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Function and Expression in Functional Grammar

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Speech acts and information structure in Functional Grammar

Ole Togeby

1. Introduction

In this article I will discuss two aspects of Functional Grammar as described by Simon Dik (1989). In general I find the functional paradigm very attractive. Especially I find the principles of pragmatic, psychological and typological adequacy as applied to grammatical description promising with respect to a functional and realistic treatment of linguistic phenomena compared to the sometimes unrealistic treatment in formal grammar. In my discussion I will adhere to the methodological principles of FG too: avoid transformations, filters and abstract semantic predicates. Based on these assumptions I will discuss the treatment of speech act types and indirect speech acts, and the treatment of information structure, which in Functional Grammar is treated in terms of pragmatic functions.

2. Speech acts

In Functional Grammar a distinction is made between attitudes, represented by attitude operators π_3 and attitude satellites σ_3 , and illocutions, represented by illocutionary operators π_4 and illocutionary satellites σ_4 .

The attitudes may concern the speaker's personal assessment or subjective opinion of the propositional content, or the speaker's personal commitment to the propositional content (volitional, experiential, quotational), or it may give an indication of the kind of evidence that the speaker has for the correctness of the propositional content, viz. experience, inference, hearsay. Attitudinal satellites are adverbs of the type *in my opinion*, *hopefully*, *apparently*, *allegedly*, *wisely*, *fortunately*, *undoubtedly* (Dik 1989: 251–252).

The illocutions are instructions from the speaker to the audience to perform certain basic mental actions with respect to the content of the proposition, viz. a. (declarative) to add the content to their knowledge, their so-called pragmatic information, b. (interrogative) to provide the speaker with the information specified in the proposition, c. (imperative) to perform the action specified in the proposition, or d. (exclamative) to evaluate the content

of the proposition as surprising. Illocutionary satellites are adverbs of the types: *frankly, since you are interested, in case you haven't heard, in brief, to put it paradoxically* (Dik 1989: 256, 259–260).

As regards illocutions, a distinction is made between the illocutionary intention of the speaker, the illocution-as-coded-in-the-expression, and the illocutionary interpretation of the audience.

The classification of the satellites can be seen as implying that two satellites of the same type belong to the same paradigm of semantic oppositions so that they cannot occur in the same clause; they stand in complementary distribution. You cannot modify the same verb with two manner adverbs in the same phrase because they belong to the same paradigm, and you have to choose among the members of a paradigm:

- (1) **She dances slowly beautifully.*
- (2) **She dances beautifully slowly.*

(the last one could perhaps mean 'slowly in a beautiful manner', but then *beautifully* does not modify *dances*)

As expressed by the formulas and the satellite numbering, the attitudes are within the scope of the illocutions. The system implies that two operators (or satellites) of different levels can both be present in one sentence; accordingly it should be possible for both illocutionary and attitudinal satellites to be present in the same sentence, exactly as we can get combinations of manner adverbs ($\sigma 1$ satellites) and illocutionary adverbs ($\sigma 4$ satellites) within one and the same overall construction (Dik 1989: 260):

- (3) *Frankly, John answered the question frankly.*

But it is not possible in Danish to have both an illocutionary adverb and an attitudinal adverb in the same sentence:

- (4) **Hvis du ikke har hørt det, er han angiveligt kommet.*
'In case you haven't heard, allegedly, he has arrived.'
- (5) **Han er ærlig talt tilsyneladende en idiot.*
'Frankly, he is, apparently, a fool.'
- (6) **Efter som du også er interesseret er hun lykkeligt usigfl.*
'Since you are interested too, she is, fortunately, unmarried.'

It is remarkable that it is not possible in Danish because it seems to be acceptable in both English, German and Dutch. But the Danish sentences are definitely deviant and odd. If they are said, they can only be understood as

a covert ironic quotation: 'Since you are interested, she is — as you would say: "fortunately" — unmarried'. And it is clear that we have to exclude examples with words used in hidden quotation marks as long as we discuss attitudinal and illocutionary adverbs because the attitudes communicated by the quoted adverb are the attitudes of the quoted person, not the attitudes of the speaker. So in Danish attitudinal and illocutionary adverbs can not be combined in the same sentence, they are in complementary distribution.

