

# THE SYNTACTIC ASPECT OF FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

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Language is primarily an instrument for setting relationships among persons. It is used for forming communicative relations between its users. The functional theory of grammar is based on a scientific investigation of the instrumental aspects of language and their usage in social communication. Because language is affected by social laws and norms it has become a structured activity which involves the speakers and the listeners. All the conventions governing social interaction through the means of speech combine to formulate a linguistic system of verbal structure. Therefore, various forms of utterances are always following certain rules of the system of language.

The term "Function" was originally used to denote the additional value which is given to a word by the context when it is used in a linguistic expression. Therefore, the functions of a certain linguistic entity, which may be either a noun, an adjective, a verb, or a satellite, refer to its relations to the other entities in the sentence structure. In sentence relations a function has marks of its existence with meaningful implications of both the syntactic and the semantic levels. The positions of the nouns and verbs in sentence structures are governed

by their functions as Subject, Predicate and Object. Hence, syntactic functions can be considered as linguistic signs which have meanings. Semantic functions depict the meaningful entities and their denoted relations. Pragmatic functions specify the shared common knowledge and the new information.

The system of language may be defined as a hierarchy of connected levels. An utterance conveys series of implications which belong to more than one level. The adequacy of a grammatical theory depends on its ability to reveal the properties of the linguistic expressions used and the rules governing their verbal structure. Functional Grammar aims at attaining a descriptive adequacy for the system and the usage of the English language. The descriptive devices do not contain structure-changing formulas. Linguistic structures are formed by the sentences that are lexical units existing in the language. The rules, which are constructed, depend on the functional and the categorial properties of the lexical items. Categorial descriptions refer to the notions which convey the internal properties of the described units. Functional descriptions refer to the relational properties of the units in relation to the structures in which they are used. Both categorial and functional statements supplement each other in a linguistic analysis. A text may

contain units with the same categorial properties which are used to perform different functions; and it may contain different categorial units performing the same functions.

There are three main functions for the system of linguistic expression. Semantic functions denote the roles which the referents of the linguistic units do in the situation analysed, e.g. agent, recipient, goal. Syntactic functions denote the perspective from which the situation is described in the analysed text. e.g. subject, predicate, object. Pragmatic functions denote the information conveyed by the linguistic units. At the same time, they convey the relationship between these units and the situations in which they are used, e.g. Theme, Topic, Focus, Tail. Lexical units may change their form and semantic structure according to their functions in usage.

The rules of Functional Grammar can be applied to all linguistic expressions whose constructions are based on syntactic laws. The analysis is based on analyzing independent utterances which are not syntactically related to the structures preceding or following them. However, functional analysis should not always be limited to the construction of sentence units. It may be extended to a group of sentences which are semantically or syntactically related.

This survey will be limited to the study of the internal structure of sentences. Therefore, I shall concentrate on the syntactic aspect of the theory of Functional Grammar.

Predication is the major issue in the sentence formation. The predicate's function is basically to define the properties of the subject or to show the relations existing between the entities expressed by the subject and the objects. The nuclear predicates may be basic verbs existing in the language, or they may be derived terms formed by predicate formation rules. The main differences between the two types of predicates are based on the fact that the basic predicates are taken from the lexicon without any synchronic changes. They are content words with semantic and syntactic properties such as the verbs. The derived predicates are verbal structures which are formed according to the predicate formation laws of predicate frames.

A predicate frame gives the essential information about the semantic and the syntactic structures of the derived predicate in a sentence. It gives the meaning, the grammatical properties and the selection rules which accompany them. The semantic function depicts the agent, the goal and the recipient which are further

differenciated as animate or inanimate.

Terms may be created according to term formation laws where one or more than one operator are combined with an open predication variable. Syntactic rules show which words can be used within the structure of the terms. They determine the means by which the grammatical constructions are formulated into terms.. Term formation rules are recursive. They can produce head terms or modifiers. When they are used to produce modifiers, they can form nominals, adjectives, participials, prepositional phrases or relative clauses, e.g.

1. a boy with a leather brown jacket and a red badge on his pocket.
2. an old friend I saw in the restaurant last week.
3. the fact that he can't accept the invitation.

The formulation of a predicate or a term follows specific grammatical rules. Nuclear predicates may be formed from sets of basic or derived predicates and from terms. Both can be taken from the lexicon or formulated according to predicate or term formation rules.

Each predicate frame has its combinatory possibilities; and each term has specific properties. Nuclear predication is made as a result of placing suitable terms in the slots of predicate frames to convey specified

states of affairs. The main semantic relations are defined by the nuclear predication. Functional Grammar formulas may be written with the verb as their initial item: V - Ag - Go - Rec

In a sentence structure this formula may be realized by:

V (deliver) - Ag (Jack) - Go (letter) - Rec (John)

The state of affairs in this sentence is that the act of delivering is performed by a specified person (Jack). He delivers a selected object (letter) to a known person (John).

