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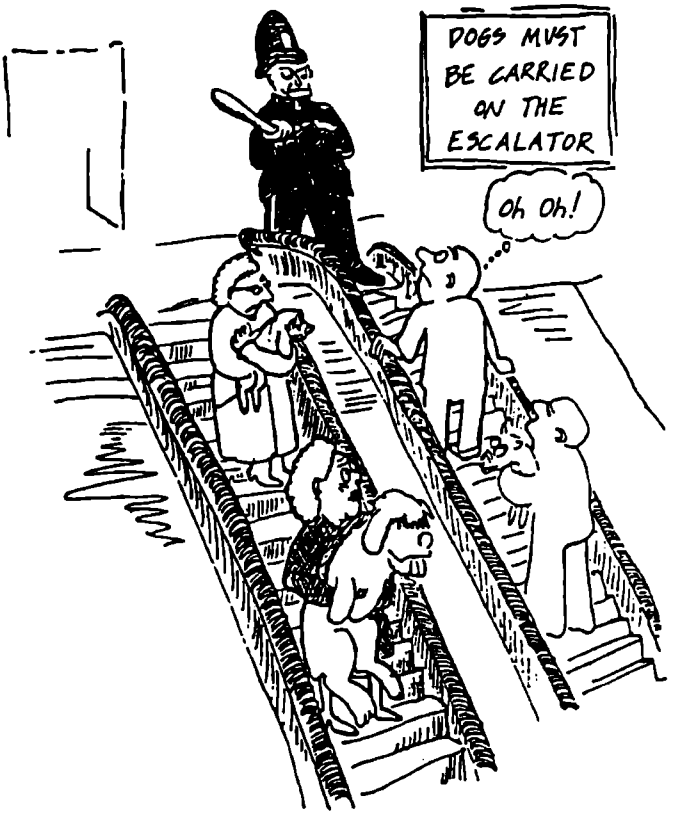
JAN FIRBAS

"DOGS MUST BE CARRIED ON THE ESCALATOR"
(A case study in FSP potentiality)

After my lecture on functional sentence perspective (FSP) delivered in the Linguistics Department of the State University of New York at Buffalo on 23rd September, 1998, Mrs Colleen Maloney-Berman drew my attention to a cartoon suggesting intriguing questions to an FSP theorist. The cartoon is reproduced below. It depicts a group of people on an escalator. With the exception of one man, everybody on the escalator carries a dog. The man is upset, because he fears that the policeman posted at the escalator may take him to task for not carrying a dog as well. Above the escalator there is a one-sentence notice running: *Dogs must be carried on the escalator.* What is the functional perspective of this notice? Which of its constituents conveys the high point of the message? Is the message perspectived to *on the escalator*, *must*, *carried*, or *dogs*? These questions create a welcome opportunity to offer a case study demonstrating how the problems posed can be handled from the viewpoint of the theory of FSP. The aim of the present paper is to present such a case study. Bearing in mind that the cartoon and the questions suggested by it may rouse the interest even of scholars not so well acquainted with the theory of FSP, I will remember briefly to account for the basic concepts of the theory wherever in the discussion it may appear to be necessary. As these explanations cannot be exhaustive, I have to refer the interested reader to an exposition of the FSP theory presented in Firbas 1992.

The cartoonist's interpretation perspectives the notice, *Dogs must be carried on the escalator,* to *Dogs*. According to this interpretation, somebody wishing to use the escalator, can only do so if they carry a dog. The notice does not, of course, require this, and the cartoonist knows it. It requires that, if dogs are transported on the escalator, their owners carry them. The cartoonist has produced an ingenious pun that, strictly speaking, is a play on functional perspectives. However, does the request placed above the escalator really permit of two interpretations?



Getting Caught on the Escalator Without a Dog

I

One of the chief concerns of the FSP theory is to account for the different conditions under which one and the same (semantic and syntactic) sentence structure can function in different perspectives. Let me just recall that FSP is determined by an interplay of factors reflected by an interplay of signals they yield. There are four such factors. Three operate in an interplay both in written and in spoken language, the fourth joining them in this interplay in spoken language. They are the contextual factor, the semantic factor, the factor of linear modification and—in spoken language—intonation. In order to account for a perspective of a sentence, these factors and the signals they yield must be taken into account. (For a detailed discussion of the interplay, see Firbas 1992.)

