Towards paragraph typology

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In his pioneering article, significantly called 'Umění psát odstavce' (The Art of Paragraph Writing) Mathesius (1942) draws a boundary between those paragraphs marking absolute beginnings or ends in texts on the one hand, and text-internal paragraphs on the other, which, although self-contained, also indicate their connectedness to their co-text. Moreover, he presents his own paragraph typology, distinguishing between paragraphs presenting their themes implicitly and explicitly. These themes may in turn remain stable within paragraphs, or they may be unfolded, or else they may be developed in them. The author argues that these three types need not always exist in their pure forms. In his treatment the theme is developed when, through its inner logic, it is transformed into a new theme. A paragraph theme is unfolded when its various aspects are gradually displayed and manifested or when it is broken down into several auxiliary subthemes. The author associates the developing themes predominantly with the time axis, with dynamic/epic texts. The unfolded themes, on the other hand, are frequently employed in static descriptions. In exemplifying these types, Mathesius shows that one paragraph type may gradually infiltrate another.

In his inspiring study entitled 'The Paragraph – a Central Unit of the Thematic and Compositional Build-up of Texts' (1995), František Daneš argues that the paragraph is a content unit delimited by its boundaries and its inner coherence. He elaborates Mathesius's typology of paragraphs, using his own concept of thematic progressions. Thus he correlates two homonymous terms delimited on two hierarchized levels, namely 'the notion of "theme" in the textual sense' and 'the concept of "theme" (or "topic") in the frame-of-reference of the so-called functional sentence perspective'. Daneš argues that 'the basis of thematic units is to be seen in semantic (cognitive) structures and that their thematic functions are of textual character; they are assigned to the semantic structures on the basis of their "relevance in the given text world"'(1995:32). In his view, both kinds of 'theme'answer the same question, i.e. 'What is the speaker talking about?' *What is important is the way in which the two thematic levels are interrelated and how they interact, in what way the individual utterance themes contribute to the construction of "hyperthemes"(i.e. text themes)' (1995:32).*

Taking into consideration various relationships between the paragraph theme (Ptheme, hypertheme) and the themes of individual utterances (U-themes) of which the paragraphs consist, Daneš delimits four types of the thematic build-up of paragraphs:

First, paragraphs with a stable P-theme, in which the U-themes represent a kind of a recurrence of the P-theme. Their thematic organization is based on the continuous theme strategy.

Second, paragraphs whose P-theme is unfolded by a number of particular U-themes are further subclassified into two subtypes. On the one hand, the paragraph utterances may thematize individual aspects of the P-theme. These aspects U-themes correspond to derived themes in the framework of the thematic progressions. On the other hand, paragraphs

displaying a multiple P-theme split into two or more partial themes which are in turn treated one after the other in particular utterances. '*That is, first, the partial P-theme 1 will be processed (unfolded) in a string of utterances with U-theme 1, U-theme 2,... and subsequently, in a similar manner, the partial P-theme 2 will be processed*'.(1995:33)

The aforementioned two subtypes of paragraphs are based on what Červenka called 'paradigmatic coherence'.

Conversely, syntagmatic coherence gives rise to the third type, called a content frame paragraph. 'The P-theme has the character of a content frame (in the sense of frames, scripts, schemes), comprising a set of single items (phenomena), which will be exposed or also unfolded as single partial themes. '(1995:34) Here again Daneš distinguishes two subtypes. On the one hand, 'paragraphs with a successive specification or particularization of a P-theme having a frame character. We observe a thematic movement in the form of a serial thematization of the preceding rheme, i.e., each rheme becomes the theme of the next utterance'. (1995:34)

On the other hand, there are paragraphs containing exemplification or enumeration of the items composing the frame-like P-theme. These individual items of enumeration may, but need not have, the character of utterances.

Lastly, Daneš distinguishes the paragraphs in which the P-theme develops. 'In this instance the P-theme changes, passing and shifting to another theme, to a P-theme2. That means that at a certain point of a TP the given utterance rheme will be thematized, exposed as a new P-theme, and further unfolded'. (1995:34)

The present treatment

Throughout the following text the technical terms will be employed in the following sense:

The unit of departure will be the basic distributional field as delimited by Svoboda (1968). The FSP-theme will be understood in the sense ascribed to it by Firbas (e.g.1992), that is, as the least dynamic unit in the basic distributional field.

