Rudolf Růžička In Memoriam

Rudolf Růžička died in Berlin on February 9, 2011, at the age of 90. When the news spread that he had died, a Russian linguist wrote: "An entire era in the history of Slavic linguistics has ended." For many, Rudolf Růžička epitomized an era. His work must be set against the background of the time in which he lived.

Rudolf Růžička's academic and personal accomplishments exemplify the life of a dedicated scholar. He was born on December 20, 1920, in Löbau, a town in Upper Lusatia, Saxony, Germany. He went to school there and in 1940 began studying Russian and English at the Institute for Interpreters, a unit of the Commercial College of Leipzig. Růžička always remembered a scene from that time (1995: 4):[1] "In the spring of 1940, none other than Reinhold Trautmann tried to attract young people around the university to Slavic studies by acquainting them with startling etymologies of Slavic words." In October 1940 Růžička was drafted into the Germany army. For several months in 1945 he was held as prisoner of war by the Soviets. Between 1945 and 1947 he worked as an interpreter. In 1947, he took up Slavic studies at the University of Leipzig. He also studied English and philosophy. Among his academic teachers were Reinhold Trautmann, Theodor Frings, and Werner Krauss. He received a diploma from Humboldt University of Berlin in 1951. As he later recalled (1995: 6): "A special two-semester course was established in the years of 1950 and 1951 for aspiring young scholars in the field of Slavic studies. The aim was to educate a sufficient number of specially selected individuals considered suitable as lecturers. […] Apart from Hans Holm Bielfeldt, it was primarily Wolfgang Steinitz, a specialist in the field of Finno-Ugric studies, who ran the linguistics program at Humboldt University." Steinitz impressed Růžička deeply (1995: 6): "On returning from fieldwork among the Khanty, the former emigrant narrowly escaped the Stalinist purges. In exile in Stockholm he hosted Roman Jakobson and helped him emigrate to the United States. The inspiring lectures

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[1] Translations here and in what follows are mine, U. J.

delivered by Steinitz acquainted us with his conception of cosmopolitan, liberal-minded science, a sense of curiosity, and a striving for innovation. He drew an authentic picture of structuralist approaches as pursued in Moscow and Prague, thereby giving us profound knowledge of theories and methods philologists throughout Germany had little knowledge of and certainly did not pay much attention to."

Having gained his diploma, Rudolf Růžička was offered a position at the University of Jena, where he stayed for two years (1951–53). However, in 1953, after Reinhold Olesch had left Leipzig, Růžička was asked to take charge of the linguistics program at the Leipzig University Slavic Department. In 1955, he submitted his doctoral thesis on verbal aspect in the Old Russian text of Nestor's chronicle (1957). Early in 1960 he became acting director and, starting in 1962, director of the Leipzig University Department of Linguistics. In 1961, he submitted his habilitation thesis on the syntactic system of Old Slavic participles in comparison with Greek (1963). Also in 1961 he was made lecturer, and in 1963, professor "with the appointment to teach Slavic and General Linguistics" at the University of Leipzig. Both in research and teaching, he applied the findings of modern formal grammar.

In 1963, he founded the Leipzig Linguistic Circle and became its chairman (for publications by circle members see, e.g., Růžička 1968 as well as issues of *Linguistische Arbeitsberichte*). The circle was modeled after similar groups of linguists, all of which had been organized with the participation of Roman Jakobson—the Moscow Linguistic Circle (founded around 1915/16), the Prague Linguistic Circle (founded in the late 1920's), and the Linguistic Circle of New York (formed in 1943; its journal *Word* was established in 1945). Like August Leskien, the Neogrammarian who studied Slavic languages in the context of the most advanced linguistic theories of his time, Růžička strove to introduce the latest grammatical theories into Slavic linguistics.

From 1964 to 1969 Rudolf Růžička was head of the Arbeitsstelle für Strukturelle Grammatik der slawischen Sprachen at the Academy of Sciences in Berlin. In 1968, he chaired a commission whose task it was to establish the Leipzig University Section of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics. He was made research director of this section and became head of the Department of Theoretical Linguistics. In 1969, when the Party launched a campaign against structuralism (part of its campaign against generative grammar), the Leipzig Linguistic Circle was banned. That year Růžička was invited as visiting professor by the

universities of Stockholm and Göteborg. In 1975 Moscow State University invited him as visiting professor. In 1984 he gave up his position as head of the Leipzig University Department of Theoretical Linguistics, and in 1986 he became Professor Emeritus. He accepted an invitation as visiting professor at the University of Hamburg for the period between 1990 and 1991. In 1991, he returned to Leipzig. During his last years he lived in Berlin.

