

STANDARD AND COMMON CZECH: ATTITUDES AND USAGE

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During my last visit to Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1987, I was struck by the increasing use of Common Czech in mass-media and other areas previously dominated by Standard Czech. This prompted me to investigate the present status of Common Czech in relation to Standard Czech. Czech holds a unique position among languages by its internal stratification, called by some linguists *diglossia* and by others code-switching¹. Instead of having one underlying code, it has two, Standard or Literary Czech, and Common Czech, the predominant spoken form of the Czech lands. Although other languages, including French and German, exhibit multiple codes, only in Czech do the two codes share such a central position in the language. Not surprisingly, this duality has for centuries created a dilemma in many areas of language usage, including teaching, the arts, the mass-media, and even in formal communication. Curiously, the unusual stratification and usage have been traditionally studied by foreigners rather than native linguists. While holding the standard literary language in high acclaim, native Czech linguists often view the spoken language as substandard and unworthy of serious research. This study will probe the origins of this academic disdain and examine the current status and usage of the two codes.

Following Bohuslav Havránek's classification (which is accepted by most linguists although interpreted differently), I will distinguish between two basic codes, that of Standard Czech and Common Czech. Standard Czech, sometimes referred to as Literary Czech or *spisovná čeština*, is the basic norm of the Czech language; it represents its one and only codification. It is taught as the Literary Standard Czech code in schools. It is no longer true that it is the only acceptable language of mass-media and written communication and thus cannot be defined as the written form of Czech. Common Czech or *obecná čeština* is an interdialect² unifying a larger area in which there are also other dialects. At present, many of the dialects have been abolished and Common Czech is the vernacular of the major part of Bohemia. Nevertheless, it is not codified or taught, is never used in textbooks for Czech natives or foreigners,

¹ Sgall, Petr: Czech: A Crux Sociolinguistarum. In: Pragmatics and Linguistics. Festschrift for Jacob L. Mey. Odense 1986.

² Havránek, Bohuslav: Úkoly spisovného jazyka a jeho kultura [The Tasks of a Standard Language and Its Culture]. In: Spisovná čeština a jazyková kultura. Ed. by Bohuslav Havránek and Miloš Weingart. Prague 1932, 32-84. - Havránek, Bohuslav: K funkčnímu rozvrstvení spisovného jazyka [On the Functional Differentiation of the Literary Language]. Časopis pro moderní filologii 28 (1942) 409-416.

and its use in literature is stylistically restricted. At the same time, it is not merely the spoken form of Czech since it is also found in literary texts.

As studies show, there is no evidence that a spoken form of the literary language (Standard Czech) exists which is used in everyday communication³, although linguists disagree on this point. According to Havránek⁴ spoken literary Czech or *hovorová čeština* exists. It is a functional stratum of Standard Czech used for conversational purposes and is supposedly not identical with Common Czech. Some distinguish (after Henry Kučera) another form of Czech, called Colloquial Czech, or *běžně mluvená čeština*, which is an unstable blend of Standard Czech and Common Czech. This Colloquial Czech has, however, no features that are not found in either Standard Czech or Common Czech. Louise Hammer approached the study of contemporary spoken Czech from the viewpoint of code-switching. She discovered, (1) while Common Czech is the basic code of spoken Czech, speakers switch to Standard Czech for foregrounding purposes; (2) that the two variants of the same language (Standard Czech and Common Czech) are used by speakers under various conditions; and (3) that the use of one or the other code in speaking marks irony, in-group membership, intimacy, formality, and other factors.

The problems in contemporary spoken Czech are traditionally explained by the fact that linguists of the National Revival period in the second half of the 18th century established the Czech language of the Humanist era (represented by the *Kralice Bible* translation, 1579–1593) as the norm of the Czech language, thus completely disregarded the Czech language used in Baroque literature during the period preceding the National Revival. This norm was already archaic and did not correspond to the contemporary usage of Czech in Bohemia.

