Receptive multilingualism in 'monolingual' media: managing the presence of Slovak on Czech websites

Marián Sloboda[a] & Mira Nábělková[a]

[a] Department of Central European Studies, Charles University in Prague, Nám. Jana Palacha 2, 11638 Praha 1, Czech Republic
Published online: 28 May 2013.

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Receptive multilingualism in 'monolingual' media: managing the presence of Slovak on Czech websites

Marián Sloboda* and Mira Nábělková

Department of Central European Studies, Charles University in Prague, Nám. Jana Palacha 2, 11638 Praha 1, Czech Republic

This paper investigates how the presence of a minority language closely related to the majority language is received and treated on the World Wide Web. Specifically, it deals with the acceptability and treatment of texts written in Slovak in the .cz domain, which belongs to the Czech Republic, more than a decade after the split of Czechoslovakia. Employing Language Management Theory and focusing on membership categorisation, the investigation first examines user comments which refer to the use of Slovak on .cz websites as inadequate or problematic. The analysis then proceeds in two directions: first, it deals with users' expectations regarding the use of Slovak on specific websites. Second, it focuses on how users and the website editors subsequently managed the problematic deviations from these expectations. As a result, the study centres around three phenomena which were shown to be relevant for the online participants: Internet nationalism, the intelligibility of Slovak to Czechs and the searchability of webpages in a closely related language.

Keywords: receptive multilingualism; language management; World Wide Web; computer-mediated communication; online discussions; Slovak; Czech

1. Introduction

In reading discussions on websites in the .cz domain, which belongs to the Czech Republic, we encountered user comments which ran contrary to our own experience of Czech–Slovak communication. As people who grew up in unified Czechoslovakia, we considered the practice of receptive bilingualism, that is, when Czech and Slovak speakers communicate together each using their own language, as normal. However, we have come across opposition to the presence of Slovak-language articles in the .cz domain, sometimes expressed in an indiscriminate manner, as happens in Internet discussions. We have also witnessed an equally intense backlash. Thus, it seems that a struggle for the presence of Slovak has been taking place in the .cz domain more than a decade after the split of the common Czech–Slovak state.

Despite its focus on Czech–Slovak communication, this study touches upon several general questions pertaining to language ideologies and organised social action in the context of receptive multilingualism and the World Wide Web: how do people perceive and treat a closely related language on the web? When are they (not) willing to communicate using a *lingua receptiva*, or a language they do not speak or

---

*Corresponding author. Email: marian.sloboda@ff.cuni.cz

write but which they more or less understand (Rehbein, ten Thije, & Verschik, 2012)? Communication on the web is also usually open and relatively little institutionally constrained. How do language problems on the web reflect macro-social influences and how is their management organised? This study investigates these issues.

2. The Czech context

2.1. Linguistic similarity between Czech and Slovak

Czech and Slovak, alongside Polish, are major West Slavonic languages. To illustrate the high level of similarity between them, Example 1 provides short excerpts from translations of George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, found in the Parallel Slovak–Czech Corpus of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (http://korpus.juls.savba.sk/skcs.html):

(1)   English
    The Revolution will be complete, when the language is perfect.

a.   Czech

Revoluce		*bude*	*dovršená,*
revolution.NOM.SG.F		be.3SG.FUT	complete.PART.NOM.SG.F
až	*bude*	*jazyk*	*dokonalý.*
not.before	be.3SG.FUT	language.NOM.SG.M	perfect.NOM.SG.M

b.   Slovak

Revolúcia	*sa*	*zavŕši*	*vtedy,*
revolution.NOM.SG.F	REFL	complete.3SG.FUT	then
keď	*jazyk*	*bude*	*dokonalý.*
when	language.NOM.SG.M	be.3SG.FUT	perfect.NOM.SG.M

These short sentences illustrate differences between Czech and Slovak which, although slight, are found at all structural levels. In phonology, Slovak has the long liquid /ŕ/, as in *za-vŕš-i*, versus Czech *do-vrš-ený* 'complete', seen in (1b) and (1a), respectively. It also has the long liquid /ĺ/, palatalised /l'/, alveolar and postalveolar affricates /dz/ and /dž/, and diphthongs /uo/, /ie/, /ia/ and /iu/. Czech, in contrast, has the postalveolar trill /ř/ and diphthong /ou/. The remaining phonemes, which total more than 30, are common to the two languages. In morphology, there are some differences in the inflectional paradigms, both in terms of suffix homonymy and synonymy (higher in Czech) and the phonemic form of affixes [e.g. Czech *-e* vs. Slovak *-a* for the nominative singular form of feminine nouns, as in *revoluc-e* vs. *revolúci-a* 'revolution' in (1)]. Such morphophonemic correspondences are highly regular. In syntax, construction types are usually shared, although their distribution may be different, as in the expression of passive by 'be' + participle in Czech compared to verb + the reflexive morpheme *sa* in Slovak [*bude dovršená* vs. *sa zavŕši* in (1)]. Differences in vocabulary are illustrated by the use of *až* 'not before/until' in (1a) versus *keď* 'when' in (1b). Note that the Slovak translator could have also used *až*, common to both languages, but the Czech translator could not have used *keď*, which is only Slovak.

Sloboda and Ivanecký (forthcoming) provide quantitative data on linguistic distances between the two languages, using the method employed by Gooskens (2007). Following this method, two distance types are measured: lexical and phonetic. Lexical distance is measured by calculating the percentage of non-cognates

on the basis of aligned parallel texts in the two languages. Phonetic distance is a value obtained by applying the Levenshtein algorithm to their phonetic transcription (for details, see Gooskens, 2007). According to this measure, the lexical distance (difference) of Czech from Slovak is only about 4%, whereas it is 19% from Polish and 33% from Russian. The phonetic distance of Czech from Slovak is around 18%, while it is 30% from Polish and 39% from Russian (standard varieties). If we compare these data to the distances calculated by Gooskens (2007) for Germanic languages, we find that the linguistic distance between Czech and Slovak (4% lexical, 18% phonetic) corresponds most closely to the distance between Norwegian and Swedish (3% lexical, 23% phonetic). Such similarity is a solid basis for receptive bilingualism, which was deliberately supported in the period of Czechoslovakia.

