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Život slova  
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(Na sedemdesiatiny profesora Jána Doruľu)

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## Protestant Language Use in 17th Century Slovakia in a Diglossia Framework<sup>1</sup>

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The honoree of this „jubilejný zborník,” Ján Doruľa, has devoted many years of research and writing to issues surrounding the historical development of a Slovak standard language prior to official codification in the 19th century. One of the more prominent issues in the discussion of the history of standard language development in the Slovak-speaking territories is the question of Czech language usage. The generally-accepted version of the history of Czech language use in Slovakia<sup>2</sup> in the period prior to the 17th century is often presented as follows:

From the 10th through the 14th centuries, Latin was the dominant language of both church and state administration in the Hungarian kingdom of which the Slovak lands were a part. Czech was first „imported” into Slovakia in the 14th century in the form of complete Czech literary and religious texts brought over directly from the Czech lands as finished works. In the 15th century we see the first active use of literary Czech<sup>3</sup> as a means of written communication in Slovakia in the drafting of administrative-legal texts, including official correspondence on several administrative levels, translations of law codes, and entries in town record books. It is generally argued that one of the primary factors contributing to the introduction of Czech as

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<sup>1</sup> This article presents a discussion of several issues that are central to my ongoing, larger sociolinguistic investigation of the history of standard language development in pre-Bernolák Slovakia. Thus this article is, to a great degree, a report on „work in progress.” It is, in a sense, a position paper, laying out the basic framework and methodology of my research on the history of Slovak standard language development and outlining an investigation of the 17th century linguistic situation among the Slovak Protestants within this framework and methodology.

<sup>2</sup> The term „Slovakia” will be used alongside the expressions „Slovak-speaking territories,” „Slovak language territory” and „Slovak lands” throughout this article to denote the Central European territories in their various historico-political configurations where Slovak was spoken during the period under investigation.

<sup>3</sup> The terms „Czech literary language” and „literary Czech” will be used throughout this article to denote the „normalized, polyvalent, nationally recognized idiom” which was „established as a medium of administrative and legal documents” and was „increasingly used for learned and technical writings” in the early to mid 15th century in the Czech lands (Auty 1980, 169-170).

a language of writing in Slovakia in the 15th century was the increased presence and interaction of Slovaks at higher (literate) levels of social structure in the Hungarian state, where they needed a means of written communication that was more widely accessible to them than Latin. The lack of a sufficiently developed Slovak written language left the way open for the introduction of genetically related Czech, already known in Slovakia since the 14th century. From the 15th into the 16th century, the use of Czech as a language of writing in Slovakia increased, and in the early to mid 16th century several major events occurred that supported and encouraged the further use of literary Czech throughout Slovakia: the invasion of the Turks into Hungary, the inclusion of Slovakia with the Czech lands into the Habsburg Empire, and the event that is most significant for the present discussion, the arrival of the Lutheran Reformation in Slovakia.

The Reformation arrived in the Slovak lands in the first quarter of the 16th century, bringing with it the concept of the appropriateness of native languages in religious worship and church affairs. The Czech literary language (already in place as a means of written communication in the Slovak language territory since the early 15th century) was chosen as the linguistic vehicle of the Reformation in the Slovak lands. The Reformation, and thus the written (as well as limited oral) use of literary Czech, gained ground rapidly in the 1530s throughout the Slovak-speaking territory. The period of the Reformation also saw an increase in the number of schools and hence an increase in literacy in Slovakia, particularly among the middle classes of society. This increase in literacy, coupled with the rise of new socio-economic structures in the Hungarian state that necessitated greater use of written records, also brought about increased use of Czech in the course of the 16th century.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout these periods, the general means of *oral* communication in Slovakia were, of course, the Slovak dialects. While there is obviously no direct evidence attesting to the patterns of oral use of Slovak in the 10th-16th centuries, there is a certain amount of indirect evidence, and a fair amount of theorizing, that has produced a view accepted by many Slovak scholars studying the issue of Slovak language use during these periods. It is generally considered that already as early as the 10th or 11th century a supradialectal

<sup>4</sup> See for example Pauliny 1983 and Varsik 1956 for more detailed presentations of the use of Czech in the Slovak-speaking territories in the 14th-16th centuries.

