

# Unit 1

## Theoretical Introduction and Overview of English grammar

within the SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL model of language

Print version of the  
*Exploring English Grammar – the world of clauses*  
 presentation given on  
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1.1

### Goals

The learning goals for today's session are:

1. To understand four choices we'll make about how to 'do' grammar:
  - (a) Descriptive vs prescriptive grammar
  - (b) Lexis + Grammar = Lexicogrammar
  - (c) Functional vs formal grammar
  - (d) Systemic vs structural grammar
2. To introduce some concepts useful in studying grammar

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## 1 About grammar

### 1.1 Prescriptive vs descriptive grammar

Descriptive vs prescriptive (and/or proscriptive) grammar

1. Lay people often say grammar is about prescribing what is good, or proscribing what is bad.
2. A modern grammarian just describes how people actually use language (rather than how they think they do, or claim to do)
3. Grammatical "rules" therefore need to be reinterpreted as something like "laws of nature" (like gravity, or conservation of energy, or evolution by means of natural selection): generalized statements of observed fact.
4. We'll try to work with real examples taken from linguistic corpora; but sometimes, when trying to illustrate a particular grammatical point, it can be convenient to use (carefully) constructed examples.

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## 1.2 Lexicogrammar

Lexis + Grammar = Lexicogrammar

1. Some approaches treat lexis (vocabulary) separately from grammar
2. We will treat both together, as “lexicogrammar”
3. Lexicogrammar covers all the knowledge in the dictionary plus all the knowledge in the grammar book
4. With this knowledge, you can produce and understand very many sentences
5. But you still need to know about the context before you can really use or understand lexis and grammar appropriately.

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## 1.3 Functional vs formal grammar

Functional vs formal grammar

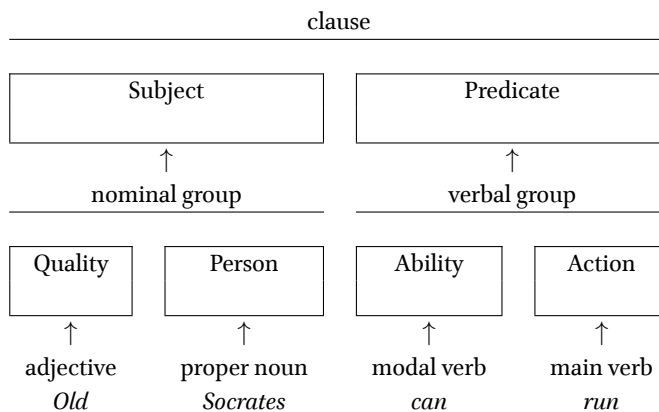
1. Consider the simple sentence: “Socrates runs”.
2. A formal grammar might analyze this by saying that it consists of a noun followed by a verb.
3. A functional grammar might analyze it by saying that it consists of:
  - (a) a subject, of which something is predicated
  - (b) an actor, who is involved in a process of doing something
  - (c) a theme (specifying the topic), followed by a rheme (conveying a message about the topic)

Socrates	runs
S	P
Actor	Process
Theme	Rheme

- 4.
5. From now on, we'll use initial capitals for function labels.
6. We'll also include information from formal grammar as well:

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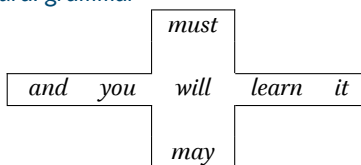
Functional and formal grammar combined



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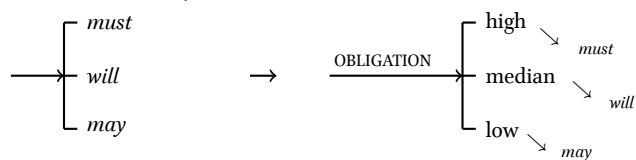
## 1.4 Systemic vs structural grammar