Accounting for the application of the sentence structure examined, *Dogs must be carried on the escalator*, let me first pay attention to the operation of the contextual factor, which plays the dominant role in the interplay. The signals it yields are the actual ("tangible") presence of a piece of information in the immediately relevant context (verbal and/or situational)[1] and its re-expression in

the sentence produced and/or perceived. In the sentence structure examined such a piece of information is conveyed by the adverbial *on the escalator*. The piece of information conveyed by it is retrievable from the immediately relevant situational context and in this narrow sense of the word context-dependent. In regard to the development of the communication, a context-dependent element contributes less to the further development of the communication than an element that is context-independent, i.e. conveying information absent, and therefore irretrievable, from the immediately relevant context. It follows that the sentence structure examined cannot be perspectived to *on the escalator*. Let me note that an element becomes context-dependent irrespective of sentence position and irrespective of the character of its semantic content and the character of the semantic relations (pattern) into which it enters. This is due to the hierarchical superiority of the contextual factor to the other factors.

It must be decided whether *Dogs* and *carried* convey retrievable or irretrievable information. The pieces of information they convey are irretrievable from the immediately verbal context. There is no such context. They are not retrievable from the immediately relevant situational context either. It must be borne in mind that the request expressed by the notice has general validity. The notice stays in its place all day no matter whether the escalator is used by people with dogs or without them. Seen in this light, the pieces of information conveyed by *Dogs* and *carried* are to be regarded as irretrievable from the immediately relevant situational context.

It remains to decide whether the sentence structure, *Dogs must be carried on the escalator*, is perspectived to *Dogs* or *carried*. Before I offer an answer, let me recall some relevant conclusions arrived at by FSP enquiries. The contextual conditions under which a sentence structure operates in the act of communication are of primary importance. For instance, the most natural contextual application of the sentence structure *A dog appeared on the escalator,* consisting of a subject, a predicative verb and an adverbial, fulfils conditions that can be worded as follows: the subject is context-independent; the verb is context-independent and expresses appearance or existence on the scene explicitly or with sufficient implicitness; and the adverbial is context-dependent and expresses the scene or some background information co-setting the scene. If these conditions are fulfilled, the following functional perspective results. Whereas the adverbial setting the scene, *on the escalator*, contributes least to the development of the communication, the subject expressing the phenomenon appearing on the scene, *A dog*, contributes most to it. The verb, *appeared*, ranks between them. By expressing appearance or existence on the scene it introduces the phenomenon that is to be presented on it. It follows that it is the subject, *A dog*, which conveys the high point of the message and to which in consequence the sentence is perspectived. Under the conditions stipulated, the following sentence structures can serve as further illustrative examples: *Dogs appeared on the escalator, A little pack of greyhounds appeared on the escalator, A dog found itself on the escalator, Dogs were seen on the escalator, Ein Hund erschien auf der Rolltreppe, Auf der Rolltrepe erschien ein Hund, Auf der Roll-*

treppe ist ein Hund erschienen, Ein Hund befand sich auf der Rolltreppe, Auf der Rolltreppe befand sich ein Hund, Auf der Rolltreppe wurde ein Hund gesehen, Ein Hund wurde auf der Rolltreppe gesehen.

In spite of different word orders, the functional perspective remains the same. This is due to the operation of the contextual factor and that of the semantic factor. The context-dependent adverbial conveys least to the development of communication irrespective of sentence position. Owing to the semantic character of the verb and the character of the semantic pattern in which it occurs, the context-independent verb contributes less to the further development of the communication irrespective of whether it precedes or follows the context-independent subject. Likewise a context-independent verbal notional component contributes more, and an auxiliary less, towards the further development of the communication; cp., *Auf der Rolltreppe ist ein Hund erschienen* and *Ein Hund befand sich auf der Rolltreppe* vs. *[Ich wußte nicht,] daß auf der Rolltreppe ein Hund erschienen ist* and *[Ich wußte nicht,] daß sich ein Hund auf der Rolltreppe befunden hat.* The example sentences illustrate the capability of the contextual and the semantic factors to operate counter to linear modification. It is only when unhampered by these two factors that linear modification can fully assert itself. It is only then that through the successive positioning of the elements in the actual linear arrangement it can signal a gradual increase in the extent to which the elements contribute towards the further development of the communication. (Cf. Bolingers's observation—1952.1125—that "gradation of position creates gradation of meaning when there are no interfering factors".) If in the following sentences only the subjects are context-dependent, the sentences illustrate the operation of linear modification unhampered by the contextual and the semantic factors: *The dogs/They appeared on the escalator, The little pack of greyhounds/It appeared on the escalator, The dogs/They were seen on the escalator, Der Hund/Er erschien auf der Rolltreppe.* The subject cannot convey the high point of the message, because the information it conveys is context-dependent. It is the context-independent location of the dog(s) that completes the development of the communication. The preceding comments and examples illustrate the hierarchical relationship of the FSP factors spoken about. The contextual factor plays the dominant role. As for the relationship between the semantic factor and linear modification, the former is hierarchically superior to the latter. Within the context-independent section of the sentence, the semantic factor either permits or does not permit linear modification fully to assert itself.

