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STANDARD SLOVAK IN MASS MEDIA

At present, media become important linguistic institutions that decisively determine language development. Tendencies with synergistic effect on contemporary Slovak language in mass media include primarily changes, e. g., socio-economic changes in society after 1989, globalization, digitalization; and specific linguistic changes, e. g., inter-style and inter-genre hybridization, linguistic unification, tendencies to informal conversationalization, vernacularization, weakening of codification and stylistic norm. In Slovakia, even in the recent past, the cultivation of media language was mostly identified only with standardized varieties of language usage, but today some Slovak linguists think also about communicatively understood language cultivation.

Key words: *codification, mass media, Slovak, speech, standard language*

Introduction

Language is a heterogeneous phenomenon with many varieties that allow users to communicate in any socio-ethnocultural situation. Fundamental factors that influence development of language are, on the one hand, stabilizing codification changes used to maintain linguistic functionality and identity, and, on the other hand, spontaneously innovative linguistic changes, which we also find in the language of mass media. At present, due to influence of mass media on society, media increasingly reflect and shape language of people, their linguistic awareness and attitudes towards language. «The media are important linguistic institutions. Their output makes up a large proportion of the language that people hear and read every day. Media usage reflects and shapes both language use and attitudes in a speech community» (Bell 1995: 23). Through mass media, people can learn to speak in a literary and rich vocabulary, but on the other hand, media can strengthen people's own incorrect language habits or learn them to express ungrammatical or non-literary.

«As a result of the nexus between mass media and the emerging nationstates of the nineteenth century, the media used standard language to reach national audiences, thereby strengthening the bond between language and nation» (Anderson 2006, in: Androutsopoulos 2010: 740), «today a rigid hierarchy of right and wrong, normative and nonnormative are replaced by media communication tolerant to the deviation» (L. A. Brusenskaya – E. G. Kulikova 2018: 168). In mass media we can find examples of non-standard language, in which grammatical rules and stylistic principles are not followed; at present expressions lacking precise and logic increases as well. These shortcomings are most evident in unprepared, spontaneous speeches, but they are also common in pre-prepared texts that can be (and should be) modified and possibly corrected before they are published.

In Slovakia, even in the recent past, the cultivation of media language

was almost absolutely identified only with standardized forms of language usage, but today some Slovak linguists think more about communicatively understood language cultivation, in which language is used appropriate to conditions or environment of communication (Ondrejovič 2008: 244). In the works of Slovak linguists we find various, often antagonistic views on the roles and functions of standard Slovak in mass media, which is confirmed by many studies and any proceedings on standard language and language culture, which has been published in Slovakia so far. In this context, three main opinion groups gradually formed in the Slovak linguistic community: a) a group of sociolinguists who apply sociolinguistic methods also in normative-codification practice and involve language users in linguistic and regulatory language activities; b) a group of authors who subscribe to the postulates of sociolinguistic research only declaratively, who in a specific codification practice do not take into account the linguistic consciousness and linguistic attitudes of language users; c) a group of authors adhering to the principle that language users should not be involved in normative-codification activities, as the standard language is described in codification manuals (Ondrejovič 2008: 214). At present, in addition to the expression "failure of standard Slovak in mass media", the phrase "seeking and finding the degree of legitimacy, adequacy, variability in the language of media" is used - both expressions are related to cultivation of media language.

Factors effecting standard Slovak in mass media

Factors effecting and changing contemporary Slovak language of mass media have a synergistic effect. In our paper, we focus on those that are among the crucial components of the influence on the current state and development of Slovak language presented not only in mass media. In Slovak linguistics, it is accepted that media language has a decisive influence on development of contemporary Slovak as a whole, that mass media belong to spheres decisively determining language development (Horecký, Buzássyová, Bosák et al. 1989; Mlacek 2008: 288). The situation is different, for example, in German mass media, which have their own way of dealing with language, their own communication procedures and types of texts that clearly differ from ordinary linguistic reality (Burger 1990: 3).

Among the factors that change the language of Slovak media, and thus current Slovak language, are general changes related to the socio-economic situation after 1989, establishment of independent Slovak Republic, Slovakia's integration into European structures, and overall globalizing tendencies in society and media practice. The use of Europeanisms, words with the prefixoid euro- or Anglicisms increases in mass media and in current Slovak language as well. In the case of Anglicisms, we must not forget the fact that these are usually words of a Greek-Latin origin, for which Slovak language has been enriched in the past (Šimková 1999: 135). However, in connection with the use of Anglicisms, it is necessary to emphasize that

English internationalizes not only the lexicon of Slovak language, but also its syntax and stylistics, therefore, the research focuses on the penetration of English supre-lexical phenomena and structures into contemporary Slovak as well (Böhmerová 2012).

