

Sentence and the compound sentence in Julius Zeyer’s epic poetry and prose

Keywords: style, Julius Zeyer, poetry and prose, sentence and the compound sentence

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the use of the sentence and the compound sentence in the literary works of the Czech poet Julius Zeyer (1841–1901). Specifically, we intend to make a quantitative identification of congruencies and parallels, typical of the syntactic structure of Zeyer’s epic poetry and prose, as evidenced by a detailed analysis of particular stylistic devices used in the selected representative texts. The aim of this paper is to corroborate, or possibly to exclude, the impact of the selected narrative means of expression on the stylistic and compositional variances of the text, which is facilitated by paying full attention to one aspect of Zeyer’s authorial style, namely, the quantitative variation of sentences and compound sentences.

The aim of this paper is to explore the use of the sentence and the compound sentence in the literary works of the Czech poet Julius Zeyer (1841–1901). Specifically, we intend to make a quantitative identification of congruencies and parallels, typical of the syntactic structure of Zeyer’s epic poetry and prose, as evidenced by a detailed analysis of particular stylistic devices used in the selected representative texts. Our stylistic analyses are based on the traditional conception of terms prescribed by the theory of literature, where the epic, by contrast to the lyric, is defined as a subject genre centred mainly on the causally linked external events (Hrabák 1977, p. 263, 284). The subject quality is signalled by “the existence of a certain algorithm, as a concatenated combination of elements (phenomena, events, pleasures, feelings, ideas)” (Pospíšil 1998, p. 19). The natural expression of the epic is prose; linking it with the epic is conventionalised and non-

respecting such association is perceived by the reader as marked or accented, i.e. as part of the authorial intention. In the commonest definition, poetry is conceived as contrast to prose, as literature written in verse (following a pattern), in contrast to prose written forthrightly in un/patterned speech (Vlašín 1984, p. 279 and 297). In this study, the sentence is conceived as an uncomplicated unit displaying “a specific morphosyntactic structure and semantic texture” (Karlík 2017); the compound sentence is defined here as “a syntactic combination of two finite sentences” (Karlík 2017). The measured length of a simple sentence; a compound sentence; as well as a single sentence within a compound sentence is in this study represented by the unit length from one full stop to another full stop; one unit is represented by a word as a graphic unit. The linear dimension as a basic quantitative sentence parameter is influenced by several factors, with the sentence length reflecting, e.g. the system potentialities of the language; the theme; its content; genre specificity (?), etc. Our attention will focus on the potentialities, or perhaps limitations of the chosen epic means of expression. The aim of this paper is to corroborate, or possibly to exclude, the impact of the selected narrative means of expression on the stylistic and compositional variances of the text, which is facilitated by paying full attention to one aspect of Zeyer’s authorial style, namely, the quantitative variation of sentences and compound sentences.

As a poet, prosaist and dramatist, Julius Zeyer ranks among classic Czech authors who lived and worked in the latter half the 19th century. Although literary historians traditionally group him with ‘the Lumír affiliated generation’, he may be, more often than not, also linked with the New Romantics associated with *Ruch*, *Lumír*, and *Květy* periodicals; with the representatives of *Česká moderna* [Czech Modernism], namely its Catholic branch; and potentially, he may be aligned with the ‘sensitives’ in the 19th-century European culture. His comprehensive writings (the Collected Edition comprising 35 volumes) offer a variety of Baroque and Gothic elements; decadent, or Art Nouveau motifs. Despite repeated attempts to classify Zeyer within Czech liter-

ary history, he still remains a solitary figure in Czech poetic art, an author whose writings are difficult to classify and grasp being endowed with outstanding, almost cultish stature. Zeyer actually produced many works of indisputable, time-honoured artistic quality, featuring alongside texts approaching the verge of conventional fiction. Though widely known by name, his creations can be better understood through our familiarity with the attributes relating to the poet's personal attitude, for his very texts are rather detached from the needs of (not only) today's readers. This obvious discrepancy notwithstanding, Julius Zeyer occupies a secure position in the treasure of Czech literary classics.

