

# On the Aesthetic Function of the Text (Exploitation of Semantic, FSP and Syntactic Means in the Process of ‘Meaning Focus’)

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Let me dedicate this article to Aleš Svoboda, with whom I led several fruitful discussions on this very topic. His enthusiasm for the issues of FSP and the aesthetic function of a text inspired me to carry out deeper research, and this paper is a result of both – his enthusiasm and my modest investigation into the matter. Therefore, Aleš Svoboda should actually be viewed as a co-author of this paper; without his interest and inspiration, the findings of this research may never have come to light.

## Abstract

*The present study draws on the research carried out by Jan Firbas into the theory of functional sentence perspective. The paper is based on a comparative study of the communicative strategy used by the author of a Czech fictional text and its observance by the author of its English translation. The study deals with the aesthetic function of the text and analyses various linguistic means which the author exploits in order to pursue his communicative purpose.*

*Keywords: functional sentence perspective, rhematic and thematic layers, communicative purpose, aesthetic function, meaning focus.*

## 1 Introduction

Previous research (Firbas 1995, Svoboda 2006, Adam 2006, Hurtová 2009) has shown that the writer’s communicative purpose may be, and often is, related to the aesthetic function conveyed by the text. To accomplish a particular aesthetic impact, the writer exploits distinctive communicative strategies. In other words, the author uses various linguistic means to create an effect connected to the central meaning of the text, or to a meaning on which

the author focuses, on various levels and to varying extents, throughout the whole text. This desired, yet not always present, process of the author's focus on a particular central idea of the text shall be labelled the '**meaning focus**'<sup>1</sup>. This paper will attempt to look into those linguistic means which, when in cooperation, may create a distinctive aesthetic effect. The analysis of 727 distributional fields (see below) of Karel Čapek's *Krakatit* and the corresponding number of distributional fields of its English translation by Lawrence Hyde proved that the author exploited at least three factors to create an aesthetic effect that corresponds to and in fact nurtures the central idea of the book - semantics, syntax and the means of functional sentence perspective (FSP).

## 2 Brief outline of FSP theory

The theory of functional sentence perspective is one of the branches of linguistics which explores how a message is successfully transferred from the author of the message (speaker) to the addressee (listener). Firbas (1992) sees a sentence or a clause as a basic distributional field (DF), in which individual elements are distributed according to the degree of communicative dynamism (CD) they carry. By the term 'degree of CD' we understand "a relative extent to which a linguistic element contributes to the further development of communication in comparison with other elements within the distributional field." (Firbas 1992, 8) The degree of CD is influenced by four factors – linearity, context and semantics in written discourse, with intonation being added to the preceding three in spoken discourse. The interplay of the above factors results in every element contributing to the development of communication. However, the elements contribute only to a certain extent when compared to other elements, i.e. some elements contribute less and some more. *Rheme* is the term used for those elements that 'push' the communication forward the most. They represent information **towards** which our communication is perspectived. *Theme*, on the other hand, is an expression used for those elements that carry the lowest degree of CD. They signify information **from which** our communication is perspectived. Jan Firbas (1979) also introduced other levels, of which the most important ones for the reader of this paper are *Transition* and *Transition Proper*. Transition stands for those elements of a sentence that carry a higher degree of CD than the thematic elements, but on the other hand, are exceeded in CD by the rhematic elements within the given distributional field; this mostly comprises the notional component of the verb. Transition Proper shares similar borderline characteristics, however it involves very specific elements, namely the temporal-modal exponents of the verb.

## 3 Meaning focus

Firbas (1995) demonstrated that the interplay of FSP factors does not confine itself to a basic distributional field, but reaches far beyond; in fact, "through creating the thematic and the non-thematic layers (tracks)"<sup>2</sup> (64) it asserts itself on a suprasentential level. We can say that higher levels of text, e.g. paragraphs, have proved to contain notionally homogenous elements, which in turn form vertical (paradigmatic) strings (tracks). These tracks then effectively serve the author's communicative purpose. Firbas' observations based on the analysis of the initial paragraphs of Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* indicate a rhematic track forming a gradation effect. This effect serves the author's purpose, i.e. his aim to introduce

