Jiří MARVAN
Prague-Ústí nad Labem

Euro-gradation in Czech.
A Slavic picture of a euro-universal

This study is an attempt to show why Czech, usually treated as a separate "inward, private" language or as an object of genetic and/or bilingual contrastive studies, can be treated as a European universal language, as a euro-language (euro-Czech). In fact, being neither "big" nor "small" euro-Czech occupies a mainstream position shared by most of the euro-languages, meaning that it is equally close to both poles of linguistic Europe, the macro-languages and the micro-languages.

That is why within the framework of linguistic Europe comprising more than 50 basic languages, e u r o - C z e c h, though unique in its substance, can nevertheless be viewed as an intrinsic, i n d i s - p e n s a b l e p a r t o f l i n g u i s t i c E u r o p e. That is why it is able to stand for any other of these euro-languages in investigating, handling and promoting a quite new (or very old) idea our unifying Europe faces nowadays, the idea of the European Linguistic Union or European Linguo-area (ELA). The idea of this kind of Europe might help us discover Europe as a happy continent rather than Europe as a scene and initiator of the most horrible tragedies the humankind ever experienced.

0.1 The level which is directly connected with the outside world, the e x o s p h e r e, and which any (European) speaker experiences directly and practically every day is t h e l e v e l o f e u r o - l e x i c a l i s m s. This level offers an undeniable advantage in observing and investigating "linguistic Europe" as a whole, the E u r o - p e a n L i n g u o - a r e a (E L A): in most of the lexicalisms it is easy to uncover their "euro-biography" that is to say, we can usually trace their original source language as well as intermediate links of borrowing. This provides a rather clear picture of the role the source/donor languages played in contributing to the euro-integration and of the main routes used to develop this process. In case of Czech and/or Polish as the target euro-languages, this route can be expressed by the following channel-like formula:

(0) Greek – Latin – (modern western languages) – German – Czech – Polish

In this formula the last links of this channel, i.e. Czech and Polish, represent the t a r g e t l a n g u a g e s while its other links represent t h e s o u r c e l a n g u a g e s. While forming an important link in this chain each of the source languages, at the same time, can be a d o n o r l a n g u a g e if it is the last link in mediating the euro-lexicalisms between this channel and the target language.

1. If the source language is a non-European language the donor language nevertheless comes from Europe.
2. Czech can appear in the position of both the source and donor language in relation to Polish.

The level of lexicalisms, being involved in everyday changes and providing a connection of any language with the extralinguistic reality (including the so-called aggressive languages, cf. 2.2) is at the same time the least dependable criterion for establishing the ELA. In fact, very often these lexicalisms are neither euro-universal nor euro-particular.

Thus, e.g., the word *hotel,* French by origin (medieval Latin), appears not only in euro-languages as (Romance) Spanish, Portuguese, Rumanian…, (Germanic) English, Dutch, Danish, Yiddish…., (Slavic) Czech, Polish, Ukrainian, Croatian/Serbian… but also in non-European languages as Indonesian, Japanese. On the other hand, they are not used in (Romance) Italian, (Germanic) Icelandic, (Slavic) Russian, in (Baltic) Lithuanian and Latvian or in Greek, Hungarian etc. …

1. Morphology and a search for euro-universals

1.0 Unlike the shallowest level of lexicalisms, the level of morphology, including word-formation and morphosyntax, but above all of inflection, operates at the deepest level of language, called e n d o - s p h e r e (cf. *endon* "within, but also at home, in the heart"). This level is a product of a process lasting for centuries and even of millennia as it is the case of the e u r o - g r a d a t i o n o r d e g r e e s o f c o m p a r i s o n (DC) which appeared in Indo-European about 4.000 years ago (see the Table 4.0) but became eventually euro-universal spreading to Finno-Ugric and (partly) euro-Turkic languages as well (for the eastern euro-edge cf. Table 2.9).

Being the most comprehensive and, as we just saw, the most obvious mark of the positive euro-integration, the DC are however not more than the proverbial tip of the iceberg called the euro-area (ELA). It displays other features manifesting the linguistic e u r o - i n t e g r a t i o n and euro-solidarity. We can observe this in all inflectibles (i.e. inflected parts of speech) as the following selected examples indicate:

1° N o u n s (substantives), e.g.

(a) use of the definite article (D-featuring) – originating in Ancient Greek (cf. Homer) it is typical for the euro-perimeter: it appears in the northwest (Germanic, incl. English and Icelandic, Celtic), the west/southwest (Romance, Basque, Semitic Maltese), the southeast (the Balkan union: Slavic, modern Greek, Albanian, Rumanian), the extreme southeast (Caucasia: Abkhaz-Adyghe group, Ossetic, Armenian), and in the extreme east (Volga and Ural Finnic, as Mordvin and Komi, euro-Turkic as Tatar or Chuvash as well as area-related North Russian dialects!) but unusual in the center (Hungarian). As the languages in the center (Czech/Slovak, Polish), adjacent languages in the east/northeast (East Slavic, Baltic, Balto-Finnic) and in the southeast (Slovene, Croatian/ Serbian) do not use the articles, this feature is not euro-universal but euro-zone constituent as we have just described. At the same time, it is not euro-

particular as it is used by significant number of non-European languages practically in all continents incl. America (Nahuatl) and Oceania (Maori et al.),

(b) stratified use of diminutives (cf. *doggy, Charlie*) which is very limited in the northwest (English, Scandinavian languages), usual or very usual in the central and northeast zone, and very frequent in the south (N.B., the suffix -*k* which might be Nostratic, cf. Below),

(c) parallel (derivational or inflectional) formation of masculine/ /feminine animate nouns: though feminine derivatives from the masculine counterparts (*actor – actress*, *tiger – tigress, fireman – firewoman*?) are not typical for the Western (English), Northern (Scandinavian) and Eastern (Finno-Ugric and euro-Turkic, partly Russian) periphery, this barrier is broken by expansion of female proper names with the feminine exponent -*a* making it a E u r o p e a n u n i v e r s a l. Though it is absolutely absent in the standard stock of English vocabulary, an English speaker accept the fact that in proper names like *Robert-a, Martin-a, Petr-a* – as opposed to the masculine counterparts *Robert, Martin, Peter* – the exponent -*a* (suffix or ending?) is a distinctive feature marking a female. This extends to the female names (coming from different European languages) without a masculine counterpart such as *Belinda* (Old Germanic), *Linda* (also form Spanish), *Lena* (Irish), *Veronica* (Latin) = *Vera* (Russian), *Vanessa* (English of the 18th c.) etc. The same applies to the Finnish and Estonian speakers; actually Hungarian developed here a special diminutive exponent (cf. *Janka, Verácska, Marika* cf. Slavic = Czech *Mir-ka, Věruš-ka*) which might be of pre-Indo-European (Nostratic) origin.

