

## TENDENCIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LANGUAGE USED IN CZECH DAILY NEWSPAPERS

### TENDENCIJE U RAZVOJU JEZIKA KOJI SE UPOTREBLJAVA U ČEŠKIM DNEVNIM NOVINAMA

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#### *Abstract*

The worldwide scale of printed media is decreasing. This trend can also be seen amongst the dailies in the Czech Republic. In reaction to this tendency journalists are increasingly engaging in the entertainment aspects of journalism. So-called 'infotainment' is now firmly established in journalism. One of the most frequently and at the same time most effective infotainment strategies used in media is the application of verbal (and nonverbal) means of comedy and humor. The study presents an overview of the most frequent and thus the most typical verbal means of comedy and humor in current Czech periodicals based on the analyses of three representative Czech daily newspapers and one tabloid. The conclusion comprises, on the basis of the comparison of frequency, forms and the means of comedy and humor used sixteen years ago and at present, the development of verbal comedy and humor in Czech journalism.

#### *Sažetak*

Obim tiskanih medija u svijetu se smanjuje. Ovaj trend se može vidjeti i kod dnevnih novina u Republici Češkoj. Kao reakcija na te tendencije, novinarima su sve privlačniji zabavni aspekti novinarstva. Takozvani 'infotainment' je sada čvrsto prisutan u novinarstvu. Jedna od najčešćih i istovremeno najučinkovitijih multimedijjskih strategija koje se koriste u medijima je primjena verbalnih (i neverbalnih) oblika komedije i humora. Rad daje pregled najčešćih i time najtipičnijih verbalnih sredstva komedije i humora u aktualnoj češkoj periodici na temelju analize triju reprezentativnih čeških dnevnih novina i jednog tabloida. Zaključak sadrži, na temelju usporedbe frekvencije, oblika i sredstava komedije i humora koji su se koristili prije šesnaest godina i trenutno, prikaz razvoja verbalne komedije i humora u češkom novinarstvu.

#### 1. STUDY BACKGROUND

On the worldwide scale, the circulation of printed media, mainly the dailies, is decreasing. This trend also prevails in the Czech Republic, where daily newspapers sales have been decreasing since about 2006. The editorial boards of the periodicals are trying to slow down this trend by increasing the share of entertainment in journalistic products. In the past the entertainment function was only a characteristic of the entertainment journalism. Nowadays it is also emerging in the

fields of serious and analytical journalism. The introduced concept is called infotainment. Entertainment in journalism is evoked with the help of linguistical, graphical and ideografical instruments. At the same time the journalists shouldn't forget, that currently the realm of media is dominated by TV from the 1960s up to now. TV, as well as the Internet, offers visual communication, which has in comparison with verbal communication numerous advantages: the pictures allow for a more intensive perception than verbal information, they activate the viewer more intensely,

they are remembered better and they are more amusing than a printed text.

If journalists want to influence and persuade the recipients when offering information to them, they have to respect the basic principles of visualization. Printed periodicals therefore use all possible nonverbal elements; cease publishing extensive texts and divide information into small, transparent and easily perceivable units. What also changes is the language style. The journalists drop impersonal, rational or argumentative ways of writing and assume expressive and attractive language, also using varied means of comedy and humor /1/. Comedy and humor in printed media are becoming one of the most frequented and at the same time effective infotainment strategies.

## 2. ANALYSED DAILY NEWSPAPERS

The material background for this study comprised both serious daily newspapers and a tabloid newspaper. Generally speaking, the current Czech periodicals, mainly the dailies, recently seem to acquire rather a uniform appearance, as well as content. Despite that fact, it was possible to choose as many as three serious daily newspapers for the analysis in question. It was *Právo* (P), *Mladá fronta Dnes* (MFD) and *Lidové noviny* (LN). Tabloids are represented by *Blesk* (B). These periodicals were monitored and analyzed in the period from December 2012 until April 2016. *Právo* was published under the title *Rudé právo* between 1920 and 1995. At the beginning it was a tribune of the left wing of the Social Democratic Party, then in May 1921 *Rudé právo* became the central press authority of the communist party of Czechoslovakia. After the Velvet Revolution in 1989 the newspaper ceased to be a party press authority. The newly acquired independence was then manifested by the subtitle „Independent newspaper“ printed under the title *Právo*. In February 2016 *Právo* published 83,558 copies (in 2012 the amount of copies was 111,636).

