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FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE NOUN PHRASE

Aleš Svoboda

1. INTRODUCTION

By functional perspective we understand the distribution of different kinds of linguistic information (thematic, transitional, rhematic) within a certain communicative unit. Since it was the sentence that was examined first, Firbas (1959) introduced the term Functional Sentence Perspective. This term, however, has gradually become applied to the whole field of linguistic research, whether dealing with the sentence or any other communicative unit or units. By the noun phrase we understand the basic noun phrase, the prepositional phrase and the complex noun phrase as presented in Quirk and Greenbaum 1977. Their *University Grammar of English* will also be the main source of our examples so that the reader may readily see our 'informational' evaluation of linguistic items against the background of their syntactico-semantic description.

Communicative units are hierarchically ordered. On the one hand, noun phrases frequently represent communicative units within the distributional field of their superordinate units, *eg* clauses. On the other hand, they themselves represent distributional fields containing subordinate units, *eg* attributes. The general position of attributes in the theory of functional perspective was examined in Svoboda 1968. Twenty years ago, we concentrated on the relation between the head and its attributes and dismissed the problem of determiners, quantifiers and prepositions. Recent research into functional perspective has thrown new light especially on the function of thematic and transitional elements, which enables us today to examine the 'non-attributive' elements of the noun phrase as well, and to solve the problem of the nominal distributional field in its entirety. Most of the conclusions offered in Svoboda 1968 are fully compatible with the present solution, the main difference being connected with the functional evaluation of the head and related problems, as will become clear from the following discussion.

Since the functional analysis of nominal distributional fields is partly based on certain parallels drawn between verbal and nominal fields, we shall briefly characterize the verbal field first. The verbal (or clausal) distributional field can be distinguished from other kinds of distributional fields by the character of the communicative unit called transition proper. Transition proper within the verbal field conveys the basic information about the modality, polarity and temporality

of the message. ('The basic information' is to be regarded as a gradable phenomenon.) The central items are (i) the intentional modality (declarative, interrogative, imperative, desiderative), (ii) the opposition positive-negative, (iii) tense. These central items may be expanded by other non-central or peripheral items (cf. Fig. 1).

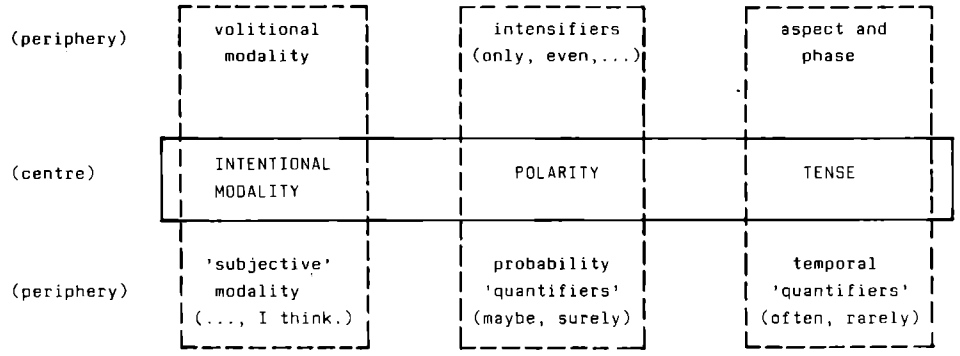

Fig. 1. (Items of verbal transition proper)

The central items are closed-system items. If the peripheral items are or tend to be of a closed-system nature, they remain part of transition proper. If they are open-class items, they display a tendency to function as separate communicative units outside transition proper: the 'upper line' items (in Fig. 1) tend to be, or merge with, units that are situated higher on the information scale (transitions (non-proper); the 'lower line' items tend to become units that are lower on the information scale (diathemes). The relative positions of thematic, transitional and rhematic units on the information (or importance) scale are as follows (the most informative unit is at the top):

rhematic units	{ rheme proper rheme
transitional units	{ transition transition proper
thematic units	{ diatheme theme proper

Transition proper is closely connected (both semantically and grammatically) with the unit called transition. In verbal fields, transition is frequently represented by the notional component of the verb, which expresses transient or permanent Quality (of some Quality Bearer) in the widest sense of the word. The notional content of the verb may be expanded by further items, which – according to their semantico-contextual characteristics – are either thematic or rhematic. Thematic units (themes proper and diathemes) are connected with the notion of Quality Bearer and the notion of Scene; rhematic units (rhemes and rheme proper) are mostly related to the notion of Specification. (For details see Firbas 1979 and references therein.) All these units can be found in the following verbal field, which also exemplifies the fact that noun phrases frequently represent both thematic and rhematic units:

The day after tomorrow	he	will	summon
(diatheme)	(theme proper)	(transition proper)	(transition)
our students	to a general meeting.		
(rheme)	(rheme proper)		

From the viewpoint of our further discussion, it will be useful to take a closer look at one aspect of the units of a thematic nature. In verbal distributional fields, themes proper are regularly represented by (unstressed) personal pronouns and pronominal adverbs. Personal pronouns expressing subject in English (like personal endings of verbs in Czech) anchor the notional content of the verb in the communicative situation; they tie the verb to the verbal, situational and experiential context, and – in this sense – they are closed-system verb-determiners. According to the communicative needs, these closed-system verb-determiners may be 'replaced' by open-class verb-determiners, *ie* (non-pronominal) noun phrases (expressing subject). Such open-class verb-determiners frequently (but not always) function as more informative thematic units called diathemes. Cf. *He'll summon a general meeting* – unstressed *he* is theme proper; *Our rector will summon a general meeting – our rector* (if not the carrier of the intonation nucleus) is diatheme.

After these introductory remarks, we shall now make an attempt to analyze the distributional field of the noun phrase by itself, keeping in mind, however, that we are not examinig dictionary entries, but noun phrases as they appear in the act of communication.

2. THE BASIC NOUN PHRASE

2.1 Phenomenon presented on the scene

The basic noun phrase introduces a phenomenon into the discourse in an abrupt way, which will be called the presentation (of a given phenomenon) on the scene. The phenomenon is expressed by the notional component of the head. Its presentation on the scene is frequently mediated by items conveying the information about case and number. (Case is to be understood as the signal of syntactico-semantic relations enabling the noun phrase to function within the structure of a higher order.) The scene is often represented by the definite and the indefinite article, signalling the presence or the absence of a tie with a given verbal, situational or experiential context at the very moment of communication, and – therefore – locating the presented phenomenon in a most general way.

SCENE	—	PRESENTATION on the scene	—	PHENOMENON presented on the scene
(article)		(case and number exponents)		(notional component of the noun)

Case and number in nouns correspond to modality and tense in verbs. Modality is an indispensable item if a clause is to perform its communicative function. So is case for the noun phrase. A noun phrase without case is but a dictionary entry, which can only start to function in normal communication after having been set into syntactico-semantic relations within a superordinate unit (which itself need not be explicitly expressed). Tense is an information item in-

herent in verbs. So is number in nouns. As has been proved for verbal distributional fields, temporal and modal exponents of verbs have a very strong tendency to function as transitions proper. It is not illogical to suggest that the number and case exponents of nouns tend to function as transitions proper of the nominal distributional fields. (They mediate the presentation of a phenomenon on the scene in a way similar to that in which the temporal and modal exponents mediate the act of ascribing a quality to a quality bearer.) If number and case represent transition proper, then – under unmarked circumstances – the notional content of the noun, the presented phenomenon, is the information focus and hence rheme proper of the nominal field. On the other hand, the general 'location' of the phenomenon – for the time being the article, representing the scene – stands lowest on the importance scale, and represents theme proper.

