

# Slovaks in Czechia – Czechs in Slovakia

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## 1 Introduction

Czech and Slovak are two closely related languages which together form the Czecho-Slovak sub-group of the West Slavonic languages, to which there belong two further subgroups, the Lusatian and the Lechitic. In spite of their similarity and a nearly complete mutual intelligibility (see below), the literary languages are clearly differentiated, which is among other things due to the fact that they were standardized on the basis of different dialects of the Czecho-Slovak dialectal continuum (Czech on the basis of the Central Bohemian dialects in the Prague area, Slovak on the basis of the Central Slovak dialects in the area of the town Martin). Although Czechs and Slovaks lived together in one state for the relatively short period of 68 years (1918–1938 and 1945–1992), compared to their long literary tradition (the first Czech texts were written in the second half of the 13th century), their linguistic relations have been very close since the middle ages. Most of the time, however, it was an asymmetrical relationship: Czech was used as a written language in the territory of contemporary Slovakia (at that time Upper Hungary) since the early 15th century, and even when slovakized varieties of Czech began to emerge (since the 16th century) and eventually a Slovak literary language was introduced (since the late 18th century), the Slovak literary tradition always developed in opposition to and in permanent contact with the Czech literary language. For some time Slovak was used to a larger extent by the catholic part of the population, whereas the protestants continued to write in Czech, the language in which their Bible was written.

After a period during which the use of the Czech language had been weakened, mainly due the centralist reforms of Maria Theresia and Joseph I., strengthening the importance of German as the language of the Empire, the Czech National Movement was successful in developing a new literary norm in the first half of the 19th century. This new norm was based on the language of the so-called “Golden Era” at the end of the 16th century and was quite different from the language as it was really spoken. From the 1850s, the National Movement managed to strengthen their influence on the educational system, and soon Czech was used in schools

of all levels. In 1882, Prague University was divided into a Czech and a German school. Czech was also freely used in newspapers and fine arts, though the National Movement did not gain any major success in the field of politics.

On the other hand, the situation of Slovak deteriorated in Upper Hungary under the pressure of Hungarian Nationalism. Slovak was banned from the schools after a short period of liberalization (ca. 1860–75), Slovak newspapers and books could be published (under hard censorship), but the literary language remained the affair of a small intellectual minority.

When Czechs and Slovaks gained independence in 1918 and came together in a common state, the Republic of Czechoslovakia, the situations of both languages were very uneven, and it is not surprising that Czech teachers, clerks etc. became very important in the Slovak part of the country, where they organized the school system and the public service. According to the constitution of 1920, the official language of the new country was to be “Czechoslovak”, but this was a fiction, since both languages continued to be used as literary languages. Nevertheless the situation remained asymmetrical, since literary Slovak was codified under strong Czech influence and in many situations Czech was preferred even within Slovakia (Marti 1993).

After 1930 the relations between Czechs and Slovaks deteriorated, as the Slovaks had not been granted the autonomy which they had expected after gaining independence. At this time, Slovak scholars also began to protest against Czech influence on their literary language and rejected a proposal of new orthography rules, put forward in 1931). In March 1938, Slovak nationalists founded their own republic, the “Slovak State”, which was entirely dependent on Nazi Germany and also participating in World War II on the side of the German troops. During this period the codification of literary Slovak was deliberately set apart from Czech. After the Slovak National Uprising in August 1944 and the victory of the Allied Powers in 1945 the Republic of Czechoslovakia was restituted.

After 1945 the idea of a “Czechoslovak” language was not revived. The Slovak literary language was allowed to develop more freely than before the War, but continued to be under Czech influence. Only in 1968, when Czechoslovakia was turned into a federal state, Slovak gained complete equality with Czech. This situation continued after the peaceful revolution of autumn 1989. The discussions about the status of Slovak as a “state language” which began to emerge within Slovakia since summer 1990 did not concern the relation of Slovak and Czech, but rather of Slovak and Hungarian (which is used as a minority language in Southern Slovakia). Nevertheless the division of Czechoslovakia into two independent states from January 1st 1993 caused a thorough change in the relations between these languages, since now there is no factual “need” for either side to take the other language into account in legislation, administration, the educational system

etc. On the other hand, new problems arise for the rather large Slovak minority in Czechia, but also for the much smaller Czech minority in Slovakia.

This paper will give a short overview of the relation of both languages and their speakers in former times and will concentrate on the period from 1968–92 (equality within one state) and the new situation from 1993. I will begin with some demographic data and a short characteristic of the legal situation and will then describe the presence of (written and spoken) Czech texts in Slovakia and Slovak texts in Czechia. After this I will concentrate on the questions of mutual intelligibility of both languages and the factual influence of Czech on Slovak and vice versa.