*Mladá fronta Dnes* was established in 1945 under the title *Mladá fronta*. The current name of the newspaper has been used since September 1990. Nowadays it is the best selling serious Czech daily newspaper. In February 2016 published copies totaled 143, 929 (in 2012 the amount of copies was 206,098).

*Lidové noviny* is the oldest Czech daily newspaper. It was established in 1893. The profile

has been formed as a good quality daily title with a special focus on politics, economics and culture. Nevertheless, the circulation has been decreasing. In February 2016 published copies totaled 39,663 and in 2012 the amount of copies added up to 41,346.

The three mentioned daily papers have a nation-wide circulation. *Mladá fronta Dnes* and *Lidové noviny* belong to a sole owner, the German publishing house *Bergische und Rheinische Verlag und Druckerei*, and the marketing services are also the same. The newspaper *Právo* belongs to *Borgis*, the Czech joint-stock company. Though all of the mentioned newspapers declare themselves to be independent and serious, the political character of *Mladá fronta Dnes* and *Lidové noviny* is focused on political center to right wing whereas *Právo* is oriented from the center to left wing. In this study, the tabloid press is represented solely by the newspaper *Blesk*. Despite the fact that in tabloid journalism all types of humor are more frequent than in serious periodicals /2/, we pay them less attention because in tabloid press (and in the media of this character in general) the elements of comedy and humor fulfil or stimulate just the function of entertainment, generally on the basis of purely commercial reasons. That is to say, the precondition necessary for any persuasive effect in mass media is the social reputation of the medium. The reputation ensues from the degree of truthfulness of the conveyed facts, and from the trustworthiness of approaches assumed to the facts by the producer /3/. These preconditions can be hardly met by the tabloids.

The tabloid newspaper *Blesk* has been published since 1992. Since 1993 it has been the only Czech periodical issued on Sundays. It is the best selling Czech daily newspaper, the daily circulation being 237, 143. Still in 2012 the number of copies of *Blesk* was 305,272; that's supported by the fact, that the demand for periodicals by the public is truly decreasing, and can be followed universally.

## 3. COMEDY AND HUMOR: THEIR TYPES AND MEANS

Comedy and humor do not display a uniform characteristic in professional literature. Most studies, however, define humor as one of the forms of the aesthetic category of comedy. Comedy ranks among the aesthetic phenomena, which

distinguishes it from what is simply ridiculous, as ridiculousness needn't always be aesthetic. The category of comedy can assume many forms: humor, satire, practical jokes, parody, grotesque, absurdity, nonsense, irony or slapstick /4/. Humor and verbal comedy are based on the contrast between the expectation of the recipient, i.e., the subjective norm on the one hand, and the unexpectedness of the perceived reality on the other hand. It means that humor is a highly subjective phenomenon. In periodicals, and thus in the material analysed for this study, it is possible to find two types of humor: *situational* and *verbal*. Situational comedy is based on a concrete situation. The situation may be either funny or serious; if it is serious, then the seriousness is communicated in a funny way. Verbal comedy evokes the humorous effect on the basis of linguistic means. To understand verbal humor in journalism, it is essential for the readers to be aware of the verbal-style convention. This is an inevitable precondition for the appropriate interpretation of the given contrast. In journalism, comedy and humor can be expressed in a number of other ways, for example in the form of *cartoon humor*. There are humorous and satirical drawings, sketches, illustrations of jokes or anecdotes, caricatures. Apart from this, there are artistically rendered moralisms, paradoxes and aphorisms.<sup>v</sup> Also non-verbal pictorial forms, mainly intelligence (news-reporting) photographs, can display a comic effect. In this study, we mainly focus on humor expressed by *verbal means*. The range of these means is very broad: phonemes, affixes, morphemes, sentence structure, particular words or even language sound system and the graphic aspects. They are used specifically, unwittingly or with the aim to create a comic effect. The comic effect can be also triggered by the specific use of the semiologic characteristics of the language or by breaking its logic /5/. This study aims at presenting the most frequent linguistic means which evoke humor in current Czech newspapers: **lexical means**. They are the most typical means fulfilling this function. In journalism, verbal humor can often be found in analytical genres like commentaries and glosses, sometimes in reviews and critical comments. Other genres displaying the frequent occurrence of humor belong to fiction, such as columns, essays, sketches or reports. This is not surprising because these genres represent the individual style of their author. In reporting genres, however, the use of

humor can be surprising for the reader. At present it is not considered exceptional as the required objectivity and sobriety of the reporting style is being mixed with subjective elements.

