

Does functional linguistics have a ‘fundamental unity’?

Doing things with words in three structural-functional theories

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1. Introduction

In view of the considerable advances made in functional approaches to language in recent times, it is perhaps surprising that there are rather few detailed discussions about what marks off functional linguistics from other ways of looking at language. There seems to be an assumption, made explicit on the website for this journal, that there is a ‘fundamental unity’ behind the various functional models (<https://benjamins.com/catalog/fo1>). In the present article I examine this claim, in relation to three structural-functional theories: Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG), and Role and Reference Grammar (RRG).¹ These three theories were chosen because they illustrate both diversity and similarity within functional linguistics (see further Section 5 below). The discussion will be illustrated by reference to one important area,² namely the ways in which what Austin (1962) calls ‘doing things with words’ – for example, making a statement, asking a question, trying to get someone to perform an action – are handled in the three approaches.

1. The term ‘structural-functional’ originates with Van Valin (1993: 2) and refers to theories which aim to account not only for both structure and function (semantic and/or pragmatic) but also for the relationships between the two.

2. See e.g. Lyons (1997: 109) on the crucial role of ‘social meaning’.

2. What makes a theory a functionalist theory? A preliminary assessment

Butler & González-García (2014) compare sixteen approaches considered to be functionalist and/or cognitivist and/or constructionist by their proponents. This comparison can be seen as leading on from the detailed examination of SFL, RRG and Dik's Functional Grammar (the precursor of FDG) presented in Butler (2003a:1–31), which discusses properties which could contribute to a characterization of functional approaches in general. As in that earlier work, Butler & González-García note that functionalism has usually been defined in opposition to formalism/formalist linguistics, as typified by the work of Chomsky. This essential difference is neatly summarized in Allen's (2007:254) statement that functionalism, but not formalism, "holds that linguistic structures can only be understood and explained with reference to the semantic and communicative functions of language, whose primary function is to be a vehicle for social interaction among human beings". Smirnova & Mortelmans (2010:13–15) take a similar line when they say that functional theories are based on the premise that language structures derive from the cognitive and communicative functions of language. But are we simply to assume what these functions are? If language is, first and foremost, conceived as one of the most important ways in which human beings communicate in social and cognitive contexts, we surely cannot theorize language adequately without knowing a great deal about how human beings actually do communicate, a view which commits us, as functional linguists, to detailed descriptions of actual communication on which to base our theorizing. So is the study of authentic textual materials a *sine qua non* for a theory to regard itself as functionalist? It would seem not: for instance, while SFL is very much concerned with textual analysis, neither FDG nor RRG has based its theorizing primarily on the analysis of actual samples of communication: FDG is now making more use of corpus materials, but the architecture of the theory was not established on this basis.³

Butler & González-García (2014) go on to list other characteristics which derive from the overall orientation sketched above, such as: attention to the flexibility of language in order to meet varying communication demands; the study of language beyond the sentence, to include discourse patterning; typological orientation; a constructivist rather than nativist approach to language acquisition. However, they also show that these features are very variable across supposedly functionalist models.

Two factors complicate matters still further. Firstly, Allen's characterization of functionalism, though useful in the context of opposition to formalism, does not

3. For a discussion of the roles of corpus methodologies in functional linguistics, see Butler (2004, 2009:12–14).

distinguish functional approaches from those associated with the Cognitive Linguistics movement: indeed, Nuyts (2005), in analysing convergences and divergences between functional and cognitive accounts of language, observes that there are no major points of opposition in basic approach, and sees the main differences as being in the kinds of linguistic phenomena they concentrate on. Similarly, Siewierska (2013:499), again in a comparative treatment, states that “there is nothing in the aims of the functional and cognitive models of grammar considered which would make them incommensurable”. Both scholars discuss possible points of difference, but conclude that even these do not distinguish cleanly between the two orientations: for a summary of these arguments see Butler & González-García (2014:18–23). There is evidence from Butler & González-García’s (2014) study for some degree of separation between centrally functional and centrally cognitive models, but this evidence is based on conclusions from the statistical analysis of a large and complex set of features across all the models studied, rather than isolating single features which separate the two kinds of approach.

Secondly, there has in recent years been something of a rapprochement between functionalist and formalist models, especially in the work of Culicover & Jackendoff (2005). Jackendoff (2007:255) recognizes that many of the alternatives to mainstream generative grammar that he proposes are adapted from proposals in functional, cognitive and constructionist frameworks. Mention should also be made here of the long-running debate between the generativist Newmeyer and the various functionalists and cognitivists who have reacted to his position that although Chomskyan formalism is correct in insisting on the autonomy of syntax, this is not incompatible with external explanation, particularly in terms of iconicity and processing efficiency; for a detailed account see Butler & González-García (2014:6–16).

