

DOI: 10.11649/a.1974

Article No.: 1974

Adeptus
nr 14/2019 r. pismo humanistów

Kamil Czaiński, graduate of the Czech philology programme at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. His academic interests include Eastern European cultural phenomena, borderland studies and contemporary evolution of language. He explored the subject of his essay in his master's dissertation.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2113-8669>

e-mail: kam.czainski@o2.pl

Kamil Czaiński

***Ponašymu* – the mixed language code of Těšín Silesia**

Introduction. Těšín Silesia and its language before 1920

The term “Těšín Silesia” is inextricably linked with the Duchy of Těšín, initially a Piast and later a Habsburg fief, which first appeared in the annals of Eastern European history in 1290. At the time, the formally independent Silesian duchies found themselves clearly within the sphere of Czech influence. Czech ascendancy was later sealed with their annexation into the realms held by the Czech Crown in the first half of the fourteenth century – 1327 in the case of the Duchy of Těšín, when Duke Casimir I paid liege homage to King John of Bohemia (Bakala, 1992, pp. 20–21). In terms of ethnicity, most of the Duchy's population was of Slavic descent – with the exception of eastern portions, Bielsko (which the Germans called “Bielitz”), which were reserved for ethnic German settlement and later gave rise to what is known as the Bielsko-Biała language island (*Bielitz-Bialaer Sprachinsel*).

The course of the Lučina River, running through the western portions of the region, formed the isogloss separating areas where the proto-Slavic *g* was dominant (east of the river) from areas where it shifted into *h* (west of the river), areas with different degrees of nasal vowel denasalization (*češki* in the west and *čyrški* in the east, *luka* in the west and *luŋka* in the east), and areas with different development patterns for *TorT*, *ToIT* groups (*krava* in the west and *krova* in the east, *młady* in the west and *młody* in the east); conse-

The study was conducted at the author's own expense.

No competing interests have been declared.

Publisher: Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 PL License (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/pl/), which permits redistribution, commercial and non-commercial, provided that the article is properly cited.

© The Author(s) 2019. © To English translation: Jan Szelaǳiewicz 2019.

quently, it separates Silesian dialects with predominantly Lechitic characteristics from Lach or Silesian-Moravian dialects, which carry predominantly Czech-Slovak patterns (Hannan, 1996, p. 125). Whenever this essay uses “dialect”, “folk language” or “local language”, it means those Lechitic Silesian dialects. In the part of the region we are most interested in, namely the contemporary borderlands between Poland and Czechia, these included the Těšín dialect (centre), the Jablunkov dialect (Goral), the Fryštát/Karviná dialect, and the Bohumín dialect (north), the latter closest to central Silesia (Hannan, 1996, p. 120).

In the fifteenth century, following a period of domination of Latin and German, the Duchy of Těšín adopted and began using Czech in literature, official matters and administration. While the oldest document written in Czech dates to 1434, the language quickly grew into widespread usage and by the end of the century was spoken in all Těšín Silesian towns: even the ethnically homogeneous Bielsko used Czech in its official records from 1475 to 1560 (Hannan, 1996, p. 148). Proclaimed on 24 June 1573, by Duke Wenceslaus III Adam, the Constitution of the Duchy of Těšín formally recognized Czech as the official language in the land. Article 20 of the Constitution reads:

If one were to prove any claim or proffer any document or testimony before the court in a language other than Czech, better for him to turn to a trusted party to translate it into Czech and write it out before the trial; claims should be proffered in Czech by both natives and foreigners (as cited in Šefčík, 2001, p. 64).¹

In Article 18, on the other hand, we find the following clause: “Before the court, natives and foreigners shall speak in Czech or a similar tongue, and all arguments should be conducted likewise” (Šefčík, 2001, p. 63).² The phrase “tomu jazyku podobná řeč” (which translates to “or a similar tongue”) is of particular interest here, as it clearly indicates that sixteenth-century legislators were aware of Czech actually being the second language of most of the Duchy subjects – the first being one of the Silesian folk dialects. An analysis of the body of modern Czech literature written in Těšín Silesia reveals a number of “misspellings” and forms that never appear in Czech, which, in turn, demonstrates that the language was a foreign code to most Silesian authors, whereas the usage of local dialects was widespread and cut across social classes. And so Alois Knop, author of the monograph *Spisovná čeština ve Slezsku v 16. století*, mentions the following as commonly observed characteristics:

¹ “Pak-liby kdo jaké spravedlnosti, listy aneb svědectví prokazovati chtěl před soudem jiným a ne českým jazykem, ten to sobě na česko hodnověrným osobám přeložiti a časně před stáním pilně vypsati dáti má a českým jazykem spravedlnosti své předložiti má, tak dobře cizozemec, jako obyvatel.” Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are the author’s.

² “Před soudem česky aneb tomu jazyku podobnou řečí a ne jináče ode všech cizích i domácích mluveno a pře vedeny býti mají.”

