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VORWORT

Der vorliegende Sammelband enthält die Beiträge zu dem vom 29. September bis zum 2. Oktober 1999 im Internationalen Wissenschaftsforum Heidelberg unter demselben Thema vom Slavischen Institut Heidelberg durchgeführten internationalen Symposium. Möglich wurde dies durch einen beträchtlichen Zuschuß der Thyssenstiftung und das tätige Engagement von Frau Dr. Reiter vom IWH und ihren Mitarbeitern, wofür hier herzlich gedankt sei.

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Heidelberg, im Juni 2000

Baldur Panzer

Jiří Nekvapil, Prague

Language management in a changing society

Sociolinguistic remarks from the Czech Republic

0. Introduction

This paper deals with some aspects of the language situation which has developed in the Czech Republic over the last ten years.

The beginning of this period is marked by social changes initiated by the events of November 1989. Since these changes, called in Czech 'revoluce' (revolution) or, not so often, 'převrat' (turn-over), have had a profound influence on the further development of Czech society in general, it is tempting to ask what impact they have made on the language situation. In the case of some language phenomena, the answer to this question is simple (in vocabulary, for example), but in other cases it may be more complicated, because the causal relations have frequently been obscured and sometimes we can only speculate upon them. The main difficulty lies in the fact that, in principle, we are unable to identify all social variables active in the course of the emergence of the language phenomenon under investigation. Then, the operation of a particular variable, however important, can be easily overestimated. In the case of the Czech Republic, it is clear that a profound effect on the language situation of the last decade was exerted not only by the change of the social system in 1989, but also by the division of Czechoslovakia and the rise of the independent Czech Republic on January 1, 1993. This is obvious especially in the changed status and use of some Slavonic languages, in particular of Slovak.

1. Concept of language management

In dealing with the language situation of the last decade, this paper will employ the theory of language management. One of my aims is to show the explanatory potential of the language management model through its application to the description of the language situation in the Czech Republic. Accordingly, I will try to describe the changes in the last decade not only from the viewpoint of the linguist but, if possible, also from that of the (everyday) language user – the latter being defined simply as a non-linguist. However, as the language behavior of everyday Czech speakers is

not always sufficiently known, this paper also appeals for further detailed research (esp. Section 4).

Language management theory has been developed by J.V. Neustupný and B.H. Jernudd as an alternative to theories of language planning (see, for example, Jernudd and Neustupný 1987, Neustupný 1994). The point of departure of language management theory is the language behavior of the (everyday) language user in the course of communication. It is the user, not a linguist, who determines what is and what is not a language problem. Ways in which the individual manages his utterances becomes the starting point of institutional management of language. Language management may display the following phases: 1. noting, 2. evaluation, 3. planning of adjustment and 4. implementation. The language user, for example, notes a language feature in his own or in his interlocutor's utterance; this may be in contrast to the language feature expected; in other words, the individual notes a deviation from the norm. He evaluates the used language feature negatively and, subsequently, chooses another language feature and implements the choice. The speaker may also choose a different language feature because he evaluates it positively. Language management can be stopped during any of these phases. The speaker, for example, may only note a language feature or note and evaluate it, but not plan an adjustment. Noting and the subsequent phases of language management apply not only to particular language forms (English words in Czech utterances, for example), but also to deep language problems such as communicative incompetence in foreign languages. The speaker can evaluate his/her competence negatively and can enroll in a course of English or German. In addition to language planning, there are other types of organized language management such as cultivation of language, language teaching or speech therapy.

In my view, the most valuable aspect of this theory is that language management is seen as a process which can occur on very different levels of society: in particular conversations of (everyday) language users, in families, in various social organizations such as companies, local authorities, schools, media, academies or ministries. Hence, language management is a very complex phenomenon, which forms an important part of the language situation. On the other hand, it is clear that not all language phenomena are subjected to language management. By definition, language management does not apply to the language phenomena which are not noted or cannot be noted by (everyday) language users. It follows that characterization of

the language situation through language management alone is necessarily incomplete.

