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SLOVENIAN ORTHOGRAPHY AND ORTHOEPY BETWEEN STANDARD, WRITTEN AND LITERARY LANGUAGE

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In the article, we discuss the relationship between orthography and orthoepy, the relationship of the Slovene language to writing and public speaking, which developed within the South Slavic languages. The Slovene language is quite bound to notation, but the main problem is the accent and pronunciation of vowels – other phonetic changes are relatively predictable and learnable. We briefly discuss the issue also within the Slovene school system, but above all we attempt to offer solutions for high-quality literary expression and public communication.

Keywords: Slovene, orthoepy, literary language, phonology, sociophonetics

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to Slovene linguistics, orthoepy is still considered as something that is less definite and less definable, if we conclude that there is still no independent codification book of orthography. The vagueness of Slovene orthoepy, in the sense of the institutional confirmation of an independent orthoepy book, therefore triggers many manipulations and subjective evaluation of the phonetic-phonological regularities of the Slovene language, which are relevant for codification. We want to point out the relevant orthoepy criteria for the Slovene language and justify the importance of the literary

language for Slovene public speech. In recent decades, the orthoepic science of phonetics has made concrete steps forward with the help of many articles, measurements, and research. However, the question of the literary standard, standard itself and spoken or written language in Slovene public speech today and in the past remains unresolved, which needs to be precisely defined both in terms of content and terminology. Above all, we need to clarify the basic linguistic orientation towards knowing and observing the rules of public speaking (rhetoric) and speech (orthoepy, with phonetics and phonology). Etymologically, the term orthoepy means “correct speech”: the term is from the Greek ὀρθοέπεια, from ὀρθός orthos (“correct”) and ἔπος epos (“speech”). What is correct is then often in opposition to incorrect pronunciation, incorrect accentuation, etc.

METHODS AND MATERIAL

The basic method used in this article will be discursive-analytical, based on a comprehensive review of various sources far back in history, relevant scientific articles and codification books. These various sources include, among others, material obtained on the basis of analysis of audio data from the Slovenian national television RTV between the years 2000 and 2020, as well as research papers from 2003 and 2008 (Tivadar, 2003c, 2008). On this basis, we make new theoretical conclusions and directions and solutions regarding the modern codification of the Slovene spoken language.

SPEECH, ORTHOGRAPHY AND ORTHOEPY

“Enunciate any vowel, even consonant audibly and only stressed syllables get the accent.”¹ (Novice, 1861: 252)

In the territory of Slovenia, speech was basically tied to the written language, as the Slovene territory was very dialectally diverse, and until the end of the 19th century, Slovene was not very present in the spoken public situation, especially not in the sense of an actual country. Dialect diversity is still present in Slovenia, at least from a phonetic-phonological point of view. We must emphasize that the language of central Slovenia plays a decisive

¹ Novice, the most widely read newspaper of the time, advocates in this case for the most articulate pronunciation possible, which should be close to most speakers. Compressed syllables mean syllables or vowels that have been formed from several vowels, for example *pojó* instead of *pójejo*. At that time, they advocated the principle of “read as it is written”, which is the opposite of Vuk's principle of “write as you speak”. Orthography therefore retained a large role also in orthoepic codification.

role in the formation of the literary language, but it is not (was) the only one. The system of the literary language took into account provincial and social stratification and took certain elements also from the south and north side of Ljubljana and more distant regions (mainly Koroška and Štajerska), thereby acquiring a universal communicative function (cf. Tivadar, 2008: 12). The standard speech began to be cultivated where it was most needed: in speeches, lectures, in the theatre and at school. It started in Ljubljana, the cultural centre, where educated people from different dialect areas began to gather with the establishment of the university in 1919. The unified expression was created as a compromise of mainly central and also marginal Slovene languages, it was placed above dialects and is not a dead formation of the language (Rupel, 1946: 6). Nevertheless, speech is not the same as writing, even if we are talking about phonological (Slovene) orthography, which deviates more significantly from the written language in terms of accentuation (Slovene has free accent placement) and the quality of vowels (five letters in Slovenian indicate 8 vowels; more about this in relation to the Croatian language in Tivadar, 2003b). Basic speech rules also apply in the Slovene language.