All nuclear predicates may be enlarged by adding satellite structures to them. These satellites serve to give further information about the nuclear state of affairs in the sentence. A verb of action, which is used as a nuclear predicate, can be extended by adding satellites expressing its reason, purpose, manner, time, etc. Satellites are terms which follow the grammatical rules of term formation. They are labelled according to their semantic functions. All the components of predication have syntactic, semantic and pragmatic functions.

Syntactic functions differentiate between subject and object structures. The subject has the agent function in active constructions. It may have

either the goal or the recipient function with a passive predication. The object may have the function of the goal or the recipient except in double object sentences where both are present. Semantic and syntactic functions may be combined for analysis: e.g.

1. Jack (Ag.Subj.) delivered the letter (Go.Obj.) to John (Rec.)
2. Jack (Ag.Subj.) delivered John (Rec.Obj.) the letter (Go.)
3. The letter (Go.Subj.) was delivered to John (Rec.) by Jack (Ag.).
4. John (Rec.Subj.) was delivered the letter (Go) by Jack (Ag.)

Pragmatic functions may be categorized as internal and external functions. The internal pragmatic functions are the Topic and Focus. The Topic is the person or state about which the predicate gives information in the sentence situation. The Focus is the relevant information given. The external pragmatic functions are the Theme and Tail. The Theme presents the situation where the predicate is the relevant unit. The Tail gives modifying information about the predicate. Pragmatic functions denote the content of the linguistic expression. They represent the information conveyed by the structure. Changing the unmarked pattern of word order may affect the pragmatic functions of the unified construction.

Linguistic units follow expression laws when they are used to formulate syntactic structures. Nominals are

affected by two syntactic aspects. They are case marking and specified positions in the structure. Lexical verbs may be combined with certain auxiliaries forming verb phrase which follow the syntactic rules of voice and concord. Grammatical patterns of unmarked word order illustrate the way linguistic units are combined into expressive structures. The elements of intonation and stress add semantic and pragmatic values to the formal constructions.

According to functional grammar, a term is any word or phrase which is used to denote one or more than one entity. Predicates are used to refer to specific properties of entities designated by terms, or to relations existing between them. By choosing a term and using it a writer means to draw the attention of the readers towards an entity on which he intends to predicate information. The term must clearly lead the readers to the referent. The writer may have to specify the intended referent by using predicates which eliminate unwanted potential referents. To identify a term the writer has to give specifying information the extent of which depends on his estimation of the readers' capabilities and on the degree of the term's novelty. A newly introduced term needs more identifying information than a well known one.

The syntactic construction of a term, which is composed of more than one word, distinguishes between the Head and the Modifiers. The head of a noun phrase is a nominal. The modifier of the head word are its restrictors which may have different forms based on their grammatical properties. The restrictors of a nominal may be:

1. an adjective - a red car
2. a nominal - a silk dress
3. a participial - the girl wearing a red dress
4. an attributive phrase - a carefully decorated house
5. a prepositional phrase - the table in the right corner
6. a possessive nominal - Jack's car
7. a relative clause - the box which is made of wood

The operator of a term, which is a phrase, is the word which is used in the initial position of the term structure. The operator's function is to qualify or denote the quantity of the referent of all the term construction as one whole; e.g.

1. quantifiers - all, every, half, some, many, etc.
2. numerators - numbers
3. definite or indefinite items - the, a, an
4. demonstrators - this, that, these, those.
5. question words - wh-terms introducing questions.

Predicate frames may be composed of verbs, adjectivals and nouns. The lexical predicate, the verbal, has a primary usage to designate information about or relations between given entities.

The application of tense and aspect is restricted to the verbal use of the lexical predicate as a finite verb. It denotes the relations between the terms as they exist in their syntactic construction of expressions; e.g.

The young man died of cancer in the hospital.

The verbal term may be used in non-primary uses as a nominal or as an adjectival in the derived forms; e.g.

the killing of the man

the dying man.

Predicate, Subject and Object units have syntactic and semantic functions. Their roles are basic in the formal structure of a sentence. The predicate gives states of affairs which are situated at a certain place and time. The satellites in the predicate are used to modify the situation. The verb designates the relations between the terms which represent the agent, goal, recipient, etc. A set of states of affairs can be expressed by various syntactic structures depending on the different functions performed by the Subject, Object and Satellites of the predicate.

