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REMARKS ON THE ORIGIN OF THE FUNCTIONAL
SENTENCE PERSPECTIVE

From time to time linguists like to go back to see what their ancestors said about language and its phenomena in their simple and naive ways. However, on closer study we often discover that contemporary linguistics has not made the expected progress. An example of this is the problem of the Functional Sentence Perspective described in many works in the last 30 or 40 years. The father of FSP Vilém Mathesius mentions in his writings a French linguist, Henri Weil the author of De l'ordre des mots dans les langues anciennes comparées aux langues modernes /1844/. In 1887 the book was translated into English by the President of the Ohio University Charles W. Super as The Order of Words in the Ancient Languages Compared with that of the Modern Languages. H. Weil's book has a number of interesting points. In the first place he pays tribute to his predecessors: "Although I felt obliged to take issue with these grammarians in seeking a principle that regulates the order of words independent of syntax, I am glad to recognize the fact that their works first gave me light upon this subject and led me to reflect upon it." /p.16/. Among those mentioned are Nicolas Beauzée and his book Grammaire générale ou exposition raisonnée des éléments nécessaires du langage pour servir de fondement à l'étude de toutes les langues, written in 1767 and Abbe Batteux with his book Traité de la construction oratoire written in 1763. Batteux has the following to say about the

order of words:

"[...] on a imaginé deux nouvelles fortes d'ordre ou d'arrangement pour les mots: le grammatical, qui se fait selon le rapport des mots, considérés comme régissans ou régis: et le metaphysique, qui considère les rapports abstraits des idées. Si on y joint l'ordre oratoire, qui ne considère que le but de celui qui parle, on aura trois especes d'arrangement ou de construction qui peuvent être employées dans le discours." /p.9/448//. "Il faut donc en revenir à la troisième espece d'ordre ou d'arrangement, c'est à - dire à celui qui est fondé sur l'intérêt ou le point de vue de celui qui parle. Ou'est - ce qui se passe en nous mêmes lorsque nous nous déterminons à quelque mouvement. Je vois un objet: j'y découvre des qualités qui me conviennent ou qui ne me conviennent point. je m'y porte, ou je le fuis. Je ne commence point par me mouvoir avant que de me mouvoir. Je veux aller au Louvre, je pense d'abord au Louvre, ensuite je vais: Ad regiam vado." /p.12/449//. Among other linguists mentioned by H.Weil are Germans, Herling as the author of Die Syntax der deutschen Sprache written in 1830 and K.F.Becker the author of Ausführliche deutsche Grammatik written in 1836-39. A mention is also made of Dr R.Störenburg /no bibliographical data given/ and his views: "Dr R. Störenburg in the notes which he has added to an oration of Cicero - that for the poet Archios - has sought to explain the arrangement of the Latin sentence by the emphasis. He distinguishes four kinds of emphasis, - a grammatical, a logical, an emphatic, and fourthly, an emphasis which results from emotion intentionally restrained. A word which is affected either by the logical or grammatical emphasis is placed before the rest; a word which has the restrained emphasis is placed after the others."

Later Weil criticizes Dr F. Raspe: "Dr F. Raspe has appended to his addition of Cicero de Legibus a treatise on the order of words in Latin, in which he develops a theory proposed by Goerentz in his commentaries on several works of Cicero. This theory makes us acquainted with a particular sonus possessed by the Latin language, which rests upon the first, the

fourth, the seventh, and the last word of each proposition. I confess that in spite of my efforts I have not been able to comprehend this theory."

To discuss his own point of view on the problems under discussion Weil uses an example from Livy's History: Lucumoni contra, omnium heredi bonorum cum divitiae jam animas facerent, auxit ducta in matrimonium Tanaquil, etc. about which he writes:

"Observe the cast of this phrase. Tanaquil is the subject: it is from her that the action expressed by auxit proceeds. She therefore occupies the first place in the march of the syntactic drama. Yet the author has given to her the last place in the order of words. He begins his sentence with Lucumoni, and he has done well, for Lucumo occupies the first place in the march of his thought. Change now the grammatical rôle of Lucumo, as you wish; put it in the nom., gen., acc., or abl.- it matters little provided it be this idea that you enter the subject matter of the sentence " /p.26/.

He then draws a conclusion that "There is then a point of departure, an initial notion which is equally present to him who speaks and to him who hears, which forms, as it were, the ground upon which the two intelligencies meet. and another part of discourse which forms the statement /l'énunciation/, properly so called. This division is found in almost all we say." /p.29/. And he continues his discussion of the problems of word order on the example of a Latin sentence Romulus founded Rome: "Suppose that some one has related the story of the birth of Romulus and the marvellous events that attach thereto, he might add, Idem Romulus Roman condidit. While showing a traveller the city of Rome, we might say to him, Hanc urbem condidit Romulus. Speaking of the most celebrated foundings, and after mentioning the founding of Thebes by Cadmus, that of Athens by Cecrops, we might add, Condidit Roman Romulus. The syntax is the same in the three sentences: in all three the subject is Romulus, the attribute founded, the direct object Rome. Nevertheless, three different things are said in the three sentences, because these elements, though remaining the

same, are distributed in a different manner in the introduction and the principal part of the sentence. The point of departure, the rallying point of the interlocutors, is Romulus the first time, Rome the second, and the third time the idea of founding. And so the information that is to be imparted to another, the goal of the discourse, is different in the three forms of expression.

[...] In these three examples the fact under consideration is the same, yet things altogether distinct and different are stated to the hearer. The fact does not change: the sensible and exterior action is the same: these are the reasons why syntax has remained the same: for the syntax, as we have seen above, is the image of a sensible fact. The progression, the relations of the thought, change: this is why the succession of the words ought to change also, for it is the image of the progression of the thought." /pp.29-30/.