the leading character, towards which the whole of the initial part is perspectived. Similar characteristics of text (semantic homogeneity and gradation) and communicative strategy have been studied and described by Adam (2006, 2009). In his research Adam has concentrated especially on higher levels of text (distributional macrofields, cf. Adam 2006). On this level of FSP analysis he focuses on how ideology is manifested and portrayed in biblical texts and what linguistic means are employed to co-create the overall ideological character of a particular discourse. In his most recent study (2009) he points out that particular “rhematic elements constitute a gradual rise in overall semantic tension, and, as a result, form a distinctive gradation effect.” (28) To show that the author’s communicative strategy might vary, let me also mention a contribution by Hurtová (2009), who similarly described the author’s conception of the internal organization of paragraphs in Updike’s novel *Marry Me* as being closely connected to the aesthetic function of a particular text. This time, her investigation into the non-thematic tracks of the above-mentioned novel revealed that these in result form a pattern of “undulation” (52). In this way the tracks create a specific overall aesthetic effect as “the image of ever-changing, unstable dunes of sand occurring throughout the whole chapter also penetrates above a level that is perceivable by mere reading.” (55)

### 3.1 Explosive Meaning Focus

The analyzed text also proved to be aesthetically expressive, i.e. it carries distinctive aesthetic features. This distinctness then enables the creation of an ultimate picture which is in accordance with the ‘meaning focus’ of the text. The meaning focus, or the overall meaning, of the analyzed narrative text is expressed in various ways on different levels of the text. As was stated above, and in accordance with the previously mentioned observations, it is mainly asserted verbally. The linguistic means employed range from the level of individual expressions and basic distributional fields to the level of macrofields, such as paragraphs and their arrangement within the chapters. Furthermore, the distribution of particular expressions within the FSP of individual distributional fields also amplifies the aesthetic result.

To be more specific, leaving aside the prophetic and social ideological message of *Krakatit*, the novel depicts the story of a physicist and his struggle when inventing an atomic explosive. So to put it simply, the central meaning of the book can be said to be that of explosiveness. Before coming to the general semantic, syntactic and FSP analysis, and in order to underline the complexity of the studied issue, let me briefly comment on the title of the book, which also reflects the central idea. The name of the explosive, and also the title of the Czech original, is *Krakatit*, which is derived from the name of the Indonesian volcano Krakatoa.<sup>3</sup> A volcanic eruption imparts a notion of, or rather is semantically synonymous to, explosion – and in this way it essentially determines the semantic content of the whole book. Drawing on Daneš’ conclusions in the field of thematic progressions, i.e. that “the whole text has ‘theme’ of its own (hypertheme)” (Daneš 1974, 109), the title *Krakatit* basically anticipates the hypertheme of the text from the very start. It may be understood as a “context-independent item opening the hyperthematic string” (Firbas 1992, 81). A partly different approach to the title was adopted by the translator, who opted for the phrase *An Atomic Phantasy*. This, however, may have been due to the period of

history when the translation was published, i.e. in 1948, when the invention and actual use of the atomic bomb had become a troubling reality. Thus, the title of the English translation may also be said to fulfil the purpose of the original title.

As suggested above, the notion of explosiveness may not only be clearly observable on the level of individual words, i.e. in the choice of semantically homogenous expressions, but also in their distribution over certain parts of the analyzed chapters. What may not be so apparent while merely reading the text normally is their peculiar distribution over the FSP layers; furthermore, the notion of explosiveness may be sensed also on the formal level of the text, i.e. in the formal grammatical structure of sentences. None of the above factors works on its own; all of the levels – semantic, FSP and syntactic – interlink and thus assist in forming a complete picture. Therefore, the following sub-chapters will offer more detailed insights into individual phenomena, however they cannot be described in isolation, so the remarks may often overlap.

### **3.1.1 The semantic approach**

The most ‘vivid’ factor is the expression of explosiveness in the novel. The analyzed texts include a significant number of expressions (a considerable proportion formed by lexical equivalents, which indicates the semantic density of the excerpts) presenting the idea of explosion explicitly, as well as expressions that are closely semantically related to explosion. They vary on the morphological-syntactic level, appearing in the forms of nouns, verbs, adjectives or interjections, with approximately 50% of them formed by verbal constructions.

