

*Jiří Nekvapil*

## **A premature retrospective: An interview with František Daneš, September 21, 1988\***

**ABSTRACT:** The core of this article is a substantial part of an interview conducted by J. Nekvapil with F. Daneš on September 21, 1988. The aim of the interview was to gain information for a profile of Daneš on the occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, which was later published in *Philologica Pragensia* (Nekvapil 1989). Unlike other published interviews given by Daneš in later years, this one is characterized by a relatively high degree of spontaneity, thus presenting a less stylized view of the development of Czech linguistics and the Prague School, as well as of the life of Daneš himself. Prior to the interview transcript, several essential factors which constitute the interview are given: the participants, goal, surroundings, key, communicative medium and sequential progression. Attention is also devoted to the way in which the interview is presented in this article, including the genre-related pressures on its presentation. The epilogue adds information about the activities of F. Daneš after the interview, i.e. after 1988, and some intertextual and interdiscursive connections. The publication of this text stands to commemorate this significant linguist, who died on March 18, 2015.

**Key words:** functional syntax, topic-focus articulation, text linguistics, sociolinguistics, stylistics, Prague school, Czech linguistics, German linguistics, history of linguistics, discourse

### **Prologue**

This article contains a reproduction of a substantial part of an interview conducted by J. Nekvapil with F. Daneš on September 21, 1988. The aim of the interview was to gain information for a profile of Daneš on the occasion of his upcoming 70<sup>th</sup> birthday (he was born on July 23, 1919 in Písek, Czechoslovakia), which was then published as Nekvapil (1989). A profile is a specific genre in linguistics (and in other fields as well) which constitutes a distinctive type of data used in writing the history of linguistics. However, because the recording of the interview was preserved, we also have another type of data available that is not loaded with the same degree of interpretive work as a text which came about on the basis of an original interview (in comparison with the original interview, the profile is, of course, characterized by a great degree of information condensation, including the complete omission of a number of topics). I do not want to deal with the complicated issue of historiographic data in this article, but rather, I wish to “merely” lay the groundwork for the interpretation of the interview for

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historiographic purposes. I essentially limit myself to a basic description of selected elementary factors which constituted this interview, and on the ways in which it is presented in this article (however, both the impatient reader looking forward to the interview itself and the naïve linguistic historiographer can skip over the next paragraphs and immediately get to “the heart of the matter”).

First, let us consider the interview participants. At the time of the interview, František Daneš (FD) was 69 years old and had already been retired for several years. The second participant, Jiří Nekvapil (JN), was 35 years old and was employed at the Czech Language Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Prague, i.e. at the institute where FD had essentially spent his entire academic life up to that point. JN and FD had worked together there for several years, even as members of the same department (Department of Grammar). FD was one of the JN’s important mentors as well as an evaluator of his doctoral dissertation. The participants have a great degree of trust in one another, they share a lot of information, and the intersection of their systems of relevance is extensive (Hájek, Havlík & Nekvapil 2014). For these reasons, there are many things that they do not formulate explicitly and precisely, and they often relate to the context only through allusions.

As mentioned above, FD and JN met so that JN could gain information that would help him write the profile of FD in honor of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. For this purpose, JN put together a list of question areas which he gave FD a few days before the interview (these written materials are unfortunately no longer in existence). The interview took place in FD’s apartment, in his home office. Both participants orient toward the written materials they have in front of them, nevertheless, the interview also contains numerous digressions. The atmosphere of the interview is basically a relaxed one, more so in some parts and less so in others, the participants joke, exaggerate, and use extreme case formulations (Pomerantz 1986), though they are consistently on formal terms (they address each other using the formal *vy*, and JN addressed FD with the untranslatable form of address *pane docente* several times). They speak Czech; the written materials used in the interview, the specialized character of the topic, perhaps even their differing social status led them to use Standard Czech, but they also use elements of Common Czech. Concerning the course of the interaction, from the technical perspective, the interview was interrupted several times; what is important is its division into four 30-minute segments because JN inserted two-sided cassette tapes into the tape recorder (two of these were recorded). In the sequential course of the interview, it is striking that overlaps frequently occur as a result of the “undisciplined conversational behavior” of both participants.

Let us now move on to the way in which the interview is presented in this article. In considering the conventions established for the publication of such interviews (which are conducted on the occasion of various life milestones), the idea of presenting the interview in the form of a conversation analysis (CA) based transcript was rejected from the very beginning. Such a solution, especially given that the interview was to be translated into English, would also have necessitated an increase in the number of transcribed pages. This means, however, that the transcript published here does not capture

numerous overlaps, pauses, self-initiated self-repairs, changes in tempo, intonation contours, changes in loudness or the details of the laughter, and other interactionally important phenomena. These phenomena are, however, essential to talk-in-interaction, as they have the potential to create meaning. Therefore, it follows that the resulting Czech transcription, which became the basis for the English translation, emerged from the interpretive work of the transcribers and in the final phase, of the author of this article.<sup>1</sup> The Czech transcription was based on Czech orthography, hence the translation is oriented toward English-language orthography.<sup>2</sup>

However, in presenting the interview it was also necessary to consider the reader. As indicated above, FD and JN share biographical experience to which they relate with a varying degree of explicitness. The uninformed or even only partially informed observer (reader) can usually reconstruct this experience from the course of the interview or make sense of the interview on the basis of his or her knowledge of the “social world of linguistics”, or can perhaps gain the relevant knowledge by looking through an encyclopedia (e.g. in the case of the names of the linguists being discussed). In isolated cases, some facts are embedded into the subjective world of both participants to such a degree that it was necessary to make them explicit using footnotes.

## Interview

**Jiří Nekvapil:** So, when a person is nearing seventy, he may perhaps turn and look back at what he did in his academic work and perhaps evaluate it or consider which things carried a lot of weight, which didn't, which paths led somewhere, which ones could lead even further, but are already somehow closed off. So what do you think were the key ideas or concepts that manifested themselves in your academic work and how did they come about, what were the circumstances.

**František Daneš:** I don't like looking back, but since you've made me, I'll attempt to do it. Well, definitely the concept of the sentence pattern. How did I come up with that? Mathesius led me to it, and as I'll show, all of my work is based on Mathesius. I was sometimes aware of this, sometimes not, as his way of thinking had permeated me so much that I was building on it automatically, without knowing I was doing it. The sentence pattern is in Mathesius; when Mathesius considered it, in the context of the critique or analysis of the interpretation of Alan Gardiner, he faced the question of what aspects of the sentence (Cz. *věta*), what aspects of the utterance (Cz. *výpověď*), are a part of the language system and what is only a matter of the passing moment of the discourse (Cz. *promluva*). And he reached the conclusion that the sentence, as a sentence pattern, belongs to the language system. That's where the sentence pattern comes from. As for

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<sup>1</sup> Patricie Kubáčková did the initial transcription of the interview, Martin Havlík contributed to a more detailed version of the transcription, and Tamah Sherman provided the English translation. I am grateful to all of them.

<sup>2</sup> Essentially only the following CA transcription conventions are used: the transcriber's comments are presented in italics and in parentheses, e.g. (*laughs*), and various uncompleted syntactic constructions are marked with a dash (–).

the sentence and the utterance (*laughs*), those are also Mathesian terms. Mathesius uses the term utterance, but his work doesn't contain the sentence-utterance distinction in the sense that we had it later with Dokulil and Hausenblas, because his definition of the sentence is a definition of the utterance, not the sentence, or rather, the utterance which takes the shape of a sentence. Well, we also figured it out from our practical experiences, because we saw that these things somehow go around in circles, right. This was the case above all in the work of Trávníček, where these things were not differentiated, and above all there was no differentiation, and this is an important point in the interpretations that I provided, between the grammatical aspects and the semantic ones. These things went together, so the differentiation between the sentence and the utterance are connected to the fact that we differentiated between three levels of structuration of the utterance: that is, the formal grammatic, the semantic, the propositional semantic and the organization of the utterance, by which we meant topic-focus articulation and some other aspects.

**JN:** But the differentiation between the grammatical and the semantic, that was already beyond what Mathesius did, wasn't it? With respect to the concept of sentence patterns, wasn't it?