It was not only in the west, i.e. France and Germany, that ideas of this kind were put forward. As early as 1755 Russian grammarian M.V. Lomonosov noticed in his Rossijskaja grammatika differences in the Russian word order and its various functions. Discussing differences between /1/ and /2/

/1/ Tučneet ot rosy zěmlá.

/Swells with dew the earth/

/2/ Zěmlá tučneet ot rosy.

/The earth /Nom/ swells with dew/

Lomonosov says that although the order of words is in agreement with nature, yet freedom of human thoughts transforms the order and removes from the speech what should be there according to the nature. /1/ is an example of the freedom of human thoughts and appropriate transformations.

Another Russian grammarian who deserves mention even more is A.A. Barsev. In his Rossijskaja grammatika /1783-88/ he not only discussed the order of words but also the significance of the sentence stress. The logical word order is, according to him /the stress is not mentioned/

/3/ Ja govoril tebe.

/I told you/

However, the same sentence can be uttered in a number of different ways involving both the order of words and the sentence stress, with different interpretations. Thus /4a/ and /4b/¹

/4a/ Ja govoril tebe.

/4b/ Ja tebe govoril.

are interpreted as /5/:

/5/ It was I who told you, not anybody else, /6a/ and /6b/

/6a/ Tebe ja govoril.

/6b/ Tebe govoril ja.

are interpreted as /7/:

/7/ It was you whom I told, not anybody else, and /8a/ and /8b/

/8a/ Govoril ja tebe.

/8b/ Govoril tebe ja.

are interpreted as /9/:

/9/ I told you /n'eumolčal - was not silent/.

Still another Russian grammarian deserving mention is N.J. Greč who in his Čtenija o ruskom jazyke /1840/ discussed the order of words in questions. He clearly saw the difference in meaning between

/10/ Čto delaet Ivan?

/What is doing Ivan?/

and

/11/ Čto Ivan delaet?

/What Ivan is doing?/

In conclusion he formulates two general rules:

1. the most important element in a sentence is placed at the beginning;
2. if the main or grammatically required word is placed at the beginning, then the most important element is placed at the very end of the sentence.

In conclusion it seems useful to present the main points of the views described above and compare them with similar points in the contemporary theory of Functional Sentence Perspective:

1. Batteux describes three levels of description of the order of words which he calls:
grammatical described in terms of governing and governed elements of the sentence,
metaphysical described in terms of abstract relations between ideas.
oratorical described in terms of the point of view of the speaker.

The three levels can be compared to the three levels described by Daneš /1964/ as grammatical, semantic and thematic structures.

2. Weil /1887/ discusses "the march of thought" represented in the sentence by two constituents: "a point of departure, an initial notion which is equally present to him who speaks and to him who hears, which forms, as it were, the ground upon which the two intelligencies meet - and another part of discourse which forms the statement /l'énonciation/, properly so called." The two constituents correspond directly to what Mathesius /1939/ calls "a starting point /'východiško'/" that is "that which is known or at least obvious in the given situation /= the initial notion which is equally present to him who speaks and to him who hears/ and from which the speaker proceeds", and "a core /'jadro'/" that is "what the speaker says about this theme."

And Weil's "march of thought" is only a very vivid

description of Communicative Dynamism.

3. Discussing later a Latin sentence Romulus Romam condidit, Weil clearly makes use of the context in the explanation of the differences in meaning of various orders of words. Again this can be compared with Firbas¹ /1975/ use of context and his distinction between "context dependent" and "context independent" elements.
4. Barsov /1783-88/ gives a very detailed and precise description of the meaning of the sentence stress in his examples. His description is in agreement with discussions of the meaning of the sentence stress of such authors as Akmaljan and Jackendoff /1970/, Daneš /1960/, Szwedek /1976/ and others.
5. And finally Greč /1840/ makes two very important points on the significance of the initial and final positions in the sentence which are similar if not identical to the principle of topicalization and the principle of end weight.

All this shows clearly that we have not got very far since the 18th century as concerns problems connected with Functional Sentence Perspective. It should also teach us more respect to linguistic achievements of our ancestors and more humbleness in our research.

NOTES

- ¹ In this transliteration the apostrophe indicates palatalization of the consonant. Elements under sentence stress are underlined /in the original in italics/



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UWAGI O ŹRÓDŁACH AKTUALNEGO ROZCZŁONKOWANIA ZDANIA

Streszczenie

W artykule autor cofa się w przeszłość w poszukiwaniu początków znanego ze Szkoły Praskiej "tematycznego rozczłonkowania zdania". Analogie znajduje już w XVIII wieku zarówno na Zachodzie Europy, np. u Francuzów N. Beauzée /1757/ i A. Batteux /1763/, ale także na Wschodzie, np. u rosyjskich gramatyków M. W. Łomonosowa /1755/ i A. A. Barsowa /1783-88/. W wieku XIX podobne badania można znaleźć również u Francuza H. Weila /1887/, na którego powołuje się V. Mathesius, ale także u rosyjskiego badacza N. J. Grecza /1840/.

Podobieństwa dotyczą punktów zasadniczych:

- 1/ wyróżnienie trzech poziomów analizy /A. Batteux, Daneš/,
- 2/ wyróżnienie tematu i rematu /Weil, Mathesius/,
- 3/ rola kontekstu w interpretacji szyku wyrazów w zdaniu /Weil, Firbas/,
- 4/ rola akcentu zdaniowego /Barsow, Daneš, Szwedek/,
- 5/ wyróżnienie początkowej i końcowej pozycji w zdaniu /Grecz, Enkvist/,
- 6/ dynamizm komunikacyjny /Weil, Firbas/.