The term 'thematic progressions' is adopted in the sense defined by Daneš: 'By this term we mean the choice and ordering of utterance themes, their mutual concatenation and hierarchy, as well as their relationship to the hyperthemes of the superior text units (such as paragraph, chapter,...) to the whole text, and to the situation. Thematic progression might be viewed as the skeleton of the plot'. (Daneš 1974:114)

The themes and rhemes may be seen as general functions conveying various discourse subjects. 'DSs are here conceived of as anything – i.e. objects, properties, states, relations, processes, actions, events, stories, even text parts – that the speaker has in mind when employing this or that naming unit' (Daneš, 1989:235). For the sake of simplicity, for the present purpose we shall not make any distinction between the DSs and their linguistic representation (exponents).

Somewhat modifying the distinction between the two interpretations of the key homonymous terms of *THEME*, we shall tentatively reserve the capital-preceded 'theme' P-theme, PH-theme, U-theme) to be interpreted on the textual, hierarchically superior level, as corresponding to a cognitive/content entity and defining the notion of subject matter aboutness or 'topic' of a specific portion of a text (and ultimately based on the dichotomy 'what is spoken about' versus 'what is said about it'). In this sense, the Theme is more directly relevant to the reception of the text as a coherent whole. The non-capitalized 'theme', on the other hand, will be delimited on the hierarchically inferior FSP level, as the unit of the

basic distributional field carrying the lowest degree of CD, (and ultimately based on the dichotomy (FSP-)theme vs. (FSP-)rheme).

All of the delimited categories may be explicitly expressed by their linguistic exponents (discourse units) potentially entering thematic progressions and thus enhancing the cohesion in a text (and only indirectly facilitating the interpretation of a text as a coherent one). On utterance level, the two respective categories (U-theme and theme) may at times correspond to the same discourse units, but naturally sometimes their exponents differ sharply. Therefore whenever capitalized, the THEME will denote the exponents of any of the above textual categories which may, but need not, coincide with the themes in the respective paragraph utterances.

The purpose of this paper is to examine and elaborate the sources discussed previously. Altogether, we have based our classification on several parameters, which include:

- Paradigmatic versus syntagmatic coherence,
- Reiteration versus semantic derivation of the succeeding THEMES,
- Presence versus absence of PH-themes, i.e., Higher- versus lower-level strings,
- Serial versus parallel arrangement of progressions,
- Single DS paragraphs versus multiple DS paragraphs,
- Constant versus changing number of DSs in paragraphs, and, last but not least,
- Consistently versus inconsistently constructed paragraphs.

Since this topic is impossible to cover or even explore in such a small span of time, in this outline we will have to focus on some of the main parameters of the classification.

We propose to distinguish consistently between Paragraph Hyperthemes (P-themes), Paragraph Hypothemes (PH-themes) and Utterance themes (U-themes). These categories differ in their scopes. Paragraph Hyperthemes are global Themes governing and unifying whole paragraphs; PH-themes, which are lower rank Themes, embody aspects or components of these global P-themes. As an intermediate category, they control parts of paragraphs. They are further elaborated and particularized by individual U-themes, representing the lowest level Themes. However, in extreme cases, any of these distinctions may be neutralized. For example, in single-utterance paragraphs all three categories are fused.

Generally speaking, the P-theme may be stated explicitly or just implied. In the former case, its exponent (P-THEME) is launched by the so-called Topic Sentence (TS), prototypically the first utterance in a paragraph, in which it may assume either the thematic or the rhematic position (FSP). Thus, to introduce the P-theme through a Topic Sentence, the author may employ the Combined scale (1), producing the in medias res effect, or the more usual Presentation scale (2), which relieves the recipient of much of the interpretative burden.