Rudolf Růžička was one of the most important generative grammarians in the German-speaking countries and, on a worldwide scale, a very influential researcher in the field of Slavic linguistics. He successfully combined General Linguistics and Slavic Studies. The central aim of his work was "the development of grammatical theory tested against data from Slavic languages" (1995: 9). It is not an exaggeration to call him a pioneer of Slavic linguistics. Růžička co-founded the famous *Linguistische Arbeitsberichte* series (University of Leipzig, Section of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics) and co-edited its issues between 1970 and 1989. For many years he worked as an editor of *Zeitschrift für Slawistik*. In 1974, he became a member of the editorial board of *Russian Linguistics*. For a long period he was a member of the Linguistic Advisory Board of the Academy of Sciences. He participated in the work of two commissions that had been established by the International Committee of Slavicists—the Linguistic Terminology Commission (1958ff) and the Commission for the Study of the Grammatical Structure of Slavic Languages (1963ff). As an academic teacher he gave courses for students of various subjects—prospective teachers of Russian, interpreters and translators, philologists, and linguists. For more than 30 years he gave advice and support to young scholars, not only from Germany but also from various European countries and the United States. Rudolf Růžička was supervisor and reviewer of numerous theses. He held a weekly colloquium that attracted scholars from abroad and was also attended by non-linguists.

Starting in 1986, Rudolf Růžička took part in the annual meetings of the Konstanz Circle of researchers in the field of Slavic linguistics. Written versions of the papers that he delivered at those meetings can be found in the circle's publications for the years between 1987 and 2004.

According to his colleague Anita Steube, Růžička's high scholarly ideals and moral integrity made him the perfect candidate for various boards and committees evaluating and appointing scholars as well as

deciding on whom to honor. Thus, he played an important role in the changes following 1989. In their joint obituary, the Linguistics Department and the Slavic Department of the University of Leipzig called Rudolf Růžička "den Wegbereiter und geistigen Vater beider Institute".

Rudolf Růžička's linguistic works have been read and cited by many. His analyses and proposals have led to a great number of related investigations. Bibliographies covering the periods 1951–85/86 and 1980–87 were published in Zybatow and Steube 1986 (4–16) and Stiller 1988 (8–11), respectively. A bibliography for 1988 until his death remains to be compiled.

The book *Control in grammar and pragmatics: A cross-linguistic study* (1999a) was the most important publication of his last years. Building on previous work (e.g., 1983, 1986, and 1987), Růžička, in this monograph, according to Edward J. Vajda, who reviewed it for *Language,* "seeks to clarify the factors that determine if a complement clause can be controlled. He provides a formal account of the syntactic and semantic properties of the clause that determine the choice of controller" (Vajda 2001: 628). "The… investigation goes a radical step further [than previous studies by other authors] in its attempt to establish unifying constraints, which are shaped into conjunctions of feature specification values. The distinct pairs of values are associated with respective classes of control verbs or predicates" (Růžička 1999a: 1). Růžička's data come from Russian, German, English, Czech, Italian, Polish, French, Dutch, Serbian/Croatian, Slovak, and Spanish (cf. 1999a: 28). "In describing and explaining control behavior one cannot avoid crossing the boundaries of grammar proper, but the passage to conceptual-pragmatic or other areas can be justified and related to the grammatical 'core'. Here again, the respective constraints… are involved in an empirically natural way" (1999a: 2). Vajda concludes (2001: 629): "This data-rich study should be of interest to both typologists and generative grammarians."

Other topics Růžička dealt with include Russian verbs and adverbials, structural and communicative aspects of participial adjuncts, argument structure, empty categories, reflexives and reciprocals, diathesis, impersonal structures, imperatives, modal predicates, predication, attitudes, and pronouns.

Růžička's work has inspired many researchers in the fields of General and Slavic Linguistics. "A person who makes his ideas public does

risk persuading others of his viewpoints, influencing them." This sentence by Milan Kundera (2002: 22), one of his favorite novelists, can be seen as relating to both Růžička's linguistic publications in the narrow sense and his view of Slavic studies, the present state and perspectives of Slavic linguistics. In a paper published in 1999 Růžička emphasized the importance of "discussion [among scholars] fully aware of the various theories and methods" (1999b: 330) and recommended to try to "muster tolerance and communicate in ways allowing mutual understanding" (1999b: 333). Rudolf Růžička considered it a task of Slavic linguistics to distinguish between general features of human language and specific Slavic features, thus facilitating the formulation of "hypotheses or conjectures concerning linguistic universals" (1999b: 332). He contributed to our knowledge of natural language. Like Noam Chomsky, he was interested in the more general questions of language and mind. Růžička's name stands for the investigation of the structure of Slavic languages with the ultimate goal of finding explicit grammars.

Rudolf Růžička was buried in Berlin.

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