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# The decline of Czech transgressives – a *memento mori* for the Polish language?

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

As Ewa Kołodziejek noted in her speech “»Myśląc o imiesłowach ... « Kilka uwag do dyskusji o kształcie nowej normy językowej”, given at the May 29, 2023 meeting of the Bydgoszcz branch of Towarzystwo Miłośników Języka Polskiego, as well as in a very recent article (Kołodziejek, 2023), the modern Polish language is subject to attempts to artificially “weed out” transgressives (Pol. *imiesłowy przysłówkowe*). Such attempts by journal editors and authors of normative works are justified, e.g., by the difficult rules regarding the use of transgressives and their supposed “unnatural” quality, by the vagueness ascribed to transgressive constructions (e.g., when contrasted with the requirements of legal language), and, most of all, by the fact that, according to the linguistic norm, Polish speakers use simultaneous transgressives (*imiesłowy współczesne*) somewhat more liberally than they should when the actions in question are not fully simultaneous because of a slight time shift (Kołodziejek, 2023, pp. 17–20). Arguments raised by Polish editors bear a strong resemblance to the critical comments regarding the use of transgressives coming from Czech linguists since at least the 1920s (see part 5 of this article). Could these comments have influenced the evolution of this verb form in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries? What were the changes in Czech transgressive frequency, including functional style differences? And what are the factors behind the course of

<sup>1</sup> This is the primary version of the article. However, I have also prepared a Polish version titled “Zanik czeskich imiesłowów przysłówkowych – memento mori dla polszczyzny?”, which will be available in Repozytorium UJ from January 2024.

these changes? I will attempt to answer all these questions, hoping that the Czech experience can become a valuable context for the discussion of the status of transgressives in the modern Polish language.

## 2. Previous findings on the status and evolution of transgressives in the Czech language

Transgressives (Czech: *přechodníky*; also known as adverbial participles), which belong to the cross-linguistic category of *converbs* (Haspelmath, König, 1995), are described as “bookish or even archaic” in modern Czech grammars (cf. Karlík, Nekula, Rusínová, 2003, p. 337) and are characterised by a very complex morphology (see part 5 of this article). They are not used in the non-standard variety of the Czech language, called *obecná čeština*; they have also been exceptionally rare in standard language (Czech: *spisovná čeština*) for many years. Emil Dvořák’s research (1970, 1983) shows that, in general, the frequency of transgressives has been falling since the Old Czech period, and a constant diminishing trend can be seen since the 1830s. After a momentary increase in frequency during the first two phases of the Czech National Revival (1781–1830), when transgressives constituted 6.8% of all verb forms (hereinafter abbreviated as “V”), during the final stage of the Revival (1831–1855) their share fell to 4.2% of V, and a further fall was observed in the subsequent decades: the number went down to 2.41% of V in the years 1857–1918, 1.41% of V in 1918–1945, 0.64% of V in 1945–1960, 0.38% of V in 1961–1970, and 0.14% of V in 1971–1978 (Dvořák, 1983, p. 85). However, it should be noted that Dvořák conducted his research before the advent of electronic corpora, and his choice of material for the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be contested: daily newspapers and magazines were only included for 1971–1978 and, as a result, journalism up to 1970 was represented almost exclusively by reportage published in books and propaganda texts. Therefore, it is worth taking a closer look at the evolution of transgressives in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly the second half, as well as in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Recent research by Petra Macurová (2021) does not include the diachronic perspective, but a paper by Olga Nádvorníková (2021, pp. 71–72)<sup>2</sup> indicates that the use of transgressives diminished during that period; however, Nádvorníková’s research provides information neither on the dynamics of this change in particular functional styles nor the specifics concerning the evolution of each type of transgressive (*přechodník přítomný* vs *přechodník minulý*). This article, due to space limitations, only contains a detailed analysis of Czech *přechodník přítomný*, i.e., the transgressive that expresses simultaneity (called the *simultaneous transgressive*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Further publications of this author are in press (Nádvorníková, forthcoming 1, Nádvorníková, forthcoming 2).

<sup>3</sup> I use this term as in Nádvorníková’s paper (2021) present transgressive, in Macurová’s article (2021) present gerund, or in Haspelmath and König’s monograph (1995) present tense converb. In the latter

in this article; hereinafter abbreviated as “ST”), whose evolution has still only been described up to Dvořák’s time. Information concerning the transgressive with the meaning of anteriority – Czech *přechodník minulý* (called the *anterior transgressive*<sup>4</sup> in this article) will be presented in the discussion of processes which occur in analogous ways in the case of both these types of transgressive.