Until recently, however, the solution of Josef Dobrovský⁵, the eminent linguist of the National Revival period, was seen as the only possible one. Dobrovský turned to the older Humanistic norm because of extra-linguistic factors such as the prestige of the Humanist literature, and the highly developed non-Catholic culture. Also, the Humanistic norm assured a link between the Czech, Moravian, and Slovak territories. The renewal of Humanist Czech yielded a common standard language for Czechs, Moravians, and Slovaks. In Slovakia, the language of the Czech Bible was used as the standard; furthermore, changes in spoken Czech before the National Revival distanced Czech from both Moravian and Slovak.

Although a Czech Baroque literature existed (with limited functional range and exemplified only by Václav Jan Rosa's, Jan Václav Pohl's, and Maximilian Šimek's puristic works on the Czech language), Dobrovský regarded it only as an ideological phenomenon. Starting with Josef Jungmann, the opinion spread that the Czech, in which this Baroque literature was written, was in decay (invaded by dialectisms, inappropriate neologisms, and an overwhelming number of loan words from German)⁶.

³ Hronek, Jiří: *Obecná čeština* [Common Czech]. Prague 1972. — Hammer, Louise: *Prague Colloquial Speech*. Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation. Bloomington, Indiana 1985.

⁴ Havránek: *Úkoly* 1932, 42–43.

⁵ Dobrovský, Josef: *Geschichte der böhmischen Sprache und Literatur*. Prague 1792.

⁶ Stich, Alexandr: *On the Beginning of Modern Standard Czech*. In: *Explicit – Beschreibung der Sprache und automatische Textbearbeitung*. Prague 1987, 121–128.

This "decayed" language was judged to be an inappropriate basis for Czech codification. One of the actual sources of this decay is Dobrovský's study of "the decay of the Czech language"⁷.

In a recent penetrating essay, Alexandr Stich⁸ suggested a solution different from that of Dobrovský, that of establishing Common Czech as the norm of Czech during the National Revival. Common Czech, a new Czech code, arose as part of the process of urbanization from the middle of the 18th century and led to the formation of a Common Czech interdialect spreading from the region of Prague⁹. Contemporary scholars are coming to the conclusion that Common Czech was actually in use in Czech Baroque literature.

Journalistic texts¹⁰, and religious and historiographic literature show that there was a norm of the Czech language. Czech used in Baroque times was textually materialized and continued the older standard language of the Humanist period, with some innovations. All the innovations, the "decay" phenomena present in the texts, are restricted to specific lexical units with corresponding semantic properties. A crucial factor is that these phonemic innovations are typical of contemporary Common Czech. They include very few phenomena of dialectal origin, although dialects were blamed during the National Revival for invading Standard Czech. Neither the neologisms of Rosa nor of other purists were used in literature. The literature shows a conscious effort by the authors to bring the language closer to the non-standard Common Czech. We can speculate that if the language of the Baroque literature was properly evaluated during the National Revival as the logical link between the Humanist and the National Revival language and as such used as the basis for codification, contemporary Czech would be an internally unified language.

However, on the basis of the anti-Habsburg evaluation of the political development of Bohemia after 1620, linguists tend to assume negative attitudes toward the ideological content and artistic values of the Baroque literature. Baroque literature has never been considered an integral part of Czech literature and due to its negative attributes scholars have usually distanced themselves from it and its language. Thus, our knowledge of the literature of the Baroque times is beginning to be formed only now.

The first attempt to incorporate Baroque literature into the Czech cultural tradition and to reevaluate it was carried out by Havránek¹¹. Havránek stated that the Czech of the 17th and 18th centuries encountered difficulties mainly in its functional range and that it had limited possibilities of social assertion (if compared with the 15th and 16th centuries). He further noticed that "the language of the literary production of that time was altogether not touched by lexical neologizing" (of Pohl, Šimek and Rosa). He identified specific phonological features that differentiated Standard Czech from

⁷ Dobrovský 1792, 311–364.

⁸ Stich 1987, 121–127.

⁹ Sgall 1986, 198.

¹⁰ Kamiš, Adolf: *Slovní zásoba české publicistiky 18. století* [The Lexicon of Czech Journalistic Texts from the 18th Century]. Prague 1974.

