

THE PRAGUE SCHOOL OF LINGUISTICS AND HALLIDAY'S SYSTEMIC AND FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

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Abstrakt: V príspevku sa pozornosť sústreďuje na dve lingvistické školy, ktoré patria do oblasti funkčnej lingvistiky – Pražský funkčný štrukturalizmus a Hallidayovu systémovo-funkčnú gramatiku. Jeho cieľom je načrtnúť základné podobnosti a rozdiely medzi nimi. Tieto dve lingvistické školy majú podobný charakter, pretože obidve postulujú komunikačné a systémovo-funkčné perspektívy na jazyk. Rozdiely medzi nimi nie sú kvalitatívne rozdiely.

Kľúčové slová: funkčný štrukturalizmus, systémovo-funkčná gramatika, metafunkcie a makrofunkcie jazyka, procesový model jazyka, funkčná vetná perspektíva, veta ako správa

Abstract: Attention in the present paper is focused on two linguistic schools belonging to the area of functional linguistics – the Prague functional structuralism and Halliday's systemic functional grammar. Its goal is to outline basic similarities and differences between them. These two schools of thought are very similar in character since both of them postulate communication and systemic-functional perspectives on language. The differences between them are not qualitative differences.

Keywords: functional structuralism, systemic and functional grammar, metafunctions and macro functions, the process model of language, the functional sentence perspective, the sentence as message

1 INTRODUCTION

At present there is a great variety of linguistic schools of thought and it is beyond any doubt that the study of various linguistic conceptions and schools of thought will bring new inspirations and new ideas to anyone who is interested in the scientific study of language in general and various languages in particular. Of course, the situation is so complex that it is virtually impossible to consider them all. For this reason, one has to be really selective and deal mostly with those theories or perspectives on language that represent major linguistic movements. In this paper I will focus attention on two linguistic schools of thought which have been influential in European linguistics for a considerable period of time. The first of them is the classical functional structuralism of the Prague School of Linguistics, and the second one Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar. Both of them belong to those linguistic conceptions at the core of which is the communication and functional perspective on language (see e.g., Van Valin & La Pola 1997, 22–28).

Right at the beginning I must stress that functional linguistics does not represent a homogeneous and unified theory, but is composed of a range of various conceptions which differ according to whether they put more emphasis on the communicative (functional) or cognitive aspects of language (its functions in broader cognitive processes).

2 FUNCTIONAL AND STRUCTURAL LINGUISTICS

Among functional linguistic theories an important place is occupied by the theory of language of the Prague School of Linguistics which is commonly referred to as functionalist and structural linguistics. Prague structuralism was extremely fruitful and multifaceted, and its theses were programmatically implemented not only in the description and explanation of language, but also in literary studies, the development of children's speech, ethnography, etc. It was interdisciplinary in character, and its epistemology was empirical, that is, its problems and concepts were rooted in the praxis of linguistic and literary analysis (see e.g., Doležel 1997, 47). In addition to theoretical analysis, some prominent Prague school linguists (e.g., B. Trnka, J. Vachek) were also interested in the questions of teaching the mother tongue and foreign languages.

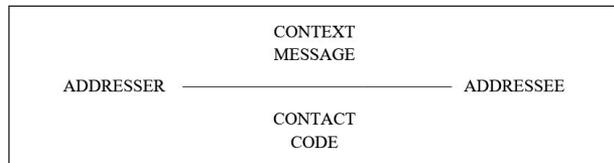
The Prague school was inaugurated by a group of prominent scholars including Mathesius, Jakobson, Trnka, Havránek and Rypka. But it was Mathesius who gave the group "an organized form and a clear theoretical direction". Originally, the group was known at that time as the Prague Linguistic

Circle (PLC). Many other eminent scholars, such as Trubetzkoy, Mukarovskij and Karcevskij, became members of the PLC. In the 1930s, it was joined by younger scholars such as Vachek, Vodička, etc. Later on, the PLC counted among its members or adherents many other Czech and Slovak scholars (e.g., J. Firbas, L. Dušková, J. Nosek, E. Novák, E. Paulíny, etc.) The classical Circle published the international book series *Travaux du cercle linguistique de Prague* in 1929-39.

