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JAN FIRBAS

## ON SOME BASIC ISSUES OF THE THEORY OF FUNCTIONAL SENTENCE PERSPECTIVE IV

(Some thoughts on Marie Luise Thein's critique of the theory)

The literature dealing with what is — apart from other designations, for instance, 'functional sentence perspective (FSP)' — referred to as 'information structure' is very vast. This testifies that the interest in problems it tackles is not shared by a small group of researchers. Under these circumstances, an extensive and reliable state of the art report is a great desideratum. The ambitious task of presenting a critical evaluation of at least some approaches has been undertaken by Marie Luise Thein in her book *Die informationelle Struktur im Englischen* (1994). The evaluation constitutes the first of three parts of a monograph that concentrates on the implementation of information structure in English. The writings evaluated are mainly those of (in order of discussion) Vilém Mathesius, Jan Firbas, Aleš Svoboda, Petr Sgall, Eva Hajičová, Ray Jackendoff and M. A. K. Halliday. All these writings are subjected to harsh criticism. Criticism certainly plays an important role in research. It does not, however, play it well if it does not give a reliable account of the views and results criticized. The present paper illustrates in what way my views and results have been misrepresented. What has led me to offer such an illustration is a wish to appeal to the reader interested in FSP to check on the criticisms by going *ad fontes*, that is by taking into account what has actually been said and arrived at in the sources criticized.

### I

Let me open the discussion with the following citation from Thein's book.

Firbas baut zwar die Theorie Mathesius' an einigen Punkten aus, modifiziert sie aber nicht grundlegend. Gleich geblieben ist das ideelle Verständnis von der FSP und eine Mißachtung der Intonation, deren Wirkung generell lediglich am Rande erwähnt wird. Lediglich in dem

Aufsatz von 1969 geht Firbas näher auf die Intonation ein. Mit diesem Aufsatz werden wir uns in 1.2.3. näher beschäftigen. — Thein 1994.19

The expressions *Mißachtung der Intonation, lediglich am Rande* and *Lediglich in dem Aufsatz von 1969 geht F. näher auf die Intonation ein* maintain that I have disregarded intonation, dealt with it only marginally and examined it more closely only in my paper of 1969. The truth is that apart from this paper, I have written a number of papers dealing with the role of intonation in FSP. Thein's bibliography itself, adduced at the end of her book, lists four other papers of mine which concentrate on, and two which pay considerable attention to, the role of intonation in FSP. These six papers are entitled: 'On the prosodic features of the modern English finite verb as a means of functional sentence perspective' (1968), 'On the interplay of prosodic and non-prosodic means of functional sentence perspective' (1972), 'Post-intonation centre prosodic shade in the modern English clause' (1980), 'Thoughts on functional sentence perspective, intonation and emotiveness' (1985), 'A study in the functional perspective of the English and the Slavonic interrogative sentences' (1976) and 'On some basic problems of functional sentence perspective' (1992b). These are not the only publications in which I have extensively dealt with the role of intonation in FSP. There are others that appeared before 1993 (1992 being the year of the last Firbas item in Thein's bibliography): 'Thoughts on functional sentence perspective, intonation and emotiveness, Part two' (1987a), 'Degrees of communicative dynamism and degrees of prosodic prominence (weight)' (1990), and *Functional sentence perspective in written and spoken communication* (1992a), offering a synthesis of my writings on FSP and devoting its second part to intonation (pp. 143–224). The bibliographical data adduced disprove Thein's contention that intonation has been examined by me more closely only (*lediglich*) in Firbas 1969. Together with Firbas 1969, the other writings referred to equally disprove her contention that intonation has been dealt with by me only (*lediglich*) marginally (*am Rande*).

The citation announces Thein's intention to pay particular attention to Firbas 1969. This gives me the opportunity to revisit the results of the enquiry presented there and do so in the light of the results arrived at in my post-1969 papers. It should perhaps be pointed out that Firbas 1969 is closely related to Firbas 1968. This is explicitly expressed by the titles: 'On the prosodic features of the modern English finite verb-object combination as means of functional sentence perspective' (Firbas 1969) and 'On the prosodic features of the modern English finite verb as means of functional sentence perspective' (Firbas 1968). Within the framework set by Firbas 1968, Firbas 1969 takes up the result of an enquiry into written texts carried out by Firbas 1959, entitled 'Thoughts on the communicative function of the verb in English, German and Czech'.

Apart from incorrectly stating that my paper of 1969 is the only publication which I have devoted to intonation, Thein offers a number of statements that do not present a true picture of my assessment of the important role played by in-

tonation in FSP. For the present, let me just quote these of her formulations introducing her criticisms of my paper of 1969.

Firbas sieht nur eine zufällige Übereinstimmung zwischen der intonatorischen Realisation und der FSP. — Thein 1994.28

Um etwaige letzte Zweifel an der Zuverlässigkeit der Intonation als Kriterium der informationellen Struktur auszuräumen, verfolgen wir Firbas' Argumentation, laut der kein Zusammenhang zwischen Intonation und FSP besteht. Ist die Argumentation schlüssig, müssen wir bislang noch nicht die überprüfte These, daß die Intonation ein Kriterium der informationellen Struktur ist, über Bord werfen. — Thein 1994.29

Firbas untersucht anhand eines Korpus das Verhältnis zwischen Objekten und Verben in bezug auf Intonation und CD-Gehalt. Dabei stellt er drei Typen fest, wovon er den dritten wiederum in drei Unterarten unterstellt. — Thein 1994.29

The first quotation contends that I see only an accidental correspondence (*zufällige Übereinstimmung*) between the intonational implementation and FSP. This is certainly not my view of the role of intonation in FSP. In all my writings on intonation I examine the relationship between the distribution of degrees of CD (communicative dynamism) as determined by non-prosodic FSP factors, on the one hand, and the distribution of degrees of PP (prosodic prominence) supplied by intonation acting as a powerful FSP factor co-determining the degrees of CD in spoken language, on the other. Let me recall that by a degree of CD carried by a linguistic element of any rank I mean the relative extent to which the element contributes towards the further development of the communication. The distribution of degrees of CD — determined by an interplay of the non-prosodic factors in written language, and in spoken language by an interplay including both the non-prosodic factors and that of intonation — produces the perspective in which the sentence functions (FSP) in the act of communication. The characters of the factors, the signals they yield and their operations in the interplay have been discussed in detail in my previous writings on FSP, and will be briefly recapitulated and illustrated in the present paper (see pp. 65–8). A synthesis of my pre-1992 writings have been presented in Firbas 1992a. This is not listed in Thein's bibliography, which nevertheless adduces Firbas 1992b, a fairly extensive abstract of Firbas 1992a. My enquiries, establishing an interplay of factors, do not permit of the conclusion that the participation of intonation in this co-operation is accidental (*zufällig*).

The second quotation repeats the critic's allegation of my seeing no relationship between intonation and FSP. This is what she says. 'In order to remove any last doubts about the reliability of intonation as a criterion of information structure, let us follow Firbas' reasoning according to which there is no relationship between intonation and FSP. If this reasoning is conclusive, the still

unverified thesis that intonation is a criterion of information structure will have to go by the board.'

At this point it is not out of place to quote my own formulation from Firbas 1969, the paper receiving special attention from the critic. It follows from my formulation that I find the enquiry into the operation of intonation to be a suitable test of the validity of the conclusions concerning the operation of the non-prosodic FSP factors. The expression 'test' occurs twice in the quotation. (I will nevertheless return to the question of the employment of intonation as a testing device when closing my notes on pp. 82–3.)

In its first stage, the Brno work on FSP concentrated on written English. But the time has now come to undertake an inquiry into the means of FSP offered by the spoken language. It is hoped that such an inquiry will make it possible to test the results achieved on the prosodic level and carry the investigation a step further. Of these results, the present paper will put to the test its author's earlier conclusion that in English, German and Czech, and possibly in all Indo-European languages, the object will carry a higher amount of communicative dynamism (= CD) than the finite verb if it conveys new, unknown information, i.e. if it is contextually independent. — Firbas 1969.49

These formulations of mine requiring that the results achieved within the sphere of written language should be put to the test at the prosodic, i.e. intonational, level, hardly permit to draw the conclusion that I see no relationship (*kein Zusammenhang*) between intonation and FSP.

Constituting the paragraph immediately following the second quotation, the third quotation informs the reader of the aim pursued by Firbas 1969. It does not, however, do so in an accurate way. It says that on the basis of a corpus I examine the relation between objects and verbs in regard to intonation and CD. In accordance with Firbas 1969.49 (see above), what I actually examine is whether the distribution of degrees of CD over the finite verb-object combination (as co-determined by the semantic character of the verb and the object, and the context-dependence/independence of the information conveyed by them) is reflected by intonation in spoken language. In other words, what is examined is whether the distribution of degrees of CD as determined by non-prosodic factors (under the circumstances, the semantic and the contextual factor) is reflected by intonation. (The ways the contextual factor and the semantic factor, together with linear modification, operate will be illustrated in the following discussions. These three factors are the non-prosodic factors operating in the interplay; see pp. 56–7.)

Additionally, the third quotation informs that my enquiry has established three types of verb-object group, but neither the quotation itself nor the text following it tells the reader on exactly what grounds the three 'types' (I speak of groups) of 'verb-object group' (I speak of a finite verb-object combination) have been established. In Section Two (pp. 55–65), I shall demonstrate the procedure I used in establishing the three groups. Preparing the way for my com-

ments, let me recall that like Firbas 1968, Firbas 1969 adopts A. C. Gimson's gamut of four degrees of accentuation — no stress, partial stress, stress and nucleus — as the starting point of the examination (Gimson 1962:244)<sup>1</sup>. It is worth noticing that in her book Thein also works with four degrees of accentuation. She speaks of four cases of auditively and instrumentally distinguishable forms of accentuation: unstressed (*unbetont*), weakly stressed (*schwach betont*), strongly stressed (*stark betont*) and centre of prominence (*Hervorhebungszentrum*) (Thein 1994:157). 'Hervorhebung' is a felicitous term. In my later writings on intonation I myself started using the term 'prosodic prominence' synonymously along with 'prosodic weight', eventually preferring 'prominence' to 'weight' without regarding the latter as inappropriate. Consequently, I now prefer the term 'degree of prosodic prominence' (degree of PP) to the term 'degree of prosodic weight' (cf. Firbas 1992a, as well as 1990 and 1992b). In the course of the further development of my enquiries, the gamut constituted by four degrees of PP has been expanded. The first steps in this direction are already indicated in Firbas 1969 as well as in Firbas 1972, which incorporates the results presented in Firbas 1968. In discussing only one of a long series of my articles on intonation, and an early one at that, Thein does not take the development of my enquiries into the role of intonation in FSP into consideration. Among other things, the expansion of the gamut of degrees of PP (taken up here on p. 58 and pp. 61–2) remains unmentioned.

