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*Brno studies in English*. 1991, vol. 19, iss. 1, pp. [35]-44

ISBN 80-210-0310-3

ISSN 0231-5351

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/104415>

Access Date: 19. 02. 2024

Version: 20220831

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## SOME NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF SLOVAK ANGLICIST LEXICOGRAPHY

*Ada Böhmerová*

The rise and development of Slovak Anglicist lexicography was and has been to a large extent dependent on the conditions for the development of English studies in Slovakia. And, for most of the time, these were far from being favourable.

The present paper is an attempt at throwing some light upon several Slovak Anglicist lexicographical works in the sphere of general bilingual dictionaries (special dictionaries are not dealt with). Its aim is to present some of the basic data and point out the main problems as well as the main achievements, with some analytical insights. Nevertheless, the paper cannot claim to be but an introductory and partial account of the history of Slovak Anglicist lexicography, and a more comprehensive analysis of Slovak Anglicist activities, involving systematic research of data which, for a number of reasons, are not available so far, is yet to be written. In future it might also be interesting to compare the history of Slovak Anglicist lexicography with the corresponding Czech lexicography, mainly with regard to the fact that the fate of Slovak Anglicist studies has been, in many respects, shared by Czech Anglicist studies.

In Slovakia, lectures on English philology at the Faculty of Arts started in 1923, i.e. four years after the founding of Comenius University in Bratislava, and two years after the founding of its Faculty of Arts, and were delivered by the Czech Celticist J. Baudiš. An important contribution to the beginnings of English studies in Slovakia was made by the Germanist František Kalda, who started his lectures in Bratislava in 1928. For a short time, between 1936 and 1938, the Czech literary scholar Otakar Vočadlo also delivered lectures in Bratislava; cf. Fried 1959.190—200; *Encyklopédia Slovenska*, 1985.53. But after the forced departure of Czech lecturers, and for lack of Slovak ones, as well as due to World War II, in the 1940s English studies stagnated.

From a wider perspective, the unfavourable conditions for their de-

velopment were also due to the fact that practically up to the 1930s English was not taught at secondary schools in Slovakia. Before World War II, second language teaching in Slovakia meant, above all, German, Latin or French; cf. the situation in Bohemia, Fried 1959.190. Soon after World War II Russian was introduced as an obligatory second language into the educational system in Czechoslovakia, which shifted the potential option for English even further away. Consequently, in Slovakia there was no educational background for the rise of English studies, as most of the applicants for university studies were beginners in English, and both subjectively and objectively, they were more oriented towards a practical command of English and a pedagogical career than towards scholarly research. Moreover, after World War II and up to the early 1950s, the lecturers of English at Comenius University were not scholars themselves, and could not instigate theoretical research.

In this context it is not surprising that the first bilingual general dictionaries of English and Slovak were compiled not in Slovakia, but abroad. On the one hand, in Slovakia, up to the end of the 1940s, there were not yet any Slovak Anglicists dedicated to research, nor was there any wider Anglicist community that would have called for the growth of Slovak Anglicist lexicographical works. On the other hand, in the United States, as early as the 1920s, there was a rather numerous community of Slovak immigrants estimated at 620 000 (cf. Kučera 1990.20—5), most of them in the states of Pennsylvania and Ohio, and there was actually a manifold need for Slovak/English dictionaries.

