

Affirmation of the Slovenian language
Slovenian grammars and dictionaries from 16th to 19th century

The construction of the national language and a national culture is a difficult task. One of the main questions, which appear very often in the Slovenian linguistics, is the problem of the construction of the national language. Must this language be identical to the language of the people? And who this “people” really are: peasants in the village, bourgeoisie in the towns or the clergy? The period between 16th and 19th century was the most vibrant and important for the development of the dialects, spoken on our territories. Until the middle of the 19th century Slovenians succeeded to create the basis for their literary language, based on the central Slovenian dialect. During the history of the language and its development, three questions appeared to be most present:

- relation between Slovenian language and other Slavic languages,
- relation between the dialects of the suburbs and the dialect of the central region, which was meant to be standardised,
- the importance of the language of the 16th century (language of the Slovenian protestants) and its influence on the formation of the “modern” language.

During the centuries grammars and dictionaries played an important role in the development of the languages. The 16th century presents a turning point in the history of a language; the protestant writers began to write in their native language. The main aim was to make the ecclesiastical rituals comprehensible to the people. It was also the time of the first grammars, describing vernaculars, even though mostly in Latin. The Protestantism gave Slovenian people three main pillars, on which the national language was constructed: first grammar (Adam Bohorič, *Arcticae Horulae*, 1584), first dictionary (Hieronymus Megiser, *Dictionarium quatuor linguarum, videlicet germanicae, latinae, illyricae*, 1592) and first translation of the Bible (Jurij Dalmatin, *Biblia, tv ie, vse svetv pismv, stariga inu noviga testamenta, slovenski, tolmazhena*, 1584). The Protestantism developed a literature in the language of the people; it was the process to which the catholic restoration was not favourable. But they could not have been efficient without leaning on the national patriotism.

The grammatisation of the Slovenian language began with the grammars of the protestant priests who described the dialects they knew and spoke. At this moment, we cannot talk about the connection between the language and national consciousness. Like in other parts of protestant Europe, the most important thing was that the people understood the language of the church and they could listen masses in the language familiar to them. During the centuries that followed, the history of the grammatisation of the Slovenian language was an interesting sign of the development of the linguistic thought and the national consciousness.

The philologists of the first periods didn't ask to use the Slovenian dialects in all the domains of the public communication: they limited it to the ecclesial use. The first grammars were not meant to all speakers of the language; there are groups for which they wrote. At the beginning it was the clergy which role was to transfer the language to the people. Based on all this facts we can say, that the 16th presented the turning point in the history of the linguistics.

The lack of the books in the 17th century was a cross European fact and not known only in the Slovenian speaking territories. With baroque and the end of the 17th century new times arrived; the linguistic situation was mainly the same as the situation in the society: Latin was the language the most estimated, used in the church, schools and for science. The upper class spoke Italian and French; the language of the documents and offices was German. The rest of the people spoke the Slovenian dialects.

The beginning of the Slovenian enlightenment is defined with the issue of the grammar of the Augustinian monk p. Marko Pohlin. He published his *Kraynska grammatika* in 1768; it was a grammar of the dialect of the central Slovenia, written in German. It was another beginning of a period, caused by a grammar.

At the end of the 18th century, also because of the French revolution, the national consciousness slowly came into the minds of the intelligentsia. At the beginning of the 19th century the Slovenian national movement had a cultural character, which slowly, towards the middle of the century, turned to the political direction. The idea of the nationality is a modern idea; after quite a lot of turning points, it entered into the world history at the second half of the 19th century. Language and nation became a theme of eternal debates and since then they present a “popular” point of discussion.

The name of the language is the best proof of showing the conflicts of the different forces: political, ideological and historical. Until the 19th the name for Slovenian people and its language varied between the generic name *Slovenci* and regional names, related to different territories: *Kranjci*, *Štajerci*, *Korošci* and also *Winden* or *Vendi*. While *Kranjski* was used also outside the territory of Kranjska (Carniola), *Windisch* meant only Slovenian people living in Carinthia and Styria. It was the linguists in the beginning of the 19th century who gradually abandoned the regional names and started to use the generic name *Slovenci*.

The two main elements of the language politics, grammar and dictionary, show us, in their sociolinguistic aspect, important directions in the development, importance and meaning of the Slovenian language through centuries. That is why a lot of authors would like to show the connection between the use of Slovenian language, or better its dialects, and the national consciousness already in some early linguistics works. The main aim and intention of my scientific work is to present the language development with the highest level of objectivity. During my research I study the introductions in the grammars and dictionaries. They present a good material for the study of the relation between the language and national consciousness, the development of the national idea and give examples of the different language nominations. In the period from the 16th to the 19th century 28 grammars and dictionaries were published. They are an unlimited source, which is not only rich in facts but also often an interesting reading. Almost all grammars, except one of Valentin Vodnik (1811), were written in foreign languages (German or Latin); this is also a fact, we may not overlook.

The main questions I try to answer with my research are:

- To whom the writers intended their grammar or dictionary, which is the “target” group of their work,
- Which is the language, dialect of their work,
- How they name the language they describe (*Slovenian*, *Slavic*, *Windisch*, *Carniolien*, ...),
- Which is the territory where this language is spoken,
- Why they think it is important to have a grammar or a dictionary of the language described,
- Which was the echo of this work.

The answers to these questions may help us better understand the development of the Slovenian language - from its vernaculars to the stage when it became a literary language - better define the relation between language and nation and characterize its meaning in the context of Slavic and other European languages.