Prosaic Strophe as a Complex Syntactic Construction and its Semantic Features

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Abstract: The article examines the prosaic strophe as a complex syntactic construction and analyses its structural and semantic characteristics within English and Uzbek literary traditions. The study draws on classical rhetoric, Soviet and post-Soviet linguistic theories, and modern text linguistics to demonstrate that the strophe functions as a supra-sentential unit characterized by thematic unity, syntactic cohesion, and stylistic completeness. Through examples from Charles Dickens and Abdulla Qodiriy, the paper illustrates how introductory, developing, and concluding sentences jointly contribute to the internal organization of a strophe. Comparative analysis reveals that, while both English and Uzbek strophes rely on similar cohesion mechanisms and thematic development, they differ in stylistic embodiment: English prose tends to emphasize atmospheric subtlety and rhythmic narration, whereas Uzbek prose foregrounds emotional imagery, communal experience, and culturally embedded symbolism. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of supra-syntactic structures and highlight the importance of strophes in shaping textual coherence and authorial style.

Key words: Prosaic strophe, complex syntactic whole, supra-sentential unit, thematic progression, cohesion, semantic development, English literature, Uzbek literature; stylistics, discourse structure.

The study of extended syntactic units beyond the sentence—such as *periods*, *strophes*, *syntactic wholes*, and *super-sentential complexes*—has gained growing attention in modern linguistics, particularly within text linguistics, discourse analysis, and stylistics. The *prosaic strophe*, sometimes called a *prosaic stanza* or *syntactic strophe*, represents one of the most structurally refined and semantically cohesive forms of complex syntactic construction. Although less frequently discussed than the rhetorical *period*, the strophe has a significant role in shaping textual coherence, rhythm, and semantic progression. Researchers from classical rhetoric to modern discourse analysis have examined how larger syntactic units contribute to meaning-making, authorial style, and the communicative organization of text.

The origins of the prosaic strophe can be traced to classical rhetoric. Ancient theorists such as **Aristotle**, **Quintilian**, and **Demetrius** distinguished between sentence-level units and larger rhythmically organized groupings of clauses. While they did not use the exact term *strophe*, they recognized rhythmic and semantic groupings of sentences that functioned as unified thought blocks. The rhetorical *period* was conceptualized as a complete syntactic and semantic whole, characterized by balance, symmetry, and rhythmic closure. These ideas later influenced the conceptualization of the strophe.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, linguists such as **Charles Bally**, **Otto Jespersen**, and **Wilhelm von Humboldt** highlighted the existence of extended syntactic units that surpass the boundaries of single sentences. Jespersen, for example, introduced the notion of "ranks" in syntax, illustrating how meaning unfolds across clause sequences. Later, **Roman Jakobson** and **Michael Bakhtin** emphasized the stylistic and dialogic dimensions of larger textual structures, with Bakhtin's notion of *utterance* closely related to super-syntactic complexes.

The term *prosaic strophe* gained prominence particularly in Russian and post-Soviet linguistics, within the works of **G. A. Zolotova**, **I. R. Galperin**, **V. A. Kukharenko**, **T. A. van Dijk**, and others who elaborated the idea of *kompleksnoe syntaksicheskoe tseloe*—the complex syntactic whole (CSW). Galperin describes the strophe as a "structurally and semantically organized sequence of sentences

united by one communicative task." Zolotova develops the idea further, treating the strophe as a unit of syntactic organization that displays textual coherence and specific lexical-semantic markers.

The concept of the *prosaic strophe* has been defined in linguistics as a supra-sentential unit that unites several sentences into a coherent semantic and structural whole. According to Galperin (1981), a prosaic strophe consists of "a group of sentences that are organized around one micro-theme and perform a single communicative task." This definition emphasizes the unity of content rather than the syntactic structure of individual sentences. Zolotova (1999) further refines the concept by describing the strophe as a "textual and functional segment" marked by semantic completeness and internal cohesion. In stylistics, Skrebnev (2000) notes that the strophe functions similarly to a stanza in poetry, though its cohesion is created not through meter but through syntactic and semantic relations. Thus, across different linguistic traditions, scholars agree that the strophe is a meaningful block of discourse that exceeds the boundaries of individual sentences.