### 3. Data and methods

The research presented here is based on data obtained from the Czech National Corpus (*Český národní korpus*), particularly on the SYN verze 9 (Křen et al., 2021) corpus included therein, which contains texts dated up to 2019.<sup>5</sup> Both the diachronic corpora Diakorp and the larger Diakon (the latter of which is only available as a work-in-progress version) have proven unusable in practice since they lack the morphological annotation that would enable a transgressive search using an appropriate tag. In the case of journalism, I regard the SYN data as insufficient for some periods (1950s, 1960s, 1970s) and for this reason I supplemented it with the data from the Totalita corpus (Skoumalová, Bartoň, Cvrček, Hnátková, Koček, 2010), which contains journalistic texts from the Communist era, mainly from the daily “Rudé právo”.

This material was divided into subcorpora of texts representing 10-year periods because the Czech National Corpus does not provide sufficient data for each year due to the infrequency of transgressives; results for shorter periods would be more a reflection of the composition of the corpus than of actual language change (more on this issue in Górski, Król, Eder, 2019, pp. 43–44). Some texts published posthumously (such as those by Ladislav Klíma that were issued in the 1990s) have been removed from the subcorpora since they might falsely inflate the number of transgressives.

Creating the query relevant to this article’s research question also required some additional solutions. In particular, lexicalized transgressives<sup>6</sup> (Czech: *ustrnulé přechodníky*), a list of which was acquired from the Czech phraseological dictionary (Čermák, Hronek, Machač, 2009), had to be omitted from this research. Such units function as prepositions (e.g., *počínaje* ‘beginning with’), adverbs (e.g., *chtě nechtě* ‘willy-nilly’), or particles (e.g., *takříkajíc* ‘so to speak’) and are subject to fewer syntactical limitations than transgressives since they “do not fulfil the criterion of so-called subject identity, nor

monograph, the term simultaneous converb also appears and is used as a cross-linguistic category (including English present participle in an adverbial function).

<sup>4</sup> I use this term as in Nádvořnicková’s paper (2021) past transgressive, in Macurová’s article (2021) past gerund, or in Haspelmath and König’s monograph (1995) past tense converb. In the latter monograph, the term anterior converb also appears and is used as a cross-linguistic category (including English perfect participle in an adverbial function).

<sup>5</sup> The more recent SYN verze 10 corpus was rejected here because of lemmatization problems which could influence the accuracy of statistical data.

<sup>6</sup> I use this term as in Krystyna Bojalkowska’s paper *frazeologizmy imiesłowowe* (2010, p. 16).

do they express temporal relations”<sup>7</sup> (Bojałkowska, 2010, p. 18). Moreover, my research shows that such lexicalized units are evolving entirely separately from transgressives; they do not follow a visible diminishing trend, and because of their high frequency they could significantly disturb the view of transgressive evolution.

Subsequently, the obtained list of transgressives was reviewed manually in order to minimise the impact of very frequent annotation errors: cf., e.g., misspellings such as *větvě* (correct: *větve* ‘branches’) or *vceně* (correctly *v ceně* ‘in the price’), which the corpus automatically qualifies as transgressives because of the word endings. Wrongly tagged units, as well as lexicalized transgressives, were excluded from the search at the query level.

The final query had two stages. The first stage<sup>8</sup> was this query:

```
[tag!="R.*"] [tag!="Ve.*" & word!="(?)počinaj(e|íc)" & word!="(?)začínaje" &
word!="(?)nehled(ě|íc)" & word!="(?)nemluv(ě|íc)" & word!="(?)nepočítaj(e|íc)" &
word!="(?)nevyjímaj(e|íc)" & word!="(?)vyjímaj(e|íc)" & word!="(?)konč(e|íc)" &
word!="(?)nekonč(e|íc)" & word!="(?)cht(ě|íc)" & word!="(?)necht(ě|íc)" & word!="(?)takřikajíc"
& word!="(?)soud(ě|íc)" & word!="(?)nedbaj(e|íc)" &
word!="(?)vycházej(e|íc)" & word!="(?)pra" & word!="(?)větvě" & word!="(?)budě" &
word!="(?)ohromě" & word!="(?)raze" & word!="(?)piště" & word!="(?)zně" &
word!="(?)dra" & word!="(?)vřadě" & word!="(?)vhale" & word!="(?)rachna" &
word!="(?)šina" & word!="(?)tona" & word!="(?)hostě" & word!="(?)vceně" &
word!="(?)sně" & word!="(?)vele" & word!="(?)buje" & word!="(?)vidě" &
word!="(?)pna" & word!="(?)mata" & word!="(?)otoče" & word!="(?)lna" &
word!="(?)lově" & word!="(?)rozhodě" & word!="(?)leště" & word!="(?)neboje" &
word!="(?)zra" & word!="(?)doje" & word!="(?)potě" & word!="(?)udě" & word!="(?)pasa"]
```