## **2 Migration and Minorities**

The ancestors of modern Czechs and Slovaks lived together in one state, the so called “Great Moravian Empire” in the beginning of their history (from about 830 to 900). Since the arrival of the Hungarians in Pannonia, those Slavs who in the future were to become the Slovak ethnical group, lived within the borders of the Kingdom of Hungary, in the part called “Upper Hungary” (“Hungaria superior”, in Slovak “Horné Uhry”). The Czechs, on the other side, had their own state, the Kingdom of Bohemia, which comprised Moravia, Silesia and other regions. From 1526 Hungary and Bohemia were ruled by the same dynasty, the Habsburgs, but until 1918 both regions constituted separate administrative units with their own gentry, legislation etc. The difference was even strengthened when Hungary became an part of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy in 1867 having equal rights, whereas Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia did not gain autonomy and remained under immediate Austrian (i. e. German) rule.

In spite of the political division of these two nations there was some migration in both directions during the Middle Ages. Intellectuals of Slovak origin came to Prague, in order to study there and eventually staid there (e. g. the grammarian Vavřinec Benedikt z Nudožer). Slovaks from Southern Slovakia fled to Southern Moravia after the Turkish invasion into Hungary, their descendants still form a specific ethnic group in the region called “Slovácko”, but today are considered to be part of the Czech nation. After the victory of Catholicism in Bohemia and Moravia many protestants came to “Upper Hungary”, where the literary language of the Czech bible was continued to be cultivitated in a slightly slovakized form (known under the name of “bibličtina”).

In the second half of the 19th century economic emigration from the rural parts of Slovakia became more and more important. The largest group emigrated overseas, many others to Hungary, but also to the Czech lands. This tendency became

predominant after 1918, when Slovak workers mainly came to the industrial region of Ostrava, but also to other parts of the country (cf. Prokop, Šrajerová, Sommer, and Gímeš 1998: 56ff.). On the other hand many Czech officials, teachers etc. came to Slovakia in order to establish a new administrative and educational system. These developments were the reason why the Slovak minority in the Czech lands and the Czech minority in Slovakia belonged to completely different social groups.

In 1938, a large part of the Czech minority in Slovakia had to leave the country, and only some of them returned after 1945. In contrast, Slovak emigration to the Czech lands became even stronger after World War II, since many Slovaks (and Roms from Slovakia) migrated to those regions in the North and West of Bohemia and Moravia from which the German population had been expelled (cf. Zeman 1995: 525, Nekvapil 1997: 1643). Together with the continuing economic migration this caused the Slovak community in Czechia to become so much larger than the Czech community in Slovakia.

When Czechoslovakia was divided into two separate states in 1992/93, most Czechs in Slovakia obtained the citizenship of the new state. The same applies to Slovaks in Czechia, though there was some tendency to exclude part of the Slovak speaking Roma. A very small, but prominent group of Slovak intellectuals left Slovakia after it was declared independent, and emigrated to the Czech republic.

The migration in both directions can be illustrated by demographic data, but only to some extent. There are no reliable data before World War II since Czechs and Slovaks were not differentiated in official statistics and treated as one "Czechoslovak" nation until 1938. A special problem is connected with the fact that statistics were always based on the "principle of confession", this implies that immigrants who were willing to assimilate could define themselves as members of the majority. It is also relevant that until 1989 it was not possible to declare oneself as Rom (nor as Moravian, Silesian etc.). This might explain that the number of Roms noted in the census of 1991 is much lower than one might expect.

The distribution of the nationalities at the censuses of 1950, 1970 and 1991 is as follows (according to SRČSSR 1971: 85, and SRČR 1993: 412):

	absolute figures			percentage		
	1950	1970	1991	1950	1970	1991
Czech republic						
Czechs	8344	9293	8364	93.8%	94.7%	81.2%
Moravians			1362			13.2%
Slovaks	258	309	315	2.9%	3.2%	3.1%
Roms			33			0.3%
others	294	213	228	3.3%	2.1%	2.2%
Slovak republic						
Slovaks	2982	3884	4519	86.6%	85.5%	85.7%
Czechs	40	48	53	1.2%	1.1%	1.0%
Hungarian	355	554	567	10.3%	12.2%	10.8%
Roms			76			1.4%
others	65	56	59	1.9%	1.2%	0.9%

A last interesting fact which should be mentioned is that recent Statistical Yearbooks of the Czech Republic (e. g. SRČR 1999) do not give any figures on nationalities at all. This does not apply for the Slovak yearbook (cf. ŠRSR 1999: 167).