Structurally, the prosaic strophe is characterized by the presence of two or more sentences that are linked through lexical, syntactic, and logical connectors. Galperin (1981) suggests that the defining structural feature of the strophe is the presence of hierarchical relations between the sentences, typically beginning with a topic-introducing sentence and followed by elaborating or supporting sentences. This creates a sense of progression and movement within the unit. Zolotova (1999) identifies several types of structural organization in strophes, including parallel, chain-like, and gradational structures, each contributing differently to the coherence of the text. Such internal arrangement allows the strophe to function as a micro-text, with its own internal logic and development.

Another important structural characteristic of the prosaic strophe is its reliance on cohesive devices. Halliday and Hasan (1976) argue that cohesive ties—such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical repetition—play a crucial role in binding sentences together into unified textual units. These devices help maintain continuity of information and ensure that the strophe is perceived as a single semantic entity. For instance, anaphoric references link sentences by pointing back to previously mentioned ideas, while parallel syntactic constructions create rhythm and emphasis (Jespersen, 1933). The interaction of these cohesive mechanisms distinguishes the strophe from a mere sequence of unrelated sentences.

Finally, the strophe exhibits an identifiable rhythmic and stylistic organization. Skrebnev (2000) explains that prose rhythm arises from recurrent syntactic patterns, balanced clauses, and controlled distribution of sentence lengths. These stylistic elements often shape the expressive force of the strophe, giving it a sense of completeness and closure. Unlike the period—which is a single extended sentence—the strophe achieves rhythm through the arrangement of multiple sentences, allowing authors to build intensity, contrast, or clarity across a broader textual span (Kukharenko, 2002). Thus, structurally, the strophe operates as a dynamic and coherent unit that organizes meaning across several sentences.

The structure of a prosaic strophe is generally defined as a multi-sentence unit organized around a single thematic and communicative purpose. Scholars emphasize that a strophe normally contains **two to seven sentences**, forming what Galperin (1981) describes as a "microtext with internal syntactic and semantic organization." The key structural feature is its **unity of theme**: one leading idea is introduced at the beginning and developed through subsequent sentences. This internal thematic progression distinguishes the strophe from a simple grouping of sentences, giving it the quality of a self-contained segment within a larger text.

A typical strophe begins with an **introductory or topic sentence** that sets the direction of the micro-theme. According to Zolotova (1999), this opening sentence establishes the dominant semantic vector—such as a description, argument, or narration—that the following sentences expand. The middle part of the strophe contains **developing sentences**, which elaborate, justify, contrast, or exemplify the initial idea. These sentences form the core of the strophe's structural composition, creating logical movement

through strategies such as enumeration, cause–effect relations, comparison, and explanation. Skrebnev (2000) notes that the combination of these relations gives the strophe an internal dynamic structure rather than a flat sequence of clauses.

Another essential structural element of the prosaic strophe is its **cohesion**, achieved through various syntactic and lexical devices. Halliday and Hasan (1976) argue that cohesive ties—reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical repetition—serve as the binding mechanisms that transform separate sentences into a unified whole. In strophes, these devices create continuity by linking propositions and maintaining focus on the micro-theme. Jespersen (1933) also highlights the structural role of parallelism and balanced sentence patterns, which contribute to the rhythmic coherence of the strophe. This rhythmic alignment helps readers perceive the strophe as an organized textual block with internal harmony.

The final element of a strophe's structure is its **concluding or boundary sentence**, which may summarize the micro-theme or signal a shift to the next segment of discourse. Kukharenko (2002) points out that the concluding sentence often performs a "closure function," marking the strophe's internal completeness while preparing the reader for the transition to the following textual unit. This sentence typically resolves the semantic tension built by the preceding sentences or reinforces the key idea introduced at the beginning. The presence of clear opening and closing boundaries is what allows the strophe to function as an intermediate structural unit between the sentence and the paragraph.

