

The Dramatic Arc of the Theory of FSP: A Tentative Diachronic Excursion

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The theory of functional sentence perspective (FSP) and its research methods have been considered one of the prominent tools of discourse analysis and information processing. It is widely known that, combining the approaches adopted both by formalists and functionalists, the theory of FSP draws on the findings presented by the scholars of the Prague Circle. The father of FSP himself – Jan Firbas – drew on the findings of his predecessor, Vilém Mathesius, who formulated the basic principles of what was to be labelled FSP only later. Apart from the principal FSP representatives and more recent followers (as a rule associated with Prague or Brno universities), this homage paper overviews somewhat less familiar – yet significant – pioneers in the field of theories of information structure, viz. Henri Weil, Sámuel Brassai, Georg von der Gabelentz and Anton Marty. It will discuss some of their writings and achievements that were forming (and inspiring) the theory of FSP.

Keywords

FSP; Firbas; functional sentence perspective; information structure

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts.
William Shakespeare – As You Like It
(Act II, Scene VII, lines 139-143)*

Prologue

Untypical though the outset of the present paper may seem, it can, I believe, throw some light on the position the theory of Functional Sentence Perspective holds in today's world of linguistics. If one enters the acronym "FSP" into

an Internet browser, what one gets is a remarkable list of curious results. For example, FSP stands for *fragment simulator projectile*, *Freeway Service Patrols*, *fibre saturation point*, *fibrin split products*, *Food Stamp Program* (whatever these mean), or – to offer at least one less technical explanation – FSP may also designate the religious community of *Frateres de Santo Pablo*.

Those, however, whose environment is related to linguistics or who study English, will probably be aware of the existence of the theory of functional sentence perspective or its acronymic form, FSP (also this result will finally pop up in the browser's findings, of course). Admittedly, even if FSP theory is generally something precious and sacred for a limited group of “initiated” members of the linguistic community, for the majority of the general public, the theory remains something unknown, or at least marginal, too detached from everyday reality.

And yet all human beings – irrespective of their origin, nationality, age, religion, social status or education – take advantage of the FSP principles literally every day, in every utterance.

Over the years, the theory of functional sentence perspective seems to have vindicated its firm and renowned place in the area of theories of information structure. Combining the approaches adopted by both formalist and functionalist traditions, it principally draws on the findings presented by the scholars of the Prague Circle, the Brno branch included. The founder of FSP proper, Jan Firbas, drew on the findings of his predecessor, Vilém Mathesius whose research was apparently instigated by the pioneering investigation presented, e.g., by Weil or Gabelentz (see below). Information on individual scholars in the area of FSP, especially those outside the radius of the Prague Circle, is unfortunately scattered over different, often hard to access sources.

Firstly, the present paper is meant to be a tribute paid to the main figures of FSP. Incidentally, in the year of publication of the present study (2017), the linguistic community will mark 135 years since the birth of Vilém Mathesius (1882) and, at the same time, it will have been 60 years since Jan Firbas revealed the coinage of the term “functional sentence perspective” itself most probably for the first time (abbreviated FSP, it began its adventurous and fortunate journey in 1957):

It is not without interest to note that Mathesius, who knew Weil's work, coined the felicitous term ‘aktuální členění větné’. (...) As English ‘actual’ is not an exact equivalent of Czech ‘aktuální’, another term had to be

found for English. I accepted Professor Josef Vachek's suggestion and started using the term 'functional sentence perspective' (FSP; Firbas, "On the problem of non-thematic subjects"). The term is based on Mathesius' term 'Satzperspektive'. Vachek's suggestion has added the qualification 'functional'. This is the way the term 'functional sentence perspective' (FSP) has found its way into the literature. (Firbas, "Round Table on Functional Linguistics" 4)

Secondly, this review paper should provide a summative – though necessarily concise and inexhaustive – excursion into the realm of theories of structure, with special regard to FSP, giving a tentative, non-evaluative account of key actors who appeared on the scene of linguistics. Let me point out that I am by no means using the theatrical terminology by accident and as an end in itself. I have actually decided, on the contrary, to follow the Firbasian tradition of utilizing the lexicon related to the stage and drama as such (e.g., actor, setting, scene, etc.) – not only in the epigraph to this paper but also in the structure of this mapping excursion. To be more specific, I have been inspired by the Dramatic Arc (i.e., the classical structure of drama that is based on Aristotle and, by extension, on Freytag (summarized, e.g., in MacEwan), which consists of EXPOSITION, RISING ACTION, CLIMAX, FALLING ACTION, and DÉNOUEMENT/REVELATION. The point is that I actually see the history of FSP as a real dramatic process with its milestones, heroes and audience. I hope that this daring idea of mine will find support and understanding on the part of the reader. All the world is a stage, after all.