2.2. Socio-historical context

The one-word name 'Czechoslovakia' may give the impression that it was a unitary state with one state-forming nation and one language. In internal politics, however, the state consisted of two majority nations of Czechs and Slovaks, each with their own language. In 1968, Czechoslovakia became a federation and, at the turn of 1992/1993, it split into the Czech Republic (or 'Czechia' for short) and Slovakia.

Czechoslovak national language policy was not intended to promote a common language of communication, but rather the development of *receptive* bilingualism, with an emphasis on the linguistic and intercultural components of the *lingua receptiva* (cf. Rehbein, ten Thije, & Verschik, 2012). Budovičová (1986) distinguished between direct (personal) and indirect (mediated) contact in Czech–Slovak communication at the time. Indirect contact, in particular, formal education (which included instruction on the other nation's language and culture) and federal radio and television broadcasting (e.g. regular bilingual news broadcasts) were crucial for the development of Czech–Slovak *lingua receptiva*. Both schools and the media affected the population nationwide.

The division of Czechoslovakia at the end of 1992 brought about fundamental changes. Especially in Czechia, indirect contact with Slovak has diminished, particularly in schools, where lessons on Slovak have almost disappeared, and, to some extent, also in the media, where the use of Slovak has become much less regular. The development of Czech–Slovak *lingua receptiva* at present depends much more on individual personal experiences. Czechia is relatively homogeneous in the linguistic sense: 95% of its population of 10 million reported Czech as their mother tongue in the 2001 census, compared to 2% who claimed Slovak (Czech Statistical Office, www.czso.cz). However, due to Slovaks' high level of assimilation, it is Czechs' visits to Slovakia and their Slovak relatives, as well as visitors and migrants from Slovakia that remain the largest source of direct contact with Slovak.[1] They and the media maintain Czechs' exposure to Slovak to some extent (for details, see Berger, 2003; Nábělková, 2008; Neustupný & Nekvapil, 2003). In a study by Dickins (2009), 90% of Czechs ($n = 283$, age 15 and over) reported at least a 'passive' knowledge of Slovak. A high level of knowledge was reported in the middle and older generations (age 30 and over), who grew up mostly in the period of Czechoslovakia, and the least amount of knowledge, in the youngest group (age 15–19), raised after the split.

The following two passages – written by an older person, writer Pavel Kohout (Excerpt 1) and an apparently younger Internet user (Excerpt 2) – represent the current range of attitudes towards Czech–Slovak relations. All excerpts in this paper

are English translations. The originals are available on the websites and from the present authors. The beginnings and ends of text stretches which originally appeared in Czech are marked with [CZ], and those originally in Slovak, with [SK].

Excerpt 1
http://www.novinky.cz/domaci/31504-hej.html
Pavel Kohout, 07.05.2004
[CZ]And even the most annoying newly laid-out borders [between Czechia and Slovakia] will soon start to fade away, and after the completion of the [European] Union's external protection, they will disappear completely again. What already faded away during the separation almost absolutely was the Czech dominance and the Slovak envy. Now the Slovak TV Mondays, bedtime stories with the shepherd and the doggie and the joint sports reporting could return to Czechia. Well,[CZ] [SK] that would be nice, really, yeah![SK]

Excerpt 2
http://www.pixy.cz/bloxxy/index.php?comments=1&story_id=1063362560
jirka, 16.09.2003, 16:50
[CZ]I don't understand why we are supposed to know Slovak because it's a language very similar to Czech. So is Polish and, after all, Russian as well. Or because we were one country for some time. That's not a very good reason, because we were a so-called 'one family' much longer, together with Austria, and none of you will shout here that everybody should speak German, how cute this is. I think it's also time for the older ones to realize that we have almost nothing in common with Slovakia, and we have possibly never did . . .[CZ]

Despite the high level of linguistic similarity and mutual intelligibility between Czech and Slovak, as described above, some web users respond negatively to the appearance of Slovak, such as in Excerpt 2. It is to these reactions, their motivations and attempts at their resolution that we turn the rest of this paper.

3. Data and theoretical perspective

3.1. Data

As mentioned, we have chosen to examine online discourse due to the ongoing discursive struggle for the maintenance of Slovak in the .cz domain. Online discourse also contains expressions of a wide variety of personal experiences, some of which have possibly not appeared elsewhere in public.

The data were collected incidentally from 2002 to 2010. Appendix 1 lists the websites from which data (618 messages posted by about 380 users in 15 discussions) were drawn for this study. The data analysis was mostly qualitative, with some simple counting, and focused on categorisation work in interaction (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2009; Lepper, 2000).

3.2. Theoretical perspective

This study adopts a theoretical perspective which, we believe, enables us to answer our long-term research question of how Slovak is used and received in Czech society in the post-Czechoslovak period. This perspective is based on Language Management Theory (LMT), which is a general theory of management or treatment of language issues. LMT was developed mainly in the works of Jiří V. Neustupný and Björn H. Jernudd as a general theory of attention to language problems (see Jernudd &

Nekvapil, 2012; Nekvapil, 2006, 2010; Neustupný, 2002; also Lo Bianco, 2001, pp. 239ff.). LMT describes language management very broadly by contrasting it to discourse production: 'Language behavior as generation of utterances is accompanied by behavior towards language as management' (Jernudd, 2000a, p. 195). At the same time, language management is not understood only in the narrow sense of the management of grammatical and lexical phenomena but concerns various components of communication, including the management of content, norms, participants, settings, channels, etc. (Neustupný & Nekvapil, 2003; following Hymes, 1974).

Instances of corrections in speech, regular avoidance of communication with certain people and processes in which a supranational organisation influences language practices in an entire community are all instances of language management. They may at first seem incommensurable. However, LMT models language management as behavioural processes which can reach various levels of complexity in terms of time, human, material and ideological resources. In this respect, LMT distinguishes between simple and organised forms of language management, the level of organisation being a matter of degree. Simple management takes place within one communicative event; thus, it does not require many resources and the number of participants is small. Organised management, in contrast, is trans-situational; consumes more resources; the number of participants is larger; and communication about the management itself takes place (Nekvapil, 2010, p. 65). The object of this study is organised forms of language management, as communication in online discussions usually involves a large number of people and takes place within an information technology (IT) infrastructure.