Then, a negative filter was applied, primarily to filter out lexicalized transgressives with two or more elements:

```
[word!="(?)tak"] [word="řikajíc"] | [word!="(?)tak"] [word="řka"] |
[word!="(?)vstávaj(e|íc)] [word="lehaj(e|íc)"] | [word!="(?)lehaj(e|íc)"]
[word="vstávaj(e|íc)"] | [word="(?)v"] [word="to"] [word="počítaj(e|íc)"] |
[word!="(?)počítaj(e|íc)] [word="v"] [word="to"] | [word!="(?)počítaj(e|íc)"] |
[word="i"] | [word!="(?)počítaj(e|íc)] [word="od"] | [word="(?)v"] [word="to"]
[word="čítaj(e|íc)"] | [word!="(?)čítaj(e|íc)] [word="v"] [word="to"] | [word="(?)čítaj(e|íc)"]
[word="i"] | [word="(?)polo"] [word="sed(ě|íc)"] | [word="(?)polo"] [word="lež(e|íc)"] |
[word="(?)věda"] [1,3] [word="co"]
```

The results obtained were calculated for 1 million tokens. All the statistical analyses were performed in the R programming environment, with packages included in the *tidyverse* collection: *tidyr* (Wickham, Vaughan, Girlich, 2023) and *ggplot2* (Wickham, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> “nie spełniają warunku tzw. tożsamości podmiotu i nie wyrażają relacji czasowych”, translated above for the purpose of this article.

<sup>8</sup> For journalistic texts, the query was somewhat modified to compensate for particular annotation errors which do not occur in the other groups of texts.

#### 4. Changes in the frequency of Czech simultaneous transgressives (*přechodník přítomný*)

Changes in the frequency of the ST (simultaneous transgressive) were traced in three styles of language: artistic (*Cz. styl umělecký*, marked as FIC in the corpus<sup>9</sup>), journalistic (*Cz. styl publicistický*, tagged as NMG in the corpus) and in the style which can be described as specialist (*Cz. styl odborný*), as in Stanisław Gajda's terms (1998, p. 424). The specialist style which is traditionally distinguished in Czech stylistics (cf. Čechová, Krčmová, Minářová, 2008, pp. 98–99) has a somewhat wider meaning than the Polish scientific style; it includes texts that the corpus tags as SCI (scientific, academic texts), PRO (directed at specialist in a particular field), and POP (popular science). The specialist style is marked as ODB in the graphs.<sup>10</sup>

Below is the graph of ST frequency changes in the three aforementioned styles, after World War II.

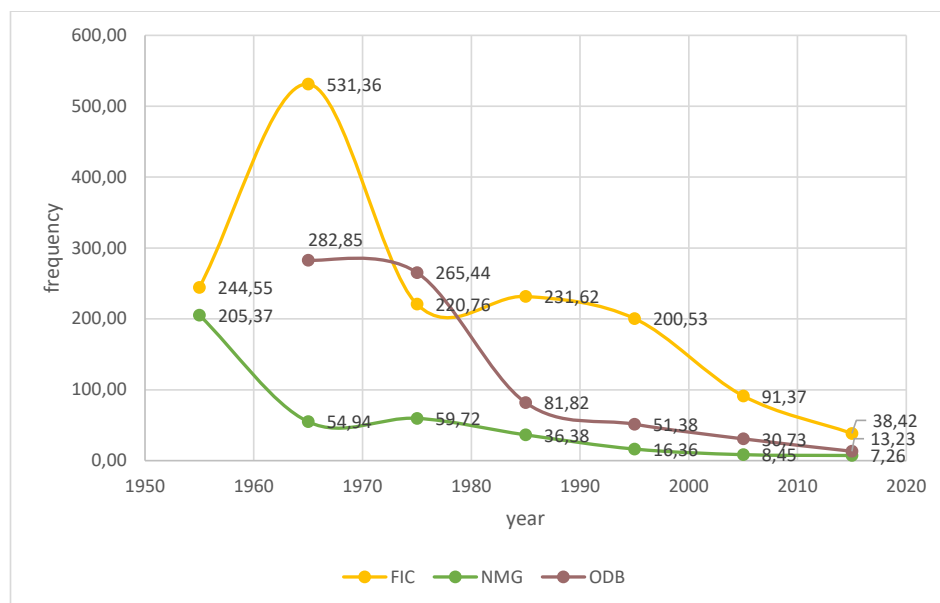


Figure 1. ST frequency changes in the 1950–2019 period (Czech National Corpus data)

<sup>9</sup> More on the classification of texts in the corpus (cf. Cvrček et al., 2015).