It is important to note that under the above stipulated conditions the indefinite article undoubtedly signals irretrievability. As an FSP signal, however, it does not operate on its own. Owing to the operation of the contextual factor, it can accompany a noun conveying retrievable information. For instance, in the sentence string that follows, it is only in the first sentence that the zero variant of the indefinite article, accompanying *dogs*, is linked with context-independent information: *There were dogs on the escalator. In fact, dogs were on the platforms, dogs were on the trains, dogs were everywhere.* With due alterations, the same can be said about the definite article. It can effectively co-signal retriev-

ability, but like the indefinite article, it does not operate on it own. For instance, in the sentence string adduced below, the definite article is prevented from signalling retrievability: *We heard some scratching at the door. We opened it. And what did we see? The missing dog stood outside.* True enough, *the door* and *the missing dog* convey information known both to the sender (producer of the sentence, speaker or writer) and the addressee (the perceiver of the sentence, listener or reader). This information, however, is not retrievable from the immediately relevant context. It is in this narrow sense that "retrievable" is used in my discussions unless explicitly qualified otherwise. Additional qualifications are necessary if a piece of information is actually retrievable from a wider section of context than that constituted by the immediately relevant context. It is certainly possible to say that under the circumstances the pieces of information conveyed by *the door* and *the dog* are retrievable from the section of context constituted by the common knowledge shared by the sender and the addressee. The fact, however, remains that the section of context that plays the decisive role in regard to the immediately relevant communicative step to be taken is played by the immediately relevant context. (To a certain extent the immediately relevant context forms part of the wider contextual sphere constituted by the common knowledge shared by the sender and the addressee. What is, however, of primary concern is to establish objective signals yielded by the immediately relevant context and enabling its delimitation.)

The examples adduced have illustrated the two FSP functions of the grammatical subject. In the act of communication, a sentence is either perspectived towards the subject, which conveys the high point of the message, or away from the subject, the high point of the message being conveyed by another sentence constituent: *A/The DOG has appeared on the escalator* vs. *The dog/it/he/she appeared on the ESCALATOR.* These functions are not linked with the subject outside context. They are acquired in the course of the development of the communication. They affect the meaning conveyed by the subject when it comes to serve as information in the dynamics of communication. For these reasons they have been qualified and referred to as dynamic semantic functions (DSFs). It is, however, not only the subject, but the other sentence constituents as well that in consequence perform different DSFs. As these functions are highly pertinent to the questions in hand, I find it necessary to add some comments on them.

It is important to note that, if the subject conveys the high point of the message and in this way completes the development of the communication reflected by the sentence, then nothing more is said about the subject within the limits of the sentence. The situation is different if the subject does not convey the high point of the message. In that case, something is said about it in the development of the communication. By way of illustration let me comment on two contextual applications of the sentence structure *John has come to the dining room.* It follows from what has already been pointed out that if the adverbial, *to the dining room*, is the only context-dependent constituent, the sentence structure under discussion is perspectived to the subject: (i) *JOHN has come to the dining room.*

If, however, the subject, *John*, is the only context-dependent constituent, the sentence structure is perspectived to the adverbial: (ii) *John has come to the DINING ROOM*. In regard to the dynamics of the communication, the different perspectives modify the meanings, which have come to serve as information, accordingly. The constituents perform different DSFs.