LMT emphasises that any language problem and its management, be it simple or organised, is based on and situated in social interaction. The language management process starts after a deviation from an expectation appears in an interaction. When it is noted by interaction participants, it may be evaluated and may then become an object of adjustment. The process can be represented schematically as follows: expectation deviation > noting > evaluation > adjustment > implementation. A deviation that receives a negative evaluation is, in LMT terms, an inadequacy. Inadequacies can develop into a language problem if they are systematic or occur too frequently and if there are no interactive adjustment routines to overcome the negative evaluations of the deviations (Jernudd, 2000b, p. 12). Language management thus always begins as simple management but may become highly organised in later stages. Its development and completion depends on the power relations, interests and ideology of its participants (Neustupný & Nekvapil, 2003, p. 186).

To summarise what this theoretical perspective means for this study, we are interested in interactions in online discussions in which the use of Slovak became an inadequacy or problem for web users. We investigate the users' expectations, deviations from which received negative evaluation (Section 4), and the ways in which these inadequacies were subsequently managed (Section 5).

4. Expectations and deviation evaluations

We begin by examining an excerpt from a discussion on MobilMania.cz, a website devoted to mobile phones. Users in Excerpt (3) express several expectations which often appear in other online discussions on Slovak.

Excerpt 3
http://www.mobilmania.cz/bleskovky/nokia-n70-bez-umts-a-predni-kamery/sc-4-a-
1110765/default.aspx?showforum=1

Mr. Slider, 30.08.2005, 13:23
^{CZ}Why is the headline in Czech and the article in Slovak? I don't understand. Had I known right away it was in Slovak, I wouldn't have come here. I'll have to wait again until the article comes out on a rival server to read it. Wouldn't it be possible to distinguish in the headline that an article is not in Czech, so I can know which articles I needn't even open? I can't understand why Slovak articles are published on Czech servers:o(There are Slovak servers for this.

odklizec, 30.08.2005, 13:37
Are you kidding? You need the article translated from Slovak into Czech?:-D That's really incredible how people can degenerate a couple of years after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia? I have absolutely no problem with it and can't see how someone can.

Marek Lutonský, 30.08.2005, 13:38
What can be done . . . You will have to wait for someone to translate it for you.
Please, send further opinions on Slovak to my e-mail account only. We expect discussions on the topics described in the articles; there have been enough flame wars over Slovak. Thank you.

binary, 30.08.2005, 15:36
Slovak is OK. It is only Mr. Slider's problem that he cannot decipher it.
. . .
stak, 30.08.2005, 14:56
Huh, I noticed the Slovak language only when I read in your message that it's in Slovak. I wonder what year you were born in.

Mirek.P, 31.08.2005, 06:50
What does one's year of birth have to do with this? The point is, Why is there a Slovak article on a purely Czech website? [. . .]

[CZ]Hunter, 31.08.2005, 17:29
Where did you get the phrase 'purely Czech website' from? This is another sort of marketing scheme, right? There have been and will be articles in Slovak on Mobilmania, and I can't see why this should change because of someone who has poor language skills.^{CZ}

Excerpt 3 contains a number of expectations concerning Slovak. Those which often appear elsewhere are summarised below (using emic formulations):

(1) Slovak articles should not be published on Czech servers/on purely Czech websites.
(2) There is no such thing as a 'purely Czech website'; articles written in Slovak are normal here.
(3) The user *Mr. Slider* does not want to open Slovak articles because he cannot understand Slovak; and this is only his (not others') problem.
(4) Editors (represented here by Marek Lutonský) are not obliged to/will not translate articles from Slovak.
(5) People did not need to have articles in Slovak translated into Czech a few years after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia.
(6) Discussions on this website should concern the topic of the article; a discussion about Slovak is a flame war.[2]
(7) The noticing and rejection of an article in Slovak relate to the reader's age.

Although these expectations often appear together, we will focus on the following three clusters: a purely Czech website (points 1 and 2), the intelligibility of Slovak to Czech users (point 3), and the issue of translation (points 4 and 5).

4.1. Purely Czech website

The expression 'purely Czech website' represents an expectation which often appears in response to the posting of a Slovak article (17 cases in our data). However, this expectation is not shared by all participants, as seen in Excerpt 3 above. Whereas one of the opponents relates such expectation vaguely to 'marketing', perhaps indoctrination, it is more often associated with nationalism (seven cases in the data). Excerpt 4, from a website for Czech university students, *Studentský list* ('Students' Gazette') describes this link well.

> Excerpt 4
> http://www.ilist.cz/diskuse/2112
>
> [CZ]Name: *Martin*
> Date: Monday, 31.1.2005
> Subject: About Czech
> Text: In my message, I would not like to discuss standard or non-standard Czech as used in Students' Gazette, but rather why Students' Gazette is bilingual. I am Czech, I study in Czechia and I study at a Czech university supported by Czech tax payers' money, so I expect that Czech will be the language of instruction and also that I will read Students' Gazette in Czech. Unfortunately, sometimes I do not find this. I do not want to stir nationalist passions, but I wonder why our Slovak students have such a problem, unlike other nationalities, with accommodating?...
>
> Name: *David Koubek*
> Date: Wednesday, 2.2.2005
> Subject: Re: The editors' position
> Text: Hi Martin.
> We are interested in readers' opinions. Full stop. We will continue to publish messages in Slovak. Full stop. These two sentences are not in contradiction. We consider it interesting that some Czech students cannot read Slovak, but that is precisely why we publish Slovak articles. If students recall Slovak more often, then they will understand it better...[CZ]

Martin's message shows several aspects of the expectation that 'Students' Gazette' should be written only in Czech. Firstly, the participant himself makes the category of 'nationalism' relevant in this respect. Secondly, he suggests that for non-Czechs, 'accommodating' means they should use Czech instead of their own language. This belief is widespread in Czech society, underlying a host of other every day, including administrative, practices which lead to the assimilation of national minorities and migrants (Sloboda, 2010; Tollarová, 2006). Thirdly, the message implies that 'Czech tax payers' are Czech in the ethnolinguistic sense. This understanding of 'Czech tax payers' is most likely related to the apparent ethnolinguistic homogeneity of Czechia (cf. Section 2.2) and to its perception as a state belonging to ethnic Czechs, which is deeply rooted in Czech society (Sloboda, 2010). The fact that many thousand persons of non-Czech ethnicities, including Slovaks, pay taxes to Czechia testifies to the strong ideological nature of this argument.[3] The rejection of Slovak as an inappropriate language for 'Czech'

Internet media is one of many expressions of this nation–state ideology (for more examples, see Sloboda, 2010). We cannot exclude the possible appearance of the argument that there are people of non-Czech ethnicities who live and pay taxes in Czechia, but we have not come across any. When web users argue that there are also Slovaks among the website readers, these are identified as readers from Slovakia, not as local Slovaks from Czechia.