The basic noun phrase *the girl* functioning as one unit within the distributional field of the sentence *I haven't seen the girl for two years* has its own (nominal) distributional field consisting of three communicative units:

rheme proper	–	the notional content of *girl*
transition proper	–	singular (signalled by zero numeral exponent), 'object' case (signalled by syntactic position)
theme proper	–	the definite article *the*

In the following discussion we shall take a closer look at the separate units in a nominal distributional field. Since the term communicative unit seems to be a bit cumbersome, we shall use the term element instead.

2.2 Themes proper

Theme proper in the nominal field is frequently expressed by *the, a, some* and *∅* (plural zero variant), or is not explicitly expressed at all.

I haven't seen { *the girl* / *a girl* / *the girls* / *girls* / *John* / *furniture* } for two years.

Theme proper determines whether the presented phenomenon is scenically (contextually) tied or untied. It is of paramount importance to relate the concept of scenic tie to all the three types of context which set the scene:

(i) context created by (mostly preceding) text
(ii) context created by the communicative situation
(iii) context created by the general experience shared by the speaker and the listener

The general distinction tied-untied need not be explicitly expressed if the presented phenomenon is by itself scenically tied (*John, Mother*) or untied (*furniture, prettiness*). Articles delimit the scene (on which the phenomenon is presented) in a most general way and – as themes proper – stand at the bottom of the importance scale.

Next to articles there are possessive determiners *my, your,* etc. They also delimit the scene, but in a less general and therefore more specific way than articles.

I haven't seen { *my girl* / *your girl* / *his girl* / (etc.) } for two years.

Possessive determiners are slightly more informative than articles, stand higher on the importance scale, but — under normal circumstances — are functionally close to articles and are evaluated as themes proper.

Both possessive determiners and articles have their counterparts in verbal fields in the form of personal pronouns, which also delimit the scene by determining the verb by locating the quality with the speaker, the listener, a 'third person', or a combination of the three. It is definitely not a coincidence that the articles, the possessives and the personal pronouns functioning as themes proper all display the same prosodic features: they are unstressed and are subject to phonic reduction.

2.3 Transitions proper

Transition proper in a nominal field is expressed by the items conveying information about case, polarity, and number. Polarity is part of transition proper in both nominal and verbal fields. For the time being, we shall leave it aside and focus on case and number.

2.3.1 **Case**

By case we understand the syntactico-semantic signals enabling a distributional fields to function as one particular unit within a distributional field of superordinate order.

(1) *His girl* bought a new car.
(2) He bought *his girl* for a new car.
(3) *His girl's* car (wasn't enough for him).
(4) He bought *his girl* a new car.
(5) He bought the car *to his girl.*
(6) He stood *at (by, in front of, behind, above, below, . . .) his girl.*
(7) He bought a new car *before (after) his girl.*
(8) He bought a new car *because of his girl.*
(9) She showed him *this way.* (to follow)
(10) She showed him *this way.* (in this manner)

As can be seen from the examples, the current case signals are the following:

(i) word-order position (compare (1) and (2))
(ii) morphological form (compare (1) and (3))
(iii) intra-clausal context (compare (2) and (4))
(iv) preposition (compare (5) — (8))
(v) extra-clausal context (compare (9) and (10))

Different languages exploit the above signals and their combinations to various degrees. What seems to be of major importance is the outcome of their interplay. For our purpose, let it suffice to say that in Indo-European languages, we can mostly distinguish cases signalled by various combinations of (i), (ii) and (iii) on the one hand, and cases signalled by combinations of (iii), (iv) and (v) on the other. There is no clear dividing line between these two groups, because some prepositions may become 'grammaticalized' (cf. (5) above), and the morphological cases of some nouns may become 'lexicalized' (cf. (10)).

2.3.1.1 Central items

Diachronically, the most central items of the Indo-European case system are the essives (cf. Hjelmslev 1935, Erhart 1982.94 f.):

E° (neutral) – the first participant (subject) of the active verb
E^{+} (positive) – the second participant (object) of the active verb
E^{-} (negative) – the accessory member in a nominal group

Their common feature is the absence of a local relation. They constitute the base of the morphological nominative, accusative and genitive.

Less central items of the case system are the inessives (I) and the adessives (A), which may be characterized by the presence of certain (originally) local relations:

I° – locative	A° – sociative, instrumental
I^{+} – illative (directive)	A^{+} – allative (dative)
I^{-} – elative (partitive)	A^{-} – ablative

These local items combine to constitute the local morphological cases. Some of them also combine with the positive and the negative essive to expand their (accusative and genitive) meaning. Further expansion of the above information items can be achieved by means of prepositions. The prepositional cases represent the periphery ot the case system, because they constitute the link between the closed-system items of morphological cases and the open-class system of 'lexical' information items.

Synchronically, we shall regard morphological cases as more central than prepositional cases. The former regularly constitute a 'smaller' closed system than the latter. The number of central items may differ from language to language. In English, the central items seem to be the subjective case, the direct objective case, the indirect objective case, and the attributive (genitive) case (see Exx. (1) – (4)). As has been mentioned above, their case signals are of type (i), (ii), (iii). The word-order 'variant' of the indirect objective case with the preposition *to* (cf. (5)) is closely related to the central items. So is the *of*-genitive, which will be dealt with later on.

2.3.1.2 Prepositions

Prepositions form a relatively numerous system of local (cf. (6)), temporal (cf. (7)), and other more or less circumstantial relations (cf. (8)). As they are basically closed-system expansions of the central items, they constitute part of transition proper.

(11) He stood *by his girl.*

The prepositional phrase *by his girl* in (11) is a nominal distributional field which functions as one unit within the superordinate distributional field of the clause. The nominal field of the phrase contains *his* as theme proper, the no-

tional content of *girl* as rheme proper and *by* as part of transition proper. Transition proper of the prepositional phrase in (11) is expressed by the information items concerning number and case. Number is signalled by the zero singular ending. Case is signalled by the preposition *by*, the intra-clausal context (excluding the instrumental *by*) and the extra-clausal context (distinguishing the 'local' and the 'metaphorical' meaning).

Simple prepositions are closed-system items. Complex prepositions (see Quirk and Greenbaum 1977.145) form

a) the periphery of the closed-system items (Quirk's category A − adverb or preposition + preposition: *along with, as for, away from,* etc.)
b) the boundary between the closed-system and the open-class items (Quirk's category B − verb/adjective/conjunction/etc. + preposition: *owing to, due to, because of,* etc.)
c) the periphery of the open-class items (Quirk's category C − preposition + noun + preposition: *by means of, in comparison with,* etc.)

The consequences of the above systemic shifts are that complex prepositions (esp. sub (b) and (c)) display a tendency to function, not as part of transition proper, but as separate units within the nominal fields.

2.3.2 **Number**

By number we understand the syntactico-semantic signals that characterize the phenomenon presented on the scene as to singularity (denoting various aspects of 'one') and plurality (denoting various aspects of 'more than one'). The current number signals are the following:

(i) notional content (*gold, cattle*)
(ii) morphological form (*the girl, the girls*)
(iii) quantitative expressions (*every girl, all the girls, many girls*)
(iv) context (*These sheep* were locked for the night.)

2.3.2.1 Central items

The Proto-Indo-European hypothesis says (Erhart 1982.100 f.) that the bare noun-form was originally indifferent to number. It was the determinative endings (*-s, -m, -t, -i*) that gradually lent it the singular (singulative) character. Within the opposition singulative − indifferent, it was the latter member that combined with primitive postpositions (deictic particles), denoted plurality, and finally performed the plural function. Some languages developed special forms for 'two objects' − the dual. From the diachronic point of view, the central closed-system items of number are the following four: singular, indifferrent, plural, and dual. The present-day Indo-European languages vary as to the employment of the indifferent and dual in the system.