Whereas in (i) *to the dining room* merely expresses background ("scenic") information, in (ii) it highlights the goal of John's movement to a particular place. In (i) it performs the DSF of expressing a Setting (Set); in (ii) it performs the DSF of expressing a Specification (Sp). Whereas in (i) *come* prepares the presentation of John as the person appearing on the scene, in (ii) it develops the communication by saying something about him. In (i) it performs the DSF of Presentation (Pr); in (ii) it performs the DSF of expressing a Quality (Q). "Quality" is to be understood here in a wide sense of the word, meaning anything that is ascribed to a subject that does not convey the high point of the message. Finally, whereas in (i) *John* expresses a person to be presented on the scene, in (ii) it expresses a person about whom something is going to be said. In (i) it performs the DFS of expressing the Phenomenon to be presented (Ph); in (ii) it performs the DSF of expressing a Bearer of quality (B). (For a detailed discussion of DSFs, see Firbas 1992.66-87.)

It has already been pointed out that the semantic content or feature of appearing or existing on the scene can operate as an effective signal in perspectiving a sentence. The extent to which it can do so, however, depends on the interplay of the signals in which it participates. The operation of *come* in the two applications—(i) and (ii)—will illustrate. In (i) the feature of appearing on the scene, conveyed by *come*, effectively participates in perspectiving the sentence towards the subject, *John*. It enables *come* to perform the Pr-function. In (ii) it recedes to the background, and the semantic feature of motion, equally present in the semantic content of *come*, is foregrounded. The goal of a motion represents an essential amplification of the meaning of the verb. If the information of the goal is context-independent, it contributes more to the development of the communication than the information of the motion. Under the changed contextual conditions producing application (ii), *come* has been enabled to perform the Q-function.

The preceding discussion has illustrated that verbs capable of expressing explicitly or with sufficient implicitness appearance or existence on the scene can effectively perform the Pr-function if induced to do so by the interplay of the FSP factors. Under different contextual conditions, however, they can be induced by this interplay to perform the Q-function. The presence of the semantic feature of appearance or existence in the semantic content of the verb is not obliterated thereby. This feature is an inherent characteristic of the semantic content of the verb. It is the modificatory power of the FSP factors that ultimately determines to what extent the feature can assert itself in FSP. As an FSP signal, the semantic feature of appearance or existence on the scene does not operate on its own irrespective of other FSP signals. In contrast with verbs expressing appearance or existence explicitly or with sufficient implicitness, there

are verbs that do not express this semantic feature with sufficient implicitness or do not express it at all. Such verbs are therefore capable of effectively performing the Q-function. Analyses of texts, however, have shown that they are not excluded from performing the Pr-function. I shall be able to demonstrate this further below when dealing with the anxious man's interpretation of the notice. It follows that the Pr-function is not exclusively performed by verbs of existence or appearance. Neither is the Q-function exclusively performed by verbs not displaying the semantic feature of appearance or existence on the scene. The absence or presence of this feature is a semantic signal, which does not operate on its own in the interplay of signals yielded by the interplay of FSP factors. It must be borne in mind that this interplay permits one and the same sentence structure to appear in different functional perspectives.

I am now in a position to decide whether the notice *Dogs must be carried on the escalator* is to be perspectived to *Dogs* or *carried.* As has been pointed out, the notice, appealing to the public using the escalator, has general validity. The context-dependent adverbial *on the escalator* serves as a Setting. Neither *dog* nor *carried* conveys information that is retrievable from the immediately relevant context. The context-independent *carried* is not a verb that expresses appearance or existence explicitly or with sufficient implicitness. Nothing prevents it from performing the Q-function on this account. It does not participate in perspectiving the sentence towards the subject, but away from it. In regard to the further development of the communication it says something about the dogs. In consequence, *Dogs* performs the B-function and the notice is perspectived to *carried.*

II

The interpretation offered by the cartoon is a different one. Its comment runs: "Getting caught on the escalator without a dog". It reflects the man's interpretation who finds himself on the escalator without a dog. He has evidently read the notice, for the anxiety he shows stems from the awareness of an obligation decreed by the *must* of the notice and enforced by the menacing frown of the policeman on duty. The anxious man and the composer of the notice, however, are not on the same wave length regarding the signals determining the functional perspective of the notice. Like the composer of the notice, the anxious man considers *escalator* to convey context-dependent information. He does not, however, fully appreciate the general character of the notice. The immediately relevant context in which he puts the message is not exactly the same as that observed by the composer of the notice. He is strongly influenced by the very situation he finds himself in. He is struck by the presence of the number of dogs on the escalator. He is worried by the fact that while each of the other users of the escalator carries a dog, he carries none. The presence or absence of a dog or dogs on the escalator plays a decisive role in his interpretation. It plays a role not accorded to it by the contextual conditions under which the notice has been composed. The contrast of the presence and absence of dogs on the escalator so strongly suggested to him by the actual situation, taken by him for the immedi-