Systemic vs structural grammar



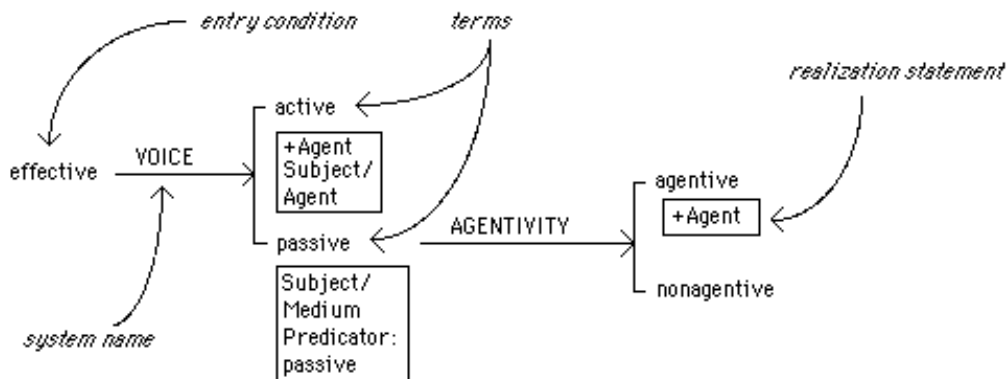
1. A structural approach is interested in the horizontal (syntagmatic) relations: what is connected to what, and how?

2. A systemic approach gives priority to the vertical (paradigmatic) dimension: what choices are available, and how do they differ from each other?
3. Once the focus has been shifted from structure to system, the choices available can be stated in a more abstract way:



4.

### Some notational conventions



Oswald	shot	Kennedy
Subject/ Agent	Predicator	Medium

Kennedy	was shot	by Oswald
Subject/ Medium	Predicator: passive	Agent

Kennedy	was shot
Subject/ Medium	Predicator: passive

## 2 Some choices involved in producing a clause

### Some choices involved in producing a clause

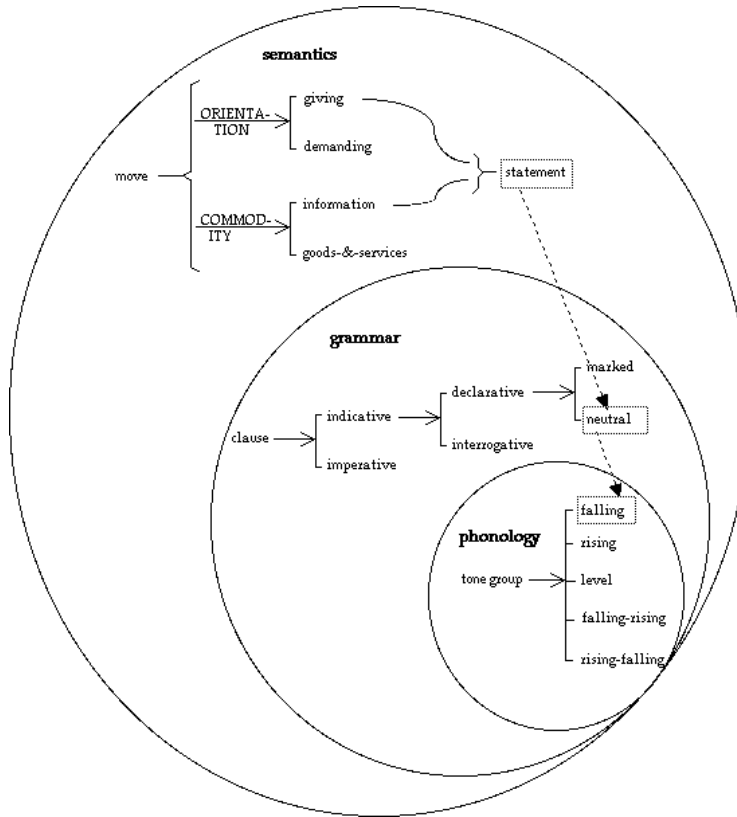
1. In winter semester you tried to guess a clause that I was thinking of; you asked 'closed' questions (e.g. 'yes/no' for binary choices, or 'wh-' questions for sets of choices with three or more terms).
2. Some of the results from that experiment can be generalized.

## 2.1 Strata: semantics vs grammar vs phonology/orthography

Strata:

- “Is it a question?”
- →
- “Does it function as a question?”
- OR:
- “Does it have the grammatical structure of a question?”
- OR:
- “Does it sound like ( / Is it written like ) a question?”