1. Exposition

The first investigations into the theory of information structure did not, of course, come into existence in a vacuum. Its exposition can be traced back as early as the middle of the 19th century; the history of it, as well as the names of scholars who first realized the importance of researching the arrangement of information in the sentence, were aptly summarized in Firbas in 1974 ("Some Aspects of the Czechoslovak Approach"). Here, for the sake of brevity, I will recall the gist of his survey only, adding several observations and facts that lie outside of the scope of his study.

The true pioneer-actor in the study of word order (and so of matters related to information structure) was a prominent French classical philologist **Henri**

Weil (1818-1909). He was born in Germany and also studied at German universities, but his professional – pedagogical and scholarly – career was connected with the University of Besançon (University of Franche-Comté) as well as the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres (*On-Line Jewish Encyclopaedia*). In 1844, he published a far-seeing monograph entitled *De l'ordre des mots dans les langues anciennes comparées aux langues modernes* (in 1878, the book was published in English under the title *The Order of Words in the Ancient Languages Compared with that of the Modern Languages*) (Firbas, “Some aspects of the Czechoslovak approach” 11-12). In it, he distinguished between “the movement of ideas”, i.e., actual word order, and “the syntactical movement”, i.e., terminations, claiming that speakers of languages express their ideas in the same order “whether they speak a modern language or use one of the ancient languages” (Firbas, “Some Aspects of the Czechoslovak Approach” 11-12). In the context of this survey, it is necessary to mention the fact that Weil saw the sentence as a body containing an initial point of departure (typically grammatical subject) and a goal of the discourse, which is the information that is to be conveyed to the addressee, following the movement of one’s mind. He argued that such an ordering of ideas is most frequent, though its reverse counterpart also exists (Weil 29-43). Later on, it was evidently Weil’s ideas that inspired Vilém Mathesius. Discussing Weil’s observations to advocate the scalar understanding of degrees of communicative dynamism, Firbas holds that such a two-fold approach (i.e., the point of departure – goal of the discourse movement)

does not consist in two steps only, one being the starting point and the other the goal. Other steps leading from the starting point to the departure can occur between the two. This observation corroborates the existence of a gamut of CD conceived of as a reflection of the development of the communication. (Firbas, *Functional Sentence Perspective* 107)

Interestingly enough, approximately in the same time span, Weil’s contemporary, Hungarian scholar **Sámuel Brassai** (1800-1897) was the first to notice the word order differences between Hungarian, which belongs to the family of Uralic languages, and Indo-European languages. Incidentally, as far as I know, neither Mathesius nor Firbas seemed to be acquainted with Brassai’s works. Among other things, Brassai revealed that word order in Hungarian sentences is based on a division between a topic and a comment (Brassai). Apart from being a teacher and a linguist, he was also a natural

scientist, mathematician, musician, philosopher, and a renowned member of the Hungarian Academy of Science; sometimes he was referred to as the Last Transylvanian Polymath. Brassai studied, among other things, the word order principles of the Hungarian language, comparing them to other Indo-European languages. Unfortunately, to the knowledge of the author of the present paper, none of Brassai's writings have yet been published in English; a crucial English-written study on information structure of the Hungarian sentence by Ferenc Kiefer is therefore used below. As Kiefer summarizes the most significant findings of Brassai,

- (i) Brassai argued convincingly that the word order rules in Hungarian cannot be formulated in terms of grammatical subject – grammatical predicate, word order is determined by topic-comment articulation; (ii) the topic can be identified by means of the question test (the common element of the question and the corresponding answer belong to the topic); (iii) the boundary between topic and comment is determined by stress: the first stressed element in the sentence is the first element of the comment; (iv) typically, the topic occupies the sentence-initial position and it is followed by the comment. (Kiefer 259)

Brassai discovered that practically all of the languages he studied displayed a sentence structure, which began with one or more elements carrying information already known. These items “practically lay a basis for the meaning of the sentence in the listener’s mind, i.e., they are calling attention, and pointing forward, connecting the mental activity of the listener with that of the speaker” (Brassai 341 in Kiefer; cf. also Brassai). According to Kiefer (257), Brassai labelled this initial part of the sentence as “introduction” (or a “subject in a different sense”) or “preparatory part”, while the second part of the sentence, including the verb, is the “predicate”, “message” or “principal part”.