¹¹ Havránek, Bohuslav: *Vývoj spisovného jazyka českého* [Development of Standard Czech Language]. In: *Československá vlastivěda*. 2nd series: *Spisovný jazyk český*. Prague 1936, 1–144.

Common Czech at that time such as the spread of *-ej* into the old positions of *-ý*, and of *-ě* into *-í*, word initial *ou-* for *ú-* and *vo-* for *o-*, instrumental plural *-ama* and the alternation of third person plural present indicative verbal endings *-í* and *-ejí*. František Kopečný¹² wrote that the continuity of the development of Czech was not interrupted and that this was ignored in the National Revival and consequently led to difficulties in constituting modern Standard Czech. Neither Havránek's nor Kopečný's research has reversed linguists' negative attitudes toward Czech Baroque literature.

Standard Czech based on Humanist Czech thus came into being during the National Revival as an "artificial" code¹³, due to the gap that was created between Humanism and the National Revival out of disregard for Baroque literature. Nevertheless, it still influences the contemporary language culture and being normative with minor modifications, is responsible for problems in contemporary codification of Standard Czech and lack of Common Czech codification. Until the 1960s, no one in Bohemia had seriously questioned the codification of Standard Czech as the only normative codification, although Havránek's study of the language of the 17th and 18th centuries¹⁴, and studies in which he identified the presence of two central codes in a single language¹⁵ have generally been known¹⁶.

The differences between the two codes are relatively minor. They occur in phonetics, morphophonemics and syntax. In Common Czech phonetics we find *-í-* in the position of Standard Czech *-ě-*; *-ej-* in some positions of Standard Czech *-ý-*; word initial *vo-* for Standard Czech *o-* and *ou-* for Standard Czech *ú-*; vowel shortening or lengthening, and consonantal clusters simplification. Common Czech morphophonemics are as a whole simpler than Standard Czech. The simplifications occur in the past tense and conditional mood, in nominal plural endings, especially instrumental plural; first singular present indicative *kupuju* type is used for *kupuji* and first plural present indicative *nesem* for *neseme*, infinitive *řict* for *řici* and past masculine *řek* for *řekl*. Common Czech syntax shows a number of features typical of spoken syntax such as left-dislocation, repetition of clauses, conversational fillers, independent sentential elements, and other features¹⁷.

¹² Kopečný, František: *Spisovný jazyk a jeho forma hovorová* [The Standard Language and Its Colloquial Form]. *Naše řeč* 33 (1949) 14 ff.

¹³ Mathesius, Vilém: *O požadavku stability ve spisovném jazyce* [On the Requirement of Stability in Standard Language]. In: *Spisovná čeština a jazyková kultura*. Ed. by Bohuslav Havránek and Miloš Weingart. Prague 1932, 14–31, here see 26.

¹⁴ Havránek: *Vývoj* 1936.

¹⁵ Havránek, Bohuslav: *Nářečí česká* [Czech Dialects]. In: *Československá vlastivěda*. Bd. 3. Prague 1934, 84–218. – Havránek, Bohuslav: *Stalinovy práce a jazyk literárního díla i překladu* [Stalin's Writings on Language and the Language of Fiction and Translation]. Prague 1951 (Knihovnická Varu 29).

¹⁶ For a complete history of the Czech language readers should consult Havránek: *Vývoj* 1936. – Havránek, Bohuslav: *Vývoj českého spisovného jazyka* [Development of the Czech Literary Language]. Prague 1979. – A condensed history is presented in Auty, Robert: *Czech*. In: *The Formation of the Slavic Literary Languages*. Columbus, Ohio 1985, 163–182.

¹⁷ For a more complete discussion see Hammer 1985. – Jedlička, Alois: *Spisovný jazyk v současné komunikaci* [Standard Czech in Contemporary Communication]. Prague 1978. – Townsend, Charles E.: *The Phonological and Morphological Regularization in Colloquial Czech*. *The Prague Bulletin of Mathematical Linguistics* 42 (1984) 37–44.

Although these differences do not cause misunderstandings between native speakers, they present a serious communication threat to foreign speakers of Czech. This question was addressed by Charles Townsend. As Townsend notes, even native Czech teachers of Czech as a second language are coming to the conclusion that at least some aspects of colloquial Czech should be taught¹⁸.