2° A d j e c t i v e s – cf. the DC (incl. the suppletion) below.

3° P r o n o u n s – use of the same exponents as (1st person) -*m* and (2nd person) -*t* throughout the Continent (a pre-Indo-European feature).

This Nostratic feature is reflected both in pronouns – cf. enclitics *me, te* "we, you (Pl)" in Uralic, i.e. Finnish, Estonian, (Volga Finnic) Mari and (Samoyed) Selkup (cf. Sg *me, te* in Latin and Romance,

South Slavic and (Ural Finnic) Komi – and inflections – cf. (Czech) *nese-me, nese-te* "(we, you) carry" and Estonian *ole-me, ole-te* "(we, you) are"..

The (Volga Finnic) Mordvin *ava-m* "my mother" and (Ugric) Hungarian *anya-m* correspond with (euro-Turkic) Karaim/Crimean Tatar *ana-m* and Turkish *ane-m* and resembles (Balkan) Bulgarian (enclitic) *majka mi*, (modern) Greek *mitera mu*.

4° N u m e r a l s – notable coincidences in the formation of ordinals, incl. the parallel use of suppletion (cf. *one-first, two-second/other*) (applied even in such unrelated languages as Finno-Ugric); cf. also the Baltic, Slavic and Scandinavian involvement in the prehistoric introduction of Indo-European numerals 100, 1000 in Finnic languages as a sign of their euro-integration.

5° V e r b s – periphrastic formation of marked categories, e.g. of marked tenses and voices, by means of the auxiliary verbs *to be* and *to have.*

(i) The distribution of these auxiliaries is as follows: (for English, German and Finnish):

Table 2.6.

(a) west = *have*	(b) center = *have/be*	(c) east = *be*
I have written	*ich habe geschrieben*	*olen kirjoittanut*
I have come	*ich bin gekommen*	*olen tulut*

(a) English, Scandinavian, most of the Romance languages,
(b) German, Dutch/Afrikaans, Faeroese, Icelandic, Yiddish; French and Italian, Basque,
(c) originally Balto-Slavic, Finnic (here from Baltic before the 6th c. AD!).

Slavic moved closer to the west: Macedonian has a full paradigm of the type (a), Czech, Polish and particularly Kashubian are developing constructions like Czech *mám napsáno* "I have written".

(ii) The use of the auxiliary verb *to be* encounters several obstacles in forming the Passive.. While English *The letter was written* equals Czech *Dopis byl (na)psán,* the German and Polish correspondences of these constructions would be *Der Brief wurde geschrieben* and *List został napisany* with the verb "to become" (used also in Scandinavian). In languages like Slovak or Ukrainian these constructions are not available and some other ways of expressing the Passive must be used. One of them is the reflexive *s*-construction.

(iii) The (Indo-European) *s*-reflexive constructions (cf. the Hittite *za*) are applied in different degrees of intensity and divide the ELA in rather different euro-zones, as in the case of the use of the following verb "he/it washes itself/is washed"):

– synthetic – the north/east (Scandinavian, Baltic, East Slavic), cf. (Swedish) *han/den tvätta-s* – (Lithuanian) *(jis) prausia-si* – (Russian) *(on) mojet-s'a,*
– enclitic – the south and the center (Romance and other Slavic lasnguages), (Portuguese) *lava-se (!)* – (Spanish) *lava se* – Slovene *umiva se* – Rumanian s*pală se,* Cf. Bulgarian/Macedonian *mie se =* Czech *myje se* but Polish *myje się*, Slovak *myje sa,* (Upper) Sorbian *myje so,*
(c)   syntactic – the center (German, Dutch),   (cf. German *er wäscht sich…*),
(d)   none – periphery, either the northwest (English, Frisian), the southeast (Greek) or the northeast (Finnic) (cf. English *he washes himself*).

2. The degrees of comparison as a millennial euro-constituent

2.0 As suggested in the (small print) introductory remark the unique character of Czech reflected in the background of the European D e g r e e s o f C o m p a r i s o n (E D C) is a feature which makes possible for Czech to represent and promote the idea of European linguo-area (ELA). This double role of the DC in the ELA can be expressed by the tripartite formula:

(1) |positive – comparative – superlative| or |1d – 2d – 3d|

(where *d* stands here for "degree"), as in English |*new – newer – newest*| and Czech |*nový – novější – nejnovější*|. This formula applies practically in all European languages but, at same time, it is almost unknown outside Europe. For this reason we call it b o t h a e u r o - - u n i v e r s a l a n d a e u r o - p a r t i c u l a r.

2.1.1 However, the DC, besides being shared by all European languages, are reflected in each of them by its own means. This is made possible by the stratification of language. The outside reality – the e x o s p h e r e – is reflected by the m e s o s p h e r e, represented in a universal formula |1d – 2d – 3d| s h a r e d by all European langua-g e s. T h e u n i q u e s y s t e m o f e a c h l a n g u a g e applied to express this formula (see Table 2.3 for more than 30 alternative applications) is called e n d o s p h e r e (cf. 1.0).

While the mesosphere played an initial role in connecting human beings and their language with the outside world, it is a variable changing with each generation and its external conditions (exosphere). The endosphere, on the other hand, is stable, being a product of several millennia – as it is the case of the DC in Czech (see section 4.) – during which the experience of each generation and of its mesosphere is deposited and stored in this inner sphere. Paradoxically, it is the s y n - c h r o n y of each generation which is a v a r i a b l e, while the p r o - d u c t s o f t h i s m i l l e n n i a l p r o c e s s r e p r e s e n t s t h e s t a b i l i t y of language, it is its c o n s t a n t.

