TECHNIUM
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

Vol. 11, 2020

A new decade for social changes

www.techniumscience.com

ISSN 2668-7798

9 772668 779000

The Prague School Theory of Drama & Theatre and SFL

Patrice Quammie-Wallen

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
patriceq@gmail.com

Abstract. The Prague Linguistic Circle's theories of drama and theatre were ground-breaking in the early 20th century. While the many and varied writings of its scholars are only recently gaining global recognition the application of the many semiotic principles as it applies to the stage remain to be fully utilised. Literary analyses over the modern decades have comparatively ignored the play text for stylistic treatment, due significantly to the fact that a suitable framework that can manage the 'combinatory quality of theatre' remains at large. Systemic functional linguistics (SFL), a developed, language-based semiotic framework whose foundations share Prague School principles of structure and function, has been suggested to be capable of managing that combinatory quality. This paper, agreeing with that position, compares Prague School principles with that of SFL to advance the further position that combined use of SFL and Prague theatre theories can potentially construct that elusive primary dynamic connecting the page and the stage, as well as facilitate mutual development of both frameworks.

Keywords. Prague School Drama and Theatre Theory, systemic functional linguistics, play text, semiotics, functional analysis

1. Introduction

The original Prague school began as a collection of linguists and literature, music and theatre theoreticians in 1926 under Vilém Mathésius with Roman Jakobson serving as vice-president up till his exodus to America in 1941. The Prague Linguistic Circle's unique composition allowed its scholars the opportunity to firstly recognize, identify and then theorize beyond language into other types of semiotics, in areas such as literature, drama, theatre, music, art, folk songs, and architecture. As a result, they were not blinded by a language focus but were able to apply linguistic principles to other areas of meaning making. Michael Quinn stated in his seminal 1995 publication (Quinn, 1995) that

“the Prague school provides one of the first sociological models for critical understanding in which the interdisciplinary arts and scholarship of the post-modern era can be seen as more of a gain than a loss, more like a return to common sense than the sometimes strange separation of the arts and other human activities into disciplines-the forced, “organic” closures that more dogmatic theories had achieved” (pp. 6-7).

While the Prague school of linguistics and literary scholarship made ground-breaking contributions to areas such as phonetics, phonology and syntax through its more famous scholars such as Nikolai Trubetzkoy, Vilém Mathésius, and Roman Jakobson, it also had

“an enormous influence on the later development of the study of drama and theatre, especially in the field of semiotic, because it analyzed dramatic works with respect to the structure and meaning-productive processes initiated by dramatic and theatrical signs” (Kacer, 2013, p. 38).

Modern literary analysis has a developmental history of stylistic and pragmatic treatment. With poems and narratives monopolizing this attention it is, interestingly, the play and theatre text which has generally been neglected. While there are a few reasons for this, one main issue has been the non-existence of a suitable linguistic theory or framework that could competently and richly describe the drama experience, whether written or viewed (Herman, 1997; Nørgaard, 2003; Peacock, 1984). This paper, after giving an overview of the school and its scholars and outlining the chief underpinnings of its theory of drama and theatre -structuralism, functionalism and semiotics - questions whether Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), as a functional theory of language, is an appropriate modern analytical tool to realize Prague School endeavors, and if Prague School drama and theatre scholarship can help develop empirical and semiotic applications of SFL.

2. The Prague Linguistic Circle

2.1. History

The Prague Linguistic Circle held its first meeting in 1926 and its last in that first and critical era in 1948. It arose at a time of great upheaval in Europe, around the first and second World Wars, amidst Nazi occupations, the fallout of the Russian Revolution and the rise of Communism. The liberal and avant-garde ideas of the Prague Circle, and other artists in general, did not align themselves with the building of society upon ostensibly Marxist ideals and so scholars, musicians, artists, dramatists and architects of the Circle developed and spread their ideas under great upheaval, eventual censorship, exile and death. Quinn (1995, p. 1) states that “the dissemination of the Prague school’s unique “functionalist structuralism” proceeded in an extremely scattered fashion” with many of its terms which found their way into theory not retaining their full conceptual richness. It is only in recent decades with the ease of censorship in Czechoslovakia and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 that many of the Circle’s multilingual work emerged out of relative obscurity and scattered-ness and have been translated for global access. With new access came acknowledgement of the ground-breaking philosophies which originated from its scholars that form the core of many aspects of both literary and linguistic theory today.

