REALISATION RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE LEVEL OF GRAMMAR

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Abstract:

When we analyse a text we analyse in fact the functional organization of its structure and the choices that are made in relation to the context. When speaking of structural features, the systemic functional school operates with the concept of realization. Realisation is a phenomenon that derives from the fact that a language is a stratified system, being the most important scale of all, showing how different levels of language are related to each other. At the same time, at each level realization shows how categories such as structure and system are related to each other. In this paper we are going to discuss the realization relationships between the levels of language, the realization relationships within the level of grammar which comprise: realization statements, realization relationships between the systems and the structures of grammar, between the structures and the formal items of grammar. In a systemic functional grammar of a language, every system has a realization statement associated with it. In the English grammar there are six types of realization statements: insertion, concatenation, particularization, inclusion, conflation and discontinuity. We are also going to demonstrate that the concept of realization is designed to show how the surface aspects of grammar derive from the more fundamental aspects of grammar.

Key words: structure, realization, text organization.

I. Theoretical framework

When we analyse a text we analyse in fact the functional organization of its structure and the choices that are made in relation to the context. The term 'text' refers to any piece of language that makes sense to someone who understands the language (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, ch.1). Grammatically, a text can be explored from several points of view. According to Halliday and Matthienssen (2004:3), "a text is a rich, many-faceted phenomenon that

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'means' in many different ways". We can anayse a text as an object and as an instrument that helps us finding out other information contained in the meaning of this text. When analysed as an object, the linguist focuses on the reason a text means what it means, while focusing on the text as an instrument, the linguist is interested in its structure.

Within systemic functional linguistics, the language is referred to as text and as system, as structure and as resources, i.e. choices. The systemic functional theory's approach has several characteristics: (i) it is comprehensive, being concerned with language in its entity, and (ii) what it is said about something represents a contribution to the whole picture. The idea is to see where a piece of language fits in.

When we analyse the grammar, "we find that the structure of each unit is an *organic configuration* so that each part has a distinctive function with respect to the whole; and that some units may form complexes, iterative sequences working together as a single part". (Halliday & Matthienssen: 2004: 21).

The functional configurations represent the structures which maintain the grammatical principle according to which units of different ranks construe different types of patterns.

Structure is the syntagmatic ordering in language. Resuming, structure is about what goes together with what. On the contrary, the system refers to what structures can be replaced with others. This is the paradigmatic ordering of language (Halliday:1966, Fawcett: 1987).

A text is the product of a selection within a very large network of systems, the so-called *system network.* The basic idea is that a language is not a list of structures, but a system network. Structures are useful in the description of the realizations, but they are not the most important characteristic of language. "A language is a resource for making meaning, and meaning resides in systemic patterns of choice" (Halliday & Matthienssen: 2004: 23).

Each choice leads to the formation of the structures. This process of formation, namely ordering the words, semantic choice of words, adding linking words and so on, is called *realization.* When we analyse a text we analyse the functional organization of its structure pointing out the choices the author made and each choice is discussed in the context of what might have been meant but was not. Realization is the phenomenon which derives from the fact that a language is a stratified system.

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II. Realization Relationships

Realisation is a phenomenon that derives from the fact that a language is a stratified system, being the most important scale of all, showing how different levels of language are related to each other. Realization can be carried out at the levels of language as well as the levels of grammar.

II.1. Realization relationships between the levels of language

This type of realization refers to generalizations. When we speak or write we want to communicate something, and in order to so we generalize situations. According to Berry (1991:18), there are two types of generalizations:

(i) one type of generalization refers to the generalization of objects, qualities or actions with the same qualities.

(ii) the second type of generalization refers to the generalization of situation properties in relation with different objects and qualities, and it marks the recurrence of each property by a particular feature of language.

The process of generalization moves the speaker or the writer from the situation to the context. Berry (1991) exemplifies this process with the formal level of lexis, pointing out that the interlevel of context and the formal level of lexis is a relationship of realization. We are more interested in the second type of generalization, the one which moves the speaker or the writer into the level of grammar. In this case realization is represented by a grammatical structure. For example, the past tense is realized with the help of the suffix – *ed*.

We can conclude that the relationship between the different levels of language refers to the fact that each level is realized by the level before.

II.2. Realization relationships between the systems and structures of grammar

As we have stated before, the relationship between the systems and structures of grammar is that the structures realize terms form systems. In other words, systems are realized by structures. In some cases the realization can depend on the presence or lack of presence of a particular element of the structure.

For example, if we choose the imperative over the indicative, we choose not the express the Subject element in the structure of a clause; thus the imperative is realized by the absence of the Subject element from the structure of a clause:

e.g. *Suzanne is writing her homework.*
Write your homework!

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Another example is represented by the choice of a structure without predicator instead of one with a predicator. This choice is used especially in everyday language.

e.g. *Would you like beer or wine?*
I would like wine, please.
Beer or wine?
Beer, please.

In the first piece of discourse (the first two examples) the Predicate is expressed, while in the last two examples the Predicate is absent from the structure of the clause.

In some cases the realization of terms does not depend on the presence or absence of a element, but on the position of a particular element in the structure. For example, in interrogative sentences the Finite comes in front of the Subject, while in declarative sentences the Subject comes first.

e.g. *Is John coming today?*
John is coming today.