- forms lacking the Czech umlaut, such as *baran, od pola, rzetaz*
- *u* instead of *au* (*smluva, kupyl*)
- *o* instead of *ů* in the plural dative form (*domom, dietom*)
- syllabic *r* and *l* when next to vowels (*hernecz, welna*)
- emphasis of the *dž/ć* pronunciation over *d'/t'* (*dziejzinie, do smerczy*) and palatalization of other consonants (*do Strumienia, przedkowie*)
- extended nasal vowels (*trombe, beczkem*)
- raised vowels (*Jklorz, zahun zeli*)
- consistent usage of *-uw* in the plural genitive form (*organuw, dwu pyecuw*)
- inconsistent emphasis of vowel length – either overrepresented in penultimately accented words (*pochwálu, dalékych, zwěftowátel*) or missing altogether (*przikladu, rozgimáni, žádam*) (Knop, 1965, pp. 23–47).

The eighteenth century marked a resurgence of German, particularly in the wake of Maria Theresa's 1774 education reforms, but in most rural schools, churches and offices, Czech, which was also commonly called "Moravian" by the locals (see Hannan, 1996, p. 133), held on well into the mid-1800s. While in practice textbooks and hymnals published in Moravia were indeed written in Czech, the locals continued to use a mixture of Czech and Silesian dialects in casual writing and official documents. An example can be found in a bill of sale of land issued in 1837 by the magistrate in Puńców, a village near Těšín:

Quittung

na 16 fl 53 kr C.M., prawim Szesnaście Ryńskich 53 Xr strzebemich piniendzy, które Jerzy Beness, Przigimatel Gruntu pod Nr. 65 w Puńcowie podug swoigo kupu Act 2 intab. 30 Octobra 1812, do Sztalmachowey Masy należonce piniondze, mie Niże podpisaney, iak moy erbowni dział, do moich własnych rąk, dobrze odliczone, w przitomności trzech godnowiemych świadków, oddal. Na co dozwołuie żeby ty wyzmienione piniondze z gruntowey Ksiegi wymazane były.

W Puńcowie dnia 20. Decembra 837.

+++ Ewa rodzono Benesz, wydano Kordon, Odbieratelkinia

Jan Sniegon, Podpisowatel a Świadek

Andryd Glaycar Świadek

Paweł Kayzar Świadek

(Poloczkowa, 2003, p. 42)

Polish finally made its way into the linguistic landscape of Těšín Silesia in the seventeenth century – when it began appearing in official documents, although in rare cases, and in pamphlets “for the folk”, most of which were simple guidebooks or religious writings. Scholars consider *Wierność Bogu y cesarzowi czasu powietrza Morowego, należąca á pokazána przez Jána Muthmána słuęę Ewanieley przy kościele Jezusowym przed Těšínem*, published in 1716, to be the earliest book written exclusively in Polish (Raclavská, 1998, p. 37). Like the local variety of Czech, the strain of Polish used in Těšín Silesia also carried strong regional characteristics, including denasalized nasal vowels. For example, the introduction to the 1761 book *Prawdziwa Jedżina do Nieba z Pisma Swientego dokazana Droga*, authored by a group of Catholic priests from Jablunkov, reads:

Łaskawy Czytelniku! Oto ci sie podaje Ksionszka nowo, która jakkolwiek stare Rzeczy w sobie zawiera, przece noworzeczona, że twojemu Jenzykowi a mowie w Druku przysposobiona popierwsze na Światło wychodzy, aby tym milsza, y każdemu przyjemniejsza była czym snadniejsza bendzie do wyrozumienia (as cited in Raclavská, 1998, p. 39).

The same period also marks the earliest appearances of so-called “zapiśniki” or peasant journals, which were a valuable example of writings penned in native tongues, here understandably marked by influences of Czech and Polish, given the literature available in the region, and as such, they also stand as examples of a certain linguistic mixture. One of the earliest of these writers, a so-called “piśmiorz”, was Jakub Galacz of Dolní Žukov, the author of *Pisniczka pobożna ewangelitska složena w ten czas 1709 když tak hrabie Sytzenorffu komisarz cysarski przy meste Tessyne kostel a sskolu ewangelikum wystawiti naweczne czasy gmenem cysarze placz pokazal a oddal* and a chronicle documenting the years 1698–1717 (Raclavská, 1998, p. 45). The most prominent of them, however, and one that is most often discussed in this particular context, was Jura Gajdzica, a carter from Mała Cisownica, author of *Nieco z kroniki Cieszęski*, a chronicle spanning the years 1211–1823, and the memoir *Dlo pamięci rodu ludzkiego* (1840), which features both lexical Bohemisms as well as traces of phonetic and grammatical forms derived from local dialects. The memoir reads:

Roku 1812 przed Gody Francuz prziszeł na Mozgola do bitki, ale sie Francuzowi źle podarziło, Pon Bóg mu tam bardzo wybił, trefła zima wielko i mróz i zmorz tam, że sie go mało wróciło i musioł sie wrócić chned w poście z Galicje. Potem sie zaś woyna szczęła, Cysorz z Francuzem. I nasze cysarskie woysko teź sie wrociło z Polski i tu były tak wielki marsze, że yuż nie szło ku wytrwaniu a trwały od Apryla aż do Czerwieca, że niekiedy było 8 koni u yednego Pasieczana (gazdy z Małej Cisownicy), tego roku 1813

też wtedy wtych marszach szli Francuzi, Harwoci i wszelijaki zbierwy a ściągali sie ku Pradze i tam sie potem zaczęła woyna (as cited in Spyra, 2006, p. 38).

