A Functional Characterology of the English Transitional Pr-Verbs: Presentation or Appearance on the Scene Revisited

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Abstract

In the framework of the theory of functional sentence perspective (FSP), aptly elaborated by Jan Firbas (summarised in Firbas 1992), the English verb tends to be the mediator (i.e. transition) between the theme and the rheme. Every sentence implements one of the dynamic semantic scales, which functionally reflect the distribution of communicative dynamism and operate irrespective of word order. In principle, Firbas distinguishes two types of the dynamic semantic scales: the Presentation Scale and the Quality Scale. The present paper discusses the dynamic as well as static semantic characteristics of the English verb operating in the transitional sphere of the clause, with special regard to its Presentation Scale occurrence. Especially the Firbasian phenomenon of presentation or appearance on the scene is examined and exemplified by means of statistical and FSP analysis of a sample corpus based on religious discourse.

Keywords: Presentation; Scale; English; Verb; FSP; Firbas; Transition; Existence; Appearance;

1. The Topic of the Paper

The theory of functional sentence perspective (FSP) has been an integral part of the research into information processing. Following late Firbasian tradition, the author's research into the area of the theory of FSP has predominantly dealt with the text material of religious discourse. The research has been focused especially on the establishment, development, and function of the dynamic semantic tracks (within the thematic and non-thematic layers) that operate on a suprasentential level within texts (see above all Adam 2004, 2008 and 2009).

The present paper aims at the functional characterology of the English verb, which typically occurs within the transitional sphere of the clause. Above all, attention will be paid to the semantic characteristics of such verbs in the sentences where the so-called Presentation Scale is implemented. The paper will try to discuss the Firbasian understanding of presentation or appearance on the scene in the context of primary religious discourse, making use of particular examples from the corpus.

1.1 The Sample Corpus

For the purpose of the FSP analysis, several extracts from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (hereafter abbreviated *NIV*) will be used. The theory of FSP has been applied to different discourses; it is not restricted to any specific text types. Nevertheless, my research into the area of FSP principles adopted on the textual level has predominantly dealt with the text material of religious discourse as offered by the Old and the New Testaments of the Bible. The biblical texts have proved to be suitable for the purpose of the research in FSP and thus have supplied a syntactically rich source of discourse analysis studies (most notably Firbas 1992, 1995, Svoboda 1983, Adam 2004, 2009, Chamonikolasová & Adam 2005). Especially the later studies published

by Firbas dealt with a number of Old and New Testament texts (Firbas 1989, 1995, 1996). Apart from its linguistic value, the Bible is particularly interesting thanks to its canonical, and thus fixed character and variety of translations that are available.

The sample corpus (derived form the author's long-term research into the field of religious discourse) consists of the following integral passages of *NIV*: six chapters from the *Gospel According to St. Matthew* (sections Mt 1:18-4:25, 5:1-12, 6:9-13); three abridged chapters of the *Gospel According to St. John* (verses J 1:1-9+14, 1:19-28, 3:1-18, 4:1-42); an extract from the *Gospel According to St. Luke* (Lk 2:1-20, 10:30-34); two passages from the *Book of Acts of the Apostles* (Acts 2:1-4, 4:31-35); *Psalm 145*; and finally three short pieces of the New Testament epistles, viz. *Epistle to Colossians* (Col 1:15-20), the *Epistle to Philippians* (Phil 2:5-11) and the *First Epistle to Corinthians* (1Cor 15:24-28). The corpus covers all the main biblical genres, such as narratives, historical accounts, dialogues, poetic texts, and doctrine (for the corpus in full, see Adam 2009).

To sum up, the analysis explores altogether 245 biblical verses containing altogether 525 distributional fields (out of which there are 326 clauses as basic distributional fields, and 199 clauses or semi-clauses as distributional subfields). This makes up a corpus of over 31,000 words.