indigenous language form, often called „Cultural Slovak” (*kultúrna slovenčina*), was in common oral use in the Slovak-speaking territories as a linguistic vehicle for broader interdialectal communication than was possible with the local dialects. This Slovak koiné is considered to have been structurally influenced by the local dialects and thus to have existed in three regional variants (following the three major Slovak dialect divisions) – Cultural West Slovak, Cultural Central Slovak, Cultural East Slovak – each developing at different rates according to the prevailing socio-political conditions in the respective regions, but each considered to be structurally fairly stable by the end of the 16th century.<sup>5</sup>

On the surface then, based on this standard history of Czech language use in Slovakia, we seem to be presented with a fairly simple scenario for the immediate pre-17th century linguistic situation in the Slovak-speaking territories. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the Slovaks used their local dialects as well as certain interdialectal/supradialectal Cultural Slovak forms for oral interaction, but they did not have an indigenous, well-developed, polyvalent written language that could fill the increasing demands for text production in the changing socio-historical conditions of the Slovak lands. Literary Czech, on the other hand, had been reasonably well developed by the late 14th-early 15th century and, as a genetically closely related language, was accessible to the Slovaks. Thus, while the Slovak dialects and spoken Cultural Slovak were the major vehicles of oral communication among the general Slovak populace in ordinary day-to-day affairs, literary Czech was used by the Slovaks in their official written communication and, among the Protestants, also in religious matters. This coexistence of two closely related language forms with largely separate functional domains in a single linguistic community is often referred to in sociolinguistics as a situation of „diglossia.” -The definition of diglossia that serves as the basis for the modern sociolinguistic investigation of the phenomenon was formulated by Charles Ferguson in 1959 as follows:

„Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another

<sup>5</sup> For discussions of this oral Cultural Slovak see especially Kotulič 1968, Krajčovič and Žigo 1994 and 1999, Pauliny 1983.

speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation.” (1959, 336)

In the case of 15th–16th century Slovakia, literary Czech fills the role of the „superposed variety” in relation to the Slovak dialects and interdialectal varieties which represent the „primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards)” in the diglossia model.<sup>6</sup>

However, this simplified description of the 15th–16th century linguistic situation in Slovakia masks one very important fact. In any situation of language contact, including diglossic situations where the two languages co-exist in largely separate functional domains, there will be mutual interference between the two linguistic systems involved. In our case, we would expect literary Czech to influence the Slovak language, and the Slovak dialects to affect the literary Czech of those who commanded both languages in 15th–16th century Slovakia. Whether there was interference from literary Czech in the spoken Slovak of those who were literate is essentially impossible to establish. However, there is evidence of such linguistic interference in the direction Slovak→Czech in the form of phonological, morphological and lexical „Slovakisms” in extant 15th and 16th century Czech texts produced in Slovakia.

The framework of diglossia necessarily allows for such interference between the two languages involved (see Ferguson 1959). It even allows for the rise of certain types of „mixed language” that relieve the „communicative tensions” of the diglossic situation, with the proviso that these mixed language forms be „relatively uncodified” and „unstable” (Ferguson 1959, 332–333). This is where it becomes necessary to examine the 15th–16th century Slovak situation much more closely. The evidence of Slovak linguistic interference in Czech texts from the 15th and 16th centuries needs to be appropriately analyzed to determine the extent of this interference and the degree of stability of the mixed linguistic forms arising from this interference. Many scholars investigating these issues assert that already in the 16th century the language attested in many Slovak administrative-legal texts exhibits a *relatively stable*, linguistically mixed form incorporating the *consistent use* of

<sup>6</sup> In discussions of diglossia following in the Fergusonian tradition, the highly standardized superposed variety is often referred to as the „high” language variety or simply „H,” while the non-standardized primary dialects of the language are referred to as the „low” language variety or simply „L.” I will follow these conventions throughout the remainder of this article.

Slovak linguistic features alongside features of literary Czech, and they consider this stable Czech-Slovak hybrid language as a written Cultural Slovak.<sup>7</sup> My own research into the phonology of 16th century texts supports this position with certain structural and geographical provisions (Lauersdorf 1996). If further investigation continues to demonstrate convincingly that the Slovak elements present in these Czech texts are consistent and stable, this consistency and stability of features could be interpreted as an indication of development in the 16th century toward the resolution of the Czech-Slovak diglossic situation in favor of a single mixed Czech-Slovak standard language (Cultural Slovak) that could eventually have been used in all functional domains, both written and oral, in place of both literary Czech and the Slovak dialects.<sup>8</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the Lutheran Reformation was one of the primary catalysts behind the increased use of Czech in Slovakia in the mid to late 16th century. Thus it is highly important to examine the development of the Czech language employed during the Reformation and subsequent Recatholicization periods in further investigating the possible development of a Czech-Slovak hybrid language as a resolution of the situation of Czech-Slovak diglossia. The early progression of the Reformation movement in Slovakia was rather uneven and this unevenness is generally considered to be mirrored in Protestant language use in the 16th century. According to Eugen Pauliny: „All of this resulted in a certain unevenness in the penetration of Czech as the language of worship among the Slovak Protestants” (1983, 105), and „Neither the form of Czech as the religious language of the Slovak Protestants nor its functions were equally distributed, especially in the 16th century” (1983, 106). The following period of the early to mid 17th century is generally thought to be a more fruitful period for the development of mixed Czech-Slovak language forms among the Slovak Protestants. Pauliny states: „... in the 17th century Czech was noticeably Slovakized also among the Slovak Protestants, specifically in texts of a liturgical nature” (1983, 109). It

