

“A bee buzzed across their path.” **Semantic Affinity as a Formative Force in Presentation Scale Sentences**

Martin Adam

Abstract

*In the context of the theory of functional sentence perspective (FSP), the English verb either ascribes a quality to the subject, bridging its specification, or presents something new on the scene, expressing the existence or appearance of the phenomenon on the scene with “explicitness or sufficient implicitness” (Firbas 1995: 65). Focusing exclusively on the latter possibility, the present paper discusses the prototypical type of sentences implementing the so-called Presentation Scale (i.e. that containing a rhematic subject in preverbal position) within fiction narrative discourse with special regard to the semantic affinity operating between the subject and the predicate. In such distributional fields (cf. The sun shone. or A bee buzzed across their path.), the Pr-verbs seem to semantically support the character of their subjects, preparing “the way for the phenomenon to be presented” (Firbas 1992, 61). Namely, the phenomenon of semantic affinity is examined in terms of statistical and FSP analysis of a sample corpus based on two fiction narrative texts: C. S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and D. Lodge’s *Changing Places*.*

Key Words: Presentation; Scale; Affinity; FSP; Firbas; Existence; Appearance;

1 The Preliminaries

There is no doubt that it was especially Aleš Svoboda that substantially enriched the world-famous theory of functional sentence perspective aptly elaborated by Jan Firbas. Namely, it is Svoboda’s minute analysis of thematic elements (introducing also the idea of communicative fields) that ultimately led to his identification of a new type of communicative unit labelled “diatheme” or his revealing application of FSP principles on the levels hierarchically lower and higher than the clause. In his latest multifaceted research, Svoboda examined for instance Firbasian dynamic semantic scales and their implementation in poetic texts in relation to the auctorial communicative intention and the accompanying aesthetic effect.

In this respect, the present paper is meant to be both a humble contribution to the long-term study of FSP conducted in particular within the Brno branch, and, at the same time, a tribute paid to Aleš Svoboda’s memorable and multifarious achievements in the field of functional linguistics. Building on the findings presented especially by Firbas (1992), Svoboda (2005, 2006) and Dušková (1998, 2008), the paper looks at one of the most frequent types of sentences implementing the Presentation Scale, i.e. that containing **a rhematic subject in preverbal position**. Predominantly, it deals with the register of fiction narrative discourse, focusing on the phenomenon of so-called **semantic affinity of the verb with the subject**. For the purpose of analysis two novels are used: C. S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (in the corpus abbreviated N) and D. Lodge’s *Changing Places* (in the corpus abbreviated C).

Being a fraction of a larger tagged corpus under the current author’s examination, the present corpus consists of ca 125,000 words and their FSP analyses. Within the corpus, there are 5,946 basic distributional fields, which are technically counted as finite clauses; non-finite clauses are regarded as separate communicative units within the basic distributional fields. Out of all the basic distributional fields in the corpus, 488 instances of sentences that implement the Presentation Scale were identified, which represents 8.2 percent. 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 occurrence is in full compliance with other findings and other genres examined (see e.g. Adam 2009, 2010).

2 Pr-Sentences Classification

In his opus magnum, Firbas (1992) introduced 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 principle, Firbas distinguishes two types of dynamic-semantic scales: the Presentation Scale (Pr-Scale) and the Quality Scale (Q-Scale). In these scales, each element is ascribed one of the dynamic-semantic functions (DSFs) (Firbas 1992). In contrast with a static approach towards semantic functions of sentence constituents (e.g. 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 (cf. also Svoboda 2005: 221). The items of both scales are arranged in accordance with a gradual rise in CD from the beginning to the end of the sentence reflecting the interpretative arrangement.

What follows is a brief, summarising account of the Presentation Scale sentences (hereafter abbreviated Pr-sentences), i.e. the framework of the present paper. The prototypical Pr-Scale includes three basic dynamic semantic functions. Going in the interpretative arrangement from left to right (from the least to the most dynamic element), the first position is taken by the thematic Setting of the action (Set), usually temporal and spatial items of when and where the action takes place. Second, the existence or appearance on the scene is typically conveyed by a verb by means of the Presentation of Phenomenon (Pr). Finally, the major, most dynamic element, Phenomenon to be Presented (Ph) is literally ushered onto the scene (Firbas 1992, cf. Chamonikolasová & Adam 2005):

- (1) *A second police car (Ph) drew up (Pr) beside them (Set).* (C191a)