2. The Fundaments of Theory of FSP

Generally speaking, the theory of FSP – rooted in the functional-structural teaching of the Prague School and especially of its Brno branch – explores the information structure (theme-rheme articulation) of utterances and the relationships between the units of information in the utterance. The analytical methods of the theory have been considered one of the prominent tools of discourse analysis and information processing. According to Firbas, who elaborated the theory into its full-fledged and renowned shape (summarised in Firbas 1992), the sentence is a field of semantic and syntactic relations that in turn provides a distributional field of degrees of communicative dynamism (CD). Firbas defines a degree of CD as "the extent to which the element contributes towards the development of the communication" (Firbas 1964, 270). The most prominent part of information is the high point of the message, i.e. the most dynamic element; other elements of the sentence are less dynamic (have a lower degree of CD). The degrees of CD are determined by the interplay of FSP factors: linear modification, context and semantic structure (Firbas 1992, 14-6). In spoken language, the interplay of these factors is joined by intonation, i.e. the prosodic factor. It is the continuum of degrees of CD along with the interplay of the basic FSP factors that make FSP specific within the field of text linguistics.

2.1 The Hierarchy of Communicative Units

At the very moment of communication, the communicative value of an element may be determined only on the basis of the interplay of the FSP factors – one has to consider all the factors in action, taking into account their relative power. In English, for example, the governing factor is represented by context, which is followed by semantics and by linear modification. In accordance with the distribution of the degrees of CD, each sentence constituent corresponds to one communicative unit. Units carrying a lower degree of CD form the thematic part of the sentence and those carrying a higher degree of CD form – together with so called transition – the non-thematic part of the sentence. Firbas (1992), substantially amended by Svoboda (1968 and 1981) elaborated a sophisticated set of dynamic semantic units. The interpretative arrangement of

the communicative units (which does not, as a rule, coincide with the actual linear arrangement) – starting from the unit carrying the lowest degree of CD – is the following:

Tab. 1

Theme		Transition		Rheme	
theme proper	diatheme	transition proper	transition	rheme	rheme proper
Th	**DTh**	**TrPr**	**Tr**	**Rh**	**RhPr**

In sentences (basic distributional fields), the **thematic** units provide a foundation for the message to be conveyed. The least dynamic thematic elements perform the function of theme proper (ThPr), the most dynamic thematic elements, on the other side, perform the function of diatheme (DTh). The **rhematic** elements exceed the Tr- and Th-units in their degrees of CD. They include rheme proper (the most dynamic element of the whole sentence) and rheme, which comprises any elements carrying a higher degree of CD than Tr and a lower degree of CD than RhPr. Through the interplay of FSP factors, an element can become rhematic if it conveys entirely irretrievable information.

The **transitional** layer – which is the focus of the present paper – consists of the transition proper (TrPr) and the most dynamic transitional element, transition (Tr). The transitional sphere as a whole adds to the information set by the thematic elements and, at the same time, forms a real transition to the rhematic section. Typically, the transitional layer is made up of the predicative verb. The transitional layer is formed by the so-called Temporal Modal Exponents (TMEs) of the verb: categorial exponents and notional components (Firbas 1992, 70-1).

The TrPr layer is constituted by the categorial exponents (i.e. formal realisation) of the verb (tense, mood, aspect, person, number and polarity), while the categorial exponents are signalled, for example, by auxiliaries, endings or suffixes. The categorial exponents of the verbs have a three-fold linking role in the sentence: firstly, they link the subject with the predicate (syntactic level), secondly, they link the Th and Rh (FSP), and thirdly, they link the content of the sentence with the extralinguistic reality.

The Tr layer is, in turn, made up of the notional component (lexical meaning) of the verb – the semantic content or, rarely, by the nominal part of the predicate. It performs the dynamic semantic function of Quality or Presentation. Interestingly, as long as the notional component of the verb is irretrievable from the immediately relevant context, it carries a higher degree of CD than the categorial exponents do. Under favourable conditions (when there is no successful competitor in terms of CD), the notional component of the verb abandons the transitional layer to complete the message as the most dynamic element of the distributional field (Firbas, 1992).

