

ON THE OCCASION OF J. V. NEUSTUPNÝ'S 80TH BIRTHDAY

In his paper on the problematic condition of the Roma in Czechoslovakia, Professor Jiří V. Neustupný (*31.10.1933; hereafter JVN) draws on Language Management Theory and explores socioeconomic, sociolinguistic and linguistic facts of life for the Roma in relation to the surrounding communities (Neustupný, J. V.: Language management for Romani in Central and Eastern Europe. *New Language Planning Newsletter* 7(4), 1993: 1–6). He connects facts in these three areas into bundles of relationships that he terms ‘interaction clusters’ (ibid.: 5). Problems in any one of the three factual areas cannot be solved, he writes, unless the policies in each are in force at the same time and in support of one another.

Axiomatic in JVN's approach is the uncompromising demand for claims about communication problems to rest on facts from discourse. His approach holds that the diagnosis of communication problems must rely on the “examination of what is or what is not considered to be a problem by individual participants in individual discourse” (ibid.: 4). This, of course, applies to the Roma and to the surrounding communities.

JVN credits Dell Hymes, whom he met in the early 1960s in Prague, as his source of inspiration to discern how “sociolinguistic (communication) problems represent a necessary link between the socioeconomic and linguistic areas” (ibid.: 4). In a much earlier paper on language problems and language policy, presented to the Airlie House Conference on Developing Nations (held in November 1966) (published as Neustupný, J. V.: Some general aspects of “language” problems and “language” policy in developing societies. In: J. A. Fishman, C. A. Ferguson & J. Das Gupta (eds.), *Language Problems of Developing Nations*. New York: Wiley, 1968, 285–294), JVN refers to Hymes' ethnography of communication and

Skalička's and the Prague School's concepts of parole and discussions of style (ibid.: 294, footnotes 4 and 6). On this basis, he formulates a fundamental thesis: to “think of ‘language’ problems in the broad contexts of communication problems and to include in ‘language’ problems besides language code problems also the problems of speech” (ibid.: 287).

JVN and I discovered that we had both been invited to this conference. We had also both arrived to take up appointments at Monash University in Melbourne, at that time still a project under construction, in the summer of 1966. JVN came to Monash University as a professor of Japanese, I as a lecturer in linguistics. The Airlie House conference became the event from which language planning as a contemporary discipline evolved, through mechanisms of international research projects, conferences, publications, and discussions – and from which Language Management Theory subsequently evolved as well.

We shared a fascination with people's behavior toward language and with the emerging field of sociolinguistics. During walks on campus we discussed our work, the condition of Australian linguistics, sociolinguistic problems, and of course issues that arose from the development of language planning as an emerging (sub-)discipline of sociolinguistics. Looking back at JVN's Airlie House paper, I see the seeds of Language Management Theory. He calls for general theory, while at the same time devoting special attention to developing speech communities. He draws attention to the desirability to ‘encompass’ previous approaches such as the Prague School's writings on ‘language culture’ (among which Havránek's writings in particular stand out). He admonishes the linguist to cooperate with the political scientist. In his view, work must be descriptive as well as prescriptive, and citing Skalička and Hymes, we must look beyond ‘language code’ to communication and the communicative situation

(parole, speech). The Prague School's understanding of language cultivation and of parole underpins much of JVN's work, which was eventually connected with the re-emergence of the Prague School and brought about a renewed vigor in investigating behavior-toward-language.

In his thinking, JVN fits whatever facts he captures into a broader context, creating a challenging canvas of historical and typological macro-relationships. When he urges inquiry into relationships between features of the 'language code' and their evaluation in considering the non-linguistic 'motivation' of features of language, he takes this thought of language-to-societal-context further, to connect the concept of developing languages to developing societies: "The task of the day is the compilation of a complete list of problems in the developing languages, and this presupposes a complete list of all features of these languages which are connected... with other developing features of the corresponding social structures..." (ibid.: 290).

The claim that communicative features are motivated by social realities is fundamental to JVN's thinking. Theory, in his view, must embrace both the communicative and the societal. And since societies change, he necessarily takes an interest in developmental typology. JVN could have stopped there and made 'language policies' the objects of empirical descriptive analysis, but he takes up the challenge of prescriptive solutions to language problems. JVN calls for a typology of criteria of evaluating language policies and proposes four general principles (ibid.: 292), reflecting his own values, but connected, of course, with political realities in Japan and elsewhere:

- contribution to development of the society
- creation of equal opportunities (democratization) for all members of the society
- contribution to the unity of the society and
- foreign relations (in other words, is the feature an obstacle to communication with other specific communities?)