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## 2.2 ‘Functional components’ a.k.a. ‘metafunctions’

‘Functional components’ a.k.a. ‘metafunctions’

1. Clause as interaction: grammatical systems of MOOD — enacting social relationships
2. Clause as representation: grammatical systems of TRANSITIVITY — construing a model of reality
3. Clause as message: grammatical systems of THEME — creating relevance to context
4. These three sets of choices are simultaneous to and independent of each other (i.e. they are ‘in parallel’)

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Metafunctions in the grammar of English (1): syntagmatic view

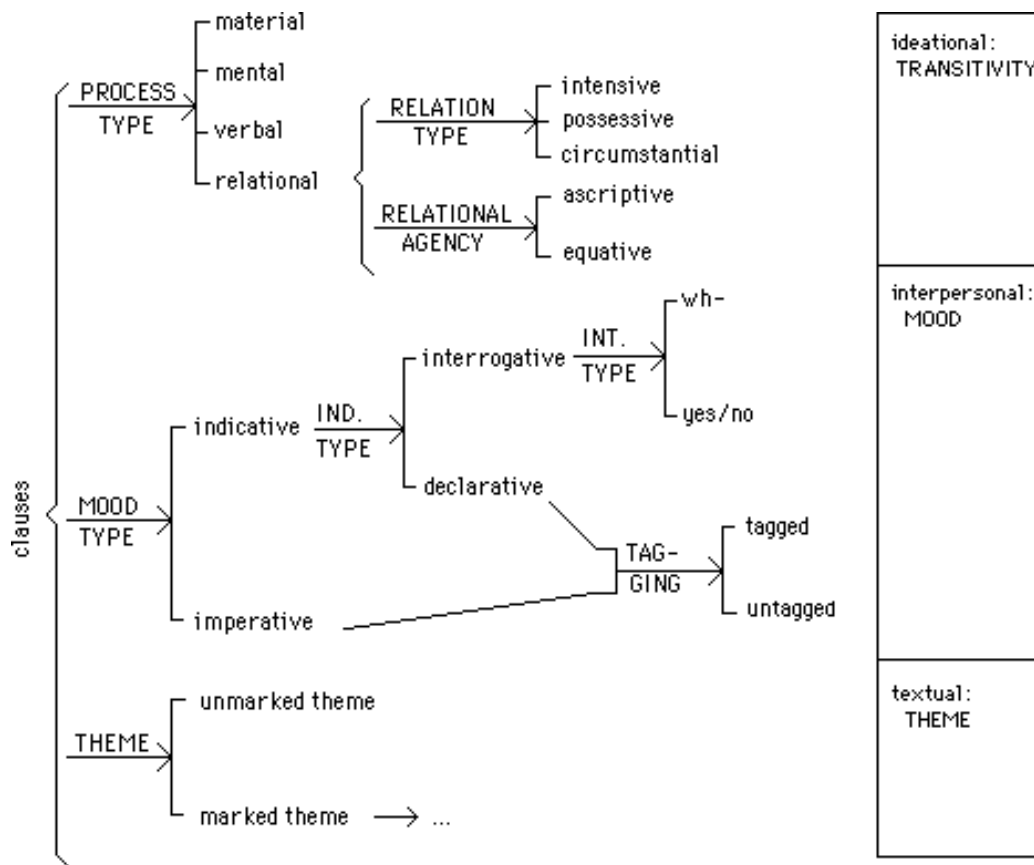
Do	cats	eat	bats?		
Mood		Residue			MOOD
Finite	Subject	Predicator	Complement		
Pro-	Actor/ Agent	-cess: material	Goal/ Medium 'affected'		TRANSITIVITY
Theme		Rheme			THEME

Who		shot	the sheriff?	
Mood		Residue		
Subject/Wh-	(did) Finite	Predicator (shoot)	Complement	
Actor/ Agent	Process: material		Goal/ Medium	
Theme		Rheme		

I		have	a dream.	
Mood		Residue		
Subject	(do) Finite	Predicator (have)	Complement	
Carrier/ Medium	Process: relational: ascriptive/possessive		Attribute/ Range	
Theme		Rheme		

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Metafunctions in the grammar of English (2): paradigmatic view



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## 2.3 Clause as interaction: MOOD

### Clause as interaction: MOOD (1)

#### MOOD TYPE:

- either 'imperative' or 'indicative',
  - if 'indicative', then either 'declarative' or 'interrogative',
    - \* if 'interrogative', then 'yes/no' or 'WH-',
      - if 'WH-', then 'WH-subject' or 'WH-other'.

