

COURSE TITLE: SYNTAX

WEEK 13: SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR
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FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR: AN INTRODUCTION

- ▶ In all our past analyses, we looked at TG, Structuralism, TGG, X-Bar-
- ▶ They form part of formal Grammar.
- ▶ Functionalism focuses on **language use** rather than **structure**.
- ▶ Its proponents claim that people use language to communicate certain meanings in specific situations.
- ▶ These situations influence the form of language that is used

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- ▶ By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:
 - i. Describe systemic functional grammar
 - ii. Examine the role of language in society
 - iii. Discuss the metafunctions of language
 - iv. Analyze various types of sentences in using Functional Grammar.

TYPES OF FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

1. Prague school -: Trubetskoy (1890-1938), Jakobson (1884-1955), Mathesius (1882 - 1945).
2. Halliday

Prague school

Influenced by De Saussure (especially paradigmatic vs syntagmatic); but not content to describe the structures of language; these structures have functions.

A clause was said to consist of two parts: the theme and the rheme.

Types of functional Grammar- Prague School Linguistics

- ▶ The theme - comes first in a sentence so that it can attract the most attention.
- ▶ It is regarded as shared information (between the speaker and the listener) and is therefore the point of departure for the message.
- ▶ The rheme follows the theme and contains new information e.g. in the sentence
- ▶ Jane is a teacher
- ▶ Theme- **Jane**
- ▶ Rheme- **is a teacher.**

Further insights from Prague School Linguistics

- Language is “a system of means of expression which serves to promote mutual understanding” thus to unearth the actual function of language one should consider:

- ▶ What is being communicated.
 - ▶ To whom it is being communicated.
 - ▶ The occasion of the communication.
- Language is a reality or physical phenomena.
- ▶ It is not abstract.
 - ▶ Written and spoken varieties of language have their unique characteristics.

Further insights from Prague School Linguistics

- - The basic functions of language are:

- ▶ Expression
- ▶ Appeal
- ▶ Reference
- ▶ The correctness of a sentence is determined by its functional adequacy.
- ▶ Is it doing what it is meant to be doing?

SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR/HALLIDAIAN GRAMMAR

- ▶ According to Halliday, language is a system of meaning.
- ▶ This means that people use language to express meaning.
- ▶ Studying the grammar of language therefore entails looking at the use of words and aspects such as tone and emphasis to express meaning.
- ▶ This implies that the Hallidayan Grammar and Semantics (concerned with meaning) and functional at the same time. (Thompson, 2014)

Thompson, G. (2014). *Introducing functional grammar*. London: Routledge. Pg. 28.

SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR/HALLIDAIAN GRAMMAR

- ▶ A functional approach to language focuses on how language is used and not the structure
- ▶ e.g. different expressions can be used to put across the same meaning:
- ▶ Who is the winner? - Interrogative
- ▶ Tell me who the winner is. - Imperative
- ▶ I would like to know who the winner is- Statement
- ▶ How I would like to know who the winner is! - Exclamation
- ▶ The above choices are available to the language user and the one picked depends on factors such as:-
- ▶ the communication situation and the participants involved.
- ▶ The principle in making the choices is based on context.

METAFUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE

- ▶ Systemic functional grammar seeks to answer the following questions:
- ▶ What purposes does language serve?
- ▶ How are we able to achieve their purpose in our communication?
- ▶ Is the form of the language determined by the function used.
- ▶ To answer the first question, Halliday classifies the ways in which we use language into 3 (three) broad categories which he calls **the metafunctions of language**. (Halliday, 2014)
- ▶ Ideational
- ▶ Interpersonal
- ▶ Textual
- ▶ Halliday, M.A.K. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar (4th Ed)*. London: Routledge. Pg. 30

METAFUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE

- ▶ **Ideational function-** Language is used to help people understand themselves and their environment.
- ▶ **Interpersonal function-** Language use involves participants in the form of speakers and listeners or readers and writers. These entails an interpersonal relationship.
- ▶ **The textual function-** relates one linguistic event or utterance with another and hence deals with the organization of information.
- ▶ He argues that the three metafunctions appear simultaneously in expressing meaning.
- ▶ This means the 3 are found together in a communicating event; hence, the term systematic which means affecting the whole system.

