

CZECHOSLOVAK LINGUISTICS AND THE WORLD*

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When, in 1938, I had to emigrate from the Western Bohemian Border Area, I didn't even know there was such a field as linguistics. And now I stand before you after some decades of a linguistic career to receive the highest honor that the scholarly world can offer me. The only thing I can say to that is that I am moved as never before in my professional life, and that I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the recognition this means for me, and for the opportunity to return to the cultural environment that has given me the Leitmotiv of my professional activity.

And it is particularly appropriate that this honor should be offered to me here in Brno. The personality to whom I owe not only an awareness of linguistics but also the entry into a linguistic career is the former professor of Masaryk University, the late great Roman Osipovich Jakobson, whose proud former student and continuing admirer I am.

I have many interests in common with my colleagues in Brno, as well as a common orientation. The most important of these is that, just as in their case, the scholarly personality of the late Prof. Vilém Mathesius, who taught Prof. Vachek, had a decisive influence on my work and my thinking, although — unlike Prof. Vachek — I know the work of Prof. Mathesius only from reading and from his influence on his students.

In summary I can say that I owe to my teacher Jakobson above all the basis of my professional orientation, functionalism in linguistics. I owe to Mathesius my inspiration from his awareness of the need for linguistics to have a part in the linguistic and cultural development of the speech community. This awareness is particularly clear in his work *Čeština a obecný jazykozpyt* (Czech and General Linguistics) and in his con-

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tribution to the compendium *Spisovná čeština a jazyková kultura* (Standard Czech and the Cultivation of Language).

The significance of the principles voiced in these works is particularly clear these days when issues of language and nationality are at the center of interest in many parts of the world. Examples can be found in the disputes between the central government and regional interests in some well known federal states.

It was clear to me from the moment I became familiar with them that the validity of these principles is not limited to the Czech linguistic environment in which they came about. In my own work I have therefore tried not just to apply the principles of the Czechoslovak linguists of the 30's about the cultivation of language and the role of linguistics in fostering it, but to further develop and extend these principles as applied to language problems the world over. On the basis of my own interest and thanks to the cooperation of a number of colleagues and students from various countries I have thus arrived at the development of a theoretical point of view on issues of language cultivation, language policies and language planning. In my further comments, I should like to present some of the main aspects of this point of view.

It is not only in the Czech lands, but also in many other parts of the world that questions of the standard language are at the center of the problem area of language cultivation and language policy. I shall therefore begin with a summary of my views on the nature of a standard language.

Since I did most of my lecturing on these topics in the United States, I had to begin by explaining that the English notions of "standard language" and "language standardization" have the disadvantage of suggesting the concept of standardization in the sense of stability and uniformity. This covers only the codificational aspect of the standard language, that is, its establishment by means of such generally accepted reference works as dictionaries, spelling books and grammars. Another disadvantage of the English terms is that, unlike the Czech term "spisovný jazyk", they do not suggest the notion of "jazyková kultura" for which there isn't even an appropriate equivalent in English. In my work, I had to render this term by the inaccurate circumlocution "the cultivation of good language".

My own presentation then began with the delimitation of the concept of "standard language" from the standpoint of cultural policy-making as a codified form of language capable of expressing important cultural values in a modern linguistic and cultural community. This means that in the spirit of Czechoslovak linguistics, I stressed the tasks that a standard language must fulfil, together with the problem of the codification and development of language so that these tasks can be met satisfactorily.

In line with this point of view, I developed a theoretical frame of reference consisting of three main conceptual categories. These are: (1) the

structural properties of a standard language, (2) its functions, and (3) the attitudes towards it.

The concept of function is in this connection broader than in Havránek's suggestions about the functional stratification of language. In my conception, functions are the abstract principles underlying and governing the categories of usage, while Havránek's functions are more like the usage categories themselves.

