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states, we can specify that the linguistic sign is a relation between expression-form and content-form. Speech sounds belong to expression-substance, and phonemes to expression-form; the categories according to which we experience reality belong to content-substance, and the way in which they are organized by the lexicon and grammar of individual languages belongs to content-form. To use a well known example, the continuum of the color spectrum is formed in different languages into units which differ both in their number and in their boundaries; compare Eng. *green, blue, gray, brown* with Welsh *gwyrrd, glas, llwyd*. (For reference on glossematics, see Hjelmslev 1943, 1959, 1973.)

The study of content-form, in the attempt at a structural investigation of semantics, is one of the striking and influential features of glossematics which have been developed in the theories of Algirdas J. Greimas: it also has parallels in American *componential analysis*. As sign-expressions can be analyzed into minimum elements which are not signs, but just "expression figurae," so the meaning of a minimum sign can be analyzed into figurae of meaning; whether such figurae can be designated by a single term in a given language, or whether one needs a periphrasis, is not relevant. The meanings of *child, man, woman, calf, bull, cow, chicken, cock, hen, lamb, ram, ewe, foal, stallion, mare*, etc. can be analyzed into components which apply to the whole series—e.g. young, adult, male, female—and into components which indicate the species to which each triad of terms belongs: human, gallinaeous, bovine, ovine, equine, etc. This analysis produces a more limited and economic inventory: in the present example, nine figurae account for the meanings of fifteen words, but then each new group of three words in the same series would require only one new figura.

Glossematics also deals with general semiotic concepts: a "metasemiotic" is a language whose content-plane is a semiotic; a "connotative semiotic" is one whose expression-plane is a semiotic; and a "denotative semiotic" is one in which no plane is a semiotic. Thus, *semiology* is a metasemiotic whose content-plane is a connotative semiotic; it can accommodate a theory of styles, plus most of sociolinguistics and Saussure's "external linguistics." Meta-semiology is a meta-semiotic whose content-plane is a semiology; it will provide a description of substance, dealing with the objects of phonetics and semantics. Thus one is led to the conclu-

sion that there is no object that is not illuminated from the key position of linguistic theory—a statement not incompatible with the centrality attributed to language by many trends in modern philosophy.

Glossematics has been influential on other schools, e.g. stratificational grammar, and on semiotic and critical theories, e.g. those of Galvano Della Volpe. It also continues to be used as a theory in its own right; see for instance the work of Togeby, e.g. 1970.

[See also Bloomfield, Leonard; Componential Analysis; Jakobson, Roman; Sapir, Edward; Saussure, Ferdinand de; and Semiotics.]

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GIULIO LEPSCHY

Western Traditions: The Prague School

The phrase "Prague School" refers to a research movement in structural linguistics which is far from unitary, yet there are enough converging lines of thought to justify

the denomination. These include an emphasis on the notion of function, a conception of languages as functional systems, a view of synchrony and diachrony as interacting with each other, an interest in stylistic phenomena considered as a relevant part of language, and, finally, an integrated approach to linguistics and literature.

1. History. It is usually assumed that the birthdate of this movement was the formation in 1926 of the Prague Linguistic Circle, the activities of which included, from 1929, the publication of the *Travaux du Cercle linguistique de Prague*. This event, however, cannot be understood without reference to the rich cultural context of the city, where interest in philosophy of language and linguistics had been prominent since the end of the 19th century, and in the early 20th century was represented by figures like Anton Marty and Vilém Mathesius, both professors at the University of Prague. Mathesius was to have a leading role in the constitution of the Circle and served as its first president. The Prague environment catalysed the development of new perspectives in structural linguistics. These were inspired by a number of separate scholarly traditions, some brought to the city by Russian scholars like Roman Jakobson and Nikolai Trubetzkoy, who had been particularly influenced by the ideas of the Moscow and St. Petersburg circles and by Russian linguists like Filipp Fiodorovich Fortunatov (1848–1914) and L. V. Ščerba. Through these Russian contacts and Mathesius's personal research, the Prague Circle was also exposed to the thought of Jan Baudouin de Courtenay; particularly evident is the link with his phonological conceptions, especially his idea of the phoneme as "a psychical image of a sound" created by merging into one the psychical representations of individual sounds (Vachek 1966:44; Lepschy 1982:109).

The Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia and World War II interrupted the activities of the Circle and marked a break in the development of the Prague ideas, which can be seen as part of a broader discontinuity in the main trends of European structuralism. These historical events led to a period of adaptation of the Prague ideas to various cultural and scientific contexts. A key figure was Jakobson, who in 1941 migrated to the United States and shortly afterward started teaching there. He reoriented the main research direction of the Prague linguists along trends influenced by the American operationalist climate. Particularly significant was the impact of information theory on the development of Jakobson's phonological models. From the 1940s on, the Czech milieu experienced a difficult continuation of its scientific activity. In their

attempt to develop the traditional approaches in new directions, the Czech scholars remained closer to the cultural roots of the movement, the term "Second Prague School" has sometimes been used for the postwar continuation of Czech linguistic research (Mathesius 1936; Vachek 1966:3–14; Lepschy 1982:53–64; Svoboda 1992).

The Prague Linguistic Circle should not be exclusively, or even predominantly, associated—as has often been done—with the rise and growth of phonology. Its real aim was that of combining historical and structural models. Eventually, the work of the Prague linguists led to a many-sided view of language and of speakers that encompassed all levels of analysis (Sornicola 1995; for other interpretations of the epistemological contribution of the Prague School, see Mahmoudian and Seriot 1994).

The various branches of the movement have deeply influenced not only general or historical linguistics (in particular, synchronic and diachronic typology), but also applied linguistics and sociolinguistics. The impact of so-called Second Prague School is especially recognizable, from the 1960s on, in text linguistics and functional syntax. In general, the original tradition of the Prague Linguistic Circle became a hidden source of inspiration for various European linguistic trends. In spite of the dramatic break in the Circle's activity, the Prague heritage was not lost, but lived on and thrived in new shapes—not only in the North American context, but also in French, Dutch, British, and German linguistic milieux. This multiplicity of adaptations is a remarkable feature in the history of the reception of the ideas of the Prague Circle (for the influence of Prague functionalism, see Dirven and Fried 1987, especially pp. 3–205).

2. Function. Function is an all-important Prague notion that has various interconnected meanings. First of all, and most pervasively, it can denote a speaker's "expressive need," which is always associated with a communicative intention. The various expressive needs are identified with the intellectual/emotive/communicative/poetic functions of language (Theses 1929:14). A strict correlation is assumed between these functions and linguistic structure, with each function having its specific modes of realization at the phonological, grammatical, and lexical levels.

Second, function can be defined as an expressive means that is appropriate to an end. This is reflected especially in the definition of the culminative/demarcative/distinctive functions in Trubetzkoy's phonological theory (Trubetzkoy 1939:27). For example, phonetic characteristics

with a culminative function (such as stress in German) have the aim of signaling the number of units in the sentence. Clearly, in this case function is a property of the structure itself and does not correspond to the speaker's need or intention.

Third, function may signify a relation carried by one or more elements of the sentence with respect to the others. This is an inherently syntactic meaning, and its development can be followed from Mathesius's papers on syntax through the contributions of the Second Prague School.

Closely linked to the central role assigned to the notion of function is the view of languages as functional systems—as systems of means of expression that are appropriate to an end; the end is the realization of the subject's intention to express and communicate. Also linked is the functional principle of linguistic analysis, which states: "When one analyzes language as a form of expression or communication, the speaker's intention offers the most easily available and natural explanation" (Theses 1929:7). (On the meanings of "function" in the Prague School, see Daneš 1987.)

3. Synchrony and diachrony. As in other forms of structuralism, the fundamental role in the study of the nature and character of languages is ascribed to synchrony (Theses 1929:7); in earlier works by Mathesius, the term "statics" is used (Mathesius 1911:22). This perspective is considered the most suitable to analyze "the entire complex of language phenomena which exist simultaneously at a given point in time," and consequently "to grasp the synchronic interdependence which links these phenomena in the language system" (Mathesius 1929:122). At the same time, the synchronic perspective can enhance the possibility of a systematic typological (structural, non-genetic) comparison of languages.

