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Conclusions and possibilities for further research

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4 Conclusions and possibilities for further research

4.1 Prospects of stylistics in general

After the survey and comparison of Czech and British theories of style I will now proceed to summarize the main results emerging from the comparison and to indicate several possibilities for further research in the field of stylistics. Summarizing the results of the comparison, I will concentrate mainly on the differences found out, rather than on the identical points – the differences will serve as a much more useful starting point for dealing with the possibilities for further research.

I feel necessary to point out that although in this work I was primarily dealing with *theories* of style, i.e. with the sphere of metalanguage, on the most general level any theoretical analysis is connected with the extralinguistic reality – with the historical, social and political context. This is important especially for the disciplines such as stylistics whose investigations are not focused only on the means of expression existing on one particular level of language, but also on the links of the text with the situation in which the communication takes place, with the author of the text, with the addressee etc. Generally speaking, any social situation as well as any change to it require and prefer certain types of communication in which various kinds of texts are employed. The language norms according to which the texts are created are rooted in the norms existing in the sphere of extralinguistic reality. Depending on the social situation, both types of norms can change. Stylistics then has to define its own aims and to choose the type of texts it will deal with. The tasks which follow are to find and apply adequate methods of investigating and analysing the texts; the methods themselves can naturally be subjected to analysis and comparison as well.

As the world around us keeps constantly changing and developing, the main tasks and methods of stylistics cannot remain unchanged, and indeed they do not. From the surveys given in the first two chapters of the work it can be seen that although the general theoretical background of stylistics (in this particular case limited to Czech and British stylistics) may be to a certain extent similar – for example as to the definitions of style based on the principle of choice and variation – the stylistic investigations tend to differ a lot in practice. Some branches of stylistics, such as critical stylistics, feminist stylistics or pragmatic stylistics, focus on examining various ideologies present in texts and on the way they are

supposed to influence the addressees. Some other investigate the style of literary works of art and yet other branches are orientated methodologically – towards the teaching of skills in stylization.

The result of the variety of tasks and approaches is the interdisciplinary status of stylistics; its position as a borderline discipline was dealt with in section 3.4.

Another result of this situation is that stylistic investigations can sometimes be carried out under a label other than “stylistics”. This situation is known already from the past. Although stylistics as an independent theoretical discipline has been established only in the 20th century, the concept of style and its investigations existed in the previous centuries as well. It was focused especially on the texts belonging to the sphere of literary works of art and oratory, but at that time it was regarded as a part of poetics and rhetoric. A similar situation can be observed today. Some of the disciplines established during the previous decades, such as text linguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, in many ways overlap with stylistics (Wales 1997: 129–131, 368–369, 461): they also examine the structure of a text and the means of expression used in it with regard to the participants of the communication, to their intentions, attitudes etc.

This indicates that the very basis of theoretical investigations of texts is the purpose of the investigations and the methods of analysis chosen according to this purpose (the functional concept especially in regard to stylistics was characterized in section 3.6). The names of the particular disciplines undertaking such investigations and their borders are only of secondary importance in this respect. The names, the borders and the specific tasks of the disciplines as well as the disciplines themselves may originate, change or disappear, according to the purpose and extent of theoretical investigations which prevail during a particular period and in a particular area. At present I would nevertheless hesitate to make predictions about the coming “end of stylistics” (and not only because of the fact that the term *style* itself is now widespread and very firmly established). As can be seen at least from the Czech and British theoretical works used as sources for the work, during the 20th century stylistics has established its specific purposes of investigating practically all kinds of texts, its own terminological system and methods of analysis. Therefore, as long as these tools will be applicable and as long as the scholars dealing with stylistics will keep improving and updating them according to the new trends which appear in linguistics, the decline of stylistics is not too likely to be in sight.

4.2 Results emerging from the comparison of Czech and British 20th century theories of style

The extralinguistic factors mentioned above have naturally influenced the Czech and British theories of style as well. The first factor of this kind to be taken into consideration is the different position of Czech and English among the languages of the world (see section 2.1). Czech theories of style have been developed on a much smaller area by a much smaller number of scholars and have been aimed at a much smaller audience than the British ones, which has to a considerable extent influenced their methodological homogeneity.

