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Introduction

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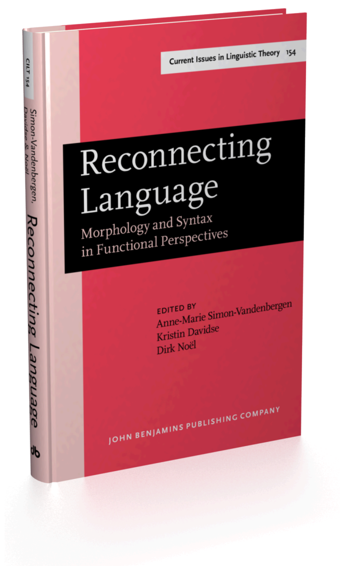

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Reconnecting Language: Morphology and Syntax in Functional Perspectives
Edited by Anne-Marie Simon-Vandenbergen, Kristin Davidse and Dirk Noël
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Introduction

The title of this collective volume reflects the thread running through the various chapters, in the sense that they are all, implicitly or explicitly, a plea for 'reconnecting language' in different meanings of the expression. The functional perspective on language which underlies the contributions to the volume calls for abandoning the 'isolationist' approach which has characterised much of 20th century linguistics and for a return to an integrated approach. There are four ways in which this book is about 'reconnecting language'.

One sense in which we intend the expression to be understood is that of re-establishing a link between language and the world, of reconnecting language to the context in which it has evolved and in which it functions. In this first sense of the term, a linguistic theory which tries to accommodate for this link between language on the one hand and its history and external functions on the other hand, and which aims at explaining the grammar by relating it to those external factors, is functional. Various contributions argue for further research into the connections between the grammar, the text and the extralinguistic context.

A second sense in which the title is to be understood is that of re-establishing a link between the strata of language. The contributions share the aim of demonstrating the non-autonomous nature of morphology, syntax and lexicon, and the inadequacy of linguistic models which deal with them in separate, independent components. A recurrent theme throughout the book is, in fact, the inseparability of lexis and morphosyntax and it provides convincing argumentation against a modular theory with autonomous levels, the dominant framework in mainstream 20th century linguistics.

The contributions vary with regard to the extent to which they take up the above issues in an explicit manner. Some aim primarily at providing arguments for the necessity to adopt an integrated view of language, while others deal with a specific problem in detail as an instantiation of the connectedness of the linguistic system. They also vary with regard to the extent to which they proclaim themselves committed to both of the above meanings of the term 'reconnecting', as well as with respect to the version of 'functional linguistics' they adhere to.

Although these differences might at first sight create the impression of a fairly heterogeneous collection of papers, we wish to emphasise that the variety is intentional and serves the purpose of bringing out the third and fourth senses in which the title of the book should be understood. In the third sense of the term, reconnecting language refers to re-establishing links between linguistic approaches. It is precisely because the linguists who have contributed to this volume do not belong to one particular 'school' that it seemed to us important to bring their views together. As argued in some of the papers, linguistics has for too long mimicked its object of investigation in that, just as language has been disconnected from the context in which it exists and has suffered from 'disintegration' in the sense that it has been studied as if it consisted of separate pieces instead of being an organic whole, in the same sense linguistics has fallen apart into separate schools which have had little or no contact. The contributors to this volume share a strong wish to renew the connections and to look for ways in which they can cooperate to extend our knowledge of language.

Finally, it seemed to us important to bring together papers which are concerned with general issues of goals and priorities of linguistics with contributions on specific grammatical problems in individual languages. The papers which deal with very specific issues of morphology and syntax in a particular language show how, even when one is dealing with 'local' problems, one should never lose sight of the wider perspective of how the description contributes to an explanation of the meaning-creating nature of language as a whole (see M. A. K. Halliday, this volume). It is therefore just as important to reconnect studies of morphosyntactic detail with a general vision of language as a 'semiotic system' as it is for linguistic theory to reconnect with the concrete data from as many languages as possible. This is then the fourth sense in which the title is relevant to this volume.