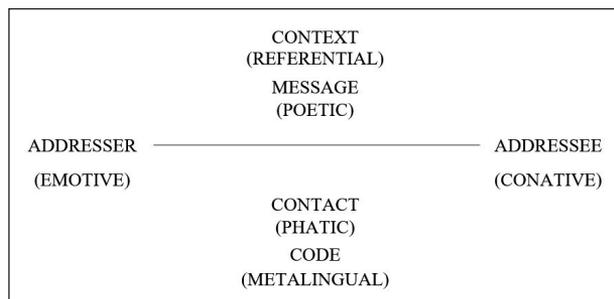
Besides Jakobson, who emigrated to USA in 1941, where he continued in his linguistic and literary research, the dissemination, evaluation and further elaboration of the Prague school linguistic theory was carried out especially by Vachek (1947, 1964, 1966, 1970, 1972, 1975, etc.) and Dušková (1993). Research into the theory of the Prague school was also conducted by many other scholars (e.g., Matejka 1995).

Basic theoretical tenets were outlined in the form of theses in the year 1929. They were presented under the same heading to the Congress of Slavic Philologists held in Prague (see Theses 1970). In the Theses language is defined functionally as “a system of goal-oriented means of expression”. Then it is maintained that “No linguistic phenomenon can be understood without regard for the system to which it belongs” (Vachek 1970, 35). In this sense, the Prague school puts emphasis on the communicative function of language in the broadest sense of the word and communicative needs which bear responsibility for the systemic organization of the formal means of expression, by means of which language satisfies given communicative needs. All this has helped to lay the foundations for the programme of linguistic characterology of various languages, both Slavic and non-Slavic. Linguistic characterology (it was called contrastive analysis decades later) is not a mere description, or a taxonomy, of language phenomena, but an analysis of the most significant language phenomena, that is, according to their importance in the language system. In fact, it is a method of analytic comparison, and as such it is a characteristic feature of functional structuralism.

The concept ‘linguistic characterology’ was introduced by Mathesius in his works Mathesius (1947) and in his university lectures published after his death (see Mathesius 1961, 1975). It has been adopted by Vachek (1975) and other scholars. The point of departure for this kind of linguistic analysis was not the way in which we receive language, but how we produce it, that is, how people express the world around them and inside them. In other words, how people express factual content. This has resulted in Mathesius’ model (or diagram) of the process of communication. This model, which has the character of the process model, was slightly modified by Hladký and Růžička (1996, 23) as follows:

*Figure 2***The model of the process of communication by Jakobson**

At the same time the model represents an integration of language functions since each constituent is associated with a corresponding function. Integrating Bühler's tripartite system (emotive, conative, referential) with Malinowski's concept of phatic communion, Jakobson proposes the following system of functions:

*Figure 3***The model of the process of communication by Jakobson (modified)**

The referential function is concerned with the informational content of an utterance, that is, with what is said or written without virtually considering the addresser or the addressee.

The poetic function is equated with the aesthetic function of language. It valorizes the signifier, foregrounding the decorative value of the message. It is a message for its own sake, thereby reducing the referential function.

The phatic function is intended for the establishment and maintenance of social contacts and relations, and as such it is in charge of the channel of communication.

The conative function is focused on the addressee, that is, on the second person. It is realized especially by two grammatical categories – the vocative and the imperative.

The metalingual function is concerned with the verbal code itself, that is with language speaking of itself. In this way we clarify the way in which the verbal code is used.

Unlike Jakobson, Mathesius (1972, 36) distinguished only three functions of language – communicative, expressive, and cognitive. Both Jakobson's and Mathesius' models of the process of communication with their corresponding language functions have had a tremendous influence on linguistic and literary studies in this country and abroad. And their significance for teaching languages is also evident.

