TYPES OF GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES AND THEIR DETERMINATION BY DIFFERENT SEMANTIC FUNCTION

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Abstract: *The semantic system of a natural language is made up of a limited set of distinct components that are related to the most general functions of a language. This functional interpretation is a generalization about language and, as a result, it can be interpreted from three perspectives: from above, below and from its own level. In this paper we focus on the below level, starting from the hypotheses that each of this semantic components leads to a specific structural mechanism as its realization and that these different types of structure are related to the types of meanings they express. In the second part of the paper we will identify which are these mechanisms that are typically involved in the realization of the components of meanings: experiential, interpersonal and textual.*

Keywords: *semantic system, experiential, interpersonal, textual.*

I. General Functions of a Language

This paper analyses the semantic system of a language according to the systemic functional grammar developed by Halliday whose main purpose was to provide a general grammar for purposes of text interpretation and text analysis. Therefore, systemic functional grammar is a grammar which provides a basic tool for text analysis working in a wide range of different contexts. He identified three kinds of metafunctions that a text could have which depended on the way we used language. Basically, we use language:
(i). to talk about our experience of the world, including the world of our minds, to describe events and states and entities involved in them – experiential metafunction;
(ii). to interact with other people, to establish and maintain relations with them, to influence their behaviour, to express our viewpoint on things in the world – interpersonal metafunction;
(iii). to organize our messages in ways that indicate how they fit in with other messages around them and with the wider context in which we are talking or writing – textual metafunction.

In Hallidayan functional grammar, the three categories above are used as the basis for exploring how meanings are created and understood, because they allow the matching of particular types of wordings to an extent that other categorizations generally do not.

These three functional components of meaning can be noticed in all grammatical structures, but their importance in creating a complete grammatical structure is different for each of these three components, determining the general structure of a clause.

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II. Lexicogrammar and Semantics

As we have stated before, the lexicogrammatical system make two fundamental contributions beyond grammatical structures: (i) it creates the patters which are based on the relationship between a whole and its parts; (ii) it creates cohesive links that can go beyond grammatical units and can indicate the semantic relationships in the unfolding texts. The cohesive system is made up of two systems: the system of conjunction for marking the textual metafunction of a text and the system of reference, ellipsis and substitution, and lexical cohesion which give the consistency of the discourse.

Lexicogrammar makes the patterns in a discourse, telling us how a text works. "The patterns that are developed in this way are, however, patterns of meaning, not patterns of wording; they are patterns at the level of semantics rather than at the level of lexicogrammar' (Halliday & Matthienssen, 2004: 587).

We can conclude that a text is realized by clauses or clause complexes which are to be found in two different strata: the stratum of meaning, namely semantics, and the stratum of wording, namely lexicogrammar (Halliday and Hassan, 1976, Marin, 1992). According to systemic functional framework, text is the most extensive unit of meaning, and the patterns are distinctive for each metafunction.

(i) Textual. Textual metafunction refers to the resources which mark the textual *status* of a text. "By textual statuses, we mean values assigned to elements of discourse that guide speakers and listeners in processing these elements" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 549). At a level of textual metafunction there is a close semantic relationship between the system of information and the system of Theme, namely between information structure and thematic structure. These two structures have totally different functions within the flow of the text. The Theme represents the point of departure for the information presented further in the text while New retains this information. The Theme and the New belong to textual structure of the clause; at the same time the textual status (reference and ellipsis) does not. "[…] while an element is marked cohesively as identifiable by means of a grammatical item such as the nominal substitute *they*, or as a continuous by means of a grammatical item such as the nominal substitute *one*, the textual statuses of identifiability and continuity are not structural functions of the clause or of any grammatical unit." (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 550)

Messages combine in order to form a text with the help of periodic movements of information. In a narrative text, the flow of events is built up as a series of episodes which are formed by patterns linked by cohesive connectors. In the following example, the semantic sequence of patterns is realized by a series of clause complexes. They build local sequences in the flow of the events, not the whole event, and are linked by structural conjunctions, or non-finite verbs ("we need *to have"*, or temporal expressions (*today, since)*

e.g. The biggest risk caused by Brexit is on the island of Ireland. We need to make sure that Brexit does not create a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, and that the Good Friday Agreement, which has brought peace and stability to Northern Ireland, will be protected. Today, the cooperation and exchanges between Ireland and Northern Ireland occur within the common framework of the EU. Since we will not know what the future relationship will bring by Autumn 2018, we need to

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have a “backstop” solution in the Withdrawal Agreement. The UK agrees with this, and both the EU and the UK have said that a better solution in the future relationship could replace the backstop. What the EU has proposed is that Northern Ireland remains in a common regulatory area for goods and customs with the rest of the EU. We are ready to improve the text of our proposal with the UK.

(https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/ambitious-partnership-uk-after-brexit-2018-aug-02_en)

Such parts of a message which help construct the flow of information are called *information flow pattern* within systemic functional framework.

(ii) Interpersonal. The interpersonal function of language refers to the exchanges of information that involves two or more participants. When language is used to exchange information, the clause takes the form of a proposition, namely something that can be affirmed or denied, accepted, rejected, commented on, insisted on and so on. The meaning of a proposition does not refer to the exchange of goods-and-services or to offers and commands because they cannot be affirmed or denied, accepted, rejected, commented on, insisted on and so on.