2.2 The Presentation Scale

Firbas (1992) came up with the idea of the so-called dynamic semantic scales that are implemented in sentences; they functionally reflect the distribution of CD and operate irrespective of word order. In contrast with a static approach towards semantic functions of sentence constituents (e.g. affected participant, agent, instrument etc.), the dynamic semantic functions may change in the course of the act of communication; the same element may thus perform different functions in different contexts and under different conditions. In principle, Firbas distinguishes two types of dynamic-semantic scales: the Presentation Scale and the Quality

Scale. In the scales, each element is ascribed one of the dynamic-semantic functions (DSFs) (Firbas 1992). The items of both the scales are arranged in accordance with a gradual rise in CD from the beginning to the end of the sentence reflecting the interpretative arrangement.

Since the paper deals with the role of the English transitional verb operating exclusively in the framework of the Presentations Scale, only this type is going to be discussed in detail. The Presentation Scale (Pr-Scale) includes three basic dynamic semantic functions: firstly, there is a scene (Setting; Set) of the action, usually temporal and spatial items of when and where the action takes place. Secondly, the existence or appearance on the scene is typically conveyed by a verb (Presentation of Phenomenon; Pr) and, thirdly, the major, most dynamic element (Phenomenon; Ph) is literally ushered onto the scene. The patterns below are accompanied by illustrative examples from the corpus:

Ph	Pr	Set
An angel of the Lord	*appeared*	*to Joseph / in a dream.*

Recently, a special sub-type of Pr-Scale was detected and described (see especially Adam and Chamonikolasová 2005); it was labelled the Extended Presentation Scale. The structure of sentences implementing this type of interpretative scale actually corresponds very closely to the Presentation Scale, differing only in the presence of the Specification, which is not part of the pure Presentation Scale as defined by Firbas. In the following example, the Phenomenon Presented is in bold, the Specification is underlined)

Set	Ph	Pr	Set	Ph
Then	***Jesus***	*came*	*from Galilee*	*to be baptised by John.*

3. The English Verb and FSP

It has been largely taken for granted that – within the realm of FSP – the verb in English is usually semantically weak; it has a relatively emptied meaning, and serves as a mediator between the subject and other sentence elements. For instance Vachek claims that "in English the old Indo-European function of the verb i.e. that of denoting some action has been most perceptibly weakened (Vachek 1995, 23). Apart from that, being a part of an analytical language, "the English finite verb form appears to be much less dynamic in character (…) and frequently ceases to be the unmatched instrument of predication, being often reduced to something that very closely resembles a copula" (Vachek 1976, 342). This fact corresponds with what was described by Firbas in his writings (see e.g. Firbas 1992, 69-71; 88-93). As he puts it, "performing the Pr, the AofQ or the Q-function, the verb tends to mediate between elements participating in the development of the communication" (Firbas 1992, 69). Firbas also points out that the English verb can "point in two directions – in that of the Th and the Rh – and simultaneously to link the Th and the non-Th" (Firbas 1992, 91).

In relation to this phenomenon, it will be useful to refer the reader to Firbas' treatment of the verb within his theory of FSP. In the context of FSP, the English verb tends to be the mediator (or transition) between the theme and the rheme. Under the circumstances, the verb either ascribes a quality to the subject, bridging its specification, or presents something new on the scene if it

expresses the existence or appearance on the scene with "explicitness or sufficient implicitness" (Firbas 1995, 65; *cf.* Adam 2009, 92-4).

4. FSP Analysis based on the Corpus

As has been stated above, the present analysis is going to be focused on the English verbs that operate (i) in the sentences in which the Presentation Scale is implemented, and, at the same time, (ii) in the transitional part of the sentences only. Such verbs will be hereafter referred to as **Pr-verbs**. In other words, non-transitional verbs and those found in the Q-Scales will be excluded for the purposes of our discussion. The procedure will be as follows: firstly, a statistic analysis of the sample corpus will be presented and commented on, and, secondly, I will attempt at providing a dynamic semantic characterology of the Pr-verbs found in the corpus, accompanied by illustrative examples.

4.1 Statistic Analysis of the Sample Corpus

Below is a table that represents in absolute numbers and percent the statistics of occurrence of sentences implementing Pr- or Q-Scale respectively in the corpus. Drawing on what was said about the character of the so-called Extended Presentation Scale above (see section 2.2 of the present paper), I decided to include its occurrence under the general heading of Presentation Scale. Analogously, the Quality scale covers also its subtype labelled Combined Scale (*cf.* Adam and Chamonikolasová 2005).

