

THE DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURE OF WRITING IN THE SLAVIC LANGUAGES

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The popular view of language assumes that the origins of alphabets and of writing systems are connected. The development of the writing systems is subsequent to the time when the alphabet was devised and adapted to the needs of an existing dialect. There are some similarities between the manner in which the alphabets reflect and relate to speech and the manner in which the writing system of a language relates to the spoken original. The alphabets, as they exist today, can be phonetic, phonemic, or morphophonemic; and some are none of these. Some Slavic alphabets approach the desired goal of being phonemic or almost so. Russian and Czech are good examples. The attempt is to have one letter corresponding to one phoneme. The English spelling system and its alphabet are not phonemic by that principle but reflect in many cases the etymology of the word, and in a very faithful manner preserve the spelling system of Old and Middle English.

One of the most significant factors influencing the development of a literary language and the structure of its writing is the presence or absence of diglossia at one point in history and, if present, the degree of diglossia.

By diglossia linguists mean the spoken use of two different languages for different functions (Ferguson 1958). Thus one language can be used for everyday functions such as communicating with one's family, while another language may be used for communicating with groups in the process of administrative, official or religious transactions. The alternate use of two different codes for different functions could be, and has been, extended to involve a variety of codes. It may involve the use of different dialects, or it may involve the use of different languages from the same linguistic family or from different families. The latter often obtains when one code is used for writing purposes only.

Diglossia differs from bilingualism in that a bilingual speaker or language user has at his disposal two languages for all functions while in diglossia each language is used for specific functions only. In the history of the development of languages, the bilingualism of speakers played a role in being instrumental in various borrowings of lexical or grammatical constructions; while, in my opinion, diglossia influenced the formations of various styles such as written styles. This understanding comes from the extended meaning of diglossia which may be inferred from the original definition.

Therefore, it seems that if there is one single factor that is the most significant in the formation of a literary language and thus of its writing system, it is the presence or absence of diglossia as understood above. Some languages such as English have gone through short periods of time when another language was used in diglossia with the native language. Originally, Anglo-Saxon was the nationality of those who spoke Old English prior to the twelfth century. In 1066 when the Normans conquered England, there was a surge of French influence on Old English which is still evident in the lexicon. However, the original influence of French on Old English was never long lived and it was the interaction between varieties of English that played an important role in formation of literary English.

The extent of diglossia has differed from language to language in the Slavic area. It is postulated here that the diglossia between the native Slavic vernacular and another Slavic language had the most profound effect on the formation of Slavic literary languages, while bilingualism or diglossia with a non-Slavic language resulted in long-term borrowings. The

argument substantiating this claim is the extent to which Old Church Slavonic was used for writing at some period in the history of most of the Slavic languages. Even those Slavic languages which used a non-Slavic language for writing, such as Latin in Polish, seem to have achieved in the final analysis a literary language which bears many similarities to those of the Slavic areas which used Old Church Slavonic for literary purposes. Thus the presence of sentences containing subordinate clauses, the use of participles for expression of tense relationships, and a vocabulary of a specific semantic and morphological nature, attest to the fact that the Slavic literary languages share features which are absent in their spoken counterparts.

In Bulgaria (Schenker 1980), Latin was used to a small degree until 1677, at which time the Russian recension of Old Church Slavonic became influential and was used during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Greek, as the language from which translations were made, was also important in the Middle Ages. Since Bulgarian absorbed a Turkic language over a millenium, there was a period of diglossia between the local Slavic dialect and this language although it is difficult to establish whether this was a case of diglossia or bilingualism. The diglossia in Macedonia also involved at first the use of Turkish in conjunction with the local Slavic language, but after the sixteenth century the languages of high culture were Old Church Slavonic and Greek; in the middle of the nineteenth century, the high culture used Serbo-Croatian due to the commonly accepted 'Illyrian idea.' In its history, Serbo-Croatian modified the idea of the use of two separate languages by one nation into a single language consisting of two variants: Serbian and Croatian. On much of this territory, the literary language used in diglossia with the vernacular from the tenth to the eighteenth centuries was Old Church Slavonic; it was Italian in Dalmatia and Latin and Hungarian in Croatia (Naylor 1980: 79 ff). However, when in 1850 the agreement was signed to proclaim one nation using the štokavian dialect as the literary language, the influence of Old Church Slavonic on štokavian seemed to be the decisive factor. As is further stated in Schenker (1980), languages such as Slovene were small enough to be actually threatened in their existence by more widely-spoken neighboring languages such as Serbo-Croatian (the Illyrian movement). Among the Eastern Slavs the most significant influence on the formation of the respective writing systems and literary languages was Old Church Slavonic, used in diglossia with the local vernacular. The degree of use of Old Church Slavonic for writing purposes varied with time and with the community, but it exerted a lasting influence on the formation of their literary languages. Among various possibilities, the use of Polish for that purpose was significant for Byelorussian and Ukrainian. However both these languages were also influential in the formation of Russian itself. The West Slavic languages, especially Polish, Czech and Slovak, developed through a variety of mutual influences and diglossic relationships with neighbouring languages, most of all with Latin, the premier literary language of the West Slavs. In Czech, Old Church Slavonic and Latin were both used, while in Poland the use of Old Church Slavonic was not noticeable and it was Latin which served both as the language of liturgy and the church, and as the literary language. The influence of Polish and German on Kashubian and Lusatian is well known.