Another, even more important factor contributing to the homogeneity was the dominant position of the Prague School. Its prominent members – especially B. Havránek, J. Mukařovský and R. Jakobson – paid systematic attention to the theories of style, having established the general theoretical frame of modern stylistics, developed and improved during the following decades. Moreover, the dominant position of the functional and structuralist approach has lasted since the 1930s practically without an interruption to the present. The only exception was perhaps a short period in the early 1950s, under the Communist regime, when structuralism was labelled by orthodox Marxists as a “bourgeois pseudo-science”; but in practice the continuity has not been broken.

As mentioned in the first chapter, one of the impulses that have contributed to the establishment of the theoretical basis of modern Czech stylistics was the anti-purist polemic led by the members of the Prague School in 1932. The antipathy to the purist directives and rules applied without taking the context into consideration has also considerably influenced the orientation of modern Czech theories of style – they are mostly descriptive, rather than prescriptive and evaluative. This applies especially to stylistic analyses of literary works of art (as it was shown in section 3.5.3.2, the recent British works on stylistics, dealing with various ideologies, tend to be more evaluative; they are based on the presupposition that an absolute objectivity cannot be reached). In Czech stylistics, the prescriptive approach is applied only in texts belonging to the sphere of practical stylistics whose main purpose is to teach rules of writing certain fixed types of texts, such as business letters, congratulations, invitations etc.

The attention paid in the Czech context especially to the general theoretical problems of stylistics was partly influenced also by the political situation, to name one more of the important extralinguistic factors. For approximately sixty years, since the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia

lasting from 1939 till 1945 and the during the period of the Communist regime lasting from 1948 till 1989, there were topics which could not be officially analysed on Czech territory. In the sphere of stylistics, such taboo topics included various ideologies manipulating the audience, e.g. the language and style of propaganda. Investigations of texts which are in the British context regarded for example as a part of feminist or radical stylistics did not take place at all, simply because the trends themselves – feminism or radical political movements – did not exist in Czechoslovakia at that time. The situation started to change after the fall of the Communist regime in autumn 1989. At the present moment these trends and movements have already appeared, but their detailed analysis from the viewpoint of stylistics has not been carried out so far – it is one of the tasks of Czech stylistics for the future.

The 20th century British theories of style, on the other hand, have developed under completely different conditions. The position of English as a worldwide language, whose importance has considerably grown especially during several past decades, has also influenced the extent of its scholarly investigations, including stylistic investigations. The investigations of this kind have been carried out in various countries by various scholars and for various purposes – hence the theoretical and methodological plurality, which is characteristic of the 20th century British theories of style (the definition of the adjective *British* as used in the work is given in the Introduction). The democratic systems of government in the United Kingdom, the U.S.A. etc. did not – at least to my knowledge – prevent the scholars from analysing the style of any particular types of texts. A lot of detailed studies dealing with various ideologies manifested in texts could therefore originate in the British context, such as Fowler (1996), Mills (1995), Lee (1992), Simpson (1993).

Another important factor which has influenced the British theories of style is the extent of the territory on which the theories were developed. English is a language spoken in many countries, very often of different political systems, cultural traditions etc. Under such circumstances the possible tensions such as those that took place between the Czech purists and anti-purists in the early 1930s are not usually as strong as it may be in the opposite case – each of the parties involved has the possibility to look for support and the necessary background elsewhere.

The extent of the territory influenced by the British theories of style is the factor which has also contributed to the above mentioned variety of theoretical approaches towards style. In such a situation a universal theoretical basis, however excellent it might have been, which would keep its dominant position for decades could hardly appear. However,

the fact that, compared to the Czech situation, there was no single theoretical frame dealing on the general level with all possible kinds of texts had its specific effect for example on the number of the single branches of stylistics distinguished in the British context. According to the Czech model, the branches such as feminist stylistics, pragmatic stylistics, radical stylistics, simply deal with texts influenced by similar stylistic factors – similar authors, similar addressees, similar functions of the texts etc.; the similarity of stylistic factors leads to the similarities of style of the text and to the similarities of their effect. It is certainly possible to speak about the specific features of style of feminist, pragmatically orientated and radical texts. Nevertheless, following the concept of stylistics which among other things employs the inventory of stylistic factors, it does not appear necessary to create new branches of stylistics; similar approach is applied by Crystal, Davy (1969), who have for the purpose of stylistic analysis introduced the system of dimensions of situational constraint.