**FD:** Well, it was and it wasn't. If you take his analysis of content, there a semantic analysis of the sentence is actually provided, in the part about the subject and above all the part on the object and on predication, there it is, there he talks about the functions that a subject has, the functions that an object has; or he talks about the addressee object and the receptor object, I don't know how, he simply differentiates it in that way, so it wasn't so completely new, though he didn't deal with the concepts very clearly. But I digress. Concerning Mathesius, we have to realize that he was a person who later dictated most of his work and was read to, because he couldn't read and he couldn't write. So we have to look at things in that way. But Ertl was the one who also helped us with this. Because the three levels were actually already in Ertl's grammar, in a sort of footnote, Dokulil and I, in the article we later published, we state that the differentiation was already done by Ertl. As for thematic progressions. They emerged entirely on the basis of practical experience. Years ago, an unnamed professor was preparing a publication on—*Stylistics for Academic Authors*, it was supposed to be called something like that, a manual, how to write, for academic authors. And I was supposed to have things in there about the construction of text. And the manual wasn't published, because the articles that were supposed to be in it never came to exist, except for mine and Stich's. And (*laughs*) I still have that article in a drawer somewhere and—

**JN:** Stich's was also published?

**FD:** It wasn't. Well I don't know if Saša<sup>3</sup> used it. But I simply analyzed text and I said to myself, well, how are the sentences related to one another. When there's topic-focus articulation, we have to develop it, they say that the topic is somehow related to the context, so let's look at how it's related to the context. And that's how it came about,

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<sup>3</sup> Alexandr Stich, a major Czech specialist in stylistics.

that is, on the basis of rather practical aims. But it stayed in the drawer, as we say, and then later when I was a guest professor at the Linguistic Institute in Los Angeles in 1966, there was a sort of conference that was separate from the Linguistic Institute, and my friend Pavel Garvin invited me to give a lecture on something from the Prague School. Well, nothing else occurred to me than to use this. Now I don't even know what materials I had with me. But I probably had some, because I was lecturing, I needed them, I was teaching about the Prague School. And that's how the lecture came about which is not very well known here, because it was published in the collection *Method and Theory in Linguistics*. It was called "One instance of Prague school methodology: Functional analysis of utterance and text". Well, that's where I put together the famous thematic progressions which, I can say, made it out into the world the most, when it was published in the proceedings from the conference in Mariánské Lázně and a shorter version of it then came out in *Folia Linguistica*. That's the one work of mine which is really cited the most in the world. And concerning the concept or the pair of concepts, center and periphery, that also emerged from analytical experience. When I was doing normal everyday analytical work concerning the Czech language, so perhaps linguistic work makes it necessary to create certain pigeonholes. The decision as to whether this belongs to that category or not. Yeah, and I recognized it and in the work of other people I also recognized it, that those are very disputable things and that there could be big fights over it and there tend to be big fights over whether something's an adjective or not, or it's a number, or it's a pronoun, or it's this or that type of number, and so I said, how can disputes like this emerge at all? Well, and I explained it, or I tried to explain it through the idea that the world, not just language, but the entire world, is not divided only into pigeonholes with sharp boundaries, but rather, that the boundaries are fluid and that it's not theoretically necessary, there's no general principle forcing us to presume the necessary existence of such sharp borders.

**JN:** Yeah, and here it would certainly be possible to build upon a number of methodological philosophical works, while the thematic progressions could be even a sort of more or less chance discovery, this center and periphery, that's evidently a problem which can be found throughout the literature in philosophy and logic.

**FD:** Yeah, well, in recent times, but I presented on it at the Erfurt symposium *Zeichen und System der Sprache* for the first time and I think it was accepted very positively there.

**JN:** That was at the beginning of the 60s, I think.

**FD:** It was in 1959. And I only had a sort of discussion article, it's brief, it was published there, and then I dealt with it more and deepened it and I subsequently found support in some works of philosophy, but in newer ones.

**JN:** But the collection of articles, the second volume of the post-war *Travaux*, that's directly about the center and periphery, there's explicit continuity of the tradition in it.

**FD:** Professor Vachek was also actually thinking in a similar way, even though he never formulated it precisely, I think, so when I published this later, it appealed to Vachek very much, so then we thought about these things together and, based on Vachek's

initiative, the second volume of the post-war *Travaux* was devoted to this very issue and it's elaborated on various levels of linguistic structure. And then later philosophy, so to say, acknowledged that I was right or came up with things that supported me, when the now very modern fuzzy sets appeared, and today this is normal in logic, back then it was against logic. Now it's not against logic (*laughs*).

**JN:** But, for example, Neustupný benefited heavily from Polish logic literature in that collection, in the second volume of the *Travaux*.

**FD:** Yes, he has Kubiński, the Polish guy and some other works in there.

**JN:** Hm.

**FD:** So those were perhaps the most important topics.

**JN:** Do you think we've exhausted them, or do you have any other idea you could mention?

**FD:** I never hung on to just one topic. I'm a considerably multi-topic person, unlike, for example, my colleague Firbas. I admire it when someone spends his whole life working on one, not topic, but on one section, but on the other hand he can develop to a greater depth or breadth than when I deal with the topic less systematically and dominantly.

**JN:** Hm. And do you think that those, whether they were concepts or pairs of concepts, can stimulate further development, or that the topics have somehow been exhausted to a significant degree?

**FD:** Well, you know, for example the distinction between sentence and utterance has been seen in a new light through the emergence of text linguistics.

**JN:** But it was, for example, seen in a new light through pragmatics, right—

**FD:** Through pragmatics and through the fact that, well, I don't know if you would agree with me, but the fact that we're abandoning Saussurianism, *langue* and *parole*, because here the question was always what belongs to *parole* and what belongs to *langue*. And today the issue appears a bit different to us, but essentially the delimitation of the utterance as the minimal form of discourse, as Hausenblas calls it, the minimal form of communication, and certain grammatical forms, that is, systemic ones, in terms of that, it didn't lose any of its validity. I was criticized, or Dokulil and I were, for not noticing, for neglecting so-called nominal or verbless sentences, so I returned to them several years ago, but that should be analyzed better, and from the textual perspective.

**JN:** Well, to take things a bit more traditionally for interviews like this, which other people, for example, in addition to Mathesius, had the greatest influence on you? Or some books, I mean linguistics ones and non-linguistics ones.

**FD:** There's always an awful lot of influences and sometimes you can't even guess or realize that you were influenced by someone.

**JN:** It's simply a child of its time.

**FD:** You read something somewhere and forgot it and it subconsciously influenced your thinking and then you subsequently find that out and subsequently someone else

finds it out. I was influenced above all in secondary school. I had an excellent teacher, of Latin, that is, but for awhile we had him for Czech as well, Kotalík, it's not an entirely unknown name. He died several years ago, he lived to, as they say, the blessed age of over 90, but he was still active, I spent time with him. And his Latin classes were amazing, because imagine this – every day, for the five years of secondary school study, we read a passage, a section of the text. It had to be translated, that means interpreted, a comparison had to be done between Latin and Czech, and all that. That was, that was amazing linguistic training, for linguists, not for doctors, well, it was a school of precise thinking. There are now excellent doctors and chemists from the school where I studied, but I don't think it was because of the Latin. As professor Trnka once said, modern languages would perform the same service and on top of that, it would be more practical if (*laughs*) the amount of time devoted to Latin was devoted to them and if they were studied in such depth today as was done with Latin. Well, at the faculty Mathesius had an influence on me, of course, probably the greatest influence at the faculty before the war, when I started, came from professor Trnka.

**JN:** And how do you think that this influence was manifested, through the personalities of those people, or what you read by them, or how much time they devoted to you?

**FD:** I always tended toward more general problems, more general theoretical issues. And what other professors were doing didn't provide me with anything new, it didn't satisfy me too much, whereas professor Trnka, he was actually the only one in Prague other than Mathesius who lectured on–

**JN:** –grammar.

**FD:** –grammar and who was a structuralist at the faculty, if we don't include Mukařovský. Trnka was a phonologist and he was able to lecture very precisely, he used to say, I'm performing my reading. And he really did read, but it was prepared in an amazing way and it had a high level of logic, he had a great sense for logic, and that attracted me very much, and so I actually think it was Trnka who made me into a linguist.

**JN:** Did he, for example, lead you to read the logic literature?

**FD:** Well, he led me to read Bertrand Russell. And Bertrand Russell is probably the author outside linguistics that affected me the most. Even then, when I had to interrupt my studies during the war, but I still studied in spite of it, I borrowed things from the university library, so I studied Russell then. But Russell interested me both as a philosopher and as a sociologist.

**JN:** He wrote tons of publications. Could you list or do you recall anything specific?

**FD:** For example, I was taken with his *A History of Western Philosophy*. It's idiosyncratic, but very interesting. Then some sociological works, I won't cite them exactly now. He has a sort of short introduction to philosophy, it came out in Czech, a number of his things were published in Czech. And of course I read his mathematical-logical stuff.

**JN:** That was probably the closest to structuralism, to linguistic structuralism.

**FD:** Certainly. But mainly it was an exercise in abstract thinking for me. I just plowed right through it and I would recommend that everyone take a book, e.g. a hard, difficult one and try to get through it. It won't work entirely, as I've never been a logician, thus it would be difficult for someone to advise me, but I plowed through it. Later, when cybernetics came into the picture, I bought William Ashby's book, the Czech translation, and it's a well written book didactically and methodically, like only the English know how to do, and it has exercises. So during one summer holiday, back then we still had holidays at the Institute, so I– (*laughs*)

**JN:** I don't even know that. How long did the holidays last?

**FD:** From some point at the beginning, the Institute was a part of the so-called Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts and we were there as secondary school teachers ordered to work there, and as we were secondary school teachers, we had a two-month holiday.

**JN:** You had time to read Ashby's *Cybernetics*.

**FD:** I read through the whole thing and I tried to do all of the exercises. It didn't make me into a cybernetician, but it was excellent thought training. And that's what linguists, that is, Czechoslovak ones, are lacking today. They aren't trained in that sort of simple abstract strict thinking. It's not just a question of what you take from it in terms of content, but how it trains your manner of thinking and your perspective on the matter. So Russell had a really great influence on me in many senses. Well, of course in addition to Havránek, who, of course, came to Prague only after the war, so I– I didn't hear any of Havránek's university lectures, as I had already graduated or I was finishing when he came to Prague. But I was actually with him for my whole scholarly career, as I was the academic secretary when he was the director and he appointed me to various posts, I was in contact with him on a nearly daily basis. And I tell you, only years later, perhaps even some time after his death, did I realize how strongly he had influenced me. Unobtrusively, but strongly.

