LINGUISTICS

Introduction

The papers presented at the linguistic section of the Third Prague Conference on Linguistics and Literary Studies *(Plurality and Diversity in English Studies)* draw topics from the spheres of phonetics, syntax, and the utterance level, most attention being paid to the last. In this respect the conference reflected the present trends of linguistic research, in which discourse studies, together with corpus linguistics, occupy a prominent position. The contributions to the other language levels testify to the versatility of linguistic thought and pursuits.

The phonetic level is represented by two papers (Radek Skarnitzl and Kristýna Poesová, "Typology of Voicing Changes in Czech English"; Jan Volín and Kristýna Poesová, "Temporal and Spectral Reduction of Vowels in English Weak Syllables"). Both are concerned with features that make native speakers perceive a foreign accent. Identification of these features is important since a strong accent may impair communication and/or lower the sociolinguistic status of the foreign speaker. The first article compares British and Czech pronunciation in respect of devoicing of English voiced word-final obstruents when followed by a voiceless sound, voicing of voiceless word-final obstruents due to assimilation to the following voiced sound, and voicing of some voiceless obstruents in an inter-sonorant environment. The second article deals with the unstressed reduced vowel [a] in British and Czech English from the viewpoint of the differences between stressed and unstressed syllables in durational and spectral properties.

Jarmila Petrlíková ("The Competition of Present and Perfect Gerund in Gerundial Constructions") presents the results of an investigation carried out on a large number of examples drawn from fiction. The low frequency of occurrence of the perfect gerund appears to be due to the fact that in most instances reference to an anterior action is indicated by the semantics of the superordinate expression and/or the presence of temporal adverbials, which conduces to the use of the present form.

The remaining articles treat discourse topics. Three of them take dialogue as their starting point, albeit from very different spheres and with different aims. Martin Adam ("New Testament Dialogues: Semantic Indeterminacy") applies the concept of FSP macrofields to two biblical dialogues. In contrast

to semantic indeterminacy of everyday conversation biblical dialogue displays almost opposite tendencies, which is to be ascribed to its stylized nature. Lucie Betáková ("Typical Features of Classroom Discourse (on ELT material") discusses typical features of classroom discourse as described *in the* literature. Model procedures are illustrated by examples collected in English classes taught at local schools both by native and Czech teachers. Miroslav Černý ("A Few Remarks on the History of Doctor-Patient Communication Research") gives a *survey* of the views presented in five notable contributions to the research of doctor-patient communication, based on linguistic data. The discussion of the different methods and approaches serves to show how doctor-patient communication can be studied and improved.

Two articles are concerned with personal reference. Olga Dontcheva-Navrátilová ("Forms of Address and Self-reference and Other Reference in Political Speeches") deals with nominal and pronominal forms of address, self-reference and other reference in diplomatic discourse. The analysis is based on ten recent speeches given by the current Director-General of UNESCO at the opening of international conferences and meeting. Zuzana Urbanová ("Factors Influencing the Choice of Referring Expressions in British Broadsheets and Tabloids") discusses the factors that influence the choice of referring expressions in the news reports of British broadsheets and tabloids. The aim of the paper is to show how proper names, common names and pronouns are distributed throughout the body of the text in connection with thematic development.

The last paper is a cross-disciplinary study focused on sociolinguistic aspects of self-introduction of protagonists in fiction. Klára Matuchová ("Meet the Lodger"), basing her discussion on three different protagonists, young ambitious men in the process of upward mobility, describes how they treat two sociolinguistic variables, their age and origin.

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