Chamonikolasová, Jana

Summary

5. Summary

The focus of this study is a comparison of intonation in English and Czech conversation in regard to the length of the tone unit, the position of the nucleus in a tone unit, the word class functions of nucleus bearers, the FSP functions of nucleus bearers, and the pitch patterns of nuclei. These phenomena were examined in a corpus of parallel English and Czech dialogues – one pair of scripted and one pair of non-scripted (i.e. natural, unprepared) texts. The study concentrated on differences between English and Czech conversation, but it also examined some differences between scripted and non-scripted conversation across languages.

The study of tone unit length (section 4.1) suggests that the majority of tone units in all four texts consist of one to six/seven words. In three of the four texts, the most frequent tone unit length is one word. The high percentage of one-word tone units is due to the frequent occurrence of hesitation and contact interjections and particles in face-to-face conversation. Tone units containing two, three, four, or five words are each slightly less frequent and form groups of similar size. The occurrence of tone units longer than 14 words is extremely unusual. Average tone unit lengths in the Czech and English non-scripted texts were almost identical (4.20–4.25 words) while the average tone unit length in the scripted English text deviated from that of the scripted Czech text more noticeably (4.74 words compared to 3.99 words). The distribution of tone unit lengths in the four texts suggested certain tendencies in speech segmentation in English and Czech; since some of the examined phenomena may depend on the individuality of the speaker or director of the play, these tendencies will have to be verified by the analysis of a larger number of different scripted and non-scripted spoken texts.

The definition of the nucleus as the last accented syllable within a tone unit suggests that nuclei are likely to occur at the end of tone units. The analysis presented in section 4.2 testifies to the tendency of the most prominent accent, the nucleus, to occur in the final position: the position of the nucleus on the last word of the tone unit is the most frequent in all four texts under examination. The percentage of nuclei on the final word is higher in the Czech texts (72.0–82.2%) than in the English texts (66.0–69.1%). This finding is in agreement with the difference between English and Czech in the extent to which linear modification can assert itself. In Czech, where the leading word order principle is the FSP linearity principle, the most dynamic elements have a strong tendency to occur in the final position. In English, where FSP linearity asserts itself to a lesser degree because the leading word order principle is the grammatical principle, this tendency is less pronounced. Since the most dynamic elements are usually the most prominent prosodically, nuclei are likely to occur in the final position more frequently in Czech than in English.

The analysis of the representation of different word classes within nucleus bearing words in section 4.3 indicates almost negligible differences between English and Czech. In all four texts, nuclei most frequently occur on nouns (29.8–38.0%) and verbs (22.3–32.9%); non-scripted texts (both English and Czech) also contain a rather high

percentage of nucleus bearing interjections and particles (16.1–18.0%); nucleus bearing words belonging to the remaining word-classes are much less frequent. The highest coefficients of the capacity to signal prosodic prominence are displayed by nouns (2.1–3.3), adjectives (1.4–2.0) and verbs (1.1–1.6). The calculation of these coefficients is based on the ratio between the frequency of a particular world class among all words in a text and its frequency among nucleus bearing words.

The analysis of the FSP functions of nucleus bearers presented in section 4.4 suggests that nuclei most often occur on rhematic elements (in 53.3–75.3% of cases). Their ratio is higher in scripted than in non-scripted texts (both Czech and English), the latter in turn displaying a slightly higher frequency of transitional and diathematic nucleus bearers. The section also deals with the relation between the length of a field of distribution of communicative dynamism, the number of distributional fields occurring in a particular text, and the amount of information conveyed by the text. The comparison of the Czech *scripted* text and its equivalent English version suggests that comparable amounts of information are conveyed within comparable numbers of communicative fields. Communicative fields in English are on average longer than those in Czech in terms of number of words and number of tone units. The higher number of tone units allows for the occurrence of a higher number of non-intonation-centre nuclei. A non-intonation-centre nucleus usually occurs on transitional and diathematic elements and precedes the intonation centre nucleus within the same distributional field. A similar comparison of the *non-scripted texts* has a limited validity because the texts are not semantically equivalent.

The analysis of pitch direction of nuclei in section 4.5 indicates that the most frequent nucleus type in all four texts is the fall. The frequency of falls is higher in English (61.8–66.9%) than in Czech (38.2–56.2%). The Czech texts in turn display higher percentages of rises (24.0–31.7%) than the English texts (11.7–15.6%). The frequency of the remaining types of nuclei is, in both languages, very low.

In sections 4.5.1, 4.5.2, and 4.5.3, the occurrence of different types of nuclei is related to different sentence types, i.e. declarative sentences, yes-no questions and wh-questions. Within declarative sentences, distinction is made between nuclei occurring in terminal tone units (i.e. tone units closing the sentence) and non-terminal tone units (i.e. tone units that are followed by at least one other tone unit within the same sentence). Within yes-no questions and wh-questions, only terminal tone units could be examined, because the texts do not contain a sufficient number of non-terminal tone units. The two languages do not differ substantially in the distribution of nuclei in terminal tone units of declarative sentences and wh-questions: in both sentence types, both languages contain most frequently a falling nucleus (in 64.2–84.2% of cases within declarative sentences, and 61.5–87.5% within wh-questions). In non-terminal tone units of declarative sentences, the most frequent nucleus type is rise in Czech (41.3–54.1%) and fall in English (51.2–56.2%). Similarly, in yes-no questions, the Czech texts display high percentages of rises (40.9–75.7%) and low percentages of falls (12.5–22.7%), while the ratio of falls and rises in English is much more even (36.4–51.3% of rises and 35.9–45.4% of falls).

The analysis of pitch direction of nuclei is summarized in section 4.5.4, presenting a survey of final pitch movements in the different sentence types. The summarizing

Figures 9–12 involve a reduction of the scale of five different pitch directions to a scale of three: falling tones (falls and rise-falls), rising tones (rises and fall-rises), and level tones. These figures also take into consideration the occurrence of the rise after a fall, which modifies the contour of the tone unit.