This synchronic and functional dimension is also important for the study of the "past state of languages, both when we want to reconstruct them and when we want to observe their evolution" (Theses 1929:7). The Prague linguists agreed that one should not set insuperable barriers between synchronic and diachronic methods. This is a major point of divergence from the structuralism of the Geneva School and—especially in recent decades—has met with some consensus among historical linguists (see Lehmann 1968). More radical is the claim that linguistic (and especially phonological) change cannot be understood without taking into account the whole system of relations that it modifies. Though with different emphasis, all the Prague linguists reject the assumption

that linguistic changes may be haphazard and accidental, and they endorse teleological diachronic models: "Often linguistic changes aim at the system, at making it more stable, at rebuilding it" (Theses 1929:8). Jakobson, Trubetzkoy, and Karcevskij pushed this conception to the extreme when they argued that "there are some linguistic changes which, just like moves in a chess game, have the intention to act on the system" (Theses 1928:35).

Insofar as speakers are aware of typical diachronic phenomena, like archaisms and productive vs. unproductive forms, the synchronic dimension cannot be severed from the notion of evolution (Theses 1929:8). The recognition of a dynamism within synchrony is also related to Mathesius's notion of *potentiality* (Mathesius 1911). This manifests itself in tendencies—that is, in the intrinsic proclivity of linguistic phenomena to recur with certain properties or shapes in a statistically regular way. But synchronic tendencies are not static laws. Likewise, diachronic tendencies are conceived by Jakobson, Karcevskij, and Trubetzkoy as goal-oriented, teleological processes, superseding the Neogrammarians' notion of mechanical causal laws (Theses 1928:36).

4. Phonology. In the Prague Circle's *Project of Standardized Phonological Terminology*, phonology is defined as the "part of linguistics dealing with phonic phenomena from the viewpoint of their functions in language" (Project 1931:309). Like other branches of linguistics dealing with function, it was assigned a central place, while phonetics, which was seen as lacking in any functional value, was originally regarded as a mere auxiliary discipline. A phoneme is defined as "a phonological unit which is not capable of being segmented into smaller and simpler phonological units" (Project 1931:310). Later definitions stress that the phoneme has the function of distinguishing words of different meanings. According to Trubetzkoy, "the phoneme is the sum of the phonologically relevant properties of a sound" (1939:36). Thus, the most common definition of the phoneme as a bundle of distinctive features has demonstrable Prague roots. Functional distinctiveness also accounts for the difference between the phoneme and the variants in which it was realized. Two or more sounds whose permutation does not result in change of meaning are classified as variants of the same phoneme. This procedure is well known in other structuralist methodologies as the "commutation test."

The phonemes of a language stand in a definite relation of opposition to one another, and the phonological system of that language is based on those relations. The most

important kind of relations are *correlations*, sets of oppositions characterized by the presence or absence of one and the same distinctive feature. This is called a *correlation mark*: in each phonemic pair, one term is marked and the other is unmarked. Thus, the consonantal systems of many languages have oppositions like /p/ ~ /b/, /t/ ~ /d/, etc.; we speak of a correlation of voice and assume that /b/ and /d/ are the marked members of the pairs, and /p/ and /t/ the unmarked ones. In some contexts, the correlation cannot be implemented (e.g., German does not have a contrast of voice in word-final position): in such cases, it is said that the opposition is "neutralized."

An aspect of phonological theory that has important typological implications is the attempt to formulate general phonological laws. Jakobson, for instance, argued that some correlations are incompatible with others: for example, if a language has a phonologically significant correlation of vocalic quantity (i.e., long and short vowels are contrasted), this is incompatible with the presence of a phonologically significant stress accent. Thus, the correlation of vocalic quantity is present in Czech, where the stress accent is not phonological, while in Russian one finds exactly the opposite situation—the phonological use of the stress accent excludes the phonological use of vocalic quantity. (For a broader overview, see Vachek 1992, and for a detailed account, Anderson 1985:83–139).

