

The differences between Czechs and Slovaks!

What's the difference between a Czech and a Slovak? This is not a joke! It could be but for now it is a question for you to think about.

Generally speaking the Czechs, who live in the 'heart of Europe', are culturally assertive, more dynamic and are mostly atheist. Their men more 'cunning'. Having formerly lived under Austrian rule they are regarded as rational good administrators. They look to Germany as a role model, preferring to distance themselves from Eastern Europe. The Slovaks who had been a part of the Hungarian Empire are regarded as more friendly, proud of their nationality, and are more hospitable. Slovaks are more temperamental, mostly Catholic and are regarded as more romantic. Slovak men are more aggressive. It is said that Slovak women are the most beautiful in the world. Czechs have a different mind set and different habits to Slovaks. Czechs like to regard themselves as more superior to Slovaks. This of course is absolute rubbish as both are equal. But it is known the Czechs like to look down on the Slovaks as the poorer class. Czechs are a bit snobbish about their Slovak neighbours!

Slovakia and the Czech Republic are in fact next door to each other. Once upon a time they were one country called Czechoslovakia. Since joining the EU many people from both countries have lived or currently live in the UK or Ireland. One Czech said: "Czechs care about themselves and are inward looking. Because Slovakia is so small most Slovaks look abroad out of necessity." Of course there are other differences today - like the currency. Since 2009 Slovaks have had the euro, which reduces the problems of foreign exchange and hence helps the country's stability. The euro makes it easier to do business, which is something the Czech Crown cannot do. It can have advantages - like cross border shopping. Tomas Sedlacek, an economic advisor to the former President Havel of the Czech Republic recently said: "It can be said that the Slovaks have become a proud nation. The Czechs have become the grumps of Europe. The Czechs were the model but the Slovaks have turned this around."

Category: Europe / Central Europe / Czechs & Slovaks

Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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The differences between Czechs and Slovaks – 25th February 2011

It is probably true, as during the 90s Slovakia's then Prime Minister Vladimir Mečiar isolated the country from the EU and NATO. Madeleine Albright, the then U.S. Secretary of State, described Slovakia as 'the black hole of middle Europe'. My, how things have changed! Both countries are now part of the EU, NATO and are now also part of the Schengen zone.

Both countries have reached out to investors. Slovakia saw huge reforms take place. Taxes were set at 19%. Businesses especially car companies were attracted to the country. Today Slovakia is known as 'the Detroit of the East', while in the Czech Republic Hyundai have set up shop alongside the world famous Skoda brand. Today in Slovakia Volkswagen is continuing to expand. Slovakia in the past few years has been playing the catch up game. A game it now appears to be winning.

Nevertheless, there appears to be a better standard of living in the Czech Republic. Services there are also better and are on a higher level than in Slovakia. Infrastructure too is very poor in Slovakia. It lacks motorways. The further east you go the poorer the resources, the poorer the people. Thus resentment creeps in creating a divide. Unfortunately successive governments have failed to address this issue properly. Of course this was happening long before the two countries split. Only then Prague took all the money, which today is channelled towards Bratislava.

As for the language, Czechs speak Czech and Slovaks speak Slovak. The language is similar. In the old days both knew each other's language. Today this is not so. While the young people in Slovakia know Czech the young Czechs do not learn Slovak – thinking they are superior and don't need to know it. This is a huge mistake, as it will only isolate the Czechs in the future. While the Slovaks watch Czech TV the Czechs watch little Slovak TV. In Slovakia bookshops are dominated by Czech literature. There aren't so many Slovak books in the Czech Republic (C.R.). Czech newspapers are sold in Slovakia but less so the other way around.

In the future far from being 'superior' the Czechs will have a big disadvantage over their neighbours who know both languages. An exception is Slovak pop music that is listened to in the C.R. The Czech population outnumbers the Slovaks by about two to one. There are 10.4m people living in the Czech Republic, 5.5m in Slovakia. Czech and Slovak beers are similar but Czech beers are more famous - Budweiser and Pilsner. I mean, who has heard of Šariš or Zlatý Bažant (Golden Pheasant) outside Slovakia?

