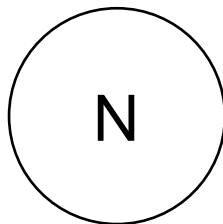


NOMINATIVE:



A NAME

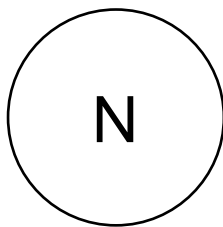
The nominative network:

A NAME ——— AN IDENTITY

Prologue

As you probably suspect, the nominative case is relatively simple and straightforward.¹ It is the logical starting point both for our survey of the cases and for many sentences. In addition to its basic meaning, NOMINATIVE: A NAME, this case has just one submeaning, NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY. Whereas NOMINATIVE: A NAME has a very broad naming function, NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY has a more narrow function, targeting a characteristic of something that has already been named. You can think of NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY as being a specialized version of NOMINATIVE: A NAME, used when we want to convey more information.

NOMINATIVE: A NAME 1 — Naming and citations



NOMINATIVE: A NAME

Because it does not have any other more specific meaning, the nominative is ideal even for use outside of a sentence, such as: pointing to an object and naming it; signs, tags, labels, titles, and similar naming devices.² The fact that dictionaries cite nouns in the nominative case is a symptom of the nominative's function as the primary name for an item or idea; the other case forms are all variations on the nominative, secondary and derived. The following two sentences show how NOMINATIVE: A NAME is used to point something out and to cite lists of items:

Hele, **opičák!**
 [Look, **monkey-NOM!**]
 Look, **a monkey!**

Obličeje pevně **sešněrované** předivem vrásek, **vybledlé oči**, **pootevřená ústa**, hle: **strohá uniformita** stáří.
 [Faces-NOM firmly **laced-NOM** fabric-INST wrinkles-GEN, **faded eyes-NOM**, **slightly-opened mouths-NOM**, behold: **severe uniformity-NOM** age-GEN.]
 Faces firmly laced with a fabric of wrinkles, faded eyes, slightly opened mouths; behold the severe uniformity of old age.

¹ An overview of the nominative case.

² The naming function of NOMINATIVE: A NAME.

A great variety of expressions are used to indicate names, such as *jmenovat se* ‘be named’, *na-zvat* ‘name, call’, as well as words referring to titles and signs, and these are often associated with NOMINATIVE: A NAME, as we see in these sentences:

Měl dvě dcery, mladší se jmenovala **Lena** a byla moje spolužačka.
 [Had two daughters-ACC, younger-NOM self-ACC named **Lena-NOM** and was my classmate-NOM.]
 He had two daughters, the younger one was named **Lena** and she was my classmate.

A i když je v hlubinách vesmíru ukryto nevidané množství vesmírných těles, vždy se s obdivem vracíme ke klenotu zvanému **Země**.
 [And even though is in depths-LOC universe-GEN hidden-NOM unseen multitude-NOM heavenly bodies-GEN, always self-ACC with admiration-INST return to jewel-DAT called-DAT **Earth-NOM**.]
 And even though an unseen multitude of heavenly bodies is hidden in the depths of the universe, we always return with admiration to the jewel called **Earth**.

Je to kolektivní snímek s nápisem **PRAŽSKÁ FILHARMONIE 1986**.
 [Is it-NOM group photo-NOM with title-INST **PRAGUE PHILHARMONIC-NOM 1986-NOM**.]
 It is a group photo with the title **PRAGUE PHILHARMONIC 1986**.

Četl jsem v novinách zajímavý článek s titulkem **Rozčarování**.
 [Read AUX in newspaper-LOC interesting article-ACC with title-INST **Disappointment-NOM**.]
 In the newspaper I read an interesting article with the title **Disappointment**.

Although the vocative case is normally used when calling someone by first name or title, the nominative can also be used, particularly when the last name is preceded by the vocative form *pane* ‘Sir!’, as in:³

Pane **Louka**, vy jste ty práporky nevystřčil! (CCz)
 [Mr.-VOC **Louka-NOM**, you-NOM AUX those flags-ACC not-put-up!]
 Mr. **Louka**, you didn’t put up the flags!