**JN:** How? How?

**FD:** In a lot of ways. Above all he influenced me in in scholarly organizational matters, but I always have the tendency for things to be clean and clear. And Havránek, you probably never got to know him, he always said: on one side it's like this, but on the other side it's like that. And for me it was almost– it sometimes even made me angry, but it influenced me in spite, and now I see that it was very wise. It's a sort of dialectical view of things. Jakobson, of course, also had an influence on me.

**JN:** Even a personal one?

**FD:** Even a personal one, I used to meet with him often. And because I dealt with phonology in a pretty systematic manner from the beginning, that's how I actually began, so Trubetzkoy did as well. And what also strongly influenced me was Jespersen, *The Philosophy of Grammar*. And that was interesting, the book was in the Institute's library, surprisingly enough, the first edition, I think from 1925, and nobody at the Institute had ever borrowed it, because the Institute wasn't oriented toward theory back then,



when I arrived, it was only when Dokulil came, and then Hausenblas, that theory began to be cultivated. And the book was— evidently nobody had ever borrowed it, since the times when Havránek had studied it, back then he wasn't a senior academic, because there were lots of little pieces of paper in it, those lexicography excerption slips, covered with his notes. And I was an idiot to return them to him immediately, why didn't I read them?

**JN:** Two years ago I borrowed Jespersen's, I think, *Language, its Nature, Origin and Development*, from the university library, and I found a lot of your notes in it (*laughs*).

**FD:** Yes (*laughs*) and how did you recognize that they were mine? That was one of the books that I studied during the war.

**JN:** You'd borrowed it from the university library?

**FD:** Yes, yes.

**JN:** Well, I think those were topics that simply became Danešian (*laughs*), and then of course I already know your handwriting a bit.

**FD:** (*laughs*) I also have very extensive notes, I think I kept them. That was one of the books that I— it was Russell, then this one, then Trubetzkoy's whole- *Grundzüge*. I studied them all thoroughly. And *Speech and Style*.<sup>4</sup> And the whole collection on language and poetry which came out in 1942, during the war.<sup>5</sup>

**JN:** Yeah.

**FD:** So those were, I think, the main ones, certainly, as I say, a wise man once wrote: you sow many times, but you reap only once. And I think that that captures human life well.

**JN:** That's probably true for all specialists.

**FD:** Certainly, I mean for life in general.

**JN:** When you look, for example, at your place, here I see only a part of your library, so there are tens, there would be hundreds of books, right—

**FD:** Three times as many.

**JN:** Then you add your own work to that, which is perhaps a book, one, two, three, right— Alright, you mentioned things you read mainly at the beginning of your academic career, then you had the opportunity, when the societal situation here changed a bit, to go on even some longer study stays, first to the Federal Republic of Germany, then to the United States, then to Holland, and you had the opportunity to compare what you knew from here, and what you grew up on, with linguistics in a more global context. If you could tell me some of your basic observations and impressions from those stays, how much did you or did you not have to adjust your opinions, whom did you speak with, what did you get out of those study stays?

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<sup>4</sup> Mathesius (1942).

<sup>5</sup> Havránek & Mukařovský (1942).

**FD:** They weren't study stays, except for that last time in Holland, I was there as a guest professor, but of course I had contact with my colleagues. Well, there they were always curious about the Prague School. So much that it sometimes disgusted me. I said to myself: Pilsner beer, Prague ham and the Prague School.

**JN:** (*laughs*)

**FD:** Because I'm a really non-dogmatic person, and those exegetical and apologetic interpretations are always a bit foreign to me. But I certainly do belong to the Prague School and I also consider myself a member, but more in its overall approach to language. I think my colleague Leška once said, in a very funny way, in Prague we vary an awful lot amongst ourselves. Many of us. But in relation to outsiders we really seem to be a unit, as Praguers. We have something in common. But pinning that down isn't so easy.

**JN:** An outsider can more likely pin it down, probably.

**FD:** An outsider can more likely pin it down (*laughs*). Certainly, every stay abroad, when you can make use of it, is useful, because it shows you that there are still many other things that you didn't know, and the Prague School could certainly, or the ideas of the Prague School could adjust, and also do adjust, the directions that were current when I was abroad, Chomskyanism was beginning then, right. But on the other hand, you adjust your own thinking. What tends to characterize the Prague School? The functional structural. The structural is a given today. All schools consider themselves structuralist in some way. We're not allowed to work with the label structuralism, it means something entirely different abroad, or very different. But functionalism was such a specific thing and even though functionalism can be interpreted in various ways, which you know from the new collection you read.<sup>6</sup>

**JN:** What's interesting is that right on the first page of Jespersen's book that we talked about there's an extensive discussion of functionalism – why Jespersen is a functionalist and why he isn't a functionalist.

**FD:** Functionalism today, I'll put it like this, is very fashionable, even though it's understood in various ways. It's ultimately understood in various ways even in Prague, I expounded upon that in the article that came out in that collection, but in that respect the Prague School is certainly interesting and I didn't have to rectify much. But a definitely specific aspect of the Prague School that I wouldn't evaluate too highly today (*laughs*), was the fact that the work with concepts wasn't precise enough. Or some people didn't do it precisely enough.

**JN:** So what you appreciated in professor Trnka–

**FD:** Out of all of them, he was the one who tried for greater precision. But people frequently worked with what were more like metaphors, every field works with metaphors, even the most exact of them, there are even whole collections published on metaphors in science, and one researcher wrote an article called “Modern physics as a metaphor”.

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<sup>6</sup> FD is thinking of the collection edited by Dirven & Fried (1987).

So we're always working with metaphors, but the metaphor must be explained precisely, and in the Prague School it wasn't always precise. Various interesting metaphors were used, for example my colleague Dokulil really likes to use metaphors from various scientific fields, but that's a sort of interdisciplinary approach, but a non-cleansed one. So I think that was missing in the Prague School. Of course, the Prague School, do you know how long it lasted? And how long linguistics after the Prague School has lasted? It's very difficult to compare.

**JN:** Okay, so if we could return to the time you spent abroad.

**FD:** Well, I was very lucky to always get to places where there were a lot of interesting people gathered together. So I met, I can say, with a great number of interesting linguists and I also picked up a lot from them overall. I recall for example, when I first came to America, in 1962, that is, I flew in with professor Horálek for the linguistics congress, that time it was in Cambridge and in Boston, at MIT and Harvard. There were so many new people there that I had only heard about or read. For example I met with professor Pike there, he influenced me a lot with his work on intonation when I was doing intonation, we had very friendly contact from that time on and he sent me a lot of his stuff and I also picked up all sorts of things from him, even though his approach is very specific, but as a student of Sapir he had a sort of— he was a healthy antidote in the, let's say (*laughs*), American Chomskyan fashion of that time. At that congress, I also immediately realized, everyone who was there had to realize it, that the era of asemantism was over and that semantics was entering the picture. Or I met with sociologists a lot in Los Angeles.

**JN:** You mean when you were there for the second time.

**FD:** When I was a guest professor at the Linguistic Institute in 1966.

**JN:** How long were you there?

**FD:** Two months. It's a summer school organized by the Linguistic Society of America at a different university every year. Professor Vachek was there once, but at a different university. My colleague Firbas as well, Přemysl Adamec also. So I also met with lots of people there, including Chomsky and others, and it was always useful. I never presented myself as a person who knew the truth and was now announcing it to someone, rather, I tried to learn something and tell others what I thought, where I had difficulties, what I didn't understand, I asked questions and as I got along with people on the whole, the friendships were maintained, I maintain most of them still, I get copies of articles, I send them mine.

**JN:** Can you say anything else about the trips?

**FD:** So I went to a lot of different conferences, various congresses, and the contacts that developed in the International Commission for the Study of the Grammatical Construction of Slavic Languages were very useful and very, I think, fruitful, it still meets on a regular basis today, I established contact with many Slavists there, above all Polish ones. It was a group of younger linguists who recently published the Polish

grammar, Zuzana Topolińska, Stašek Karolák, of the younger ones Maciej Grochowski, of the older ones (*pauses*)

**JN:** Well, the names don't matter so much.

**FD:** And with them we– went to Poland regularly, we had permanent cooperation, the groups that worked on grammar, Zdeněk Hlavsa will certainly recall it, and my colleague Kořenský, those were very good contacts. And in the Slavic Commission also, above all professor Švedovová, whom I've known probably since 1965, when she came to Prague for the first time and she came to me and said: I came to Prague so that I could see the real live Daneš. That is, it was after 1963, when I lectured on grammatical patterns in Sofia, she really liked it and was getting ready to take on the task of writing a grammar of Russian, so she came to me to get some advice on these matters. I've known professor Ivić since 1958 from the Moscow congress and a number of other Slavists, professor Růžička from Leipzig, an old friend–

**JN:** And when you were in West Germany, if I'm not wrong, I think you once said that you also went to the Habermas's seminars.

**FD:** I didn't. Unfortunately. When I was a guest professor for one semester in Cologne, that was in 1970, the spring semester, there was an assistant professor, Günter Brettschneider. He then published a very interesting book on coordination and he was interested in this and one time he said to me: if you'd like, I go to see Habermas for these seminars. Come with me. And I didn't go, I don't know why, now I don't know.

**JN:** He dealt quite a bit with speech acts, right, he developed Austin and Searle's theory in the direction of sociological applications, so perhaps he was attractive for linguists as well.