EXERCISES

1. The Czech Republic and Slovakia: Briefly, what three things do you know about the Czech Republic and Slovakia?

2. Geography +: The Czech Republic and Slovakia: Where are the Czech Republic and Slovakia? What are their capitals? What countries surround them? Who are their Presidents? Who are their Prime Ministers? Draw a map on the board then **look on Google maps** to help you.

3. Dictation: The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

4. Reading: The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

5. Vocabulary: Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

6. The article: Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?

7. Let's think! Think of five similarities between Czechs and Slovaks. Then add five differences between the two countries. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these.

Five similarities	Five differences
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. Let's talk! In a pub: In pairs. Imagine you are in a pub. One of you is a barman/barmaid. The other is a local, who whilst propping up the bar orders a drink. You get talking about the differences between your nationality and another. *5-minutes.*

9. Let's debate: In pairs. Students A think Czechs are better than Slovaks. Students B think otherwise! Explain why.

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10. Let's think! In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with **Czechs/Slovaks**. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

11. Let's talk! Radio Free Europe: *In pairs/groups*. You are in the Radio Free Europe studio in Prague. One of you is the presenter; the other student(s) is/are one the people listed below. The subject today is 'The differences between Czechs and Slovaks'. Try to get a balanced interview. *5 minutes*.

1	A Czech	3	A Slovak
2	A journalist	4	A tourist

The teacher will choose some pairs to tell their stories in front of the class.

12. Let's do 'The Article Quiz': Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) Where do the Czechs live?
- 2) Who is more cunning?
- 3) What did one Czech say?
- 4) What did Tomas Sedlacek say?
- 5) Name the old Empire.

Student B

- 1) What is the population of each country?
- 2) Name the beers in each country.
- 3) What is Slovakia known as today?
- 4) What did Madeline Albright once say?
- 5) Name the car companies.

13. Presentation: In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a 2-minute presentation on: **The differences between Czechs and Slovaks**. Stand at the front of the class to give your presentation to the class. The class can vote on the best presentation. Class – After the presentations go through the good and weak points on each presentation. Learn from the results.

14. Let's write an e-mail: Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **The differences between Czechs and Slovaks**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

15. Sentence starters: Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) The Czechs _____
- b) Slovaks _____
- c) Czechs and Slovaks _____

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Why are most Czechs atheist?
- 3) Are Central European women pretty?
- 4) Why do Czechs think they are superior to their neighbours the Slovaks?
- 5) Do you think it is a good idea to have joint TV programmes between the two countries? Why? Why not?
- 6) What about the Moravians* in all of this discussion?
- 7) What three economic differences are there between the two countries?
- 8) What do you think of Czech and Slovak beer?
- 9) What advice would you offer young Czechs who aren't bothering to learn Slovak?
- 10) Is it still true that many Slovaks still look abroad out of necessity? Why? Why not?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) Compared with Czechs are Slovaks the poorer class? Why? Why not?
- 3) Why do Czechs prefer to look to Germany?
- 4) Is it true Slovak women are the most beautiful in the world?
- 5) Do you think it was a good idea to split Czechoslovakia?
- 6) Who has benefitted since the split of Czechoslovakia?
- 7) Are Czechs a bit snobby about their Slovak neighbours?
- 8) Why is Prague such a popular place to study?
- 9) Why doesn't Slovakia have its own Church of Slovakia?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

* Moravia forms the east part of The Czech Republic

SPEAKING

Let's debate! The difference between Czechs and Slovaks

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

The difference between Czechs and Slovaks

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Generally speaking the Czechs, who live in the '(1)_____ of Europe', are culturally assertive, more dynamic and are mostly atheist. Their men more '(2)_____'. Having formerly lived under Austrian rule they are regarded as rational good administrators. They look to Germany as a role model, preferring to distance themselves from Eastern Europe. The Slovaks who had been a part of the Hungarian Empire are regarded as more friendly, proud of their nationality, and are more (3)_____. Slovaks are more temperamental, mostly Catholic and are regarded as more (4)_____. Slovak men are more (5)_____. It is said that Slovak women are the most beautiful in the world. Czechs have a different mind set and different habits to Slovaks. Czechs like to regard themselves as more (6)_____ to Slovaks. This of course is absolute rubbish as both are equal. But it is known the Czechs like to look down on the Slovaks as the poorer class. Czechs are a bit (7)_____ about their Slovak (8)_____!