The hierarchical order of the predicate constituents affects the inner relations between the semantic functions. Central semantic functions constitute the nucleus of the predication. The other predicate entities, which are not

central, are more important to the predication than the satellites. That is, the constituent units of the predicate have the functions of expressing the state of affairs. The Satellites add their semantic content to the existing state of affairs.

According to the hierarchy of semantic functions, the constituents of the predicate have varied degrees of importance. The Agent is more essential in expressing the Action than the Goal. Meanwhile, the Goal is more essential than the Recipient in the sentence structure. Predication has the function of expressing the situation where a specific relation exists among some referents. Hence, each term must have its own functions in the unified state of affairs presented.

The Subject function defines the perspective from which the state of affairs in a sentence is expressed. The Subject is the point of departure for expressing the situation. The rules of grammar require the reference to the functions of the subject constituents and the conditions under which they are used for Subject assignments. The construction of the sentence structure as active or passive determines the subject constituents, the movement of the argument and the object units of the predicate.

The functions of the object constituents are not restricted to the recipient or the goal in the argument. Their main function is to expound the perspective which is set by the subject constituents. Hence the function of the Object is syntactically dependent on the formal consequences of the subject assignment. Both Subject and Object may have basic functions essential to the argument in the sentence. Their semantic functions as agents, recipients or goals do not mark the noun's morphological structure. Therefore, subject and object head nouns are identical in form. They can be differentiated by their semantic functions as their assignments determine their relations. The linear order of the Subject and Object constituents depends on their pragmatic syntactic and semantic functions in the situation.

The constituents of the Subject agree with the finite verb in number and person as they convey information which is central to the argument in the predicate. The Subject determines the perspective presented in the sentence. Animate referents are frequently taken as the point of departure for introducing the state of affairs in the sentence. The primary semantic function of the Subject is that of the Agent. Hence, it refers to the referent who controls the action expressed by the

predicate. The syntactic function of the Subject lies in its situation as the entity which represents the point of departure for expressing the state of affairs. The pragmatic function of the Subject lies in its construction which contains the Theme, Topic or Focus. The Theme is the entity about which the predication is presented. The Topic function of a subject constituent is found when the head noun refers to a known referent about whom the predicate is expressed. The Focus entity represents the most important information.

The theory of Functional Grammar stresses the concept that every word in a sentence structure has a semantic function that determines the role of its referent in the state of affairs. Specific functions are more essential and, therefore, more central to the predication than others. The linear ordering of the semantic functions depends on how central they are. From the nuclear predication, they are placed in an order from the most to the least central. Their intrinsic relations delimit their functions within the structure of the sentence. Semantic functions are formalized with respect to the notions of acceptability, occurrence in usage, and formal rules of syntactic construction. Subject assignments have essential functions that contribute to the making

of the whole content of the sentence. A subject assignment decides the voice of the verb. The active voice is used with the Agent Subject; the passive is used with the other forms of the subject. Object functions are assigned to terms with various semantic functions whose presentations are in the accusative. Animate beneficiary constituents are more frequently used than inanimate ones because beneficiaries are typically animate. The variation in behaviour between the types of Subject and Object constituents is caused by the differences in their semantic functions.

Functional Grammar depicts a system of expression laws which governs the form of the constituent entities and their order in any linguistic expression. The realization of a linguistic construction is based on expression relations of abstract representations. The actual expression entities of the Subject and Object vary in case and position. The predicate constituents vary in voice, auxiliary items and concord aspects. In a sentence structure variations of word order, stress and intonation affect the expression relations. Construction aspects illustrate the fact that the form of the constituents should be determined before applying the rules of word order. The linear order of sentence structure governs the usage of words, phrases and clauses which

may be pronouns, nouns, prepositional phrase, etc. The lexical verb, which is the sentence nucleus predicate, follows either the rules governing a single verb form or those governing a complex verbal construction which may be a finite verb and one or more than one auxiliary verb. The restrictors' word order depends on the forms in which they are expressed as adjectives, participles or relative clauses.

Case marking affects the nouns, adjectives and participles. It denotes variations in their functions and their categorial states. The three cases are the nominative, accusative and genitive cases. The syntactic and semantic functions of a constituent determine its case.

Subjects take the nominative case and Objects take the accusative case because of their syntactic functions. In the realization of linguistic expressions case marking has both the characterizing and the distinguishing functions.

The verbal constituents follow two syntactic conditions. Their morphological constructions do not have overt differences between the nucleus active or passive verb items. The word order of a verb phrase

is independent of the specific function of each constituent. The verbal structure refers to the nucleus predication in a sentence while the extended predication refers to the whole construction of verb and satellites. The nucleus predicate is used to define the state of affairs in the sentence situation. The satellites are the linguistic items used to give added information about the state of affairs as it is defined by the verb. Satellites are used to describe the time, place, reason, etc. Hence, the information provided by the satellites is optional while that provided by the verbal items is essential. The semantic function of the nucleus entity defines its contribution and role in the relation denoted by the predicate. There are various degrees of cohesion between the satellites and the nucleus predicate, because the added information may be so integrated in the predication that it becomes part of the basic semantic content.

