# РЕЦЕНЗИИ / REVIEWS

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**"Functional English Syntax". Vilnius: VPU, 2006, pp. 204.**

## Introductory observations

As pointed out in the Introduction of the monograph under review, functional syntax is not a new type of syntax. Traditional syntax is also functional: it focuses its attention on the constituents of the sentence and their functions. However, traditional syntax is only concerned with the so-called surface structure of the sentence; it is not interested in the semantics of the syntactic categories (the subject, the predicate, the objective compliment, and the adjuncts). Nor is it interested in the informational-pragmatic functions of the said categories.

In the monograph under review the sentence is conceived as a three-level structure: semantic (propositional), syntactic (formal), and informational-pragmatic. The novelty of the work lies not so much in the description of the three levels as in the description of the interrelationship of the levels. However, a reader who is familiar with the problem will notice that the authors have not only systematized the available information but have also offered their own insights into the semantic (propositional), syntactic (formal), and informational-pragmatic analysis of the sentence. Without doubt, this work presents a valuable contribution to the study of the sentence: besides traditional subjects, it includes a number of new ideas, i.e. the classification of circumstances, the relationship between circumstances and processes, the delimitation of clause parts, the principles for the analysis of the composite sentence, the informational-pragmatic values of the sentence parts, and the integration of the clause into the text.

The monograph is not restricted to the analysis of the sentence. Giving their due to tradition, the authors give a separate analysis of word-combinations which are treated as structures without modality.

## The structure of the work. The problems.

The monograph consists of two parts. Part One, entitled *The Syntax of the Sentence (Major Syntax)*, includes four chapters: chapter 1 examines the semantic (propositional) structure of the sentence; chapter 2 analyzes the syntactic (clausal) structure of the sentence; chapter 3 deals with the infor-

mational-pragmatic structure of the sentence; chapter 4, which is a continuation of chapter 3, examines the contextualization of the clause. Part Two, entitled *The Syntax of the Word-Combinations (Minor Syntax)* analyzes the theoretical problems of the word-combination.

Part One begins with the examination of the sentence and its features. The basic feature of the sentence, according to the authors, is modality, which is given a fairly wide interpretation; it includes both the relationship of the speaker to reality and the intention of the speaker in producing the sentence. A distinction is made between modality and predicativity which in traditional syntax are often used as synonyms. Predicavity is *form* while modality is *content.* In other words, predicavity is the formal expression of modality. However, there are sentences which are devoid of predicavity (e.g. *Rain*!). Yet, their sentencehood cannot be called into question: they have modality. This treatment of modality and predicativity is a welcome innovation which, if accepted, may put an end to a long debate about the nature of the sentence.

After discussing the features of the sentence, the authors proceed to examine the semantic (propositional) structure of the sentence. The proposition constitutes the basis for the sentence. In the surface structure it is realized as a predicate structure, or a clause. The clause is the underlying structure of the sentence. Here we are faced with another innovation: a distinction is made between the clause and the sentence. The clause is a structure expressing a prediction while the sentence is a contextualized (modalized) clause.

What is not new is the classification of processes and to a considerable extent their analysis. The authors have made use of the classification worked out by Halliday and his followers (e.g. Downing & Locke, 1992). True, the description of the process types is not entirely 'given' information: we can find new ideas here as well. One such new idea is the description of *happening processes* and the definition of the *Agent.* The so-called lack of novelty is amply compensated by an extensive semantic analysis of the process types and the peculiarity of their realization in the surface structure. As compared to Halliday's description of the process types, the description presented in the monograph may be regarded as a further elaboration of the work by Halliday and his followers.

Semantic syntax is still in the process of development: it raises more questions than it can answer. This can be easily seen in this chapter, where the reader may find a number of problems that require further study. One such problem is the definition of the process types; it needs perfecting. The point is that many verbs present a blending of process, e.g. *wish,* which may be treated as both affective and mental. Besides, processes can be recategorized. For instance, mental processes can turn into relational processes. Another

problem that needs further discussion is the relationship between the semantics of the verb and the circumstances, a problem discussed in detail in the section on material processes but received inadequate attention in the section dealing with the other process types. The chapter ends with the description of the grammatical metaphorization of the semantic functions. The process of metaphorisation includes all the semantic functions, or elements: processes, participants and circumstances. The aim of grammatical metaphorization is to produce more participants or processes and then increase the volume of information in the clause. It is a pity that this problem has received relatively little coverage in the monograph. On the other hand, the semantic structure of the sentence is too wide a subject to be fully examined in a book in which it constitutes only one chapter.

