

A TEXTUAL VIEW OF NOUN MODIFICATION

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1. Introduction

Drawing on Aleš Svoboda's analyses of the distributional field of the noun phrase, the present paper examines the relations between the FSP structure of a modified NP and the NP's position in the text with the aim of ascertaining the role that modified NPs play in the text build-up. According to the FSP structure of the NP the following discussion is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with NPs in which both the head noun and the modifier are context-independent. The second part deals with the varying FPS structure of modified NPs as they move through sections of the text, a further division being made according to whether the recurrent NPs under observation reiterate both components or whether a recurrent lexico-semantic element is found in the realization form of only one of them.

2. Modified noun phrases with context-independent FSP structure

The FSP structure of context-independent modified noun phrases is best illustrated by book titles. The context independence of a book title rests on its being the first component of a whole text which introduces the text's hypertheme. As such it has no antecedents and contains only novel elements.

This type of context-independent NP is presented on a contrastive Czech–English and English–Czech basis, which makes a good starting point for demonstrating the relevant points by bringing into relief the differing systemic possibilities of modification structure in an analytic and an inflecting language. Two book titles have been chosen, Mark Corner's translation of the title of Vladislav Vančura's *Rozmarné léto*, and Martin Hilský's translation of the title of D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*.

2.1. Starting with Mark Corner's translation of the book title *Rozmarné léto*, literally 'A Capricious Summer', we find it rendered as *A Summer of Caprice*.

(1) *Rozmarné léto* / *A Summer of Caprice*

From the FSP point of view this appears to be a felicitous counterpart, although possibly due not so much to the translator's choice as to semantic (collocational) factors, and thus may have nothing to do with what appears to be a salient FSP point. The semantic aspect of the chosen equivalent is involved in the collocational propensities of the adjective *capricious*, which usually modifies personal activities and features. The only inanimate entity commonly described as capricious though unrelated to personal behaviour, acts and mental processes is the weather. In the case of other inanimate nouns without personal associative ties the use of the adjective involves a certain degree of personification. This may have led to the choice of a less marked structure in English, viz. a prepositional phrase containing the respective cognate noun instead of its adjectival derivative. The assignment of a quality to the referent of a head noun by means of an *of*-phrase is looser than direct modification by the respective adjective, hence the assignee remains more or less vague.

However, it is not the semantic aspect that primarily draws attention to the English counterpart of the Czech title. More importantly in the present context, it is the linear arrangement of its information structure. According to Aleš Svoboda's initial conception of the distributional field of a noun phrase (Svoboda, 1968), the modifier, unless context dependent, is more dynamic than the head noun, irrespective of the latter's context dependence or independence. In terms of FSP functions, if both the modifier and the head noun are context independent, the modifier constitutes the rheme, the head serving as the theme. This appears to be due to the modifier's semantics which is as a rule more specific than that of the head noun. In the case of premodifiers the importance of semantics and context independence for their rhematic function in the communicative subfield of a noun phrase stands out especially when these factors are considered in connection with the other two FSP factors, intonation and linearity. Both these factors here operate counter to semantics and context independence. The more dynamic element, which in the basic distribution of communicative dynamism follows the less dynamic one(s), is here preposed, and as regards the prosodic factor, not only the premodifier, but also the noun carries the word stress, which contradicts the usual placement of the intonation centre on the rheme.

Svoboda's later conception (Svoboda, 1987, 1989, esp. 101–104) is based on his drawing a parallel between the communicative function of the verb in a clause and that of the head noun in a complex noun phrase, which led him to assign the notional component of the head noun to an extensive transitional section: "... in the complex noun phrase, the function of the head is that of nominal transition, which – together with the nominal transition proper [the case and number] – belongs to the transitional sphere of the nominal distributional field", cf. ex (2) (Svoboda, 1987, 76, 77). In the present paper the FSP analysis of the noun phrase is based on Svoboda's earlier thematic interpretation of the head and rhematic interpretation of the modifier if context-independent¹ because of the relations between the NP's distributional field and its syntactic structure. In the underlying predicative construction the head noun represents the subject and as such has thematic function, cf. *the girl is (standing) in the corner*.

- (2) *Can you see the girl* [quality bearer, nominal transition] *(standing) in the corner* [specification, rheme proper].