To be more precise, both excerpts offered comparable figures with only insignificant differences, so the following remarks apply for both texts. Each analyzed excerpt contains 70 explicit expressions conveying the idea of explosion. This number includes the word *Krakatit*, which represents the meaning of explosive throughout the novel. Moreover, there are a further 35 expressions closely related to the notion of explosion, i.e. various sentence elements connected with the process of exploding, its immediate consequences or the manner in which described objects explode or are made to explode. Together they constitute over a hundred semantically homogenous expressions connected to the main topic of the book within the 730 analyzed DFs.

To offer a concise picture, let me present here a table of several Czech expressions together with their particular English translations as used by Hyde:

Table 1

NOUNS		VERBS		ADJECTIVES		INTERJECTIONS	
EXPLICIT EXPRESSIONS							
Czech	English	Czech	English	Czech	English	Czech	English
exploze/ výbuch	explosion	vybuchnout	explode	výbušný/ třaskavý	explosive	prásk	crash
třaskavina	explosive	explodovat	disintegrate	atomový	atomic	puf	puff
lydditová patrona	lyddite cartridge	vyletět	go up			bum	bang
detonace	detonation	roztrhat	break up				
dynamite	dynamite						
IMPLICIT EXPRESSIONS							
Nobel	Nobel	roztřísknout	crush	destruktivní	destructive	fft	fft
destrukce	destruction	smést	blow off				
vulkán	volcano	roztrhat	smash up				

What might appear interesting is the fact that the layout of these expressions across the paragraphs, or across whole chapters, does not seem coincidental. A common characteristic feature of the examples discussed here is that they do not appear at the beginning of the analyzed chapters, but their occurrence is very intensive in the middle paragraphs. Here we come to a point where the ‘mere’ semantic disposition of a text overlaps with the functional distribution of studied elements. Let me recall again Firbas (1995) and his observations on strings of notionally homogenous elements, which “operating also on suprasentential level” (64), induce a communicative function in larger units of text. From this semantic-functional point of view, it may be suggested that these expressions, and their high occurrence in particular parts of the text, represent the semantic ‘apex’ of each analyzed chapter.

### 3.1.2 The FSP approach

Moving from the semantic analysis to a functional interpretation, we must naturally consider the way in which these semantically homogenous expressions are embedded in the functional perspective of the given distributional fields. The analysis of the layout of these elements across the FSP layers reveals that their distribution within individual DFs is closely related to their distribution over the larger parts of the text, and thus it assists and amplifies their communicative importance. Let me begin with some data concerning the original Czech text:

Table 2

SEMANTICALLY HOMOGENOUS EXPRESSIONS CONNECTED TO THE NOTION OF EXPLOSIVENESS		
FSP FUNCTIONS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Theme	9	9
Transition	19	18
Rheme	71	68
DFs not analyzed	6	5
TOTAL	105	100

These figures certainly deserve attention, as in 71 cases these utterances occupy the rhematic layers of particular DFs. This gives us 68 per cent of semantically homogenous expressions related to the meaning focus of the story functioning as Rhemes. Such distribution cannot be treated as coincidental. Instead it shows not only that a high occurrence of expressions carrying the notion of explosibility within the analyzed text indicate their superiority over any other meaning, but also that their prevailing distribution over the rhematic layers signifies their suggested communicative importance. The relevant data from the English translation are again nearly identical, with only insignificant differences. On the grounds of Adam's suggestion that "the functional pressure of the layers may corroborate (or violate) a hypothetical interpretation and tip the scales in dubious cases" (Adam 2006, 13), I can state that the translator successfully represented the primary aesthetic result, and therefore preserved the original intended function of the text.

Such functional distribution, however, may seem to work counter to the aspect of contextual dependency, which is one of the factors that allocate certain sentence elements into the thematic layer. Thus, a question arises: to what extent may a contextually dependent unit form the Rheme of a sentence? The function, i.e. to serve a particular aesthetic effect of a text connected to its meaning focus, may be determined and emphasized by the 'violation' of one FSP factor in favour of another. Reaching an aesthetic effect may be considered a specific function carried by narrative texts; it is a specific, unusual phenomenon that may be characterized by a certain markedness when compared to other types of communication. This issue deserves to be treated more closely; however, due to space limitations, further details on FSP factors and the possible impact of contingent markedness will be offered elsewhere.