One of the main problems in attempting to characterize functionalism is the multiplicity of meanings attached to the term ‘function’, ranging from the overall functions which language plays in our everyday lives, to the syntactic function of a constituent in a higher constituent. Perhaps, then, we should search for a fundamental unity in the ways in which models which regard themselves as functionalist models treat function within the grammar itself, rather than in terms of broader concepts of function. Even here, however, there is a great deal of variation, again analysed in some detail in Butler & González-García (2014) – and, as we shall see, illustrated in the present article.

Let us then proceed, by way of more detailed and specific discussion, to examine how SFL, FDG and RRG handle the area which is often labelled as ‘illocution’, or, as Austin would have it, ‘doing things with words’, in an attempt to characterize the similarities and differences of approach (i.e. the degree of ‘unity’) and the reasons behind these. We begin with the overall orientation and aims of the three

theories, as we shall see that these are important in determining how our chosen area is handled.

3. The overall orientation of the three theories

There are two important versions of SFL theory, which differ in a number of significant respects: that elaborated by Halliday and his colleagues and the variant developed by Fawcett and co-workers in Cardiff. Hallidayan SFL views language as a **social semiotic**:

A social reality (or a 'culture') is itself an edifice of meaning – a semiotic construct. In this perspective, language is one of the semiotic systems that constitute a culture; one that is distinctive in that it also serves as an encoding system for many (though not all) of the others. (Halliday 1978: 2)

The Hallidayan model of SFL is thus a model not only of grammar, but also, and centrally, of the social contexts in which language is produced and understood, and of the relationships between the two. The areas of register and genre are strongly featured in this approach (for summaries of this work see Bowcher 2017; Gardner 2017; Moore 2017; Tann 2017).

Since it views language as a social semiotic, SFL is committed to the analysis and description of the 'social acts of meaning' in which an individual engages (Halliday 1994: 4506). Given this emphasis on situating language within particular cultures, it is perhaps not surprising that SFL has never prioritized typological matters, though this aspect has gained some ground in recent years as more languages have been investigated. To the extent that typological work has been undertaken so far, the approach has been to describe individual languages and only then to make comparisons, rather than to formulate claims about particular aspects of the grammar by reference to data from a wide range of languages. There has been some detailed comparative work on other languages in relation to English: see for example Lavid *et al.* (2010) on Spanish and English. However, the fact that SFL has been developed over the years very largely in relation to English tends to lead to a situation where patterns in other languages are viewed through the prism of the pre-existing descriptions of English, rather than in their own right. For detailed information on SFL typology see Caffarel *et al.* (2004), Martin (2018), Matthiessen (2007), Mwinlaaru & Xuan (2016), Teruya *et al.* (2007), Teruya & Matthiessen (2015).

The Cardiff model of SFL, while not foregrounding the conception of language as a social semiotic, aims to take account of both the social and the cognitive aspects of language and its use. In the latter aspect it contrasts strongly

with the Sydney approach, which is not concerned with the placement of language within a cognitive framework. Like the Hallidayan model, the Cardiff approach has never attempted to formulate a theory which is adequate for all types of language found in the world. Rather, as in the Sydney model, the approach is to describe individual languages and only then to make comparisons. A final important aspect of both Sydney and Cardiff models is that they aim to describe languages in enough detail to make the descriptions appropriate for text analysis.

In contrast with SFL, both FDG and RRG are concerned essentially with the grammars of languages and with the formulation of a linguistic theory which is capable of accounting for the properties of the whole range of language types found in the world. Hengeveld & Mackenzie (2008:31), state that “[I]n linguistic typology, the study of the principles underlying variation across the languages of the world, is an essential source of inspiration for FDG”. Van Valin (2010:704), writing about RRG, similarly emphasizes “the importance of taking account of typologically diverse languages in the formulation of a linguistic theory”. In both FDG and RRG the approach taken is to discuss data from a wide range of languages when formulating particular claims about the grammar. Universals in FDG take the form, not of claims about all languages, but of implicational hierarchies, which are statements to the effect that if a language has a certain property B it will also have a property A (Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2008:32).

Both FDG and RRG also attempt to link their models to cognitive aspects of linguistic processing. In FDG, this takes the form of a parallel between the top-to-bottom architecture of the model and the processing model proposed in the work of Levelt (1989). There has been some work on the adequacy of aspects of RRG to model both production and comprehension.⁴

Finally, a fundamental principle of FDG is that only those phenomena which are overtly expressed by the grammatical resources of the language are included within the scope of the grammar.

4. Doing things with words in the three theories

We turn now to accounts of illocution/speech function in the three theories. As the descriptions unfold, the architectures within which these accounts are embedded will be explained.

4. For detailed discussion of cognitive adequacy in structural-functional grammars see Butler (2008), and for suggestions for dialogue between SFL, Cognitive Linguistics and psycholinguistics see Butler (2013).