The Czech form of the title of Vančura's novel, cf. (1), represents the most frequent type of noun modification, viz. modification of a noun by an adjective (cf. the Tables in 4.). Here the basic ordering in both languages is adjective – noun irrespective of the information structure. In English this order is largely obligatory for lack of inflections, cf. (3) a. This is in agreement with the primary grammatical function of English word order which often acts counter to the principle of end focus. In contrast, inflectional Czech whose primary word order principle is the functional sentence perspective allows both positions², cf. (3) b. Looked at from this viewpoint, the placement of a more dynamic element before a less dynamic one is a certain anomaly: Czech word order normally follows the basic distribution of CD, i.e. thematic elements precede the rheme. Nevertheless, even in Czech the order adjective – noun is the basic arrangement, the unmarked, usual order, whereas postposition of an adjective in the noun phrase is a marked order emphasizing the importance of the attributed quality (cf. Daneš et al. 1987, 161–162). This is evident in the translation of the title of D. H. Lawrence's book in (4):

- (3) a. *he was a handsome fellow* vs. **he was a fellow handsome*
 b. *byl to hezký člověk* / *byl to člověk hezký*
 (4) *Women in Love* / *Ženy milující*

In this light, of the two versions of the title *Rozmarné léto* vs. *A Summer of Caprice*, cf. (1), the English rendition appears to be more consistent with the respective FSP functions. While in Czech the more dynamic adjective precedes the less dynamic noun, the English realization form of the counterpart of the Czech adjective, a prepositional phrase, whatever its motivation, has brought the two major word order principles, grammatical structure and information structure, into agreement: both operate in the same direction.

In the case of the second title, *Women in Love* / *Ženy milující*, cf. (4), agreement between grammatical structure and gradual increase in CD is found in both languages. However, here the English original and its Czech counterpart differ in the respective degrees of markedness. Whereas the English construction is neutral, the postposition of the adjective in Czech is marked in that it intensifies the importance of the attributed quality.

2.2. In English the grammatical status of the position of adjectives with respect to nouns, generally applicable to anteposition, is in some instances also found in the case of adjectival modifiers in postposition. The word order head – adjectival modifier is displayed by noun phrases with pronominal heads realized by indefinite pronouns, cf. (5). In Firbas's formulation "the unqualified indefinite pronoun *something* ... usually acts as a semantic slot filler" (1992, 45). Here the position of an adjectival modifier and its head, which is a general categorial concept semantically endowed with a low degree of CD, is again in agreement both with the grammatical structure, the postposition of the adjective being obligatory, and with the placement of the focal element at the end.

- (5) *He said something strange. Did you see anything interesting?*

Another instance of this kind occurs in modified noun phrases of French origin, such as *notary public*, *heir apparent*, cf. ex (6). However, these phrases – unproductive, mostly fixed legal terms – have been taken over as wholes from French, and their linear arrangement is due to the French order noun – adjective.

- (6) *notary public*, *heir apparent*

As shown by the adduced examples, in some instances English displays more agreement between the grammatical and the FSP structure of a modified noun phrase than Czech³. This may be found not only on the level of attributive modification within the noun phrase structure, but also on the level of clauses where the modifier is construed predicatively as the complement of a copula. Consider the following examples:

- (7) *Her face was pale, yellowish, with a clear, transparent skin, she leaned forward rather, her features were strongly marked, handsome, with a tense, unseeing predeative look.*

[Lawrence, 27]

Měla bledý, zežloutlý obličej, s čistou, téměř průsvitnou pletí, neustále se držela v mírném předklonu, měla nápadné, výrazné, hezké rysy a napjatý, nevšímavý, trochu dravčí pohled.

[Hilský, 15]

- (8) *Měl vůbec humor nepřijatelného druhu.*

[Jirotko, 17]

His sense of humour was really almost beyond the pale.

[Corner, 18]

Here the Czech noun phrases, in (7) a translation equivalent, in (8) the Czech original, are heterogeneous with respect to context in/dependence (cf. Firbas, 1992, 32–37). In both examples

the modifiers carry a high degree of CD, being irretrievable from the context, hence fully context independent, and moreover semantically loaded. The head nouns, on the other hand, are less dynamic: in (7) they are partly derivable from the pragmatic (associative) context, 'face' and 'features' being in the relation of parts to the whole 'person' (*she*); in (8) the notion of a sense of humour is implied by the preceding context. While in Czech these heterogeneous elements are contained in one postverbal clause element which constitutes the rheme, in English the structure is decomposed into its less and more dynamic part, the thematic component, the head noun, being construed as the subject in initial position, and the rhematic modifier in the function of subject complement after a copula as the only element in the postverbal focus position.