As for the gradation effect proved by the research of Firbas as well as Adam, the analyzed text does not show such a distribution of the expressions of explosiveness within the rhematic track. This may be due to the fact that gradation has been proved to serve the aims of introductory sections (cf. Firbas 1995, Adam 2006), whereas the expressions studied here occur mainly in the middle paragraphs and form the apex of the analyzed chapters. It could also be suggested that the sudden occurrence of these expressions within the rhematic layers in the middle paragraphs, without any gradation of meaning but instead with an immediate and vigorous intensity, supports the overall effect of explosiveness.

The following table presents one of the middle paragraphs of the second chapter. It demonstrates the explosive expressions in the immediately relevant context in terms of their immediate appearance (contrary to the gradation effect).

Table 3<sup>4</sup>

No	Thematic layer	Transition layer	Rhematic layer	Scale
<b>Direct speech (Thomas)</b>				
442	you	(Don't) (want)	(yes/no focus) to sleep?	QS
<b>Direct speech (Prokop)</b>				
443	I (to sleep)	(want)	(yes polarity) do.	QS
444	Today I	'm	tired.	QS
445	And you all this time?	(have) (been)	what doing	QS
<b>Direct speech (Thomas)</b>				
446	(I) (have been doing)	(TM exponents)	Nothing.	QS
447	Life.			NA
<b>Direct speech (Prokop)</b>				
448	Life	is (see)?	an explosive,	QS
449		(TM exponents)	Bang	QS
		and		
450	a man	(is)	born.	QS
		and		
451	then,	(TM exponents)	Bang	QS
452	he	falls	to pieces.	QS
453	And we	think	...	QS
454	...it	lasts (see)?	some years,	QS
455	(You)	Wait	a moment,	QS
456	I	've got (haven't I)?	something mixed,	QS
<b>Direct speech (Thomas)</b>				
457	It Prokop.	's	all right,	QS
469	Thomas his arm.	(TM exponents)	waved	QS
<b>Direct speech (Prokop)</b>				
470	So you still	've got	a father.	QS
471		said	Prokop with <b>sudden gentleness.</b> (+470)	QS

Let me briefly comment on this phenomenon. An outline of a particular dynamic-semantic track will show the characteristic occurrence more clearly:

*sleep* → do → *tired* → doing → *nothing* → **an explosive** → **bang** → born → **bang** → **falls to pieces** → some years → a moment → something mixed → *all right* → waved (→ a father → *sudden gentleness*)

Across the first five DFs (442–446) the dynamic-semantic track presents the notion of calmness (sleep, tired), which results in an absolute standstill, expressed by ‘nothing’. Afterwards Prokop starts another piece of conversation, and without any sign of a possible gradation effect that would gradually signal the meaning of explosion, ‘an explosive’ appears, strengthened by the interjections ‘bang’, ‘bang’ – which, as it were, express the actual action or process of exploding. Finally, the string results in ‘falls to pieces’. In this way we can say that the semantically homogenous expressions of explosion are directly presented in the flow of communication, and the meaning is almost ‘thrown’ at the reader. The same pattern is repeated at the end of this particular string. After the last element, ‘falls to pieces’, the rhematic track immediately quietens down; this immediate repose is asserted by the expression ‘all right’, and even enhanced by another rhematic element, ‘sudden gentleness’.

The same pattern of abruptness concerning the idea of explosion is to be detected in most of the dynamic-semantic strings of elements carrying the notion of explosion. It only varies in the number or the length of particular strings, so it affirms that “the functional approach applied by the theory of FSP need not to be restricted to the level of individual clauses, but can be applied to the hierarchical level of paragraphs and chapters” (Adam 2006, 8) Similarly, it contributes to the discussion on possible aesthetic effects manifested by the elements conveyed in rhematic layers. As for the gradation effect studied and mentioned by Firbas and Adam, relating to the introduction of new elements into the flow of communication, and the nexus of undulation relating to the hyperthematic beach in Updike’s *Marry Me* studied by Hurtová, this text can be said to present another effect, i.e. an intense abruptness, connected with the meaning focus of the studied material, i.e. the idea of explosiveness. This shows that the aesthetic effect observable by means of FSP analysis is not a universal phenomenon, but is in fact highly individual and based on the type of text, its meaning focus, or the hypertheme of particular paragraphs, chapters or whole texts. As a matter of fact, such variability lies at the core of the functional study of various linguistic phenomena.

