

LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND ETHNICITY: THE CASE OF SLOVENE

Society for Slovene Studies Round Table Panel, AAASS
22nd National Convention, Washington DC, October 1990

1. Rado L. Lencek: "The dimensions of sociolinguistic language attitudes"
2. Jana Kobav: "The case of Slovene in Koprščina"
3. Emidij Susič: "The case of the Slovene minority in Italy"
4. Tom Priestly: "The case of the Slovene minority in Austria"

1: THE DIMENSIONS OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

Rado L. Lencek, Columbia University

1.0. The purpose of this paper is to outline the sociolinguistic phenomena usually referred to as language persistence and language change in languages-in-contact settings, which are part of the speaker's behavior toward languages-in-contact situations. Thus our attention will be focussed not on language behavior in contact situations, but with *the speaker's behavior toward language or languages* in such situations. This slightly tangential topical subdivision of the nexus of research into language maintenance and language shift has quite recently been recognized as a field of systematic inquiry in sociolinguistics. As is well known, the subject was touched upon by Weinreich (1953) and by Fishman (1966). It was Fishman who pointed to two major categories of behavior toward language, which he classified as *attitudinal-affective behaviors* and the *cognitive aspects of language response*.

More concretely: the relation *SPEAKER : LANGUAGE* is first of all dominated by language stereotypes and conventional impressionistic patterns that languages are, for example, "beautiful" vs. "ugly," "melodious" vs. "harsh," "rich" vs. "poor;" or by perceptions about individual features of languages that are considered "attractive" or "unattractive," "distinctive" or "commonplace," "proper" or "improper;" or by a series of emotional postures, sentiments, mental states, moods—assumed either unconsciously or intentionally,—opinions and dispositions of feelings about one or another real or alleged property of the language concerned: all being part of the emotional attitudes toward the languages that we use, dictated—as Antoine Meillet put it—by "le sentiment et la volonté d'appartenir à une même communauté linguistique . . . (de parler une même langue)" (Meillet 1921: 80-81). These emotional attitudes are part of Fishman's *attitudinal-affective behaviors toward languages*.

To this grouping of the relation *SPEAKER : LANGUAGE* we would like to add, as well, the speaker's emotional attitudes toward the language of

the earliest life experiences, of individual memories, of a longing for something now lost, gone, far away or long ago; remembrances of the earliest conscious psychic reactions, sentiments; everything that is implied by the German *Heimweh*, the French *mal du pays* or our own *nostalgia*. The evoking of nostalgic reactions seems to be the very last function that a language can perform on the scale of its non-communicative attitudes and emotions. Paradoxically, this nostalgic echo of a language, remote and distant, can hardly be treated as a sociolinguistic attitude; on the other hand, it seems to be fully operative even after a language ceases to be actively used for communication in a diaspora.

And finally—and perhaps most importantly—the relation *SPEAKER : LANGUAGE* in this very same system of individual memories and in the common memory of the language that is learned first (the *mother tongue* or *native tongue*) which normally becomes the natural instrument of thought and communication, represents the strongest ethnic or national self-identification. We say: the strongest, because—besides the consciousness of the mother tongue as an entity separate from folkways, besides the knowledge of the native language—there are perceptions of language as a component of "groupness," which makes the mother tongue a principle in the name of which language becomes the most prominent component in perceptions of "own-groupness" versus "other-groupness." In the Slavic tradition these are best known as the opposition *po naše* vs. *ne po naše* (in Pleteršnik 1894-95, an interpretation from Slovene dialects), Polish *po naszymu : nie po naszymu*, Russian *po-našenski : ne po-našenski*; this is one of the basic general attitudes toward language of the level of preliterate societies (cf. Lencek 1985). In Fishman's system this attitude represents one of his *cognitive aspects of language response*.

2.0. In literate societies, on the level of standard languages, the speaker's behavior toward a standard language is determined by the functions which a standard language performs in society. There are three *symbolic functions* (the unifying, the separatist, and the prestige functions) and one *objective function* (the frame-of-reference function), which give rise to a set of three *cultural attitudes* toward the standard.