To make the picture complete, it should be at least mentioned that unlike the Pr-Scale, the Quality Scale sentences do not present a new phenomenon on the scene, but ascribe a Specification (Sp) through a quality verb (Q) to a typically context-dependent Bearer of Quality (B) as in (2):

- (2) *They (B) were sent (Q) to the house of an old Professor who lived in the heart of the country (Sp).* (N7b)

Before a thorough discussion on the phenomenon of semantic affinity between the verb and the subject in the Pr-sentences is presented, it is necessary to outline the basic syntactic semantic subtypes of the Pr-sentences. In the present corpus (as well as in other corpora under the author's examination), four principal syntactic patterns were identified and labelled as Subtypes 1-4 (see below). Incidentally, though carried out independently, the classification acquired is virtually in harmony with what Dušková offers in her study on differentiation of the syntactic forms of the Presentation Scale (cf. Dušková 1998). Also Svoboda tackled the area of syntactic semantic types of sentences implementing the Pr-Scale within his functional treatment of parallel sentences both in Czech and English (Svoboda 2005). Nevertheless, he does not classify their syntactic make-up in a systematic way, focusing instead on the word order issues emerging in the comparative background, such as the question of (emotional) markedness of certain types of Pr-sentences (Svoboda 2005: 224-225).

The following four examples will shed light on the four syntactic semantic subtypes of Pr-sentences detected in the corpus (the Phenomenon is underlined, while the Pr-verb is in bold):

- (3) *There **are** streaks of soot on the engine cowlings.* (C9b)
- (4) *A slow cruel smile **came over** the Witch's face.* (N99b)
- (5) *And next to Aslan **stood** two leopards of whom one carried his crown and the other his standard.* (N125)
- (6) *The walls of his room **bore** plentiful evidence of his marksmanship in the form of silently snarling stuffed animals.* (C23b)

Below is the table showing the findings obtained in the course of the corpus analysis:

Table 1 Incidence of the Subtypes of Pr-sentences in the Corpus

Pr-Scale Sentences	Occurrence	%
Subtype 1 – Existential construction (Ex. 3 above)	317	65.0
Subtype 2 – Rhematic subject in preverbal position (Ex. 4)	122	25.0
Subtype 3 – Fronted adverbial & S-V inversion (Ex. 5)	40	8.2
Subtype 4 – Locative Th-subject (Ex. 6)	9	1.8
Total	488	100.0

As has been suggested above, only Subtype 2 will actually be discussed in the scope of this paper as in it examples of semantic affinity of the verb with the subject may be traced. As a rule, Subtype 2, viz. the **rhematic subject in preverbal position**, represents the second most recurring subtype of the Pr-Scale sentence pattern (Adam 2011; cf. Adam & Kudrnáčová 2010). It is usually referred to as the prototypical, canonical type connected with the Presentation Scale (Dušková 1998). In it, the initial sentence element is typically represented by a context-independent subject, which is only then followed (in accordance with the requirements of the English word order principles) by the verb, which expresses existence or appearance on the scene. The sentence may be also opened with a scene-setting temporal or spatial thematic adverbial, the position of which is quite volatile (Adam 2011). Cf.:

- (7) *And now a very curious thing **happened**.* (N70)

Obviously, the word order of this subtype actually violates the end-focus principle observed in English. If fully implemented, linear modification induces the sentence elements to manifest a gradual rise in CD in the direction from the beginning to the end of the sentence. It should be recalled at this point that while in Czech the FSP linearity principle represents the leading power governing the syntax of sentences (i.e. the further an element is in the sentence the more prominence it carries), in English the prominent word order principle is the grammatical one. The English sentence has to satisfy the requirements of ordering the individual sentence elements in accordance with their syntactic functions. Nevertheless, sentences with a rhematic subject in preverbal position are, as a rule, considered unmarked by native speakers of English (exceptions may be observed in connection to prosodic re-evaluating intensification; Firbas 1992: 154-156; Svoboda 2005: 224-225).

It follows that the verb operating in Pr-Scale sentences (Pr-verb) presents something new on the scene. It is important to recall that in relation to its presentation role, Firbas claims

that it does so “if it expresses the **existence or appearance on the scene with explicitness or sufficient implicitness**” (Firbas 1995; cf. Adam 2011). In the present corpus (and also in other corpora under the author’s investigation), two types of verbs classified in this respect have been detected.