- (1) *I 1Harry Potter was a highly unusual boy in many ways. 2 For one thing, he hated the summer holidays more than any other time of year. 3 For another, he really wanted to do his homework, but was forced to do it in secret, in the dead of night. 4 And he also happened to be a wizard.* (Harry Potter)
- (2) XI 31 In the days of the first Queen Elizabeth, there lived at Bisham Abbey a proud and beautiful lady. 32 She was proud of her face and figure, proud of her beautiful clothes and jewels, proud of her own ancient lineage and that of the man into whose family she had married. ... (Folk)

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The paragraph Hypotheme is merely an optional category. Therefore, a paragraph may, but need not, include its Hypothemes, irrespective of whether they are explicit or implicit ones. If the Paragraph Hypothemes are present, they are worded in so-called Semi-Topic Sentences (STS).

Similar to the position the P-theme exponent takes in a TS, the discourse unit denoting the Hypotheme (HYPOTHEME) may be placed either in the thematic or in the rhematic layer of the STS. Thus, in order to establish the link between the P-THEME and the respective HP-THEMES, various strategies may be used. The thematic progressions employed may be either that of continuous split theme/derived CT (3) or that of thematization of the split rheme/derived TR (4). It follows that to introduce the PH themes, one may employ paradigmatic or syntagmatic arrangements.

- (3) XXI 108 Late Norman architecture is indeed a personal and in some ways rather 'Baroque' style. 109 At St Frideswide's Priory, Oxford (now Christ Church Cathedral), the arcade is based on the giant columns of the Tewkesbury type; the triforium is not placed above them, however, as one would expect, but is oddly tucked between them. 110 At another Augustinian house, Worksop (or Radford) Priory, Nottinghamshire, there is similarly complex and unexpected internal elevation in which the tribune has a busy tripartite rhythm with a huge central arch cutting right into the clerestory area. 111 In the nave walls of St David's Cathedral, Dyfed, begun in 1180, a remarkable spatial effect is achieved. 112 Two-storey window arches contain within them both the triforium and its passage, and a large clerestory passage. (Architect)
- (4) XV 70 Exciting variants are found in the design of the west front of Lincoln and Tewkesbury. 71 At Lincoln, begun in c. 1090, we have a kind of Roman triumphal arch with a brooding power that dominates later additions to the west front from the midtwelfth to the fourteenth century. 72 At the Benedictine Teskesbury Abbey, built during the first half of the twelfth century, there is a similar triumphant expression of the sculptural power in a huge round-headed entrance arch. 73 At Tewkesbury also we have one of the most massive of all Norman towers as well as a nave, possibly complete by 1121, dominated by colossal cylindrical columns for which there is no precedent in Anglo-Saxon or Norman architecture. (Architect)

In their relation to the respective P-theme (launched by the Topic Sentence), the individual Paragraph Hypothemes are parallel. Their ranking is not affected by the number of U-THEMES the individual HP themes trigger, providing there is always at least one such U-THEME for a HP theme. It follows that the HP themes may be elaborated unevenly, without necessarily flouting a regular pattern.

Admittedly, one may, at times, run across paragraphs which elaborate individual Hypothemes unevenly, with one triggering a series of U-THEMES and (an)other(s) just introduced, whose further elaboration is suspended. In such cases, some distinctions between HP and U-THEMES are neutralized.

Still, when such cases of clear asymmetry are put aside, on the whole, the number of PH-themes elaborating the P-theme is not important, and neither is the number of U-THEMES elaborating the PH themes. However, the higher the number of the aforementioned categories, and, naturally, the longer the individual utterances of a paragraph, the greater the probability for a coherent passage to be broken down into two or more paragraph units. In such cases, similar patterns and regularities detected within paragraphs may be ascertained

also within whole paragraph groups. Clearly, as in most linguistic units, the boundaries are by no means watertight, but rather blurred or continuous.

Furthermore, in sufficiently long paragraphs the PH-themes may appear recursively on several levels in a hierarchy. The presence of such recursive Hypothemes suggests explicitly the hierarchy in such paragraphs. However, a recursive patterning is more frequently attributed to units exceeding paragraphs, that is, to the Paragraph Groups. In this way, the boundary between some paragraphs and paragraph groups may be blurred.