<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that data concerning this style is less reliable than that concerning other styles because the proportion of types/groups of texts (i.e., groups distinguished on the *txttype* level and the *genre\_group* level, cf. Cvrček et al., 2015) varies in different time spans. Moreover, as pointed out by Nádvořníková (forthcoming 1), many concordances in the case of some scientific disciplines (e.g., history or theology) are quotations from source literature and Bible.

The graph shows a steep descent in frequency of ST use in all the styles; however, throughout the period analysed here (apart from the 1970s), ST frequency is definitely highest in the artistic style and lowest in the journalistic, i.e., the one closest to the language of everyday communication. In the case of artistic style, a surprising increase in ST frequency is noticeable in the 1960s. I have attempted to explain this in a broader time perspective because, in the case of the artistic style, the corpus allows one to follow the changes in ST frequency since the 1920s (while the data is insufficient for other styles – it is available only since the 1950s for journalistic style or since the 1960s for specialist style).

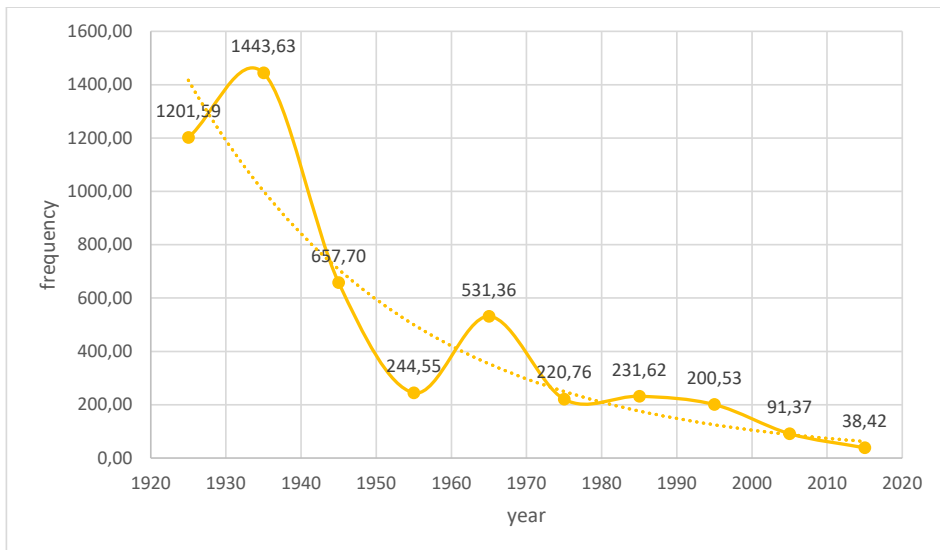


Figure 2. Changes in ST frequency in the artistic style (FIC) between 1920 and 2019 (Czech National Corpus data), with exponential trend curve

The graph shows that a steep descent in ST frequency in the artistic style happened in the 1940s and 50s, while in the 1950s it was even faster than the trend curve (marked with the dotted line) suggests; subsequently, there was an unexpected “rebound” in the 1960s, but this did not reverse the general downward trend.<sup>11</sup> It is true that the subcorpus for the 1960s includes the translation of an extensive historical novel (Mika Waltari’s “The Egyptian”), which is full of STs that are used for archaization, but I have verified that this does not entirely explain such a marked increase. Alternatively, it may be supposed that the decline in the 1950s was, in fact, not so sharp but it was more consistent with the

<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that the evolution of anterior transgressives proceeded in the same way: there also was a steep fall in the 1940s and 50s and a momentary increase in frequency during the subsequent decade.

trend curve; because of a prevalence of translations,<sup>12</sup> the subcorpus for the 1950s seems to be a rather imperfect reflection of this period in Czech literature. Thus, it would be preferable to take another look at the 1950s when more balanced corpora are available.