In English, 'morphological' criteria speak in favour of two central items: singular and plural. 'Syntactic' criteria require a three-item system of singular count, plural count, and non-count. (In principle, Quirk and Greenbaum adhere to the former solution (1977.80), but in practice (*eg* when dealing with determiners and predeterminers, p. 62, 63) they employ the three-item system.) From the viewpoint of our further discussion, the difference between the two-item and the three-item system is irrelevant.

2.3.2.2 Quantifiers

Quantification can be regarded as an aspect of number, and its signals as the peripheral items of transition proper. Their formal representatives often com-

bine the determinative function (of theme proper) and the quantitative function (of transition proper). There is also a gradience from closed-system quantifiers to open-class quantifiers. Examples will illustrate:

Determiners:
(12) *The students* wanted to speak to you.
(13) *These students* . . .
(14) *A student* . . .
'Quantitative' determiners:
(15) *Some students* . . .
(16) *Every student* . . .
Predeterminers-quantifiers:
(17) *All/both/half the students* . . .
Closed-system quantifiers:
(18) *Many/(a) few/several students* . . .
Open-class quantifiers:
(19) *Plenty of students* . . .
(20) *A group of students* . . .

The in (12) is indifferent to number and functions solely as theme proper. *These* in (13) co-signals the plural of *students* and apart from its thematic function (see later 2.5.1), it performs the function of a co-conveyer of transition proper. *A* in (14) may be regarded as pure theme proper (in its generic function) or as theme proper plus the co-conveyer of transition proper (like *these* in (13)). As a kind of determiner (theme proper), *some* and *every* in (15) and (16) are not mere co-signals of number and hence co-conveyers of transition proper, but bring new 'quantitative' information and function as separate items of transition proper, too. The predeterminers and closed-system quantifiers in (17) and (18) are only transitions proper, because the determinative function of theme proper is performed by the article or its zero variant. While *plenty of* in (19) and similar open-class quantifiers can be — like *many* — qualified as transition proper, *a group of* in (20) will most probably require a different interpretation (as will be shown in 3.2.2).

2.4 Rhemes proper

As has been said in 2.1, rheme proper of the basic noun phrase (and the corresponding prepositional phrase) is the notional content of the head. This holds under normal, unmarked circumstances:

(21) *This book* is (meant as a present) *for my brother.*

The notional contents of the heads *book* and *brother* are rhemes proper of their noun phrases. But under different circumstances, the internal conditions of the noun phrases may be changed:

(22) *This book* is *for my brother* (and *that one* is *for my father*).
(23) *This book* is *FOR my brother* (not *FROM my brother*).

It is important to remember that within verbal fields (clauses), noun phrases function as units; in (21), (22) and (23), *this book* functions as diatheme and

for my brother as rheme proper. According to contextual conditioning, the information structures of the noun phrases are different. In (22), *this* is made rheme proper, and the notional content of the head *book* is (automatically) thematized. The same can be said about *for* and *brother* in (23). The thematized heads, however, are not made themes proper at the lowest level of the information scale, but should be classed as more informative thematic elements – diathemes. This time, of course, we have in mind nominal diathemes, *ie* diathemes in nominal fields.

2.5 Diathemes

Diathemes are thematic elements standing higher on the information scale than themes proper, but lower than transitions proper (for details see Svoboda 1981, 1983). Thematized heads are not the only elements that perform the function of diathemes in the basic noun phrase. Further common representatives of diathemes are demonstratives, *-s* genitives, and cardinal numerals.

2.5.1 **Demonstratives**

To locate *this, these, that, those* used as determiners on the information scale is a problem. On the one hand, they are closed-system items which delimit the scene like articles and possessives; on the other hand, they display certain formal, semantic and contextual features that resemble diathemes in verbal fields (cf. Svoboda 1981). (In many ways, they are counterparts of non-pronominal basic noun phrases representing thematic subjects in verbal fields.) Without going into detail, we are inclined to think that owing to their 'demonstrative' content, the determiners *this, that, . . .* delimit the scene in a more specific way than articles and possessives. Under normal, unmarked conditions, they are higher on the information scale than other closed-system determiners (rhemes proper), but lower than *-s* genitives, regarded as open-class determiners functioning frequently as diathemes (see 2.5.2). Taking into account their contextual and semantic ties, as well as their phonic 'stability', we are inclined to evaluate determiners *this, that, . . .* as (nominal) diathemes. This holds, of course, if they are not contextually contrasted and prosodically intensified (cf. 2.4, Ex. (22)).

2.5.2 *-s* **genitives**

-s genitives can be regarded as open-class determiners which – owing to their notional content – stand higher on the information scale than the closed-system determiners. *Paul's* and *my sister-in-law's* are more informative items than *his* and *her,* but their common feature is that all of them delimit the scene on which the phenomenon (head) is presented and therefore function as thematic elements, the former two as 'more informative' diathemes, the latter two as 'less informative' themes proper.

(24) *Paul's hat* is the last thing I wish to see in the kitchen.
(25) I can't see *my sister-in-law's name* on the list.

In the noun phrases *Paul's hat* and *my sister-in-law's name,* the *-s* genitives function as diathemes, the (notional contents of the) heads *hat* and *name* as rhemes proper, and the signals of case and number of the heads as transitions proper. As a matter of fact, *Paul's* and *my sister-in-law's* are basic noun phrases themselves: the zero determiner at *Paul's* and *my* at *sister-in-law's* rep-

resent themes proper, the case and number signals *'s* represent transitions proper, and the notional contents of *Paul* and *sister-in-law* are rhemes proper. As a whole, however, these phrases may be regarded as (thematic) determiners within their superordinate noun phrases *Paul's hat* and *my sister-in-law's name.* (These determiners may be rhematized in the same way as other determiners; see 2.4 and also 2.6.1.)

There is, however, another interpretation of the *-s* genitives, which is based on the fact that they often display certain common features with premodifiers. We shall deal with the alternative interpretation within the complex noun phrase in 3.3.3.

2.5.3 **Cardinals**

While closed-system quantifiers express a certain (rather general) aspect of number and are classed as peripheral items of transition proper, cardinals – as special open-class quantifiers – seem to represent separate elements, detached from transition proper and frequently functioning as diathemes.

(26) There were *three children* in the room, *one boy* and *two girls.*

In our opinion, rhemes proper of the basic noun phrases *three children, one boy,* and *two girls* are, not the cardinals, but the notional contents of the heads. We can see some analogy between the verbal and the nominal distributional fields. As has been said in 2.1, modality (in verbal fields) corresponds to case (in nominal fields) and tense corresponds to number. The closed-system temporal signals represent items of transition proper, but the open-class temporal indications (*eg yesterday, next year, on the 2nd of April*) frequently represent temporal settings (part of the scene) and function as diathemes. Only when they are made temporal specifications (*George flew to Prague YESTERDAY,* see Firbas 1979.50 f.), do they become rhemes proper. Cardinals behave in a similar way. Semantically, they are either numeral settings, functioning as diathemes, or head specifications, functioning as rhemes proper. (Specification is to be understood as a technical term, which will be explained in 3.1.1). Cardinals performing the function of rheme proper have the same 'thematizing' effect on their heads as described in the case of rhematized determiners and prepositions (2.4).

(27) But I could see *ONE girl* (not *TWO*)!

Here the noun phrase *one girl* has *one* as rheme proper and *girls* as diatheme.