A possible explanation of the difference between the languages can be that in Danish neither attitudinal nor illocutionary adverbs are transconstructional, as they are in English; there are no commas around them, and no pauses or other prosodic indicators in speech. They are expressed syntactically in exactly the same way as other adverbs.

The fact that both attitudinal and illocutionary adverbs are transconstructional in English indicate that they are parenthetical information in the clause; the meaning of the adverb is not part of the meaning of the sentence. If this interpretation is correct, it is implied that they can combine freely even if they belong to the same paradigm.

In consequence of the theory of scope relations the fact that the attitudinal and the illocutionary adverbs exclude each other in the same context means that there is no distinction between illocutionary adverbs and attitudinal adverbs in Danish; they are members of the same paradigmatic opposition. They are subcategories of the same syntactico-semantic category, viz. illocutionary force indicators.

In opposition to the FG theory of a distinction between attitudinal and illocutionary levels, my claims are:

1. There are only three universal levels of operators and satellites, and only one which has the propositional content in its scope. All level-3 operators and satellites (attitudinal as well as illocutionary) belong to the same opposition of pragmatic and semantic meaning.
2. The meaning of illocutions is not only 'instructions to the audience to perform mental actions with respect to the propositional content', but also 'indication of the speaker's commitment with respect to the propositional content'. Instruction and commitment are two aspects of the same functional (pragmatic and interactional) relation between speaker and audience with respect to the propositional content.
3. The illocutionary function of an utterance depends on many things at the same time: not only on the sentence type, but also on the matrix sentence verb (in performatives), on the tense of the verb, on the subject pronoun (first or second person), on modal verbs, on the predicate type of the proposition,

on adverbs and on the context (background assumptions) in which the sentence is uttered. (The background assumptions could be handled in Functional Grammar by the distinction between the illocutionary intention of the speaker, the illocution-as-coded-in-the-expression, and the illocutionary interpretation of the audience, but I do not see any attempts to use the distinction for anything.)

In general, Functional Grammar allows us to discuss issues which are ruled out by the framework of formal grammar. The problem with respect to speech acts is the following: how do grammatical categories (declarative, interrogative, imperative) correspond to functional categories (statement, question, instruction)? How are the functions expressed by means of formal categories if they do not correspond one to one? Many observations confirm my three claims. The observations I mention here are also discussed by Rodie Risselada (1990).

In Functional Grammar the imperative is seen as a basic type of illocutionary function, viz. as an instruction to the audience to perform the action which is specified in the proposition (and, I would add, towards which the speaker has a volitional attitude). But most instructions to perform actions are not communicated by imperatives, but by modal verbs in declarative or interrogative sentences:

- (7) *Can you pass the salt.*
- (8) *You have to go now.*
- (9) *You shouldn't stay.*

On the other hand, most imperatives found in authentic utterances are not instructions to the audience to perform actions:

- (10) *Tell me where you go.*
- (11) *Don't worry, be happy.*
- (12) *If you want to make people angry, just speak your mind!*

So within the framework of Functional Grammar we can pose the question: why do many languages have imperatives if they are not used to express instructions, and instructions are normally expressed by other means?

The generalization made in most speech act theories that promises, orders and requests belong to the same class of speech acts because they all have future acts of one of the interlocutors as their propositional content, cannot be formulated within a theory which takes the imperative form of the verb as the basis for a functional categorization.

Most directive speech acts (promises, orders, requests) are expressed by modal verbs:

- (13) *Can you pass the salt.*
- (14) *May I see.*
- (15) *Shouldn't you ask your mother:*
- (16) *Could you be here at five o'clock.*

But according to the Functional Grammar treatment of modal verbs they are π_2 and π_3 operators respectively, and should as such be within the scope of the π_4 illocutionary operator. The impossibility of this scope inclusion is highlighted by the fact that modal verbs have no imperative form. Again, the modal verbs and the imperative form are members of the same paradigmatic opposition, they cannot be syntagmatically combined, as predicted by the level theory of Functional Grammar.