Naturally, not all paragraphs display the complex hierarchy described. Many are worded even without employing the intermediate Hypothemes. Those which do not display PH-themes at all may be arranged either along the paradigmatic, or along the syntagmatic axis. The paradigmatically organized ones include the Stable P-theme paragraphs, which simply reiterate the P-theme in their U-THEMES (1 above), and the Unfolded P-theme paragraphs, all of whose U-THEMES are derived directly from the P-theme. Those which are organized along the syntagmatic axis and are also devoid of the HP themes, employ the serial thematization of rhemes, and represent a subtype of content-frame paragraphs (5).

(5) *IV 15 Italo-Gallic influences remain predominant in eighth – and early ninth-century architecture, as, for example, in St Peter, Britford, Wiltshire (possibly early ninth century). 16 This is memorable for the low arches that lead from the nave into north and south porches. 17 The north arch is carved with a fine pattern of repeated foliated scrolls. (Architect)*

Whether elaborated evenly or unevenly by their respective U-THEMES, the mere existence of HP themes is usually associated with some kind of transparent and deliberate planning, and reveals a conspicuous unifying principle, and a regular pattern in paragraph structure. Thus, their construction may be considered consistent. Naturally, for a paragraph to be consistent, the representation of HP themes is by no means binding.

Paragraphs constructed consistently should be distinguished from those lacking a regular Thematic pattern. In the latter case, the author proceeds either along the paradigmatic or the syntagmatic axis, but at a particular moment, s/he decides to abandon the established pattern and for some reason or other departs from it, searching for and finally pursuing another one. In doing so, s/he produces what has become known as the so-called developing paragraphs.

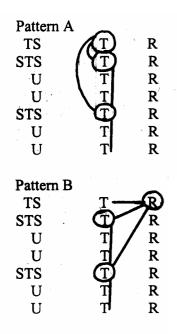
Moreover, paragraphs exist which are not directly based on the thematic progressions at all. Daneš does not elaborate on the idea but identifies them as a subgroup of exemplification/enumeration within the content frame paragraphs. Rather than on thematic strings, these seem to be based more on associative, loose, or even pragmatically motivated relations.

There seems to be yet another major distinction, namely that between the serial arrangement of THEMES and the parallel arrangement of THEMES. These two types of arrangements appear to be neutralized in the stable P-theme paragraphs, where the two major modalities coincide. In the parallel arrangement, two or more thematic strings originate from the same antecedent, while in the serial arrangement, characterized by successively concatenated links, only one thematic string always stems from one antecedent. The aspects subtype of the paragraphs with unfolded P-theme and dynamic subtype of the content frame paragraphs appear to associate primarily with the serial strategy (5), while the remaining subtypes are prone to employ the parallel strategy at least on the higher level, i.e. Hypotheme level. Still, one may make a distinction, for example, between serial (successive) and parallel arrangements within the content frame paragraphs, or else the same distinction within

paragraphs whose P-theme is unfolded: (examples 4 and 5 illustrating the former; examples 6 and 7, displaying both the modalities of the latter i.e. paragraphs with unfolded P-theme).

- (6) 14 Britain has a somewhat erratic nuclear history. 15 It plunged into nuclear power in the 1950s, in response to threats from coalminers to use their monopoly on electricity supply as ransom. 16 Britain had developed a plutonium-producing reactor for military purposes. 17 Calder Hall, which opened in 1956, led the way with the world's first power-producing nuclear unit. 18 It is still producing – more now than it was then – which testifies to the skill and care with which it was designed and built. 19 But war-torn British industry was simply not up to the demands of a rushed programme in a new technology. (Spectator)
- (7) 74 The black (ship) rat reached Britain from the east in the baggage of merchants, infested with fleas that spread the Black Death and Plague. 75 Nowadays, it is principally confined to larger ports and a few islands, although it retains a capacity for turning up in unlikely places. Its cousin, the common (brown) rat, arrived from Russia around 1682. 77 Within a hundred years it had spread right across the land and, by swimming from shipwrecks, on to almost all islands. (Heritage)

In this way, we can arrive at various configurations of the thematic progressions to be detected in paragraph types on the two distinct levels in the posited hierarchy. In doing so, we should take notice both of the higher level links (stringing the P-THEME with the respective PH-THEMES) as well as the lower-level ones (stringing HP-THEMES with their respective U-THEMES). Strictly speaking, these patterns may be visualized as forming a tentative scale. It ranges from the patterns arranged only paradigmatically on both levels, across those arranged paradigmatically only on one level, and those displaying varying degrees and proportions of paradigmatic and syntagmatic arranged syntagmatically on both the levels. In other words, paragraphs may display varying proportions of the two major types of coherence (see Fig 1).