Despite these remarks, Figure 2 shows that the decrease of ST frequency in the artistic style can be convincingly described as an exponential trend curve. However, instead of typical exponential regression, in practice it is more convenient to work with its linearized version,<sup>13</sup> i.e., a linear model where the dependent variable (i.e., frequency) has been logarithmized. A model like this can be shown in a so-called log-lin plot:

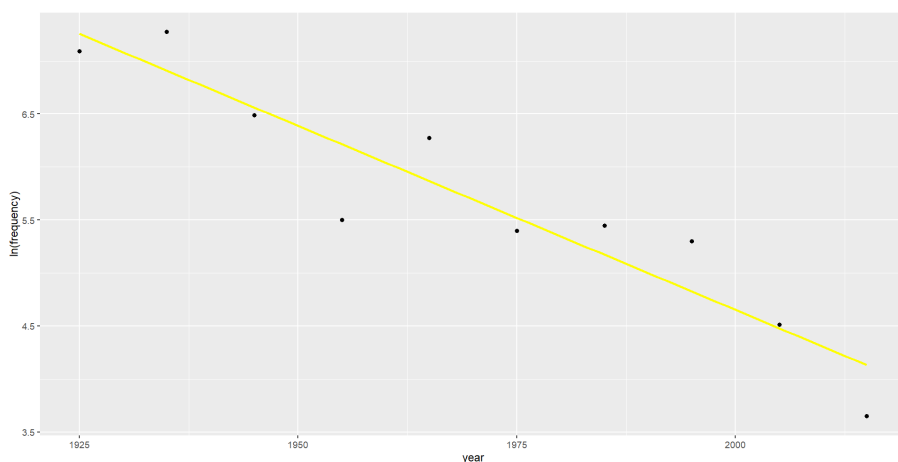


Figure 3. Changes in ST frequency in the artistic style (FIC) between 1920–2019 (log-lin plot), with regression model,  $R^2 = 0.8770716$

Models of this kind were created for all three styles and the  $R^2$  coefficient (which, put simply, shows how well the model is fitted to the data) was calculated. Since the  $R^2$  coefficient turned out to be very high for each of the styles (for artistic  $R^2 = 0.8770716$ , journalistic  $R^2 = 0.9468836$ , and specialist  $R^2 = 0.9686303$ ),<sup>14</sup> it can be concluded that **each of the styles shows an exponential fall in ST frequency**. This is interesting since Dvořák's data for the 1918–1978 period shows an almost ideal linear fall in ST frequency:

<sup>12</sup> The frequency of Czech transgressives in translations is generally lower than in non-translated fiction (Nádvořníková, forthcoming 1).

<sup>13</sup> Linearization of nonlinear functions (as exemplified by a power function) is succinctly described in an accessible manner by Rolf Hammerl and Jadwiga Sambor (1990, pp. 123–124). A more technical description of the procedure in R (this time for an exponential model) was presented by Przemysław Biecek and Krzysztof Trajkowski (2011).

<sup>14</sup> Moreover,  $p$  was very small for each of the cases (in the artistic style, it was  $6.577e-05$ ; in the journalistic style,  $0.0002251$ ; and for the specialist style,  $0.000373$ ). Therefore, the models predict the dependent variable in a statistically significant way.

STs constitute 1.17% of V in 1918–1945, then 0.57% of V in 1945–1960, and 0.34% of V in 1961–1970, finally reaching 0.13% of V in 1971–1978 (Dvořák, 1983, p. 60); the  $R^2$  coefficient for the linear model<sup>15</sup> I created on the basis of this data was as high as 0.9901. Thus, Dvořák’s data does not suggest such a rapid course of change.

The use of regression models also makes it relatively easy to determine the rate of decline of STs in particular styles (of course, only for the period for which data is available for all styles, i.e., 1960–2019). A comparison of the slope for different functions (as indicated in Figure 4) shows that the rate of decline of STs is fastest for the specialist style. The difference between the two other styles is not as marked; however, it is not surprising to see that the slowest frequency decrease rate can be observed for the artistic style.

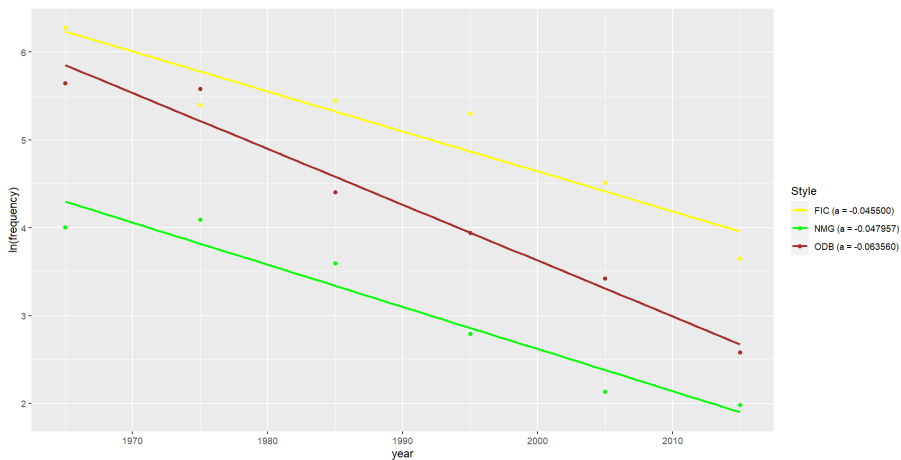


Figure 4. Changes in ST frequency in the 1960–2019 period with regression models (log–lin plot)