Tab. 2

The Scale Implemented	№ of Fields	%
Pr-Scale (the Extended subtype included)	**64**	**12.19**
Q-Scale (the Combined subtype included)	461	87.81
Total	525	100.00

Apparently, a low number of the basic distributional fields in the corpus follow the pattern of the Pr-Scale. It is possible to claim, however, that the number of Pr-scale occurrence is – in comparison with other text types – still relatively high. To illustrate, in fiction narrative texts analysed in terms of FSP (works by Čapek, Leacock, and Wilde respectively) the incidence of sentences implementing the Pr-scale is usually about 5-8 percent (see the results published by Řezníčková, I. (2009); Wachsmuthová 2009; Tillhonová 2009). This tendency may be corroborated also by the findings presented by Lingová (2008), who detected an analogous occurrence of sentences implementing the Pr-scale in biblical theological texts, arriving at 7.7 percent of Pr-scale sentences. By contrast, the biblical texts in the corpus under discussion indicate 12 per cent of this subtype. Due to the space limit, a deeper discussion of this disproportion is outside the scope of the present paper though.

4.2 Dynamic semantic Characterology of the Pr-Verbs

Following the Pragian tradition (see especially Mathesius 1975 and Vachek 1995), the term linguistic *characterology* is used here to denote a holistic and functional description of linguistic

phenomena. Below is a chart that offers a basic outline of individual types of the Pr-verbs detected in the corpus, classified according to their dynamic as well as static semantic character:

Tab. 3

Pr-verb category	№ of items	%	Examples detected in the corpus
A. verbs of going & coming	24	37.50	*went out; was coming; came; followed; happened to be going; is coming; returned; will come; has come;*
B. verbs of appearance proper	13	20.31	*had appeared; came about; was created; were made; has been born; be done; appeared;*
C. static & positional verbs	1	1.56	*stands;*
D. copular "be" + quality	10	15.63	*be hallowed; blessed are;*
E. existential "be"	12	18.75	*(there) is; (there) were; (there) was; (there) were not;*
F. miscellaneous	4	6.25	*shone; attacked; took control; said;*
Total	64	100.00	

Now, the individual dynamic semantic groups of Pr-verbs found in the corpus will be discussed in a greater detail; each of the categories will be illustrated by one or two examples with a reference to the corpus.

A. Verbs of going & coming

Along with the B and E types, type A is obviously the most frequent one adopted in the corpus material. The Tr-verbs falling into this category are, in their nature, dynamic (as opposed to static) and carry the meaning of certain motion. Logically enough, they fulfil the Firbasian idea of existence on the scene, but mediate this existence from the dynamic point of view, placing emphasis on the motion process proper. *Cf.*:

> *Then / Jesus / came / from Galilee / to be baptised by John.*
> (Matthew 3:13; distributional field 69)

> *Large crowds from Galilee / followed / him.*
> (Matthew 4:25; distributional field 112)

The Pr-verbs identified in the corpus under examination usually denote a simple movement action performed by the phenomenon that is being presented on the scene of communication. The set of verbs as such is not extremely varied as to the meaning carried by the verbs; it rather denotes simple motion actions such as that of going, coming, following, or returning that actually

lack any further specification of a more subtle meaning. Kudrnáčová, for instance, in her monographic treatise on the syntactic semantic interface of directed motion, speaks – in harmony with the idea of verbs of going & coming – of "path verbs", the semantic focus of which "lies on the directionality of motion" (Kudrnáčová 2008, 44-45). In her opinion and in concordance with the present findings it is the final localization of the mover that is semantically most prominent. Such verbs deal with translocation, rather than manner of motion; the culmination point is thus usually highlighted (cf. Kudrnáčová 2008).