The category of structural properties was taken over into my theoretical frame of reference directly from *Spisovná čeština a jazyková kultura*. The structural properties that appear in my work are Mathesius's flexible stability and Havránek's intellectualization. These properties were formulated by their originators as desirable and therefore gradual properties, not as privatively binary ones. In the spirit of the Prague School's tenets about the standard language and the cultivation of language, these properties can serve as the measure of the degree of development of a given standard language. The more balanced its flexible stability and the higher the degree of intellectualization, the further developed along the scale of standardization will be the language in question. One of my students, the Nigerian Bertram Osuagwu, has in his dissertation attempted such an assessment of his native Igbo language for which a standard variety is now being developed.

The categories of functions and attitudes were initially developed by me in collaboration with Madeleine Mathiot on the material of the standardization process of Guaraní in Paraguay. I then further developed these notions on the basis of my own observations as well as information from students on the confrontation of nascent native standard languages with the languages of the former colonizers in different parts of the world.

Functions are in my theoretical framework closely linked to attitudes. Theoretically, it can be assumed that a certain attitude derives from a certain function, and empirically it can be shown that the study of attitudes allows one to posit certain functions.

Let me therefore first enumerate and then briefly characterize the functions of a standard language and the attitudes that are linked to them.

There are five functions in my theoretical frame of reference. They are:

- (1) the unifying function
- (2) the separatist function
- (3) the prestige function
- (4) the frame-of-reference function
- (5) the participatory function.

To these functions are linked four attitudes towards the standard language, namely:

- (1) language loyalty
- (2) pride

(3) awareness of the norm

(4) desire to participate.

As already noted, in my approach functions and attitudes are closely linked. I shall therefore treat them together.

The unifying function of a standard language is its function to unify a speech community in spite of however great dialect differences may be. A well known example of this function is standard German, thanks to which dialect differences that sometimes approach unintelligibility do not impede an awareness of linguistic commonality.

The separatist function, on the other hand, is the function of a standard language to assert its separate identity and underline its difference from another language with which it may be confused or by which it may be swallowed up. In the present environment, it is unnecessary to make too much of a point of the fact that Standard Slovak is a clearcut example of this function.

To both the unifying and the separatist function there corresponds an attitude of language loyalty. This concept, for which I am indebted to the late Uriel Weinreich, expresses the positive attitude that a speaker has to his own language or to some other in some way significant language. In the majority of European speech communities, this loyalty is directed towards one's language, but in many countries of the Third World it can be directed to the official language, that is, the language of the former colonial power, rather than the native language. An example of loyalty to the official language is the warmly positive attitude towards the French language of many native intellectuals of sub-Saharan Africa in the former French colonies.

It can be claimed that language loyalty occupies a continuum of emotionality which reaches from a strong emotional coloring illustrated by a passionate love for the given language to an emotionally neutral conviction of the practicality and usefulness of the language. I call the former end of the continuum the national treasure attitude, the latter end a pragmatic loyalty. An example of the national treasure attitude is the love of the mother tongue which can be found in many European speech communities. A classical example of the pragmatic loyalty is the attitude towards the English language of not only its native speakers but also of many others that consider it the most practical and most highly developed language of the world.

The prestige function of the standard language is its function to bestow prestige upon the speech community that has developed it or upon the individual who masters it. In the first case, one can speak of a group prestige function, in the second case of an individual prestige function. To both kinds of prestige function there corresponds an attitude of pride. The speech community is proud of its standard language, the individual is proud of his command of the standard language.

The frame-of-reference function of the standard language is its function

to serve as a frame of reference for language correctness. The attitude linked to it is that of awareness of the norm. Neither this attitude nor the function to which it is linked are limited to the standard language. In everyday life, these factors manifest themselves in the correction of mistakes. Needless to say, this correction presupposes some frame of reference for deciding what is and what isn't a mistake, and hence what needs and what doesn't need correction. It is equally clear that such corrections are not limited to environments in which standard language is used. It is also clear that the standard language is more clearcut as a frame of reference for correctness than other forms of speech. This more clearcut frame-of-reference function arises from the general acceptance and availability of codifying reference works. In most speech communities such reference works as dictionaries, spelling books and grammars are produced only for the standard language.

To this must be added that the codification of the standard language can be varyingly stable and uniform. The most stable and uniform kind of codification can be found in the case of standard languages where the codification process is in the hands of a generally recognized and listened to authority such as an academy or comparable institution. In such cases one can speak of academy-governed codification. Examples can be found among the great majority of European standard languages.