Also these instances, frequently found in parallel English–Czech and Czech–English texts, lend support to the interpretation of modified noun phrases which assigns to the head the function of the theme and to the modifier that of the rheme. The validation or disproof of correspondences of this kind needs further testing on sufficient data.

3. FSP structure of recurrent modified noun phrases within the text

Although the FSP structure of a modified noun phrase (or for that matter, of any noun phrase) is intrinsically a textual feature deriving from the context dependence/independence of its components, its role in the text fully manifests itself in its movement through the text as a device of its build-up.

3.1. An illustrative example is presented by recurrent noun phrases whose modifier has two alternative realization forms, one in premodification and another in postmodification. Prototypically, this is found where the premodifier is a converted noun functioning as a syntactic adjective, or a morphologically derived adjective, whose substantival base constitutes the nominal component of a prepositional phrase in postmodification. Compare the two English counterparts of the Czech word *klouzačka* in the English translation of Zdeněk Jirotka's novel *Saturnin*:

- (9) *I was like someone who upon descending from a snow-covered hill steps onto a patch of ice hidden beneath the snow ... Only a person with no knowledge of what it is to engage in a desperate battle to keep one's balance would say that I could have left the ice patch at any moment...* [Corner, 9]

Example (10) comes from expository prose:

- (10) *The process of charging a capacitor consists of transferring a charge from the plate at lower potential to the plate with higher potential. The charging process therefore requires the expenditure of energy.* [Daneš's example, 1979]

On the assumption that of the two text sorts exemplified by (9) and (10), the nature of academic prose provides more favourable conditions⁴ for the occurrence of stretches of text displaying variation of this kind – the treatment of textual topics and subtopics calls for frequent reference to them – the following tentative probe is based on the exposition of two topics (textual subthemes), *the work/theories of Basil Bernstein and urban speech*, drawn from M. A. K. Halliday's book *Language as a Social Semiotic*, parts of Chapters 5 (*The significance of Bernstein's work for sociolinguistic theory*, 101–103) and Chapter 8 (*Language in urban society*, 154–157).

The length of the two text samples was determined by the occurrence in each of approximately one hundred modified noun phrases. The number is approximate because both in the case of the

heads and of the modifiers the inclusion or exclusion of some forms is questionable. Basically, the included structures have a noun as the head and a modifier realized by a syntactic adjective. Noun phrases realized by pronouns were left out of account. A borderline category was found in the case of quantifiers (*some, enough*, etc.) as potential heads or as potential modifiers. When construed with a noun, quantifiers structurally function as determiners, but semantically specify their head, and thus operate as modifiers. Moreover, quantifiers like *a number of*, though formally constituting the head, are surface realization forms of the same category as dependent quantifiers (whether these are regarded as modifiers or determiners), cf. *a number of books, some/many books*. In addition to some quantifiers (like *enough, many*) the importance of the linear arrangement of the NP's two components led to the inclusion among modifiers of the determinative possessive case of nouns (on the basis of the alternation *the theories of Bernstein/ Bernstein's theories*).

3.2. Textual subtopic "the work/theory of Basil Bernstein"

Among the noun phrases registered in the section on this topic, modified NPs and simple noun phrases were represented almost equally. In the group of modified noun phrases fourteen contain different recurrent heads: *work* (or its contextual synonym), *process, education, system, failure, problem, children, language, vocabulary, term, people, years, version* and *variant*. However, not all of them also contain identical modifiers. The point at issue is best illustrated by the first of these noun phrases, *Bernstein's work*.

- (11) *The work of Basil Bernstein*¹ has sometimes been referred to as '*a theory of educational failure*'^{b1}. This seems to me misleading ... because *Bernstein's theory*^{a2} is *a theory about society*^{b2} ... Nevertheless, it is perhaps inevitable that *Bernstein's work*^{a3} should be best known through its application to educational problems ... Something has gone wrong ... with the language; and the source of it is to be found in *Bernstein's work*^{a4} – even though the various forms in which it is mooted often bear little relation to *Bernstein's ideas*^{a5} [101–102].