Although both cardinals and ordinals are classed as postdeterminers and formally behave in the same way, they are semantically quite different. Ordinals correspond to premodifying adjectives and will be treated within the complex noun phrase (3.3.1).

2.6 Pronouns as basic noun phrases

In their nominal function, pronouns represent a special case of the basic noun phrase. They may be regarded as the minimum nominal fields we know. It is outside the scope of the present paper to deal with these minimum fields in full, because this would require to treat the separate kinds of pronoun in their historical development. We shall confine ourselves to the most important

facts, taking recourse to history only when necessary. In order to make the link between this and the preceding sections more evident, we shall start with the demonstrative and possessive pronouns.

Before opening our discussion, we cannot omit the fact that a number of pronouns keep the distinctions of personal-non-personal and those of gender. In the history of the Indo-European languages these distinctions became – or had the tendency to become – indispensable for presenting a phenomenon on the scene. They were more or less central items of transition proper, alongside case and number. We shall not trace the development of their formal signals in English. Let it suffice to say that if such signals appear, we – under normal circumstances – regard them as peripheral items of transition proper.

2.6.1 Demonstrative and possessive pronouns

We have already shown in 2.4 that the demonstrative determiners *this, that, these, those* may function as rhemes proper, while (the notional contents of) their heads are at the same time thematized. (The case and number signals represent transition proper.) The thematization, however, may go still further than that. The head may be so evident from the context (verbal or situational) that it is not formally expressed at all. It represents implicit theme proper, the 'least' informative unit of all.

(28) I like *these* (pictures, which are near me) better than *those* (pictures, over there on the far side).

The text in the brackets is not part of the examined sentence, it is to be regarded as auxiliary means supplying context and periphrasing the notional contents of the demonstratives. *These* and *those* in (28) are basic noun phrases where the demonstrative contents ('near me' and 'ovĕr there') are rhemes proper, the case and number signals are transitions proper, and the notional content of the formally not expressed 'pictures' functions as implicit themes proper.

The same solution holds good for the possessive pronouns in (29) although they have partly different 'determinative' counterparts.

(29) I like *yours* better than *hers.*

In our opinion, the development of pronominal genitives in English, resulting in two series of possessive pronouns, was strongly influenced by their thematic or rhematic functions. Rhemes proper were always stressed and appeared not only with, but also without, the following heads. The 'fuller' forms *mine, thine* were most suitable for this function. Prosodically weaker *my, thy* (originally alongside *mine, thine*) were prevailingly used as 'determinative' themes proper within their noun phrases and were always followed by heads. The distribution of functions received further support when the importance of *her, our, your, their* in the function of rheme proper was emphasized not only by stress, but also by the appearance of 'double' genitives *hers, ours, yours, theirs.* The result was that *mine, thine* and all the *-s* forms were made rhemes proper par excellence, used only in situations in which there could be no doubt about their rhematic function, *ie* in which the head was absent. On the other hand, the other forms (including the homonymous *his* and *its*) were prevailingly used as determiners in their thematic function with the possibility of being occasionally thematized (like other determiners), but only within the scope of the noun phrase with the

head, because the other rheme-proper position in the phrase without the head was occupied by their 'stronger' counterparts.

2.6.2 **Simple quantitative pronouns**

By simple quantitative pronouns we mean those which are not evident compounds (compare *all* vs. *everybody*). Functionally, they constitute a noun phrase similar to that dealt with in the preceding section.

(30) *Many/few/a few* (students) passed their exams.
(31) *All/both* (the students) passed their exams.
(32) *Some* (students) passed their exams.
(33) I gave an apple *to each* (boy).
(34) You can have *either/neither* (book).
(35) I can't see *any* (book/books).

The quantitative content of the pronoun is rheme proper of the basic noun phrase (represented formally by the pronoun), while the notional content of the non-expressed head is implicit theme proper. Implicit themes proper are also the non-expressed determiners in (30) and (31) – the zero article in (30) and the definite article in (31). In (32) – (35), the determinative item is part of the pronoun; it also functions as theme proper.

We remind the reader of the fact that transition proper of the noun phrase is represented by case and number signals, no matter whether they are expressed 'within' the phrase or supplied from the 'outside' (*eg* by word-order position in the clause, context, etc.). We have to keep in mind that we are dealing with a noun phrase in the act of communication. If the phrase performs its communicative function, if it presents the phenomenon on the scene, it must do so by means of the (explicit or implicit) items signalling case and number.

One more note on transition proper. In verbal (clausal) distributional fields, polarity (positive–negative) and its aspects (probability) represent items of transition proper. We hold that this is also true of nominal fields, where the phenomenon is presented as existing or non-existing. Since polarity and quantification in nominals overlap, we – for the sake of simplicity – do not treat polarity as a separate question and we subsume the negation items under quantifiers. Practically speaking, the results of the functional analysis are the same.

In spite of the fact that *none* looks like a simple pronoun, it behaves like a compound (which it originally is: *n(e)-an, nan*) and we shall deal with it in the next section.

2.6.3 **Compound quantitative pronouns**

Compound quantitative pronouns contain the components *(-)one, -body, -thing,* which correspond to 'empty' heads.

(36) *Everyone/everybody/someone/somebody/anyone/anybody/no one/nobody/none* will pass the exam.
(37) *Something* is better than *nothing.*

The 'empty' head (like the 'empty' copula *be* in verbal fields) can be regarded as a mere conveyer of transition-proper items, thus functioning as transition proper. Like simple quantitative pronouns, the quantitative component (*every-, some-, any-,* and *no(-)*) is rheme proper, and the determinative compo-

nent theme proper of the noun phrase. The examples above will most probably be interpreted in this way.

There is, however, another interpretation, which takes into account the fact that the head component is not 'totally' empty, but contains the notional item of 'person or non-person not further specified'. It si because of this notional content that the head component (like the existential *be*) can be regarded as communicatively more important than the (basically transition-proper prone) quantifier. According to this interpretation, the internal distribution of functions in the pronominal noun phrase *somebody* in (38) and in the non-pronominal noun phrase *a gentleman* in (39) is very similar: the notional contents of the heads are rhemes proper.

(38) *Somebody* wants to speak to you.
(39) *A gentleman* wants to speak to you.

On the one hand, it is the context that has an impact on the choice of the interpretation; on the other hand, it is the nature of quantificative components themselves. The 'absolute' *every-* and *no-* tend to be rhemes proper, while *some-* and *any-* can more easily remain transitions proper (owing to their quantitative item) or even become themes proper (owing to their determinative item).

The second interpretation also holds for the reflexive pronouns *myself, yourself, . . .*, in which the first, determinative component is theme proper, while the second — owing to its 'reflexive' notional content — is rheme proper. In this case, rheme proper is also prosodically more prominent:

(40) She hurt *herSELF.*

2.6.4 **Personal pronouns**

In the Indo-European languages the personal pronouns of the 3rd person have their origin in determinative particles connected with morphemes indicating case, number and gender. (The distinction person *vs* non-person is subsumed under gender.) We have good reason to believe that the particles functioned as theme proper and the 'grammatical' morphemes as transition proper. Where is, however, the formal representative of the notional item, which should have performed the function of rheme proper? One solution is to see it in the phoneme *-e-* (which is currently treated as part of the particle or part of the 'grammatical' morpheme) and to presuppose its existential meaning as the nominal variant of the less nominal *esse (to be).*

Another solution — in our opinion the more probable one — is based on our knowledge of economy in language. The notional item as rheme proper is represented by the zero morpheme denoting 'the person or non-person derivable from the context right now'. The 3rd person pronouns are (and must always have been) among the most frequented lexical items of language. In accordance with the economy principle, they rightly aspired to become the (only?) noun phrases in which the rhematic notional component was signalled by its 'systemic' absence.