JVN's thoughts on the paths of development of speech communities were grounded in his interest in behavior-toward-language and language behavior throughout history. He aims at a global typology and general truths. Japan and Japanese became his focus, but it could have been India and Hindi or another country and another

language – the Oriental Institute in Prague, where he started his scholarly career, offered many paths. JVN continued work on the notion of motivated relationships between communicative behavior and social organization and the possibility of a global all-encompassing theory of stages of development. I remember him once saying that he was in search of a radically unique – a truly different – language; a truly different way of life would predict it, but could there be radical difference otherwise? Quite logically, he published on the communality of languages, i.e. on 'language' and 'speech areas' (drawing on the Prague School concept of Sprachbund while extending it into Sprechbund). Unique, similar or equivalent, of language or of parole, he is always in pursuit of the socioeconomic features that motivate them.

In Czechoslovakia, before venturing abroad, JVN was inevitably exposed to the grand theories of that period, equally inevitably with a strong Marxist component, and in the context of the Cold War. His embracing the importance of exploring how socioeconomic factors motivate communicative behavior, in short – interests as an element of Language Management Theory, as well as the need to find expressions for new realities, reflects his upbringing in a Zeitgeist of a discourse of the class dialectic as historical necessity. Young people in particular, struggling against imposition and domination, will foreground their individual freedom of action, their freedom of speech. In any case, JVN fiercely advocated that researchers rely on the individual, situated facts of discourse, and on the interactants' own evaluations therein and thereof.

JVN juxtaposes interests with discourse. He positions the actual, real time performance of discourse as a force acting against it. He incorporates the individual issue of compliance with a norm within an individual's discourse through the features of deviation in his exploration of cross-cultural discourse (see Neustupný, J. V.: Problems in Australian-Japanese contact situations. In: J. B. Pride (ed.), *Cross-cultural Encounters: Communication and Mis-communication*. Melbourne: River Seine Publications, 1985, 44–64) and through inadequacy marking in his study of linguistic correction. For a teacher of Japanese, the norm, presumably endorsed also by the learner, is eventual correct speech. For

the foreigner in non-native speech situations, deviations occur relative to “what is accepted as the base norm for the encounter”.

A theme in JVN’s work is the typology of the flow of history. In the Airlie House paper, he draws attention to developing features of communication and how they “are connected with features of the social structure”, for example, he claims that “the lesser proportion of dialogue is connected with a lower degree of individualization in developing societies” (ibid.: 290–291). His earlier paper on “Oriental languages” is an essay on developmental typology (Neustupný, J. V.: First steps toward a conception of “Oriental Languages”: A contribution to the sociology of language. *Archiv orientální* 33, 1965: 83–92). He included this paper, titled “On early modern languages” as chapter 8 (147–159) in his important collection of papers published by the University of Tokyo Press (Neustupný, J. V.: *Post-Structural Approaches to Language: Language Theory in a Japanese Context*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1978). Chapter 9 is the case study “The developmental type of Japanese” (160–182).

For students of language management, the paper that appears as chapter 7 with the title “Outline of a theory of language problems” is a text originally presented orally in 1973. The

paper contributes fundamentally to correction theory, a direct forerunner of Language Management Theory. It also provides directions for research on periodization when it matches features of ‘linguistic correction’, ‘metalinguistic correction’ and ‘linguistic varieties’ to the socio-economic stages of ‘early modern’, ‘modern’ and ‘contemporary’, respectively (ibid.: 255).

JVN’s pursuit of historically informed grand theory is truly inspiring, posing an obvious challenge to sociolinguistic enquiry: what features in critical interaction clusters – what critical human actions – constitute and distinguish one *longue durée* of distinct communicative behavior from another? JVN’s search for mutually motivating behaviors in socioeconomic, sociolinguistic and linguistic areas transcends partial theory, whether Language Management Theory or developmental stage periodization, and becomes a search for the universal.

The best gift we can give JVN is to build on his thoughts and join him in his search.

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