

A PRAGIAN VIEW OF PROFESSOR JOSEF HLADKÝ'S WORK

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Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, it gives me great pleasure to open this conference held in honour of Professor Josef Hladký, yet at the same time I am filled with apprehension that I am not able to do him justice. To give at least a fairly satisfactory account of Professor Hladký's work would require much longer than the time allotted, and, more importantly, much more extensive previous study of his writings. As it is, I can only present an outline of his main professional concerns and refer you to the authors of previous anniversary articles published on the occasion of his sixtieth and seventieth birthdays: above all the late Professor Jan Firbas (1991), Professor Urbanová (2002) and Dr. Chamonikolasová (2002). They were much better qualified in this respect since they have long been working with Professor Hladký in close contact. Hopefully, the present occasion will give a stimulus to repaying a debt owed to him, viz. the publication of a supplement to his bibliography compiled by Dr. Golková (1991), which covers the period 1957-1991.

Though greatly handicapped by having such renowned predecessors, I have one advantage they could not share: the coincidence of the present occasion with the eightieth anniversary of the foundation of the Prague Linguistic Circle. Professor Hladký's teachers, the Circle's members of the second and third generation, instigated him to study and further develop the ideas of the Prague School of Linguistics, which leads me to present the results of his professional pursuits within this framework.

Let me start with the spheres that bear clear marks of the founder of the Circle, Vilém Mathesius. Although Professor Hladký could not know him personally - he was only fourteen when Mathesius died - he was introduced to Mathesius' ideas by his teacher, the late Professor Josef Vachek, who had been the secretary of the Circle from the fifth term of his university studies and its member practically from the same time. When he became director of linguistic studies in the Brno Department of English after the war, an office held by him for seventeen years, his younger colleagues and pupils were able to benefit from his close connection with the Circle and long relationship, both professional and personal, with Mathesius himself. There are several spheres of Professor Hladký's professional interests, obviously inspired by Mathesius' linguistic

pursuits. This is not to say that Professor Hladký only followed up the ideas of his great predecessor: they were further developed in diverse respects and brought to the current state-of-the-art. The main spheres, which may be subsumed under contrastive linguistics, include on the one hand linguistic characterology, studies concerned with modality, word classes and sentence condensation, and on the other hand functional onomatology and lexicology. The contrastive approach actually pervades nearly all Professor Hladký's work, recurring as one of the leitmotifs of his research work.

Professor Hladký's interest in contrastive studies goes back to the very beginnings of his academic career, the subject of his CSc. dissertation having been linguistic characterology of English (*Príspevky k lingvistické charakteristice anglického jazyka* 1967). The point has been resumed in recent years in his handbook intended, in his wording, "for advanced beginners" (1991) with an evocative title *Nebojme se angličtiny* (Let's not fear English), and in the revision of Josef Vachek's *Linguistic Characterology of Modern English* (3rd edition 1990).

His contrastive study dealing with modality ("Parts of Speech and Spheres of Modality in English and Czech" 1983) is a corpus-based treatise investigating texts from different functional styles, in which Professor Hladký demonstrates what might be called a stronger tendency to hedging in English, apparent in the lower frequency of expressions conveying certainty. Moreover, it also shows the difference in the formal means between Czech and English in the expression of modality: Czech modal adverbs often correspond to modal verbs in English. This finding again evokes Mathesius (1961: 170), who pointed out the tendency of English to use inserted clauses (now usually referred to as comment clauses) where Czech employs adverbs. The study devoted to the representation of word classes ("A contrastive view of adverb frequency in English and in Czech" 1981), again based on contrastive textual material, reveals a much higher frequency of occurrence of derived adverbs in Czech, half of which correspond to nonadverbial expressions in English (mostly nouns, adjectives or verbs). This is regarded as a manifestation of the nominal tendencies in English, projected onto the level of functional sentence perspective as a manifestation of the strong tendency of the English verb to perform the FSP function of transition. The nominal tendencies of English are also transparently demonstrated in the studies on sentence condensation, often referred to among others by syntacticians ("Remarks on complex condensation phenomena in some English and Czech contexts" 1961, "An attempt at a quantitative expression of the communicative value of the verb in English and Czech" 1968, "A note on the quantitative evaluation of the verb in