The *unifying* and the *separatist* functions of a standard language on the one hand unify the speakers of different dialects of the same language and, on the other hand, oppose a standard language to other standard languages as a separate entity; and they give rise to the *attitude of language loyalty*. The *prestige function* of a standard language, i.e., the prestige attached to the possession of a standard language by a society, gives rise to *attitude of pride*; and the *frame-of-reference* for speech usage which constitutes a yardstick for correctness brings about the attitude of *awareness of the norm* (Garvin & Mathiot 1956, Garvin 1959, Lencek 1976).

Of the three attitudes toward standard languages, the *ATTITUDE OF LANGUAGE LOYALTY* reflects the desire of an individual educated speaker as well as that of an entire educated speech community to retain its language and, if necessary, to defend it against foreign encroachment. On the opposite

end of the same spectrum, of course, is the *LANGUAGE ANTIPATHY* of which language betrayal is only one expression. And we have to add: to a certain degree both attitudes, language loyalty and language antipathy, may also act (and do act) in folk speech in pre-standard language communities; in both instances they may become and have become a powerful carrier of intellectual and nationalistic or anti-nationalistic sentiments, when they unfold in a standard language community. Cases of both of these two attitudes are known from Slovene cultural history.

The second cultural attitude toward standard language is the *ATTITUDE OF LANGUAGE PRIDE*. Here I quote from Garvin & Mathiot (1956):

"The possession of a form of folk speech as well as of a standard language may be a source of pride for the speakers. Some positive attitude such as pride is a prerequisite for the desire to develop one's language into a standard. This attitude of pride will usually be focussed on one or the other real or alleged property of the language. As with language loyalty, pride is often the more militant, the less recognized the status of one's language is by others."

And finally, the *ATTITUDE OF AWARENESS OF THE NORM* expresses the standard language speakers' disposition and frame of mind toward the codification of their language, its value, its desirability, even its necessity for the cultural evolution of society. The concept of such a norm can be either highly puristic, calling for an etymological purity in language, style and elegance of expression—the *puristic attitude*—or lax, careless, even sloppy with a tolerance of unnecessary loans in the standard language.

3.0. It is in this conceptual framework that we, in our panel discussion, intend to treat the dimensions of sociolinguistic language attitudes of the Slovene language in 1990. We intend to do this for all three types of socio-political and socio-cultural language communities in which Slovene native speakers live today: (1) at home (*v osrednji Sloveniji*), inside the boundaries of the Republic of Slovenia where a Standard Slovene exists through its own authority and in its own right, deeply rooted in its historical mother tongue base; (2) in three geographically contiguous areas (*v slovenskem zamejstvu*), in Italy, Austria and Hungary, historically part of the same Eastern Alpine Slovene mother tongue base but separated from the Slovene language society; and (3) apart from this territorial ethnic community (*v slovenskem zdomstvu*), in emigration, in the Slovene diaspora, very often without any continuous linguistic tradition: in Argentina, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the United States and elsewhere.

The typological differentiation of the Slovene language communities is a product of the process of development of Slovene history during the last four or five generations (Lencek 1976, Rupel 1976). Until the very end of World War One the majority of Slovene speakers lived together in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and it was only then that they became territorially divided and politically separated, and only during the last century have they been participating in an intense emigrating resettlement. Thus the territorial division and the state-political division of the Slovene speech area

and the main waves of emigration partially preceded the periods of growth and development of the Slovene Standard language after 1918. What this means is that the model of sociolinguistic functions and attitudes of the Slovene language before 1918 was still modeled after preliterate Slovene societies. It is only after 1918 that educated urban Slovene began to assume the functions of a standard within the culture of a speech community—the unifying, the separatist and the prestige functions, and that these functions gave rise to the attitudes of the speech community toward the standard language,—the attitude of language loyalty and the attitude of pride, in the members of the entire Slovene standard speech community.

