

Chloupek, Jan

Aspects of the dialect

In: Chloupek, Jan. *Aspekty dialektu*. Vyd. 1. Brno: Universita J.E. Purkyně, 1971, pp. 125-130

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/120574>

Access Date: 28. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

The prevailing opinion is that it is hard to draw a precise line between the dialect and the language. a) If one tries to delimit these terms by applying to them different criteria of cultural prestige, the structure of the dialect or of the language is not involved in such argumentation. b) Language has generally been represented by what we call the written or the literary language. Now, this form asserts itself both in speech and writing, while the dialect lives today as means of spoken communication only. Not even this fact, however, represents always a qualitative delimitation between these two linguistic phenomena. c) According to the traditional view the dialect is believed to be the spoken language of the common people (mainly country people). This conception, as a product of historical dialectology, nowadays encounters several obstacles: first, the idea of "the common people" is, particularly at the present time, hard to determine, and then we are up to the problem of intermingling linguistic with ethnographic criteria, sociological criteria, and the like. — If, despite this, the term "dialect" is considered to be a suitable one, and if we treat it in the linguistic practice (e.g. when investigating a dialect *in situ*) upon the whole as a uniform linguistic unit, it is exactly because we agree on conceiving the dialect as one and the same complex category of linguistic, sociological, and historical phenomena, displaying essentially two purely linguistic (structural and that of utterance) aspects, the social linguistic aspect and the historical linguistic one. As for the difference of views of what the dialect actually is, it results from the researcher's stressing and methodically preferring one of the aspects and belittling the other (others). In linguistic theoretical work it is, naturally, necessary to distinguish clearly the single aspects, for only in this way we can attempt to clarify the problem "the structure of the dialect".

I. About the purely linguistic aspect of the dialect we can speak only when we have attributed the dialect an independent linguistic structure.¹ Next it is necessary to limit its characterization to the traditional territorial dialect (TTD), provided we mean by the structure of the dialect exactly its grammatical construction. The field-work, which merely collects all that the investigation has discovered, surely follows other aims than just to prepare materials for the classification of the conception "the structure of the dialect", the latter demanding a study of the synchronic interdependence of its components. One need not be afraid of admitting that an adequate evaluation of such field materials is not easy. Mainly on two occasions we feel induced to attempt a more profound analysis:

a) When we encounter the coexistence of two forms of one and the same grammatical phenomenon in one locality. One may be borrowed from the literary language (LL), and although it has been added to the colloquial equipment of the speaking man, it nevertheless has not become an integral element of the TTD. Or else one of these two forms may have been the product of inter-dialectal development (ID). Are we to imagine a third possibility? We could hardly assume the

¹ If a monograph on "one dialect" comprises also comment on the neighbouring dialects, or if the work deals with the so-called "basic system" of a larger area, admitting differentiation as to "details", some isoglosses are sure to be discussed; the outside phenomena or differentiations within the investigated area are in view of the "basic system" looked upon as differentiation deviations or as variants reflected against the background of the "basic system". All this is, however, but emergency solution. As a rule, no answer is given to the question what variants are reconcilable with the conception of the dialect as a structure, nor are we informed where one dialectal structure ends and another begins. — Among the attempts to give the structural description of a dialect a prominent place is occupied by E. Pauliny's monograph, *Nářečie zátopových osád na hornej Orave* [The Dialect of the Inundation Places in the upper Orava], Turč. sv. Martin 1947, pp. 130. Its author strives to present an adequate description of a dialectal structure, but above all he tries to apply the theoretical and methodical results of the Prague school to his dialectal material. — The fact that the linguistic average of a locality is not a uniform structure was emphasized by P. L. Garvin in his comment on Adolf Kellner's memorial volume, *Word* 11, 1955, p. 626.

