

Selected style markers of English biblical texts (seen through the prism of FSP)

Martin Adam (Brno)

ABSTRACT

The paper looks at the stylistic dimension of English religious texts analyzed against the background of the Firbasian theory of functional sentence perspective (FSP). Anchored in the functional approach to the study of language, it first defines the basic linguistic concepts, both in the area of English stylistics and the theory of FSP. Having introduced the research corpus (selected biblical texts in the *New International Version*) the paper explores three key FSP style markers (viz. the frequent occurrence of potentiality, the ratio of different syntactic realizations of presentation sentences, and manifestation of ideology). The phenomena under examination are discussed first at the level of FSP to be subsequently interpreted in terms of functional stylistics. It is possible to conclude that, in addition to pragmatic differences concerning the biblical discourse, the connection of the theory of FSP with the stylistic dimension of the text proved to be enriching and fruitful.

KEY WORDS

FSP, style, stylistic, markers, biblical, religious

INTRODUCTION

Over the decades, the theory of functional sentence perspective (FSP) has been understood as one of the major approaches to the study of information processing as well as text linguistics (Firbas, 1992, 1995; Svoboda, 1989, 2005; Dušková, 1998, 2008; Chamonikolasová, 2010, 2013; Adam, 2009, among others). Its cornerstone research method has been based on a careful, minute and context-oriented analysis of text and an insightful interpretation of this which is anchored within the orthodox FSP coordinates. Following in the clearly established footprints of Firbas and Svoboda, researchers in FSP have pursued the notorious triplet of language dimensions (labelled FSP factors), viz. the immediately relevant context, linear modification and semantics.

Somewhat heretic though it may appear at first sight, the present paper proposes to offer yet another dimension of FSP analysis: it looks at the Firbasian theory of FSP as a tool of stylistic analysis. Originally, some stylistic observations were commented on rather as a “side-effect” of the regular analysis (Firbas himself did not take style into consideration in a systematic way); later on, however, research proved that style as such seems to represent a significant (and desired) aspect of FSP interpretation. On the one hand, different types of text (registers, genres, etc.) manifest different FSP qualities and, as a consequence, provide the researcher with a range of text-specific features of the text under examination. On the other hand, adopting an entirely op-

posite (yet complementary) perspective, we may say that it is the style of various texts that brings about sets of differing FSP qualities.

In accordance with Firbasian scholarly legacy (as well as our research), the paper will focus on the area of biblical religious texts, and specifically on English translations of a set of Biblical extracts. Especially the later studies published by Firbas dealt with a number of Old and New Testament texts. To illustrate, let us recall his paper on the establishment and the function of the dynamic-semantic layers of Luke 2:1–20 (Firbas, 1995), the case study in linear modification discussing the translation of the Revelation 21:6b (Firbas, 1996) or his interpretation of Psalm 91 based exclusively on FSP (Firbas, 1989). The corpus exploited in the present paper comprises approximately 100,000 words. Namely, it explores the following Old Testament and New Testament books, all in the *New International Version* (NIV): Gospel of Matthew; Gospel of Luke; Gospel of John; Book of Acts; Book of Revelation; Book of Psalms (part).

As for the structure of the paper, after essential linguistic terms and categories have been defined, it will look at three individual FSP style markers identified in the corpus of religious texts extracted from the Bible. Inevitably, the paper — being primarily an FSP study — does not aspire to cover the style markers of biblical texts in totality; it represents rather a selection of style markers discussed against the background of FSP. First, a phenomenon traced during the FSP analysis will be described, and second, the stylistic implications in terms of Biblical language will be focused on.

THE ELEMENTARY TENETS OF STYLISTICS AND FSP

As has been suggested above, the present study sets out to examine stylistic aspects of FSP analysis; for this purpose, in order to stick to the functional character of the teaching represented by the Prague school (and its Brno branch), the systemic-functional understanding of stylistics will be applied in the present paper. According to Crystal (1991, 332), stylistics is defined as “a branch of linguistics which studies the features of situationally distinctive uses of language, and tries to establish principles capable of accounting for particular choices made by individual and social groups in their use of language”. As such, it explores various pieces of discourse in contexts “in which linguistic patternings are built up for the construction of the overall text in its particular ‘genre’, shaped as it is in response to the context of situation which gave rise to it” (Halliday, 1990, ix). Fowler (1996, 186), obviously avoiding the term ‘style’, prefers the notion of ‘variety’, i.e. “any distinctive and recognized form of language which has a specific communicative role in a society”. Thus, every text manifests a set of style markers, i.e. items that are stylistically marked, at different levels of language analysis (including FSP) (Crystal and Davy, 1969; Biber and Conrad, 2009; cf. Urbanová, 2008).