The Spring of Nations brought on a number of developments which had considerable influence over the shape of the sociolinguistic landscape of Těšín Silesia. In 1847, a student of the Evangelical Gymnasium in Těšín, Andrzej Cinciała, established a fraternity for students of Polish. The following year, in May 1848, together with his schoolmate Paweł Stalmach and lawyer Ludwik Klucki, Cinciała founded *Tygodnik Cieszyński* (The Cieszyn Weekly), the first Polish-language newspaper in the region and one with a pronouncedly pro-Polish slant. *Czytelnia Polska* (The Polish Library) was founded later that year (Kadłubiec, 1997, p. 21). In a rather short span of time, Polish activists managed to secure the introduction of Polish into Catholic and Evangelical churches, and usher in Polish textbooks into the curriculum of nearly all the folk schools in the Duchy – with the exception of the Frýdek Deanery and, following some local protests, its counterpart in Fryštát (Bogus, 2012, p. 339).

As time passed, the importance of Polish in Těšín Silesia continued to grow. The year 1867 proved decisive, as the new constitution, which transformed the Austrian Empire into the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, guaranteed “equal rights to all the country’s languages in schooling, administration and public life”.³ Regardless of the provision, however, the Austro-Hungarian state presumed the existence of only nine *landesübliche Sprachen* or “ethnic languages”, namely German, Hungarian, “Czech-Moravian-Slovak”, Polish, “Ruthenian”, Romanian, Serbian-Croatian, Slovenian and Italian, so most of the area making up Těšín Silesia – with the exception of the Bielsko-Biała language island and the western belt from Frýdek to Silesian Ostrava, where Lach dialects were dominant – was determined to be “Polish-speaking” (Wandruszka & Urbanitsch, 2003, p. 44). Polish nationalists called the region a “Polish state asset”, fuelled by the influx of Polish labourers from Galicia, especially into the Ostrava-Karviná Coal Basin (Kadłubiec, 1997, p. 26).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, three basic language codes coexisted in the Těšín region. One was German, the prestigious state tongue used by all ethnicities, requisite for any sort of social advancement. Another was Polish (in the Bielsko, Těšín and Fryštát townships) or Czech (in the Frýdek township), used as literary language by the press, the Church,

³ Article 19 of the Constitution reads, in the original German: “Die Gleichberechtigung aller landesüblichen Sprachen in Schule, Amt und öffentlichem Leben wird vom Staate anerkannt” (*Staatsgrundgesetz vom 21. December 1867, über die allgemeinen Rechte der Staatsbürger für die im Reichsrathe vertretenen Königreiche und Länder*, n.d.; Polish version as cited in Kasza, 2009).

the local administration, as well as in primary and secondary education, to some extent at least in the latter case. Finally, the last of three was the common Silesian tongue, which remained the essential communication code in the private sphere; if used for written communication, it was mostly used for purposes of entertainment or folklore, sometimes in popular manifestos and pamphlets drafted for political purposes (Hannan, 1996, p. 152). No broader efforts have been undertaken, however – whether within Austrian Silesia itself or jointly with the Prussian Silesians – to either codify or establish the tongue as a fully-fledged literary language. In 1910, Józef Koźdoń, the leader of the Silesian People's Party, which represented those of the Těšínian peoples who embraced their Silesian identity and opposed efforts to Polishize the region, founded the Committee for the Preservation of the Purity of the Silesian Dialect; its successes, however, were ephemeral at best, while the *Ślązak* weekly, the Party's press arm, were published mostly in Polish, with the local dialect reserved only for shorter forms, such as japes, rhymes, folk tales, brief essays and manifestos (Hannan, 1996, p. 158).

At the time, the common folk tongue was shaped, on the one hand, by pronounced German influence – the source of many German loanwords incorporated by the Silesian dialect, some of which (e.g. *ganc*, *richtik*, *verk*) continue to exist in the collective consciousness of the Těšínians – and literary Polish or Czech, taught in school and used by the press, on the other. Silesian texts from that period are full of inconsistencies, with different spellings of the same words used even within a single sentence, as well as random usage of forms taken from literary languages (e.g. featuring nasal vowels like *ą* and *ę*) next to attempts to emulate pronunciation using purely phonetic means (e.g. transcriptions of devoicings).

An example of this can be found in the following political manifestos from 1920–1921, in which the dialect was deployed in order to better reach the souls of the local population:

Ślonzocy!

Jeszcze przet 80 rokami bronili sie naszymy przotkowie przed spolszczynim. Prawili hernie że som Morawcy! We szkołach czytali z morawskich ksionżek, w kościele rzykali i śpiwali z morawskich kancynołów, doma rzondzili po naszymy.

Podziwejcie sie na gory a najdziecie tam jeszcze dość morawskich ksionżek. Kandy sie tam wziyny? Jeszcze przed niedownym czytali w nich waszy ojcowie, starzicy, matki i starzynki. Aż do dzisio mają te ksionżki w zocy!

Prziszoł ksiąc – polak, rector musieli uczyć po polsku, aby nie stracił zarobku w kościele. Rakuski urzyndy pomagały polszczyć. Ślonski lud oprzył sie na moc miejscach polszczynie. Ślonscy Morawcy w mocka dziedzinach bronili sie a jejich postympowani musi być i dzisiok jeszcze ślonzkimu ludowi wzorem. [...]