**FD:** Yeah, he was. He had a knack for these things, Habermas. You know, abroad, I'd also like to say that when you're there as a guest professor and you're not an ingenious lecturer, and I didn't have major experience with university lectures, and you have to lecture in a language in which you've never lectured in your life, even though you should theoretically know it, you spend most of your time preparing the lectures. Some of it you prepare at home, but you can't manage to prepare everything at home. When you have a minimally three-hour lecture, and then in Cologne I had two seminars–

**JN:** And for whom did you lecture? Who was your audience?

**FD:** Well. I was a replacement or I simply was filling in the gap left by professor Seiler, my good friend, Hansjakob Seiler, who has a very interesting group in Cologne, Seiler is unfortunately also already retired, and they publish a number of things that are very close to the Prague way of thinking, he makes no secret of that, it's functionalism. Well, so I lectured, I held regular lectures, on the levels of language construction, Seiler requested it, then the paper that came out in the German collection *Grundlagen der Sprachkultur* emerged from out of that. And I had two seminars. One introductory seminar, it was a sort of general introduction to the Prague School and then I had an advanced seminar, a sort of seminar for doctoral students that I devoted to text linguis-

tics. And there were very interesting participants there, for example, Elisabeth Gülich, who is now professor Gülich.

**JN:** She was your student (*laughs*).

**FD:** Well, student, at that time she was (*laughs*) preparing her habilitation. And professor Raible, who's a professor in Freiburg and who later published together sometime in the 70s–

**JN:** *Text Types*, I think, right?

**FD:** That was only later. But first there was– *The Types of Text Linguistics* or something like that, it's called. And you could see that my stay there was not futile, because there I really– both topic-focus articulation and thematic progressions are analyzed in a really detailed manner there. So you know, when you're lecturing abroad, it takes up a lot of time.

**JN:** And what about other friendships with linguists in Czechoslovakia?

**FD:** Well, so I had two original, lasting and closest linguistic friends. My colleague Hausenblas and my colleague Dokulil.

**JN:** Somewhere Hausenblas wrote in *Slovo a slovesnost*, that you were three for *mariáš* (card game). Did you play *mariáš*?

**FD:** (*laughs*) We never played *mariáš*.

**JN:** But he put it in quotation marks.

**FD:** We never played. Each of us was a bit different and I think that we complemented each other well. I learned a lot from my colleague Dokulil, even though each of us went a little bit of a different way, Dokulil didn't follow the new things so much, he had an extensive background that was older, to be honest, I didn't take much away from the university. I was actually self-taught in linguistics.

**JN:** And who did he take things from. From Jakobson, as early as that.

**FD:** From Jakobson, Havránek, Trávníček. He was highly trained in philosophy and logic, of course of the older type. And he didn't follow the newer things so much, but he's an amazing thinker and I picked up a lot from him. And Hausenblas, with his liveliness and relationship to textual matters, so– both of them were good for me, because I'm interested in those sorts of theoretical matters and also in those concrete linguistic analyses and concrete facts, in stylistics, so I understood both of them and they understood me as well. Of course I also became friends with professor Vachek, when he came to the Institute, and I owe him a lot in many respects, my friend Firbas in Brno, professor Romportl, who is unfortunately already deceased, we both worked, we began in the same area, that is, sentential intonation, but we were– usually when two people get into the same fields, there's friction, but Milan and I really liked each other. And I could name tens of them.

**JN:** And what about Slovakia?

**FD:** So Slovakia, I was always lucky with Slovaks, so to say (*laughs*). There were various Czech linguists who sometimes got into a bit of a conflict. But on the whole, I didn't, as I give everyone the right to do with their language what they deem right. Acting superior, which some Czech linguists were inclined to do, not Havránek, younger ones, I didn't have that inclination, so with all of them I—, above all professor Mistrík is a good friend, but I also know Ján Horecký well, and professor Ružička, who at this time is in very bad health. And I always had good contacts with them and even from the younger generation for example Kačala, the director, now a corresponding member of the Academy, they give me their stuff to review. (*cut/interruption*)

**JN:** What was going on in Bielefeld?

**FD:** Well, sometimes even some conferences are very valuable, you don't know how a conference is going to turn out beforehand, and I was invited to Bielefeld to a conference on text connectivity or something like that.

**JN:** I have the impression that the bibliography you gave me, that you have some contributions from there.

**FD:** Something's coming out now, it's in the proofs phase. There I had, not a presentation, but a co-presentation, but in the true sense of the word, or they called it a report, like an evaluation, but an evaluation of the content of one of the presentations. And there I could also present my ideas, but that wasn't important. What was important was meeting a lot of people there who were doing contemporary theory of text, text linguistics and who were bringing new ideas. That truly opened up new horizons for me.

**JN:** That was a few years ago, right?

**FD:** Four or five years ago.

**JN:** That's amazing, some people close themselves off at 30 and— Chomsky wrote somewhere that a teacher who's been teaching the same thing for twenty years should look for a new job.

**FD:** You know, that would be very unpleasant for me. As soon as I would hear myself saying the same things, I would leave it all behind. For sure, I experienced it numerous times that there are— older linguists were invited and everyone knew what they were going to say, but— people wanted them to be there. That doesn't work for me. I just want to say new things, they don't always have to be good, they don't always have to be one hundred percent, but I always try to come up with something new. But I want to say that Bielefeld was also valuable for me because in the co-presentation, it's more than twenty pages long, I came up with the thesis, I arrived at it through the analysis of the interpretations of the author who I was supposed to evaluate, that no linguistic interpretation can be objective, that it doesn't exist. I had a lecture about that later at Štířín. And now I've found out that there was a whole group of people there who had been claiming the same thing for a longer time, I didn't know it back then, in Czechoslovakia— not everything gets to us here and it was a great confirmation and a great inspiration for me to go further in this direction.

**JN:** But when you stop to look at the method or procedure, how to work, there's also a certain danger in that, when you're constantly trying to say something new— to a certain degree it's difficult to constantly say something new, but then again it's not that difficult when, when the verification of whether the new thing holds weight or not is missing, right. To what degree does a person have the opportunity to elaborate on this new thing. You can't, for example, constantly come up with new things, maybe three ideas occur to you and you simply elaborate them in some way.

**FD:** It's like this: I certainly didn't always come up with something entirely new, for example I gave several talks on thematic progressions, or on topic-focus articulation, but I always somehow expanded it further or looked at it critically, but usually that was because I had been invited somewhere to talk about it. That's just it— the Prague ham and the Pilsner beer. When you're from Prague— this happens to me repeatedly. They invite me to a conference and they say: well we're not going to bind you to a choice of topic, but apparently you'd probably like (*laughs*) to say something on topic-focus articulation and thematic progressions. Well, so I perhaps write them no, I'd like to say something about sentence patterns or something else. But on the new thing. Sure, it's a risk to always come with a new thing, but on the other hand it has the advantage that you can present it in that forum and you can verify it. You can verify it more than when you publish it. Because the response to publications is problematic. Natural scientists and chemists are always claiming that it's best to measure—

**JN:** —based on citations.

**FD:** —academic success based on citations, but today there are serious arguments against it, that's it's very controversial to measure, and in linguistics it—

**JN:** It could also be measured.

**FD:** Well, it could be measured, but I think that hasn't really occurred to anyone yet. But above all, if it's written in Czech, then it certainly doesn't have the huge response that you would need to verify that, so participating in a conference that's well chosen, with good people, is very, very valuable.

**JN:** We keep mentioning the Prague School, so if you could perhaps say something more about how it was rather than how it is now, your relationship to the Prague Linguistic Circle, above all at the beginning of your scholarly career, that basically overlaps with your student years. If you could recall, whom— you've already named some names, or knew some people from the Prague Linguistic Circle a bit better, whether you took part in something that the Prague Circle organized, or even if you recall what position the Prague Circle had back then, perhaps how you experienced it as a student?

**FD:** In Prague it didn't have any position at all overall, at the faculty. I was young then, the first, second semester, the third semester was just the beginning and then the end, so I was never a member of the Circle, I didn't even attend it. For me it was simply a revelation— I was disappointed at the faculty. You know, if linguistics that was being done had been positivistic, I would never have been an outstanding linguist— I'm not one even as it is (*laughs*), but I never would have stood out in linguistics, as I wouldn't know

how to do it and I wouldn't have enjoyed it. But the Prague School was a revelation for me. Trnka opened it up. Because I was learning about it from Trnka. Mathesius had an introductory seminar then, not a linguistic one, but a literary one. So I never heard a linguistics lecture from Mathesius (*laughs*). But he was an amazing lecturer and he was able to say all sorts of things about language, of course. So Trnka opened linguistics for me and he opened the doors by introducing me to the work of the Prague Linguistic Circle. And I studied it during the war. I was a fan, it was a revelation to me, I lapped it up. You know, the war was unpleasant, life wasn't easy, so you concentrated on that. And the ones who were really at the faculty back then, where the real Prague School existed, were Trnka and Mathesius. And the younger ones there, right, but–

**JN:** But during the war there were some lectures organized by the Circle.

**FD:** There were, there were, but it was closed.

**JN:** Like Trnka's famous lecture "The ideological structure–"

**FD:** On the one hand I didn't live in Prague, I lived in Buštěhrad near Kladno, and on the other hand it wasn't accessible to the broader public, it was a select group.