<sup>7</sup> Among the scholars who maintain the existence of written Cultural Slovak there seems to be consensus concerning its general characteristics as presented here. However, opinions vary regarding the exact nature of the linguistic development and dialectal forms of written Cultural Slovak. See for example: Dorul’a 1967 and 1977, Habovštiaková 1972, Kotulič 1968 and 1969, Krajčovič and Žigo 1994 and 1999, Lifanov 1989, Pauliny 1983.

<sup>8</sup> See Lauersdorf 2002 for a more detailed discussion of Czech-Slovak diglossia in the 15th and 16th centuries.

is generally considered, however, that there were two opposing tendencies in Protestant writings during this early to mid 17th century period – one furthering the Slovakization of Czech and the other maintaining the continuity of literary Czech in a more „pure” form – and ultimately, in a complex reaction to the systematic Recatholicization efforts that began in the early 17th century it happens that „In the course of the 17th century the Slovakizing tendencies that had clearly appeared in the period of the blossoming of the Reformation are abandoned, and the Slovak Protestants begin to return to the exact norm of literary Czech” (Pauliny 1983, 112). As a consequence, it is more through the Recatholicization efforts and the attempts of the Catholic church to reach out to the Slovak Protestants in their native language than through the work of the Slovak Protestants that the development of Czech-Slovak hybrid language forms continued from the 17th into the 18th century. Thus, understandably, the majority of studies investigating continued development toward a mixed Czech-Slovak standard language in the Slovak-speaking lands in the 17th–18th centuries examine linguistic practices among the Slovak Catholics. It is my contention, however, that the linguistic situation among the Slovak Protestants in the late 16th–17th centuries warrants renewed attention specifically within the sociolinguistic framework of diglossia.

The general description of linguistic practice in the Reformation and subsequent Recatholicization periods provided in the preceding paragraph suggests a three-stage evolution in the language use of the Slovak Protestants during the period leading into and through the 17th century:

1) Czech-Slovak diglossia with Czech filling the role of the standardized, superposed (or „high”) language variety and the Slovak dialects as the non-standardized, primary (or „low”) language variety;

2) tendencies toward resolution of Czech-Slovak diglossia through increasing development and use of hybrid Czech-Slovak written language forms (written Cultural Slovak) with, however, simultaneous retention of the use of literary Czech under certain conditions;

3) a return toward a Czech-Slovak diglossic situation through a return to more rigorous use of literary Czech at the expense of further development of the Czech-Slovak hybrid forms.

The second and third of these three stages are of particular interest from a sociolinguistic standpoint and merit special attention from researchers because of the complex dynamic involved in the interaction of multiple language varieties. Konstantin Lifanov has recently drawn attention to the

complexity of the linguistic situation among the Slovak Protestants during this period, stating:

„The return to the Czech literary language among the Slovak Protestants happens not only in the sphere of religious literature, but also in high-style poetry, science, etc., but nevertheless not in all aspects of writing. In administrative-legal documents and popular poetry, i.e., in spheres common to both Catholics and Protestants, the Slovak literary language of the old type [slovakij literarnyj jazyk starogo tipa, i.e., written Cultural Slovak – MRL] continued to function, but in contrast to the first, the Protestants considered it not as a language ‚of writing’ but as a ‚simple’ language. [...] From this it can be seen that the Czech literary language and the Slovak literary language of the old type found themselves in a relationship of complementary distribution among the Slovak Protestants. The Czech literary language, having arisen in another linguistic community and represented by a large and authoritative corpus of texts, above all by the Kralická Bible, was considered as the higher, codified form of the native language. It occurred exclusively as a written language and was never used as a means of daily interaction. In this way, in the first decades of the 17th century there arises among the Slovak Protestants a diglossic situation, as not found among the Catholics, i.e., diglossia permeated Slovak society from the inside as a mark of religious confession. [...] The establishing of the presence of diglossia among the Protestants clears up many questions in the history of the Slovak literary language and, in particular, the reason for their sharply negative attitude toward Bernolák’s codification” (2000, 57).