Changes in society brought a new social group to media communication - personalities who are educated, professionally erudite, but not ready for presentation in the media. Their media utterances are mostly based on personal language assumptions (Ondrejovič 2008: 244), their speech is not adapted to the specifics of communication with the media and in the media. The media expressions of these people are often protracted, they are too long or fragmentary, without a media message, key points; there is a lack of specific information, concise, clear and concise statements in them. The speech rate is too fast, or, conversely, too slow, these personalities often mumbles, articulates lazily, TV viewers or radio listeners cannot understand their utterances. However, we find similar language shortcomings in the speeches of some journalists, anchors or editors, who rely only on their own, usually insufficient language standard.

Among factors changing the language of Slovak mass media, we also include changes in the media industry. Slovak media as well as foreign ones have transformed into media concerns in which financial aspects are important. The role of today's media is not only to inform, educate, entertain, engage, point out shortcomings, influence people, arouse emotions, but above all to bring profit. The economic side and the struggle for the viewers (listeners, readers) have become more important than excellent language, great stylistics and professional voice qualities. Changes in the media industry are also closely related to the digitization and dominance of digital media, which has led to emergence of media linguistics in the second half of the 1990s (Luginbühl 2015). This (sub)discipline of applied linguistics is understood as a hyperonym of multi-layered communication fields (Rašová 2017) in which media language has a special position, or as a dynamic phenomenon used by individuals and various large groups of people both in traditional and digital media (Voigt 2015), thus contributing to chances in the language of mass media. Dominance of digital media also led to creation of new communication styles in which the differences between individual and public communication or between spoken and written language are blurred. The language of the determining medium, which is currently digital media, also influences the language of print, radio and television media, which tend to express the more relaxed and personal expression that is characteristic of digital media. In addition, people now choose for themselves what kind of media information, when and to what extent they will pay attention to. On the Internet, media texts can not only be read, but they can also be discussed and commented on; interaction is also possible across the media or with unknown people. An interactive digital media communication is created; it acquires a personal character manifested in the

language of all media types.

According to Kralčák (2008: 24), the current language of primarily electronic media is characterized by two tensions: the tension between information and entertainment and the tension between public and private. At the same time, the author observes two tendencies in mass media: a tendency towards conversationalization and a tendency leading through entertainment to “marketization”, when market behaviour is in the background.

Another strong linguistic factor influencing the language of contemporary Slovak media is the blurring of boundaries between styles and the syncretism of genres, thus creating free media texts, not specific genre units. This creates a functionally unhelpful inter-style or inter-genre hybridization. Gradually, the differences between news, analytical and fictional media stories also disappeared; so in the media often the news text is not distinguished from the editor's opinions. There is not only linguistic unification of media texts (Mlacek 2008), but also unconscious linguistic manipulations, where the subjective opinions of text creator are presented as objective facts. At present, advertising texts that have the character of editorial texts are also being added to newspapers and media magazines; it is difficult for the average reader to distinguish them from journalistic text. In this context, it shows how important media education in primary schools and the related development of (critical) media literacy are.

The language of mass media is also influenced by blurring of the differences between elite and yellow journalism towards tabloidization, which is also reflected in weakening of validity of the codification and the stylistic norm. Expressive words, stylistically more expressive constructions, simple sentence structure are in the foreground, stereotyping of language on all language levels increases. These phenomena lead to the hackneyed expressions, which become clichés through excessive use in the media. In pronunciation, the same articulation and intonation errors or inappropriate speech tempo are constantly repeated. Some oral media speeches are thus on the verge of intelligibility and receptivity (sometimes beyond this limit, even on state radio and television). Through tabloidization, Slovak language is gradually losing some characteristic specifics of Slovak.

The fundamental change of contemporary Slovak media language is the tendency to informal conversationalization (Škvareninová 2019: 34), which «is no doubt joined by vernacularization, i. e., an increase in the currency of non-standard speech» (Androutsopoulos 2010: 742). In media informal conversational style, the use of intimate expressions increases. The characteristic features of this style are spontaneity, immediacy, privacy, originality, and expressiveness which are reflected in the use of elements from the language periphery, in defective features in sentence structure, casualness of expressions and non-compliance with rules of the standard language. The current preference for informal expression leads to the

tendency to informal conversationalization also in written mass media texts which is reflected especially in lexicon, e. g. in use of Czech words, the already mentioned Anglicisms and incorrectly formed neologisms. There are fewer shortcomings in morphology and syntax, e. g., grammatical errors in declension of nouns, gradation of adjectives and adverbs, conjugation of verbs, use of prepositional phrases, conjunctions, and in greeting forms (Slovak distinguishes for "ty" form and "vy" form; in the "vy" form there is a specific type of plural verb form even addressing to one person which is often misused in Slovak mass media). In today media language, defective syntactic constructs and phraseological contaminations are common as well.

The use of dialect (regional speech), which is growing in the language of mass media in the last decades, is also related to conversationalism (Betz 2006: 78, 173). People from dialect regions identify more quickly with news with dialectisms they know (Burger, Luginbühl 2014: 364), which is characteristic e. g. for some German-speaking regions. In Slovakia, dialect elements are a welcome source of media entertainment, they are tolerated in regional news, namely in the lexicon, syntax or pronunciation of moderators and editors (Škvareninová 2019: 34-35). In addition to the use of dialect, conversationalism is also reflected in unprepared media speeches.

