

ISAČENKO'S NAREČJE VASI SELE NA ROŽU:
AN ASSESSMENT AFTER HALF A CENTURY

Isačenko ima pomembno mesto v zgodovini jezikoslovja kot posredovalec precej idej Jakobsona in Trubeckoja naslednjim jezikoslovcem. Njegova knjiga *Narečje vasi Sele na Rožu* iz l. 1939 je bila objavljena v kritičnem času njegovega razvoja. Isačenkovo delo zasluži priznanje tudi v podrobnejši oceni. Je izredno napredno v nekaterih pogledih, toda z resnimi madeži v drugih. Številno navajanje v knjigi kaže, kako zelo se je Isačenko opiral na Ramovša. V celoti se zdi, da je Isačenko pridobil z učenjem od obeh, od Trubeckoja in Ramovša, pri svojih raziskavah za to knjigo.

Isačenko occupies a significant position in the history of linguistics, in that he acted as the mediator of many of the ideas of Jakobson and Trubetzkoy to succeeding linguists. His book *NVSR* of 1939 was published at a critical time in his development. This article recounts assessments of Isačenko and his work; then, after a summary of reviews of *NVSR*, the work itself is assessed in some detail. It is considered extremely progressive in some respects but seriously flawed in others. The numerous references in the book show how much Isačenko relied on Ramovš. In sum: Isačenko appears to have profited from what he learned from both Trubetzkoy and Ramovš in his research for this book.

1 Introduction

When the history of linguistics in our own times comes to be written with proper hindsight and objectivity, it will not be enough to record the various theories and the fruits of their application; what will hold these highlights together will be the details of how the theories were disseminated from scholar to scholar, and the ways in which they were changed in the process.¹ When, to be specific, the development of general Slavic linguistics on the one hand and the development of phonological theory on the other come to be properly chronicled, it is obviously true that a central place will be taken by the two giants whose influence upon both of these areas has been so enormous: Nikolaj Trubetzkoy and Roman Jakobson; but it is surely also true that the influence of these two linguists has been enormous not only because of what they taught, but because of whom they taught it to; directly or indirectly, much of modern linguistic thought in these areas derives from Trubetzkoy and Jakobson because first they, and then their students, and then their students' students, have continued to spread their theories throughout the world of scholarship.

Surely, this strand in linguistic historiography deserves more attention, at least in this particular instance. On the one hand Trubetzkoy's untimely heart attack meant that the proper dissemination of his theories was thrust into the hands of colleagues and students; and on the other Jakobson's teachings, for all their importance, would without interpretation by others have found a much smaller place in twentieth-cen-

¹ For a brief example of this kind of historiography, see the tracing of part of what could be called the Jakobsonian apostolic succession, e.g. from Jakobson through Cornelis van Schooneveld to Pavle Ivić, and then to numerous Yugoslav linguists, by LUNT (1983: 54–55).

tury linguistics than they deserved, for the simple reason that he was normally so very difficult to understand.²

One extremely important link in part of this scholarly network was Alexander Vasil'evich Isačenko. He was among Trubetzkoy's first students in Vienna in the early 1930s, the author of what Trubetzkoy called *первая лингвистическая работа в моем семинаре* (Jakobson 1975: 276), and in Jakobson's words (1939/1966: 537) "sein bester linguistischer Schüler." He spent nearly two of his formative years in Paris under Jakobson's eye. Subsequently, from 1939 more or less uninterruptedly for forty years, Isačenko taught generations of students, first of all in Vienna, and then in turn in Ljubljana, Bratislava, Olomouc, Berlin, Prague, Los Angeles, Ann Arbor and New Haven, and finally in Klagenfurt/Celovec. However well or badly his personal research contributions to linguistics will eventually be judged, his talents as an outstanding teacher were never in dispute;³ it is therefore all the more important for us to know how well he understood and represented the 'school' that he belonged to.⁴

Although the references to Ramovš in the text of Isačenko's first major publication – *Narečje vasi Sele na Rožu* [henceforward NVSR] – outnumber those to Trubetzkoy by nearly 20 to 1, he lists both scholars in the bibliography: there are seven works by Trubetzkoy, mostly theoretical studies concerned with phonology and morphophonology; and there are ten publications by Fran Ramovš, all of them works on the historical phonology of Slovene. In his preface to NVSR, Isačenko acknowledges the two scholars' assistance:

Predvsem je avtor zahvalo dolžan svojemu prerano umrlemu učitelju, knezu N. S. Trubeckoju, ... saj mu je on vzbudil zanimanje za koroška narečja in mu v prvih študijah pri pregledovanju materiala in snovanju načrta vedno stal ob strani z dragocenimi nasveti. Enako je avtor hvaležen g. prof. Ramovšu, ki mu ni le radevolje odprl svojo privatno knjižnico, ampak mu je dal v razgovorih važne pobude ter ga obvaroval raznih pomot ... (NVSR 3)

Isačenko's academic training and these words—cf. also the comment by Toporišič quoted below – suggest that Isačenko combined the data and ideas he derived from Ramovš with the ideas and theories he had learned from Trubetzkoy in this, his first major publication; and that these two influences came together in his scholarship at a

² Cf. Trubetzkoy on Jakobson's *трудночитаемость*, see JAKOBSON 1975: 147.

