

Chloupek, Jan

[Style in language]

*Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity. A, Řada jazykovědná.*  
1964, vol. 13, iss. A12, pp. 236-238

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/101318>

Access Date: 28. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

the passages concerned with the differences of European reasoning, based on Aristotle's logic, and the reasoning typical of the Chinese. Naturally, the problems here are rather pointed out than definitely solved, but the way they are pointed out is both highly stimulating and formally elegant.

Another most important common feature of Sommerfelt's and Prague views is the emphasis laid on the fact that changes in language are effected not gradually but by jumps. While the Prague linguists were led to this thesis rather by considerations of philosophical nature, in Sommerfelt's case the thesis appears to have been motivated mostly by empirical observation not only of his own but of some older investigators (e.g., by P. Rousselot's well-known analysis of the changes in the French patois of Celledrouin). It is most remarkable to see how Sommerfelt was able to synthesize the powerful inspiration he had drawn from the French linguistic tradition (besides Meillet, M. Grammont appears to have been one of his favourite masters) with the structuralist ideas of the Prague group. In referring to this group Sommerfelt usually means Trubetzkoy and Jakobson; it is interesting to note that he appears to have been distinctly less informed about the activities and achievements of the Czech members of the group (such as Mathesius, Havránek, Trnka, etc.). The parallelism of Sommerfelt's and Havránek's views has already been pointed out; with Mathesius Sommerfelt shares, apparently not being aware of it, a number of other essential points—e.g. the emphasis on the selective activity of the speaker of language displayed by him in analysing the complex reality of the outside world into elements to be denominated; further, the distinction of the inner and outer motivation of linguistic changes, etc.

The above comment had to be confined, for technical reasons, to those papers of the reviewed volume which deal with issues of general linguistic interest. The papers concerned with issues of comparative grammar can only be mentioned here, though they will certainly arouse much attention of the specialists (mainly Celticists). There is, however, another group of Sommerfelt's papers which, however small, should not be left unmentioned here, despite the very narrow limits of the present report. It is a group of three obituaries of distinguished linguists, two of which will undoubtedly be read with great interest by any student of language. They are those devoted to the memories of Hugo Schuchardt and Antoine Meillet. One can easily understand why it was exactly these two giants of linguistic research that were to attract Sommerfelt's attention (and why, consequently, it was found most appropriate to include them into the reviewed volume). Both these scholars must have been very close to Sommerfelt's heart, just as their approach of linguistic problems had been, in principle, very close to his. Schuchardt, an ingenious author of monographs of the type *Slawo-Deutsches und Slawo-Italienisches*, throwing intense light on the problems of the mixing of languages, must have strongly attracted the young Norwegian whose attention had been, since the earliest days of his scholarly career, concentrated on the same category of problems. He had seen particularly instructive examples of the problems not only in the countries where modern Celtic languages are still spoken, but also in the notorious Russenorsk which, in his younger years, he still could have heard in actual use. As for Meillet, who had been Sommerfelt's direct teacher and whose impact upon the early period of Sommerfelt's activities had been so powerful, he could hardly find a more competent biographer than his Norwegian pupil. The adequate evaluation of work is here accompanied by intimate human touch which is illustrative of Sommerfelt no less than of Meillet himself. The obituaries, thus, supply a worthy frame to the wealth of brilliant ideas contained in the volume, and they will be found hardly less impressive by the general reader than those papers which discuss strictly linguistic issues.

It is rather regrettable that a relatively large number of misprints (especially in the English articles) may disturb, however slightly, the pleasure of reading this most welcome and most valuable volume.

Josef Vachek

### Style in Language

Six years is a period long enough for the development of a modern scientific discipline. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning again the book which, under the title *Style in Language* (The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1960), brings materials from a conference on style held at Indiana University in the spring of 1958. The conference was attended by linguists, psychologists, literary critics, and cultural anthropologists, "each speaking his own professional language, each starting from at least a somewhat different base than the others". The complex character of scientific methods may of course give a clue to the solution of problems concerning literary style, which is a subject to be regarded as a complex phenomenon in its very nature.