Most Pr-verbs clearly express the existence or appearance on the scene in an explicit way. Prototypically, these are verbs such as *come, arrive, step in, come down, be born, enter, appear, occur, turn up, rear up* etc. (Adam 2010, 2011). The Pr-verbs falling into this are, in their nature, dynamic, mostly intransitive, and carry the meaning of appearance, both as a result of a dynamic process or seen in the process of motion proper. Such verbs actually exactly reflect the definition of Firbasian appearance on the scene with explicitness. Cf.:

(8) Three men **entered** the room. (C223c)

In his treatise on valency of the English verb, Allerton (1982) describes this syntactic verb group – using his own terminology – as a divalent valency structure No.17 patterning as *S + V + Adverbial Elaborator*, especially of the directional character. Apart from classical Pr-verbs like *come, go, arrive, sit, lie, stand, reside* he lists for instance verbs such as *step, travel, live, occur*, etc. (Allerton 1982: 101). In addition, he sees this syntactic group as an underlying variant of existential *there*-clauses (Allerton 1982: 95).

However, research has convincingly shown that other types of verbs are also capable of expressing the existence or appearance on the scene even though they do not convey the meaning of appearance in a straightforward manner; in other words, they do so with sufficient implicitness (Firbas 1992, 1995; cf. Adam 2009, 2010). A relatively large group in the corpus is made up with Pr-verbs that express the existence or appearance on the scene in a rather implicit way; all different sorts of verbs, such as *overshadow, send, strike, await, buzz, wake (the silence), chirp, shine, seize, shine, pour, feed, blow* or *preach* were identified in the research corpus (cf. Adam 2010). Seemingly, the verbs come from different semantic groups of verbs and do not have much in common.

In Adam 2010 and 2011, a set of intriguing questions were asked but never truly or fully answered: What is the implicit semantic load that enables a verb to serve as Pr-verb in the Presentation Scale? What criteria should be taken into consideration? What and where are the boundaries between the maximum degree of implicit expression of existence or appearance on the scene and a verbal content that allows “only” for a qualitative use of the verb in the Quality Scale? Perhaps the time has come to answer those at least partly now as the heart of the matter seems to be, among other things, the semantic affinity discussed in detail below.

3 Semantic Affinity in Subtype 2 of Pr-sentences

The point is that the research has shown that one of the most significant features of such Pr-verbs occurring in Subtype 2 may be described as a certain degree of **semantic affinity between the Pr-verb itself and the clause subject** (cf. Firbas 1992: 60). To be more specific, the corpus findings show that ca 33 percent of all sentences of Subtype 2 manifest subject – verb semantic affinity. Such occurrence seems to reveal a significant semantic feature of what may be considered to express existence or appearance on the scene in an implicit way. In previous papers (see esp. Adam 2010 and 2011), I introduced several sentences in which a certain sort of semantic affinity was detected. This paper, however, attempts at a more delicate typology of such sentences and a possible revelation of some of the underlining (syntactic and/or semantic) principles. The title sentence of this paper as well as two others will be used as introductory examples:

- (9) *A bee **buzzed** across their path.* (N120e)
 (10) *At that moment a strange noise **woke the silence**.* (N128)
 (11) *The sun **shone**.* (C20)

In (9)-(11), the action is so semantically inherent to the subjects (subject-related) that it is the subject that takes over the communicative prominence at the expense of power of the verbal content (cf. Adam 2011). The static semantics of the verb then – even if expressing a specific type of action – is reduced to that of presentation. The semantic content of the verbal element is so natural of the agents employed that the full verb serves to denote a form of existence or appearance on the scene. In other words, the verb that operates in semantic affinity with its subject semantically supports the character of the subject. One may readily say that buzzing is an inbred activity for bees and thus in (9) the highest degree of communicative dynamism is definitely carried by the subject. Similarly, it is most natural for a strange noise to wake silence (10), or for the sun to shine (11). Incidentally, a very similar set of instances following identical principles has been repeatedly identified also in other corpora of narrative character, such as New Testament narrative texts (Adam 2011), including several Firbas' and Svoboda's examples that were actually not discussed in terms of their semantic affinity. Cf. Firbas' (1992: 67) *Ages ago a young king **ruled** his country capriciously and despotically*, or Svoboda's (2005: 222) *A dog **barked** in the distance*.

