

**MARTIN DRÁPELA,**  
**A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF FUNCTIONAL SENTENCE PERSPECTIVE 1956–2011.**  
**CZECH AND SLOVAK AUTHORS, FIRBASIAN APPROACH ORIENTED.**  
**WITH AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY BY LIBUŠE DUŠKOVÁ**

Brno: Masaryk University, 2015

For the researchers of any field of science it is important to look back to the history of their subject of study: the results achieved in the past should be summarized and the names of chief representatives recalled regularly because they represent a natural bridge to the future development. A good and effective means of doing so is to compile a bibliography.

A brand new bibliography has been compiled by a Brno specialist in English philology Martin Drápela. It brings a broad retrospective glance at the field widely known as *functional sentence perspective (FSP)*, *topic – comment articulation*, *theme – rheme structure*, *aktuelle Satzgliederung*, *aktuální členění větné*, *information structure*, *given/old – new*, or otherwise.

Drápela followed in the footsteps of two bibliographies so far available, a tentative one dating from 1970, and another one, with short English annotations, from 1975<sup>1</sup>. Now, four decades later, the edition of a new bibliography is most welcome. The FSP has developed substantially in its theoretical dimensions, as well as in multifarious applications and verifications of empirical data from several typologically divergent languages, genres, authors, and texts. Also the number of specialists in FSP has significantly increased. It is not at all surprising, if we take into consideration that the FSP theory is one of the most valuable pieces of scientific knowledge offered by Czech functional linguistics (in continuation to the classical period of the Prague Linguistic Circle) to the linguistic world during the second half of the last century and at the beginning of the present century.

The launching of Drápela's bibliography is perfectly well-timed. The publishing house of Masaryk University, in which Drápela's bibliography is published, is the same publishing house thanks to which the first three of the five planned volumes of the collected works of Jan Firbas have appeared quite recently, in 2010, 2013, and 2015, respectively. It is not necessary to repeat here that Firbas is the founder of the FSP theory: he devoted his whole scientific career to the elaboration of FSP theory and gained international renown. Drápela himself belongs to Firbas's young, talented and enthusiastic followers, more exactly to the second generation of them. He is the author of a successful monograph *Aspects of functional sentence perspective in contemporary English news and academic prose* (Brno: Masaryk University, 2011), and a keen organizer of cooperation between young scientists at the Czech universities who are interested in the FSP theory.

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1 *Materiály k bibliografii prací o aktuálním členění větném 1900–1970* [A tentative bibliography of studies in functional sentence perspective], Praha: Ústav pro jazyk český, 1970; Firbas, J. — Golková, E., *An Analytical Bibliography of Czechoslovak Studies in Functional Sentence Perspective*, Brno: Masaryk University, 1975.



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As the title of Drápela's bibliography claims, it is mainly oriented towards the Firbasian FSP approach. Still, it is not limited exclusively to it. It also lists selected works by other Czech and Slovak researchers who do not share the Firbasian approach in its entirety, who hold different standpoints based on other theoretical frameworks, or who are specialists in various other aspects of sentence, utterance or text structure which are connected with FSP more loosely. An open range of references is fully justified because the information structure of utterance and/or text is a highly complex topic overlapping into a number of neighbouring fields.

The bibliography is extensive. It provides more than eleven hundreds references to monographs, advanced degree theses, book chapters, conference papers, and journal articles with some relevance to FSP. It does not contain reviews, with one exception only: twelve reviews of Firbas's fundamental monograph *Functional Sentence Perspective in Written and Spoken Communication* (Cambridge University Press, 1992) are included — there are hardly many other books reviewed so many times, and in so highly positive terms at that. There is also a reference to Firbas's biography,<sup>2</sup> written by one of Firbas's closest followers Aleš Svoboda, too early deceased in 2000.

The author's decision to start the references from 1956, i.e. from the year of Firbas's first article on FSP, is reasonable. Then, the references are arranged into five year intervals, ending with 2011; the references inside each interval are arranged increasingly according to the year of publication, and the names of the authors follow in alphabetical order. Each item is given in a standardized format; its unique identifier begins with a three-character crop of the surname of the principal or sole author, followed by the abbreviation of the author's first name, the year of publication, and a three-letter abbreviation of the title. This clever identifier, proposed by Drápela, serves as the alphabetical and referencing key throughout the bibliography. Let us note that it would serve its purpose even more effectively, if the whole bibliography could be converted (hopefully, in the near future) into an electronic version.

Each bibliographical record which starts at the first indented line of each entry is presented in a customized bibliographical form. It is optionally followed by an English translation of the title for publications written either in Czech or Slovak, and all titles published originally in Cyrillic script or in Japanese or Chinese have been transliterated using transliteration standards. In addition, another helpful piece of information is added, namely an internet link to an online copy of the item where an online resource has been found during the process of compiling the bibliography. Also a cross-reference to a later, earlier or foreign-language edition is appended, and in the case of items published between 1956–1974 there is also a tag specifying that the item is included in the 1975 bibliography. — An index of authors follows the bibliography with references to corresponding pages.

The volume begins with a preface, a modest one, but clearly revealing how laborious and time-consuming the whole process of compiling the bibliography was, and how patiently, even meticulously the author had to proceed — on a high professional

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2 Svoboda, A., Jan Firbas — an outstanding personality of European linguistics. In J. Hladký (ed.) *Language and Function. To the Memory of Jan Firbas*, 2003, 1–7. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

level and with much skill. Unfortunately, the total number of copies currently available is bibliophilically small. A reprint is desirable, the sooner the better, so as to distribute copies wanted by researchers, especially by those abroad.

It is very inspiring that the bibliography is introduced by a previously unpublished study by a leading Czech scholar in English linguistics Libuše Dušková,<sup>3</sup> entitled “Czech approaches to information structure: theory and applications”. In the first part of the paper the main theoretical frameworks that have been gradually elaborated by Czech scholars are brilliantly outlined, while the second part is devoted to one of Dušková’s favourite topics: syntax-FSP interface.

The arrangement of the bibliography items as well as the layout is friendly to users, the print lucid and careful, without printing errors.

The real value of Drápela’s bibliography clearly follows from its content: Firbas’s FSP ideas are not a closed chapter of our linguistic and philosophical heritage. They are continued up to the present and further developed vigorously by Firbas’s disciples, and by disciples of their disciples. It is believed that the issue of the bibliography will be a great help to all of them.

**Ludmila Uhlířová** (Prague)

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3 Her well-known comprehensive systematic description of English grammar, *Mluvnice současné angličtiny na pozadí češtiny* (first edition 1988), is available also electronically (Academia, 2006).