The representative corpus of Zeyer's prose and poetry consists of two texts, namely, the long epic *Vyšehrad*, in particular the poem *Ctirad* (1880); and the legend *Inultus*, the first of his *Tři legendy o křížifixu* [Three Legends of the Crucifix] (Lumír 1892). *Ctirad* is part of the epic cycle *Vyšehrad* (1892), which comprises five epic poems interconnected by the same content: namely, *Libuše*; *Zelený vítěz* [The Green Winner]; *Vlasta*; *Ctirad*; and *Lumír*. Thus *Ctirad* represents the fourth part of the authorial epic *Vyšehrad* (1880). Zeyer completed this poem as the first – originally conceived – loose epic (published in Lumír in 1879). The circumstances surrounding its origin are depicted in Zeyer's letter to Jan Voborník (Voborník 1907, p. 91), which reveals that the poem was motivated by an agreement between Zeyer and Jaroslav Vrchlický on completing a poem pursuing the same theme. Zeyer's composition was inspired by visual impressions of the landscape surrounding the *Hvězda* [Star] summerhouse, where he dwelled when the poem was born. The dating of *Ctirad*'s genesis at the turn of the 1880s thus corresponds with the turning point marking Zeyer's initial and middlemost creative stages. The second text included in our corpus is the legend *Inultus*, the first of his triad *Tři legendy o křížifixu*, which appeared together with the Toledo legend entitled *El Cristo de la Luz* [Christ of the Light], and the Slovak legend *Samko Pták* [Samko the Bird]. The language used in the legend *Inultus* describes, obviously somewhat limited by the analysis of the author's pe-

culiar style, the linguistic characteristics of Zeyer's final period, i.e. his creative high. The epic is a monumental poetic composition conceived as a series of successive events with typical episodic digressions. Its typical features are a slow course of events; a detached narrative; established poetical devices; an exhaustive epic description, and deflection "from what happened to how it happened" (Hrabák 1977, p. 286). The legend represents a narrative on a religious theme; its protagonist is a saint; its distinctive feature is the "epic element with gripping motifs of miracles and self-sacrifice for faith" (Vlašín 1984, p. 198).

Julius Zeyer's narrative style is based on the compound sentence, showing the same incidence both in his epic poetry (Mathesius 1942) and prose (Schacherl 2001, 2013). The importance of compound sentences in his epic narrative is corroborated by frequency analyses of both poetical and prosaic texts. Yet there is already a strikingly different ratio between the simple and the compound sentences. While in the epic text, the predominant occurrence are compound sentences and simple sentences (subject-predicate) do not even approach one-third representation (26,81%), in the prosaic text, simple sentences are much more frequent (51,93%), actually their incidence is slightly higher than that of compound sentences. Simple sentences in the epic are also longer (5,64 words) than those in the explored legend (4,61). In Zeyer's poetic text, the occurrence of simple sentences is more closely related to the character's utterance than in his prose. Its incidence here represents almost two thirds (60 %) of its total representation. In the prosaic text, the simple sentence frequency in the characters' utterances is much lower, slightly exceeding one third of the total incidence (37,8%). The average sentence length in the characters band keeps the same ratios as in their total representation (*Ctirad* 5,81 words; *Inultus* 4,85 words). In a poetic text, the linearly longer simple sentence whose occurrence is prevalingly restricted to characters' utterances, has a significantly lower incidence, which enhances the impact of the linearly more fluent epic narrative in contrast to the prosaic text, characterised by a more noticeable share of shorter simple

sentences, both in the narrator's and the characters' utterances. The basic quantitative characteristics of the syntactic structure indicate that the prosaic text is more subdivided and dramatised. The action is also boosted by largely disproportioned linear lengths of successive simple or compound sentences. So in the contrasting abbreviation of the narrator's diction, a short simple sentence determines the opportune moments or situations in the legend's subject.

The differences in Zeyer's poetical and prosaic texts related to the representation and the linear length of the simple subject-predicate sentence and the compound sentence are confirmed by the quantitative data on the monomial simple sentence. The incidence of the monomial simple sentence is sporadic, slightly higher in the prosaic text (*Inultus* 10,6%) than in the poetic text (*Ctirad* 8,13%). Similar to the simple binomial sentence, the monomial sentence in the poetical text (*Ctirad* 4 words) is longer than in the prosaic text (*Inultus* 2,9 words). In both representative texts, the monomial sentence scores one common characteristic – its incidence is reduced to the character utterances where it enhances the dramatic tone of the action. In the legend, the occurrence of the monomial simple sentence is used in 86,67 % of character utterances, and in the epic poem, its occurrence is even 100%.

The basic element of Zeyer's literary style is the compound sentence (which Mathesius denominates the long epic sentence). As mentioned above, in Zeyer, the compound sentence is a more dominant occurrence in poetic texts than in prose. In epic poetry its incidence is 73,19%, in prose its ratio is 48,07%. In the epic, the average compound sentence is longer (*Ctirad* 21,99 words) and more developed (*Ctirad* 3,26 sentences), in contrast to the prosaic text, where the compound sentences are shorter (*Inultus* 17,75 words) and less developed (*Inultus* 2,92 sentences). As for the compound sentences, in both of Zeyer's texts, parataxis prevails over hypotaxis. The coordinate arrangement is one of the most characteristic features of his syntax and creates the dominant stylistic effect both in his epic poetry and prose. Both texts reveal a similar ratio of parataxis prevailing over hypotaxis