³ " ... [Isačenko] has, without any doubt, shown himself worthy of his master, the unforgettable N. S. Trubetzkoy, ... as a fascinating and committed teacher ... " (Birnbaum 1976: 7); "Poleg jasne in vedno nemirne znanstvene misli mu je bil dan tudi dar bleščечега in duhovitega govornika in pisca, tako da je svoje misli zlahka posredoval drugim in bil izvrsten pedagog," (Derganc 1978: 453); and "Он был богом одаренным учителем, 'magister natus', которого никогда не забудут тысячи его цлушателей и десятки настоящих учеников в университетах Европы и Америки," (D'urovč 1979: 127). Linked hereto is the reputation that Isačenko's memory still enjoys in Sele as a raconteur.

⁴ In the obituaries of Isačenko (which are fewer than he deserved; perhaps this is because of his scholarly unreliability?), what I see as his crucial role as one of the chief interpreters of Trubetzkoy goes (largely? completely?) unnoticed. In the historiography of twentieth-century linguistics he is hardly mentioned; all I have found to date is one line in Langleben 1988: 205, "The [Prague school] method was successfully applied to Russian morphology by R. Jakobson, S. Karcevski, A. Isačenko."

vital time: just before he began his career as a teacher. The purpose of the present paper is to begin an analysis of NVSR, to try to detect the ingredients in the scholarly mixture; to see whether, and (if so) how, Isačenko combined these two influences in this work, as part of the foundation for his future scholarly career; and to place this analysis in the context of the often glaring errors which (unfortunately) characterize this work.

It is indeed well-known that Isačenko was, in some specific ways, an unreliable scholar: no final assessment of his contributions to research will surely ignore the fact that his writings were outstanding, among other reasons, for their inconsistency. The English linguist Robert Auty, in a conversation with me in Ljubljana in 1973 (during a discussion of the notion of visiting the Carinthian village of Sele for my fieldwork), categorized Isačenko's publications in three very dissimilar groups: the 'really brilliant', the 'very ordinary', and the 'purely politically-motivated'. Isačenko's change of opinion about the Freising Fragments in the early forties, and his volte-face with respect to then-current theories of linguistics in the USSR in the early fifties, are both well-known. Did this strange inconsistency influence his role as a mediator of Prague-school views, and in particular of Trubetzkoyan phonology?

2 Isačenko in the period 1935–1939

Isačenko himself has explained the happy chances which led to his being brought up in Celovec and thus to learning, among other languages, Slovene.⁵ It is also clear that he made the most of his own linguistic proficiency and of the bilingual situation in Carinthia in his formative scholarly years in the 1930s, by applying (in the first place) the teachings of Trubetzkoy (and other Prague School phonologists) to Slovene dialect data: his 1933 dissertation, and three of his first published articles (1935, 1936, 1938) dealt with Carinthian dialects. After his graduation in July 1933, Isačenko spent over three not too successful years at other pursuits, and then returned to what he was until the end of his life to consider his home,⁶ Carinthia. His fieldwork in Sele resulted in the work which was accepted as a *habilitacija* in Ljubljana in 1939 (Schöler 1976: 8), the work treated here – the first published description of a local Carinthian dialect (henceforward: *selščina*).

Embarrassing though it may be to those who knew and liked him (and there were

⁵See ISAČENKO 1979: 152–54 for his Russian-language version. The German-language version (manuscript in my possession, TMSP) goes as follows: "Ehemalige Klienten meines Vaters, denen es gelungen war, ihr Geld aus Russland ins Ausland zu bringen, hatten am Südufer der Wörther Sees in Kärnten eine Villa gemietet ... Meine Familie wurde in die geräumige Villa zu einem Sommeraufenthalt eingeladen. Es traf sich, dass mein Vater beim Baden im See völlig unerwartet einem Jugendfreunde begegnete, dem damaligen Professor ... Dr. Hans Uebersberger ..., [der] überredete meinen Vater, mich in ein Internat nach Klagenfurt zu geben unter Hinweis auf die besonders guten Schulverhältnisse in Österreich ... Mein Vater war mit dem Plan einverstanden, und so kam ich noch vor der Volksabstimmung ... nach Klagenfurt." There is, incidentally, an interesting parallel between 1920 and 1968 when Isačenko, once more on holiday in Carinthia, this time from his job in Czechoslovakia, decided to forsake his residence in that country (cf. Hamm 1979: 370).

