fact that a word consists of particular sounds and that these sounds can be easily interchanged or substituted for different ones. I am convinced that this component could be beneficial for Czech children when acquiring English. Moreover, the activities for developing phonological awareness and practising this are not immoderately complicated, which means that they could be incorporated in an everyday English lesson in a Czech school (Richter, 2007).

Phonemic awareness is a subset of phonological awareness and relates to the ability to distinguish between phonemes; in other words, children will be able to hear the sounds and will be aware that they differ and how and why they differ from each other. Consequently, we can claim that when a child's phonemic awareness is sufficiently well developed, he or she will be able to separate a whole word into particular phonemes and will be able to recognise similar phonemes (e.g. in resembling words). Use of activities to evolve this ability in our classrooms is similar to the use of phonological awareness, which suggests that these two components provide a framework for the incorporation of certain segments and ideas of various phonics-based approaches (Richter, 2007).

Another component which can be easily used in our English lessons is phoneme-grapheme correspondence. Here children are taught which sounds are represented by which letters and subsequently they learn how to blend the particular letters into single-syllable words. They will enjoy and love the activities for forming and creating words, and teachers should take advantage of this and allow the children to be as inventive as possible. Also this element can be quite easily incorporated into a lesson and it will not be difficult for a creative teacher to come up with various games and activities.

Nevertheless, we have to be aware that the original use of nearly all of these components is mainly oral, with special emphasis given to verbal practice and activities. Here lies the crucial difference between teaching in an English-speaking environment and English lessons in Czech schools: the latter will make use of the written forms of these activities, too.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage all teachers who decide to try these types of activities to help "slower" children be successful, as it is definitely worth the effort. This field needs to be further examined and practised so that we gain more experience and reliable results from which we can consequently profit. You perhaps already use a lot of games and interesting activities in your English lessons; maybe if these were modified or "upgraded" only slightly, they would immediately possess attributes such as "multisensory", making them suitable, meaningful and encouraging for an integrated classroom or for students with learning disabilities. Would that not be satisfying?

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Using Correspondence in Teaching English

Rita Collins

There are many ideas and resources for incorporating correspondence including letters, postcards and emails into an English language class. A teacher can use actual examples of correspondence to connect reading, writing and speaking skills for learners. Often correspondence can provide a real life opportunity for students to apply English language skills in a meaningful way. One way that a teacher can begin exploring styles of correspondence with learners is by seeing how other people write letters.

There are many books in English for both children and adults that have letters as part of the story. You may be familiar with some books for young learners such as "Letters from Felix: A Little Rabbit on a World Tour" and "Toot and Puddle." These types of books can be read with a class and then used to encourage children to write their own letters based on the theme. "Click, Clack, Moo Cows That Type" is a delightful book with letters written between the cows, who are on strike, and the farmer. For older students, "Griffin and Sabine" and "Letters from Rifka" are at an appropriate reading level for intermediate or upper intermediate students and can provide inspiration for many classroom activities.

English teachers can use the Internet for introducing ideas about correspondence as well as a motivational tool for encouraging students to write more. Although suitable for more mature learners, one interesting website is <http://postsecret.blogspot.com/>. This was a project that evolved into an art exhibit, several books as well as the thought-provoking website. A class can look at the various postcards on this site and follow up with discussions about the postcards' contents. Learners can then be asked to design their own individual postcards.

Another website that provides both teachers and learners with the opportunity to correspond with others in English is <http://www.epals.com>. This site connects classes and teachers from around the world who exchange emails. One student in our faculty who is also a teacher, used this with

his class and raved about it.

Besides using correspondence for personal use or to communicate with peers, formal letter writing can be another topic that teachers address. Writing business letters, letters to the editor or letters of inquiry are all useful skills for English language learners to develop. One website, <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/business.html> gives examples of these types of letters. As with the less formal letters mentioned above, learners can be encouraged to write a business letter or a letter of inquiry for a practical purpose. Seeking information, requesting resources or asking for a job are some examples of how formal letter writing can be used in the classroom. Suggested recipients of students' letters might be businesses, government agencies, NGOs or authors.

Correspondence can certainly be a practical and enjoyable activity for any English language class. When teaching skills associated with any written correspondence, a teacher should work with learners to first brainstorm ideas and vocabulary, then write drafts, make necessary corrections and eventually produce the final copy. This process is useful for improving grammar, spelling and written expression. Speaking, listening and reading can also easily be incorporated into lessons using correspondence. Take a moment to look at the websites mentioned in this article or copies of the books which are available in my office. Then think about writing a letter yourself to someone you care about.

Resources:

- Bantock, Nick (1991). *Griffin and Sabine: An Extraordinary Correspondence*. Chronicle Books: San Francisco.
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literature pages

Havel, Stoppard and the Plastic People of the Universe

Lucie Podroužková

The older I get, the less I care about self-concealment. (Tom Stoppard)

Bill Gaskill, a founding director of the National Theatre and a former artistic director of the Royal Court Theatre, “once declared that, while it is hard to define what a Royal Court play is, we all know what it isn’t, and that’s a play by Tom Stoppard” (Taylor). But in 2006, the venue reputed as the cutting edge of new British drama chose to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary with a play by no other than Tom Stoppard. *Rock’n’roll* opened on June 14 and at its premiere, seated among a mix of celebrities such as Cate Blanchett, David Gilmour, Mick Jagger and Brian Eno, were luminaries of dissent in the former Czechoslovakia, including Václav Havel and Ivan Martin Jirous.

On July 22, 2006 the play and its cast transferred to the Duke of York Theatre, where it remained a sell-out. On February 23, 2007 *Rock’n’roll* opened at the National Theatre in Prague, in a historical first production abroad. For Tom Stoppard, receiving a prolonged standing ovation under Hynais’s curtain, it was apparently a symbolic act of homecoming.

Tom Stoppard calls himself a “bounced Czech” (Taylor). For much of his life, his awareness of and access to his roots has been limited. He left Czechoslovakia as a toddler, and when his mother remarried, she resolved to draw a thick line under the past, apprehensive of her husband’s prejudices and afraid that her children might be handicapped in their new home if they did not assimilate. Stoppard took to England almost immediately and remained for a long time reticent in claiming his Czech heritage. In fact, his support of Charter 77 was initially motivated

by his appreciation of the plays of Václav Havel rather than any emigrant sentiment: “Havel wrote wonderful plays, he had a deft and sprightly intelligence and wit which even in translation you couldn’t miss.” (Tusa) Stoppard’s visits to his native country became more frequent after the fall of the Communist regime, but it was only after his mother’s death in 1996 that he was able to shed light on some aspects of his identity. Ten years later, at nearly 70, he travels down “the road not taken” in what seems to be his most personal play to date.

Rock’n’roll spans two revolutions: from the Prague Spring in 1968 to shortly after the Velvet Revolution. The final scene takes place at the Rolling Stones concert at Strahov in 1990, discussed earlier in the play as sheer utopia (perhaps only comparable to the Plastic People of the Universe performing under the “Nation to Itself”). But the play is as much about England as it is about Czechoslovakia, with the action switching between a Prague decimated by the totalitarian regime and the academic haven of Cambridge, which is free to choose to cultivate leftist ideologies, but where ideals, loves and lives are fought for and lost, too.