4.2. (Un)intelligibility of Slovak

Another argument, which sometimes co-occurs with the expectation that a 'Czech' website should only be in Czech, is that Slovak is difficult to understand (20 cases in the data). This opinion was shown in Excerpts 3 and 4 above. Nevertheless, the fact that texts in Slovak *continue* to be published on websites written predominantly in Czech with .cz addresses clearly shows that there is a widespread expectation that Slovak is intelligible and acceptable to the Czech readers. Contributors writing in Slovak sometimes explicitly formulate this expectation as well as their surprise at deviations from it, as in Excerpt 5.

> *Excerpt 5*
> http://www.abclinuxu.cz/blog/asdf/2006/6/aaaaaa-2/diskuse
>
> *pol128*, 24.06.2006, 01:54
> [SK]I really thought Czechs understand Slovak. I have no problem with Czech, and I do not know of any Slovak who would.[SK] [CZ]'Where's the hitch?'[CZ];))
>
> *bhy*, 24.06.2006 15:36
> [CZ]Normal Czechs do understand Slovak, but there are a lot of loonies everywhere.[CZ]:)

The response of user *bhy*, who writes in Czech that it is normal for Czechs to understand Slovak and those who do not are 'loonies' (*magoři*), is not exceptional. Similar hostile categorisations of a person who does not understand Slovak as an 'idiot' (*debil*), 'blockhead' (*blbec*), 'dull' (*omezenec*) etc. are very frequent (54 cases in the data). Such categorisations thus present these users as not entirely normal exceptions to the rule. For example, in Excerpt 3 (as in seven other cases), the inability of one user to understand Slovak was categorised as only his personal, i.e. rather isolated problem. This act of downgrading and marginalising of those who do not understand Slovak as deviants may be the reason some of them further support their argumentation with the idea of a 'purely Czech website'. It is indicative of Czech society that this nationalist discursive device is readily available to many discussants, but also that many others are ready to reject it. As a result, the application of this discursive device tends to generate debate (cf. Housley & Fitzgerald, 2009).

Those who understand Slovak are not only surprised that it could be difficult for some other Czech speakers, but often also express their incomprehension of how this can even be possible. In Excerpt 3, user *odklizec* explicitly expressed his total incomprehension of *Mr. Slider*'s position (for more examples, see Nábělková, 2008). The resoluteness of such statements indicates the expectation that Czechs will naturally understand Slovak is highly normative for this 'understanding Slovak' group.

Both those who 'do not understand' and those who do or 'have no problem with Slovak' often attribute the inability to understand and accept Slovak to younger generations (21 cases in the data), as in Excerpt 3 above, in which *stak* asked the user

who described Slovak as a problem about his age. Users identifying themselves as members of the younger generation, however, evaluate their ability to understand Slovak in various ways. Excerpt 6 shows several experiences.

Excerpt 6
http://www.abclinuxu.cz/ankety/slovenske-clanky-na-abclinuxu

Jarek Čecho, 15.09.2007, 08:36
[CZ]I have to admit that Slovak causes me discomfort (however, I respect it and, with difficulties, I do read articles in Slovak). By the way, my mum is of Slovak origin.
otula, 15.09.2007, 08:51
I don't mind at all. Ten years ago, I didn't notice if a text was in Slovak. Today, I notice it (because Slovak has rapidly diminished), but I have no problem with it. And if I were to choose this article to be (a) in Slovak or (b) not posted at all, then I am definitely for (a).
. . .
Michal Vyskočil, 15.09.2007, 09:06
I read them with some difficulty. Still, I voted [in a survey about this topic] for the first option ['I do not mind at all']. . .

n3tman, 15.09.2007, 14:40
I read them without any problems. I am from the young generation, but I often absorb Slovak from various forums and other websites. Earlier, however, I wouldn't have understood.

MaFy, 15.09.2007, 15:57
Well . . . Slovak sometimes gives me trouble, but I definitely do not mind . . .[CZ]

Let us examine the results of the survey referred to in Excerpt 6 in order to gain an idea of how widespread the perception of the use of Slovak as a problem is on this website. Excerpt 7 presents a summary of the survey results.

Excerpt 7
http://www.abclinuxu.cz/ankety/slovenske-clanky-na-abclinuxu
What is your attitude towards articles in Slovak on AbcLinuxu.cz?
I don't mind at all. 64% (1096)
They are a bit difficult to read, but I'm for them. 30% (511)
I will not read them, but continue to publish them. 3% (45)
I don't want them to be published here. 3% (51)
Total 1703 votes
Created: 15.09.2007, 08:24

The editors did not provide the option to express indifference to Slovak, which became a topic of debate, as some users expressed their preference for such an option. In any case, we see that only 3% of the 1703 voters did not want articles in Slovak to appear on the website. We do not have data on the characteristics of this group; we only know that, in another survey on this website, 22% out of 1471 users claimed to be Slovak, but this is much less than the percentage of those who did not mind Slovak in the former survey (64%).

For comparison, we can examine the results of a survey from the World of Warcraft: Official Czech and Slovak Fansite (http://wowfan.cz). As its subtitle suggests, the website is conceived of as Czech-and-Slovak. Therefore, we can assume that Slovak users participated in the voting, although we do not know how many. Excerpt 8 shows the results, with an introductory comment from the editors.

