

## LIBUŠE DUŠKOVÁ, OR LIVING TO THE LETTER

«ANNIVERSARY: LIBUŠE DUŠKOVÁ, OR LIVING TO THE LETTER»

by Jan Čermák

Source:

Linguistica Pragensia (Linguistica Pragensia), issue: 1 / 2005, pages: 35-36, on [www.ceeol.com](http://www.ceeol.com).

---

*The following ad supports maintaining our C.E.E.O.L. service*

### eBooks on Central, East and Southeast Europe



**NAD TURSKIM I  
BOSANSKIM FRAZIKONOM.**  
Semantički, sintaktički, lingvostilistički  
i sociolingvistički aspekt

**On Turkish and Bosnian Phrasicons**

By Amina Šiljak-Jesenković

Orijentalni Institut u Sarajevu,  
Sarajevo, 2003  
(in Bosnian)

This study is an attempt to compare  
Turkish and Bosnian phrasicons in  
the light of their linguistically most  
relevant features.

more on:

[www.dibido.eu](http://www.dibido.eu)

ANNIVERSARIES  
JUBILÄEN  
ANNIVERSAIRES  
ANIVERSARIOS

---

#### LIBUŠE DUŠKOVÁ, OR LIVING TO THE LETTER

One Friday afternoon in the winter of 1988, I turned the proofreading for my first academic book review into a cavalier job. The text had to be ready first thing early in the morning on Monday and I was far too eager to get away from it all and go skiing. What followed was inevitable: come Monday morning I found on my office desk the text of the proofs overflowing with red ink and accompanied by a typically terse note in the hand of Dr. Libuše Dušková, then the recently appointed head of the linguistic section of the English Department, Faculty of Arts, Charles University Prague: "I have re-read your text, corrected it and sent to print. Proofs must be read to the letter."

To all those who have had the privilege of working with Professor Libuše Dušková, that winter incident of many years back will reflect much of her quiet nobleness and generosity. Possessing the reserved and modest nature of the scholar, she has always performed her tasks of an academic, teacher, administrator and editor to the letter – not in slavish narrow-mindedness but out of unfailing zeal to advance knowledge. Deep in the years preceding her transfer to the English Department she was at the Institute for the Czech Language, working almost single-handedly and in trying circumstances on the largest comprehensive structuralist grammar of English for Czechs to date (*Mluvnice současné angličtiny na pozadí češtiny*, A Grammar of Contemporary English against the Background of Czech, 1988, 1994, 2003), with little prospect of advancement or recognition and powered by the sheer fact that the project would help to develop the Mathesian tradition of English linguistics and its results would be shared by generations of academics, teachers and students. The new era after 1989 brought a long-overdue recognition of Dušková's academic achievements but its demands were such as to require all her capacity of a perceptive and thorough scholar, effective yet gentle administrator and conscientious and unstinting mentor. Rather than using her time she must have felt was more precious every day for secluded work on grand new linguistic themes she was ready to preside over a massive expansion of the curricula in the linguistic section of the Department and to develop a graduate programme from scratch. Instead of harvesting the fruits of her international renown in academic travelling she was always in the office, prepared at all times to extend academic support, scholarly expertise and personal advice to younger colleagues, never hesitant to spend long and almost endless hours in consultation of diploma and doctoral theses. (Their number has come close to 100 over the years, a simple fact suggesting that, had it not been for the deep-seated political opinion of the new era that money

put in the advancement of education is money wasted, the scholar and administrator of Libuše Dušková's stature would no doubt have established an institutional research body active in a number of linguistic fields, her beloved syntax in particular.)

Few people's academic career can demonstrate more clearly than that of Libuše Dušková the well-known fact that the letter comes to life but through the spirit and only knowledge imparts knowledge. The prime impulse of her monographs [*Studies in the English Language I, II*, 1999), scholarly articles, textbooks (*Syntax současné angličtiny*, Syntax of Contemporary English, 1995; *Morfologie současné angličtiny*, Morphology of Modern English 2001, 2003) and collective projects [*Dictionary of the Prague School of Linguistics* (a translation of Josef Vachek's *Dictionnaire de linguistique de l'Ecole de Prague*), 2003] has been twofold: to restore in the new, post-1989 era the position of English linguistics on the grounds of the Prague School theory and to ensure academic continuity of research and teaching in the field. At the same time, Libuše Dušková has been carrying scholarship forward by broaching new topics in syntax and hypersyntax, such as the interaction between grammatical word order and the principle of end focus; syntactic function versus FSP function in an intralingual and interlingual perspective, differentiation of variant syntactic realisation of FSP functions and constancy of syntactic functions across languages from the viewpoint of their FSP functions. At present, she works on a monograph devoted to the topic of syntactic constancy in English and Czech.

The fact that her formal retirement in 1996 went almost without notice is very typical of Professor Dušková. She goes on serving the Department she had done so much to foster and strengthen with characteristic determination, meticulousness and an awe-inspiring capacity to take everything in stride. The flow of her substantial publications, advancing the study of English in a number of ways, continues unabated. She follows new developments in linguistics with absorbed interest and informed sympathy. She takes as seriously as ever her responsibilities to individuals and institutions alike, going to extraordinary trouble to place her immense knowledge at the disposal of others. She lends an attentive ear to the ideas of even the youngest students, not sparing herself as a teacher who is always more concerned with why a mistake occurred than with it occurring in the first place. Her writing as well as her instruction (so inspiring that it takes no more than a two-line lesson to turn an impatient skier into an avid proof-reader) continues to be as formative an experience as ever. The only difference perhaps is that she now has slightly less patience with work that does not meet her high standards, either as a result of shoddy performance or of what she considers ill-conceived theories and gratuitous assumptions about language.

A radiant sense of duty and helpfulness informs the personality of Libuše Dušková – the human being, the teacher and the scholar. Her life and work continue to be a great gift to all those who have come to know her.

*Jan Čermák (Prague)*