As already mentioned, neither Standard Czech nor Common Czech have a clearly marked and exclusive area of usage in contemporary Czech. In written Czech, which used to be dominated by Standard Czech, Common Czech is under various stylistic conditions gradually gaining access to fiction, poetry, and journalistic writing. This is most visible in lexicon and morphophonemics. Common Czech has developed into the spoken form of the national language. At the same time, spoken Czech is very diversified because speakers have access to two codes of the language and use both features; they switch to Standard Czech especially for the purpose of highlighting¹⁹. Although not so long ago Standard Czech was the only acceptable form of spoken Czech in official conversations (for instance, between superiors and their subordinates or in schools) and on radio and television, the situation is quickly changing. Within the past few years Common Czech has penetrated into the domain of Standard Czech especially in the mass-media.

Linguists sometimes fail to see this situation as part of a natural change that is an attribute of every language. They are trying to limit the encroachment of Common Czech into Standard Czech and keep the standard language "pure". Although this approach is against the natural course of language change, it is completely consistent with purist tendencies in Czech linguistics that have frequently manifested themselves in the course of the history of Czech language; for instance, in the early 1930s as reflected in the journal *Naše řeč* [Our Speech] under the editor Jiří Haller.

I will further briefly outline the history of the study of Common Czech by Czech linguists. Petr Sgall instigated the discussion of Common Czech in the 1960s outside Czechoslovakia. As he points out²⁰, the continued discussion in *Slovo a slovesnost* [Word and Literature] from 1960 to 1963 shows how shocking it was still for some of the leading linguists in the country to accept that Common Czech might be seriously studied as something more than just a locally restricted interdialect. Hammer wrote in her thesis²¹ that "Sgall had given the impulse to this discussion when he claimed that Common Czech was developing into the spoken form of the national language and that it was necessary to introduce elements from Common Czech to Standard Czech, particularly lexical and phonetic items [...] in order to bring codification and the spoken norm into a more realistic relationship". Sgall emphasizes the need to distinguish between two central codes in Czech and to study Common Czech as a system. He is rightly convinced that more Common Czech forms will gradually become part of the

¹⁸ Sgall 1986, 203.

¹⁹ Code-switching between Standard Czech and Common Czech by Czech intelligentsia is elaborately analyzed in Hammer 1985. — Hammer, Louise: Code Switching in Colloquial Czech. In: Language and Discourse: Test and Protest. A Festschrift for Petr Sgall, Ed. by Jacob L. Mey. Amsterdam 1986, 455–473.

²⁰ Sgall 1986, 198.

²¹ Hammer 1985, 12.

Standard Czech norm which will lead to even greater stylistic stratification of the Czech language. He predicts that the two codes may perhaps merge after two or three generations. He correctly interprets the "decline" of Czech as being of extralinguistic origin and having nothing to do with the linguistic nature and changes in the Czech language²². A book on Common Czech by Sgall and Jiří Hronek is to be published in the near future but outside Czechoslovakia by Benjamins of Amsterdam.

The Institute for the Research of the Czech Language in Prague claims to study Common Czech as part of its long-term plan. However, the Institute studies only the structure of discourse, instead of investigating the usage of Common Czech. Now, there is no ongoing official research of Common Czech in Czechoslovakia. No speech recordings are available in the country and linguists interested in Common Czech rely on foreign scholars who make speech recordings for their own research purposes for materials. Thus it is not surprising that the grammatical forms of Common Czech were first noticed and discussed by scholars outside the indigenous speech community²³.

Many prominent Czech linguists do not concern themselves with the study of Common Czech. Professor Alois Jedlička from the Charles University, Prague, maintains that only functions of individual language forms have broadened or narrowed and that the spoken form of Czech uses features from both systems (Standard Czech and Common Czech), depending on the language situation and stylistic level²⁴.