As mentioned above, the dynamic semantic role of the verb used is reduced to that of presentation and the communicative lead is taken by the respective subjects/agents. A crucial role when interpreting the sentences as to the dynamic semantic function implemented is undoubtedly played by the immediately relevant verbal and situational context (Firbas 1992: 59-61; Adam 2009). In his discussion on such cases, Svoboda also takes it for granted that "context will decide whether the Pr-scale or the Q-scale is employed" (for details along with examples see Svoboda 2005: 225). The presentational interpretation of Pr-sentences with subject – verb affinity (which may be legitimately questioned at first sight) can be – apart from the major role of the context – additionally corroborated by two facts. First, it is the placement of the nuclear stress on the rhematic subject in English (the intonation centre is noted by capital letters):

- (12) *Then A WIND **sprang up**.* (N92a).
 (13) *And THE MOON **came out**.* (N92c)

Second, by the Czech corresponding equivalent translation of the clauses in which the rhematic subject – according to the principle of end-focus – invariably occupies the final position in the sentence – cf. (12a) and (13a):

- (12a) *Pak **se zvedl** VÍTR.*
 (13a) *A **vyšel** MĚSÍC.*

In harmony with what has been said above, Dušková (2008: 72-73) also mentions semantic affinity of the verb and the subject as an accompanying phenomenon of Pr-sentences. Commenting on various possibilities favouring the presentational interpretation, she claims that the Pr-verbs manifesting affinity may be – with identical effect – functionally replaced by verbs that express existence/appearance on the scene in a purely explicit manner. Thus, the title sentence (9) above could be analogously expressed by means of an explicit Pr-verb

accompanied by a locative adverbial construction in the object position (9a), not to speak of an existential construction proper (9b). Cf.:

(9) *A bee **buzzed** across their path.* (N120e)

(9a) *A bee **appeared** / **perched** on their path.*

(9b) ***There was** a bee on their path.*

A parallel transformation is naturally unheard of in the sentences implementing the Q-Scale; in them, something new is said about the Bearer of Quality and the predication does not express existence/appearance on the scene any more. It follows that the verb(s) used cannot be replaced by a Pr-verb without changing the FSP of the sentence. Cf.:

(9c) *On the windowsill (Set), the bee (B) **buzzed and flew away** (Q).*

Semantically, the Pr-verbs that manifest semantic affinity with their subjects are almost prototypically recruited from a relatively limited semantic category of verbs generally related, to a certain extent, to sensory (acoustic, visual etc.) perception. Below is a tentative (because partly overlapping in places) classification of these categories, examples adduced. Although due to space limitation the examples of Pr-sentences are decontextualized, all of them congruently implement the Pr-Scale:

- Natural / supernatural phenomena typically unaffected by people, such as weather:

(14) *A light breeze **sprang up**.* (N119d)

(15) *And the moon **came out**.* (N92c)

(16) *The sun **shone**.* (C20)

(17) *A cloud **swirls** round Philip Swallow's plane.* (C53c)

Let me at least briefly comment on one particular aspect of the examples (15) and (16) adduced above. Closely related to their syntactic make-up is also the question of definiteness of the subjects in Pr-sentences. Contrary to the “prototypical” use of the indefinite article in Pr-sentences, subjects in these two make use of the definite article; this, nevertheless, does not violate the concept of context-independence of the subjects but obviously denotes the uniqueness of the phenomenon (the Sun, the Moon and the like). Cf. a somewhat peculiar example of another use of the definite article in the Pr-sentences in (24) below: in *The potatoes are boiling / and the kettle's singing* the subject is clearly context-independent and yet the definite article is employed. This case can be seen as a result of both colloquial use of language in the particular dialogue and of the fact that potatoes (and tea in the second part of the sentence) are to represent a commonplace snack.

- Fauna and flora:

(18) *A bee **buzzed** across their path.* (N120e)

(19) *Close beside the path they were following, a bird suddenly **chirped** from the branch of a tree.* (N74d)

(20) *In the wood behind them a bird **gave a chuckling sound**.* (N148b)

- Facial expressions / bodily feelings at times expressed metaphorically or via personification of an inanimate object:

- (21) *A searing pain **bored** into his hand.* (C84)
 (22) *A ghost of a smile **hovered** on Mrs Swallow's lips.* (C86c)
 (23) *An expression of great pain **passed over** his big, brown face.* (C182a)

Likewise, Firbas offers several examples of Pr-sentences in which there is “a context-independent subject presenting a phenomenon appearing on a human body, the element(s) expressing the body or some part of it performing the role of a setting” (see Firbas 1992: 61).

