

MICHAL KŘÍSTEK



**A COMPARISON
OF 20TH CENTURY
THEORIES OF STYLE**

(in the context of Czech and British scholarly discourses)

OPERA UNIVERSITATIS MASARYKIANAE BRUNENSIS
FACULTAS PHILOSOPHICA

SPISY MASARYKOVY UNIVERZITY V BRNĚ
FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

Číslo 407

muni
PRESS

A COMPARISON OF 20TH CENTURY
THEORIES OF STYLE
(IN THE CONTEXT OF CZECH AND
BRITISH SCHOLARLY DISCOURSES)

Michal Křístek



Masarykova univerzita
Brno 2012

© 2012 Michal Křístek
© 2012 Masarykova univerzita

ISBN 978-80-210-8217-5 (online : pdf)
ISBN 978-80-210-5944-3 (paperback)
ISSN 1211-3034

Acknowledgements

I am greatly indebted to all friends and colleagues who kindly agreed to read and proof-read the following pages and to provide me with their valuable advice and commentary; needless to say, the responsibility for all faults and mistakes remains entirely mine. This work is a revised version of my previously unpublished UK dissertation (Křístek, 1999); and although time passes very quickly, the subject matter of this work (i.e. the development of stylistic theories) does not change – in fact, could not have changed indeed. Therefore I believe that members of the academic community, focusing either on Czech studies or on English studies (students, teachers, translators), will find this small book a useful guide providing a basic orientation in one of the scholarly disciplines as well as a possible impulse for their future professional career (and since this work deals with stylistics, I cannot resist the temptation to stress that some medieval and even antique traditions relating to this discipline are still in use these days, namely, *captatio benevolentiae*).

Table of Contents

0	Introduction	9
1	Czech Theories of style	11
1.1	Czech stylistics during the first three decades of the 20th century	11
1.1.1	<i>The pioneering 20th century theoretical works</i>	12
1.2	Czech stylistics 1932–1954	16
1.2.1	<i>The 1932 debate on standard language</i>	16
1.2.2	<i>The situation after the 1932 debate</i>	20
1.2.3	<i>The 1941 debate on style</i>	21
1.2.4	<i>Theoretical works on style and stylistics published between 1941 and 1954</i>	22
1.3.	Czech stylistics from 1954 to the present	27
1.3.1	<i>The situation in the early 1950s</i>	27
1.3.2	<i>The 1954 conference on style and stylistics</i>	27
1.3.3.	<i>Theoretical works on style and stylistics published between 1954 and 1960</i>	30
1.3.4	<i>Investigations of literary style carried out in the 1960s</i> ..	31
1.3.5	<i>Expressional theory of style</i>	34
1.3.6	<i>Theoretical works on style and stylistics published in the 1970s</i>	35
1.3.7	<i>Theoretical works on style and stylistics published in the 1980s</i>	38
1.3.8	<i>Theoretical works on style and stylistics published from 1990 to the present</i>	41
1.4	Present-day situation of Czech stylistics	45
2	British Theories of Style	46
2.1	British theoretical works	46
2.2	Present-day situation of British stylistics	60
2.3	Czech works on the stylistics of the English language	61

3	Comparison of Czech and British theories of style	66
3.1	Theoretical preliminaries	66
3.1.1	<i>Main aims of comparing languages</i>	66
3.1.2	<i>Contrastive approach and stylistics</i>	67
3.2	The methodology used for comparison	69
3.3	Definitions of style and stylistics	70
3.4	Relations of stylistics to other theoretical disciplines	72
3.4.1	<i>Stylistics and linguistics</i>	72
3.4.2	<i>Stylistics and theoretical disciplines investigating literary works of art</i>	73
3.4.3	<i>Stylistics and poetics, stylistics and rhetoric</i>	75
3.4.4	<i>Stylistics and sociolinguistics</i>	76
3.4.5	<i>Stylistics and psycholinguistics</i>	77
3.5	Stratification of stylistics	78
3.5.1	<i>Stratification of Czech stylistics</i>	78
3.5.2	<i>Stratification of British stylistics</i>	79
3.5.3	<i>Comparison of Czech and British stratifications of stylistics</i>	84
3.6	Functional concept in Czech and British theories of style	86
3.7	Mutual influences of Czech and British theories of style	91
4	Conclusions and possibilities for further research	95
4.1	Prospects of stylistics in general	95
4.2	Results emerging from the comparison of Czech and British 20th century theories of style	97
4.3	Possibilities for further research	99
	Bibliography	104