Somewhat misleading in the area of religious discourse may be the use of one of the key socio-linguistic terms, ‘register’. It is typically viewed as “a distinctive use of language to fulfil a particular communicative function in a particular kind of situation” (Fowler 1996: 191), or, in other words, as a language variation according to the

use or situation that can be characterized by its field, tenor, mode (Halliday, 1978). The point is that the area of religious text is so varied and generically heterogeneous that it is virtually impossible to see it as one distinct register (Crystal and Davy, 1969; Crystal, 1987, 385). Crystal (1987, 385ff) suggests that we should rather speak of 'religious language' that functionally splits into a number of individual types of varieties: (i) liturgical language (mass, service), (ii) sermons (spoken homilies), (iii) ritual forms (such as the acts of baptism, christening, matrimony and the like), (iv) readings (biblical translations from the original languages — Hebrew, Aramaic, and Ancient Greek), (v) doctrinal statements (confessions of faith), and (vi) private affirmations (personal declarations of faith and beliefs). It will be fair to add that these categories logically partly overlap and so can have some features in common, depending e.g. on the particular use of language, on the denomination, even on a particular congregation. This said, it becomes clear that the present paper is concerned with subtype (iv), i.e. biblical translations. Within the 'biblical readings' it is then possible to distinguish several text types, namely epistles, narrative texts (stories), parables, historical accounts, prayers, poems, doxologies, etc.

To complete the picture of the theoretical framework of the paper, let us briefly recall the fundamentals of the Firbasian theory of FSP. In a nutshell, FSP explores how a piece of information is produced (and ultimately decoded) in the act of communication, and how different elements are given different communicative prominence in order to achieve the author's communicative intention. In FSP, the very moment of utterance (or perception of a sentence) is thus a phenomenon of paramount importance. As Chamonikolasová (2000, 139) aptly notes, Firbas's approach is "an approach of an independent observer who studies utterances without speculating about the process in the speaker's or listener's consciousness". In Firbas's view, the sentence is a field of semantic and syntactic relations that in its 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" (1964, 270). The degrees of CD are determined by the interplay of FSP factors involved in the distribution of degrees of CD: linear modification, context and semantic structure (Firbas, 1992, 14-16). For further details and terminology, the reader is referred above all to Firbas's opus magnum, in which the theory of FSP is thoroughly summarised (Firbas, 1992).

SELECTED STYLE MARKERS

As has been noted above, the goal of the paper is not to cover all the style aspects of biblical language in an exhaustive way; therefore the full array of traditional style markers generally observed within religious texts is not subject to our present investigation. The paper focuses on those style markers that may be derived from FSP analysis. Logically enough, even these must certainly be seen in the context of traditional levels of language study (phonological, graphetic, morphological, lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features), such as the distinctive lay-out, the occurrence of key words, the use of repetition instead of reference, a strong parallelism, reiterative syntactic patterning, etc.).

In the following three sections below, the three selected FSP style markers will be explored, viz. a relatively high degree of interpretative potentiality, the incidence of Presentation sentences, and manifestation of ideology. They were chosen to represent three different levels of language, i.e. the sentence (syntactic and semantic) level, the textual (hypersyntactic) level, and the pragmatic level respectively.

A RELATIVELY HIGH DEGREE OF INTERPRETATIVE POTENTIALITY

In the area of FSP analysis it may at times be hard to interpret the distribution of the degrees of communicative dynamism unequivocally and so to trace the basic Th-Rh structure; such an ambiguous interpretation does not lead to one clear conclusion and is then referred to as genuine potentiality (Firbas, 1992, 8–9). Firbas (1992) mentions the phenomenon of potentiality several times. He argues that in written discourse real cases of potentiality are extremely exceptional and that an equivocal, unclear FSP interpretation is often rooted either in an inappropriate understanding of FSP principles in general or in the fact that one does not necessarily consider all three factors operating in FSP in their interplay. Firbas is generally cautious about using the term ‘potentiality’ even in dubious cases of interpretation and seems to be reluctant to provide premature judgements. The situation is somewhat different in spoken discourse, where he regards intonation as a decisive tool (Firbas, 1992, 114):

By eliminating potentiality, intonation disambiguates the FSP function of an element and frequently also the perspective of the entire distributional field. As it does not create a ‘discrepancy’ between the two distributions, elimination of potentiality contributes towards the establishment of perfect correspondence between them.