Jan, one of the main characters in the play and Stoppard’s alter ego, escapes to England with his mother before the war; unlike Stoppard, he returns home in 1948. Following an ambiguous contract with the State Police he is allowed to go to England again in 1966 to study for a doctorate at Cambridge, under Professor Max Morrow, a Communist hardliner “as old as the October revolution” (ibid. 79) who “clings to his faith however severely it is tested” (Spencer). At the play’s opening Jan comes to see Max to say goodbye before his departure for Prague, which is under siege by Soviet tanks. Back home, he maintains neutrality and disengagement:

I came back to save rock’n’roll, and my mother actually. But none of it happened. My mum’s okay, and there’s new bands ripping off Hendrix and Jethro Tull on equipment held together with spit. I was in the Music F Club where they had this amateur rock competition. The Plastic People of the Universe played ‘Venus in Furs’ from Velvet

Underground, and I knew everything was basically okay (Stoppard 19).

Jan's friend Ferdinand, affiliated with dissident circles, cannot concur. When Jan accuses Ferda of defeatism and states rather smugly that, "we've been done over by big powerful nations for hundreds of years but this time we refused our destiny" (ibid. 19), Ferda counters by arguing that "it's not destiny, you moron, it's the neighbours worrying about their slaves revolting if we can get away with it"(ibid.) and that defeatism means "turning disaster into moral victory"(ibid. 20).

It is obvious that Jan does not aspire to be a hero, let alone a dissident. He continues to fend off Ferda's attempts to draw him out of his political and civilian passivity, turns down the petitions and protests Ferda never tires of placing before him, and declares that "it is normal to be afraid of prison" (ibid. 30). He is mildly repelled by the intellectual opposition represented by Havel's circle, who he accuses of moral exhibitionism: "all they're doing is exploiting the prisoners' misfortune to draw attention to themselves. If they're so concerned for the families they should go and do something useful for the families, instead of – for all they know – making things worse for the prisoners." (ibid. 38) Like Jirous, Jan believes that the intellectual community are "a bunch of tossers"(ibid 340). In his view, the Plastic People of the Universe stand a better chance of drawing Husák's attention than Havel (ibid. 36). It is they who are the authentic rebels, a genuine opposition to the Establishment, because of their utter lack of interest and complete removal from the official culture:

The policeman is angry about his fear. The policeman's fear is what makes him angry. He's frightened by indifference. Jirous doesn't care. He doesn't care enough to even cut his hair. The policeman isn't frightened by dissidents! Why should he be? Policemen love dissidents, like the Inquisition loved heretics. Heretics give meaning to the defenders of the faith. Nobody cares more than a heretic. Your friend Havel cares so much he writes a long letter to Husák. It makes no odds whether it's a love letter or a

protest letter. It means they're playing on the same board. So Husák can relax, he's made the rules, it's his game. The population plays the other way, by agreeing to be bribed by places at university, or an easy ride at work ... they care enough to keep their thoughts to themselves, their haircuts give nothing away. But the Plastics don't care at all. They're unbribable. They're coming from somewhere else, from where the Muses come from. They're not heretics. They're pagans. (ibid 36-37)

Conversely, many among the intellectuals tended to think of the Plastics "as layabouts, hooligans, drug addicts" (ibid xii). This was soon to change. The Plastic People of the Universe are sentenced to prison in 1976 for spreading anti-socialist ideas and producing socially negative music, and their arrest triggers a reaction amongst the opposition, whose varying strands unite with the formation of Charter 77: "Thanks to the band, intellectuals came to realize that "living in truth" could take the form of attending a rock concert." (Taylor) Jan, too, is briefly flung into prison, and when he returns, he finds his precious LP collection smashed to pieces by the State Police. Amid the splinters of his beloved vinyls, he quickly but firmly reshuffles his priorities. Telling Ferda that "it's only rock'n'roll"(Stoppard 57), he adds his name to Charter 77. He now acknowledges the role of dissent, too: "You were great, you and the other tossers – you got us out, nearly all of us. I heard we were on the radio and TV in America!" (ibid. 53) Even Max, monitoring Jan's fortunes and misfortunes from behind the Iron Curtain, can see this; he tells his comrades that Jan is turning into a dissident not by choice but out of necessity. Now Jan says, "everything's dissident except shutting up and eating shit" (ibid 56).

Meanwhile, Max has long been feeling that his obstinate adherence to the ideals of the October Revolution casts him as "the last white rhino"(ibid 25). When he meets Jan in Czechoslovakia in 1971, he confides in him that:

There's something that keeps happening to me. More and more now that I'm getting to

be half-famous for not leaving the Communist Party. I meet somebody, it could be a visiting professor, or someone fixing my car, anyone ... and what they all want to know, though they don't know how to ask, because they don't want to be rude, is – how come, when it's obvious even to them, how come I don't get it? And it's the same here. I meet some apparatchik working in the system and he is fascinated by me. He's never met a Communist before (ibid.).

Despite his growing dissatisfaction with party politics and workers' indifference, Max continues to subscribe to basic Marxist principles and premises. British reviewers of the play highlighted the fact that, notwithstanding his personal dispute with Marxism and Communism Stoppard equipped Max with some very strong arguments. Max seeks to embrace a different, better concept of society than capitalism. Jan, who loves England with the nostalgia of a boyhood memory, can neither comprehend nor sympathize:

I dream of having what you invented – trial by jury, independent judges – you can call the government fools and criminals but the law is for free speech, the same for the highest and the lowest, the law makes freedom normal, the denial of freedom must prove its case, and if the government doesn't like it, tough shit, they can't touch you – and yet, what you have set your heart on, Max, the only thing that will make you happy, is that the workers own the means of production. I would give it to you gladly if I could keep the rest. (ibid. 27)

But on his return to England in 1990 Jan finds that Western society has let the ideals of democracy slip from its fingers. The propaganda papers and the capitalist press seem to “arrive at the same relation to the truth” (ibid. 88) and Lenka, Jan's compatriot living in Cambridge, declares that: “This place has lost its nerve. They put something in the water since you were here. It's a democracy of obedience. They're frightened to use their minds in case their minds tell them heresy” (ibid. 103).

I'm supposed to be one of your intellectual playwrights. I'm going to look a total prick, aren't I, announcing that while I was telling Jean Paul Sartre and the post-war French existentialists where they had got it all wrong, I was spending the whole time listening to the Crystals singing 'Da Doo Ron Ron'. (Tom Stoppard: *The Real Thing*)

The play's driving force is rock'n'roll itself. Jan celebrates its atavistic spirit, and Max's daughter Esme, a defunct flower child, sees its embodiment in Syd Barrett, who she once saw sitting on a garden wall, “tooting on the pipe, like Pan”(ibid. 67). Barrett represents one of the tragic ironies of the play: while the Plastic People of the Universe are persecuted by the totalitarian State, Barrett is pursued by the “independent” press, for which “the cruelty and dishonesty are completely unmotivated, it's just a ... a kind of *style*” (ibid. 100). The scene in which Alice hits Candida with her own newspaper, which contains a paparazzi photo of Barrett, describing him as “a drug-crazed zombie who barks like a dog”(ibid. 83), is among the tragicomic highlights of the play (Neuman).