## II

The enquiry carried out by Firbas 1969 (published in volume 8 of *Brno studies in English*) was based on a corpus offered by Peter A. D. MacCarthy's *English conversation reader* (1956) and consisting of twelve tonetically transcribed dialogues. For the purpose in hand, the transcriptions presented sufficiently naturalistic conversation. As has already been indicated, Thein does not acquaint the reader with the procedure employed by me in dealing with the corpus. In the first place, she does not correctly present the characteristics of the three groups of the finite verb-object combinations established by the enquiry. Below, the left-hand column quotes mine, the right-hand column Thein's presentation of the characteristics of the groups. In all, the corpus yielded 323 finite verb-object combinations.

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|--|---|
| (i) The verb is prosodically lighter than the object.  | (i) The context-independent object is prosodically weightier than the verb. |
| (ii) The verb is prosodically heavier than the object. | (ii) The context-dependent object is prosodically lighter than the verb.    |

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1 In my later writings, I use the terms 'unaccented stress' and 'accented stress'. I do so after O'Connor and Arnold (1973). Accented stress occurs in the head of a tone unit, whereas unaccented stress occurs outside it, that is in the pre-head or in the tail. In contrast with the pre-head and the tail, the head and the nucleus form the salient part of the tone unit.

- (iii) The verb equals the object in the (iii) The object and the verb show prosodic weight.

The FIRST PHASE of my investigation consisted in grouping the finite verb-object combinations according to the prosodic features borne by them. This is why my characteristics of the three groups were presented strictly in prosodic terms. References to context dependence/independence were deliberately avoided. This is not respected by Thein.

Context dependence/independence was taken account of in the SECOND PHASE. While context dependence was determined on the grounds of the actual presence in, and hence retrievability from, the immediately relevant context, context independence was determined on the grounds of the actual absence, and hence irretrievability, from the immediately relevant context.<sup>2</sup> A context-dependent element contributes less to the development of the communication than a context-independent element. If in *Peter has bought a book*, only *Peter* is context-dependent and the other elements context-independent, it carries a lower degree of CD than any of the other elements. If in *Peter has bought the book/it*, both *Peter* and *the book/it* are context-dependent, both carry lower degrees of CD than the rest. It is important to note that the context-dependent elements carry the lower degrees of CD irrespective of their positions in the actual linear arrangement.

Simultaneously, the second phase consistently took account of the results of the enquiry presented in Firbas 1959. According to them, the semantic content of an object expresses an essential amplification of the semantic content of the verb. Provided it is context-independent, the object contributes more to the development of the communication, and carries a higher degree of CD, than the verb. It is important to note that it does so irrespective of its position in the actual linear arrangement. If in *Peter/He has bought a book*, *Peter/Er kaufte ein Buch* and *Peter/Er hat ein Buch gekauft*, only *Peter/He/Peter/Er* is context-dependent, the object *a book/ein Buch* carries a higher degree than the verb. Under the circumstances, the object in fact carries the highest degree of CD in the sentence.

The context independence of the object is crucial. For though continuing to convey an essential amplification of the meaning of the verb, a context-

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2 In Firbas 1957.36-7 (cf. Firbas 1966.246-7), I offered the following observation on known and unknown information. Information that forms part of common knowledge shared by the speaker/writer and the listener/reader need not necessarily be regarded as known in regard to the immediately relevant communicative step to be taken. In the sentence *I saw Peter yesterday*, opening a conversation, *Peter* may name a person well known to the interlocutors, but not having been mentioned yet it conveys a new piece of information, in fact the high point of the piece of news presented. The information is regarded as new because it is irretrievable from the immediately relevant context, verbal and situational. This section of context plays a crucial role in the development of the communication. Since 1957 I have been aiming at delimiting it. For my most recent attempts at its delimitation, see Firbas 1992a. 22-5, 29-31, 1994, 1995.

dependent object is exceeded in CD by a verb that is context-independent. This is because every context-dependent element contributes less to the development of the communication than an element that is context-independent. These formulations, of course, imply that if both the verb and the object are context-independent, the essential amplification conveyed by the object can fully assert itself and the object is more dynamic than the verb. With due alterations, this also applies if both the verb and the object are context-dependent (see p. 62–3).

The preceding comments have illustrated the participation of two factors in the distribution of the degrees of CD: that of the contextual factor and that of the semantic factor. The contextual factor operates through the retrievability and/or irretrievability from the immediately relevant context, and the semantic factor through the character of the semantic content of an element and the character of the semantic relations into which the element enters. The above references to the actual positions in the actual linear arrangement indicate the participation of another participant in the interplay: that of linear modification.

This requires a word of explanation. As Bolinger has demonstrated, sentence linearity is not an inactive phenomenon. It asserts itself through what he has termed 'linear modification'. He finds that 'gradation of position creates gradation of meaning when there are no interfering factors' (1952.1125). In regard to degrees of CD this means that in the direction from the beginning to the end of the sentence the degrees of CD are gradually raised when no factors prevent, or interfere with, the implementation of such a gradual rise. It follows that if in *Peter/He has bought a book* and *Peter/Er kaufte ein Buch* only *Peter/He/Peter/Er* is context-dependent, the two sentence structures show a gradual rise in CD. In regard to the actual linear arrangement the three factors — the contextual factor, the semantic factor and linear modification — operate in the same direction. Under the same contextual condition, however, the sentence structure *Peter/Er hat ein Buch gekauft* does not show a gradual rise in CD. Linear modification cannot fully assert itself, because the operation of the semantic factor prevents the final *gekauft* from carrying the highest degree of CD. If in *Peter/He has bought it* and *Peter/Er hat es gekauft*, the elements *Peter/He*, *Peter/Er* and *it/es* are context dependent and the rest context-independent, it is through the pronoun *it/es* that the contextual factor operates counter to linear modification. Under the same contextual condition, the French counterpart *Pierre/Il a acheté un livre* shows a gradual rise in CD, all the three factors operating in the same direction. In determining the distribution of degrees of CD, the three factors under discussion constantly operate both in written and in spoken language. In the latter they are joined by intonation, which operates through PP.

The THIRD and final PHASE of the enquiry examined the relationship between the distribution of degrees of CD as determined by the interplay of the non-prosodic (non-intonational) factors on the one hand, and the distribution of degrees of PP as produced by intonation on the other. In accordance with its aim, Firbas 1969 centred its attention on the finite verb-object combination. The three-phase enquiry, starting off in strictly prosodic terms in its first phase, and



determining the result of the interplay of non-prosodic FSP factors in the second, enabled to analyze the relationship between the two distributions and to assess the role of intonation in FSP.

As has already been stated, the degrees of PP were recorded in terms of A. C. Gimson's simple four-degree gamut of 'no stress', '(non-nuclear) partial stress', '(non-nuclear) full stress' and 'nuclear stress'. In Firbas 1969, this gamut was expanded into a five-degree scale. A low rise that in one distributional field<sup>3</sup> occurred after a fall was considered to be prosodically less prominent than its predecessor (cf., e.g., Halliday 1970.38, O'Connor and Arnold 1973.82, Quirk et al. 1985.1601)<sup>4</sup>. In principle, Firbas 1969 considered the finite verb and the object to be of equal prosodic prominence if both bore the same prosodic feature in terms of the five-degree gamut just mentioned. For convenience' sake (see below), however, the two were regarded as prosodically equal (i) if each showed prominence lighter than full stress (being either unstressed or merely partially stressed), or (ii) if one showed prominence lighter than full stress and the other bore a low rise that within the same distributional field followed a fall occurring on an element outside the finite verb-object combination (Firbas 1969.5, 1st par.).

Out of 323 finite verb-object combinations yielded by the corpus, 193 had a finite verb prosodically lighter (prosodically less prominent) than the object and formed Group (i), 82 had a finite verb prosodically heavier (prosodically more prominent) than the object and formed Group (ii), and 42 had a finite verb of prosodic prominence equal to that of the object (in terms stipulated above) and formed Group (iii). Without mentioning the total number of cases, Their chooses for her critical discussion the group of the lowest number of cases, that is Group (iii). Before discussing her critical comments, I will first give an overview of the three groups, doing so in the light of my post-1969 enquiries.

### Group (i)

Out of the total number of 323 finite verb-object combinations yielded by the corpus, 193 had a finite verb that was prosodically lighter than the object. In all these cases the object conveyed a context-independent amplification of the in-

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3 In my writings, the sentence is viewed as a field of semantic and syntactic relations, which in the act of communication serves as a distributional field of degrees of CD. Additionally, in the act of spoken communication the sentence serves as a distributional field of degrees of PP. A hierarchy of distributional fields is constituted by distributional subfields provided by subordinate clauses, semi-clauses (also termed, non-finite clauses) and noun phrases, each field having its functional perspective. The syntactic constituents of these fields serve as communicative units (Svoboda 1968). A case *sui generis* is the verb, finite or non-finite, which serves as two communicative units (Firbas, e.g., 1992a.91). An important note must be added concerning the distribution of degrees of PP. If a communicative unit bears more prosodic features than one, the most prominent of them serves as the representative prosodic feature of the communicative unit in regard to the other communicative units occurring in the same distributional field (Firbas, e.g., 1985.17, 1992a.149–50, 169–70, and 1992b.182).

4 For examples. see sentences (6), (9) and (10) on pp. 59, 60 and 60, respectively.

formation expressed by the finite verb. In consequence, it contributed more to the development of the communication than the finite verb, and carried a higher degree of CD (cf. p. 56). This distribution of CD over the finite verb and the object was in perfect agreement with the distribution of PP over them. The object as carrier of a higher degree of CD acted as bearer of a higher degree of PP. It follows that intonation reflected the distribution of degrees of CD as determined by the interplay of non-prosodic FSP factors.

- (1) Well <sup>1</sup>wait a <sub>1</sub>minute. — MacCarthy 1956.32.22, Firbas 1969.51<sup>5</sup>
- (2) [I<sup>1</sup>went] and <sup>1</sup>looked at the <sub>1</sub>rooms [and <sup>1</sup>took them on the <sub>1</sub>spot]. — ib.<sup>1</sup> 33.1, ib.<sup>2</sup> 51
- (3) [<sub>1</sub>Well,] <sup>1</sup>I don't <sup>1</sup>claim to be an <sup>1</sup>expert. — ib.<sup>1</sup> 38.5, ib.<sup>2</sup> 51
- (4) It <sup>1</sup>said it was <sup>1</sup>very <sup>1</sup>good. — ib.<sup>1</sup> 30.4, ib.<sup>2</sup> 51

### Group (ii)

Out of the total number of 323 finite verb-object combinations yielded by the corpus, 82 had a finite verb that was prosodically heavier than the object.