aggressive

snobbish

superior

hospitable

romantic

neighbours

cunning

heart

Slovakia and the Czech Republic are in fact next door to each other. Once upon a time they were one country called Czechoslovakia. Since joining the EU many people from both countries have lived or (1)_____ live in the UK or Ireland. One Czech said: "Czechs care about themselves and are inward looking. Because Slovakia is so small most Slovaks look abroad out of necessity." Of course there are other differences today - like the (2)_____. Since 2009 Slovaks have had the euro, which reduces the problems of foreign exchange and (3)_____ helps the country's (4)_____. The euro makes it easier to do business, which is something the Czech Crown cannot do. It can have advantages - like cross border (5)_____. Tomas Sedlacek, an economic (6)_____ to the former President Havel of the Czech Republic recently said: "It can be said that the Slovaks have become a proud nation. The Czechs have become the (7)_____ of Europe. The Czechs were the (8)_____ but the Slovaks have turned this around."

currency

advisor

model

shopping

currently

grumps

stability

hence

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Generally speaking the Czechs, who live in the 'heart of Europe', are culturally assertive, more dynamic and are mostly atheist. (1)___ men (2)___ 'cunning'. Having formerly lived under Austrian rule (3)___ are regarded as rational good administrators. They look to Germany as a role model, preferring to distance themselves (4)___ Eastern Europe. The Slovaks who had been a part of the Hungarian Empire are regarded as more friendly, proud of their nationality, and are more hospitable. Slovaks are more temperamental, (5)___ Catholic and are regarded as more romantic. Slovak men are more aggressive. It is said (6)___ Slovak women are the most beautiful in the world. Czechs have a different mind set and different habits to Slovaks. Czechs like to regard themselves as more superior to Slovaks. (7)___ of course is absolute rubbish as both are equal. (8)___ it is known the Czechs like to look down on the Slovaks as the poorer class. Czechs are a bit snobbish about their Slovak neighbours!

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	assertive	11	nevertheless
2	dynamic	12	infrastructure
3	atheist	13	stability
4	resentment	14	fluctuations
5	unfortunately	15	hospitable
6	successive	16	administrators
7	stability	17	temperamental
8	superior	18	aggressive
9	grumps	19	snobbish
10	romantic	20	necessity

LINKS

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Differences_between_the_Slovak_and_Czech_languages

<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20090211161255AAk78Zj>

<http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curaffrs/how-different-are-czechs-and-slovaks>

<http://society-culture.indie.my/2010/09/28/what-is-the-difference-between-slovak-czech-and-russian-languages/>

<http://www.fgslovakia.com/2010/3/12/czech-slovak-mutually-intelligible>

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: The differences between Czechs and Slovaks! Generally speaking the Czechs, who live in the '**heart**' of Europe', are culturally assertive, more dynamic and are mostly atheist. Their men more '**cunning**'. Having formerly lived under Austrian rule they are regarded as rational good administrators. They look to Germany as a role model, preferring to distance themselves from Eastern Europe. The Slovaks who had been a part of the Hungarian Empire are regarded as more friendly, proud of their nationality, and are more **hospitable**. Slovaks are more temperamental, mostly Catholic and are regarded as more **romantic**. Slovak men are more **aggressive**. It is said that Slovak women are the most beautiful in the world. Czechs have a different mind set and different habits to Slovaks. Czechs like to regard themselves as more **superior** to Slovaks. This of course is absolute rubbish as both are equal. But it is known the Czechs like to look down on the Slovaks as the poorer class. Czechs are a bit **snobbish** about their Slovak **neighbours**!

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