The beginnings of the Prague Circle had a strong foundation in the prior writings, research and informal meetings of its members. For example, Vilém Mathésius predicted a focus on synchronicity of language from as far back as 1911, independent of Saussure’s posthumous publication of 1916, ‘Cours de linguistique Générale’ (Saussure, 2013 original 1916) which nonetheless also became instrumental in the development of Prague theory. Czechoslovakia also inherited members of the Moscow linguistic Circle: Roman Jakobson (founder) and Nikolai Trubetzkoy, who, from 1915, would have executed research based on Formalist tradition with others drawn from language and literature faculties at Moscow University. This group’s aim was the “elucidation of linguistic problems of both practical and poetic language as well as questions of folklore and ethnology” (Jakobson, 1971, p. 531), reflecting Jakobson’s interest in language, literature and avant-garde art and artists with whom he was heavily involved in Russia. Jakobson’s relatively brief settling in Czechoslovakia in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution presented him with a new literary tradition to explore and champion, and he even gained Czech citizenship. His philosophy embodied that of the Prague Circle: a

rejection of that “strange separation of the arts and other human activities” (Quinn, 1995, p. 6), including language. Roman Jakobson is noted to have contributed to every area of research championed by the Prague Linguistic Circle, including semiotics and functionalism which greatly impacted their drama and theatre theory.

The deliberately international, multi-ethnic and multilingual “loose association of scholars and artists” (Quinn, 1995, p. 1) that was the Prague Linguistic Circle lists among its members, apart from founder Vilém Mathésius, and Roman Jakobson, Bohuslav Havranek (general linguistics and Slavic philology), Bohumil Trnka (English language and literature), Jan Rypka (Turkish and Iranian languages and literatures); Czech scholars Jan Mukařovský (literary theory), Jaroslav Průšek (sinology), and Pavel Trost (general and comparative linguistics), as well as Russian emigre scholars Nikolai Trubetskoy, Sergey Kartsevsky, Petr Bogatyrev, and Dmitry Chizhevsky. Notable second generation Prague scholars include Josef Vachek, Rene Wellek, and Jiří Veltrusky (former assistant to Jan Mukařovský at Charles University), (Grishakova & Salupere, 2015); and in the third generation, Miroslav Procházka, Frantisek Deák (symbolist scholar) and Herta Schmid (Quinn, 1995, p. 2). With one foundational principle being the creation of a safe space to encourage the debate of ideas, the circle welcomed visitors the likes of Edmund Husserl, Rudolf Carnap, Karl Bühler, Otto Jespersen, Yuri Tynyanov and Emile Benveniste (Grishakova & Salupere, 2015). This wide membership spanning a variety of expertise richly influenced the development and application of Prague theory.

The Prague School’s theoretical contributions are many: it established the foundation of “the approach to the study of language as a synchronic system, the functionality of elements of language and the importance of the social function of language” (Herteg, 2003, p. 372). It established a functional-structural paradigm. Notably, it is Roman Jakobson who is credited with the coining of the term “structuralism” some thirteen years after Saussure’s influential publication, (Herteg, 2003; Quinn, 1995). The Prague Circle also separated phonetics from phonology (Trubetzkoy) and developed distinctive features (Jakobson), which contributed to the Chomskyan tradition. Vilém Mathésius applied functional analysis to the sentence and established the distinction between the Theme and the Rheme. The Prague School’s contributions touched many areas including communication, translation, language acquisition, aphasia, art, folklore and sociolinguistics.

Alongside all this then, “Prague scholars provided the first systematic formulation of semiotic structuralism. Semiotics emerged from Prague Linguistic Circle structuralism” (Herteg, 2003, p. 375). In the next section we take a closer look at the theoretical underpinnings of the Prague School’s drama and theatre theory.

