

Dynamics of linguistic prescriptivism in Slovakia in the context of scientific and social development

Abstract: The contribution will present the social background of the emergence and further development of protective and nationalistic purism in Slovakia in the 20th century, when we can speak about two periods of the rise of the purism in language policy, namely the 1930s and the 1960s. These resulted in the persistence of prescriptivism and criticism of incorrect language use long after the political and social circumstances that led to the emergence of purism had passed. Another consequence is the ongoing presence of the ideology of standardism, language uncertainty and weak language users' self-confidence, which is often associated with the entrenched language myths and prejudices.

Today, despite the change in the scientific linguistics – from a structuralist conception of language and an overestimation of the regularity of linguistic forms to an emphasis on communicative and pragmatic aspects and the natural language dynamics – we can speak of a renaissance of prescriptivism, which comes “from below”, i.e. from the sphere of folk linguistics.

Out of folk beliefs about the polarized evaluation of variants (right-wrong) and of the dynamics of language after democratic social changes, various forms of language counselling and protective language activism emerge in the public.

Research focusing on different forms of prescriptivism uses methods of discourse analysis and draws data from historical and contemporary discourses on language correctness. Namely:

- 1) linguistic works on language culture (the term refers to the cultivation of language aimed at the acquisition of a codified variety);
- 2) the archive of questions and answers of the institutional language counselling service;
- 3) state language policy documents related to the language legislation;
- 4) various manifestations of folk linguistics, in particular discussions on social networks, folk language counselling and amateur prescriptivist dictionaries.

The extra-linguistic (social and political) causes of the rise and decline of purism and prescriptivism in the 20th century are well-known (cf. references). The aim of this presentation is to identify the motivations of those contemporary phenomena that emerge from among non-linguists and to look for possible reasons why the more liberal approach to language regulation that is currently being favoured by linguists is not more widely accepted in the linguistic community. Another issue is the differences and parallels between the current situation and the historical periods mentioned above.

Keywords: Slovak language, language policy, purism, linguistic prescriptivism, language critique, folk linguistics

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