I. Currently the elements of humor can be found even in **political reporting**. On the background of neutral standard language, various verbal means, usually colloquial words or slang, create the comic contrast. On the other hand, also hypercorrect words or literary, even archaic expressions can have the same effect. As politics is often personalised<sup>vi</sup> even in serious newspapers, these contrastive expressions are usually connected with concrete politicians. For example, the daily newspaper *Právo*, in the column *Zpravodajství (News Report)*, offers an interview with Karel Schwarzenberg, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is known for his prompt use of terse expressions; in this dialogue, where the answers are full of words from common Czech, the tone and the whole message is critical and ironical. In the interview Minister Schwarzenberg reacts to the situation when President V. Klaus described Deputy Prime Minister Karolina Peake, nominated to become Minister of Defence, as a mere girl who won't be respected by soldiers:

**SCH:** *Pan prezident zapomíná, že největší vojevůdci se podřídili a poslouchali křehké dívky.*

**P:** *Myslíte Johanku z Arku?*

**SCH:** *Spíš mám na mysli Josefínu, kterou poslouchal Napoleon. Všichni vojevůdci měli holky, které poslouchali. Ale vážně. Považuji to za smutné, protože váha strany LIDEM není taková, jakou by si resort obrany zasloužil. Ale jde o prachy [...]. (P, 8. 12. 2012, s. 2)*

**SCH:** Mr. President forgets that even the greatest warlords sometimes submitted and obeyed frail girls.

**P:** Are you thinking of Jeanne d'Arc?

**SCH:** Rather of Josephine, who commanded Napoleon. All military leaders had their **damsels** who they listened to. But to be serious, I find it sad because the power of the LIDEM party is not exactly what the defence department deserves. But it is all about **dough**.

II. The familiar or comic effect in the texts of political reports can be also created by **folk idioms**. For example, the text at the bottom of a large pho-

to showing President Miloš Zeman and Prime Minister Petr Nečas goes as follows:

*S pravicovým prezidentem míval premiér peklo. Klaus Nečase vyplísnil i na rozlučkové návštěvě vlády. S levicovým Zemanem si notovali a „pinkali“ si žertíky. (MFD, 21. 3. 2013, s. 4)*

Prime Minister used to have hell with right-wing president. Klaus even scolded Nečas during the good-bye visit of government session. With left-wing Zeman, they were tuned up in a similar way (notovali si) and cracked jokes with each other („pinkali“ si žertíky).

Criticism of political enemies is another example of the use of idioms based on colloquial language, where the message gets comic in the given context:

*Vidíme jen konjunkturální zoufalce, kteří se chtějí zalíbit. V mnoha případech za vzletnými slovy jen skrývají snahu udržet se u lizu. (LN, 22. 3. 2013, s. 10)*

We can see just boom-driven desperados (konjunkturální zoufalci) who want to catch the fancy of stakeholders (zalíbit se). In many cases it is just the effort to hold the ropes (být u lizu) which is hiding behind their ambitious words.

**III. Irony** is a typical and prevailing means which creates humor in Czech journalism. Though it does not denominate what it really indicates, its communicative function is one of the most frequent in Czech periodicals. Its techniques can be varied: most often it is based on contrast, metaphor and other kinds of periphrasis, contrastive or expressive denomination, paradox and sarcasm.

To provide an example we present a fragment of a journalistic text reacting to the situation of Karolina Peake after being dismissed from the Ministry of Defence. At that time, Deputy Prime Minister did not even have a room of her own:

*Z vládní vrátnice by ho [velvyslance z Marsu - dopl. A. J.] štandopéde poslali do krcálku, z něž by vicepremiérka nejprve musela poslat asistentku pro svaččinu, aby uvolnila židličku ctihodnému velvyslanci. (MFD, 21. 3. 2013, s. 14)*

From the reception of the government building he [the ambassador from Mars – explained by A.J.] would be promptly sent to a closet from which Deputy Prime Minister would have to send her

assistant to get some snack and so make it possible for the respectable ambassador to take a seat.