About half the papers and comments dealt with linguistics. C. F. Voegelin's paper (Casual and Noncasual Utterances within Unified Structure) refers to the difference between casual and noncasual utterances, and to some questions of linguistic selection; the author's views are of much interest, in practice, however, both kinds of utterances include a number of points in common (not only in relation to the unified, monolithic nature of the language), and various languages do not follow only one direction in which deviations can be observed. For instance, Czech (in its codified literary form) complies rather with the language of noncasual utterances, and deviations are more likely to appear in casual utterances. As was also shown by the discussion, some casual language, e.g. novels, will be literature, and some noncasual language, e.g. some didactic poetry, will not be literature (Greenberg). According to V., structural linguistics has to cope with two tasks: 1. a revision of the monolithic hypothesis of language, and 2. a concern with "the interdependence of diverse structures within one language".

A very important paper (Linguistics and the Study of Poetic Language) is by E. Stankiewicz, who considers poetic language from the viewpoint of five dimensions that can be singled out in any linguistic utterance: (1) the subject matter, (2) the participants, (3) the speech act, (4) the code, (5) the message. (3): A poem is an organized message, the elements of which must recur in any performance. (4): R. Wellek's remark that deviations cannot be accepted as an official definition of style and stylistics, certainly does not refer to the opinions of Stankiewicz, who thinks that "poetic language takes full cognizance of the rules of the linguistic system, and, if it admits 'deviations', they themselves are conditioned by the language or by the given poetic tradition". And S., in the right place, quotes Goethe:

In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister  
und das Gesetz nur kann uns Freiheit geben.

Most discussion was raised by Sol Saporta's paper *The Application of Linguistics to the Study of Poetic Language*. The author suggests the following: (1) The application of linguistics to poetry must assume that poetry is language and disregard whatever else poetry may be. (2) Syntactic statements, that is, distributional statements, are to be explored before semantic, if only because they seem to afford the desired degree of precision. (3) Stylistics is in some way dependent on linguistics, since style cannot be clearly defined without reference to grammar; but, whereas the aim of grammatical analysis is essentially predictive, the aim of stylistic analysis is primarily classificatory. (4) Every message may be said to deviate from a norm in two ways which are independent in that one or the other or both may be present. The two ways involve the elimination of certain restrictions and the introduction of new ones.

It is understandable that the greatest number of objections was directed against the definition of style "as a degree of ungrammaticalness".

The book ends with some general theoretical problems, treated in the papers by F. W. Householder, Jr., and R. Jakobson. The first of them is inclined to suggest, that literature includes: (1) all continuous (i.e., excluding catalogues and telephone books, etc.) utterances that are over a certain minimum length and (2), in addition, utterances of any length which are marked by structural regularities not required by the grammar, and (3), in the case of short utterances, some of those that are marked by the characteristic which, in connection with Saporta's paper, rechristens "nonbanality", but which Saporta calls "ungrammaticality" or "ungrammaticalness". (4) For the short utterances we would have to take into account in some way permanence or possibility of repetition.

Jakobson points out the fundamental difference between syntactic and morphologic research and more or less normative grammar, and, similarly, to the difference between an investigator of literature and a literary critic. He explains six basic functions of verbal communication (since that time well known), adding to this scheme of fundamental factors a corresponding scheme of the functions:<sup>1</sup>

EMOTIVE

REFERENTIAL  
POETIC  
PHATIC  
METALINGUAL

CONATIVE

<sup>1</sup> An evaluation of this scheme is the main subject of K. Horálek's informed criticism of the book [cf. *Slovo a slovesnost* 23 (1962), pp. 126-131]. Another review of the book, by L. Gáld, was published in *Acta linguistica Academiae Sc. Hungaricae*, vol. XI, pp. 199-210.