4.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics

In Halliday's model, as presented in Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), the Saussurean syntagmatic axis is represented by the dimension of **structure**, while the paradigmatic axis is represented by the dimension of **system**. Within structure, syntagmatic order and constituency are described in terms of **rank scales**: that for the grammar is clause – phrase/group – word – morpheme, that of the phonology is tone group – foot – syllable – phoneme. The term 'system' is used here in a specific technical sense, to mean a closed set of alternatives available in a particular environment ('entry condition'); for instance, the system of polarity states that a clause can be either positive or negative. Systems are arranged in **networks** with simple or complex dependencies.

Hallidayan SFL recognizes four **strata** (levels), grouped into two planes: the content plane consists of an 'upper' stratum of **semantics** and a 'lower' stratum of **lexicogrammar**; the expression plane for spoken language consists of **phonology** and **phonetics**. The strata are related in terms of **realization**: choices from semantic systems are realized by choices in lexicogrammar, which in turn is realized by phonology, and this ultimately by phonetics. There is no separate level of pragmatics in the model. It is acknowledged that factors such as inference and knowledge of the world are important in discourse, but the position taken is that they should not be treated as separate from language, but "are all phenomena of, and operations in, meaning" (Halliday 2002: 11) which should be incorporated into an enriched semantics.

The linguistic system (in a broader sense than that used technically above), embedded in the **context of culture**, is instantiated by a **text**, embedded in a **context of situation**. Instantiation is a cline, with the whole linguistic system at one end and a particular text at the other. Between the two we can recognize text types, or **registers**, and also situation types.⁵

Hallidayan SFL recognizes three generalized functions of language which are not merely extrinsic, but are claimed to be built into the structures of languages, in the sense that the clause, for example, is seen as expressing simultaneously all three types of functional meaning:

The **ideational** metafunction is concerned with construing experience – it is language as a theory of reality, as a resource for reflecting on the world. ... The **interpersonal** metafunction is concerned with enacting interpersonal relations through language, with the adoption and assignment of speech roles, with the negotiation of attitudes, and so on – it is language in the praxis of intersubjectivity, as a resource for

5. See also the rather different architecture proposed by Martin in his discourse semantics model (e.g. Martin 1992).

interacting with others. The **textual** metafunction is an enabling one; it is concerned with organizing ideational and interpersonal meaning as discourse – as meaning that is contextualized and shared.

(Halliday & Matthiessen 1999: 7–8, emphasis original)

The ideational metafunction thus deals with representational meanings, for example those concerned with processes (actions, states, etc.) and the participants involved in them, together with attendant circumstances. The textual metafunction is concerned with matters of information distribution and cohesion which enable the construction of discourse. The interpersonal metafunction clearly includes the areas of speech function and mood with which we are concerned here.

More specifically, Halliday & Matthiessen (2014: 136) present a semantic network for **SPEECH FUNCTION** at the rank of move in a discourse exchange, consisting of three simultaneous sets of systems. The **MOVE** system differentiates between [initiate] and [respond], with the former divided into [open] and [response request] and the latter into [expected] and [discretionary]. The **INITIATING ROLE** system distinguishes between [give] and [demand] roles, while the **CROSS-CUTTING COMMODITY** system demarcates [information] from [goods-&-services].⁶ The combination [give, information] leads to a statement, [demand, information] to a question (further divided into [polar] and [elemental] types), [give, goods-&-services] to an offer and [demand, goods-&-services] to a command.

Options in the semantic **SPEECH FUNCTION** network are realized at the lexicogrammatical stratum by selections from the **MOOD** system, at clause rank. Variation in speech function is typically expressed by parallel variation in just that part of the clause labelled as the **Mood element**, consisting of the Subject and the Finite operator. The most basic division of mood types is into [indicative] and [imperative], the former being split into [declarative] and [interrogative] types, with further more delicate subdivisions. The most typical realizations of the major speech function types, apart from offers, are shown in Table 1, where bold type in the realization column indicates the extent of the Mood element.⁷

Offers are less likely, cross-linguistically, to have a set pattern of grammatical realization. In English they are claimed to be typically realized as a first person modalized clause with *shall*, either declarative or interrogative (as in Example (5)), although there is dialect variation here and a clear tendency for *shall* to be less frequent in present-day British English than it once was (see e.g. Biber *et al.* 1999: 487–490; Gotti 2003; Leech 2003).