Děšintero při kozani dla Šlonzoka před glosovanim:

1. Věř sobie samymu, polskim agitatorum něvěř!
2. Paměntej ynym svojigo vlasnigo dobra!
3. Paměntej přislosti svoji a svojich děci!
4. Šanuj ojca svojigo i matki svoji i předkuv svojich, kieři od věkuv byli v paňstvě českim!
5. Nězabiješ sebě i svojich potomkuv glosovanim dla paňstva polskigo!
6. Nědej se svišť přivandrovalcami z Galicyje, abys zapřil svojum krev!
7. Nědej sobě ukrasť svojum bogatum zimiú šlonskum Polokami!
8. Nědej nic na falešne sviadectva a plotki polski!
9. Něžič sobie dobrobytu polskigo, bo go nima!
10. Glosuj s pelnym přesvědčim dla republiky českoslovacki!

(as cited in Gawrecki, 2017, p. 143)

A similar combination of Silesian, Polish and Czech forms, sometimes even coexisting versions of the same words (e.g. *moja złata* and *moja złoto*), can be found in a private letter written in the second half of the nineteenth century by a resident of Istebna:

Niech bedzie pohwalony Jezus Krystus moja złata Marenko ja če pozdrawujem na niezliczene razy a ceszyłoby mie to gdyby če tyh moih paru słow przy dobrem a stałem zdrowiu wynatreficz mohło ja sem hwała Panu Bogu zdrowy a powodzeni moje jak w tej smutnej Ostrawie tu kartku Cosz mi pisała toh dostał i tak czi zaniu dziękujem bardzo pieknie piszeš mi až przijadem na odpust ale moja złoto Marenko nimožem rad byh bardzo przijehacz aleh dostał kartku ku wojsku na dewatnastego usz mušiu bycz w czesinie na 13 dni tak mi to miła Marenko niepasuje jechacz dodom teras a zaš potem zatydzień bardzo mie To mierži že nimožem jehacz usz še tam musziš sama za ten czas czeszicz bo ja gdyžby nie to to byh przijel [...] (Hannan, 1996, p. 153).

***Ponašymu* – the contemporary mixed language of the Czech part of the region**

In the wake of the First World War and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Těšín Silesia became the subject of a territorial dispute between two nascent states: Poland and Czechoslovakia. On 28 July 1920, the Conference of Ambassadors decided on the partition of the region. Poland was granted Bielsko, along with its language island, the Vistula Valley with

Skoczów, Ustroń and Strumień, as well as the right-bank part of Těšín, whereas Czechoslovakia – the industrial Ostrava-Karviná Basin, Frýdek, Třinec, the Jablunkov area (but without Istebna, Jaworzynka and Koniaków), along with the left-bank part of Těšín. The further development of the language in the Polish part of the region was tied primarily to the increasing assimilation toward Polish, which was eventually recognized as the sole official language in the region in 1920, and has remained so ever since, with the exception of the Second World War. Simultaneously, the Polish interior remained the primary direction of reciprocal migrations.



Changes of the Polish-Czechoslovak border in Těšín Silesia, 1918–1945 (map after Gašior, 2008, p. 3)

The situation in the Czechoslovak part of the region was much more complicated, mainly on account of the greater phonological and morphological distance between standard Czech and the common folk tongue (the Těšín Silesian dialect) on the one hand, and the emergence over the previous decades of a powerful Polish ethnic minority, and the resultant spread of Polish primary and middle schools, Polish cultural organizations, and the possibility of using Polish in official contacts with the state on the other. These two factors significantly hampered the pace of assimilation into Czech. Furthermore, the majority of people who settled in the region after the Second World War came not from Czech-speaking territories, but from Slovakia.

Consequently, in the course of the twentieth century, a specific linguistic code emerged in the strip of borderland that Poles somewhat incorrectly came to call Zaolzie, the Trans-Olza Region (see Gašior, 2008, p. 2), which combined the substrate of traditional Těšín dialect with standard Czech and elements taken from both Polish and Slovak. Its speakers tend to call the resulting lect *ponašymu*. The term itself, popular across Central and Eastern Europe in its many incarnations, such as the Sorbian *ponaschemu* or the Podlachian *svoja mova*, has also been adopted by many a scholar working in the field (Bogoczová & Bortliczek, 2017, p. 21)

What we are dealing with here is a sort of hybrid language or interlanguage, a phenomenon not unlike *surzhyk*, the chaotic blend of Russian and Ukrainian substrates used by wide swathes of Ukrainians (see Fałowski, 2011, pp. 140–141). *Ponašymu* speakers draw rather randomly on the linguistic means of those codes that they have easiest access to. This blending goes beyond merely imposing Czech lexis on Silesian phonological and morphological patterns, the palette of possibilities is much broader here. Distinct forms of one word or paradigm may coexist within a single sentence uttered by one speaker. Words from the languages that *ponašymu* is built upon (Silesian, Czech, Polish, Slovak) that are similar in form but imbued with distinct meanings may be used concurrently to imply different interpretations (*řykać* used as either ‘pray’ or ‘speak’, *čuć* used as either ‘sense’ or ‘hear’). Individual words often have a number of synonyms (*kyrchuv*, *cmyntoř*, *hřbitov*, *cintorin*; *cug*, *poćung*, *vlak*; *mjyškać*, *bydleć*, *byvać*) borrowed from different languages used in the area.