[... If language is the key factor, the primary channel, in socialization, and if the form taken by the socialization process is (in part) responsible for educational failure, then language is to blame.] ... The language failure theory is sometimes referred to *Bernstein's work*^{a6} ... language failure is offered both as an interpretation of *Bernstein's theories*^{a7} and as an alternative to them [102].

The head word *work* recurs in 4 instances (11a1, 11a3, 11a4, 11a6); 3 instances contain a referential (contextual) synonym: *ideas* (11a5), *theory* (11a2), *theories* (11a7). This noun phrase is the global theme of Chapter 5 *The significance of Bernstein's work for sociolinguistic theory*. Within the chapter it constitutes the hypertheme of the introductory part (first two pages: 101–102). The middle part of the chapter is concerned with the theory of language failure, a notion sometimes referred to Bernstein's work. Through this connection the language failure theory constitutes a derived theme of the global theme. In the concluding part (105–107) it is reconsidered in the light of Bernstein's work (ideas), which is reflected in the recurrence of noun phrases reiterating both components of the global theme.

- (12) *But, reconsidering in the light of Bernstein's work*¹, especially his more recent thinking, we can see that the question 'deficit or difference?' is the wrong question. [105] ... *What Bernstein's work*² suggests is that there may be differences in the relative orientation of

different social groups towards the various functions of language in given contexts ... There is evidence in Bernstein's work³ that different social groups or subcultures place a high value on different orders of meaning. [106] ... Language is central to Bernstein's theory⁴; [107]

Considering the FSP structure of the noun phrase from the viewpoint of context-dependence/independence, both components are given since the phrase denotes the global theme of the chapter, announced in the chapter's title, *The significance of Bernstein's work for sociolinguistic theory*. However, as the global theme *Bernstein's work* moves through the text, its distributional field changes. Although basically the relative degree of communicative dynamism of context-dependent elements is determined by the semantic factor, as in the case of context-independent structures, other factors also play a role. In general, the semantic factor assigns a higher degree of communicative dynamism to the modifying element, in this case to the possessive determiner, since it specifies (narrows) the meaning of the head noun. This is reflected in the realization form of the noun phrase when it occurs for the first time in the body of the text. The specifying component appears in the form of a prepositional phrase in postmodification, in accordance with the final placement of the focal element within the noun phrase. It is to be noted that it contains an additional novel feature, Bernstein's first name, which is not derivable from the preceding linguistic context: *The work of Basil Bernstein* (11a1). Once a textual theme denoted by a modified noun phrase is introduced in the form that reflects its FSP structure, i.e. with the modifier in postposition, in the subsequent occurrences its givenness is indicated by a shift from the postmodifying to the premodifying form. In other words, the structure with premodification functions as a textual indicator of the givenness of the concept; it signals its occurrence in the previous context, cf. (11) *Bernstein's theory* a2, *Bernstein's work* a3, etc., (12) *Bernstein's work*1, *Bernstein's theory*4, etc. However, in the successive occurrences of the global theme *Bernstein's work* the degree of CD carried by the two components displays a shift from the possessive case to the head noun reflected in stronger word stress on the latter (*work/theory*, *theories/ideas*). This is presumably due to a higher degree of activation of the referent of the possessive case, the name of Bernstein naturally also occurring elsewhere throughout the text. Moreover, the denominations of the global theme *work/theory*, *theories/ideas*, though broadly synonymous, present the notion from different points of view, and may acquire semantic significance resulting in contrast, cf. (11) *Bernstein's work*a4 and *Bernstein's ideas*a5.

As regards the role of the distributional subfield of the noun phrase within the higher distributional field of the clause, the FSP function of the noun phrase is determined by the factors operating on the higher clausal level, its own distributional subfield being in this respect only a potentially contributive factor⁵. Accordingly, the noun phrase occurs both in the theme, cf. e.g. (11a2), (11a3), (122); (124) in sentence-final position; and in the rheme (11a4), (121); the only form with postposition occurs in the theme, cf. (11a1). There is one instance of potentiality due to the extent of synonymy of the head nouns in *Bernstein's work* (11a4) and *Bernstein's ideas* (11a5). If *ideas* in (11a5) are interpreted as contrasting with *work* in (11a4), they are disengaged from context dependence and acquire rhematic function (if regarded as a separate element at the clause level); however, if regarded as synonymous, i.e. as reiterating the concept, they belong to the theme⁶.