6. For criticism of the distinction between information and goods-&-services see Andersen (2017).

7. Examples marked as BNC are from the version of the British National Corpus available as Davies (2004).

Table 1. Default realizations of speech functions by mood choices

Example	Speech function	Mood	Realization
(1) Michael had opened the bedroom window ... (BYU-BNC CR6)	Statement	Declarative	Subject (<i>Michael</i>) Finite (<i>had</i>)
(2) Have you opened the door? (BYU-BNC KBG)	Polar question	Interrogative: yes/no	Finite (<i>have</i>) Subject (<i>you</i>)
(3) Why did you open the letter? (BYU-BNC CKE)	Elemental question	Interrogative: <i>Wh-</i>	WH- (<i>Why</i>) Finite (<i>did</i>) Subject (<i>you</i>)
(4) Well open the window! (BYU-BNC KBL)	Command	Imperative	Predicator (<i>open</i>)

(5) Shall I open a window? (BYU-BNC CEC)

Now consider Examples (6) and (7):

(6) Your brain needs oxygen and that means you should breathe plenty of fresh air.
Can you open the windows in your office? (BYU-BNC B26)

(7) **Can you open the door for me?** His face was pale with fear but he nodded ...
(BYU-BNC CKD)

Although both have the same structure at the lexicogrammatical stratum, consisting of an interrogative clause with the modal *can* in its ability use (see Halliday & Matthiessen 2014: 696), the co-text given in (6) makes it clear that this is simply a polar question, while the inclusion of *for me* in (7) signifies that here the modalized interrogative is realizing a request (a type of command), and this is confirmed by the report of the addressee's accepting response. Halliday & Matthiessen (2014: 705–706) address this issue, observing that “[t]he fact that the ‘indicative’ clause realizes a kind of command can be seen in the way the addressee treats it in the exchange, complying with it (or refusing to comply...)”. Halliday & Matthiessen treat such examples as instances of **interpersonal grammatical metaphor**, in which a particular speech function is realized ‘non-congruently’, i.e. not in the default way (here, imperative for a command). This, then, is how Halliday deals with ‘indirect speech acts’. If there were no evidence for either a question or a request interpretation from the co-text (including non-linguistic clues, such as someone actually responding by opening a window), the example would be seen as ambiguous between the two interpretations.

However, if the addressee's response is to be taken as indicating the nature of the initiation – or rather the way in which the addressee interprets that initiation – what are we to do about an example such as (8)?

- (8) “**Do you not think it's very hot in here?**” the maid suddenly asked the cook. “It is a bit; will you open the back door for a few minutes and let in a breath of air?” Jane flashed a grin at Patrick and turned away to open the door.

(BYU-BMC EVG)

Again the co-text indicates that the addressee interprets the maid's apparent question as a request. However, we have seen that no separate level of pragmatics is postulated in SFL, phenomena such as inference hypothetically being dealt with as part of an enriched semantics. Given the wide range of ways in which a highly indirect request of the kind in (8) could be made, it is difficult to see how this could be done except through some systemic choice which merely indicates that there is an intended deduction which goes beyond what can be treated as grammatical metaphor. Such examples indicate the need for SFL to take more seriously the ways in which implicit meanings are conveyed. Such meanings are extremely important in discourse: Jaszczolt (2008: 32), for example, says that “there is substantial experimental evidence in support of the claim that the main, most salient meaning is frequently an implicature”, quoting work in which 60–80% of informants select implicatures as the main communicated meaning in an experimental task.

The inclusion of a level of (social) context in SFL allows the model to make statements about the kinds of situation in which indirect speech acts, rather than their ‘congruent’ counterparts, are appropriate. The contextual level describes the situations in which linguistic interactions occur in terms of values of **field**, **tenor** and **mode** (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014: 33–34). Field is “what is going on in the situation”, including the kind of social and semiotic activity involved and the subject matter. Tenor is concerned with “who is taking part in the situation: the roles played by those taking part in the socio-semiotic activity”, including institutional roles and considerations such as power relations and familiarity. Mode is “what role is being played by language and other semiotic systems in the situation”, including: how communication is divided between linguistic and other semiotic activities (e.g. pictures, music, etc. in a TV advertisement); the ‘rhetorical mode’, such as informative, didactic, explanatory, persuasive; whether the activity is monologic or dialogic; also distinctions relating to written and spoken language. The ‘context-metafunction hook-up hypothesis’, first put forward in the 1970s (see Halliday 1978: 117), and more recently renamed as the ‘context-metafunction resonance hypothesis’ (Hasan 2014), predicts that values of field will correlate preferentially with choices in the experiential metafunction, tenor with interpersonal choices, and mode with textual choices (see Bowcher 2017 for a recent discussion

of field, tenor and mode). According to this hypothesis, we would expect choices in the realization of speech acts – and particularly of commands – to be sensitive mainly to values of the tenor variable.

In other words, Halliday's hypothesis predicts that the selection of particular options from the speech function networks (and therefore also their realization in the lexicogrammar) will be made in the light of the social and institutional roles the speaker perceives to be held by him/herself and the addressee, together with the balance of power between them and their degree of familiarity. Discussion of some problems with the hook-up hypothesis can be found in Butler (2003b:374–376). More finely nuanced accounts of field, tenor and mode have emphasized that they are not entirely independent: Bowcher (2017:395) observes that “[a]lthough Field, Tenor and Mode are described as separate components of the context of situation, they actually work interdependently. This is because ‘what we do’, ‘with whom’ and ‘how’ are contingent on each other”.

