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My memories go back to the very beginnings of the study in formal and computational linguistics in our part of the world. There had not even been a consensus on its name by then. Bar-Hillel's attribute "algebraic" or a more general specifier "mathematical" were supposed to put too much (and undeserved) stress on its mathematical aspects, which were not supposed to be that crucial or innovative. Let me recall that actually both these terms were applied by our team in Prague, ironically so, because there was only a single mathematician in the team at that time: in 1964 the journal *The Prague Bulletin of **Mathematical** Linguistics* was founded (which is still in existence, under this original name). At the same year we organized in Prague a Colloquium of **Algebraic** Linguistics (with Hungarian participation) and in 1968 the Laboratory of **Algebraic** Linguistics was founded at Charles University as a roof for the then existing two small communities: one at the Faculty of Arts and one at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics. Just a side remark: this Lab existed just for three years when it was abolished by the communist regime. Back to the term: in the sixties, the now prevailing term **computational** linguistics was regarded to be rather inappropriate because the computers were still supposed to be in an early stage of development, at least in Europe. Our Hungarian colleagues were even then more forethoughted or better prepared - they named their journal (started, if I am not mistaken, in 1963) **Computational** Linguistics.

And as I have mentioned, our contacts with a group of Hungarian linguists interested in this rather new field date that far back. This group was really strong, both as far as their scientific contribution to the field and their organizational skills: Ferenc Papp, Denes Varga, Gyerge Hell, Gyerge Szepe and last but not least, **Ferenc Kiefer**. And, in addition to the outstanding scientific and organizational role of these people for the field of computational linguistics there was one additional value of our contacts – and that was friendship.

My **personal memories** on Feri Kiefer concern all these three mentioned aspects. It is difficult to separate them but I will try.

Though the core of Feri's **linguistic interests** and priorities was a little bit different from mine, there was a period of time when our research interests perfectly matched. That was actually the time of our first meetings in person, when both of us were deeply involved in the study of the **topic-focus articulation** of the sentence: we, in Prague were convinced (and still are) that this phenomenon has important effects on the semantic interpretation of the sentence, Feri was not that sure at the beginning but then accepted our arguments. And that was also the time when one of the centers of linguistic discussions were the relations of entailment and **presupposition**. In particular, we both were interested in the presupposition of questions, issues such as e.g. Can we define, and how, presuppositions of questions? Is the difference between the wh-questions and yes-no questions of some relevance to this issue? Feri published several papers discussing these points in the late seventies of the last century. He made a distinction between a **presupposition** of a question, which must be shared by the question and the answer, and a **background assumption** which may but need not be shared by the answer. One of his examples is the wh-question "Who has studied water pollution?" If there was no water pollution, then this question involves a negation of one of the presuppositions of the question and can be considered as a presupposition failure, or in terms of cohesion, the dialogue so to say breaks down. In a follow-up to the first study, Feri discussed the notion of a focussed part of the question: he concluded that in principle, there is no focussed part in yes-no questions but he also acknowledged some kind of markedness of such examples. He observed a distinction between *Is John leaving for Stockholm TOMORROW?* with the focussed part "tomorrow" and *IS John leaving for Stockholm tomorrow?*, with no focussed part. The first of these questions should be interpreted as *When is John leaving for Stockholm?* And in such a case the answer "No" is not complete from the point of view of the questioner. However, in the second case, in the question "IS John leaving for Stockholm tomorrow?", in Kiefer's terms, the answer "No." is a complete answer and the question has no focussed part. Though our Praguian analysis differs in this point, since we would say that both questions have a focussed part, and that the two questions differ in which part of the question is the focussed part, this being reflected by the position of the intonation center, such a difference of opinions was only a fruitful matter of our discussions. They continued also during our participation at a small symposium organized by Feri in May 1980 at Visegrad in Hungary, with such prominent persons attending as J. Hintikka, John Searle, Manfred Bierwisch, to name just a few. The

discussions there were really very interesting, the programme was very well organized and relaxed which gave space for walks around the place, for meetings in small groups and for vivid discussions.

This makes me pass over to the second outstanding contributions of Feri, namely his **organizational** skills.

In one of the obituaries that appeared at the occasion of his death in November last year, Feri Kiefer was called the ambassador for linguistics par excellence and the engaging, friendly person who had an encouraging word for everyone he met. And I can confirm every single word of this sentence.

First of all, and most importantly, we in Prague profited a lot from his **editorial** activities that thanks to his professional and friendly contacts reached the publishing houses behind the iron curtain and thus also helped our results to receive an attention in that geographic area and in the international community. In this way we had received his invitations to publish our papers in periodicals or volumes he edited or was at least a co-editor of. Let me only recall the international journal SMIL - Journal of Linguistic Calculus that first appeared in late sixties under the initiative of the late Hans Karlgren and was co-edited by Hans and Feri and published in Germany till the eighties. Or several volumes of the series "Studies in syntax and semantics" edited by Feri and published by D. Reidel in Dordrecht, again in the late sixties and early seventies. Or the volumes Speech act theory from 1980 or Questions and Answers from 1983, published by the same publishing house.

Aside from the editorial work for several well-known publishing houses abroad, Feri was very active in several international **organizations** of linguists, out of which the most memorable is his presidency of the International Committee of Linguists known as CIPL (Comité International Permanent des Linguistes), whose aim is to promote the knowledge of linguistics throughout the world, to encourage the development of linguistic science and to stimulate co-operation among linguists. CIPL was founded in 1928 during the first [International Congress of Linguists](#) (CIL), which took place in The Hague. Each five years CIPL organises a CIL in close collaboration with national committees of linguistic research. Feri Kiefer was the president of CIPL from 2003 till 2013. In 2001 the Committee faced an urgent problem to find the site of the 2002 CIL because the original local organizer had some organizational difficulties and had given up

during the preparation. It was a great challenge for me to be addressed by Feri with his proposal that we organize the 17th Congress in Prague. We have agreed that to have less than one year for the organization is a suicidal task but we agreed that a postponement of the meeting by one year might be a feasible solution. For me this was a most welcome occasion to help Feri to serve the community and thus to pay back a little bit his long time services to us.

And last but not least, there comes our personal **friendship**. It lasted for almost 60 years, since the very first personal meeting in the early sixties to our last exchanges of messages during the last years of his life. Several outstanding moments come to my head: the very tasty Hungarian Goulash he prepared at Hans Karlgren's house at one of the Stockholm's lakes in 1969, the meetings with him, his wife Julia and the kids in a small cottage in Karlgren's garden which was then their home, his and his wife's hospitality offered to me in Budapest after the Coling 1971 conference that took place in Debrecen. And the very many lunches in the fashionable restaurant in the Hungarian Academia building in Budapest. There has not been a single one of my stays in Budapest whatever short it might have been during which I would not meet Feri and there has been no stay of Feri in Prague without meeting each other.

Let me conclude by a most precious memory of Feri: in August 1968, he and his Hungarian colleagues organized a small linguistic conference at the lake Balaton. Both Petr Sgall and myself were invited and prepared to attend. Alas, these were exactly the days of the Soviet invasion when the Czechoslovak borders were firmly closed for the Czechs to go out of the country so that we were locked in and could not attend. In a month or so, we have received a postcard with signatures of the participants of the meeting from West and East and with nice words of sympathy. A wonderful unforgettable gesture that in spite of the difficult times we were going to live in made us felt as members of the community.

Feri Kiefer, one of the first mathematical linguists in Europe, one of the first who introduced generative grammar in Europe, and a beloved friend has a irremovable place in my memory.

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