In Functional Grammar some of the so-called indirect speech acts are explained as results of pragmatic or grammatical conversion (Dik 1989: 257-258). But that is in its essence an explanation exactly like the transformational explanations in classical generative grammar: a deep structure is transformed into surface structure by transformation rules, a type of rule which is explicitly avoided in Functional Grammar (Dik 1989: 17-21).

A distinction is made in some speech act theories between statements (*She is ill. The man is Dutch.*) and expressions of feelings, assessments and evaluations (*I have a headache. The man is disgusting.*). It is not possible in a theory which takes declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamative to be the basic functional speech act distinctions.

Such a theory cannot explain why interrogative sentences have different meanings depending on whether the predicate is of the statement type or of the assessment type. It is perfectly acceptable to ask:

- (17) *Is she ill?*
- (18) *Is the man to the right of Peter Dutch?*

But the following utterances cannot be understood as questions, when heard:

- (19) *Do I have a headache?*
- (20) *Is the man to the right of Peter disgusting?*

Again, the predicate types (*Dutch* and *disgusting*) are members of the paradigmatic opposition between illocutionary forces: statement, question, expression of assessment, etc. And you cannot let the operator be dependent on the type of predicate in its scope.

So although the formula with operators within the scope of other operators within the illocutionary force indicating operators is very elegant it does not capture important generalizations of the speech act structure of language. It should be possible to make a functional grammar description of the grammatical and semantic functions of the sentence types and how they correlate with a functional (interactionally based) classification of speech acts. The problem is that most languages have a set of three (or four) sentence types defined by their formal properties, but another set of pragmatic speech acts defined by functional properties, a set with four, five or six differently delimited classes. A real functional treatment of the problem will be a theory which takes into account both linguistic expressions and pragmatic context (presupposed mutual background knowledge) and describes how the same linguistic expressions have different meanings and functions in different contexts.

3. Information structure

The Functional Grammar framework is ideally suited to formulating the rules of information structure because it makes it possible to describe how functional meaning is expressed by various grammatical means at the same time.

In Functional Grammar information structure (pragmatic functions) is divided by Dik into two independent parts: the theory of topicality and the theory of focality. The theory of topicality is in fact a theory of formal restrictions on anaphoric reference from NP's to NP's. And as such it is useful and important: we need theories about introduction of new NP's in the discourse, NewTops, about existential constructions, about the role of definiteness in anaphoric reference of GivTops, bridging assumptions to establish connections from SubTops to GivTops, and so on.

The concept of "topicality" is, however, not defined formally in terms of definite NP's or anaphorically referring NP's, but functionally as "those entities 'about' which information is provided or requested in the discourse" (Dik 1989: 266). Every stretch of discourse, even the sentence (the clause), has a topic. It is also said (Dik 1989: 269) that NewTops combine properties from the dimensions of topicality and focality. But according to the definition, a NewTop is not the topic of the sentence. The sentences (from Dik 1989: 268, 270)

- (21) *Once upon a time there was an elephant called Jumbo.*
 (22) *There appeared a car on the horizon.*

are not, in any sense of the word, "about" the elephant or the car. The paragraph is perhaps "about" the elephant or the car, but the sentence, if it is "about" anything at all, is "about" *Once upon a time* and *there*, i.e. the situation. *an elephant* and *a car* are the focuses of the sentences. In my view, it is not consistent to say that a piece of information is the topic of the sentence because it is the new topic of the discourse; it is focalized in the sentence as a new topic of the discourse.

A piece of information can at the same time be what the sentence is "about", and "the most salient piece of information with respect to the modifications which the speaker wishes to effect in the knowledge of the audience, and with respect to the further development of the discourse." That is what happens in sentences with contrastive focus, see below.