A national language consists of a standard and of regional dialects. Regional dialects are spoken in a given region and they are not always mutually intelligible. The standard language is considered to be the dialect which is intelligible both to the speakers of regional dialects and to speakers of the standard. The standard is not regionally differentiated, at least not to a significant degree. However the standard is itself differentiated and stratified in a hierarchical manner. Due to the greater popularization of writing in more recent times

and especially in the present century, the standard has come to be thought of as the language of written texts. This popular view is sometimes reinforced by the fact that the spoken colloquial language is influenced by normative and educational activity through the written texts. In cases where the standard is the same as the colloquial standard, it is mutually intelligible with regional dialects.

The spoken standard occurs in a number of varieties which may be referred to as professional dialects (although this term is usually reserved for a different phenomenon). Professional dialects, as defined here, require educational preparation in a specific field of knowledge and fluency in the appropriate written texts. Thus we may say that professional dialects are primarily written and only secondarily spoken, unlike the colloquial dialect of the standard which is primarily spoken and only secondarily written. In Slavic linguistics of the Prague School tradition, Czech linguists noticed the differentiation of professional dialects and called them functional styles.

Languages differ as to the inventory of functional styles and corresponding professional dialects. The commonly recognized inventory of Slavic functional styles includes formal styles such as scholarly or learned, official and bureaucratic, and less formal styles such as those in the mass media and the artistic style. These styles I will refer to as primarily written and their corresponding professional dialects are also primarily written in distinction to the colloquial standard which is primarily spoken. The primarily spoken dialects may also include various dialects arising from the bilingualism of speakers (i.e., between the standard and another language), or dialects arising from bidialectalism (i.e., between the standard and a regional dialect). The latter situation is especially true of societies in which the speakers of regional dialects are in the process of acquiring the standard. The varieties of the standard arising from bilingualism and bidialectalism may achieve varying degrees of permanency or may remain as idiolects with no permanency at all.

In addition, users of a language differ in their competence. The most common situation involves an active competence in the colloquial standard and either a passive competency in professional dialects, or an active competence in one or more professional dialects and a passive or no competence in others. Thus a user may be able to 'encode' and 'decode,' that is, to understand and to speak a colloquial standard and a professional dialect (one or more or none at all); he or she may also be able to read and write in one or more professional dialect counterparts—functional style(s). Users differ in their abilities to 'encode' and 'decode.' The degree of these abilities is a factor of the native intelligence and the education received.

The importance of written varieties is greater in modern times than it was in the past. In societies which are largely illiterate, the relationship between written and spoken standard is different from that in societies which are literate. For one thing, in literate societies such as the Slavic areas the written and spoken are drawing closer, for people tend to speak more as they write and to write more as they speak.

There are numerous differences in grammar, syntax and lexicon between the so-called written language and the spoken language. By 'written language' is meant the collection of extant written texts as well as a set of grammatical, syntactic and orthographic rules to produce and generate such texts. Most written texts consist of narratives and of dialogues rendered in writing. Both the narratives and the dialogues occur in speech as well as in writing but the narratives are indigenous to written texts while dialogues are indigenous to speech, although both kinds of texts occur in each. The structure of narratives and of dialogues is different in written and in spoken texts, and, moreover, the narratives and the dialogues are also differentiated according to the functional style they occur in. By

narrative I mean any connected text that is not a dialogue; by dialogue is meant an exchange of sentences (or parts thereof) between two or more speakers. Thus, in this usage, the term 'narrative' includes also nonartistic prose such as newspaper reporting. It is postulated that some bureaucratic announcements, wedding invitations, train schedule postings, etc., are a third genre which I will call truncated dialogues. Truncated dialogues are sentences which assume an interlocutor but do not expect an answer, e.g., in an order posted on a train, "NIE PALIĆ", an interlocutor is expected to read the order and obey it but not to answer it. However the functionally identical announcement, "DLA NIEPALĄCYCH" is not an order as much as it is an announcement and can be considered to be a narrative statement.

The differences between the structure of written and spoken narratives and dialogues are so numerous that it would not be possible to enumerate them here even if they had been properly researched. One interesting example that may be mentioned is the use of verbs. It will be assumed here that while all grammatical, syntactic and lexical items are part of the inventory of the national language, most (though not all) potentially occur both in written and spoken texts, although the frequency of occurrence will be different from written text to spoken text and from one written style to another.

The presence or absence of imperative forms of verbs, for example, may be a differentiating factor between written and spoken texts. Judith Markowitz (1986) establishes two classes of verbs: action verbs and stative verbs:

"Action verbs differ from stative verbs in a number of important ways. Action verbs like 'bite' and 'persuade' can appear in imperative sentences, while stative verbs like 'own' and 'resemble' cannot:

Bite that man!
 Persuade him to go!
 *Own the house!
 *Resemble your father!

