**The Prague Linguistic Circle**

The Prague Linguistic Circle was a group of linguists, philologists, literary theorists and cultural analysts who began meeting on a regular basis in 1926 and thereafter exerted a widespread influence throughout the century. Its members defined the approach as jointly structuralist and functionalist, although the structuralist aspect of their project acquired greater international visibility. Their collective programme involved a dual focus both on the relations of structural contrast and resemblance that make up a given language or cultural artefact and – inseparably from that, they argued – on the role of those structures conceived in terms of their internal and (to some extent) external function. The Prague Circle linguists, among them notably Roman Jakobson (1896-1982), Vilém Mathesius (1882-1945), Jan Mukařovský (1891-1975) and Nikolai Trubetskoy (1890-1938) were thus very much a part of the wider twentieth-century movement of thought that redirected attention from the diachronic (historical-developmental) aspect of language and culture to the synchronic (immanent or formal) features revealed by structural analysis. However, some of them made it their primary aim to devise a more historically and socially responsive approach that would treat these as complementary rather than opposed dimensions. This was partly due to shifts in the pressure for ideological conformity exerted by successive communist regimes, but partly – more significantly – brought about by a process of internal, self-reflexive critique within the movement itself. The output of the Prague Linguistic Circle slowed under Soviet occupation, but revived in the final decades of the twentieth century and is currently still active (<http://bit.ly/MILCSU>).

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**References and further reading**

Fried, V. (1972) *The Prague School of Linguistics and Language Teaching*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vachek, J. (1966) *The Linguistic School of Prague*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.