The second chapter, entitled *The Syntactic (Clausal) Structure of the Sentence*, is concerned with the syntactic analysis of the clause. Traditional syntactic analysis seems to have changed very little since the time of Henry Sweet. One may wonder what new insights can be offered into an analysis whose principles have been perfected for several centuries. To revise the whole conception of traditional analysis and suggest new principles of analysis would have been a giant's task. Being well aware of it, the authors have concentrated only on the controversial and moot points of traditional analysis. To such points they attribute the boundaries of the *Subject,* the *Predicate,* the *Objective Compliment,* and the *Adverbial Adjunct.* The idea that the sentence analysis should only be concerned with the surface structure is not new. However, analysts often forget it and draw their conclusions on the basis of deep syntax. A case in point is the syntactic analysis of the clause *The sun rose red.* Specialists in syntax are still debating whether *rose* is a notional verb or a link-verb. Many a linguist has inclined to a view that such clauses are based on two predicates – verbal and nominal. The proof of it, they argue, is the possibility of the transformation of the clause into two clauses: *The sun rose* and *The sun was red.* It will be obvious that such an approach has nothing to do with the syntactic analysis of this clause. In the authors' analysis the clause is based on one predicate only – compound nominal predicate: it is only in the deep structure that *rose red* presents two predicates: verbal and nominal. A revised approach can also be seen in the analysis of the composite clause. One rather interesting innovation is the classification of subordinate (dependent) parts of the complex clause into primary and secondary. To primary dependent predications are attributed subject and predicate, and to secondary, object, relative and adverbial. In conclusion, it should be noted that this chapter is not so traditional as one may initially think: it does not present a mere repetition of the old ideas; it presents a critical approach of the old ideas and suggests new ideas concern-

ing syntactic analysis.

The third chapter is of no less interest. Here the authors' attention is focused on the informational-pragmatic structure of the sentence. The analysis is based on the idea put forward by Mathesius and Firbas who treat the *Theme* as a constituent conveying *given* or *old* information and the *Theme* as a constituent conveying the most important information in the sentence. This type of information may be both new and given. Two types of sentences are subjected to informational-pragmatic analysis – declarative and interrogative. As with the first and second chapters, the authors do not merely present a systematized account of the available information. A careful reader will find many new ideas too. One such new idea is the importance of the establishment of the boundaries of the *Theme* and the *Rheme*: the sentence cannot be roughly divided into the *Theme* and the *Rheme.* Between the *Theme* and the *Rheme* there can be a transitory structure which conveys part of the new information, e.g. *John married a blonde,* where *married* may be treated as the *Pre-rheme.* Cf. *What did John do? He married a blonde.* Similar to the first chapter, this chapter presents a comparative analysis of the informational-pragmatic and syntactic (clausal) structure of the sentence. The analysis has demonstrated that English syntax is not so rigid as one may think: more often than not the speaker can avoid the grammatical principle and express his or her message using the *Theme-Rheme* sequence. Many sentences that may look awkward or even ungrammatical in isolation look normal in the text: the text not only specifies the informational-pragmatic value of a constituent but also motivates the deviation from the grammatical arrangement of the sentence constituents. As this chapter is devoted to the third level of sentence analysis, it naturally presents a comparative analysis of the interrelationship of the semantic (propositional), syntactic (clausal), and informational-pragmatic levels of the sentence. The chapter ends with the analysis of the pragmatic functions (speech acts) of the sentence and the integration of the clause into the text. To sum up, the information presented in this chapter helps the reader to fully understand the authors' conception of modality, a factor directly responsible for the organization of a linguistic structure into a message. On the whole, the monograph has demonstrated the authors' ability to analyze the available information and use it properly. My criticism would only concern the information on speech act theory. In the monograph, the authors confine themselves to the ideas presented by Austin and concretized by Searle. However, speech act theory has been examined by other scholars as well. They also deserve a mention, at least in the footnotes.

Part Two is concerned with non-communicative structures, i.e. word-combinations. After a short discussion of the theoretical problems of word-combinations, the authors undertake to classify the word-combinations. Three types of word-combinations are distinguished: subordinate, predicate and

coordinate. The basis for the classification is the syntactic relations between the components of a word-combination. Traditionally, a word-combination is based on subordination (e.g. *a stone wall*). Predicate and coordinate word-combinations are not distinguished. The question may arise: should we distinguish them now? Predicate word-combinations are in fact clauses, and coordinate word-combinations can be treated as subordinate structures – structures whose headword is the verb. The authors seem to be fully aware of the problem, but such an approach allows them to show that the word-combinations and the clause are based on the same structure, viz. a predicative structure. Such being the case, a predicative structure can be viewed both as a clause and as a word-combination. To cite the authors, "The difference is functional: the clause functions as a pre-sentence while the predicate word-combination functions as a pre-clause" (p. 188). A better explanation might be the following: when we treat a predication as a clause, we focus on its ability to express finiteness; when we treat a predication as a word-combination, we focus on the combinability of the verb. Unfortunately, this important observation is placed in the footnote (p. 180), and the reader may simply not notice it.

A few words should be said about the corpus of the study. The linguistic material has been drawn from a number of sources – articles, monographs, textbooks, and fiction. Most of the material is documented. However, some illustrative constructions are not (p. 153). In general, the monograph is not overburdened with illustrative material: the authors use it very sparingly.

## Concluding observations

The monograph presents the first attempt to examine the sentence as a system of three structures: semantic (propositional), syntactic (clausal), and informational-pragmatic. The monograph tries to convincingly demonstrate that the sentence is well-organized linguistic unit where each constituent performs its characteristic functions at the said levels. The relations between the levels are not straightforward: constituents functioning at one level can perform more than one function at the other level.

To summarize what has been said, the monograph under review is an up-to-date study. It is informative, well organized, and reader-friendly. No doubt, it will contribute to a better understanding of the sentence and word-combination; it will be interesting and useful to those who specialize in syntax and sentence in particular. Those who wish to obtain more relevant information on the functional aspects of the sentence will avail themselves of the rich bibliography at the back of the book.