NOMINATIVE: A NAME 2 — The mobile subject of a sentence

In most sentences the nominative names the subject, the active head of most sentences.⁴ Because words are marked with cases, there is no need for a nominative subject to be the first item in a sentence, as in English. The thing that identifies the subject is its nominative case, not its position; no matter where it is, it can be identified as nominative and therefore subject. As we will see, the same goes for the other cases as well: since each item in a sentence is flagged with a case ending indicating its role, the order of words doesn’t matter as much. The word order we are familiar with from English is probably the most common one used in Czech, but there are many other possibilities, thanks to the fact that speakers of Czech can read the case flags no matter where they are waving. Here are some examples of nominative subjects, both at the beginnings of sentences and elsewhere:

³ The use of NOMINATIVE: A NAME in place of VOCATIVE: A CALL.

⁴ NOMINATIVE: A NAME as the subject of a sentence isn’t always at the beginning.

***Václav Havel** jednal s kardinálem Vlkem o vztazích mezi státem a církví.

[**Václav Havel-NOM** negotiated with Cardinal Vlk-INST about relations-LOC between state-INST and church-INST.]

Václav Havel negotiated with Cardinal Vlk about relations between the state and the church.

*Letošní cenu česko-německého porozumění dostanou **podnikatelé** z mladoboleslavské automobilky Škoda.

[This-year's prize-ACC Czech-German understanding-GEN will-get **businessmen-NOM** from Mladá-Boleslav car-factory-GEN Škoda-NOM.]

Businessmen from the Mladá Boleslav Škoda car factory will get this year's prize for Czech-German understanding.

*Na opravenou kupoli věže chrámu svatého Víta se vrátil **český lev**.

[To renovated cupola-ACC tower-GEN cathedral-GEN St. Vitus-GEN self-ACC returned **Czech lion-NOM**.]

The Czech lion has returned to the renovated cupola on the tower of St. Vitus' cathedral.

Notice how we have to completely re-juggle the following sentence in order to translate it into English. In Czech there is no reason why the subject can't come last, as *asteroidy* does in the first clause where it is the subject of an active verb. Because English requires the subject to come first, the only way we could keep this word order would be by passivizing the verb, and saying 'A very serious threat is presented by asteroids which...'

Velmi vážné ohrožení představují **asteroidy, které** mají proletět nebezpečně blízko Země.

[Very serious threat-ACC present **asteroids-NOM, which-NOM** have fly-through dangerously close Earth-GEN.]

Asteroids which are supposed to fly dangerously close to Earth present a very serious threat.

The subject of a sentence need not engage in any real action in order to serve as the source of energy for a verb; it can merely exist.⁵ Here is an example of NOMINATIVE: A NAME serving as the subject for the verb *být* 'be':

Ten váš muž tu už zase byl. Co mu mám proboha říct? (CCz)

[**That your husband-NOM** here already again was. What-ACC him-DAT have for-God say?]

That husband of yours was here again already. What the heck should I tell him?

NOMINATIVE: A NAME 3 — Emphatic vs. omitted subject pronouns

When the subject of a sentence is already known, it can be referred to by using a pronoun: *já* 'I', *ty* 'you (singular and informal)', *on* 'he/it', *ona* 'she/it', *my* 'we', *vy* 'you (plural or formal)', *oni/ony/ona* 'they'.⁶ In Czech these pronouns are usually used for nominative subjects only when the speaker is adding emphasis, as in the following examples:

Pan asistent leží kdesi v cizině vážně nemocen a **vy** myslíte jenom na svoji recenzi!

[Mr. lecturer-NOM lies somewhere in foreign-lands-LOC seriously ill-NOM and **you-NOM** think only about own book-review-ACC!]

The lecturer is lying seriously ill somewhere abroad and all **you** are thinking about is your book review!

⁵ NOMINATIVE: A NAME as the subject of *být* 'be'.

⁶ Emphatic use of subject pronouns.

No Jano, **ty** jsi prostě strašná!
 [Well, Jana-VOC, **you-NOM** are just terrible-NOM!]
 Well, Jana, **you** are just terrible!

Rodiče se o mě příliš nestarali, **oni** si žili, jako bych nebyla.
 [Parents-NOM self-ACC about me-ACC much not-tried, **they-NOM** self-DAT lived, as
 AUX not-was.]
 My parents didn't trouble themselves too much about me, **they** lived it up as if I didn't
 exist.

My jsme na české poměry velká firma, ale na světové poměry velice malá.
 [**We-NOM** are for Czech proportions-ACC large company-NOM, but for world
 proportions-ACC very small-NOM.]
 By Czech standards **we** are a big company, but by the world's standards we are very small.