There is no space here to discuss other accounts under the overall umbrella of SFL. Interested readers are referred to the work of Hasan (see especially Hasan *et al.* 2007; Hasan 2013), Martin (1992) and the ‘Cardiff model’ of Fawcett and his colleagues (for the model itself see Fawcett 2000:33–44, 209–211; 2008:36–43; 2017; and see Fawcett 2011 for a critique of Halliday's account of speech function and mood, together with a detailed proposal for meaning options in this area). Also relevant is the work of the dedicatee of this article on a metafunctional approach to exchanges in discourse (e.g. Berry 2016).

4.2 Functional Discourse Grammar

FDG (Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2008:6–7, 12–14) is the **Grammatical Component** of a wider theory of **verbal interaction** in which it is linked to (i) a **Conceptual Component** responsible for the construction of a communicative intention for a specific speech event and a set of conceptualizations of relevant extralinguistic events; (ii) an **Output Component** generating acoustic or other output based on the information furnished by the Grammatical Component; and (iii) a **Contextual Component** which contains a record of the preceding discourse and a description of the physically perceivable setting of the speech event and the relationships between the people engaged in the discourse.

The Grammatical Component consists of four hierarchically arranged levels, split into those responsible for the **Formulation** of pragmatically and semantically acceptable representations and those concerned with the **Encoding** of these representations. As set out in Hengeveld & Mackenzie (2008:15–16), the ‘higher’ level in Formulation is the Interpersonal, which is seen as pragmatic and is intended to account for all the formal aspects of a linguistic unit that are concerned with

its role in the interaction between Speaker and Addressee. It is a strategic level at which the speaker performs actions concerned with the making of Discourse Acts and their organization into Moves. The ‘lower’ level is the Representational, and is semantic in nature, being concerned with propositional information. The highest unit is the Propositional Content, which may contain one or more Episodes, each of which may contain one or more States-of-Affairs, which in turn consist of Properties (represented by predicates) and the entities which are the arguments of the predicate. They may also contain other kinds of entity such as Location, Time, Manner and Quantity.

It should be noted here that pragmatics as conceived in FDG refers to interpersonal information that is linguistically encoded, and not to such areas as inference and knowledge of the world. As such, it includes information on information distribution (Topic and Focus), thus marking a salient difference from SFL, where such phenomena are dealt with in the textual metafunction, which is regarded as of equal importance to the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions, though instrumental with respect to these, in that it takes the ideational and interpersonal content and moulds it into a coherent and cohesive text. Despite the similarity in name, the ‘Interpersonal Level’ in FDG is thus very different from the ‘interpersonal metafunction’ in SFL, both in theoretical conceptualization and in the assignment of particular linguistic phenomena.

In Encoding (Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2008:16–18), the **Morphosyntactic Level** takes information from the Interpersonal and Representational Levels and produces an analysis in terms of syntactic constituency, while the **Phonological Level** does so in terms of phonological units which can be passed to the Output Component for final realization.

Relationships between the levels are handled not by means of any type of realization or linking rule but in terms of general types of **alignment** (Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2008:316–332), in which the organization of the Morphosyntactic Level can mainly reflect that of the Interpersonal or Representational Levels, or can have its own organization based on syntactic functions (Subject/Object) and/or complexity (e.g. ‘end weight’). Different types of languages may favour different alignment patterns.

FDG deals with illocution as a pragmatic phenomenon, and so at the Interpersonal Level, as a property of the Discourse Act, within a particular Move. Hengeveld & Mackenzie (2008:71–73) present a list of twelve types of illocution – Declarative, Interrogative, Imperative, Prohibitive, Optative, Imprecative, Hortative, Dishortative, Admonitive, Commissive, Supplicative and Mirative. They state that the list “contains a range of illocutionary categories and their conventional conversational uses, from which the languages of the world make a selection”. As

always in FDG, the categories recognized in a language are restricted to those which are reflected in the grammatical distinctions the language makes.

Hengeveld *et al.* (2007, see also the summary in Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2008:74–76), in a study of a sample of the native languages of Brazil, show all the languages in the sample have Declarative, Polar Interrogative, and Imperative Illocutions. Using the term Propositional Illocution to cover both Informing and Questioning Illocutions (i.e. those concerning the exchange of information), they demonstrate the validity of the following hierarchies: Questioning \supset Informing, Mirative \supset Declarative, Content Interrogative \supset Polar Interrogative. For those Illocutions which are concerned with influencing behaviour, they show that Supplicative \supset Admonitive \supset Hortative \supset Imperative.

According to Hengeveld & Mackenzie (2008:73), English has six grammatically realized illocutions: Declarative (realized by a combination of intonation and a non-verb constituent in clause-initial position), Interrogative (characterized by intonation and a question word or finite verb in initial position), Imperative (realized by intonation and an initial verb), Optative (with *let* or *may* initially), Hortative (with *let's* in initial position) and Mirative (with a question word in first position but no inversion, e.g. *How beautiful you are!* (BYU-BNC AEA)).