### 3 The Legal Situation

As mentioned before, Czechs and Slovaks were regarded as one “Czechoslovak” nation in the first Czechoslovak republic founded in 1918. This effected that they enjoyed equal rights before the law (in opposition to the numerous minorities). The language situation, however, was more complicated. Although the constitution of 1920 stated that there was a “Czechoslovak” language, the language law issued in the same year said that this language had two varieties, Czech and Slovak. Each of them was to be used in its own territory, but Czech was the language of the central administration. This automatically meant that Czech was in a much stronger position, also considering that the Czech literary language had been able to develop freely during the second half of the 19th century, and was prepared to take on the role of a state language much better than Slovak. This led to a situation where Czech was clearly privileged compared to Slovak (for more detailed information see Marti 1993).

After the period from 1938-1945 when Slovak was the sole language of the “Slovak state”, and the position of Czech was weakened by the German occupants (though books and newspapers could be issued and Czech continued to be taught in schools), Czechs and Slovaks again enjoyed equal rights in the post-war Czechoslovak republic. The idea of a “Czechoslovak” language was not renewed and the situation of Slovak improved. This was due to the fact that Slovakia gained

autonomy to a certain degree (with its own government), but also to the fact that by then, there were many more Slovak intellectuals than in 1918 and the literary language had developed considerably in the meantime. But the situation as a whole remained rather asymmetrical: Czech prevailed in all contexts where members of both nations were present and Czech texts played an important role in Slovakia whereas the same could not be said in the reverse. The Czechoslovak army seems to have been the only institution where both languages were used to the same extent.

In 1968 Czechoslovakia was turned into a federal state with a Czech and a Slovak republic, which were constituted in a similar way and with the same rights. The federal government transferred part of its powers to the governments of both republics, from which time there was also a Czech government (it played a much less important role than the Slovak government until 1989). Though there was no official language law, the federalization brought about a new language policy which aimed at real equality of Czech and Slovak. For the first time measures were taken to support the use of both languages in both parts of the federation. Mixed texts with alternating passages in Czech and Slovak began to be used in many official contexts, e. g. in the radio and television news, the same applied to many popular and scientific journals (but not to newspapers). Consequently, Slovak was now used frequently in the Czech part of country, and many more people got accustomed to understanding the other language passively.

It must be stressed that this policy also took advantage of the fact that Czech and Slovak were closely related. Each individual had the right to use his/her native language in each part of the federation, but there was no obligation for the authorities to produce every text in both languages nor to secure formal education in the other language. Two examples shall be given to illustrate this fact: Slovak judges who worked in the Czech part of the country could write their verdicts etc. in Slovak (cf. Pohanka 1993), but it was not possible to study Slovak in Prague or Czech in Bratislava (cf. Kořenský 1998: 32)! Theoretically the Slovak minority in the Czech Republic or the Czech minority in the Slovak Republic had the right to receive education in their own language, but *de facto* there were only some Slovak schools in the region of Karviná (Northern Moravia resp. Silesia). To my knowledge there have not been any Czech schools in Slovakia after 1945.

After the end of communist rule in 1989 the relations between Czechs and Slovaks, which had been stable for quite a long time, began to change. The nationalist organization “Matica slovenská” opened a discussion of the status of Slovak which to their opinion was threatened especially in the South of the country (i. e. in the territory of the Hungarian minority). In summer 1990 they introduced a language law, according to which Slovak was to be “state language” (“štátny jazyk”) in Slovakia. Such a law would have been in contradiction to the constitution, hence

the Slovak parliament finally passed a much weaker version of the bill and declared Slovak to be the “administrative language” (“úradny jazyk”) of the Slovak republic, in spite of numerous protests and demonstration. When the nationalist parties who advocated much stronger autonomy of Slovakia or even independence, had won the elections in 1992, they brought forward a new constitution, which says in article 6 that “Slovak is the state language on the territory of the Slovak Republic” and that “the use of other languages in dealings with the authorities will be regulated by law”. The approval of this constitution by the Slovak parliament on 2 September 1992 confirmed the end of Czechoslovakia.

The treatment of minorities in the two new states differs considerably. The new Czech constitution of 16 December 1992 does not mention a state language and even the state nation. The “Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms” says that everybody is free to determine to which nationality he belongs to, and guarantees the rights of minorities. On the whole the situation of Slovaks in the Czech republic did not change. There is, for example, still one Slovak school in Silesia with 38 pupils (cf. SRČR 1999: 553; Sokolová, Hernová, and Šrajerová 1997: 107f.), but it should be stressed that their numbers have decreased dramatically (two schools with 584 pupils in 1990/91!). The idea to found a Slovak secondary school in Prague could not be realized since there were too few prospective pupils (cf. Nekvapil 2000: 689f.). No new legal provisions have been introduced though there were discussions in recent times if a language law might be necessary, but this concerns the growing influence of English rather more than the use of minority languages like Slovak.