As far as linguistics is concerned, Mathesius' model is reflected, for instance, in the linguistic characterology of modern English. In the well-known publication *A Functional Analysis of Present Day English on a General Linguistic Basis* (1961), assembled by his pupils, Mathesius gave almost a "plastic" description of English (functional and structural, as well as contrastive). He has applied here a broader linguistic view because the structure of English is delineated not only in relation to Czech but also in relation to German and French. In this way, a comprehensive structure has been established with extensive application possibilities

Functional structuralism has made many contributions to linguistic and literary sciences, both theoretical and methodological. As to linguistic studies, it has introduced new concepts, e.g., dichotomies marked-unmarked, centre-periphery; analytical comparison (contrastive analysis), complex condensation (by means of non-finite verb forms such as the infinitive, the gerund, and the participle which simultaneously emphasize the current overall tendencies towards language and speech economization (Bojo 2019, 135), but above all it has been very influential in the elaboration of the theory of the functional sentence perspective (FSP). The concept was first introduced by V. Mathesius (see e.g., Mathesius 1939, 18–34). FSP, which has been developed into a theory by Firbas (see Firbas 1992, 31–62), became one of the principles applied in the study of English word order. The FSP is concerned with the functional analysis of a sentence, that is, with the way in which participants in the process of communication distribute information in relation to the context. In this connection Mathesius (1939, 57) distinguished two basic entities in the structure of the sentence as a message: the **theme** (what is being talked about, the point of departure) and the **rheme** (what is being said about it, the nucleus of the message). For example:

<u>The hurricane</u>	<u>killed three people.</u>
theme	rheme

The theme-rheme division of the sentence as a message has become a point of departure for the theory of the FSP by J. Firbas (1992). According to him

every element that conveys meaning pushes the communication forward and is a carrier of **communicative dynamism**. The **degrees of communicative dynamism** are relative degrees of communicative importance by which the elements contribute to the unfolding of the process of communication. The degrees of communicative dynamism are determined by the interaction of semantic and pragmatic factors, as well as the word order. Instead of the theme-rheme division of the sentence Firbas introduces tripartition: **theme-transition-rheme**:

<u>They</u>	<u>were</u>	<u>dancing</u>
theme	transition	rheme

It is obvious that the theme carries the lowest degree of communicative dynamism and the rheme the highest amount of communicative dynamism, and the natural way is to go from the known to the unknown

And as I have said at the beginning of this paper, the questions concerning the teaching of the mother tongue and foreign languages in elementary and secondary schools were also at the centre of attention. In the Theses themselves (Teze, 60–65) these questions were discussed mostly in connection with the teaching of the mother tongue and Slavic languages, but the conclusions can be also utilised for the teaching and learning of other foreign languages. Moreover, some members of the Prague School (e.g. Trnka and Vachek) were also textbook writers. It was especially Vachek who wrote a number of textbooks, workbooks and readers for practically all types of schools.

At present considerable attention is paid to discourse analysis, genres and registers, cognitive processes, metaphors, metonymy, etc. These questions were also studied in the Prague school (e.g., Jakobson 1960; Hausenblas, 1964; Nosek 1967). Admittedly, the Prague functional structuralism is still an inspiring force for many present-day linguists both in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic.

3 SYSTEMIC-FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS

On the scale of functional linguistic theories, a radical functionalist position is occupied by the systemic-functional theory of language, the founder of which is Halliday (see e.g., Halliday 1978, 1985). This linguistic school has a number of identical signs in common with the Prague school. Both schools have an almost identical view of language. In Halliday's view: "Language has

evolved to satisfy human needs, and the way it is organized is functional with respect to these needs – it is not arbitrary. A functional grammar is essentially a “natural” grammar, in the sense that everything in it can be explained, ultimately, by reference to how language is used. (1990, XIII). ...The orientation is to language as a social rather than an individual phenomenon, and the origin and development of the theory have aligned it with the sociological rather than psychological modes of explanation. At the same time, it has been used within a general cognitive framework.” (1990, XXX). In the above quotation, we can discern an important perspective: needs > functions of language > the structural organization of language. In fact, the same perspective is immanent in Prague functional structuralism. Halliday, however, managed to determine the ways in which language functions inform language forms. He builds on the most abstract functions which language must fulfil in all human cultures regardless of physical environment. Halliday proposes the following triad of metafunctions which are embedded in the semantic system of language: interpersonal, ideational, and textual.

