...from the very outset all his work has been permeated by a keen sense of the hierarchy of linguistic values. But it is by placing the ethical values above all others in the general structure of life that he has come to be respected by his pupils, colleagues and friends not only as an eminent teacher and scholar of worldwide reputation, but as a man of character and heart.

These were the closing words of my introduction to the Vachek Homage Volume (Brno Studies in English 8/1969), brought out in honour of Professor Josef Vachek’s sixtieth birthday. They were written at the end of two uneasy de-
Cades for many who hated to be manipulated and to act contrary to their conscience. Little did I realize when writing these words that we were in for another two equally demanding decades. I find it significant that in the year of Professor Vachek's eightieth birthday (1989) there is no need to change anything about the words quoted.

It was a happy start when in the post-war winter term (1945) Vachek came to Brno and began his lectures and seminars on English linguistics. Courses on Old, Middle and Early New English were offered by the pre-war Brno Department of English, but English linguistics in the true sense of the word was not pursued, the research interests of the Department being predominantly literary. In this way Vachek became the founder of the linguistics section of the Department. Through his research he soon made the Department known to the world of linguistic learning. In his lectures and seminars he developed the heritage of the Prague School, at the same time being undogmatically open to fruitful contributions of current linguistics.

The bright prospects, however, were dimmed by the February events of 1948, which dealt a severe blow to the freedom of academic teaching and research. Vachek bravely carried on acquainting young Anglicists with the progressive ideas of the Prague School. His teaching was strongly disapproved of by Academician František Trávníček, Rector of the University. Vachek colleagues' remember Trávníček's unfounded censure of Trubetzkoy's Grundzüge der Phonologie, linked with an open attack on Vachek's teaching. Academician Bohuslav Havránek intervened and Vachek could continue his pedagogical activities and research. In 1959 he founded the series Brno studies in English, on which Études romanes de Brno and Brünner Beiträge zur Germanistik und Nordistik were modelled.

An even more serious situation arose when in January 1960 the members of the teaching staff of the Brno Faculty of Arts (Faculty of Philosophy) had to undergo a 'religious test'. The test consisted of three questions: (i) Are you a believer?, (ii) If not, state since when, and (iii) What religious prejudices do the members of your family suffer from? Vachek was one of the six teachers who declared themselves to be practicing Christians (three of them were Catholics, two were Protestants and one a member of the Orthodox Church). This evidently was the main reason for the Municipal Party Committee's decision that Vachek and his assistant (the writer of these lines) should be replaced in their teaching posts by 1964.

However, Academician Havránek, Director of the Institute of Czech Language of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, once again stepped in. Highly appreciating Vachek's work, he invited him to join the Institute. Vachek accepted the invitation and left the Department (1962). At the signs of a thaw, which ultimately led to the Prague Spring of 1968, some of his Brno colleagues made an attempt to bring Vachek to Brno. Not wanting the Institute to lose Vachek, Havránek refused to support this attempt. To demonstrate how highly he valued Vachek's work, he said that under normal conditions he would choose Vachek as his successor as director of the Institute. As a member of the Institute, Vachek
founded the series *Travaux linguistiques de Prague*, meant as a continuation of *Travaux du Cercle linguistique de Prague*. (After the invasion of 1968 the series was discontinued with volume 4 in 1971.)

Vachek never returned to Brno. Other universities have benefited from his scholarship and teaching. For one year (1968—9) he taught at the venerable University of Leiden, where he had been appointed ordinary professor. (The Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences honoured him with its membership.) But Vachek did not think of moving abroad.

In Czechoslovakia he once again — not for the last time — took upon himself the role of a founder. In Bratislava, he started the English section of the Institute of Interpretation and Translation of the University of 17th November (1971) and simultaneously revived the linguistics section of the English Department of Comenius University after the two most important members of this section had emigrated. Finally (1975—80), he taught in the English Department of Šafárik University in Prešov, laying the foundations of English linguistic studies there as well.

Previous issues of *Brno studies in English* (vols 8/1969 and 13/1979) have paid tribute to Vachek's achievements in English and general linguistics. This modest note has served another purpose — to honour the work of a university teacher who has not separated the quest for knowledge from the quest for values ensuring the proper use of knowledge and preserving human dignity.

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**PROFESOR JOSEF VACHEK — ZAKLADATEL ANGLISTICKÉ LINGVISTICKÉ SEKCE MASARYKOVY UNIVERZITY**

Několik dat z dějin československé anglistiky

Brněnská anglistika si s vděčností připomíná životní jubileum vědce, který po čtyři těžké deseti-letí našich novodobých dějin zůstal v životě osobním i vědeckém vérem humanitním ideálům.
When Vachek wrote his seminal papers on speech and writing, the ideas of Marshall McLuhan on the decreasing importance of writing in favor of orality were not yet as current as they have become since. In the spirit of Vachek's broad-based conception of these issues, it is worth reexamining McLuhan's points in the light of the use of computers in communication which point in the direction of the renewed importance of writing in today's technological society.

McLuhan's main point is, as is well known, that the electroacoustic media such as telephone, recording devices, radio and television, mainly the latter, have led to a decrease in the importance of writing by virtue of the increase of the use of oral communication through these media. One might even expect, he suggested, that these media might contribute to something like the "death" of written communication, since the massive transmission of oral messages now is possible and makes written communication unnecessary and uninteresting.