The whole journalistic text can be presented in an ironical tone. As an example, we offer a part of an article which characterizes the resulting balance after the financing of the presidential election when M. Zeman became president of the Czech Republic. Irony is based on pretended disparagement of the turbid financial situation and created by a number of metonymic and metaphoric expressions:

*Nepřátelé rajtují po účetnictví. Co chtějí dokázat? Skoro všechno sedí, kde má, a nesedí-li, čas to sám srovná. Neměla by se ta finanční titěrnost na kandidátech, a dnes dokonce na panu prezidentovi, vynucovat. Každý člověk je jiný, někdo zapíše tyhle peníze, někdo zase jiné. Občas se něco omylem špatně sečte, to v tom volebním fofru každý pochopí. Když je jarmark ve městě, také nesedí všechny sturzenky. Kapely, cirkus, sloni, řev a rvačky, kejklíři, stovky opilých, spočítejte v tom brajglu sponzory. (MF, 22. 3. 2013, s. 10A)*

Enemies are mad about accounting. What do they want to prove? Almost everything fits all right, and if not, it will get right on its own in the course of time. This financial pedantry should not be required from candidates, and now even from Mr. President. People are not alike; someone entries one amount, the other a different one. From time to time, some amounts are badly added up due to the election rush. It is natural. When there is a market in town, not all the receipts are correct. Bands, circus, elephants, yelling and grappling, jugglers, hundreds of drunken men; just try and count the sponsors correctly in that rumpus.

**IV.** Some of the linguists dealing with the language of journalism state that the lexis in use is getting vulgar. The existence of such a trend was proved by our analyses. Nowadays, **vulgarisms** as well as various **invectives** can be found in journalistic texts more frequently. Their use demonstrates second-rate journalism but they can still invoke comic effect in some readers. The following quotations were selected to prove the mentioned trend:

*Je to blbý, protože jsme jediní, kdo to nepodepsal. V Evropě vypadáme zase jako šašci. (Právo, Minister K. Sch.)*

It is **bloody silly**, because we are the only ones who did not sign. Europe sees us like **fools** once again.

*Možná, že jsou to jen moje pitomé nápady. Ale je těžké z naší současné vlády nezblbnout.* (Právo, editor J. H.)

Maybe it's just my **stupid** idea. But it is difficult to avoid **going dotty** because of our present government.

*Hlavně, aby se Rusové nenechali doma vyhecovat až moc a ne dělali nějaké prasárny.* (Právo, sports news)

It's important that the Russians don't **get stirred up** in the domestic environment and don't do any **dirty (beastly) things**.

*Jestli se generálplukovník nechal zmasírovat od neurochirurga, tak neměl být nikdy ani desátník. Jako major v záloze těžko mohu uvěřit, že velitel armády byl totální sráč.*

(Lidové noviny, Minister M. K.)

If the lieutenant-general was **given a massage** from a neurosurgeon, then he shouldn't have even deserved being a mere corporal. As a major in reserve, I can hardly believe that the army commander was **a total shithead**.

**V. Metaphorical denomination** is another frequent means of expressing humor in Czech periodicals. It is possible to find numerous metaphors and metonymies, which represent an original and effective way how to express hot issues provided they are fully intelligible. Comparisons can create the comic effect by using hyperbole or by being unexpected or illogical:

*ČSSD torpéduje studium totalit* (a headline, MFD, 23. 3. 2016, 10 A)

The Czech Social Democratic Party torpedoes the study of totalitarian regimes.

*Český lev se kolikrát probudil, ale po zařvání se vždycky jen vymočil a zase usnul. A zdá se, že spí klidně ještě i dnes – jako by nevěděl, že žrádlo zdarma je ve skutečnosti draze zaplacené* (a metonymy expressing Czech history, MFD, 25. 3. 2013, p. 10)

The Czech lion woke up a couple of times, but after giving out formidable roar, he always just urinated and fell asleep again. And it seems that he is sleeping in peace even today – as if he did not know that food for free is actually the most expensive.

*Nikoho by nenapadlo, že prezident Zeman je Kristus. Přesto má apoštolů, řekl předseda strany Štegl, kteří ponosou jeho myšlenky na křídlech. Spíš než apoštolů či anděly však Zemanovci připomínají zmatené brouky z šera oslněné sluncem.* (MFD, 25. 3. 2013, p. 12)

It wouldn't ever occur to anyone that President Zeman is Jesus Christ. 'Yet he has apostles', said party chairman Mr. Štegl, 'who will carry his ideas on their wings'. However, more than apostles the followers of Zeman resemble confused bugs from the dark, dazzled by sunshine.