⁶As quoted by D'UROVYČ 1979: 119.

many), I must now review the first signs of Isačenko's scholarly inconsistency: signs that were all too apparent to his supervisor, Trubetzkoj, and which are apparent in his published works from the 1930s and especially in the work I wish to concentrate on here: NVSR.

Trubetzkoj's letters to Jakobson are a vivid testament to this inconsistency, in that they range from approbation to disenchantment and then settle somewhere between the two. Soon after Isačenko became his student in Vienna, Trubetzkoj mentioned him in a letter to Jakobson (8 June 1930) as "очень способный" (Jakobson 1975: 160). By the time Isačenko came to write his dissertation, however, Trubetzkoj's assessment had changed: "По существу, кроме нескольких удручающих ляпсусов, особых ересей нет, хотя нет и оригинальности. Но зато по форме – тихий ужас. Впечатление полнейшей беспомощности. Полное неумение распределить материал ... Как ни жалко мальчика, но пришлось его огорчить и велеть ему переделать работу," (Jakobson 1975: 282, letter of 10 June 1933). Two years later, however, (14 March 1935) Trubetzkoj had a more even-handed assessment: "Он какой-то странный. Безусловно способный, быстро схватывает, соображает. Как будто действительно интересуется наукой. А в то же время чего то не хватает, при том не хватает чего то очень существенного," (Jakobson 1975: 328). Following this assessment, Isačenko began his fieldwork on *selščina*, eventually marrying Trubetzkoj's daughter; and we read no more about him in Trubetzkoj's letters to Jakobson.

3 Assessments of Isačenko's Early Work

3.1 General comments

In the obituaries published immediately after Isačenko's death, as may be expected, harsh words are few. No criticisms of Isačenko's works from the 1930s are made in either Derganc (1978) or D'urovyč (1979). Only Hamm and Rode allow themselves any kind of hint something amiss, and then it is very mild: "Trotz seiner in jeder Hinsicht eminenter Tätigkeit als Fachslavist und Lehrer – und trotz dem, dass er einen ausgezeichneten Vortragenden stellte –, der beste österreichische Russist war ein Einzelgänger und musste es bis an sein Lebensende bleiben" (Hamm 1979: 374); "Kot vidimo, se je A. V. Isačenko loteval mnogih vprašanj slovenščine. Marsikdaj jih ni rešil najboljše ..." (Rode 1979: 103).

Outside the group of specialists working at the University in Graz (see below), two linguists – Toporišič and Neweklowsky – have written historical surveys of dialect research in Carinthia; both are generally complimentary about Isačenko's contributions, but both also (rather gently) mention some criticisms.

Neweklowsky (1979: 446) ranks Isačenko's early work with that of his fellow-student Viktor Paulsen (also, incidentally, praised by Trubetzkoj, and help up as a model of linguistic description by the workers in Graz), and writes: "Beide Arbeiten ... bringen zwei neue Aspekte in die Forschung: die Phonologie und die Methode der Sprachgeographie." He does however admit that "... die Akzentverschiebungen [werden] bei Isačenko nicht sehr klar beschrieben." Toporišič (1987b, summarized also in

1987c) concentrates on Isačenko's positive contributions:

Z Isačenkoma je prodrla – žal kaj prehodno – v slovensko narečjeslovje fonološka obravnava jezikovnih danosti. Sedaj se vsi pojavi pojasnjujejo ne več tako sami po sebi, temveč v njihovi vključenosti v večje fonološke tvorbe in preslojitve, in (deloma) se tako tudi razlagajo. Tako je Isačenko npr. povezal jezičkov *r* v rožanskem narečju, ki so ga drugi narečjeslovci pripisovali vplivu nemščine, s pomaknitvijo tudi mehkojne soglasniške vrste v grlo ... Vrednost Isačenkovega narečjeslovnega dela je predvsem v novi razlagi jezikoslovnih dejstev, čeprav je tudi pri določanju izoglos prinesel marsikaj 'tvarinsko' novega. Značilno je, da je [njegov] delo izšlo kot 4. knjiga v razpravah Znanstvenega društva, pri katerem je Ramovš zasedal vodilni položaj. Prof. Ramovš je torej odobral novo smer, čeprav se ji ni mogel priključiti ... (1987b: 245-46)

He does however allude to problems, without giving many details: "Da njegovo nagnjenje pri razlagi rinezmov ... ni naletelo na odobravanje, pa tu nekatere druge trditve – to se razume samo od sebi," (1987b: 246).