On the other hand, Firbas admits that genuine cases of potentiality do exist. In the case of biblical texts (especially those of poetic character) potentiality represents a relatively frequent obstacle for the analyst and a relatively high number of distributional fields manifest some genuine potentiality (Adam, 2003). Typically, these are texts formed of thetic-like statements, i.e. minimal, informationally dense pairs of the subject and the predicate. Cf. example (1) below; an extract from the so-called Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9–10):

- (1) *Your kingdom (Th or Rh?) // come (Th or Rh?),
Your will (Th or Rh?) // be done (Th or Rh?)
on earth as it is in heaven.
(...)
Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory.*

The key question is as follows: are the two sentences perspectived towards or away from their subjects? Seen strictly from the point of view of semantics and logic of the clause, it is apparent that something new is said about the subject and, thus, the units

Your kingdom / Your will should be thematic, performing the dynamic-semantic function of a Bearer of Quality; thus the sentence would implement the Quality Scale. The person reading or uttering the Lord's Prayer may be thinking in the following way: "It is clear that God has his name, and I want it to be hallowed. I know his kingdom exists, and I want it to come..." and so forth. Consequently, the specifying quality verbs are emphasized; the context-dependent elements such as *Your name* etc. are ascribed the dynamic semantic function of a Quality or a Specification in the rhematic track (see also Adam, 2008).

However, there is something else that ought to be taken into account: the functional pressure of the thematic and the rhematic layers respectively. Looking at the individual dynamic semantic tracks, we can arrive at the following conclusions: first, the verbs *come* and *be done* can be regarded as transitional ones, with a reduced or even zero notional component, i.e. a low degree of semantic residue (and so a relatively higher presentational potential). Semantically speaking, the more is added to the presentational capacity of the verb (i.e. the larger the semantic residue), the more probable it is that the verb will operate in the Q-Scale sentences, and vice versa (Adam, 2012, 200–208). On top of that, as Firbas and others have noted several times (see e.g. Firbas, 1992, 88), the English verb has a tendency towards transitivity, irrespective of other FSP functions it may perform, serving as TrPr. Second, the notions connected with God appear to be of a crucial importance to the message of the text under discussion; there is a whole string of these: *Your name* → *Your kingdom* → *Your will* → *Yours (is the kingdom)*. This dynamic semantic track culminates, as it were, in *Yours / is / the kingdom and the power and the glory*. In this clause, the possessive pronoun *Yours* is clearly rhematic, highlighting the sovereignty of God. We can thus conclude that, within the whole passage, the concept of deity plays a substantial role. As a result, all the other units containing semantic elements of the same kind should be rhematic, in this case performing a Ph-function. The notions of *Your kingdom* and *Your will* are presented here as ultimate concepts, the sovereignty of which does not depend on the process they are involved in (*come* and *be done*).

At this point, naturally enough, a very important aspect of FSP analysis should come in: the prosody. The prosodic features of a text represent the fourth principle governing the realm of FSP in spoken discourse. Sentence stress and intonation can disambiguate potentially dubious sentences. In the case of the Lord's Prayer, speakers typically seem to perceive the subjects of the sentences as central to the message (*Your kingdom* and *Your will*), though this is not the rule. At the same time it is important to be aware of the fact that such perspective need not necessarily coincide with the real distribution of the degrees of CD; we should rather speak of a "folk FSP", in which other aspects of spoken discourse may also play their role, such as rhythm, the habitual way of reading/reciting the prayer at church, necessity to keep the pace with others when chanted in unison, one's breath capacity, etc. The pressure deriving from a strong oral tradition definitely brings about a relatively fixed way of reading the text.

To further illustrate, let us have a brief look at one more biblical extract in which the FSP interpretation can be viewed from two different angles, namely Matthew 7:24–25:

- (2) *Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, // the streams rose, // and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. (...)*

Analogously, it is somewhat difficult to identify the theme-rheme structure in the underlined sentences. The question remains again as to whether the subjects are context-dependent or context-independent, as they appear for the first time in the immediately relevant context, yet are determined with definite articles. It seems that it is the thetic character of the units that stands at the root of this dubious situation. Besides, the use of definite articles in the rhematic subjects may be tentatively ascribed to the style of biblical texts and thus may be labelled as style-specific.

To sum up, the issue of the ambiguous FSP structure of the sentences under investigation is far from equivocal and manifests interpretative potentiality. As such, potentiality constitutes a major style marker of biblical texts — especially in comparison with other discourse types or registers (narratives, scientific texts, etc.). We find it necessary to note that it is not the FSP theory as such that fails here: rather, as has been mentioned earlier, the root of the problem probably lies in the character of the biblical text: i.e. in its extremely fixed character, the role of tradition, high degree of ritualization and also informational density. In this respect it is possible to say that, apart from conveying the author's communicative purpose, the text also allows for the personal FSP interpretation perceived by an individual. Such an interpretation is then not necessarily black-and-white, thus leaving space for person-specific understanding of the text. Svoboda (2005) even suggests that such an interpretative potentiality exerted by the author may be at times intentional, for instance in poetic texts (poems). It will be fair to note that potentiality testifies to the complexity of language in general, not to the inefficiency or fallacy of FSP; it actually underlines the role of FSP factors, above all context, and thus is fully functional.