Constructions with *there* in the subject position can be explained by a rule saying that an indefinite noun cannot be the topic of a sentence with an intransitive verb* (except for generic sentences and newspaper headlines which have special topic-focus structures). The word *there* indicating the abstract situation is the topic on the background of which the indefinite noun is focalized.

So again the framework of Functional Grammar makes it possible to put new and important questions to grammar: How do the formal categories definite and indefinite NP, existential sentence, cleft sentence and so on, correspond to functional categories such as topic and focus? And how are information structure functions expressed by means of formal categories to which they do not correspond one to one?

Dik (1989: 266–269) states the tendency that the topic is to the left and the focus to the right. Accordingly we need extra explanations in cases where this tendency is overruled, such as cleft sentences (I use roman type to indicate the focus, square brackets to indicate the topic):

- (23) *Det var Peter [Alberta gav bogen i går].*
 'It was Peter to whom Alberta gave the book yesterday.'
 (24) *Det var Alberta [der gav Peter bogen i går].*
 'It was Alberta who gave Peter the book yesterday.'
 (25) *Det var bogen [Alberta gav Peter i går].*
 'It was the book Alberta gave Peter yesterday.'
 (26) *Det var i går [Alberta gav Peter bogen].*
 'It was yesterday Alberta gave Peter the book.'

It is well known that in cleft sentences the complement of *be* is focused, while the rest of the sentence is the topic. Why is it possible or necessary to

change the order of topic and focus? In my view, it is necessary if the topic of the sentence is not only an NP, but a whole presupposed proposition with arguments and modifiers, or if the focus is a piece of definite information. This rule can only be stated if the theoretical framework allows us to say that the topic is, by default, given (known, presupposed, minimally specified, or abstract) information, and the focus, by default, new and relevant (i. e. maximally specified or concrete) information – independently of the word class and the syntactic constituent of the piece of information.

The identification of the topic is illustrated by Dik (1989: 279) by question-answer pairs, and it is true that the focus can uniquely be identified in answers, and that answers show that the focus can fall on various constituents of the sentence; but an answer is not the typical case. In normal textual (written) discourse the focus of a sentence, which is defined as the piece of information most salient with respect to the further development of the discourse, cannot be found as the answer to a preceding question. To take an example:

- (27) a. [Since the publication of *Functional Grammar* in 1978] many linguists have in one way or another responded to the ideas set forth in that book.
- b. Some (a) have written reviews (a) in various shades of sympathy;
- c. others (a) have applied FG (a) to a variety of different languages;
- d. yet others (a) have challenged (a) certain theoretical claims, sometimes suggesting alternative solutions for specific problems.
- e. [All these reactions (a,b,c,d)] have obviously affected the 1978 framework.
- f. [They] have made it clear that certain modifications and extensions (e) of that framework are called for.
- g. [This work] attempts to provide a new (f) presentation of FG in which due attention is paid to these various contributions to the theory.

The first problem of a theory of information structure is:

How is it possible to identify the topic and the focus of a sentence in its context when the context is not a question?

In my view, the focus of a sentence can only be identified as the piece of information which is presupposed by, or in other ways necessary for, one or more of the subsequent sentences. In the example, I have indicated which constituents presuppose or in other ways are dependent on some pieces of information in the previous sentences – and it is only because of these pre-

suppositions or dependencies in the subsequent sentences that this piece of information in the previous sentence is identified as the focus. After each underscore I have, in parentheses, indicated the letter of the sentence that the piece of information underscored is dependent on.

We see that in this paragraph the focuses of sentences a, b, c, and d are contrastive in parallel, while the focuses of sentences e, f and g are non-contrastive.

The next question of information structure is:

What are the necessary and sufficient grammatical conditions for topicality?

How is topicality signalled to the audience by the speaker?

What are the necessary and sufficient grammatical conditions for focality? How is focality signalled to the audience by the speaker?