Excerpt 8
http://wowfan.cz/clanky/ankety/1/
Survey August–October 2008
A vast majority of you are tolerant people who appreciate any news on the website and
do not mind Slovak . . . The rest are out of luck and, moreover, have few votes:o)
Do you mind some articles on the website being in Slovak?
Yes, I do not understand Slovak. 307 [7%]
Yes, it is a Czech website. 226 [5%]
No, Slovak is almost the same as Czech. 2536 [59%]
No, but I'd rather have it in Czech. 967 [23%]
I couldn't care less. 263 [6%]
Total 4299

A large majority of respondents (82%) implied that they did not mind Slovak articles
on the site. Only 7% reported that they could not understand it and as few as 5%
chose the nationalist argument. Interestingly, we can learn on the basis of another
survey conducted on the same website that the vast majority of 79% out of 5356
participants fell into the age category of 11–19.

The introductory comment by the editors, not attitude-neutral, shows which side
they take and that they do not see Slovak as a problem to be managed. However,
their responses do not limit themselves to just this one, as we will see in Section 5.

4.3. Searchability

Let us mention one more perceived communication inadequacy related to Slovak,
which was rare in the data (two instances) but has an interesting technical dimension.
The author of a website on web design noted that his webpages in Czech cannot be
found by online searches in Slovak. Excerpt 9 shows his description and management
of this inadequacy.

Excerpt 9
http://weblog.jakpsatweb.cz/archiv/2004-01.html
[CZ]An attempt at Slovak
After the Google.sk page starts up, I expect increased use of Google in Slovakia. And
searches in Slovak. I do not know how many Slovaks will switch to searching in Slovak
together with Czech, but I think there won't be many. (They are offered only Slovak on
the main page.) At the same time, Slovaks understand Czech. I have tried to find my
pages in Slovak and (of course) have not found any.
I do not have the resources, time, or personality to translate the whole site. But I have
tried to translate the main page at least. I wonder if this will bring me new readers (I will
follow logs and report back later). There are certainly many mistakes there; I will
appreciate specific notifications about them by e-mail.

Sunday, 11 January 2004[CZ]

The author of the message not only reported his noting of the inadequacy, but also
decided to resolve the issue by translating his homepage. Interestingly, he attempted
a translation with apparently only 'receptive' competence in Slovak. At the same
time, he tried to manage possible deviations from the norms of Slovak by asking
others to point out his language mistakes to him. Such anxiety about possible
violations of the language norms is a factor supporting the maintenance of Czech–
Slovak bilingualism in the receptive mode: In contact situations, Czech and Slovak
speakers tend to stick to their own language rather than attempt to speak/write in the

other language, potentially running the risk of unintended and negatively perceived interference or mixing, sometimes called 'Czechoslovak' (see Nábělková, 2007). Nevertheless, the desire to attract more readers motivated the author of Excerpt 9 to translate the homepage himself. In another case, the author of a website on mathematics (www.matweb.cz) had his website translated into Slovak by a Slovak speaker for the same reason – to make it searchable by browsers using Slovak. Later, when the Czech version of the site was extensively updated and expanded, he decided to remove the outdated Slovak version. As he explained to us in an email, this was partly because new, good Slovak websites on mathematics had appeared in the meantime and also because he felt incapable of translating into Slovak on his own. He had considered the use of Google Translator, but was not sure about the quality of the results. Although we have encountered only two such cases, the problem of searchability of Czech pages in Slovak (and vice versa) may be a problem for more web users.

5. Adjustments and implementation

In this section, we move from expectations and deviation evaluations to their subsequent management: communicative adjustments and their implementation. Here, we deal with the following management strategies: posting messages and flaming, normalising Slovak, conducting surveys, and translating.

5.1. *Posting messages and flaming*

An individual noting a deviation from his or her expectation – be it the fact that an article is in Slovak instead of Czech, or that it is not fully intelligible – does not have to communicate the thought to anyone. It can remain in the *simple* language management mode (cf. Section 3.2). Indeed, several of the users in Excerpt 6 might not have shared their difficulties with Slovak with others, had someone else not initiated the topic. They did not even consider their individual difficulties as a problem in their *summarising* accounts, or what is known in LMT as 'management summaries' (Nekvapil, 2004; Neustupný, 1994, 2003).

Following such management summaries, we find a higher degree of language management organisation, while a lower degree is found after the formulation of a specific difficulty. When such difficulties are communicated, they are usually solved quickly by a few participants and without ideologising the issue – see Excerpt 10.

Excerpt 10
http://www.abclinuxu.cz/poradna/linux/show/167755

[CZ]Query[CZ]: [SK]How to learn if a file is new[SK]
rooboo, 02.02.2007, 20:42
[SK]Greetings, gentlemen. I need advice on how to learn if there is a new file in a directory. I have already tried to do it by comparing the current content of the directory and the content saved in the past (by feeding the variable with the ls command), but it makes errors when a file is deleted.
How would this be possible, please?
Thank you in advance.[SK]

[CZ]Replies
Lukáš Zapletal, 02.02.2007, 20:46

It should be in what?
(though I still know some Slovak)[CZ]

rooboo, 02.02.2007, 20:55
[SK]I don't know if I understood your question correctly.
A script in bash, if you had this in mind.[SK]

Michal Kubeček, 02.02.2007, 21:20
[SK]'*Priečinok*'[SK] [CZ]is a Slovak equivalent of the Czech 'folder', i.e. a term which is used
in Microsoftish for '*adresář* [directory]'. . .[CZ]

This exchange about a specific difficulty that relates to the 'corpus' of Slovak does
not continue any further (on this website, at least). In contrast, extensive discussions
occur after management summaries or general 'language status' questions, such as
why a text is in Slovak instead of Czech. Messages containing such questions
function as 'flames' or triggers of flame wars, which involve many participants and
last for longer periods of time.

5.2. Normalising Slovak

Attempts at what we can call the normalisation of Slovak frequently appear on .cz
websites in response to messages against use of the language. Normalisation of
language choice is one of the actions which social actors take to alter an ongoing
language management process itself, i.e. its reprocessing. Reprocessing actions
include various types of norm replacement, de-evaluation, re-evaluation, etc. (cf.
Fairbrother, 1999; Muraoka, 2000). Normalisation can be understood as a special
type of norm replacement, a process in which the norm in view of which a
communicative phenomenon presents a deviation is replaced by another norm in
view of which it ceases to be a deviation.