INCIDENCE OF PRESENTATION SCALE SENTENCES

Firbas (see especially 1992, 66–69) 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). In contrast to 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 (Chamonikolasová, 2010; cf. also Svoboda, 2005, 221).

The point is that the incidence of individual syntactic subtypes of Presentation Scale sentences respectively represents another style marker of biblical texts. The 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 regarding 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); as Firbas says, a Pr-verb expresses “existence or appearance on the scene with explicitness or sufficient implicitness” (Firbas, 1995, 65). Finally, the major, most dynamic element, Phenomenon to be Presented (Ph) is literally ushered onto the scene (Chamonikolasová and Adam, 2005). Research has indicated that the average occurrence of Pr-sentences in texts ranges between 5–10% of all distributional fields (Adam, 2012, 101–103).

The present paper explores a corpus of Pr-sentences detected both in biblical narrative and fiction narrative (for details on the corpus make-up and structure see Adam, 2012, 16–24). In the 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 examples 3–10 below along with their incidence in approximated percentage in the two subcorpora; cf. Dušková, 1998; Svoboda, 2005, 224–225). The following examples will shed light on the four syntactic semantic subtypes of Pr-sentences detected in the corpus (the transitional verbs are underlined, while the rhematic Phenomena are presented in bold). The examples are followed by a table (Fig. 1) showing the findings obtained in the course of the corpus analysis (for details on individual subtypes see e.g. Adam, 2011 and 2012, 89ff, 95–97):

Existential *there*-construction (66% vs. 22%)

- (3) *There* was **a man who had two sons**. (L15:11)
 (4) *In the beginning there* was **the Word**. (J1:1)

Preverbal Rh-subject (25% vs. 64%)

- (5) *Today in the town of David* **a Saviour** has been born to you. (L2:11)
 (6) *Just then* **a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years** came up behind him. (M9:20)

Fronted Adverbial + S-V Inversion (8% vs. 13%)

- (7) *Then* came **the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed**. (L22:7)
 (8) *From the throne* came **flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder**. (R4:5a)

Locative Subject + Rh-Object (1% vs. 1%)

- (9) *It* had **a great, high wall with twelve gates**. (R21:12a)
 (10) *The walls of his room* bore **plentiful evidence of his marksmanship in the form of silently snarling stuffed animals**. (C23b)

As is obvious from the data presented in Fig. 1, the corpus actually displays opposite percentages of occurrence of the existential *there*-constructions on the one hand (65.6% vs. 21.9%) and of the Pr-sentences with preverbal rhematic subject (25.0%

Pr-Scale Sentences	Fiction		Bible	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Subtype 1 — Existential construction (ex. 3–4)	320	65.6	112	21.9
Subtype 2 — Rhematic subject in preverbal position (5–6)	122	25.0	328	64.2
Subtype 3 — Fronted adverbial & S-V inversion (7–8)	40	8.2	68	13.2
Subtype 4 — Locative Th-subject (9–10)	6	1.2	4	0.7
Total	488	100.0	512	100.0

FIG. 1 Subtypes of Pr-sentences in the corpus

vs. 64.2%) as far as the two subcorpora are concerned. The other two syntactic subtypes are not statistically significant for the purpose of the present comparison. In other words, in the biblical narrative we most often observe the clauses featuring a rhematic subject in preverbal position, at the expense of other subtypes, including the existential construction, which in fiction narrative occupies a clearly prominent position.

The core of such a high occurrence of Subtype 2 appears to be connected with the style of biblical gospels, namely with its formality and literary nature (therefore, an analogous ratio may be anticipated also in the register of academic prose). The most dynamic element — the rheme embodied in the subject — is fronted and so the classical arrangement of the English sentence (following the end-focus principle) is functionally violated. Apart from the obvious stylistic markedness, as Dušková (1998, 41) claims, “English appears to tolerate deviations from the basic distribution of CD more readily than those from the word order rules” — this is true especially in the New Testament texts. Such a pattern makes it then possible for the reader to watch the scene with a special focus on the actors coming and leaving; individual participants of communication as if on parade in the setting of the scene, appearing one by one (Adam, 2012, 98–99):

One almost feels like a detached observer of a puppet play, watching individual figures that are being moved by the invisible hand of the Creator. This simplistic idea of presentation on the scene is prototypical for most New Testament texts researched so far (see Adam 2009, 2011); the configuration with a rhematic subject in preverbal position seems to be able to depict it best.