The specialists on Carinthian dialectology in the Arbeitsgruppe für Slowenistik des Institutes für Slawistik der Universität in Graz provide (necessarily) a more balanced view. Looking back at the relevant items from Isačenko's writings of the 1930s, this group of scholars have ambivalent attitudes: "Isačenko's Untersuchungen der Jauntaler Dialekte" [i.e., 1933, 1936, 1938] "..., die in ihrer Zeit vor allem vom methodischen Standpunkt bahnbrechend waren, gehen leider von einem Korpus aus, der im Verhältnis zum Umfang des Untersuchungsgebietes wohl zu klein gewählt sein dürfte. Die Textbeispiele, die Isačenko in seiner Dissertation [i.e., 1933] veröffentlichte, scheinen zudem nicht repräsentativ zu sein," (Prunč, Karničar, Sellner and Pfandl 1980: 63).

Further, the *Thesaurus* of all pre-1980 citations of Carinthian dialect material (in the fascicles published to date) contains a number of citations considered dubious by the team in Graz. They quote four kinds of unreliable data, with question marks attached to the accompanying symbols, and give examples: and the four examples include three from Isačenko's writings, namely (Hafner and Prunč 1982: 15-20): – the symbol "B?" for a dubious semantic gloss, exemplified by the word *pomnati* in its suggested meaning "meinen" (instead of the correct "erinnern") in Isačenko (1933); – the symbol "L?" for a datum whose very existence is suspect, exemplified by the word *bratna* in *NVSR*; and – the symbol "G?" for a grammatically-suspect datum, e. g., *bwa:wən* which is quoted as a fem. sg. form in Isačenko (1933). The fourth grounds for disquiet is marked by – the symbol "Lf?" which shows a phonetically-suspect form; the example is from an author other than Isačenko, but indeed he could have served to exemplify this kind of inaccuracy also (cf. 4.6. below).

3.2 Narečje vasi Sele na Rožu: Published Assessments

Of more interest here, clearly, are assessments of *NVSR*. For the most part, these are positive, whether they date from the 1930s or more recent times.

3.2.1 One contemporary review: Grafenauer

In his review of *NVSR*, Grafenauer is frankly critical about only a few, relative minor, points. In general he is full of praise: "Dragocen donesek k poznavanju slovenskih narečij na Koroškem, ki ga je napisal ruski slavist A. V. Isačenko iz šole kneza N. S. Trubeckega, profesorja slovanskih jezikov na dunajski univerzi!" (1939:

280). He singles out for especial approval Isačenko's sections on the suprasegmentals of *selščina* and the fricativization of voiced stops in Carinthian dialects, and is quite complimentary about his historical ("zgodovinske ugotovitve ali vsaj verjetne domneve", 1939: 282). His reproaches concern, first, instances where Isačenko betrays his ignorance of other Carinthian dialects not only their tonemics, but details such as the various reflexes of PSI. */südravü/; and, second, Isačenko's use of the word *Rožanec* (rather than *Rožan* for 'inhabitant of Rož', and the (?) idiosyncratic phrase *na Rožu* instead of *v Rožu*). All in all, we may say that Grafenauer finds nothing serious—other than limitations on Isačenko's knowledge of other Carinthian dialects—to criticize.

3.2.2 Recent assessments

Two assessments of NVSR refrain from criticism:

Tako je [Isačenko] v ljubljanskih letih objavil razpravo [NVSR] ..., ki je pomenila novost v slovenski dialektologiji, saj je opisovala glasovni in morfološki ustroj nekega narečja s strukturalno metodo (Derganc 1978: 450).

Isačenko selški govor glasovno najprej predstavlja enočasijsko, in sicer prav izčrpno, tako da je obravnavana tudi stavčna fonetika. Vse izoglose zasleduje sosednja ... narečja, v primerjavo pa večkrat (kakor pred njim že Ramovš in Tesnière) priteguje tudi zahodnoslovanske jezike. – Strukturalno metodo Isačenko uporablja tudi v zgodovinskem delu in podaja zanimivo tozadevno razlago sicer bolj ali manj znanih dejstev glede naglasnih prestav in metatonije. – Isačenko pa ni obstal pri samoglasniških in soglasniških sestavih, temveč podaja tudi jasen in popoln pregled oblikoslovnega stanja ... Kakor v oblikoslovju tako tudi [v besedotvorju] načelno ločuje med ... živimi in že mrtvimi prviniami. (Toporišič 1987b: 245)

The Graz group's views on NVSR are however, in part at least, uncomplimentary:

Isačenko's Ortsmonographie zum Dialekt von Zell Pfarre ... ist sehr umfangreich konzipiert und enthält als erste Arbeit zu den slowenischen Dialekten auch Angaben zu diastratischen Sprachphänomenen. In einigen Fällen mussten allerdings von uns eine Diskrepanz zwischen dem derzeitigen Sprachzustand und den von Isačenko angeführten Belegen festgestellt werden. Ob dies auf eine rasche Entwicklung dieses Dialektes zurückzuführen sein wird oder ob der Grund dafür in der Auswahl inadäquater Informanten liegen könnte, wird erst nach Vorliegen entsprechender Feldforschungen aus diesem Informationspunkt festgestellt werden können, (Prunč, Karničar, Sellner and Pfandl 1980: 64).