The first and most crucial necessity for these immigrants was to try to make themselves understood in their new homeland and to become — as much as possible — linguistically integrated in American society. These were the needs which were intended to be met by a charming little booklet by Ján Slovenský entitled *Americký tlumač ku naučeru še najpotrebnejších, začatečných známostoch z anglickej reči pre uherských Slovákoch v Amerike žijucích* (American Interpreter for Learning the Most Important Introductory Knowledge of the English Language for Slovaks from Hungary Living in America), which was first published in 1887 and reprinted twice (in 1892 and in 1920). The booklet is actually a predecessor of the later bilingual dictionaries. Its 131 pages in Part One contain information on English spelling and pronunciation, on grammar (including a list of irregular verbs) and “Najpotrebnejše slova ku mluveňu” (The Most Important Words for Speaking) in thematic groups (e.g. Človek a rodina, Robotny narod a remesla), and it is this section which can be viewed as a predecessor — although a very elementary one — of the later Slovak-English dictionaries. Part Two presents thematically organized Slovak phrases with their English equivalents and their pronunciation, and this section is in fact a manual of basic English conversation. As is evident from the title, the Slovak used in the book is a variety of East-Slovak dialects, with the exception of four full-page advertisements

which are written in the Central-Slovak dialect, hence in Standard Slovak.

Later, there was the need of the immigrants to revive, preserve and develop their command of Slovak, and the desire to have linguistically unhampered contact with Slovak information and culture, and on the whole, with their distant former homeland.

A remarkable early achievement in Slovak/English dictionary compilation is Jozef J. Konuš's *Slovensko-anglický slovník — Slovak-English Dictionary*, compiled in the USA and published there in 1930. Its size can be estimated at about 32 000 to 34 000 entries, which makes it a close-to-medium-size dictionary. However, according to the criteria defining dictionary size with regard to the degree of completeness, or exhaustiveness, or density (cf. Zgusta 1971.216—20), it should be included in the category of small dictionaries. Nevertheless, this fact in no way diminishes its tremendous historical value or its pioneering lexicographical achievements.

As Konuš says in the introduction, American Slovaks had long since needed a dictionary of Slovak words translated into English. But the previous attempts had failed for the lack of a representative dictionary of Slovak. To overcome this problem, Konuš drew his material for the entries from excerpts from accessible Slovak belles-lettres. It is quite natural that this procedure was bound to result in a relative overinclusion of bookish, archaic and dialectal words, as well as of expressive words; and without equipping them with the relevant stylistic labels their misuse or misinterpretation was not lexicographically prevented. Although the author was not a linguist or a lexicographer himself, he undertook with great responsibility the search for English counterparts of the Slovak words, although, from our contemporary point of view, some of them would not be considered systemic equivalents at all, e.g. *ošemetný — deceitful, lotor — thief, lono — bosom*.

In spite of any of its shortcomings, this pioneering Slovak-English dictionary exceeds the framework of its own time and the conditions of its conception. Firstly, it systematically aims at including botanical and zoological terms and non-terminological units, usually accompanying the former ones with their Latin counterparts, and in many instances it can even now serve as a reliable source of vocabulary in these spheres. Secondly, as far as its aim to mediate traditional Slovak background is concerned, the author sets great store by including these and their English counterparts or explanations, e.g. *rajbanica — soup with grated dough, bryndza — cheese from sheep milk, bryndzovník — cake of cheese, osúch — layer of leavened dough with a spread, radostník — wedding cake, or a cake for special occasions*. Of course, at places there can already be observed an alienation from the authentic Slovak background. Staying with entries referring to food, let us mention here at least *lokša — dumpling*. In some other cases Konuš decided to approximate the translation of the Slovak word to the phenomena existing in America, e.g. *pirohy —*

*ravioli*, obviously preferring the name of the Italian dish to a descriptive explanation. In most cases, the author gives only one English equivalent of the headword, although occasionally a synonym is added, too, e.g. *ohyb* — *bend, curve*. If the headword is polysemantic, its different meanings are listed and separated by a semicolon, e.g. *líčiť* — *whitewash; depict*. However, this procedure is not observed thoroughly. At places, Koneš also presents the syntactic and lexical environment of the equivalent, e.g. *oblúbiť* — *to take a liking to*, *oboriť sa na koho* — *to rush madly at someone*, but in most cases he does not do so, e.g. *obrániť koho pred kým* — *to defend, oprieť sa* — *to lean*.