Below are passages from two conversations recorded in the course of field research the author conducted in August 2018. The letter *ů* in the transcript denotes the “raised o”, the distinctly Silesian intermediate sound between *o* and *u*, *ô* denotes the labialization of *o*, while the remaining letters should be pronounced according to standard Czech (*š*, *ž*, *č*, *ň*,

ř, h, ch, d', t', í, ú) and Polish (ś, ź, ć, ł, i, y, ie) pronunciation patterns. Voicings and devoicings appearing within or between individual words have not been indicated.

The first of the two conversations involved a group of twentysomethings from the village of Hřčava in the southern part of the region, nearest to the Czech-Slovak-Polish melting pot:

“To je Chytry kviz, a vidžiš jacy chytrři som, no...”

“Ale nejgorši je ta typovačka, ňi? Michaela Jílkova, vole, a kolik ona natočila d'ilú toho Mate slovo, a jo pravim že, kurva, jo se kejši s učitelkům bavił, ešče na zakladce to bylo, tak možna v ôsmej třídže, ňi? A tož, kurva, to je každý mješůnc, sům štyry d'ily, ty vole, krat osum, tak jech vyrachovoł třišta osumdesat štyry d'ily.”

“Ale ty žeš to až pozdě povjedžo!”

“No, jo to pozdě povjedžo. Bo jo nad tym furt rozmyslo! A vyšče mje ňepočovali...”

“No, a my muvili stopadesat, a joch mu dovała šance, tak viš co, tak napiš tam dvjestě... A stejne to bylo gupje...”

“A jo typnoł dvjesta osumdesat štyry a ve finale to bylo dvjesta osumdesat šest, ňi?”

“A potem ešče bylo, kjela vina špañelskeho vyprodukovaly do ostatňich zemi za rok dva tisíc šestnact, a jo muvim padesat... ja! že kolik tisíc... ňi, kolik milionu hektolitrů Špañelsko za jedyn rok, a jo muvim: Špañelsko? uňi tam ty vina enem tak rozdovajům, ňi?...”

“Hahaha, no, tam vseňdže dajom, tam być bezdomovcem to muši być luksus... Maš tu vino... (“Jadymy do Špañelska na dovolenke...” “Ćepło, vino...”)

“...tak muvim, dejmy padesat, napišće tam padesat... Ale ňi, to je moc, to je moc, napisali ôsymnost, bylo to štyrycet, gdyby dali na mje, to by my vygrali.”

“No a minule, ty vole, typek tam postavil grafickom kartym jakože z Lega, ňi, jakši, kurva, Čiňan nebo co to byl, a teraz byla otazka, z kjela kostek to postavil... A Klara rachovala, ňi, že kostka muši mječ tela a tela... a tak to zrachovala, že třinact tisíc, ňi? A že napiše to tam... A Pičak ňi, kurva, to je mało, to mušoł być tak milion kostek miňimalne, ňi... A všyscy dali potem na Pičaka, ty vole... Ve finale bylo třinact tisíc dvjestě. My potem ubrali, že sedumset tisíc, ale i tak...”

The other conversation involved two women in their sixties, hailing from Bohumín:

“Ale teraz mało ježdžům cugami. Všecko autym...”

“Jo se myšlym, aňi to letišťe ňyma využyte. Každyk přivježe, odvježe... Abo do Katovic, je to bližy.”

“Ňyma to využyte, no... Tež juž ich ubrali, tych přimych vlakuv, do Bogumina vubec ňeježdžům, až z Ostravy muši jechać.”

“Ale jest. Ńi, Ńi, Ńi... jedům. Jedům.”

“Teraz byli naši v Turecku. Młodzi. A odvožali ich autami ojcovje do Ostravy. Na Hlavňi. A džeprym jechali na Mošnov. Tym cugym.”

“To možno, že ja. Bo jak jo była v Karvinej... v Ostravje, tak było pisane: Mošnov. Byli v Turecku?”

“V Turecku byli, no.”

“U nas tež jedům do Turecka. Ale na tydžyň.”

“Ći tež ņebyli... śedym dñi. Ale pochvalovali se.”

“Ja? No už podrugje. Jedno to samy. Se jim tam podobo.”

The passages above illustrate the chaotic and inconsistent choice of forms and incessant code-switching on the part of the interlocutors. The conversations feature typically Silesian forms and expressions, part and parcel of the traditional dialect (*kejsi, džeprym, tela, joch mu dowała, jo pravim, jadymy*), but even the characteristic phonetic forms, such as raised vowels or the labialization of *o*, are deployed without any semblance of consistency (*sům – som, potym – potem, ôsmej – odvožali*). Contaminations sometimes appear even within the space of a single word – the verb *jedům* (= *jedou* ‘they’re going’) used a handful of times by one of the recorded speakers, begins in Czech, with an umlaut, but ends in Silesian, with an extended nasal vowel and a raised vowel. The logic of the sentence, specific syntactic ligatures (*añi to letišće*), and elements that serve the phatic function (*tak* used as a consecutive conjunction, *jakože*) – are all rooted primarily in Czech. The vulgar ornaments correspond, to some extent, to similar uses either in Polish (*kurva* used as a slightly less emphatic interjection) or in Czech (*ty vole*). Phrasemes in the passages are mostly Czech: *ve finale, dali na mje, jo se baviš s, pochvalovali se, už podrugje*. Entire expressions in Czech, sometimes even entire sentences, that are incorporated into the utterances, preserve Czech phonetics and grammatical forms, even if they contain the most basic descriptions that have easily identifiable counterparts in the dialect. For example, the speaker’s family was taken to the *Hlavňi* rather than the *Głuvny* railway station in Ostrava, whereas the young people from Hřava, when discussing specific questions used in a competition they attended, in all likelihood asked in Czech, use Czech numerals (and then immediately follow them up with Silesian forms: *osumdesat* but *ôsymnost*), mention an *učitelka* (*rechtorka* in Silesian, meaning ‘teacher’), and talk about something happening *pozde* (= *pozdě* ‘later’) rather than *ňyskoro*. In these passages lifted from Czech realities, *ponašymu* speakers are evidently capable (although inconsistently) of using proper vowel length (*kolik dñlú = kolik dñlů*), as well as Czech declensions (*miljonu hektolitrú, = milionů hektolitrů*) and phonetics (*natočila*).