In this connection, it will be interesting to recall what Firbas observed in terms of semantic affinity of verbs operating as Presentations in Pr-scales. In his research material (based more or less on fiction texts), he identified a number of motion-specific verbs (such as *drift* or *gleam*) that, as it were, semantically support the character of their subjects (*a wave* or *spots of light* respectively). The noun *wave* along with the verb *drift* expresses, in his opinion, "the idea of motion" in *A wave of the azalea scent <u>drifted</u> into June's face*, and, analogously, *gleam* preceded by *spots of light* convey the notion of illumination in *And now big spots of light <u>gleamed</u> in the mist* (Firbas 1992: 60). In other words, it seems that via such semantic affinity "the verb prepares the way for the phenomenon to be presented" (Firbas 1992, 61).

B. Verbs of appearance proper

This type in fact exactly reflects the definition of Firbasian "appearance on the scene with explicitness". One could say that also Tr-verbs in this category represent a somewhat dynamic verb type; however, these Tr-verbs are concerned more with the appearance *per se* rather than with the motion involved. If we take Tr-verbs from the category A above as those based on the process of motion, here, on the contrary, it is possible to speak of appearance as a non-scalar, polar phenomenon – somebody or something appears on the scene without any prior presence, i.e. from zero to full existence.

> *When they had gone / an angel of the Lord / <u>appeared</u> / to Joseph / in a dream.*
> (Matthew 2:13; distributional field 43)

> *Today / in the town of David / a Saviour / <u>has been born</u> / to you.*
> (Luke 2:11; distributional field 14c)

The set of Pr-verbs falling into the category B is (similarly to A) relatively homogeneous in its content – the verbs mostly simply carry the meaning of the appearance of the Phenomenon to be presented on the scene. Apart from different verb forms of *appear* or *come*, we find verbs such as *be born, be done,* or *occur* in the corpus.

Again, it will be beneficial to look at what Kudrnáčová has to say on the topic of the verbal appearance on the scene. Analogously to the findings discussed in the present paper, she views appearance as "a markedly contrastive concept because it presents the entity's change of location as a sharp change of its original position" (Kudrnáčová 2008, 47). Furthermore, she goes on to claim that "the intrinsically contrastive character of (dis)appearance in underlain by the strict bipolarity of the path, lacking a transitional phase"; cf. our claim on the change from zero to full existence above (Kudrnáčová 2008, 47 and 2006).

C. Static & positional verbs

With the exclusion of the existential *there*-constructions, the corpus contains only one item; it was felt that – from the functional point of view – it does not denote existence in the classical

sense. Moreover, it does not follow the existential *there*-pattern (even if, theoretically, such verbs may occur also in there-clauses). In the example below, the verb *stand*, as it were, fulfils the function of an existential *there*-construction (cf. *There stands...*).

> *(...) but / among you / <u>stands</u> / one you do not know.*
> (John 1:26; distributional field 11b)

In his monograph of 1992, Firbas gives further examples of Pr-verbs that might fall into the type C category, such as *have* or *hold* (Firbas 1992, 62-63). He relates their FSP function to the idea of "production", though, claiming that they represent a group of transitive verbs of production. Drawing on Hatcher (1956, 44-5), he says that e.g. *have* "indicates the existence of a phenomenon in somebody's possession" (Firbas 1992, 63).

D. Copular "be" + quality
Syntactically speaking, the Tr-verb "be" falling into this category can be seen as a copula as, as a rule, a quality (carried by a complement) is ascribed through it to the subject. From the point of view of functional syntax, however, we must see the *be + quality* pattern as a representative of a transitional Tr-verb. It may be argued that such verbs might fulfil a somewhat ambiguous role – being potentially capable of perspectivising the sentence in both Pr and Q-scale directions. The D type examples were spotted above all in the poetic texts of the *Lord's Prayer* (Mt 6:9-13) and *The Beatitudes* (Mt 5:1-12).

> *Our father in heaven / your name / <u>be hallowed</u>.*
> (Matthew 6:9; distributional field 1)

At first sight, due to potentiality, it is not quite clear whether the notion of *your name* is ushered on the scene here for the first time, or, whether it forms the scene and is thus thematic, even if context-independent. Such verbs may be regarded as with a reduced or even a zero notional component. The interplay of all the FSP factors, nonetheless, disambiguates the interpretation of such sentences almost invariably towards the Pr-scale.