Rock'n'roll sustains the structure of the play, which is punctuated with the songs of the Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd, the Grateful Dead, the Velvet Underground, the Beach Boys, U2, John Lennon, Guns'n'Roses and “the Plastics” themselves, linking fragmentary scenes of the play and the passing years, and often providing an ironic commentary on the action.

Music also functions as a semi-conscious language of love between Jan and Esme. Esme continues to cherish her teenage devotion to Jan, a gentle knight who had once taken one of her records instead of her virginity (Stoppard 49). Struggling to control her brilliant daughter and cope with middle-age crisis, she looks back with sentiment on her hippie past, when Syd Barrett had singled her out: “He looked at me, sort of surprised. He said, 'Oh, hello. It's you' ” (ibid. 67).

One of the criticisms levelled at the play is that at times Stoppard sketches his characters rather too thinly (Machalická).

Stoppard himself has always admitted his interest in ideas over psychology, and here, too, most of the protagonists are present to argue their point of view. Yet ideas that are worth a personal sacrifice are hardly a subject for detached academic discourse, and in Stoppard's play, concepts such as freedom, totalitarianism, Marxist ideology, Communism, Sapphic poetry and the nature of conscience are given a strong emotional charge.

In Max's wife Eleanor, Stoppard has created one of his strongest characters ever. A brilliant Greek classicist, Eleanor fights for love and acknowledgement despite her cancer-ridden body, which has undergone a mastectomy:

I am not my body. My body is nothing without me, that's the truth of it.

She tears open her dress.

Look at it, what's left of it. It does classics. It does half-arsed feminism, it does love, desire, jealousy and fear – Christ, does it do fear! – so who's the me who's still in one piece? (ibid. 51)

Max, who believes that consciousness is nothing but an "amazing biological machine" (ibid.) and that inspiration that poets have described as divine does not exist "except as so many neuron-firings whizzing about the cortex" (ibid. 46), cannot find an answer. Listening in on Eleanor's tutorial on Sappho, he is ready to identify brain and mind as the "same thing" (ibid. 45). But Lenka, Eleanor's Czech student, is quick to spot his ideological bias: "What you like about brains, Max, is that they all work in the same way. What you don't like about minds is that they don't. To you consciousness is subversive – because your thing is collective mind" (ibid. 47).

Biography is a net through which the real life escapes. (Tom Stoppard)

Stoppard describes *Rock'n'roll* as his "fake autobiography" (Pepper), a parallel life, in which he speculates on what would have happened had he returned to Czechoslovakia after the war. In the "Introduction" to the play, Stoppard writes that in fact, "in the first

draft of *Rock'n'roll* Jan was called Tomáš, my given name which, I suppose, is still my name." (Stoppard ix) One of the questions he then asks himself in the play is, would he have signed Charter 77 or would he have kept his head down? This he will never know (Pepper).

In Stoppard's unofficial biography, Ira Nadel describes how on his 1994 visit to the Czech Republic Stoppard decided to travel to Zlín and:

revisit the family home to duplicate a photograph he had just been shown of his parents sitting on a bench against the wall of their house. He took the train, checked into a hotel and the next morning went to the house on Zálesná III, the carefully laid-out street in a complex near the Baťa hospital where his father had practised medicine. But, try as he might, he could not find the right angle or perspective. He walked round the red-brick cube of the house. He stopped. He tried different views. In the end, he left in frustration and bewilderment. His parents and his home remained elusive; he understood that the past could not be reproduced, only invented (Nadel ix-x).

Stoppard's latest play, too, is a token to this epiphany.

Don't let me put you off, my objections are a mere detail. (Tom Stoppard, 1999)

Sadly, the Prague production, directed by Ivan Rajmont, lags behind its London forerunner. While Trevor Nunn built the dynamics of the play with minute precision, most of the verbal force of Rajmont's production falls flat. The cast are virtually look-a-likes for their London models, which is perhaps justifiable in the case of Jan, whose physique was most probably intended to recall Stoppard himself and whose face would age plausibly throughout the play. Both Rufus Sewell and David Prachař are ideal for the role. Sewell, whose performance won him the Lawrence Olivier Award for Best Actor, shifts subtly between Jan's Czech and English identities by affecting a slight Eastern

European accent when speaking "English", and speaking without an accent when conversing in "Czech".

As most Czech reviewers note, the space of the National Theatre, though overtly symbolic, does not agree with the intimate nature of the play. Moreover, the production is burdened with unnecessary reshuffles of scenery. The energizing effect of the music is minimized as the stage does not black out completely and the volume is rather moderate. The only addition to the original production then, is the truly electrifying appearance of the Plastic People themselves.

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dissertation pages

In Dissertation pages students are invited to introduce their bachelor, master or doctoral work thus practicing their academic writing skills as well as providing inspiration to their fellow students

Šárka Mlčochová

The diploma thesis tries to grasp a new concept of understanding contemporary British cultural phenomena. It attempts to design a textbook based on the investigation of cultural features in popular lyrics composed in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century. The textbook may be used as both self-study material for English teachers and a textbook for advanced learners of the English language. Above all, it is intended as alternative course material for university students with a particular interest in British cultural studies. The textbook also complies with the requirements of cross-curricular approach to teaching and learning.

The incentive to design the course originated from the author's practical need to outline some kind of procedure to comprehend and interpret selected cultural images of contemporary Britain. The key conception is based on the proposition that a great deal of what is recognized as a British cultural attribute is integrated into British

popular lyrics and may be transparently presented in a compact form that the lyrics offer.

The textbook does not necessarily provide ready-made lesson plans, but contains short background reading on the selected issues that are to be further developed by the analysis of the lyrics attached. Should both teachers and students like to use the textbook, they are to adapt the individual cultural images to their own purposes and approach them creatively. Even though the content of the textbook is based on a variety of topics and phenomena, it is to be used as a supplementary sourcebook and always in conjunction with other kinds of material and further reading.

To establish their own opinion on the lyrics, students and teachers are advised to listen to the most relevant songs, which are available on the enclosed CD in the appendix.

In four self-contained chapters, the thesis strives to cover selected images of four extended areas of contemporary British cultural background and their reflection in popular lyrics.

For instance, the following fragment of the chapter three traces back Britain's transformation into a multicultural and multiethnic society and looks closely at West Indies population.

HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY



Background reading

The immigration of the West Indies population is a great illustration of the way Britain absorbs and adapts external influences. Surprisingly enough, much of what is recognized as a traditional, or even national particularity of Britain, may appear to have originated in the Caribbean and be attached to Rastafari movement. The lyric to the song *His Imperial Majesty* by Mikey Dread depicts the core of the religion:



Listening *His Imperial Majesty*

His Imperial Majesty
Emperor Haile Selassie I
His Imperial Majesty
Emperor Haile Selassie I

Look how long, look how long
Since we've been waiting down here
We have suffered and felt the pain
Year after year after year

Jah, O Jah Rastafari!
Emperor Haile Selassie I!
Jah, O Jah Rastafari!
Emperor Haile Selassie I!

