ON THE PRESENTATIONAL CAPACITY OF THETIC-LIKE SENTENCES

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Abstract
Within the Firbasian framework of the theory of FSP, sentences are understood to implement either the Presentation Scale or the Quality Scale; the author’s research into the area of FSP has recently dealt with the role of the English verb operating in Presentation Scale sentences (Pr-sentences) (Adam 2011, 2012; cf. 2009). In addition to the existential there-construction, it is the configuration of the rhematic subject in preverbal position that seems to convey existence/appearance on the scene most frequently in English (A cruel smile hovered over her face). The present corpus-based paper proposes to shed light on the structure and the function of a rather specific type of Pr-sentences patterning as relatively short structures with a tentatively context-independent subject (The potatoes are boiling). Such sentences functionally resemble statements that came to be labelled as “thetic” or sometimes “all-new sentences” (Mathesius 1975: 87, Firbas 1992: 86-87, cf. Kuroda 1972, Lewis 2001). The point is that even though from the static point of view (i.e. that of lexical semantics) such sentences do not suggest the characteristic of appearance/existence, they do not appear to be excluded from expressing presentation on the scene.

Key words
FSP, presentation, scale, thetic, sentences

1 Introduction
The present corpus-based paper proposes to throw light on the structure and the function of a rather specific type of Pr-sentences patterning as relatively short (minimal) structures with a tentatively context-independent subject which is formally marked with a zero or definite article (The potatoes are boiling. or Gold flashed.). As a matter of fact, the principal research question is whether these sentences fall into the category of Presentation Scale (Pr-Scale) sentences at all, i.e. whether such constructions are capable of presenting a phenomenon on the scene, expressing appearance/existence with explicitness or with sufficient implicitness.