

## SLAVISTIC STUDIES: RESEARCH REVIEWS & COMMUNICATIONS

### INTRODUCTORY

PETER ŽEŇUCH

Research into Slovak language and culture in relation to other Slavic and non-Slavic languages and cultures constitutes an inseparable part of Slavistics in Slovakia. The discipline of Slavistics focuses on comparative, interdisciplinary and comprehensive research into relations between the national language and culture and other Slavic and non-Slavic languages and cultures. There are many ongoing research projects in Slovak Slavistics relating to integrational and intercultural European contexts as well as international ones. The interdisciplinary nature of Slavistics research on language and culture and its connection to the national environment is the most natural way of comparing other languages and cultures. An interdisciplinary approach does not in any way mean denying the identity of the whole, for it is within the whole that the components of national culture are ascertained. A diachronic or evolutionary discourse on the continuity and identity of Slavic and non-Slavic dimensions of Slovak language and culture has indeed been identified within an integrating European society, yet there are still a large number of aspects of diachronic and current synchronic research in national languages and cultures that have received little attention, particularly in relation to Central Europe and the broader European cultural and historical as well as linguistic environment.

The capacity of Slovak Slavistics to examine relations between Slovak language and culture in relation to other languages and cultures stems from the need to understand the inter-linguistic, inter-ethnic and inter-cultural processes which have shaped Slovak language and Slovak culture since the earliest times. The earlier and later versions of Slovak culture that emerged naturally through contact with Latin and Byzantine-Slavonic cultural and historical influences present a unique source, which is essential to gaining an extensive synchronic and diachronic understanding of today's society. Extensive and systematic Slavistic research is a synergy of all the components of comparative and literary studies research relating to historiographical and archaeological research, and ethnology and

folkloristics. It thus applies a model of interdisciplinary scrutiny in which research findings from the various fields involved are applied and the phenomenon or issues are viewed from every angle. Slavistic research is unique because of its content, and because it is a natural and inseparable influence within Slavic research as well as the broader international research environment. As such, focusing on one element of synergetic scrutiny over others might jeopardise the integrity of systematic and extensive knowledge

The basic component in developing Slovak Slavistics is therefore applying the methods of interdisciplinary research. Elements of the debate ongoing throughout the evolution of Slovak Slavistics, the discipline's current status and prospects for further development are outlined in a review by P. Žeňuch and K. Žeňuchová. The paper formulates priorities in synergetic research policy in the field of Slavistic research as a model for a comprehensive insight into the continuum of Slovak national culture in the context of relations with Slavic and non-Slavic linguistic and cultural contexts. The article also outlines the natural competencies and conditions of Slovak Slavistic studies when examining national culture and its relation to European culture, but also raises questions regarding the identity and competitiveness of Slovak Slavistic research. Furthermore it deals with the topicality of the latest findings in relation to existing knowledge and the application of current scientific information in a university environment.

Issues relating to the gradual consolidation of Slovak Slavistics in the national and international context as well as in the context of the institutionalisation of Slovak Slavistic investigations at the Slovak Academy of Sciences are addressed by J. Doruľa. He looks particularly at aspects and tendencies which aim at suppressing Slavistic priorities in Slovakia and that place the Slovak national context at the centre of research. At the same time, he explains the risks of problematic and anti-Slovak activities, which Slovak Slavistic research has to cope with almost constantly at home.

Taking current onomastic research as an example, J. Krško identifies the priorities of comprehensive linguistic Slavistic research, which he sees predominantly in onomastic research. He considers the skills required in the field of dialectological, ethnologic and historiographical research to be a priority in extensive onomastic research. Current concepts of onomastic scrutiny can be utilised in Slovakia in coordination with other national and international Slavistic centres.

Ethnolinguistic research programmes are of particular significance for extensive knowledge of Slavic language and culture. Research into the Carpathian and Carpathian-Balkan area is dealt with by A. Plotnikova. Her review presents new findings on relations between the Slovak language and cultural borders of the earliest period on one hand and the South Slovak environment on the other. This is reflected in the lexis, phraseology, and folk culture of Slovaks as well as South Slavs. Slavistic field research, including ethnolinguistic research in the Carpathian-Balkan context constitutes an inseparable part of comprehensive and comparative Slavistic research.

In the context of research related to Slavistic literature studies, D. Hučková highlights current problems in Slovak Slavistic literature studies, seeing them above all as resulting from a lack of self-reflection within the discipline and in programme selectiveness within literature studies research. She emphasises the acute need to revive systematic interdisciplinary scientific scrutiny in the fields of comparative Slavistic literary studies.

Slovak literary studies research has obtained conclusive findings despite the complicated situation.

Research into Slovak language, literature, ethnology, history and culture in the context of Slavistic research in Russia from the 18th century onwards is lucidly described in the review by M. Valentsova. She attaches particular importance to comparative research into Slovak language and culture in the context of other languages and cultures. In her review, she focuses primarily on Slovak research (research related to Slovak studies) by Russian Slavists who perceive Slovak language and culture as a continual and unique element in the Slovak cultural context from the earliest times.

Research within Slovak Slavistics on Slovak-Slavic as well as Slovak-non-Slavic linguistic and cultural relations is our contribution to the competitive environment of European research. This is achieved through the scientific, coordinating and research activities of the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics at the Slovak Academy of Sciences, with close cooperation from the Slovak and International Committee of Slavists. The importance of Slavistic research organised in this way lies in the synergy and coordination of individual Slavistics-oriented disciplines (linguistic, ethnologic, historical and archaeological disciplines and literary studies disciplines). Of course, this scientific and coordinating work cannot be put in practice without collaboration between the relevant corresponding scientific or research and educational institutions. The end result is planned and implemented research projects. The basic prerequisite for the successful and stable development and continuity of a discipline is that its institutionalisation not only enables existing projects to be implemented, but also provides space to carry out further scientific, organisational and research activities. These should correspond to the needs of society and be of lasting benefit to advancing the knowledge of the entire society, mostly in creating and deepening cultural, language, historical and social consciousness, knowledge and identity.

In Slovakia, these research competencies are determined by comprehensive and interdisciplinary Slavistic research.

Jan Stanislav Institute of Slavistics,  
Slovak Academy of Sciences,  
Dúbravská cesta 9,  
841 04 Bratislava, Slovakia  
E-mail: peter.zenuch@savba.sk