The following example will illustrate the process of language management. After 1989 most speakers of Czech have noted an extensive influence of English on Czech. At least they have noted that a considerable number of English words have appeared in Czech utterances and texts. In many cases, they have evaluated this fact and some of them have addressed language experts with their queries in language consulting centers (Uhlířová 1998). Linguists have studied phonemic and morphemic integration of English words into Czech (Kučera and Zeman 1998, Daneš in press) and have formulated recommendations for the use of those words. This is an example of a harmonious relationship between individual and institutional (organized, systematic) language management. Moreover, a large number of speakers came into contact with English in the following way: soon after the state borders with Germany and Austria were opened and people started travelling on a mass scale, they discovered that they were not able to make themselves understood beyond the territory of Czechoslovakia. They evaluated this fact negatively and they enrolled in various courses of English (and/or German) on a mass scale. Needless to say, they were accompanied by those who wanted to be employed in foreign companies operating on the territory of Czechoslovakia. A keen interest in English led to the extensive setup of private language schools and English became a favored subject even within the state school system. This is another example of the harmonious relationship between individual and institutional language management.

It is also important to briefly mention components of the language situation that are not managed. After 1989, as a result of the spread of English, English words of the type 'briefing', 'leasing' started being pronounced in Czech utterances not only as /bri:fiŋk/, /li:ziŋk/, which is the usual, 'systemic' way of their sound integration into Czech, but also as /bri:fiŋ/, /li:ziŋ/ (Kučera 1995). In Czech, the sound /ŋ/ is an allophone of the phoneme N. So far, this sound has occurred only in front of /k/ and /g/ (cf., e.g., Cz. 'banka'). In the period under review, however, /ŋ/ has started appearing in another position, namely before the pause and/or at the end of the word (see the examples above). Not noted by everyday speakers, this phenomenon appears not to have become an object of language management. However, the changing status of the sound /ŋ/ has been a part of the Czech language situation.

In the following sections of this paper I will pay attention to language management in relation to the following areas: 1. semiotics of public space, 2. political and mass media discourse, 3. standard and non-standard means of expression in discourse.

2. Semiotics of public space

Let us start with a phenomenon that probably has been noted by a number of speakers because it has caused them communicative problems. The most prominent language changes after 1989 were a part of a global process which can be characterized as a removal (or at least a modification) of signs symbolizing communist ideology and the subsequent filling of the emptied semiotic space. Understandably, this did not apply to linguistic signs alone. A political editor of *Mladá fronta*, a prestigious Czech newspaper, summarized his observations in January 1990 as follows:

Fascinuje mne to svaté nadšení a úsilí věnované již tradičně naším národem změnám jmen, zamalování nápisů, strhávání soch a hledání nových model. (Mladá fronta, 26/1/1990)

(I am fascinated by the immense enthusiasm and the effort which our nation traditionally devotes to changing names, painting over inscriptions, pulling down statues, and looking for new idols.)

Obviously the social change in 1989 was accompanied, or more precisely, co-produced, not only by language management but also by semiotic management.

The range and character of semiotic changes after 1989 can be illustrated by the changes of street names in Czech cities and towns. For example, in Hradec Králové (HK), which with its 100 000 inhabitants is one of the larger Czech cities, there are 532 names of streets and similar objects (Dejmek 1993). After 1989, 50 street names have been changed. Let us pay attention to the position held by the ideologically marked signs in the re-naming of streets. Logically, it is possible to differentiate four classes of semiotic changes:

- (1) An ideological sign is substituted by another ideological sign (e.g., in HK, Marx Street has been changed to Edvard Beneš Street¹).
- (2) An ideological sign is substituted by a non-ideological sign (e.g., in HK, Five Year Plan Street has been changed to Morello Cherry Street).

¹ E. Beneš was the last non-communist president of Czechoslovakia.

- (3) A non-ideological sign is substituted by an ideological sign (a hypothetical example represents the change of Apple Street into Ronald Reagan Street).
- (4) A non-ideological sign is substituted by another non-ideological sign (e.g., in HK, Garden Street has been changed to Street of Small Houses).

In the corpus collected in Hradec Králové, the most numerous class is the second one. The first class is slightly less common. The third class is not represented at all and the fourth one only here and there. Changes in the fourth class are motivated by the inner logic of the system of street names and as such are not relevant to our topic. On the whole, it is possible to claim that in the semiotic space, the tendency toward 'de-ideologization' dominated, although instances of 're-ideologization' also frequently occurred. In this regard, it is instructive to mention the following anecdote which was widely circulating at that time: when you send a letter to your friend who lived on Lenin Street and you don't know its present-day name, put down Masaryk Street – it is highly probable that you are not wrong².

Obviously symbolic features of street names could not have been overlooked after the social change in 1989 and they became a real language problem. Who solved it? Who evaluated the current names and decided which ones were acceptable and which ones were not³? Who suggested adjustments of non-acceptable names? Who implemented them? There were no measures taken at the level of the central government at that time. It was the local authorities who became language managers on a mass scale. The influence of linguists was marginal.

