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Professor Jiří V. Neustupný

Jiří V. Neustupný and his twin brother Evžen were born in Prague on 31 October 1933 into the highly intellectual family of Jiří Neustupný, a prominent Czech archeologist, leading museum curator, and university professor, whose scientific and theoretical interests significantly influenced the future scientific career of both his sons (Evžen Neustupný is a prominent Czech archeologist). In the foreword to his book *Post-Structural Approaches to Language* (1978), Jiří V. Neustupný wrote: "I wish to dedicate this book to my mother who was my first teacher of communicative competence and to my father who provided the opportunity to test the faculty in heated discussions about the history and future of science." (Neustupný, 1978, vii).

Jiří V. Neustupný studied at the Jirásek Grammar School in Prague between 1944 and 1950 and, after the grammar school was closed, finished his studies at the grammar school-gymnasium in Kubelíkova Street in Žižkov in 1952. He started studying Latin in the 1st grade and Classical Greek in the 4th grade and took V. Pořízek's Hindu and Urdu courses at the School of Oriental Languages during the last two years of grammar school. He always retained his affection for India and its languages (he wrote a paper on the relationship of Japanese and the languages of India, started writing about the Romany language in the 1990s and taught language planning theory in India for a short period of time).

When accepted to the Faculty of Philology of Charles University in 1952, Neustupný chose Japanese as his major, which was taught by Vlasta Hilská and Miroslav Novák, and the history of the Far East as his minor. He also regularly attended the linguistics seminar of Professor Vladimír Skalička and focused on studying linguistics. He chose the phonology of the Japanese accent as the topic of his thesis. He further developed this topic as a postgraduate scholar at the Oriental Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, where he started working as a scientist in 1964 after having defended his dissertation. He actively participated in Czechoslovak linguistics, e.g. his analysis of linguistic vagueness was published in the second volume of *Travaux linguistiques de Prague*, purposely following up on the famed series of publications of the Prague Linguistic Circle from the 1930s. During this time period, Neustupný was also an active member of the committee of the Czechoslovak Oriental Society and later on its scientific secretary. Oriental studies were concentrated in one scientific institute, which caused a huge fragmentation in terms of territories and fields of knowledge. The management of the Oriental Institute tried to overcome this disadvantage by promoting large collective projects for the specialists from different cultural and linguistic territories and to turn the

representation of different specializations into a scientific and research advantage. These projects in the 1960s included *The Dictionary of Asian and African Writers* as well as the topic defined as “the qualitative changes in the national liberation movement in Asia and Africa after WW II”. This topic actually included all types of social changes, including current and potential linguistic and cultural changes. Having always been very much interested in all general issues concerning language structure as well as in all aspects of the role of a language in society, it was actually Neustupný who initiated the first steps of the Prague Orientalists in this area. Later on, he pointed out that these were the first steps towards the research of language problems (Neustupný, 1978, p. 32). In 1965, he published his paper „First Steps towards the Conception of ‘Oriental Languages’. A Contribution to the Sociology of Language“.

Neustupný was one of the first Czechs to be awarded the postgraduate scholarship of the Japanese Ministry of Education, and during 1960–1962 he studied at the most prestigious University of Tokyo. In Tokyo he met his future wife, Reiko Kaki-hara, who took her husband's name and also worked at the Oriental Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences as a specialist on Japanese economy after her husband's return to his homeland. In Japan, Neustupný mostly acquired his first-hand knowledge of Japanese linguistics with its specifics (e.g. expressing politeness, the relationship between spoken and written language, etc.) and especially his understanding of sociocultural problems in the communication of foreigners with the Japanese and vice versa. This acquired knowledge and contacts determined his future professional career.