All in all, it seems that this remarkable discrepancy may be ascribed above all to stylistic characteristics of the two text types. The biblical narrative is definitely more formal, tending towards stylization with didactic purpose, whereas the fiction narrative texts strongly prefer constructions that conform to both the word order rules and the basic distribution of the degrees of CD, thus maintaining the unmarked character of the text. The biblical narratives appear to favour structures in which one of the principles is obviously violated: the preverbal rhematic subject does not follow the unmarked information structure. Thus, they show a statistically significant preference of stylistically marked constructions. Subtype 1 (existential *there*-construction)

then, unlike fiction narratives, amounts to 21.9%, taking the second place in terms of incidence in biblical narrative corpus.

Thus, the New Testament narrative shows a statistically significant preference of stylistically marked constructions, tending towards formality. While the fiction narrative texts may be characterised as popular narratives (novels, short stories) in which also informal, conversation-like style is employed, the biblical writings definitely make use of a much more formal style. One has to take into consideration the specific role of the New Testament narratives in question, especially their stylistic and ideological nature (see also below).

MANIFESTATION OF IDEOLOGY THROUGH FSP

Generally speaking, biblical texts and their English translations display a tendency towards a straightforward presentation of different phenomena on the scene, which is apparently related to the communication of ideology (Adam, 2009; cf. Adam, 2011). Ideology reflects and fulfils the main purpose of the religious communication: to persuade the reader of the veracity of the Christian doctrine. Consequently, manifestation of ideology in fact represents an omnipresent style marker of religious texts on the textual level of FSP.

Carter and Nash (1990, 21) define ideology as “a socially and politically dominant set of values and beliefs which are ...constructed in all texts especially in and through language”. In their study, they sub-divide the participants of communication with respect to style and ideology into “the interested writer” and “the interested reader” domains — “writers are concerned in varying degrees with: first of all persuading readers to pick up the text and to read it; second, they are concerned with prompting readers to act in accordance with a set of behaviours” (Carter and Nash, 1990, 50–51). The reader, on the other hand, should be challenged to take over and accept the values. Also in the case of biblical texts, the linguistic means serve as a vehicle for communicating the message; Carter and Nash (1990, 59) speak of the fact that “ideology is encoded in the linguistic organisation of the text”. According to van Dijk, “variation in the order or hierarchical relations of the structures of clauses and sentences is a well-known expression of dimensions of meaning as well as of other underlying semantic and pragmatic functions” (van Dijk, 1998, 202). In this way, hierarchical relations and syntactic-semantic structures may play a significant role in “emphasising or concealing preferred or dispreferred meanings, respectively” (van Dijk, 1998, 203). Below is a selection of FSP style markers along with examples connected with an efficient presentation of Christian ideology.

Perhaps one of the most obvious FSP style markers at the textual level is the frequent occurrence of reiterative hyperthemes at the expense of usual reference; even items that are referred to repeatedly in discourse are given in their full forms, not via pronominal or other types of referents (this aspect is presumably partly related, among other things, to the liturgical purpose of the Scriptures: apart from being read in private, they are often read out loud or recited at Christian liturgies, during sermons and the like). As a result, the text displays extreme clarity and enhances didac-

tic emphasis, which would probably be considered to be redundant in other types of discourse, such as everyday face-to-face conversation or even narrative. Cf. two examples from the Bible with the items in question underlined:

- (11) *In the beginning was the Word (Rh), and the Word (Th) was with God, and the Word (Th) was God... (John 1:1)*
- (12) *The Lord (Th) is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord (Th) takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The Lord (Th) takes vengeance on his foes (...). The Lord (Th) is slow to anger but great in power; the Lord (Th) will not leave the guilty unpunished. (Nahum 1:3)*

Another syntactic device that is closely related to the FSP picture of the text is strong parallelism, i.e. an idea expressed in two or more syntactically different ways, typically occurring in the rhematic track (examples 13 and 15) or a reiterative Th-Rh sequence (example 14). In the examples, the parallel structures are graphically signalled by a double slash:

- (13) *Your word (Th) is a lamp to my feet (Rh) // and a light for my path (Rh) (Psalm 119:105)*
- (14) *My son, my teachings (Th) you shall not forget (Rh) // and my commands (Th) your heart (Th) shall guard (Rh). (Proverbs 3:1)*
- (15) *(Who may live on your holy hill?) He whose walk is blameless (Rh) // and who does what is righteous (Rh), // who speaks the truth from his heart (Rh) // and has no slander on his tongue (Rh). (Psalm 15:1–3)*

