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Vernaculars in Slovenian and Other European Reformations

The introductory part of my dissertation project will focus on the social and political circumstances, in which the Reformation in Europe emerged. A comparison will as well be made with the development of the Slovenian Reformation. I will be especially interested in how the Reformation, as a social and religious movement, influenced the evolution of vernaculars and, hypothetically, affected the shaping of national identities. The fundamental principle of Reformation, *sola scriptura*, scripture alone, and the demand that everyone should understand the Bible to live according to its teachings led to greatly increased use of written vernaculars. Thereby the need to define a speech community, a community that speaks and understands language, rose considerably. Protestants joined forces to deliver texts understandable to specific groups of people and they had quite good capacity for switching codes, i.e. languages according to their intentions. Namely, they had to deal not only with religious aspects of the Protestant movement, but also with raising funds for printing and publishing, they had to keep up with theological debates and had to make sure they were not doing or saying anything politically inappropriate. Spreading Protestantism in many cases meant persuading people to accept new doctrines, and, apart from using force, talking and preaching to masses in a language these would understand were considered the best way. The use of vernaculars was, after all, legitimized by the Bible and expressed in the motto of Renaissance Humanism „*ad fontes*”, which summed up both the protestant attitude towards the Bible and towards the language. When the Reformation and question of language clashed in the early 16th century the Holy Scripture came up with an answer: It is written: As surely as I live says the Lord, every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.¹ Undoubtedly, the Reformation and the language were inseparably connected, the first finding a powerful tool in the latter.

1 »Romans 14:11«, *Holy Bible. New International Version.*

Jonathan Steinberg once pointed out: When the question of language appears, it means that great changes are going on and the historian needs to think about them.² By the mid-15th century, people had become more aware of the existence of the varieties of languages. At the same time, more and more people were arguing for the use of one's own language. The earliest apology of any vernacular is Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*, written as early as at the beginning of the 14th century. In this work, Dante advocated the principle of cultivating and broadly using languages.³ *De vulgari eloquentia* was printed in 1529 and was followed by a number of texts promoting the use and the importance of different vernaculars, therefore in the late 16th century the aesthetic and expressive quality of the vernaculars compared to Latin were well established. Although many scholars still thought Latin was the only appropriate language for written texts, others saw vernaculars as much or even more suitable for creating religious, legal, scientific or other texts. At the same time perceptions about one's own language triggered comparisons with other languages, which entailed questioning the expressive quality of one's own language. This led to the situation in which one language, because of its speakers, its use or for some other reason, was considered to possess more value than another did, which could again lead to language conflicts and possibly to some other social or historical developments.⁴

Reformation ideas were generated by individuals, who were themselves part of communication and cultural contexts. These contexts defined the way the ideas would expand in a certain society. The expansion of the idea of Reformation usually meant translating theology of the leading Protestants in different linguistic and cultural contexts. Several difficulties emerged during this process. There were issues concerning translation and transfer of the ideas, which had to be shaped for targeted cultural environment and properly advertised, on several occasions with clear political motives. Protestants exposed both, the role of vernaculars in spreading religious truths and the role of individuals in receiving them. They, with the actual use of the vernaculars, triggered the process of forming a community, based on common language. This raises a question, to what extent Reformation is a unified process and to what extent the Reformation processes were influenced by different cultural environments.⁵ By any means, the Reforma-

2 Jonathan Steinberg, „The historian and the *Questione della lingua*”, *The social history of language*, Peter Burke and Roy Porter (eds.), Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1987) 208.

3 Peter Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 15–17.

4 Burke, *Language and*, see fn. 2, 61–65.

5 Bob Scribner, „A comparative overview”, *The Reformation in national context*, Bob Scribner, Roy Porter and Miklaus Teich (eds.) (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1994) 217. In *The Reformation in national context*, Scribner suggests two descriptions for two types of Reformation. For example, Reformation in Germany is a process that took place in German cultural environment as opposed to German Reformation, which is a process that reflects the characteristics of the specific, in this case German, environment and can be separated from the other (Slovenian, Croatian etc.) Reformations. The latter type is usually formed in the areas where the Protestantism is still present today or in the areas where Protestantism is a dominant religion.

tion was a process, in which slight modifications, even of the Bible itself, were not just allowed to achieve the common goal, but also necessary to the cause. An example can be found in Luther's work itself. He tailored the text of the Bible by adding words – e.g. „only” before „faith”, in order his translation of the Bible would suit his theology better. For the same reason he separated several books in his 1534 Bible edition and listed them under the title Apocrypha.⁶ In the Slovenian Reformation Trubar did the similar. In his translation of Luther's House Postils he adopted several passages in the way he considered more appropriate for Slovenian readers.⁷ In this context, the Reformation as a religious movement gained its ethnolinguistic dimension. The readiness to translate in different vernaculars contributed not only to the fast spreading of Reformation ideas but also to the establishment of fairly good perception of belonging to a specific speech community. An example for such intertwining of language and religion can be the German speaking population of Lithuania, Poland, Prussia and Hungary, which accepted the German Lutheran Reformation.⁸