0 Introduction

Although general problems of style, stylistically marked/unmarked means of expression, metaphors or tropes appear as early as in Aristotle's works (mainly in *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, but partly also in *Organon*), modern stylistics as an autonomous theoretical discipline was not established until the first decades of the 20th century. Undoubtedly it would be very tempting to observe and compare the development of this discipline in various countries from the classical period through the Middle Ages up to the present, but the aim of this work is more modest. Its purpose is to provide a contrastive view of 20th century Czech and British theories of style and stylistics in general.

The period dealt with was chosen intentionally – stylistics during the 20th century, in the context of both Czech and British scholarly discourses, developed into an autonomous theoretical discipline, linked with numerous branches of linguistics and literary theory (discourse analysis, textual syntax, pragmatics etc.).

To avoid possible confusions, it is necessary to start by defining basic terms – the adjectives *Czech* and *British* used in constructions such as *Czech and British theories of style*, *Czech and British stylistics*. There are no major difficulties with the adjective *Czech* – books on stylistics written in Czech usually deal with stylistics of the Czech language, are aimed at a Czech audience and were published in the Czech Republic or in the former Czechoslovakia.

On the other hand, numerous works on style and stylistics written in English vary by many features: language whose stylistic features are being investigated, the country of origin, the audience at which they are aimed etc. and referring to all of them as simply *British* would be misleading. The use of the attribute *British* is therefore limited in this work to works

- concerning stylistics of the English language,
- written in English and aimed primarily at an English-speaking audience,
- published in the United Kingdom and/or having a considerable theoretical influence on style investigations there.

The nationality of the particular authors is not taken into account here – this criterion would exclude e.g. the works of Roman Jakobson, Nils Enkvist, M. L. Pratt, David Lee or G. W. Turner.

As there is only a small number of Czech works available in English translation, I start with a detailed survey of 20th century Czech theories of style; the following chapter deals with the most important British works on stylistics from approximately the last three decades of the 20th century.

In the study of Czech and British theories of style there are four main areas of comparison: 1) present-day definitions of style and stylistics, 2) the position of stylistics among other theoretical disciplines and its relation to them, 3) the stratification of stylistics into various branches and the criteria of the stratification, 4) the concept of function in studies of style. Further on, possible mutual influences of Czech and British theories of style will be briefly mentioned. After summarizing the facts emerging from the comparison, several possibilities for further research in this particular field of stylistic studies will be indicated.

This work focuses on Czech and British theories of style as they developed during the 20th century, and on their comparison. A survey of British theories of style is presented in the second part of the study; but as there are numerous general works on style and stylistics available, I have included only the most important theoretical works.

Surveys of this kind were necessary before I could begin comparing Czech and British theories of style; I have also attempted to find to what extent Czech and British theories of style influenced each other. Since research in the field of contrastive stylistics has till now focused mainly on comparing stylistic values of means of expression rather than on comparing theoretical approaches to style, I had also to develop a methodology for the comparison. In the last chapter I summarize the main results emerging from the comparison and to indicate several possibilities for further research in this particular field.

1 Czech Theories of style

1.1 Czech stylistics during the first three decades of the 20th century

Up to the early 1930s, the term *stylistics* was in the Czech context applied above all to what is today called *practical stylistics*, i.e. a set of instructions on how to produce texts of various kinds; unless other sources are mentioned, all English equivalents of Czech terms used in this work were taken from *Slovník slovanské lingvistické terminologie* (Dictionary of Slavonic Linguistic Terminology). Attention was paid especially to written texts belonging to administrative style (Večerka et al. 1988: 30–31, Krčmová 2007), but also to formal and informal private letters. The character of the works establishing rules for creating texts of this kind was predominantly descriptive and prescriptive; it may be said that in this respect they used the same methodology as the majority of handbooks of poetics and rhetoric from previous centuries, which were still quite influential at that time.

