

Theory of the Cultivation of Language after 1945

Summary

This monograph deals with the problem of **codification of literary** (i.e. standard) **Czech**. Its aim is to provide a review of the history of thought on this topic since the Second World War as well as to analyze the presented arguments. This research should form a part of a more complex description of standardization activities (i.e. codification) in Czech, and of the interaction between language and various efforts at codification.

The **historical review**, starts with the Theory of the Cultivation of Language (TCL) which appeared in the late 1920s. Clearly, these theories of language cultivation were, in part at least, motivated or influenced politically (communist ideology), especially so between 1948 and 1958 (2.2.) and from 1970 until 1989 (4.1.). This fact destroys the status of TCL as a strictly scientific and independent theory.

The study is divided into five parts: The first part describes TCL in the form as it was developed in the late 1920s. Relying on functional principle of language regulation, TCL argued in favour of bringing standard Czech closer to the contemporary usage. Although this period (1920s and 1930s) – usually characterized as the **classic period of Prague linguistic circle** (PLC) – was mostly concerned with countering the tradition of Czech purism (esp. rejection of puristic criteria of language correctness), the advanced version of TCL perpetuated some of the puristic concepts (esp. interventional character of language cultivation and codification), instead of eliminating them.

With the end of WWII (and especially the communist takeover in 1948) came a period of **import of communist ideology** from soviet linguistics (2nd part). Between 1948 and 1950 it was “materialistic linguistics” of N. J. Marr, after 1950 it was J. V. Stalin’s critique of former marrism as non-marxistic. (2.2.) Unfortunately Stalin’s criticism of marrism was absurdly applied to the structuralism of pre-war PLC. Many members of PLC (and creators of TCL as well) had to recant their former theories. Some of them (esp. Bohuslav Havránek) tried to preserve TCL by converting pre-war theories into marrism and subsequently into Stalin’s marxism (for example by treating parts of TCL as special examples of materialistic dialectic). This period saw the emergence of an intimate connection between TCL and communist ideology which lasted till 1989. Apart from the regime’s influence on the theory, there were several attempts to influence codification of Czech in 1950s (some of them were successful) in the name of democratization of language. (2.3.) Dokulil introduced his concept of perspective depth of codification (“perspektivní hloubka kodifikace”), meaning that standardization activities should anticipate the development of language. This reaffirmed and strengthened the “noetic optimism” in the regulation of language, which had already been present in pre-war TCL.

Scientific **debate about the language culture intensified in 1960s** (3rd part), as the ideological pressure subsided somewhat during that period. In the main Czech linguistic journal *Slovo a slovesnost*, the discussion first focused on the common Czech (which is the real Czech vernacular) (3.1.) This marked the first time when the Czech scholarly community engaged in a relatively open discussion about the real usage of spoken language. While almost all of the calls for

employing certain elements of common Czech in codification of standard Czech were refused, the discussion did shift the perception of the vernacular. The main obstacle that stood in the way of resolving the vernacular's problematic position within codification was the concept of "literariness", a term that has never been successfully defined (despite it being one of the basic concepts of pre-war TCL). More specifically, in evaluating any form of expression, all participants in the discussion had to address the issue of whether such a form was or was not literary. The next big discussion concentrated on Czech orthography (3.2.). It led to many proposals (some of them of rather technocratic and directive nature) for changing the orthography. Nevertheless, none of them has ever been accepted, mostly for political reasons (as was the case in 1950s). By 1968, attention shifted towards language culture (3.3.) from which point the debate was likely to turn to a substantial, deep critical appraisal of TCL. That development, however, was interrupted by the intervention of Warsaw Pact armies in August 1968.

The period after 1968 is usually referred to as a time of "normalization" (4th part). This period resembles in some way the 1950s, for example in its restoration of the notion of marxist linguistics, supposed to be a special method of linguistic research and cultivation of language (4.1.) The only difference from the 1950's was that TCL was no longer criticized; to the contrary, it was uncritically accepted as a real doctrine (of a marxist regulation of language), as the mainstream thought on cultivation of language. In this period, the theoretical thinking sought to take into account speakers' evaluations of language means and their views on the varieties of Czech. The TCL paradigm was dominant until 1980s when it began to disintegrate. (4.2.)

The critique of TCL has become more common since the fall of communist regime in 1989 (5th part). The TCL paradigm is being gradually destroyed. (5.1.) Most discussions center on the position of common Czech (alongside literary Czech) and the prescriptivism of codification. (5.2.) However, while in the 1930's, contemporary language usage (as the foundation for language norm) was supposed to serve as a corrective instrument of standardization activities, its role is being currently downplayed (esp. by Moravian linguists). The importance of this empirical reference has declined in favor of axiological approaches to language cultivation. This axiological aspect – presented in the late 1960s and in 1970 by Daneš – is often reduced to a mere emotional attachment to language cultivation without reference to objective linguistic data. Continuing interest is paid to orthography. (5.3.) Related in the problem of orthography in 1990s is the stress put on the fact that the writing system should be able to record all Czech texts not only texts of standard variety.

In regards to the examined literature and sources, **TCL does not seem to be an adequate mechanism of language cultivation.** Yet TCL is still in vogue today, despite never having come to terms with its legacy of political – or generally un-scientific – manipulation.