- (5) [... but I must say] <sup>1</sup>I <sub>1</sub>like an <sub>1</sub>open <sub>1</sub>fire. — ib.<sup>1</sup> 1956.46.12, ib.<sup>2</sup> 1969.53
- (6) I'm <sub>1</sub>longing for a <sub>1</sub>smoke. — ib.<sup>1</sup> 34.29, ib.<sup>2</sup> 53
- (7) I can't <sub>1</sub>bear the cold. — ib.<sup>1</sup> 44.4, ib.<sup>2</sup> 53
- (8) I'd <sup>1</sup>love to see them. — ib.<sup>1</sup> 39.13, ib.<sup>2</sup> 53

In an absolutely overwhelming majority of cases, the object was context-dependent. It conveyed information that had been expressed in the immediately relevant preceding context and was therefore retrievable from it. The verb was context-independent, conveying irretrievable information. Contributing more towards the development of the communication than the object, it carried a higher degree of CD. This was reflected by the distribution of PP, the verb bearing a more prominent prosodic feature than the object.

Sentence (5) was used in reply to <sup>1</sup>*How about <sub>1</sub>heating? Have <sup>1</sup>you got any "open fires?* Sentence (6) immediately followed after *Then <sub>1</sub>perhaps there'll <sup>1</sup>just be <sup>1</sup>time for a <sub>1</sub>ciga<sub>1</sub>rette.* Sentence (7) was uttered in reaction to a weather forecast announcing cold weather: <sup>1</sup>*Last <sub>1</sub>night they said: <sup>1</sup>continuing <sup>1</sup>cold in the <sub>1</sub>north, <sub>1</sub>temperatures <sup>1</sup>slightly <sup>1</sup>higher in the <sub>1</sub>south, with <sup>1</sup>bright <sup>1</sup>periods over much of the <sub>1</sub>country <sup>1</sup>later in the <sub>1</sub>day.* Sentence (8) was said in reply to *I'll <sup>1</sup>show them <sub>1</sub>to you if you <sub>1</sub>like.*

Very few cases showed a verb prosodically weightier than the object in spite of the latter conveying irretrievable information and being therefore assigned a higher degree of CD by the interplay of the non-prosodic factors. These cases are worth special attention. Rendering the context-independent object prosodically lighter than the verb, intonation produces a marked effect which consists in presenting context-independent information as context-dependent. In other words, the marked effect consists in presenting unknown information as known.

5 References to MacCarthy 1956 (hereafter: 'ib.<sup>1</sup>') give the page and line on which the illustrative text begins; references to Firbas 1969 (hereafter: 'ib.<sup>2</sup>') merely state the page.

('Unknown' and 'known' are to be understood here in the narrow sense, that is as 'irretrievable' and 'retrievable' from the immediately relevant context.) It has to be borne in mind that context dependence is signalled by the actual presence of the information in the immediately relevant context. Seen in this light, a context-independent object that is treated as if it were context-dependent deviates from perfect correspondence between the distribution of CD as determined by the non-prosodic FSP factors and the distribution of PP as produced by intonation. Under the circumstances, this deviation, caused by PP, proves to be highly functional; see (9) and (10).

(9) I ɹdon't think you'd ɹbetter. — ib.<sup>1</sup> 39.27, ib.<sup>2</sup> 53

Both *think*, and — with the exception of *you* — the object clause, convey irretrievable information. No mention of the speaker's pondering over the advisability or inadvisability of the action concerned has been made in the preceding context. Nevertheless, both *think*, and — with the exception of *you* — the object clause, appear in the prosodic shade (Firbas 1980) after the fall on *don't*. It is worth noticing that the notional component of the verb is prosodically lighter than the auxiliary component linked with negation. This suggests that emphasis is laid by the speaker on his having given the issue some thought before coming to the negative conclusion that his friend 'had better not do it'. The shading of important irretrievable information presents such information as known. It may be regarded as known from the point of view of the speaker, but it is not actually present in the immediately relevant preceding context, and is therefore, objectively speaking, irretrievable from it. Retrievability or irretrievability from the immediately relevant context serves as an objective signal. The actual presence of information in, or its absence from, the immediately relevant context is an observable fact. Against the background of the overwhelming majority of context-independent objects conveying irretrievable information and bearing a more prominent prosodic feature than the verb, the shading of an object clause with irretrievable information proves to be marked. Through this markedness the clause, or rather the entire sentence, acquires a new emotive attitudinal dimension. Under the circumstances, the tone pattern used sounds apologetic, mitigating the harshness of the refusal.

(10) [He!lo! ... `Oh, !he!lo!] Ì thought I ɹrecognized your ɹvoice. — ib.<sup>1</sup> 24.3, ib.<sup>2</sup> 53

The words recorded under (10) occur at the opening of a telephone conversation. The dots merely indicate the words spoken by the caller at the other end of the line. It can be assumed that they stand for the words with which the s/he identifies her/himself. The information conveyed by the object clause, *I recognized your voice*, is new to her/him. It is indeed irretrievable from the immediately relevant preceding context. By putting this information in the prosodic shade after the fall on *thought*, the speaker ( a man) intimates that in his original

estimate about the interlocutor's identity he has proved to be right. From his point of view the original estimate can be regarded as known information. Objectively speaking, however, the notion of the original estimate is irretrievable. Once again, the shading of an object clause with irretrievable information proves to be marked. Not only does it indicate that the notion of the original estimate is merely presented by the speaker as known, but it also conveys the speaker's feeling of satisfaction at his correct estimate. It is worth noticing that, if under the same contextual conditions the most prominent prosodic feature were placed on *voice*, the information about the correctness of the guess would not be expressed. Nor would the attitudinal information about the speaker's self-satisfaction be conveyed.

The few cases in which, despite carrying a higher degree of CD than the verb, the object bore a lower degree of PP than the latter showed a striking deviation from perfect correspondence between the two distributions, that is that of the degrees of CD as determined by the interplay of non-prosodic factors and that of the degrees of PP produced by intonation. This deviation, however, could not be regarded as a discrepancy. On the contrary. Against the background of perfect correspondence between the two distributions, it proved to be truly functional, producing a marked (emotive) effect (Firbas 1980.132-3). This effect is a case of prosodic intensification, which was dealt with extensively in Firbas 1985, 1987a, 1990, 1992a.148-72 and 192-213, and 1993. The place of prosodic intensification in FSP will also be taken up here on pp. 71 and 72-9.

### Group (iii)

Out of the total numbers of 323 finite verb-object combinations yielded by the corpus, 48 formed Group (iii). They had a finite verb whose prosodic prominence equalled that of the object (in terms stipulated by Firbas 1969 and restated here on p. 58). Apart from 4 cases that occurred in special questions and were given special attention<sup>6</sup>, the second phase of the enquiry assigned the remaining 44 cases of finite verb-object combination to three subgroups going by the context dependence/independence of the members of the combination. Before discussing the three subgroups, let me insert a note on the expansion of the gamut of degrees of PP established in my post-1969 writings on intonation. I find the expansion of the gamut to be in harmony with Bolinger's observation on linear modification (see p. 57).

It follows from Bolinger's observation that sentence linearity is not an inactive phenomenon in the act of communication. As I see it, it also asserts itself in a specific way in regard to PP. Affected by linear modification, prosodic features that are of the same phonic rank (absence of stress, partial stress, full stress and nuclear stress) and occur in the same distributional field<sup>3</sup> do not cre-

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6 For lack of space, I do not discuss the four *wh*-questions in detail here. As for the relationship between the interrogative *wh*-word and the verb in FSP, I have discussed it in Firbas 1976.*passim* and most recently in Firbas 1996.67-70. With due alterations, the observations pertaining to the interrogative *what* can be applied to the relative pronoun *what*.

ate an exactly identical impression of PP. For instance, of two nuclear stresses occurring in the same distributional field, the one coming later creates an impression of greater prominence than its predecessor. Seen in this light, different degrees of PP are involved. With gradually lesser intensity, the same is displayed by features of lower phonic rank. (Needless to say, this formulation does not apply in cases of configurations necessitating a modification. The most important modification established so far (cf. Firbas 1992a. 152–3) is the occurrence in the same distributional field of a low rise following a fall.<sup>4</sup>)

Group (iii). Subgroup (a)

Subgroup (a) contained 21 cases of the finite verb-object combination. In all of them both the finite verb and the object were context-dependent. Consequently, they carried lower degrees of CD than the context-independent elements concurrent with them in the same distributional field. This distribution of degrees of CD was reflected by the distribution of degrees of PP. The context-dependent finite verb-object combination was exceeded in PP by the context-independent elements.

Though exceeded in CD by context-independent elements, context-dependent elements themselves do not equal in CD. This is mainly due to two facts. First, although through retrievability it renders elements context-dependent irrespective of semantic character and position in the actual linear arrangement, the contextual factor does not entirely efface the operation of the semantic factor and linear modification. Second, the graded character of context (Firbas 1993.41; 1994) enables the contextual factor to signal the relative degree to which in the course of the development of the communication a piece of information has been established in the immediately relevant context. Sentences (11), (12) and (13) are illustrative of the first fact mentioned.

(11)  $\checkmark$ One of the  $\acute{r}$ ooms  $\acute{f}$ aces the  $\acute{s}$ ea. — ib.<sup>1</sup> 33.13, ib.<sup>2</sup> 55

(12)  $\setminus$ I got a few  $\surd$ books  $\setminus$ too. — ib.<sup>1</sup> 40.28, ib.<sup>2</sup> 55

(13)  $\acute{L}$ ots of grown— $\checkmark$ ups have  $\acute{w}$ riting that's  $\acute{h}$ ard to  $\acute{r}$ ead. — ib.<sup>1</sup> 40.16, ib.<sup>2</sup> 55

The objects of the context-dependent verb-object combinations of (11), (12) and (13), *the sea*, *a few books* and *writing that's hard to read*, are expressed by a simple noun phrase, an extended noun phrase and an extended noun phrase containing a relative clause, respectively. In terms of the expanded gamut, each of these objects is prosodically more prominent than its verb. This is in harmony with the semantic characters of the verb and the object and the character of the semantic relationship between them. Under the circumstances, the object exceeds the verb in CD, which is reflected by the degrees of PP. It does so even in a verb-object combination that is entirely context-dependent. As a carrier of a higher degree of CD than the verb, it behaves in the same way as objects operating in an unmarked way and dealt with under the heading of Group (i).

(14) [ $\acute{T}$ hat's the way] the Chi $\grave{n}$ ese drink it[, I under stand]. — ib.<sup>1</sup> 50.15, ib.<sup>2</sup> 55

(15) [About the  $\acute{o}$ nly time]  $\checkmark$ I get for  $\acute{r}$ eading [is  $\acute{l}$ ate at  $\setminus$ night, when everyone's in  $\acute{b}$ ed and a  $\setminus$ sleep]. — ib.<sup>1</sup> 30.23, ib.<sup>2</sup> 55

Sentences (14) and (15) are illustrative of the second fact mentioned. In (14) the object in the context-dependent verb-object combination is expressed by a personal pronoun and in (15) by the zero variant<sup>7</sup> of the relative pronoun. Each of the two pronouns bears a lower degree of PP than the verb, silence linked with a zero variant being regarded as the lowest degree of the expanded PP gamut. This is due to the semantic weakness of the pronoun and to the fact that it has not been induced to convey any additional irretrievable information (for instance such as indicating contrast or selection; see e.g. Firbas 1992b.171 and 1995.22). Under these conditions, the pronoun acts as a signal of context dependence *par excellence*. It indicates a piece of information that has become more firmly established in the immediately relevant context than the information conveyed by the verb. In consequence, it carries a lower degree of CD than the verb. With due alterations, it can be said to behave in the same way as objects discussed under the heading of Group (ii). Once again, the distribution of PP is in harmony with the distribution of CD as determined by the non-prosodic FSP factors.