Normalisation can be achieved interactively by various discursive moves,
targeting different components of communication (cf. Hymes, 1974; Neustupný &
Nekvapil, 2003). In Section 4.2, we saw that advocates of Slovak chose the strategy of
presenting opponents of Slovak as not entirely normal (a management strategy
targeting participants). Another discursive move found in the data (eight instances) is
the attempt to re-categorise a 'Czech' website as a 'Czech–Slovak' one (a setting
management strategy), as in Excerpt 11. As a result, Slovak would become an
expected language of communication.

Excerpt 11
http://www.abclinuxu.cz/ankety/slovenske-clanky-na-abclinuxu
[CZ]*Michal Kubeček*, 16.09.2007
Re: What is your attitude towards articles in Slovak on AbcLinuxu.cz?
I don't know, instead of one Czech and one Slovak website, I would prefer one Czech-
Slovak site. According to the survey results, it seems that not very many people would
boycott it due to the presence of Slovak, and I assume that even the percentage of those
who strongly object to Czech on the other side would not be too high.[CZ]

The number of websites in the .cz domain conceived as Czech–Slovak is not small.
We have already mentioned the World of Warcraft fan site (http://wowfan.cz),
although a survey about the acceptability of articles in Slovak took place even there
(see Excerpt 8).

Very widely used method of normalising Slovak found in the data is the direct management of expectations about the language (expectation/norm management) (35 cases). This includes frequent assertions by some Czech users that the perception of Slovak as communicative inadequacy is itself inadequate (see previous excerpts). In other words, for these users, the expectation or – taking into account the intensity of their assertions – the norm is that the Czechs naturally understand Slovak and Slovak on a 'Czech' website is also normal.

In addition, website editors sometimes contribute to the normalisation of Slovak (see Excerpt 3). A Czech editor of the website 'Students' Gazette' chose the unusual strategy of writing in Slovak himself to show readers that it is not difficult to understand or even write in Slovak (www.ilist.cz/clanky/zaklady-politologie#dis-kuze9348). He also argued that, by publishing articles in Slovak, the editors help Czech readers to develop their understanding of Slovak (Excerpt 4). There is evidence in the data that Slovak texts can really work in this way: 'I read [Slovak articles] without any problems. I am from the young generation, but I often absorb Slovak from various forums and other websites. Earlier, however, I wouldn't have understood' (user *n3tman* in Excerpt 6, and three other users in the data). The exact impact of reading webpages in Slovak on the development of receptive competence in Slovak is a topic which has not yet been studied.

5.3. Conducting surveys

The third management strategy, which we observed website editors use in response to negative evaluations of Slovak, was organising an online survey. Surveys are an effective means of learning the relative popularity of various attitudes. They present a democratic way to decide on subsequent language management methods and to avoid the possible imposition of editorial interests.

We have already quoted two surveys from wowfan.cz and AbcLinuxu.cz (Excerpts 7 and 8). We do not know how the results of these surveys influenced language practices therein, but have the following information regarding PotterWeb.cz. A Slovak editor of this website noted 'that commentaries containing "linguistic intolerance" appear here and there' and therefore announced a call for applications for a translator position (http://www.potterweb.cz/web/content/view/5410/2/). His message was followed by a discussion and the survey shown in Excerpt 12.

Excerpt 12
http://www.potterweb.cz/web/component/option,com_poll/task,results/id,37/
What is your opinion on Slovak articles?

I like to read them. I am happy the website is Czech-Slovak.	80	53%
I have no problem with them.	40	26.5%
I read them, but I would welcome translation into Czech.	23	15.2%
I don't read them. Slovak is difficult for me and has no business here.	4	2.6%
I hate Slovak articles!	3	2%
I have another opinion (and will write it in the discussion).	1	0.7%

Number of respondents: 151

As a result of such an overwhelmingly positive response to Slovak, the editors changed their original adjustment plan, announcing that the call for applications was cancelled and that articles would continue to be published in Slovak without

translation. However, as we will see in Section 6, the strategy of no translation does not apply to the entire .cz domain.

6. Evidence of pre-management

Translating can be a case of pre-management or, in other words, preventive language management. Neustupný (2004, p. 26) defines pre-management as language management executed before a deviation from a norm/expectation appears. Nekvapil and Sherman (2009, p. 185) define the related term 'pre-interaction management' as language management carried out 'in anticipation of potential problems in a future interaction'. Neustupný's wider notion includes cases in which those who carried out an act of language management had not anticipated certain inadequacies or problems, but their action, in its consequences, worked preventively. This may be the case in Excerpt 13, in which the web page author accompanied the Czech word *sudý* 'even' (referring to numbers) with the Slovak equivalent *párny*.

> *Excerpt 13*
> http://wowfan.cz/clanky/treneri/1/
> [CZ]Profession Trainers
> Whatever profession you have, you can learn new spells and abilities at every even numbered (for Slovaks [SK]*even*[SK], for mathematicians *2x*, for the mentally handicapped: *2, 4, 6*, etc.) level...[CZ]

We are not sure here whether the author inserted the Slovak translation in anticipation of a communication problem or, as the other apparently jocular explanations ('for mathematics' and 'for mentally handicapped') suggest, for fun. In either case, however, this step could pre-manage possible problems Slovak readers might have in understanding the Czech word for 'even'.

Translating from Slovak to Czech is a predominant type of pre-management found in the data, but even this strategy does not seem to be very widespread (only four unimplemented and two implemented cases). Moreover, such translations themselves are sometimes perceived as deviations. We have noted this particularly with interviews which were published in Czech, but about which readers knew that the interviewee was a Slovak speaker. Excerpt 14 illustrates such a case:

> *Excerpt 14*
> http://www.fantasyplanet.cz/clanek/rozhovor-dusan-duke-fabian-1-2
>
> *Ogre*, 24.01.2007, 20:57
> [SK]Why is the talk in Czech? Did Dušan respond in Czech? Or is it because the Czechs are reluctant to read Slovak?[SK]:-)
> ...
> *Regis*, 25.01.2007, 08:03
> [SK]The interview was originally in Slovak...but as Ondra said, Czechs do not want to read Slovak;) In my opinion, there are also Slovaks here and not just a few;) Maybe next time...my interview with Števo Huslica will be in Slovak.[SK]
>
> *Petr B.*, 27.01.2007, 13:21
> [CZ]I am also for the 'original version', but it's true that [using song lyrics:] 'I'm not twelve any more, my love, I'm not even twenty-five', and I could go on:P So my relationship towards Slovak is loaded with LOTS of books I have read in this language (for example, the brilliant crime novels in the $3 \times$ edition).

