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Discourse as Function

Introduction

The present issue of *Brno Studies in English* is the first of the special issues that have now, fifty years after the foundation of the journal, become annual feature of the journal. This special issue, entitled *Discourse as Function*, is a collection of twelve papers that are tied together by several elements. All the articles are linguistics papers, primarily dealing with various aspects of spoken language from the perspectives of functional linguistics and pragmatics.

The title of this special issue connects two concepts that reflect not only the contents of the issue but also the path that the present journal has taken over the past fifty years. Thus, it not only relates to the tradition of functional linguistics in the Prague School approach, but also indicates the shift from 'structure' to 'discourse' that has characterised mainstream linguistics over the past decades.

This orientation is not accidental, because the authors are connected by another, much more specific, bond: their respect for the linguist Ludmila Urbanová (*1944), to whom their papers are dedicated on the occasion of her sixty-fifth birthday. The contributors to this issue are either her close colleagues or former students, and their papers symbolically touch upon various aspects of her own work, from functional sentence perspective and stylistics to spoken language and dialogic interaction. What connects the articles is not so much their orientation to spoken language, but their attention to features of spokenness and interpersonal interaction that are to be found in texts and discourses regardless of the mode they are in, be they spoken or written.

The collection is organized into four thematic areas: analysis of sentence structure and function; pragmatic markers and discourse segments; discourses in the public sphere; and discourses over the course of time. Although the individual papers draw on various methodologies, they are all functionally and pragmatically oriented: they strive to explain the linguistic phenomena under analysis with respect to the relevant contexts, the speakers'/writers' intentions, and the effects which they hope to achieve.

Part I brings together three papers that deal with various aspects of sentence structure. Their orientation to the functional description and explanation of sentence-level phenomena makes it evident that the articles share the structuralist-functionalist approach of the Prague School and develop some of the traditional notions in a novel way.

The section opens with **Jana Chamonikolasová's** article on word order and linear modification in English. Adopting a diachronic approach to concepts in the theory of functional sentence perspective, the author illustrates how English syntax changed from flexible word order to fixed word order on the way from Old English to Modern English, which translates into the reduction of the importance of linear modification as a word order principle at the expense of the grammatical principle. As a result, linear modification, expressing the natural order of rising importance of sentence elements, has become subordinate to the grammatical principle of relatively fixed word order. The author's diachronic analysis of the changing balance between the two principles in the history of English is illustrated with relevant material from chronicles written in Old English and Modern English.

Libuše Dušková focuses on noun modification in fiction and academic prose, with the aim of identifying possible style markers. The analysis shows that there are both quantitative and qualitative differences between the two genres. Non-modified noun phrases are more common in fiction, while modified noun phrases tend to occur more often in academic prose. Fiction appears to be characterised by the possessive case (especially in connection with proper names), while academic texts contain a comparatively higher proportion of apposition. On the syntactic level, relative clauses in academic prose tend to appear in the subject function, with relativizers being predominantly inanimate. Dušková concludes that such features as the role of proper names and the distribution and semantics of premodifiers may be stylistically relevant.

Aleš Klégr reconsiders the four traditional factors signalling functional sentence perspective (linear modification, semantic structure, context and intonation) and argues for the adoption of another element: typography or punctuation marking FSP-relevant prosody in writing. Though marginal and discretionary, such devices as italics, boldface and small capitals can be used in written texts to indicate prosodical features that assist the reader in processing a given sentence in a way relevant to FSP analysis. As a parallel to 'prosodic prominence' in spoken texts, Klégr suggests a typology of 'typographic prominence' for written texts, with the following categories: perfect correspondence (typographically unmarked), selective non-re-evaluating intensification, and re-evaluating intensification (typographically re-evaluating a thematic element into a rheme).

Part II consists of three articles that deal with pragmatic and discourse markers. They all share a commitment to functional explanation, examining the phenomena with respect to the goals and intentions of the speakers, often adopting a contrastive perspective on the material under analysis.

The section opens with a text by **Karin Aijmer**. In a contrastive study of the discourse marker *please* in English and Swedish – based on Swedish translations of several British novels – Aijmer considers the different functions of *please.* She shows that it is used not only conventionally (as a standardised politeness marker in recurrent social situations) but also strategically (as a way of avoiding conflict by being tactful). It is these two different functions that are evinced by the use of different Swedish translation equivalents (and their variations): *var så och* and *var snäll och*, respectively.

Angela Downing analyses the pragmatic marker *surely* in British English, drawing on data from the crime fiction novels of P.D. James. She focuses on the function of the marker in interactive discourse as an indicator of a speaker's dominance, showing that it can convey different personal stances. Evidence indicates that *surely* functions as a bid for the recognition of the speaker's dominance and entitlement, indicating his or her self-confidence and self-belief. In indirect speech and fictional thought, *surely* can also introduce an element of doubt and conceal one's own opinions, thus conveying the weaker stances of persuasion, tentativeness and self-questioning.