Also, Kiss has recently commented on Brassai's attempts to describe Hungarian syntax and to establish the universal characteristics of the sentence on the basis of a set of genetically unrelated languages. Brassai, according to Kiss's treatise, distinguishes “French-type languages that realize a constrained version of this universal structure, requiring the topicalization of the grammatical subject” (Kiss 23). It is of importance to understand that Hungarian, being an Ugric language, analogously to Czech for instance, manifests a more-or-less free word order, even if more in the sense of its

semantics than pure syntax. Basically, the order of sentence elements is arranged from general to specific; the Hungarian sentence thus prototypically follows the end-focus principle (Rounds).

Whereas Brassai is not mentioned by Firbas, the situation is different with a German general linguist and Sinologist **Georg von der Gabelentz** (1840-1893). He studied law, administration, and linguistics at University of Jena, and, later, Asian languages at University of Leipzig (Dědičová). Although his main field of interest was Chinese grammar, developing Weil's ideas in an identical direction, Gabelentz (1891) dealt with the distinction between a "psychological subject" and "psychological predicate", misleading though these labels may be (Elffers-van Ketel, "Georg von der Gabelentz and the Rise", Firbas, "Some aspects of the Czechoslovak approach" 4). The term "psychological subject" does not denote the grammatical subject alone (expressed typically by a noun), but it is always the particular part of the sentence through which the addressor conveys something to the addressee; the addressee is then expected to think of the content of the "subject". The "psychological predicate" actually suggests what exactly the addressee should think about the "subject" (Dědičová; cf. Gabelentz 369). Gabelentz obviously sees the relationship between the speaker/writer and the hearer/reader as crucial for the communication proper. In his opinion, the "psychological subject" always precedes the predicate; the sentence invariably starts with the topic that is dealt with later in the sentence (Dědičová).

Incidentally, as has been mentioned above, Mathesius argued that these two expressions ("psychological subject" and "psychological predicate") "unduly tended to relegate the problems of FSP to spheres not treated by current linguistic research" and that a linguistic issue should be solved by linguistic methods alone (Mathesius in Firbas, "Some Aspects of the Czechoslovak Approach" 11; for further details concerning the Prague School criticism of psychologizing tendencies in information processing see also Section 2 below). It will "remain Mathesius' merit that he proposed a linguistic method capable of tackling the task" (Vachek, *A Functional Syntax* 10).

The last name to be mentioned in regards to the studies on word order and information structure is **Anton Marty** (1847-1914), a Swiss linguist and language philosopher lecturing at the German (Charles-Ferdinand) University in Prague. He is usually associated with the theory of speech acts and specification of illocutionary function. Marty's investigations dealing with language made it clear that (unlike many other scholars) he understood language "as something that arises from individual human minds as intentionally directed to objects"

(*Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*; see also Rollinger). In this respect, his psychological and philosophical observations on human communication may be readily associated with what members of the Prague Linguistic Circle said about the function and structure of language a decade later (Lečka). In harmony with the Prague findings, Marty is also concerned above all with language “in the sense of the *purposeful manifestation* of inner life through certain signs, especially through sounds and in particular those which – like most words of our spoken languages – are not intrinsically intelligible” (*Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*; cf. Marty, and Lečka).

On top of that, according to Watanabe’s entry on Anton Marty in *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Marty’s principal merit for the history of linguistics lies in his “cogent argumentation against the nativistic parallelism between mind and language, which was introduced into linguistics by Wilhelm von Humboldt (...); Marty’s idea concerning *innere Sprachform* was empirical-teleological” (*Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*).

2. Rising Action

In the Czech context, research into the area of word order and functional syntax in general was initiated and accelerated with the establishment of the Prague Linguistic Circle in 1926. As such, it is inevitably associated above all with two outstanding scholars of the Prague School – Professors Vilém Mathesius and Josef Vachek. In this connection, it is interesting to note that research into what evolved into the theory of FSP later has been dealing with English in the first place ever since; this is of course not to say that other languages, Czech included, have been overlooked – in fact, the opposite is true.

It is well known that Professor **Vilém Mathesius** (1882-1945) was the founding father, chair and the leading figure of the Prague Linguistic Circle. Since its establishment, Mathesius represented a scholarly reaction to the linguistic principles and concepts pursued in Europe until that time. Admittedly, before Mathesius advanced his conception of Czech word order, three other Czech scholars (Zubatý, Ertl and Trávníček) had proved to be aware of the relevance to word order of what may be termed the functional approach, speaking of “the psychological subject” and “psychological predicate” (Firbas, “Some Aspects of the Czechoslovak Approach” 12-16). Nevertheless, only Mathesius showed in his research (*inter alia* establishing

the terms THEME – RHEME) that the study of language as such can cope with the topic even without (up to that moment) expected psychologizing tendencies. (It will be fair to admit that some authors maintain that Mathesius's understanding of information structure as a matter of fact corresponds with what was originally described by Weil or Gabelentz – see, e.g., Elffers-van Ketel, “The Historiography of Grammatical Concepts” 310-311). In this sense, these two theories are not entirely mutually exclusive; in Elffers-van Ketel's opinion, the failure of Weil's and Gabelentz's psychological understanding of the linguistic matter was then triggered by “their reasoning from content to form and not the other way round” (Elffers-van Ketel, “The Historiography of Grammatical Concepts” 311).