As I shall further substantiate below, the facts are indisputable: what is reported for *selščina* in the 1930s and what is known about this dialect in the 1980s and 1990s is often very different. The problem, as the Graz linguists have shown, is clear: can this all be explained as 'accelerated change' over the intervening generations? Or did Isačenko, quite simply, make mistakes? and if we cannot properly rely on the authenticity of his data, what value does Isačenko's publication have at all? and further: how much trust can we in retrospect place in its author as a mediator in the spread of linguistic theories, at least in his early years? These are the problems that I wish to approach in this paper.

Prunč et alii (1980) also criticize the work for its lack of clarity with respect to the data, pointing out how frequently the text lacks any reference as to the dialect to which a given datum belongs: "... [es ist] nicht immer klar ersichtlich ..., wann er Belege aus dem Ort selbst anführt and wann er solche aus dem übrigen Mundarten

beibringt," (1980: 65). This is clearly one of the reasons (but is alas not the only reason) why Isačenko's work is unreliable. (It may incidentally be pointed out that the other authors who are remarked upon for their untrustworthy material in the *Graz Thesaurus* did and do not, for the most part, have any lasting pretensions to scholarship.)

Karničar's recent book (1990)—the first book-length description of a Carinthian dialect in 50 years!—has six references to Isačenko. Two are positive: a reference to Isačenko's explanation of some phonological changes with reference to the articulatory basis (45), and a reference to his description of the definite article (63). The other four, however, are critical: the suggestion that Isačenko's use of [ə] to show the off-glide in the mid-vocalic diphthongs is "etwas übertrieben" (7); a refutation of one point in Isačenko's description of the accentual system in *selščina* (43); a comment on Isačenko's 'discovery,' in this dialect, of dental and bilabial⁷ fricatives (49); and references (50) to Isačenko's citation of the *selščina* for "bee" as not showing the metathesis of */b/ and /č/, viz., the gloss *čabéawa* instead of the current, the expected, and (for Carinthia, the typical) form *báčéawa*.

4 Narečje vasi Sele na Rožu: A More Detailed Assessment

4.1 Introduction

NVSR is divided into two main sections, 'Glasoslovje' (5–88) and 'Oblikoslovje' (89–123), with short sections on derivation and lexis, and one page of textual examples. The 'Glasoslovje' is, in the "modern" structuralist manner, formally divided into a synchronic sub-section ('deskriptivni del') and a diachronic sub-section ('historični del'); this is not true of the 'Oblikoslovje'.

The text of the 'Glasoslovje' section contains 40 references; it is interesting to note that references to works by Ramovš vastly outnumber those to Isačenko's Prague-school mentors – Jakobson, Trubetzkoy and Karcevski – not only in the diachronic sub-section (26 : 2), but also in the synchronic sub-section (10 : 2).

4.2 Synchrony vs. diachrony

We can hardly carp at the fact that Isačenko's section on morphology is not (as is his phonological section) divided into descriptive and historical sub-sections; such a division in morphological descriptions is still rare nowadays, half a century later. We can however inspect the two sub-sections of his description of the phonology of *selščina* to see if he adheres to the distinction; and, in general, he does so admirably. In the 'deskriptivni del' (5–44) there are the occasional lapses: thus, when describing the consonantal system, he allows himself to be sidetracked (via comparative dialectology) into historical remarks about the origin of /h/ (36–37), the fate of */nj/ in Carinthia (40), and similar digressions about other consonants (41, 42). The 'hi-

⁷ Karničar writes "Eine Spirantisierung von *d* und *z* kommt nicht vor;" the latter must be a misprint for *b*, cf. Isačenko's frequent use of the 'barred *b*' (the bilabial fricative) in NVSR. In fact, Isačenko cites no forms at all with the interdental fricative ('barred *d*'). See p. 34: "slabljenje samo v posameznih primerih," whereby only the bilabial fricative is exemplified.

storični del' (45–88) is confined to diachrony: it may be considered a little out of place to trace the development of the vowels and consonants of *selščina* by spending so much time and space (at least a quarter of the pages allotted to this subject) upon pre-Slovene and early Slovene developments; but we cannot detect any synchronic material in these pages. More important – even if, as Toporišič mentions, there is little new material – his structuralist approach, exemplified above all in his derivation of the vowels of *selščina* from a single reconstructed Early Slovene vocalic system, anticipates Rigler's (1963, 1967) exemplary methodology in his reconstructions of the histories of the various vocalic systems on Slovene-speaking territory. In sum: Isačenko appears to have more or less overcome one of the failings for which his mentor Trubetzkoy criticized his 1933 dissertation: "Полное неумение распределить материал: в исторической части сообщаются наблюдения над произношением ..." (Jakobson 1975: 282).

