
Linguistics in Europe: The Prague School



Do you know about
types of phonological
schools?

Who is the
founder of
Prague
school?

Do you know
about Prague
linguistic
school?



Give more information
about Prague
Phonological School

1. Introduction to The Prague School/

2. (Linguistic Circle of Prague)

3. The Prague School's Major Contributions:

- Function in the Prague conception
The theory of Markedness
- The Prague School as a combination of structuralism and functionalism.

◦ Conclusion

1. Introduction

The Prague School (Linguistic Circle of Prague) was established in 1926 by Vilem Mathesius (1882-1946).

Influenced by *Saussurean School*, the Prague School emphasized the analysis of language as a system of functionally related units.

It was in 1911 that Mathesius published his first call for a non historical approach to the study of language.

Its contribution to phonological study is enormous.

It includes influential linguists such as:

Prince Nikolay Sergeyevich
Trubetzkoy 1890-1938



- Roman Jakobson
1896-1982



Roman Jakobson

For linguists of the Prague School:

language must be studied as synchronic and as a dynamic system.

Language is systemic in that no element of it can be satisfactorily analyzed or evaluated in isolation and assessment can only be made if its relationship is established with the coexisting elements in the same language system.

Language is functional in that it is a tool for performing a number of essential functions or tasks for the community using it.

2. The Prague School's Major Contribution

□ Function in the Prague conception:

It was Karl Bühler who recognized three general kinds of function fulfilled by language.

- *The cognitive function.*
- *The expressive function.*
- *The conative function.*

The cognitive function:

It refers to the employment of language in the transmission of factual information.

It is fulfilled characteristically by 3rd person non modal utterances.

- e.g. John travelled yesterday.

The expressive function:

- It refers to the indication of the mood or attitude of the speaker (or writer).
- Characteristically, it is fulfilled by 1st person utterances in the subjunctive.
- **e.g. I am happy to see you.**

The conative function:

- It refers to the use for influencing the person one is addressing or for bringing about some particular effect.
- It is fulfilled by 2nd person utterances in the imperative.
 - **e.g. come here.**

The Prague School stresses the function of elements within language, their contrast to one another and the system formed by these elements. They developed *distinctive feature* analysis, by which each sound is regarded as composed of contrasting articulatory and *acoustic features*, with sounds perceived as different having at least one contrasting feature.

Functionalists study phonic elements from the points of view of the various functions they fulfill in a given language.

□ The Theory of Markedness:

- The notion of markedness was first developed in Prague school phonology but was subsequently extended to morphology and syntax, semantics...etc. A marked form is a non-basic or less natural form and an unmarked form is a basic or a default form.
 - *Markedness in Phonology:*
 - *Markedness in Morphology:*
 - *Markedness in Vocabulary:*

3. Conclusion

The general approach in the study of language for the Prague school can be described as a combination of *functionalism* (every component of a language, such as phoneme, morpheme, word, sentence...etc exists to fulfill a particular function) and *structuralism* (the context not just the components is what is important). In addition, synchronic and diachronic approaches are seen as interconnected and influencing each other. They regard language as a system of subsystems, each of which has its own problems but these are never isolated since they are part of a larger whole. As such, a language is never in a state of equilibrium, but rather has many deviations. It is these deviations that allow the language to develop and function as a living system.