The **interpersonal metafunction** applies to the process of interaction between interactants (speaker and addressee) and the grammatical resources for enacting social roles and for establishing, changing and maintaining social contacts and relations. It is the social and speech roles we take on in dialogic interaction that are of paramount importance. One of its major grammatical systems is Mood. What must be stressed in this connection is that the relation of grammar to other parts of the linguistic system is not a part to whole relationship, rather it is a symbolic choice, that is, a system is a point of choice (it has a paradigmatic character).

The **ideational metafunction** refers to the grammatical resources by means of which we interpret our experience concerning the world around us and inside us. Human experience is construed as a flux of “goings-on”, i.e., processes, the participants involved in the processes, and circumstances in which the processes take place. One of its major grammatical systems is understandingly Transitivity. Transitivity is a starting point for a semantic organization of our experience. It subsumes all the functions that are relevant for the syntax of the sentence. In it, are balanced processual meanings with grammatical categories.

As far as the classification of these processes are concerned, Halliday distinguishes six basic types: material, mental, relational, behavioural, verbal, and existential. Each process implies specific categories of meanings, specific participants, and specific roles.

We have seen that the above metafunctions orient to the social world and the natural world. While the interpersonal metafunction serves to enact the social world (social and personal relations, roles and feelings), the ideational

metafunctions applies to the construal and account of the natural world (various types of processes). However, the third metafunction, the **textual** metafunction, is different in character. It concerns "the creation of text with the presentation of ideational and interpersonal meanings as information that can be shared by speaker and listener in text unfolding in context." (Mathiessen & Halliday 1997, 10) The role of the textual metafunction is to provide the speaker and hearer with strategies for guiding the listener in his/her interpretation of the text.

The textual metafunction is based on two structures. The first of them is called *a unit of information*, and information is understood to be a process of interaction between what is known or predictable and what is new or unpredictable. The interplay of new and non-new in fact generates information 'in the linguistic sense'. In this sense, an information unit is a structure which consists of two functions, the **New** and the **Given**. Ideally, an information unit is composed of two elements (Given, New), but this does not apply to the beginning of discourse, nor to the cases in which Given points to something present in verbal or non-verbal context. It follows from this that a 'new element' is obligatory, whereas 'given' is optional.

Understandably, each information unit is phonetically realized as a pitch contour (or tone), and within each tone group one foot carries the main pitch movement. This is referred to as TONIC PROMINENCE. The element having this prominence is thought to be carrying INFORMATION FOCUS.

Information structure is very closely connected with the so-called thematic structure. This structure also consists of two elements, which are generally known as Theme and Rheme. To form a sentence, a speaker will choose the Theme from within what is Given and locate the focus, the climax of the New, somewhere within the Rheme:

I	<u>haven't seen you for ages.</u>
theme	rheme

In spite of the fact that both structures are very closely semantically related, they cannot be regarded as identical. According to Halliday (1990, 278): "The Theme is what I, the speaker, choose to take as my point of departure. The Given is what you, the listener, already know about or have accessible to you. Theme + Rheme is speaker-oriented, while Given + New is listener-oriented." The Given-New structure determines the organization of text into discourse units and information options, whereas the thematic structure affects the sequence of elements in the structure of the sentence, conceived as a message.

The three metafunctions are simultaneous. It means that Mood, Transitivity and Theme are simultaneous strands within the system networks of the clause.

Apart from the three metafunctions, there is a further metafunction called the **logical metafunction**. This function is a manifestation of systems of logical relations such as “and”, “or”, “if-then”, “because”, etc., which ‘construe the link between one piece of discourse and another’. These systems are expressed not by configuration but by iteration: one clause bonded with another clause, or one group or phrase with another group or phrase.

Besides the metafunctions and semantic roles of clause elements implied in various kinds of processes, language has a set of macrofunctions. Halliday (1978, 19–20) speaks about the following macrofunctions:

- ”1 Instrumental (‘I want’): satisfying material needs
- 2 Regulatory (‘do as I tell you’): controlling the behaviour of others
- 3 Interactional (‘me and you’): getting along with other people
- 4 Personal (‘here I come’)
- 5 Heuristic (‘tell me why’): expressing the world around and inside us
- 6 Imaginative (‘let’s pretend’): creating a world of one’s own
- 7 Informative (‘I’ve got something to tell you’): communicating new information.”

