

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE INTERACTION OF »GLOBAL«  
LATIN WITH NATIONAL LANGUAGES IN THE 16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
(Martin Luther – Jan Blahoslav – Primož Trubar)

Avtor na novo obravnava vlogo latinščine v Srednji Evropi v času latinskega srednjega veka. Obravnava posplošena mnenja o izključno ustni vlogi domačega jezika in izključno negovorni pisni latinščini ter nezadostno metaforično taksonomijo, ki govori o »živem jeziku« in »mrtvem jeziku«. Njihova neprimernost v zvezi z obdobjem renesanse, humanizma in reformacije zahteva nadaljnje podrobno raziskovanje ter novo interpretacijo že znanih dejstev. Avtor skuša najti vzroke za razširjeno in pogosto preklapljanje v drug jezik; te gre iskati v več notranjih in zunanjih psiholingvističnih in sociolingvističnih vzgibih. Primerjava jezikovno mešanih besedil akademsko izobraženih Martina Lutra in Jana Blahoslava z nekaterimi neznanstvenimi besedili Primoža Trubarja razkrije različne vzorce in stopnje kulturne diglosije.

The author reconsiders the role of the Latin language in Central Europe during the Latin Middle Ages. Oversimplified views about the exclusively oral character of the vernaculars vs. exclusively non-oral written Latin, and the inadequate metaphorical taxonomy »living language« vs. »dead language«, are discussed. Their inappropriateness for application to the Age of Renaissance, Humanism and Reformation calls for further detailed research and reinterpretation of known facts. An attempt is made to account for extensive and frequent code-switching in terms of several internal and external drives of psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic nature. A comparison of linguistically mixed texts by scholarly educated Martin Luther and Jan Blahoslav with some non-scholarly texts by Primož Trubar reveals different patterns and stages of cultural diglossia.

This paper concerns only a single facet of the bottomless topic of understanding the relationship between the Latin language and the vernaculars not very long after the so-called Latin Middle Ages.

It is of primary importance, however, to bear in mind from the start that the latter-day tendency to separate the vernacular and Latin into two rigid compartments, namely to consider automatically the vernaculars as »living and oral languages«, and the Latin language as »a dead and mostly written cultural language«, is misleading. According to this inadequate taxonomy, Latin remained alive through late antiquity, but then died (let us say immediately before the

beginning of the Carolingian period) and has been dead ever since. It was not as simple as that.

After the sixth or seventh century, Latin ceased to be a mother tongue, to be sure, because it was spoken by no one from the cradle. Latin was *lingua non propria* to everybody then, which is witnessed, e.g., by Notker (III) Labeo of St. Gallen in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, Latin did not become a dead language until long after the Middle Ages. During the Middle Ages it hovered in an undead/unliving limbo state. Whereas the mother tongues of the Middle Ages varied from place to place and time to time, Latin continued to be a comparatively constant prestigious language of religion and culture. As Dante put it: »Latin is perpetual and incorruptible, and the vulgar language is unstable and corruptible.«<sup>2</sup> Latin was *lingua paterna* – a father tongue, as it were, to use Nigel’s term.<sup>3</sup> This designation is particularly appropriate since medieval Latin was used predominantly by males to uphold a male-dominated or patriarchal society. It was a tongue that boys were forced to learn en route to positions in the Church, university, and state.

It is no less important to mention another prejudice. In appraising the consequences of the special kind of bilingualism called cultural diglossia<sup>4</sup> for Latin literature in the Middle Ages, we have to avoid drawing hasty correspondences between the vernacular being oral and unlearned on the one hand, and Latin being literate and written, and being learned on the other hand; for there were no absolute values here. Actually, the vernacular was not always oral, Latin not always literate.

Such oversimplified views and inadequate taxonomy are even more inappropriate in their application to the following Age of Renaissance, Humanism and Reformation. The quickly spreading phenomenon of mixing Latin with the national languages in both oral and written texts provides convincing evidence for cultural diglossia, so typical of that time, which cannot be considered a symptom of withdrawal of Latin, but the opposite: it rather shows that Latin in the new circumstances was an entirely living part of linguistic consciousness of European scholars during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the time of the great change. These statements are based upon a number of the present author’s empirical studies and a detailed analysis of linguistically mixed grammatical and rhetorical texts by the leading Czech Protestant scholar Jan Blahoslav (1523–1571) (Čejka 1998). The author’s results have been compared with the linguistic analysis of Luther’s *Tischreden* (Luther 1912–1921) by Birgit Stolt (1964).

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. PIPER 1882, VI. Anhang, B. Notkers Brief, 860–861: »Scio tamen quia primum abhorrebitis quasi ab insuetis. Sed paulatim forte incipient se commendare uobis et preualebitis ad legendvm et ad dinoscendvm quam cito capiuntur per patriam linguam que aut uix aut non integre capienda forent in lingua non propria.«

<sup>2</sup> »Per nobilità, perché lo latino è perpetuo e non corruttibile, e lo volgare è non stabile e corruttibile.« (ALIGHIERI 1988: 33.)