TABLE I

	REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA CSS	V ZAMEJSTVU Regional koines	V ZDOMSTVU Dialects
SOCIOLINGUISTIC CATEGORIES:			
Function/Attitude			
Separatist/Loyalty	+	(+)*	0
Prestige/Pride	+	-	0
Frame of Reference/ Awareness of Norm	+	-	0

The plus sign (+) indicates that the level of the language has a major role in the particular sociolinguistic function, and is to a significant degree the object of the attitude associated therewith. The minus sign (-) indicates that this is not the case. The zero (0) indicates that the particular sociolinguistic functions and its associated attitudes appear to be inapplicable for that particular level of language. The asterisk (*) suggests that the indicated sociolinguistic function and attitude differ in degree and/or quality from the same sociolinguistic function and attitude that characterize CSS. The parenthesis indicates less specific evidence. See also Lencek 1988.

This explains the differences in sociolinguistic function/attitude models among the three types of socio-political and/or socio-cultural language communities in which native speakers of Slovene live today (cf. Paternost 1985): (a) in the realm of Standard Slovene, *v osrednji Sloveniji*, the unifying, the separatist and the prestige function, with a set of cultural attitudes toward the standard, an attitude of language loyalty, an attitude of pride, and an attitude of awareness of the norm (see Gjurin 1990); (b) in the realm of the Slovene language beyond the limits of Standard Slovene (*v zamejstvu*), a unifying, a separatist and a prestige function of the regional dialects of Slovene with a set of loyalty and pride attitudes toward the mother-tongue (mother-dialect) (see Sedmak & Susič 1983); and (c) in a Slovene diaspora situation (*v zdomstvu*), with a complete absence of

soicological functions and attitudes (see Lencek 1988). These differences are displayed on TABLE I above.

The situation in the Republic of Slovenia is stipulated in terms of the use in public life of Contemporary Standard Slovene [= CSS; the situation in Italy, Austria and Hungary (*v zamejstvu*) in terms of the use of the regional koinés; and the situation in emigration (*v zdomstvu*) reflects language use in the first two generations of American Slovene communities (whereas speakers in these communities who were educated in Slovenia still use CSS.)

4.0. There is no better starting-point for our discussion of the dimensions of sociolinguistic attitudes toward language in the three Slovene language communities, than the concept of *mother tongue* and the precepts for the conduct which we owe to our first language, as formulated by Bishop Anton Martin Slomšek (1880-1862) just a few years before the Slovene vernacular was introduced into elementary education in the Slovene lands. In the sermon which he delivered on Whitsunday 1834 in Možberk/Moosberg in Carinthia, he spoke to his faithful Carinthians about their *slovenji* (*slovenski*) language, and included a string of aphorisms on the *materni jezik* and their moral responsibilities for its preservation—epitomizing, as it were, the fullest possible *loyalty* to the Slovene language:

"Kdor svoj matern *jezik zavrže*..., je zmedinemu *pjancu* podoben, ki zlato v prah potepta, ino ne ve, koliko škodu si dela..."

or:

"*Slovenji starejši*, ki slovenje znajo, pa svojih otrok ... slovenjiga jezika ne učijo, so *nehvaležni hišniki*, ki svojim otrokam drago domačo reč, slovenski jezik, *zapravijo*, ki so jim ga njihovi dedi izročili..."

or:

"*Materni jezik je nar dražji dota*, ki smo jo od svojih starih zadobili; skerbno smo ga dolžni *ohraniti, olepšati*, ino svojim mlajšim zapustiti..."

and finally:

"Kakor hvaležen sin moje ljube matere želim . . de kakor je moja *prva beseda* slovenja bila, naj tudi moja *posledna beseda* slovenja bo."¹

1 In translation: "He who repudiates his mother tongue . . . is like the befuddled drunkard who tramples gold into dust without even realizing what great injury he does himself . . .;" "Slovene parents who know Slovene but fail to teach the Slovene language to their children are like those faithless stewards who have squandered away their children's precious legacy, the Slovene language, which had been entrusted to them for safekeeping by their forefathers;" "The mother tongue is the most precious dowry that we have received from our elders; we are obliged prudently to preserve it, to beautify it, and bequeath it to our youth;" "As the grateful son of my mother I wish . . . that as my first word was Slovene, so too may my last word be Slovene." Originally published in *Drobtince za novo leto 1849. Učitelam ino učencam, starišem ino otrokam v podvučenje ino za kratek čas*. Na svetlo dal Anton Slomšek (Celje, 1949); quoted, in English translation by Lena M. Lenček, from Toporišič & Gjurin 1981: 530-32.