2.1.2 Moreover, while the mesosphere represents primary, hence quite elemental process of humanization of the exosphere, the endosphere, being protected by the mesosphere (and its millennial experience), i.e. being the second step of this process, represents the essence of language as a human artifact, not dependent directly on the external world. Language, traditionally viewed as some kind tool or implement to achieve the final goal of communication, proves to be in fact the environment in which native speakers feel, in the strange world of many languages and exospheric globalization, safe, finding themselves here at home. After all, n o t w h a t we are doing (let alone how

much of it we are doing) b u t h o w we are doing that, is the only k e y f o r o u r s a f e f u t u r e. Moreover – thanks to this notion we discover with surprise E u r o p e a s a h a p p y c o n t i n e n t of linguistic adventure, joy and solidarity contrasting remarkably with Europe's long-lasting image as the scene (and an exporter!) of the most horrible tragedies humankind has ever experienced.

2.1.3 While a close connection between the exosphere and the mesosphere (as well as the often transient but immediately accessible experience of each generation) tempts linguists to concentrate their efforts on the mesosphere, this idea, since its inception in the late 1970s, has been resisting this temptation, devoting itself to the endosphere and its stability without which the future of Czech and of a great majority of languages does not make any sense.

2.2 One of the natural extensions of the DC, quite appropriate in a new geo-political environment, is the question of their a l l - E u r o - p e a n c o n t e x t. We Europeans know how we have been treating for centuries our own linguistic heritage and environment – and the linguistic heritage and environment of other continents as well – like the proverbial bull in a china shop. At the same time European languages, unlike their speakers, have been proving a great deal of mutual solidarity and mutual understanding – which the European politicians can only dream about – generating gradually the E u r o p e a n Linguistic Union or L i n g u i s t i c A r e a (ELA).

The purpose of the following brief account is to demonstrate that the European context of the Czech DC offers an ideal pilot program to prove the existence of the ELA and to improve, in that way, its traditional image as a ground for "aggressive languages" (such as German, Russian and recently English) to "impose their *barbarisms* on their inferior partners".

2.3 It is noteworthy that such a European inflectional category as the DC, though born in Indo-European about four millennia ago (see Scheme 4.0), has been maintaining its *é l a n v i t a l* f o r a l m o s t f i v e m i l l e n n i a, of which no other language can be a better witness than English: being one of the most inflection-resistant languages

of Europe, it nevertheless maintains signs of this Indo-European heritage in such tripartite sequences (1) |1d – 2d – 3d| (see 2.0) as *new – new-er – new-est* shared by all the other European languages, no matter whether genetically related or unrelated (see the following table).

Originally typical for Greek, Latin, Proto-Germanic, and Proto-Celtic (besides Indo-Iranian, see 4.0), the DC expanded eventually to the rest of Europe regardless of the resistance offered by the distance, political and psychological barriers as well as by the Continent's linguistic diversity. The result is remarkable – the degrees of comparison are now a E u r o p e a n u n i v e r s a l as obvious from the following table:

Table 2.7.

			1d	2d	3d	supple-tive:	1d	2d
		Greek	ne(u)-os	ne(u)-o-teros	ne(u)-o-tatos		agathos	belt-ion
		Latin	nov-us	nov-ior	nov-issi-mus		bon-us	mel-ior
1.		Spanish	nuevo	mas Nu-evo	el mas nuevo		bueno	mejor
		Portugu-ese	novo	mais no-vo	o mais novo		bom	melhor
		French	nouveau	plus no-uveau	le plus n.		bon	meilleur
		Ruma-nian	nou	mai nou	cel mai nou		bun	(mai bun)
2.		Czech	nov-ý	nov-ěj-š-í	nej-nově jší		dobrý	lepší
		Slovak	nov-ý	nov-š-í	naj-novš í		dobrý	lepší
		Sorbian (Upper)	now-y	now-š-i	naj-now ši		dobry	lěpši
		Polish	now-y	now-sz-y	naj-no-wszy		dobry	lepszy
		Belaru-sian	nov-y	nav-ej-š-y	naj-nave jšy		dobry	lepšy
	Ukrai-nian	nov-yj	nov-iš-yj	naj-noví šyj		dobryj	kraščyj/l ipšyj
	Slovene	nov-i	nov-ej-š-i	naj-nove jši		dober	boljši
	Croa-tian/Ser-bian	nov	nov-ij-i	naj-no-viji		dobar	bolji
3.	Russian	novyj	novee	novee vsech		chorošij	lučše
	Bulga-rian	nov	po-nov	naj-nov		dobăr	(po-dob ăr)
	Macedo-nian	nov	po-nov	naj-nov		dobar	(po-do-bar)
4.	English	new	new-er	new-est		good	better
	German	neu	neu-er	neu-est		gut	besser
	Yiddish	nai	nai-er	nai-est		gut	beser
	Danish	ny	ny-ere	ny-est		god	bedre
	Norwe-gian	ny	ny-ere	ny-est		god	bedre
	Swedish	ny	ny-are	ny-ast		god	batter
	Icelan-dic	ný-r	nýj-ari	nýj-astur		gó	betri
5.	Welsh	newydd	newydd-ach	newydd-af		da	gwell
	Irish (I. Gaelic)	nua	nua-í	is nua-í		maith	fearr
	Scottish Gaelic	nuadh	nas nua-idhe	as nuai-dhe		math	
6.	Lithua-nian	nauj-as	nauj-es-nis	nauj-au-sias		lab-as	(lab-es-nis)
7.	Latvian	jaun-s				lab-s	
	Romany	nev-o	nev-eder	jek-ne-veder		láčho	feder
	Hunga-rian	új	új-abb	leg-újab b		jó	(jo-bb)
8.	Finnish	uusi	uud-em-pi	uus-in		hyvä	par-em-pi
	Estonian	uus	uu-em	k		hea	par-em

	Komi	*viľ*	*viľ-žyk*	*med-viľ*		*bur*	*(bur-džy k)*
9.	Chuvash	*şene*	*şene-rech*	*ver-şene*		*lajach*	*(lajach-rach)*
	Turkish	*yeni*	*daha ye-ni*	*en yeni*		*iyi*	*(daha iyi)*
10.	Tadzhik	*nav*	*nav-tar*	*nav-tar--in*		*chub*	*bech'-tar*

(mai bun), (daha iyi) … forms in brackets: regular formation (no suppletion)

As we see, this feature is shared by such languages as Greek (Ancient and Modern Katharevousa), Latin and Romance languages, Slavic languages, Germanic languages, Baltic languages, and Romany, as well as a whole range of Finno-Ugric and Turkic languages.. Such a common feature proves the process of euro-integration and the existence of the European Language Area. Moreover, being an intrinsic part of the process of integration, it is one of its essential integrants, e u r o - c o n s t i t u e n t s.