<sup>2</sup> An entire monograph has been published in this country on the art of folk narrative (cf. A. Satke, *Hlučinský pohádkář Josef Smolka*, Ostrava 1958).

Of no less interest are also the articles attempting to solve specific questions: Oral Styles of American Folk Narrators by Richard M. Dorson;<sup>2</sup> Phonological Aspects of Style: Some English Sonnets by Dell H. Hymes; Nominal and Verbal Style by Rulon Wells (an attempt to evaluate nominality which, in my opinion, does not lay sufficient stress upon the functional point of view); Decoding a Text: Levels and Aspects in a Chereemis Sonnet by Thomas A. Sebeok (who was editor of the book); Variant Readings and Misreadings by I. A. Richards; The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity by Roger Brown and Albert Gilman (an acute semantic study; we should add, however, that the area covered by the use of the 2nd person pronoun (*thou-ty*) also includes its occurrence in utterances in which the expression of social relationship is negligible; accordingly, we use *thou* in Czech when addressing, for example, children, animals and, in our thoughts, all sorts of people). Five papers are devoted to metrics and three to psychological approaches to the problem of style.

In my opinion, the importance of the book may above all be seen in the fact that the authors of the papers tried to adopt a modern, exact, almost unidealistic approach towards the question of literature and its style (linguistic in particular, but also literary). Although the book does not bring any "definite", generally recognized solution as to the nature of style in literature and the methods of analysing style, and although the scholars from various fields of research have not reached agreement in establishing a common language, there are, after all, some problems explained in quite a new way, and looking back after a period of time it is possible to say that many premises stated at the conference and published in the book have in the meantime won universal acceptance.<sup>3</sup> Two features of the book are particularly striking. First, the willingness to work with new concepts and methods of the theory of information seems to be greater among linguists rather than among literary critics. Secondly, and this will please the Czech reader especially, some of the papers manifest their adherence to the scholarly heritage of the pre-war Prague Group, Jakobson's in the first place. The reader will then certainly notice the lively explanatory style of the papers, their clearness, wittiness, respect for the audience, prompt reactions of the speakers—things that are not quite common in our discussions. A book containing the papers of a conference should in fact retain its vivid, spoken character, which is something we sometimes forget about.

Jan Chloupek

Zellig S. Harris: *String Analysis of Sentence Structure*, Mouton & Co., The Hague 1962, pp. 70.

1.

Z. S. Harris's monograph opens a new series, entitled *Papers on formal linguistics*, to be published by Mouton & Co. of the Hague. The series will bring studies concerning various spheres of linguistic research and employing formal methods.

Harris's monograph is a revised version of *Computable Syntactic Analysis*, No. 15 (1959) of *Transformations and Discourse Analysis Papers*, a mimeographed series which publishes the results of the research carried out, with the help of automatic computers, by the Department of Linguistics, University of Pennsylvania.

2.

Harris first defines the concepts of sentence and utterance. Sentences are characterized by him as "those segments of speech (or writing) over which certain intonations occur or within which certain structures occur", a particular structure being a particular combination of classes of elements. Utterances are described by him as sequences or fragments of sentences. He does not, however, explicitly state whether the sentence is a unit of a system, i.e. of language, or the utterance a unit of the text, either written or spoken.

Empirically decomposing any set of utterances, we cannot obtain all the sentences of the language, i.e. the set of all the sentences of the language. We may, however, group the words into classes. Provided we know the regularities shown by the combinations of these classes, we can say that the sentences found in an utterance are combinations of particular members of these classes and that the same combinations of other members of these classes will also be accepted by native speakers as being sentences. A grammar of a language endeavours to show that all sentences accepted by native speakers can be characterized as particular types of combinations of particular classes of elements (phonemes, morphemes, words, sentences).

<sup>3</sup> Compare, among the latest books, L. Doležel: *Stylistika jako experimentální věda? (Slovo a slovesnost 24 (1963), pp. 64—67).*