Prague phonology is not a closed chapter. Certain Prague concepts (e.g., markedness) keep reappearing in generativist and natural phonology (cf. Dinnsen 1979).

5. Morphonology. The Prague linguists, particularly Trubetzkoy, regarded the relation between phonology and morphology as especially close. This point was emphasized by the founding of a new discipline called "morphophonology" or "morphonology" (Trubetzkoy 1929, 1931), which deals with the phonological structure of morphemes. The basic unit of morphonology, the "morphoneme," was originally defined as "a complex idea of all members of a morphological alternation" (e.g., Russian *k/ĕ* abstracted from *ruká* 'hand', adj. *ručnój* 'manual'). At a later stage, the morphoneme was divested of its psychological garb and the emphasis was put on its functioning in the various grammatical implementations of the morpheme (Vachek 1968). This concept is especially important in the structural analysis of languages that preserve a "synthetic" grammatical structure, such as Latin, Greek, or the Slavic languages.

6. Morphology and syntax. The morphological research of the Prague linguists is less unitary than their

phonology. Mathesius saw morphology as a somewhat less important part of the grammar, which dealt with the formal patterns present in functional syntax and in functional onomatology (the study of the lexicon and of its use in speech acts). Morphology is, however, given a central place in Vladimir Skalička's typology, though mainly as a tool for language comparison. Attempts at more general theories came from other scholars. Bohumil Trnka developed the notion of "morphological exponents," which are defined as "all formal expedients that are able to express a morphological function in the language." In his study of the Russian verb, Jakobson applied the theory of correlative relations (i.e., the relations of markedness vs. unmarkedness in opposition pairs) to morphological analysis (Vachek 1964, 1966:82–87).

Mathesius was the leading figure in the Prague syntactic research of the prewar period. His approach was consistent with the prevailing functionalism and is clearly reflected in his definition of the sentence, which was developed as early as 1924. He was interested in the formal attributes of the sentence, but here too he was convinced that the functional properties had to have priority. He focused mainly on what the sentence is for—on communicative function in its broadest sense. He thus abandoned the psychological tradition of sentence analysis and laid the foundations of a new functional approach to syntax, which he furthered with his studies on language-specific syntactic characters. This domain of research, which he termed "syntactic characterology," was to influence postwar synchronic and diachronic typology. Another lasting contribution to syntax was Mathesius's informational approach to the analysis of the sentence: the part that refers to a fact or facts already known from the preceding context, or to facts that may be taken for granted (the "theme"), is distinguished from the part that conveys new information and thus enriches the knowledge of the listener or reader (the "rheme"). This model, called "Functional Sentence Perspective," was later developed by linguists of Second Prague School, especially František Daneš, Jan Firbas and Petr Sgall (Vachek 1964, 1966:88–95; for more recent developments, see Firbas 1992, Sgall et al. 1986, and Sornicola and Svoboda 1992).

[See also Jakobson, Roman.]

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JOSEF VACHEK AND ROSANA SORNICOLA

Western Traditions: The London School

The so-called London School of linguistics is closely identified with John Rupert Firth (1890–1960). Firth is a figure of major importance in linguistics in two respects. As the first British Professor of General Linguistics, from 1944 to 1956 he almost single-handedly established linguistics as a recognized academic discipline in British universities—where the subject had been represented, if at all, only by phonetics and comparative philology. In the same years, he set his seal on the direction of linguistic theory and linguistic research among some of the most active linguists in Britain, at that time mostly concentrated in London (see Robins 1963).

While Firth fostered the development of the subject as a whole, his own particular interests lay in two fields: (i) phonological theory, where his Prosodic Phonology was the major challenge at the time to the dominant phoneme theory of Daniel Jones in Britain, and to “structuralist” phonemics in the United States; and (ii) semantic theory, which will be addressed first below.

1. Semantics. In his many studies of linguistic meaning, Firth propounded his contextual semantics, the theory of the *context of situation*, with an enthusiasm almost amounting to a passion throughout his professional life. In this, he was in strong opposition to the intellectualist conception of language as the independent expression of thought and of personal experience, and to the notion of