Of course, this first Slovak-English dictionary does not have only a linguistic value, but also a cultural value. It is to the latter that Jozef Škultéty refers in the introduction to this dictionary. He points out the fact that the dictionary makes Slovak more accessible to speakers of English, and applauds the fact that the dictionary puts Slovak among those languages whose vocabularies have been compared with English.

Koneš is the author of two more dictionaries, and his lexicographical work and merits deserve to be analysed in more detail in a separate paper. Here we shall only mention that in 1941 Koneš's English-Slovak dictionary was published in Pittsburgh. His second Slovak-English dictionary, published in 1969, will be touched upon at the end of this paper.

Observing the chronology of dictionary compilation, we have to devote our attention to another American of Slovak descent, Filip Anton Hrobák. Paradoxically enough, it was easier to find data about his personality than about his dictionary, as his name occurs as an entry in several Slovak sources (e.g. *Malý slovenský biografický slovník*, 1982; *Malá encyklopédia Slovenska*, 1987) — while, by the way, Koneš is not included at all — but Hrobák's *English-Slovak Dictionary* (1944), according to the catalogues of the University Library in Bratislava, is to be found in none of the academic libraries in Czechoslovakia, which is also the reason why it has been practically unknown in Slovakia. The fact that Šimko (1967) does not list him in the bibliography of his *English-Slovak Dictionary* could have been caused by his not having known about its existence, by its inaccessibility, or by the fact that the inclusion of Hrobák's name was prevented because of political reasons, as the previous regime labelled Hrobák an antisocialist and anticommunist reactionary. Hrobák (1904—1964) was born in Cleveland and came from a family of Slovak immigrants from Spiš. He graduated from New York University in 1929 and taught chemistry, history and Slovak at various schools in the USA. He was also a journalist and an activist in the Slovak community in the USA. From 1950 to 1962 or 1964 — here the sources differ — he was the head of the Slovak League in America. Whatever his political attitudes and activities were, by his *English-Slovak Dictionary* he definitely contributed to Slovak Anglicist lexicography. As his dictionary has not been

available for the present research, its scrutiny will have to be postponed until a later time.

The year 1946 saw the publication of the first English-Slovak dictionary in Slovakia. It was compiled by Ján Vilikovský (1904—1946) who was a literary historian and a University Professor dealing above all with Slovak and Czech literatures. Although he was not an Anglicist, he used his formerly only personally intended files of English-Slovak equivalents resulting from his literary research and reading as the basis for his dictionary, which was published by YMCA.

The extent of Vilikovský's dictionary can be estimated at about 25 000—27 000 entries, making it one of English-Slovak dictionaries with the largest number of entries, considerably exceeding in this respect even the later dictionary by Šimko. The equivalents are quite reliable and economically selected. Homonyms are presented within the same entry. Vilikovský's lexicographical work deserves high praise, as in spite of his not being an Anglicist, his dictionary, although written more than a decade earlier than Šimko's, can be a very useful lexicographical source supplying equivalents for a number of entries, including derivatives, many of which were not part of Šimko's dictionary. However, only very little exemplification or phraseology is present. It is a great pity that the number of copies printed was very low and that it has not been reprinted, which made its accessibility very limited and prevented its use on a wider scale.

This dictionary in fact completes what we might term the first period of the compilation of English/Slovak dictionaries. Before proceeding to the second period of the history of Slovak Anglicist lexicography, we shall present a brief outline of the further history of English studies in Slovakia.

In the 1950s lecturing within English Studies at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University was provided by Slovak Germanists and by visiting Czech Anglicists Karel Štěpáník, Zdeněk Vančura, Ladislav Cejp, Jessie Kocmanová and others. The first scholarly oriented Slovak Anglicists were Ján Šimko, who became senior lecturer in the late 1950s and Professor in 1969, and Lev Soudek, who was to become senior lecturer in 1969. Both of them were linguists, Šimko dealing also with literature. In 1965 the Department of English Studies was established. In the 1960s the first more extensive Slovak Anglicist works appeared — textbooks, chapters on English and American literature in the publication *Dejiny svetovej literatúry* (History of World Literature), and also dictionaries. At that time prospects for the development of English studies were very promising. It was most unfortunate that in 1967 and in 1968 both Šimko and Soudek left the Department, as Anglicist linguistic development was badly interrupted and left without any scholarly guidance.