The two types of predicates are the basic and the derived predicates. Both consist of lexical items. A basic predicate is a linguistic entity which has a semantic function in a predicate frame. Its syntactic category is verbal and it is further differentiated as transitive or intransitive. In a sentence situation, the basic predicate is accompanied by structural restrictions governing the predicate variables and denoting

which terms it can take in the same frame; e.g. types of goal, recipient, etc. A predicate frame may be used to specify the syntactic and semantic structure of the predication where a basic verb occurs, because Functional Grammar depicts the underlying construction of predicate frames. The formation of the predicate depends basically on the insertion of suitable elements in the argument slots. It is giving the required information by means of a predicate structure. The word order of the elements follows the hierarchy of their intrinsic relations which depends on their semantic functions.

The semantic component of a nucleus verb is either found in the lexicon or derived by verb formation laws. The predicate defines the designated entities by showing their properties or their relations. Semantic functions denote the varying roles that may be performed by the referents in the state of affairs. Two types of states of affairs can be distinguished in sentences. The non-dynamic state is a situation where there are no changes involving the designated entities during a period of time. The dynamic state of affairs refers to events which convey a type of change from one situation to another. A dynamic predication may be accompanied by terms performing the semantic functions of the agent,

the goal, the recipient, the direction, the source, etc. A non-dynamic predicate portraying a situation has the semantic function of a positioner showing the place, goal or time. The formation of well constructed predicates depends on following the conditions of selection restrictions and adding to them the inherent properties of the terms. The result is the basic aspect of predicate construction which is realized by means of some forms of specification given by the meaning definitions of the terms used. The lexical components of the terms are specified and related to interpret the underlying structure. All predicates used in predicate constructions, in meaning definitions or appearing by themselves are composed of lexical elements of the language. The association of nucleus terms and satellites in a predication depends on the choice of appropriate terms to the argument and satellites slots. While predication is considered a relational structure of various constituents, the predicate frames are regarded as the essential units in the construction of linguistic expressions.

The word order of the sentence constituents follows a construction system of ordering different entities. The system of principles governs the order of elements in all linguistic expressions. The types of constructions depend on the clauses used. Word order

laws differentiate between the main and subordinate clauses, because in a sentence situation they are two distinct structures. The various types of sentence units have word order differences corresponding to their functions. The Subject and Object functions may be performed by a noun, a pronoun, a phrase or a clause. Each case is categorized according to its own constituents. Functional Grammar theory gives an account of the positions of the sentence units. The Subject precedes the Predicate because its function is to define the perspective of the state of affairs in the sentence. It is placed initially and it furnishes the Topic and the Theme in the construction of the sentence. The verbal constituents are divided into two categories; the finite verb and the infinite verb. In the main clause the finite verb follows the Subject. In a question, the question word is placed initially followed by the auxiliary verb. When the question word has the function of the Subject, it is followed by the main verb. The Object follows the verb. Yes / no questions are expressed by the patterns:

aux - S - V - O

The basic functional pattern of the declarative sentences is:

S - V - O

According to Functional Grammar, pragmatic functions define the informational content of linguistic entities. During any verbal discourse there is a communicative setting which is the information known to both the listener and the speaker. Pragmatic information, in general, refers to the common knowledge and beliefs which are shared by a certain society. It denotes knowledge about the world which is acquired over a long period of time. At any moment of verbal interaction the speaker and the listener will share general information. Meanwhile, there will always be specific knowledge which is not shared by both. An important function of speech is to add new information to the knowledge of the listener. It may also change known information by substituting new facts and concepts for known ones. Sometimes speech serves to remind the listener of specific knowledge he had acquired in the past.

The functional concept of language is based on the fact that language is used as an instrument for

reaching communicative aims by means of verbal expressions. The pragmatic functions of the language represent its social aspects as co-operative interactions of ideas. It is a theory which depicts the rules of the language, their functions in usage and the goals they are intended to reach. The social aspect of the language depends on its ability to convey human thought. The grammatical theory is to show the system of the language and its usage. Hence, a functional description of an utterance contains information about its structure and its goal.

Functional Grammar has an inherent potential theory which defines fundamental relations between the grammatical, semantic and pragmatic functions, and the corresponding linguistic signs. We can conclude our study by stating the fact that Functional Grammar Theory describes linguistic functions and structural relations by a deductive approach which is internally consistent.

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