1. The Turkish 3d exponent en has its correspondences in other euro-Turkic languages cf. (Lithuanian) Karaim *enk*, Tatar *ink*, but it is used in (Central) Asian Turkic as well, cf. Kazakh and Uzbek *eng,* Kyrgyz *en* etc.

2. We note the *élan vital* of the Indo-European DC in Iranian Tadzhik (Central Asia) – which has maintained (of course, together with Persian) the original Indo-European model – see 10. the table. We can call it a Central Asian euro-feature!

2.4 The degrees of comparison are shared by all European languages, they are one of the e u r o - u n i v e r s a l s , at the same time, they belong to the category of e u r o - p a r t i c u l a r s . The particular in this case means that the universal tripartite formula (1) |1d – 2d – 3d|, though reflecting the exosphere, organizes it nevertheless in "its own particular way" almost unknown in non-European languages (but cf. the small print above!).

Nevertheless this formula is just the first step in the internalization, being a part of the m e s o - s p h e r e , i.e. an i n t e r m e d i a t e l i n k between the e x o - s p h e r e on one hand, and the e n d o - s p h e r e (internal system) of each of the European languages on the other hand, each of which, as we see from the table, uses its own resources to manifest it.

2.5 How far this unity of c o m m o n E u r o p e a n f o r m u l a can range, is obvious from the s u p p l e t i v e sequences (cf. the right part of the table) in which each of the languages reaches for the deepmost reserves of its endosphere: the suppletive pairs such as English *good – better* (cf. German *gut – besser*, Swedish *god/bra – bättre* etc.) are meso-spherically identical with the endo-spherically (internally) different pairs as in Slavic, cf. Czech *dobrý – lepší*, Russian *chorošij – lučše* as well as Latin *bonus – melior*, Spanish *bueno – mejor* and French *bon – meilleur*, Celtic (Welsh) *da – …well…*, (Central European) Romany *láčho – feder*, Finno-Ugric, as in Finnish *hyvä – parempi*, Estonian *hea – parem* as well as Basque *on – hobe* and Georgian *k'argi-i – uk'etesi…*

As obvious from the examples – if the degrees of comparison are associated by a native speaker with some kind of outside influence at all, it cannot be accepted negatively (i.e. as a barbarism) but only positively as a bridge for learning and understanding (in both senses) other European languages, and hence as a sign of the E u r o p e a n l a n - g u a g e s o l i d a r i t y .

2.6 Another evidence that the D e g r e e s o f C o m p a r i s o n a r e a E u r o p e a n u n i v e r s a l a n d p a r t i c u l a r , generated by a gradual p r o c e s s o f e u r o - i n t e g r a t i o n , is a division of the euro-area into e u r o - z o n e s according to their specific application of the DC. We note that the highest level of their analytical manifestation is typical for the broader periphery of the euro-area, namely for the south (Romance languages), the southeast (Balkan area, incl. Slavic languages, i.e. Bulgarian and Macedonian) and the extreme East (Russian and unrelated languages of European Russia) though in

most of them some relevant elements of synthesis are present in the paradigm as well (cf. Table 2.9).

2.7   In the kernel territory (incl. Germanic, Baltic and western Finno-Ugric), the most remarkable sub-area seems to be the remaining Slavic languages. Though they resemble Germanic languages in using common formal (i.e. endospheric) exponents they, at the same time, apply a unique formula with the 3d prefix *naj-/nej-* (cf. Table 2.3, section 2.)

(2) |3d = prefix+2d| (cf. Czech *novější* 2d – ***nej***-*novější* 3d "new, newest")

which is otherwise unknown in the ELA. But there is an important exception: genetically unrelated languages of the same euro-zone – Latvian, Hungarian, and (Central European) Romany (see ibid., section 7.) use this formula proving that besides the genetic (here Slavic) relations the close euro-areal relation is relevant as well (for the prefixation in 3d cf. also Table 2.9, languages*).

2.8 The Slavic euro-group is divided in separate sub-zones, the occidental sub-zone using the formula (2) and the residual area including Russian and Bulgarian with Macedonian. While the occidental languages form with area-related languages one compact (east central) euro-zone, the residual languages belong to other euro-zones as follows:

R u s s i a n (unlike Ukrainian) form a compact euro-zone with other languages of European Russia, i.e. (Volga and Ural) Finnic and euro-Turkic.

M a c e d o n i a n (unlike Serbian), B u l g a r i a n and particularly P o m a k i a n (a micro-language of Moslem Slavs in Greek Thrace) display another distinctive feature – i.e. partial or complete analytism of the DC – which is typical for the Balkan euro-zone (cf. Rumanian, Albanian, Greek Dhimotiki).

Finally to demonstrate the euro-particularity of the DC, the following table mapping the Euro-Asian borderland can be used:

Table 2.9.

	1, 2, 3 synthetic	1, 2 synthetic	1, 2, 3 analytical	syntactic
Indo-European	Baltic, Ukrainian Bulgarian (Tadzhik)	Russian Ossetic, Kurdish	Russian (attribute) Rumanian Armenian*	
Uralic	Finnish, Sami Komi, (Mansi)	Estonian, Vepsian Mari, Udmurt	Livonian, Mordvin (Khanty), (Selkup*)	Nenets (Ngasan)
Turkic		Karaim Chuvash*, Tatar	Turkish, Gagauz	Azerbaijani Bashkir
Ibero-Caucasian	Adyghe Georgian, Svan	Chechen, Ingush	Abkhaz*, Lezgyn Kabardin	Avar Cez (=Dodo)
Mongolian				Kalmuck

Languages*: (Samoyed) Selkup, (Tatar) Chuvash, (Caucasian) Abkhaz, (Indo-European) Armenian – possible prefixation in 3d!

(Languages) in brackets – non-European languages (Caucasia is considered a part of linguistic Europe).

3. The degrees of comparison in Czech and their inflectional   properties – a "new" part of speech?

3.1   As the DC do not generate a new lexicon word, they are integrated in the inflectional paradigm of another unit, as in the English DC, cf. *new, newer, newest* (= Czech *nový, novější, nejnovější*). In a highly inflected language, as is the case with Czech (as well as other Slavic languages, German, Latin, Latvian, Hungarian, Finnish etc.), they are, together with declension and conjugation, another c o n s t i - t u t i n g e l e m e n t o f i t s i n f l e c t i o n a l l e v e l and, at the same time, one of the crucial exponents of the European Linguo-Area (see 0.1).