They took us away from Africa
Far, far, far from Jamaica
To work on the big plantation
All we see was frustration

Set me free, set me free
From Babylon's slavery and misery
We are all of one religion
'Cause I'm a true-born Rastaman...



Questions for consideration:

- Whom does the movement accept as 'His Imperial Majesty'? The former emperor of which African country is he?
- What do Rastafarians call him?
- What does the lyric in say about Rastafarians' African ancestors?
- What does the movement call a modern society, seen as a place of slavery and misery?

REDEMPTION SONG



Background reading

Quite often Rastafari is referred to as a religion, however, Rastas talk about the way of life, a philosophy. Rasta ideology has spread throughout Britain through reggae music and its representatives. Initially, the movement helped the immigrants to react to the dominance of white society, however, later Rastafari was adopted by British white youth cultures. Storry and Childs prove that "in the late 1970s and 1980s, the Afro-Caribbean Rastafarian style influenced both black and white youth subcultural fashion, with red, green and gold Ethiopian colours commonly featuring on T-shirts, hats, badges and jackets." (1997: 172)

In 1981, Bob Marley, a pioneer in spreading reggae and Rastafari doctrine throughout the world, wrote a message to Caribbean people living outside their homelands. It is called *Redemption Song* here are some fragments of the lyric:



Listening *Redemption Song*

Old pirates, yes they robbed I,
Sold I to the merchant ships
Minutes after they took I
From the bottomless pit.
But my hand was made strong
By the hand of the almighty.
We forward in this generation triumphantly.

Won't you help to sing
these songs of freedom?

'Cause all I ever have:
Redemption songs.

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery;
None but ourselves can free our minds.
Have no fear for atomic energy,
'Cause none of them can stop the time.
How long shall they kill our prophets,
While we stand aside and look? Oh
Some say it's just a part of it:
We've got to fulfill the book.

...



Questions for consideration:

- What does Marley call his native people in the lyric? What does the salutation suggest?
- What is the first strophe of the lyric about?
- What is the message of the lyric? What kind of freedom does Marley proclaim?
- Generally, to what extent may immigrants influence the way they will be treated in the new country?

WHITE RIOT



Background reading

For Caribbean immigrants to Britain one of the devices to gain freedom is a carnival of West-Indies cultures, which takes place annually in Notting Hill, London. It is led by communities of Afro-Caribbean people who have been living in Britain since the 1950s. Nevertheless, in the course of the years the black people had to face racist attacks both from the white British natives and the police. The two biggest racially-motivated riots in the history of the carnival happened in 1958 and 1976. The first was concerned with the aggression of the white working-class youngsters who displayed hostility towards the black residents in the area, the second emerged when the black men attacked the police in order to safeguard their mate, an arrested pickpocket. (URL 24)

In 1977, the Clash released their song *White Riot* as a respond to the riot of 1976, in which two band members were engaged:



Listening *White Riot*

White riot - I wanna riot

White riot - a riot of my own

...

Black man gotta lot a problems

But they don't mind throwing a brick

White people go to school

Where they teach you how to be thick

An' everybody's doing

Just what they're told to

An' nobody wants

To go to jail!

...

All the power's in the hands

Of people rich enough to buy it

...

While we walk the street

Too chicken to even try it

...

Are you taking over

or are you taking orders?

Are you going backwards

Or are you going forwards?

...



Questions for consideration:

- Which line/s of the lyric despises/despise the class economics? What does the lyric drive at?
- In what way are the black rioters of 1976 depicted in the lyric?
- Some people claim that the lyric seems to be advocating a kind of a race war and appealing to white youngsters to find a worthy cause to riot, as did the black youths at Notting Hill Carnival. Consider the statement.

Generally, the song lyrics contained in the textbook helped to summarize the extent to which popular music has been involved in the overall cultural and social climate of contemporary Britain, therefore several conclusions may be made.

The lyrics contemplating the issues of ethnicity and multiculturalism have addressed the problem of racial diversity in Britain. In the lyrics, songwriters have, at different levels of urgency, been referring to issues still present in British society, such as injustice, poverty and prejudice. The attention of the songwriters has been drawn to significant events, such as racially-motivated riots, and rather legal aspect of the matter, such as law restrictions and power of authorities, either government or local.

translation pages

The following article was written by Tomáš Plavec, who studied the etymology of the proper names in the Harry Potter series for his bachelor's thesis.

In my translation of a chapter from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by J.K. Rowling I tried to analyze and translate the characters' proper names. Most of the names in the book carry a meaning and it would be a pity to leave them in their original English forms because the translation would lose much of its magic. I would like to mention some of the more interesting names I created.

Albus Dumbledore

Bělus Bzučmelák

The first name of the character corresponds to the Latin word *albus* – *bílý*. I wanted to keep the ending *-us* because of its Latin tinge and still wanted to express the meaning of the word because it had its importance (white as a symbol of good, the appearance of the character), so I created the name *Bělus*.

Dumbledore is an old Devonshire word for *bumblebee* with its origins in West Country dialect, the same dialect that Hagrid

speaks. The author of the book imagined the character “wandering around the castle humming to himself.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albus_Dumbledore>, so I used the Czech word *čmelák* and added the quality of humming, or buzzing when connected with a beetle, and created the name *Bzučmelák*.

Minerva McGonagall

Minerva Bručžlučková

Minerva was the name of the Roman goddess of wisdom. I wanted to keep the quality of wisdom carried in the teacher's name, so I used it, too.

I did, however, change the name *McGonagall*, which was inspired by 19th century poet William Topaz McGonagall. The name I created can be compared to the English as follows: *nag* = *bručet*, *gall* = *žluč*. *Bručžlučková* corresponds in a certain way to the character of the teacher.

Severus Snape

Severus Sychravý

Severus is a Latin word for strict, harsh or severe and may correspond to the name of the Roman emperor Septimius Severus, who was known for his cruel rule.

The name *Snape* was inspired by the village of Snape in the English county of Suffolk. During the writing of the book the author remembered one of the teachers from her own childhood, who was very unkind to his pupils.

In some translations of Harry Potter, the name of Snape is translated into to express his characteristic of being arrogant and unpleasant. I tried something similar and translated his name into Czech as *Sychravý*, connoting an unpleasant feeling of cold.

Professor Quirrell

profesor Třasařík

Nervous tics and a stutter are typical of this teacher. He is scared of his students and even of the subject he teaches. These were the main reasons I used the name *Třasařík*, inspired by the Czech words *třást se* and *roztřesený*.

Rubeus Hagrid

Rubínus Hagrid

Rubeus is a Latin word for *red, reddish*, which is why I used the stem of the word *rubín*, a red precious stone, and created the name *Rubínus*.