The most straightforward path to analyse and describe the texts of the Early Modern Age, no matter their topic, is using linguistic concepts and methods and viewing the language data in context of the society and the time in which it was produced. The field of study that endeavours to describe the language as a social phenomenon, and to provide an answer to the question: Who says what to whom and when, is sociolinguistics. When we attach historical component to the sociolinguistics we get an academic discipline that is sometimes referred to as socio-historical linguistics, historical sociolinguistics, historical pragmatics or simply social history of the language. The latter seems to focus more on the social function of the language, bringing out the language as a means of constructing variety of social relationships.⁹

Put into a context, language is much more than just a means of communication or a tool with which we are trying to influence one another or a carrier of content. Language itself is a content, a marker of social status and personal relationships. When we choose a certain variety of language or language code, we define the situation and the theme of the speech act. Basically every human being can switch between several varieties of language and employ them according to the situation he or she is currently in. If there is the existence of both the varieties of the same language and of several languages in a speech community, this community possesses language repertoire, the ability to employ certain language in a certain position. With the help of sociolinguistics we define linguistic and functional characteristics of the language varieties: how widespread they are in a certain community; how

6 Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation. Europe's House Divided 1490–1700* (London: Penguin Books 2003) 134.

7 Majda Merše, „Trubarjeva Hišna postila (1595) v odnosu do Lutrove prevodne predloge”, *Jezikoslovni zapiski* 2 (2010) 7.

8 Scribner, „A comparative overview”, see fn. 5, 216.

9 Burke, *Language and*, see fn. 2, 2–3.

the varieties influence one another; what is the variety's symbolic value; what are the rules and norms that constrain the use of a certain variety; and how are varieties seen within the community. The social value of language code is closely related to the speech situation in which it is mostly used. In conclusion, sociolinguistics analyses characteristics of language codes or varieties, characteristics of their functions, use of a certain language code or variety and characteristics of their speakers. The code, the function and the speaker constantly intertwine, change and affect each other inside the language community.¹⁰ Concept of community as well as concepts of identity, culture etc., implicate the sharp line dividing those who belong to the community and share its culture and identity, and those who do not. In the real life, lines are not sharp, sometimes they are not lines at all, but are rather fields of bilingualism or multilingualism, where languages coexist and mix. The use of a certain language code expresses, maintains and helps to create a sense of belonging to a certain speech community. For example, when we come across deixis „we”, we know it expresses a sense of solidarity and inclusion.¹¹ Nevertheless, conflicts and differences among speech communities and languages also help build language loyalty and consciousness. Now, even if real life communities are often evasive and hard to define, the imagined ones can be very clear and straightforward. They are, as Peter Burke says, a figment of imagination with very real consequences.¹² Think for instance of Primož Trubar's imagined community. He wrote: „I put a lot of effort in translation to both vocabulary and style, so that every Slovene: whether Carniolan, Lower-Styrian, Carinthian, Karstian, Istrian, Lower-Carniolan and Bezjak can understand it.”¹³ He created the speech community, it is up to us now to investigate, what kind of consequences the formation of the community had, and if the consequences of formation were as Primož Trubar thought they should be, when he created it. Speech situation, in this case Trubar trying to explain to funders who the recipients of this work are, affected the writer's choice of a language code. If the use of certain language is defined by the context of its use, we call such situation diglossia, or in case there are more than two codes, polyglossia. In such situation every code has its own function, and all codes are culturally accepted and little or no language conflict is present. In most cases separation is defined along categorisation of languages based on the context of their use: Language used in discussing religious matter, high culture, education and similar is named high language and the one used in a day to day communication low language.¹⁴ As I have already mentioned, there is no language conflict in diglossic society, which is especially true for the societies of the

10 Joshua A. Fishman, *Sociolinguistics. A brief introduction* (Rowley: Newbury House Publishers, 1972) 1–4.

11 Burke, *Language and*, see fn. 2, 1–6.

12 Burke, *Language and*, see fn. 2, 6.

13 *Primož Trubar, Nemški spisi (1550–1581)*, Edvard Vrečko (eds.), Zbrana dela Primoža Trubarja 11 (Ljubljana: Pedagoški inštitut, 2011) 34. Original text: Vnd ich hab mich befliffen in difem dolmetfche[n] / mit den Wörtern vnd Stylo / auff das ein jeglicher Windifcher / er fey ein Creiner / Vnterfteyrer / Karner / Kahrtner / Hifterreicher / Niederländer oder Beßyak / müge leicht verfteen.