Turning now to Examples (1)–(4), repeated as (9)–(12) below, (9) is clearly Declarative, (10) and (11) are Interrogative, (12) is Imperative.

- (9) Michael had opened the bedroom window ... (BYU-BNC CR6)
 (10) Have you opened the door? (BYU-BNC KBG)
 (11) Why did you open the letter? (BYU-BNC CKE)
 (12) Well open the window! (BYU-BNC KBL)

A skeleton structure for the Discourse Act in Example (9) is shown in (13).

- (13) $(A_1: [(F_1: \text{DECL } (F_1)) (P_1)_S (P_2)_A (C_1: - \text{Michael had opened the bedroom window} - (C_1))] (A_1))$
 {A = Act, F = illocution, DECL = Declarative, P = speech act participant (subscript S = Speaker, A = Addressee), C = Communicated Content}

Example (5), however, repeated as (14) below, presents a situation which illustrates a major difference between FDG and SFL.

- (14) Shall I open a window? (BYU-BNC CEC)

As noted earlier, offers tend cross-linguistically to have no set realization pattern. In SFL, where the task, in a given language, is to set out the choices available and specify their realizations, postulating a category of offer is perfectly acceptable. In

FDG, however, an offer category would be recognized only if there were languages in which offers had a stable grammatical reflex in the grammar. Example (14) is therefore classified in the same way as (10), as having an Interrogative illocution, signalled by intonation and the placement of the finite verb in first position in the clause. Its speech function as an offer would be a matter for the relationship between the Conceptual Component and the selection of an appropriate illocution in the Grammatical Component – as indeed would any alternative realizations.

Now consider Examples (6) and (7), repeated as (15) and (16) below, where the linguistic context makes it clear that the former is a question asking about ability, whereas the latter is intended, and interpreted, as a request.

- (15) Your brain needs oxygen and that means you should breathe plenty of fresh air.
Can you open the windows in your office? (BYU-BNC B26)
- (16) **Can you open the door for me?** His face was pale with fear but he nodded ...
 (BYU-BNC CKD)

In line with what was said about offers above, both would be classified as Interrogative, since the requestive function of (16) is not realized in the clause itself, which, out of its linguistic context, would be ambiguous. Hengeveld & Mackenzie (2008: 48) state that “[t]he FDG position on indirect speech acts is ... that the grammar represents communicative intentions only to the extent that they are encoded in the message”. Any deductions from what is actually said are treated as being due to “the possible discrepancies between the Conceptual Component and the initial levels of the grammar” (Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2008: 47). However, this way of dealing with inference remains unexplored, so that the situation is in practice no better than that caused by the lack of a pragmatic level in SFL.

4.3 Role and reference grammar

RRG (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997; Van Valin 2005) is a theory of grammar rather than of language as a whole, in contrast to SFL, with its concern for relationships between language and context, and to some extent FDG which, as we have seen, postulates components in addition to the central Grammatical Component, although these have not been developed to the same extent as the grammar itself. RRG posits separate syntactic and semantic representations for clauses and complex sentences.

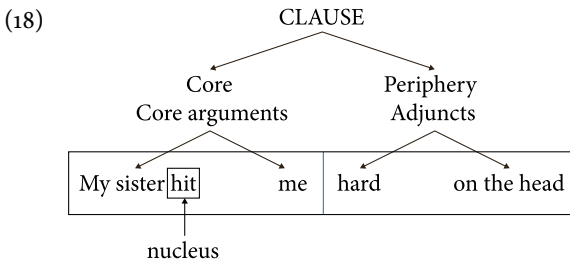
The **layered structure of the clause (LSC)** at the syntactic level contains a **core** and a **periphery**, the core containing the **nucleus**, usually though not always a verb, plus the associated **core (syntactic) arguments**, while the periphery houses **adjuncts**. These syntactic units, claimed to be universal, are motivated by contrasts between semantic units, as shown in Table 2. An example is shown in (17) and (18).

Table 2. Motivation of syntactic units by contrast between semantic units (adapted from Van Valin 2005: 5)

Syntactic unit	Semantic unit by which it is motivated
Nucleus	Predicate
Core syntactic arguments	Arguments in semantic representation of predicate
Periphery (adjuncts)	Non-arguments
Core	Predicate + arguments
Clause (= core + periphery)	Predicate + arguments + non-arguments

(17) My sister hit me hard on the head

(BNC FPU 443)