I have some suggestions, which do not always correspond to the rules stated by Dik; I order them as default rules and exceptions:

0. Information structure deals with pieces of information, and in principle all parts of an explicit sentence are pieces of information, NP's as well as verbs, adjectives, adverbs, inflectional forms and so on. All types of information can be topicalized or focused (or both).
 1. The first constituent of the sentence is the topic (except when the topic is a whole presupposed proposition minus one constituent; in this case we will have a cleft sentence).
 2. Only given (known, presupposed) information is topicalized, except in generic sentences and newspaper headlines.
 3. A sentence normally only contains one grammatical constituent which is focused, except for contrastive focus in parallel sentences.
 4. Normally only new information is focused; the more specified the information (i. e. the more informative, the more concrete) the greater the probability of its being focused; exceptions: identity predications, i. e. cleft sentences and contrastive parallel focus.
 5. If the presupposed topic of the sentence is not only an NP, but a whole verbal phrase with arguments and modifiers, or if the focus is a piece of definite information, a cleft construction is chosen.
 6. π -operators are not focused, except in meta-sentences, echo questions, and quotational corrections.
 7. Attitudinal and illocutionary adverbs (σ 3–4 satellites) are never focused.
- I have some comments on some of the rules. I find it necessary to exclude meta-statements, echo-questions, and corrective quotations from the set of sentences for which we will formulate the rules of focus. Everything which has been uttered can be focused in such an utterance, and consequently no

rules can be formulated about conditions on the scope of the focus. Dik's example (1989: 281, 40c) is of that type:

- (28) *John hasn't painted the house, he is painting it right now.*

It can only be understood as a quotational correction. Someone has said:

- (29) [*John*] *has painted the house.*

And then the speaker utters (20) (=Dik's example (40c); 1989: 281). If you want to focus on the fact that the predication is perfect, i. e. that the action has been performed, outside a context which can be quoted, you have to say:

- (30) [*John*] *has already painted the house.*

If quotational sentences are excluded in this way, rule 6 can be stated as a general rule (term operators are not the same as π -operators). In this case the Functional Grammar framework (with the operator-operand notation) appears to be well fitted for the formulation of information structure rules; the concept of π -operators has already been established, and the rule is stated as the formal conditions for expression of the information structure function of focus. In this way the information structure rules are an integrated part of, and a consequence of the formal representation of the meaning or function of the sentence as expressed by the formulas.

It is part of the definition of operators that they are outside the scope of focality.

The same holds for the aktionsart operator. The concept of 'givenness' (instead of definiteness (rule 0)), is essential in the explanation of a different focus on examples with negation of predications having different aktionsart. Compare the following sentences:

- (31) a. [*She*] *slept for three hours.*
 b. [*She*] *woke up in two minutes.*
 c. [*She*] *did not sleep for three hours.*
 = 'she was awake for three hours.'
 d. [*She*] *did not wake up for three hours.*
 = 'she was asleep for three hours.'
 e. [*She*] *did not wake up in three hours.*
 = 'it took more than three hours for her to wake up.'

In accordance with rule 4, *slept* is focused in (a) and *two* in (b) because *woke up* is a predicate with an operator, and consequently not focusable; *slept* has no operator and is focusable.

From the examples (31c), (31d) and (31e) it can be seen that (31a) and (31b) in fact have different information structure. It can be seen that *sleep* is focused in (31c) because it is in the scope of the negation, and the aktionsart of the predication is imperfective, which can be seen from the duration adverbial *for three hours*. *three* is focused in (31e) because it is in the scope of the negation, and the aktionsart of the predication is perfective, which can be seen from the duration adverbial *in three hours*.

It is possible to negate the predicate *wake up*, but in that case the aktionsart of the predication is changed from perfective to imperfective, which can be seen from the duration adverbial *for three hours*. And because *not wake up* has a negated operator, the predicate can be focused as in (31d); if it is still in the scope of the operator, as in (31e), it cannot be in the scope of the focus (Togeby 1980; Verkuyl 1972).