THE CLAUSE

- ▶ The clause is said to be the basic unit of grammar since:
- ▶ it has a specific place in expressing meaning.
- ▶ It is through it that we are able to talk about the things that exist, how things happen and how we feel.
- ▶ Thus, we are able to express our perceptions of the world.
- ▶ This is the **ideational function** of languages. It is also at the clause level that we are able to interact with others (**interpersonal function**).

A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE CLAUSE

- ▶ The analysis of the clause is based on the function it plays in language.
- ▶ The function in turn determines the interpretation or meaning that the clause is given.
- ▶ There are three meanings associated with these clauses in functional grammar.
- ▶ Clause as a message
- ▶ Clause as an exchange
- ▶ Clause as a representation

CLAUSE AS A MESSAGE

- ▶ The clause is said to be a message if it is organized as a communicative event. (Thompson, 2014; Halliday, 2014)
- ▶ This is done by giving one of its parts special attention- the theme, and it's the element that serves as the point of departure for the message.
- ▶ It expresses what the clause is concerned with and placed first in the sentence
- ▶ *Donald Trump / took the presidency again.*
- ▶ Theme Rheme
- ▶ The two parts: theme and rheme constitute a message e.g.
- ▶ *The Americans / have made a decision.*
- ▶ Theme Rheme
- ▶ Halliday, M.A.K. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar (4th Ed)*. London: Routledge. Pg. 88
- ▶ Thompson, G. (2014). *Introducing functional grammar*. London: Routledge. Pg. 145

CLAUSE AS A MESSAGE

- ▶ The theme is either 'wh' word or the group in which the 'wh' word occurs. 'How' also falls in this group.
- ▶ With yes/no interrogatives the theme includes the finite verb, but it extends over to the subject. Example:
- ▶ *Did she / answer the question?*
- ▶ Theme Rheme
- ▶ *Must you / run away?*
- ▶ Theme Rheme

CLAUSE AS A MESSAGE

- ▶ There are two ways of analyzing an imperative sentence.
- ▶ It can be assumed that since there is no subject there is no theme i.e. *come here*, *sit down*.
- ▶ \emptyset / *come here*
- ▶ Theme Rheme
- ▶ \emptyset / *cook the food*
- ▶ Theme Rheme
- ▶ Since the theme is associated with the first position the verb can be considered the theme:
- ▶ *Come* / *here*
- ▶ *Sit* / *down*
- ▶ *Cook* / *the food*

CLAUSE AS EXCHANGE- INTERPERSONAL FUNCTION

- ▶ A clause is used to exchange information and is seen as an interactive event involving both the speaker and writer and the listener and reader. (Halliday, 2014 & Thompson, 2014)
- ▶ Both parties play distinct roles.
- ▶ There are four speech functions that are identified and fulfilled in the exchange as illustrated in the table that follows:
- ▶ Halliday, M.A.K. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar (4th Ed)*. London: Routledge. Pg. 134
- ▶ Thompson, G. (2014). *Introducing functional grammar*. London: Routledge. Pg. 204

CLAUSE AS EXCHANGE

Speech Function	Speaker	Expected/desired responsibility
1. Offer	Take a ride in my car	Accepting or declining the offer.
2. Command	Stand up!	Carrying out the command
3. Statement	She is my teacher	Acknowledging.
4. Question	Is she your teacher?	Answering

CLAUSE AS EXCHANGE

- ▶ When viewed as an exchange of information, the clause is divided into two functional elements:
- ▶ Mood
- ▶ Residue
- ▶ **The mood element**
- ▶ This consists of two parts:
- ▶ *The subject element*
- ▶ This is a nominal group.
- ▶ *The finite element*
- ▶ This is a part of the verbal group that carries tense i.e. can express ability.
- ▶ Sometimes the finite element is fused with the main verb e.g.
- ▶ *She cooked for hours.*
- ▶ The verb cook apart from indicating the action also carries the past tense ‘-ed’ which is the finite element.

CLAUSE AS EXCHANGE

<u>Some students</u>	had	arrived quite early.
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Subject

Fin

MOOD

<u>The children</u>	have not	woken up
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Subject

Fin

MOOD

CLAUSE AS EXCHANGE

- ▶ **The Residue**
- ▶ What comes after the mood is a residue. It has 3 elements:
- ▶ ***Predicate***
- ▶ This is in the form of a verbal group without the finite part that expresses tense or modality.
- ▶ ***Complement***
- ▶ This may be in the form of DO, IO, SC or OC
- ▶ ***Adjunct***
- ▶ This is the form of a prepositional or adverb phrase e.g.