present TTD preserving practically for good two forms that should have survived from the previous stages of its development. This possibility may be granted only in the syntax, where we may find side by side with some later phenomenon — usually one gaining ground —, a co-existing older form which is not (at least for a certain time) ousted from usage by the former (Havránek). We need not denote the older form as resistant, for it is not subjected to systemic pressure. To be sure, investigation has supplied us with a few odd instances of parallel existence of two forms, even outside syntax, representing situations in which we are not able (and hardly ever shall be) to decide which of the two forms is new and which old, which is traditional and which interdialectal. In my opinion, this dilemma has been caused by gaps (for the most part irreparable) in the investigated material. Making virtue of necessity we just have to declare that in the TTD there is at disposal either the one or the other form, either the one or the other usage. From the theoretical point of view, however, we have to reject the possibility that a linguistic structure with a compact, uniform norm (Horálek, Trost) and displaying no need of stylistic differentiation should suffer the luxury of variable doublets.²

The structure of the dialect is compact exactly because of the close tie joining the components of different grammatical levels. For instance, in the area stretching from Gottwaldov to Vizovice in Eastern Moravia the occurrence of palatalized labials (including *m'*) and thus also the non-existence of the consonantal combination *mj* is reflected in the declension of the pronoun of the first person „já“ with the forms *mi* (dat.) and *mne* (accus., local, prepositional dat.). In the neighbouring dialects with palatalized labials the situation is different: dat. has *ne*, accus. *ňa* (prepositional local has the shifted morphemic juncture *om-ňe*). (These forms appear in more remote dialects — e. g. near Uherský Brod — as elements of superficial pronunciation alongside the slower and more careful *mňe*, *mňa*.) The situation is different in each of these areas, each having a somewhat different binding that links the phonological and the morphological levels.

b) When we encounter the coexistence of two forms of one grammatical phenomenon in two localities it is only the working routine that makes us speak here of two variants of the same phenomenon, of the fact that in view of “otherwise identical” structures we “still” can speak of one dialect. I am one with J. Hamm when he says that “every dialect — even the smallest subdialect — yields its own system”.³ Other views find strong opposition in the fact that we never know precisely how many other conformities or non-conformities there exist in the adjoining dialects besides the phenomenon discovered and designated by the explorer in question as variable; after all, such variables are usually selected at random from a number of similar phenomena. Apart from that, too much would depend on what grammatical level has been allotted the function of criterion. For instance, there is no doubt that phonological phenomena are significant when we try to characterize a dialect; they are certainly the most outstanding. Yet, for other reasons we may argue that the phonetic phenomena are no less important. Dialectal features resting in articulation are diehards and are often found to survive when a dialect speaker strives to get at least partly conformed to the literary language. Or of what weight for the analysis are the single grammatical qualities of phenomena and have they a manifold validity? Thus, for instance, is it possible to see in the above-mentioned pronominal forms *mi*, *mne* a further (this time morphological) symptom of differentiation when compared to forms in the neighbouring dialects in addition to the existence of the palatalized labials (which is a phonetic phenomenon), in spite of the fact that these pronominal forms are only an outcome of phonetic situation?

A structural definition of the dialect (in contrast to the functional definition, discussed later) might be formulated as follows: TTD (to be looked upon today as an archaic surviving linguistic form) is a linguistic structure without the need of inward variability (such as is inherent in the literary language); if, in spite of it, a seeming variability appears to exist in its structure, and if this variability has not been taken over from the literary language, and if we find, in addition to this, the coexistence of older phenomena with the new ones it means that an ID is originating or has been originating, even though it may not have attained its ultimate form. The origination of an ID foretells the extinction of the TTD.