## 5. Causes of the decline of Czech transgressives<sup>16</sup> in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries

In all likelihood, the steep decrease in the number of transgressives in the standard variety of the Czech language (*Cz. spisovná čeština*) is influenced, among others, by the difficulty of creating correct forms thereof: Czech transgressives (both simultaneous and anterior) are inflected according to gender and number, which is an exception in the entire Slavic world. Apart from the categories of number and gender, the choice of correct ST suffix also depends on the third-person plural of the present tense of the verb the transgressive is derived from. Therefore, the automation of this process is much more difficult than

<sup>15</sup>  $p = 0.004962$

<sup>16</sup> In this section, I refer both to the simultaneous and to anterior transgressives, since, despite some differences, the general trend in their evolution is identical (in both cases, a steep descent in frequency is visible in the period analysed), and the reasons for their decline are convergent.



in other Slavic languages, where STs usually have only one or two suffixes (cf. Pol. *-ąc*, Croat./Serb. *-ući, -eći*, Bulg. *-(e)ǔku*, Mac. *-(e)jku*, Rus. *-я/-а*); this is substantially fewer than in the Czech system, which includes *-a* or *-ě/e* for singular masculine, *-ouc* or *-íc* for singular feminine and neuter, and *-ouce* or *-íce* for all genders in plural.

Since both simultaneous and anterior transgressives are very rare (particularly in spoken language), knowledge of the rules regarding their formation is strictly related to the level of school education regarding grammar. Much depends on the particular school, since transgressives are not present in the curriculum as obligatory material. General curricula for primary schools and high schools (“Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání”, 2021, “Rámcový vzdělávací program pro gymnázia”, 2021) do not define a scope for education in Czech morphology; both curricula contain only the rather general expression: “tvarosloví (morfologie) – slovní druhy a jejich mluvnické kategorie a tvary”. Transgressives are mentioned in the recommended primary school curriculum (“Doporučené učební osnovy předmětů ČJL, AJ a M pro základní školu”, 2011), but only for the ninth grade, and only as complementary material (*rozšiřující učivo*). So, at least some users of the Czech language can finish their education with no knowledge of the correct rules for transgressive formation, and for this reason they avoid them lest they commit a mistake.

This “elitist” character of transgressives (as a kind of indicator of high language competence) may be another factor causing their disappearance and limiting their distribution mainly to the artistic style. This is confirmed, e.g., by internet fora and social media discussions, where some users like to point out the lack of ability of their interlocutors or the authors of articles they are commenting on to use transgressives properly. For example, when Český rozhlas Plus entitled an article “Rozdělení Československa nechtíc odstartoval Václav Havel”, a Facebook commenter did not hesitate to say that those who cannot use transgressives should not use them: “Nechtě. **Avoid transgressives** until you learn them.”<sup>17</sup> This is a humorous example since the form *nechtíc* had been used quite correctly; both ST forms derived from the verb (*ne*)*chtít* (masculine *nechtě*, feminine and neuter *nechtíc*) have already been lexicalized and function as adverbs. There is no reason, therefore, to make the suffix agree with the male sentence subject (cf. analogous example from Internetová jazyková příručka: “Jako správný stydlín jsem nechtíc/nechtě a pudově sklopil zrak k zemi”<sup>18</sup>).

Moreover, the erroneous use of transgressives is used as an argument against their continued function in language, as pointed out by Vilém Kodýtek: “For this very reason, a leading linguist recommended fourteen years ago [i.e., in 1996 – AW]: **let’s avoid transgressives**”<sup>19</sup> (Kodýtek, 2010). Interestingly, this phenomenon has a history of almost 100 years, with roots at least in the 1920s and 1930s. Such arguments can be found in the

<sup>17</sup> “Nechtě. Vyhýbejte se přechodníkům, dokud se je nenaučíte.” Cf. <https://m.facebook.com/rozhlasplus/posts/6426973624049806/> (accessed: 26.06.2023).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. <https://prirucka.ujc.cas.cz/?slovo=necht%C3%ADc> (accessed: 26.06.2023).

<sup>19</sup> “Před čtrnácti lety jeden z předních jazykovědců právě z tohoto důvodu doporučoval: Vyhýbejme se přechodníkům.”

