

CONGRATULATIONS, THANKS AND BEST WISHES FROM PRAGUE

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Time flies like an arrow – there cannot be a more appropriate occasion to quote this ambiguous syntactic structure (quoted and contrasted with "fruit flies like bananas" as early as in 1963 by one of the pioneers of machine translation Anthony Oettinger and belonging to the so-called garden-path sentences) other than the occasion of Gábor Prószéky's 70th(!) birthday. And to recall the long-term working and personal relations between Czech(oslovak) and Hungarian (computational) linguists the beginnings of which date back to the 1960s(!). The names that come to our mind are Ferenc Kiefer, one of the first mathematical linguists in Europe and also one of the first who introduced generative grammar in Europe and, most importantly, one of those who was very active to make the world-wide community acquainted with the research in the field of computational linguistics carried out in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. And as well as Ferenc Papp, the organizer of one of the first COLING conferences in Debrecen, György Szépe, György Hell, Dénes Varga, just to name those who come to our mind at this moment. In this connection, it should not be forgotten that the (at that time new) field of computational linguistics received an important support in Hungary by a famous Hungarian mathematician from Szeged University László Kalmár (1905–1976), the founder of the study of mathematical logic and information theory in Hungary.

Though the name of Gábor Prószéky as a representative of the second generation of computational linguists is naturally missing in the above list of the first generation of Hungarian computational linguists, there is still an explicit link to one of them in his CV (aside to their joint paper from 1985) – it is certainly not a mere chance that in 1995, Gábor received the Kalmár Award of the John von Neumann Computer Society. We do not remember the year and occasion when we met with Gábor for the first time, but we will always remember the important role that Gábor's MorphoLogic played concerning the implementation of the Czech grammar checker for Microsoft (around 2005), and in general the promotion of Czech in MorphoLogic products and cooperations. We will be grateful to him for substantial "material" help when he proposed to support one of the computational linguistics conferences we organized in Prague. As any organizers of a huge international event, we struggled hard with the financial aspects. Out of a sudden there arrived an offer from Hungary: if you need, we might take care of the conference bags. "We" referred to Gábor's MorphoLogic. Of course, we appreciated any help but we still remember our surprise that somebody took the initiative and made an offer by himself.

We have been meeting often at conferences, where both Gábor's industrial efforts and also his research teams played a role. He has also been very active in European networking of the field – aside from participation in many coordination and support actions, he and his company is a long-term member of META, the Multilingual Europe Technology Association. And we also have shared several bi- and multi-lateral international cooperation and initiatives, such as the close cooperation with colleagues in Hamburg.

Time flies like an arrow but strong friendly and working relations persist if based on firm foundations and developed with mutual respect and understanding. We are very happy that the "founding fathers" of the Hungarian - Czech(oslovak) cooperation in computational linguistics have found such devoted successors as our honored person Gábor Prózský. We in Prague deeply appreciate his contribution to our mutual relations and to the development of our field of study, and cordially wish him many years to come in good health, full energy and well-deserved recognition.

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on behalf of UFAL, Charles University, Prague