2.2. Structuralism

Jozef Hrabak defines structuralism as an epistemological point of view as opposed to a theory or a method. It first postulates that every element in a system has no significance of its own but rather, is determined by all other elements, and only then becomes unequivocal (Deák, 1976). It is in this interdependency of elements- their hierarchy or dependence or dominance- that produces or explains the thing, highlighting then that there is no one right procedure or methodology, for new elements trigger new methods and patterns. Therefore, a work is not the simple sum of its parts since the inner relationships of the components make it more than that. This would emerge as a guiding principle in SFL, that, for example, the paradigmatic nature of systemic choices in language is what gives meaning to any one element. In Prague School theory structures were seen as dynamic, a newly emerging paradigm that differed from previous viewpoints. Where there is structure there is system and “the Prague School conceptual

framework is itself such a [dynamic] systemic structure where the terms involved tend to relate to and imply one another” (Quinn, 1995, p. 18).

Logically, then, components must be first identified and described in order to explain their significance, connections and effect in an artistic work. The components fall into one of two groups: those that can be directly observed (material) and those that generally are inferred (non-material) against the backdrop of the assumption of a systematic structure. Secondly, patterns of organization amongst the components can then be extrapolated based on inquiries on the function of each component in relation to, for example, other components, the whole, or the referential or esthetic functions of the communicative event (more on this later). Prague structuralists then, once the inner structures had been mapped, took a third step to extrapolate the link to external social structures.

Mukarovsky’s “semantic gesture” facilitated this enquiry. This term encapsulated the idea of “the conceptual unity of semantic composition from the smallest unit to the general features of the work which locates it in the context of esthetic norms and values as well as in the social and political context” (Deák, 1976, p. 86). Whereas in the formalist method a single dominant component was searched for to be identified as the element that exerted the most influence on other elements in the work, thus giving it its structural integrity, in the Prague school Mukarovsky focused on the most powerful dialectical tension; i.e., relationship, that superseded and exerted considerable shaping influence over other tensions and offered within itself, through its unity of temporal and spatial dynamics, the structural unity of the entire work of art and of its relations.

The whole and components of theatre were outlined by Otakar Zich in “Esthetics of Dramatic Art” (Zich, 1931). His structure of the performance was the basic structure for structuralists, and he established the starting point for esthetics in dramatic arts. He postulated that the performance should be divided into visual and audial material components and he identified the conceptual/non-material components as dramatic action, dramatic character, dramatic plot and dramatic place. When the Prague School adopted this they made the non-material components the object of enquiry and added the audience as a material element, along with the existing dramatic text, actors, costumes, music, etc. in theatrical structure (Deák, 1976). Each material element could be further broken down into its constituent parts, but the material elements on the whole were not the focus of the Prague group.

Individual members explored diverging methodologies and interests, a key Prague Circle cultural element. Jindrich Honzl kept only one of Zich’s non-material components - dramatic action – and saw it as a unifying force to his performance examples of continually morphing signs, as he mainly worked with the referential function of signs. For Veltrusky, the dramatic text is always invariably working with or against the actor, producing a dominant dialectic in performance. In his work ‘Dramatic Text as a Component of Theatre’ (Veltruský, 1976 original 1941) Veltrusky subdivides the dramatic text into dialogue, direct speech and author notes and lists it among the other known components – theatrical space, music and stage figure, thereafter introducing the unknown component as “the relationship of the linguistic system [dramatic text] to the extra-linguistic system [dramatic space, music and the stage figure]” (Deák, 1976, p. 93). With this framework he investigated the ways the text crafts the stage figure, then explored the interrelationships. Prague structuralism allowed for different methodologies depending on the nature of the components to be examined.

2.2.1. Foregrounding. The work of Jindrich Honzl, (1976), exemplifies the Prague School concept of foregrounding in its structuralist theatre theory. Every time a component is assigned an untraditional function, it is being foregrounded. This idea arose from the Formalist school of thought through Viktor Shklovsky, even though it was never applied then to theatre theory.

Viktor Shklovsky was the founder of OPOYAZ, (Society for the Study of Poetic Language) in 1916 which developed Russian Formalism (along with the Moscow Linguistic Circle under Roman Jakobson). In his pamphlet, “The Resurrection of the World”, (1914) Shklovsky pioneered the idea that the principle of artistic perception was the tangibility or ‘palpableness’ of form; the ability to sense form as opposed to being so familiar with its presentation that one is no longer sensitive to it and cannot see it or appreciate it or be impacted or moved by it. Shklovsky continued to build on these ideas and three years later he published his programmatic statement “Art as Technique” where he outlined the concept of defamiliarization- “the synthesis of the practice of modern art and psychological observation on perception” (Deák, 1976, p. 88). In his view “...Art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony...to make things unfamiliar...” so that the effort to perceive is prolonged and enjoyed (Shklovsky, 1917, p. 2). Deák adds that Shklovsky’s concept of “ostrannenie” translated as “making strange” or “defamiliarization” found its way into Bertolt Brecht’s concepts of alienation as one kind of alienation – *verfremdungseffekt*-right after Brecht’s visit to Moscow, suggesting some direct formalist influence in the famous epic theatre of this playwright and director.