ately relevant situational context, induces him to perspective the notice to the subject, *dogs*. Under these circumstances, the verb, *carry*, does not perform the Q-function, but the Pr-function; the subject, *dogs*, in its turn, does not perform the B, but the Ph-function, expressing the Phenomenon to be presented. In this way, *carry*, which—statically speaking—does not convey appearance or existence on the scene—has come to perform the Pr-function in the dynamics of the communication. In the end, the notion of "appearance or existence on the scene", in fact, tips the scales in favour of the subject, *Dogs*. Perspectiving the sentence structure *Dogs must be carried on the escalator* to *Dogs*, the anxious man offers a description and interpretation of the event as he experiences it.

What is the policeman's interpretation of the functional perspective of the notice? His menacing frown does not allay the man's fear of being taken to task or even fined. On the contrary, it confirms it. It follows that the policeman's interpretation of functional perspective of the notice is the same as that of the anxious man. It must be remembered, however, that the frown has been put on the policeman's face by the cartoonist. Both the anxious man and the policeman in the cartoon perspective the notice to *Dogs*.

Nevertheless, a policeman standing at his post near the escalator can be expected to view the matter differently. His view is certainly not that of the anxious man. Standing at his post, the policeman can see people coming up the escalator with or without dogs. There are certainly moments when none of those finding themselves on the escalator has a dog. This does not affect the validity of the notice. Interpreting it, the policeman goes by the signals observed by its composer. The notice is perspectived to *carried*. If anybody with a dog uses the escalator, the dog must be carried by them. As this interpretation tallies with that of the composer, who must be seen as a person in authority, it must be regarded as authoritative.

One of the questions posed in the introductory paragraph of the paper has not been answered yet. Could the notice be perspectived to *must*? The answer is in the negative. *Must* cannot convey the high point of the message because of the presence of context-independent constituents that take the development of the communication further than *must*.

One of the chief concerns of the theory of FSP is to account for the different contextual applications of one and the same semantic and syntactic sentence structure. This term applies to a structure viewed out of context, in other words, to a structure that is regarded as decontextualized. If used in the act of communication in order to serve a particular communicative purpose, such a structure becomes a sentence. The communicative purpose it serves is revealed by its functional perspective. (Some regard such a decontextualized structure as a sentence, speaking of it as an utterance when it is employed to serve a definite communicative purpose.) The FSP theory has been investigating the contextual conditions and the signals determining the functional perspective. As for the language users, the contextual conditions and the signals yielded by the interplay of FSP factors are binding on them. An unequivocal use of the signals by the sender (producer of the sentence, speaker or writer) and a faithful apprecia-

tion of them by the addressee (the perceiver of the sentence, listener or reader) ensures successful communication. The binding character of the signals enable the language users constantly to exchange the sender's and the addressee's roles. Needless to say, inadequate handling of the signals on the part of the sender naturally fails to convey his/her communicative purpose adequately. In the light of what has just been said, it is possible to account for possible different interpretations of the functional perspective of a sentence as presented by different addressees. An unequivocal outcome of the interplay of the FSP factors only admits of one interpretation. An interpretation that does not take account of all the signals offered by such an unequivocal interplay is a misinterpretation. An equivocal outcome of the interplay of the FSP factors creates the phenomenon of potentiality and opens the door to two or more potential interpretations. (For a discussion of the phenomenon of potentiality, see Firbas 1992.108-10, 181-2, 183-6, 221-21.) An interpreter always, rightly or wrongly, goes by the signals yielded by the interplay of the FSP factors. A good knowledge of the operations of the FSP factors, reflected by the signals they yield, is a key to the discrimination between correct, faulty and potentially acceptable interpretations. Further enquiries may throw more light on the interplay of the factors, reflected by the interplay of the signals yielded by them, and reduce the number of types of potentiality. In any case, the likelihood of acceptance of two or more potential interpretations of the functional perspective of a sentence may not be the same. Tendencies operating in the system of language prefer some solutions to others to a greater or less extent.[1]

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[1] Enquiries into FSP have shown that it is the immediately relevant context, verbal and situational, that plays a decisive role in determining the functional perspective of a sentence. What is known as part of the common knowledge shared by the sender (producer of the sentence, speaker or writer) and the addressee (the perceiver of the sentence, listener or reader) need not be known in regard to the immediately relevant communicative step to be taken. John may be a person well known both to the sender and to the addressee, but unless he is mentioned in the immediately relevant verbal context or unless as an object of immediate concern shared by the two of them he becomes part of the immediately relevant situational context, a mention of him conveys new, unknown information. If, for instance, A opens the conversation by saying to B, *I met John yesterday*, or by asking B, *Where is John?*, the name *John* conveys new, unknown information. Or, if, for instance, the English great vowel shift is discussed in an early chapter of a book on the history of English, its remention later on in the book in a sentence running *Let us recall the great vowel shift* conveys new, unknown information as well.