CLAUSE AS EXCHANGE

<u>Some students</u>	had	arrived	quite	early
Subject	Fin	pred P	Adjunct	Adjunct
MOOD		RESIDUE		

<u>The children</u>	have not	woken up
Subject	Fin	P
MOOD	RESIDUE	

CLAUSE AS EXCHANGE

Some students	Had	Arrived	Early
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Adjunct
MOOD		RESIDUE	
The children (sub)	Have (finite)	Played (P)	
MOOD		RESIDUE	

CLAUSE AS EXCHANGE

- ▶ YES/NO Interrogatives
- ▶ The finite elements comes before the subject e.g

1.

Have	you	cleaned	the dishes?
F	S	P	C
MOOD		RESIDUE	

2.

Is	he	working	today
F	S	P	C
MOOD		RESIDUE	

CLAUSE AS EXCHANGE

- ▶ The subject comes before the finite element if the subject is in form of wh word e.g.

Who S	is F	The president? C	
MOOD		RESIDUE	

Where S	are F	You going? C	
MOOD		RESIDUE	

CLAUSE AS EXCHANGE

- ▶ The 'wh' word above is the subject of the sentence.
- ▶ In cases where a form of 'Be' has been used as the main verb, there is no predication.
- ▶ Sometimes the mood does not distinctively come before the residue e.g.

Probably	the bus	hasn't	left	her	yet
A	S	F	P	A	A
MOOD			RESIDUE		

Where	have	they	gone?
S	F	C	C
MOOD	RESIDUE		

CLAUSE AS REPRESENTATION- THE IDEATIONAL FUNCTION

- ▶ We use language and specifically the clause to talk about the experiences, in terms of what goes on around us, what we do and what we feel (Thompson, 2014; Halliday, 2014)
- ▶ The clause makes it possible for us to encode real as well as imaginary events.
- ▶ It is therefore seen as a representation of our realities and experiences.
- ▶ The clause as a representation is said to be a process involving the following three processes:
- ▶ Halliday, M.A.K. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar (4th Ed)*. London: Routledge. Pg. 221
- ▶ Thompson, G. (2014). *Introducing functional grammar*. London: Routledge. Pg. 91

CLAUSE AS REPRESENTATION- THE IDEATIONAL FUNCTION

- ▶ **The process itself**
- ▶ This refers to what is going on e.g. *Are learning.*
- ▶ **The participants in the process**
- ▶ This is the entity doing the action and the entity affected e.g. *The students*
- ▶ **The circumstances associated with the process**
- ▶ This could be the locations of the happening or the manner in which the action is done. E.g. *The students are learning.*
- ▶ The three elements provide a framework of reference for interpreting our experiences of what goes on.
- ▶ The participants appear in the form of a nominal group; process in the form of a verbal group while circumstances could either be an adverbial or preposition group.

CLAUSE AS REPRESENTATION

The lady quarreled her brother noisily over the phone.

The lady quarreled her brother loudly over the phone

Participant Process Participant Circumstance Circumstance

Nominal group Verbal group Nominal group Adverbial group Prepositional group

CLAUSE AS REPRESENTATION

- ▶ The first participant (the lady) is actually an ACTOR
- ▶ the second one (her brother) is the GOAL.
- ▶ Every process has an actor - this is the logical subject and the one that does the deed.
- ▶ Some processes but not all, also have a second participant that does the deed.

CLAUSE AS REPRESENTATION

- ▶ Some processes but not all also have a second participant called the GOAL. The term GOAL - implies directed at e.g.

The president ACTOR	hired PROCESS	New ministers GOAL
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New ministers GOAL	Were hired PROCESS	by the president ACTOR
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Summary

- ▶ In this lesson, we have studied Functional Grammar-
- ▶ Grammar structures have functions in society.
- ▶ Prague School
- ▶ SFL
- ▶ Metafunctions of language
- ▶ Analysis of the clause as:
 - Message
 - Exchange
 - Representation

Next lesson

- ▶ SYNTAX AND SEMANTICS

REFERENCES

- ▶ Halliday, M.A.K. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar (4th Ed)*. London: Routledge.
- ▶ Thompson, G. (2014). *Introducing functional grammar*. London: Routledge.