After several years of stagnation, of invaluable help to the Department was the fact that between 1971 and 1975 Professor Josef Vachek came

there as visiting lecturer. His scholarly and pedagogical erudition, as well as his devoted concern for supporting scholarly work and research, gave a greatly needed impetus to English linguistics at the Faculty of Arts. It was deeply regretted by the Department that, in spite of the willingness of Professor Vachek to stay longer, he was prevented from doing so. Since then, the research in Anglicist linguistics at the Department has been supported only from outside, namely by Professor Josef Vachek, by Senior Lecturer Jan Fírbaš from Brno, by the Slovak Germanist Professor Villiam Schwanzer and others, and by Slovakists and Slavicists.

It was within the above historical framework that the following Anglicist lexicographical works arose.

The first was the *Slovak-English Dictionary* of Júlia Vilikovská, Pavel Vilikovský and Ján Vilikovský (1959), which has been republished several times. It is based upon the lexicographical material collected by Ján Vilikovský Sr and was compiled and completed by his son Ján, who at the time of its compilation was still a student. With its roughly 23 000 entries it is a small-size dictionary, although the largest of its kind published so far in Slovakia. Its compilation had to face the same problem as its American predecessors, because even at that time there did not yet exist any comprehensive dictionary of the Slovak language (the first volume of the academic *Slovník slovenského jazyka* [Dictionary of the Slovak Language] was published only in 1959). No bibliography of the dictionaries used is given, and the author did not use Konuš's 1930 dictionary.

Due to the care devoted to the search for entries and, undoubtedly, also due to the fact that this dictionary was compiled on Slovak territory, the entries are of course much more representative of the contemporary Slovak vocabulary than in the dictionaries conceived abroad (Konuš 1930, 1969). Nevertheless, some of the entries are certainly questionable not only from our present point of view, e.g. among entries starting with *k* there is *konidráč*, *konfundovať*, *kopeň*, *kopenec*, later on *lúkoť*, while in other cases word entries as common as e.g. *poloostrov* or *letieť* are absent (with *lietať* the user is instead of an equivalent referred to *letieť*, but that is absent). Because of the small-size type of the dictionary, and maybe also because of a lack of lexicographical experience, the author often does not present the polysemy or homonymy of the entries, e.g. *opica* is translated only as *monkey*, *ape*; *lieň* only as "básn." *sloth*, *laziness*. Also some of the equivalents have gone astray, e.g. *lahôdkárstvo* is translated as *Italian warehouse*, *confectioner's*. Nevertheless, this dictionary being the largest one of its kind available in Slovakia, has rendered good service to students and users of English.

The two-directional *English-Slovak and Slovak-English Dictionary* by J. Smejkalová, D. Smrčinová, K. Herrmannová and K. Hais (none of them members of the English Department in Bratislava) was published for the first time in 1963. Like several other English/Slovak dictionaries, this