Could we imagine a better or more inviting point of departure for the discussion of our topic today, a century and a half after this first paradigm of precepts, expectations and responsibilities toward the mother tongue of the three Slovenias was formulated? May it serve as a frame of reference for our projected comprehensive survey of the dimensions of language attitude problems in the Slovene language situation in 1990!

Thank you for your attention.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bright, William, ed. 1966. *Sociolinguistics. Proceedings of the U.C.L.A. Sociolinguistic Conference, 1964*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Fishman, Joshua. 1966. "Language maintenance and language shift as a field of inquiry. (A definition of the field and suggestions for its further development)," 424-58 in J.A. Fishman et al., eds., *Language Loyalty in the United States. The Maintenance and Perpetuation of Non-English Mother-Tongues by American Ethnic and Religious Groups*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Garvin, Paul L. 1959. "The standard language problem—Concepts and methods," *Anthropological Linguistics* 1/2: 28-31.
- & M. Mathiot. 1956. "The urbanization of the Guarani language: A problem in language and culture," 783-90 in A.F.C. Wallace, ed., *Men and Cultures: Selected Papers of the Fifth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences*. Philadelphia PA: U Pennsylvania Press.
- Gjurin, Velemir. 1990. "Prednosti federalne, konfederalne in samostojne Slovenije za slovenski jezik," *Nova revija* 95: 582-84 [= *Samostojna Slovenija. Nova revija, Mesečnik za kulturo* IX/1990].
- Grafenauer, I. & A. Gspan. 1960-71. "Slomšek Anton," 367-79 in *Slovenski biografski leksikon* 3. Ljubljana: SAZU.
- Havránek, Bohuslav. 1932. "Ukoly spisovného jazyka a jeho kultura," 32-84 in B. Havránek & M. Weingart, eds., *Spisovná čeština a jazyková kultura*. Prague: Melantrich.
- Lencek, Rado L. 1976. "On dilemmas and compromises in the evolution of Modern Slovene," 112-52 in Thomas F. Magner, ed., *Slavic Linguistics and Language Teaching*. Cambridge MA: Slavica.
- . 1985. "On sociolinguistic determinants in the evolution of Slavic literary languages," 39-51 in Gerald Stone & Dean Worth, eds., *The Formation of the Slavonic Literary Languages. Proceedings of a Conference held in Memory of Robert Auty and Anne Pennington at Oxford, 6-11 July 1981*. Columbus OH: Slavica [= *UCLA Slavic Studies* 11].
- . 1988. "On literature in diasporas and the life span of their medium," *Slovene Studies* 10/2: 119-23.
- Mathesius, Vilem. 1932. "O požadavku stability ve spisovnem jazyce," 14-31 in B. Havránek & M. Weingart, eds., *Spisovná čeština a jazyková kultura*. Prague: Melantrich.
- Meillet, Antoine. 1921. *Linguistique historique et linguistique générale*. Paris: Champion.
- Paternost, Jože. 1985. "A sociolinguistic tug of war between language value and language reality in Contemporary Slovenian," 9-29 in Thomas D. Magner, ed., *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 52: *Yugoslavia in Sociolinguistic Perspective*.
- Rupel, Dimitrij. 1976. *Svobodne besede od Prešerna do Cankarja. Sociološka študija o slovenskem leposlovju kot glasniku in pobudniku nacionalne osvoboditve v drugi polovici devetnajstega stoletja*. Koper: Lipa.
- Sedmak, Danilo & Emidij Susič. 1983. *Tiha asimilacija. Psihološki vidiki nacionalnega odtujevanja*. Trieste: Založništvo trž aškega tiska.
- Tollefson, James. 1981. *The Language Situation and Language Policy in Slovenia*. Washington DC: University Press of America.
- Toporišič, Jože. 1978. "A language of a small nationality in a multinational state," 480-86 in William R. Schmalstieg & Thomas F. Magner, eds., *Sociolinguistic Problems in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia*. Columbus OH: Slavica.
- & Velemir Gjurin, eds. 1981. *Slovenska zvrstna besedila*. Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani.
- Weinreich, Uriel. 1953. *Languages in Contact*. New York: Linguistic Circle of New York.