Awareness of Speech as an Independent Articulatory Activity

We usually become aware of the peculiarities of speech and the meaning of speech only when we encounter problems, because an unpleasant sounding voice is tiring for both the speaker and the listeners (Škarić, 2005: 174). Within the Slovene environment, which also applies to the modern digital image world, awareness of the importance of regular efforts for the vitality of the articulatory organs is relatively low. Regardless of whether we are forced to speak in public on a daily basis or not, in educational systems (especially future pedagogues) we should acquire knowledge on how to nurture and maintain the quality of our voice. By following proper advice for preparing for speech performance, we would ensure better speech and reduce the chances of damage occurring to the speech organs (Omerza, 1970: 143), which Zdravko Omerza, as a leading Slovene speech therapist, warned about more than 50 years ago. Unfortunately, school programs also neglect speaking lessons, namely both when teaching Slovene (phonetics and phonology lessons) and during practical tasks, even during the matriculation examination, where the speaking part is rather unimportant (cf. Tivadar, 2015). However, a lot could already be done through high-quality articulation and spoken interpretation by teachers themselves, which still remains a big problem even today. Contemporary media and the public seem to value the relaxation and naturalness of speech and writing above all. This could also very much be due to the rise of social media and the speech and language used therein. But the com-

mitment to correct language is the basic guideline of high-quality rhetorical interpretation and also of high-quality communication (message exchange). Literary language, i.e. a single language standard is a language type (genre) that facilitates communication.

Description of the Slovene Speech Situation from the Point of View of Orthography and Orthoepy

“Slovenians are proud of our historical script, because we feel within it, despite considerable inconsistencies, the historical continuity of our culture from the founders of our literature, Trubar and Dalmatin, through Vodnik, Prešeren, Levstik and Cankar, to the present day.” (Vodušek, 1958–1959: 193)

At the end of the 19th century, the real development of the Slovene spoken language in public began, which had its start with a parliamentary speech in the provincial assembly (Svetec, 1861 in Novice, 1861–1962; cf. Tivadar, 2003a). The university played a very important role in the formation of the literary language, where the Slovene language asserted itself at the highest possible level of use – the first lecture was given by the slavist Fran Ramovš (December 3, 1919; Vidovič-Muha, 2005).² It was exactly the public use that stimulated the creation of modern dictionaries and the first real code of the language of orthography (Pleteršnik, Levec), in which Škrabec participated with advice and his linguistic thoughts, followed by Breznik. It was with Anton Breznik that the era of grammars and orthographies began (1934, 1920), who then continued the orthographic tradition together with Fran Ramovš (1935). Ordinance and speech have always (“traditionally”, Dular, 2002: 215) been part of orthography or grammar, but it appeared in an independent book only as late as in 1946 (Rupel, 1946). With the beginning of the fifties, the era of academic dictionaries and orthographies also began, however the speech itself stagnated at the level of discussions regarding the problem of the “*bralec*” vs “*bravec*” and the use and strict pronunciation of the letter l (*bil* vs *biy*, *žal* vs *žau*) (e.g. Urbančič, 1987), where there was again a connection with orthography. Then, in the 1960s, Toporišič attributed a greater role to phonetics with his *Slovenski jezik na pločama* (1961, published in Zagreb), which is actually the first orthoepic manual of the Slovene language for foreigners with audio recordings. Later, Toporišič, with a series of discussions in *Slovenski knjižni jezik, 1-4* (1965–1970), also continued

² It achieved its definitive confirmation and comprehensive representative role only at the end of the 20th century with the establishment of an independent state and all its institutions and the establishment of Slovene as an official language. The Slovene language was also introduced in the army in 1991 (Article 11 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia; on this and the relationship to the Serbo-Croatian language in Tivadar, 2003a).

with phonetics, which he included as a special chapter in his Slovene grammar *Slovenska slovnica* (1976), which in fact remains unchanged to this day. In addition, he also participated in the *Dictionary of Slovenian Literary Language* (1970–), where Jakob Rigler took over the majority of the determination and structuring of the orthoepic-phonetic characteristics of the Slovene literary language. An overview of the (non) treatment of spoken language in formal education (from primary schools to colleges) still shows a certain neglect in Slovene linguistics, as evidenced by the modern analysis of both curriculums and textbooks and the general matriculation examination, where phonological and speaking tasks are quite non-existing (less than 10%, if we deduct the 1st year, even less than 5%), and above all, the evaluation at the general matriculation is completely subordinated to the written part of the matriculation, especially the essay task (more about the state of Slovene education in Tivadar, 2015, 2016a).