As Vachek puts it, thus referring to his own revealing idea of seeing the alternative to psychologism as functionalist, “Mathesius' merit lies in the fact that by replacing the psychologistic terms with those of functional linguistics, he made the whole conception really workable – it was to become an efficient tool in the comparative study of different languages or of different stages of one and the same language” (Vachek, *Selected writings in English* 89-90). Mathesius claims that in communication “the lexical and grammatical means of language are made to serve a special purpose imposed on them by the speaker at the moment of utterance, i.e., the very act of communication” (Mathesius in Firbas, “Some Aspects of the Czechoslovak Approach” 14). In Mathesius's view, word order phenomena “constitute a system characterised by a hierarchy of word order principles; the hierarchy is determined by the extent to, and the manner in, which the principles operate” (Firbas, “Some Aspects of the Czechoslovak Approach” 15). In his insightful papers, Mathesius endeavoured to establish the essential principles rendering word order; he “allots the leading role to the grammatical principle, ranking FSP only with factors of secondary importance” though (Firbas, “Some Aspects of the Czechoslovak Approach”); further research into the position of word order in the English language showed that besides word order (and intonation in spoken language), semantic structure operates as an effective means of FSP. Yet Mathesius evidently viewed the sentence as a dynamic phenomenon developing in the act of communication (as opposed to the traditional formal analysis that considers a sentence a static body).

Mathesius had formulated and outlined the basic platform of FSP as early as 1911, during his memorable lecture on the potentiality of language. He actually noticed the language universal of every utterance having a theme and a rheme, and formulated the basic principles of what was to be labelled

FSP only later. According to Mathesius's studies on word order in Czech, the theme of a sentence represented the point of departure/initial point ("východiště/východisko výpovědi" in Czech), that is "what is being talked about" (and hence is retrievable from the context), while the rheme was connected with the core of the message ("jádro výpovědi"), that is "what is being said about the theme" (most often something that is not known from the context of the act of communication). The natural, unmarked (objective) sequence of these segments of communication is theme – rheme; the reversed word order is a marked (subjective) one, usually signalling an emotive flavour to the message conveyed (Svoboda & Hrehovčík; for a thorough treatment of Mathesius's achievements in the field of FSP and their wider context, see Hajičová "Vilém Mathesius").

In terms of functional syntax, one of the most prominent of Mathesius's pupils was definitely **Josef Vachek** (1909-1996), whose far-reaching, prolific and most versatile scholarly work is largely associated with Masaryk University, Brno, and also the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague. Having a truly wide scope of research, his most prominent topic is definitely represented by inquiries into the area of functional syntax, Czech-English comparative linguistics, varied issues of general linguistics, morphology, English teaching and, last but not least, the historical development of English. In regards to FSP, let me mention at least Vachek's major studies on written vs spoken language, English phonology, analytic tendencies in English, or the linguistic characterology of Modern English. Furthermore, it was Vachek who established the journal *Brno Studies in English* in 1959. What should be most appreciated – as reflected in Firbas's foreword to Vachek's *Selected Writings in English and General Linguistics* – is the fact that Vachek, though being a devoted pupil of Mathesius, "carried on the work of his teacher in an original, nonepigonical way. There are not too many masters who can claim such a pupil – one who, keeping abreast of the times, continues and develops the work in a manner truly worthy of and equalling his great master's achievements" (Vachek, *Selected Writings in English* 13).

3. Climax

In my view, the golden times of the study of FSP are without any doubts personified by Jan Firbas and his pupil and future colleague, Aleš Svoboda. They both represent what has been called the Brno approach to the study of FSP. Though Jan Firbas (1921-2000) is one of those who faithfully followed the

functionalist principles set by the Prague School, both his life and professional career were closely connected with the city of Brno. He proved to be a true follower of the Prague tradition; however, as a functional structuralist par excellence, Firbas not only elaborated Mathesius's idea of the functional analysis of the sentence, but also developed the findings into a full-fledged and renowned theory.