**JN:** And then after the war?

**FD:** After the war I witnessed the funeral of the Linguistic Circle. But don't put that in there.

**JN:** (*laughs*) But the lectures were held for three more years after the war, weren't they?

**FD:** I don't remember exactly. But they probably were. But not very much. Back then people were busy doing other things, and– I don't recall. They probably did go on, but it's disappeared from my memory completely. I just know that when the Academy was founded later, that was in fifty-two, fifty-three, scholarly life was reorganized, yeah, and the Circle was liquidated or changed to, to the Linguistic Association, and as the Institute secretary I was present for these things, and then I was the secretary of the Linguistic Association. Not everyone agreed with it, for example professor Trnka didn't agree, he wanted it to continue being called the Linguistic Circle.

**JN:** In the end, the name probably wasn't as important as the content.

**FD:** The name was essential, *nomina sunt odiosa*. Yeah, people have different relationships to language. One of them is that they assign it sort of magic powers.

**JN:** When something is named, it exists.

**FD:** The word had such immense strength. What has no name, doesn't exist–

**JN:** That's from Orwell, right?

**FD:** I don't even know. I had already written that without knowing Orwell (*laughs*), but one time I broadcasted it during a language corner on the radio and because of it I was horribly– that's one side of the conviction, as I call it, the conviction about the magical power of the word, that words are responsible for everything, Alfred Korzybski worked on that a bit. If we don't say the word, if we don't name the name, the thing



or the person doesn't exist. And conversely, when we constantly repeat one word, the reality we signify using that word occurs or simply exists. So simply *nomina sunt odiosa*. So you know, what was before the war, probably couldn't happen again, it was the product of a certain human constellation, a certain societal constellation, a certain situation in science and it couldn't happen again. It couldn't happen again.

**JN:** Well, to build upon that, what do you think about the contemporary position of Czechoslovak linguistics in the world context and to what degree has the Prague spirit been used up, or in what sense it is current?

**FD:** I think that Prague linguistics, or Czech, Prague, it's also Brno linguistics (*laughs*) doesn't have a bad position and could be even better, if it wanted to.

**JN:** In what sense, if it wanted to? Some of us want to.

**FD:** Well, if it sort of strove for it.

**JN:** Some of us are striving for it.

**FD:** Well, certainly, it's misleading, even the word is misleading. Again, what is Prague linguistics, if it wanted to? Semantically it's an expression that's a bit difficult to interpret (*laughs*). But look, what is known, undoubtedly, in the world today is topic-focus articulation. Even though there are objections to it, or people say that they don't understand this or that, that it's imprecise, and that this person understands it like this and that person like that, it doesn't matter, but as the saying goes, out in the world it's all the rage.

**JN:** Still?

**FD:** Yeah, still, still, still. And so that's one thing. The second thing is the theory of standard language, the theory of language cultivation, these things have just come into the forefront of interest, I mean in general, not the Prague approach, generally this issue, for many reasons. I wrote it somewhere. Now I can't repeat it from memory, but it's definitely the new situation of the newly forming nation-states in Africa, in Asia, and so on and then on the other hand the cybernetic interests and a lot of things which force both linguists and non-linguists to somehow deal with it. Neustupný's term treatment of language problems is very fitting, that people simply realize that there are problems with language and that these problems somehow have to be solved. To treat doesn't mean to solve, but *narábat* (to handle), as a Slovak would say. To do something with them. So that's happening— my friend Garvin did a lot in support of it, both by translating the Prague stuff, and by trying to apply it to the case of the South American situation and the one in Bangladesh. I had bad luck twice in my life, I had bad luck many times in my life, one time Garvin invited me to go to Chile with him, where language things like that were supposedly being done and so that I could do something with the Prague School there with him. But before we could get there (*laughs*), unfortunately—

**JN:** The coup took place?

**FD:** Yeah. Pinochet came into power. The second time I was supposed to go to Bangladesh for the same reasons and a coup took place there too. After that he didn't invite me

anywhere, so that a coup wouldn't take place there, I don't know (*laughs*). I was also invited to India. And I'm sorry I didn't go there for a longer period. But they wanted me to organize something related to fieldwork, which I don't understand much, that was one reason.

**JN:** When was that?

**FD:** At the beginning of the 70s. I don't know exactly. I'd have to look. And then I was afraid, I was afraid of the food, I was afraid of the climate and stuff like that, but now I'm almost sorry, but I probably wouldn't have been successful there, as I would have had to devote myself to preparation, an awful lot of preparation. So there is interest in these things in the world. And finally, I think that even in stylistics, but that's been a bit neglected, because today stylistics, going either by the name stylistics or rhetoric, is at the forefront of interest.

**JN:** I just got the stylistics of German, actually directly from Barbara Sandig.

**FD:** I have it.

**JN:** It completely fascinated me, when you look at the literature, how it's been developing, we don't know anything about it, for us stylistics ended with Hausenblas. And it got into the context of what's called the pragmatic turn, that even collections called *Pragmatics and Stylistics* and things like that are published.

**FD:** The Prague School would have something to say about that. I'm sometimes overcome with anger when I read these things and I say, why, we've already thought these things through. That is, I'm not of the opinion that the Prague School did everything, well perhaps it did, where one person mentioned something, another person mentioned something, but it wasn't elaborated, so please, you can't say that the Prague School already did it. Well, alright, it's all been done, there's nothing new in the world, only a bit differently, as I say. But a lot was done specifically in stylistics. But nobody knows about it. This is why I think that a collection of texts that would familiarize the international public with these results, but integrated into the contemporary era, not in some exegetical-apologetic way, but viewed from the perspective of the contemporary linguistic situation—

**JN:** We'll have the opportunity.

**FD:** That would be a valuable thing.<sup>7</sup> Well, in that respect the Prague spirit and Prague linguistics are alive and have a chance, of course they have to learn something, as we all do. We learn, we accept impulses from what was going around us, it would be stupid for us here to not want to let ourselves be influenced. But the Prague element could always be there or should be there, because, I think those are fundamental approaches which, not only the functional structural one, but above all the semantic one, even though it was not quite clarified in the Prague School— but it's the semantic approach

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<sup>7</sup> They are thinking of the collection in preparation at that time, later published as Chloupek & Nekvapil (1993).

that lasted and that is very successful now. Why, Skalička, when he came up with the linguistics of parole, well, it was a sensational turn (*laughs*) in linguistics or it could be a sensational turn. It didn't happen. Others didn't catch on. I have a great experience, when I arrived in Berlin, East Berlin, in 1958 or 1959. That time the Academy sent me to prepare the Czechoslovak participation, I was the Institute secretary then, at the Erfurt symposium *Zeichen und System der Sprache*. And there I encountered a group of people who were young men then, probably a year or two out of university. One was named Bierwisch, another was named Hartung, a third one was named Heidolph, a fourth was named Motsch, and a fifth was named Vater. And they were unhappy, as they hadn't heard anything reasonable at the faculty, there it was governed by a sort of old linguistics, the only one who was a bit more modern was professor Seidel, Eugen Seidel, he was in Romania during the war, he was a member of the Circle, well, but it wasn't what those young men needed. And so I told them that in Prague we knew various things that could interest them. And they said: Yes, we'd like to read that. Well, but they didn't have the *Travaux* in their collection in Berlin and the newer stuff wasn't accessible to them because of the language. So when Chomsky and this whole new linguistics showed up later, they simply accepted it in its entirety. Whereas in Prague we never accepted it in its entirety, not even Sgall.

**JN:** That's awfully interesting, because I'm currently translating, two of us are translating Gerhard Helbig's book *The Development of Linguistics after 1970*, and actually if I exaggerate, those five men that you just named were sort of creating world, world linguistics. Because Helbig sees world linguistics through the prism of the development of those five people. They took their stimuli from the United States, then, of course, the corresponding reactions to them came and it developed into the 70s, when these men later somehow reached the pragmatic turn in linguistics. So you were sort of at the genesis of East German linguistics. And if I'm going to write a foreword to this, I can really use a remark like that (*laughs*).

**FD:** They did it a bit by going parallel to the development of world linguistics.

**JN:** They went in that direction and today East Germany is a superpower.

**FD:** Chomsky reformed his linguistics several times. And one time a lot. That was the transition from the *Aspects*, when he completely crossed over into something new. And back then I came to Berlin and said to one of those guys I listed, I know which one, but it's not necessary to name him, so I said: well, what do you think about it? That it was really different. What do you think about the new Chomsky or the new development of Chomsky's theory? And he said: pshaw, we were expecting that.

**JN:** That was definitely Bierwisch (*laughs*).

**FD:** It was Motsch. But I like him, we were friends. (*laughs*) Well and then I, I don't know about Hartung, what inspired him—

**JN:** Various things, they were inspired by everything possible, including the societal situation.

**FD:** But those are extraordinarily gifted people, the ones I named, then the younger one, Ewald Lang, he's younger, so I missed him. And Dieter Viehweger, he didn't belong to that group. He was a bit younger.

**JN:** But that shows that they simply, because they don't have the tradition, it's like with West Germany, like in economic development, right? The fact that they don't have the tradition, so they essentially somehow grabbed onto the international spirit. That's probably a disadvantage that's apparent in our country, that the tradition here is huge, so sometimes a bit binding—

**FD:** It's an impediment, sometimes it can be an impediment.

**JN:** And then we didn't exhaust the tradition, we didn't utilize it to the maximum, so it remained somewhere at the halfway point. The world is pulling away from us and we somehow don't utilize the tradition in a way that it could still be utilized.