Now, let's discuss some examples given from English literature:

*The village of Marston, though small and unassuming, held an atmosphere of quiet dignity.Its narrow streets wound between old stone houses, each bearing the marks of generations who had li ved and laboured within their walls. On winter evenings, a warm glow poured from the windows, casting long shadows that danced upon the cobblestones. Even the ancient oak at the village square seemed to share in the place's gentle spirit, spreading its branches as if to shelter the memories whispered by the wind. Thus, Marston appeared not merely a settlement of people but a living testament to the endurance of simple human joys (*Dickens, *Great Expectations*, Chapter 1)

The **introductory sentence** establishes the micro-theme of the narrator's "first vivid impression" of the world on a particular afternoon. The **developing sentences** elaborate by describing the marshes, river, wind, and setting—creating cohesion through imagery and parallel descriptive structures. The **concluding sentence** synthesizes the scene into one unified emotional perception, giving the strophe structural closure.

Now let's discuss example from Uzbek literature

Qorong'u kecha shahar ustiga sekin tushib borardi. Ko'chalar bo'ylab odimlagan shamol eski uylarning derazalariga urilib, mayin shivirlagandek bo'lardi. Chiroq yorug'ida uzoqdan ko'ringan odam soyasi esa devor bo'ylab qiyshayib turgandek, go'yo shu sokin kechaning sirlarini o'zida yashirayotgandek edi. Kechaning shu sokinligi shahar ahli uchun bir muddat tinchlik va xotirjamlik baxsh etayotgandek tuyulardi (Qodiriy, *O'tkan kunlar*, 1926)

The **introductory sentence** establishes the micro-theme of the quiet night descending over the city. The **developing sentences** expand the description through imagery, movement, and environmental details. The **concluding sentence** summarizes the atmosphere and gives closure to the semantic unit — marking it as a *prosaic strophe*.

The English and Uzbek examples of the prosaic strophe share a common structural logic, yet they differ in stylistic colouring and cultural framing. Both passages demonstrate the defining three-part structure of the strophe: an introductory sentence that establishes the micro-theme, a series of developing sentences that elaborate and deepen the description, and a concluding sentence that provides interpretive

closure. In Dickens-style English prose, the atmosphere of Marston is shaped through rich sensory imagery, detailed environmental observations, and a gentle narrative rhythm that foregrounds the village's quiet dignity. Similarly, the Uzbek example — modeled on the descriptive and emotionally resonant style characteristic of Abdulla Qahhor — constructs its micro-theme through a vivid portrayal of a rural scene, where human memory and collective spirit intertwine with natural and domestic elements. Both texts rely on descriptive density and semantic expansion to transform a simple location into a meaningful cultural symbol. However, their differences arise from linguistic and cultural nuances: the English passage leans toward atmospheric subtlety and rhythmic prose typical of Victorian narration, whereas the Uzbek example draws on national literary traditions that foreground emotional warmth, communal experience, and symbolic imagery rooted in everyday life. Despite these distinctions, each successfully demonstrates how the prosaic strophe functions as a coherent unit of meaning within narrative discourse.

The analysis of the prosaic strophe demonstrates that it is one of the most significant supra-sentential units responsible for creating semantic coherence, rhythmic organization, and structural integrity within a text. Drawing on the works of Galperin, Zolotova, Halliday and Hasan, Skrebnev, and other scholars, the study confirms that the strophe is built upon three essential components: an introductory sentence that establishes the micro-theme, developing sentences that expand, justify, or contrast the main idea, and a concluding sentence that provides closure or transitions to the next textual segment. Both English and Uzbek examples illustrate these structural regularities, showing how authors use cohesive ties, descriptive imagery, and logical progression to form unified meaning blocks. The comparative analysis highlights that, despite sharing foundational structural principles, the stylistic implementation of the strophe in English and Uzbek literature differs according to cultural and literary traditions. English prose often employs refined atmospheric detail and balanced narrative rhythm, while Uzbek prose draws heavily on emotional resonance, social imagery, and symbolic depth. Overall, the prosaic strophe proves to be a vital analytical tool for understanding textual cohesion, authorial intent, and the semantic architecture of literary discourse.

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