II. It was only the systematic study of dialectal syntax which made it necessary to analyse the TTD from a new point of view. An investigation had to be undertaken to find what the TTD had in common with other spoken forms of the national language, i. e. in the present writer's country with Common Colloquial Czech and with the interdialects, or with the stock of expressions

² In syntax situation is more complex indeed, cf.: M. Jelínek, *Skladebná synonymika* [Syn-tactic Synonymy], in the publication *O vědeckém poznání soudobých jazyků*, Prague 1958, p. 253 etc.; V. Michálková, *Některé konkurující syntaktické prostředky v nářečí* [Some Competing Syntactic Means in a Dialect], *SPFFBU A 12*, 1964, p. 147 etc.

pertaining to the colloquial usage of the LL (Hausenblas). Now, this common feature is the manner of performing linguistic communication, that is to say the oral aspect (in contrast to the written aspect). This performance finds its manifestation partly in the phonic modulation of the communication — as we know, the system of phonemes and the system of sings are not in accord in the literary language, although they correspond to a certain extent — and partly in the level of utterance (parole). The oral aspect implies (causes) a certain arrangement of linguistic phenomena and thus it asserts itself — as “a cause” — also on the systemic level. By analyzing oral performances we arrive at the conception of the oral language, which, as a counterpart of the written language, represents one of the two functions of the language as means of communication. A structural content of this spoken form, or oral function, may also be a TTD. Further it must be pointed out that the contrast of one arrangement (in the written language) and of the other arrangement (in the spoken language) leaves its traces also on the stylistic level. Either manner of arrangement turns into a stylistic form, which, theoretically considered, may have for its content both literary and non-literary linguistic materials. We know, however, well enough that in the dialect this contrast does not exist. Dialectal communication is exclusively oral (the dialect has not even its own graphic system), speaking is not a style-forming element, and all this is contrary to the written language, where the oral communication even forms a stylistic contrast to the written performance.

As to dialectal oral communications, their relation to the non-linguistic situation is twofold: in one case they become, in fact, an integral part of the situation entering it, reacting to it, and taking it directly into account (e. g. when two speakers interchange views); in the other case communications create a new situation described by the speaker to the person addressed (e. g. in an oral narrative), and these are always incomplete with regard to the total amount of communicated reality. Thus, for instance, the narrating person selects only those relations that serve the purpose of his communication. In this latter type of communication we meet more frequently inherent dependences and linguistically close forms as well as those that are more consistently organized.

When estimating dialectal phenomena from this point of view we try to find, first of all, how the features of oral communications act as factors influencing the structure of the dialect (its syntactical construction in the first place) as to quality or quantity — by changes in the frequency of phenomena (e. g. the prevalence of the formal parataxis in dialectal syntax results from the permanent presence of the situation context, in which the linkage of clauses by conjunctions, and thus also the linguistic expression of relations, becomes redundant — in the wider sense of the word). Some features influence the syntactic structure in conformity (e. g. the context binding enables, and the fast developing actual situation supports, the tendency towards elliptic expression), others adversely (e. g. the situation binding makes possible economy in expression, while speaking supports superabundance and pleonasm in utterance). It is therefore not enough precisely to distinguish from one another the single oral factors, it is also necessary to consider all of them as one whole.⁴

III. An all-round answer to the question in what relation a dialect stands to the linguistic average of its locality is to be expected from the sociological linguistic aspect, while the question of the language structure recedes here to the background. The same ID system may serve linguistic intercourse whether on a higher or on a lower level:

TTD	—	ID
ID	—	LL (the area variant) ⁵

It is not the structuralist but the sociolinguistic standpoint that has given rise to the thesis about the so-called limited functional validity of the TTD, which is often asserted in the current definitions of the dialect. The functional limitation of a TTD is mostly due to the oral character of the dialect, that is to say, to the absence of real cultural tradition, which in modern times is inconceivable without writing. The functions of a TTD can, of course, fully meet the everyday needs of its speakers.