**FD:** But I'd say that in West Germany, it's interesting, they didn't succumb to the generative-transformational movement like in East Germany.

**JN:** And I, on the other hand, would explain it through the fact that East Germans couldn't align themselves with the pre-war traditions. For example, to Leo Weisgerber, right? And to the tradition of German grammar, while in West Germany all of this was very strong, so that was probably one of the reasons why generativism established itself in East Germany. East Germany was a generativistic powerhouse, now it's a text linguistics powerhouse.

**FD:** Text linguistics is a really German thing.

**JN:** In general.

**FD:** East German and West German.

**JN:** Well sure, yeah, the Germans have always been capable.

**FD:** The young men I named are really indisputably talented. Exceptionally talented. It was a coincidence that such a variety of such talented linguists appeared. In West Germany it's more fragmented, there are a lot of groups there. But overall there, for example, Seiler's work is very interesting, from Cologne. I have their work. If I have time, I'd like to write something about it for *Slovo a slovesnost*, to familiarize Czechoslovak scholars with it. That's very accessible and appealing for Prague. There were various groups there.

**JN:** I'd also be interested in what you said when professor Vachek renewed the post-war *Travaux*. Do you recall some of the circumstances of this renewal? You were, I think, on the editorial board beginning with the first volume.

**FD:** I probably was. Well it was like this. There was a need felt for a periodical where we could present ourselves in public. Whether it would be the *Travaux* or something else. Well, but it was natural, and with Vachek above all, that he tried to continue in the tradition of the pre-war *Travaux*. That was also wise, because it was something that was well-known before the war. You'll notice that even the cover is very similar.

**JN:** That's true. There was supposedly also a fifth volume of post-war *Travaux* that came out, or was prepared, devoted to sociolinguistics. Professor Vachek–

**FD:** Well, it was planned.

**JN:** When I was putting together the *Reader in Czech Sociolinguistics*, he told me that I should investigate what happened with volume five.

**FD:** But Zdeněk Hlavsa would have it–

**JN:** He was the editorial assistant, the secretary of the editorial team.

**FD:** That was Zdeněk Hlavsa. I was just a member of the editorial board. Or maybe not, but I probably was.

**JN:** I think you're listed there– Alright.

**FD:** We desperately lack a platform like that.

**JN:** Even though it's interesting that there are no platforms like that abroad. People simply group themselves around journals or occasionally collections here and there or they publish non-occasional, thematically specified collections, but the tendency to present national linguistics through a series in a different language, there isn't much of that, is there?

**FD:** No, there isn't. There are those *Acta*, I don't know, of various universities, but–

**JN:** Sure, universit–

**FD:** You're probably right, but here I mean, not to, not to present ourselves as a whole, but to have the opportunity to publish abroad, because–

**JN:** But we do have that to a significant degree, don't we?

**FD:** Yes and no. For various reasons, of course (*laughs*). I'm not concerned with promotion. Either Czechoslovak linguistics is good and will promote itself by being the way it is, and it doesn't matter if I use this company symbol or that certified trademark.

**JN:** But it's also another thing, who linguistics wants to address, because what you're saying is in the frame of the international context. There something is either new or it isn't, and that's how it does or doesn't establish itself. But then there's the Slavic context after all, there are people and countries who study us as Czechs, as Czech language scholars, at least for these people it would be worth it to publish something in foreign languages.

**FD:** Here it would be no problem even for a Russian collection to come out.

**JN:** Well, sure.

**FD:** That would be no problem at all. If it came out, they would read it in the West. And of course in the East. We have a good name in the Soviet Union and in Bulgaria. Soviet linguists utilized Czechoslovak, Czech linguistics in many respects. And they make no secret of it. And they always behaved in a positive manner toward us. I have the best experiences from presenting or from stays in the Soviet Union. They were always interested in us.

**JN:** They still are.

**FD:** They always accepted it and you have a lot of friends there, good friends. So at least if a collection written in Russian were to come out.

**JN:** If we could talk a bit more about one thing, it's more of a question from the mechanisms of sciences and from how contemporary science and linguistics is developing. You actually became, among others, a specialist in text linguistics and a specialist in sociolinguistics perhaps even against your own will (*laughs*). How does something like that actually happen?

**FD:** Well, so I'll start with the text linguistics. Up until recently I posed this question: why am I considered a text linguist? (*laughs*)

**JN:** When they started considering you a text linguist, maybe it forced you to work on yourself in that area, didn't it?

**FD:** I wouldn't completely rule that out. I wouldn't completely rule that out. But I posed this question: why am I still considered a text— when did I become a text linguist? And then I picked up this book, by chance, I was looking for something else, here I'll read. I'll translate it into Czech.

**JN:** You can read it to me in English.

**FD:** Alright. "One of the most interesting tasks of our science is the study of the non-grammatical linguistic structure of utterance and discourse," in parentheses "text". I was amazed that I was already working with the terms discourse and text. But I didn't realize. That is, the consequences of it. I got into it via the thematic progressions. But the consequences, the view of linguistics, I didn't realize. Even though here before that I say: "On the contrary, we maintain that even the utterance as such displays some social, i.e. general nonindividual and nonaccidental, properties. Speech is controlled by certain norms, some of them being linguistic norms (these being both of grammatical and nongrammatical and stylistic character), others of some other nature." Referencing Trost. In other words here *in nuce* it's as if I were already seeing the text linguistics. But I didn't fully realize that I was promoting text linguistics (*laughs*).

**JN:** It likely began, the primary motivation is likely from topic-focus articulation.

**FD:** Sure, sure.

**JN:** Topic-focus articulation is no longer a matter of—

**FD:** And from stylistics. And Hausenblas, a bit. I was really inspired by Hausenblas. He did this. He went beyond classic linguistics and—

**JN:** But perhaps Hausenblas went even further beyond it, whereas in your case the overlap wasn't that great, so Hausenblas would already fall into the category of stylistics, whereas you haven't yet abandoned the sentence, but have already gone beyond it. And the development of text linguistics went like that.

**FD:** No, I intentionally went beyond the sentence. The thematic progressions, they were really before that. Well, so it was probably like that, because otherwise Gülich and

Raible would never have listed the Prague School in first place in their examples of textual approaches. But that was already in Mathesius. I just wrote an article for *Slovo a slovesnost*, I was asked to write it, and as a motto I used, if Mařenka Těšitelová<sup>8</sup> allows it, the motto. Mathesius used to say: important is the question of what is a discourse, how it comes about, how it is created, how it is formed, how it comes to be understood. It's inspiration apparently from Gardiner, Hrabě drew my attention to it–

**JN:** Did you read Gardiner's book?

**FD:** No. Hrabě brought it to my attention. A paper came out some time ago, I received a copy, it's already a bit older, now I've just gotten to it, Coseriu in one lecture that he had in England about competence and performance and, this would interest you, it's also about de Saussure, and there are whole citations from this this Gardiner and it strongly recalls Mathesius and it even shows or indicates, you'd have to read Gardiner, that Mathesius judged Gardiner unfairly, that even how he said that the sentence, via the pattern, belongs to the language system, it's actually written *in nuce* even in the Gardiner book. But I'd like to read it– I think the Gardiner book must be at the faculty. Because all of Mathesius– I assume that Mathesius had the book in his library. Mathesius's whole library was passed on to the English department library.

**JN:** It's got to be here somewhere, because Leška said that he read it.

**FD:** Well, Hrabě also said that he read it and that Mathesius, if we're thinking of his slightly psycholinguistic commentaries–

**JN:** He wrote an extensive review of it.

**FD:** He said that linguistics– that it's necessary– where he talks about the functions, about functional syntax, about the two acts, so there he says that his approach is that of a psychologically informed linguist. So these things which are moving in the direction of psychology, so Hrabě claims that he read them in Gardiner and that Mathesius left them out of Gardiner. But it already int– it always interested me, for example he has *Speech and Style*, where it begins: What happens when we create a discourse, we see how the sun shines into the room. So it really interested me and I said to myself, why didn't he say more about it? So now I try to say more about it. In every point that I do, you can likely find some tiny motivation or moment from Mathesius.

**JN:** A little while ago you said that your Mathesius books were not very worn from use, that you know it by heart. Is that the case or is it a bit of an exaggeration?

**FD:** It's exaggerated, but I know a lot of it by heart.

**JN:** Okay, but that means that you're constantly reading the same– there are essentially two approaches, that you can constantly be reading something new, constantly gathering more and more books. Or you can have some authors you're constantly returning to, that you read and interpret over and over again and that you repeatedly let inspire you.

**FD:** I do both.

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<sup>8</sup> Marie Těšitelová, the editor-in-chief of *Slovo a slovesnost* at the time.

**JN:** And do you have, other than Mathesius, another author that you return to regularly like that?

**FD:** Probably not. It depends, when it's a matter of some individual problem. Havránek. And with various things, when you read them the first time, you don't find it there. And you read it the second time and only then do you find it there.

**JN:** Sure.

**FD:** Because you weren't actually looking for it there. Something like that. For example, the prologue to Havránek's *Genera verbi*, that's worth it.