The situation in Slovakia is completely different. The tendency which had begun with the constitution was continued by the notorious “Law on the State Language of the Slovak Republic” of December 15th 1995. This law prescribes the use of Slovak in many areas of daily life and allows the minority languages only in contexts which are guaranteed by international human right covenants (this concerns mainly education in the mother tongue and religious services). The law even regulates that doctors and nurses have to speak with their patients in Slovak (§ 18), that foreign songs which are broadcast have to be introduced in Slovak (§ 5) etc. Audiovisual productions intended for children up to 12 years must be dubbed (§ 5(2)). On the other hand, text books in foreign languages may be used at universities (§ 4(5)).

The “Law on the State Language of the Slovak Republic” was widely understood as a law against the Hungarian minority, but some of its prescriptions are also relevant for the use of Czech texts. As Nábělková (1999: 78) points out, the official explication of the law contains some passages which are directed against alleged bohemisms in Slovak. On the other hand § 5(1) says that radio and television reports can be broadcast in foreign languages if they are dubbed or “fulfil

in another way the condition of fundamental intelligibility from the view of the state language”. As I have pointed elsewhere (cf. Berger 2000: 182f.) this can refer only to Czech texts, so that Czech is still privileged in comparison to other minority languages. This became even clearer after the “Law on the Use of Minority Languages” was passed by the Slovak parliament on July 11th 1999, since this law says explicitly in § 6: “This law assumes that the use of the Czech language in official contacts complies with the conditions of basic compatibility with the state language, provided that international agreements to which Slovakia is a signatory do not specify otherwise.”

At the end of this chapter I would like to mention that both minorities have their organizations. The Slovak minority in Czechia is represented by the “Community of Slovaks in the Czech Republic” (“Obec Slovákov v ČR”) which issues the monthly journal “Korene” (“Roots”), the Czech minority in Slovakia by the “Association of Czech in Slovakia” (“Spolek Čechů na Slovensku”, cf. Hošková 1994, 138). Three Slovak representatives are members of the “Council for Nationalities” (“Rada pro národnosti”) which was established by the Czech government in 1993.

#### **4 Slovak Written Texts in Czechia – Czech Written Texts in Slovakia**

Czech books have played an important role in Slovakia since the Middle Ages. Even when more and more texts were written in Slovakized Czech or predecessors of literary Slovak the Slovak protestants continued to use Czech bibles and liturgical books (some of them until about 1990, cf. Berger 1997: 176f.). Until 1918, book production in Slovakia was very low and often hindered by the Hungarian authorities. During this period Slovak books came to the Czech lands only rarely.

When Czechoslovakia had gained independence in 1918 Slovak books could be printed without any problems, nevertheless Czech texts continued to be used. This was especially true for scientific literature which developed rather slowly, but Czech newspapers and journals were read in Slovakia as well. The short period of the “Slovak State” did not suffice to limit the influence of Czech texts in a substantial way, after World War II the number of Slovak texts increased slowly. For example, Slovak texts were included in Czech text-books since 1945 (cf. Hedvičáková 1985).

After 1968, the deliberate policy which aimed at supporting the equality of both languages led to the appearance of Slovak texts in the Czech part of the country. This happened mainly in connection with mixed texts (see above), but to some extent books were produced exclusively in Slovak, too. Sometimes a specialized



scientific publication was issued only in Slovak, this was especially true for translations of philosophical texts which could be published in Slovakia more freely than in the Czech Republic. But also in this period Czech books played a much bigger role in Slovakia (where they constituted a large part of the assortment of book shops) than Slovak books in Czechia, Czech newspapers were brought to the Slovak part of the country, but not vice versa etc. (cf. Nemcová and Ondrejovič 1992). To some extent Czech texts were translated into Slovak (this concerned legal and administrative texts, text books etc.), the translation of Slovak texts into Czech was rather seldom (mainly fiction and other literary texts).

The division of Czechoslovakia in 1992 led to an end of the mixed texts. Some common institutions continued for a short period (some scientific organizations remained “Czechoslovak” until 1995/96), but on the whole there was no need to produce such texts, with the exception of politically motivated enterprises like the Czech-Slovak journal “Mosty” (“Bridges”), which continues to be issued in both languages. Written Slovak texts are very rare in the Czech Republic today, though one sometimes may find books issued in Slovakia in Czech book shops.