In Adam (2009, 146–147), I presented instances of a remarkably strong semantic homogeneity of the Th/Rh-layers in biblical texts that in effect conveys e.g. ideas of togetherness, totality, or is employed to cover crucial doctrinal ideas. In connection with the phenomenon of notional homogeneity, in the case of 1Cor 15:24–27, for instance, I demonstrated the interpretative function of the rhematic layer, illustrating the method on a text where an appropriate FSP analysis would not be otherwise unequivocal:

- (16) *Then the end will come, when **he** hands over the kingdom to God the Father after **he** has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For **he** must reign until **he** has put all **his** enemies under **his** feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For **he** “has put everything under **his** feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under **him**, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. (...)*

When reading the text the reader may have problems with a proper understanding of the message. These difficulties result from the great number of personal and possessive pronouns of the same type — e.g. *He*, *Him* or *His*. These pronouns denote either God the Father or the Son, i.e. Jesus Christ, which unfortunately reduces the transparency of the message and, consequently, the passage is rather vague in meaning,

the reader losing the thread of the text easily. With the presupposition that in each of the two layers the tendency towards semantic homogeneity is strong enough to assert itself, producing a more-or-less homogeneous semantic string, it becomes much easier to decipher the identity of the persons denoted by all the pronouns used in the text. Under the circumstances, it is obvious that while the thematic layer conveys predominantly the notions of God the Son (as derived from the first clause), the rhematic layer implements exclusively the elements denoting God the Father. Looking at the two semantic strings (Th — God the Son; Rh — God the Father; see example 17) that obviously display a high degree of semantic homogeneity, the message of the text becomes clearer:

- (17) **ThPr/DTh: He → He → He → He → He → under Him → the Son Himself/Him**
RhPr: God the Father → under His feet → under His feet → He/under Him → to Him/under Him

It follows that such an interpretation was corroborated both by a different Bible translation in which the text conveys exactly what was deduced on the basis of the FSP analysis and a commentary provided by a theological study (for details see Adam, 2009, 146ff). Thus, the functional pressure of the dynamic semantic tracks is evidently capable of throwing light on the FSP interpretation, and, in more general terms, on one's understanding of the text. It should be noted at this point that some researchers are inclined to view semantic homogeneity within dynamic semantic tracks as a fourth FSP factor, as it were. For instance, Drápela (2012, 46ff) speaks of the phenomenon of the 'suggestive semantic clue', which can be, on the one hand, understood as one of the characteristic features of the text, and, on the other hand, as "a convenient aid to an FSP analyst, or, in general, a recipient of a message in the process of determining the high point (rheme) of the message" (ibid., 48).

Generally speaking, the pragmatic impact of religious texts — and even more so of those of doctrinal nature — is reinforced by notional homogeneity of the tracks. As shown above, especially the rhematic tracks usually contain a set of semantically related (notionally homogeneous) rhematic elements capable of enhancing the repercussion of the theological content of the text on the part of the reader. In harmony with van Dijk, such syntactic-lexical structures "may have an impact on the description of in-group and out-group actions, and hence on ideological implications of text" (van Dijk, 1998, 203).

The last style marker of English biblical translations based on FSP analysis that will be mentioned here may be labelled as a frequent use of laconic, patterning, simplistic (and often reiterative) Th-Rh structures, such as the following series of statements made either by Jesus Christ or John the Baptist extracted from the Gospel of John in (18) below:

- (18) I (Th) am (Tr) **not the Christ** (Rh). (John 1:20)
 I am **not [Elijah]** (John 1:21)
 I am **the voice of one calling in the desert.** (John 1:23)
 I am **the door.** (John 10:9)

I am the good shepherd. (John 10:11)
I am the Son of God. (John 10:36)
I am the way, the truth and the life. (John 14:6)
I am the true vine. (John 15:1)
 (...)

An analogous, striking simplicity of expression magnified by its syntactic patterning and numerous repetitions that apparently contribute to the clarity of the message conveyed may be exemplified by the following declaration of Jesus, which is repeated three times within John 1:3–18. It represents an introductory formula that anticipates most of Jesus' doctrinal statements:

(19) I (Th) tell (Tr) you (Th) **the truth** (Rh). (John 1:21)