<sup>3</sup> Nigellus de Longo Campo (Wireker, \*1130 – † after 1200), *Tractatus contra curiales et officiales clericos*: »Lingua tamen caveas ne sit materna, sed illa / Quam dedit et docuit lingua paterna tibi.« (DE LONGCHAMP 1959: 148, lines 165–166); ZIOLKOWSKI 1991 revives this expression.

<sup>4</sup> For the term cf. ONG 1984; ZIOLKOWSKI 1991; STOCK 1983.

Almost every learned person in 16<sup>th</sup> century Central Europe was bilingual in Latin and in a vernacular. It is remarkable that the amount of written and oral texts in which both languages were mixed up and closely interwoven increased immensely then, compared with the state of affairs during the Middle Ages. And nobody considered it improper at that time, which was quite natural: in the countries to the North of the Alps, the so-called positive grammar (*grammatica positiva*), with medieval Latin as the end and the means of the study at the same time, remained the central branch of academic trivium.

Luther's above-mentioned *Tischreden* are more or less authentic recordings of Luther's unprepared talks with his friends on different theological and other subjects; these spontaneous oral texts contain innumerable cases of code-switching. Authenticity of their oral origin is indirectly documented by Luther himself, when he says that he quite usually speaks »mixed vernacular language«<sup>5</sup> and that »all has been said spontaneously and popularly, as the words came in my mouth, with repetitions and also mixed with German, much more verbosely than I wanted.«<sup>6</sup> The analyzed Blahoslav's written texts are to a certain extent spontaneous, too, especially in those passages where he critically comments (in the margin) on the first Czech grammar by Beneš Optát, Petr Gzell and Václav Philomates and where he appraises the linguistic qualities of the contemporary translations of Biblical texts (Čejka – Šlosar – Nechutová 1991). Blahoslav's mixed utterances are in many respects very similar to Luther's, with parallel linguistic features and motivations.

The explanation for this phenomenon should be sought in several common internal and external drives of psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic nature:

(1) The speaker's wish to be precise in his expressions and to be universal at the same time is connected to the *terminological* drive (Terminologiezwang). The speaker incorporates Latin theological, legal, and other scholarly terms, interpretations of expressions, definitions, references to biblical passages, metatextual termini technici, etc.

(2) The *topical* and *quotation* drives follow naturally from the general tendency to differentiate the text according to its pragmatic components (e.g. code-switching between the introductory clause and the direct speech or a quotation).

(3) The speaker often wants to acknowledge or concede the specific linguistic competence or language needs of the hearer/reader. Such a *partner* drive (Partnerzwang, cf. Braun 1937) has either the form of tendency towards the general intelligibility of the text (e.g. paraphrasing or translating parts of the text, phrases, or single words into the other language) or the special form of language options

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<sup>5</sup>Context: »Is est Vir ille, qui ubique iactat usque hodie me adeo fuisse convictum, ne nec latinum verbum nec vernaculum respondere potuerim. Nam quia mixtim (ut fit) vernacula lingua digladiabamur, omni fiducia pronunciavit me nescire latinum verbum.« (LUTHER 1930 (letter № 135: Luther an Spalatin, Wittenberg, January 14, 1519): 301, 11. 14–18; cf. STOLT 1969, 1989.)

<sup>6</sup>»Extemporaliter enim et populariter omnia dicta sunt, prout in buccam venerunt verba, crebro et mixtim etiam Germanica, verbosius certe, quam vellem.« (LUTHER 1911 (Genesisvorlesung, 1544), 1, 11. 27–29.)

according to the needs of the communicative partner in the actual acts of communication.

(4) Each language is able to express certain ideas or mental images with better plasticity and stronger vividness than the other, by the means of proverbs, comparisons, parables, curses, invocations etc. This is the reason why the speaker tends to shift towards the language with stronger *impressive* means at certain places of the text. The *emotional* momentum leads to similar code-switching, mostly from the *lingua non propria* towards the *lingua propria* (i.e. the mother tongue).

(5) It happens quite often in many linguistically mixed texts that during the speech-event a specific expression of psychological importance emerges in the speaker's mind in a specific language form, which leads to code-switching to the language of this important expression. As a matter of fact, it is nothing but the natural drive towards the *linguistic integrity* of speech.

Such a variety of motivations in code-switching suggests that the typical scholar of the time of our interest was oriented both towards Latin and the vernacular and was not bound by the formal and semantic structure of a single language, namely the mother tongue. For that reason it seems that in formulating their ideas these scholars were almost indifferent as to the option which language to choose.