From the Czech point of view such simplifications and generalizations seem quite fruitful. They enable the scholars to use similar methodological approaches for the basic analysis of practically all texts and to develop special techniques above all for the advanced stages of stylistic investigations, e.g. for measuring the coherence of texts and examining its relevance from the viewpoint of stylistics. Besides simplifying the basic stages of the stylistic analysis there is another advantage – if similar methodologies are used, the results obtained by various scholars analysing various types of texts can be relatively easily subjected to mutual comparison. This of course does not mean that I am in favour of one universal and absolutely binding method of stylistic analysis. I was only trying to show that in stylistics as well as in other disciplines simplifications and the effort to find a common denominator of the phenomena investigated can sometimes simplify the research work, making it more effective at the same time.

4.3 Possibilities for further research

The conclusions from the previous section indicate the possibilities for further research in the field of stylistics. There are at least two main areas of the research work to be carried out in the future: 1) theoretical stylistic investigations of various texts plus the practical application of the results, 2) investigations into the metalanguage, such as studies in the history of stylistics also using the contrastive approach – e.g. for the comparison of various methods used for stylistic investigations. Working

on these tasks, Czech and British theories of style can complement each other very well.

As far as the first area is concerned, the theoretical background of Czech stylistics has been developed to the extent that can subject to analysis practically any text. In the theoretical research, more attention could perhaps be paid to the stylistically relevant features occurring at the levels of graphemics/graphology, as is done by Crystal, Davy (1969) or Cummings, Simmons (1983). Some observations of this kind have already been made by Hausenblas (1971).

The theoretical background of Czech stylistics should be complemented by detailed analyses of texts which either for political reasons, or simply due to the absence of the particular phenomena could not be investigated in the past. Some areas, for example journalistic and technical styles, have often been explored in Czech theoretical works, while others, such as the style of advertising, propaganda or religion have been examined only rarely. Using e.g. the methodology of critical linguistics, such analyses could bring a lot of specific information concerning the influence of ideologies on style.

On a more general level, it is possible to investigate the nature and issues of style from various perspectives, which need not necessarily mean negation of previous approaches, as it hopefully emerges from the previous chapters; and since I have been recently trying to work out one of the possible approaches (referred to as the Resultative Theory of Style – RTS), I will add a brief summarization of its main features: RTS is rooted especially in the context of functional stylistics as represented by the Prague School. Style is understood here as a triple result: 1) as the result of the influence that stylistically relevant features linked with the means of expression present in the text perform upon the recipient, 2) as the result of application of rules relevant for creating texts of the particular kind (in the established Czech terminology “stylové normy” – stylistic norms, 3) as the result of influence of factors linked with the wider extralinguistic context (“slohovorní činitelé” – stylistic factors, such as the function of the text, its supposed addressee, context, topic, author etc.). Another aspect dealt with are possible ways of visualization of style (various kinds of stylistic mps) and stylistic models – these tools are meant to be used in practice, by future philologists, teachers, translators – and generally, by all who for specific needs of their professions need to explore style in any kind of texts (Křístek, 2010).

A part of this concept is a phenomenon referred to as *stylistic pitch*: In Czech terminology, these features are called “stylová dominanta” – sty-

listic pitch; in the Czech context it has been developed since the 1930s, e.g. by R. Jakobson, K. Hausenblas and O. Uličný. Five main points were presented as possibilities for further research in this particular field: 1) Stylistic pitch can be defined as those elements in the text which are active from the viewpoint of stylistics and at the same time frequently occurring. 2) An effort to identify the stylistic pitch can be seen as a transition from the subjective to the objective stage of stylistic analysis. 3) Identification of the stylistic pitch should begin from the viewpoint of an observer standing outside of the text (i.e. not from the stylistic norms, which give rules for stylization of texts). 4) It is also necessary to take into consideration how existence of the stylistic pitch may be motivated. 5) Stylistic pitch can provide a lead for locating the text within a certain sphere of communication. (Křístek 2009).