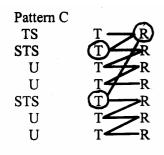


Fig. 1 Illustration of Several Paragraph Patterns

The proposed typology, which is to be conceived of as tentative and preliminary only, incorporates the interplay of several major dichotomies:

- Type of thematic progressions
- Level of linkage (higher/lower)
- Type of arrangement (serial/parallel)

However, for the present purposes, it has taken no notice of the number of DSs featured, their referential identity, their syntactic implementation, etc. Therefore, in the last part of this paper, we shall touch upon some of the parameters so far left unattended.

One of the dichotomies which has been ignored so far is a semantic one, introduced by Daneš in the 1970s, in association with the typology of thematic progressions. Specifically, it is the distinction between referentially identical reiteration of the theme in succeding utterances and the various semantic derivations. Needless to say that the semantic identity need not be impaired by formal diversity. This semantic distinction is perfectly applicable also to paragraph typology. By way of an example, paragraphs whose P-theme is stable and those whose P-theme is unfolded (aspects subtype), share both the type of coherence and the thematic path, the distinction relying only in the sematic identity or derivation of the respective themes.

Furthermore, so far we have tacitly presupposed that there is just one DS appearing in all the paragraph's THEMES. However, this need not always be the case, notably in certain functional styles. Thus one can make a distinction between single DS paragraphs (1) and multiple DS ones. (12)

If more than one DS appear in the THEMATIC layer of the paragraph, several situations/configurations may arise. In some paragraphs, the number of DSs appearing in the thematic positions remain constant throughout, while in others the number changes, either growing or decreasing. The former case can be called additive (8), the latter subtractive (9)

- (8) X 1 The introduction of the Euro, the largest currency switch in history, has proceeded with few problems - until now. 2 Polish statisticians say the one Euro coin, at least in Belgium, does not have an equal chance of landing 'heads' or 'tails'. 3 They allege that, when spun on a smooth surface, the coin comes up heads more often. (New Scientist)
- (9) XII 7 Tomasz Gliszczynski and Waclaw Zawadowski, statistics teachers at the Akademia Podlaska in Siedlce, received Belgian Euro coins from Poles returning from jobs in Belgium and immediately set their students spinning them. 8 Gliszczynski says

spinning is a more sensitive way of revealing if a coin is weighted than the more usual method of tossing in the air. (New Scientist)

Moreover, as we have already seen, there are other paragraphs which introduce a new discourse subject at the cost of the existing one/s. As a result, the reader's attention is shifted away from one DS over to another. In other words, although the number of THEMATIC DSs appearing in the paragraph does not change, their identity does. The introduction of one is compensated by the suspension of another. These paragraphs have already been labelled as developing ones. (10)

(10) V 27 The perceived threat to this ozone layer was one of the turning points in the political fortune of green issues. 28 Above all, it was the one issue which was initially championed by the Conservative administration in Britain and was the focus of a very successful British consumer campaign. 29 The well-known link, which allowed government to set policy and consumers to make a choice, is the group of chemicals known collectively as CFCs (short for chlorofluorocarbons). 30 These are humanlymade gases, developed early this century, which were designed to be exceptionally unreactive. 31 They are non-flammable, they do not react with common substances and are not poisonous, nor do they break down easily. 32 They have been used extensively in industrial societies. 33 Most notoriously, they are used as propellants in aerosol cans. 34 Certain CFCs can be liquefied easily by pressure even at room temperatures. 35 When the pressure is released they evaporate rapidly. 36 This stream of evaporating gas can be used to carry along other chemicals: for example, perfumes, paints, or deodorants. 37 Being largely unreactive, the CFCs do not *interfere with the perfume or poison the user.* (Ozone)