Modern social development brings along with it a certain disarrangement of the TTD structure by introducing into it new elements, until this structure is replaced in the end by unstable, non-literary complexes, which, naturally, are no more relatively stabilized structures, and retain a greater or smaller portion of the TTD elements. This development does not occur if an authori-

³ Cf. the *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Linguists*, Cambridge, Mass., 1962, Mouton & Co., London-The Hague-Paris, 1964 (edited by Horace G. Lunt), p. 124. Likewise cf. E. Pulgram, *Structural Comparison, Diasystems and Dialectology*, *Linguistics*, No. 4, p. 66: “All the same idiolects form a dialect.”

tative linguistic form is absent (this situation does not exist in the Czech speaking area), or if the speakers are not aware of this authoritative form (this may be due, e. g., to the low standard of language culture), if they deliberately disregard it (e. g. being too much addicted to tradition), or else if they do not master this form. The above-mentioned development occurs, but proceeds slower if the enumerated conditions exist only in part.⁶ All this represents an eminently social set of problems; the present dialectology studying the relations existing between the territorial spread of a language and the social factors has little in common with its nostalgic and popularizing ethnographic predecessor.

By way of example we may sum up the Moravian situation in the sixties. Upon the whole, the TTD still holds its ground. It is especially its prominent (in the speaker's consciousness) signs in grammatical structure that are gradually fading, and such phenomena as are connected with the social situation that has passed away (particularly the lexical phenomena, but also some odd syntactic phenomena, especially the so-called "addressing plural of respect") are disappearing. This becomes manifest mainly among the non-agricultural population and is a current feature with the young generation. The ID is being formed even without a direct co-operation of the LL, the prevailing tendencies appear to be those which characterize the whole area (with regard to three or four phenomena even the whole of Moravia) — while the newly arising forms sometimes differ, strange to say, both from the TTD and from the LL. The development of the ID is an evolutionary process of the TTD, and since the structural distance between the TTD and the ID is rather small here, the Moravian territory makes at first sight the impression of a fairly uniform dialectal area.

Naturally, by stating all this we do not mean to say that the ID is not influenced by the LL at all. Yet, this primarily cultural pressure has rather a general effect, resulting in a universal levelling process, so characteristic of the present development of the TTD and postulated by the necessity to invest means of mutual communication with higher functions. It is exactly the existence of the LL which acts as a stimulus of the development of the TTD, a development which otherwise would be paradoxical in a surviving out-dated idiom. Concretely, the influence of the literary language manifests itself above all in the tendency to preserve such dialectal forms as are identical with their literary counterparts. (In our situation this tendency asserts itself at the same time as an inhibition of excessively expansive progressiveness of Common Colloquial Czech.) Of course, direct influence of the LL on the TTD is only found in a few odd instances (particularly in the borderland, which is the meeting place of two different national cultures). As to the extent of direct influence of the LL on the TTD, we may accept the thesis of structural linguistics asserting that "a language system does not submit to such external influence as would be incompatible with its structural needs and wants."⁷ Under this proviso we are ready to admit the existence of the above influence and of penetration of single phenomena, but even such organic fusion of structural elements, a levelling of structures, or origination of structures of a new quality does not take place. Theories about such "short circuit" between the TTD and the LL unduly simplify the situation. The cases we have in mind here should rather be designated as cases of a disturbed dialect rather than as cases of interdialectal development. Similarly, arguing in favour of "a mutual influence" between the LL and the TTD is, for the time being at least, erroneous, because any concrete influence of the TTD on the LL could hardly be demonstrated, except the adoption of a very limited number of items.

The relation of the speaker to the LL, when he wants to use it, is essentially different from his relation to the ID; he was made to use the latter by a natural development of the TTD and he resorts to his ID more or less unconsciously, spontaneously. On the other hand, the attitude of the speaker to the literary language is a conscious one. Naturally, the standard of speech rises or falls in accordance with the speaker's knowledge, and also with the prevailing general standard of language culture; different political circumstances may likewise leave their mark here, too. These restricting factors put somehow aside the question whether the literary language is spoken, and if so, where it is spoken, who speaks it and when, while the objective investigation is assigned

⁴ Cf. J. Chloupek, Some Notes on the Study of Dialectal Syntax, *SPFFBU* A 6, 1958, p. 35 etc. — The syntax of the dialects is the present subject of systematic studies of the Brno branch of the Institute of the Czech language of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

⁵ A similar scheme of the Czech linguistic situation was published as early as in 1934 by B. Havránek in *Čs. vlastivěda III, Nářečí česká*, p. 87.