In one of the few formalist influences on Prague School drama and theatre theory, (unlike numerous influences on literature, etc.), structuralists adopted this concept of defamiliarization. They added characteristic emphasis on the binary opposition of unfamiliar/familiar by assigning the terminology of foregrounding/ automatization, also termed as deautomatization/ automatization. Anything automatized was conventional and unnoticeable, but anything deautomatized -and any feature or element could be deautomatized- was unconventional and so was more consciously executed and perceived. For example, sound being conveyed by gestures or an actor being actualised by light brings each of those elements into greater perceptual awareness. Prague Theatre School structure therefore “was understood as a mutual relationship of foregrounded and unforegrounded elements” (Deák, 1976, p. 89). Halliday explored this concept in his examination of Priestly’s play, ‘An Inspector Calls’ (Halliday, 1982). Linguistically, he found that elements of everyday interpersonal interaction were foregrounded in his dialogue extracts.

2.3. *Functionalism*

Geoffrey Sampson claims that “the hallmark of Prague linguistics was that it saw language in terms of function” (Sampson, 1980, p. 103). Unlike American descriptivists and the Chomskyan school, The Prague school went beyond description to explanation. They “looked at languages as one might look at a motor, seeking to understand what jobs the various components were doing and how the nature of one component determined the nature of others” (Sampson, 1980, p. 104). With this knowledge they were able to pursue understanding of the structural differences across languages. Sampson further states that the Prague group constituted “one of the few genuine points of contact between linguistics and ‘structuralism’” (Sampson, 1980, p. 112), and unlike the Bloomfeldian and Chomskyian traditions, had no impetus to treat language as strictly a science but rather was comfortable in investigating it both scientifically and aesthetically.

This view of function permeated all Prague theory, including those of drama and theatre. This view originated from a Viennese contemporary, Karl Bühler, in his organon-model of communication (2011, original 1918/1934) which identified three main aspects of a communicative event - sender, context, and receiver and their representative, expressive and appellative tensions. The organum was the signifier where the three tensions connected. While

this model was functional and saw communication as semiotic, it did not consider aesthetic elements nor encapsulated the notion of fiction in semiotic process.

Quinn states that “the contribution of the Prague school to the functionalist approach to communication lies in Mukarovský’s invention of a fourth aspect, the aesthetic function, which dominates the others especially when the focus of communication centres on the sign itself rather than its referentiality” (1995, p. 25). To this four- pronged model, Roman Jakobson added the channel (phatic communication) and the code (meta-linguistic), thereby completing what is today known as the Jakobson model of Communication. Art communication was therefore now seen as part of general communication, with the aesthetic function not being restricted to works of art nor being intrinsic to works of art, but rather was “present in the sender-receiver communication [including the code], where the orientation on the receiver’s subjectivity [think perception influenced by norms and values for example] prevails” (Kacer, 2013, p. 42). This principle emerged as a core philosophy in SFL; any instance of language use is analysed against the backdrop of the entire language system and is not apart from it. Mukarovský also experimented with a structuralist theory of all human behaviour, including communication, from which his Practical Functions, Symbolic functions, Theoretical Functions and Aesthetic Functions derived. In this approach, a sign can carry more than one function.