Before approaching the issue from the syntactic point of view, let me mention another aspect connected with the central idea of the novel. Only after analysis of this supporting meaning, as I have decided to label it, may the picture be completed by a formal approach. Syntactic insight will then interconnect both the central meaning and the supporting meaning to form a complex picture of the communicative strategies used by the author to fulfil a particular aesthetic effect.

#### 4 A supporting semantic phenomenon

The results of the previous investigation inspired me to carry out a further analysis of the text in the same manner. As expected, it has confirmed the existence of another meaning standing above all lower-ranking meanings, which therefore deserves further comments

from the viewpoint of semantics, FSP and also syntax. It is the idea of movement, which asserts itself also on the level of paragraphs and chapters, and thus forms, as it were, a semantic support to the central idea of the novel.

#### 4.1 The semantic approach

As with the notion of explosiveness, the analysis found a similarly high incidence of semantically homogenous elements containing the notion of walking, going, running, or simply moving from one place to another (plus a couple of expressions of stopping, which can be understood as words expressing the phase of finishing a movement). The Czech expressions encompass the auxiliary ‘muset’ (must) or ‘chtít’ (want) used in particular contextual conditions, as these verbs often imply the meaning of movement when used together with adverbials of place (their English equivalents are joined by a particular verbal expression of movement such as *go*):

Musíš do postele.	You must go to bed.	(1)
Musíš do nemocnice.	You must go to hospital.	(2)
Já tam nechci.	I don't want to go there.	(3)

There are as many as 81 distributional fields containing sentence elements expressing such notions in the original text (66 of them are expressed by verbal forms). Here, the English and Czech versions differ in numbers, as the English text contains only 71 such expressions, and a possible deficiency of the translation can be detected. The following table will again offer several Czech example expressions, together with their respective English translations as used by Hyde:

Table 4

NOUNS		VERBS		ADJECTIVES		INTERJECTIONS	
Czech	English	Czech	English	Czech	English	Czech	English
krok	step	razit si cestu	feel one's way	uplývající	moving	ráz dva	one two
pronásledovatelé	pursuers	jít	come	poskakující	moving		
dupot	noise by ...	odcházet	move off				
		přejít	pass				
		dát se na útěk	take to flight				
		běžet					
		míjet					
		přivést					

These expressions also seem to be laid out regularly across the paragraphs, or rather across whole chapters. They mostly avoid the areas containing the notion ‘explosive’, instead appearing in the first parts of the analyzed chapters. Whereas the idea of explosivity

manifests itself with the highest intensity in the middle parts, which form the semantic apex of each chapter, the notion of movement increases in intensity before reaching the apex of a chapter.

## 4.2 The FSP approach

As with the ‘explosive’ meaning within the analyzed extracts, this supporting semantic phenomenon too is functionally expressive. Its functional distribution across the FSP layers and beyond is specific; I would contend that it is also in accordance with the semantic layout, as described in the preceding chapter.

Let me again start with a few remarks on the distribution of these elements across the FSP layers in terms of their occurrence. The distribution is as follows:

Table 5

SEMANTICALLY HOMOGENOUS EXPRESSIONS CONNECTED TO THE NOTION OF MOVEMENT <sup>5</sup>		
FSP FUNCTIONS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Theme	5	6
Transition	41	52
Rheme	35	42
DFs not analyzed	0	0
TOTAL	81	100

It is apparent that the functional distribution of elements containing the notion of movement differs slightly from the distribution of those elements carrying the notion of explosiveness. Their most important function is that as Transition, as this forms the largest proportion. The expressions of movement accordingly appear predominantly in the non-thematic layer; nevertheless, the proportion performing the rhematic function is not as high as it is with the notion of explosion. They mostly function as Transition, i.e. from the functional point of view they largely occupy positions of lower communicative importance than the elements implying the meaning of explosion. This may lead to the suggestion that the meaning of movement asserts itself as a dominant, communicatively important phenomenon within the analyzed text; nevertheless, it is also surpassed by a successful competitor, i.e. the meaning of explosiveness. Thus it serves as an accompanying semantic phenomenon to the meaning focus of the whole narrative.