#### Group (iii). Subgroup (b)

(16) [... the <sup>✓</sup>first thing] I 'did [was to <sup>1</sup>go to the infor, mation bureau ...]  
— ib.<sup>1</sup>32.7, ib.<sup>2</sup>55

(17) [... with the <sup>✓</sup>food] they 'give you. — ib.<sup>1</sup>50.20, ib.<sup>2</sup>55

(18) [They're <sup>1</sup>all <sup>1</sup>stuck in an <sup>✓</sup>album] that I <sub>1</sub>got as a <sup>✓</sup>Christmas present. — ib.<sup>1</sup>39.19, ib.<sup>2</sup>55

According to Firbas 1969, Subgroup (b) consists of 7 cases. In actual fact, the subgroup has only 6 cases, for one of the cases recorded does not belong to it.<sup>6</sup>

All the 6 objects are implemented as relative pronouns. Having been ellipped, five of them appear in zero form<sup>7</sup>; cf. e.g. (16) and (17). Referring to their antecedents, the relative pronouns convey retrievable information and are therefore context-dependent. On the other hand, the verbs convey irretrievable information and are therefore context-independent and carry higher degrees of CD than their context-dependent objects. This is reflected by the PP distribution. The context-independent verbs exceed the context-dependent objects in PP. With due alterations, it can be said that the objects behave in the same way as objects discussed under the heading of Group (ii).

#### Group (iii). Subgroup (c)

The group contained 16 cases. They are exemplified by the following five sentences.

(19) [I <sup>✓</sup>also pointed <sub>1</sub>out] that we'd 'had a 'telephone be<sup>✓</sup>fore... — ib.<sup>1</sup>48.1, ib.<sup>2</sup>56

7 For comments on the zero variant of the relative pronoun viewed as a linguistic fact, see pp. 69–70.

- (20) ... so that you can beɹgin to ɹserve ɹstraight aɹway? — ib.<sup>1</sup> 34.23, ib.<sup>2</sup> 56  
 (21) I ɹpromised I ɹwouldn't let ɹother people ɹuse it.— ib.<sup>1</sup> 39.27, ib.<sup>2</sup> 56  
 (22) Iɹ ɹmust say we're ɹjolly ɹglad of it. — ib.<sup>1</sup> 46.09, ib.<sup>2</sup> 56  
 (23) We've ɹmissed the ɹlast ɹtrain.— ib.<sup>1</sup> 53.7, ib.<sup>2</sup> 56  
 (24) ɹWell, I'd ɹlove a ɹdrink. — ib.<sup>1</sup> 34.22, ib.<sup>2</sup> 56

In contrast with the context-dependent objects of Subgroups (a) and (b), the objects of all the 16 cases of Subgroup (c) are context-independent. In consequence, they carry a higher degree of CD than the verbs. In the illustrative sentences adduced, they are implemented as noun phrases: *a telephone* (19), *the last train* (23) and *a drink* (24); as an infinitive: *to serve* (20); and as clauses: *I wouldn't let other people use it* (21) and *we're jolly glad of it* (22).

In Firbas 1969, the verb and the object were regarded as prosodically equal, because in terms of the basic gamut of PP they bore prosodic features of the same phonic rank. The features concerned are partial stresses in (19); full stresses in (20); and nuclei in (21), (22), (23) and (24). In terms of the expanded gamut of PP, however, the verbs and the objects in the distributional fields under discussion are not prosodically equal. The objects are prosodically more prominent. This is because, though bearing a prosodic feature of the same phonic rank as the verb, they occur later in the distributional field. (In assessing the PP of a constituent, its representative prosodic feature is decisive; cf. end of note<sup>3</sup>.)

The higher degrees of PP assigned to the objects in terms of the expanded PP gamut are in harmony with the distribution of degrees of CD as determined by the interplay of the non-prosodic factors. As each object is context-independent, it contributes more to the development of the communication than the verb, and hence exceeds it in CD. The sentences adduced above serve to illustrate.

In (19) and (22), a context-independent object expressing what is actually said contributes more to the development of the communication than the verb merely indicating the fact of saying. Likewise, a context-independent object expressing what is to begin, promised, missed or desired, contributes more to the development of the communication than a verb merely indicating the fact of beginning (20), promising (21), missing (23) or desiring (24) something. All this has already been stated in Firbas 1969.56–7. The context-independent status of the object is important. Applying the expanded PP gamut, we find that the cases originally placed in Subgroup (c) of Group (iii) are to be classed as Group (i) cases.

By way of closing the comments on cases originally assigned to Group (iii), we arrive at an important conclusion. Applying the expanded gamut of degrees of PP, we find that these cases are to be assigned either to Group (i) or to Group (ii). This means that the verb and the object never bear the same degrees of PP. This tallies perfectly with the outcome of the interplay of the non-prosodic factors of FSP, according to which the verb and the object never carry the same degrees of CD. The important role which the prosodic intensification plays in

FSP through co-determining the degrees of CD will become evident in the continuation of my discussion of Their's critique.

### III

Before returning to Their's critique of Firbas 1969, I feel I have to insert a few notes on some of my concepts. I do so, for the present paper is in fact meant primarily for readers who are acquainted with Their's critique of my approach, but have no firsthand knowledge or only little knowledge of my writings. As the paper Firbas 1968, within the framework of which Firbas 1969 was set, demonstrated that the mediatory (transitional) function plays a role of great importance in FSP, I find it necessary to insert a note on this function. In this connection I find it equally necessary to add a note on my concepts of thematicity and non-thematicity. Needless to say, all these notes, which are based on more detailed discussions presented in my writings, must necessarily remain rather sketchy. For a more detailed discussion, I should like to refer the readers, for instance, to Firbas 1992a, which offers a synthesis of my writings on FSP.

Distinguishing between the notional component of the verb and its categorial components, my analyses have demonstrated that the notional component of the verb shows a strong tendency to perform a mediatory function in the development of the communication. Its categorial exponents, especially the TMEs (the categorial exponents of tense and mood) perform this function invariably. The strong tendency of the notional component to mediate is reflected by the frequent presence in the sentence of what has been termed successful competitors. Such elements are context-independent and are induced by the interplay of FSP factors to exceed the verbal notional component in CD. It is only in their absence that the notional verbal component can carry the highest degree of CD and complete the development of the communication. On the other hand, the verbal notional component, can be induced to convey context-dependent information. In that case it does not close, but opens the development of the communication. This, however, does not happen very frequently. The following examples will illustrate the points that have just been made.

Provided in *I have bought an interesting book/Ich habe ein interessantes Buch gekauft* only the pronominal subject *I/Ich* is context-dependent, the verb cannot convey the highest degree of CD because of the presence of the context-independent object *an interesting book/ein interessantes Buch*. The verb performs a mediatory function between the subject and the object. Provided in *I have bought the interesting book/it/Ich habe das interessante Buch/es gekauft*, both the subject and the object are context-dependent, the verbal notional component carries the highest degree of CD and conveys the high point of the message. The mediatory function is performed by the TMEs (co-implemented by an auxiliary both in English and in German, an ending both in English and in German, a vowel alteration in English and a prefix in German). Note that in none of the sentences, the highest degree of CD is carried by the subject; in other words,



none of the sentences is perspectived towards the subject. In this respect, a different picture is presented by the following sentences.

Provided in *A book lay on the table/Ein Buch ist auf dem Tisch gelegen* only the adverbial *on the table/auf dem Tisch* is context-dependent, the sentence is perspectived to the context-independent subject. This happens on account of the context independence of the subject, the semantic character of the verb and the character of the entire semantic pattern. Under the circumstances, the adverbial sets the scene and the verb expresses existence, the communication being completed by the presentation of the phenomenon existing on this scene. The verb performs the mediatory function, the subject proving to be its successful competitor. The outcome of the interplay of the factors, however, is different if in *The book/It lay on the table//Das Buch/Es ist auf dem Tisch gelegen*, the subject is context-dependent and the rest context-independent. In that case, the adverbial no longer expresses mere background information, but completes the message by specifying the location. It acts as a successful competitor of the verb, which does not complete the message, but acts as a mediator between *The book/It//Das Buch/Es* and *on the table/auf dem Tisch*.

If *I am flying to London* is used in reply to *Peter has flown to Paris; what about you?*, the notional component of *flying* is context-dependent. Together with the other context-dependent information offered by the sentence, it opens the message to be conveyed. The other context-dependent information is offered by the subject *I* and the auxiliary *am* through those of its semantic features that make it operate as a PNE (exponent of person and number). The high point of the message, closing the communication, is conveyed by *to London*. The mediatory function is performed by the categorial exponents, which do so primarily through those semantic features that make them operate as TMEs. (The richness of information conveyed by the verbal categorial exponents, as well as its consequences for FSP, has been discussed in other places; see, e.g., Firbas 1992a.70–1, 88–93.)

In all the sentences discussed, the constituents between which (doing so with or without the co-operation of the notional component of the verb) the TMEs mediate are elements carrying lower degrees of CD on the one hand and elements carrying higher degrees of CD on the other<sup>8</sup>. The function of the former is to lay the foundation upon which the core of the message is to be built up, and the function of the latter to express the core of the message. The foundation is termed the 'theme' and the core the 'non-theme'. The foundation-laying elements are thematic, the core-constituting non-thematic.