3. Political and mass media discourse

The change of the social system in 1989 is clearly linked to profound changes in political and mass media discourse. The most striking aspect of this phenomenon, noted by many speakers, was that dozens, even hundreds of expressions ceased or, *vice versa*, began to be used or began to be used in a different way⁴. Such a massive substitution or modification of lexical items did not happen in one stroke and was accompanied by massive

² T.G. Masaryk was Czechoslovakia's first president, founder of the democratic Republic.

³ In HK, e.g., the following strategy was employed: streets named after members and officials of the Communist Party were not re-named if these people were victims of World War II and if they came from HK; see Dejmek 1993: 32.

⁴ For details see Nekvapil 1996.

language management. As the situation was revolutionary, traditional state organizations participated only marginally in this management and the mass media became the main agent.

Let us pay attention then to the activities of journalists as managers of political discourse. Their task was mainly to change attitudes toward the key terms of the previous ideology and to those of the ideology that replaced it. This was not a trivial matter. In a number of cases, language management had to be focused on an expression that had two different connotations. The word 'capitalism' can serve as a good example. The following extract from a Czech newspaper article illustrates how journalists changed the negative connotation of this expression into a positive one.

Z toho marasmu, kam nás komunisté zatáhli, nás může dostat jen systém, který je sice nedokonalejší, ale nejlepší, který známe. Systém, který za léta dokázal svoji životaschopnost, který zaručuje občanům svobody, dodržování jejich práv i prosperitu. Má takové ošklivé jméno – kapitalismus. (Lidové noviny, 28/11/1990)

(There is only one system which can extricate us from the mess the communists got us into, a system which may not be perfect, but is the best one we know. A system which throughout the years of its existence has proved its vitality, and which guarantees freedom to the citizens, the observance of their rights, and prosperity. It has an ugly name – capitalism.)

It is symptomatic that the title of this commentary is 'An Ugly Name'.

In the following article entitled 'Feared Words', it is possible to clearly identify the first three phases of language management. The political editor notes the use of some words, evaluates them and subsequently suggests how to avoid them. In other words, he plans adjustment.

Některých slov se bojíme, protože jejich obsah vyčpěl a již si pod nimi většinou neumíme nic přesného představit. Mezi tato slova patří třeba "žlutácké odbory". Podobné obavy existují a hlavně existovaly z některých slovních spojení, jako je například "socialistická demokracie". Slůvko socialistická vysálo jako lasička obsah slova následujícího a obrátilo ho v opak. Podobný strach je ovšem dnes cítit (...) ze slov "pravice" či "konzervativní strana". Přitom za pravicovým či konzervativním přístupem k politice se neskrývá nic jiného než myšlenka slabého státu a silného jedince. Levice chce naopak silný stát, který se o každého postará, který z každého sejme břemeno odpovědnosti za jeho vlastní osud. Jenže, kdo se dá a priori pojitit proti riziku, které je nevyhnutelné, přestává být sám sebou. Mění se z občana v otroka a tato cesta je přece po našich zkušenostech pro nás nepřijatelná. Navrhují tedy: bojíme-li se označení pravicová strana, řekme jí občanská strana. (Mladá fronta Dnes, 28/12/1990)

(We fear some words because their contents have become stale and because in most cases we are unable to connect them with anything precise. Such words include, for

example, 'yellow-dog contract'. Similar fears exist and, above all, have existed before due to word combinations such as 'socialist democracy'. Like a weasel the word socialist sucked out the contents of the following word and turned it into its opposite. Today, a similar fear is generated (...) by the words the 'right wing' or 'conservative party'. Yet there is nothing more behind the right-wing or conservative approach to politics but the idea of a weak state and a strong individual. The left wing, on the other hand, wants a strong state that will take care of everyone, that will take off the burden of responsibility for one's own fate from everyone's shoulders. But those who take out an a priori insurance against hazards which are inevitable, forfeit their own independence. They change from citizens into slaves and this alternative is unacceptable for us in view of our previous experience. My suggestion is this: if we are afraid of the label right-wing party, let us call it 'civic party'.)

The basic procedure employed by journalists was the elucidation of selective concepts and corresponding words by means of everyday language. Soon after November 1989, trust in everyday language and in related common sense argumentation became typical.

4. Standard and non-standard means of expression in discourse

It is often emphasized that, as a part of the social changes in Central and Eastern Europe, a change in the use of standard and non-standard means of expression has taken place. Some aspects of this problem, however, have been controversial in Czech linguistics for several decades.