The situation in Slovakia is more complicated. Though the government supports the production of Slovak books, and books in foreign languages are banned from many areas by the “Law on the State Language”, Czech books continue to be sold in book shops. In this context it is interesting to note that the “Law on the State Language” allows text books in foreign languages to be used at universities. But there are also new phenomena: Nábělková (1996, 1998, 1999) and Rangelová (1997) have described new mixed texts which are made for economic reasons. Since producers have to use Czech texts on packages of industrial products for sale in the Czech Republic and since the same reason necessitates Slovak texts for the Slovak market, more and more producers simply use texts in both languages side by side. This is a completely new phenomenon as in former times everybody was expected to be able to read texts in both languages and no necessity was seen to translate these sorts of texts. Probably all Czech and Slovak speakers are still able to understand such texts (which contain mainly terminological items), but the double version is caused by the new legal situation.

Summing up, one can state that written Czech texts are still present in Slovakia, although probably to a smaller extent than before, whereas written Slovak texts are very rare in Czechia (with the exception of the “new mixed texts” on packages).

## **5 Spoken Slovak in Czechia – Spoken Czech in Slovakia**

The question of spoken Slovak in the Czech Republic and spoken Czech in the Slovak Republic can be regarded from two points of view. On the one hand it

is interesting to see to which degree immigrant communities maintain their own language, on the other hand the influence of the radio and of audio-visual media (films, television) should not be underestimated.

From the Middle Ages until the 19th century, Slovaks coming to the Czech lands seem to have been assimilated rather quickly, many of them regarded literary Czech as their own language (cf. quite a lot of writers and scientists who came to Prague in the 19th century). Groups of emigrants who settled together tended to preserve their language more consequently, so some of the originally Slovak dialects in Southern Moravia (the so-called “kopaničárská nářečí”, cf. Bělič 1972: 26) did not possess the typically Czech phoneme /ř/ until the 20th century.

After 1918 the situation changed and became asymmetrical, again in connection with the Czech predominance. The Czech officials, teachers etc. preserved their language rather consequently. Of course, some of them learnt to speak Slovak, and part of their descendants were assimilated if they stayed in Slovakia (as mentioned above, many of them left the country in 1938), but until today the Czech minority in Slovakia uses in Czech in most situations (cf. Ondrejovič 1997: 1672). The situation was quite different in the case of Slovak intellectuals in the Czech lands, most of whom tended to acquire a pretty high level of competence in spoken Czech.

Unfortunately no reliable statistics on the question how many Czechs speak Slovak and how many Slovaks speak Czech are available. Budovičová (1974, 1986) mentions an inquiry among Czechs made in 1971 where 12% said that they were able to speak Slovak actively, 55% said that they had passive knowledge and 33% said that they didn't understand Slovak at all. The fact that one third of the group claimed something very improbable, considerably lowers the value of the inquiry.

The asymmetry of Czech and Slovak speakers is still visible today: To my experience many Slovak intellectuals (even of the younger generation) are able to speak Czech, especially with a foreigner (whereas they tend to use Slovak when speaking with Czechs). On the other hand, I have met only few Czech intellectuals who are really able to speak Slovak (though quite a lot of them pretend to be able to). Only in recent times Slovaks in the Czech Republic intentionally began to preserve their own language. – The situation was somehow different with the Slovak workers in Silesia, who retained their language much better in the beginning, but show the “normal” tendencies of assimilation within the next generations (cf. Sokolová 1985; Sokolová 1991; Sokolová, Hernová, and Šrajerová 1997: 77ff., Nekvapil 1997, 1644 ).

The influence of the media began to be relevant in the 1920s. Almost from the beginning both parts of the country had their own radio stations (in Prague since 1923, in Bratislava since 1926), whereas the Czech film industry was much more

important than the Slovak one (which *de facto* started only after World War II). Thus, films and later television strengthened the presence of spoken Czech in Slovakia. From 1968, mixed texts were characteristic for television and newsreels in cinemas, and spoken Slovak became familiar to most Czech speakers.

Since the division of Czechoslovakia, mixed texts have disappeared from the media, nevertheless the presence of both languages in the other country is still remarkable. This is quite natural in the case of Slovakia, where the film industry (which was smaller than the Czech one) suffered even more from the economical crisis. Therefore only a small amount of Slovak films can be produced, many Czech films continue to be shown in Slovak cinemas (the quota of Slovak films seems to be less than 25%, cf. Berger 2000: 186). Only films for children are dubbed regularly (in accordance with the “Law on the State Language”). The same is true for television, so one has to agree with Nábělková (1998: 97) who says that television programs belong to the few areas where the Czechoslovak bilingualism has survived. Czech broadcasting is quite rare, with the exception of musical performances.

In the Czech Republic, Slovak music is being broadcast from time to time, but Slovak television programs are popular as well. This is partly due to political reasons, so for example the very popular satiric program by Milan Markovič was regularly shown on Czech television after it had been banned from the official Slovak television (on the other hand, more and more Czechs do not fully understand the puns, cf. Zeman 1997b). For economic reasons radio and television stations cannot afford correspondents in all countries, so it happens quite often that Czech correspondents inform the Slovak public as well (and vice versa).