Examining the relationship between the subject and the verb in regard to FSP, we find that the verb participates in perspectiving the sentence either towards

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8 As the above discussed examples show, actual linear arrangement does not invariably display a gradual rise in CD. The mediatory function is therefore not position-bound. A distinction has therefore been drawn between actual linear arrangement and interpretative arrangement. The latter reflects the interpreter's ordering in accordance with a gradual rise in CD. See, for instance, Firbas 1992a.8-9, 12-13, 81-3.

the subject or away from it. This points to different functions the subject and the verb can perform in the development — in other words, the dynamics — of the communication. Under the conditions stipulated, *lay* of *A book lay on the table* participates in signalling that *A book* expresses a phenomenon to be presented (under the circumstances, against a background explicitly conveyed). In this case, *lay* performs the dynamic semantic function (DSF) of Presentation (Pr-function), *on the table* the DSF of expressing a Setting (Set-function) and *A book* the DSF of expressing a Phenomenon to be presented (Ph-function). Generally speaking, a Set-element conveys concomitant (background) information. Under the condition stipulated, *lay* of *The book lay on the table* does not perform the Pr-function, but expresses a Quality ascribed to a phenomenon. (Quality is to be understood here in a wide sense of the word.) It performs the DSF of expressing Quality (Q-function). *The book* does not perform the DSF of expressing a Phenomenon to be presented, but the DSF of expressing the Bearer of quality (B-function). *On the table* does not perform the DSF of expressing a Setting, but the DSF of expressing a Specification (Sp-function). While in regard to the development of the communication the Pr-function points towards the information conveyed by the subject, the Q-function points away from it. While pointing towards the subject, the verb does not say anything about the information conveyed by the subject; it does, however, do so while pointing away from it. The preceding notes indicate two Scales of DSFs: the Presentation Scale and the Quality Scale. As an outcome of the interplay of FSP factors, the DSFs co-determine the theme (foundation) and the non-theme (the core). The theme is constituted by (i) a context-dependent or context-independent Set-element and/or (ii) context-dependent or context-independent B-element and/or (iii) any other element that is context-dependent. Elements coming under the heading of (iii) are regarded as having had their dynamic status reduced to that of a Set-element. Elements participating in constituting the non-theme are all context-independent. Elements capable of constituting the non-theme are the Ph-element, Q-element, Sp-element, FSp-element (Further Specification). While the theme can contain more Set-elements, the non-theme can contain more FSp-elements. Starting building up the core (non-theme) upon the foundation (theme), the mediatory elements constitute the transition within the non-theme. The non-mediatory elements of the non-theme constitute the rheme. It follows that the non-theme consists of the transition and the rheme. As the very openers of the core-building process, the TMEs are regarded as constituting transition proper; the element completing the message is regarded as rheme proper.

The two Scales can be expanded, and they can be combined. The DSFs form a system, its centre being constituted by the relationship between the subject and the verb seen in regard to the development of the communication. A central position is therefore occupied by the distribution of DSFs over the constituents of verbal sentences. The dynamic operation of the verbless sentences are to be interpreted against the background of their fully developed verbal counterparts. It follows that the system has its centre and its periphery (Daneš 1966, Vachek

1966) on which also the phenomenon of potentiality operates (see, e.g., Firbas 1992a.108–10, 181–2, 183–6, 221–2; Firbas 1992b.179–81; and here p. 80). Analyses of texts (see, e.g., Firbas 1986, 1989, 1992) taking the operation of the DSFs into account testify to the viability of the concept of the DSF. Needless to say, the account of the operation of the system is open to further elaboration.

It is regrettable that in setting out to acquaint the readers with my approach, Thein does not inform them of my conception of theme and non-theme (transition and rheme). Generally speaking, it is perhaps especially the theme the identification of which creates problems (cf., e.g., Lutz 1981). Let me therefore insert another note concerning my conception of theme. Inspired by Mathe-sius, I understand by it that section of the sentence (or subclause or semiclauser or noun phrase) that in the development of the communication lays the foundation upon the which the core of the message is to be built up. In regard to a stretch of text longer than a sentence (a paragraph, for instance), all the themes of the sentences constituting the stretch build up its thematic layer. The foundation of whatever rank naturally expresses what the structure (stretch of text) within which it has been established is to be about. In my approach, however, this very aboutness feature does not form the starting point of the identification process of the theme(s). This consists in looking for the signals delimiting what is to be identified as theme. Thein does not inform the reader of my concept of the theme. In the light of the development of the theory of FSP I regard the article Firbas 1964<sup>9</sup>, adduced in her bibliography, just as a step in the direction towards a delimitation of the theme. These steps are described in Firbas 1987b. For the conclusions so far arrived at, see Firbas 1992a and 1992b, and most recently Firbas 1996.

#### IV

I can now return to Thein's critique of my approach. In order to put it to the test, she chooses four of my illustrative sentences for discussion. They were all classed with Group (iii) in Firbas 1969. Thein intends her comments to show that the groups (and subgroups for that matter) established in Firbas 1969 cannot stand up to closer scrutiny. Although two of the four illustrative sentences (11 and 23) have already been adduced, I am re quoting them for the benefit of the reader. In discussing the examples, I am first giving Thein's critical comments and then my responses.

(11)  $\checkmark$ One of the \*rooms \*faces the \*sea. — *ib.*<sup>1</sup>33.13, *ib.*<sup>2</sup>55

Thein's criticism is that the intonation used is very rare and that it can possibly be used only in expressing a contrast or a correction (Thein 1994.29).

This is the section of the conversation in which (11) occurs. Harry has been to the seaside and informs Joyce, his wife, about the holiday arrangements he has made there.

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9 The paper appeared three years earlier than stated in Thein's bibliography.

[J: <sup>1</sup>How <sup>1</sup>far is the <sup>1</sup>sea?

H: <sup>1</sup>Right on the <sup>1</sup>doorstep. You <sup>1</sup>only have to <sup>1</sup>cross the <sup>1</sup>road and you're <sup>1</sup>on the <sup>1</sup>beach.

J: <sup>1</sup>Is there a <sup>1</sup>view from our <sup>1</sup>rooms? <sup>1</sup>Which <sup>1</sup>way do they <sup>1</sup>face? Do they <sup>1</sup>get any <sup>1</sup>sun?

H: <sup>1</sup>One at a <sup>1</sup>time.] <sup>1</sup>One of the <sup>1</sup>rooms faces the <sup>1</sup>sea, the <sup>1</sup>other <sup>1</sup>doesn't, I'm a <sup>1</sup>fraid. [That's the <sup>1</sup>only <sup>1</sup>snag I could <sup>1</sup>find.] — ib.<sup>1</sup> 33.8, ib.<sup>2</sup> 55

The notions of 'facing' and 'the sea' expressed by the finite verb-object combination *faces the sea*, and the notion of 'rooms' expressed by *of the rooms*, forming the attributive part within the subject, *One of the rooms*, are context-dependent, whereas the notion of exclusiveness expressed by the headword of the subject, *One*, is context-independent. Context-independent is also the notion of contrast signalled by opposing *One* to *the other*. In consequence, the finite verb-object combination carries lower degrees of CD than the subject, and within the subject the attributive element carries a lower degree of CD than the headword. The degree of CD carried by the headword is further heightened by the contrast. Under these circumstances, it is *One* to which the sentence is perspectived. This perspective is reflected by intonation, which makes *One* the bearer of the highest degree of PP.

Owing to various contextual conditions, which affect the outcome of the interplay of FSP factors, one and the same semantic and syntactic sentence structure can appear in different perspectives. In other words, it has various contextual applications, which naturally do not have the same frequencies. The sentence structure under discussion, *One of the rooms faces the sea*, can be perspectived to any of its constituents. The theory of FSP examines the conditions under which the different perspectives occur and establishes the signals indicating these perspectives. This is certainly not a weak point of the theory. (See the comment on the contextual applicability of a sentence structure on p. 81.) Their's criticism therefore does not disprove the FSP interpretation of the contextual application of the sentence structure under discussion.

(25) [... — on that invi<sub>1</sub>tation] you<sub>1</sub> sent me. — ib.<sup>1</sup>40.7, ib.<sup>2</sup> 55

Their's objections (Thein 1994.30) to my interpretation of (25) are: (a) the preceding context of (25) is missing; (b) the object of the relative clause having been omitted, the basic assumption that the object and the verb show equal prosodic weight does not apply because it presupposes the existence of both elements; and (c) no other representatives of the type in question can be named.

My responses are the following. (a) The structure *you sent me* is a relative clause introduced by a zero relative pronoun. The information conveyed by the zero form of the pronoun is clearly retrievable from the immediately relevant context. It is expressed by the antecedent, *that invitation*.

I feel I must recall that my enquiry was based on a corpus of 323 finite verb-object combinations, excerpted from twelve tonetically transcribed conversations

offered by Peter A. D. MacCarthy's *English conversation reader*. I adduced 54 illustrative sentences in my paper. Lack of space prevented me from quoting them in their wider contexts, but in order to enable the reader to check my interpretations I consistently provided each illustrative sentence with a reference to page and line where the sentence started in MacCarthy's *Reader*. (This practice has been retained in the present paper.) Seen in this light, the preceding context of (25) cannot be declared to be missing. In any case, the presence of the antecedent, *that invitation*, provides sufficient proof of the context dependence of the zero relative.

(b) The zero object of the relative clause cannot be dismissed as non-existent. The zero phenomenon is a linguistic fact. Within a closed system of linguistic signals it has its specific functional significance. The very absence itself serves as a signal. Many examples can be adduced. Let me mention at least the zero article (Quirk et al. 1985:274–81) and, of course, the zero serving as a relative pronoun (ib., e.g., 1248–57). Like *that* and *which*, zero can serve as object of a relative clause (ib. 1251). Functionally speaking, it is most natural to interpret the accompanying zero prosodic feature as 'zero absence of stress'.

(c) Only such PP distributions were recorded as occurred in the corpus. The fact that no other cases of the PP distribution in question were recorded cannot therefore give rise to criticism. As an FSP theorist knows, different contextual conditions can induce the relative clause *you sent me* to be perspectived to *you*, *sent* or *me*. (See the comment on the contextual applicability of a sentence structure on pp. 81.)

Thein's critical remarks do not disprove the FSP interpretation of the contextual application of the sentence structure under discussion.

(26) ... and I tell me I more about it afterwards. — — ib.<sup>1</sup>33.17, ib.<sup>2</sup>56

(23) We've missed the I last train. — — ib.<sup>1</sup>53.7, ib.<sup>2</sup>56

Thein's critical argument proceeds as follows.

(a) In (26) and (23), the verb and the object are context-independent, i.e. they represent new information. In her view it is therefore not possible that in one case they are both rhematic (as in 26) and in another (as in 23) only one of the two — the object — has the rhematic status.

My response to (a). In Firbas 1969, I concentrate on the relationship between CD and PP and do not discuss the thematic and the non-thematic (transitional and rhematic) functions. Thein nevertheless takes the rhematic function into consideration. She can certainly do so, but since her aim is to give a critical account of my approach, she should have taken my concepts of theme and non-theme (covering transition and rheme) as her starting point and compared them with her own concepts. It must be pointed out that in my approach I do not invariably link context independence with non-thematicity (transitionalness and rhematicity). In my approach, non-thematic elements are always context-independent, which does not mean that thematic elements are invariably context-dependent. They can also be context-independent. (Set-elements and B-elements, which are thematic, can be either context-dependent or context-independent; cf. p. 67.)