(in the epic poetry 78,5% /21, 5%, in prose 73,67/26,33%). Yet they mutually differ in the length of individual types of compound sentences. The comparison of the linear length of compound sentences, both subordinate and coordinate, reveals a more fluent and wider epic diction in the poem than in his legend. The epic text evidences longer subordinate compound sentences (*Ctirad* 17,96 words / *Inultus* 14,99 words), as well as longer coordinate sentences (*Ctirad* 26,01 / *Inultus* 18,74 words). In the epic, both subordinate (*Ctirad* 17,96 words / *Inultus* 14,99 words), and coordinate compound sentences (*Ctirad* 3,88 sentences / *Inultus* 3,09 sentences), are more expanded than in the legend. In Zeyer's narratives, the compound sentences grow in length and width symptomatically and coordinately. The poet's diction extends in a compatible sequence of semantically related sentence contents and multiple sentence members. The typical looseness of Zeyer's fluent narration results, both in his epic poetry and prose, from the syndetic and asyndetic coordination of sentences and sentence members. Asyndeton typically occurs in his linguistic enumerations, while polysyndeton supports the laxity and rhythmical segmentation of his sentence. The course of events is carried by the long paratactic compound sentence, where the story line is uninterrupted, developed freely and continually by the prevailing verbal predicates. The effectiveness of Zeyer's long compound sentences also ensues from their dynamism and dramaticism.

The distinctive rhythm of Zeyer's prose results from a specific sentence structure, with variegated types of repetition intermingling on the phonetic, but mostly grammatical; lexical; and semantic levels. The high occurrence of these figures, resulting from the cumulation of the linguistic material in the author's prosaic text, distracts the reader's attention from the content of the communication, confining it to its expressive element. Apart from the marked repetition of linguistic means coming from various language levels, the expressivity and dynamics is also aided by frequently used enumerative procedures. The word repetition combined with the gathering of diverse linguistic structures and figures creates a peculiar parallelism which constitutes

the basis of Zeyer's decorative style. In this sense, the language of his prose works bears distinct marks of the art nouveau style. The itemised structure enables the author to dynamise the tension because, among others, it facilitates delaying or potentially, finishing utterances. In his epic poetry and prose, long epic compound sentences, whether hypotactic or paratactic, are syntactically exuberant and rhythmically segmented. Zeyer's sentences expand in length and width mainly through the reserved independent sentence members and the subsequently incorporated sentence members. Most frequently, these are attributes; predicative complements; and similes (Schacherl 2013). Among the devices that conspicuously signalise the poetic character of Zeyer's text, i.e. its difference from the neutral standard language, or common speech, special significance is attached to the inverted word order. A fairly frequent occurrence in Zeyer's sentence is especially the postpositional unexpanded attribute. Through emphasis on a quality, the attribute becomes the intonational centre of the utterance and frequently also its last accentuated member. In respect of the functional sentence perspective, it represents the rheme of the utterance marking Zeyer's peculiar type of sentence where a quality becomes the proper rheme of an utterance. Within word order inversions, a frequent occurrence in Zeyer's sentences is the postpositional formation, with another expanding member being inserted between the attribute and the substantive. Quite a high incidence in Zeyer showed removing the unexpanded attributive adjective from the substantive upon which this attribute is directly dependent, but that is placed before the noun. In the second-type inversion, Zeyer often separates adjective from the substantive through the 'interpositional word order of expanded attributes'. In the expanded attributive adjective, the most frequent was the occurrence of the type where two uncoordinate attributive adjectives are placed before the substantive. The marked word order and sentence order make one of the most remarkable stylistic dominants constituting the specifically perceived poetic quality of Zeyer's language. Here the highest incidence was recorded for the loose attribute and the loose predicative complement.

In the overloaded sentences which appear in his poetic and prosaic rhythmised texts as a result of gathering linguistic means or entire linguistic structures, the functional sentence perspective prevents disintegration of the whole syntactic structure, or the loss of its comprehensibility and meaning. In Zeyer, the basic principle that determines the word order is acoustic and semantic effect. The importance of the sound principle for the word order in the poet's sentence was highlighted by Mathesius in his study *Dynamická složka koncové kadence v Zeyerově blankversu* [The dynamic element of the final cadence in Zeyer's blank verse] (Mathesius 1931). Zeyer intensifies accentuation by shifting words towards the sentence beginning. The position of individual expressions in the sentence is also determined by their contextual connectivity or unconnectivity. As a rule, the contextually connected members appear in Zeyer at the beginning, whereas the textually unconnected members are at the end of the utterance. The marked subjective word order is in Zeyer softened by the length of the simple sentence and the compound sentence. It means that the syntactic fluency of his long epic sentence is not disturbed; the dramatisation of the marked word order is reduced; his style becomes distinctly pathetic.