Another example of a system whose terms are realized by the position of a particular element in a structure is represented by the system of Theme that can be marked or unmarked. As we know, unmarked Theme stands for the Subject and the marked Theme can function as a complement, adjunct or part of a predicator.

e.g. *Unfortunately, however, the news has spread too quickly.*
Unmarked Theme Unmarked Theme marked Theme
And shout he did all day long.
Unmarked Theme Unmarked Theme marked Theme

We have to notice that the part of the predicator which appears in front position is different from the one which occurs in front of the Subject in interrogative sentences, namely the Finite (the auxiliary in traditional framework)

e.g. *Did you go to the theatre last night?*
Unmarked Theme marked Theme

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III. Realization statements

There are six ways in which the structures of English grammar realize terms from systems. As a result, there are also six types of realization statements. According to Berry (1991), these types of realization are: insertion, concatenation, particularization, inclusion, conflation and discontinuity.

III.1. Inclusion

This type of realization refers to the presence of a particular element of structure which is able to realize a form belonging to a system. We have already analysed two types of insertion: the realization of the indicative with the presence of a Subject in the structure of a clause (declarative sentence) versus the realization of the indicative without the presence of a Subject in the structure of a clause (interrogative sentence). The second example discussed above refers to the realization of a term with the presence of a Predicate (major term) versus the realization of a term without the presence of a Predicate.

III.2. Concatenation

Concatenation refers to the relative position of a certain element in the structure. This relative position of an element in the sequence of elements of a structure could realize a term from a system. This type of realization statement presupposes that the presence of the elements which make the realization have already been specified in the discourse.

We have exemplified above with the realization of a declarative statement by placing the Subject before the Predicate and with the choice of a marked Theme and, in this case, we placed a Complement, an Adjunct or a part of a Predicate in front of the Subject.

III.3. Particularization

This type of realization statement points out the fact that a term from a system is realized by the selection of a formal item from a particular sub-class of formal items. Formal items are in fact parts of language which represent elements of language. Any language has an uncountable number of formal items; at the same time, the language has a small number of elements of grammatical structure. Therefore, each element of structure can be represented by a large number of formal items.

e.g. *Everybody in Europe thinks that terrorism is a real threat.*
A perfect health is essential for pilots.

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The underlined words represent the formal items. The first example represents a particularization where the term is a mental process. As a result, if the term mental process is chosen, the element predicate must be represented by a formal item from the mental sub-class of verbal groups. If the term perception process is chosen, the element Predicate must be chosen by a formal item which belongs to a sub-class of verbal groups.

III.4. Inclusion

The most representative examples of inclusion refer to transitivity system due to the fact that transitivity structures specify the inclusion in the message of certain participant roles. For example, if we choose a material process, the message must include a participant role of Actor. If we choose another material process structure, the message can also include a participant role of Goal.

As we know, the functions are nearer to systems on realization scale than to formal items (situation -> context -> terms -> functions -> structure -> formal items), and, consequently, this type of realization statements come before the first three discussed which presuppose inclusion.

III.5. Conflation

As we have stated before, the material process clauses include both a participant acting as an Actor and a participant acting as a Goal. This does not mean that a material process clause must implicitly contain both an Actor and a Goal. It may include one of them implicitly. Material process clauses belong to the system of transitivity which, at its turn, is represented by voice. When using this system, the speaker has the possibility to choose which participants are explicitly expressed at the surface structure and which are not. One can choose to be explicit about a process or not. Let us analyse the following dialogue in a shop:

e.g. *The black dress?*
The red one looks better on me.

In the following dialogue, the process is explicit:

e.g. *Would you like to buy the black dress?*
I like the red one better.

This system consists of two forms: a major one, used when we refer to the making a process explicit, and a minor one, used when we refer to the making a process implicit. In examples such as:

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e.g. *The man threw on the walls quickly.*
The paint was thrown on the walls quickly.
The man threw the paint on the walls quickly.

Example one makes only its Actor explicit leaving the Goal implicit, and example two makes the Goal explicit leaving its Actor implicit. The last example makes its Goal explicit. For this clause the inclusion realization statement is followed by a insertion realization statement. The insertion realization is not applied in the first example when we do not insert an element in the structure of the clause. Each element has certain functions associated with it. Conflation is realized when the function is conflated with the function mood maker (namely active or passive). An active clause conflates its Actor with the function mood marker, while a passive clause conflates its Goal with the function mood marker.

Conflation realization statements presuppose inclusion realization statements.

III.6. Discontinuity

We have shown that an element of structure can have more than one function, but, at the same time, a function can be fulfilled by several parts of speech, by more than one element of the structure.

This type of realization consists of the insertion of a particular class of adjunct, the most common one being the conjunction *or* functioning as a coordinator as in the following examples:

e.g. *Should I stay or should I go?*
He cannot decide whether to attend medicine or go to law school.

Generally, this kind of conjunctions is used together with other coordinators:

e.g. *You can either stay or go.*
You can either attend medicine or go to law school.

These complex clauses can make one further choice between emphatic or non-emphatic structures. The emphatic structures are realized by splitting the function coordinator into two halves and by inserting two adjuncts which accomplish one half of function each.

e.g. *Either can you stay or go.*
Either can you attend medicine or go to law school.

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Another case is represented of the inclusion of the function degree of certainty which is realized with modals, namely the predicator. In the non-emphatic examples this function is realized by the predicator, while in emphatic examples the function degree of certainty is divided into two parts, one being conflated with the process while the second part is realized by the insertion of an adjunct into the structure of a clause.

e.g. *He must arrive on time.* (non-emphatic)
He must certainly arrive on time. (emphatic)

Conclusions

Taking into account all the arguments we have discussed so far, we can notice that the process of realization statements can be divided into several stages:

(i) The inclusion of some specific functions;
(ii) The spitting of discontinuous functions;
(iii) The conflation of some functions;
(iv) The concatenation of the elements of structure;
(v) The realization of elements using formal items.

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