Neither the verb *tell* of (26) nor the verb *missed* of (23) completes the development of the communication. They cannot do so in the presence of successful competitors *more* and *afterwards* in (26) and *the last train* in (23). Performing the Q-function, they are non-thematic. So are their successful competitors, *more* and *the last train* performing the Sp-function and *afterwards* the FSp-function, respectively. Within the non-theme, the verbs are transitional and their successful competitors rhematic. As they complete the development of the communication, *afterwards* and *the last train* act as rhemes proper. The context-dependent elements *by me* and *about it* of (26) perform the Set-function, and the context-dependent *We* of (23) performs the B-function. They are all thematic. The lowest degrees of CD are carried by the thematic elements. Within the non-theme, the transitional elements are exceeded in CD by the rhematic elements. In each case the element serving as rheme proper carries the highest degree of CD. This distribution of CD, determined at the non-prosodic level, is reflected by the distribution of PP. The thematic constituents are prosodically lighter than the transitional elements, which in their turn are prosodically lighter than the rhematic elements. Within the rheme of (26), the ordinary rheme is prosodically lighter than the rheme proper. There is perfect correspondence between the two distributions. This is not affected by the prosodic intensification caused by nuclear stress, a fall, occurring on the transitional *missed* of (23). I shall return to this type of prosodic intensification later (see p. 75). At the moment let me just emphasize that it is functional. It serves to express the speaker's feeling about the predicament he and his friend, the other participant in the dialogue, find themselves in. The intensification, conveying a piece of attitudinal information, raises the degree of CD carried by the transitional *missed*. In the further development of the communication, the degree of CD carried by the rheme proper, *the last train*, is heightened as well. If *missed* merely bore full stress, which is a non-nuclear feature, the sentence would display perfect correspondence between the two distributions, but no prosodic intensification, which conveys additional attitudinal information and entails a rise in CD.

(b) Thein finds it possible that (26), in which the verb and the object show equal prosodic weight and in which another element, the adverbial, serves as rheme, can indeed be regarded as a representative of 3.3, that is of what I refer to as Subgroup (c) of Group (iii). As for (23), she speaks of it as a type and thinks it just plain false (Thein 1994.30). "Den Typ ... halte ich für schlichtweg falsch", she says. She does so, because she holds that a rhematic object carrying a higher degree of CD than the verb cannot display the same prosodic saliency as the verb. She adds that in such cases it is the noun that normally bears stronger stress than the verb.

My response to (b). In Firbas 1969, I put the finite verb-object combination of (23) and that of (26) in Subgroup (c) of Group (iii). I did so because in terms stipulated by Firbas 1969 and restated here on p. 58 the constituents of each showed equal prosodic prominence in respect to the other members of the distributional field, and in regard to context dependence/independence were context-independent. I explicitly stated, however, that I was taking this step for the

sake of convenience (Firbas 1969.51), the idea being to accommodate a comparatively small number of cases showing a considerable variety of prosodic patterns. As the enquiry was based on the simple basic gamut of PP, this step was certainly not unjustified. The variety of prosodic patterns, however, can be accommodated by the expanded gamut of PP. Seen in this light, the context-independent objects of (26) and (23) exceed the context-independent verbs not only in CD, but also in PP. Under these conditions, the finite verb-object combinations of (26) and (23) come under the heading of Group (i). The fact that a context-independent nominal object normally bears a higher degree of PP than a verb is statistically evidenced by Firbas 1969.52. It is also borne out by the statistics offered by Firbas 1968.23, a paper to which Firbas 1969 is a sequel, and in other papers of mine.

My revisiting the 1969 enquiry has substantiated and refined the results offered by it. May I recall that in the first phase of this enquiry I grouped the finite verb-object combinations strictly according to the distribution of degrees of PP they showed? Revisiting the enquiry I have taken the existence of the expanded gamut into account and found that the original three groups as established in 1969 have to be reduced to two. This perfectly bears out the fact that in the act of communication the verb and the object constantly show two different degrees of CD reflected by two different degrees of PP. This holds no matter whether both the verb and the object are context-independent or context-dependent, or one of the two is context-independent and the other context-dependent.

## V

I must come back to Thein's contention that I only regard the correspondence between the intonational implementation (realization) and FSP as accidental (*zufällige Übereinstimmung*; see Thein 1994.24 and here p. 53). In her view (ib.), this becomes especially evident (*vor allem deutlich*) in those cases in which I regard intonation as a phonetic intensification of the rheme (*phonetische Verstärkung des Rhemas*) or even as a means of rendering the theme salient for rhythmical or emotive reasons (*Hervorhebung des Themas aus rhythmischen oder affektiven Gründen*). By way of substantiating her view, she chooses one of my illustrative sentences — *Mine's from the library* — for her criticism (Thein 1994.28–9). I adduce this sentence below and add my interpretation. Next I present Thein's critical remarks and my responses to them, and eventually concentrate on the role of prosodic intensification in FSP. I quote the illustrative sentence together with its immediately preceding context (put in square brackets). It is clear that the context in which the sentence occurs is a conversation about a book.

(27) [... Betty: `Yes, <sup>1</sup>that's <sub>✓</sub>right. I'm in the <sup>1</sup>middle of <sup>1</sup>reading it at the <sup>1</sup>moment. It's ex<sup>1</sup>remely well <sub>✓</sub>written, and <sup>1</sup>most a <sup>1</sup>musing in <sub>✓</sub>parts. — Phyllis: I <sub>✓</sub>must <sub>✓</sub>read it. I'll see if I can get <sup>1</sup>Dick to <sub>1</sub>give it

me for my `birthday. -] Betty:  $\surd$ Mine's from the `library [, so I  $\surd$ can't  
 $\surd$ lend it you, I'm a `fraid]. — ib.<sup>1</sup>30.17, ib.<sup>2</sup>57

In the sentence under discussion, the verb 's (*is*) does not complete the communication. It neither opens nor closes the information concerning the thing expressed by the subject, *Mine* (a book). It is the context-independent adverbial *from the library* that completes the development of the communication. The verb 's (*is*) mediates between *Mine* and *from the library*. The subject *Mine* carries the lowest degree of CD and the adverbial *from the library* the highest, the verb 's (*is*) ranking between them. The mediating verb 's (*is*) performs the Q-function, the subject *Mine* the B-function and the adverbial *from the library* the Sp-function. It follows that while *Mine* constitutes the theme (foundation), 's (*is*) and *from the library* constitute the non-theme (core). Starting to build up the non-theme (core) upon the theme (foundation), 's (*is*) carries a higher degree than the theme on the one hand, but the lowest degree within the non-theme on the other. Acting as mediator, the verb 's (*is*) functions as transition. Strictly speaking, its TMEs serve as transition proper and the notional component as ordinary transition. (From the formal point of view, the two components are welded into one word.) Completing the development of the communication, the adverbial *from the library* serves as rheme proper.

As for the distribution of PP, the sentence displays two nuclei. The one coming later occurs on the rheme proper, *from the library*. In this way the rheme proper bears the highest degree of PP and exceeds the theme in PP, the bearer of the nucleus coming earlier. Bearing a lower degree of PP than the theme, the transitional 's (*is*) shows a deviation from perfect correspondence between the two distributions, that is between the distribution of degrees of CD as determined by the non-prosodic FSP factors and the distribution of degrees of PP produced by intonation. At the expense of the transition, this deviation produces a prosodic intensification of the theme. It is functional, for it serves a good purpose. It evokes and underlines the meaning of 'As far as the copy of the book I am reading is concerned'. Under the circumstances, this meaning helps to express a mild contrast, which in its turn helps to underline the fact that the copy is not in the speaker's possession, but belongs to the library.

What are Thein's critical comments pertaining to the sentence under discussion? Thein thinks that according to my definition of the theme, *Mine* cannot be regarded as thematic. She argues that a thematic *Mine* would have to contribute little to the development of the communication and to carry a little amount of CD. In her opinion, this is not the case, because as a bearer of contrast, *Mine* conveys important information and contributes decisively (*entscheidend*) to the development of communication. Two points must be made here.

(a) In the first place, the criticism does not appreciate that CD is a graded phenomenon. A degree of CD carried by a linguistic element is the relative [sic!] extent to which the element contributes towards the further development of the communication (cf. p. 53). 'Relative' is a qualification that is of paramount importance. 'Less', 'little', 'more' and 'most', as well as 'lowest',



'lower', 'low', 'high', 'higher' and 'highest', are indicators of relativeness. The theme indeed carries the lowest degree(s) within the sentence, but this does not mean that it cannot contribute a good deal to the development of the communication. Irrespective of whether it contributes a good deal or little to this development, it is exceeded in CD by the non-thematic elements, which develop the communication further and carry higher degrees of CD. I have emphasized this, for instance, in Firbas 1968.

A. Svoboda ... convincingly shows [1968.71-7 — J.F.] how a thematic subject may be expanded and thereby raise its CD without becoming communicatively more important than the non-thematic rest of the sentence, the latter only correspondingly raising its CD. Thus in *A girl had broken a precious vase brightly painted with a fanciful hunting scene; A pretty girl with red lips, dark blue eyes, and curly black hair had broken a precious vase brightly painted with a fanciful hunting scene; A pretty girl with red lips, dark blue eyes, and curly black hair had broken a vase*, the subject merely provides the foundation (theme) upon which the information offered by the rest of the sentence is built. It follows that in all three sentences the subject carries the lowest degree amount of CD, whereas the highest amount is carried by the object, the finite verb mediating between them. — Firbas 1968.22

If the degree(s) of CD of the theme is (are) raised through prosodic intensification, the same observation applies. In relation to the non-theme, the theme continues to carry a lower degree (lower degrees) of CD. As to the non-theme, it has its CD degree(s) raised accordingly, for it builds up the rest (core) of the communication upon the theme (foundation).

(b) It is certainly true that a context-independent expression of contrast is an important piece of information and raises the CD of the element induced to convey it. This, however, does not necessarily mean that every contrast contributes so decisively (*entscheidend*) to the development of the communication that it renders the element conveying it rhematic. As the discussion of the illustrative sentence has shown, it is *from the library* to which the sentence is perspectived and which therefore serves as rheme proper. The message conveyed is that the speaker cannot lend the book just because it belongs to the library.

Concerning the nuclei on *Mine* and *library*, Their holds that the former shows stronger stress than the latter. She expresses this assessment in order to substantiate her argument that *Mine* is the conveyer of the decisive piece of information. I do not think that the fall-rise on *Mine* exceeds the high fall on *library* in PP. From the functional point of view I do not find it justified to regard the sequence of a fall-rise and a high fall occurring in one distributional field as requiring a modification of the observation that, of two prosodic features of the same phonic rank occurring within a distributional field, the one coming later bears a higher degree of PP. In any case, MacCarthy, the author of the spoken text, evidently did not find it necessary to put special emphasis on *Mine*. It is worth noticing that he puts an emphatic fall-rise on *lend*, which serves as rheme proper in the following sentence. The two rhemes proper, *from the library* and

lend, efficiently cooperate in bringing home to the listener that it is because of the book belonging to the library that the speaker cannot lend it This corroborates the interpretation that it is not *Mine*, but *from the library* that conveys the decisive piece of information in the first of the two sentences.