No matter whether historical development has preserved or blurred the composition of the 3rd person pronouns, we regard them now as noun phrases in which the determinative component is theme proper, the case-number-gender component transition proper, and the notional component rheme proper. It is

evident that the re-presentation of 'the phenomenon derivable from the context right now' by means of concord in number (case must be changeable) did not meet the communicative requirement of the unambiguous derivability of one already presented phenomenon among many others. Hence the distinction of gender has been preserved to support the unambiguous re-presentation. (It is worth mentioning that in English the pronominal gender-distinction has become the means of supplying the 'genderless' noun phrases – as it were additionally – with the gender item: I met *a friend* and *she* told me . . .

The 2nd and the 1st person pronouns (at present we have in mind all four – *thou, you, I* and *we*) can be – even historically – regarded as movable proper nouns (denoting the addressee derivable from the situational context right now, the addressee plus others derivable from the situational context right now, the speaker derivable . . . , and the speaker plus others derivable . . .). Like personal names, these pronouns are self-determining nominals, in which the determinative component – functioning as theme proper – is an accompanying item of their notional content. The case signals (sometimes resting in different roots – *I, me*) and – perhaps – their intrinsic indication of 'number' perform the function of transition proper, and the notional content itself functions as rheme proper. The presence of the determinative item may not be so irrelevant as it looks. The *t-* of the 2nd person singular (coinciding with the *t*-particle of the deictic expressions) suggests that the 2nd person singular displays a higher degree of determinacy than the other persons. To present the addressee on the scene with less determinacy, to be less impositive and therefore more polite, the speaker can use the 'plural' pronoun. While many languages keep the two forms of individual address *(thou* and *you),* English has abandoned the less polite singular form altogether. The pragmatic explanation for the shift to the less direct and therefore more polite ways of expression is well known (cf. Leech 1983). We may only add that the external, pragmatic reasons were fully supported by the internal structure of the respective pronouns themselves.

Although we are convinced that the interrogative and the relative pronouns can – in principle – be analyzed in the same way as personal and demonstrative pronouns, the exact role played by their interrogative or relative components is not quite clear at the moment. For this reason we shall postpone suggesting any solution till we get the results of further research.

2.7 Final notes on the basic noun phrase

In the above sections we have tried to show that not only sentences (clauses), but also the basic noun phrases are information fields, in which the elements of functional perspective are distributed in a certain way. We have focussed our attention on the function of the separate information items as performed under normal or unmarked circumstances. (This is, of course, a very relative term, but we find it useful for methodological reasons.) Fig. 2 summarizes the functional elements of the basic noun phrase and their most frequent representatives.

It has to be borne in mind that the rigid 'word order' of the components of the basic noun phrase does not lead to rigidity of functions. In unmarked cases, the function of the separate items is dictated by their semantics, which is closely related to the context of experience. The ever-changing situational and verbal context as well as the changing communicative intentions of the speaker bring about changes in functions. The basic noun phrase displays a considerable amount of functional flexibility, which is mainly signalled by the immediate ver-

bal and situational context and by prosodic means. Some examples have already been adduced (rhematized determiners, thematized heads), others will follow in the next chapter.

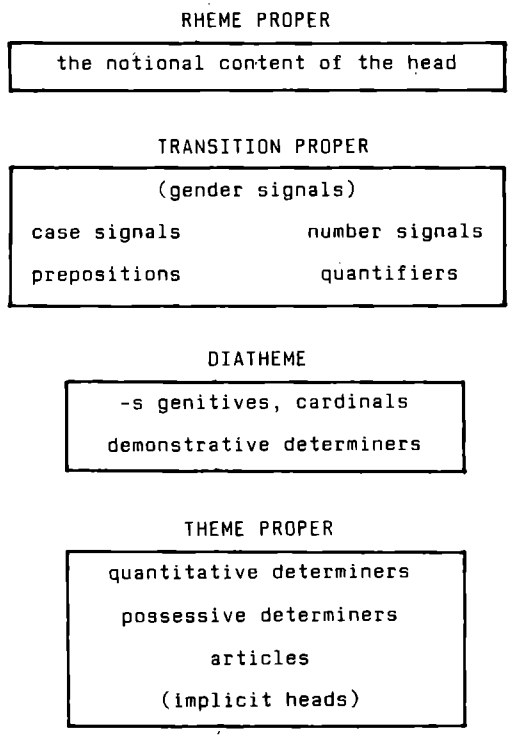

Fig. 2. (Elements of the basic noun phrase)

3. THE COMPLEX NOUN PHRASE

3.1 The head

To throw more light on the function of the head within the distributional field of the complex noun phrase, we have to take into account the results of research into the semantics of the verbal field.

3.1.1 Firbasian scales and verbal fields

For verbal distributional fields, Firbas has convincingly shown that the function of their elements is the result of the interplay of prosodic features, context, semantics, and linearity (word order). One of the most powerful semantic means is that of the mutual relations of elements at a high level of semantic abstraction. Firbas (1966, 1975, 1979.50 f.) has introduced two scales in which the semantic roles of elements are ordered according to the rising degrees of

their communicative importance (communicative dynamism). One of them, the 'appearance' scale

SCENE — APPEARANCE/EXISTENCE — PHENOMENON
on the scene — appearing/existing on the scene

inspired us to introduce the 'presentation' scale in connection with the basic noun phrase. The other, the 'quality' scale

QUALITY BEARER — QUALITY (permanent or transient) — SPECIFICATION — FURTHER SPECIFICATION(S)

will help us to explain the function of elements in the distributional field of the complex noun phrase.

The 'quality' scale in verbal fields can be illustrated by sentence (1):

(1) The girl	is	standing	in the corner.
QUALITY BEARER		QUALITY	SPECIFICATION
diatheme	transition proper	transition	rheme proper

Quality Bearer *the girl* functions as an element of the thematic sphere (here diatheme), Quality – represented by the notional content of *stand(ing)* – performs the function of verbal transition, and Specification *in the corner* the function of rheme proper. In verbal fields, Quality is closely related to temporal and modal indications, which function as verbal transition proper. In the presence of Specification(s), Quality functions as verbal transition. In the absence of Specification(s), however, Quality stands highest on the importance scale and functions as rheme proper (*The girl is sleeping* – the notional content of *sleep(ing)* is rheme proper).

3.1.2 **The head as Quality Bearer**

There is no reason why the relative degrees of communicative importance should not remain the same even when the elements appear within the complex noun phrase:

(2) Can you see *the girl standing in the corner?*

With regard to the transitional *standing* and the rhematic *in the corner,* the head *girl* is lower on the scale. Its status, however, is not the same as in (1).

The distributional field of (1) is based on temporal and modal signals functioning as verbal transition proper. The basic noun phrase *the girl* in (1) is one thematic element. It has its own distributional field with *the* as theme proper, the case and number signals as nominal transition proper, and the notional content of *girl* as rheme proper. This distribution of functions is based on the 'presentation' scale

SCENE — PRESENTATION — PHENOMENON
on the scene — presented on the scene

in which the phenomenon is represented by the notional content of the head (and by nothing else).