To sum up, ideology fostered by certain structures observed at the level of FSP also undoubtedly reflects and fulfils the main purpose of the religious communication: to persuade the reader of the veracity of the Christian doctrine. It makes use of both direct persuasion (reiterative structures, imperatives, absence of politeness, continuous clarification, preference of explicit expression) and indirect persuasion (metaphors, parables, imaginative teaching, etc.; see Adam, 2012). As a result, biblical texts are on the one hand explicit, direct (or even blunt), and, on the other hand — ambiguous, allowing for more than one interpretation. According to van Dijk, discourse “has a special function in the expression, implementation and especially the reproduction of ideologies, as it is only through language use, discourse or communication (...) that they can be explicitly formulated” (van Dijk, 1998, 316–317). While the language of genuine, authentic discourse typically manifests indirectness, impersonality, attenuation, accentuation and vagueness (Urbanová, 2001, 52–55), it is possible to claim that the religious biblical discourse is characterised by the opposite: directness, personal involvement, persuasion, clarity and disambiguity (for details see Adam, 2009, 194).

Such a character of religious communication appears to derive from one of its principal purposes: an explicit presentation of ideology and subsequent persuasion. The primary task of the Biblical texts is to offer Christian doctrines in a transparent way, to strengthen the faith of believers, to provide a source of information on different issues of theology, and, last but not least, to convince the readers — whether believers or non-believers — of the veracity of the Christian principles presented in the Bible. Such an ideological appeal then helps to legitimate the set of values via language, i.e. the intended purpose of religious discourse is fulfilled.

CONCLUSIONS

The present paper attempted to demonstrate the possibility of application of FSP as a means of stylistic analysis. It tried to show that style and FSP are truly inseparable; in both directions they represent mutually complementary levels of lan-

guage study. Thus, stylistics definitely represents one of major dimensions of FSP. Even though Firbas did not take the stylistic aspect of FSP into account systematically, FSP proved to be in fruitful compliance with and fully applicable in the realm of stylistics (and pragmatics) and in text interpretation. As has been shown above, apart from the usual set of stylistic features on the lexical or purely syntactic levels, biblical texts manifest a number of style markers also on the FSP level: the paper discussed interpretative potentiality, tendency towards formality in Pr-sentences (preference of the preverbal rhematic subject) and manifestation of ideology respectively.

By way of conclusion, from the point of view of the basic functions of language (Jakobson, 1960, 356ff), it may be claimed that — apart from the obvious referential function — the two dominant functions of language adopted in biblical texts are above all the conative and the poetic ones. The former is rooted in the didactic role of biblical message (similarly, this may be observed in the area of academic prose again) and its omnipresent aim to persuade. In other words, whereas the primary aim of genuine authentic language is human communication, the language of the Bible may be, in many ways, viewed as its counterpart; its principal task is to present religious beliefs and to persuade the readers. That is why Christian ideology, being related to faith, doctrinal significance and personal beliefs, is naturally and inevitably interwoven in religious discourse.

The latter one, i.e. the poetic function of language, predominantly deals with the potential textual character of biblical discourse. The point is that the biblical (English) translations simply differ from other discourses; thus they manifest elements of defamiliarization, i.e. ‘ozvláštňení’ in Czech, ‘ostraneniye’ in Russian — see e.g. Shklovsky, 1998 and Derrida, 1981, 28). Especially Derrida’s concept of ‘différance’ seems to depict the specific linguistic flavour of (biblical) texts as the systematic play of differences. As such, defamiliarization serves the author’s communicative purpose. Illustratively enough, Crawford (1984, 209) maintains that defamiliarization is employed to “distinguish poetic from practical language on the basis of the former’s perceptibility”. In other words, unlike biblical texts, “(P)rose is ordinary speech — economical, easy, proper, the goddess of prose is a goddess of the accurate, facile type, of the ‘direct’ expression of a child” (Shklovsky, 1998, 20).

Thus, the religious-specific FSP style markers of the English biblical translations should be understood and interpreted in the context of general stylistics; the FSP-based style markers in biblical texts definitely contribute to the functional picture of the text. Taking into account Hallidayan context of situation, they are rather sophisticated, treating a theological topic (field); they typically encompass distance, formality, stylization, literariness (tenor); and last, but not least, they are primarily written, though they may be spoken, especially publically (mode). As a language variety, biblical texts display a great number of specific, and at times unique, features also on the FSP level; after all, as Crystal (1987, 95) aptly says talking about the group identities: “The more a group of people are given the status of a social institution within a community, the more distinctive their language is likely to be. The most idiosyncratic varieties of English are those associated with the church and law.”