This only confirms the subordinate status of the FSP structure of the noun phrase in the higher, clausal communicative field where the NP's FSP function is determined by the interplay of all the FSP factors. On the level of the noun phrase the configuration of postposition of the modifier at its first occurrence and anteposition in the subsequent occurrence(s), which reflects, respectively, its context independence and dependence, resembles the simple thematic progression at the clause level. In the clausal distributional field simple thematic progressions are characterized

by the occurrence of the same item as the rheme in one clause and as the theme in the clause that follows (cf. Daneš, 1974, 118–19), the sentence position of the items being largely in agreement with the respective FSP function. On the phrasal level a parallel may be seen in the first occurrence of a context-independent modifier in postmodification signalling its rhematic function, and subsequently in pre-modification which indicates its thematization.

Apart from the noun phrase *Bernstein's work*, recurrence of a noun phrase in which the same modifier appears with the same head both in pre- and postmodification, the first text sample displayed only one other example, *process of transmission/transmission process*. Its realization form follows the pattern outlined above, cf.

- (13) *it is a theory of the nature and processes of cultural transmission, and of the essential part that is played by language therein. Education is one of the forms taken by the transmission process* [101]

Though retrievable from the immediately preceding context, *the transmission process* is disengaged from context dependence by the factor of selection: the theory is concerned with two aspects of cultural transmission, the processes through which cultural transmission takes place and its nature. Nevertheless, the modification structure *transmission process* indicates that the concept has occurred before.

To these examples may be added (14) in which the heads are related by the relationship of a part (*channel*) to the whole (*process*). Also this example follows the pattern outlined above.

- (14) *If language is the key factor, the primary channel in socialization, and if the form taken by the socialization process is (in part) responsible for educational failure, then language is to blame;* [102]

This pattern, which indicates the shift from context independence to context dependence by a different realization form of a recurrent modifier, is a special case insofar as context dependence results from previous occurrence of the same element in any form in the preceding relevant context. In general, any element in any syntactic function is apt to induce context dependence through being reiterated, cf. (15):

- (15) *Education is one of the forms taken by the transmission process, and must inevitably be a major channel for persistence and change; but there are other channels – and the education system itself is shaped by the social structure.* [101]

Context dependence resulting from the content of a whole stretch of text, rather than from previous occurrence of a particular item, can be demonstrated by an instance of a rare realization form, a complex premodifier. As shown by all preceding examples, premodifiers mostly have a simple, univocal structure. Example (16) displays a complex premodifier constituted by a noun that is itself premodified, i.e. the premodification structure involves two dependency levels:

- (16) *[If language is the key factor, the primary channel in socialization, and if the form taken by the socialization process is (in part) responsible for educational failure, then language is to blame; there must be something wrong about the language of the children who fail in school. So the reasoning goes. Either their language is deficient in some way, or, if not, then it is so different from the 'received' language of the school (and by implication, of the community) that it is as if it was deficient – it acts as a barrier to successful learning and teaching.]*

So we find two main versions of the 'language failure' theory, a 'deficit' version and a 'difference' version. ... The language failure theory is sometimes referred to Bernstein's work... [102]

Example (16) contains the complex premodifier *language failure* twice, first in inverted commas. The concept of educational failure due to language is built up by the preceding context, but is not yet established as a term. This presumably motivates the use of inverted commas at its first occurrence. At the second occurrence the concept is presented as fully established. It may not be incidental that at the clause level it first occurs as a component of the rheme, whereas in the second occurrence it constitutes the theme.

However, it is to be noted that even a modifier structurally construable both in pre- and postmodification may not follow the pattern demonstrated above. In (17) *failure*, though context dependent, appears in postmodification.

- (17) *Bernstein does not claim to be providing a total explanation of the causes of educational failure; he is offering an interpretation of one aspect of it, the fact that the distribution of failure is not random but follows certain known and sadly predicabale patterns...* [101]

The discussion in this section may be concluded by characterizing the examined pattern as a textual device which within the given constraints and with the status of a tendency rather than that of a consistently applied principle serves to develop textual topics and subtopics through its changing form.