**VI. The hyperbole**, which comes from colloquial communication and commercials and is much appreciated in the language of journalism, needn't have solely the form of simile. Any expression means based on different verbal parts can be organized in the form of a hyperbole. Hyperbole can be striking, persuasive and comic and as such it is often used in headlines, but there are entire journalistic texts or at least their parts which are hyperbolic:

*Sáblíková deklasovala na 5 000 metrů celý zbytek světa.* (MFD, 25. 3. 2013, p. 1 C)

Sáblíková (the famous Czech speed skater – explained by the translator) outclassed the rest of the world on 5,000m track.

*Kdy zmizí z českých silnic krátery po Zimě? Prý není dost peněz, tvrdí údržbáři. Takže nám vyrůstají obří inovační centra za miliardy, dojet k nim však nepůjde, protože si cestou ulomíme kolo.* (LN, 26. 4. 2013, p. 10)

When are the craters in Czech motorways going to disappear after the winter? The maintenance men say there is not money enough to repair them. So we are building new centres of innovation worth billions, but they will be inaccessible because we will break off the wheel on the way to get there.

*Je bezpečnější dát do dětem do ruky zápalky než knížku o hrdínech, co se za malý prohřešek propadají do nicoty nebo se stávají potravou neviditelných příšer.* (from a review of a children's book, P, 15. 12. 2014, p. 16)

It is safer to offer the children matches to play with than a book dealing with heroes who vanish into nothingness because of a minor misconduct or become food for invisible monsters.

VII. One of the popular and frequently used expressive means in journalism is **expressive denomination**. The implication can be either positive or negative, but the journalistic texts prefer the negative one. These means are strongly persuasive, and due to their ostentatious difference from neutral language forms they can create a comic effect. This effect is guaranteed if the communication focuses on serious facts and a complex situation. E.g., an analysis of the problems of the financial sector and economy in Cyprus is published under the following headline:

*Kypřanům trochu odlehlo, zato Rusové jsou naštvaní.*  
(MFD, 25. 3. 2013, 8 A)

The Cypriots are a bit relieved, but the Russians are fed up.

Another example is the use of a negative expressive colloquial/popular phraseologism in the context of the current debate about the English name for the Czech Republic in the form of Czechia:

*Posadí Czechia svět na zadek? (P, 16.-17. 4. 2016, s. 6)*  
Will Czechia set the world on fire?

Another example is the use of numerous expressive denominations aimed to insult former Prime Minister P. Nečas and Minister of Finance M. Kalousek, who enforced the unpopular strategy of saving measures:

*Ekonomický růst je stejně důležitý jako šetření. Jen vláda dvojice destruktorů Nečas – Kalousek to nechce slyšet a trpělivě odnaučují koně žrát.* (P, 16. 3. 2013, s. 6)

The economic growth is equally important as saving. It is just the government of two destructors, Nečas – Kalousek, that refuses to accept it and patiently weans horses off food.

In journalistic texts, **unusual collocations** accomplish the same role as expressive means, for example the following ones:

*zrůdný euroval (V. Klaus); přerostlé banky; finanční fanfarónství, famózní neschopnost; střelná modlitba; krotitelé energetiků; zrůdná ústava; důchodový hazard Bohuslava Sobotky; pivní těhotenství; veselé krizové Vánoce*

the freakish euro rescue fund (V. Klaus); overgrown banks; financial swashbuckling; famous inability; hotgun prayer; energy sector busters;

deformed constitution; the retirement hazard of Bohuslav Sobotka; beer pregnancy; merry crisis Christmas

Criticism or comic effect can be also expressed by means of invented words or **neologisms**. They are formally different from the circumjacent text, expressing the author's emotional attitude to denominated reality. Like in the case of expressive names, this attitude is usually negative:

*české politické pinožení; úředníci, kteří při vyslovení slova kultura zeskelnatí; každý druhopilířník; jeho nenapadnutelné eurohujerství; česká supermáma Alexandra; co vlastně žíví exSuperStar; Češi, Moravané a Slezané nejsou žádní odkundesové; kalouskoviny (označení reforem M. Kalouska, ministra financí – dopl. A. J.)*

Czech political **quibbling**; officers who **get glassy (apathetic)** at hearing about culture; every **second-pillar participant** (i.e., the participant in the second system of savings for retirement – explained by the translator); his **euro creep** effort (in the source language, (euro)hujerství is derived from the surname Hujer, who was a popular film character, an irresistible creep – explained by the translator); Czech **supermum** Alexandra; how do **exSuperStars** actually earn their living; the Czechs, Moravians and Silesians are no **vagabonds**; **Kalousek-like stuff** (the reforms by M. Kalousek, Minister of Finance – explained by A.J.)