**JN:** Vachek reprinted it later, right? I think it's in the *Praguiana* collection.

**FD:** Yeah, there they reprinted something from it.

**JN:** "Trends in present-day linguistic research", I think.

**FD:** There, where he has a very beautiful depiction of how to work with meaning. It's excellent.

**JN:** That's probably later on in the book. And what about sociolinguistics? How did Daneš become a sociolinguist?

**FD:** That's very simple, in the Institute I was forced, or since my school days it always delighted me, since elementary school, what's correct, what isn't correct in language. It annoyed me when the boys at school, at elementary school, said glass instead of bottle, and at home I corrected everyone, that you can't say it like that.

**JN:** Things like that irritated you? (*laughs*)

**FD:** Yeah (*laughs*). When I came to the Institute, I had the opportunity (*laughs*) to utilize these inclinations. I wrote lots of columns, it was at the radio, those columns, there were lots of them, well and then I wrote for the *Literárky* every week for eight years, then it came out, that is, a selection of them, in the *Short Guide*<sup>9</sup> and there in the back in the afterword I say how I got into it. I simply enjoy it, figuring things out, thinking about them. Simply this practice, roughly speaking, of writing columns led me to have to deal with the theory of standard language, with the theory of correctness in language, with the theory of language cultivation. Yeah, and that's my whole sociolinguistics. Then it occurred to me that it's all sort of a bit on shaky ground, that sociology does exist, after all, and should somehow be consciously applied. So I borrowed one Czech book which provides a very detailed interpretation of contemporary world sociology, from that time, from the 60s, and there I was interested in Parsons above all. And some more modern things. Merton, I cite them later in the text that was reprinted in the *Reader*.<sup>10</sup> Well, and so that led me to think about it a bit from the perspective of sociology. And to get some sociological concepts into it, that was the question of attitudes and there was even more.

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<sup>9</sup> Daneš (1964).

<sup>10</sup> Chloupek & Nekvapil (1986/1987).



**JN:** Do you recall which book it was? The Czech one that you just mentioned? The sociology one?

**FD:** Yeah, it's, the author isn't really very— but what is it called? I'll tell you later, if you want. Now I can't recall the name.

**JN:** Is it a whole book?

**FD:** A thick one. *Directions in Western Sociology* or something like that.

**JN:** I see, alright.

**FD:** It's a very useful book. That's how I got a bit of a whiff of socio— then in 1969 I went to a congress on applied linguistics in Cambridge. And before that I had been invited to some sociology days to Rome and there I met some sociolinguists, above all Dell Hymes and before that I was in America and there I met Billy Bright and Ferguson and above all Einar Haugen, he's an old man, I'm an old man now too (*laughs*), but he's older, that's funny: old man.

**JN:** It's all relative.

**FD:** It's all relative. At the summer school in America I had a sociolinguistics seminar, I studied the things that had come out up until that point.

**JN:** So you taught a seminar that was actually about sociolinguistics?

**FD:** Yes.

**JN:** Good.

**FD:** And there I was in contact with Ferguson, that's the one who thought up diglossia, then with Shuy, the head of the Center for Applied Linguistics, I think in New York. Then Dell Hymes— I later published something of his in *Slovo a slovesnost*, then he brought me onto the editorial board of *Language in Society*.

**JN:** You also, even though you weren't a professional teacher, you did have an influence, as you were just saying, on some students abroad, but of course I'm more interested in your activities, or rather your conclusions from your teaching activities here in Czechoslovakia. So when you were teaching students, you undoubtedly thought about— or like this, a person can have two strategies how to teach. In order to get something out of it himself. But then there's also the second thing, for the students to get something out of it. And so if you were to think about the type of people who are suited to linguistics, how to raise future linguists, what characteristics they should have. Does it even make sense to ask a question like that at all?

**FD:** Well, I already actually touched upon it a bit when I said that if the positivistic, linguistics of the Young Grammarians had continued, I would probably not have stood out, or I wouldn't have enjoyed it at all. What prerequisites a linguist should have depends to a certain degree on the constellations of linguistics at the given time. The constellations and the orientation. I recall— my colleague Helcl. He was an excellent expert on the history of language and language, but a downright positivist. I would've never proven successful during the time when he was successful, he was a teacher at

the faculty for a long time at one point, and he didn't follow the modern stuff. He was certainly a talented person. So it depends on what specialization is currently hot, and today there are more hot specializations at the same time (*laughs*), so it depends on the specialization in which he would have established himself.

**JN:** But there's still a sort of—

**FD:** There are certainly some common things. Above all the linguist should know a lot from university studies. Not just facts, but he should also know, that is, he should learn, to analyze language and see language. But some specific language, either his mother tongue, probably above all his mother tongue, Mathesius said that every linguist, Czech linguist, is actually a Czech language scholar, and every English linguist is above all an English language scholar. Like it or not, the medium of the natural, that is, the native language, asserts itself. He has to know a lot about the history of language, he has to know a lot of facts, he has to learn to analyze language, to interpret language. Those are sort of general scholarly abilities which are unfortunately not cultivated at our universities (*laughs*). He should have very good training not only in philosophy, but also in logic.

**JN:** Those are things on a pretty high level of generalization, but some dispositions, special ones? Or is it all the same if I go study physics or linguistics?

**FD:** That's hard to say, I don't know. It's like this. One certainly must have what it takes, to use a folk expression (*laughs*). But it's not written anywhere that a person can only be able to do one thing. I have a classmate from elementary school Vladimír Cafourek, Vláďa Cafourek, who was always very talented in class, he graduated from law school and when he saw that it was of no use (*laughs*) at that time when he graduated, he simply went and studied electrotechnical engineering and he was some type of researcher, I don't know exactly which, at the Popov Institute. It's hard to say.

**JN:** What would you be doing if you were not a linguist?

**FD:** I don't know. I would enjoy doing a lot of things, for instance I'm interested in the natural sciences, but there I'm interested in general principles used there, and if possible, I try to apply them in linguistics. Some concepts appear in various places there that would be applicable in our work. For example, these days everything gets made into a science, take synergetics. That's something that would be interesting to apply. Or Haugen published a book or he called it a book, it's a collection of his work, *Ecology of Language*. To apply a concept that's hot today to language, even though in America, ecology has had a slight shift in meaning.

**JN:** What does he mean by that? Why is it called that?

**FD:** Well, ecology right—I don't know how to say it, I would misrepresent it. In America, ecology has a slightly different meaning. It's like the language has its own life.

**JN:** Hm, the environment in which it lives.

**FD:** And the environment in which it lives. And how the language behaves, figuratively. Well, he should be talented. For sure (*laughs*). He has to have certain theoretical talent

and he also has to have analytical abilities, he has to have a feeling for linguistic detail, he should have a nose for the language, but great linguists can certainly appear who fulfil only half of that and they become great linguists in spite. I just recalled the name of that Polish guy, Andrzej Bogusławski. Once I was present at a discussion in Poland, about their new grammar, which is on such a high level of abstraction and logical thinking, if you've had a look at it.

**JN:** They're, they're a nation of logicians, the Poles.

**FD:** Well, yeah, there's a tradition of it there. And Bogusławski criticized it. So then I said to him: hey Andrzej, I can't make sense of it. You, a person who is downright based in logic and an absolutely abstract thinker, you're criticizing them for this very thing? He said: well, it's like this – I enjoy it, so I do it like this. But that doesn't mean that the grammar would have to be done like that, for people. That's interesting.

**JN:** That's a really nice example. Entirely out of the ordinary (*laughs*).

**FD:** So you can be devoted to one thing, in a general sense, and you can excel. What I'm saying, it's in support of versatility. In linguistics I always tried, it simply worked out for me, I was rather inclined to be more versatile. Well, so I'd probably like to see that among others, but that can be a very sort of individually tinged view.

**JN:** Alright, so what you just said helps us create a nice segue to the question of whether it's possible to characterize the style of your work, the style of your thinking?

**FD:** That's a very difficult question, it's more for other people to answer. Because it requires a high level of self-awareness and–

**JN:** –depersonalization.

**FD:** Of course. And self-observation, it's not always healthy to observe oneself too much. I probably have, like every person, some distinctive sketches, but which ones they are, I don't know. I hit upon something a little while ago. I think that what's characteristic for me is that on the one hand I'm interested in concrete linguistic facts, I have a bit of a feeling for the language, and I can analyze them and I enjoy analyzing them even in detail, above all in their semantic aspects, and on the other hand, I have the tendency to generalize and to look for some interpretation principles, even perhaps in other scientific fields. For example, Jakobson's study was valuable for me, you know it, I–

**JN:** Which one do you mean?

**FD:** The one about interdisciplinarity.

**JN:** “Linguistics in relation to other sciences”? Alright, alright.

**FD:** And you have a feeling for it. So, that's perhaps what's characteristic for me. And concerning formulations, that I try to formulate clearly. I always had the inclination to tell people what to do (*laughs*). And at times in my life I was unpleasant in that respect. And that's why I also liked teaching. I taught at a secondary school and I think that I wasn't such a bad teacher and the students liked me. Well, it also had a bit to do with

the fact that I wasn't much older than they were. Just recently one of them died, Pavel Kopta, he lived here.

**JN:** Kopta? I spoke with him, about half a year ago he invited me to some—

**FD:** He wrote beautiful blues poems. I received his death notice and to go along with it, they had copied one of his poems, a really sad one, as if he had anticipated his death. I didn't go to his funeral, I couldn't make it. And we were in contact, as I used to go to their student—I was the class teacher in that class, so every five years when they had—

**JN:** So as a songwriter he had a close relationship to language, of course.

**FD:** He's the son of the writer Kopta, his brother was the translator Petr Kopta. I knew him too, he was a bit older. But how did I get on that topic?