This discussion has proceeded mainly within the framework of Havránek's concept of the stratification of a national language and later, Ferguson's concept of diglossia was used⁵. Intentionally, I will avoid both frameworks, because their acceptance is connected with notions as controversial as that of Common Czech. The starting point of the discussion is the observation that in spoken discourse there often appear other phonemic and morphemic features than those codified as standard. With respect to their territorial distribution, it is important that these alternative features are not merely local. Basically, they are being used on the whole territory of Bohemia and even penetrate into Moravia. For this reason, they are often designated as Common Czech, although from the position of the majority of Moravian and Silesian speakers we should call them Common Bohemian Czech instead. This language situation has emerged mainly due to the language plan implemented during the so-called National Revival taking place at the very beginning of the 19th century⁶. A long-term policy, which has

⁵ An extensive presentation of the Czech language situation in these frameworks was published in Sgall et al. 1992. See also a recent presentation published as Sgall 1999.

⁶ For details see Sgall et. al 1992.

been obvious in the work of Czech institutional language managers in the course of the second half of the 20th century, can be characterized as a gradual acceptance of these alternative features in the standard language. However, by far not all the features are being accepted – only those which, more or less, have become a part of the standard norm, as the favorite Prague School formulation goes⁷. This moderate approach has been criticized for several decades by some linguists who suggest a more radical approach and are willing to accept a larger number of these alternative features as the standard. The supporters of this more radical approach point out that language users who speak or try to speak the standard language must devote too much energy to the formal linguistic features of the utterance, which is to the detriment of its content. Another important argument, which to some extent follows from the one just stated, is that in the standard language, there may be ‘gaps’; in other words, stylistically neutral forms are lacking in some morphemic positions. For example, while the form of Instr.Plur. *lidmi* may be bookish, *lidma* is non-standard. Thus, the standard language lacks a stylistically neutral form in this position and the form *lidma* becomes a candidate for acceptance into the standard language (cf. Sgall 1999).

Understandably, it is of crucial importance for both the moderate and the more radical approaches to determine what has become a part of the standard norm, that is, how language behavior of educated speakers actually looks. Let us pay attention, then, to the question of whether and/or to what extent the use of the standard language has changed during the last decade. To begin with, it is necessary to say that there were hardly any substantial empirical studies concerning this topic before 1989 and their number has not greatly increased since that time.

Regarding written discourse, the position of the standard language may not have changed. The written language is more or less identified with the standard language. Newspapers are no exception. Non-standard means of expression can be found in fiction (Mareš 1999) and in private correspondence. However, this was already obvious in previous decades, although not to such a great extent. The following extract, which, incidentally, also illustrates language management, comes from a private letter written in

⁷ The language norm being defined as ‘a set of language means used regularly and considered obligatory by members of a speech community’ (Nebeská 1996: 151).

1981⁸. Note, for example, the typical non-standard forms *rozmejšlím* (the standard would be *rozmyšlím*) and *vona* (the standard would be *ona*).

Pišu asi krávoinky, ale aspoň si počteš.

I guess I am writing stupid things, but at least you'll have a good read.

Zrovna se rozmejšlím to dát „naši malý“ zkonzultovat, ale radši ne,

Right now I am considering whether to ask ‘our little one’ to check it for me, but no, I'd better not,

vona by mě nadávala za každou chybičku a chybu.

‘cos she'd blast me for every little tiny mistake.

As for spoken discourse, the situation is much more complicated and its basic characteristic is that it cannot be characterized by a simple formula. Contrasting factors seem to operate here. Today, one claim is that the position of the standard has been weakening (Daneš 1997). But this is nothing new. Roughly thirty years ago, the same author claimed that, mainly among the younger generation, standard norms were weakening, this being connected to the standard's considerable loss of reputation (Daneš 1968). In this regard, the same author speaks about de-standardization of a language (cf. Mattheier 1997). Nevertheless, there is a substantial difference. Today, a possible reduction of prestige of the standard in spoken discourse is widely visible. After 1989, public communication has been considerably differentiated due to the weakening role of central and/or national institutions. As a consequence of the collapse of the totalitarian system, communication directed to the whole nation has been restricted, the public sphere has been split up, and a number of independent agents have been in operation.

Naturally, this can be best observed in the sphere of mass media (Müllerová 1996). Media owned by the state, in particular the radio, orient themselves towards the standard language. This does not mean, however, that non-standard language is not used at all.