However, during the 19th century several theoretical works dealing at least partly with style were written in the Czech lands; the 19th and early 20th century works on stylistics are listed in Bečka (1948: 409–448). Probably the most important of them was *Slovesnost* (Verbal Art), first published in 1820, with revised editions in 1845 and 1846. This textbook was written by J. Jungmann, one of the foremost leaders of the 19th century Czech revival movement, an author of the monumental Czech-German dictionary (1835–1839, 5 vols.).

The basic definition of style in this book is very close to the one established in the 1930s by members of the Prague Linguistic Circle: *style* is defined here as the selection and organization of concepts adequate to the subject matter and to the author's personality (Jungmann 1845: 59). *Slovesnost* also contains a detailed description of poetic genres, prose genres, figures and tropes illustrated with many examples, as well as passages focused on non-fictional texts. At the time of its publication, *Slovesnost* played another important role. In the 19th century it was necessary to re-establish Czech terminology in practically all fields of science (for the situation of Czech language in the 19th century see section 1.2.1) and *Slovesnost* became an authoritative work which contributed considerably to this aim in the field of literary theory. Among the terms used there, e.g. *sloh*, a Czech equivalent of style, can be found. But, as mentioned above, theoretical works of this kind were rather the

exception – most stylistic handbooks from before the 1930s could be, in present-day terminology, classified as works belonging to practical stylistics.

1.1.1 *The pioneering 20th century theoretical works*

This situation gradually started to change with the growing influence of structuralist theories. If not stated otherwise, the term structuralism in this work is primarily applied to the theories of the 1920s and 1930s developed by the members of the Prague School, not to the following decades when structuralist approaches became very influential e.g. in France and in the U.S.A.

It is necessary to point out here that the definitions of structuralism in linguistic encyclopedias and dictionaries and its periodization can vary depending on the period stressed by the particular author: Asher, ed. (1994c: 4359) regards the Russian 1920s formalism and the 1920s and 1930s Prague School theories as the early stages of structuralism; the same distinction can be found also in Matthews (1997: 119–120, 356–357). Wales (1997: 434–435) associates the term structuralism primarily with French scholars of the 1960s – Barthes, Lévi-Strauss etc., but also acknowledges the influence of de Saussure, the Russian formalists and the Prague School.

Probably the best source for a basic reference concerning the concept of structuralism is given by Dirven, Fried, eds. (1987). The authors provide a survey of 20th century linguistic schools which used the structural approach as their theoretical basis and briefly deal with their mutual influence (Dirven, Fried, eds. 1987: x-xii). Within the group of structuralists they distinguish two opposing poles: *the functionalist pole*, where the focus is on the functions of language forms, and *the formalist pole*, where attention is paid above all to the analysis of linguistic forms as such. The functional pole includes e.g. the Geneva School (de Saussure), the Prague School (Mathesius, Jakobson), the London School (Firth), the Dutch group (Dik); the formalist pole includes the Copenhagen School (Hjelmslev) and the American descriptivism (Bloomfield). Surprisingly enough, the table accompanying this overview and showing the mutual influences of the particular schools does not mention at all the Russian formalists and the impact they had on the work of the Prague Linguistic Circle – for example Jakobson and Trubetzkoy are mentioned only under the heading of the Prague School, which was undoubtedly a very important, but not the initial stage of their scholarly activities.

As mentioned above, modern theoretical approaches were represented in the Czech lands chiefly by members of the Prague Linguistic

Circle, established in 1926; its brief history is given e.g. in Vachek (1966: 3–14). During the latter half of the 1920s the Prague Linguistic Circle scholars started to publish their works, in which they were developing the ideas of e.g. de Saussure, Badouin de Courtenay and Bally; the presence and activities of R. Jakobson also link Prague structuralism to the Russian formalist school. Members of the Prague School can be regarded as the founders of modern Czech *theoretical stylistics* focused on theoretical aspects of the style of various texts, both from the viewpoint of linguistics and from that of literary theory (Čechová, Chloupek, Krčmová, Minářová 1997: 10; this work, as the newest one in this field, will be referred to in this section whenever a comparison of the historical situation with the present state is made).