1931 “Naše řeč” review of Otokar Fischer’s book “Duše a slovo”. A reviewer, Jiří Haller, having presented two (from a modern perspective, not very serious) errors Fischer had committed, decided to formulate some rather far-fetched conclusions: “I see in these examples a new testimony that transgressives are a dead form in modern Czech and that even good stylists do not have enough understanding of them. Would it not be better to avoid them, at least in cases where they do not suggest themselves?”<sup>20</sup> (Haller, 1931, p. 54). The categorical declaration that transgressives are a “dead” form had nothing to do with reality; as seen in Figure 2, the frequency of ST use in the artistic style was highest in the 1930–1939 subcorpus, reaching 1443.63 per 1 million tokens (i.e., almost 38 times more than currently!). However, Haller’s words do give a hint as to why, a decade later, the frequency of ST use was less than half than at the time of his writing (657.7 per million tokens), and the trend continued in subsequent decades.

Of course, it is difficult to see such a steep descent as seen in Figure 2 as the effect of just one linguist’s statement, even one as influential as Haller. However, a note published in a 1941 issue of “Hlídka” magazine, signed with the initials ‘ak’, shows that his opinions were in no way isolated:

“**Avoid transgressives!**” That’s how professors have been admonishing students in high school, and that’s what magazine and library editors have been requiring. Recently an instruction arrived from Prof. František Trávníček in “Lidové noviny” (2 February 1941). He says that at one time there were voices from grammatical circles that transgressives in modern literary Czech were **dead or on the verge of extinction**. Prof. Zubatý even wrote that our literary language will sooner or later get to the point where it will do **without transgressives altogether**. Ertl also thought that transgressives are a bookish, **semi-scholarly** means of expression. But Prof. Trávníček reminds us that this dubious judgement arises from the fact that in most cases only remnants of transgressives are found in common speech, and this is often very different from how they are expected to be used in the literary standard. This is true, he says, but common speech is not in all respects an indicator of the evolution of literary language.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, critical statements were also made by such prominent Czech linguists as Josef Zubatý and Václav Ertl (cf. Z., 1924, Marek, 1927). It seems, then, very likely that the stance of the greatest linguistic authorities of the interwar period was what could have caused the “chilling effect” visible in Fig. 2. It is true that unfounded declarations of the “death” of transgressives encountered firm reactions from František Trávníček and Josef Bečka, the latter of whom presented concrete statistical data in a 1941 article that

<sup>20</sup> “Vidím v těchto příkladech nové svědectví o tom, že přechodník je v moderní češtině tvar mrtvý a že ani dobří stylisté nemají pro něj dostatek porozumění. Nebylo by lépe vyhýbat se mu aspoň v takových případech, kde se sám do pera nevnučuje?”

<sup>21</sup> “«Vyhybejte se přechodníkům!» Tak dosud napomínali profesoři studenty na střední škole, a tak znělo i přání redaktorů časopisů a knihoven. A teď přišlo poučení prof. Fr. Trávníčka v Lid. novinách (2. II. 1941). Říká, že se svého času z gramatických kruhů ozvaly hlasy, že přechodníky v nové spisovné češtině jsou útvar mrtvý, nebo na vymření. Prof. Zubatý i napsal, že náš spisovný jazyk dříve nebo později dospěje k takovému období, kdy se obejde vůbec bez přechodníků. Také Ertl míní, že jsou přechodníky výrazový prostředek knižní, poloučený. Ale prof. Tr. připomíná, že ten pochybovačný úsudek pramení v té okolnosti, že přechodníky žijí v lidové mluvě většinou jen ve zbytcích, často velmi odlišných od zvyku spisovného. To je pravda – říká – ale lidová mluva není ve všem ukazatelem vývoje řeči spisovné.”

disproved such conclusions (Bečka, 1941); however, the note from “Hlídká” shows it was already too late: “avoid transgressives” became a slogan reaching schools and editorial boards, that is, institutions with direct influence on Czechs’ linguistic practices.