However, when we discuss the interpersonal function of the language, the analysis of propositions is very important because their grammatical structures are well-defined. “As a general rule, languages do not develop special resources for offers and commands, because in these contexts language is functioning simply as a means towards achieving what are essentially non-linguistic end. […] So by interpreting the structure of statements and questions we can gain a general understanding of the clause in its exchange function”. (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 110).

e.g. Mr. A: Welcome to our engineering company.
Mr. B: I am glad for the chance to be interviewed.
Mr. A: What specific job are you applying for?
Mr. B: I am an electrical engineer (double E) and I would like to try to get the job you advertised on the Net last week.
Mr. A: I see from your resume that you are very experienced.
Mr. B: Yes, I’ve worked as an electrical engineer for 10 years now. But I think it is a good career move to join your company.
Mr. A: Why did you leave your former company?
Mr. B: It was a dead-end job.

(http://www.onlineenglishteacher.org)

The text represents a part of a job interview. The interview is mostly a series of information exchanges made up of propositions: the employer requests information by asking questions and the candidate given on demand by making statements, but the exchange pattern is more complex than a sequence of questions and statements. In his first turn, Mr. B offers supplementary information about his feelings, Mr.A asks a question in his turn, and Mr.B’s following turn offers again additional information about himself. Mr.A

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gives makes an evaluation, followed by Mr.A's confirmation. As we can see, this dialogue mixes propositions (evaluation, confirmation) and proposals in order to form an exchange. Exchanges, such as class dialogues, job interviews etc. have clear and regular patterns, they are made up of certain propositions or proposals

(iii) Ideational. If in the case of interpersonal metafunction, the patterns are predictable, in the case of ideational metafunction, the patterns are episodic, due to the fact that in narrative texts, the facts are chronologically organized.

e.g. **When** I smell fresh paint I remember that apartment **and** how I thought everything had changed. There were no more piles of dirty clothes. No more dishes stacked in the sink. There was food in the fridge. Mom stopped smoking. I see that blue **and** I think: new furniture, new town, new life. Everything in that apartment was new. **But** even after all that newness our life felt like it could change at any minute. Mom never sat still. **If** she wasn't doing the dishes or sorting through piles of laundry, she was drumming her fingers on the counter. **If** she was flipping through a magazine, her legs were crossed, the top one swinging back and forth.

(M. Pinchuk, *Memories Like Photographs*)

The ideational metafunction of a text refers to how clauses are linked to one another by means of some kind of logico-semantic relation in order to form clause complexes, analysing this phenomenon from the point of view of how the sequence of events is realized in the development of text at the level of semantics. In case of narrative texts, the event is realized with the help of temporal sequence. Even if there are no temporal conjunctions, the reader can infer the relation of temporality: i.e. *I see that blue **and** I think.* Semantically, the result of combining clauses into a complex clause is one of "tighter integration in meaning" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 365).

In respect of the type of the narrative text, the sequences of events are realized in different ways. For example, if we analyse a newspaper report, we can notice that the same episode is constructed from different angles or points of view:

e.g. Just one in 20 specialist civil servants is satisfied with the government's approach to Brexit, a significant drop in approval from nearly one in five last year, according to a union survey.

Four out of five of Whitehall's scientists, engineers, analysts and mathematicians told the Prospect union they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the government's ability to negotiate with the EU.

As well as a lack of progress in negotiations with the EU, union executives blamed the dramatic drop in satisfaction on ministers such as Michael Gove for undermining the role of government specialists. The environment secretary notoriously claimed before the EU referendum that "people have had enough of experts".

(www.theguardian.com)

The above text does not involve sequence in time; it only presents the opinions of different persons involved in Brexit.

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Conclusions

As a conclusion, we can observe that within each metafunction there are some semantic patterns which differ from one another. In case of experiential metafunction, the patterns are episodic, in case of interpersonal metafunction, we text creates exchange patterns, and in case of textual metafunction, we identify information flow patterns. When investigating the relationship between semantics and lexicogrammar, we have to respect two principles which relate to semantic domains and metaphors.

(i) One principle refers to the fact that there are semantic domains which imply more than a grammatical unit. The most common example is the modality system that can be realized in more than one place in grammar: by verbal groups in finite forms (*I suppose, I consider, I think*), by modal verbs (*may, can, should*) or by modal adjectives and adverbs (*It is possible, It is advisable, maybe, perhaps and so on*). These constructions can be replaced one with another; they have their own meanings, with different semantic values, expressing a range of modality from 'low' to 'high'. The semantic system of modality is realized by a range of grammatical units.

(ii) The other principle refers to the relationship between semantic units and grammatical ones. As we have stated before, clause complexes are the ones that realize the sequences within texts, while propositions and messages are realized by clauses. Furthermore, we can analyse each part of a clause. For example, a participant can be expressed by a nominal group, a prepositional group or an adverbial group. However, it is theoretically possible that sequences could be realized by clauses.

In conclusion, the mechanisms that are typically involved in the realization of the components of meaning, experiential, interpersonal and textual, develop different types of patterns that mark the relationship between grammatical structures and semantic ones.

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