On a more general level, the methodology used by members of the Prague Linguistic Circle for their investigations was influenced also by the philosophical and sociological works of T. G. Masaryk; these works helped to create the scientific paradigm of the period, which members of the Prague School further developed (Fronek 1988, Matejka 1986). This applies above all to the functional concept, influenced by Masaryk's teleological approach as presented for example in his work *Versuch einer konkreten Logik* (1887). The scholars of the Prague Linguistic Circle themselves admitted Masaryk's influence (e.g. Mathesius 1911: 32). This influence is also mentioned in a collective introduction to the Prague Linguistic Circle journal *Slovo a slovesnost* (Word and Verbal Art), established in 1935. This introduction was jointly written by B. Havránek, R. Jakobson, V. Mathesius, J. Mukařovský and B. Trnka; its English version was reprinted in Johnson, ed. 1978: 32–46.

In works of the Prague School linguists, stress is laid on a synchronic and functionally orientated approach towards language, literature and their other fields of interest, such as aesthetics, folklore etc. Their orientation differentiates them from the mostly descriptive and diachronically orientated works of the previous, Neo-grammarians period. Members of the Prague School who paid systematic attention to the theory of style were especially Havránek, Mathesius and Mukařovský. Jakobson, one of the founders of Prague Linguistic Circle, also contributed considerably to these ideas. Nevertheless, in the 1920s and 1930s it was above all Mathesius, Havránek and Mukařovský who wrote the principal theoretical works concerning Czech stylistics.

1.1.1.1 The first important work of this kind appeared even before the Prague Linguistic Circle was established. Mathesius (1911) in his pioneering work *O potenciálnosti jevů jazykových* (On the Potentiality of

the Phenomena of Language) points out that it is necessary to examine e.g. the mutual relations of stylistics to linguistics and rhetoric as well as to define the subject stylistics should deal with.

Mathesius states here that linguistics studies language by examining the speech of individuals within the whole language community, while stylistics examines how language is used in individual literary works. The main difference then is not in the subject examined, but rather in the aim of such an examination. Mathesius makes a distinction here between *stylistics* as a discipline focused on the individual style of a particular literary work and so-called *styles of speech*. These styles of speech, as Mathesius puts it, are the common features of texts/utterances produced by various people under similar circumstances. Referring to several earlier works of Jones, Bally, Jespersen and some other European linguists, Mathesius states that these styles of speech are manifested in pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax.

Although the terminology used here is sometimes different from the one established later (e.g. instead of the opposition *synchronic* vs *diachronic* Mathesius uses the terms *static* vs *dynamic*), the author's approach is quite modern even now, more than eighty years later. In Austria-Hungary at the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century, in the atmosphere of a predominant diachronic approach towards linguistics, this paper (read at a scientific academy session) proved to be too much ahead of its time and remained without any comment – either positive or negative. Vachek (1970: 68) mentions R. Jakobson's commentary on this work. On reading it, Jakobson remarked that if in 1911 such a paper had been presented in Moscow, it would have started a linguistic revolution.

1.1.1.2 Another important pioneering step towards a new conception of linguistics was made in 1929, when the First Congress of Slavists was held in Prague. On this occasion, members of the Prague Linguistic Circle jointly worked out works concerning a structuralist and functional approach to all spheres of language. *Teze předložené prvému sjezdu slovanských filologů v Praze 1929* (Works Presented to the First Congress of Slavists Held in Prague in 1929) were after their presentation, published as a part of the proceedings of the Congress; their English version is reprinted in Vachek, ed. (1983: 77–120).

The Works were divided into ten sections: *general methodological problems of linguistics, tasks for examining the language system, functions of language, problems of Old Church Slavonic Language, the unification of phonetic and phonological transcription within Slavonic lan-*

guages, linguistic geography, the conception of an all-Slavonic linguistic atlas, methods of Slavonic lexicography, the cultivation and criticism of Slavonic languages, language teaching in secondary schools.