On the whole it can be said that Czech speakers are confronted with spoken Slovak quite often, though to still a lesser degree than Slovak speakers are confronted with Czech (spoken and written!) texts.

## **6 The Question of Mutual Intelligibility**

All those various contacts between Czech and Slovak speakers which I have described so far are possible only in connection with the fact that both languages are mutually intelligible to a large extent. This fact makes it possible that each speaker can use his/her own language when communicating with a speaker of the other language. This phenomenon is well known and mentioned in the literature quite often, but there are only a few specialized studies dealing with this problem in detail. A whole series of articles has been written by V. Budovičová who has called the phenomenon “passive bilingualism” (cf. Budovičová 1974, Budovičová 1986, also Kořenský 1998: 30) and later “semi-communication” (cf. Budovičová 1987a, Budovičová 1987b). The second term, which will be used in this article, too, can

be traced back to Haugen (1967) who described the inter-scandinavian communication as “semi-communication”. Still another term was used by Horecký (1995) who speaks about “diglossic communication”.

Unfortunately all studies known to me have concentrated on the mere fact of describing that semi-communication exists and in which situations it is used. Even Budovičová (who has contributed four studies) has not gone into more detail to find under which conditions semi-communication works, which are its pre-conditions and its limits. Nobody has so far dealt with the questions how semi-communication is acquired by children and since when the phenomenon exists in Czech-Slovak relations. So far a detailed analyze of authentic dialogs had been given only by Vrbová (1997), and a detailed description of the conversational behavior of Slovaks living in Prague has been given by Hoffmannová and Müllerová (1993b), Hoffmannová and Müllerová (1993a). Some interesting remarks can also be found in Sochová (1991), Zeman (1995) and (Zeman 1997a).

With regard to the historical evolution some assumptions can be made on the basis of our remarks in section 5. It seems likely that until 1918, Slovaks spoke Czech when communicating with Czechs, whereas Czechs came to Slovakia rather rarely. The changed situation in the 1920s brought about that Czechs living in Slovakia had to acquire at least a passive knowledge of Slovak. On the other hand, Slovaks who came to the Czech lands continued to learn Czech rather rapidly (with the exception of the Slovak workers in Silesia). Czechs living in the Czech part of the country began to be confronted with spoken Slovak texts only after 1945 and more extensively since 1968. The extensive use of spoken Slovak by Slovaks living in the Czech part of the country seems to be a rather recent phenomenon.

The specific character of semi-communication is based on the common features and the differences of Czech and Slovak which can be characterized in the following way (cf. Zeman 1997a: 1653, Kořenský 1998: 21ff., Berger 1997: 153ff.):

- a) Slovak and Czech have different phoneme systems, but most differences function in a regular way, comparable to the phenomena known from dialects of one language.
- b) In principle, the morphological systems of both languages are similar. Both languages have nearly identical grammatical categories and differ mainly in the inflection endings. Slovak morphology is more regular and uses phoneme alternations to a smaller extent (cf. Czech *v Praze* ‘in Prague’ vs. Slovak *v Prahe*).
- c) The syntactical structure of both languages is more or less identical.
- d) The core lexicon of both languages is identical, but there is a number of differences in those parts of the lexicon which concern the culture of everyday

life (agriculture, food etc.) and in specialized terminology of some sciences. In general, the Slovak lexicon contains more borrowings than Czech (cf. Slovak *sekunda* ‘second’ vs. Czech *vteřina*), quite a lot of borrowings come from different sources (cf. Hungarian words like *čičma* ‘boot’ or *chýr* ‘news’) or have a different form than in Czech (cf. Slovak *šalát* ‘salad’ in contrast to Czech *salát*). There are also lot of differences in the internal structure of the lexicon, in the distribution of various models of word-formation etc. (cf. Sochová 1991).

On this basis we can expect that Czechs who try to understand Slovak, and Slovaks who try to understand Czech will not have many problems in connection with phonology, morphology, and syntax. The phonological and morphological analogy goes so far that it is possible to transform every Czech word into a Slovak form (and the other way round), this has the consequence that neologisms can be borrowed in both directions without major problems. Native speakers of both languages will adapt to the other language automatically and rather quickly, maybe with the exception of some special cases (e. g. the present tense ending *-em*, which marks the 1st person of singular in Slovak and the 1st person of plural in Colloquial Czech, cf. *ďakujem* ‘I thank’ vs. *děkujem* ‘we thank’).