In other conversations (which are not cited here), the author has also encountered selective usage of contemporary Czech forms, e.g. *odchodzajům vocad'* (*odsud* in Czech, *stela* or *stůnd* in Silesian, *stąd* in Polish, meaning 'from here'). *Cug*, a German loanword that took deep root in Silesia, appears alongside the more modern Czech *vlak* 'train', while the Czech form of the interrogative pronoun *kolik* (= Pol. *ile* 'how much') is used interchangeably with the originally Silesian form *kjela*. Typically Slovakian forms appearing in the above-quoted passages include the verb *počuvać* (= *počúvať*, *poslouchat* in Czech, *śluchać* in Polish, meaning 'to listen') and the nominal form *dovolenka* (*urlop* in Polish, meaning 'vacation' or 'leave') replacing the Czech adjectival form *dovolená*. The phrase *všeňdze dajom* was probably influenced by Polish (*všyndy dovajům* in Silesian, *všude dávají* in Czech).

An excellent example of code mixing in *ponašymu* can be found in the passage below:

A potem ešče było, kjela vína špañelskeho vyprodukovały do ostatních zemi za rok dva tisíce šestnact, a jo muvim padesat... ja! že kolik tisíc... ňi, kolik milionu hektolitru Špañelsko za jedyn rok, a jo muvim: Špañelsko? ůňi tam ty vina enem tak rozdovajům, ňi?

It begins in Silesian dialect (although the form *potem* without the raised *e* sounds rather Polish), then shifts to Czech, with *h* replacing *g* and a distinctly pronounced long vowel sound. The subsequent word (*vyprodukovały*) is an internationalism that phonetically matches Silesian, then the sentence moves to Czech again; the word *muvim* uses a Silesian declension, and its usage in this context may evoke standard Polish (Silesian dialects usually use *godům/pravjym/padům*, while Czech uses *říkám/povídám*, and Slovak – *hovorím/povedám*). Then, the sentence employs a Silesian *ja*, meaning 'yes/sure', and later moves to Czech, interspersed with the typically dialectal raised pronunciation of *jedyn*, finally closing with Silesian and the word *enem* (*jyno* in Silesian, *jenom* in Czech, *tylko* in Polish, meaning 'only'), which itself hails from the Moravian dialects.

Conclusions

While the phenomenon of the *ponašymu* language has taken root across essentially everywhere where the Těšín dialect was once used within the territory of the Czech Republic (except the belt of Lach dialects that functioned west of the Lučina River), the processes of Bohemization in the Karviná and Bohumín region are nowadays so advanced that the usage of mixed language codes is observed mostly among the middle and older generations.

The situation is radically different south of Czech Těšín, where *ponašymu* became a sort of interdialect, a basic communication code used by all generations and social classes. The usage of this code is in no way linked with a sense of national identity – it is employed by people who define themselves as Czechs, as well as those declaring themselves Poles, or Silesians, Těšínians, Gorals or *tusteloki* (meaning ‘locals’). Curiously, youths attending schools with curricula in Polish, people going to Mass in Polish, reading regional newspapers published in Polish, and involved with events organized by the Polish Cultural and Educational Union are almost universally *ponašymu*⁴ speakers and exhibit greater competencies with regard to using the traditional Těšín dialect. Among Czech students and high school graduates consuming only Czech-language media, the percentage of people speaking exclusively Czech was decidedly higher, and their version of *ponašymu* inevitably hewed closer toward standard Czech, at the expense of distinctly dialectal forms. These observations, based on the author’s original research, essentially corroborate hypotheses put forward in earlier academic inquiries into the subject (e.g. Bogoczová, 1993, 1998; Bogoczová & Bortliczek, 2017; Greń, 2000).

Ponašymu speakers are aware of the substandard, mixed character of their language, and of its peculiar “strangeness”. The recording of the two Bohumín women, whose conversation about trains to the airport was brought up earlier in the essay, also features the following exchange on the subject of the local *komolenina* (*komolit* ‘distort’, ‘pervert’):

Tož ja už teraz ňevjem, ňeumim aňi česki, aňi ponašymu, aňi polski, bo ž džeckami, a s chłopym, myňžym, tak ůn z Bohumina, tak česki... praktički Pjetrovice sům na graňicach, sům Gurne Marklovice a Dolne Marklovice... Jo muviła Karoliňe, tak mi to vyjechało, jo ji prajm [= pravjym] “pujdymy do narpy”. A ona mi praj [= pravi], “kaj to idymy”. A jo prajm, “tak to žodnymu ňemuv, bo by mi řekli, že babička je gupjo”.