Problems relating to stylistics are discussed particularly in the third section; attention is paid above all to functions of language, to standard literary language and to poetic language. At the beginning it is stated that when examining a language it is necessary to pay attention to the variety of its functions and to the ways the functions are realized in speech. According to these functions, there are several *functional modes of speech* and each of them has its own system of conventions, its own "langue" – e.g. internal vs manifested speech, intellectually vs emotionally orientated speech, speech with communicative, practical or theoretical, orientation vs speech with poetic orientation, i.e. with orientation towards the form. These modes of speech can either occur in particular texts alone, or several of them can be present at the same time. As we can see, these *functional modes of speech*, as well as the *styles of speech* appearing in Mathesius's paper of 1911, are nearly identical with what today is called *functional styles*; this classification of styles according to their function is referred to as *horizontal stratification of styles*, as opposed to *vertical stratification of styles* – *stylus humilis, stylus mediocris, stylus grandiloquus* – which dates back to the ancient period (Hrabák 1977: 115–116).

Further on in this section of *Works*, the situation of *standard literary language* is dealt with. It is stated here that attention should be paid not only to external factors influencing its establishment, such as political, social, economic and religious conditions, but also to the reasons why it became differentiated from so-called *popular language*, i.e. – in present-day terminology – from *substandard varieties of language*.

A specific function as a basic difference between standard literary language and all other varieties of language is emphasized here above all. This approach is in accordance with the functional orientation of the Prague School, as already mentioned in section 1.1.1, and represents its original distinctive feature, compared e.g. with the Danish glossematic school or the American descriptivism (Vachek 1966:7).

Since the standard literary language serves for expressing *facts* – very often of an abstract nature – relating to all aspects of life in modern society rather than for expressing *emotions*, its vocabulary must be very rich, precise and systematic; at the same time there must be syntactic structures capable of reflecting the interdependence and complexity of the particular mental operations.

On the other hand, *poetic language* – as well as other spheres of art – can be characterized by predominant orientation not towards the sig-

nified, but towards the sign itself. This means that the elements of all levels of language, which in non-poetic texts serve only for expressing a certain meaning, can in poetic texts acquire more or less independent values; they tend to become *foregrounded*. It is therefore suitable and necessary – as stated in the conclusion of the third part of the *Works* – to examine poetic language by itself, without digressions towards cultural history, sociology or psychology.

The ideas expressed in the *Work* met with a sympathetic response at the First Congress of Slavists in 1929 in Prague, as well as at the Linguistic Congress in Geneva in 1931 and at other important meetings (Vachek 1966: 9–11). Nevertheless, a real turning point in modern Czech linguistics came three years later. In 1931–1932 there was an intensive debate on standard language and language cultivation, which resulted in the publishing of a collection of papers called *Spisovná čeština a jazyková kultura* (Standard Czech and the Cultivation of Language). Papers included in this collection can be regarded as the beginning of modern theoretical investigations of language and style.

1.2 Czech stylistics 1932–1954

1.2.1 *The 1932 debate on standard language*

Although members of the Prague School were developing modern approaches to examining language already in the 1910s and 1920s, their methodology did not become better known to a wider public until the early 1930s, during the above mentioned debate on standard language and language cultivation.

The impulse for opening the debate was several articles written by J. Haller, at that time editor in chief of *Naše řeč* (Our Language), a Czech linguistic journal established in 1916. Haller's attitudes were rooted mainly in Czech purist handbooks published in the latter half of the 19th century. In these articles it is assumed that the supreme quality of a language lies in its intact character, in the absence of traces of foreign influence, as well as in preserving as much as possible from the earlier stages of its development.

Czech purism has always been aimed mainly at removing Germanisms – or words believed to be Germanisms – from Czech. These tendencies appeared mainly as a result of the language situation in the Czech lands, populated by both Czechs and Germans. Purist tendencies trying to protect the Czech language from German influence were recorded as early as in the 15th century, during the period of an independent Czech kingdom.