Things are different in the lexicon because the speakers have to learn the equivalence of lexical items like *vteřina* vs. *sekunda* (see above), *tužka* vs. *ceruza* (‘pencil’), *nudle* vs. *rezance* (‘noodles’) etc. There are also some “false friends” like Czech *mávat* ‘to wave’ vs. Slovak *mávať* ‘to use to have’ or *sprostý* which means ‘vulgar’ in Czech and ‘silly’ in Slovak (cf. Budovičová 1987b: 35f., Kořenský 1998: 27), but their number is rather limited.

In connection with these facts it is clear that the functioning of semi-communication heavily depends on the theme of the conversation, this has been noted by many scholars (cf. the articles of Budovičová and Horecký). It will be no major problem in everyday conversation (although even the visit of a food shop or a restaurant requires some terminological knowledge), it will be more complicated in specialized discussions. The understanding of artistic texts (e. g. in cabarets) requires a very good knowledge of the other language which cannot be expected in every case.

It is also clear that semi-communication must be acquired by the speakers. Rather often native speakers naively claim that the other language is so “close” (or “easy”) that they can understand it without any problems. The case of young children and of foreigners proves the contrary. Vrbová (1997) has described situations where Slovak speakers try to adapt to the needs of children (and sometimes also of elder people) and to speak in a register closer to Czech. The situation of foreigners is known to me from my own experience: Even with a relatively good

knowledge of Czech one is not able to understand spoken Slovak well, but one gets accustomed rather quickly and “learns” to understand the major differences.

After the division of Czechoslovakia into two independent states semi-communication continues. Although there are less occasions for communication between Czechs and Slovaks now (especially in institutions), the normal everyday contact still exists with Slovak workers working in Czechia, Czech tourists visiting Slovakia etc. One might assume that the degree of understanding the other language is decreasing, that children have more problems in understanding than before (this has been claimed several times at discussions), but these are mere hypotheses as long as no serious research of semi-communication has taken place.

A last point that should be mentioned is that semi-communication is a very unstable phenomenon. It actually arises in every situation where Czechs and Slovaks come into contact anew, but in situations where Czech and Slovak speakers are in continuous contact, they tend to develop specific varieties which are characterized by interference of both languages (cf. Hoffmannová and Müllerová 1993b, Hoffmannová and Müllerová (1993a), Zeman (1995) and (Zeman 1997a).

## **7 The Question of Factual Influence**

Bearing in mind the historical relations of the two languages, one can expect that Czech has had influence on Slovak much more heavily than Slovak on Czech. Slovak scholars have noted and described Czech borrowings since the 19th century. Most studies on this theme have been written by purists who have also tended to propose “genuine” Slovak equivalents or to ascribe the Czech word another meaning, cf. in relative recent times Horák 1971 and Stevceková 1995. Only few studies deal with the theme in an impartial way, based on linguistic methods, but some interesting articles have been written in recent years by K. Buzássyová, J. Dolník and M. Sokolová. There some minor cases of Slovak influence on Czech which shall be dealt with in the end of this chapter.

The Czech-Slovak interferences can be divided into three major groups. The first group shall be called “parallel neologisms”, the second “quotations”, the third group consists of doublets in the sphere of morphology, word-formation and phras-eologisms. As we will see, the first two types of interference are typical for languages which have been used in one state and in constant contact for quite a long time, the third group is very similar to phenomena which we know from other languages in contact.

The existence of “parallel neologisms” is a very important fact which is widely ignored in existing studies. Borrowings in both directions are facilitated by the similarity of the phonological and the morphological systems. As I mentioned

before, it is possible to borrow every neologism and to adapt to the system of the other language. So it was no problem to use the Czech term *kupónová privatizace* (“privatization by means of coupons”) in Slovak as *kupónová privatizácia*, and nobody would call this a Czech borrowing. The same applies to Czech *zeštíhlování zemědělství* (“slimming of the agriculture”), transformed in to Slovak *zoštíhľovanie poľnohospodárstva* (cf. Buzássyová 1995: 168). Similar phenomena might also occur in the direction from Slovak to Czech. For example, the Slovak political slogan of “zviditeľnenie Slovenska” (“making Slovakia visible”) can be adapted in Czech as “zviditelnění Slovenska”. To some extent the phenomenon of “parallel neologisms” can be explained by a official policy in former Czechoslovakia to unify terminology as far as possible. Joint Czecho-Slovak commissions had the task to avoid the codification of different terms (cf. Kořenský 1998: 32, Marti 1993, ...) and quite elaborated terminologies for new areas of science. Although such commissions do not exist anymore, there is a strong tendency to follow the example of the other language, everything else would be conceived as a conscious puristic approach.