Rule 4 states in a cautious way the tendency that left positions exclude focality or that the last new piece of information is focused. It is clearly so with pronouns. In Danish pronouns functioning as objects and indirect objects have positions to the left of the sentential negation while nonpronominal objects have positions to the right of the sentential negation (if they are not left dislocated):

- (32) *Hun gav ham den ikke.*
 (he gave him it not)
 (33) *Hun gav ham ikke nogen bog.*
 (he gave him not any book)
 (34) *Hun gav ikke drengen nogen bog.*
 (he gave not the boy any book)
 (35) *Hun gav ikke bogen til nogen dreng.*
 (he gave not the book to any boy)
 (36) *?Hun gav ikke nogen bog til drengen.
 (he gave not any book to the boy)
 (It is only acceptable as a quotational correction.)

The position of *ham* and *den* to the left of *ikke* means that the pronouns are outside the scope of the sentential negation and thus outside the possible focus of the sentence. As pronouns they are minimally informative and maximally abstract and not candidates for focality. Object pronouns are not placed to the left of the sentential negation in subordinate clauses, and the reason for that is that there is no focus in subordinate clauses independent of the superordinate sentence.

The so-called dative shift (*drengen nogen bog :: bogen til nogen dreng*) shows the same tendency, namely that the focus falls on the last new constituent.

ent, and that the new pieces of information are placed to the right of the given ones in the sentence.

If the analysis of cleft sentences (rule 5) is accepted, it is clear that attitudinal and illocutionary adverbs (G3-4 satellites) cannot be focused, because they cannot be in the focused part of a cleft sentence (rule 7):

(37) **It is frankly [he isn't very intelligent].*

(38) **It was in brief, [we've had it].*

The fact that both attitudinal and illocutionary adverbs are transconstructions in English confirms the rule that they cannot be focused. In Danish it is not possible to analyze them syntactically as transconstructions, but illocutionary and attitudinal adverbs are normally described as semantically parenthetical even in Danish, and it is part of the definition of 'parentheticality' that the parenthetical constituent is semantically independent of the information structure of the clause (Bartsch 1972, chapters III and V).

Contrastive focus seems to be the exception to most of the formulated rules: in addition to the normal right located focus it is possible to have a left located focus; it can coincide with the topic of the sentence, it can be the object, the manner adverb or the relational adverb (often a PP). But in all cases the extra focus is part of a syntactic parallelism:

(39) *Mary John love (?)*

can in fact be said in Danish as *Marie elsker John*, but only in a sentence with contrastive focus:

- (40) [Der] er 3 piger i Johns liv: (There are 3 girls in John's life:)
 [Susanne] er han gift med, (Susan is he married to,)
 [Marie] elsker han og (Marie loves he and)
 [Ulla] går han i seng med. (Ulla goes he to bed with)

In this case all the sentences (clauses) together form one informational unit with one common topic, viz. *[Der]*. This special coherence of the four sentences is the meaning or function signalled by the syntactic parallelism. In exactly the same way sentences (27a) – (27d) in the authentic example together form one informational unit with one common topic, viz. *[Since the publication of Functional Grammar in 1978]*.

4. Conclusion

As a conclusion I would like to say that we have been waiting for the Functional Grammar framework because many linguists have felt that existing

frameworks or linguistic schools have insufficient tools to give an adequate and integrated treatment of the relation between morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics in language performance. In Functional Grammar it is possible to ask how pragmatic and semantic categories correspond to grammatical categories, and how meanings and functions are expressed and signalled from speaker to audience.

I claim, nevertheless, that Dik in his 1989 treatment of speech acts and information structure has not been sufficiently aware of the missing correlation between functional pragmatic categories and formal grammatical categories. The grammatical categories "declarative", "interrogative" and "imperative" do not correspond one to one to the functional categories "statement", "question" and "instruction", respectively, and the grammatical categories "definite NP" and "indefinite NP" do not correspond one to one to the functional categories "topic" and "focus".

Functional Grammar does, however, provide us with adequate categories for stating the rules for expressing pragmatic functions by grammatical means. The distinctions between predicates and terms, between arguments and satellites, between operators and operands, and between levels of meaning are all adequate tools for explaining how pragmatic functions are expressed by the speaker and signalled to the audience. I have tried to show how some of these rules could be formulated within the framework of Functional Grammar.

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