VIII. A very effective means of forming comic and humorous effects in journalism is its **intertextuality**. Common demonstrations of intertextuality are various **quotations, allusions** and **paraphrases**. As these means refer to other texts or even the entire communication situations, it remains unclear if a common reader is able to interpret them correctly.

E.g., an **allusion** with a comic effect is used in a text giving a humorous description of the responsibilities of Minister of Defence; it refers to a mentally retarded character of a classical Czech film comedy:

*Ministr obrany je jen politická figura, která se loučí s vojáky jedoucími na mise, vítá je po návratu, přijímá zahraniční návštěvy a vyznamenává. Tedy jakýsi loučič, vítáč a vyznamenávač. Vše ostatní prý dělá aparát. Že by role pro „momentálně opožděného“ Otíka z Vesničky mé střediskové? (P, 8. 12. 2012, p. 6)*

Minister of Defence is just a political figure seeing off soldiers going to foreign missions, welcoming them after their arrival, hosting official visitors and granting honors. That is to say, someone who sees people off, welcomes them and grants something (analogically to Czech, a 'seer off', a 'welcomer', an 'honor granter'). Other activities are provided by ministerial offices. Possibly a role for the 'mentally retarded' hero Otík from the movie *Vesničko má středisková*?

Another example of **allusion** (here used in the headline of an article) is referring to the title of a popular Czech tale but the story has nothing to do with the presented journalistic text; the resulting effect is ironical:

*Jak navrátko se emigrant k moci a bohatství přišel.* (MFD, 22. 3. 2013, p. 4)

How an emigrant returnee gained power and made a fortune.

An **allusion** referring to a statement of President V. Klaus, Czech president at that time, who marked an unsuccessful minister as the best minister of education, and to the entire situation related to the minister's resignation, is expressed in the following headline:

*Nejlepší český ministr školství Dobeš devastoval české školství a navíc je připravil o stamilióny z evropských dotací.* (P, 1. 12. 2013, p. 6)

The best Czech Minister of Education Dobeš devastated Czech education and, on top of that, he deprived it of hundreds of millions crowns from European funds.

A **paraphrase** of the title of a popular American romantic-psychological film drama is used in another text illustrating intertextuality in journalism:

*Takoví jste byli. Generála Picka dohání, ale nedožene členství v KSČ.* (LN, 20.3. 2013, p. 10)

The way you were. General Picek is being chased but not caught by his membership in the Communist Party.

**IX.** Various **puns** are important means of verbal humor. Lexical puns often originate on the basis of humorous combinations of homonymous, paronymous or polysemantic words. They can be based on contrast, i.e., a combination of **antonyms**, such as:

*pidižvoík pomohl velikánovi; Nečasova láska neláska s vicepremiérkou; nepolitická politika; nikoli tržní - je to trhovecká vláda; LIDEM byla veverčí strana - nestrana; Slavní zpívají hity slavných. Dopadlo to však neslavně.*

A dwarf helped a giant; Nečas's love – nonlove of the deputy Prime Minister; nonpolitical politics; not a market – it is a marketer government; LIDEM was a double V party (in Czech: *veverka* for onomatopoeic reasons instead of *VV* – *věci veřejné*, public affairs) – nonparty; The famous singing famous hits. But it ended infamously.

The **homonymous** similarity of Prime Minister Nečas's surname and a general name (apellative) made it possible to create the pun published in one of the headlines in *Blesk*:

*Zmoklý jako slepice: Nečas se vydal na sever. Stejně jako nečas a velká voda.* (B, 4. 6. 2013, s. 1)

Soaked as the ground: Nečas headed for north. Like bad weather (in Czech: *nečas*) and floods.