- Inherent qualities / actions of inanimate objects:

- (24) *The potatoes **are boiling** / and the kettle's **singing**.* (N74c,b)
 (25) *...and wine **flowed**...* (N179c)
 (26) *Two cups **steamed** on the bedside table.* (C230)
 (27) *...a delicious aroma of bacon and coffee now **began to percolate** from the kitchen below.* (C205b)
 (28) *A bomb **exploded** in the men's john on the fourth floor.* (C121b)
 (29) *Cars **honked and hummed** in the road.* (C117a)

- Sensory actions, at times expressed metaphorically or via personification of an inanimate object:

- (30) *There a beautiful sight **met their eyes**.* (N120e)
 (31) *A segment of light from the corridor **fell** across the floor.* (C83d)
 (32) *A spotlight **threw a pool of violet light** on to the stage.* (C112)
 (33) *A dark spidery shadow **flashed** across the gardens on the hillside.* (C171b)
 (34) *A National Guard helicopter **clattered** over the Euphoric State campus yesterday, spraying tear gas over some 700 students.* (C162)
 (35) *At that moment a strange noise **woke the silence**.* (N128)

Cf. Firbasian examples (1992: 60):

- (36) *A wave of azalea scent **drifted** into June's face, ...*
 (37) *And now big spots of light **gleamed** in the mist.*

The Pr-sentences falling into the last category – examples (30)-(37) seem to be in concord with Svoboda's interesting instance of a sentence from Čapek presenting a phenomenon through “the manner of its momentary appearance” (Svoboda 2005:224); notation and underlining mine:

- (38) *...stříbrným zvukem / **odkapává** / osamělá studna.
 [(with) silvery sound / is-dripping / solitary well]*

Likewise Firbas (1992: 61) gives an example of a sentence where the appearance on the scene is metaphorically expressed by a verb-object combination (cf. my examples (30)-(35) above). Firbas argues that via such semantic affinity “the verb prepares the way for the phenomenon to be presented” (Firbas 1992: 61); notation and underlining mine again:

(39) *Through Aunt Ann’s compressed lips a tender smile forced its way.*

In relation to this phenomenon, Headlandová Kalischová (2010) discusses in her treatise on English intonation (mis)used by Czech speakers several examples of Pr-sentences actually manifesting the subject – verb semantic affinity. Building above all on Halliday (1967: 38-39), Schmerling (cited in Gussenhoven 1986: 88), and Cruttenden (1986: 82-83), she aptly summarises a number of characteristic features of Pr-sentences (even if seen from the perspective of phonetics). Such sentences – labelled here as *high frequency collocations* – are characterised by (i) a peculiar placement of intonation nucleus, i.e. on the subject, (ii) typically intransitive verbs with inanimate objects, and (iii) by their general reference to “(dis)appearance or misfortune” (Headlandová Kalischová 2010: 70-71). Especially the last feature mentioned certainly adds a new aspect to the list above. However, her observations are obviously in full compliance with the finding presented in this paper. In the two examples below she points out the importance of the immediately relevant verbal and situational context once again; the sentences are taken from a dialogue in which a set of problems detected in a house are enumerated:

(40) *THE STAIRS are a bit dangerous.*

(41) *And THE ROOF is leaking.*

Apparently, it can be said that the semantic content of the verbal element in the given verbal and situational context is so natural to the agents employed that the full verb serves to denote a form of existence on the scene more than the action proper. Interestingly enough, the Czech non-native speakers of English under examination did not, as a rule, observe the appropriate distribution of prosodic prominence and “automatically” shifted the intonation centre onto the last element of the sentence. The core of this inappropriate, yet expectable deviation lies in the different prosodic FSP requirements of English and Czech (for the details see Headlandová Kalischová 2010: 71).

