English Presentative Semantic Patterns – as Seen through a Parallel Translation Corpus

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In contrastive corpus-assisted studies the focus has recently shifted to the analysis of co-occurrence relations. "This new emphasis on the company words keep, to use Firth's expression, has led to the discovery of a wide range of word combinations or multi-word units, which vary in fixedness and idiomaticity." (Altenberg & Granger, 2002, p. 5; cf. also Ebeling & Oksefjell Ebeling, 2013, p. 50) We present a cross-linguistic study of semantic patterns whose function is to introduce a new phenomenon in the discourse situation, relating it to an already established location (cf. Johansson, 2007, pp. 234-5). Similarly to Hunston's (2008) 'semantic sequences', the semantic patterns explored here are recurrent "sequences of words and phrases that may be very diverse in form and which are therefore more usefully characterised as sequences of meaning elements rather than as formal sequences" (Hunston, 2008, p. 271). The English semantic pattern to be dealt with can be described, in lexico-grammatical terms, as 'location – presentation verb – new phenomenon'. Three syntactic types of presentative constructions have been described in literature quite thoroughly (e.g. Firbas, 1992; Ebeling, 2000; Johansson, 2007; Adam, 2013; Dušková, 2015):

i) full (existential) presentative constructions, e.g. *There´s a long trip ahead of us*;
ii) bare presentative constructions with a rhematic subject, e.g. a) *A long trip is ahead of us*, b) *Ahead of us is a long trip*;
iii) *have*-constructions (often with a locative subject, and possibly also with other verbs), e.g. a) *We have a long trip ahead of us*, b) *The table has a lamp on it* (Ebeling, 2000).

Depending on the grammatical structure, the new phenomenon is introduced on the scene either as the subject in pre- or post-verbal position (types ii and i, respectively) or as an object (iii).

Despite the differences in the syntactic structure of the English sentences, they can all be translated into Czech using the same construction: 'locative adverbial – verb – new phenomenon', i.e. *Před námi je dlouhá cesta / Před sebou máme dlouhou cestu* (lit. Ahead of us is a long trip / Ahead of us we-have a long trip), *Na stole je lampa* (lit. On the table is a lamp). In Czech, the topic–focus articulation is considered to be the primary factor determining the word order: given information tends to be presented at the beginning of a clause and new information at the end. Thus, the clause-initial Czech adverbial (typically expressed by a prepositional phrase, e.g. *před námi*, *na stole*) carries the information about the already established locative setting; the new phenomenon presented on the locative scene occurs in post-verbal position, functioning as the subject or object of the clause.

Our paper explores the possibility to employ the recurrent Czech presentative construction to track among its translation counterparts syntactically diverse English patterns which perform the same presentative function. Like Gast's (2015, p. 5), our

method aims not only at describing the translation correspondences but also at making predictions about what syntactic constructions are likely to occur as implementations of the given semantic pattern.

We can assume that while languages have identical "needs of expression and communication… the means of expression vary from language to language" (Mathesius, 1936, p. 95; cf. also Haspelmath, 2010). The functional concept of 'presentation', shared by both languages, can therefore serve as a *tertium comparationis*. Since the Czech construction with a clause-initial locative element performs the function of presenting a new phenomenon on the scene, the question of how 'presentation' is expressed in English can be operationalised as 'What English constructions serve as functional correspondences of the presentative Czech sentences (i.e. as their translation counterparts)?' (cf. Gast, 2015).

Accordingly, we used the Czech clauses with clause-initial adverbials as potential markers or anchors (Malá, 2013; Gast, 2015) of the presentative function. This allowed us to identify among the English translation correspondences of the Czech presentative clauses various types of syntactic constructions whose function is to present a new phenomenon on the locative scene. We excluded the generally known 'full' and 'bare' presentative constructions (types i and ii above) from the study, and focused merely on the English constructions with a locative subject (iii b above).

A two-step procedure was adopted, relying on the Czech/English fiction sub-corpus of the bi-directional translation corpus *InterCorp* (2,710,000 tokens in the Czech section). In the first step, we proceeded from Czech sentences with initial locative adverbials (realised by prepositional phrases, e.g. *na tváři* in ex. 1) to their English translation counterparts. While in Czech there is a close link between the semantic role (location) and clause element function (adverbial), in English the looser ties between semantics and syntax lead to a more frequent employment of locative subjects. Such subjects serve as a context-bound scene on which new phenomena can be introduced (*his face* in ex. 1). Locative subjects occurred in four English syntactic patterns which can serve to present a new phenomenon on the scene. The SVO pattern (ex. 1) corresponds to the *have*-presentatives described above. The SVA pattern (ex. 2) is often mentioned as a result of the 'locative alternation' (Levin, 1993; Dowty, 2000; Fried, 2005) and our data demonstrate also its presentative function. Two additional, albeit infrequent, presentative patterns were attested in our data - $SV_{pass}A$ (ex. 3) and SVC_s (ex. 4).

(1) Na tváři měl klidnej úsměv. (lit. On his face he-had peaceful smile) - His face wore a peaceful smile.
(2) V očích jí zářila klidná radost. (lit. In eyes to-her shined peaceful joy) - Her eyes glowed with peaceful joy.
(3) Na zdech byly zajímavé obrazy. (lit. On the walls were interesting pictures) - The walls were hung with interesting pictures.
(4) V jejich tvářích byla skutečná zloba. (lit. In their faces was real anger) - Their faces were full of real anger.

The presentative function is carried out primarily by the semantics of the 'presentative' verb. The wide range of English verbs which occurred in presentative constructions (exx. 1-4) can be classified into three classes:

a) 'contain / be covered' verbs (and copular predications), e.g. *have, bear, contain, wear, hold, house; be bathed, coated, covered, decorated, dotted, filled, hung, inscribed, jammed, swathed, full, fragrant, rich, aglow (with/in/of)* (exx. 1, 3, 4),

b) verbs of light, sound, and smell emission or movement, e.g. *buzz, hum, ring, glow, flash, sparkle, reek, bristle, drip, swarm, twitch* (ex. 2), and

c) 'manifestation verbs' related to sensory perception, e.g. *show, display, radiate, read, say*, e.g. *The next page displayed a large wedding picture.*

In the second step, the lexical verbs identified in step one were examined in English original texts in *InterCorp* (15,820,000 tokens). Among the various uses of the verbs, the 'presentative semantic pattern' represents "what is often said, not how… [the verb] is typically used" (Hunston, 2008, p. 291).

Our study demonstrated that the potential of the sentence to convey the presentation idea is primarily based on the presentation function of the verb. The verb also determines the syntactic structure that will be employed to implement the 'presentation semantic pattern'. Apart from the presentation verb, the pattern always comprises the location (physical space, ex. 3, or body parts making it possible to add detail to the description of a person, exx. 1, 2, 4) and the bearer of a state or simple process (a specific entity, an abstract quality or its manifestation) introduced on the scene. In addition, in the SVA, $SV_{pass}A$ and SVC_s patterns the interpretation of the locative element is often holistic, i.e. these patterns convey the sense that the location is fully affected by the state/action (exx. 2, 3 and 4).

From the methodological point of view, the study demonstrates how the use of a parallel translation corpus makes it possible to by-pass one of the limitations of corpus-assisted approaches in that it allows the researcher to search for patterns of meaning, or semantic patterns, rather than formal sequences.

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