Hagrid “comes from the old English word *hagridden*, which means to have a nightmarish night, particularly when hung over” according to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rubeus_Hagrid. It is known about Hagrid that he likes drinking alcohol. I used the name *Hagrid*, too, because I was not sure if a name with a similar meaning would not have a negative connotation.

Mr Argus Filch and Mrs Norris

Argus Čorka a paní Norrisová

The name *Argus* has its origin in Greek *Argós*, who was a mythological giant with a hundred eyes. He was a vigilant guardian who served the goddess Hera as a watchman. The character’s job is to go through the school corridors and keep the students under supervision. This means that the name *Argus* is quite important, so I decided to keep it in the form *Argus*.

The word *filch* is a slang word for *steal* and I used the stem of the Czech *čorovat* - instead of other synonyms such as *šlohnout*, *štípnout* etc. - and created the name *Čorka*.

The character of Mrs Norris was inspired by one of Jane Austen’s characters in *Mansfield Park*, “a nosy, interfering character, who made life difficult for the heroine, Fanny Price” (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argus_Filch). This reflects the task of the cat Mrs Norris in Harry Potter.

travel pages

Mexico

Gabriela Čížková

Every time I plan to visit a foreign country, I try to find as much information as possible about the place I am going to. The Lonely Planet guide books are a very good source. They are full of useful tips about food and accommodation and they tell you about many other things you might need to know when traveling. But for some reason, I always focus on two sections - 'Dangers and Annoyances' and 'Illness and Diseases'. There is nothing wrong with knowing what can happen to you when you go abroad, as long as it doesn't make you paranoid or scared.

On the way to Mexico, I was both. The 'Illness and Diseases' section listed a number of contagious diseases, half of which I had never heard of and all of which sounded very unpleasant, if not deadly. The 'Dangers and Annoyances' section was exceptionally long this time and it was spiced up with thorough descriptions of individual cases of kidnapping and robbery.

I was convinced that we would get mugged as soon as we crossed the border. I left the United States, where my boyfriend Ondřej and I had started the trip, prepared for anything, with money and credit cards evenly distributed in all possible items of clothing, including shoes and underwear, and copies of passports and other documents in a safe place back at home. The first few days were exhausting. I was on the alert all the time, expecting everybody to be a murderer, pickpocket or at least a carrier of a contagious disease. It was crazy. But as the days passed, realizing that we were still healthy and alive, slowly but surely we relaxed. No wonder, it

had to come. The whole country was so relaxed and happy that I think we must have been infected by it.

The truth is that the towns near the US border are a little bit rough. There is a lot of drug trafficking going on and they are just not the most remarkable places to visit. We spent our first night in Mexico in a filthy, overpriced hotel room full of cockroaches. It was definitely not the best start.

But the further south we went, the better things got. Time passed much more slowly; people had less money, fewer worries, more time, bigger smiles on their faces, and even the already delicious and cheap tacos got even better and cheaper. We started to hear lots of music, too. In fact, there was music – Mexican music – everywhere. It is very similar to Czech brass-band music, but much faster and, of course, in Spanish. I sometimes felt like I was in a film. Everywhere we went, everything we did, had a musical accompaniment.

When I think of Mexico, I always think of San Blas. This little village on the Pacific coast has only one square with a church and a few shops, but it absolutely charmed me. Time passes so slowly there that you sometimes think it has stopped altogether. We went to San Blas for two nights and stayed ten. And I think that if we were possible, we would probably still be there now.

The weather is so dry and hot that it is too exhausting for anybody to even move. During the day, the streets are deserted and most of the shops in the square are empty, with just a few men smoking in front of them. We spent these days in our 100-pesos-a-night cabaña on the beach. The price included the use of surfboards and bikes, so when we got tired of surfing - if you could call it surfing - we each jumped on an old bike and rode to the village. After a few days, we were almost counted as locals. We got to know the baker, the grocer and the taco lady, who would always have tacos ready for us, even before

we arrived. Nobody in San Blas spoke English, which made every trip to the village a little adventure.

In the evenings, when the air cooled down, the place came to life. After it got dark, the locals set up their taco stands around the square, and the shops and streets suddenly filled up with people. The young and the old, men and women would all come out in their best clothes to meet their friends, stroll in the streets, sit on benches in the square and listen to music, chat, smoke or eat tacos. There was a little jazz bar on the corner owned by an American guy who had come to San Blas on holiday a few years ago and stayed forever. He looked like Al Pacino, smoked thick cigars and played Frank Sinatra records. His bar was almost always empty, but it had atmosphere. After a few Coronas there, we would get on our bikes again and slowly ride home singing 'New York, New York' and 'La Bamba'. I have never had a more relaxing time than I had in San Blas.

Much as I enjoyed San Blas, going to Mexico without visiting Mexico City would be a sin. Mexico City was originally built by the Aztecs in 1345. It was destroyed in 1519 by Spanish conquistadors. Newly rebuilt, it became the capital of New Spain five years later. This busy, noisy, polluted metropolis is incredibly rich in history. You are reminded of its earlier inhabitants in the temples and pyramids in and around the city, while the Latin American baroque-style buildings and churches reveal the Spanish influence. But Mexico City is also incredibly crowded. With its almost 20 million inhabitants, it is, after Tokyo, the 2nd largest urban agglomeration in the world. I had a rare opportunity to see the streets of Mexico City quiet and empty; it was after an overnight bus ride, when we arrived at 4.30 in the morning. The sun was about to come up. The air was warm but not hot and still fresh. It was very quiet; all you could hear was the birds waking up. The streets were deserted, with just the occasional sweeper starting his shift. We walked along

the avenue of Cinco de Mayo to the Plaza de la Constitucion, which is dominated by the presidential palace and the cathedral with its excavations of the Aztecs' Great Temple. We were amazed how old, beautiful, clean and serene the place was. This was the first and last time we saw the city like this, though. A few hours later, when I woke up in our hotel, Ondřej was already back with a cup of coffee. 'You won't recognize it there,' he said with an amazed expression on his face. He couldn't have been more right. Streets which were deserted just a few hours earlier were suddenly full of stalls, selling everything from tacos to digital cameras. The vendors took over the sidewalks and the pedestrians had to walk in the roads, dodging the cars. Real chaos.

But despite its crowds, pollution and vastness, Mexico City is a very attractive city, with lots of parks, wide avenues, theatres, museums and art galleries. As dangerous as it is sometimes said to be, I didn't feel threatened once. The centre at least felt very safe. There were police patrols on every corner, ready to give you directions if you got lost. The people that we met in Mexico City were all extremely helpful, too. It happened more than once that we would be looking at a map and somebody would come up to us and ask if we needed help. Everybody was really friendly. But looking back, I am a little bit suspicious. They must have had lots of fun just listening to our horrible Spanish.

Mexicans have very strange ways of amusing themselves. There are men who walk through pubs with little boxes with two electric wires sticking out of them. For 10 pesos, you can hold the wires in your hands while the man lets some electric power into the box and measures how much of it you can take. I thought it was funny in the Czech film 'Pelíšky', but I didn't realize that this was actually a popular game in some parts of the world.

