

Adjectival Variants in Monolingual Dictionaries

Abstract

The variability of adjectival lexemes (word-formation variants) is an area of linguistic redundancy often considered problematic from various points of view. In the article, ways of describing adjectival variants in the standard six-volume and one-volume monolingual dictionaries of Slovak are introduced on the basis of several examples. On the basis of their comparison the article presents some conclusions concerning the changes that result from a partially different lexicographical conception, as well as the changes representing the actual changes in the language reality.

1. Introduction

This article focuses on the lexicographical treatment of adjectival variants in monolingual dictionaries of the Slovak language. The variation of grammatical and lexical units is an important feature of natural languages, their functioning and development; at the same time this is a possible problem area from the language user point of view, as well as from the point of view of lexicographical description. This fully applies to adjectival variants. The variability of adjectival lexemes (represented mostly by word-formation variants) is a paradigmatic relationship of lexemes with equivalent meaning and functional equivalence, which can produce combinations with the same nouns and the same semantic effects. The existence of derived forms with the same meaning, functions and combinational possibilities amounts to a redundancy of a kind, which, as a rule, does not tend towards confirmation of the existing state, but to the semantic or/and stylistic differentiation of the co-existing expressions, or to the extinction or loss of one of them (cf. Buttler 1990). Nevertheless, on the synchronic plan we have to consider the existence of equifunctional variants and choose a way to describe them adequately in dictionaries. For language users it is not always easy to determine what kind of relationship actually exists among competing lexemes, whether they are variants, semi-variants (functioning as variants only in some combinations and collocationally distributed in others), synonyms, or paronyms (semantically differentiated forms) – and the dictionaries should offer such information.

Further comments, based on a comparison of the solutions found in the six-volume Dictionary of the Slovak Language (Slovník slovenského jazyka, 1959–1968; SSJ) and the one-volume Concise Dictionary of the Slovak Language (Krátky slovník slovenského jazyka, 1989; KSSJ) are part of some preparatory analyses connected with a project for a new multi-volume Dictionary of the Contemporary Slovak Language (Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka), which is being compiled at our Institute.

2. Adjectival Derivates in Word-formation Nests

Treating adjectives in general, and Slavonic adjectives in particular (due to the widely utilized systemic preference to form adjective-noun combinations and multi-word lexical units and infrequently isofunctional noun-noun combinations) is not a simple task for lexicography. The problems resulting from the tension of their paradigmatic (systemic) and syntagmatic (textual) existence represented by various combinations with various textual concretizations of adjectival meaning are well known not only with regard to an informative lexicographical description of several competing adjectival forms and their often complicated relationships, but also with regard to a single adjective as well. Particularly in the one-volume monolingual dictionary, there is usually not enough space devoted to (derived) adjectives, which are frequently only registered/nested, without any further information concerning their usage. At the same time, there are several coexisting, often competing, lexemes in many word-formation paradigms (actual word-formation nests).

In Slovak there exist frequent rival pairs, or even groups, of adjectival derivates (potential variants) based on the systemic competition of indigenous word-formation types (especially between productive formants *-ový/-ný*, but also among *-ový/-ný* and other specialized formant like *-ovitý, -ený, -itý* etc.) with each other (*autostrádný / autostrádový, stolný / stolový, meandrový / meandrovitý, drevený / drevný / drevový / drevitý / drevnatý*), the competition of word-formation types with indigenous formants as opposed to international formants like *-ic(ký), -ál(ny), óz(ny), -ív(ny)* (*diachrónny / diachronický, tyfusový / tyfózny, procesový / procesný / procesuálny, planktónový / planktonický*), as well as the competition of those with international formants with each other (*katastrofický / katastrofálny, iluzórny / iluzívny, granulárny / granulózny*). This is the sphere of synchronic dynamism with certain

crystallized or crystallizing relationships. Lexicography is constantly challenged to reflect the state and nature of these changes.

