

Reviews

“Route CZ-AT” to the USA: Perceiving American Culture in Central Europe

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ANTÉNE, P., et al. 2018. *“Route CZ-AT” to the USA: Perceiving American Culture in Central Europe*. Olomouc: Palacký University. ISBN 978-80-244-5346-0 (print).

The collective monograph titled *“Route CZ-AT” to the USA: Perceiving American Culture in Central Europe* is the result of international cooperation between the members of the English and German section of the Institute of Foreign Languages at the Faculty of Education at Palacký University in Olomouc and their colleagues from Pädagogische Hochschule Tirol in Innsbruck, Austria. The monograph focuses on diverse approaches to the wide scope of foreign language teaching with all eight contributions sharing a common frame of reference in the role of the USA in contemporary globalized society. The chapters thus present various aspects associated with the perception of the USA, whether it be American English, a theme in American literature and culture or an analysis of their reception in and/or influence on one or both of the Central European countries. The monograph is conveniently divided into two parts of equal length (4 chapters each), the first one dealing primarily with linguistic phenomena and their reflection in teaching and the second one concentrating mainly on topics in literary and cultural studies as well as their application in language education. The monograph also features an introduction explaining the beginnings of the authors’ cooperation in a 2017 Aktion project and a conclusion summarizing the findings of their research.

The linguistic section of the monograph opens with a chapter by Haupt on early English learning in Austria, arguing that bilingualism is a valuable asset highly supported or even required by the European Union. Haupt highlights that "currently, it is mainly through American culture that the English language is spreading around the world" (17). The next chapter, co-authored by Oberschneider and Salchner, deals with Americanisms in German language. The authors refer to diachronist research that shows that Americanisms in youth language in particular have been increasing since the 2000s (*Scannen, Chick, Loser* etc., 28) and provide the results of their own questionnaire on awareness of these expressions, distributed to pupils and teachers at a lower secondary school in Wilten, Austria. The following chapter by Řeřicha discusses cultural dimensions of lexical borrowings from English to Czech, with occasional references to borrowings from English to German. Finally, the chapter by Hrdinová introduces the issue of "life and institutions of the third culture" (44) in didactics of translation, using an extract of *The Treasure of the Silver Lake*, Karl May's German-language novel set in America, in German language teaching to Czech students.

The literature and cultural studies section begins with a chapter by Kovářová on the reflection of American culture in two works of contemporary Young Adult fiction, Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and R. J. Palacio's *Wonder*. Kovářová suggests the employment of both texts in English language teaching to familiarise pupils at lower secondary schools with the topics of conformity and benevolence in American society. The next chapter, co-authored by Anténe and Hoffmannová, provides the results of a questionnaire on the students' knowledge of and attitude towards the USA, distributed to 215 respondents at Palacký University who were being trained to become English teachers at lower secondary level in schools. The authors conclude that the students' ideas of symbols of the USA include not only official state symbols, but also "phenomena associated with consumerism and popular culture, larger theoretical concepts and sociopolitical realities such as the American Dream and immigration" (77). The following chapter presents Anténe's teaching practice in using another Young Adult novel, Louis Sachar's *Holes*, as a means of familiarising students of English language teaching with the multicultural make-up of the USA, and by extension, the Czech Republic. Finally, the chapter by Kořínková studies the references to the USA in a corpus of 415 song lyrics of Czech tramp songs, concluding that the songs tend to present a sentimental view of America.

In general, the chapters comprise wide-ranging topics relevant in contemporary research, as documented by a variety of recent secondary sources in the bibliography. Moreover, the covered themes may also be aptly used in the practice of language teaching, as illustrated by specific suggestions for their employment at various levels of education curricula, from lower secondary level of school to a university level. While some chapters concern primarily the Czech Republic or Austria, others raise issues easily applicable in other countries, as the monograph is written in English (with a German

résumé). The monograph may thus serve as a useful source of ideas for current as well as future teachers of foreign languages.

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