3.3. This tendency is also shown in the second source text, drawn from Chapter 8, *Language in urban society*. Example (18) duplicates the pattern illustrated by (11).

- (18) *The modern development of urban dialectology is due largely to the innovations of one linguist William Labov, who first took linguistics into the streets of New York ... Labov very soon found that the inhabitants of a metropolis are united much more by their linguistic attitudes and prejudices, ... than by their own speech habits, ... Labov's subjects showed striking agreement in their ratings of recorded utterances...* [155]

More importantly, the second source text was chosen to demonstrate the changing FSP function of a recurrent modifier, due to its being disengaged from context dependence by one of the context-disengaging factors (Firbas, 1995)⁷. From this viewpoint, of special interest is the treatment of the global theme of the chapter, urban speech, which upon being resumed in the middle of the examined section displays the modifier, disengaged from context dependence by contrast, in postmodification indicating its context-independence. In the successive occurrences the modifier follows the described pattern and moves in adjectival form to anteposition.

- (19) *[... by the time dialects began to be systematically studied, this trend towards linguistic divergence has been replaced in these rural communities by a trend towards convergence. The younger speakers no longer focused on the village, and so in their speech they were already moving away from the more highly differentiated forms of the village dialect.]* [155]
It was not until the 1960s that serious interest came to be directed towards the speech of the cities. The modern development of urban dialectology is due largely to the innovations of one linguist ... In an urban context the classical speech community model soon breaks down. [155]

Here the disengagement from context dependence follows from the content of the preceding paragraphs which deal with rural speech as the closest approximation to the concept of a speech community. In this example *speech community* also appears as a complex premodifier, its context dependence persevering through a retrievability span of 24 clauses (cf. *speech community model* on p. 155 ← *speech community notion* on p. 154). In the case of *speech community notion* the retrievability span of the complex premodifier does not exceed eight clauses (cf. *a speech community* [154] → *this* [154] → *the speech community notion* [154]).

Premodification by the adjective *urban* in the successive occurrences raises the question why the noun *city* is not used here, as it is in the opening paragraph, though construed with other head nouns, cf. (20).

- (20) *A city is a place of talk ... If one listens to city talk, one hears constant reference to the institutions, the times and the places ...characteristic of city life.* [154]

Two factors appear to be at play here, semantics and style. In (19) in the case of *urban dialectology* premodification by *city* is ruled out not only semantically but also by the terminological status of the whole noun phrase. In the case of *urban context*, which is a free combination, *city* is conceivable, but semantically vaguer than *urban*, which moreover better fits the tenor of this part of the text. The operation of the stylistic factor is most noticeable at the beginning of the chapter. When first introduced in the opening paragraph, cf. (20), the topic of the chapter is presented in non-technical language, but as the concept is being elaborated, the discussion becomes more technical and the tenor shifts to strictly academic, which involves the use of terms and more precise formal synonyms.

The opening paragraph of the chapter is of interest for another point, viz. the relation between the title and the opening sentence of the chapter. Both deal with the concepts of *language* and *city*, but the functional perspective is reversed, cf. (21). In the nominal field of the title *language* constitutes the theme, its postmodifier operates as the rheme and the most dynamic element of the whole phrase is the premodifier of the noun in the postmodifying prepositional phrase, the adjective *urban*. In the clausal field of the first two sentences the concept of the *city* is the starting point, the theme, and the information structure is perspectived to *language*, which constitutes the rheme. In the first sentence this is achieved with aid of an added locative element, *place*. In the second sentence *language* is disengaged from context dependence through the factor of purposeful repetition.

- (21) *Language in urban society.*
A city is a place of talk. It is built and held together by language. [154]

This reversal again evokes the pattern of a simple thematic progression in that the rheme of the communicative field of the title becomes the theme of the opening sentence, and as is frequently the case, launches a progression with constant theme. The only special feature here is that the theme of the title constitutes the rheme proper of both sentences, which in both occurs in the final position.

The last example to be discussed in this section illustrates the shifts in the nominal distributional field reflecting the contextual status of the modifier in its realization form.