3. Some Solutions in Monolingual Dictionaries

Using a sample from the SSJ, I would like to show several examples (entries are reduced to relevant data only) of how adjectival variants (real variants and semi-variants in a gradual continuum) are treated. Derived denominal adjectival variants rarely have their own paragraph – they are mostly nested to the noun they were derived from. The adjectival form(s) in the illustrative examples are usually shortened, so that one example combination can (mostly, but not always – see the example *provinciálny / provinčný*) represent both variant forms (see *dverný / dverový, dolomitový / dolomitický*). In the case of the different combinatorial tendencies in some collocations or multi-word lexical units (mostly terminological), they are illustrated after the “common part” of the examples (see *jablkový / jablčný*). Another step represents the treatment of each derivative with its combinatorial potentialities separately, either in the same paragraph (*bylinný / bylinový*), or in separate ones (*nit’ový / nitený, baktériový / bakteriálny*). The low frequency of a certain form is marked as *zried.* (rare), further specialization of a certain form or collocation for concrete communicative sphere is also marked: *zool., tech., lek. (med.)* etc.

dvere (‘door’) ... **dverný** i **dverový** príd.: d-é okienko

jablko (‘apple’) ... **jablkový** i **jablčný** príd.: j. koláč, j. kompót, j. závin; j-á št’ava, j-é víno; chem. kyselina j-á; zool. obal’ovač jablčný

provincia (‘province’) ...

provinciálny i **provinčný** príd. vzt’ahujúci sa na provinciu al. provincie: p-e (p-é) mesto; p-a (p-á) vláda, samospráva; Naše vel’mi provinciálne, uzunké pomery (Jége) malomestské, vidiecke; provinciálnosť -i z.

dolomit (‘dolomite’) ... **dolomitový**, *zried.* i **dolomitický** príd.: d. vápenec, d-á pôda

bylina (‘herb’) ... **bylinný** príd.: b. čaj, b. podrast, b-á os; bylinový príd. zried.: b-é odrezky z bylín

nit' ('thread') ... **nit'ový** príd.: n. tovar; n. gombík z nití; tech. n-á olovnica

nitený príd. vyrobený z nití, nit'ový: n-á gombička

baktéria ('bacteria') ... **baktériový** príd.: b-é jedy, b-á vojna

bakteriálny príd. lek. obsahujúci baktérie, súvisiaci s baktériami: b-a flóra, b-a infekcia, b. pôvod choroby

In the one-volume KSSJ, which was published 20 years later, two kinds of changes can be observed. On the one hand, there are changes resulting from the partially different lexicographical conception (a general tendency of the one-volume dictionary to present the information in the smallest possible space), on the other hand, there are changes that are expected to represent the actual changes in the language reality. As stated above, the adjectival groups create a wide sphere of synchronic dynamism – relationships in certain word-formation nests have changed mainly by disappearing as well as by the creation of new naming units. Through a comparison with the examples, parallel to some cited above, in the KSSJ we can see that adjectival forms are nested and represented mostly by their suffixes only, and that illustrative examples were in some cases completely omitted (*dolomitový / dolomitický, baktériový / bakteriálny*). In some cases there is no label showing the different frequencies of parallel units (*bylinný / bylinový, dolomitový / dolomitický*). Some variants treated in the SSJ in separate paragraphs are nested together (*nit'ový / nitený, baktériový / bakteriálny*) and so on. The type of the description with less illustrative examples sometimes leads to situations where adjectival forms with some different specialized collocations (shown in the SSJ but omitted in the KSSJ) seem "more variant". On the other hand, other pairs are introduced with new (or newly described) collocational specializations.