REFERENCES

- Adam, M. (2003) Poetic religious text and FSP, *Brno Studies in English* 29, 43–49.
- Adam, M. (2008) Interpretative potentiality as a natural phenomenon within the theory of functional sentence perspective, *Brno Studies in English* 33, 9–22.
- Adam, M. (2009) *Functional Macrofield Perspective (A Religious Discourse Analysis based on FSP)*, Brno: Masaryk University.
- Adam, M. (2011) On some specific FSP features of presentation scale sentences in the Gospel of Luke, in Černý, M., J. Chamonikolasová, S. J. Kavka and E. Klímová (eds), *New Chapters in Functional Syntax*, 9–17, Ostrava: University of Ostrava.
- Adam, M. (2012): *Presentation Sentences and English Presentation Verbs at the Syntactic-Semantic Interface*, unpublished habilitation thesis, Brno: Masaryk University.
- Biber, D. and S. Conrad (2009) *Register, Genre, and Style*, Cambridge: CUP.
- Carter, R. and W. Nash (1990) *Seeing through Language. A Guide to Styles of English Writing*, Oxford: OUP.
- Chamonikolasová, J. (2000) Retrievability and activation cost, in *6th Conference of British, American and Canadian Studies (Proceedings)*, 134–145, Prešov: Prešovská univerzita.
- Chamonikolasová, J. (2010) Communicative perspectives in the theory of FSP, *Linguistica Pragensia* 20/2, 86–93.
- Chamonikolasová, J. (2013, forthcoming) *On Different Approaches to the Information Structure of Language*, Vienna: Peter Lang.
- Chamonikolasová, J. and M. Adam (2005) The presentation scale in the theory of functional sentence perspective, in Čermák, J. et al. (eds), *Patterns (A Festschrift for Libuše Dušková)*, 59–69, Prague: Charles University.
- Crawford, L. (1984) Viktor Shklovskij: Différance in defamiliarization, *Comparative Literature* 36, 209–19.
- Crystal, D. and D. Davy (1969) *Investigating English Style*, London: Longman.
- Crystal, D. (1987) *The English Encyclopaedia of Language*, Cambridge: CUP.
- Crystal, D. (1991) *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Derrida, J. (1981) *Positions: Jacques Derrida*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Dijk, T. A. van (1998) *Ideology. A Multidisciplinary Approach*, London: Sage Publications.
- Drápela, M. (2012) On the suggestive semantic clue in functional sentence perspective, *Écho des études romanes* 8/1, 43–49.
- Dušková, L. (1998) Syntactic forms of the presentation scale and their differentiation, *Linguistica Pragensia* 8/1, 36–43.
- Dušková, L. (2008) Vztahy mezi sémantikou a aktuálním členěním z pohledu anglistických členů Pražského lingvistického kroužku (The relations between semantics and functional sentence perspective as seen by Anglicist members of the Prague Linguistic Circle), *Slovo a slovesnost* 69 (1–2), 67–77.
- Firbas, J. (1964) On defining the theme in functional sentence analysis, *Travaux Linguistiques de Prague* 1, 267–280.
- Firbas, J. (1989) Interpreting Psalm 91 from the point of view of functional sentence perspective, in Breivik, L. E. et al. (eds), *Essays on the English Language in Honour of Bettil Sundby*, 107–116, Oslo: Novus Forlag.
- Firbas, J. (1992) *Functional sentence perspective in written and spoken communication*, Cambridge: CUP.
- Firbas, J. (1995) On the thematic and the rhematic layers of a text, in Wärvik, B., S. K. Tanskanen and R. Hiltunen (eds), *Organization in Discourse. Proceedings from the Turku Conference. Anglicana Turkuensia* 14, 59–72, Turku: University of Turku.
- Firbas, J. (1996) A case study in linear modification: On translating Apo. 21.6b, *Brno Studies in English* 22, 23–48.
- Fowler, R. (1996) *Linguistic Criticism*, Oxford: OUP.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978) *Language as Social Semiotic*, London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1990) *Spoken and Written Language*, Oxford: OUP.

- Jakobson, R. (1960) Closing statement: Linguistics and poetics, in Sebeok, T. A. (ed.), *Style in Language*, 350–357, Michigan: M. I. T.
- Shklovsky, V. (1998) Art as technique, in Rivkin, J. and M. Ryan (eds), *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, 15–21, Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Svoboda, A. (1989) *Kapitoly z funkční syntaxe* (Chapters from Functional Syntax), Prague: SPN.
- Svoboda, A. (2005) Firbasian semantic scales and comparative studies, in Čermák, J. et al. (eds), *Patterns (A Festschrift for Libuše Dušková)*, 217–229, Prague: Charles University.
- Urbanová, L. (2001) On the language of authentic English conversation, *Brno Studies in English* 27, 49–55.
- Urbanová, L. (2008) *Stylistika anglického jazyka*, Brno: Barrister & Principal.

SOURCE

Biblos. Accessible from: <http://biblos.com> [1. 3. 2013].