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Michal Korenar

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Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.70163/0036-0252.1063
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rlj/vol68/iss1/7
Cherchez la femme! Cherchez Laura A. Janda!

MICHAL KORENAR


In The Mohicans of Paris (1871), Dumas’s detective concludes at some point that a woman was necessarily involved in an investigated crime, leading him to famously exclaim: “Cherchez la femme!”, which is translated to English as “Look for the woman!” (Horn, 1991). One does not need to be an actual detective to reveal the purpose of the reviewed book Each Venture a New Beginning: Studies in Honor of Laura A. Janda. Needless to say, I do not want to imply in any way that Janda has committed a crime. Still, I find the expression rather apposite because the reader can definitely feel her presence rooted in all the selected articles of the present book. Editors Anastasia Makarova, Stephen M. Dickey, and Dagmar Divjak have compiled a volume of studies informed by and proceeding from the voluminous research contributions of Janda to cognitive linguistics, Slavic linguistics, and also general linguistics.

The editors introduce the readers to the rich repertoire of topics Janda has investigated throughout her career, offering an overview of her groundbreaking studies and their influence on the development of research within Slavic linguistics and beyond. Makarova, Dickey, and Divjak pique our curiosity by explaining the core assumptions implied in Janda’s work on Slavic cases and aspect and by mentioning her newest hypothesis that verbal prefixes in Russian are verbal classifiers. Furthermore, readers who aren’t familiar with Janda’s work are offered a unique chance to not only walk along the professional path of this honored researcher, but they are also presented with a tasteful description of her qualities as a leader, a teacher, and a friend.

The articles are grouped in three thematic sections. The first section concerns theoretical and methodological insights into the study of...
language. Some of the articles expand on Janda’s research interests more directly by addressing her signature topics. For example, Alan Cienki, Olga Iriskhanova, and Valeriiia Denisova extend the semantic analysis of verbs in Russian into the realm of coverbal behavior by analyzing gestures of native Russian speakers who were asked to produce short narratives. Even though some contributions may at first sight seem to be connected to Janda’s research more implicitly, one is constantly reminded that the actual binding factor of the volume is her spirit of discovery and her pushing the boundaries of linguistics. This makes the first section a thematically consistent force which can serve theoretical linguists, quantitative researchers, and experimental researchers as a solid inspiration for their own work.

The second section is devoted to the study of various linguistic phenomena in specific languages, using the methodological tools emerging from cognitive linguistics. It is striking that the editors included papers not only on Slavic languages but also languages outside the Slavic group. In one instance, Tuomas Huumo uses the metaphor proposed by Janda (2004)—that perfective aspect in Russian is parallel with solid objects and imperfective aspect with fluids—to study the interplay between lexical quantification and aspectual case marking in Finnish. This highlights the universal character of Janda’s work and encourages studies of language-specific phenomena from a crosslinguistic perspective. In another noteworthy example, Neil Bermel, Luděk Knittl, and Jean Russell shed light on change in the morphology of inflectional languages using Czech as the case language. More concretely, they investigate factors influencing the variation of the nominative plural of Czech masculine animate paradigms, where at least four endings are documented. They use the experimental method of an elicitation task where the native speakers form plurals of novel words. Subsequently, they place the results from the survey alongside a corpus analysis of the frequencies of the various forms of masculine nominative plurals. They conclude that speakers chose one of the forms according to their frequency-based knowledge of the nominative plurals in Czech in combination with the phonological neighborhood of the novel words. This logically chosen combination of two of the research methods attested to cognitive linguistics consolidates the framework set by Janda in her studies on morphological change and variation (e.g., Janda 2004; 2010) and addresses
attempts for cognitively adequate language description while using an innovative methodology. Overall, this section of the book shows that various methodological tools which have been used to study concrete, language-specific phenomena can actually also be used universally across languages. For researchers who are experienced in applying methods across various languages, this section broadens the horizon of methodological approaches by presenting studies where theoretical, experimental, and quantitative methods are combined.

In the third section, the contributors exceed the borders of pure linguistic research by presenting language as a cultural phenomenon that cannot be neglected. Therefore, the reader has a chance to witness the interrelatedness of language and cultural change and to discover the role of language in cognitive experience, for instance, while reading Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* or viewing a film. In the article by Andrei Rogatchevski, the reader is taken to the border between language and visual stimuli, to the space where these two phenomena naturally blend: film. Rogatchevski explores how the two sides in the Cold War depicted each other in the spy movies they respectively made. This article not only analyzes two different approaches to creating an imaginary space in filmmaking but it also reminds the reader of the relevance that studying language has: it is an indistinguishable component of cognition in general. By combining the analysis of language and visuals, Rogatchevski expands on the notion of Janda (2015) that language, as an integral part of human cognition, could be studied in the context of other cognitive structures.

The volume concludes with Mark Turner's account of how Janda influenced his research journey, leading to a big-data project on the way linguists do science. In an apt way, Turner brings to the surface the *leitmotif* of the book, which is woven like a golden thread into the stories of all the previous scholars: that in *la femme* Laura A. Janda, we have found an invaluable source of inspiration, support, and progress to the world of linguistics.

**References**


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