> But I see lots of Slovaks writing on Czech discussion forums on various topics (predominantly oriented to younger audiences), and I don't remember anyone complaining that he/she doesn't understand. What about conducting a survey on this topic?[CZ]

In this study, we have dealt with negative reactions to Slovak in the .cz domain, which may give readers the impression that objecting to Slovak is a widespread phenomenon. However, *Petr B.* in Excerpt 14 writes that he does not remember coming across reactions of this sort in Czech discussion forums. It is also our contention that Slovak is still rather accepted on the 'Czech' web, as evidenced by the survey results as well as by the number and strength of opinions against the occasional complaint about Slovak.

7. Conclusion

In contrast to some other studies on multilingualism on the Internet (Danet & Herring, 2007; Menezes, 2006; Wright, 2004), this study focused on its management or treatment in interactions between web users (see also Axelsson, Abelin, & Schroeder, 2007). In particular, we investigated the presence of Slovak on websites in the .cz domain as a language problem.

LMT provided us with a concept of the language problem as an interaction-based phenomenon experienced by individual social actors. It also enabled us to focus and structure the analysis according to the general model of the language management process (expectation deviation > noting > evaluation > adjustment > implementation), from which the language problem concept derives. We suggested to employ a Hymesian model of language management objects (Neustupný & Nekvapil, 2003) to describe various management strategies social actors use to resolve language problems, such as to normalise the practice of receptive multilingualism.

We departed from the evaluation stage of language management, more specifically, from negative evaluations of the use of Slovak on specific websites, and headed in two directions: back to the expectations and deviations from which led to the negative evaluations and forward to communicative adjustments and their implementation.

We have identified two main expectations held by mostly young web users (Group A): (A1) Articles in Slovak should not appear on *Czech* websites, and (A2) a text should not be difficult to understand (due to use of a different language). Against both expectations, another group of users (Group B) held the following expectations: (B1) the presence of Slovak on Czech websites is normal and (B2) Slovak is naturally intelligible to Czech readers. Group A's expressions of anti-Slovak attitudes usually receive negative evaluations from Group B, which shows that the latter pair of expectations (B1 and B2) is highly normative for Group B. The discussions about Slovak took often place off-topic, sometimes turning into flame wars. Despite this, we can say, based on the discussions we examined and the results of user surveys, that Slovak is acceptable to most web users in the .cz domain. This corresponds to the results of several national polls on Czech relations with other ethnic groups, in which the attitude towards Slovaks has always been the most positive (Public Opinion Research Centre, 2011). What the online debates on Slovak suggest is that, more than 10 years after the split of Czechoslovakia, communicative norms in Czech–Slovak contact situations continue to change. One cannot be sure that a Slovak-

language text will be accepted by all readers in the .cz domain. One reason for this is the idea of a national space online ('purely Czech website'). The question is if similar reactions appear in response to the presence of other languages, e.g. English, in such a space.

Web users suggested a number of adjustments, targeting various components of communication, in response to deviations from the aforementioned expectations. In particular, Group A users asked to remove the texts in Slovak (management of content) or to have them translated (management of language choice). We have no evidence that these adjustments were implemented in response to the expectation of a 'purely Czech website' (A1). The expectation of problem-free intelligibility (A2) was satisfied in some cases, although in the form of preventive pre-management rather than as a post hoc response to a complaint against the presence of Slovak. It should also be emphasised that some of those who had experienced difficulty reading Slovak did not report this as a real problem in their management summaries.

Those who advocated, or just did not oppose, the use of Slovak tried to normalise it by managing mostly three components of communication: (1) participants, i.e. (1a) categorising Group A users as not entirely normal exceptions to the rule and (1b) advising them not to read the website; (2) setting, namely, re-categorising the website as 'Czech-Slovak'; and (3) norm, i.e. direct normalisation of the choice of Slovak by persuasive argumentation in debates and through survey voting. Further research could examine in more detail how social actors achieve normalisation of language choice, which is a relevant question with respect to minority language use as well as the issue of choice between the *lingua receptiva* and the *lingua franca* modes of communication.

Concerning website editors, the more powerful participants in Internet communication, we recognise their prevalent orientation towards democratic forms of language management, which avoid imposition of editorial interests. They not only organised surveys, but also joined discussions and argued persuasively. However, some questions remain: Are such decisions specific to the online context? To what extent do the language discussions influence the editors' decisions? How do editors in other cultural contexts react to similar scenarios? This is a topic for comparative study of Internet governance at the micro-level.

Interesting from the technical point of view was the management of the perceived impossibility of finding webpages written in Czech by conducting online searches in Slovak. Indeed, on its web page on employment in Slovakia, the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs advises Czech users to insert the Slovak phrase *denná tlač* 'daily press' (rather than the Czech *denní tisk*) into web browsers in order to find Slovak job announcements (http://portal.mpsv.cz/eures/prace_v_eu/zeme/slovensko/). These cases raise the question of how speakers of languages in similar situations navigate online: What is the practice of searching, for example, Norwegian-language webpages in Swedish? Google Search enables users to search in more than one language simultaneously, allowing the display of the returned pages in the original language, which can be especially useful if the language of the returned pages is a closely related intelligible language. Wider support for such multilingual options in online searches and awareness thereof will enable us to benefit more from receptive multilingualism in the international exchange of knowledge and experiences over the Internet.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. According to a recent survey, 18% of Czechs have Slovak relatives and 42% have Slovak friends ($n = 1126$, age 15 and over; Dickins, 2009). In 2009, the accommodation facilities in Czechia registered almost 300,000 Slovak visitors, and the government reported more than 70,000 Slovak citizens as residents of Czechia (Czech Statistical Office, www.czso.cz).
2. 'Flame war' is a term used for heated hostile and usually insulting off-topic discussions often involving a large number of users. The posting of messages that initiate a flame war is called 'flaming'.
3. The number of employed foreigners (only natural persons) amounted to more than 318 thousand in 2009 (Czech Statistical Office, www.czso.cz).