In the early 1950s, Jan Firbas started to investigate the principles of word order outlined by Mathesius; for instance he re-examined Mathesius's claim that English seems to be "less susceptible to the theme-rheme articulation than Czech because of its relatively fixed word order (grammatical word order)" (Svoboda & Hrehovčík). Firbas gradually elaborated and deepened the theory, making it more systematic. He labelled it Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP). In Czech, the term runs "aktuální členění větné" (a term coined by Mathesius himself); in English, the label functional sentence perspective (for its genesis, see the Prologue above) is sometimes, by other authors, altered as theme-rheme structure or topic-focus articulation or topic-comment structure. No matter what term is used, all of the ones mentioned above fall into the category of and represent one of the possible approaches to what is referred to as information processing/information structure.

In 1964, Jan Firbas published a paper on functional sentence perspective, introducing the concept of communicative dynamism (CD). In his article, he defines the degree of CD as "the extent to which the element contributes towards the development of the communication" (Firbas, *On Defining the Theme*). As has been proved many times, Firbas's understanding of a sentence as a field of distribution of CD (accompanied by the factors of context and semantic structure) provides one of the most effective approaches towards the study of language. The core of Firbas's elaboration of FSP lies in the functional approach. As Firbas claims, every meaningful element of communication is a carrier of communicative dynamism and hence pushes the communication forward. By a degree of communicative dynamism of an element, Firbas understands its relative communicative value within the utterance in the act of communication. The degrees of CD are determined by the interplay of FSP factors involved in the distribution of degrees of CD: linear modification (word order), context and semantic structure; in spoken language, the interplay of these factors is logically joined by a fourth factor – intonation. The theory of FSP represents – in the broadest sense – one of the branches of linguistics dealing with information processing. In consequence, it explores how a piece of information is produced in the act of communication, and also how different

elements are given different communicative prominence, i.e., are emphasized or made less significant to achieve the author's communicative intention. For Firbas, the very moment of utterance (or perception of a sentence) is thus a phenomenon of paramount importance (for further details, see Firbas, *Functional Sentence Perspective*, cf. Adam, *A Handbook of Functional Sentence Perspective*).

According to the degrees of CD, there are basically two directions in which the theme and the non-theme are arranged. It follows that every sentence has one of the two following perspectives: in the first variant, the sentence is perspectived (i.e., oriented) towards the subject, the subject being the high point of the message, and the verb – being a “tray” on which the new phenomenon is presented – introduces the subject on the scene. In the other variant, the sentence is perspectived away from the subject, in the process of which something is said about the subject and the verb mediates a quality/specification of the subject. The determination of the sentence perspective (basically either presentation or quality, i.e., sentences implementing presentation or qualitative scales respectively; Firbas, *Functional Sentence Perspective* 67) seems to be essential in the functional analysis of a sentence. All in all, CD is variation in the communicative value of different parts of an information unit. The common, unmarked distribution of CD follows the linear progression of an information unit and typically ranges from low information value at the beginning of the information unit to high information value at the end (cf. Adam, *Presentation Sentences* 45-46).

Thanks to Firbas's fruitful research, the FSP scholars following in his footsteps today may draw inspiration and make use of a number of concepts and terms that came into existence decades ago. To name just a few by means of illustration, apart from the aforementioned basic terminological set of FSP, Firbas introduced and elaborated the phenomena of immediately relevant context, retrievable vs irretrievable information, retrievability span, dynamic-semantic tracks, functional pressure of the rhematic layer, semantic homogeneity, interpretative potentiality, (non-)re-evaluating intensification, etc. Thus, operating with this ready-made array of FSP terminology, every FSP researcher finds pure joy and scholarly excitement in the traces of Firbasian legacy.

Finally, for the sake of brevity, let me recall at least some of the most outstanding milestones on the prolific academic journey of Jan Firbas. Besides dozens of other insightful papers on FSP (for Firbas's full bibliography, see Golková), Firbas's summative monograph *Functional Sentence Perspective in*

Written and Spoken Communication (1992) should be mentioned, as well as the revealing study on the operation and semantic homogeneity of the thematic and the rhematic tracks (Firbas, “On the Thematic and the Rhematic Layers”). The survey enumeration of significant publication achievements of Jan Firbas in the last decade of his life would certainly not be complete without the witty yet highly illustrative paper entitled “Dogs Must be Carried on the Escalator” from 1999, appreciated both by scholars and students. In recent years, owing to a laudable enterprise of Aleš Svoboda to aggregate and systematically offer to academia Firbas’s texts otherwise scattered over different journals and proceeding volumes, full-texts of Firbas’s papers are appearing step by step in five separate volumes of the *Collected Works of Jan Firbas* (Svoboda et al. 2010 – Vol. I, Chamonikolasová et al. 2013 – Vol. II, Chamonikolasová et al. 2014 – Vol. III).