Prosodic intensification is not viewed by me as an accidental phenomenon. Commenting on the prosodic intensification displayed by sentences (23), (27), (9) and (10), I pointed out its functional *raison d'être* (see pp. 71, 73, 60, 60-1). Substantiating and further developing the observations presented in Firbas 1968 and 1969, my post-1969 papers demonstrate that, seen in the light of the FSP theory, prosodic intensification operates against perfect the background of correspondence between the distribution of CD as determined by the non-prosodic factors and the distribution of degrees of PP produced by intonation. It is through deviations from this perfect correspondence that prosodic intensification is primarily effected. Prosodic intensification serves as a specific vehicle of conveying additional attitudinal information. In fact, both presence of prosodic intensification and its absence are indicators of the speaker's attitude to the content conveyed; in other words, both through absence and through presence of prosodic intensification, a running commentary is provided on the speaker's attitudes to the content of his message. Through conveying attitudinal information intonation participates in the development of the communication. Through prosodic intensification, it proves to be a raiser of degrees of CD.

All the types of prosodic intensification so far established have in fact been illustrated in the present discussion. A comparison of the following two prosodic implementations of *We've missed the last train* illustrates what has been termed non-selective non-reevaluating intensification. (Th, Tr and RhPr stand for theme, transition and rheme proper, respectively; '+' stands for transition proper served by the TMEs.)

- (28) We' ve <sup>l</sup>missed the <sup>l</sup>last <sup>\</sup>train.  
 Th + <sup>l</sup>+; Tr <sup>l</sup>\RhPr
- (23) We' ve <sup>\</sup>missed the <sup>l</sup>last <sup>\</sup>train.  
 Th + <sup>\</sup>+; Tr <sup>l</sup>\RhPr

As far as the relationship between the two distributions is concerned, (28) is a case of perfect correspondence. In contrast with (23), which is also a case of perfect correspondence, it shows no prosodic intensification. Sentence (23) displays prosodic intensification because of the fall on *missed*. It is important to note that though effecting prosodic intensification, this fall does not affect perfect correspondence. The way this type of prosodic intensification raises the degrees of CD has been accounted for on p. 71. It has been termed non-selective and non-reevaluating. It is non-reevaluating, because it does not affect the theme-rheme relationship. Why it has been termed non-selective will become evident from the comment on (27) below..

- (27) <sup>\</sup>Mine <sup>'s</sup> from the <sup>\</sup>library  
<sup>\</sup>Th +;Tr <sup>\</sup>RhPr

Through being prosodically weaker than the thematic *Mine*, the transitional 's (*is*) deviates from perfect correspondence. In this manner *Mine* has been prosodically intensified at the expense of 's (*is*), and in this manner selected for intensification. As this intensification does not affect the theme-rheme relationship, it is non-reevaluating, but in contrast with the type of intensification discussed above, it causes a deviation from perfect correspondence within the non-rhematic sphere, selecting a non-rhematic element for special prosodic prominence. This is why it is regarded as non-reevaluating and qualified as selective. The way it raises the degrees of CD has been discussed on p. 74.

- (9) I                      \don't                      think                      you'd ,better.  
      Th                      +; NegFocA                      +;Tr                      RhPr  
      Th     +; NegFocA > ,+;RhPr     +;Tr > +;Th                      RhPr > ,Th
- (10) I                      thought                      I<sub>1</sub>recognized your ,voice  
      Th                      +;Tr                      RhPr  
      Th     ;Tr > +; \RhPr                      RhPr > ,Th

(NegFocA stands for Negation Focus anticipator. The NegFocA points to the rheme proper (focus) of the negative sentence, in other words, to the element to which the negative sentence is perspectived.)

The interplay of the non-prosodic factors perspectives both (9) and (10) towards a context-independent object implemented by a subordinate clause. [The subordinate object clause provides a distributional subfield, displaying perfect correspondence between the two distributions.

- (9a)     you     'd ,better  
      Th     +     ,Rh
- (10a)     I<sub>1</sub>recognized your ,voice  
      Th     |<sub>1</sub>+;Tr     ,RhPr]

As has been pointed out (pp. 60–1), sentences (9) and (10) show a striking deviation from perfect correspondence between the two distributions. In each case, the deviation affects the theme-rheme relationship as determined by the interplay of the non-prosodic factors. In terms of this interplay, the most prominent prosodic feature of the basic distributional field provided by the sentence (its intonation centre, IC) does not occur on the rheme proper, but has been shifted onto a non-rhematic element. This striking deviation effects a re-evaluation of the theme-rheme relationship. Sentences (9) and (10) have been re-perspectived to an originally transitional element, which has come to serve as rheme proper..

The re-evaluating IC occurs on a non-thematic element (thematic or transitional), inducing it to serve as rheme proper. Irrespective of their position, the TMEs keep on performing the transition proper function. Unless chosen for re-evaluation and bearing the IC, an original thematic element retains its thematic

status no matter whether it occurs before or after the IC bearer. All the other elements retain their FSP status if occurring before the IC bearer, but are re-evaluated to thematic items if occurring after it, in other words, in the post-IC prosodic shade. As for the degrees of CD after the re-evaluation, the highest degree of CD is carried by the IC-bearer. As for the other elements, they have their CD degrees reduced if they have been prosodically shaded. This reduction, however, does not efface the original relative differences in degrees of CD.

The operation of prosodic intensification has been discussed in greater detail and amply illustrated in my post-1969 writings (see, e.g., Firbas 1985, 1987, 1992a, 1993). For lack of space, I cannot deal with it in a similar manner here and have to refer the reader to these writings. They have shown that the selective non-re-evaluating intensification is predominantly due to the prosodic weakening of a transitional verbal element. This weakening usually entails the raising of the prosodic prominence of the carrier of the highest degree of CD within the theme. The prosodic weakening of a transitional verbal element is not at variance with the function of transition, which consists in serving as a link between the theme and the non-theme and simultaneously indicating a dividing line between them. Becoming prosodically prominent at the expense of the prosodic weakening of the transition, the carrier of the highest degree of CD within the theme stands out as a counterpart of the carrier of the highest degree of CD within the rheme, the rheme proper. This is not at variance with the diathematic function of the most dynamic thematic element as it has been established by Svoboda (1981, 1983). As for the re-evaluating intensification, its frequency is — in general — comparatively very low, which is not at variance with its highly marked character. The comparatively low frequency heightens the effect it produces.

It has been emphasized in my writings that the prosodic intensification, coming into existence through deviations from perfect correspondence between the two distributions, does not obliterate the distribution of degrees of CD as determined by the non-prosodic FSP factors. It does not do so because it operates against the background of perfect correspondence between the two distributions.

As my analyses have shown, re-evaluating prosodic intensification usually appears in stretches of text which show a higher occurrence of cases of intensification. For instance the emotive effect produced by the falls on *missed* and *train* of (23), *We've missed the last train*, is heightened by the prosodic intensification displayed by the neighbouring sentences in the dialogue. Among them, there are even three — (29), (33) and (34) — that show re-evaluating prosodic intensification. Sentences (29) and (34) are re-perspectived to originally thematic elements (*Now, Now*); (34) is re-perspectived to an originally transitional element (*is*). The re-evaluations are highly functional. The comparatively low frequency of re-evaluating intensification renders the emotive effect all the more powerful. It is most natural that in the predicament they find themselves in Dick and Norman, the participants in the dialogue presented below, should be upset. Their emotional distress is effectively con-

veyed by the deviations from perfect correspondence between the two distributions under discussion.

(29) *Dick*: `Now we're in a, fix. (30) *Norman*: <sup>l</sup>What's the `matter? (23 [sic]) *Dick*: We've `missed the <sup>l</sup>last `train. (31) The <sub>1</sub>porter says it <sub>1</sub>left <sup>l</sup>five `minutes ago. (32) *Norman*: <sup>l</sup>My <sup>^</sup>goodness. (33) <sup>l</sup>That <sub>1</sub>is awkward. (34) `Now what do we <sub>1</sub>do.

(29) `Now we 're in a, fix.  
Th > `RhPr Th +;Tr > +;Th RhPr > ,Th

(30) <sup>l</sup>What 's the `matter?  
<sup>l</sup>QFocAnt;+;Th +;Tr `RhPr

(23) We 've `missed the <sup>l</sup>last `train  
Th + `+;Tr <sup>l</sup> `RhPr

(31) The <sub>1</sub>porter says it <sub>1</sub>left <sup>l</sup>five `minutes ago.  
<sub>1</sub>Th +;Tr <sub>1</sub> <sup>l</sup> `RhPr

(32) <sup>l</sup>My <sup>^</sup>goodness. (33) <sup>l</sup>That <sub>1</sub>is awkward.  
<sup>l</sup> <sup>^</sup>+;RhPr <sup>l</sup>Th +;Tr <sub>1</sub> <sup>^</sup>+;RhPr RhPr > Th

(34) `Now what do we <sub>1</sub>do?  
Th > `RhPr QFocAnt;+;Th + Th +;RhPr > <sub>1</sub>+;Th

I trust that I have shown that Their is not right in contending that I regard the correspondence between the intonational implementation and FSP as accidental (cf. here p. 72). As I have demonstrated in my writings, there is indeed nothing accidental about the operation of intonation in FSP. In spoken language, intonation constantly plays an important role in the interplay of the FSP factors. It either reflects the distribution of degrees of CD as determined by the non-prosodic FSP factors and so co-achieves perfect correspondence between this distribution and the distribution of PP, or purposefully deviates from this correspondence. In this way intonation does not always act as a mere reflecter of degrees of CD as they are determined by the interplay of the non-prosodic FSP factors, but proves to be a powerful raiser of CD degrees. Both as a reflecter of degrees of CD and as their raiser, intonation provides a running commentary on the speaker's attitudes. The attitudes conveyed in this way are to be viewed as information *sui generis* (cf. Uhlenbeck 1983.17). As information they participate in the development of the communication and become carriers of degrees of CD.

The interplay of the FSP factors proves that FSP is to be regarded as a linguistic system. Being such a system, it cannot, of course, be viewed as rigidly

closed. It has also its periphery, where potentiality may come in. This is a very important proviso that cannot be overlooked. It does not, however, weaken the evidence that none of the FSP factors can operate on its own or join the interplay only accidentally.

## VI

In the last but one section of my notes on Thein's critique, let me pay attention to her contention (Thein 1994.19, 29) that CD, which can be understood as the actuating principle (*Wirkungsprinzip*) of FSP, is an intuitive entity (*eine intuitive Größe*) and purely fictitious (*rein fiktiv*). As I see it, both 'purely' and 'fictitious' are invalidated by the following facts.