English” 1969). In the first of these studies Professor Hladký revealed not only essential differences between English and Czech, consisting in the much lower degree of condensation in Czech as compared with English, but also differences between simple narrative prose (fairy tales), narrative prose and professional prose within each of the two languages. While this study concentrates on the *ing*-forms and participles, the third complements it by considering the condensing function of the infinitive. Here Professor Hladký had to solve the problem of distinguishing between infinitives that perform the condensing function and those which fail as candidates for this function. The results show a correlation between decreasing semantic value of the verb and increasing degree of condensation. Being based diachronically, the study anticipates Professor Hladký’s writings concerned with the historical development of English.

Professor Hladký’s comprehensive approach combining several methods of treatment and capturing several aspects of the phenomena under study, apparent from what has already been said, is also manifest in his lexicological and lexicographical works. The major ones are widely known not only to the strictly professional but also to the much wider public. I am referring to his *Zrádná slova v angličtině* (False Friends in English) (1990) and *The Czech and the English Names of Mushrooms* (1996). The interest in terminology presumably dates from his early days of employment as interpreter, translator and patent researcher in the First Brno Engineering Works, and later as a teacher of English at the Electrical Engineering Faculty of the Brno Technical University. The choice of the terminological field I suppose to be due to his personal preferences. Recalling his lecture in Prague on this subject I recollect the lively interest and wide response it met with in the audience. His False Friends, though apparently a practical handbook, clearly shows what difficult theoretical problems the author was faced with and how aptly they can be solved (cf. Kudmáčová 1991). The selection of the entries demonstrates both the author’s wide theoretical erudition (etymological, stylistic, terminological and other) and his keen awareness of the problems these words pose to Czech users.

In these dictionaries, as in most of his other works from the field of lexicology and lexicography, Professor Hladký has advanced a long way from Mathesius’ functional onomatology, but still remained faithful to it: the 4th edition of his *Functional Onomatology of the English Language* appeared in 1998. The wide range of his lexicological interests is amply shown by the subjects of his other lexicological studies: “On the function of some deverbative nouns in *-er*” (1979), which again examines material drawn from three different functional styles and applies the contrastive approach, in addition to dealing with a number

of theoretical problems such as the distinction between lexicalized and ad hoc formations, the meanings involved, and the relationship between the verb and its nominal *-er* derivative. A point of contrastive interest is the finding that though possessing a large number of deverbative nouns Czech does not lend itself to ad hoc formations. The paper “Frozen forms in Czech and English” (1995) is again concerned with foreign words, but from a viewpoint which differs from the underlying concern of *Zrádná slova v angličtině*: here Professor Hladký draws his subject matter from the boundary between domestic words, and foreign words or loans from other languages, viz. words with petrified or fossilized form such as *bona fide*. Many frozen forms taken over from Latin undergo reinterpretation according to the grammatical system of the receiving language, which becomes more obvious in synthetic Czech than in analytic English. The treatment involves etymological, historical and stylistic aspects which require wide linguistic erudition. Similar problems are dealt with in the treatise modestly entitled “Notes on reduplicative words in English” (1998), presenting an extensive original list of nearly two and half thousand reduplicatives from a systemic viewpoint. To complete the picture of the width of Professor Hladký’s lexicological interests, as far as it emerges from his published works, two pedagogically oriented handbooks have to be mentioned: *Slovní zásoba anglického denního tisku* (The lexis of English newspapers) (1975, 1979) and *Anglická čítanka a cvičebnice pro právníky* (A reader and textbook of legal English) (1984). There is still a debt to be paid to Professor Hladký’s lexicographical pursuits, viz. at least a fleeting mention of his recent extensive survey of new English dictionaries, *Nové anglické slovníky* (2002).