⁴ At this point, we ought to bring up the fact that in the Czech part of Těšín Silesia, the Polish language exists, to a large extent, as an artificial code, its reach limited to bilingual signage on streets or railway stations, curricula in Polish-language schools, a handful of press titles (the *Zwrot* (The Phrase) monthly and *Głos* (The Voice), a magazine published twice a week), religious services, and occasional speeches delivered at events organized by the Polish Cultural and Educational Union. In practice, most Poles living in the Trans-Olza Region use either the Těšín dialect or *ponašymu* as their first language. Already in the 1990s, 67% of Polish high school students reported difficulty communicating with others in Poland (Bogoczová, 1993, p. 41), while the attitude toward Polishness espoused by the majority of the 30,000 Polish ethnic minority is best illustrated by a passage from a young resident of Dolní Žukov near Český Těšín, recorded by Irena Bogoczova in 2013: “Tu v tych Čechach bych potrafil coši povjedžeć, a apropo Polski tam vogule ňimům pojyňća. My můmy tendencje jakšikej še pokažde podživać na ČT 2, TV NOVA, a v tej Polsce akurat vjym gdo je prezident a tym to kůňcy, abych provde řek. Ňi že bych še tej Polski jakšikej strůnił, ale jo je tu jakši zaryty do tych Čech. Jo jako se považujym na půykład za Poloka, ale eši bych se mjoł porovnać fakt s Polokym, tak tego můmy doš mało, no, spulnego” (Bogoczová & Bortliczek, 2017, p. 164). The passage says: “While I could possibly say something about Czechia, I know next to nothing about Poland. We tend to watch ČT 2, TV NOVA, whereas I only know who’s the sitting president in Poland and that’s it. It’s not that I’m ashamed of Poland, but I feel myself much more embedded in Czechia. While I consider myself a Pole, if I were to compare myself seriously to a native Pole, frankly, we would have very little in common.”

Papirnictvi, ale dycki sme muvili “narpa”. A mi to tak vyjechało, že “idymy do narpy”, a ona “kaj to idymy”.

To tak jak syncy, jak byli mali, to my šli z roboty a jo pravjym, že “sćiśće to radjo, bo to tu jak na ryngišpilach”. Tež mi syncy muvjům: “A mami, a co to je?”

No, no, to same, to same. Všecko... “Rožni”, a mami mi praje: “rozsvit, ne rožni”. No tak... Momy česki škoły.

No, hlavně! A tyn staršy synek, tyn dycki pravi mojimu: “řekňi mamce, ať mluvi německi”. Bo jo s mojimi rodičami ponašymu, ale s ňim už po česku, vjyš, takže to bylo... komonolina (= komolenina)...

Mama muvila němjecki, jak co před nami, jak sme se zešli na kava⁵, aby čošik...

Abyśće něrozumjeli.

No, a tak ynym němjecki. A teroz tego lутuje...

My juž teraz můmy komoluňine fakt: německi, česki, polski, i ruski se mi přimješo do tego...

Všecko dogrůmady, ty mjana, bo to ňima aňi česki, aňi... no všelijaki.

Regardless, *ponašymu* continues to enjoy considerable prestige among its speakers, especially in the southern part of the region, as it is seen as an expression of the borderlands' idiosyncratic character. It separates Těšín Silesia from the rest of the country – after all, it is the only part of the modern Czech Republic where a language other than Czech continues to function in a consistent manner. Simultaneously, it often serves as an intermediary link facilitating the communication of all the nations residing in the borderlands – native Silesians, and newcomers from Czechia, Moravia, Poland and Slovakia. How long can it endure as a separate entity, before it finally merges with Czech, maybe leaving behind some distinct accent and a handful of regionalisms (as it was the case with Lach dialects, which more or less disappeared from everyday communication, leaving behind only the *ostravština*, a distinct local flavour of Czech, or with the local Těšín dialect in Polish territories, which essentially became regionally-coloured Polish)? The general trajectory here is rather obvious. *Ponašymu* continues to adopt more and more Czech lexis (which has no standing competition in terms of naming contemporary phenomena). Furthermore, to quote a 53-year-old Hřava resident:

⁵ We ought to point out a peculiar grammatical hybrid here: typically Czech verb conjugation (*jsme se...*) coupled with declension patterns used in central Silesia, which traditionally included Bohumín and its nearby dependencies (*na kava*).

“My ešte s tými džeckami muvili tak ponašymu, ale teraz juž te młode maminki, co tu sům, to se snažům už s tými małymi dětmi... už jako muvjům po česku”⁶. No doubt remains, however, that the Czech part of Těšín Silesia will continue to enjoy a distinct sociolinguistic profile for at least a couple of decades.