In media language, many spontaneous innovative language changes, new words, and play on words that benefit the language can also be found. In electronic media, voice qualities are approached as another dimension of language innovation. The form of media expressions is thus influenced not only by vocabulary, grammar or compositional-stylistic construction of the text, but also by the pronunciation and intonation of speech. The courage of editors, their commitment, effort to engage, tendency to dynamic speech, creation of a specific linguistic identity of radio and television stations are not in conflict with standard language and speech culture - standard language usage in media texts and speeches can raise mass media communication to a professionally higher level.

Standard Slovak in mass media and state language policy

In Slovak linguistic environment, Slovak language is characterized as a national language that is internally differentiated. It has several varieties of which the standard language is the most important, most elaborate and most variable one (Slančová 1994: 13-14). The codified form of standard language represents national form of the Slovak language. It is identified through a repertoire of conventions in spoken and written communication, normative dictionaries, fixed rules in orthography and grammar (Ammon 2004: 273-283). The socio-linguistic approach to the study of standard media language enriches research with the social and communicative causes of undesirable deviations from codification and language norm.

Slovak language is the state language on the territory of the Slovak Republic. It has a priority over other languages applied on the whole territory

of the Slovak Republic (Zákon Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky o štátnom jazyku Slovenskej republiky = Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the State Language of the Slovak Republic 1995). It is a language that is codified; i. e., only the standard Slovak language is meant by the state language, which, according to the law, is to be used in precisely, specified areas of public communication, to which mass media also belong. The codification is announced by the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, which regularly prepares a report on the state of use of the state language in the territory of the Slovak Republic.

The fifth report on the state of use of the state Slovak language from 2020 states the need of society to express itself in a cultivated and understandable way in public space. The state of use of the codified form of Slovak language is assessed as very differentiated and corresponding to the broad and multidimensional social, cultural and spiritual differentiation of contemporary Slovak society as a whole. Complaints of use of non-standard language in the media, which people address to the Council of Broadcasting and Retransmission, most often concern non-standard pronunciation of the soft consonant "ľ", the use of dialects, vulgarities, Bohemisms and English words.

Many Slovak media developed a well-thought-out system for improving standard language which begins with selection of media workers. For example, in all state media, each candidate must meet the language requirements which form a crucial part in deciding on the admission of an applicant to a position of editor or anchor. State media such as the Slovak Radio and Television (RTVS) and the Press Agency of the Slovak Republic (TASR) also educate their employees in Slovak standard language. Slovak Television implements a system of trainings and courses, which focuses mainly on the practical preparation of editors and anchors for live television broadcasting. Television regularly organizes trainings for news anchors with a language teacher. The culture of speech of TV editors and news anchors is examined by a commission established as an advisory board to the General Director of RTVS. State Slovak Radio focuses education in this area mainly on consultations in language interpretation and the journalistic part of radio articles. Texts can only be broadcast after checking the content and grammatical accuracy of the announcements. In the Press Agency of the Slovak Republic the so-called four-eye system works in the process of preparation and publication of information. So each report passes through language and content proofreaders who are language experts. TASR has also developed an electronic online consultation system on standard Slovak issues. It is TASR's own software, developed especially for the needs of the agency. In addition to online advice, the system publishes deficiencies in the language of press releases that need rectification or correction. Through its specialized service, the Agency has long been publishing series "Spisovná slovenčina" (Standard Slovak) (Fifth Report on the State of the Use of the

State Language in the Slovak Republic 2020: 1, 19-22). Likewise, commercial televisions and radio station with nationwide coverage have language teachers who do practical voice trainings and pay attention to the standard Slovak of anchors and news editors as well. The situation is worse in the print media, where the jobs of language proofreaders are cancelled due to economic measures among the first.

Conclusion

The personal character of contemporary media communication is also reflected in the language of mass media in which the use of vernacular speech (D. Crystal 2002) and tendency for conversationalization (Fairclough 1995; Kralčák 2008) or informal conversalionalization (Škvareninová 2019) increases. These changes in media language do not always go hand in hand with compliance with the rules of the standard Slovak. In the Slovak linguistic environment, the differences between the standard, i. e., codified language and its colloquial variety, especially in central Slovakia, are not very large, in contrast to e. g. the situation in Bohemia (standard Czech versus common Czech, i. e., an informally used interdialectal variety), or in Austria or Switzerland (schwyzertütsch, i. e., the Swiss variant of the German language, which represents an almost independent language with respect to the written form of standard German) (Ondrejovič 2008: 223). Despite the eloquence of the standard Slovak language and the current tendencies of mass media language with strong (informal) conversationalization and vernacularization, we consider the mastery of standard Slovak at all levels as one of the basic preconditions that should be met by a professional working in the media. The language of mass media says a lot about the media itself and about the language of its creators - journalists, anchors, editors - and last but not least about the language of the media audience, and of all language users as well.

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