Future Development of Slovene Phonetics

For the development of Slovene phonetics, this apparent lack of an independent orthoepic manual during the period of the greatest research and foundation of Slovene public formal speech was in fact not so fatal for the development of Slovene speech, since a multitude of spoken media developed especially after 1990. The development of the Slovene language has always been led by Ljubljana radio and television (Radio Ljubljana, today Radio Slovenia, was founded in 1928) with many programs (more at rvslo.si), today called Radio-Television of Slovenia (RTV). One positive element is also modern means of communication (several recordings and phonetic examples are available on the Internet), a new phonetic tutorial has been written with plenty of recordings and a precise visualisation of proper pronunciation (Tivadar & Batista, 2019) and an increase in interest in learning at universities and also outside the educational system (Tivadar, 2016b).

Uniform Literary Consciousness and Codification Then and Now

There is a very large dialectal stratification in Slovenia, and until the second half of the 19th century we even had different provincial standards (provincial literary languages – from Pohlin to the Prekmurje literary language, which as a special language standard gave way to the all-Slovene literary language only after 1919, when Prekmurje was annexed to the rest of Slovenia). That is why local linguistic and cultural awareness is very important, which also affects the attitude towards Slovene orthoepy. In Slovenia, speech as a primary ontological element is often very different from the standard language. Even in Ljubljana with the northern Slovene area (Gorenjska region), which is the

basis of Slovene literary expression both in terms of the place of stress (the same place of stress in both the dialect and the literary language) and the vowel system (8 vowel phonemes – /i/, /e/, /ɛ/, /a/, /ə/, /ɔ/, /o/, /u/, even the consonants and their phonotactic characteristics are more or less the same as the literary language in the Central Slovenia dialect), we have a considerable difference to the literary expression due to the reduction of vowels and consonants.

Thus, unstressed vowels, as well as stressed vowels (mainly /a/, but also /i/, /u/, less often /e/) are often reduced completely – vowel dropout (literary [ta'ko:] > dialectally ['tko:] 'that') – or partially – semivowel pronunciation (literary [b'ra:t] > dialectally ['brət] 'brother', literary ['ku:p] > dialectally ['kəp] 'heap', literary ['mɛ:ja] > dialectally ['məja] 'border'). Reduction in Slovene codification has not been written until now, although a lot of colloquialism has been appearing in the media recently, and there are also several reductions of vowels.

However, the opposite phenomenon also occurs when pronouncing a semivowel. In Slovene, semivowels are written with <e> and <r> when r is between two consonants.

Example: the relative adjective from Zadar (gen. Zadra) is written *zadrski* ['za:dərski].

According to modern codification, the predictable unstressed vowel is pronounced as [ɛ] in media speech.

Example: Biden [baɪden], the correct word would be [baɪdən], as it drops out in inflection – gen. Bidna [baɪdⁿna], similar to Foden, Pippen, etc.). Semivowel pronunciation is common in Slovene with the suffix -(ə)n- with words like *običajen* (*reven, beden*, etc.).

Consonants are also often reduced, especially in difficult-to-pronounce clusters (eg literary [ig'ri:ʃtʃɛ] > dialectally [ig'ri:ʃɛ]). In principle, at least 2 different consonants in Slovene are pronounced particularly articulately – the exception is, of course, the fusion of plosive and fricative t+s, (d+z), t+š and d+ž, where the affricate sound is pronounced (*odsedeti* - [otsedetɪ], *Kocbek* ['ko:ɖbɛk], *odšla* [ɔ'tʃ^lla:], *medžimurje* [medžⁱ'mu:rjɛ]).

In principle, Slovene phonemes affricates have their own letter or two letters (t+s>c, t+š>č and d+ž>dž).³

³ The phoneme dz is not yet part of the literary system in Slovene, but appears in a phonemic role (before vowels) only in foreign names or rare words of foreign origin (e.g. Eduard Ševardnadze, dzéta; more at: https://fran.si/iskanje?View=1&Query=dz*). In certain onomatopoeic sounds and some borrowed words, we can also pronounce dz, which is replaced with the letter c (cin vs dzin).