4.3 Synchronic Phonology

As we have seen above, NVSR has been lauded for its introduction of structural phonology to dialect description. The 'Glasoslovje,' indeed, is generally laid out in what we now think of as the structuralist way. The accentual system and the vowel system in particular are described with exceptional clarity. Some of the terminology could well be further modernized to suit our tastes, and there is some terminological confusion in the morphophonology (a synchronic alternation is generally termed *alternacija* and *menjava*, but once is called *izprememba*, a term otherwise used only for diachronic change, see, e.g., 96–98); but these are surely trivial matters. So, perhaps, is the fact that, although Isačenko produces admirable series of minimal pairs to demonstrate the contrast between long rising and long falling pitch (13) and the contrast between short rising and short falling pitch (23), he does *not* give any evidence to demonstrate any of the vocalic oppositions (see Karničar 1990: 27–28 for a contemporary example of this evidence).

There are however some grounds for serious criticism. On the one hand, when nasalization of vowels is mentioned, it is quite clear that this feature is – as described by Isačenko, at least⁸ – predictable from the consonantal environment. On the other hand, when we turn to the consonantal system, we find a table (44) where each of the obstruents is given in two forms, one 'normalni' and one 'intenzivni'; and in the accompanying description (43) it is not altogether clear whether these contrast phonemically or not – viz., whether the 'intensive' consonants occur (1) only after short rising vowels (where 'normal' consonants do not occur) or (2) after long rising vowels also (where they would contrast with the 'normal' consonants). When, in the body of the text, the 'intensive' consonants are mentioned, their occurrence is generally described as specifically limited to the position following the 'intensive' short rising pitch (23, 70–71, 88, 106, etc.); on page 43, however, Isačenko explicitly states that these 'intensive' consonants also occur after vowels with long rising pitch: "Lahko pa stojijo tudi v dolgem zlogu;" but there is only the one example, *mát*. Obviously, if any Slavic dialect were to make a phonemic distinction between 'normal' and

⁸See PRIESTLY 1983 for evidence of marginally-phonemic nasalization in *selščina*.

'intensive' obstruents (thus perhaps parallelling Caucasian, African and other languages with series of implosives and/or ejectives as well as normal obstruents), this would be something startling; if, on the other hand, these consonants were to occur only after vowels with short rising pitch, vowels characterized as having both brief duration and a very sharp change in pitch level, their 'intensive' character would be (rather unexcitingly) predictable. The pity is not so much that Isačenko does not appear to be sure which solution to favour, but that he does not even appear to realize that the choice of solutions to this problem is a matter of any importance.

4.4 Diachronic Phonology

Isačenko's structural approach to historical phonology is mentioned above. A complete analysis of his individual statements and analyses would require a lengthy article in itself. Suffice it here to say that many of these remarks, as they apply to Carinthian dialects generally (and not *selščina* in particular) appear to be copied more or less verbatim from his earlier publications (1935, 1936, 1938). More important, in the context of an attempt to trace the scholarly influences on Isačenko, is the fact that there are no fewer than 36 references to Fran Ramovš in the chapter on phonology, 10 in the synchronic and 26 in the diachronic sections. Of these, a few are simple citations of dialect data; the rest quote Ramovš's views and arguments on a variety of both general and specific points. More interesting still, *only four* are in any way critical of Ramovš's views—one such instance being his very laudable argumentation for ascribing the rise of uvular [r] to structural and articulatory-base causes (cf. the comments by both Toporišič and Karničar cited above). The other 32 references uncritically cite Ramovš as an indisputable authority; not only does it appear that Isačenko cites Ramovš at nearly every opportunity, but some of the citations are rather gratuitous.⁹ I conclude that, although Isačenko was (at least in a few instances) practising the sycophancy for which he later in his life became, from time to time, well-known (after all, this publication did serve his career interests very well), he did indeed derive a great deal of his approach to phonology – both diachronic and synchronic – from Ramovš.