3.2 The inflectional paradigm of DC must be distinguished from other n o n - i n f l e c t i o n a l   m e a n s   o f   c o m p a r i s o n which however can appear outside Europe as well:

– A. These are predominantly either syntactic (cf. *velmi, strašně zajímavý* "very, terribly interesting", *trochu, poněkud zajímavý, starší* "somewhat, slightly interesting, older") or d e r i v a t i o n a l (*pra-dávný* "ancient", *pře-(ne)šťastný* "most (un)happy", *přiblblý* "half-witted"; *vele+úrodný* "most fertile", *širo+širý* "vast"; cf. *po-starší* "elderly": formally = Russian *po-starše* and Bulgarian/Macedonian *po-star* which are however paradigmatical).

– B. The analytical (periphrastic) formation corresponding to the inflectional paradigm can be outlined as follows:

Table 3.1

	-3 d	-2 d	+1 d	+2 d	+3 d
	the least interesting	*less interesting.*	***interesting***	*more interesting*	*the most interesting*
	the worst imaginable	*worse imaginable*	***imaginable***	*better imaginable*	*the best imaginable*
	nejméně zajímavý	*méně zajímavý*	***zajímavý***	*více zajímavý*	*nejvíce zajímavý*
	nejhůře představitelný	*hůře představitelný*	***představitelný***	*lépe představitelný*	*nejlépe představitelný*

The analytical constructions, unlike the syntactic structures, can be integrated in the paradigm, in fact, they can be the only regular DC, as in Romance languages (cf. Table 2.3, section 1.) and the eastern euro-edge (Table 2.9). However, they consist of more than one text unit, hence cannot be inflectional.

3.3 Though the elimination presented in A and B (see above the small print), imposes considerable limits on the i n f l e c t i o n a l p a r a d i g m of DC, it provides, at the same time, a more powerful means of d e f i n i n g   a n d   e x t e n d i n g   i t s   i n n e r   s c o p e.

The crucial step in this extension is the integration ("addition") of the adjective and the corresponding adverb in one "n e w" i n f l e c t i o - n a l   p a r t   o f   s p e e c h   c a l l e d   a d d i t i v e (Cz *přídatek*), as in (Adjective) *zdravý* – (Adverb) *zdravě* "sound/healthy, soundly/healthily".

With three other constituents, the negative (cf. – 2s *ne-zdravější* "unsounder"), a u n i q u e   f o r m   o f   s u p e r l a t i v e, c a l l e d v a - n i t i v e with a special prefix *sebe-* (3v *sebe-zdravější* "however sound", for its origin cf. 4.4.3), vanitive with standard superlative (3s/v *sebe-nej-zdravější* "however [most] sound, healthy"), the traditional DC paradigm yields the following result:

Scheme 3.3.

±1d=positive		±2d=comparative		±3d=superlative ±3v=vanitive		±3s/v
(un-)sound	→	(un-)sounder	→ →	*the (un-)soundest* / *however (un-)sound*	→ →	*however (most) (un-)soundly*
(un-)soundly	→	more (un-)soundly	→ →	*most (un-)soundly* / *however (un-)soundly*	→ →	*however (most) (un-)soundly*
ne-)zdravý	→	(ne-)zdravější	→ →	*nej-(ne-)zdravější* / *sebe-(ne-)zdravější*	→ →	*sebe-(nej-)(ne-)zdravější*
(ne-)zdravě	→	(ne-)zdravěji	→ →	*nej-(ne-)zdravěji* / *sebe-(nej-)zdravěji*	→ →	*sebe-(nej-)(ne-)zdravěji*

1. Unlike declension and conjugation with a great deal of linguistic convention (cf. the order Genitive, Dative, Accusative), the pattern of the DC paradigm is formally and functionally pre-established in the system providing an unambiguous algorithmic sequence.

2. A special additive paradigm is developed in the Slavic euro-zone following the formula (2) but only in its Northern section comprising Sorbian, Czech (but not Slovak!), Polish, and Belarusian (but not Ukrainian!). It is noteworthy that this section (sub-area) is expanded

by the adjacent Baltic languages (Lithuanian and Latvian)! On the other hand, Slovak, Ukrainian as well as Slovene and Croatian/Serbian form the southern section with no additive: they do not have a separate adverbial form as they substitute it with the corresponding adjectival form in Ne (N.B., it was the case of Old Czech as well, cf. 4.3.2).

3.4 Basically, the definition of the D C p a r a d i g m a t i c c l a s-s e s resemble the corresponding classification in declension and conjugation (cf. e.g. Conjugation 1–4 in Latin) by applying certain formal criteria.

In the case of the DC it is the (2d and 3d) flecteme *-ěj-* (or alloflect *-ej-,* if *ě* is incompatible with the preceding consonant) in which the basic distribution can be defined as follows (for *prostý* "simple", *drahý* "dear, expensive", *blízký* "near(by), close", *nový* "new"):

property (a) absence of the flecteme *-ěj-*, cf. *prost-ší, drať-ší, blíť-ší,* Adverb *blíť-e*

property (b) presence of the flecteme - *ěj-*, cf. Adverb *prost-ěj-i; nov-ěj-ší,* Adverb *nov-ěj-i*

3.5 The (a) property involves a complementary application of ±d for flectemes */k/, /ok/, /n/,* which either takes place (+d cf. *blíz/k/-ý* "nearby, close" – *blíť/),* does not take place (-d, cf. *leh/k/-ý* "easy, light" – *leh/č/-í,* Adv *leh/č/-ej-i),* or does not apply (=d, traditional feature o, cf. *drah-ý* "dear" – *drať-ší*). Using the properties a, b, and d, the three basic classes yield the following distribution in 6 (5+1) subclasses:

Subclass		d	Adjective	Adverb	Corpus
1 (a, a)	*drah-ý*"dear"	o	*draž+ší*	*dráž+e*	1 unit
1b (a, a)	*blíz/k/-ý*"nearby"	+	*/-ší*	*bliž+//-e*	5 units
			Table 3.5.1		
2 (a, a/b)	*šir/ok/-ý* "wide"	+	*/-ší*	*šíř+//-e šíř+//-eji*	3 units
			Table 3.5.2		