In (2), the distributional field of the complex noun phrase represents a fusion of the 'presentation' and the 'quality' scale:

SCENE — PRESENTATION — PHENOMENON — — — — — — —
on the scene presented
+
QUALITY — QUALITY — SPECIFI-
BEARER CATION(S)

It is the absence of verbal transition proper (temporal and modal signals) that extends the validity of the nominal transition proper (case and number signals) of *the girl* over the complex noun phrase. The notional content of the head *girl* is not the only phenomenon presented on the scene: it is only part of the presented phenomenon *girl standing in the corner.* The notional content of the head stands higher on the importance scale than the nominal transition proper, but it stands lower than the elements functioning as verbal transition *(standing)* and rheme proper *(in the corner).* We can conclude that in the complex noun phrase, the function of the head is that of nominal transition, which — together with the nominal transition proper — belongs to the transitional sphere of the nominal distributional field. Figure 3 will illustrate.

thematic sphere	transitional sphere				rhematic sphere
theme proper	diatheme	nominal transition proper	nominal transition	verbal transition proper	verbal transition	rheme	rheme proper
SCENE		PRESEN-TATION	PHENOMENON + QUALITY BEARER	Ø	QUALITY	SPECIFICATIONS (in their absence - Quality)	
the		(case + number)	girl	Ø	standing		in the corner

Fig. 3. (Distributional field of the complex noun phrase)

The head of the noun phrase behaves in a way similar to finite verbs. In verbal distributional fields, the notional content of the verb functions as rheme proper in the absence of Specification(s), or as verbal transition in the presence of Specification(s). Similarly, the notional content of the head functions as rheme proper if it only plays the role of the presented phenomenon (in the basic noun phrase), or as nominal transition if it is — at the same time — Quality Bearer which is further semantically specified (in the complex noun phrase).

3.2 Postmodification

3.2.1 Non-finite clauses

(3) He is talking *to a girl resembling Joan.*
(4) *Any coins found on this site* must be handed to the police.
(5) *The man to consult* is Wilson.

As postmodifiers within the complex noun phrase, *-ing* participle clauses, *-ed* participle clauses and infinitive clauses display one common feature: the 'verbal' element represents Quality on the semantic scale and functions as verbal transition in the presence of Specification(s) (*resembling* in (3), *found* in (4)) and as rheme proper in the absence of Specification (*to consult* in (5)). The head of the complex noun phrase is not rheme proper (as in the simple noun phrase), but nominal transition (*girl, coin* and *man* in (3), (4), (5)).

The postmodifying infinitive clause tends to function in a way similar to the postmodifying prepositional phrase, *ie* as one communicative unit (cf. 3.2.2). This tendency is fully pronounced in appositive postmodification:

(6) *The appeal to join the movement* was well received.

In (6), we regard *appeal* as nominal transition and the whole *to join the movement* as rheme proper. The possible functional variants with the main stress on *join* or on *movement* represent changes within the internal structure (of the distributional field) of this rheme proper. If the 'subject' of the infinitive clause is introduced by the *for-(or by-)*device, it is a separate element of the complex noun phrase:

(7) *the appeal for John to join the movement*

In (7), *for John* is rheme and *to join the movement* is rheme proper of the noun phrase. In the same way we analyze the non-appositive postmodifying elements in (8):

(8) *The man for John to consult* is Wilson.

3.2.2 **Prepositional phrases**

(9) Can you see *the girl standing in the corner?*
(10) Can you see *the girl in the corner?*

A comparison of (9) and (10) shows that the complex noun phrase with the postmodifying prepositional phrase can be seen as a nominal distributional field in which the element representing Quality and functioning as verbal transition *(standing)* is suppressed. Quality Bearer *(girl)* and Specification *(in the corner)* preserve their functions of nominal transition and rheme proper. Although Quality in (10) is formally absent, it is present implicitly in a more or less general sense (in our case delimiting the way of existence (of the girl) in the corner (*standing, sitting, lying,* etc.)).

The implicit presence of Quality is given by the semantic relation between Quality Bearer and Specification. In this relation, an important role is played by the preposition of the postmodifying phrase. It functions as nominal transition proper within the internal structure (field) of the prepositional phrase *(in the corner),* but – at the same time – it partly substitutes for the 'missing' verbal transition (Quality) within the structure (field) of the complex phrase. That is why we speak of suppression of Quality instead of its absence. Suppression, of course, is a matter of degree. Some prepositions *(eg pending)* are close to verbal transitions, others *(eg of)* are counterparts of copulas, which are merely transitions proper.

(11) We need *a man of courage.*
(12) It is *the pleasure of your company* that keeps us here.

Like other postmodifying prepositional phrases, the *of*-genitives are regarded as separate elements of the complex noun phrase. In (11) and (12), *of courage* and *of your company* are rhemes proper, while *man* and *pleasure* are nominal transition. There are, however, cases in which the preposition *of* (less often some other frequent prepositions) of the postmodifying prepositional phrase and the preceding head display a tendency to fuse. Functionally, it is a fusion of the nominal transition proper of the prepositional phrase and the nominal transition of the complex noun phrase:

(13) *in the middle of the town*

On the one hand, *middle* in (13) can be interpreted as nominal transition and *of the town* as rheme proper (in which *of* is nominal transition proper in relation to *the* (theme proper) and *town* (rheme proper)); on the other hand, *in the middle of* can be interpreted as a complex preposition functioning as nominal transition proper in relation to the head *town* functioning as rheme proper. The problem is whether to regard (13) as one prepositional phrase with the preposition *in the middle of* and the head *the town,* or as two prepositional phrases constituting a complex noun phrase. (The same possible fusion can be seen between prepositions as nominal transitions proper and verbs as verbal transitions in verbal fields of the type *He // looked // at the girl. — He // looked at // the girl.)* The situation is much clearer if the original head loses some nominal features (the article, number indication, etc.).

(14) *by means of gestures*

In (14), *by means of* is nominal transition proper and the notional content of *gestures* is rheme proper of the simple (prepositional) noun phrase. This fusion of transitional elements occurs not only in the domain of 'case', but also in that of 'number':

(15) *a group of students*
(16) *a pack of wolves*
(17) *a pair of trousers*
(18) *two pints of beer*
(19) *some of the students*

From (15) to (19), there is a gradual decrease of the 'full' notional content of the formal heads at the expense of an increase in the indication of number. Functionally, nominal transitions become nominal transitions proper, and – at the same time – they and the following transitions proper (represented by *of*) fuse. Compared with the phrase *some students,* (19) emphasizes the partitive aspect of numeral indication and *some of* is regarded as nominal transition proper. The same can be said about *any of, all of, both of, half of, each of, none of.*

3.2.3 **Minor types**

(20) *The road back* was dense with traffic.
(21) *Something strange* happened last night.
(22) *Lobster Newburg* is difficult to prepare.

Like postmodifying prepositional phrases, postmodifying adverbial expressions represent Specifications (*back* in (20)) in relation to Quality Bearer *(road)* and the implicit Quality (*'leading' (back), 'chosen for our journey' (back),* etc.). Hence the head *(road)* is nominal transition and the postmodifier *(back)* is rheme proper.

In (21), the postmodifying adjective *strange* represents Quality in relation to the 'empty' Quality Bearer *-thing.* In the absence of Specification, Quality becomes rheme proper. Quality Bearer *-thing* is nominal transition and *some-* theme proper. Practically speaking, the functional evaluation resembles the complex noun phrase with a premodifying adjective (*a strange thing* — cf. 3.3.1).

In (22), the head *Lobster* represents Quality Bearer and functions as nominal transition, and the postmodifier *Newburg* can be interpreted either as Specification of the implicit Quality (*'prepared as in'* (*Newburg*)) or as Specification of the appositive nature. In either case, *Newburg* functions as rheme proper of the complex noun phrase.