In this connection, it is worth recapitulating some of the major differences that have traditionally been considered important between speech and writing. One can then first look at what has happened to these as a result of the various communications technologies that were current in McLuhan's time. Second one can thereafter consider what new issues have been raised by the more recent emergence of computer technologies and widespread computer use and their effect upon communication.

The differences between speech and writing before either of these stages of technological developments were present can be summed up as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPEECH</th>
<th>WRITING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>spontaneous</td>
<td>edited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interactional</td>
<td>one-sided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ephemeral</td>
<td>lasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>localized</td>
<td>transportable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even in pre-technological days these oppositions are only valid in terms of the predominance of a characteristic, rather than its exclusive applicability to a given mode of language use. The following illustrations may serve to make this point.

Speech is clearly more likely to be spontaneous than edited, and equally clearly writing is more susceptible to editing than speech. At the same time, prepared speech such as formal oratory can certainly be heavily edited. And who doesn’t have the memory of informal little notes being passed behind the teacher’s or other supervisor’s back. And can’t these be as spontaneous as any orally conducted communication?

Similarly, in most situations speech is obviously more likely to be interactional than writing. But once again, prepared speech such as formal oratory can be used as an example of how oral communication can be one-sided and not truly interactional, since the sender and receiver roles are not truly interchangeable as they are in conversational interaction. Likewise, passing little notes may serve as a common example of written interaction in which the roles of sender and receiver are as readily interchangeable as in spoken conversation.

It is likewise obvious that speech is likely to be more ephemeral than lasting. Without technological assistance, speech can only be preserved through the human memory, and to make an utterance truly lasting under those circumstances writing has to be called upon. Equally obviously, writing seems to have been invented to make a permanent record possible, as is indicated by the fact that the earliest writing was done through inscriptions on materials that are indeed as permanent as can be. But once again think of the persistence of oral tradition where human memory is used to make the ephemeral repeatable and thus lasting. Think also of the very transitory nature of much of the written messages as more and more perishable materials become available. Now when written materials are thrown away, they disintegrate and no longer remain preserved for the benefit of future archeologists. Today, ordinary people’s letters and restaurant checks are likely to wind up in wastebaskets and then landfills rather than to remain to be studied by future generations.

Finally, speech is usually localized in the sense that it is perceived only within earshot of the hearer. By comparison, writing is transportable from place to place even when no technological means are available. But even in pretechnological days, there was transmission of speech over a distance by shouting from one mountaintop to another, although there clearly was serious danger of distortion through mishearing. There could also be transmission by messengers, though here again there clearly could be danger of distortion, this time not only through mishearing but also through false memory. While writing is more suitable for transportation, not every piece of writing was deemed worth transporting any more than it was deemed worth preserving.

Nevertheless, the very clearcut advantages of writing of being more permanent and transportable than speech remained. In addition to its social exclusiveness and difficulty of acquisition in many periods and places, these advantages of writing contributed to its prestige.
In the above frame of reference, McLuhan's points can be interpreted as stating that the electroacoustic media have given speech added advantages of permanence and transportability that previously were almost exclusively associated with writing. Thus, permanence was insured by recording devices and transportability in increasing degrees by the telephone and the electronic mass media of radio and television. In his view, thanks to these technologies, speech was thus empowered to do everything that writing could do and more. More, since the psychological effect of the electronically transmitted spoken word is often vastly greater than that of writing coming from the same distance. Hence, one could expect that with time, writing would become superfluous.

In come computers. Unfortunately, with all their increasing sophistication, computers still have no strong speech recognition capabilities. Until they acquire them, communication with (and between) computers will continue to be through writing. Current technology allows input through keyboarding. Output, which earlier used to be limited to more cumbersome means such as line printers, is now done more conveniently through displays of written messages on screens on which they can also be combined with increasingly useful and pleasing graphics. Add to this recently facsimile transmission, which likewise is confined to writing, embellished as it may be by graphics. Thus, writing has suddenly reacquired its place in the sun: storage in computer memories (right now on all sorts of discs, who knows what media in the future?) enhances its permanence capabilities; networking, faxing, and who knows what other future developments enhance the transportability of writing.

Thus, Vachek, who was one of the few linguists to pay serious attention to issues of writing, was right in stressing its importance, and McLuhan turned out to be a false prophet.

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Note: A detailed examination of these issues has been made in a recent doctoral dissertation by Deborah DuBartell presented to the Department of Linguistics of the State University of New York at Buffalo.
VACHEK STÁLE AKTUÁLNÍ –
K SOUČASNÉ PROBLEMATICE
MLUVENÉHO A PSANÉHO JAZYKA

Autor zvažuje ve světle Vachkových prací McLuhanovy téze o mluveném a psaném jazyce, zejména tvrzení, že následkem vývoje elektroakustických zapisovacích a sdělovacích prostředků psaný jazyk zastaral a může vymízet. Poukazuje na to, že současný vývoj počítačů, s nímž v své době ovšem McLuhan nemohl být obeznámen, naopak silně zvyšuje význam psaného jazyka a tím přispívá k vyvrácení McLuhanova tvrzení.