> *<u>Blessed are</u> / the poor in spirit / for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
> (Matthew 5:3; distributional field 5)

The whole clause is perspectived towards the subject (*the poor in spirit*) and thus the unit is rhematic, performing the dynamic-semantic function of a Phenomenon. The fact that these people (*the poor in spirit*) are *blessed* is context-independent, yet less dynamic than the Ph-element; the Phenomena entering the communication are actually introduced for the first time. The very fact that these are blessed can be viewed as something implied or even taken for granted. As a result, the verbal expression (*are blessed*) constitutes the transition only and may be considered to be merely a verb suggesting "existence or appearance on the scene with sufficient implicitness" (Firbas 1992.88-9; for a thorough discussion on the topic see Adam 2003).

E. Existential "be"
The existential *there*-clauses represent a somewhat specific phenomenon in the area of FSP interpretation; it may cause difficulties in assigning the dynamic-semantic functions to the units. Firbas speaks, in this connection, of "permanent obviousness" of the *there*-constructions in the

immediately relevant context (Firbas 1992, 24). For the writer and the reader it is obvious what this *there*-element means and hence its notion is permanently present in the situational context. Firbas argues that this construction, "though semantically very weak, is not totally stripped of all meaning, ... and acts as an indicator of a scene expressed by a genuine adverbial of place" (Firbas 1992, 24). That is why the existential there is assigned the Set-function and is entirely context-dependent. It is, furthermore, worth mentioning that the existential *there*-clauses are specific in their linear modification, i.e. word order arrangement: unlike most sentences that implement the Pr-scale, in the existential clauses the notional subject is typically postponed towards the end of the sentence. In other words, the Phenomenon is not presented in the initial part of the sentence, but on the contrary, it actually represents the culmination peak of the information structure; the English grammatical principle requiring the SVO wording is thus overridden by the linear modification FSP factor.

> *In the beginning / there / <u>was</u> / the Word.*
> (John 1:1; distributional field 1)

> *And / there / <u>were</u> / shepherds keeping watch over their flocks at night / out in the fields.*
> (Luke 2:8; distributional field 10)

In the first sentence, the notional subject (*the Word*) is context-independent (NB irrespective of it position in the sentence) and conveys the information towards which the communication is perspectived. Thus, it carries the highest degree of CD and performs the Ph-function. The verb *was* is then transitional and mediates between the theme and the non-theme. The rest of the sentence is thematic, forming the diatheme: *In the beginning* (for a detailed discussion of the existential *there*-clause, see also Firbas 1992, 59 and Breivik 1983).

F. Miscellaneous

The last Tr-verb category covers the FSP interpretation of verbal elements such *shone; attacked;* or *took control.* Occurring in the sentences implementing the Pr-scale, also these verbs should definitely express appearance or existence on the scene with "explicitness" or, at least, with "sufficient implicitness" (Firbas 1995, 65). Obviously, the Tr-verbs have, however, a more specific meaning then just that of existence or appearance on the scene. This uncertainty might thus open the door to potentially differing interpretation (Firbas 1992, 108-110 and 181-6). At first sight it seems that verbs such as *shone* do not express appearance with sufficient implicitness and so the subjects of the clauses should be assigned B-function, not Ph-function.

> *The Holy Spirit / <u>took control</u> / of everyone.*
> (Acts 2:4; distributional field 7)

> *(...) and / the glory of the Lord / <u>shone</u> / around them.*
> (Luke 2:9; distributional field 12)

At this point it should be emphasised that a whole complex (interplay) of FSP signals is needed to interpret properly the distribution of the degrees of CD. In addition to the three basic FSP factors, two more (auxiliary) ways of interpretation were demonstrated (Firbas 1995, 65; cf. Adam 2009). Firstly, it is the comparison with other translations (e.g. in Slovak, the factor of linear modification asserts itself more powerfully than it does in English):

... a <u>ožiarila</u> (Tr) / ich / Pánova sláva (Ph).
[...and shone / them / the Glory of the Lord]

The verb in the Slovak translation is definitely a Pr-verb, unequivocally perspectivising the sentence toward the subjects and ushering the phenomenon (subject) to the scene.

