NOTE ON THE PROSODIC FEATURES AS MEANS OF FUNCTIONAL SENTENCE PERSPECTIVE

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In the theory of functional sentence perspective (= FSP),[1] a vexed question is presented by the concept of transition. Somewhat modifying I. P. Raspopov's view, I have found (in an article published in Philologica Pragensia 8/1965) that in their non-marked use on the level of FSP, the temporal and modal exponents of the finite verb (TME's) start building up, on a foundation provided by the thematic elements, the very information to be conveyed by the sentence or clause. By themselves, or in co-operation with other elements, they mediate between the theme (constituted by elements carrying the lowest degrees of communicative dynamism [=CD]) and the rheme (constituted by elements carrying the highest degrees of CD): they carry the lowest degree of CD within the non-thematic section of the sentence or clause.[2] In their marked use, they function either in theme proper or rheme proper, signalling a very special kind of contextual dependence. The question may be raised to what extent an inquiry into the prosodic features of the finite verb (= f.v.) would corroborate this view, which points to a remarkably high coincidence between FSP on the one hand, and the semantic and grammatical levels on the other.

There cannot be a perfect correspondence between the gamut of prosodic weight (unstressed — partially stressed — stressed — bearing a nucleus [cf. A. C. Gimson's *Introduction* ... p. 244]) and the gamut of CD (ranging from theme proper over transition to rheme proper). Such a perfect correspondence would not but impede language in fully coping with all its tasks. It is well-known, e.g., that the theme may undergo prosodic intensification. The same, in fact, applies to transition. Such intensification, however, must remain within certain limits. The respective elements would cease to be thematic or transitional if not followed by a functionally weightier prosodic feature. (A low rise occurring after a fall within one and the same distributional field of CD would not constitute such a feature. This is perhaps the chief qualification we have to bear in mind when using the above-mentioned prosodic gamut.)

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[1] For an outline of my conception of the theory of FSP, see my paper delivered at the Xth International Congress of Linguists in Bucharest 1967.

[2] A misleading omission has occurred in the summary of my paper. The beginning of line 5 of par. 2 should read: within the non-thematic section of the sentence.

I will now offer the main results of an inquiry into the prosodic features of 419 f.v.'s examined in the light of FSP. The material has been drawn from P. A. D. MacCarthy's *English Conversation Reader* (1956), pp. 24—45. The inquiry is to be published in full in *Brno Studies in English* 7.

It has revealed that there are at least six types of communicative function the English f.v. can perform. Illustrative examples follow: (i) 'What did you ·say?—25, ex. 16; (ii) ''They were ·booked ·up 'too, ,really, ... —32.28; (iii) The pro|prietor was ||most ,friendly — ... 33.05; (iv) Then I re|tired to a |seat in the ,park and spent |half an ,hour or so ... —32.06; (v) ,Well, I'll ,tell you. —32.14; (vi) |Well that ,,does sound nice. — 33.08.

T(ype) (i) is represented by 1 case (0,2 %) in my material. The f.v. is entirely thematic. *T(ii)*. 13 cases (3,1 %). The f.v. is thematic with the exception of the TME's, which constitute transition proper. Both T(i) and T(ii) are excluded from the sphere of stress bearers and nucleus bearers. *T(iii)*. 122 cases (29,1 %). The f.v. is non-thematic, functioning entirely within transition proper. With the exception of 3, all cases are excluded from the sphere of stress bearers and nucleus bearers. *T(iv)*. 212 cases (50,6 %). The f.v. is non-thematic, functioning in transition proper only through its TME's, but not expressing rheme proper. In 100 cases it functions as a stress bearer, in 13 cases as a nucleus bearer. *T(v)*. 61 cases (14,6 %). The f.v. is non-thematic; it expresses rheme proper, though through its TME's it simultaneously functions in transition proper. 56 cases out of the 61 (91,8 %) are nucleus bearers. (Though not nucleus bearers, the remaining cases appear as the prosodically weightiest elements within the respective sentence or clause structures.) *T(vi)*. 10 cases (2,4 %). The f.v. expresses rheme proper, this time through its TME's; otherwise it is thematic.

Borderline cases can naturally be established. (They are to be discussed in *BSE* 7.) They do not, however, invalidate the following conclusions. The f.v. displays an unmistakable tendency to function as a transitional element. In regard to degrees of CD, it is, in an overwhelming majority of cases heterogeneous. On the prosodic level this heterogeneity becomes especially evident when the TME's are separate words.