2.4. *Semiotics*

From all of these things emerged the unique orientation of Prague school semiotics, or rather, Prague school semiotics produced all of the above. From Mukarovsky’s (1931) work , ‘An Attempted Structural Analysis of the Phenomenon of the Actor’, in which he identified and described the sign system of Charlie Chaplin’s acting, Prague school semiotics was firmly established as exploring non-language sign systems. They treated every phenomenon as sign. Influenced by Saussure’s concept of the sign, the Prague scholars adapted his distinction between ‘langue’ and ‘parole’. Langue and parole, the distinction between the collective (language) conventions of the community and the particular selections of the individual found precise equivalence in the “strongly codified theatre forms of the oriental and folk theatre” (Deák, 1976, p. 90), as discovered by Petr Bogatyrev, a Prague scholar. Just as the individual must have a grasp of the collective conventions of a language in order to understand another individual, so too must an observer (e.g. theatre goer) have a command of the language and social norms of that particular art in order to decipher the artist’s articulation, whether speech, painting, music, etc, a paradigm which eventually found echoes in SFL’s foundational pillar of system-institution-instantiation.

Mukarovsky’s 1934 work, “Art as Semiotic Fact”, introduced a tripartite sign structure, building on Saussure’s binary distinction between signifier (sound/image) and signified (concept) and promoting itself as the first modern semiotic theory of art. For him and Prague scholars, there was the signifier (artefact), the signified (aesthetic object) and the designatum. The designatum could be a material referent, but in the case of art and fiction it usually was non-existent (e.g. a unicorn). This was important for function in Prague structuralism, as an aesthetic on its own cannot give comprehensive meaning to a sign as it does not definitely represent something else. Looking back at Jakobson’s communication model where all elements of the communicative event are always present but dominated by the aesthetic in art, these elements are the only ones that can give concrete realities to an aesthetic, but, because in art they are dominated and their interrelations shaped by their relationship with the aesthetic, these extra-linguistic components cannot freely assign a concrete reality to the sign as practical, theoretical or symbolic (Quinn, 1995). This causes the work to be perceived as a polyfunctional whole, with no one activity or function defining the work with overriding informational purpose

(as opposed to the ‘autonomy’ of the aesthetic function). This autonomous-informational dialectic tension is typical of Prague School theory. Such works, then, provide rich, complex tools for investigation and critical review across every field of artistic practice.

In Mukarovsky’s tripartite sign, perception types (visual, aural, etc) was a consideration between the signifier and signified and the degree of similarity between the signified and the designatum was also explored. The Prague Circle emphasized the interdependence of synchronic and diachronic analysis; and not sharply dividing them as Saussure had purportedly done⁸ This was also reflected in their drama and theatre frameworks. The scholars also contended that one sign cannot be completely conveyed in another, e.g. music cannot be comprehensively translated into pictures, which birthed interest in contrastive semiotics in the group, with the theatre being the perfect laboratory to observe sign complexes and synchronicity, discovering the similarities and differences of the semiotic signs.

The Prague School contribution to drama and theatre theory is comprehensive, complex, multifaceted, and still undergoing discovery as the texts of its proponents become more visible. It combines, structuralism, functionalism, semiotics and context in a flexible, dynamic and authentic whole that seeks integrity at all levels of the artistic institution, from component to society.

3. Systemic Functional Linguistics

The Prague Linguistic Circle also made significant contributions to the linguistic semiotic. However, concerning literature, David Herman expressed dissatisfaction with the methodological tools available to accurately perceive literary works, “despite the groundbreaking researches of...Mukarovsky and Jakobson” (Herman, 1997, p. 486). He goes on to say that text and context and structure and function must be all accommodated in a suitable analytical tool. A few years later, Nina Norgaard (2003), in her research on James Joyce’s plays, had come to the conclusion that systemic functional linguistics (SFL) as developed by Michael Halliday was a suitable framework for linguistic-literary criticism as it paid attention to both text and context. This is the conclusion shared by the approach of this position paper.

Lukin and Webster say

“both Halliday and Hasan...see the stylistic tradition through Russian Formalist and Prague structuralist schools as part of the theoretical antecedents for the orientation to the study of verbal art [a type of aesthetic] which has developed in systemic functional work”

and that Hasan credits Mukarovský as having produced “the most coherent view of the nature of verbal art and its relation to language” (2005, pp. 413-414). Halliday’s 1969 paper “Options and functions in the English clause”, one of his foundational papers on SFL’s use of paradigmatic relations as its basic organizing principle producing the concept of metafunctions (Halliday, 1969) was published in the Czech Republic, which to Martin underscores the “affinity which Halliday acknowledges between this aspect of his functional perspective and the work of the Prague School” (2016, p. 44).