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- non-finite or finite
- bound (e.g. reported speech)
- major
- clause
- 

	[free]		[[free]]		[bound]		[non-finite]
	Close the window!		(She told me)		to close the window.		[finite]
·	He is closing the window		(She told me)		closing the window.		[finite]
	Is he closing the window?		(She asked me)	whether he was	closing the window.		[finite]
	Who is closing the window?		(She asked me)	who was	closing the window.		[finite]
	What is he closing?		(She asked me)	what he was	closing.		[finite]
	Why is he closing the window?		(She asked me)	why he was	closing the window.		[finite]

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### Clause as interaction: MOOD (2)

#### SUBJECT PERSON:

- either 'non-interactant' or 'interactant',
  - if 'interactant', then 'speaker' ("I") or 'speaker-plus' ("we") or 'addressee' ("you");
    - \* if 'addressee', then: no further differentiation (unlike German)
    - \* *You kenn say You to me. :-D*

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### Clause as interaction: MOOD (3)

#### FINITE TYPE:

- either 'temporal' (primary tense) or 'modal';
  - if 'temporal', then PRIMARY TENSE: 'past' or 'present' or 'future';
  - if 'modal', then MODALITY: 'high' or 'median' or 'low'.

		[past]	<i>she knew</i> ('yesterday')
PRIMARY TENSE		[present]	<i>she knows</i> ('now')
		[future]	<i>she will know</i> ('tomorrow')

		[high]	<i>she must know</i> ('surely')
MODALITY		[median]	<i>she will know</i> ('probably')
		[low]	<i>she may know</i> ('perhaps')

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### Clause as interaction: MOOD (4)

#### POLARITY:

- either 'positive' or 'negative';

#### POLARITY MARKING:

- if 'positive' or if 'negative', then either 'marked' (emphatic) or 'unmarked'.

	[unmarked]		[marked]
[positive]	<i>he closed it</i>		<i>he did close it</i>
[negative]	<i>he didn't close it</i>		<i>he did not close it</i>

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## 2.4 Clause as representation: TRANSITIVITY

### Clause as representation: TRANSITIVITY

1. A “GOING ON” consists of
  - PROCESS +
  - PARTICIPANTS +
  - CIRCUMSTANCES
2. PROCESS TYPE:
  - material ('doing')
    - *Lola runs.* [intransitive]
    - *Tom films Lola.* [transitive]
  - mental ('sensing')
    - *Mary liked the gift.* ['like' type]
    - *The gift pleased Mary.* ['please' type]
  - relational ('being')
    - *Mary is a teacher.* [ascriptive]
    - *Mary is the teacher.* [equative]
  - (plus other minor types)
3. TWO WAYS OF MODELLING REALITY:
  - *Pat cooked.* [intransitive]
  - *Pat cooked the rice.* [transitive]
  - *The rice cooked.* [middle]
  - *Pat cooked the rice.* [effective]

MODEL 1 IS THE  
'TRANSITIVE' MODEL  
MODEL 2 IS THE  
'ERGATIVE' MODEL

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## 2.5 Clause as message: THEME

### Clause as message: THEME

1. THEME SELECTION
    - Theme = Predicator (*Close the window!*)
    - Theme = Adjunct (*In summer the students drink lots of beer.*)
    - Theme = Subject (*Maria likes Mozart.*)
    - Theme = ...
  2. THEME FOCUSING
    - THEME PREDICATION
      - *it was Oswald who shot Kennedy*
    - THEME IDENTIFICATION
      - *the one who shot Kennedy was Oswald*
      - *Oswald was the one who shot Kennedy*
    - ... probably VOICE belongs here, too:
      - *Oswald shot Kennedy*
      - *Kennedy was shot by Oswald*
  3. INTERPERSONAL THEME
    - *surely Anne*
  4. TEXTUAL THEME
    - *oh but in that case*
- To be continued ...
  - The next page of your handout contains a screenshot of the slide that was too complicated to print normally:  
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