dictionary does not present any bibliography of earlier dictionaries used. In the introduction the user is only informed that for the phonetic transcription of the pronunciation D. Jones's *English Pronouncing Dictionary* (1947) was used. The overall number of entries is stated to be 25 000 and both in extent and content it is a small-size dictionary. Although the Vilikovskýs' dictionary had been published four years earlier, the authors of the present work drew little or no material for the Slovak-English part from that work. For example, while in the Vilikovskýs' dictionary *jačmeň* is translated as 1. "bot." *barley*, 2. "lek." *sty*, *milovník* as *lover*, *admirer*, *milý*<sup>1</sup> as "prid. m." *dear*, *agreeable*, *milý*<sup>2</sup> "podst. m." *lover*, *sweetheart*, in the present dictionary there is only *barley*, *dear*, *nice* respectively, though the Vilikovskýs' lexicographical solution could have been profited from. However, it is certainly true that at some places sequences of equivalents identical to those in the Vilikovskýs' dictionary are used in the Slovak-English part, e.g. *močarína* — *bog*, *marsh*, *swamp* (the Vilikovskýs also have *morass*), *mučiť* — *torture*, *torment*, *neľúbosť* — *dislike*, *displeasure*. One way or another, it is evident that the compilation of the latter dictionary involved independent lexicographical work, and in spite of its smaller size and depth, in some entries it offers more satisfactory and more adequate solutions, e.g. the entry *ja* — *I*, *self*; *tvoje lepšie* "ja" — *your better self*; *ja sám* — *myself*, while the Vilikovskýs have only *I*.

In the light of the above observations it became evident that the second dictionary arose relatively independently, which can also be supported by the fact that the choice of entries differs quite considerably in the two dictionaries, and definitely not only in the direction of fewer entries in the latter and smaller dictionary, i.e. its second part. Deserving positive evaluation is the fact that this two-directional pocket dictionary abandoned nesting, a then still currently used lexicographical technique, and listed derivatives as separate entries.

Only later, after the above observations had been made, did the author of this article learn that the dictionary was actually compiled by the Czech Anglicist Karel Hais, and the other three authors provided merely the translation of the Czech into Slovak.

The largest English-Slovak Dictionary so far was compiled by Ján Šimko and published for the first time in 1967. The number of its entries is not stated by the author, but it can be estimated at about 20 000. In spite of this relatively small number of entries the dictionary can be considered to be a medium size one due to the depth and elaborateness of the entries.

According to the available sources it seems that the idea for its compilation stemmed directly or indirectly from the suggestion of a publishing house that Šimko rework Vilikovský's 1946 English-Slovak dictionary; he, however, decided to compile a dictionary of his own. Of the dictionaries listed in his biography the basic source, above all for entries, was



V. K. Mjuller's *Anglo-russkij slovar'* (1946). Students were also involved in the compilation of the data. Being a linguistic scholar, Šimko explicitly outlined his lexicographical method. He presents relatively extensive and semantically structured equivalencies, and also includes exemplification and phraseology. From the user's point of view it is rather inconvenient that Šimko uses nesting. It is understandable that the restrictions on the size of the dictionary could lead to the decision to exclude from it a number of derivatives, though it is rather surprising to read the following argumentation for this choice: "Odvodené slová, ktoré k významu základného slova nepridávajú nič nového, nebývali zaradené" (Šimko 1967.5—6), i.e. "Derived words which do not add anything new to the meaning of the basic word were not included". Regardless of this argumentation, the derivatives, as well as many converted words, were missed by the users.

In spite of any possible comments and considerations, Šimko's *English-Slovak Dictionary* has proved to be a most valuable lexicographical source, and in a situation where until quite recently English explanatory dictionaries published in English-speaking countries were practically inaccessible for us, its role was all the more important. Of course, there also were and are English-Czech dictionaries, which, due to the closeness of Czech and Slovak, have often been resorted to and have been of great help. Nevertheless, they could not be expected to replace Slovak ones. With regard to Šimko's dictionary it can only be regretted that for political reasons it has not been re-published more than twice (1968, 1971).

The last dictionary we shall look at briefly is Konuš's second Slovak-English Dictionary, entitled *Slovak-English Phraseological Dictionary*, published in the USA in 1969. In size and to some extent also in depth the dictionary is a medium-size lexicographical work, the largest existing Slovak-English dictionary. In spite of its title it is not phraseological in the terminological sense of the word (the *English-Slovak Phraseological Dictionary* by Pavol Kvetko was published in 1984); in comparison with Konuš's former Slovak-English dictionary, it was merely extended by a number of verb complements, collocations, exemplification, and, of course, also some phraseologisms. Although the extent and uniqueness of this dictionary call for analysis, such an analysis lies beyond the scope of the present article. In conclusion we shall merely state that Konuš's voluminous and dedicated lexicographical work deserves the greatest respect and admiration. It is a pity that it could not have been supported from Slovakia, particularly considering the fact that, as is also indicated in the Foreword to the second Slovak-English Dictionary, Konuš's work was born under difficult conditions and its publication involved a lot of sacrifices.