Sometimes a pronoun is used alongside the nominative subject for extra emphasis. In the first two of the following sentences, this use of an “extra” pronoun is possible in both Czech and English, but in the third and fourth examples, Czech has pronouns where we can't use them in English.

Uvědomte si, že **my Norové** se rodíme s lyžemi na nohou.
 [Comprehend self-DAT, that **we-NOM Norwegians-NOM** self-ACC give-birth with skis-
 INST on feet-LOC.]
 You have to understand that **we Norwegians** are born with skis on our feet.

Vy, takový znalec, jak můžete tak černě posuzovat své postavení!
 [**You-NOM, such expert-NOM**, how can so blackly judge own position-ACC!]
You, such an expert, how can you judge your own position so severely!

On ten von Ribbentrop byl totiž příjemný a kultivovaný chlapík.
 [**He-NOM that von Ribbentrop-NOM** was after-all pleasant-NOM and cultured guy-
 NOM.]
 After all, **that von Ribbentrop** was a pleasant and cultured guy.

Ona se někdy **ta demokracie** nemá přehánět.
 [**It-NOM** self-ACC sometimes **that democracy-NOM** not-have exaggerate.]
 Sometimes **democracy** shouldn't be exaggerated.

In normal, neutral sentences, where there is no special emphasis, nominative subject pronouns are commonly dropped.⁷ In LCz it is generally the rule that you must drop a nominative subject pronoun that is not emphasized. Note that in Czech you generally don't lose any information by dropping a nominative subject pronoun, because Czech verbs almost always give us plenty enough clues to figure out what the subject pronoun is even when it's missing.

Zapálil svíčku zasazenou do prázdné láhve.
 [Lit candle-ACC stuck-ACC to empty bottle-GEN.]
He lit a candle stuck in an empty bottle.

Mlčky nasedli do auta.
 [Silently sat to car-GEN.]
They silently got into the car.

⁷ Non-emphatic subject pronouns are usually dropped.

Už dávno nejsem kněz.
 [Already long-time am-not priest-NOM.]
 I haven't been a priest for a long time already.

In Colloquial Czech, however, the pronouns often appear even when they are not particularly emphatic, as we see in these sentences:

Voni vás tak neznají, nevědí, že je to sranda. (CCz)
 [They-NOM you-ACC thus not-know, not-know, that is that-NOM fun-NOM.]
 They don't know you, they don't know that it's a joke.

Já jim to pak řeknu, rovnou do očí! (CCz)
 [I-NOM them-DAT that-ACC then will-tell, directly to eyes-GEN!]
 I'll tell them it then, right to their face!

In the examples with the missing pronouns above, there is a subject that is known to both the speaker and the hearer; in other words, the missing pronouns actually refer to specific persons.⁸ Sometimes, however, languages use 'they' to refer to no one in particular, just people in general (or the media). In English we often hear sentences like *They say that's a great movie* or *They say it's supposed to rain this afternoon*. Czech has equivalent expressions, but the pronoun *oni* 'they' is omitted:

V každém podniku, kde se ptá po zaměstnání, říkají, že musí mít v Praze trvalé bydliště.
 [In every business-LOC, where self-ACC asks for employment-LOC, say, that must have in Prague-LOC permanent residence-ACC.]
 At every business where he asks for employment **they** say that he must have permanent residence in Prague.

In all of the sentences in this section there is a grammatical subject, and both speaker and hearer know what it is, even if we don't hear a pronoun coming from the speaker's lips.⁹ In fact, the vast majority of Czech sentences do have nominative subjects. However, there are sentences that do not have subjects at all — some examples of subjectless sentences appear in the discussions of GENITIVE:: A WHOLE, DATIVE:: AN EXPERIENCER, and INSTRUMENTAL: A MEANS.

NOMINATIVE: A NAME 4 — The use of *to* as a “dummy *it*” and emphasizer

English is quite consistent about having subjects for all sentences, even adding the so-called “dummy *it*” when there is no logical subject, as in *It's raining/cold outside* (if you stop to think about it, you will realize that *It* really doesn't refer to anything here).¹⁰ In Czech this kind of sentence usually doesn't have a subject at all: *Prší/je zima venku* [Rains/is cold outside] ‘It's raining/cold outside’. *To* can be used like English ‘that’ to refer to something (which may be rather indefinite, or represent an entire sentence or situation):

To přece není možné!
 [That-NOM just is-not possible!]
 That just isn't possible!