But worse for me was seeing a bull fight. It is a number-one pastime throughout

Mexico. They say that Mexicans are never late for two events only: a funeral and a bull fight. The one we saw took place in a large arena. There was a brass band playing, vendors selling pop corn and beer and everybody was shouting like mad. The bull fight started with a parade of the toreadors and their helpers, all of them dressed up in tight black trousers and jackets embroidered with silver, golden or red thread. The helpers were in the arena to provoke the bull with a red scarf, and it was the toreador who stabbed the bull several times in its neck and ultimately killed it. The more stabs the bull got, the more the Mexican crowd cheered. The tourists, who were all evidently in shock, did not. I couldn't really watch this and I was relieved when it was over, thinking that that was more than enough killing in one afternoon. Just as I was getting ready to go, they let another bull into the arena, another toreador came out and the thing started all over again. This went on for four hours; six bulls died altogether. They would all be sold for meat the next day.

Throughout Mexico you can feel the heritage of pre-Columbian civilizations. But the place where you feel it the most is Teotihuacán. It was built 2000 years ago and was the largest pre-Hispanic city in Mexico. In the language of the Aztecs, the word means 'a place where gods were born'. The Aztecs believed that the gods created the universe there. The beginnings of this city are mysterious, as is its fall. It thrived for many centuries. The inhabitants were warriors whose aim was not the conquest of territory but the capture of prisoners. The prisoners were then sacrificed to avert the end of the world, which they believed was approaching. For an unknown reason, the city was suddenly abandoned. The main avenue in what remains of this prehistoric city, the Avenue of the Dead, is 1.5 miles long and lined with palaces and temples. Teotihuacán is dominated by two pyramids - the Pyramid of the Sun and the Pyramid of the Moon, which

are, after the Egyptian Pyramids, the second and third largest pyramids in the world. The feeling you get here is indescribable. You admire the people that were able to build such a city 2000 years ago; you also feel respect and a little bit of fear when thinking of all the sacrifices that had to be made.

In Teotihuacán, as in any other famous place that attracts many tourists, you will see vendors trying to sell you overpriced articles of not very good quality. To my surprise, it was here that we bought our Mexican souvenir - a woolen blanket with green, blue, red, white and pink stripes. In its way, it describes perfectly what the country is like - colorful, a little bit rough, but warm.

Teotihuacán was the southernmost point we reached. After that, we slowly started heading back to the United States. We stopped in more towns and villages, meeting new people, eating more tacos and listening to more music. As we were approaching the border, we felt sadder and sadder, realizing how much we would miss Mexico. We had fallen in love with it.

And as for the 'Dangers and Annoyances' section in the Lonely Planet, I still read it when I go abroad, and I think that I always will. But I have realized only recently that my main reason for doing so is not to be on the safe side: I guess that my trips are just becoming more adventurous and the sense of accomplishment after avoiding all possible horrors is enormous.

At the US-Mexico border we stopped in the office to get another souvenir - a stamp in our passports. The officer had a well-kept moustache and seemed to be in a very good mood. 'You illegal in Mexico,' he said, 'must pay money'. He just wanted to earn a few extra dollars, which would go straight into his pocket. Ondřej and I just looked at each other and as he started dealing with another customer, we left. 'Hasta la vista,' and we disappeared, in Mexican style.

My Fulbright Experience in U.S.

Irena Hůlková

The present article expresses my grateful thanks to the J. W. Fulbright Commission in Prague and the Council for the International Exchange of Scholars in Washington, D.C. for enabling me (to have) this once-in-a-lifetime experience and helping me out in many ways during my whole stay in the U.S.

“International educational exchange is the most significant current project designed to continue the process of humanizing mankind to the point, we would hope, that men can learn to live in peace... We must try to expand the boundaries of human wisdom, empathy and perception, and there is no way of doing that except through education.”

(Senator J. W. Fulbright, 1976)

This time last year I could hear sea lions barking under the municipal wharf, the Pacific crashing against the rocks, and I could smell the air filled with the rich and unique scent of sequoias. Palm trees all over, Starbucks Coffee round the corner, friendly and polite bus drivers thanking you for ‘riding with them’ and wishing you ‘a good one’, strangers striking up a conversation with you, bums asking you for some change... These and many others are still very vivid and abiding memories of my 11-month stay in Santa Cruz – a hippie town on the imaginary border between Northern and Central California, the county seat and largest city of Santa Cruz County with a total population of about 60,000. It is located about 75 miles south of San Francisco, on the northern edge of Monterey Bay.

I was honoured to become a Fulbright visiting scholar (thanks to the Fulbright-Masaryk Fellowship I applied for in autumn 2005) and thus given the opportunity to conduct my Ph.D. research in English grammar at the Department of Linguistics at UCSC (University of California, Santa Cruz), under the supervision of Geoffrey K. Pullum, a renowned Professor of General Linguistics (who has now left UCSC and works at the University of Edinburgh).

Looking back, I would say my whole stay in the U.S. was the experience of a lifetime, which enriched me both academically and personally. I had a chance to attend linguistic colloquia regularly and find out all the things a language expert can look into these days. I also took part in Geoff’s classes in Modern English Grammar, which enabled me to discuss various language issues with educated native-speakers of English and gather lots of useful tips on explaining grammar in an amusing, yet adequate way.

On the personal side, I had plenty of opportunity to travel and thus discover and enjoy spectacular scenery of breathtaking beauty, not only in California but also in other states. I met a lot of interesting and remarkably intelligent people from all around the world and even made great friends with some of them. On many occasions, I talked to people from different cultural as well as ethnic or religious backgrounds, and I feel it has helped me return home with a better understanding of the world and a wealth of unforgettable, valuable and insightful experiences, which have broadened my horizons immensely.

**Linz ConneXions:
TEA Conference 21 – 23 September, 2007
(Ladies' Outing)**

Nad'a Vojtková

September is conference time – there is the Czech National Conference of Teachers of English and several international conferences in neighbouring countries. One of them is in Austria. As we (Alena Kašpárková and I) experienced the atmosphere two years ago we didn't want to miss this conference and that's why we persuaded two other colleagues – Rita and Svetlana – to attend with us. We all submitted speakers' proposals: we wanted to share our experience of educating teachers in the Czech Republic. Chatting on the way to Vienna, the four of us assigned a working title to our trip: "Ladies' Outing".

The name soon proved right because the venue of the conference was a very nice school situated on the outskirts of Linz, Lachstatt. The boarding school used to be a farm and we really felt as if we were on holiday – hills and fields all around, fantastic sunny weather and nice people.

The programme started on Friday afternoon with two plenaries. Andrew Skinner reviewed critically the notion of learner autonomy in his speech "Self-help: Still the name of the game?" and Mark Fletcher looked at "brain/learning" issues which stimulate students' interest in study-skills.

After dinner we saw the Bear Theatre's performance of "The Bear" by Chekhov and then we went to bed because Saturday's programme started at nine o'clock. The day began with a plenary again – Yvonne Pratt-Johnson talked about the challenges that learners of English have to face to achieve good results in the twenty-first century.