(a) Communication is not a static, but a dynamic phenomenon. It serves the purpose to convey information in the widest sense of the word. Communicative dynamism (CD) is an essential property of communication; it manifests itself in constantly developing the information conveyed and in aiming at the completion of this development, in other words at the fulfilment of the communicative purpose imposed upon this development by the language user. It is legitimate to enquire into the gradual unfolding of the communication and to ask what the signals are that indicate the degrees displayed by this process. The dynamic character of communication is a fact, which cannot be disregarded. Communicative dynamism can indeed be looked upon as an actuating principle (to use Thein's term) in the development of the communication.

(b) Are there signals that indicate the extent to which an element contributes towards the further development of the communication? Thein maintains that I cannot name a single formal criterion (*kein einziges formales Kriterium*; 1994.19) that would permit to determine the degree of CD of an element or, for instance, the differences in CD degrees carried by two elements.

The 'no single' assertion does not take into account that — as Mathesius has shown (1942.185) — FSP is a formative force. My enquiries, conducted on an empirical basis, have demonstrated that as a formative force FSP resolves into three factors operating in written language and an additional one operating in spoken language. Neither the operation of the factors nor the signals yielded by them can be regarded as fictitious. In this particular context, I do not find it out of place to re-emphasize the existence of four groups of facts. (i) Linear modification operates through the actual linear arrangement of linguistic elements. The signals it yields are the actual positions taken up by the elements in this actual arrangement. (ii) The contextual factor operates through the retrievability of information from the immediately relevant context, verbal and situational. The signals it yields are the cases of actual presence of information and its re-expression by linguistic elements in the sentences. In actual fact, however, the contextual factor also operates through irretrievability. The very absence of a piece of information in the immediately relevant context acts as a signal. (iii) The semantic factor operates through the semantic contents of linguistic ele-

ments and the semantic patterns into which they enter. The signals it yields are the characters of these contents and the character of the semantic relations into which they enter. Both the characters of the linguistic contents and the characters of the relations into which they enter are linguistic facts. (iv) Intonation operates through variation of prosodic prominence. The signals it yields are the prosodic features. It is in spoken language that all the four factors constantly interact through their signals. Factor (iv) and its signals do not operate in written language. It is only when the written sentence is intoned that factor (iv) and its signals join the operation of the three non-prosodic factors and their signals.

The enquiries into the conditions under which the FSP factors and the signals yielded by them operate have not come to an end. Throughout the years, the formulations of the conditions have been improved upon and the concepts employed refined. The enquiries justify to view the interplay of factors, reflected by the interplay of signals they yield, as a system. Knowing that language is not a rigidly closed system and that it has its centre and periphery, one can hardly expect that FSP implemented through signals yielded by the interplay of FSP factors will operate as a system that is rigidly closed. As I have shown in my writings, this is testified to by the phenomenon of potentiality creating the possibility of equivocal interpretations of the interplay (cf. here pp.68 and 79).<sup>10</sup>

(c) My enquiries into FSP do not justify Thein's claim that, leaving aside semantic considerations and going by such a tangible phenomenon distinct through form as intonation (*Läßt man semantische Erwägungen bei Seite, und stützt sich auf formal Faßbares wie die Intonation*; 1994.29), one arrives at the same results as the FSP theory. It follows from my enquiries that only going by signals yielded by intonation does not produce an account sufficiently appreciative of how a sentence operates in the act of communication. Nor can such an account be produced if one disregards how the meanings of the linguistic elements are affected at the moment they participate in fulfilling a particular communicative purpose and in consequence function in an appropriate perspective. The theory of FSP attempts to deal with this problem. It examines the development of the communication as reflected by the sentence structure in the act of communication and finds that the inherent communicative value with which a linguistic element enters into the development of the communication is subject to modification in the course of this development. This involves the necessity to distinguish between the inherent communicative value of a linguistic element and its actual communicative value, which represents the inherent communicative value modified in the development of the communication in accordance with the communicative purpose. While the intrinsic communicative value is a static phenomenon, the actual communicative value is the outcome of a modification created in the dynamics of the communication. Seen in this light, the

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10 See, e.g., Firbas 1966.249-53, where the phenomenon is referred to as 'multifunctionality', not felicitously replacing 'potentiality' as originally used in Firbas 1957.166-9 and 173, and later reintroduced; see, e.g., Firbas 1986.56-7; Firbas 1992a.108-10, 181-2, 183-6 and 221-2; and Firbas 1992b.179-81.

modification of the inherent communicative value of a linguistic element is brought about by the interplay of the FSP factors, each factor applying modificatory power in its own specific way. Generally speaking, the static inherent communicative value plays its role in predetermining the operation of the linguistic element in the act of communication. The modificatory power of the FSP factors, however, determines the actual communicative value of the linguistic element in the act of communication. It is only after having been modified in this way that the meaning of a linguistic element serves as information. The just presented exposition of the actual communicative value is consistent in taking the dynamic character of the communication into account. It corroborates the concept of communicative dynamism. Determining the positions of the linguistic elements in the development of the communication, the degrees of communicative dynamism reflect the actual communicative values of these elements in the act of communication.

A special note must be added on the requirement of the presence of tangible phenomena distinct through form. From the viewpoint of the theory of FSP, one fact of paramount importance must be borne in mind. Under different contextual conditions but without change in form, one and the same semantic and syntactic sentence structure can function in different perspectives. In other words, under different contextual conditions but without change in form, the same constituents of the same sentence structure may be assigned different thematic and non-thematic (that is, transitional and rhematic) functions. All these variations in FSP a sentence structure can display constitute the (range of) contextual applicability of the structure. They could not take place if the FSP factors, and in consequence the signals yielded by them, did not operate in an interplay in which the contextual factor plays the dominant role. The variations show that a particular signal yielded by an FSP factor does not necessarily invariably link with one particular FSP function. This is certainly not a weak point of the interplay. On the contrary, it renders it a pliant instrument of language, an instrument enabling one and the same sentence structure to function in different perspectives in accordance with different communicative purposes. By way of illustration, let me recall a few facts. (As they are illustrative, they do not represent an exhaustive list.) They are adduced under four headings, (i). (ii). (iii) and (iv) standing for the contextual factor, linear modification, the semantic factor and intonation, respectively.

(i) Retrieval signals are linked with thematicity, but their absence, which signals irretrievability, is not invariably linked with rhematicity. True enough, rhematicity is always linked with irretrievability, but it does not hold the other way round. Irretrievability is not exclusively linked with rhematicity, for thematic elements can convey irretrievable information. Set-elements and B-elements, which are thematic, can convey either retrievable or irretrievable information. (ii) True enough, the actual linear arrangement plays an important role in FSP, but particular positions in the actual linear arrangement cannot be invariably linked with thematic and non-thematic (that is, transitional and rhematic) functions. In other words, the thematic, transitional and rhematic func-



tions are not invariably linked with initial, medial and final positions, respectively. (iii) True enough, the character of semantic contents and the character of semantic relations create intrinsic communicative values which play an important role in predetermining the functions to be performed in the act of communication. Nevertheless, they cannot as a rule be invariably identified with actual communicative values acquired in the communicative act. The actual communicative value is determined by the interplay of FSP factors. For instance, the notional component of the verb is not invariably transitional, though showing a strong tendency to be so. The definite and the indefinite article are certainly suitable means to signal thematicity and non-thematicity, respectively, but cannot do so on their own irrespective of the other means in the interplay. (iv) The prosodic features play an important role in co-signalling degrees of CD, but their phonic rank is not invariably linked with a particular FSP function. For instance, nuclear stress does not exclusively appear on rhematic elements, it can also appear on thematic or transitional elements.

In order to enable one and the same semantic and syntactic sentence function in different perspectives, signalled by different distributions of degrees of CD (in spoken language determined by the interplay of all the four FSP factors, including intonation), none of the factors can operate on its own. None of the factors can operate irrespective of the other factors, with which it constantly participates in the interplay. In consequence, the same applies to the signals yielded by the factors. My enquiries in to FSP have been consistent in aiming at establishing the laws of the interplay of the FSP factors, reflected by the interplay of the signals they yield. In other words, they have been consistent in aiming at establishing the conditions under which the factors interact through signals they yield.

It follows that intonation as an FSP factor, yielding its own signals, cannot be equated with FSP. It is one of the factors through the interplay of which FSP comes into existence. Its interaction with the other factors must be consistently taken into consideration. This implies that semantic considerations can hardly be left aside. One must bear in mind that it is on entering into the flow of communication and being modified through the interplay of FSP factors that meaning becomes information. In examining the information structure — FSP, in other words — one can hardly leave semantic considerations aside and merely rely on intonation as a formally distinct phenomenon. To sum up. Their's contention that 'leaving aside semantic considerations and going by such a tangible phenomenon distinct through form as intonation, one arrives at the same results as the FSP theory' (cf. Their 1994:29 and here p. 80) is unjustified. Moreover, it can be claimed that the theory of FSP has thrown some light on how a semantic and syntactic sentence structure comes to life in the act of communication when as a genuine sentence it functions in a definite perspective in order to serve a particular communicative purpose. (For an appreciative view of the place of the FSP theory in contemporary linguistics, see, e.g., de Beaugrande 1991.)

At this point I can return to the question of intonation serving as a suitable testing device of the results presented by the theory of FSP (cf. p. 54). As has

been demonstrated, intonation is a powerful FSP factor operating in spoken language and yielding efficient signals there. Nevertheless, as it does not operate on its own independently of the other FSP factors, it cannot be regarded as the only force determining the functional perspective in spoken language. The other factors prove to act as powerful formative forces as well. As the intonational (prosodic) signals are not present in written language, the question naturally arises whether intonation could be used as a testing device of interpretations presented in the sphere of written language. I have actually applied intonation for this purpose in Firbas 1969. As language is a system, the operation of intonation can indeed serve as a test of the validity of the results concerning the operation of the non-prosodic factors, which naturally operate in spoken language as well. The procedure adopted in Firbas 1969, and in my post-1969 enquiries, for that matter, consists in an examination of the relationship between the distribution of degrees of CD as determined by the interplay of the non-prosodic factors and the distribution of degrees of PP as provided by intonation. It has not only corroborated the validity of the results concerning the non-prosodic factors, but also demonstrated the role of intonation as a participant in the interplay of FSP factors in spoken language. It has revealed, however, another important fact. Involved in the interplay as one of the factors, and therefore not acting independently of the other factors, intonation cannot really be looked upon as the last court of appeal. The last court of appeal is the evaluation of the operation of the system formed by FSP through the interplay of factors, reflected by the interplay of signals yielded by them.

## VII

In the subtitle of my paper I have intentionally announced that I offer only some notes on Thein's critique of my approach to FSP. This is because her critique contains a good deal of contentions that could not have been covered by the present paper. In any case, my notes on Thein's critique have given me the opportunity to revisit my 1969 enquiry into the prosodic implementation of the English finite verb-object combination, to demonstrate its usefulness and to develop it further in the light of the results of my post-1969 writings. It has also given me the opportunity to stress how important it is for a scholar to go *ad fontes* when encountering a critical account of another scholar's efforts and how important it is to check to what extent the critic's presentation of a work criticized is reliable and correct.

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