⁸ Dropped *oni* ‘they’ can also refer to no one in particular.

⁹ Most Czech sentences have a subject, but some do not.

¹⁰ Czech *to* can serve as the subject of a sentence, and it can also be emphatic.

Stalo se **to** v době, kdy jeho fotografie nebyly ještě vůbec známé.

[Happened self-ACC **that-NOM** in period-LOC, when his photographs-NOM not-were still at-all famous-NOM.]

It happened at a time when his photographs were not yet famous at all.

Je **to** skoro čtyřiapůlkrát více než za stejné období loňského roku.

[Is **that-NOM** almost four-and-a-half-times more than for same period-ACC last year-GEN.]

It's almost four and a half times more than for the same period last year.

In addition, *to* can be used to add stress, either as an emphatic “dummy *it*” or as an emphatic sentence particle that is not really a subject. For example, *Tady prší* [Here rains] ‘It’s raining here’ is a neutral statement, but if it’s really coming down hard, you can add *to* and say ***To tady prší!*** ‘Wow, it’s really raining here!’ In that sentence and in all three examples below *to* is not filling a required grammatical role; all of these sentences are just fine without *to*, but with *to* they are emphatic:

Co ho **to** jen napadlo, taková nerozvážnost!

[What-NOM him-ACC **that-NOM** only fell-on, such imprudence-NOM!]

What’s **it that** has gotten into him? Such imprudence!

To mám ale radost!

[**That-NOM** have but joy-ACC!]

Boy, am I glad!

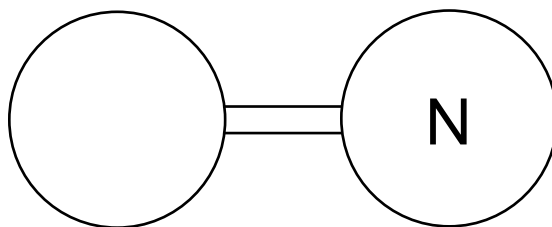
To jsme nepředpokládali, že most by mohl být tak poškozen.

[**That-NOM** AUX not-anticipated, that bridge-NOM AUX could be so damaged-NOM.]

Well, we didn’t anticipate that the bridge could be so damaged.

NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY 1 — The Y in an X = Y sentence

Even when you have already given something a name, you might want to give more information about the item, to tell us that it is a certain type of thing, or big or unusual or whatever.¹¹ The basis of this submeaning is a simple equation of the type $x = y$, where y is NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY. The bond between x and y is typically the verb *být* ‘be’. The other item, x , is typically NOMINATIVE: A NAME, the subject of the sentence (and remember that if the subject is a pronoun, it is usually dropped). This use of NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY is traditionally known as the “predicate nominative”. In the following $x = y$ sentences, x is *Klára*, *domovník* ‘the janitor’, *slepá ulička* ‘a dead-end alley’, and *vy* ‘you’ (even though the pronoun itself is missing). The NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY, or y , is represented by the bold-faced items below.



NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY

¹¹ NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY with *být* ‘be’

Klára byla **dvacetiletá dívka** z dobré rodiny.
 [Klára-NOM was **twenty-year-old girl-NOM** from good family-GEN.]
 Klára was a **twenty-year-old girl** from a good family.

Domovník není **nepřítel**.
 [Janitor-NOM is-not **enemy-NOM**.]
 The janitor isn't an **enemy**.

Slepá ulička je **místo** mých nejlepších inspirací.
 [Blind alley-NOM is **place-NOM** my best inspirations-GEN.]
 The dead-end alley is **the place** of my best inspirations.

Jste **moje jediná záchrana**.
 [Are **my only salvation-NOM**.]
 You are **my only salvation**.

Since both terms in the $x = y$ equation refer to the same thing, the item marked as NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY can be just an adjective, adding extra information, as in:¹²

Každý lidský život je velmi **mnohoznačný**.
 [Every human life-NOM is very **ambiguous-NOM**.]
 Every human life is very **ambiguous**.

Ó, jste příliš **skromný**.
 [Oh, are too **modest**.]
 Oh, you are too **modest**.

Czech has some special short forms for adjectives that are used only as NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY.¹³ The most common is the adjective *rád* 'glad' which is used in both CCz and LCz and has only short forms:

Moje matka s přítelkyní by byly **rády**, kdybych už do závodního auta nesedal.
 [My mother-NOM with friend-INST AUX were **glad-NOM**, if already to race car-GEN not-sat.]
 My mother and her friend would be **glad** if I never got into another race car.