However, SFL has also branched into non-linguistic semiotics, which was established with O’Toole’s “The Language of Displayed Art (O’Toole, 1994) and Kress and van Leeuwen’s Reading Images: the grammar of visual design’ (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996). These explorations “take metafunctions as a crucial point of departure” (Martin, 2016, p. 49). Today, complex semiotic signs are being tackled, from advertisements to film.

What, then, are the affinities between the Prague school and SFL that make the latter suitable for more accurately perceiving and articulating the theatre and drama text? As approaches that

can both be bracketed as “functional structuralists” (Davidse, 1987, p. 73) Prague School and Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics have many similarities with differences occurring at finer points of detail. One key feature is that they both run counter to a formal approach (e.g. Chomskyan and Bloomfeldian linguistics) by approaching language or semiotic codes as a tool for communication whose analysis cannot be divorced from their purpose and context. Just like the Prague School, Halliday was influenced by Bühler’s three-pronged organum model, and identified that model as key in his development of SFL’s metafunctions, likening the experiential metafunction with Bühler’s *Darstellungsfunktion* (representation) and the interpersonal with both *Appellfunktion* (appellative) and *Kundgabefunktion* (expression) (Davidse, 1987). Where the Prague School developed Bühler’s semiotic model and treated aesthetic texts as a regular communicative event with different dialectals emphasized, Halliday developed his model of specifically linguistic representation and included the textual and logical functions as a way to further distil meaning from the organization of the text, a dimension I would put forward is, in the broadest sense, akin to Jakobson’s metalingual element in the final communication model.

Where else do the two converge? Advocacy for equal emphasis on theory and description, rejection of Chomsky’s “competence-performance dichotomy”, and acknowledgement of complexity and hierarchy of elements in natural language which reflect each other (semantics -lexis and syntax- phonology) were to be found in each camp (Davidse, 1987), particularly in the case of the latter two, with slightly different forms of realization. Prague scholar František Daneš (1960) and Halliday (1967) introduced intonation into their framework of language’s meaning-making repertoire, and Halliday has credited the Prague School with being “the first linguists to attempt to build functional theories into the linguistic system instead of imposing them from outside” (Parret, 1974, p. 115). Halliday states that “language is as it is because of the functions it has evolved to serve, and Prague linguistics is unique in attempting to incorporate a theory of what these functions are” Halliday (1974, p. 45). In this latter and most definitive eventual mutual aspect of functionalism shared by Halliday and the Prague School, Davidse states that “their attention to grammar that were neglected by many contemporary linguists flow[ed] directly from their general functional concerns” (1987, p. 58).

This attention to functional concerns helped both Halliday and Prague School scholars venture into new methodological territory in semiotic description. While Prague scholars embarked on such exploration pre-dating the birth of Halliday, culminating in Mathésius’ linguistic functional sentence perspective (FSP) and its development and derivatives, Halliday took up the mantle in this regard and has worked out, amidst other influences, a systematic theory of language in which Prague School tenets, such as FSP, could exist. Mathésius pioneeringly showed that sentence organization (Theme-Rheme/ Given information -New information) encodes semantic meaning. This provided the raw material for what would become the foundation of Halliday’s textual metafunction, which was expanded to be of use below and above the clause (Davidse, 1987; Halliday, 2002) and incorporated cohesion.

The idea of theme produced differing approaches and it is worth noting that the two main classes of approaches existed within the Prague School itself. One main issue, for example, was how Theme was identified. Prague scholar, Jan Firbas (1964), clarified Mathésius’ view on Theme, indicating that Theme would be the sentence element which did the least for the advancing of the communication, i.e. having low communicative dynamism. Halliday (1974) professes to have sided with another Prague scholar, Trávníček, in determining that the sentence element need only be in initial position to be dubbed Theme (Trávníček, 1961) in English (cf. Teruya, 2007). Theme in SFL structurally realises the textual component of language. Halliday explains that “it is through the semantic options of the textual component that

language comes to be relevant to its environment” (2002, p. 29). Both Prague School and Halliday did not favour mapping language via isolated vocabulary and sentences such as that in a dictionary or grammar book devoid of context. Halliday gives credit to the Prague school for being the first to identify this textual component (FSP) in “text- forming” semantics (Halliday, 2002, p. 29).