Literary Standard or Standardization in Relation to the Diversity of Slovene Dialects and Adopted Words

In the Slovene language area, standardization and literacy are often synonymous with standardized language. Here, the importance of codification, which is characteristic of the final standardized form, and at the same time proves the literacy of a certain language, must be highlighted. In Slovenia, we have had only one codification since the end of the 19th century, when the Levec orthography was written in 1899. We received our orthoepy 50 years later after Mirko Rupel wrote *Slovensko pravorečje* (1946), which is still the only monograph bearing that name (Slovene Orthoepy). Regarding the dialect systems of the Slovenian language, we must point out that we have 8 vowel phonemes and 21 consonant phonemes (more in Tivadar & Batista, 2019), and the accent is determined according to the Central Slovene speech, prescribed in SSKJ2 and SP 2001 (www.fran.si). As stated, all speakers must adapt when speaking in public. We have to switch to the literary language and speak appropriately – Central Slovene speakers adapt a bit less, but speakers from more peripheral dialects have to adapt significantly more. As we have already mentioned, orthoepy is traditionally considered within the framework of orthography, also within the framework of *Pravopis 8.0*, which is still being developed (see [www. https://www.fran.si/pravopis8](http://www.fran.si/pravopis8)). Within the new orthography, the main problem will be the definition of reduced vowels, which we described earlier. In addition, the influence of the script, which is otherwise an important part of the Slovene literary language. However, the written language must not excessively influence the pronunciation of the voices, which occurs especially in the case of borrowed words. The letter must play an important role in borrowed words only in rare phonologically relevant cases and in terms of ease of pronunciation, especially in inflection. When adopting foreign names, the principle applies that for foreign names, the closest Slovene sound is adopted, which is pronounced according to the phonetic system rules of the Slovene language, and also preserved is the place of the accent from the original language.

Examples: French Céline [se'li:n], Spanish Murillo [mu'ri:ljo], Hungarian Illyés ['i:jeʃ].

Relationship to Spelling and Pronunciation in Assumed Proper Names

In principle, the already mentioned rule applies in Slovene language, that you speak as written, of course with certain deviations. A bigger problem is borrowed words, where in the case of foreign names in Latin scripts, the

original notation is preserved, while the pronunciation is closer to the original language, taking into account the rules of the Slovene language, with Slovene phonemes, of course.

Examples: Dachau ['da:xaʊ] Dachaua ['da:xava]

In certain cases, the written form has a stronger influence, e.g. Leonard (Cohen), which is pronounced in the original US English: [lɛn'ɔrd], in Slovene is pronounced ['le:ɔnart]. The pronunciation in Slovene that is closer to English would be ['le:nart], but in Slovene we already have our own name Lenart, so we make a distinction and take into account the written form to a greater extent.

Of course, we also know some rules regarding the quality of vowels – therefore e before r in borrowed words is generally pronounced as an open-mid vowel: Molière [moljêr].

There are a lot of complicated examples of pronunciation, which will be explained in detail in a special chapter in the new *Pravopis 8.0*, taking into account the basic Slovene phonological principles shown in the phonological part of the grammar outline (https://www.fran.si/pravopis8/Poglavje/7/slovnichni_oris).

Compared to Croatian, the Slovene language does not have such problems with the pronunciation of consonants, as we do not distinguish between soft and hard č or ć, đ or j. However, Slovene has 8 vowels, while Croatian is simpler, as it has only 5 vowels (a, e, i, o, u), which are written with 5 letters, and the syllabic r. In terms of position and pronunciation and learning the standard accent, especially from the point of view of tonal accentuation, the Slovene and Croatian languages and linguistics are similar.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON MODERN SLOVENE ORTHOEPY

The science of codification in linguistics is often not sufficiently appreciated despite its social resonance, which is especially noticeable in Slovene linguistics. Considering the definitive unification of the Slovene literary language, the Slovene language is a relatively young language. Namely, it was finally formed in the form of an independent codification book at the end of the 19th century, when the so-called new forms were also finally established (Tivadar, 2012). The unification continued at the beginning of the 20th century, when the Eastern Slovene Prekmurje standard language, affirmed in many religious and secular literary works as well as in journalism and other genres, slowly merged with the unified Slovene literary language after the

annexation of Prekmurje to the Kingdom of SHS in 1919. Before the 19th century, the Slovene language had a long literary tradition, which developed mainly in the area of Central Slovenia, in the region of Kranjska. The inclusion of other parts of the Slovene cultural space and the unification of the Slovene literary language was a demanding project, which is still ongoing, as regional consciousness is still very much present in Slovenia, especially in terms of language. However, it is essential to point out that the Slovene language developed as a monocentric language that takes into account different geographical variations even in the public space. An important foundation is the description of spoken standard language in codification manuals (the latest will be *Pravopis 8.0*), the cultivation of rhetorical culture, the high-quality use of standard language in public and the teaching of proper speech from kindergartens, primary schools to faculties and the media.

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