Renata Povolná deals with contrastive relations between discourse segments in spoken academic discourse. Her corpus-based study reveals that the frequency of contrastive discourse markers increases with the interactivity of the situation. Spoken academic discourse tends to draw on paratactic discourse markers: this favours the natural ordering of discourse segments with new or unexpected information coming later in the sentence. As regards the meaning of contrastive discourse markers, Povolná stresses that it is the entire context that plays a role, not just the meaning of the relevant marker. As regards their function, the markers help to establish coherence over extended stretches of discourse.

Part III addresses various discourses in public and mass media situations. Stressing the interpersonal dimension of language use, all three contributions aim to identify the typical patterns and discourse norms characterising the genres that they deal with.

Jan Chovanec describes live text commentary (LTC) – a new genre of written journalism in which textual reports of events are produced online in real time. Noting its genre hybridity, he argues that LTC draws on several models: unscripted spoken commentary, everyday conversation, and online chat. As a result, the online written texts contain numerous linguistic features that are traditionally associated with spoken language. On one hand, such mixing of modes is a reflection of the producers' efforts to increase the interactivity of their texts; on the other, of the actual interactions underlying the processes of text construction. LTC emerges as structured as a pseudo-dialogical event in which conversationalism and spoken features are used in order to give the impression of genuine interpersonal interactions.

Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova deals with interpersonal meanings in the genre of diplomatic addresses. Considering the communicative purposes and rhetorical

structures in this sub-genre of political speeches, she argues that the ritualistic character of such addresses contributes to the perception of discourse coherence. Social deixis, with rather formal and deferential terms of address, is used to show respect and create common ground (e.g. the pronoun *we*). Despite the formulaic nature of this genre, speakers indicate subjectivity at various places in their speeches, using conventionalized phrases and other features typical of spoken interaction.

Milan Ferenčík, using the methodology of conversation analysis and pragmatics, offers an analysis of 'turn taking' in radio phone-in interactions from the perspective of post-modern politeness theory. Focusing on interruption, he notes that this phenomenon is commonly seen as a violation of the agreed norms of acceptable behaviour and, hence, is evaluated negatively as 'impolite'. However, Ferenčík argues that, within the local norms of a given community of practice (which are, in his case, characterised by a confrontational communication setting), interruption in fact constitutes 'politic' behaviour. As a result, in dialogic interactions, the seemingly intrinsic impoliteness of interruption is neutralized.

Part IV includes papers that provide a functional explanation of interjections, code-switching, and linguistic borrowing from the point of view of language change, analysed both synchronically and diachronically. All three papers offer pragmatically-oriented explanations of the phenomena under analysis.

Hans Sauer looks at the ways emotions were expressed in Old English texts with the help of interjections. Analysing Ælfric's *Grammar* and the Old English *Soliloquies*, he deals with interjections not only as markers of emotion, but also in their other, less traditional functions, such as attention getters, greeting forms, response forms, etc. After outlining Ælfric's own classification of the word-class, Sauer provides an analysis of the formation and morphology of Old English interjections, discussing their semantic and pragmatic functions. He establishes a list of around 40 items out of which only a few survived into modern times (namely *yea(h), haha, what, lo, no* and *woe*), while the majority of the Old English forms were replaced with French and Latin borrowings during the Middle English period.

Herbert Schendl focuses on historical code-switching. Drawing on the anatomist William Harvey's hand-written lecture notes (*Prelectiones Anatomie Universalis*), he identifies numerous instances where the author code-switches from Latin into English. He shows that non-finite and elliptical sentences and clauses predominate, with one- and two-word switches being equally frequent. Switches are used for a number of pragmatic reasons, such as illustrating or enumerating. However, they also provide English translations of and equivalents for Latin medical terms and can, thus, be appreciated in the context of the vernacularisation of medical texts in the later Middle Ages. Schendl concludes that the overall function of code-switching is closely linked to the purpose of the analysed text: since the notes served as the basis for Harvey's spoken commentaries, the swit-

ches most likely made the anatomist's description of the dissection more vivid to mixed audiences.

Jarmila Tárnyiková considers the issue of linguistic borrowing in the context of globalisation. Adopting a pragmatic perspective, she argues that the contact-induced processes of language adoption and adaptation (i.e., domestication) should not be analysed solely in respect to loanwords taken by one language from another (e.g, Anglicisms in the case of English borrowings in Czech) but should also consider structural borrowings, borrowings of function words, discourse markers, communicative strategies, etc. – explicit manifestations should be complemented with implicit manifestations, which tend to be neglected by analysts. Drawing on an extensive sample of recent data from Czech, she illustrates two phases in the dynamic process of linguistic borrowing: contact-induced language choice and contact-induced language change. Among the types of borrowings that she isolates are modifications in syntactic patterns (slight structural borrowings), shifts in evaluative strategies, English discourse markers and interjections in Czech discourse, adopted communicative strategies, and lexical borrowings (including the various reasons for the infiltration of English loanwords into Czech).

The notion of 'function' provides a link between all of the authors: they treat language as a resource for meaning-making, regardless of the actual theoretical frameworks they adopt in their analyses – be those functional syntax, pragmatics, politeness theory, sociolinguistics or historical pragmatics. In other words, the contributors see linguistic analysis as inseparable from communicative intentions, goals and strategies: they all look at dynamic functions (rather than fixed structures) and study the way meanings arise in actual texts and contextually-situated interactions.

Jan Chovanec