Thus Lifanov also considers 17th century Protestant language use worthy of closer investigation, and he too sets this investigation within a sociolinguistic framework of diglossia. However, what Lifanov characterizes here simply as a „diglossic situation,” might be better analyzed within the more elaborate typology of diglossia proposed by Paul Wexler (Wexler 1971). One of the models of diglossia proposed by Wexler in this typology „involves expansion on the plane of the written norm” (1971, 339). In this model multiple written norms (high language varieties) arise in an otherwise typical diglossia situation (involving a single standardized high language variety and non-standardized, low language varieties). According to Wexler, „Here the *raison d’être* [of these multiple written norms] is rarely functional distribution, but rather marked sociological, political and/or territorial cleavages within an historically unified speech community” (1971, 339). In terms

of the situation outlined above for the Slovak Protestants during the 16th–17th centuries, there is an initial Czech-Slovak diglossic situation which appears to be headed toward resolution through a hybrid Czech-Slovak language (Cultural Slovak), however, the re-implementation of literary Czech causes a slowing in the developmental process of this Czech-Slovak hybrid and results in the use of two written high language varieties (literary Czech and Cultural Slovak) alongside each other in addition to the low language varieties of spoken Slovak. What is interesting in the situation among the Slovak Protestants, especially if one accepts the analysis of this situation proposed by Lifanov, is that the reason for the existence alongside each other of both literary Czech and Cultural Slovak high language varieties seems to be specifically a *functional distribution* of the two written norms and not the „marked sociological, political and/or territorial cleavages” proposed as more common by Wexler.

Another possible analysis for the 17th century linguistic situation among the Slovak Protestants is that it represents a case of *schizoglossia* in Wexler’s typology of diglossia (Wexler 1971 and 1992). Schizoglossia is also a situation where multiple high language varieties arise in an otherwise typical diglossia situation. However, schizoglossia is specifically characterized by the fact that the „dual written norms continue to coexist even after the geographical [or other] stimulus has been removed” (Wexler 1971, 341).<sup>9</sup> If further analysis of the language situation among the Slovak Protestants were to reveal that the distribution of the two high language varieties (literary Czech and Cultural Slovak) did, in fact, not follow lines of complementary functional distribution as suggested by Lifanov, but rather coexisted in all, or at least many, of the functional domains of written communication, we would be dealing with a case of schizoglossia in 17th century Slovakia.

In order to investigate fully the evolution of language use among the Slovak Protestants during this period, it is necessary to assemble a corpus of texts that represents the full chronological range from the late 16th through the 17th century, as well as a broad geographical scope and a wide range of authors. There are, of course, studies of the language of late 16th–17th century texts, but such studies tend to focus on the linguistic description of individual texts or small groups of texts (see for example Lifanov 1991). These

<sup>9</sup> According to Wexler (1992, 43 note 5) the term „schizoglossia” in this usage actually originated with Einar Haugen in his study of the modern Norwegian linguistic situation. See Haugen 1966.

studies are valuable for the information that they provide regarding the language use of a given individual or regarding linguistic tendencies at a given time or in a given place, and linked together, it is possible to discern from these individual studies certain patterns of development. Yet it is only through the investigation of a larger corpus that it might be possible to sketch out in a more cohesive fashion, with fuller illustrative detail, the broader picture of language development during this time, and to my knowledge, no one has yet performed this type of large corpus study on the language of the Slovak Protestants in the late 16th–17th centuries.

The most significant aspect of a large-scale study of late 16th–17th century Slovak Protestant texts is that it is possible to assemble and investigate a corpus that specifically includes multiple genres, thereby allowing for a determination of whether the linguistic situation among 17th century Slovak Protestants should be described as schizoglossic or as diglossic with multiple high varieties in complementary distribution. While the available Czech (or mixed Czech-Slovak) textual corpus from Slovakia from the 15th to mid 16th centuries is made up largely of administrative-legal texts with relatively few extant religious or belletristic manuscripts, the period of the late 16th through the 17th centuries provides, for the first time, a wider range of works written in Czech or mixed Czech-Slovak beyond the administrative-legal domain. Thus, in assembling a corpus of late 16th–17th century Slovak Protestant texts, „variety of genres” becomes as important a consideration as breadth of chronological, geographical and author distribution in assuring the completeness of the corpus. Sermons, prayers, catechisms, instructional and polemical religious books, hymns, poetry, travelogues, memoirs and personal letters are available from 17th century Slovak Protestant writers such as Samuel Chalupka (1600–1668), Joachim Kalinka (1601–1678), Eliaš Láni (1570–1618), Ondrej Lucae (1596–1670), Tobiaš Masník (1640–1697), Daniel Sinapius-Horčička (1640–1688), Ján Simonides (1648–1708) and others.