Of course, one cannot fail to spot a number of similarities comparing the above list with similar lists by other authors (see e. g., Jakobson 1960).

There is another aspect to SFG which must be mentioned. This aspect concerns the relationship between grammar and lexis. SFG does not treat them separately but views them as a continuum based on the principle of delicacy. It also uses a common term for them: lexico-grammar. Delicacy, as a very powerful principle, orders systems on a cline from the most general systems of options to the most specific ones. SFG claims that: “Looked at from the point of view of grammar lexis is most delicate grammar; and looked at from the point of view of lexis, grammar is least delicate (most general) lexis.” (Mathiessen & Halliday 1997, 24) This virtually means that grammar construes the general parameters in terms of which lexical distinctions are made.

In SFG the principle objective is not just to describe the system, but also to relate the system to actual instances of language; which are referred to as text. This relation of system to text is called instantiation. Thus, system and text are not two different things. Text is meaningful only because it is the instantiation of a systemic potential. Considering the dialectic of text and system, SFG regards language as a dynamic system maintained in existence by constantly changing in interaction with its environment. Language as such is firmly embedded in a context of culture since it is a semantic (social) system. Context as a high-level

semiotic system includes in the first place social discourses (genres, registers or functional styles, thematic systems) and practices (expected patterns of behaviour). Cultural context generates communicative situations (or situation types). Halliday defines communicative situations in terms of three variables: field, tenor, mode. They are reflected in the three metafunctions that we have discussed: field = ideational + logical; tenor = interpersonal; mode = textual.

Situation types are articulated within interactional processes (see Melrose 1995). The main component in them is an interaction sequence. Interaction sequence means passing through stages (involving actual strategies) to accomplish a social purpose. Though it is tempting to deal more in detail with this subject, we cannot do so because it lies beyond the present scope. A couple of examples must be sufficient to illustrate interaction sequences, i.e., their structural stages. First, we have to consider genre. Melrose (1995, 53) examines the schematic structure of two genres – casual conversation, and service encounters. The first of them has the following schematic structure: Greeting ~ Address ~ Approach (Direct or Indirect) ~ Centring ~ Leave-taking ~ Goodbye. The second one consists of: Greeting ~ Turn- allocation ~ Service Bid ~ Resolution ~ Pay ~ Goods Hand-over ~ Closing ~ Goodbye.

Everyone admits that communicative situations are realized both verbally (by means of lexicogrammar and phonetics) and non-verbally (gestures). Lexicogrammar is an integral subsystem of language in context. Lexicogrammar interfaces with both semantics and phonology, and together with semantics it forms the content of language. A natural language is contextualized among other semiotic systems. SFG claims that “A language is fourth-order system, to be investigated (1) acoustically, (2) neuro-physiologically, (3) culturally, as well as (4) lexicogrammatically (Mathiessen and Halliday 1997, 35).

Lastly, a few words about understanding the cognitive basis of language. SFG (see Halliday 1978, 11–15) rejects the nativist view which holds that there is a specific language-learning faculty, distinct from other learning faculties, and that it provides the human infant with a ready-made blueprint of the structure of language. SFG has the environmentalist view which says that language learning is not fundamentally distinct from other kinds of learning. It is dependent on the same mental faculties that are involved in all aspects of the child’s learning processes. The very specific properties of language are not innate, and therefore the child is more dependent on his environment – on the language he hears around him, together with the contexts in which it is uttered – for the successful learning of his mother tongue.

1 CONCLUSION

To sum up, the Prague functional structuralism and the systemic functional linguistics are very similar in nature. The most important similarities are that both of them postulate that communicative functions determine the systemic organization of language, and both of them build on the process of communication and the process model of language. They are also in agreement about the relation of language and text as its instantiation. Understandably, there are also a number of differences between them, e.g., the SFG operates with a greater number of functions (metafunctions and macrofunctions), semantic roles, and it is also more explicit with respect to different kinds of processes (material, mental, relational, etc.) However, such differences are no differences in quality but more or less differences in degree.

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