- (22) *If we think of the inhabitants of an old-established European village, they probably did form some sort of communication network: in Littlebyl, or Kleinstadt or Malgorod, strangers were rare ... in a rural context the 'speech community' notion works reasonably well.*

'The dialect of Littleby2' can be taken, and by consent is taken, to refer to the highly differentiated form of Littleby speech3, that which is most clearly set apart from the speech of the neighbouring villages4. [154]

Here although *Littleby* is mentioned in the immediately preceding relevant context (22)1, it appears as context-independent in the postmodification of the head *dialect* (22)2, which is also retrievable from the preceding sentence. While *Littleby* is disengaged from context dependence by the factor of selection (cf. *Littleby*, or *Kleinstadt* or *Malgorod*), the whole noun phrase introduces a novel feature by bringing the two elements into relation in construing them as one unit. The second occurrence of the noun phrase, with the coreferential head noun *speech* (*speech* (22)3 ↔ *dialect* (22)2), displays the now familiar pattern, while the last occurrence in this passage (22)4 demonstrates a prototypical correspondence between the basic distribution of CD and the grammatical order. The whole noun phrase is disengaged from context dependence by contrast, with the most dynamic element conveying a novel feature presented in postmodification.

A point that emerges from this section is the role of the decontextualizing factors in the development of textual subtopics.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion the registered types of nominal distributional fields and their realization forms are considered with respect to their respective representation in the two text samples.

Table 1

Bernstein's work		
Premodification	Adjective	39
	Noun	7
	Possessive case	5
Postmodification	Prepositional phrase	18
	Finite clause	19
	Nonfinite clause	3
Post- and premodification		19
Total		110

Table 2

Language in urban society*		
Premodification	Adjective	40
	Noun	6
	Possessive case	1
Postmodification	Prepositional phrase	21
	Finite clause	20
	Nonfinite clause	5
Post- and premodification		19
Total		112

*In this text the count includes the noun phrases on pages 155–156.

According to the account of the nominal distributional field given in 2.1., in general the more dynamic element is the modifier. This applies to instances where both components of the

modification structure are context-independent irrespective of the realization form. In the case of premodification, the linear arrangement acts counter to the increasing degree of communicative dynamism. As premodification accounts for about a half of all modification structures (cf. the figures for the adjective in the two Tables), the most frequent modification structure displays disagreement with the FSP structure. In the case of postmodification, linearity and final position of the rhematic element are in agreement. Here the relevant realization form is the prepositional phrase, whose representation shows it to be the second basic type. This configuration of the nominal distributional field can be changed only by the contextual factor, where the modifier is context-dependent and the head noun context-independent. Then the head noun becomes the rheme and the modifier is thematicized. If both components are context-dependent, the semantic factor acts in favour of the modifier, as in the case of context independence.

As was shown in 3.1., the realization form appears to come into a play in the case of recurrent modified noun phrases where the modifier has alternative forms for pre- and post-modification. In this case there is a tendency for the modifier to constitute postmodification at the first occurrence of the noun phrase and shift to premodification when the modified noun phrase is reiterated. The respective FSP functions of the modifier and the head noun remain the same insofar as a higher degree of CD is carried by the modifier, but the role of the noun phrase in the text build-up is shown to have changed, the shift to the premodifying form of the modification structure indicating the NP's previous occurrence, and hence its context dependence.

In 3.2. the realization form and FSP structure was observed also in the case of modified NPs with only one recurrent component. A novel point noted here was the role of factors disengaging recurrent items from context dependence, thus serving to develop textual subtopics.

As regards changes in the basic distributional nominal field due to the contextual factor, they were found to be rare: a configuration of a context-dependent thematic modifier and a context-independent rhematic head noun was observed in less than ten instances. Compare (17), noted before, and the followings examples:

- (23) *So we find two main versions of the 'language failure' theory1, a 'deficit' version and a 'difference' version; ... The language failure theory is sometimes referred to Bernstein's work and he has even been held responsible for the deficit version of the theory2. ... The fact that language failure is offered both as an interpretation of Bernstein's theories3 and as an alternative to them4 shows how complex the issues are and how easily they become clouded.* [102]

The context inducing the context dependence of the postmodifier *the 'language failure' theory* in (23)1 is given in (16) in 3.2. The head noun *two main versions*, though derivable from the immediately preceding context, is disengaged from context dependence by the factor of summarizing effect. Similarly, the head noun in (23)2, *the deficit version*, though present in the preceding context, is decontextualized through the contrast with respect to *a difference version*; the context dependence of the postmodifier *of the theory* is here so highly activated that it appears in a reduced form: *theory* = *language failure theory*. In the case of (23)3 the context dependence of the postmodifier *Bernstein's theories*, in the absence of decontextualizing factors, follows from its constituting the hypertheme of the whole chapter; in (23)4 its context dependence results from the immediately preceding context and is reflected in its pronominal form. The head nouns *interpretation* and *alternative* are not only irretrievable from the context, but moreover contrast with each other.

