Functional sentence perspective in written and spoken communication

JAN FIRBAS
Professor Emeritus, Department of English and American Studies, Masaryk University, Brno, Czechoslovakia
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preface</th>
<th>page xi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of abbreviations</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part I  Functional sentence perspective in written communication

1  Introduction                        | 3       
   In medias res                       | 3       
   Two perspectives                    | 5       
   Communicative dynamism and linear modification – one of the factors of functional sentence perspective | 6       
   Potentiality                        | 11      
   Actual linear arrangement and interpretative arrangement | 12      
   Organization of the present study  | 13      

2  The sentence and the carriers of communicative dynamism | 14       
   The sentence as a field of relations | 14       
   The hierarchy of carriers of communicative dynamism | 16       

3  The contextual factor               | 21      
   Known information and the structure of context | 21       
   The immediately relevant context            | 23      
   Signalling of context dependence            | 31      
   More thoughts on context dependence        | 37      
   Context – a graded phenomenon               | 39      
   Presenting elements as context-dependent   | 40      

vii
## Contents

4 The semantic factor 41  
The verb and its successful competitors 41

5 The theme and the non-theme 66  
The scales of dynamic semantic functions 66  
The foundation-laying and the core-constituting elements: the theme and the non-theme 69  
An analysis of a text 74  
Additional notes on transition (transition proper oriented elements) 77  
Additional notes on theme (diathematic elements) 79  
Additional notes on rheme (strings of specifications) 81  
The functional perspective of the noun phrase 83  
Dynamic and static 86

6 Some special issues of the theory of functional sentence perspective 88  
Boundary between theme and non-theme 88  
The functional sentence perspective of questions, negative sentences and commands 97  
The concept of communicative dynamism revisited 104  
More thoughts on potentiality 108  
The contextual applicability of functional sentence perspective 110  
Signals of the distribution of communicative dynamism 114

7 Word order and functional sentence perspective 117  
Word order as a system 117  
Topicalization 125  
Notes on Old English and present-day English word orders 127  
Basic instance-level implementations 134
Part II  Functional sentence perspective in spoken communication

8  Non-prosodic distribution of degrees of communicative dynamism and degrees of prosodic prominence  143
  Degrees of prosodic prominence  143
  Perfect correspondence between the non-prosodic distribution of communicative dynamism and the distribution of prosodic prominence  148
  Prosodic intensification imposed upon perfect correspondence between the two distributions  154
  Selective non-reevaluating intensification  156
  Re-evaluating prosodic intensification  159

9  Some more observations on the relationship between the non-prosodic distribution of communicative dynamism and that of prosodic prominence  173
  Deshading  173
  Further notes on shading and the to-be-in-the-know effect  176
  Settings and specifications  180
  More thoughts on the prosodic implementation of the subject and on potentiality  183
  Functional sentence perspective, intonation and emotiveness  186
  Intonation of questions  189

10  Analyses of two spoken texts  192
  Analysis of the first text  193
  Analysis of the second text  196
  The relevance of degrees of prosodic prominence to functional sentence perspective  212

11  Some special issues concerning functional sentence perspective in the spoken language  214
  Functional sentence perspective and the contextual applicability of the spoken sentence structure  214