Translated by Jan Szelaǳewicz

Bibliography

- Bakala, J. (1992). Śląsk Cieszyński w średniowieczu (do roku 1450). In M. Borák & D. Gawrecki (Eds.), *Zarys dziejów Śląska Cieszyńskiego* (pp. 17–30). Ostrava: Advertis.
- Bogoczová, I. (1993). *Jazyková komunikace mládeže na dvojjazyčném území českého Těšínska*. Ostrava: Sfinga.
- Bogoczová, I. (1998). *Świadomość i kompetencja językowa najmłodszej generacji Polaków na Zaolziu*. Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita, Filozofická fakulta.
- Bogoczová, I., & Bortliczek, M. (2017). *Jazyk příhraničního mikrosvěta (běžná mluva Těšíňanů v ČR): Język przygranicznego mikroświata (mowa potoczna mieszkańców Zaolzia)*. Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita.
- Bogus, M. (2012). *Nauczyciele szkół ludowych Śląska Cieszyńskiego w XIX i na początku XX wieku: Uwarunkowania prawne i zawodowe*. Częstochowa: Akademia Jana Długosza.
- Fałowski, A. (2011). Język ukraiński. In B. Oczkova, E. Szczepańska & T. Kwoka (Eds.), *Słowiańskie języki literackie: Rys historyczny* (pp. 127–144). Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.
- Gawrecki, D. (2017). *Jazyk a národnost ve sčítáních lidu na Těšínsku v letech 1880–1930*. Český Těšín: Muzeum Těšínska.
- Gąsior, G. (2008). Zaolzie. In A. Knyt (Ed.), *Zaolzie: Polsko-czeski spór o Śląsk Cieszyński 1918–2008* (pp. 2–3). Warszawa: Fundacja Ośrodka Karta, Dom Spotkań z Historią.
- Greń, Z. (2000). *Śląsk Cieszyński: Dziedzictwo językowe*. Warszawa: Slawistyczny Ośrodek Wydawniczy.
- Hannan, K. (1996). *Borders of language and identity in Teschen Silesia*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Kadłubiec, K. D. (Ed.). (1997). *Polská národnostní menšina na Těšínsku v České republice*. Ostrava: Filozofická fakulta Ostravské univerzity.
- Kasza, K. (2009). *Sytuacja polityczna i narodowościowa w Austro-Węgrzech w latach 1848–1918*. Retrieved October 21, 2019, from <https://historia.org.pl/2009/09/03/sytuacja-polityczna-i-narodowosciowa-w-austro-wegrzech-w-latach-1848-1918/>
- Knop, A. (1965). *Spisovná čeština ve Slezsku v 16. století*. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství.
- Poloczkowa, B. (2003). Archiwalia cieszyńskie jako źródło do badań historii języków urzędowych na Śląsku Cieszyńskim. *Pamiętnik Cieszyński*, 18(1), 35–44.

⁶ “We spoke ponašymu with our own children, but these young mothers that live here, with their children... well, they only speak Czech with them.”

Raclavská, J. (1998). *Język polski na Śląsku Cieszyńskim w XIX wieku*. Ostrava: Filozofická fakulta Ostravské univerzity.

Šefčík, E. (2001). *Zemské zřízení Těšínského knížectví z konce 16. století: Studie o Těšínku 17*. Český Těšín: Muzeum Těšínska.

Spyra, J. (2006). *Dło pamięci rodu ludzkiego: Z wprowadzeniem i komentarzem Janusza Spyry*. Těšín: Muzeum Śląska Cieszyńskiego.

Staatsgrundgesetz vom 21. December 1867, über die allgemeinen Rechte der Staatsbürger für die im Reichsrathe vertretenen Königreiche und Länder. (n.d.). Retrieved October 21, 2019, from <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10000006>

Wandruszka, A. & Urbanitsch, P. (2003). *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918: T. 3. Die Völker des Reiches*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Ponašymu – mieszany kod językowy czeskiego Śląska Cieszyńskiego

Abstrakt

Artykuł opisuje rozwój sytuacji językowej w pogranicznym regionie Śląska Cieszyńskiego na przestrzeni dziejów, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem tzw. ponašymu – mieszanego kodu językowego używanego w czeskiej części regionu. Oparty jest on na dowolnym łączeniu form tradycyjnego śląskiego dialektu cieszyńskiego ze standardowym językiem czeskim i w mniejszym stopniu elementami zapożyczonymi z języka polskiego, słowackiego i sąsiednich gwar morawskich. Ważnym elementem pracy jest analiza wybranych materiałów zebranych przeze mnie w trakcie badań terenowych w sierpniu 2018 roku.

Słowa kluczowe:

etnolekt śląski; język czeski; język polski; języki mieszane; ponašymu; przełączanie kodów; Śląsk Cieszyński; Zaolzie

Ponašymu – the mixed language code of Těšín Silesia

Abstract

This article describes the development of the linguistic situation in the border region of Těšín Silesia throughout its history, with particular emphasis on the so-called *ponašymu* – a mixed language code used in the Czech part of the region. It is based on a random combination of forms of the traditional Těšín dialect with the standard Czech language and, to a lesser

extent, elements borrowed from the Polish and Slovak languages and from neighbouring Moravian dialects. An important element of the study is the analysis of selected material collected by the author during fieldwork in August 2018.

Keywords:

Silesian ethnolect; Czech language; Polish language; mixed languages; ponašymu; code-switching; Těšín Silesia; Zaolzie region

Note:

This is a translation of the original article entitled “Ponašymu – mieszany kod językowy czeskiego Śląska Cieszyńskiego”, which was published in *Adeptus*, issue 14, 2019.

Citation:

Czaiński, K. (2019). *Ponašymu – the mixed language code of Těšín Silesia*. *Adeptus*, 2019(14). <https://doi.org/10.11649/a.1974>