Saturday was Rita's and Svetlana's day - they presented their contribution about the course integration at the English Department. They had to compete with six other sessions running concurrently, which were devoted to a number of issues, eg. teaching and testing professional English, poems in the classroom, teaching English across the curriculum.

I really enjoyed the plenary given by Herbert Puchta: "It's the brain, stupid! How cognitive psychology findings can be applied to EFL". I learnt some practical ideas based on findings and discoveries about how the brain works.

One more useful session that I attended was devoted to a very important teaching tool - the voice. In the "Voice Clinic for Teachers" led by Harriet Anderson we learnt how to use the voice in the classroom with more impact and less effort.

The day culminated in a delicious gala dinner in the Wine Tavern with Celtic music to help our digestion. After that we had a great time with Andrew Wright's storytelling session.

Sunday's programme started even earlier, at 8 o'clock with Jim Wingate's plenary on "Seeing and Hearing". Alena Kasparkova and I had a workshop on using the EPOSTL in our teacher-training programmes. The last plenary given by Andrew Wright was an excellent end to the conference. Andrew talked about stories that accompany human lives from the beginning to the end.

We thanked Irena Kostenbauer and the organising team and after that there were just hugs and kisses, with promises to see everyone in two years' time. Or perhaps earlier in the Czech Republic?

Moscow

Kateřina Špalková

This summer I got the opportunity to spend a month in the city where as many people live as in the whole of the Czech Republic, and which is often seen as exotic, mysterious or dangerous – Moscow.

The stay took place thanks to a bilateral contract between this country and Russia, enabling us, fourteen university students, to taste life in the Russian capital and to form our own ideas about Russian university education. We attended school (Pushkin's Institute of Russian Language) four days a week, always for three one-and-half-hour lessons called "para". Classes started at 9:30 a.m. and ended at 3 p.m. In the afternoon we went out to discover the life in the city.

Probably the first phenomenon you will experience is the overcrowded metro. Moscow's metro is the pride of Russia and I must confess it is the nicest one I have ever seen - fast, reliable and tidy - but I don't recommend you discover its beauties about 6 or 7 p.m., during the so-called "chasi pik" (traffic-jam hours). The Lonely Planet guide characterizes this period as follows: "Sometimes it looks as if all ten million people living in Moscow have tried to get into one wagon of the metro".

Other essential places to visit are the Kremlin, which, in terms of the number of visitors reminds me of the underground in the heaviest traffic, Red Square, which most of the week is partly closed, sending you through GUM, a store full of expensive "western" shops, and the Mausoleum of

Lenin, where both foreign and Russian tourists queue. Before you are allowed to enter any sight, you will be asked to leave either all or at least the bigger of your belongings in a special cloak room, which is often free of charge. In the case of the Kremlin and the mausoleum, however, there is a fee for this. That's why it is better (and cheaper) to take only a small handbag with you. Unfortunately for us, in Russia there are two types of prices: those for the Russians and those for foreigners, which are mostly twice as high.

If you want to feel "the spirit" of this nation, go to any orthodox church. There are hundreds of them in Moscow. The best known are the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, destroyed during the socialistic era and rebuilt in the 1990's, and the Novodevitchi monastery, which is under the patronage of UNESCO. These two are not as strict as the Daniilovsky monastery, which remains hidden to the eager eyes of foreign visitors but even so retains an indescribable magic. When visiting orthodox churches, you have to make sure you have covered your shoulders and head. Ideally you will be wearing a long skirt (long trousers for men). Visitors dressed in shorts are not allowed in.

There are hundreds and hundreds of words I could write about Russia and Moscow - about its theatres, the circus, which is an art-form in the country, about people I met, about the way people live there, about the food. But in my opinion a single experience is worth more than a thousand words. I believe that if you decide to travel to this charming country, it won't disappoint you. Russia is a country I would certainly like to return to.

technology pages

Accessibility Online

Aaron Collier

If you have visited our department's website (<http://www.ped.muni.cz/weng/>) recently, you may have noticed a few changes. Some of the changes are merely aesthetic, while some are far more important. As the primary author of these changes, I thought I could try to explain some of them here. I will try to use mostly general language to describe what has happened and why, although I will occasionally use some technical terms to assist me.

The first, and most obvious, change is in the main language of the site. Since we have a policy to use only English in our department, we thought it was about time our website met our policy. Now you will see that most information is available in English only. There is still some information available in Czech, but it no longer includes everything.

The deeper (and, honestly, more difficult) changes took place behind the scenes. These changes were made in order to make the site more accessible for everyone. The need for accessibility comes from a few different areas. The first is that each and every web browser (the application that reads web pages, such as Microsoft Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox) is written differently and will present things in different ways. This means that even though your page sends the same information to the computer, different computers will show it differently.

The second area comes from the large number of people with disabilities who use the internet. These disabilities can be visual, auditory, learning disabilities, or other things. There are many different kinds of software to

assist people with disabilities, but, again, these will show your web page in a different way (or not at all, if you're not careful).

The last area is the ever-changing nature of the internet. As technology changes, so do the tools we have to help us. People with older technology may not be able to access important parts of your web page if you do not make it available to them. Also, as more people buy phones and PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants) with internet capability, the way they are accessing the internet changes.

Making your site accessible to everyone is important in getting your message to as many people as possible. It is a lot like teaching in a classroom with students with mixed-abilities. You have to make sure that everyone understands the most important points, while recognizing that everyone will take something different from the class.

The first, and most important, way to make a web page more accessible to everyone is to separate content from presentation. This means that what you are telling people (your content) should be separate from how you tell the computer it should look (the presentation). This allows people to access your content in a variety of different ways, with a variety of different software. This way if they need to change the way the content is presented (for example, by having it all read aloud to a blind person), they can completely change the presentation without changing the content.

One way to separate out the presentation is to use something called Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). These are pages with all of the presentation information on them (e.g., background color, text color, size and shape of the letters, etc.). They are put in a completely different place than the content of the page. This way a person can use a browser (such as Opera, which has a lot of support for this) to choose all of the presentation for themselves (e.g., they can change all of the colors). They can also ignore the presentation entirely (for example, if they just want to see

the text). An added benefit of this approach is that now, to change how a lot of pages look on your site, you only have to change one document (the CSS) rather than each page.

Another important change is the change in the language that the web site is written in, which is an extension of the separation of content from presentation. The web site is now all written in XHTML (Extensible Hypertext Markup Language) Strict. In HTML (Hypertext Markup Language), the presentation can go right into the document and it was not necessary to be very precise in writing; if you made a mistake, the browser would fix it for you. This led to browsers fixing mistakes in different ways. XHTML Strict requires you to be very precise in writing; your code must be "clean". This makes it much, much easier for computers to find the information that they need (the content). This change also helps us to be ready for changes in the future; XHTML is viewed by many as a bridge to the internet language of the future: XML.

A site that offered many ideas for changes was the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C site at www.w3.org). This is a group of people from all over the world who try to agree on guidelines for all of the internet. These are people who are as into computers as possible. One service they offer is the Markup Validation Service, which will check your web page to see if it is written without any mistakes (<http://validator.w3.org/> or click on the link at the bottom of our website).