Codification as well presents a continuum. At one end of the scale is the academy-governed case that has just been discussed. At the opposite end is the kind of codification that I consider a case of "free enterprise". A typical instance of this sort of codification is standard American English. As is well known, the United States has no language academy. The Federal Government controls the language habits of only its own employees. The public at large depends on private societies and companies for the solution of questions of language correctness. Technical terminology is often codified by professional societies which of course are not under the supervision of the government. For everyday language, issues of correctness are decided by the editorial boards of dictionaries and textbooks. These are normally published by private companies. The important point here is that different authorities, such as the editors and publishers of different dictionaries, do not always agree on what is correct, especially in case of less well known expressions and forms, which are also those most likely to be looked up. This then leads to a certain fluctuation of the norm and to a violation of the requirement of stability discussed by Mathesius in the 30's and 40's. The result is a strong awareness of the norm in American speakers, coupled with strong doubts about what exactly the norm is. This seems to me one of the difficulties in language arts instruction in the United States.

Finally some comments about the participatory function and the attitude that corresponds to it.

The participatory function is the function of the standard language to

allow participation in the cultural developments of the modern world through one's own language. If one's own standard language is not sufficiently developed and generally accepted, then participation in these developments is achieved through the mediation of some other language, which in the case of many countries of the Third World is the language of the former colonial power.

To the participatory function corresponds an attitude of desire to participate. This attitude manifests itself by a desire to share in the material and cultural values of modern life. These values go beyond just language, although language does play a crucial role in acquiring them, since after all it is the most important means of communicating about them. The values themselves include not only literary and artistic creation, but also more pedestrian advantages such as technological achievements or the vagaries of fashion.

Lately, some personal research in Canada as well as observations among the language minorities of Western Europe have led me to some further national developments. I have come to the conclusion that in addition to the detailed conceptual categories that I have been discussing there is a need to also recognize a set of broader categories, that of the roles of language. There are at least two such roles: the role of language as a tool of communication, and the role of language as an identity symbol.

The role of language as a tool of communication is well known and there is no need to belabor it. In speaking of language as an identity symbol, I have in mind the role of language to serve the speaker or the speech community as a means of asserting some national or other identity. In the case of Czech, it is clear that both of these roles are met satisfactorily.

The main question here seems to be whether a given language fulfils these two roles to approximately the same extent. If this is the case, it can be said that the two roles are in balance.

If both roles are fulfilled equally satisfactorily, one may speak of a positive balance. The case of Czech falls into this category.

If the two roles are fulfilled equally unsatisfactorily, one can speak of a negative balance. An example of this is Breton, the Keltic language of Brittany, the Western edge of France. This language serves as a tool of communication only to a reduced extent; the younger generation has to a large extent deserted Breton for French. Its symbolic role has likewise been greatly reduced. The Bretons were subjected to the physical and propagandistic pressure of the French school system which convinced many of them that Breton is only good for milking cows, while French is the true language of civilization.

If the two roles of language are fulfilled unevenly, it can be said that they are in imbalance. One or the other can then prevail.

A classical example of the prevalence of the communicative role is North American English, the English of the United States and Canada.

These speech communities do not display any love of mother tongue. As already noted, theirs is a typical case of pragmatic language loyalty.

An example of the opposite is Irish. In both the Irish Republic and in Northern Ireland, Irish serves as a tool of communication to only a tenth of the population. In spite of this, both the people of the Republic of Ireland and the nationalists in Northern Ireland consider it the national language of the country. Thus, the Irish language fully meets the symbolic role.

Closely linked to these two roles of language are the two kinds of language loyalty discussed earlier. The national treasure attitude is usually closely linked to the symbolic role, especially in cases of positive balance. The pragmatic loyalty is linked to the prevalence of the communicative role. An interesting case of the contrast between these two language situations can be found in Canada, a country which I know from many years of informal observation and more recently also from some research in the field of language attitudes.