It might justifiably be asked whether the dynamic strings of the semantically homogenous expressions might appear within a transitional layer as well. So far, the existence of these strings, i.e. the tendency towards semantic homogeneity, has mainly been described with respect to thematic and rhematic layers (Firbas 1995). Adam (2006) also commented on “information of transitory character” (37) in the biblical texts he analyzed. However, we can go even further. The following table will show that the dynamic-semantic strings actually cut across the layers. The tables below illustrate the layout of expressions of movement across the individual layers in both (English and Czech) versions of the text. The paragraphs were chosen to show the semantic deficiency of the translation.

Table 6

No	Thematic layer	Transition layer	Rhematic layer	Scale
49.	And he	<b>went on</b>	as best as ...	QS
50.	he ( <i>go on</i> )	(TM exponents)	could.	QS
51.	The man with the turned-up collar him.	(TM exponents)	<b>followed</b>	QS
52.	It	seemed	that...	PS
53.	... he	(was)	<b>running.</b>	QS
54.	Prokop	<b>took to flight</b>	in terror.	QS

Table 7

No	Thematic layer	Transition layer	Rhematic layer	Scale
45.	A ( <i>Prokop</i> )	<b>jde</b>	jak...	QS
46.	... ( <i>Prokop</i> )	(TM exponents)	nejlépe umí.	QS
47.	náhle ( <i>Prokop</i> ) za sebou	slyší	<b>kroky.</b>	PS
48.	Člověk s vyhrnutým límcem za ním.	(TM exponents)	<b>jde</b>	QS
49.	( <i>situace</i> )	Zdá se	že...	PS
50.	... ( <i>člověk s vyhrnutým límcem</i> )	(TM exponents)	<b>běží.</b>	QS
51.	A Prokop v nesnesitelné hrůze	(se) ( <b>dal</b> )	<b>na útěk.</b>	QS

Let me again offer the simplified outlines of both versions for easier orientation:

English version: went on → followed → was running → took to flight

Czech version: jde → kroky → jde → běží → na útěk

These tables, with the relevant data offered in simplified outlines, demonstrate the semantic homogeneity of the analyzed paragraphs. The meaning of movement is apparently the most 'vivid' one, and it asserts itself as the central notion of a particular paragraph. Nevertheless, it is not restricted to the rhematic layers of all individual DFs. It enters the communication less dynamically than as the most important information in (45) in the Czech excerpt or (49) in the English translation. In fact, it opens the respective dynamic-semantic track by establishing itself as a transitional element, and only then does the notion of movement settle safely within the rhematic layers of individual DFs. The only difference is that the last Czech DF, i.e. (51), is perspectived towards the element of movement, as the distribution of CD is clearly determined by the word order, whereas its English counterpart (54) is more dubious in this respect, with 'in terror' being rather understood as the Specification of the Quality of 'took to flight'. The central notion of movement in the English paragraph is further weakened by the complete omission of the translation of the

Czech (47). Moreover, it is also this DF which assists in forming the gradation effect of a particular dynamic-semantic track.

As mentioned above, Fírbas' and Adam's observations indicate the capability of a rhematic track to create an effect of gradation. The effect has been proved to serve the author's aim of introducing a character or information towards which a whole part of the text is perspectived. When analyzing the idea of explosion, I showed that it did not create such an effect, and I offered an explanation suggesting that this was due to the distribution of respective elements across the middle paragraphs, so that they already formed the apex of the analyzed chapters, and also due to the need to verbally create the overall image of explosiveness.