**JN:** Via work.

**FD:** Yeah, I liked teaching. In my style you can see that I try to say things clearly. So that others understand. Sometimes it can be a positive thing, for an author it can sometimes be a negative thing, because—

**JN:** In other words, an explicit author is more exposed.

**FD:** He has to say something too explicitly and sometimes he'll explicitly say something that is demonstrated to be somehow not quite right.

**JN:** And you can argue with him.

**FD:** Then you can argue with him. That has its disadvantages, but I probably wouldn't know how to do it any differently, because when I stylize, I simply feel the need for that clarity. And it's like an internal need. And I also won't sit down to work until I have a clear structure and, in fact, a solution, in my head. I won't sit down to write on the paper. Now I've become spoiled. Earlier, I didn't even copy anything over— My wife is wonderful, as she's willing to type up my scribbles. In three languages (*laughs*). That's an advantage. But today linguistics is more complicated. So I copy over my scribbles and make them into a clean manuscript. So I have the tendency to very clearly—

**JN:** And how do you work then? You can work in various ways. You can have the topic prepared about halfway, and you can start writing and formulating at the same time, when you start formulating, the solution can somehow appear to you, or even starting to write the article can suddenly begin to lead you further. Or can it be, as you say, that you're carrying the problem in your head for so long, until you solve it. But you can't solve it by having it rendered verbally in your head, definitely not.

**FD:** Well, right, I also have both of those, what you said, that creation actually happens under the hand of a person. But I usually think it out at night or in the morning when I wake up early. At that time you're not tied up, it's probably easier.

**JN:** There are probably fewer disruptions.

**FD:** You think through the weak points as well, you have to pay attention to that. Because at night or early in the morning something may seem quite clear to us, that it

works, it's wonderful, then we start mulling it over during the day, and it turns out that it wasn't thought through. It also gets forgotten sometimes, so it's necessary to get up in the morning and write it down immediately. But without these half-conscious activities I would not have come up with so many things.

**JN:** Alright. And how many hours a day do you work?

**FD:** I never work into the evening.

**JN:** Never?

**FD:** Never. It would have to be a necessity for me to do something after dinner, and I finish up already around five. What's the point? Then I can't sleep. Then it keeps running through my head and that drains me, when I can't sleep. I'm not a night owl, late morning is more my time. When it's necessary, I work all day. I work really intensively and I also laze around a lot. When I work, I work really intensively and in a focused manner. I can't turn on music, I tried it, what Hausenblas does, I can't. But, for example, when I'm really into some topic, I'll sit on it for maybe a week and I'll sit down and write about it every day.

**JN:** But that's now, when you can plan your time entirely on your own, but when you think back to when you were at the Czech Language Institute. So how to do it? Sometimes at the Institute it looks like that, that you're there, you spend time there and then you leave, or everybody leaves, and you actually start working.

**FD:** You know, I think I never did any scholarly work in the Institute. It wasn't possible to work there. Especially for me, when I had so many posts. I was the academic secretary for four or five years, then I was department head, then I was director, then I was department head again for a while, then in that last period I did more, but at the height of the Havránek period, when– Havránek was an awful employer, he always had something for us to do, so it wasn't possible to work in the Institute, I did it at home. I remember the book on intonation, that I wrote here and there was different furniture here.

**JN:** What did your family have to say about that?

**FD:** Well, that's something that's awfully important. And my wife was amazingly understanding and self-sacrificing.

**JN:** But you had to work in the evenings?

**FD:** No, I didn't work in the evenings.

**JN:** And if it wasn't possible to work in the Institute, the hours, when you came–

**FD:** Well, my wife was the type that never wanted me to do any household chores.

**JN:** (*laughs*)

**FD:** That doesn't just happen to anyone. Take the book on intonation – I wrote it in maybe two weeks, maybe a month. Of course, I did have the material ready, it was winter and they weren't heating this building, there was no coal, so we brought in

a little stove, because luckily there's a chimney here, and I wrote it here in that winter. And I really worked. I worked hard, continuously. But then I sometimes I laze around for a bit. You have to find your rhythm. And sometimes you sit down at your desk and it doesn't come. You squeeze it out of yourself like squeezing a lemon, and it doesn't come. I have to leave it. Then all at once— there are periods, I don't know, if it's the spring, the fall, or the spots on the sun, or if they're some cycles—

**JN:** Alright.

**FD:** But they've already figured out that every one of us has internal cycles.

## Epilogue

The interview continued on from this point – there are another 22 minutes of it on the recording (we have not published it in its entirety due to lack of space). The life of František Daneš also continued, for nearly 27 more years. At the time of the interview, neither of the participants had any idea that an essential social change (November 1989) would soon come, fundamentally transforming the life of Czech (then Czechoslovak) society, including the life of František Daneš. During the course of the revolutionary events, he was elected the new director of the Czech Language Institute, after years spent in retirement he returned to work and acted as director until May 31, 1994 (Dvořáčková 2011: 66). He remained very active in the field even after this period. While still in close contact with the Czech Language Institute, he wrote and published tens of articles, the last of which was published in this very journal (see Daneš 2012). On the occasion of his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, an international conference devoted to the legacy of his work was held, entitled *Užívání a prožívání jazyka / Living With and Through Language* (cf. Čmejrková & Hoffmannová 2009, which also provides a detailed overview of Daneš's professional life after 1989; see also Kaderka 2009). Five years later, another series of articles was published, their authors declaring their intellectual harmony with F. Daneš, having been inspired by his work (in grammar Bondarko 2014, in syntax Karlík 2014, in text linguistics Dressler 2014, and in phonetics Palková 2014).

After 1989, F. Daneš also gave several interviews which were later published. They are characterized, among others, by the fact that they contain very little information regarding the circumstances under which they came about, they are heavily decontextualized, their dialogical character has been removed, and they have a more or less literary or journalistic character. The author himself carefully edited them prior to publication, providing him with the opportunity for considerable impression management. One example of such an interview is the text published in the volume Chromý & Lehečková (2007: 11–64) (see also Čmejrková 2009 for a critique of this volume). In reading these interviews, we also become aware of the fact that it was not only the life of F. Daneš and Czech society that changed after 1989, but also the discourse which co-constructs and influences societal events, including the way in which we narrate our lives.

As is the case of truly significant individuals, not even František Daneš's death on March 18, 2015 means that his work has definitively come to an end. It will permeate

into the most various of contexts, which will assign it further meanings. These contexts are only somewhat predictable, but they also tend to be partly intentionally produced through the translation of texts into other languages. The first of these essentially posthumous contributions by F. Daneš is a Croatian translation of his 1968 article “Dialectical tendencies in the development of standard languages” (see Daneš 2015).

*List of the Czech scholars mentioned in the interview*

Adamec, Přemysl (1930–2006)	Leška, Oldřich (1927–1997)
Daneš, František (1919–2015)	Mathesius, Vilém (1882–1945)
Dokulil, Miloš (1912–2002)	Mukařovský, Josef (1891–1975)
Ertl, Václav (1875–1929)	Neustupný, Jiří V. (1933–2015)
Firbas, Jan (1921–2000)	Romportl, Milan (1921–1982)
Garvin, Pavel/Paul (1919–1994)	Sgall, Petr (*1926)
Hausenblas, Karel (1923–2003)	Skalička, Vladimír (1909–1991)
Havránek, Bohuslav (1893–1978)	Stich, Alexandr (1934–2003)
Helcl, Miloš (1904–1978)	Těšitelová, Marie (1921–2011)
Hlavsa, Zdeněk (1926–1998)	Trávníček, František (1888–1961)
Horálek, Karel (1908–1992)	Trnka, Bohumil (1895–1984)
Hrabě, Vladimír (*1927)	Trost, Pavel (1907–1987)
Kořenský, Jan (*1937)	Vachek, Josef (1909–1996)

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## RÉSUMÉ

### Předčasné bilancování: Rozhovor s Františkem Danešem 21. září 1988

Jádrem tohoto článku je podstatná část rozhovoru, který vedl J. Nekvapil s F. Danešem 21. 9. 1988. Účelem rozhovoru bylo získat informace pro napsání medailonku o F. Danešovi u příležitosti jeho sedmdesátin. Tento medailonek byl pak publikován v časopise *Philologica Pragensia* (Nekvapil, 1989). Na rozdíl od jiných publikovaných rozhovorů, které poskytl F. Daneš později, se tento rozhovor vyznačuje relativně vysokou mírou spontánnosti, a představuje tedy méně stylizovaný pohled na vývoj české lingvistiky, Pražské školy i na život samotného F. Daneše, včetně jeho života každodenního. Před uvedením přepisu rozhovoru jsou v tomto článku stručně popsány některé základní faktory, které tento rozhovor konstituují: účastníci, účel, prostředí, tón, komunikační prostředky a sekvenci průběh. Pozornost je věnována i tomu, jak je rozhovor v tomto článku prezentován, a zmíněny jsou žánrové tlaky na jeho prezentaci. V epilogu jsou uvedeny životní aktivity F. Daneše, které následovaly po čase rozhovoru, tedy po r. 1988, a některé aspekty intertextové a interdiskurzí. Článek vychází jako připomenutí života a díla velkého českého lingvisty, který zemřel dne 18. 3. 2015.

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