

Linguistics

Functional Grammar vs. Other Grammars

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ILOs (Intended Learning Objectives):

*To differentiate between traditions of functional grammar vs. other schools of grammar

Questions:

1*Which would you prefer in doing discourse analysis : functional grammar or traditional grammar? Give reasons.

Functional Grammar vs. Other Grammars

1. 1. What is Grammar?

Gerrot and Wignell. (1995) say that:

Grammar is a theory of language of how language is organized and how it works. Grammar concerns in the study of wordings that is realized and expressed through sound of letters.

Theories of language or grammar are not inherently good or bad, right or wrong, true or false. Rather, grammars are validated by their usefulness in describing and explaining the phenomenon called language.

1. 2. Types of Grammars

Gerrot and Wignell. (1995) argue that:

There are some types of grammar, like:

- Traditional Grammar

Traditional Grammar is used to describe the grammar of Standard English by comparing it with Latin. In this type, the students learns parts of speech (nouns, verbs, prepositions, adverbs, adjective, articles, conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, and interjections).

- Formal Grammar

Formal Grammar is used to describe the structure of individual sentences. This type sets language as a set of rules which allow or disallow certain sentence structure.

- Functional Grammar

Functional Grammar is used to describe language in actual use and so focus on texts and their contexts. This type sets a language as a resource for making meaning.

Differences between Functional Grammar and the Other Grammars

Type of differences	Formal / traditional grammar	Functional grammar
Primary concern	-How is (should) this sentence be structured?	- How are the meanings of this text realized
Unit of analysis	Sentences	Whole texts
Language level of concern	Syntax	Semantics
Language	- is something we know- as a set of rules for sentence construction	- Is something we do- as a resource for making meaning

Butt et. all. (1995) say that:

Functional grammars not reject, discard or replace the terminology of traditional grammar, but to catch what goes on in language we need to build on and refine our nations of traditional grammar is several ways. The first is to recognize that words have functions as well as class, and that how a word functions can tell us more about the piece of language where it occurs. About the person who chose to use it in that function and about the culture that surrounds the person and the message, than any description of words in term of class can do.

So, according to me:

-Grammar or the study of wordings is concern in describing and explaining the phenomenon which called language.

-There are three types of grammar:

- Traditional grammar is used to describe the grammar of Standard English by comparing it with Latin. The students mostly learns about parts of speech
- Formal grammar is used to describe the structure of individual sentences
- Functional grammar is used to describe language in actual use and so focus on texts and their contexts. This type sets a language as a resource for making meaning.

-Functional grammars evaluate and do not replace the term of traditional grammar. Beside that, functional grammar have a purpose to make traditional grammar more simple (simplify) and to make it easy to understand (understandable). Functional grammar concerns in the meaning of a whole texts (coherence) rather than the order of word in sentence (usually in traditional grammar).

Content

Butt et. all. (1995) say that:

The content of level of language is more accurately two levels, the second realizing the first. The first level is systems of meaning which are realized in the second level, system of wordings. More technically, we refer to systems of meaning as SEMANTICS (include ideational, interpersonal and textual systems) and systems of wordings as LEXICON GRAMMAR, which simplify means words and the way they are arranged. The notion of system is important because it refers to the whole potential of language at each level.

Expression level of language

The expression level of language, especially in the ways of expressing the lexicon grammar realize on meanings. At the expression level, we make choices from systems of sounds (*phonology*), systems of gesture (*the phonology of signed language*) or systems of writing (*graphology*).

Then, I conclude that:

In levels of language, there are two main levels of language:

- Extra linguistics level, those are context of culture and context of situation, which realized in content levels
- Linguistics level, those are content level (which realized in lexicon grammar-the system of wordings and signings) and expression level (the representation of lexicon grammar).

In the content level, they are two systems:

The system of meanings as semantics. This system includes ideational, interpersonal and textual meaning.

The system of wordings as lexicon grammar, which simplify the meaning of word and the process of arrange it.

The relationship between text and context

What is text?

Halliday.(1985) as quoted in Gerrot and Wignell. (1995) argue that:

Text is a piece of language in use that is language that is functional. A text length is not important and it can be either spoken or written.

Butt et. all. (1995) say that:

Text always occurs in two contexts, they are context of culture and context of situation. Context of culture or the outer context around a text determines what we can mean through:

- Being “who we are”
- Doing “what we do”
- Saying “what we say”

Context of culture have two general purpose they are transactional (to get something done) and interpersonal (for different purpose of communication).

Another context is context of situation (the inner context) which can be specified through the use of register variables: field, tenor, and mode.

-Field refers to what is going on, including:

- Activity focus (nature of social activity)
- object focus (subject matter)

So, field specifies what is going on with reference to what.

-Tenor refers to the social relationship between those taking parts. These are specifiable in terms of:

- Status of power (agent roles, peer or hierarchic relations)
- Affect (degree of like, dislike or neutrality)
- Contact (frequency, duration and intimacy of social contact)

For example, the way you say “Good morning” to members of your family, shop assistants, work colleagues. This simple act is a cultural one and clearly be speaks social relationship (tenor)

- Mode refers to how language is being used, whether :

- The channel of communication is spoken or written

- Language is being used as a mode of action or reflection

For example, a teacher asks his students through a base – competence of English is spoken channel, language as action. The students write about a base – competence of English in their workbooks is written channel, language as reflection.

Example of prediction, within reason, how the text might go:

Field activity focus: request for repair

Object focus: security screen door in rented unit

Tenor Status: real estate agent and elderly, widowed tenant

Affect: Favorable agent and deceased husband

Contact: occasional

Mode channel: spoken, language as action

The ability to predict the context to text is critically important for the production (speaking or writing) and the ability to predict from text to context is essential for text comprehension (listening or reading). To understand something of the text-context relationship is to understand something of how literacy is possible.

So, I suppose that:

Text is a piece of language in use that can be spoken or written language (every type of utterance). It can be from magazine article, a television review, a conversation or cooking recipe without concern in the length of the text.

Text occurs in two contexts:

* Context of culture concerns in determining what we mean through “what we are”, “what we do” and “what we say”.

*Context of situation concerns in specifying the use of register variables like field, tenor and mode.

In the production of active vocabulary (speaking and writing), it is very important for us to have an ability to predict from context to text. The ability to predict from text to context is essential for text comprehension (listening and reading). When we understand the relationship of the text-context it seems as we understand something of how of how literacy is possible.