3.3 Premodification

3.3.1 **Simple premodification**

When there is no other modifier in the noun phrase, the adjective, the participle, the noun, the adverbial and the ordinal all function as rheme proper of the nominal field, while the notional content of the head regularly performs the function of nominal transition:

(23) *his delightful cottage*
(24) *his crumbling cottage*
(25) *his country cottage*
(26) *his far-away cottage*

The nominal fields of (23) and (24) are closely related to the verbal fields *His cottage is delightful* and *His cottage is crumbling,* where *his cottage* is Quality Bearer and *delightful* or *crumbling* is Quality. We hold that, basically, the same semantic relation is also preserved between the notional content of the head *(cottage)* and its premodifiers. Since Quality stands higher on the importance scale than Quality Bearer, the premodifying *delightful* and *crumbling* function as rhemes proper, while the head is nominal transition.

Examples (25) and (26) are related to verbal fields *His cottage is (situated, built in the way frequent) in the country* and *His cottage is (situated) far-away from here,* where the verbal transition is implicit (or suppressed) and *in the country* and *far-away* from here are Specifications and, therefore, rhemes proper. Parts of these Specifications *(country, far-away)* preserve their rheme-proper status even when they appear as premodifiers in nominal fields.

Unlike cardinals, which frequently qualify as (nominal) diathemes (cf. 2.5.3),

ordinals represent Quality, based on a certain order of things, and frequently function as rhemes proper of such phrases as (27):

(27) *his third cottage*

3.3.2 **Multiple premodification**

Multiple premodification is a very complex phenomenon. A detailed analysis would exceed the scope of the present paper. We shall only make an attempt to show the main tendency which exerts an influence on the distribution of communicative importance among the head and the premodifying elements.

(28) *his beautiful country cottage*

While the postmodifying elements are frequently ordered according to the rising communicative importance, with the last element functioning as rheme proper, the premodifying elements display a 'mirror' tendency. The first premodifier is usually rheme proper and the following ones have a strong tendency to function as nominal transitions. In (28), *beautiful* is rheme proper of the noun phrase and *country* functions as nominal transition. Hence we have two nominal transitions in the phrase: *country* and (the notional content of) *cottage.* Their mutual relation is that of Specification and Quality Bearer; *country* is higher on the importance scale than *cottage.* But in comparison with (25), *country* is surpassed in importance by *beautiful:* it is not rheme proper any more, and starts to behave as nominal transition. The similar nature of the two nominal transitions strengthens the relation between them. They tend to fuse and to form one communicative unit. This tendency fo form one unit may be further strengthened by their frequent use as two nominal transitions standing alongside one another. Then the pair itself may appear as premodifier (or premodifiers?) and we shall interpret it as one unit rather than two.

(29) *the rising country cottage tax*
(30) *the country cottage tax*

In (29), *country cottage* is no longer a nominal field because it is deprived of both the thematic (the article) and the transition-proper (case and number) element. It functions here as one nominal transition, closely related to the nominal transition represented by the notional content of *tax.* (Rheme proper in (29) is *rising.*) If it is true that *country cottage* functions as one nominal transition more often than *cottage tax,* then *country cottage* in (30) represents one unit, this time rheme proper, and (the notional content of) *tax* is nominal transition.

The fusion of two units frequently used as nominal transition is closely connected with the question of compounds. The functional difference between *the country house* regarded as a complex noun phrase (containing the premodifier and the head) and *the country house* regarded as a basic noun phrase (the compound) is that in the former, *country* is rheme proper and the notional content of *house* is nominal transition, while in the latter, both *country* and the notional content of *house* form one unit functioning as rheme proper. It is well known that compounding is a matter of degree. It appears to us that the items representing Quality display a tendency to be preserved as modifiers and, therefore, as more or less separate units, while the items representing Specification tend to form compounds much more easily. It is to be kept in mind that these are tendencies, not rules.

(31) *a factory which* (Quality Bearer) *is a toy* (Quality) = *a toy FACtory*

(32) *a factory which* (Quality Bearer) *produces* (Quality) *toys* (Spec.) = *a TOY factory*

A toy factory in (31) represents a complex noun phrase with *factory* as nominal transition and *toy* as rheme proper. The same phrase in (32) can be functionally evaluated as a basic noun phrase in which *toy* and *factory* represent one communicative unit, rheme proper.

3.3.3 **Special cases**

In 2.5.2, *-s* genitives were regarded as open-class determiners, which currently play the role of diathemes within their noun phrases. Apart from their determinative nature, relatable to *my, your,* etc., they display certain common features with premodifiers.

(33) *his fisherman's cottage*

In one reading of (33), probably the only reading today, *fisherman's* is not regarded as a determiner delimiting the scene (for the presentation of *cottage*) through the owner of the cottage, but as a premodifier representing Specification:

(34) *(his)*	*cottage*	*(once) built*	*by a fishermann or in the style of fishermen's houses*
	(Quality Bearer)	(Quality)	(Specification)

This interpretation has its functional consequences. Like other premodifiers in this place, *fisherman's* in (33) functions as rheme proper of the noun phrase, while (the notional content of) *cottage* plays the role of nominal transition. If the determiner preceding the *-s* genitive is related to the head (see (33)) or if the phrase has its *-s*-less variant

(35) *a summer's day* = *a summer day,*

we can be sure that the *-s* genitive represents a premodifier and currently functions as rheme proper.

The interpretation of the above cases has an impact on the interpretation of other *-s* genitives *(Bergman's films — Bergman films)* and leads to the uncertainty in the functional evaluation of the 'classic' examples like *John's cottage* or *his uncle's cottage.*

Another specialty is the function of *this* in certain phrases. We have already shown (2.5.1) that within the noun phrase, the demonstratives *this* and *that* currently function as (nominal) diathemes. Their function in phrases like (38) is different. Let us compare (36), (37) and (38):

(36) *the last week, the present week, the next week, the following week; the last month,* etc.
(37) *last week, next week, last month,* etc.
(38) *this week, this month,* etc.

In (36), *last, present, next,* and *following* perform the function of rheme proper in the same way as other adjectives or ordinals used as simple premodifiers (see 3.3.1). There is no reason to believe that the premodifiers *last* and *next* in (37) perform a different function. So we consider them to be rhemes proper with regard to their nominal transitions *week,* or *month,* etc. Against the background of phrases in (37), *this* in (38) plays the same role as *last* and *next* in the parallel structures and performs, therefore, the same function, *ie* that of rheme proper.

We may adduce one more reason in favour of the above interpretation of *this.* The question is whether the phrases in (37) and (38) are noun phrases at all. Their adverb character places them at the periphery of noun phrases, which has its consequence for their functional evaluation. We cannot go into detail, so let it suffice to say that the shift from a 'typical' nominal distributional field to a 'typical' adverbial (semi-)field is connected with the loss of scenic elements (themes proper, diathemes) and the suppression of case and number (nominal transition proper). Hence *this* cannot represent a scenic element (diatheme) and the only alternative (under normal, unmarked conditions) for it is to function as rheme proper.

3.4 Premodification and postmodification

3.4.1 General relations

In the presence of both premodification and postmodification, the general tendency is for the postmodifying elements to preserve their functions as explained in Postmodification (3.3), while the premodifying elements become nominal transitions.

(39) *the pretty girl in the corner*
(40) *the pretty college girls standing in the corner*

In (39), *in the corner* is rheme proper of the complex noun phrase and *pretty* performs the role of nominal transition which stands higher on the importance scale than the nominal transition expressed by the notional content of the head *girl.* In (40), both *pretty* and *college* are nominal transitions, the former standing higher on the scale than the latter. Nevertheless, *pretty* as nominal transition stands lower on the scale than the verbal transition *standing* and rheme proper *in the corner.* (In addition to that, *college* and *girl* display a tendency to fuse, cf. 3.3.2.)