This all leads to the great potential which lies in using SFL as the theoretical tool to investigate drama and theatre texts. Being of a functional- structural nature, Hallidayan theory may provide the theoretical framework in which Prague school semiotic concepts can be realised. To be clear, from a linguistic point of view, a functional approach to drama texts explores the language of that particular register as it relates to the systemic functional description of the language as a whole. However, the developing field of systemic functional semiotics is creating new systems based on the concept of metafunctions to account for meaning in non-linguistic systems such as in images, movement, layout, colour and film. (Knox, 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2005; O'Halloran, 2004; O'Toole, 1994; Stockl, 2015). Additionally, questions are being raised concerning the incorporation of non-linguistic semiotic phenomena in the theoretical framework of SFL, which is essentially linguistic (Bowcher, 2018; Hasan, 1999; Matthiessen, 2007). As description of instances informs SFL theory, exploring the structure of Prague school functionalism can also develop the theory, as there is not yet a unified, comprehensive approach in systemic functional semiotics.

SFL is not without criticisms. Davidse highlights the fact that while the two schools of thought proposed the existence of not one but three different levels of syntax, Halliday's mapping of the systems of transitivity, theme and mood unto the metafunctions, though effective, are inherently intuitive and not empirically grounded, just like the related philosophy that the metafunctions are simultaneously existent and discrete (Davidse, 1987). The Prague School, through Danes, does not map the metafunctions unto the three different levels of syntax (in his case grammatical, semantic and organizational) and posits that the grammatical system is dominant (within a very different conceptual framework from Halliday's albeit treating with the same syntactic issues). Another criticism of SFL is that aspects of analyses that do not fit into the three part system are either forced into categories or not accounted for at all (Thompson & Hunston, 2006).

Despite these shortcomings SFL continues to produce rich analyses and no doubt will continue to evolve. Concerning drama and theatre, use of SFL to analyse drama scripts can shed more light on Prague theatre concepts of material/ non-material elements and known/ unknown elements and how they are linked. It is this continued absence of a primary dynamic that could “combine the discreet cognitive and sensory elements indicated and implied in the written text and realised in performance” (Peacock, 1984, p. 39) that makes the employment of both SFL (for functional analysis of text) and Prague School drama and theatre theory (for functional semiotics of the stage) practical, appealing and mutually beneficial. A functional approach to drama scripts would be the first step and this has already begun (Melrose, 1985) with (Quammie-Wallen, 2018a, 2018b) paying particular attention to the special register of stage directions, which more directly links the page to the stage.

What seems somewhat ironic is that ground-breaking functional and structural principles were worked out for other semiotic codes through drama, art, music, folksongs, architecture and the like and were eventually applied to and developed in the linguistic code, where thereafter, the linguistic application became the standard. Now, these linguistic principles are being approached and reinvented in multimodality and systemic functional semiotics, when these modes were in fact, one of the rich and original planes of discovery, invention, and philosophical coding in the multidisciplinary investigations of the Prague School. Having come

full circle, more in-depth understanding of Prague School theory may help to expand SFLs overall empirical approach to other semiotic communication and serve to provide more systematic answers to, for example, the Veltruský (1976) original search for the unknown component in plays.

4. Conclusion

The Prague School and Halliday's systemic functional linguistics can be deemed to have adopted the same approach to semiotic understanding. While the former were indeed pioneers, setting semiotic research on new pathways in areas such as communication, function, context, structure, text organization and syntax, Halliday and his successors also pioneered new perspectives and the arrangement of these and other key contributing ideas (courtesy Sweet, Malinowsky, Firth, etc.) into a coherent and consistent linguistic framework grounded in the social where the existence of choice in the lexico-grammar points to meaning (systemicity). Davidse states of Halliday:

"He has, even more than the Prague School, incorporated the social dimension into his linguistic theory and he holds that without it the nature of language and language development cannot be satisfactorily explained. Moreover, he has developed a number of bridging concepts, such as system network, metafunctions, and register that face both 'upwards' to the social structure and "downwards" to the linguistic system" (Davidse, 1987, p. 74).

In that regard, SFL may well be an appropriate theoretical tool capable of more fully illuminating drama and theatre theory, after the fashion of the Prague School- a pool of concepts which includes perspectives on the play text which does not rest comfortably in either literature or performance^{**}. Dual attention paid can be instructive.

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