Subclass		d	Adjective	Adverb	Corpus
3a (a, b)	*Mlad-ý* "young"	o	*mlad-ší*	*mlad+ěj-i*	28 units
3a (a, b)	*leh/k/-ý* "light"	-	*leh/č/-í*	*leh/č/+ej-i*	8 units
3c (a, b)	*hlad/k/-ý* "smooth"	+	*hlad/č/+ej-i*		6 units
			Table 3.5.3		
4a (a/b, b)	*Hrub-ý* "coarse"		*hrub-ší hrub+ěj-ší*	*hrub+ěj-i*	4 units
4b (a/b, b)	*Heb/k/-ý* "fine"	–	*heb/č/-í heb/č/+ej-ší*	*heb/č/+ej-i*	6 units
4c (a/b, b)	*Krot/k/-ý* "tame"	+ /–	*krot+//-ší krot/č/+ej-ší*	*krot/č/+ej-i*	2 units
			Table 3.5.4		
Total 3.5.1-3.5.4	63 units				
5 (b, b)	*nový* "new"	**o**	**nov+ěj-ší**	**nov-ěj-i**	open
			Table 3.5.5		
6a (a, a) and (b, b)	*hust-ý* "thick"	o o	*hust+ší hust+ěj-ší*	*houš/ť/+hust +ěj-i /*	1 unit
6b (a, a) and (b, b)	*snad/n/-ý* "easy"	+ –	*snad/n/+ěj-ší*	*snáz+//-e snad/n/+ěj-i*	1 unit
Total	2 units				
			Table 3.5.6		

The tables 3.5.1–3.5.6 outline the pattern of relations between the classes and subclasses. Again we observe the p r e - e x i s t e n c e of the classification i n t h e s y s t e m ("endosphere", see 2.1.1 above), a naturally ("algorithmically") developing pattern, free of linguistic convention (on this convention, typical for most of the declensional and conjugational paradigms, see 3.3, small print 1.)

3.6 Though highly organized in this way, the DC paradigm – as any inflectional pattern – displays some i r r e g u l a r i t i e s (traditional fuzzy points). Two are important:

[1] (b, b): use of a flecteme +*n*+ (for words ending in -*cí,* cf. *vrouc-í* "ardent", Adv *vrouc+n+ě,* 2s *vrouc+n+ější*), (we deal here with adjectives originating from present active participles)**,**

[2] (a, a): suppletion (with units of high frequency, cf. *dobrý* "good" – *lep-ší,* Adv *lép-e* "better", *velký/mnoho* "big/much" – *vět-ší,* Adv *víc-e*) shared by majority of languages of the European Linguo-area (see Table 2.3 and section 2.5). The following table indicates that the suppletion is a euro-feature concerning the following four items, i.e. two binary oppositions (for Germanic=English, Romance=Spanish, Slavic=Czech):

Table 3.6 Other typical irregularities involve

English Spanish Czech	English Spanish Czech
(a) *good – better bueno – mejor dobrý – lepší*	*bad – worse mal – peor špatný – horší*
(b) *much – more mucho – mas mnoho – více*	*little – less poco – menos málo – méně*

[3] defectiveness: e.g. lack of the proper 1s as in *záz-e* "more at the back",

[4] irregular formation: 2d *pozd+ější* from Adv *pozd+ě,* not from the Adj *pozd/n/-í* "late") with /n/ = +d,

[5] substitution: *dalek-ý* "distant" has no DC in Adj, other lexical unit must be used,

[6] non-paradigmatic character (no 3d) of formally correct 2d (e.g. *jin-ý* "other" – "2s" *jin-ší,* cf. also (about 16 units) *tam* "there" – "2s" *tamější* "being there".

4. Czech euro-gradation (EDC) – its diachronical perspective and (Indo-)European context

4.0 The pre-Czech (and pre-European) history of the EDC starts with the I n d o - E u r o p e a n development (from approximately the

4th–3rd millennium BC) in which, *inter alia,* the 2d (comparative) suffix -*is/-ies/-ios* as well as its 3d (superlative) expansion (preserved in such English forms as *new-est, bus-iest, godli-est; fir-st, la-st*) were formed. The tripartite formula (1) |1d – 2d – 3d|, i.e. |positive – comparative – superlative| (see 2.0) was originally developed by just some of the Indo-European groups, i.e. Greek, Latin, Germanic, Celtic and Indo-Iranian. The original process of the development, from the viewpoint of the euro-area (ELA), can be expressed in the following diachronic scheme:

Scheme 4.0

Type 1-2-3 (all degrees)	Type 1-2 (no 2d available)	Type 1 (pre-gradation stage)
Indo-Iranian Greek, Latin	later Indo-European	early Indo-European Hittite, Armenian
Proto-Germanic Proto-Celtic	Balto-Slavic	Proto-Finno-Ugric Proto-Turkic
the 1st millennium BC	the 2nd millennium BC	the 3rd millennium BC

As obvious from this scheme, the formula (1) (= Type 1–2–3) originally typical only for some of the euro-languages, has been gradually developed into one of the universals of the modern euro-area regardless of genetic relations including Finno-Ugric and (some) euro-Turkic languages Table 2.3 and Table 2.9).

4.1 Unlike the above-mentioned languages of the type 1–2–3, P r o t o - S l a v i c (developing from the 1st millennium BC and lasting until the 10th century AD) developed just the 2d with the corresponding Indo-European suffix to yield the suffix .

This suffix is reflected in such late P r o t o - S l a v i c forms as, e.g. Ma (*ăw-*) *bliť-*(), *nov-ě-j*"nearer, newer", Ne (*ăw-*) *bliť-e, nov-ě-je,* and MaPlNo (*ăw-*) *bliť-š-e, nov-ěj-š-e.* All the other forms of the Proto-Slavic DC (following the pattern of active participles) used the -*jo/-ja* paradigm, cf. Ma/NeSgGe (*ăw-e-jis-j*) *bliť-š-a, nov-ě-jš-a.*

4.2 During the 10th century AD it was P r o t o - C z e c h as the first Slavic language which separated from Proto-Slavic as a result of the prehistoric contraction. This process affected specially the definite

(pronominalized) paradigm of the DC (using the postpositive pronoun…) – one of the Balto-Slavic features. This yielded such results as (Proto-Slavic Ma/Ne SgGe *bliť-š-/a+je/go*) *bliť-š-/é/go* (modern Czech *bliť-š-ího*).

