

Laura Janda and Steven Clancy. *The Case Book for Czech*. Bloomington: Slavica, 2006. Indices in English and Czech. Cross-platform CD-ROM. ix + 375 pp. \$49.95 (paper).

The Case Book for Czech is the second in a series of books intended to teach a “feel for” or help students develop an “intuitive sense” of (58) the meanings and uses of the cases in individual Slavic languages. *The Case Book for Russian*, which won the 2005 AATSEEL award for best contribution to language pedagogy, was published in 2002, and a book for Polish is in the preparation stage. Similar textbooks on Slavic aspect are also planned (see <http://www.seelrc.org/> under the “Current Projects” menu for more information).

The authors, Laura Janda (<http://hum.uit.no/lajanda/>) and Steven Clancy (<http://home.uchicago.edu/~sclancy/>), are both linguists who work in Cognitive Linguistics (CL): Janda is the current president of the International CL Association (<http://www.cognitivelinguistics.org/>) and Clancy the president of the Slavic CL Association (<http://languages.uchicago.edu/scla/>) Their approach to the “austere and powerful little system” (21) of the Czech cases is grounded in more than a decade of research into case semantics within a CL framework, but they present their findings, as befits a student-centered textbook, in a purposefully non-technical way. Arguably the two most technical terms used in the book are “metaphor” and “conceptual domain”, and the meaning of these is illustrated on the basis of ample examples. Indeed, the book happily brims with examples, which are, as the authors phrase it, not “contrived and antiseptic” but “raw and unadulterated” (8)—that is, they are drawn from a database of naturally-occurring Czech sentences.

The book eschews an approach to case that merely presents lists of contexts in which cases are used. The authors instead rely on a network model of case meanings in which the sub-meanings of each case are shown to be conceptually connected to each other: as the authors argue, “there are patterns to case usage that make sense and can be learned fairly easily” (3). How does the meaning of the Czech dative (61ff) in the prototypical “giving” context relate to its use with verbs that express matched forces (*podobat se*, *vyrovnat se*), submission (*poddat se*), and domination (*dominovat*)? What is the status of the so-called “ethical dative” in Czech (95ff), and why does it make sense that Czech, unlike Russian, uses dative with verbs of “taking” (75ff)? Why does Czech use the genitive case with a whole range of verbs (*bát se*, *vzdát se*, *zbavit se...*) indicating withdrawal (34ff)? A network approach to case meaning has an organizing power that the authors have harnessed for teaching purposes.

The preface of the book lays out suggested ways of using it and even includes four week-by-week plans for integrating the material into a semester-long Czech language class. The preface is followed by an introduction that explains the book’s approach to the meanings of the Czech cases. The seven case chapters follow, and each has a prologue and epilogue that summarize the meaning of the case in non-technical terms and give the learner an image to better remember that meaning—for example, the genitive as an “elusive beast” or “back-seat driver” (24). After the case chapters comes an appendix that provides a comprehensive review of the case endings for nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and numerals along with a discussion, where relevant, of the differences between Literary

Czech and Colloquial Czech. The last section of the book is devoted to exercises on case identification that are divided into three levels according to ease of understanding.

A tour-de-force of the textbook is its accompanying CD, which contains pdf versions of the whole textbook and interactive features for the exercises that include: automatic self-correction in identification of cases, glossing and translation of example sentences, and a scoring system that charts progress. Each and every example sentence in both the textbook and the exercises is also accompanied by sound buttons: one is a female native speaker reading the sentence and the other is a male native speaker doing the same.

Everything about this book contributes to ease of use. The writing style is friendly and often just plain fun: the very concept of “case” is explained via analogies to both a “sandwich” (3) and, more substantively, a “game” that Czechs play with their words and the rules of which we need to have a sense of in order to understand the language (4). There are sidebar comments throughout the book that highlight key points in the explications. Moreover, the chapters do not have to be read in a systematic order: each chapter is a self-sufficient unit, and readers can pick and choose the case that interests them the most. While the book could be integrated into a regular language class (probably at least at the intermediate level), it is also perfectly suited for independent learners who already have knowledge of the Czech case system.

A linguist might miss the technical aspects of the explication of the case meanings, but the textbook can easily be complemented with scholarly articles on Slavic case from a CL perspective, and citations (if not also the articles themselves) are readily available on Janda’s and Clancy’s respective websites (see above) as well as in the bibliography of the Slavic CL Association (a pdf is available at <http://www.unc.edu/~lajanda/>). The textbook also presents a list of suggested scholarly readings in case semantics (240).

Simply put, *The Case Book for Czech* represents the best in an applied linguistics textbook. It is a resource that all teachers of Czech at any level should own and study and consider using in their language classes. and it is indispensable for anyone—students of Czech, linguistics, and even literary scholars—who have an interest in the semantics of case.

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