Secondly, it is the pressure of notional homogeneity developing in the rheme proper layer. In the examples above, the clauses are obviously perspectived towards the newly appearing participants of the communication – *the Holy Spirit* and *the glory of the Lord*. Thirdly, we may speak of "the pressure potentially exerted by the tendency to induce the notional component of the verb to serve in the transitional layer" (Firbas 1995, 65). Also this aspect of the sentence FSP interpretation is maintained. In Firbas' opinion, also these two aspects can "tip the scales in favour of the Pr-interpretation" (Firbas 1995, 65).

Let me conclude the discussion of possible types of Pr-verbs and their dynamic semantic characterology by saying that even Firbas was well aware of the fact that it is entirely implausible to enumerate a full set of verbs that may occur in the transitional sphere of Pr-scale sentences. In his summarising monograph he gives a number of Pr-verbs identified in his corpora; with a few exceptions he does not comment on the set in a greater detail, though. To present just a few, here are some of the Pr-verbs detected by Firbas in alphabetical order: *exist, be in sight, arrive, become plain, come forward, come up, crop up, come into view, emerge, evolve, develop, grow out of happen, issue, recur, rise, spring up, show up, take place,* etc. (for further reference and a full account of the Pr-verbs given by Firbas, see Firbas 1992, 60-64). We may readily say that all of these verbs are invariably in full concordance with what the present analysis suggests.

5. Conclusions

The present paper has discussed the functional characterology of so-called Pr-verbs, i.e. the verbs that operate in the transitional part of the sentences implementing the Pr-scale. The functional analysis of the Pr-verbs appearing in the corpus provides some principal data on the dynamic semantic makeup of Pr-verbs. The Pr-verbs occurring in the corpus were classified according to their dynamic semantic content and split up into six sub-categories: verbs of going & coming; verbs of appearance; static & positional verbs; copular "be" mediating a quality; existential "be"; and a few specific Pr-verbs falling into the category of miscellaneous.

As has been postulated several times above, Firbas characterises the Pr-verbs as those that present something new on the scene; this property is then defined as an expression of "the existence or appearance on the scene with explicitness or sufficient implicitness (Firbas 1995, 65). Below is a table summarising the results of the functional analysis of the corpus, specifying individual groups of Pr-verbs as well as their role in expressing existence or appearance on the scene with explicitness or sufficient implicitness. The table presents the tentative data derived form the dynamic (and static) semantic analysis in the sense of the Praguian set of binary oppositions, i.e. the signs + or − (+ as presence, - as absence of the feature):

Tab. 4

Pr-verb category	Existence		Appearance	
	with explicitness	with sufficient implicitness	with explicitness	with sufficient implicitness
A. verbs of going & coming	-	+	-	+
B. verbs of appearance proper	-	+	+	-
C. static & positional verbs	+	-	-	+
D. copular "be" + quality	-	+	-	+
E. existential "be"	+	-	+	-
F. miscellaneous	-	+	-	+

The research clearly shows that all the groups identified within the transitional Pr-verbs manifest – to a different extent – at least one of the two qualities examined: existence or appearance. The varying degree of the property is partly reflected by the fact that the property in question may be actually expressed either with explicitness or different degrees of implicitness. It follows that even though the functional characterology of the Pr-verbs set has been further specified (compartmentalising the Pr-verbs into a number of sub-types), the analysis proves that all of the categories may be readily labelled as those expressing existence or appearance on the scene with explicitness or "unmistakable" implicitness (cf. Firbas 1992, 59). The Pr-verbs then, in accordance with their tendency to recede to the background, perform the presentation function, ushering the phenomenon on the scene of the communication.

As has been noted above, the analysis deals with the author's corpus that covers above all the area of religious discourse. It is possible to claim, though, that the current findings suggest that – when comparing religious and fiction discourse – there seems to be a substantial difference even in the ratio of the sentences implementing the Q- or the Pr-scales respectively. Also, whether the dynamic semantic characterology of the Pr-verbs is identical with other types of discourse (such as fiction narratives, non-fiction texts, etc.) is still left open for further discussion and research.

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