“Quotations” play an important role in political discourse, but they can also enter into the normal language. Buzássyová (1995: 177) has shown how utterances of Czech politicians etc. were quoted in the Slovak press, evidently with a (mostly) negative expressive function. I myself have witnessed how the Slovak slogan *dosť bolo Prahy* (“no more Prague”, lit. “there was enough of Prague”) was taken up by Czech speakers who playfully combined *dosť bolo* with many other words without changing it into Czech (the Czech form would be *dost bylo*).

The main core of Czech-Slovak interferences is formed by doublets in the lexicon, by models of word-formation and by phraseologisms. Sokolová (1995) who has contributed the main study on this issue mentions phonological and morphological interferences, too (cf. Sokolová 1995: 189f.) but I will not deal with these here since many of them might be seen in the context of dialectal interferences as well (local dialects play a much bigger role in Slovakia than in Czechia). Sokolová has collected data from 360 questionnaires distributed to Slovak native speakers. These native speakers were asked to classify 330 items as “frequent”, “common”, “artificial” or “improper”. As a result Sokolová draws up four major classes of interferences: In the first class the “contact variant” (e. g. the borrowing form Czech) more adequate than the Slovak word, in the second class the contact variant is seen as more frequent than the Slovak word, but it is evaluated more negatively, in the third class both items are seen as more or less equivalent, and the fourth class contains words where the Slovak variant is preferred by native speakers.

To my opinion it is rather interesting to note that lexical doublets behave in another way than interferences in word-formation and phraseologisms. With regard to lexical doublets the picture is very much differentiated: In some few cases the

Czech and the genuine Slovak word are equivalent (cf. *tužka* – *ceruza* ‘pencil’ or *počítat* – *rátat* ‘to count’), in many other cases the Czech word is marked as colloquial (e. g. *hasič* ‘fireman’ besides Slovak *požiarník*), as substandard (e. g. *krabica* ‘box’ besides *škatuľa*) or even archaic (*snád* besides *azda*). In some cases most speakers agree that the Czech word should not be used (since it is “wrong”), e. g. *klud* ‘quiet’ (from Czech *klid*) instead of *pokoj* or *dopis* ‘letter’ instead of *list*. This is probably a consequence of purist propaganda (cf. the remarks on *klud/dopis* in Dolník 1992), since the fact that these doublets are known to every Slovak speaker seems to prove that they really exist in at least some variety of Slovak.

Models of word-formation seem to have better chances to be accepted in Slovak than lexical items. This is especially true for the Czech suffix *-sko* with which names of countries and regions are formed. The Czech word *Chebsko* “region around Cheb” seems to have advantages instead of traditional Slovak *okolie Cheba*, the same applies for new names like *Kirgizsko* and *Turkménsko* which are used quite frequently although purists advocate the use of the original names *Kyrgyzstan* and *Turkmenistan* (cf. Genzor 1995: 140ff.). – Phraseologisms behave in a similar way (cf. Buzássyová 1995: 173, on this point), so it is quite common to say *vyvenčiť psa* ‘to go out with the dog’ like in Czech, instead of the older form *vyjsť so psom*. There are also interferences with regard to the government of verbs, cf. *vážiť si* + genitive like in Czech instead of accusative in older Slovak.

Slovak influence on Czech is much rarer, but can be noted in some cases, e. g. Slovak *dovolenka* ‘leave’ has become a variant of Czech *dovolená* (cf. Zeman 1997a: 1654). There are no cases where the Slovak word has really driven out its Czech equivalent. There is one very interesting case of morphological influence: Czech began to form adverbs from participles (like *uklidňujícne* ‘in a calming way’ from the participle *uklidňujúci*) under the influence of a Slovak model (cf. Jedlička (1978), 87ff.).

Whereas Slovak influences on Czech have been noted only by specialists, real and alleged Czech influences on Slovak have been discussed in Slovakia rather broadly. We can differentiate several attitudes here, first of all the classical purist attitude (which staid an “inofficial” stream most of the time since the political situation did not allow an open anti-Czech purism), then a more moderate position which is based on the so-called “ethnosignificative” or “nationally representative” function to which Buzássyová (1995: 170f.) has drawn attention and in the last place a “functionalist” position which allows Czech words as long as they have a specific function (this is the position of Sokolová 1995 although she does not utter it openly).

How has the situation changed since the division of Czechoslovakia? It is clear that “quotations” play a smaller role than before, “parallel neologisms” still are formed, but to a smaller extent. Other Czech-Slovak interferences continue,



they even might become more important since anti-Czech purist attitudes lose their significance (cf. Dolník 1998, Nábělková 1999 because it is not necessary any more to “defend” the Slovak literary language against Czech. On the contrary Patr’áš (1995, 129) claims that the Czech borrowings in the lexicon become rarer, but that there is a latent bohemization of the grammar. Further empirical research will be necessary to decide in which direction the Czech-Slovak interferences will develop in the new situation.

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