

IN MEMORIAM  
DWIGHT BOLINGER

It was with profound regret that the Czech linguistic community has received the sad news of the passing of Dwight Bolinger, Professor Emeritus of Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.). Originally specializing in linguistic research of Romance languages, he was soon to become well known by his versatile contributions to all sorts of branches of general linguistics. Some idea of the richness of the topics dealt with by him can be obtained from perhaps the most widely read source (and loved by students of linguistics all over the world), his stately volume Aspects of Language, published in New York by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich for the first time in 1968, and repeatedly in 1975 and 1981 (the third edition in collaboration with D. A. Sears). The author himself very modestly qualifies it as an eclectic book but it represents, as a matter of fact, in unrivaled entirety, a surprisingly rich survey of all topics which may concern any adept of general linguistic theory, not only a beginner but even a very advanced scholar. Being a highly efficient academic teacher, Bolinger subjects to his criticism all approaches of linguistic issues topical in the late sixties; in the later editions of the volume, his survey of the "state of the art" was to be duly updated without impairing the general perspective of the book. This general perspective can be safely characterized as functionalist and structuralist, very strongly sympathizing with the views of the Prague school, pointing out that most of all future currents of linguistics "embraced most Praguian concepts one by one" (p. 525). It should also be added that Bolinger also, in a way, heralded the Praguian thesis of the special status of written norm and written utterances (see his paper on "visual morphemes" in Language, 22, 333-340).

In view of all these facts, the presidium of the Prague Linguistic Circle very justly regarded him as one of the precursors of their own ideas and gave a concrete expression to their conviction by conferring on him, immediately after the re-establishment of the Circle, at the end of 1989, the status of their honorary membership, the status which he was pleased to accept.

Josef Vachek

Josef Vachek, "IN MEMORIAM DWIGHT BOLINGER", Linguistica Pragensia, (1993).