According to Hronek²⁵, Standard Czech is not commonly used in conversations and there is no stable spoken form of Standard Czech; speakers use Common Czech with a number of words borrowed from Standard Czech; and Common Czech developed outside of Standard Czech influence as an interdialect. The development of the interdialect of central Bohemia, which gave rise to Common Czech, was studied by Jaroslav Porák²⁶.

The general tendency in Czech linguistics is to maintain Standard Czech as such while occasionally yielding to certain Common Czech forms and accepting them as part of Standard Czech. There is a hierarchy to Common Czech features. Some Common Czech features slowly find their way into the Standard Czech codification. These are mainly morphophonemic features. However, the revision process in codification is extremely slow and does not reflect the present status of other possibly accept-

²² Sgall 1986, 201. Also a private conversation in 1987.

²³ Ibid. 198. – Široková, Alexandra G.: K voprosu o rozličii meždu češským literárnym jazykom i narodno-razgovornoj reč' ju [On the Difference between Standard Czech and Common Czech]. In: Slavjanskaja filologija. Sbornik statej. Moscow 1954, 3–37. – Kučera, Henry: Phonemic Variations of Spoken Czech. *Slavic Word* 11 (1955) 575–602. – Kučera, Henry: The Phonology of Czech. The Hague 1961. – Kučera, Henry: Language Variability, Rule Interdependency, and the Grammar of Czech. *Linguistic Inquiry* 4 (1973) 499–521. – Micklesen, Lew R.: Czech Sociolinguistic Problems. *Folia Slavica* (1977) 437–455. – Townsend, Charles E.: Czech through Russian. Columbus, Ohio 1981. – Townsend, Charles E.: Phonological and Morphological Regularization 1984. – Hammer 1985.

²⁴ Jedlička 1978. – Also a private conversation.

²⁵ Hronek 1972.

²⁶ Porák, Jaroslav: Vytváření normy a její vztah ke kodifikaci v humanistické češtině [Formation of the Norm and Its Relation toward Codification in Humanistic Czech]. *Slovo a slovesnost* 42 (1981) 219–227.

able Common Czech features. At the same time, many obsolete phenomena are still required as the only possible variants of Standard Czech. While the codification of Standard Czech in the dictionary of standard Czech²⁷ is normative for written communication, nowhere is it stated which features are and which are not acceptable in public speeches and the mass-media, until recently an exclusive area of Standard Czech. The usage itself only confirms that there are major differences between the dictionary codification and the actual reality of spoken Czech. This inveterate situation has been challenged by "radical" linguists. Zdeněk Starý (a Professor of the Charles University) maintains that Standard Czech is no longer functional and does not serve its purpose. Consequently, new dictionaries and grammars reflecting the actual usage of Czech are needed. Starý correctly notes that the *Dictionary of Standard Czech* does not contain information about the present state of spoken Czech (for instance, it does not offer information about expressions commonly used in the spoken language). The three-volume *Grammar of Czech*²⁸ brings no changes in evaluating Standard Czech, that is, it still evaluates it as the one and only normative Czech code. It contains data that are long obsolete (for instance, the use of certain relative pronouns).

Common Czech continues to be viewed by the majority of linguists only as "the spoken substandard variant of the Czech language" instead as a system of its own. The subject itself remains provocative to the Czech scientific community.

From this brief exposition we may conclude that the study of Common Czech in Czechoslovakia is second-rated, limited, and non-systematic.

Most ordinary Czech speakers praise Standard Czech highly. Even though they do not use Standard Czech in the spoken language themselves, they view it as a very prestigious form which should be maintained as such. At the same time, they have extremely negative feelings about the use of Common Czech on radio, television, and in formal conversations, and evaluate the use of Common Czech in these spheres until recently dominated by Standard Czech as Czech language decay. Ordinary Czech speakers, among them students, teachers, and people of various generations and professions, are dissatisfied with the growing use of Common Czech in schools, mass-media, public political speeches, and formal official communication. They tend to say about themselves "I don't speak quite properly", and to pass moral judgements on those who fail to speak Standard Czech "when appropriate". One might hear a statement such as "he is careless about his speech, he is not proud of being Czech". One of the reasons for such patronizing attitudes may be that Standard Czech is taught at schools – while Common Czech is never taught – and thus is regarded as proper. Another reason may be the long tradition of using Standard Czech (since the Humanist period) and the role it played during the Czech National Revival (when it was used as a tool of the Revival), which is a factor contributing to national pride. Due to the National Revival tradition people tend to view the use of Common Czech as a threat to their culture and traditions, as a disregard for the past. They often claim that the

²⁷ Slovník spisovné češtiny [Dictionary of Standard Czech]. Ed. by Jan Filip ec and František Daneš. Prague 1978.