Regrettably, the most recent trend in Professor Hladký’s lexicological research is not evidenced in print, it was noted at two recent academic events where he lectured on the relationship between British and American English (at the conference in Budmerice in Slovakia, held in October 2004 on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the foundation of English studies in Slovakia, and at the First Brno Seminar on Linguistic Studies in English, held at the Faculty of Education, Masaryk University in 2005). Let’s hope this gap will soon be filled.

Among other members of the Prague Linguistic Circle Professor Hladký found most support and inspiration in his teacher, the late Professor Josef Vachek. The spheres shared by these two scholars include the history of English, written language and historiography. In the first of these spheres Professor Hladký began to work as early as 1957 when he produced an index of Old English, Middle English, Early New English and Modern English words in Josef Vachek’s *Historický vývoj angličtiny*. Publication of historical textbooks connected with

his teaching assignments continued throughout his pedagogic career: after three editions of a *Reader* for the seminar on the historical development of English (1977, 1982, 1985), its revised 4th edition in 1998 (*An Old English, Middle English, and Early New English Reader*) and a *Diachronic Dictionary* supplementing the *Reader*, a synthesis of these works appeared in book form under the title *A Guide to Pre-Modern English* (2003).

As regards Professor Hladký's pursuits with respect to written language, he has essentially contributed to the clarification of the vexed problem of word division. He treated this question in several studies (three of which appeared in the same year 1985: "A note on word division in English", "Notes on the history of word division in English", "Word division in Caxton and Dryden"; the fourth, "Word division and syllabification in English" appeared a year later in 1986). Basically, he identified three criteria, the first of which can perhaps be simply rephrased as the influence of pronunciation, the other two being morphological/etymological, and the conditions in consonant pairs and consonant clusters. In addition, attention was paid to the differences between British and American English, and the diachronic aspect revealing the changes that have been taking place in this respect. There is yet another study from this field, *The Orthography of British Trade Names* (1971), dealing with the deviations from English orthography. Using a large corpus, Professor Hladký has shown that these words display peripheral grapheme-phoneme correspondences, lacking the regular features of English orthography (very likely a consequence of the marketing strategy).

As a historiographer Professor Hladký distinguished himself internationally as the author of "The History and the Present State of English Studies in the Czech Republic" (which appeared in *European English Studies* in 2000). For the domestic public he prepared two most meritorious major works, one devoted to his teacher - *Josef Vachek v dopisech a vzpomínkách*, published in 1998, the other to Vilém Mathesius (*Paměti a jiné rukopisy*), for the appearance of which we are still waiting. Both these works fittingly complement the late Professor Vachek's writings on the Prague school *Prolegomena k dějinám pražské školy jazykovědné* and *Vzpomínky českého anglisty*. Let me add a personal remark on the yet unpublished *Memoirs and other manuscripts of Vilém Mathesius*: Professor Hladký had chosen it as the subject of one of his Prague lectures, and again he could not have chosen better: his audience was highly appreciative.

Exceptionally wide as the range of Professor Hladký's research activities may appear from what has so far been said, two more lines involving the most recent linguistic trends remain to be mentioned. One of them has already been

touched upon: a member of the Brno English Department cannot fail to take an interest in functional sentence perspective, which points on the one hand back to Mathesius, but on the other hand forward, to the late Professor Jan Firbas, who brought the FSP theory to a full-fledged stage of development. Finally one of Professor Hladký's so far omitted studies, "A coroner's inquest in eight newspaper versions" (1986) anticipates textual and discourse linguistics, as has been aptly noted by Professor Urbanová (2002).²

To conclude.

However brief this survey has been, it will have shown, among many other things, an exceptionally wide range of Professor Hladký's professional interests, his staunch adherence to the tenets of the Prague school of linguistics, a creative many-sided approach to their development, and their felicitous application to novel lines of research. Let us wish him many more achievements.

Notes

¹ For full bibliographical data up to 1990, see Golková 1991.

² I am indebted to Professor Urbanová for having kindly supplied me with the data for the parts concerned with Professor Hladký's unpublished works.

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