The same principle was used for creating the pun based on the participial form of the surname of the representative football team player Bořek Dočkal:

*Dočkal se dočkal. A s ním i Krejčí, Kozák, Vydra či Tecl.* (MFD, 21. 3. 2013, s. 14 B)

Mr Waited (in Czech: *Dočkal*, a surname) waited to see (in Czech: *dočkal se*). As well as Krejčí, Kozák, Vydra or Tecl.

Puns can also have the form of **figures of speech**. Mostly they are antitheses (contradictions) or syntactic parallelisms<sup>viii</sup> (in addition, both our documents of syntactic parallelisms are intensified as regards the meaning):

*Fischer se topí, Zeman za vodou.* (MFD, 21. 3. 2013, p. 1)

Fischer is drowning, Zeman over the hump (the Czech idiom: *za vodou* - out of the water and safe).

*Příliš velká na pád. Příliš velká na pomoc. Příliš mnoho příliš.* (LN, 20. 3. 2014, p. 10)

Too big to fall. Too big to help. Too many 'too'.

*Ženskost a křehkost problém paní Peake tedy není. Ona je však problémem české politiky a zejména vlády. Ona křehká dívka se totiž do funkce ministryně obrany doslova provydírala.* (P, 15. 12, p. 6)

Appearing womanlike and frail is not a problem for Ms Peake. However, she represents a problem for Czech politics and mainly for the government. This frail girl has literally extorted her way to the position of Minister of Defence.

Popular **paradoxes** also belong to puns. They are unexpected and surprising statements, apparently illogical, in contrast with common sense. They are based on contradictions, antonyms, and they occur mostly as headlines to attract the reader's attention:

*Co řeší dokumenty ministerstva školství? Všechno a nic.* (MFD, 22. 3. 2013, p. 10)

What do the documents of the Ministry of Education solve? Everything and nothing.

*Hezké auto, na kterém je skoro všechno špatně.* (MFD, 22. 3. 2013, 4 C)

A nice car with almost all of its details (almost everything) being bad.

*Pražská politika vlekoucí se odnikud nikam.* (LN, 26. 4. 2013, p. 10)

Prague politics dragging itself from nowhere to nowhere.

*Vláda se chová tak, aby důvěra občanů ve stát byla co nejmenší.* (P, 1. 12. 2013, p. 6)

The government acts in the way that the trust of citizens in the state is as little as possible.

*Krást se nemá, ale někteří mohou.* (B, 4. 6. 2013, p. 1)

Stealing is wrong, but there are exceptions.

**X.** The interpretation of a text created by the combination of **lexical means belonging to different styles** can be more demanding for the reader. The contrast between them (here in the combination of the literary conjunction *Pyrrhic victory/Pyrrhovo vítězství* and the colloquial expression *farce/fraška*) causes an impressive communication effect (in the extract shown below it is critical), often with a humorous aspect:

*Premiér Nečas se po těchto Pyrrhových vítězstvích pustil také do vládního úklidu, jenže i to je fraška* (P, 1. 12. 2013, p. 6)

After these Pyrrhic victories, Prime Minister Nečas also started to do government cleanup, but this, too, is a farce.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

On the basis of comparing the character, frequency, forms and means of humor and comedy used in Czech journalism roughly fifteen years ago and at present /6/, it is possible to mark the following trends in the development of the style in question:

- Considering all its genres including reporting the news, journalism gets more and more diverted from the neutral and impersonal attitude to presented topics and moves towards expressive contrasts. That is to say, particular topics are presented either in an amiable way, with friendly humor and understanding, or on the contrary with criticism, irony and malevolence.

- Along with the increase of subjectivity in the author's attitude to the topic, journalism displays an increase in the use of comic and humorous elements. The humorous interpretation could possibly compensate for negative information prevailing in the media. However, verbal elements of humor are mostly based on negative aesthetic and expressive means, which doesn't quite correspond with the previous idea of compensating the negative facts. Irony, sarcasm, offence and mockery are commonly found in the newspapers.

- Consequently, there are also changes of the lexis used in Czech journalism. The authors of texts often use words with negative expressiveness, impoliteness and/or vulgarity.

In the context of current Czech journalism, the particular characteristics mentioned above also refer to a more general trend: the tabloidization of journalism. It is obvious that the current situation of the press influences the Czech public. It results in pessimism and disbelief in presented information, often even in giving up participation in public affairs.



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