²⁸ Mluvnice češtiny [Grammar of Czech]. Ed. by Jan Horeck ý. 3 vls. Prague 1986.

"decay" of Czech is connected with the moral decline of the nation and the people are enthusiastic about neither the Czech nation nor its language.

The general disapproval of the way in which Czech is used is directed at two main areas. First, the mixing of Standard Czech and Common Czech in mass-media. Second, bureaucratic and political language with its clichés devoid of any meaning, which is affecting the usage of Czech by penetrating beyond its delimited area of usage.

As one of the leading representatives of the Czech Union of Theatrical Artists summarized the use of Czech in very uncompromising terms: the language is impoverished; it is a social and political jargon that everyone is now speaking, a language vulgarized by television, film and newspapers. He further expressed concern about the need to relearn how to speak Czech, to purify, and to revive the language. As he said, "one gets sick of listening to how we all speak"²⁹.

One of the areas Czech speakers disapprove of the mixture of Standard Czech and Common Czech on television as used by actors and TV anchors. It testifies to the speakers' uncertainty with regard to the functions of the two systems, about breaking of barriers separating the two systems, and about their blending. In mass-media, attempts to speak correctly and to adhere to Standard Czech are often evident; however, not knowing the Standard Czech code sufficiently leads in the sphere of morphophonemic to confusing Standard Czech and Common Czech verbal and nominal endings; in lexicon, a plethora of clichés and bureaucratic phrases are frequently mixed with typically Common Czech lexical items. In an attempt to bring the official Standard Czech closer to the general public, TV anchors may also deliberately use both Standard Czech and Common Czech verbal and nominal endings, and again use inappropriate colloquial lexicon. However, for listeners the result is disquieting and produces the aforementioned critical evaluation of Czech.

While watching a program called *Klub mladých* [Youth Club], I noticed how uneasy a young TV anchor was when introducing the program and interviewing its guests. The program was directed at "youth" between fifteen and forty and participants in the program were of a similar age. While the TV anchor tried to adhere to the Standard Czech norm, the result was very inconsistent. This inconsistency was characterized by a mixture of verbal endings, for example, first singular present indicative *sleduju* [I watch] and *děkuji* [thank you]; typically Common Czech lexicon was used in combination with Standard Czech morphophonemics, for example, *děkuji za hezké povídání* [thank you for a pleasant discussion]; and adjectival endings were used inconsistently. As a whole, Common Czech morphophonemics and lexicon were used rather interchangeably with Standard Czech. The same was apparent in the speech of program guests. Often strictly Standard Czech morphophonemics were combined with Common Czech lexicon in places where equivalent Standard Czech expressions would be expected, Standard Czech and Common Czech endings were used interchangeably while purely Common Czech endings rarely appeared. Exclusively Standard Czech endings were limited to professional areas such as politics, medicine and other areas. Among the viewers of the program were people between the ages of twenty

²⁹ Na pomoc Rudému právu. Úplný text projevu Miloše Kopeckého [Let's Help Redé právo. Complete Speech of Miloš Kopecký]. Listy 4 (1987) 8.

and sixty. In evaluating the speakers, they agreed, that "they don't know how to speak Czech". Although this is only an example and further sociolinguistic data are needed to make the statements conclusive, it is, in my experience, a representative example.