Přece víš, že tě mám **rád**, vidíš?
 [After-all know, that you-ACC have **glad-NOM**, see?]
 But you know that I **like** you, right?

Certain adjectives have short forms, but the use of short forms is more characteristic of LCz than of CCz. The most common short forms are *hotov* formed from *hotový* 'ready', *jist* formed from *jistý* 'sure', *laskav* formed from *laskavý* 'kind', *nemocen* formed from *nemocný* 'ill', *schopen* formed from *schopný* 'capable', and *zdráv* formed from *zdravý* 'healthy'. In addition, Czech can use the short forms of participles in this way (contrasting *dopis byl napsán* 'the letter was written' with *napsaný dopis* 'the written letter'). One is more likely to encounter the short form participles in LCz than CCz, but note the use of short form *bit* 'beaten' in the CCz song lyric below. Like *rád*, all short forms, whether of adjectives or participles, can appear only as NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY:

¹² NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY with adjectives.

¹³ NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY with short-form adjectives and participles.

Nepudu domů, nepudu domů, doma byl bych **bit!** (CCz)
 [Not-go home, not-go home, home was AUX **beaten-NOM!**]
 I'm not going home, I'm not going home, at home I would be **beaten!**

Během obsazení Francie byly dokumenty naštěstí **zničeny**.
 [During occupation-GEN France-GEN were documents-NOM fortunately **destroyed-NOM.**]
 Fortunately the documents were **destroyed** during the occupation of France.

V jednom z varšavských parků byl **nalezen** bezdomovec, který zemřel na podchlazení.
 [In one-LOC from Warsaw parks-GEN was **found-NOM** homeless-person-NOM, who-NOM died on hypothermia-ACC.]
 A homeless person who died of hypothermia was **found** in a park in Warsaw.

Note that the verb doesn't have to be *být* 'be' — other verbs, particularly position verbs, work here too. Recall our example above of the lecturer, repeated in part below. Here the verb *ležet* 'lie' does the job usually done by *být* 'be', and we still have a short form adjective *nemocen* 'ill':

Pan asistent leží kdesi v cizině vážně **nemocen** a ...
 [Mr. lecturer-NOM lies somewhere in foreign-lands-LOC seriously **ill-NOM** and ...]
 The lecturer is lying seriously **ill** somewhere abroad and ...

In reality Czech has two kinds of $x = y$ expressions, the relatively simple identity described here, and a different one that involves labeling x as a member of category y , in which case y is marked as INSTRUMENTAL:: A LABEL.¹⁴ Here is one example for comparison:

Proč nejsem ctitelem Václava Klause
 [Why am-not admirer-INST Václav Klaus-GEN]
 Why I am not an admirer of Václav Klaus

This example is the title of a newspaper editorial in which the author writes about how he would like to be an admirer of Václav Klaus, but can't at the moment, because of the way Klaus has been behaving. This use of INSTRUMENTAL:: A LABEL is more typical of LCz than CCz (which could produce *Proč nejsem **ctitel** Václava Klause*), and will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter on the instrumental case. For now it is enough to note that although both the nominative and the instrumental cases can be used to describe an item, NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY is the more neutral expression, whereas INSTRUMENTAL:: A LABEL tends to describe properties that are limited to a certain context. Remember that an identity is something that is permanent, whereas a label can be taken off and exchanged.

NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY 2 — $X = Y$ reduced to XY

The construction associated with NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY can appear in an abbreviated form, without any verb to connect the two entities.¹⁵ In this construction we see a word that refers to a generic category (like 'bank', 'state', 'novel') followed by the specific name or title of something in that category (like 'Bohemia'). The word for the generic category can be in any case, but the actual name (commonly known as the appositive) can be either in the case that the generic word is in, or NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY. Thus one can say either *Jdeme do banky Bohemie* [Go to bank-GEN Bohemia-GEN] 'We are going to the Bohemia bank', where the generic word *banky* 'bank' is in the genitive case, and the name of the bank *Bohemie* is also genitive; or one can say *Jdeme do*

¹⁴ Contrast between nominative:: an identity and instrumental:: a label with *být* 'be'

¹⁵ NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY can be used to give specific names to examples of categories.

banky Bohemia [Go to bank-GEN **Bohemia-NOM**] ‘We are going to the **Bohemia** bank’, where the name of the bank is appears as NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY. Here are some more examples:

*Oblast zasáhla série slabých zemětřesení, která měla epicentrum v obci **Nový Kostel**.
[Region-ACC struck series-NOM weak earthquakes, which-NOM had epicenter-ACC in town-LOC **Nový Kostel-NOM**.]
The region was struck by a series of weak earthquakes which had their epicenter in the town of **Nový Kostel**.