The only other example of a rhematic head and thematic postmodifier is very similar, cf.

- (24) ...there are two variants of the theory and possibly a third... [102]

Here the postmodifier *of the theory* represents the same use as in (23)2, i.e. it is co-referential with *language failure theory*, this relationship being again indicated by the anaphoric definite article and the high degree of activation by the NP's reduced form.

The only instance of a context dependent premodifier (if *enough* is classed as one) was found in (25):

- (25) ...not enough vocabulary, not enough grammar, and ... not enough meanings... [102]

It can thus be concluded that even as it moves through a text, the modified noun phrase largely preserves its basic distributional field with a rhematic modifier and a thematic head, irrespective of the form of realization. The rare distributional field containing a thematic modifier and a rhematic head appears to be due to the configuration of a context-dependent modifier with a novel head or a head disengaged from context dependence by one of the decontextualizing factors. The realization form appears to play a role in the case of recurrent modified noun phrases whose modifier can take both a premodifying or postmodifying form. In this case there is a tendency for the noun phrase to be construed with postmodification at the first occurrence and premodification when reiterated. Being based on a small sample, these findings are only a first probe and need to be tested by further study.

Notes

- ¹ This is also the view taken by Jan Firbas (1992, 84, 94–95).
- ² Grammatical anteposition applies only to adjectives lacking inflectional endings.
- ³ In the case of modified indefinite pronouns such as *něco zajímavého*, *něco divného* the postposition of the modifier is due to its noncongruent form, the genitive case of the modifying adjective. This construction is also an instance of grammatical postposition, but due to the non-congruent form, not to the head. In the congruent form the adjective would be preposed: *to zvláštní ne-identifikovatelné něco v jejím půvabu* 'that strange unidentifiable something in her charm'. However, as shown by the English counterpart, which also displays the adjective in premodification, the pronoun is here used as a lexical item and behaves as an ordinary noun.
- ⁴ According to a previous study (Dušková 2009) one of the constraints on noun modification in fiction is the frequent occurrence of noun phrases whose heads are proper nouns (personal names), i.e. a class of head nouns that generally do not favour modification. This also applies to another frequent realization form of noun phrases in fiction, personal pronouns.
- ⁵ Cf. Firbas (1992, 32–33), who demonstrates the subordinate role of the distributional subfield of the noun phrase in the FSP structure of the higher clausal field, but also draws attention to the potential role of complex and heterogeneous NP structure in causing ambiguous assignment of FSP functions to the clause elements (instances of potentiality).
- ⁶ This also being a case of syntactic potentiality, the noun phrase *to Bernstein's ideas* (11_{as}) can be interpreted as postmodification of the preceding NP *little relation*, in which case it is a component of the rheme whether disengaged from context or context-dependent.
- ⁷ Specified as selection, contrast, identification, purposeful repetition and summarizing effect (Firbas 1995, 22).

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Libuše Dušková: A TEXTUAL VIEW OF NOUN MODIFICATION

The article discusses the shifts in the realization form and the distributional field of modified noun phrases as they move through the text. In general the linear arrangement of a modified noun phrase is in agreement with a gradual rise in the degree of communicative dynamism only in the case of postmodification insofar as modifiers are more dynamic than the head nouns irrespective of the head nouns' context dependence or independence. Hence premodification structures display the more dynamic element before the less dynamic one. In the text samples under study this basic pattern appears to be preserved; the configuration of a context-dependent premodifier or postmodifier with a context-independent head noun was found to be rare. The role of noun modification in the text build-up was observed in the case of recurrent noun phrases where the shift from post- to premodification indicated previous occurrence in the text. Another textual feature was noted in the operation of decontextualizing factors serving the development of textual subtopics.