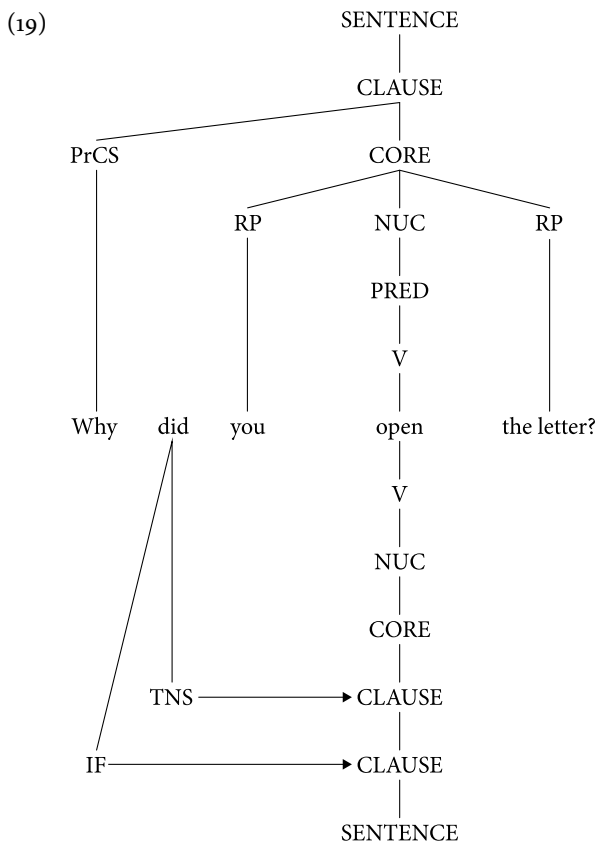


In addition to the universal units, the clause may contain language-specific additions, usually pragmatically motivated: in English we have the pre-core slot into which *wh*- words (by default) and fronted constituents go, and a left-detached position, normally containing an adverbial marked off by punctuation or intonation from the rest of the clause. The layered structure of the clause is represented by three separate projections: the constituent projection shows the syntactic units – sentence, clause, core, nucleus and any language-specific additions; the operator projection shows operators such as tense, modality and, as we shall see, illocutionary force; the focus projection indicates the domain within which information focus is allowed to fall in the language and also the domain of actual focus within the particular clause. RRG also has a detailed model of the linkage of clauses into complex sentences.

At the semantic level, each predicate has a **logical structure (LS)** showing the lexical decomposition of the predicate. The type of LS depends on the *Aktionsart* of the clause (i.e. distinctions between types of predicate such as events and states). Unlike in FDG, the relationship between semantic and syntactic representations is dealt with by means of a linking system with algorithms for mapping semantic representations (the LS) into syntactic representations (the LSC) as part of the language production process, and for the reverse mapping, from syntactic structures to semantic representations, in the comprehension process. Some of the rules in the mapping process are claimed to be universal, others language-dependent.

Each operator modifies one of the syntactic units: nucleus, core or the whole clause (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997: 40–49; Van Valin 2005: 8–11). Clausal operators have scope over core operators, which in turn have scope over nuclear operators. Within the group of operators modifying each unit, further scope relations apply cross-linguistically. Among the clausal operators, illocutionary force is always the outermost in terms of scope and is one of only two operators which are claimed to be universal, the other being negation (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997: 41–42).

Figure (19) shows the constituent and operator projections for Example (3/11) given earlier.⁸ The tensed auxiliary *did* is labelled not only with TNS but also with IF, since it is the position of the tensed element in the core which signals illocutionary force in English.



8. In Van Valin (2008), the designation **noun phrase** (NP) used in Van Valin (2005) is replaced by **reference phrase** (RP). The RP, unlike the NP, is non-endocentric.

We see, then, that RRG, as a strongly typological theory, is concerned with developing a theory of language which will be adequate for all types of language, attempting to show which categories and properties are universal and which are language-dependent. Like FDG, but unlike SFL, it is concerned with the description of particular areas of the grammars of languages only to the degree of detail that is necessary in order to further these goals. In fact, RRG says less about the area of illocutionary force than FDG. There is very little discussion of the different values that illocutionary operators can take or of the underlying semantics. Van Valin & LaPolla (1997: 41) simply mention declarative, interrogative, imperative and optative types, and Van Valin (2005: 50) comments that “[o]perators like tense, aspect, modality and illocutionary force are very complex semantically, and no attempt will be made to develop a substantive semantic representation for them here”.

5. Conclusion: A basic unity?

One of the reasons for choosing SFL, FDG and RRG for the present discussion was that Butler & González-García's (2014) study showed that

- SFL stands out very clearly from the other 15 models studied in its combination of features, having no statistically significant correlation with any other model in the final analysis
- FDG and RRG lie close together within the functional-cognitive space, and have a statistically significant correlation only with each other.