The papers grouped in part one are more general in scope. In their different ways, all three of them set up a cogent argumentation for functional linguistics. Michael Halliday's paper 'Linguistics as Metaphor' answers the question how a linguistic theory is like its object, language itself. Starting from the view that a theory is always, as a semiotic system, essentially a metaphor, linguistic theories will be different metaphors depending on which features of language they consider as essential and necessary to account for. Halliday shows how systemic-functional linguistics aims at reflecting the properties of language which give it its power as a meaning-making system. Since the semogenic power of language derives from its connection with the material world in which it functions, linguistics must enable us to explain in what way these connections exist.

Claude Hagège's paper 'Language as a Faculty, Languages as 'Contingent' Manifestations and Humans as Function Builders' pleads for reconnecting language in different ways. First, language needs to be linked again to its fundamental dimension, which is the social one; further, the study of language as a faculty needs to be reconnected with concrete data from languages as manifestations of the faculty; thirdly, linguistics must account for man's presence in language, and for the reflections of his intervention in it; fourthly, Hagège argues that the facts of language and language change, in particular processes of grammaticalisation and lexicalisation, demand a linguistic approach in which lexicon, morphology and syntax are seen as essentially connected to one another.

In 'Linguistics — Systemic and Functional: Renewing the Warrant' Robert de Beaugrande explains why formalist linguistics has not achieved the goals it expected to achieve, and why it could not possibly achieve them. The warrant for systemic-functional linguistics is the fact that the model integrates the connectedness of language to human knowledge and experience in social life. By means of the example of the verb 'warrant' as it occurs in the 'Bank of English' de Beaugrande demonstrates that grammar cannot be described in isolation from lexical data and suggests that the evidence that large computerised corpora yield and will yield in the future may contribute to solving the question as to how formal and functional descriptions should be.

The papers in part two look at dependency, which they propose as a fundamental relation. Both Stanley Starosta and Petr Sgall argue that functionalism and formalisation are perfectly compatible, and that explicit formulations are useful in offering a basis for comparing different functional approaches among themselves as well as with other trends in theoretical linguistics. Both arrive, via different routes, at a description in which grammar and lexicon are inseparable components.

In 'Structure, Meaning and Use', Sgall gives a very clear account of the functional principles of the classical Prague School and of the way in which these are formalised by the Charles University research group of theoretical and computational linguistics. He describes dependency within the framework of 'Functional Generative Description' as developed by the Charles University research group. Sgall argues that only part of syntax can be accounted for by a constituency approach, and that large portions can best be explained from a description based on dependency. The link with Starosta's dependency framework is clear, and explicitly mentioned by Sgall. They share the belief that much of the grammatical information is stored in the lexicon, in that the lexical entry contains, amongst other things, a valency frame.

Starosta's contribution 'Control in Constrained Dependency Grammar' introduces the relevant properties of his lexicase framework, pointing out the extent to which they match or differ from their closest counterparts in the systemic-functional and Chomskyan frameworks. It then applies the dependency approach to the analysis of infinitival complements in several European languages. While lexicase differs from other approaches in this volume in that it shares with the Chomskyan tradition a conception of language as a formal system generating an infinite set of sentences and a primary commitment to linguistics as related to psychology rather than to anthropology, Starosta shares with the functionalists in this volume a belief in the need for data from large numbers of languages and an aversion to ethnocentric linguistics.

The contributions by William McGregor and Anna Siewierska, grouped in part three, are both cross-linguistic studies of morphosyntactic phenomena. On the basis of data from widely divergent languages they are able to throw new light on their respective topics of investigation. Interestingly, both authors have, in their search for explanations of morphosyntactic phenomena, found it necessary to look at grammar in text and both point to the evidence of man's presence at the centre of language.

McGregor's paper 'Grammatical Structures of Noun Incorporation' gives an answer to the crucial question (which has, as he points out, been of little concern to previous investigators) of the grammatical structures involved in noun incorporation and the grammatical roles served by the incorporated nouns. On the basis of a richly documented analysis McGregor gives a functional account of the existence of two primary types of noun incorporation, serving two different functions, roughly corresponding to Halliday's logical and textual metafunctions. In addition he offers an account of how it is that two such semiotically distinct grammatical relationships have come to share similar formal realisations.