As obvious from the last form, this period, called e a r l y P r o t o -
- C z e c h (the 10ᵗʰ–11ᵗʰ cc.), formed the first proto-types of modern Czech. During the same period o t h e r S l a v i c c o n t r a c t i o n l a n g u a g e s – such as (Proto-) -Sorbian, -Polish, -Slovak, -Slovene, -Croatian, -Serbian and other proto-dialects of the Slavic contraction area stretching from the Southern coast of the Baltic Sea (cf. Polabian in the Hamburg area, Kashubian in the Gdańsk area) to the Adriatic and the Balkans – followed suit. The same applies to other features of the development of the DC in this period, including the pattern of four suppletives (as English *good – better,* Czech *dobrý – lepší* et al., cf. Table 3.6), one of important properties marking the DC as a E u r o p e - a n u n i v e r s a l (cf. Table 2.3 and section 2.5).

4.2.2 The ensuing stage, the l a t e P r o t o - S l a v i c (the 12ᵗʰ–13ᵗʰ cc.) confirms the crucial role of Proto-Czech in the development of the DC. The indefinite forms retreat to the position of predicatives (*on jest múdřějí, lepí* "he is wiser, better") and gradually vanish. The only trace left in modern Czech are adverbs, such as *lép-e, blíť-e,* (*novějé nověj-í*) *nověj-i* "better, nearer, more newly" reflecting the original Ne forms (cf. 4.3.2).

4.2.3 As described in the Scheme 4.0, P r o t o - S l a v i c h a d n o i n f l e c t i o n a l 3 d (s u p e r l a t i v e), a form which, in the case of the DC, is one of the preconditions for the status of a euro-universal. The l a t e P r o t o - C z e c h is the period of its initial p a r a - d i g m a t i z a t i o n. The Proto-Slavic (not yet paradigmatic) prefix *nai-/naj-*, with some vacillations, establishes the formula

<div align="center">(2) |3d = prefix + 2d| (see 2.7).</div>

This formula proves Czech to be the prime catalyst in stimulating the same process in three euro-areas (cf. 2.7):

(i) the basic euro-area, developing between the 13ᵗʰ–17ᵗʰ cc. and forming a euro-channel called the N o r t h S l a v i c g e n e t i c u n i o n, comprising West Slavic and Western East Slavic languages (Ukrainian and Belorussian, but leaving Russian aside),

(ii) expanded Slavic union, incorporating W e s t e r n S o u t h S l a v i c (Slovene, Croatian, Serbian, but excluding Macedonian and Bulgarian),

(iii) a d j a c e n t n o n - S l a v i c (i.e. "area-related") languages (Latvian, Central European Romany, Hungarian) using instead of the Slavic preflect *naj-* their own prefixes (see Table 2.3-7. and the section 2.7). Here the role of Czech and the North Slavic Union in diffusing the DC as a euro-universal and forming a (genetic + area-related) euro-zone in the euro-center is quite obvious.

4.2.4 All the processes which took place not during the historical period of the (classical) Old Czech (the 14ᵗʰ–15ᵗʰ cc.) but in the p r e - h i s t o r i c s t a g e (10ᵗʰ-13ᵗʰ cc.), played a c r u c i a l r o l e in building the DC as an important component in the endo-space of future Czech in the millennium to come.

4.3.1 Unlike the Proto-Czech period constructing the general framework of the DC, the role of the classical period of O l d C z e c h (the 14ᵗʰ–15ᵗʰ cc.), in which the first major literary works appear, is in "refining" this framework, i.e. in elaborating in detail the emergent DC. As written texts of the period testify, the t r i p a r t i t e f o r m u - l a | 1 d – 2 d – 3 d | acquires at that time its modern shape.

It is a process in which the a u t h o r i t y o f L a t i n played an important part by cementing the role of this formula as an unifying factor i n e s t a b l i s h i n g t h e E u r o p e a n L i n g u i s t i c U n i o n. This feature of Czech, in which Latin took part in its forming, involves not only the universal (common European) tripartite formula but, at the same time, its own ("endospheric") model, including the f o r - m u l a (2) | 3d = prefix *naj-* + 2d| and a new a l g o r i t h m i c s e - q u e n c e of six paradigms developed in this period as a Czech particular not known in any other European language (see Tables 3.5.1–3.5.6).

4.3.2 An important moment of this process is the d o m i n a t i o n o f t h e c o n t r a c t e d p a r a d i g m which involved the establishment of a separate adverbial pattern (cf. 4.2.2).This was an initial precondition for establishing a "new" part of speech called (adjective+adverb=) a d d i t i v e (see 3.3) which was eventually shared by Sorbian, Polish (but not by Slovak!) and by Belarusian (but not by Ukrainian and South Slavic) but spread to Baltic! (ibid., small print 2.).

For this purpose the neuter form |cf. *blíz-ko – blíť-e – naj-blíť-e|* "nearby, closely 1d, 2d, 3d" of the indefinite (short) paradigm of the adjective was used while its other forms are gradually replaced by its contracted counterparts. Some important morphonological and morphological processes "refining" the future modern shape of the DC took place.

Another quite new impulse of the development of the DC is their a p p e a r a n c e in written texts and i n m e d i e v a l *b e l l e s - l e t - t r e s* in particular. While L a t i n a s a n e x t e r n a l c a t a l y s t (see above) played an important euro-integrant role in the initial stage of this period, in a later process (since the late 14th c.) the C z e c h a u t h o r s develop their own ("endospheric") attitude to the DC discovering in them, *inter alia*, an important source of their a e s t h e - t i c i n s p i r a t i o n (T. Štítný).

4.3.3 Formally, an important process in the above-mentioned "refining" is so-called c a l i b r a t i o n ("size adjusting") in which the original form is either extended – cf. MaNoSg *novějí novější* and generally the nominal paradigm is replaced by its contracted counterpart

(cf. *nověj-ša – novějš-ého* etc.) – or reduced in the case of adverbs – *blíť-e blíť, dřéve dřév* "closer, earlier".

4.4.1 The i n t e r i m p e r i o d in the history of Czech (the 16th–18th cc.) attracting until recently much less interest of scholars than Old Czech, proves nevertheless significant for understanding some more specific features of the modern Czech DC. It is a period in which the first attempts to describe Czech more comprehensively appear, among them Jan Blahoslav's *Grammatyka Cťeská* (Czech Gram-

mar, 1571) offering some valuable data concerning the development of the DC in his century.