This raises the problem of the delimitation of the immediately relevant context, verbal and situational, a section of the wide and complex phenomenon of context (cf. Firbas 1992. 22–3, 39–40; 1994 passim). Analyses of texts of modern English fiction prose (Firbas 1995) have come to the following conclusions. The moment a piece of information appears in the flow of written communication, it becomes retrievable. The stretch of text in the course of which it retains its retrievability without re-expression constitutes its retrievability span. Through examining the frequencies of the distances between the members of co-referential strings (strings of expressions having the same referent), the analyses have set the length of the retrievability span at six through eight sentences. The immediately relevant written context, then, is constituted by all the retrievability spans that are open (live) at the moment a sentence is to be produced and/or perceived. There is, of course, a borderline area between the immediately relevant context and the rest of context.

The phenomenon of potentiality as presented above is conceived of in a narrow sense, being understood as based on all the signals available at the moment of production and/or perception of a sentence. It could be conceived of in a wider sense, being also based on signals inadequately chosen by an interpreter who simultaneously fails to take account of all the proper signals available. Distinguishing between these two types of potentiality, one can speak of genuine and non-genuine potentiality. To a certain extent, this is reminiscent of a distinction pointed out by Randolph Quirk between a perfect and an imperfect pun (1950-1). The latter would occur if one of two applications of an expression employed in producing the pun did not faithfully mirror all the relevant features of the other application. For instance, it can be claimed that the spoken words *They got married in the first place* mean either that first of all they got married or that they got married in the first place they had come across. The pun is imperfect, because two different intonations can distinguish the two meanings. In terms of FSP, the two different meanings can be traced back to two different DSFs of *in the first place*. In the first application of the sentence structure, *in the first place* serves as a Setting, in the second as a Specification. This distinction is duly signalled by intonation. Coming back to the sentence structure *Dogs must be carried on the escalator*, the cartoonist has produced an irresistibly stringing pun. The pun, however, is not a perfect one. Seen in the light of FSP, the interpretation of the anxious man represents a case of non-genuine potentiality. His interpretation and that of the composer of the notice are not based on the same contextual conditioning. This is duly reflected by intonation. The composer's contextual conditioning places the intonation centre (i.e. the most prominent prosodic feature) on *carried*: *Dogs must be CARRIED on the escalator*. The contextual conditioning chosen by the anxious man places it on *Dogs*: *DOGS must be carried on the escalator*.[2]

As for the immediately relevant situational context, it is an equally narrow section of context. It is constituted by two groups of referents. One group contains phenomena whose first mention in a written or spoken text can be directly pronominalized without creating any ambiguity. For instance, the personal pronouns *I* and *you*, referring to the sender and the addressee, respectively, can appear in a text without antecedents. Their references are unambiguous. Other pronouns performing the same function are the indefinite pronouns E *one*, F *on* and G *man*. The same meaning can be conveyed by *they* and *people*, for that matter. Expressions so used refer to phenomena permanently present in the immediately relevant context. Their list can be expanded. It is, however, neither a long nor open one. It is a closed list. Another group is constituted by referents that have become objects of immediate common concern shared by the sender and the addressee. For instance, a waitress happens to drop a tray of drinks. The clatter of bottles and glasses falling and breaking attracts everybody's attention. Turning to B, A says, *I hope she won't have to pay for all the things*. Though not the only woman present, the waitress is the person referred to by the pronoun *she*. The common concern shared by the sender and the addressee is an absolutely essential characteristic. If the presence of the waitress is to serve as a signal yielded by the FSP contextual factor, it must be recognized as such by both interlocutors.

2 For the interested reader who may not be well acquainted with the theory of FSP, let me add brief explanations of some essential concepts not employed in the preceding discussion. These brief explanations are to outline the wider framework within which the present case study has been presented. (For a fuller treatment, see Firbas 1992.)