14 Fishman, *Sociolinguistics*, see fn. 10, 73–79.

Early Modern Age; the so-called politicization of the language had not occurred yet.¹⁵ In 16th century, a vast majority of the rural population living in today's Slovenian territory was monolingual and only few individuals learned languages that are more prestigious during education process, first German and later on Latin. Modern sociolinguistic theory predicts that the educational component is strongly present in a society, which is of course not true for the Early Modern Time. In the case of diglossia members are expected to be competent also in a speech situation, in which knowledge of the high language is mandatory. Since this kind of knowledge is supposed to be acquired during educational process, which was in 16th century very limited, diglossia was somewhat different at that time. Speakers of the low prestige code could not adjust, whereas the speakers of the more cultivated code did. This led to the formation of the terminology for different speech situations and, finally, to the codification and standardisation of the Slovene. The emergence of at least partial multi- or bilingualism was thus necessary. Multi- or bilingual were members of the upper classes, who were usually fluent in Slovene and German. The town population and part of nobility in addition spoke and wrote Italian and educated people, regardless of their origin, had knowledge of Latin.¹⁶

Every language used in the community possesses status and corpus. The latter represents every text that exists in a certain language. Corpus is autonomous and independent whereas status or prestige is established in comparison with other languages. Status and corpus can both change over time.¹⁷ To establish status of Slovene in times of Reformation we have to analyse the language use of people who were actually able to communicate in several languages. In short, the prestige of a language is determined how acceptable and how often it is used in situations, that are public, can have political connotation and bear some kind of symbolic value. Such events are most often exceptionally ritualized, they consist of definite and specific behaviour, gestures, they demand the use of specific objects and, last but not the least, specific language. Ritual can be in a function of social institutions - it has to maintain the continuity and efficacy, which can be nonempirical and closely connected to, for instance, Christian god or some other deity. Costumes and rituals differentiate in the efficacy that only rituals possess.¹⁸ The way the ritual is performed has a special meaning for its participants and the observers, and they all have to recognize the ritual as performative act. Performative acts are for instance enthronements, elections, oaths, baptisms and so on. Very good example of the importance of the language in the ritual can be found in the medieval enthronement of Carinthian dukes. In 1414 Ernst, the designated Duke of Austria, interrupted the Slovene ritual, because he did not understand

15 Fishman, *Sociolinguistics*, see fn. 10, 74.

16 Kozma Ahačič, *Zgodovina misli o jeziku in književnosti na Slovenskem: protestantizem*, *Linguistica et philologica* 18 (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2007) 15–17.

17 Anita Peti-Stantič, *Jezik naš i/ili njihov. Vježbe iz poredbene povijesti južnoslavenskih standardizacijskih procesa* (Zagreb: Srednja Evropa, 2008) 50–52.

18 Jean Cazeneuve, *Sociologija obreda* (Ljubljana: Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete, 1986) 14–17.

the language. With that he avoided being enthroned by a member of a lower class, thus interrupted the continuity of the ritual, which eventually lost its meaning.¹⁹ Rituals are also strong part of religious discourse, in which Slovene gained importance in times of Reformation. Essential constituent of the religious discourse is appellative intentionality. Participants are expected to follow the statements uttered in discourse and these statements should also influence participant's behaviour, norms and values. The persuasion is mostly carried out through the rhetoric of reassurance. Speech acts which prescribe or appellate are based on cosmological, mythical and ethical thoughts of a certain religion and through them the participants give themselves and the world around them a meaning. Religion is obviously an entity of a specific knowledge about the meaning of life, which can be expressed in private or in public sphere. For discussing religious matters every way of communication can be employed, even though communication inside religious discourse can be very formalised through forms of prayers. Ingo Dalferth defines three basic speech acts of religious discourse: reception, the experience of God's call, response, i.e. in the form of prayer and reaction, discussion about God and knowledge in form of religious metadiscourse. Speech acts are establishing religious discourse and also have very strong role in creating a sense of community.²⁰

The Reformation idea and the role the vernaculars played in it are considered to be a cultural turn. The growing importance of vernaculars during the Reformation is manifested in the formation of communities that were held together not only by belief or religion itself, but also by language. The languages emerged and were suddenly used in the most prestigious speech situations, in which they were well accepted. Townsfolk in Ljubljana rushed to the church in order to listen to the sermon in their own language. It seems that in the times when people were desperately afraid of Ottoman invasion and strongly believed the Last Judgment was near, a great interest in having more intimate relation with God appeared. They achieved this intimacy through language they were born into. Social history of the language offers a methodological apparatus to observe, describe and analyse language in the Early Modern Age, to put it in its social context and to find out what value had a certain language in a certain society. One thing is, however, standing out: In the times of Reformation, people were indeed discovering the frontiers of their languages.

19 Enthronement of the Carinthian dukes as an independent ritual (without any higher political instances involved) of installation of a new duke was in decline since 1077, when the title of duke became hereditary. Sergij Vilfan, *Pravna zgodovina Slovencev: od naselitve do zloma stare Jugoslavije* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1961) 109. As a symbolic act, enthronement lost its meaning in 1414, together with the decline of social standing of the *kosezi* and their Slovenian language.

20 Holgar Kusse, *Kultur-wissenschaftliche Linguistik. Eine Einführung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012) 153–158.