⁶ Cf. Strang's remarks at the Ninth International Linguistic Congress; see the report on the congress proceedings and publication in *SPFFBU* A 13, 1965, p. 204.

⁷ J. Vachek, On the Interplay of External and Internal Factors in the Development of Language, *Lingua* 11, 1962, pp. 433—448 (see esp. p. 448).

the task to determine what qualities are possessed by the literary language of the respective speaking area. The outcome of such investigation would be the specification of the areal variant of the literary language (Jedlička).

Summing up we may say that Czech dialectology has four tasks to solve: (1) The investigation of Common Colloquial Czech as a linguistic form that transcends the function of an areal inter-dialect. (2) The investigation of interdialectal hierarchy, particularly in places where the TTD is surviving at the same time. (3) The investigation of speech in the repopulated borderland. (4) The investigation of speech in town areas. The present approach to these tasks shows that the researchers are getting aware of this programme and go in for initial partial analyses.⁸ In contrast to the investigation of the TTD we are faced here with an essentially different situation. After taking the first steps the explorer finds no relatively stable structure to start with; while in the course of a TTD investigation the research looks primarily for the most conservative linguistic stratum of the local population, here it has to work in a situation that is rather hard to survey.

From this point of view we might formulate the definition of the TTD as follows: Of the different linguistic forms of the national language that coexist in a certain locality the TTD performs the function of the lowest grade, whereas the ID may be either the lower or the higher member of the functional pair.

IV. In the conception of the dialect as a form of the national language we find reflected another aspect, i. e. the historical linguistic (diachronic) aspect.⁹ The very conception of the national language is essentially an historical idea, which naturally does not exclude — just as in the case of “the nation” — its present-day existence as an outcome of a process. Yet, we need not ascribe it a linguistic structure in the current sense of the word. It is an historically conditioned sum of language forms used by all members of the same nation, when they make use of their native tongue. At the same time the said varieties of this national language must be sufficiently akin from the structural point of view to be capable of mutually influencing each other and of displaying common evolutionary tendencies. The idea “a territorial dialect” (of what?) implies dialectically a relation to the national language — this is not contradictory to the thesis about the structural invariability of the TTD, as pointed out here above — and as its component it may be reviewed historically and defined as a relatively stabilized territorial modification of the national language (in contrast to the interdialects, which are unstabilized territorial varieties, and to the literary language, which is a variety essentially undifferentiated from the territorial point of view; it is unnecessary to add that only a relative stability can be a characteristic feature of every linguistic variety in living usage; the term “variety” protects us from conceiving a TTD as a limited areal phenomenon with fixed boundaries, which is a character that dialects may assume only in abstract reasoning). Here we have to deal with proper area of so-called linguistic geography. At the same time individual TT dialects of the national language have a considerable part of phenomena (the inventory) in common, but this fact in itself does not mean that such apparently identical phenomena do not appear in different relations. And besides, differing phenomena may perform, in different structures, the same function.¹⁰

Very often we can come across the term “transition dialects”. This term is justified when dialects are discussed in relation to political, historical, or ethnographic problems, or else to the general problems of the national language. Otherwise, in fact, all dialects constitute transition phenomena when compared with their neighbours, provided that their speakers represented a mass population of the given territory. The “transition character” in the purely linguistic sense of the word begins to develop, as a matter of fact, with the very first isogloss, no matter how insignificant. Admittedly, the combination of dialectological problems with historical or ethnographic ones may easily become guilty of anachronism. Thus, for instance, the isogloss implied in the pronunciation *aš ráno* // *až ráno* may be taken for a basis for conclusions concerning the situation of Czech in the mid-Moravian area and thus finally also for conclusions concerning the situation of the local population; as a matter of fact, however, the eastern (the latter) form is *sit venia verbo* Central Slavonic, while the western (the former) form is peripheral when considered from the viewpoint of the development of Slavonic languages. This phenomenon is therefore one of those that extend beyond the horizons of the national language. In the frame of historical