To conclude on a more personal note, Jan Firbas was an ordinary man in the true sense of the word, and, at the same time, an extraordinarily gifted teacher and a highly esteemed linguist of lasting fame. As one of his colleagues said, he was a very humble man who had absolutely nothing to be humble about but was nevertheless very humble all the same, treating everyone as individuals from whom he might learn something.

The following part of this homage paper is devoted to the extraordinary figure of European linguistics, **Aleš Svoboda** (1941-2010); owing to its appositeness, this text partly builds on an obituary dedicated to him (Adam, “In Honour of Professor Aleš Svoboda”). Being the most brilliant disciple of Jan Firbas, Svoboda connected the greatest part of his scholarly activities and research with the study of FSP. Above all, it should be noted that not only did Svoboda join the ongoing research conducted by Jan Firbas, but he himself was also very creative and active in the field. His innovative and, as it were, courageous endeavours into various areas of linguistics (above all functional syntax and pragmalinguistics) actually determined all of his research. Svoboda’s comparative studies in FSP of English, German, Italian, Czech, Slovak and other languages have truly provided numerous signposts on the paths of modern linguistics. What I find most inspiring about Svoboda’s research is the fact that he always succeeded in going somewhat deeper, further and beyond the average, no matter how strange or unusual the step might have appeared – outside the casual scope of the field. Svoboda – the pioneer enjoyed researching new areas of linguistics, naming new phenomena and taking new steps. In a word, he was not afraid of transcending the expected and the customary.

In the first instance, two of Svoboda's contributions have enriched the research into the Firbasian theory of FSP and thus deserve special attention. Firstly, it is his minute analysis of thematic elements (introducing also the idea of communicative fields), which ultimately led to his identification of a new type of communicative unit labelled "diatheme". Secondly, let me recall his revealing application of FSP principles on the levels hierarchically lower and higher than the clause (e.g., within the nominal phrase or even the syllable as FSP microstructures or sentence groups as FSP macrostructures). In his last research, Svoboda examined for instance Firbasian dynamic semantic scales and their implementation in poetic texts in relation to the authorial communicative intention and the accompanying aesthetic effect. In other words, Aleš Svoboda surely is in many ways a credit to Jan Firbas and his legacy.

During his prolific career, Svoboda published literally dozens of studies, papers, university textbooks, and – most notably – monographs, among which *Diatheme* in 1981 and *Kapitoly z funkční syntaxe* in 1989 definitely stand out as eternal memorials of FSP. In relation to the above-mentioned pioneering articles, at least two examples of his work ought to be pointed out: a study on FSP of the noun phrase, and a minute study of the syllable as a microfield in the framework of FSP. Logically, Svoboda's editorial activities also continued in the vein of FSP. Here, let me bring to mind the initiative and zealous effort with which he started a long-term project of preparation of the *Collected Works of Jan Firbas* (see also above). It was with true love, expertise and profound knowledge of Firbas's work that Professor Svoboda began collecting, apportioning, and outlining the contents of the five volumes; unfortunately, Svoboda was neither able to finish this task, nor to see the first fruit of his tremendous plan which appeared only in 2010.

It was Mathesius who once said to his students – and both Firbas and Svoboda himself repeatedly alluded to this – that "language is a fortress that must be attacked with all means and from all sides" (Vachek, "Epilogue" 69). Let me say in harmony with this metaphor that for me, Aleš Svoboda was one of the most exemplary, diligent and noble knights of linguistics; always prepared to do his best to conquer the fortress.

In this author's opinion, the mosaic of the climactic, golden period of FSP would not be complete without at least two other names, both of which are inevitably – in the true sense of the word – related to Prague studies in English; interestingly enough, their understanding of information structure corresponds with the Brno perspective. The first one is František Daneš

(1919-2015), whose professional interest in terms of FSP was concerned above all with textual approach to the study of language, higher text units and hypersyntactic phenomena in general, the notion of the sentence as such, and, last but not least, the phenomenon of paragraph and – perhaps most notably – thematic progression. Incidentally, the textual, macro-structure (embodied in the works by Daneš, see, e.g., Daneš, “A three-level approach”, “Functional sentence perspective”, “The Paragraph – A Central Unit”, but also Pípalová, “On the Global Textual Theme”, “*Thematic Organization of Paragraphs*”, and others) appears to be a distinctive feature that characterizes the Prague approach to the study of FSP – unlike the Brno tradition that seems to be preoccupied primarily with the micro-structure of FSP, i.e., the sentential/clausal levels; there are of course exceptions that prove the rule (cf., e.g., Hajičová, “Topic-Focus Articulation” on the one hand, and Adam, *Functional Macrofield Perspective* on the other).