Another area of which Czech speakers are highly critical is the political and bureaucratic language of news-media. Although this jargon cannot be taken as representative of Czech, its influence is far-reaching and destructive. The language of political speeches and news reporting deserves a separate study and cannot be analyzed here in detail. Its phrases are usually empty of any meaning. The political and mass-media jargon includes a number of Russian borrowings and *calcs*, for example, *chozrasčot* [economical budget], *subotnik* [voluntary work on Saturdays], *politika otevřenosti* [politics of openness], or *všenárodní široká diskuse* [all-nation-wide discussion]. Part of this jargon includes the creation of new words, for example, *dárkovina* [gifts] or *vyvařovna* [kitchen], the replacement of ordinary Czech words with "scientifically" sounding phrases, for example, *komplexní experiment v růstu samostatnosti* [complex experiment in growing independence]; abundant use of passive participial constructions, for example, *země jsou oddány míru* [countries are devoted to peace]; and long nominal phrases in place of verbal constructions, for example, *využívání různých prostředků k dosahování výsledků* [using various means to reach results]. Most public discontent with Czech is directed against this usage. However, its cause lies in the political system rather than in the nature of Czech language. It is extremely interesting to observe how closely linked language and politics are in Czech history. In an analysis of the revival process of 1968 I came across the following statement: "The Czechoslovak revival process [...] was at the same time a linguistic matter: the fact is that Czechoslovak reformers liberated language from political ideology clichés and started speaking about reality in a normal human language"³⁰.

The unclear and ambiguous status of Standard Czech and Common Czech in the contemporary Czech language produces several results. Speakers are uncomfortable with using Czech in public, uncertain of which code is appropriate in which situation. Due to natural language change the relationship to the two codes is changing and barriers breaking down. Speakers are beginning to use a number of typical Common Czech morphophonemic and lexical features in areas previously dominated by Standard Czech. The hierarchy of Common Czech features is clearly manifested in this sphere; however, it also shows the general disagreement about what should be allowed. While people do not encounter similar problems during private informal speaking when they use Common Czech (however, foreigners learning Czech are often uncomfortable and lost here because they have usually learned only Standard Czech and have never heard of the Common Czech code), they have problems expressing themselves in public, especially during official presentations. The hierarchy of Common Czech features acceptable within Standard Czech usage is unstable and disputable³¹.

³⁰ Dubček a osmašedesátý! [Dubček and the Year Sixty Eight]. *Obrys* 4 (1987).

³¹ Further bibliographical references: Kravčíšínová, Květa / Bednářová, Božena: *Z výzkumu běžné mluvené češtiny* [From the Research of Fluently Spoken Czech]. *Slavica Pragensia* 10 (1968) 305–320. – Mey, Jacob L.: General Editor's Preface. In: *Conversational Routine*. Ed. by Florian Coulmas. The Hague 1981. – Sgall, Petr: *Obichodno-*

To summarize: at present Czech encounters problems stemming from political and bureaucratic jargon and from the ambivalent usage of Common Czech and Standard Czech in the contemporary Czech language. It is inappropriate to describe this situation as the "decay" of the language. However, it is undisputable that Czech speakers encounter problems due to misunderstanding of functions of Standard Czech and Common Czech, and uncertainty about when to use Standard Czech and Common Czech. As some linguists suggest, these problems should be overcome within several generations by blending the two codes together into one stylistically diversified Czech language.

razgovornyj češskij jazyk [Common Czech]. *Voprosy jazykoznanija* 2 (1960) 11–20. – Sgall, Petr: K diskusi o spisovné a obecné češtině [On the Discussion of Standard Czech and Common Czech]. *Slovo a slovesnost* 24 (1963) 244–254. – Sgall, Petr: K některým otázkám naší jazykové kultury [On Some Questions of Linguistic Culture of Czech]. *Slovo a slovesnost* 42 (1981) 299–306. – Sgall, Petr / Trnková, Alena: K metodám zkoumání běžně mluvené češtiny [On the Methods of Research in Fluently Spoken Czech]. *Naše řeč* 46 (1963) 28–35. – Townsend, Charles E.: Review of M. Heim: *Contemporary Czech* [Ann Arbor 1976]. *Folia Slavica* 2 (1976) 265–289. – Townsend, Charles E.: *Běžně mluvená čeština očima cizince* [Fluently Spoken Czech through the Eyes of a Foreigner]. Forthcoming in: *Russian Linguistics*.