Though we have the complete list of adjectives treated in the KSSJ as (potential) variants (with possible additional differentiation in collocating shown on illustrative examples), we do not have the same from the SSJ so far, so it is not possible to give any interesting comparative statistical data yet. But there can be seen some tendencies corresponding with our findings concerning the dynamism within the adjectival sphere described in a monograph *The Dynamism of the Wordstock of Contemporary Slovak* (Horecký, Buzássyová, Bosák et al. 1989; cf. also Nábělková 1993), e.i. the additional appearance of the forms with productive indigenous formants (*-ový* in the competition with *-ný; -ový / -ný* in the competition with international formants *-ický, -ózný, -ívny, -álny*) (indicated by the plus sign): *dekádny / + dekádoový, lícny / + lícový,*

*jačmenný / + jačmeňový, koledný / +koledový, bordó / +bordový, + princsový / princes, + virózový / vorózny, + jednokol'ajový / jednokol'ajný, + konfliktový / konfliktný, magmatický / + magmový, + skulptúrny / skulpturálny, + profesiový / + profesný / profesionálny. A complementary tendency to enrich the lexicon from "international sources", frequently seen in texts, is in the KSSJ manifested in the pairs *inšpiračný / + inšpiratívny, + monolitický / monolitový*. The loss of one of the variants can be demonstrated in the following cases: *podlahový (-podlažný), interiérový (-interiéřny), deklaratívny (-deklaratóřny)*.*

Another type of change concerns the order of the members – in a comparison with the SSJ in the KSSJ some adjectival pairs have an inverse order: *jatkový / jatočný, žlový / žlný, kotolný / kotlový, diachróňny / diachronický, erózny / erozívny, epizódny / epizodický, hradiskový / hradištný, lebkový / lebečný, hexametrový / hexametrický, maláriový / malarický, žalmový / žalmický*. The question is, in what extent does the inverse order just copy the changed linguistic situation and in what extent is it a device of lexicographic influence to confirm a preferable form (cf. Zgusta 1989). Examining huge amounts of lexical data offered by computer corpora is expected to shed more light in this aspect if the question (the Corpus of Slovak Language is being prepared, cf. Jarošová, 1993).

The textual appearance of variant forms used in various communicative spheres by various language users, or even by the same speaker, is the most important source in solving the problem. Another, less objective but very interesting, way is to inquire as to the awareness of the variability of certain units on the level of individual linguistic consciousness. A questionnaire survey concerning (potential) adjectival variants like *autostráđny / autostráđový, stolný / stolový, dovozný / dovozový, pondelkový / pondelňajší, profesionálny / profesijný / profesiový, operačný / operatívny* and others, has shown that individual language users are, even in the cases of clear variation, seldom aware of it. They typically prefer either one (the same) form in various collocations (*stolový olej / stolová lampa* or *stolný olej / stolná lapma*) or different forms in different collocations demonstrating this way their (real or potential) (common or individual) collocative specialization (*stolový olej / stolná lampa*) (Nábělková 1995). Empirical studies concerning parallel English adjectival forms like *poetic / poetical, optic / optical, electric / electrical* from the point of view of language users consensus on collocations with concrete adjectival forms also showed a certain amount of individual variation, a different measure of collocating specialization of competing forms in concrete adjectival pairs and a as a

whole great deal of unsystematicity of collocations (Leitzke 1989; Lipka 1992).

4. Conclusions

The relationship of variation thus represents an area of language mobility, synchronic dynamism, changes and shifts, sometimes very slight, in connection with crystallizing the combinatory possibilities, which should be at the focus of lexicographers' attention in their attempt to reach greater lexicographical precision. The new multi-volume dictionary offers an opportunity to do that. In contrast to the two dictionaries examined above the general rule of the project is not to nest derivatives of this type, so that derived adjectives might have more "private space" to be described. This also concerns adjectival variants – the forms closer, on the scale, to the status of semi-variants or synonyms (demonstrated by their different combinatory possibilities, objectivized in a large computer corpus, by their further different word-formation potentialities and so on) are to be treated separately, in their own entries. The problem of solving each concrete case of potential variability is thus given more appropriate conditions but still remains.

5. References

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