The other scholar definitely associated with the climactic phase of FSP is the doyenne of current English studies firmly rooted in the Praguian tradition and an honourable mentor to many of us, Libuše Dušková. Her research into English grammar, carried out profoundly, sensitively and systematically, often against the background of Czech, has in the long run always been closely related to FSP studies following in the footsteps of Jan Firbas. Dušková’s scope of scholarly endeavours has been immense, multifaceted, and, in many ways, unprecedented. In the area of FSP, it ranges from the sub-clausal level to hypersyntax and text, from examination of dynamic semantic scales to the constancy of syntactic functions, from studies on the role of the English verb to stylistic aspects of FSP, and many more (e.g., Dušková, “From the Heritage of”, “Czech Approaches to Information Structure”; for an apt outline of Dušková’s achievements in the field of FSP, see, e.g., Drápela, “Libuše Dušková’s Birthday”). Recently, her summative, monothematic volume *From Syntax to Text: the Janus Face of Functional Sentence Perspective* (“The FSP Bibliography”) has meritoriously enriched the bibliography of contributions to the study of FSP.

In addition, to complete the mosaic of the study of information processing in the Czech context, it will be necessary to briefly discuss the “Lesser Town” centre of Prague investigation into information processing, represented above all by scholars at the Institute of Formal and Applied Linguistics of Charles University, viz. Petr Sgall, Jarmila Panevová and Eva Hajičová. Their method of research and the whole concept came to be labelled as the TFA approach, i.e., Topic-Focus Articulation. In short, anchored in the framework of the

functional generative description of language (FGD), it deals with description of language, dependency relations and with language-dependent means of the expression of the topic-focus articulation. Seeing “aboutness” as a key concept of information processing (and unlike Firbasian tripartite understanding of the set of communicative units), TFA makes use of a bipartite classification: topic/focus. Thus, the basic concept of TFA is the division of the sentence into two parts – topic and focus, topic (T) being that part of the sentence which is contextually bound, and focus (F) encompassing that part of the sentence which is contextually non-bound (Stehlíková 14). “In unmarked cases, the main verb (V) and those of its direct dependents that on the surface follow it belong to F, and the items preceding V are parts of T” (Hajičová & Sgall 1). In this respect, TFA differs substantially from FSP which is based on the tripartite division of a sentence. Logically enough, there are, nevertheless, also areas where TFA and FSP build on a common core: “It is primarily the notion of communicative dynamism which both theories perceive as a decisive factor for the ordering of elements in a sentence. Another aspect in which these theories find agreement is the central position of the verb” (Stehlíková 14; for a detailed account on differences between FSP and TFA see, e.g., Chamonikolasová, *On Different Approaches to*). As such, TFA is said to “allow for the possibility of describing the TFA not only as concerning the intrinsic dynamics of the process of communication, patterned in the utterance (sentence occurrence) but also as constituting the structure of the sentence itself, i.e. grammar” (Sgall, Hajičová & Buráňová; cf. the summarizing work by Sgall, Hajičová & Panevová). TFA is understood as “one of the basic aspects of the underlying, tectogrammatical representations of sentences. No separate level of information structure is needed” (Hajičová & Sgall 2). Firmly associated with the TFA approach is the Prague Dependency Treebank, a unique computational corpus serving the TFA investigation (Hajičová, “Topic-Focus Articulation”).

Let me put forward a deep conviction that – though based on somewhat different principles and differing in some of the key concepts – at a more general level TFA is functionally compatible and on good terms with the theory of FSP.

4. Falling Action

I must admit that this segment of the Dramatic Arc seems to be somewhat

problematic as far as the survey of FSP scholars is concerned. The Falling Action in drama as a rule means a decreasing tendency in the course of the story – the post-climactic period is typically full of critical moments, obstacles, and lacks positive solutions. The audience is usually disillusioned.

By analogy, the FSP research community faces a similar – expectedly transient – period nowadays; on the one hand, after the two great, unique and definitely irreplaceable figures of FSP, Firbas and Svoboda, passed away, one may perceive legitimate emptiness or even disillusion. And it is true – it will never be the same. As one of the guests at Jan Firbas's funeral said, "This is the end of an era...".

It will thus be wise to go swiftly on to tackle the next, more promising component of the Dramatic Arc.