By contrast, this chapter has shown that elements carrying the notion of movement have a different function and thus are subject to different principles. So far, it has been proved that these expressions appear in the first parts of the analyzed chapters. Occupying mostly the paragraphs preceding those expressing the idea of explosion, the notion of movement was seen to increase in intensity before reaching the apex of a chapter. This characteristic obviously provides more space for verbal elements implementing the discussed gradation effect. With reference to the above schemes, let me comment on the gradation effect created by the rhematic track in the Czech excerpt. Once established within the rhematic layer, the track begins with the word 'kroky', suggesting individual steps and as such the basic level of walking. It is followed and intensified by the verb 'jde', which implies continuous movement, and further escalated by the expression of running, 'běží'. It reaches its climax with the idea of the most rapid movement, 'útek'. As with the preceding FSP-related remarks on the notion of movement, there is a certain element of deficiency and discrepancy in the English translation, rendering it unable to create the effect as clearly as the original Czech text. This is so due to the omission of the DF containing the word 'kroky' as well as the choice of the expression 'followed', which disturbs the gradation of movement. The last factor is the ambiguous perspective of the last analyzed DF, with 'terror' asserting itself as the information with the highest degree of CD.

Hopefully, I have been able to successfully demonstrate that the distribution of elements carrying the notion of movement across the FSP layers supports the suggestion on their communicative importance as proposed by the results of their semantic analysis. However, there is one more factor to be discussed. The following sub-chapter will address distinctive formal features of particular excerpts. In this way, it will attempt to interconnect both the central meaning and the supporting semantic phenomenon, and thus it will make the picture of the writer's aesthetic intention complete.

## **5 Syntactic approach**

So far I have dealt with the aesthetic effect of the text from the semantic and functional points of view. Now I will attempt to support the preceding ideas by offering a few background comments on the formal level of the text, i.e. the grammatical structures of the sentences, which may – as far as stylistics are concerned – also display the semantic tendency of explosiveness or movement. Leech and Short point out that “when the length of graphic units follows a regular pattern, the text seems to progress with a measured dynamic movement.” (Leech, Short 1981, 215)

In accordance, the author of the analyzed text mostly uses distinctive syntactic structures in parts containing the semantically characteristic expressions. What I mean is that the sentences are often short, abrupt, or unfinished. To clearly illustrate particular syntactic patterns, let me adduce the following passage:

“I don’t want to go there! Not there! There is... There is...”  
 “What?”  
 “Kratatit,” breathed Prokop.  
 “What’s that?”  
 “Nothing. I shan’t say. No one must go there. Or.... Or....”  
 “What?”  
 “Ffft, bang!” said Prokop (4)

Naturally, with respect to stylistics we may come across various explanations of such sentence structuring, “since different considerations will apply in different circumstances” (Leech, Short 1981, 219). In our case, we may assume that such a sentence pattern evokes a certain feeling of explosiveness and haste. Furthermore, segmentation into simple sentences often signals a climatic point of the text, which affirms the above suggestions proposed on the grounds of the semantic and FSP analysis. However, the feeling of explosiveness and haste is achieved not only by abruptness, simplicity and the broken graphic pattern of the syntactic structures. It is further supported by the punctuation, which through its density and weight plays an important stylistic role (Leech, Short 1981, 216). Particularly worthy of note is the frequent occurrence of exclamation marks, which implies abruptness and intensity.

At this point, let me once again recall Firbas’ analysis of Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago* (namely the excerpt with Marya Nikolayevna’s burial), which he succinctly commented (1995) also from the viewpoint of syntactic structures in connection with the aesthetic effect. He claimed that “the shortness and simplicity of structure of sentences [...] effectively underlines the haste with which the coffin is interred.” (11) In a similar way, I believe that not only the notion of haste and movement, but also the notion of explosiveness, is well underlined by corresponding syntactic structures.

## 6 Summary

It has become evident that the aesthetic effect a text creates is often an inseparable part of a writer’s communicative purpose, in the same way as the message expressed verbally. A particular aesthetic effect is usually connected to, and serves to support, the central idea of a text. It has been revealed that a specific aesthetic result may be achieved by exploiting various linguistic means such as notional homogeneity, the specific formal arrangement of syntactic structures, or functional distribution over particular FSP layers of text.