Two major speech communities live side by side in Canada, the French that prevails in Quebec and the English that prevails elsewhere. Disputes between these two speech communities are a traditional feature of Canadian life. Some cultural figures occasionally characterize the situation as "The Two Solitudes", after the novel by the same name by Hugh MacLennan.

The two speech communities of Canada poignantly illustrate the difference on the one hand between the national treasure attitude and pragmatic loyalty and on the other hand between a balance and an imbalance between the two roles of language. French-speaking Quebecers are characterized by a strong national treasure attitude towards their language which in addition to the communicative role also has a strong symbolic role. English-speaking Canadians, on the other hand, are characterized by a pragmatic attitude towards their language which fulfills only the communicative role. A consequence of this difference is a misunderstanding between the two speech communities. Each of them looks at the other from its own viewpoint and is not aware of the fact that its viewpoint does not apply to the other community.

From my own research, I know above all the English speech community of Canada. Characteristic of these Canadian English speakers is that, just like their American neighbors, love of mother tongue is completely alien to them. On the contrary, most of them show indifference to this kind of language question. What interests them the most about their language is their own ability to use it correctly and to express themselves effectively. The French-speaking Quebecer's national treasure attitude is alien to them, and the desire to maintain the French identity strikes them as impractical.

The orientation proposed here allows one to pose a number of questions important for the study and understanding of language situations the

world over. These questions stem from opinions that are the result of many years of research experience, but mere opinion nevertheless and not direct research results. I should therefore like to stress that the questions I am raising are not just assertions masquerading as rhetorical questions, but formulations subject to validation.

One of these questions is whether the national treasure attitude and the symbolic role of language aren't simply components of the traditional European concept of "culture". To this can be linked the question whether the pragmatic attitude towards language and the prevalence of its communicative role are in the modern world not signs of the so-called "American way of life" or at least of a desire for it.

A further question is whether the national treasure attitude and the symbolic role of language aren't a sign of a national consciousness based on linguistic identity. Linked to this is the question as to what is a symbol of national identity when it isn't the language. This question arose in connection with research on the language attitudes of English-speaking Canadians. These speakers display considerable uncertainty as to the nature of Canadian identity. If the question exists for them at all, they have great difficulty expressing themselves about it and to state the main point which is how they differ from Americans. There is no such uncertainty for French-speaking Quebeckers. Their identity is primarily expressed through language.

In the light of the above one can further ask which of the nationalities of the world have a feeling of national identity stemming from language. I have dealt with this issue in connection with the nationalities of the Third World where the issue in many countries arises in a very interesting manner. In many parts of the Third World thanks to the earlier colonial regime political boundaries do not coincide with the borders of linguistic and cultural entities. This raises considerable difficulties for the establishment of national and political identity. The questions raised here ought to have particular significance for the study of this issue.

Let me stress, in conclusion, that I consider the issues raised here as the direct consequences of the work on questions of standard language and the cultivation of good language of the Prague School. They clearly show the significance of Czechoslovak linguistics in a worldwide perspective. This is, after all, the linguistic tradition that paid attention to the words by Karel Čapek presented in the inaugural issue of *Slovo a slovesnost*:

... I do not think, however, that I would be able to abstract language from people, that I could ever visualize speech as a purely linguistic phenomenon and not as a manifestation of certain people, human occupations, types, groups, cultures, and last but not least, world views.

ČESKOSLOVENSKÁ LINGVISTIKA VE SVĚTĚ

Autor nastiňuje svůj přístup k otázkám jazykové kultury, jazykové politiky a jazykového plánování, který je inspirován myšlenkami Romana Jakobsona, Viléma Mathesia, Bohuslava Havránka a Josefa Vachka. Dokládá, že přínos těchto reprezentantů Pražské školy k dané problematice přesahuje svým významem rámec evropské lingvistiky.

Článek je anglickou verzí českého proslovu, který autor pronesl při své promoci dne 14. listopadu 1990, kdy mu Masarykova univerzita udělila čestný doktorát filologických věd. České znění proslovu vyšlo v druhém čísle ročníku 1991 časopisu Universitas, vydávaného Masarykovou univerzitou.