## Conclusions

How does the evolution of Czech transgressives compare to their situation in the Polish language? It might seem that some of the factors which could contribute to the disappearance of Czech transgressives are less prominent in Polish; for example, since they are uninflected, the formation of correct transgressive forms is not as difficult (at least in the case of the simultaneous transgressive; the anterior transgressive may be a challenge to some language users, although further research is required on this issue). Transgressives are also present in the primary school curriculum, which includes them in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade and states that students completing this level of education should “recognize participles [including adverbial participles / transgressives – AW], should understand the rules regarding their formation and inflection, should be able to correctly use transgressive phrases and understand their function, should be able to transform them into complex sentences, and vice versa”<sup>22</sup> (“Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego z komentarzem. Szkoła podstawowa. Język polski”, 2017, p. 18). On the other hand, in the context of Ewa Kołodziejek’s research quoted in the introductory part of this article, the discourse on actual and supposed mistakes committed by native speakers sounds rather familiar, particularly when it is used as an argument to avoid using transgressives altogether. If this discourse is to be accompanied by statements regarding the marginal status of transgressives and their imminent extinction, a self-fulfilling prophecy might work just like in the Czech language. Since the Czech case shows that people perceived as language authorities, and particularly linguists, could be the driving force of a process like this,<sup>23</sup> particular caution is required when formulating opinions on the status of transgressives; even though Małgorzata Czachor’s data (2019) on anterior transgressive frequency (69 per 1 mln segments) shows they are rare, it is definitely too early to declare them a “marginal” form as the frequency of such transgressives in journalism is a few dozen times higher than that of their Czech counterparts.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> “rozpoznaje imiesłowy, rozumie zasady ich tworzenia i odmiany, poprawnie stosuje imiesłowowy równoważnik zdania i rozumie jego funkcje; przekształca go na zdanie złożone i odwrotnie.”

<sup>23</sup> As for the Polish language, I expect that the opinions of established writers may also play a role. Recently, I have come across a statement from Mariusz Szczygieł (2022, p. 10), who listed the following “clumsy” expressions in his early piece: “«Programowy eklektyzm», «według zasady», «dotychczas», «począwszy», «skończywszy», «pracując jako»... – ile chwastów! Ile wyobrażenia o tym, że opis powinien być wzniosły... (...) Jak pisać – nie wiedziałem.”

<sup>24</sup> These are, of course, approximate comparisons, since the data for Polish and Czech was collected in different fashions: the frequency of Czech anterior transgressives (0.77 per 1 mln tokens) is for the 2010–2019 period, while M. Czachor’s paper provides the frequency (52 per 1 mln segments) in journalistic material found in the entire National Corpus of Polish, without periodization into decades.

Małgorzata Czachor's research is basically of a synchronic character, but it also includes key information for a diachronic perspective as it shows the drop in the frequency of use of transgressives in literature: by 8% in comparison with the period before 1950 for the simultaneous transgressive, and as much as 70% for the anterior transgressive (Czachor, 2019, p. 227). Olga Nádorníková's paper (forthcoming 2) provides even more detailed information showing that although the frequency of Polish transgressives in fiction was very stable throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a constant diminishing trend can be observed since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, this is a reason to be alarmed and to think about what we could learn from our neighbour's experiences.

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**SUMMARY**

**Keywords:** adverbial participles, transgressives, converbs, frequency, quantitative linguistics, corpus, language policy

This article describes the evolution of Czech transgressives (adverbial participles) in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries; the processes occurring within this timeframe are exemplified by the transgressive which expresses simultaneity (*přechodník přítomný*). Data related to the changing frequency of use of this transgressive was obtained from the Czech National Corpus and was used to verify the speed of its decline within artistic, journalistic, and specialist styles. The causes of the decreasing frequency of transgressives in the Czech language are discussed: they are mainly related to morphological factors and language policy, including how grammar is taught at school. Analogies with the current situation of the Polish language are also indicated, particularly in relation to the way normative prescriptions concerning the use of transgressives (and authoritative statements regarding their status) may influence the disappearance of this verb form.

**STRESZCZENIE****Zanik czeskich imiesłowów przysłówkowych – *memento mori* dla polszczyzny?**

**Słowa kluczowe:** imiesłów przysłówkowy, frekwencja, językoznawstwo kwantytatywne, korpus, polityka językowa

Artykuł opisuje rozwój czeskich imiesłowów przysłówkowych w XX i XXI w., przy czym jako egzemplifikacja zachodzących w tym czasie procesów posłużył casus imiesłowu współczesnego. W oparciu o dane z Czeskiego Korpusu Narodowego prześledzono zmiany we frekwencji tego imiesłowu, a także porównano tempo jego zaniku w stylu artystycznym, publicystycznym i specjalistycznym. Następnie przedstawiono przyczyny spadku frekwencji imiesłowów w języku czeskim, związane głównie z czynnikami morfologicznymi i polityką językową, w tym z nauczaniem gramatyki w szkołach. Wskazano też na analogie z sytuacją we współczesnej polszczyźnie, zwłaszcza w zakresie tego, jak zalecenia normatywne dotyczące imiesłowów (oraz autorytatywne stwierdzenia na temat ich statusu) mogą wpływać na zanik tej kategorii.