Devadesát metrů dlouhá pasáž ústí do ulice **Masarykova**.
[Ninety-NOM meter-GEN long passageway-NOM leads to street-GEN **Masaryk's-NOM**.]
A ninety-meter-long passageway leads into **Masaryk** Street.

Zítra ve dvacet hodin zahraje v divadle **Archa** pražské Divadlo Sklep hru **Besídka**.
[Tomorrow at twenty-ACC hours-GEN performs in theater-LOC **Archa-NOM** Prague Theater-NOM Sklep-NOM play-ACC **Besídka-NOM**.]
Tomorrow at eight pm the Prague Sklep theater company will perform the play **Besídka** in the **Archa** theater.

NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY 3 — Y as a comparison with *jako* ‘like’ or *než* ‘than’

Czech *jako* ‘like’ can also be used to introduce an item identified with the nominative subject and marked as NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY:

Připadal jsem si jako **kluk**.
[Seemed AUX self-DAT like **boy-NOM**.]
I felt like **a boy**.

*Za měsíc budu mluvit jako **kniha**.
[In month-ACC will talk like **book-NOM**.]
In a month I’ll be talking like **a book**/perfectly.

When a comparison is made by using a comparative adjective or adverb in Czech, the item that something is bigger or better than follows the word *než* ‘than’ and appears in the nominative case, as we see in the following examples:

Otec hlasitě chrápal za zavřenými dveřmi a ráno vstal dříve než **Petr**.
[Father-NOM loudly snored behind closed door-INST and morning got-up sooner than **Petr-NOM**.]
Father snored loudly behind the closed door and in the morning he got up earlier than **Petr**.

Na celém světě pravděpodobně neexistuje známější lék než **Aspirin**.
[On all world-LOC probably not-exists better-known medicine-NOM than **Aspirin-NOM**.]
In all the world there is probably no medicine better known than **Aspirin**.

NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY 4 — Y as something perceived with *vidět* ‘see’ and *slyšet* ‘hear’

Czech has an unusual construction for saying that something can be seen or heard.¹⁶ This construction consists of the verb *být* ‘be’ + an infinitive verb of perception, usually *vidět* ‘see’ or *slyšet* ‘hear’ + the thing that is seen or heard marked as NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY. A typical example is *Je vidět hora* [Is see **mountain-NOM**] ‘A **mountain** is visible’.

Z domu byla slyšet **veselá hudba** a **hovor**, který propukal v nevázaný smích.

[From house-GEN was hear **cheerful music-NOM** and **conversation-NOM**, which-NOM broke-out into uninhibited laughter-ACC.]

Cheerful music was heard from the house and **conversation** which broke out into uninhibited laughter.

The thing seen or heard looks a bit like a subject here, but the real force of the statement is a subjectless expression meaning something like ‘A mountain can be seen’, where the logic is more suggestive of a direct object. In fact, these constructions can alternatively use ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION, as we see in: *Je vidět horu* [Is see mountain-ACC] ‘A mountain is visible’. This use of the accusative case confirms the idea that Czechs probably don’t understand these constructions as having subjects (see more about this in the chapter on the accusative case).

Epilogue

To recap: the nominative case can be used to identify someone or something by name, to name the subject of a sentence, and also to indicate what an item is. The nominative is all about naming, and it should not surprise you that the very term “nominative” is related to our English word *name*. Though not all Czech sentences have nominative subjects, the vast majority do, and your strategy should be to look first for a nominative subject and its verb; once you find these two items, the rest of the sentence becomes easier to unpack. The remaining chapters of this book will reveal the meanings of the other cases and demonstrate their functions. Czech operates on an austere and powerful little system, using only seven cases to describe all the possible relationships that human beings encounter in their lives. As the pieces fall into place, you will gradually become acculturated to the logic of Czech sentences, and you will find that each case takes on a life of its own.

¹⁶ NOMINATIVE:: AN IDENTITY identifies things that are seen or heard.