



STANDARDIZING ROMANI AND THE IDEOLOGY OF STANDARD CZECH

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THESIS

- Ideology of standard Czech is a significant factor in the exclusion of Romani from the Czech sociolinguistic space and of Roma children from the mainstream educational process
- Institutions practicing the standard (schools, in particular) operate through corrective and prescriptive practices
- Speakers' firm belief in correctness and what's incorrect and stigmatizing is linked to the overt
- Czech speech community is highly codified ideology of standard Czech (cf. L. Vaicekauskiene on Lithuanian)
- Language attitudes of the public, school and the media affect legitimization of nonstandard and minority languages



STANDARD CULTURE AND IDEOLOGY: GOALS AND QUESTIONS

- What is the ideology of standard Czech? And in what ways do they interfere with Romani?

GOALS:

DESCRIBE sociolinguistic consequences of beliefs and attitudes about Czech speech community's own and other languages for standardizing and legitimizing Romani, and maintaining Romani vernaculars

COMPARE Romani in the context of standard Czech to African American/Ebonics in the context of Amer. English

PROBLEM:

Standardizing Romani in Czech R. is a concern of only some sociolinguists but not of official institutions

- Standards are identity-forming and awareness-raising



STANDARDIZATION, STANDARD CULTURE AND LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

- **Standardization**

...is a purposeful modeling that involves deliberate choices of the 'right' dialect basis and structural variants so that language is 'as it should be'

Imposition of uniformity upon a class of subjects (Milroy 2001)

Regime of standardization requires loyalty to a standard whose high status is supported by centralizing institutions that inculcate in the population a respect and desire for standard linguistic forms commanding authority; other linguistic forms seem inadequate or invisible (Gal 2006)

- **Language ideology**

Belief that language is a cultural possession rather than part of human mental and cognitive faculties ...biased toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language imposed and maintained by dominant institutions and considering the written language as its model ...adversely judging those who use language 'incorrectly' Lippi-Green 1997

- **Subordination of the dominated language**

...amounts to linguistic mystification of dominant institutions designed to valorize the standard language and its mainstream culture while devaluing the non-standard and its associated cultural forms (Kroskrity 2004)



LINGUISTIC PRESCRIPTION AND PRESCRIPTIVISM

Mate Kapović:

- linguistic prescriptivism is related to conservatism and is so internalized that no public awareness of the connection between that and conservatism
- linguistic prescriptivism is a reflection of conservative ideology in language, an unscientific tendency to mystify linguistic prescription
- prescription is a process of codification of a certain variety of language for some sort of official use

Kazuhiko Nakae:

- people stick to the prescriptive norm but speak their own regional varieties
- people are concerned only the prescribed variety due to its "purity, sacredness, prestige and authenticity" (such as in Arabic)



CULTIVATING THE CZECH STANDARD IN HISTORY

- Czech national revival and linguocentrism
- Maintenance of Josef Dobrovský's conservative standardization of Czech, 1809
- Linguistic purism and prescriptivism of interwar Czechoslovakia
- Prague Linguistic Circle: B. Havránek and V. Mathesius' theory and principles of language cultivation (mostly in relation to Czech), 1930s: GOALS: dynamic stability, functional differentiation, stylistic elaboration and communicative efficiency
- Academic cultivation of language and ongoing support to its codification in the Institute of Czech Language of the Academy of Sciences oriented at "recommending" language practice
- Ministry of Education: centralizing institution overseeing language studies at schools and textbooks, presentation of standard Czech and "nation"

but neglecting dynamics of standard & minority languages,
planning for multilingualism, sociolinguistics of language
behaviors of minorities



STANDARD CZECH VS. ROMANI IN THE CLASSROOM

- Authority of the standard and the conservative tradition of language arts teaching
- StCz can be only learned through study and teachers are the guides
- Expectation of StCz cultural experience upon entry to school
- To attend Czech school one has to be socialized through StCz
- StCz is the correct, sensible and logical system vs. Romani is substandard, dia/ethnolect and incorrect
- ... is the advantage vs. handicap
- ... has common sense rules vs. no-rules
- ... is tested, trusted and safe language vs. non-language
- ... organizes the school linguistic landscape
- Czech monolingualism and gradual learning of vehicular ls vs. (passive)Cz-Ro bilingualism
- Inexperience with everyday bilingualism and codeswitching
- Prescriptive rules regulate power dynamics in the classroom and beyond with negative social consequences
- Corrective practices
 - polarize the ethnic divide Roma vs. non-Roma
 - Destabilize children's social security and educational prospects



STANDARD CZECH IDEOLOGY

- Standard Czech ideologized as if serving all, a homogeneous language that has hegemony over the social space
- ... as a national language of Czechs with lasting effects of on language attitudes of the public, teachers et al.:
- resistance to multiculturalism (protests in Duchcov 2013) in defence of the supposed national integrity and socio-economic stability
- Social integration of the Roma is a plan rather than a process, experienced and aimed at
- Media pollute public discourse