In the Czech context it would also be useful to produce a practical textbook of literary theory which could also serve as a workbook with exercises built directly into the text, such as Durant, Fabb (1990). A textbook of this kind would be of great help to the students of both language and literature; a first step in this direction was taken by Hubáček (1987); a recent, practically orientated attempt was made e.g. by M. Křístek (2011) in a handbook *Stylistika češtiny : úvodní kurs (základy teorie a praktická cvičení)*. As the title itself indicates (Czech stylistics – an introductory course: elementary theoretical explanations and practical exercises), this handbook consists of both theoretical and practical sections – its main aim was to serve in university seminars in stylistics. (As a matter of fact, I was hesitating a bit whether it is appropriate to quote my recent contributions repeatedly, but all in all I have decided to leave the final decision upon the readers – I considered these quotations appropriate as well as the readers may consider appropriate to skip those sentences or to throw the book away.)

The British theoretical works on stylistics could aim at developing further a methodology which could serve as a basis for a complex stylistic analysis of any kind of text in the spirit of the pioneering work of Crystal, Davy (1969), thus making the results of the analyses easier to process and compare (without distorting them, of course). It would probably be fruitful to include in such methodology the approaches of critical stylistics, discourse analysis and other disciplines which have developed especially since the 1970s. More attention could also be paid to analysing the style of the texts belonging to non-literary genres and to various sub-types existing within them, for example to a stratification of technical style, differences among style of scientific monographs, textbooks, popularizing articles etc.

Both Czech and British stylistics can also develop comparative stylistic studies, starting from the basic level on which stylistic values of the particular means of expressions existing in two or more languages are compared. Such comparisons are usually undertaken for practical purposes, such as translating texts adequately also from the stylistic point of view.

The topics in the second area, that of metalanguage, can also use the comparative approach. It is possible, for instance, to undertake comparisons of Czech and British, or any other, theories of style. Moreover, the research work in this area is not only limited to comparing theoretical approaches to style. Moving one level higher in the stratification of comparative stylistics suggested by Miko (1976) it is possible to examine and to compare the development of the standard varieties of Czech and English, their positions among other varieties of language, the basis on which they were established and the circumstances under which this happened.

Although this work dealt mainly with works that originated during the 20th century, the end of the 20th century does not certainly mean the end of stylistics as an autonomous discipline, even though its interdisciplinary nature may strengthen its intertwining e.g. with discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics etc. And it is mainly the development of cognitive approaches towards style that became dominant in the English scholarly discourse in the early 21st century; this tendency is reflected e.g. in the revised version of Katie Wales' *A dictionary of stylistics* (second edition 2001; third edition is being prepared). In the Czech context, some of the previously mentioned traditions and concepts continue e.g. in collective monographs *Současná česká stylistika* (Contemporary Czech stylistics; Čechová, Chloupek, Krčmová, Minářová, 2003) and *Současná stylistika* (Contemporary stylistics; Čechová, Krčmová, Minářová, 2008), a chapter on the history of stylistics from the Middle Ages to the present day was included in the book *Kapitoly z dějin české jazykovědné bohemistiky* (Chapters from the Czech studies from the viewpoint of linguistics, 2007, a chapter by M. Krčmová), thus the history of stylistics as well as its present-day state are dealt with from modern points of view.

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During the 20th century stylistics, at least in the context examined, has become an autonomous discipline with a rich and modern theoretical background which also enables it to play an important role in the future. Stylistics belongs to the disciplines very closely connected with extralinguistic factors, open and responding to impulses coming from

the outside world. Its future development and the specific tasks it will face will therefore to a considerable extent depend for example on the development of the social situation.

On the other hand, it is known e.g. from radical stylistics that this connection can also work the other way round. It means that stylistics – or, to put it in a more accurate way, the scholars specialized in stylistics – can also to a certain extent influence the social situation. The future stylistic investigations carried out from both the synchronic and diachronic points of view should to a greater extent operate in a cross-cultural dimension. They can help people learn about texts which have originated in different cultures developing under the influence of different historical and cultural traditions and they can also help them understand the particular cultures themselves – the opinions and value systems possibly different from their own, but from a different point of view equally acceptable.

These tasks represent a great challenge for stylistics in the 21st century. If it manages to cope with them adequately, it will mean not only progress in the sphere of scholarly research work, but also in the sphere of the relationships among people in general.