Another thing that the W3C does is to write a list of guidelines for making sites accessible to all people (the list is here: www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/). Following these guidelines helps everyone to see what you want them to see.

One example of a suggestion is to include alternative text for each picture. These words show up whenever a picture can't be found, or if the person cannot see the pictures. Another similar important idea is to provide alternative text for any audio you use. Another example

is to make sure the most important information is at the beginning of each paragraph. This way people who cannot see (and so cannot visually skim the text) or who have learning disabilities can easily tell if they should keep reading.

Just like when teaching students with disabilities, providing information in alternative forms (visual, auditory, etc.) can help everyone understand more easily. Since we are living in an inclusive world, it is important to enable everyone to end up with the same information. We are trying our best to make our site and our teaching accessible to all, and we will continue to change as new options become available. We will of course welcome any comments or suggestions you have, which you can make through our website.

Resources/Further Reading

<http://webxact.watchfire.com/> - A tool that can automatically look at your site to test it for some areas of accessibility.

<http://www.webcredible.co.uk/user-friendly-resources/web-accessibility/automated-tools.shtml> - A document about the benefits and problems with automated accessibility tools.

<http://www.webcredible.co.uk/benefits/web-accessibility.shtml> - Some benefits to making websites as accessible as possible.

<http://www.european-agency.org/site/access/index.html> - The site for the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education and a description of how they work to make their website accessible.

poetry pages

Train your [w]:

Why was the waiter once
waiting at windows and swearing?

Hana Břoušková

One widow once whistled in winter
and swallowed her white whistle. Wow!

Jan Brím

Wise waiter will wait
while white weeping willow
wakes Winnie with whispering whistle.

Katka Wiesnerová

One whale woke up in winter while waiting
for wind to swim.
It swallowed waiter's towel.

Ladka Jagošová

One winter a waiter swallowed a towel
while he was in a shower.

Zuzka Píštěková

One winter one tower
Whined with wild power.
Wept like a willow
Watered its pillow
With only one wish
To wait while we fish.

Eva Minaříková

Some new limericks

There once was a cat in the hay
"Listen, that's what I'd say.
The mice are so nice,
I eat them with rice."
And followed her grey little prey.

Eva Minaříková

There once was a young man from Maine
Who suffered a terrible pain.
Searching for some drug
He choked on a bug.
So instead of being cured went insane.

anonymous

There once was a fat man called Fan
Who's eaten as much as he can
It was so malicious
But food is delicious
So he's turned himself into a van.

Jan Brím

There once was a teacher at school
Who everyone thought was a fool.
He lived with a mouse
And ate only rice
Last night he drowned in a pool.

Zuzka Píštěková

There once was a cat and she said
She knew just how far this way led.
She walked just one metre
And then she met Peter
And they went together to bed.

Hana Břoušková

amy jarvis's style diary

7:00 am Went to see a friend of mine yesterday. A University Teacher!

8:00 am The groves of Academe - my foot! Where are the orange trees of knowledge and contemplation? Everybody eats yoghurt here, between consultations, to feed their ulcers.

9:00 am Have been thinking about this hard. Really hard. And have to admit, am a bit confused. But maybe because of the noise. Couldn't hear a word, my head was spinning, couldn't hear my friend talking - she was saying something and I was looking at her, and looking, and looking, and I just couldn't hear anything. Was it the atmosphere? The acoustics? The lorries under the windows? The trains under the windows? The policeman outside whistling? I was being thrown from side to side. By what? I couldn't see my friend properly, she kept disappearing from view, then coming back again. What was it? What was moving

me around? Was it bodies? All those students? The sheer number of them! The sheer *number* of them! So *many*! Was starting to worry I would suffocate, would die, they'd run and go and run and go and I'd remain there on the floor and ... Anyway, my friend, the University Teacher, kept talking and talking and did not mind that she was thrown from side to side, too; she didn't even seem to notice it, and then she was asking me: Are you ok? Are you ok? What's wrong with you? ... And then I woke up, lying amongst these boxes and papers, in a dirty old arm-chair. I jumped up and shouted: "Oh, no! What is this? Where have they chucked me? Is this a cellar?" And there was a friend of mine looking at me. Very sweet. And she said: "But this is my office, honey."

10:00 am Hm.

11:00 am Hm.

12:00 noon

Nah. Still can't get my head round this.

8: 00 pm What has gone wrong here?

the messenger

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A LETTER TO THE CHIEF

Lucie Podroužková

Dear Dean,

I am one of your staff and I try to do my best. But as they say, happy mum, happy child, and in order to generate pedagogical and academic enthusiasm in the students, I too must be made happy.

Here I want to tell you how to improve my welfare:

1. I am proud to be teaching at Masaryk University but to be honest, my workplace does not by half reach the standard of my “provincial days”. As an employee of the Silesian University in Opava, I occupied a pleasant attic office in a beautifully restored building, wedged between a museum and a church. There were no classrooms in the attic, so it was quiet for work and from the windows my eye could rest on the waxen beauty of magnolias in the garden below. In my present office, I am exposed to an incessant clatter from the corridor as well as hurtling lorries and yelling sirens rising from the Poříčí road. With students coming in to see my colleagues and myself, the image of the Tower of Babel Tower is complete.

So got to thinking - what if you diverted the traffic from Poříčí, did away with the tarmac and set up a park on the riverside? Imagine the students having a lie-down on the grass and reading, imagine the staff strolling along, engaged in an academic debate or a solitary reverie. A second Cambridge! We can even do the punts! Counting in the local inhabitants, you would delight a crowd, I'm sure.

2. With the growing numbers of students, I spend days on end officiating at state exams. I should be dressed up for the occasion and feel comfortable at the same time, braving the strain and extreme weather conditions (remember June this year?) But shopping for clothing of appropriate quality and quantity proves unrealistic in terms of both my busy schedule and the options afforded by my wallet.
I propose each female examiner be entitled to a set of five dresses yearly. I further propose that their male counterparts receive two shirts and ties per day, so they can change at noon.
3. Hardly anybody in the department keeps regular lunch hours. We pop food into our mouths as we go. Whenever I bring a packed lunch or a sandwich with me, students come barging in just as I am digging my spoon or sinking my teeth into it. We definitely need a lounge to take our meals in. A comfy sofa in there wouldn't be a bad idea either. And what if you arranged things so that we would always find a bite to eat there? Let's say fruit, nuts, sandwiches and cake, coffee and tea? And an ongoing supply of ice? Much better for my health if, instead of reasoning with an unreasonable student, I could simply dump a bag of ice on my head!
4. Funny thing. The term has barely started but most of us are looking as if we are in urgent need of a break. Your teachers are very diligent, you know, and if you don't watch over us, we'll never stop working, come rain or shine. You'd be better sending us to the spa once a year. But be sure to see that our luggage is checked - otherwise we'll smuggle work out.

A special institute should be established for storing our clones, which would stand in for us if we collapsed in the middle of the term.