

# Interpretations

In a number of recent mainstream publications (in English), Levý has been erroneously presented as a **Russian formalist** focusing on de-contextualized formal aspects. However, even Roman Jakobson, when he published his two famous articles on translation (1959, 1960), was no longer a Russian formalist, having been involved for almost twenty years in Czech structuralism.

Czech structuralism, unlike Russian formalism, did not focus on form alone, as form and content constituted the sign as a whole; form contributed to its semantics by forming the content. The function and value of the sign/message were absolutely dependent on the socio-historical context and they changed with it. The same was true of the interpretation of the sign/message. The term **literariness does not belong to Czech structuralism, but concepts like style, norm, function and value** form its backbone.

To say that adherence to norms is a significant factor does not entail prescriptivism. **Normativity is not the same thing as prescriptivism when axiology is taken into account**, i.e. social values as a socio-historical factor. Levý made further discoveries when exploring the history of translation from the Middle Ages to the end of World War II. He even found, inter alia, cases of canonical classics reduced to a popular style and texts subjected to ideological manipulation. He identified various translation methods applied in Europe over time. As a Czech structuralist he was also alert to **individual agencies** (including the translator) as well as to **sociological aspects** of the readership.

Levý incorporated the **interpretative** perspective, drawing on Ingarden's phenomenology as presented by Vodička and Mukařovský. Jaus (of the Constance School) was motivated by this approach (see Striedter 1976).

Levý's **functionalist translation theory** has been largely ignored, due to its limited linguistic accessibility until 2011. This theory is unique in accounting for both the retrospective (SLT oriented) and prospective (TLT oriented) aspects in their socio-historical dialectics. Even some interpretations of his decision process were inevitably limited until 2008, based as they were on the original short English version published in 1967.

Western/mainstream humanities (and TS) have gone through a number of paradigmatic shifts since the 1970s in respect of focus and methodology. Czech structuralism to a certain extent pre-empted these developments several decades earlier (see e.g. Doležel, 2000. *Poststructuralism. A View from Charles Bridge*. In *Poetics Today* 21 (4): 633-652).