Primož Trubar cannot be regarded as an academic scholar in the proper sense of the word. Although he understood the formal structure of Latin very well and although he emphasised good knowledge of Latin in preachers, the above-mentioned complete functional symbiosis of the vernacular and Latin was not within his reach. His texts follow another, simpler pattern. Latin in his vernacular printed texts is only marginal: it is limited to titles, quotations, generally used formulas,<sup>7</sup> integrated<sup>8</sup> and non-integrated<sup>9</sup> borrowed words, references to the Bible.<sup>10</sup> In his pastoral and missionary orientation, the Latin language played a rather inferior role. He was mostly interested in being successful in gaining ground for Protestant ideas in the Slovene territory within the broad scope of the German-speaking Catholic world. In his letters (Rajhman 1986), though, there are several (but not many) bilingual mixed texts, their form, however, differs from the above-mentioned academic bilingual interweaving. Quite frequently he used some kind of rigid Latin epistolary formulas.<sup>11</sup> Otherwise his code-switching is sharp, blocks of texts in one language are in clear juxtaposition with the blocks of text in the other language. Code-switching within a single utterance is highly sporadic in his writings. His motivations seem to be limited to the partner drive and the quotation drive.

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<sup>7</sup> E.g., *in summa*.

<sup>8</sup> E.g., *collecta*.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., *congrue*.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., *Act. 18*.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., the introductory formula: »Gratia et pax a domino Jesu Christo, seruatore nostro.«

The mixed bilingual texts of Central European Protestant scholars provide enough evidence that the Latin of their time was still a partly living structure, i.e. not dead, and continuing to exist as *lingua paterna*, which again supports the idea that from the linguistic point of view, no substantial break between the Latin Middle Ages and the time of Reformation took place and that the impact of the New Learning's sophisticated Latin was very moderate in this part of Europe.<sup>12</sup> Blahoslav's and Luther's texts provide a great abundance of positive evidence in this respect; Trubar's evidence is also important, although his motives are different: namely his modest tendency not to use Latin beyond necessity<sup>13</sup> and his shyness while using it, which was the consequence of his esteem for the universal medieval *principia latinitatis*.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Similar opinion has been expressed by Pavel Trost more than sixty years ago (TROST 1939: 67–68).

<sup>13</sup> »Vobis et huiusmodi eruditissimis viris Latine haud libenter scribo, nisi necessitate compulsus, sicuti d. Vergerio semper latine scribere cogor, postquam Germanicam linguam non intelligit [...]« Letter to Henry Bullinger of March 13, 1557 (RAJHMAN 1986: 27).

<sup>14</sup> »[...] nam vereor in scribendo latine ne committam aliquem soloecismum et ne peccem in Priscianum [...]« (ibid).

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NEKAJ POGLEDOV NA MEDSEBOJNO VPLIVANJE »GLOBALNE«  
LATINŠČINE IN NACIONALNIH JEZIKOV V 16. STOLETJU  
(Martin Luther – Jan Blahoslav – Primož Trubar)

POVZETEK

Članek na novo obravnava vlogo latinščine v Srednji Evropi 16. stoletja. »Globalna« povezovalna vloga latinščine v srednjem veku je neizpodbitna in se popolnoma ujema z univerzalnostjo srednjeveške Cerkve. Moderne težnje, ki domači jezik in latinščino delijo v dva strogo ločena razdelka in domače jezike avtomatično obravnavajo kot »žive in govorjene«, latinščino pa kot »mrtev in večinoma pisni kulturni jezik«, so varljive. Ta preveč posplošeni vidik in nezadostna taksonomija sta še bolj neprimerna za naslednje obdobje renesanse, humanizma in reformacije. Mešanje latinščine in nacionalnih jezikov v govorjenih in pisanih besedilih se je hitro širilo in prepričljivo dokazuje kulturno diglosijo, ki je bila tako značilna za to dobo. Avtor skuša najti vzroke za razširjeno in pogosto preklapljanje med jeziki v več notranjih in zunanjih psiholingvističnih in sociolingvističnih vzgibih: 1. terminološki vzgib (nagnjenost k univerzalnosti in natančnosti); 2. citatni in predmetni vzgibi (*loci classici*); 3. partnerski vzgib (upoštevanje poslušalca in bralca); 4. impresivni vzgib (težnja k jasnosti izraza) in čustveni vzgib; 5. vzgib jezikovne popolnosti (učinek psihološko pomembnih izrazov).

Raziskava je zasnovana na podrobnih analizah mešanih, prvotno govorjenih, nemško-latinskih besedil, tj. *Tischreden* (1531–1540) Martina Lutera, ter mešanih češko-latinskih besedil, tj. *Češke slovnice* (1571) Jana Blahoslava. Avtor primerja rezultate z nekaterimi tiskanimi besedili Primoža Trubarja, npr. *Catechismus* (1551), *Cerkovna ordninga* (1564), in z nekaterimi odlomki iz Trubarjevih pisem. Pri tem upošteva različne funkcijske značilnosti treh analiziranih virov.

Gornja analiza je pokazala, da je velika večina srednjeevropskih intelektualcev 16. stoletja istočasno živela v dveh ali več jezikovnih svetovih ter da so vedno spoštovali glavne splošne srednjeveške *principia latinitatis*.