At this point in the discussion, a remark concerning the purely syntactic make-up of Pr-sentences is in order, namely a commentary on transitivity. It has been noted above that the Pr-verbs typically tend to originate in the intransitive (though sometimes can act as transitive) group of the English verb (in the examples above, see e.g. items (14)-(19) or (21)-(26); such sentences follow usually the SV or SVA sentence types patterns (see also Quirk et al. 1985: 1169-1170, on monovalent verbs see Huddleston et al. 2002: 219). Generally speaking, research has indicated that Pr-verbs appear to tend towards relatively simple syntactic structures, whereas a more complex complementation of the verb (i.e. a multiple valency) usually speaks in favour of quality verbs (Q-verbs). However, especially in the area of subject – verb affinity, the Pr-verbs are recruited also among transitive verbs (ordinarily patterned as SVO or SVOA). Cf.:

(42) *In the wood behind them a bird gave a chuckling sound. (N148b)*

(43) *There a beautiful sight met their eyes. (N120e)*

(44) *A spotlight threw a pool of violet light on to the stage. (C112)*

(45) *At that moment a strange noise woke the silence. (N128)*

The four examples adduced above (42)-(45) obviously fall into the semantic category of Pr-verbs expressing existence or appearance on the scene with sufficient implicitness in a metaphorical way and following the SVOA pattern in the present corpus. Incidentally, the transitive character of the verb seems to go hand in hand with the metaphorical / personifying nature of the phrase.

In addition, Firbas (1992: 61) lists several examples of S – V affinity quoting Svobodová (1966). He claims that in such sentences the object expresses a phenomenon that is “filled, permeated or covered by another phenomenon. The latter appears within the space provided by the former. The latter is the phenomenon to be presented; the former serves as the setting (scene) for the presentation” (Firbas 1992: 61). Dušková discusses the issue of (in)transitivity in connection to the use of passive voice in Pr-sentences (Dušková 2008: 72-73); she points out that especially ditransitive verbs, such as *bring* or *hand*, are capable in their passive form of expressing presentation. In her view, “the goal of action expressed with an indirect object can be understood as the scene, and the verb as appearance on the scene induced from outside” (Dušková 2008: 73; transl. by MA).

Though the observations above seem to be in accord with the general linguistic tendencies, the conjectures concerning the role of transitivity in the framework of syntactic semantic characteristics of Pr-verbs inevitably remain a subject to further research.

4 Conclusions

The present paper discussed the prototypical type of sentences implementing the so-called Presentation Scale (i.e. that containing a rhematic subject in preverbal position) within fiction narrative discourse with special regard to the semantic affinity operating between the subject and the predicate. In such distributional fields, the Pr-verbs seem to semantically support the character of their subjects, preparing “the way for the phenomenon to be presented” (Firbas 1992, 61). On the basis of an array of corpus examples, a number of semantic categories of semantic affinity were identified and, in addition, some special syntactic aspects of such sentences were examined.

Before conclusions are drawn, it will be beneficial to provide a brief comparative summary of all types and subtypes of dynamic semantic scales that were tackled in the paper. The point is that the borderline between some of them may be tricky and/or misleading and, sometimes, even the essential differentiation between the Presentation and the Quality Scales respectively may seem deceptive. Therefore, apart from the Pr-scale, also the Q-scale examples will be included. Let me recall the set of research questions that were formulated at the beginning of this paper:

- 1 What is the implicit semantic load that enables a verb to serve as Pr-verb in the Presentation Scale?
- 2 What criteria should be taken into consideration?
- 3 What and where are the boundaries between the maximum degree of implicit expression of existence or appearance on the scene and a verbal content that allows “only” for a qualitative use of the verb in the Quality Scale?

The following conclusive remarks should provide several satisfactory answers. To be more specific, drawing on the findings of the present paper as well as previous research, I am inclined to see the Firbasian system of dynamic semantic scales as a more-or-less continuous spectrum rather than a black-and-white, i.e. polar set. The principal distinguishing criterion is

then the relative degree of explicitness of existence or appearance on the scene expressed. The summary will be first outlined in a table and then discussed in more detail below.

Table 2 Spectrum of explicitness of existence or appearance

	Subtypes of the scales	Example	Note
1	Classical Pr-Scale expressing existence or appearance with explicitness	<i>A new boy came into the classroom.</i> <i>A new idea appeared in his mind.</i>	Invariably intransitive verbs (SV, SVA)
2	Pr-Scale with sufficient implicitness (typically with semantic affinity of the verb with its subject)	<i>A bee buzzed across their way.</i> <i>A strange noise woke the silence.</i> <i>There a beautiful sight met their eyes.</i>	Typically intransitive, but also transitive verbs (SVA, SVO or SVOA) Can be replaced by an explicit Pr-verb Tendency towards subject – verb affinity
3	Q-Scale with a context-independent subject (i.e. so-called Combined scale)	<i>A king had three daughters.</i> <i>A boy opened a can of Coke in his armchair.</i>	Transitive (SVO or SVOA) verbs
4	Classical Q-Scale with a context-dependent subject	<i>The boy showed me a text message.</i> <i>The boy gasped.</i>	Both transitive and intransitive verbs with a more concrete semantic load Much more directly express a particular action