As has been demonstrated by the comments so far offered, linguistic elements differ in the extent to which they contribute to the development of the communication. In regard to the dynamics of the communication, they carry different degrees of communicative dynamism (CD). Communicative dynamism (CD) is an essential inherent property of communication. It manifests itself in constantly developing the communication and in aiming at the attainment of its communicative goal. By a degree of CD carried by a linguistic element of any rank I understand the relative extent to which such an element contributes towards the further development of the communication (Firbas 1992.7–8). (The designation "element of any rank" indicates that "element" is used here in a wide sense of the word. For a discussion of the hierarchy of elements as carriers of CD, see Firbas 1992.16–20.) It is important to note that only such linguistic elements can participate in the development of the communication as convey some meaning. In other words, it is through their semantic contents that linguistic elements operate in the development of the communication.

The distribution of degrees of CD is determined by the interplay of FSP factors, whose operation, as well as the operation of the signals they yield, has been described in the present paper. The distribution of degrees of CD implements the functional perspective of the sentence. Apart from other things, enquiries into the distribution of degrees of CD have thrown revealing light on the relationship between the grammatical subject and the verb in FSP. In the development of the communication as reflected by the sentence, the predicative verb, or rather its notional component, participates in perspectiving the sentence either towards the subject or away from it. The verb, or rather its notional component, shows a strong tendency to mediate between elements carrying lower degrees of CD on the one hand, and elements carrying higher degrees of CD on the other. In the development of the communication, the elements carrying the lower degrees of CD, perform different functions from those carrying the higher degrees of CD. As for the verb, or rather its notional component, it performs different functions in dependence on whether it participates in perspectiving the sentence towards or away from the subject. As these functions are not displayed outside context, but operate in the development (dynamics) of the communication, they are qualified as dynamic semantic functions (DSFs). They have already been dealt with in the present paper. Let me add that the constituents carrying lower degrees than the verb provide the foundation (the theme) upon which the core of the message (the non-theme) is built up. The theme is constituted by a context-independent or context-dependent B-element and/or a context-dependent or context-independent Set-element and/or any other element that is context-dependent. The number of Settings is not limited. The non-theme is constituted by a Pr-element, an AofQ-element, a Q-element, a Sp-element or a F(urther)Sp(ecification)-element. The number of Specifications is not limited. (The dynamic semantic function of AofQ—Ascription of Quality—is performed by copulas; e.g., *John/He is a good boy.*) When performing the Pr or Q-function, the verb, or rather its notional component, functions in the non-theme. When it performs the mediatory function, it acts as transition within the non-theme. The rest of the non-theme serves as the rheme. The element that within the rheme conveys the high point of the message carries the highest degree of CD and serves as rheme proper.

Under different contextual conditions, one and the same semantic and syntactic sentence structure displays different functional perspectives. The constituents perform different DSFs. This entails differences in the thematic and the non-thematic functions. Under the conditions observed by the composer of the message, the notice *Dogs must be carried on the escalator* is to be interpreted as follows. The context-dependent Setting *on the escalator* and the context-independent Bearer of quality *Dogs* constitute the theme. The context-independent notional component of *carried* acts as a Quality element. It belongs to the non-theme. As carrier of the highest degree of CD, it conveys the high point of the message and serves as rheme proper. As to the verbal categorial exponents, implemented by the auxiliaries *must* and *be* and the ending *-ied*, they act as transition proper. (Let me point out in this connection that whereas the notional component of the verb shows a strong tendency to act as transition, its categorial exponents—especially though the exponents of tense and mood, or TMEs, for short—do so invariably. They serve as transition proper, providing simultaneously a link and a boundary between the theme and the non-theme; Firbas 1992,71–3, 89–93, 202.) The anxious man,

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* To my regret, I have failed in my efforts to trace the cartoonist and the publisher of the cartoon reproduced here on page 50. My apologies and thanks are due to both.

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who does not actually follow the contextual conditioning observed by the composer of the notice, perspectives the notice differently. As in the composer's interpretation, *on the escalator* is regarded as a context-dependent Setting and therefore as thematic, and the verbal categorial exponents—especially though their TMEs—as serving as transition proper. In the anxious man's interpretation, however, the transitional notional verbal component of *carried* serves as a Pr-element and the context-independent subject *Dogs* as a Ph-element. In consequence, the subject conveys the high point of the message and therefore serves as rheme proper.