CONSEQUENCES OF THE IDEOLOGY

ATTITUDES TO ROMANI AND INTERFERING WITH ITS USAGE, PUBLIC DISCOURSE, SOCIAL PROTESTS AND STEREOTYPES

- Unlike Czech, Romani has never been cultivated but continuously used in story telling and music
- Romani is subordinated to StCz
- ... disadvantages its speakers since inadequate for their communicative and social needs
- ...is a hybrid without a proper grammar and a lexical base
- ...exists in several competing dialects
- ... is a protested and rejected language
- ...is a useless and impractical minority language
- Stereotypes of the Roma
 - excluded (schools, social peripheries, borderlands)
 - marginalized
 - incompetent speakers of Czech
 - non-Czechs with a Roma nationality
 - inadaptable [*nepřizpůsobiví*]



ROMA ASSIMILATION POLICY

- 1950s: Since the Roma live in the society Romani should be incorporated into the school as an auxiliary language and a foreign language to be taught
- 1960s-80s: The Roma should assimilate and adopt Czech since Romani considered incapable of meeting speakers' needs and satisfying basic conceptual expressions
 - Dialectal diversification of Romani was exaggerated as a block to making a self-sustainable language
- Today: Are the Roma entitled to their own standard and to the Czech standard? And to membership in the nation and Czech nationality?



QUESTIONS:

- Who cares about standardizing, legitimizing and teaching Romani?
- What are the right goals?
- Is the process a way to debase the vernaculars?
- Should Romani be saved as a cultural entity, historical database and an academic subject?
- In what ways is the Czech-Roma ethnic conflict affecting Romani? (Duchcov, Facebook...)
- Is Romani vernacular on its way to becoming the ethnolect of racial protest?
- Will the Roma continue to distance themselves from Romani and accept the stance that it disadvantages them socio-economically?



ROMANI AND EBONICS: WHY COMPARE?

- Court cases and verdicts
- Segregation, stereotypes and attitudes
- At the school:
 - Teaching strategies
 - Special education programs and practical schools
 - Psychological testing
 - Dangers of “special schools”
 - Tradition of psych testing and teachers’ excluding “incompetent” students is culturally rooted
 - Block to advanced study
 - Block FL learning
 - Disable integration



EBONICS IN THE AMERICAN CLASSROOM

- 20 and 40 years after court verdicts and sociolinguists' vehement support AAVE/Ebonics debated and focused on in teachers' prep.
- Acknowledged as a stumbling block for English language arts teachers
- Research > Ebonics handled well by teachers who sociolinguistically trained to understand language dynamics and variability

Vs. Czech context:

inclusion of Roma students seen as special education issue with practical school solution



EBONICS AS A NAMED LANGUAGE

- its status raised through the court victories (1979, 1998)
- Endorsed by linguists and professionals
- Grounds for
 - recognition of its grammar
 - shift in speakers' attitudes
 - acceptance of language variability
 - "destandardizing" English as the language of the classroom
 - vs. covert segregation
 - Ebonics in the classroom both a blessing and curse



ROMANI AS A NAMED AND LEGITIMATE LANGUAGE?

○ PRO: potential benefits

- a strategy of ethnic and identity revitalization
- a recognition of social plurality and bilingualism
- outgrowing the ethnolect as a Slovak/Romani/Czech contact variety
- legitimizing and standardizing Romani on par with standard Czech and other named languages
- destandardizing Czech in some of its functions and domains?!

○ CON: real situation

- ideologically rejected as a non-language
- protested against
- R speakers disengaged from public and political initiatives
- lack of professional resources (human and material)
- society and school lack experience with bilingualism and code-switching
- Not identified as a goal in the Ministry's integration strategy



PREDICTABLE OUTCOMES

- Continued emphasis on conservatism in standardization inhibits intercultural communication
- Romani vernacular becomes a lingua franca and the language of protest into which Romani dialects converge
- In the process of social disintegration Czech and Romani grow apart
- EU "2+1" strategy of school foreign language study be underexplored in Czech Republic and targeted at vehicular languages



HOW TO STANDARDIZE ROMANI TO GET RESULTS?

- Modifying school spaces > plurality
- Raising teachers' awareness of the sociolinguistic paradigm of language variation and dynamics
- Clarifying reasons to teach Romani
 - establish a positive identity of Romani
 - bridge the social divide
 - save a minority language
 - ??

PROBLEMS:

Or, does north-central Slovak Romani have a chance of socio-cultural acceptance by all Czech Roma?

Can Romani be standardized if and as polycentric?



REMAINING QUESTIONS ON THE CZECH STANDARD AND IDEOLOGY

- Will the Czech conservative tradition of standardization, language institutionalization and approaches to language arts be maintained?
- Can language attitudes of the public and StCz conservative teaching ever be overcome?!
- Will Czechs ever give up security of the standard?
- i.e., could the Swedish approach encouraging destandardization and internal variability become a model to reform the Czech tradition so that
 - the standard become polycentric and selectively elaborated
 - codification be not socially binding for all
 - the standard be a property of not just the elites (Hübschmannová and Neustupný, 1996, 2004)