An important share in the specific structuring of Zeyer's long epic sentence and the formal peculiarity of his style is also taken by the simile. The high incidence of this stylistic device in his poetic and prosaic texts, and in his personal correspondence alike (Schacherl 2013), suggests that the explicit expression of similarity was the natural means of his authorial style, regardless of its textual function. Major quantitative representation in both texts is also recorded for similes expanding into complete sentences. Similarly important are the similes expressed in the whole sentence as evidenced by the poet's private correspondence. The expanded similes reflect the complexity of the author's similitive relations and constitute one of the numerous forms of his long epic sentence, which has a lion's share in the perception of Zeyer's exuberant authorial style. In Zeyer's epic poetry and prose, Kt is most often expanded through a relative clause, or possibly an object clause. Another relation, namely the purpose, is less frequent in Zeyer.

Quite frequent occurrence in Zeyer's comparison is its expanding through a multiple sentence member, or potentially the combination of both. Multiple sentence members are added in a joining, or adversative function. The right side of Zeyer's comparison consists of often exuberantly reserved sentence members and additionally joined sentence members, or potentially complete sentences. The syntactical exuberance and rhythmical segmentation is enhanced by the frequent duplication of Kt and its enumeration with the subsequent extension through a sentence member, or possibly a sentence. Zeyer's comparison often serves as a starting point for a more complex denomination of an image. In his narrative, it is not expanded only in its multiformity, as in the figures of linguistic accumulation, but also in the semantic equivalence, towards a kind of synonymic completeness. The ultimate image in its entirety displays the aesthetic value of the poet's comparison and, as a highly frequent device of Zeyer's peculiar prose, it significantly contributes to his poeticised communication. Both of the analysed texts compared, its incidence is higher in the epic poem.

Separated by a distinctive pause, the reserved sentence member enables the author to exacerbate the tension between the sentential rheme and theme. The additionally attached sentence member mostly conveys supplementary explanation. The expansion of Zeyer's sentence is actually contributed by incomplete sentence structures, namely participial clauses. The inner dynamics of Zeyer's sentence is largely generated from the "contrast between the loose, additional insertion of multiply expanded attributes and closely connected adjectives and past participles in the predicate" (Hausenblas 1987, p. 278). Such transitions between the static and dynamic segments, together with the syntactic overload, lend Zeyer's sentence a sort of "Baroque contradiction" and an "ornamental stamp" at the same time (ibidem). Typical of Zeyer is also a high incidence of incomplete sentence structures, especially the structures featuring adjective + infinitive; substantive + infinitive; or potentially a single infinitive. A special type of incomplete sentence structure in Zeyer is the adverbial phrase *tot'*. The syntactic structure of Zeyer's compound sentence with the pre-

vailing parataxis evokes certain congruity of his sentence and the principles of folk speech. Zeyer often expresses his ideas not in words, but in larger syntactic units. As a rule, his ideas, thoughts, and images are conveyed through whole syntagmata, or long sentences, potentially sentence groupings. The authorial intention behind the speech syntax could be limited by Zeyer's language competence. The syntactic structure of his exclusively individual authorial style, deliberately differing from common speech and combining stylistically marked bookish and archaic elements, paradoxically involves even concrete traces of common tongue. Thus his individual style displays, intentionally or unintentionally, expressional heterogeneity, probably reflecting the authorial intention to use literary language as well as his linguistic limits as an empirically natured man.

Zeyer's idiosyncratic linguistic style is to a great extent evolved from the distinctive construction of his long sentence. The specificity of his syntactically exuberant and rhythmically segmented epic sentence in his prose was compared with the long epic sentence in his epic poetry. A comparison of (simple) linear dimensions of the simple sentence and the compound sentence showed that the narrative in the form of epic poetry is, in contrast to the prose text, based on a longer, linearly more fluent utterance. The epic evidences a marked prevalence of compound sentences over the simple sentence, with both the simple sentence and the compound sentence being noticeably longer; compound sentences consist of several clauses. On the whole, the prosaic text is more segmented and in its fluency (only natural in Zeyer) is tempered and purposely dramatised. Regardless of the expressional form, the marked feature of Zeyer's epic style is, besides the linear length, also a considerable prevalence of parataxis over hypotaxis, the same in the epic and the prose. Zeyer markedly evolves his narration linearly and continually in the prevailing coordination. There are minor differences between poetry and prose in the explored aspects of the authorial style, as related to the chosen expressional form of his narrative; the influence of the selected expressional form of the narration is manifest but not profound. It should not be forgotten that the ex-

cerpted differences may be caused by other things, e.g. they can ensue from Zeyer's authorial style; from the genre specifics; from the concretised theme; etc.

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