4.5 Phonetics

I have two major criticisms. I have already mentioned Karničar's brief but suggestive comments about Isačenko's description of the bilabial fricative of *selščina* (see NVSR 34, and 57 for items with this sound: *dbâ*, *dbîâ*, *dbõr*, *zbiázda* and NVSR 68, 70 for what is almost one of the same items without it: *dbõr!*) I have also cited Karničar's comments about Isačenko's "exaggerated" phonetic transcription of the mid-vocalic diphthongs. One other phonetic criticism must be made of Isačenko: the

⁹For example, on p. 72 of NVSR we read: "... novi rastoči poudarek /je/ imel posebno silo in ta sila je ves novi poudarjeni zlog po svoje premenila, kar se kaže prav na vokalu in končnem konzonantu (tako že Ramovš IV: 240)." The reference is to Ramovš 1936: 240; but there, although we do read a summary of Ramovš's views on the quality of these newly-stressed vowels, not only is there no discussion of consonants, but the only Carinthian dialects mentioned are the Zila dialects.

fact that he, almost certainly, made an auditory mistake with respect to the glottal stop (grlov napornik / laryngaler Verschlusslaut): he omits the symbol /q/ whenever it is expected, historically, before oral and nasal stops (thus: *dôxtar* “k doktorju”, *pêřkřřáindam* “zu den Bergfreunden”, *nôham* “zu Fuss”, (94)). These examples led him to conclude that *selščina* has a prepositionless dative of direction (“brezpredložni dativ smeri”, 94). If indeed Isačenko were correct in this conclusion, it would be a typological rarity: a Slavic dialect in which (on the one hand) two cases must occur with prepositions, and (on the other) one prepositional usage has been lost; note that other Slavic dialects with prepositionless datives of direction also allow prepositionless instrumental phrases. For further details see Priestly 1982, where I demonstrate that at least today this /q/ does exist, if only in the phonetic form of creaky voice (glottalization). Admittedly, the glottal stop and/or creaky voice are difficult to hear when adjacent to voiced stops and nasals; but the fact that data which led Isačenko to this conclusion consisted of phrases with only these combinations should (for typological reasons) have made him pause and investigate further; and he did not.

4.6 Data

As already mentioned, many of Isačenko's data are suspect. I can vouch for this fact through personal experience. In the mid-1970s I chose to study *selščina* precisely because it was one of two local dialects of Slovene which had had their descriptions published in books.¹⁰ When I took up residence in the village in September 1978, I began learning the dialect deliberately without reference to either German or Literary Slovene, and used NVSR as a guide; and frequently met puzzled expressions on the faces of my informants when I used words from Isačenko's book. The data are indeed not reliable. Some examples: *brôb* (43): this word may be a simple misprint. It is omitted from the Graz Thesaurus. – *hábouq* (63), cf. *hàbəq* (75), both cited as being the reflex of /*jabolko/: which is correct? – *háqsna* (63), listed in the Graz Thesaurus with the symbol “Lf?” – *hlàim* (81) ‘knapp’: very dubious. – *hrîās* (57) ‘Gries’: dubious. – *hūārō* (58) cited as an acc. sg., presumably, of *hūārā* ‘hour’; such acc. sg. forms only occur in the Zvrhnji Kot sub-dialect of Sele, a fact not mentioned by Isačenko. – *îĕřmĭn ĭĭřmĕna* (57,78) and *řĭtāmen řĭtāma* (57) cf. Literary Slovene *remen*: did both forms exist? – *iščĭm* ‘I seek’ (88) where /*šč/ results in /š/ in all other intervocalic positions. – *lájžna* (63): dubious. – *lúč* (55) for *uč*. – *měš* (76), (perhaps!) a misprint for *měš*. – *mōa* (62) as the reflex of /*mogol/, in the sentence *čĕmōa ũĕč nōst* ‘I cannot carry it any more’: extremely dubious. – *ōriās* (57, 130) ‘heather’, now *urĕsli*. – *pĕsernĭšā* ‘better’ (81): very dubious. – *pĭāč* (57) as the supine of *pĕčt*; the supine nowadays in *pĕčt*. – *sūžba* (55) ‘service’; contemporary *selščina* has three variants, *swāžwa*, *šwāžwa* and *swāžba*, but no forms with *su-*.

4.7 One possible explanation (as mentioned above) is that half a century ago *selščina* was different from what it is today, and that everything that we find in NVSR

¹⁰The other one, the dialect of Črni vrh nad Idrijo, I rejected because my 1973 on-the-spot investigation of the data in Tominec (1964) suggested very strongly that this was very unreliable. In retrospect, this is ironic.

that is not mirrored in today's dialect has simply changed in the interim. This possibility is, rather too generously, sometimes allowed by scholars working on the Graz Project, cf. the quotation above. I myself consider that this argument may be accepted in certain instances; and it is certainly true that there has been extensive grammatical change in this dialect over the most recent generations, cf. Priestly (1988). Occasionally, we can use typology as a guide. For example, when we compare my own description of the dialect as having lost the neuter gender (Priestly 1984b, 1984c) with NVSR, we find that the latter has so many reflexes of neuter forms (in spite of widespread masculinization) that there is no question of complete gender-loss; but the state of affairs described by Isačenko is typologically acceptable as a stage prior to the grammatical loss of the neuter (cf. Priestly 1984a), and we do not have to suspect Isačenko of widespread error in this instance.