Looking at the chart, it will become evident that it is especially the “seam” between Categories 2 and 3 that deserves special attention as the borderline appears to be subtle if existent at all. In other words, it is exactly the breakpoint area where the semantic load of the verb in question necessarily tips the scales. Example sentences from Categories 2 and 3 look, at least at first sight, identical; true enough if one employs only syntactic approach. Once both dynamic and static semantic approaches are adopted, though, the two sets of sentences can be seen from two different perspectives. As the explanatory notes in Table 2 suggest, it is the very semantics of the verbs that makes the difference. Some verbs (Category 2) “unmistakably imply, or under certain conditions are capable of unmistakably implying, appearance or existence on the scene” (Firbas 1992: 60) thanks to (i) **being prevailingly intransitive – i.e. tending towards a relatively simple complementation**; (ii) **operating typically in sentence types SVA, SVO or SVOA**; (iii) **being exchangeable with an explicit**

Pr-verb such as *appear* or *come*; (iv) most notably, manifesting the subject – verb semantic affinity. The other verb group (Category 3) – even if operating in analogous syntactic configurations – cannot express existence or appearance and so are destined to serve as verbs ascribing a Quality or Specification in a Q-scale only. To sum up, the implicit semantic load that enables a verb to serve as Pr-verb in the Presentation Scale is inevitably related to its syntactic, lexical and semantic characteristics, such as valency, transitivity or semantic affinity. On the other hand, the verbs falling into the Category 3 in Table 3 are invariably transitive (patterning as SVO or SVOA) and fulfil the dynamic semantic function of a Quality in Firbasian Combined Scale. In it, as Firbas (1992: 67) says, the distributional field “telescopes the Ph-function and the B-function into the subject”; the Phenomenon presented actually coincides with the Bearer of Quality and is introduced on the scene *in medias res*, i.e. without any actual presentation (cf. Svoboda 2005: 226). It should be noted that although Firbas (1992, 1995) consistently uses the expression Combined scale, the function of such sentences have been recently understood as a functional variant of the Quality Scale (Chamonikolasová & Adam 2005, Dušková 2008: 73-74).

Much has been said about the traditional Pr-verbs of Category 1 in Table 2 above; in a nutshell, they express existence or appearance on the scene with unequivocal explicitness. To complete the picture, Category 4 of the spectrum covers the classical Q-Scale instances with context-dependent subjects and verbs (both transitive and intransitive) that convey a distinctly more concrete semantic load than Pr-verbs. Q-verbs are capable of expressing a rhematic specification or ascribing a quality to the subject. In the spectrum of explicitness of existence or appearance, Q-verbs much more directly express a particular action (as opposed to mere existence/ appearance); the existential meaning of existence is rather implicit and, so to speak, limited to the minimum. And, vice versa, the qualitative content of Pr-verbs is reduced to that of presentation. Evidently, the FSP of the English sentence is co-determined by the lexico-semantic nature of the verb (cf. Dušková 2006 (1988): 531).

To conclude, it should be highlighted again that **semantic affinity of the English Pr-verb with the subject seems to stand at the root of the question concerning the (semantic and syntactic) criteria that make it possible for the verb to act as a Pr-verb in the sentence. In this respect, such semantic affinity proved to be a truly formative force operating in the constitution of the Presentation Scale sentences.** Many of the related aspects as well as an in-depth study of the role of valency and transitivity have only tentatively been tackled in the paper, and so definitely call for further research.

List of Abbreviations

B	bearer of quality
C	Lodge's <i>Changing Places</i>
CD	communicative dynamism
DSF(s)	dynamic semantic function(s)
FSP	functional sentence perspective
N	C. S. Lewis' <i>The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe</i>
Ph	phenomenon to be presented
Pr	presentation
Rh	rheme / rhematic
Q	quality
Set	setting
Sp	specification
SVO etc.	sentence types / patterns
Th	theme / thematic

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Address:

Mgr. Martin Adam, Ph.D.
 Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury PedF MU
 Poříčí 7, 602 00 Brno
 Czech Republic
martinadamcz@yahoo.com