Action verbs take the progressive aspect; stative verbs do not:

She is biting that man.
 She is persuading him to go.
 *She is owning the house.
 *She is resembling the father." (Markowitz 1986:112)

Applying this discussion to the search for differentiating factors of written and spoken texts, it can be seen that the imperatives of action verbs characterize dialogues while their absence is characteristic of narratives.

In writing, however, just as in all linguistic output, the switching of codes or texts occurs, and in a written work texts may alternate, thus both narratives and dialogues may occur.

Other differentiating features are the presence of ellipsis in dialogues and of complex and embedded sentences in narratives.

Embedded sentences and subordinate clauses rarely occur in colloquial standard languages. The few exceptions can be easily identified. In Polish, for instance, the colloquial standard usage prefers the pronoun *co* for *który*, the former being undeclined in this particular function: *Janka, podaj mi te rzodkiewki, co je wczoraj kupiłaś.* ('Janka, hand over to me the radishes which you bought yesterday.'). A corresponding rendering of this sentence in a written dialogue is: *Janka, podaj mi te rzodkiewki, które wczoraj kupiłaś.*

Another linguistic feature which distinguishes dialogues from narratives and spoken colloquial dialogues from written dialogues is the matter of ellipsis of nouns and verbs. The rules of ellipsis are very well defined and have been described in linguistic literature, and these rules can set off and distinguish a dialogue from a narrative and a written dialogue from a spoken dialogue. Similarly the use of participles for the expression of temporal relationship in embedded clauses serves the same purpose. In morphology and syntax certain suffixes are characteristic of written texts only, while lexicon is style-specific.

Different texts can also be described as forming a 'sublanguage.' Kittredge (1982) views a sublanguage as a set of linguistic elements and relations within texts describing homogeneous subjects, a set of sentences on the same topic. A sublanguage which performs a certain linguistic function may be a component part of what hitherto has been called a functional style, if a set of texts on the same subject is included. A sublanguage is thus identified with a particular semantic domain. Moskovich (1982:190ff) begins his consideration of a sublanguage with N.D. Andreev's definition of a sublanguage as a set of language units and their relations in texts of homogeneous themes. The research on sublanguage is another approach to describing the varieties of language.

The relationship between speech and writing or speech and spelling is also discussed in the modern linguistic literature. In an article on the topic, Tauli (1977:17-35) poses the question: if writing and speech manifest the same language, what does the term 'language' mean in this context? This is a relevant question since the two are so different. Some argue that written language symbolizes the spoken language, while others view both the written and the spoken as independent of each other. For many societies an agreement and a consensus on this issue is important because of the common need for a spelling reform. It is stated further that we cannot derive speech and writing from an abstract language, we can only compare speech and writing with one another. Further, the author defines such notions as writing or written language, writing system, orthography or spelling. He defines writing as the process or result of recording language in graphic signs; written language is defined as one of the modes of linguistic communication, whereas a writing system is a code of conventional graphic signs representing speech (1977:22).

The above discussion of the 'written language' versus the 'spoken language' among the Slavs shows the vast difference between the two. In our conviction, speech and the 'spoken language' are primary in relation to all other forms of linguistic communication. We first learn to speak before we learn to read and write, and writing is an acquired skill that takes many years of educational schooling. There are still many primitive societies that do not have an alphabet at their disposal and have not developed any written texts. Among the developed nations, most dialects are not written down except in the form of a linguistic phonetic transcription and the transcriptions of them or of the spoken standard are always so different from the written texts written in that standard, even when the transcription uses a standard alphabet, that the two are not reconcilable.

Nevertheless, even if the assumption is made (as it nearly always is) of the primacy of speech over writing, the presence of grammatical, graphemic, lexical and syntactic constructions specific for writing has to be accounted for, since different rules apply to speech and to writing. Thus the dilemma of what is that language that is manifested both by writing and speech would remain open. I propose that we consider the 'written language' as the rendering of speech in writing through an intermediary of graphemic, grammatical, syntactic, lexical and other rules of the given writing system. Thus a 'written language' is a 'spoken language' minus and plus some specific rules.

Given the fact that speech is primary, one still recognizes that professional dialects at this point are to be viewed as primarily written and only secondarily spoken, since writing is the contemporary product of past history.

In conclusion, we may state that the writing systems and 'written languages' of the Slavs are the result of a long process of development and arose in part through the efforts of religious scribes, printers, normative grammar writers and normative institutions such as linguistic academies and schools, and in part through diglossia with a variety of linguistic codes. The changing world is having an impact on the 'written language' in that it draws it and the 'spoken language' closer together. Thus the spoken form which is primary is subject to influences from the writing which was originally devised by humans themselves.

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POVZETEK

RAZVOJ IN ZGRADBA PISAVE V SLOVANSKIH JEZIKIH

Avtorica obravnava pomembnost odsotnosti in prisotnosti diglosije ter raznolikost njenega obsega v zgodovini začetkov slovanskih pisav. Ponaazorjene so velike razlike med pisavo in govorom slovanskih jezikov.