5. Dénouement

By way of conclusion, let me present the so far final segment of the story of FSP. The Dénouement, or Revelation, in a dramatic structure offers a solution to the problems (not necessarily a positive one) and thus represents a relief after the critical moments before. It does not bring a perpetual victory, but definitely means hope for the future.

At this point, let me first of all give names of six of the followers and closest colleagues of Jan Firbas and Aleš Svoboda, scholars whose research has also been indispensably related to the study of FSP and the syntactic context of information processing in general: **Ludmila Uhlířová**, primarily a Slavist at the Academy of Science, Prague; **Josef Hladký**, a renowned lexicologist and lexicographer, whose truly universal scope of linguistic research also included FSP aspects; **Ludmila Urbanová**, once a close collaborator and diligent pupil of Jan Firbas, who especially in her earlier treatises devoted a number of studies to FSP aspects of authentic English conversation; **Eva Golková**, the author of *Bibliography of the Publications of Professor Jan Firbas* published in 2003 (the last three representing Masaryk University, Brno); **Eva Klímová** (a prominent Romanicist at Silesian University, Opava); and, last but not least, another Brno researcher whose expertise has actually pursued predominantly FSP since the initial stages of her investigation into linguistics, **Jana Chamonikolasová**; it is actually she who took over Firbas's FSP relay torch at Brno and continues investigation into FSP, especially in the area of intonation and, more recently, the dynamic semantic scales (Chamonikolasová *Intonation in English and*,

“Word Order and Linear Modification”, and “Communicative Perspectives”). It will be worth mentioning that Jana Chamonikolasová, along with the author of the present study, amended Firbas’s theory of FSP by a refined classification of the dynamic semantic scales, introducing the Extended Presentation Scale (Chamonikolasová & Adam).

To complete this concise enumeration, also the youngest generation of FSP followers should be mentioned, even though in a rather selective manner: Charles University, Prague, is represented by a scrupulous follower of Daneš’s tradition, **Renata Pípalová**, who has been, among other areas, dealing with the hypersyntactic approach to FSP, especially at the paragraph level (see, e.g., her insightful study on thematic organization of paragraphs in Pípalová published in 2008), **Gabriela Brůhová** with her perceptive treatment of ditransitive verbs in FSP in 2015, and **Leona Rohrauer**, whose FSP interest has lately been focused on presentation sentences (*Presentation Sentences in Fiction and Academic Prose*); representing Ostrava University is the research into dynamic semantic tracks and semantic meanders of FSP carried out by **Zuzana Hurtová** in 2009, and **Ivana Řezníčková** in 2013; the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice has its faithful FSP scholar in the person of **Vladislav Smolka**, whose main interest lies in the study of English word order and FSP (e.g., Smolka, “Word-Order Variability and FSP”, “Linearity in Functional Sentence Perspective”); finally, Masaryk University, Firbas’s alma mater, is – in addition to Jana Chamonikolasová – represented by **Lenka Stehlíková** (see, e.g., her recent study on contextual disengagement, *Contextual Disengagement*), **Irena Headlandová Kalischová**, who has fruitfully connected FSP with prosodic and phonetic levels of language (e.g., Headlandová Kalischová, *Intonation in Discourse*, and “Why do Czech Speakers of English”), **Martin Drápela**, who has succeeded in introducing a new sophisticated and fully compatible system of FSP annotation (e.g., Drápela, “O některých úskalích”, and “Appendix 3”) and provided a full, up-to-date FSP bibliography (Drápela, “The FSP Bibliography.”), as well as the author of this paper, definitely complimented and privileged to be in such company (Adam, *A Handbook of Functional Sentence Perspective, Functional Macrofield Perspective, and Presentation Sentences*).

On top of that, the five aforementioned Brno researchers (Chamonikolasová, Adam, Drápela, Headlandová Kalischová, and Stehlíková) have recently formed a team with the aim of preparing the ground for setting up a corpus of texts annotated from the viewpoint of Firbasian FSP. The first step has been an outline of the discrepancies between different interpretations of selected phenomena within the text and suggesting a refinement of some FSP concepts.

The project draws on Drápela's simple FSP tagging system, which allows the annotation of FSP functions and degrees of communicative dynamism carried by communicative units (Chamonikolasová, Adam, Headlandová Kalischová, Drápela & Stehlíková, "Creating a System of Annotation for FSP").

Epilogue

All in all, it does seem that the future of FSP is full of hope and that what was planted in the last century will be nurtured by a new, enthused generation of FSP admirers and advocates whose research will open new vistas on the adventurous scene of FSP initiated more than 150 years ago. I am sure that such efforts are worthwhile.

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