Is it possible to prove that speakers orient themselves towards the standard language? This can be demonstrated in utterances where language management operates. In the following example from a state TV broadcast, the moderator M notes a deviation from the standard norm in his own utterance and adjusts it properly.

⁸ Provided with a German idiomatic translation, the full text of this letter was published in Holšánová, Nekvapil and Šoltys 1989. Some methodological remarks on its analysis can be also found in Nekvapil 1994.

M: *hezke nedělní odpoledne nejen vám u televizních obrazovek ale i hostům v našem studiu. témata o kterých bude dnes řeč, možná poznáte už podle jmen panů který kteří přijali dnešní pozvání. vítám tady ...*⁹

(a nice Sunday afternoon not only to you at the television screens but also to the guests in our studio. the themes which will be talked about today you may recognize even from the names of the gentlemen who who accepted today's invitation. I welcome here ...)

As we can see, M uses the standard forms *hezke* (the non-standard form would be *hezky*), *odpoledne* (the non-standard would be *vodpoledne*) etc. After the word *panů*, he uses the non-standard form *který* whereupon he supplies the standard *kteří*.

Self-corrections like this are common. On the other hand, 'other-corrections', as conversation analysts would call it, are unusual¹⁰. Perhaps they are only acceptable in teaching situations. In the state media, for example on television, it is also common for the moderator to consistently speak the standard language while his/her interlocutor consistently uses the non-standard. Clearly, the use of the standard and non-standard is accompanied by a high degree of tolerance.

In private media, in particular on radio broadcasting stations, non-standard means of expression are used very often and it is common for a great variety of combinations of the standard and non-standard to be produced. The speaker oscillates between the standard and the non-standard means of expression even in the course of one utterance and his/her speech may display features of inherent variation¹¹.

Also, it is not exceptional for speakers, non-media people (for example, politicians), appearing both in the state or the private media, to orient themselves to the standard language. The point is that in the public sphere a new elite is winning recognition and demonstrates its status through the use of the standard language. In particular, this applies to the emerging class of businessmen and politicians. So, we are witnessing not only that the pres-

⁹ This is the first sequence of a TV debate broadcast in January 1993. Some more fragments of this TV debate were published in Nekvapil and Leudar 1998.

¹⁰ See a remarkable example in Čmejrková 1996.

¹¹ By the non-standard, I am referring throughout the paper to the phonemic and morphemic features typical for Bohemia and a part of Moravia, the so-called Common Czech.

tige of the standard language is weakening, as has been noted on various occasions, but also that the reverse process is in progress.

In the non-public sphere, the non-standard dominates.

Now let us pay attention to the question of how institutional language managers should proceed in this language situation. To start with, they should draw, I believe, on the study of what particular speakers, in a particular interaction and at a particular point of the utterance, *do* when using and in using the standard or the non-standard means of expression. The point is to find out what social meaning is assigned to the language resources in question by interlocutors, and/or whether they assign a social meaning to these resources at all (and possibly to what extent).

Of utmost importance is the study of language management of everyday speakers. It is symptomatic that a number of claims submitted by adherents of the more radical approach to the organized management of the standard language failed to be based on reliable empirical research (see also Uličný 1998/1999). As a matter of fact, we do not know whether or to what extent people really experience acquisition and use of the standard language as a language problem or whether this is more or less a fiction of linguists. If such information is insufficient, it is questionable whether the so-called gaps in the standard language should be filled at this moment¹².

Given this language situation, of which institutional language managers are 'reflexively' a part, attitudes of the main representatives of another type of language management, namely (language) teaching, seem to be quite reasonable (Čechová 1996). They suggest the following policy: though the standard language should remain the basic means of expression at school, neither teachers nor pupils are obliged to use it exclusively. In conversations between teacher and pupil, for example, speakers should differentiate their usage depending on whether the participants are speaking in a formal context (during the class) or in an informal setting (during the break).

¹² Thus, for the time being, it seems to be reasonable to take seriously Daneš' negative reaction to suggestions of a more radical approach to management of Standard Czech (see Daneš 1995).

5. Concluding remark

The theoretical framework for this paper has been language management theory. It seems that this theory could cover a large number of language phenomena and, therefore, could serve as a starting point for the description of a language situation. It follows from the structure of the language management theory that the resulting description of a language situation does not primarily draw on the linguist's analytic perspective but is based rather on how the language situation is experienced and/or co-produced by the everyday language user. However, both linguists and other institutional language managers are not outside the language situation – they are part of it and, for that reason, their activities, too, should be included into the description of a language situation.

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