Another dimension of classification is the (syntactic) implementation of the THEMATIC DSs. They may appear listed, coordinated and jointly reiterated throughout, or else their various subgroups may (11):

(11) VI 15 The Dursley family of number four, Privet Drive, was the reason that Harry never enjoyed his summer holidays. 16 Uncle Vernon, Aunt Petunia and - their son, Dudley, were Harry's only living relatives. 17 They were Muggles, and they had a very medieval attitude towards magic. 18 Harry's dead parents, who had been a witch and wizard themselves, were never mentioned under the Dursleys' roof. 19 For years, Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon had hoped that if they kept Harry as downtrodden as possible, they would be able to squash the magic out of him. 20 To their fury, they had been unsuccessful, and now lived in terror of anyone finding out that Harry had spent most of the last two years at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. 21 The most the Dursleys could do these days was to lock away Harry's spellbooks, wand, cauldron and broomstick at the start of the summer holidays, and forbid him to talk to the neighbours. (Harry Potter)

Or, the individual DSs may be treated separately, taking turns and appearing relatively regularly, say, each, in every other utterance. We shall refer to these as multiple DS paragraphs with a chain strategy (12):

(12) *VIII 21 The Devil yelled with pain and anger, but St Dunstan held on tight. 22 The Devil sprang this way and that, roaring vengeance and calling up curses onto the*

head of the agile saint-archbishop. 23 Still Dunstan held on. 24 Then, with a mighty wrench, the Devil pulled himself free, and leaped, high over forge and smithy, high over church and village, high over the lovely countryside where Kent and Sussex meet, till he came to earth again in the middle of Tunbridge Wells. (Folk)

A more complicated situation arises when one DS is pursued throughout the thematic units of the basic distributional fields, while the other travels from the non-thematic layer all the way to the thematic position. In doing so, the latter may eventually submerge or even suspend or otherwise discontinue the so far pursued thematic string. This type of paragraph will be labelled as a multiple DS paragraph with an undercurrent. Its subtype, eventually suspending the original thematic string may be referred to as the one with surfacing undercurrent:

(13) III 5 At Mayfield, in Sussex, there was then no church. 6 Dunstan desired that one should be built there, and a tiny wooden one soon arose. 7 Alas, when the archbishop travelled to Mayfield to consecrate the new building, he found to his chagrin that it was out of position, and did not lie true east and west, as churches should. 8 Taking a deep breath and relying on the strength of the Almighty, he applied his shoulder to the church, and gently pushed. 9 The foundations moved, and the next moment the little church was aligned as it had been first intended. (Folk)

Last but not least, there seems to be another way of coping with the existence of two DSs entering thematic strings in a paragraph, namely keeping one consistently to the superior thematic position of the basic distibutional field, while the other to the inferior thematic positions. This frequently happens, for example, where the reporting clause features one DS (producer) while the direct speech stretches, to be interpreted here as a special kind of dependent content clauses, display another. Let us call this type – multiple DS paragraphs with a consistent thematic hierarchy.

Naturally, the survey presented till now is far from complete, but time constraints keep us from elaborating on it further.

By way of conclusion, in the present paper we have striven to outline a proposed paragraph typology, based on a number of parameters. These include the distinction between paradigmatic and syntagmatic coherence, serial versus parallel arrangement, higher versus lower-level links, reiterated versus derived THEMES, single DS versus multiple discourse subject paragraphs, and consistently versus inconsistently constructed ones.

Abbreviations and Symbols

СТ	continuous/constant theme
DS	Discourse Subject
P-theme	Paragraph Theme (Textual Level)
PH-theme	Paragraph Hypotheme (Textual Level)
STS	Semi-Topic Sentence
TP	thematic progression
TR	thematization of rheme
TS	Topic Sentence
U-theme	Utterance Theme (Textual Level)

Theme	FSP theme (FSP Level)
THEME	Exponent of any textual theme (P-theme, HP-theme, U-theme) which
	may, but need not, coincide with the FSP theme

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