At the same time, it is the period of further expansion of the C z e c h m o d e l through the North Slavic euro-zone (Sorbian, Polish, Slovak, Ukrainian, Belarusian, cf. Table 2.3, section 2.). Noticeable (euro-zone) correspondences could be found in the south (Slovene, Croatian, Serbian and their diverse dialects) indicating a clear line between the S l a v i c o c c i d e n t a l a r e a as opposed to the residual area including Russian in the north and Bulgarian with Macedonian in the south (cf. 2.7-2.8).

4.4.2 T h e f i r s t s y s t e m a t i c C z e c h g r a m m a r, W. J. R o s a's *Č e c h o ř e č n o s t* (*Grammatica linguae bohemicae*, 1672) in its description of the DC seems to promote the paradigm B/(b, b) (see Table 3.5.5) as a universal pattern suggesting even such forms as *draťejší, niťčejší* "dearer, lower" which is known neither in Old Czech nor in modern Czech. Obviously, we deal here with the author's own constructs ("endems") testifying to his preference to see the system from the position of *langue* (endosphere) rather than of *parole, performance* (mesosphere).

At the same time, the B paradigm forms as *lehčejší, mělčejší* "lighter, shallower", used both in Old Czech and in the 19th century, offer a historical explanation of the modern forms *lehč-í, mělč-í* which are from the synchronic point of view difficult to explain (cf. Table 3.5.3).

4.4.3 In this period, t h e m o s t d i s t i n c t i v e f e a t u r e o f C z e c h i n t h e E u r o p e a n c o n t e x t (unknown even in Slovak) is developed. It is the v a n i t i v e which using the prefix (originally the reflexive pronoun) *sebe-* refers to the 3rd degree of "vanity" (vain effort), cf. *sebe-bliťší, sebe-novější* "however nearby/close, however new" (cf. 3.3). The original meaning "closer, newer than oneself = *se-be* in Ge", seems to be a poser for traditional logicians but thrives in modern Czech without any hindrances..

4.5 S u m m i n g u p t h e d e v e l o p m e n t o f t h e E D C in Czech we can distinguish the following stages:

1. P r o t o - C z e c h   p e r i o d   (t h e   1 0 t h – 1 3 t h   c c.): The initial stage of adopting the Proto-Slavic model |1d – 2d| and constructing the basic framework by establishing the internal (endospheric) formula (2) |3d = prefix *naj-* + 2d| (see 2.7). This formula yielded the common European ("mesospheric") formula (1) |1d – 2d – 3d| (see 2.0) with its own unique means which eventually constituted a new euro-zone comprising besides Slavic "occidental" languages "area-related" Latvian, Romany and Hungarian. This is a natural (spontaneous) process in which the native speaker is not aware of the ongoing changes, although they integrate Czech, and the other Slavic and non-Slavic languages following suit, into the ELA (see section 4.2).

2. O l d   C z e c h   p e r i o d   (t h e   1 4 t h – 1 5 t h   c c.): The appearance of written texts in Czech triggers off the process of becoming aware of the DC, originally passively – prompted *inter alia*, by the Latin (Bible translations etc.), contributing significantly to the "euro-integration" of Czech – later actively by using the DC for developing and cultivating the language by some distinguished medieval pens (see section 4.3).

3. T h e   i n t e r i m   p e r i o d   (t h e   1 6 t h – 1 8 t h   c c.): The first descriptions of the DC, originally of its surface or *parole* (mesosphere), later of its depth or *langue* (endosphere) involving the underlying constructs (endemes) as some kind of counterparts of the surface and its entities (W. J. Rosa). This period ends about two centuries ago (cf. J. Dobrovský's *Lehrgebäude* in 1809) when the modern system of the DC, as described in section 3., acquires its definite shape (see section 4.4).

5. A postscript. The perspective of the ELA and of its further investigation and promotion

This brief review, based on one euro-language and the competence of just one author, can only suggest a future perspective of the problem at hand and its initial investigation. It, however, includes a claim that the European context of the DC signals a new and v e r y   u p - t o - date topic – the idea of the European Linguistic Area, involving the linguistic euro-integration and the centuries-long tradition of European linguistic interrelation and solidarity.

Such a claim can just foreshadow a n e w   l i n g u i s t i c   d i s c i - p l i n e ,   e u r o - a r e a l   s t u d i e s. It will require an entirely new comprehensive approach to the contrastive studies with much more advanced means of technology. Clearly, such an approach would involve a new treatment of mutual integrity and solidarity shared by all the languages of Europe regardless of their seize, political importance, origin, and genetic relation.

Yet, this would only confirm the claim in the introduction describing (future?) Europe, one of the smallest continents, as a happy continent of linguistic adventure, joy and solidarity.

That's why nothing has changed the idea, chosen to close the first edition of the book on the Degrees of Comparison (1986):

The most useful lesson offered by the degrees of comparison seems to be the idea of abstraction – expressed by the endo-sphere of each of the European languages – humanizing the extra-linguistic and often extra-human reality surrounding the human being.

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Abbreviations (selected)

Ma, Fe, Ne   masculine, feminine, neuter
Sg, Pl   singular, plural
No, Ge, Da   nominative, genitive, dative
DC   degrees of comparison,
EDC   European DC, euro-gradation
d   degree (of comparison)
1d   1st degree, positive (*new = nový*)
2d   2nd degree, comparative (*newer, novější*)
3d   3rd degree, superlative (*newest, nejnovější*)
|1d-2d-3d| the EDC formula (see 2.0)
3v   (Czech) vanitive (*sebe-novější* "however new") (see 3.3)
Adj, Adv   Adjective, Adverb
ELA   European Linguo-area, euro-area (cf. 0.1)

Streszczenie

Autor omawia europejski obszar językowy (*European Linguo-area*). Omawia systemy językowe i ich wzajemne zależności. Wskazuje również na powiązania języków, biorąc pod uwagę cechy językowe. Punktem wyjściowym jest tutaj perspek-tywa indoeuropejska badania języków, przy czym w każdym przypadku jest to czeski model językowy. Ukazuje nowe możliwości komparatystyki lingwistycznej w ra-mach tzw. lingwistyki areałowej.