These three models, then, illustrate both diversity and similarity in the relationships between functional theories. The disparity in the aims and assumptions of SFL, on the one hand, and FDG and RRG, on the other, leads to very different treatments of the illocutionary area. FDG and RRG focus on similarity and variation of illocutionary phenomena across languages: FDG provides a finite list of illocutions, overtly realized in the grammar, from which any given language selects, while RRG mentions only a few very basic illocutionary types and concentrates on how illocutionary operators behave in relation to operators for other phenomena. SFG, on the other hand, has provided detailed analysis, at semantic and (lexico)grammatical levels, of the choices speakers and writers of English have in the area of speech acts, with some additional work on this area in a few other languages.

The greatest differences are caused by two factors. Firstly, the strong typological emphasis in FDG and RRG leads their practitioners to look at a particular area of the grammar, such as illocution, in relation to data from a wide range of typologically diverse languages, whereas in SFL (both Sydney and Cardiff) languages tend to be described independently, comparisons being made at a later stage, a method

which inevitably leads to a smaller database of languages. Secondly, the Hallidayan SFL view of language as a social semiotic, and the aim, in both Sydney and Cardiff models, to describe languages in enough detail for the descriptions to be suitable for analyzing texts, contrast strongly with the lack of any such aim in the other two models, for which the detail provided by SFL analysis is simply irrelevant.⁹

A further important difference is that SFL is a paradigmatically-oriented grammar (while still paying attention to syntagmatic realization), whereas FDG and RRG are, like most grammars, essentially syntagmatic. SFL system networks thus find no analogue in the other two theories.

Yet another difference is the relationship between what we might call the 'content' level(s) and the 'expression' level(s) – and here FDG is the odd one out, in that both SFL and RRG postulate rule-based linking mechanisms between meaning and form (realization rules/statements in SFL, algorithms for going from semantics to syntax and *vice versa* in RRG), whereas FDG deals with this relationship in terms of alignment patterns between levels, without any mapping rules as such.

Our discussion has demonstrated that even if only three functional theories are examined, no clear specific unifying features emerge which could provide grounds for the claim that there is a 'fundamental unity' underlying functional approaches. Let us then return to the basic idea that a functional theory is based on the claim that the communicative functions of language are instrumental in shaping its structures. The most obvious way in which this claim is apparent in the theories examined here is the recognition of both 'representational' and 'social' functions of language in the 'layering' of the architectures in SFL and FDG: SFL with its parallel layers of experiential and interpersonal meaning, FDG with its hierarchical arrangement of Interpersonal and Representational levels within the Grammatical Component.¹⁰ RRG, however, does not make this distinction, operating with an undifferentiated semantics including aspects of both kinds of meaning, its pragmatics being largely concerned with matters of information distribution (focus structure), which is modelled as interpersonal in FDG, but as textual in SFL.

Are we then to assume that there is little to be gained by contemplating a more integrated picture of functional linguistic endeavours? I have always felt that this was a counsel of despair and that much more could be done to make links between functional models. For this, we need two things: a clear idea of the range of phenomena which functional linguistics should treat as its domain, and a willingness

9. I am grateful to one of the reviewers for pointing out that there are other ways of doing typology in which the interest is in the narrower issues where detailed description is necessary and the set of languages considered is typically smaller.

10. For a comparative account of layering in structural-functional grammars see Butler & Taverniers (2008).

to look with an open mind beyond our own individual conceptions of language and the models we work with.

I have argued elsewhere (see e.g. Butler 2009, 2013) that the ultimate aim of functional linguistics should be to provide a detailed answer to the question put forward by Dik (1997:1), "How does the natural language user work?", and that this requires adherence to a set of criteria of adequacy, set out in Butler (2009), which go beyond those proposed by Dik. Descriptive adequacy is reinterpreted as a requirement for the database for study to include samples of authentic linguistic productions. Criteria of explanatory adequacy include cognitive, sociocultural, discoursal, acquisitional and diachronic. This very ambitious programme would require collaboration between experts in different areas of linguistics and in cognate disciplines such as psychology and sociology.

In the area investigated in this article, such a research programme would need to seek answers to (at the very least) questions about how distinct illocutionary meanings are to be recognized, how they relate to the levels proposed in the model, what illocutions can be recognized in particular languages taken from a wide range of types, whether there are restrictions on what illocutions are possible, whether any are universal or at least obey implicational hierarchies, how illocution/mood is realized structurally in various languages, how indirect illocutions are handled, what the roles of illocution in discourse are, how such meanings are processed in language production/comprehension/storage, how illocutionary meanings differ in different varieties of a language, and how they evolve in the histories of languages. Each of the three theories examined here addresses a subset of these issues, but because of their very different orientations, none deals with all of them. There are clearly problems to be faced, such as the availability of corpora for a wide enough range of languages and the need for psycholinguists to advance further our knowledge of language processing.¹¹ The overall question which remains to be answered is, of course, what kind of model of language (and it must be of **language**, not just grammar) is needed to cover all these aspects and whether ideas and mechanisms from existing models could be incorporated.

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11. See Wray (2014) for a stimulating critical discussion of some of the strengths and potential problems of a research programme such as I have advocated.

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