3.4.2 *Of*-genitive compounds

The *of*-genitive may become part of a 'fixed' noun phrase, which – to a degree – acquires the status of a compound.

(41) *the Tower in London*
(42) *the Tower of London*

In (41), we clearly evaluate *Tower* as nominal transition and *in London* as rheme proper. If the phrase in (42) is not further modified, we may either apply the same evaluation as in (41), or take into account its nature as a compound and regard the notional content of *Tower* and *of London* as one unit, functioning as rheme proper. These two interpretations reflect – of course –

the extreme ends of the gamut from the complex noun phrase to the compound. If a phrase like (42) is further modified, both the head and the *of*-genitive become nominal transitions with the above mentioned tendency to fuse.

(43) *the beautiful Tower of London*

So in (43), it is not the 'postmodifier' *of London,* but the premodifier *beautiful* that is rheme proper of the complex phrase.

3.5 Final notes on the complex noun phrase

It has already been stressed that the comparatively rigid word order of the noun phrase does not imply functional rigidity. It is true that our examples mostly offered one arrangement of elements on the importance scale. In order to show the interplay of formal grammatical means and their semantics, we deliberately considered our examples as if they were used – in our opinion, at least – in standard contexts and with standard prosodic features. In the act of communication, these standard conditions may be replaced by less standard conditions, with the interplay of the four factors of functional perspective (prosodic features, context, semantics, linearity) leading to different results. The changes brought about by prosodic means and context seem to be detected most easily. We should not forget, however, that the semantic shifts in the notional contents of words and their mutual relations are also powerful means of functional perspective.

As to the functional flexibility of the complex noun phrase, it is possible to say that nearly any element may be thematized or rhematized. These thematizations or rhematizations are – of course – seen in the light of the standard or unmarked functions of the examined elements.

(44) *the girl in the CORner*
(45) *the girl in the C O R n e r* (not the one at the window)
(46) the *G I R L in the corner* (not the boy)

Example (44) is the unmarked phrase, in which *girl* is nominal transition and *in the corner* is rheme proper. It is typical of postmodification that rheme proper currently carries the most prominent prosodic feature within the complex phrase. The variant (45) exemplifies a marked phrase. In full agreement with the changed contextual conditions, the intensification of the most prominent prosodic feature keeps *in the corner* functioning ar rheme proper and thematizes the head *girl* to diatheme. In (46), *girl* is rhematized and plays the role of rheme proper, while *in the corner* is thematized to diatheme.

Whereas in unmarked cases of postmodification the most prominent prosodic feature (within the noun phrase) seems to appear on rheme proper, in unmarked cases containing only premodification this features is currently connected with nominal transition.

(47) *the pretty girl*
(48) *the PRETTY girl*

In (47), it is not the main prosodic feature, but the interplay of semantics, context, and word order that makes *pretty* function as rheme proper (and *girl* as

nominal transition). In the light of (47), (48) is marked. According to context, there are — at least — two alternatives: *pretty* remains rheme proper and *girl* is thematized *(the pretty girl, not the ugly one),* or both *pretty* and *girl* preserve their functions (*ie* rheme proper and nominal transition) and the whole phrase is rendered emotional. (For emotiveness in functional perspective, see Firbas 1985.)

Research into these and related problems is under way. Analysis of originally spoken texts (*eg* Quirk and Svartvik 1979) clearly shows that not only clauses but also noun phrases display a high degree of functional flexibility, but the results show as well that what underlies this flexibility is a set of standard patterns, some of which we have tried to describe.

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FUNKČNÍ PERSPEKTIVA JMENNÉ FRÁZE

Nominálními frázemi se rozumí jmenné a předložkové fráze ve smyslu Quirkovy gramatiky (Quirk-Greenbaum 1977). Funkční perspektivou se rozumí distribuce různých druhů lingvistické informace (tematické, tranzitní, rematické) v daném distribučním poli. Tato pole jsou hierarchicky uspořádána. Distribuční pole nominální fráze obvykle funguje jako jednotka distribučního pole větného. Je-li větné pole založeno na verbu finitu, jde o distribuční pole verbální. Verbální pole se liší od jiných polí tím, že explicitně či implicitně obsahuje jednotku nazvanou verbální vlastní tranzit. Tato jednotka je nositelem základní informace o modálním, temporálním a polaritním zařazení sdělovaného „věcného" obsahu. Věta se stává verbálním distribučním polem tehdy, obsahuje-li verbální vlastní tranzit.

Rozbor nominálních frází z hlediska různých typů lingvistické informace obsažených v jednotlivých složkách těchto frází ukázal, že informace o pádovém a číselném zařazení „věcného" obsahu nominální fráze má podobnou funkci jako modální a temporální informace (verbální vlastní tranzit) ve verbálním poli. Nominální fráze se stává nominálním distribučním polem, které je schopno fungovat jako sdělná jednotka v rámci vyššího distribučního pole, tehdy, obsahuje-li informaci o pádu a čísle, nazvanou vlastní tranzit.

Prostou nominální frázi je možno z hlediska Firbasových sémantických škál považovat za pre-

zentaci jevu na scéně. Tato prezentace má tři složky: scénu, prezentaci na scéně a jev prezentovaný na scéně. Scéna obsahuje tematické elementy, a to především vlastní témata. Vlastními tématy jsou členy a nesamostatná přivlastňovací zájmena. Prezentace na scéně je zprostředkována pádovou a číselnou signalizací. Ta má své složky centrální a periferní. Centrální složkou pádovou jsou pády gramatické, periferní složkou je signalizace předložkami. Centrální složkou číselnou je signalizace singuláru a plurálu, periferní složkou jsou kvantifikátory. Jev prezentovaný na scéně, totiž nocionální obsah základu prosté nominální fráze, je vlastním rématem. Kromě vlastního tématu, vlastního tranzitu a vlastního rématu může prostá nominální fráze obsahovat ještě elementy diatematické. Jsou jimi demonstrativa, saské genitivy a základní číslovky. Výše uvedené hodnocení prosté nominální práze se považuje za nepříznakové. V aktu sdělení však může při změnách komunikativní situace a změnách záměru mluvčího docházet ke změnám ve funkcích jednotlivých elementů. Nejfrekventovanější „odchylkou" je rematizace některého tematického nebo vlastně tranzitního elementu. Při ní pak automaticky dochází k tematizaci nocionální složky základu fráze.

Složenou nominální frázi je možno ze sémantického hlediska vidět jako částečnou fúzi dvou škál, výše uvedené prezentační škály a škály obsahující vlastnost: scéna, prezentace, prezentovaný jev, který je zároveň nositelem vlastnosti, vlastnost a specifikace. Postmodifikační elementy mají charakter vlastnosti nebo specifikace a fungují jako verbální tranzity nebo vlastní rémata. Nocionální obsah základu se v takovémto případě stává nominálním tranzitem. Premodifikační elementy jsou podle okolností vlastními rématy nebo nominálními tranzity. Mezi premodifikací a postmodifikací je určitý bezpříznakový vztah, který se však podobně jako u prosté fráze může vlivem okolností měnit. Přes určitou strnulost „slovního pořádku" nominální fráze je možno říci, že díky proměnlivým sémantickým obsahům, proměnlivému kontextu i měnícím se prozodickým rysům vykazuje nominální fráze značnou funkční flexibilitu. Je tedy i u ní možno mluvit o distribuci lingvistické informace mezi elementy, a tudíž o funkční perspektivě.