The typological argument does *not* however hold in some other instances, especially the phonetic errors that appear to have been by Isačenko. Furthermore, the grammatical and especially the lexical errors in data are so frequent that we surely cannot excuse them all; this would mean allowing an unnatural amount of linguistic change to have occurred for the 50-year time-span. Nor can we excuse them in the grounds of poor type-setting and copy-proofing techniques at the outbreak of World War II as some colleagues in Ljubljana have, very generously, tried to do.¹¹

5 Conclusion

We have to conclude that Trubetzkoy's comments on Isačenko's dissertation of 1933 were accurate, and that Isačenko was still prone to make what can only be called unscholarly errors. At the same time, we can also conclude that Isačenko did indeed show some strong evidence of having profited both from his university teacher Trubetzkoy, and from his new mentor Ramovš, in putting together a dialect description which (at least in its phonology) tackled both the synchrony and the diachrony from a structural viewpoint; and what is striking is how much more appears to be derived from Ramovš than from Trubetzkoy. I would suggest that, as a future teacher of Prague School linguistics and as a mediator of Trubetzkoyan phonology, Isačenko *did*

¹¹ Tine LOGAR, personal communication. Of course, some of the mistakes in NVSR are indeed misprints: e. g., the reference in the first footnote on p. 34 to Ramovš 1924: 27 should be to Ramovš 1924: 217, where the distribution of *š* is in fact discussed; a reference which Isačenko had in fact noted correctly in two of his earlier articles, namely, 1935: 62 and 1936: 51. For the sake of fairness, it should also be mentioned that Isačenko had some references incorrect in his earlier articles, and corrected them in NVSR. Thus in 1936: 40 he quotes Ramovš 1918/20: 289 as a source for details about vowel reduction, and in 1936: 43 he quotes Ramovš 1918/20: 123 as a source for data on the stress retraction in words such as *proso*; in both cases, the references are faulty, and Isačenko's corrections in NVSR – to Ramovš 1918/20: 132 on p. 76 and to Ramovš 1918/20: 151 on pp. 58 and 69 – are great improvements. Nevertheless, I consider it necessary to note one suspicious datum, namely, that the house in Sele in which Isačenko stayed in the late 1930s, called "Pr Sqtuc," was the home both of a family native to the village, and also of a 'foreigner': one of the wives in the household had married into the family from her home in Šmarjeta na Rožu/St. Margarethen im Rosenthal. My suspicion is that some of the forms that found their way into *Narečje vasi Sele na Rožu* may have belonged, rather, to a potential book entitled *Narečje vasi Šmarjeta na Rožu*.

understand the theories involved; and this is, after all, the most important thing. However, NVSR is undoubtedly very carelessly written. All in all, it is an annoying and fascinating book, and in these features reflects its author.

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POVZETEK

Isačenko ima pomembno mesto v zgodovini jezikoslovja, posebno fonološke teorije in slovanskega jezikoslovja, to pa kot posredovalec precej Jakobsonovih in Trubetzkovih idej naslednjim rodovom jezikoslovcev. Njegova knjiga *Narečje vasi Sele na Rožu* iz l. 1939 je bila objavljena v kritičnem času njegovega razvoja po njegovi disertaciji in ko je začel svojo učiteljsko kariero. Delo pa ima precej več sklicevanj na Ramovša kot na Trubetzkaja in druge Isačenkove mentorje praške šole. Ta sestavek se spominja prve Trubetzkovej ocene Isačenkovega ranega dela ob slovenskih narečjih na Koroškem. Za tem in po povzermalni oceni NVSR se to delo ocenjuje v nekaterih podrobnostih. V določenih pogledih ga je imeti za izredno napredno (npr. strukturalna metodologija, ločevanje sinhronije in diahronije), vendar resnimi madeži v drugih pogledih (npr. fonološko zgrešene trditve, fonetične napake, gradivske pomanjkljivosti). Številno navajanje Ramovša, ki prežema knjigo, se deloma zdi nepotrebno, vendar kaže, kako močno se je Isačenko naslanjal na slovenskega znanstvenika. Povzeto: Isačenko je, se vidi, imel dobiček od tega, česar se je naučil od obeh, od Trubetzkaja in Ramovša v svojem raziskovanju za to vznemirljivo in prevzemajočo knjigo.