Now there are 127 cases in which the TME's are expressed by separate words (auxiliaries). In 10 of these cases they function as rheme proper and are nucleus bearers, in 1 case as theme proper and are unstressed; in 117 cases they function as transition proper and occur outside the nucleus sphere. If to the last mentioned group, the 114 cases are added in which the f.v. form has no auxiliary, but occurs within transition proper, the number of cases in which transition proper is expressed by at least one separate word is raised to 241, i.e. 58,7 per cent of the total number of all the examined cases. The total number of nucleus bearers among these 241 cases amounts to 4.

All this is not at variance with the assignment to transition proper of those TME's that are expressed by bound morphemes. The weight of the prosodic feature of a word consisting of more than one morpheme naturally depends on that morpheme which carries the highest degree of CD within the examined word.

To sum up. It is hoped that the offered inquiry bears out the conclusion that the TME's show a remarkably high degree of coincidence between FSP on the one hand and the semantic and grammatical sentence structures on the other. It is also hoped that it testifies to the usefulness of the concept of transition proper in functional sentence analysis.

Table 1

Type	The Finite Verb of the Sentence or Clause										The Non-Thematic Section of the Sentence or Clause[2] (not including the finite verb) Number of non-verbal nucleus bearers occurring within the non-thematic section that are functionally weightier than the finite verb	Total Number of Cases
	The Sphere of Function in FSP of[1]		Prosodic Characteristics of									
	the TME's of the finite verb form	the finite verb form to the exclusion of its TME's	the auxiliaries (if present) of the finite verb form				the finite verb form to the exclusion of possible auxiliaries					
			Number of Cases									
			unstressed	partially stressed	stressed	bearing a nucleus	unstressed	partially stressed	stressed	bearing a nucleus		
I	theme proper	theme proper	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	one	1
II	transition proper	theme	2	—	—	—	8	5	—	—	at least one	13
III	transition proper	transition proper	8	—	—	—	117	2	2	1	at least one	122
IV	transition proper	transition	78	1	8	1	77	22	100	13	at least one	212
V	transition proper	rheme proper	17	—	1	—	3	2	—	56	none	61
VI	rheme proper	theme[3]	—	—	—	10	3	—	—	1	none	10

[1] Strictly speaking, this column records how the finite verb function in FSP through its semantic content. [2] The term 'non-thematic' is always to be understood here in regard to the distributional field in which the examined verb functions. [3] Provided this component occurs. Cf. the higher number in the column giving the prosodic characteristics of the auxiliaries.

Table 2

Type	Characteristics of the Finite Verb (Cf. Table 1)		Total	Percentage		
I	theme proper	theme proper	1	0,2	0,2	0,2
II	transition proper	theme	13	3,1	3,1	
III	transition proper	transition proper	122	29,1	} 79,7	} 97,4
IV	transition proper	transition	212	50,6		
V	transition proper	rheme proper	61	14,6	14,6	
VI	theme proper	theme	10	2,4	2,4	2,4
			419	100,0	100,0	100,0

DISCUSSION

Storms:

In a number of instances a special intonation is linked with the introduction of a special grammatical word (He is *most* friendly; it *does* sound nice), whereas in other cases there is no special grammatical word. Now my question is: Can you say anything about the percentages of the introduction or absence of grammatical means?

Wode:

It seems to me that statistical findings should be evaluated in relation to innate stress placement. For instance in

I can ónly see yóu

only refers to *you*. In

I can ónly sée you

only refers to *see*. This should prove important for FSP.

Firbas:

ad Storms: The laws of the interplay of means of FSP determine under what conditions certain grammatical elements carry certain degrees of CD. As the location of the nuclei is determined by these laws, I hold that even the emotive intensification of prosodic features, which may be considerable, must not interfere with the function the sentence performs in FSP.

The last intervention concerns the relation between grammatical structure, FSP and the prosodic means expressing emotiveness.

ad Wode: It would be worth finding out to what extent Dr. Wode's term 'inherence' could be made to correspond to my term 'coincidence'. I have not collected enough examples of his type to be in a position to give a satisfactory reply. But as to *only*, I regard it as a rhematizer, i.e. as an element which signals the element to which it refers as rhematic.

Firbas:

In my previous researches into FSP, carried out almost exclusively in the non-prosodic sphere, I have by no means confined myself to the finite verb. In the present paper, I have concentrated my attention on the TME's, for as they present a point of remarkably high coincidence between FSP on the one hand, and the semantic and grammatical sentence structures on the other, they appear to be a good starting point for an inquiry into the means of FSP in the prosodic sphere.