This availability of a wider variety of text genres should allow us to determine whether the distribution of literary Czech and Cultural Slovak was complementary along functional lines or whether there were other factors at work. Encompassing highly formal yet somewhat personal sermons and prayers, potentially less formal/more personal travelogues, memoirs and letters, and again more formal but highly impersonal administrative-legal documents, the broader range of written genres available in the late 16th–17th centuries allows us to look for a shift in the style of language used and an adoption of a different



linguistic code to reflect that shift in style from one text type to the next. In other words, we can attempt to ascertain whether a Protestant preacher, who perhaps used a fairly „pure” Czech with very few Slovakisms in his sermon writing, used a more highly Slovakized language form in his personal correspondence, and even a third different linguistic form in composing a document of church administration. Katarína Habovštiaková, in a study of lexical items collected from a corpus of religious and administrative-legal texts from the pre-Bernolák period, makes the following statements in this regard: „The entire linguistic character of religious literature is *more Slovak* in comparison to administrative-legal writings; Bohemisms occur more seldom in it than in writings of an administrative-legal nature [emphasis added]” (1968b, 157) and „In religious literature, especially that literature connected with preaching, the author’s personality, his ability to express a given thought even with a certain artistic intent, appears to a greater degree than in writings of an administrative-legal nature or in specialized professional literature” (1968b, 157).<sup>10</sup> Habovštiaková’s conclusion that the language of religious writings shows greater Slovak interference than the language of administrative-legal texts is based on largely statistical work (see also Habovštiaková 1968a) that does not bring the parameters of chronology, geography, author, genre or religious confession into the analysis of the data, hence her remarks can only be regarded as generalizations. However her preliminary work in this area does appear to show at least a general differentiation in language use in the two types of texts investigated, and it is sufficiently convincing to encourage further, more detailed work on the issue of variation across textual genre in the pre-Bernolák writing of the Slovak Protestants.

The question of variation across genres in Slovak Protestant writings is a significant one within the sociolinguistic framework of diglossia: 1) because of what it might demonstrate concerning the potential resolution of the diglossic situation in the 17th century Slovak-speaking territories, and 2) because of what it might reveal about the further interaction between Catholics and Protestants in the final resolution of the Slovak language question through the programmatic codification efforts of Anton Bernolák and Ľudovít Štúr in the 18th-19th centuries.

<sup>10</sup> Although Habovštiaková seems to be making these comments as generalizations for the entire pre-Bernolák period, it should be noted that the textual examples that she provides in the article cited here come primarily from the early 18th century.

1) Determining whether texts from different genres show differing degrees of Slovakization, and whether there are differing degrees of stability of this Slovakized Czech from genre to genre, could help us determine whether a significant shift was in progress among the Slovak Protestants toward a standardized Czech-Slovak language (Cultural Slovak) in the 17th century – a shift that would then have been halted by the reintroduction of a stricter adherence to the literary Czech norm. Pauliny goes so far as to speculate that: „It is possible perhaps to conclude that the Slovak Protestants would have unequivocally worked their way through to a Slovak literary language if Recatholicization hadn’t arrived” (1983, 111).

2) Determining the exact nature of the diglossic, or perhaps schizoglossic, situation among 17th century Slovak Protestants could help to shed light on questions of standard language development in the following centuries. Lifanov states that, „The establishing of the presence of diglossia [i.e., multiple-high variety/low variety diglossia or perhaps even schizoglossia – MRL] among the Protestants clears up many questions in the history of the Slovak literary language and, in particular, the reason for their sharply negative attitude toward Bernolák’s codification” (2000, 57).

The validity of such statements by Pauliny and Lifanov can only be verified through in-depth, large-scale studies of textual corpora of the type proposed here – studies that take into account the socio-historical parameters and the chronological, geographical, author and genre variables of the 17th century situation among the Slovak Protestants.

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