Siewierska's paper on 'The Formal Realization of Case and Agreement Marking' also aims at explanatory power based on empirical data. By examining a large number of languages the author manages to modify in significant ways the complementarity hypothesis, which states that there is complementarity in the nature of the arguments which display case as compared to agreement marking. Siewierska comes to the interesting conclusion that while the hypothesis is to some extent borne out across languages, there is little complementarity within languages. On the other hand, it appears from Siewierska's analysis that there is a functional explanation for the difference in the number and the nature of the arguments favoured by case and agreement marking.

The final part comprises studies of case and clausal roles in specific languages. All four contributions argue for an analysis of morphological and syntactic phenomena in the wider context of the discourse. Both Marja-Liisa Helasvuo and Karen Robblee present a corpus-based analysis of case marking. In 'Functions of Case-Marking vs. Non-Marking in Finnish Discourse' Helasvuo discusses the case system in Finnish as a discourse construct, concentrating on the use of noun phrases in conversation. She discovers interesting links between case marking and system-external pressures, such as the need to track participants, the need to introduce new referents, the need to express identifiability. In other words, Helasvuo is able to show that the case system can only partially be explained in terms of structural oppositions, and more generally that the case system is another instantiation of the non-autonomous nature of linguistic systems. Robblee's paper 'The Interaction of Russian Word Order, Agreement and Case Marking' shows that word order interacts with agreement as well as with case marking, and that case marking and agreement also interact with each other. These interactions are motivated by similar functions of 'existentialisation' and 'individuation'. The author demonstrates that there are clear correlations between syntactic, morphological, lexical and discourse choices, and argues that these correlations provide evidence against a modular approach to grammar.

The contributions by Alice Caffarel and Motoko Hori are systemic-functional analyses of process types and functions in the clause. In 'Models of Transitivity in French: A Systemic-Functional Interpretation' Caffarel explores how French grammar construes the speaker's experience of the internal and external world. It is suggested that the experiential structure of the French clause can be approached from a transitive and ergative perspective, and that these two models of participation in the process are simultaneously constructed by the French clause grammar by means of the process type and the agency systems respectively. It is then shown how the different models of transitivity are deployed in two texts chosen as representatives of different registers. The texts illustrate how different registers foreground different transitivity models. Finally, Hori re-examines the notion of 'subjecthood' in Japanese. Her paper 'Mental Process Clauses in Japanese' shows that formal descriptions of the particle *ga* (the so-called 'subject-marker') are inadequate, mainly as a result of the fact that they have invariably been based on self-constructed examples. Hori argues that the sentences which have been crucial to the argumentation are in fact either highly marked or simply ungrammatical. She therefore examines the use of the particle in 'real data'. Hori's account is based on an analysis in terms of the speaker's point of view and of information structure in casual conversation. The description beautifully illustrates the interaction of the experiential, the interpersonal and the textual aspects of meaning in the clause. In addition, the author produces strong arguments against ethnocentric linguistics, which tries to force languages into patterns too readily proclaimed as being universal.

Most of the contributions to this book were presented as papers, some of them as plenary lectures, at the 21st International Systemic Functional Congress in Ghent in 1994. We hope that they reflect what we saw as the aim of that conference, to create a forum for an open-minded discussion of where we stand in linguistics and where we should be going. It appeared that there was a great amount of agreement on the priorities and the directions to take, also among linguists who, while embracing functional principles, are by no means systemicists. As organisers of that conference we are grateful to everybody who contributed to the discussion, also to those people who presented very valuable papers which could not be included in this volume.

Our sincere thanks are also due to the referees who sent us their pertinent and most helpful comments on the papers. They were: Fred Karlsson, Greville G. Corbett, Mick O'Donnell, Liliane Haegeman, Pirjo Karvonen, Véronique Lagae, Senko Maynard, Marianne Mithun, and Erich Steiner. Their expertise has been invaluable to us. Further, Robert de Beaugrande's help deserves special mention. The title of the present book was suggested by him and he was so kind as to provide us with a tape and transcript of Michael Halliday's plenary paper. Finally, we owe

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AMSV, KD, DN