References

Axelsson, A.-S., Abelin, Å., & Schroeder, R. (2007). Anyone speak Swedish? Tolerance for language shifting in graphical multiuser virtual environments. In B. Danet & S. C. Herring (Eds.), *The multilingual Internet: Language, culture, and communication online* (pp. 362–381). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Berger, T. (2003). Slovaks in Czechia – Czechs in Slovakia. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *162*, 19–39.

Budovičová, V. (1986). Literary languages in contact (a sociolinguistic approach to the relation between Slovak and Czech today). In J. Chloupek & J. Nekvapil (Eds.), *Reader in Czech sociolinguistics* (pp. 156–175). Praha: Academia.

Danet, B., & Herring, S. C. (2007). *The multilingual internet: Language, culture, and communication online*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Dickins, T. (2009). Češi a slovenština [The Czechs and the Slovak language]. *Naše společnost*, *7*(1), 12–26. Retrieved from http://www.cvvm.cas.cz/

Fairbrother, L. (1999). *The management of cultural deviations in contact situations*. (Unpublished M.A. thesis). Chiba University, Chiba.

Gooskens, C. (2007). The contribution of linguistic factors to the intelligibility of closely related languages. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *28*(6), 445–467.

Housley, W., & Fitzgerald, R. (2009). Membership categorization, culture and norms in action. *Discourse & Society*, *20*(3), 345–362.

Hymes, D. (1974). *Foundations in sociolinguistics: An ethnographic approach*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Jernudd, B. H. (2000a). Language management and language problems: Part I. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, *10*(2), 193–203.

Jernudd, B. (2000b, July 14). *Cognition and language management*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Language and Cognition, Kuala Lumpur.

Jernudd, B., & Nekvapil, J. (2012). History of the field: A sketch. In B. Spolsky (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of language policy* (pp. 16–36). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lepper, G. (2000). *Categories in text and talk*. London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: Sage.

Lo Bianco, J. (2001). *Officialising language: A discourse study of language politics in the United States* (Doctoral thesis). Australian National University, Canberra.

Menezes, C. (Ed.). (2006). Languages of the Internet. *Journal of Language and Politics*, *5*(2), 155–298.

Muraoka, H. (2000). Management of intercultural input: A case study of two Korean residents of Japan. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, *10*(2), 297–311. doi:10.1075/japc.10.2.09mur

Nábělková, M. (2007). Closely-related languages in contact: Czech, Slovak, "Czechoslovak". *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *183*, 53–73. doi:10.1515/ijsl.2007.004

Nábělková, M. (2008). *Slovenčina a čeština v kontakte: Pokračovanie príbehu* [Slovak and Czech in contact: A continuation of the story]. Bratislava/Praha: Veda.

Nekvapil, J. (2004). Language biographies and management summaries. In H. Muraoka (Ed.), *Sesshoku Bamen No Gengo Kanri Kenkyuu – Language management in contact situations* Vol. III (pp. 9–33). Chiba: Chiba University.

Nekvapil, J. (2006). From language planning to language management. *Sociolinguistica*, *20*, 92–104.

Nekvapil, J. (2010). O historii, teorii a modelech jazykového plánování [On the history, theory and models of language planning]. *Slovo a slovesnost*, *71*(1), 53–73.

Nekvapil, J., & Sherman, T. (2009). Pre-interaction management in multinational companies in Central Europe. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, *10*(2), 181–198.

Neustupný, J. V. (1994). Problems of English contact discourse and language planning. In T. Kandiah & J. Kwan-Terry (Eds.), *English language planning: A Southeast Asian contribution* (pp. 50–69). Singapore: Times Academic Press.

Neustupný, J. V. (2002). Sociolingvistika a jazykový management [Sociolinguistics and language management]. *Sociologický časopis – Czech Sociological Review*, *38*(4), 429–442.

Neustupný, J. V. (2003). Literární kritika jako jazykový management [Literary criticism as language management]. *Slovo a slovesnost*, *64*(4), 276–288.

Neustupný, J. V. (2004). A theory of contact situations and the study of academic interaction. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, *14*(1), 3–31.

Neustupný, J. V., & Nekvapil, J. (2003). Language management in the Czech Republic. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, *4*(3–4), 181–366.

Public Opinion Research Centre (Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění) (2011). *Vztah Čechů k národnostním skupinám žijícím v ČR – březen 2011* [Czechs' attitude to the nationalities living in the Czech Republic, March 2011]. Press release. Retrieved from http://www.cvvm. cas.cz

Rehbein, J., ten Thije, J. D., & Verschik, A. (2012). Lingua Receptiva (LaRa) – remarks on the quintessence of receptive multilingualism. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, *16*(3), 248–264.

Sloboda, M. (2010). Menej používané jazyky v Česku: problémy rozvoja v jazykovo "homogénnom" národnom štáte [Lesser-used languages in Czechia: Problems of development in a linguistically 'homogeneous' nation-state]. In A. M. Papp (Ed.), *Kevésbé használt nyelvek helyzete a Visegrádi Négyek országaiban – The situation of the lesser used languages in Visegrad Four Countries* (pp. 38–55). Budapest: Országos Idegennyelvu Könyvtár.

Sloboda, M., & Ivanecký, J. (forthcoming). How similar are Slavonic languages? Linguistic distances between twelve standard varieties based on text.

Tollarová, B. (2006). Integrace cizinců v Česku: pluralita, nebo asimilace? [The integration of foreigners in Czechia: Plurality or assimilation?]. *Biograf*, *39*, 23–52.

Wright, S. (Ed.). (2004). Multilingualism on the Internet. *The International Journal of Multicultural Societies*, *6*(1), 1–183.

Appendix 1. List of websites (data sources)

timy.blog.cz
weblog.jakpsatweb.cz
wowfan.cz
www.abclinuxu.cz
www.auto.cz
www.autorevue.cz
www.fantasyplanet.cz
www.fronta.cz
www.ilist.cz
www.mobilmania.cz
www.novinky.cz
www.pixy.cz
www.potterweb.cz
www.svethardware.cz