In 1966, Neustupný accepted the invitation of Monash University in Melbourne to set up Japanese Studies there. After the Academy of Sciences refused to extend his stay in 1968, he decided to settle in Australia permanently and obtained Australian citizenship. This decision was also made in view of the fact that a third country held certain benefits for the Czech-Japanese marriage of such strong personalities as Jiří and Reiko. After having spent 27 years at Monash University, where he had built up the largest Japanese Studies Department in Australia (25 professors) and created and published many Japanese textbooks, dictionaries and other study materials, Neustupný, a professor emeritus, moved to Japan in 1993. He first worked at Osaka University, then at Chiba University and, starting in 1999, at Obirin University in Tokyo, not as a visiting professor but as the first foreigner in the history of Japanese faculties of philology to teach Japanese students in Japanese and to be a regular teaching staff member.

His stay in Australia not only brought Neustupný closer to Japan but also opened doors to western sociolinguistics and prominent linguists specializing in language policy (Haugen, Fishman, Rubin and others) and representing what Neustupný characterized as the “sociolinguistics of language problems”, which was very close to his heart (Neustupný, 1978, p. 18), as obvious from his previously published

papers. In the mid-1960s, Neustupný was invited to an important conference on developing countries in the Airlie House in Warrenton, Virginia, together with Swedish linguist Björn Jernudd, with whom he shared the same interests and who had taught linguistics at Monash University together with Neustupný. Neustupný and Jernudd became very close and “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 (Jernudd, “On the occasion of J. V. Neustupný's 80th birthday.” *Slovo a slovesnost* 74, 2013). For many long decades, Björn Jernudd was Neustupný's closest colleague and co-creator of the Language Management Theory that build upon both the Czech teachings of language culture, developed mainly by Bohuslav Havránek, and the theory of language planning, but is based on the research of everyday problems arising from communication.

Typically, Neustupný approached linguistic topics from general standpoints trying to cover various linguistic issues as part of the whole language concept -- internal language structure, the language-society relationship as well as extra-linguistic realities. His interest in the general issues of science and language certainly stems from the mentioned discussions with his father at a young age.

Neustupný, however, explained (Neustupný, 1978, p. 3) that his entire life he was forced to deal with matters from a general perspective because he always had to go beyond the existing fields of knowledge (which he experienced, for example, in solving the issues of the Japanese verbal accent) and to generalize and interpret his knowledge in different language schools he dealt with. Therefore, he could not become an orthodox promoter of existing paradigms and movements, but rather, had to become an original thinker. People who were close to him found him funny and lovely. But those who did not know him much did not like his elliptical way of speaking and perhaps even considered him stuck up, although this was his way of hiding his shyness.

Neustupný counterbalanced his living in Japan by coming to Prague regularly at the beginning of the 1990s. Although he was unable to settle there long-term, he initiated fruitful collaboration with Czech sociolinguist Jiří Nekvapil, with whom he published several texts. In the end, this collaboration led to the emergence of a Prague branch of the Language Management School in addition to the Australian and Japanese ones. Jiří Nekvapil was then invited to Australia and Japan, promoting the collaboration of Jiří Neustupný's students on three continents. These students continue with the research that Jiří V. Neustupný initiated.

Neustupný was also invited to other foreign universities. While in Duisburg, he had a massive stroke on January 1, 2005 that made the last decade of his life difficult. He passed away in Melbourne on July 2, 2015 at the age of 82, leaving behind his family, students and colleagues. Nevertheless, he will certainly remain in his students'

and colleagues' hearts and daily work for at least one or two generations. For his contribution to Japanese science and its international links, J. V. Neustupný received the Order of the Rising Sun from the Emperor of Japan in 2013.

*PhDr. Ivo Vasiljev, Orientalist,
fellow student and colleague*

Selected major publications of Jiří V. Neustupný

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- Neustupný, J.V. (1995) Atarashii nihongo kyooiku no tame ni (Towards New Perspectives in Japanese Language Teaching). Tokyo: Taishuukan
- Neustupný, J. V. & Nekvapil, J. (2003) Language Management in the Czech Republic. Current Issues in Language Planning, 4, 181–366.
- Many papers of J.V. Neustupný can be downloaded from the language management website: <http://languagemanagement.ff.cuni.cz>