These tendencies were considerably reinforced several centuries later, when the Czech kingdom became for approximately three hundred years a part of the Austrian Empire. From the 17th century till the establishment of the independent Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, German was the dominant language there. It prevailed over the Czech language in the spheres of state administration, law, science etc. This situation gradually began to change from the end of the 18th century, when a period called the Czech Revival started. Nevertheless, purist attitudes were quite frequent even after 1918 (on the character of Czech purism see Jelínek 1994 and Thomas 1991: 148–149, 198–199).

Haller shared the opinion of the purists that there is one ideal language standard suitable for all purposes, the rules of which should not be broken in any circumstances. He tried to enforce these rules very strongly, to a much greater extent than J. Zubatý and V. Ertl, his predecessors as editors of *Naše řeč*, both of whom were eminent linguists of the older generation. Some of Haller's articles in *Naše řeč* analysed the language of Czech contemporary writers, accusing them of "bad usage", making lists of their "mistakes" and demanding, in Haller's opinion, the only correct version. This led to controversy with the renowned Czech writers and critics, such as O. Fischer, I. Olbracht, V. Vančura and F. X. Šalda.

At that time members of the Prague Linguistic Circle continued developing their own theoretical view of these problems. Having realized the necessity of opposing Haller's opinions not only from the viewpoint of users of the language, but above all from the linguistic viewpoint, they decided to organize a series of lectures where a modern approach to the cultivation of language, standard language and poetic language would be presented. These lectures, held in January and February 1932, had a very wide public response and in the same year they were published under the above mentioned title *Spisovná čeština a jazyková kultura* (Standard Czech and the Cultivation of Language).

This publication included six papers: *O požadavku stability ve spisovném jazyce* (The Requirement of Stability for a Standard Language) by V. Mathesius, *Úkoly spisovného jazyka a jeho kultura* (The Purposes of a Standard Language and its Cultivation) by B. Havránek, *O dnešním brusičství českém* (Czech Purism Today) by R. Jakobson, *Jazyk spisovný a jazyk básnický* (Standard Language and Poetic Language) by J. Mukařovský, *Zvuková kultura českého jazyka* (Czech Orthoepy) by M. Weingart and a collective text *Obecné zásady pro kulturu jazyka* (General Principles for the Cultivation of Good Language); the English translation of the titles is taken from Garvin 1964:153.

It is possible to say that the publication of these lectures initiated a systematic exploration in the field of language cultivation. In these papers, there were three general starting points that were contradictory to purist ideas:

- every standard language norm must be based on the present-day usage, not on historical criteria, e.g. as far as the meaning of words is concerned,
- texts performing different communicative functions must inevitably differ in the means of expression used and in their organization; consequently, there can hardly be a set of rules suitable for all types of texts,
- as far as vocabulary is concerned, no words can be excluded merely because of their origin; the richer variety of expressions a language possesses, the better it can perform various communicative functions. Even if there are several expressions denoting the same extra-linguistic reality, they usually differ in the sphere, where they can be used, i.e. by their stylistic character; therefore it is questionable, to what extent it is ever possible to speak about synonymy.

And although after eighty years it is possible to see pros and cons on both sides of this argument, it is still possible to say that a confrontation of this kind was sooner or later inevitable – contradictory opinions on a relatively small territory could not possibly result into anything else. Jiří Haller (who in the following decades did a lot of useful practical work, e.g. in the field of lexicography) and his colleagues from *Naše řeč* definitely were keen and well-trained professional linguists, and so were members of the Prague Linguistic Circle – but their theoretical background and professional orientation were hardly compatible. And perhaps one more brief commentary at the end of this section: now it is possible – and maybe even desirable – to be tolerant to those purist approaches – all in all, they also express a great deal of concern with language, but it is far more difficult (if not impossible) to be tolerant if straightforward purist approaches prevail, with almost no alternative in sight, as it might seem before the period of the Prague Linguistic Circle.

After these general preliminaries I shall now concentrate on those parts of this collection, which relate to stylistics. The most important ideas, further developing the approach presented in 1929 *Works*, can be found in articles written by Havránek and Mukařovský.