⁸ E. g. J. Bělič, *Ke zkoumání městské mluvy* [On the Research into the Speech of Town], *SlavPrag IV*, Prague 1963, p. 569 etc. Cf. also the postulates resulting from the discussion on Common Colloquial Czech, *SaS* 22, 23, 24, 1961—1963.

⁹ Overrating the historical linguistic aspect leads to the following conclusion: “... dialectology is a part of the history of language, and ... strictly speaking, there may not be any synchronic dialectology.” Cf. D. L. Canfield, *The Diachronic Dimensions of “Synchronic” Hispanic Dialectology*, *Linguistics*, No. 7, 1964, p. 5.

evaluation it assumes an altogether different place from that which is allotted to it when the contemporary condition of the dialect is described.

In principle, both the convergent and the divergent development of dialects always took place simultaneously in a large area, both processes forming a dialectic unity. If we speak of pre-vaillingly convergent or of pre-vaillingly divergent development, what matters is how large is the area we can actually encompass from our "outlook-tower" (Lamprecht). As for the oldest period of the language, we cannot directly assume (at least in the areas of Indo-European languages) that the present, and more particularly the recent, multiplicity of dialects had been the product of an original uniformity; the oldest dialectal differences may have remained beyond the reach of our knowledge.¹¹ In spite of this the theory of "relatively uniform" old languages is generally accepted; it is simply an outcome of the only possible working method at our disposal. We are eye-witnesses of the present dialectal differentiation, whilst the assumed differentiation in the early stages of development of the national languages is devoid of any evidence, and for this reason it may be put aside as negligible.

Conclusions

A complex definition of the dialect would, therefore, run as follows: The TTD is a relatively stabilized linguistic structure without inner variability. Its function is limited, that is to say only oral.

Further conclusions: When an ID originates, the assertion of a territorial dialect expands (this depending on the place it occupies in the hierarchy of the territorial varieties of the national language), while its structure loses its stabilized character, striving occasionally for a new stabilization (only seldom successfully because of a short stretch of development). The functional limitation to the spoken form remains inalterable.

When the common colloquial language originates, the territorial limitation is seen to disappear and the structure of the linguistic variety starts intensely developing towards a new relative stability. The functional restriction to the spoken communication still exists, but with the progressing stabilization of structure and with the growth of social prestige of the new variety a rationally founded endeavour begins to gain ground to bridge the structural gap existing between the literary language, traditionally bound up with the written functional form, and the common language, springing from the current spoken usage of every-day life.

Dialectology represents a certain kind of "microlinguistics" in the linguistic science, and as was recently stated by Francescato, the term "dialect" may after all be taken for a synonym of the term "language". In view of the complexity of dialectological problems one would greatly appreciate if a uniform system of concepts could be accepted in world linguistics, and reflected in common terminology; the latter task, strange to say, appears to be even more difficult than the former.¹²

¹⁰ Cf. G. Francescato, *Dialect Borders and Linguistic Systems*, publication quoted in Note 3, p. 109 etc. As to the idea "diasystem", see the same.

¹¹ There are exceptions; see A. Bartoněk, *Vývoj konsonantického systému v řeckých dialektech* [Development of the Consonantal System in Ancient Greek Dialects — with Summary in English], Prague 1961.

¹² Dialectology is sometimes charged with little effort to attempt formalization of grammatical analysis. In our opinion, this defect is "caused" by the heuristic significance of concrete documents, which pushes to the background the application of the most recent working methods for the analysis of a dialect. That is why dialectology keeps operating not only with types, schemes, formulas, and models, but also with "documents" (with localization, which is an analogy of quoting sources of philological documents).