In concluding our notes concerning the second period of Slovak Anglicist lexicography we may state that the dictionaries that existed in this sphere by the end of the 1960s could already satisfy the basic linguistic needs of their users, although there was still much to be desired,

and larger and more comprehensive dictionaries were and still are much needed.

The present chapter of Slovak Anglicist dictionary-making is only being written and, of course, it can profit from the previous efforts and achievements. (These also include the dictionary *Zrádná slova* [Faux Amis] by Josef Hladký and the dictionary *Znáte anglická slovesa* [Do You Know English Verbs] by Aleš Klégr.) Medium-size English-Slovak and Slovak-English dictionaries are being compiled by two teams of academic non-professional (though Anglicist) part-timers, as, in spite of current developments in the field, Anglicist lexicography does not yet exist as a profession or a career in Slovakia. Hence, Anglicist lexicographers here are far from expecting to be provided with the "comfortable, well-equipped offices" which seem to be a basic requirement of contemporary lexicographers, as stated in Gate's "career summary" (Ilson 1986.91). Most definitely, Slovak Anglicist lexicographers could not state with Hartmann that "lexicography is no longer an obscure pastime performed by a small minority of introverted collectors, but a professional activity with its own established practices and international contacts" (ibid. 90). But what definitely does apply to our English-dictionary compilers, too, are the words of Samuel Johnson (in Ilson 1986.vii): "It is the fate of those who toil at the lower employments of life . . . to be exposed to censure without hope of praise . . . Among these unhappy mortals is the writer of dictionaries . . . Every other author may aspire to praise; the lexicographer can only hope to escape reproach."

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have shared information and helped with this paper, namely Doc. PhDr. Jozef Olexa, CSc., PhDr. Ivan Staník, PhDr. Magda Šaturová, PhDr. Heather Trebatická, Doc. PhDr. Ján Vilikovský, CSc. and Mr. Martin Ward.

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## NEKOLKO POZNÁMOK O DEJINÁCH SLOVENSKEJ ANGLISTICKEJ LEXIKOGRAFIE

Cieľom predkladaného článku je poukázať na niektoré základné fakty a súvislosti z dejín slovenskej anglickej lexikografie v oblasti všeobecných prekladových slovníkov, keďže táto problematika doteraz vôbec nie je spracovaná.

Analýza vychádza zo spätosti podmienok vývoja anglistiky na Slovensku s možnosťami a potrebami vzniku lexikografických prác. Vzhľadom na tieto podmienky nie je prekvapivé, že prvé slovenské anglistické slovníky pochádzajú z USA. Vďaka obetavým lexikografom slovenského pôvodu vznikli na jeho území viaceré priekopnícke anglistické lexikografické práce, ktoré možno vysoko hodnotiť.

Anglistická lexikografia sa na Slovensku začala rodiť až koncom 40-tych rokov, i keď jej širší rozvoj možno datovať až do rokov 60-tych. V súvislosti s nízkou spoločenskou podporou rozvoja anglistiky je príznačné, že zostavovanie anglistických slovníkov na Slovensku bolo — a aj v súčasnosti je — neprofesionálnou činnosťou. Napriek záslužnosti vzniknutých lexikografických prác ide doteraz v podstate len o vreckové slovníky a iba Šimkov anglicko-slovenský slovník spôsobom spracovania hesiel ich rámec presahuje. Zmenu tejto situácie by mali znamenať pripravované stredné prekladové slovníky, ktoré sú pred dokončením.