So far, various studies have proved the existence of and described the individual effects achieved by the specific usage of such linguistic means, e.g. the effect of gradation (Firbas 1995, Adam 2006), the effect of undulation (Hurtová 2009), or the multifunctional quality of dynamic-semantic scales in poetry (Svoboda 2006). This study has hopefully contributed to such insights and further pointed out that these means are not a universal phenomenon, but are instead highly individual, and depend on the type of text and the central

idea. The semantic, FSP and syntactic analysis of a particular text demonstrated several remarkable aspects connected to the aesthetic effect which it invokes. Most importantly, this paper introduced two different aspects: central meaning and supporting semantic phenomenon. To be more specific, the research has confirmed the existence of another meaning which surpasses any other lower-ranking ideas but whose communicative importance is subordinated to the central idea – both of which are subject to the meaning focus of the author. The crucial quality of both these meanings is that they are distributed on various levels of the text, from fields to macrofields, from phrases and clauses to paragraphs and the whole text. As far as the analyzed novel *Krakatit* is concerned, it is the idea of movement (supporting that of explosiveness) which asserts itself also on the level of paragraphs and chapters. Therefore, it forms, as it were, a semantic support to the central idea of the novel. The high occurrence of expressions containing the notions of explosion and movement, and also the choice of their placement within the rhematic and transitional parts of the individual distributional fields, might confirm the idea that an author employs, whether intentionally or subconsciously, semantic means as well as their functional distribution in order to achieve the communicative purpose of the given text. In other words, it may explain why the text of *Krakatit* in its overall manner invokes feelings of a certain haste and explosiveness.

We should be aware that this is most likely a specific phenomenon in narrative texts. Concerning the aesthetic effect, these texts use distinctive stylistic means to impose an overall picture of the text and to affect the reader in a manner which is suitable in the particular style of the literature. Moreover, the existence of a meaning focus is an ideal when creating a piece of literature, but it is not necessarily present in all texts, and individual authors may exploit specific means, on various levels and to varying extents, to highlight the central idea and thus successfully achieve the overall aesthetic effect. Hopefully, this paper will be a contribution to recent studies on the meaning focus and its aesthetic result, and possibly it will further open the door to new possibilities that the theory of functional sentence perspective has to offer in its observation of language.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The term *meaning focus* originates from personal communication with Martin Adam, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> In his paper *On the Thematic and the Rhematic layers of a text* (1995), Firbas uses the term *layer* synonymously for two different phenomena, i.e. for the complete thematic or non-thematic spheres of distributional fields and for the strings of semantically homogenous elements typically occupying non-thematic parts and shifting across the parts of a text exceeding the level of semantic and syntactic sentences. In his following articles he substitutes the latter phenomenon with the term *track*. Accordingly, this term is used in the present paper.

<sup>3</sup> The volcano Krakatoa erupted in 1883 and its eruption had a tremendous effect not only on civilization in that particular area (blast waves cracked walls and broke windows up to 160 km away, tsunami waves as high as 37 metres were recorded and approximately 36,000 deaths were reported) but also on the whole planet (the overall average temperature on Earth was lowered, and incoming solar radiation and the Earth's weather was affected for several years). The 1883 eruption of Krakatoa was assigned a Volcanic Explosivity Index of 6, which rates as "colossal". The total

energy released by the 1883 eruption was equivalent to 200 megatons of TNT. It is said to have been one of the most severe eruptions in the modern history of the planet. (www.earlham.edu)

<sup>4</sup> The charts reflect the interpretative arrangement of communicative units, i.e. their arrangement according to relative degrees of CD. The actual linear arrangement, i.e. word order, is preserved as well. Charts follow the natural reading conventions of both analyzed languages, i.e. from left to right and from top to bottom, to preserve the naturalness and thus the ease and transparency of normal reading. The elided parts within the charts are marked both in italics and round brackets. The Transition Proper, i.e. temporal-modal exponents (TMEs), are either expressed by the form of the verb itself, by the modal verbs standing separately, or by the interrogative elements of the tag questions. If the TMEs are expressed separately from the main verbal element, they are indicated by being placed in round brackets. The present analysis includes also non-finite clauses as well as interjections such as *bang!* or *crash!* which can be understood in their temporal context.

<sup>5</sup> To show the original communicative aim of the author, and due to the respective deficiency of the translation, only Czech figures are presented.

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