
I recommend this imaginative and practical resource book for ESL teachers who would like to introduce a new dimension to their teaching.

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Halliday, M.A.K. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold, 1985. 387 pp.

Although it bills itself as an introduction, this comprehensive attempt to present a functional account of English grammar is not for the faint-hearted.

The blurb on the back cover explains that *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (IFG) 'is called a functional grammar because it is designed to account for how the language is used - how and why an individual makes choices from the syntactic structures and vocabulary available, according to the meaning being conveyed'. This description could also be applied to works such as Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik's *A Communicative Grammar of English* (Longman 1975) and various English Second Language grammars in the functional-notional mould. IFG is, however, a rather different proposition to such reference and pedagogical grammars. Where these are eclectic and clear in their organisation, IFG is something of a *tour de force* of Hallidayan systemic-functional grammar and, as such, it is not particularly user friendly.

As far as organisation is concerned, the most serious weakness is the absence of an index. In such a wide-ranging, terminology-dense work this omission is unforgivable: it will frustrate those who are already initiated into Hallidayan grammar and will drive novices to despair. On the positive side, the table of contents pro-

vides good detail and the book is graphically well-presented, with very effective use being made of blocks and tables to exemplify analyses and to display the various systemic taxonomies.

The content of the book is dealt with in two major sections: Part I focuses on structures and functions within the clause, while Part II looks at structures that are smaller than, and those that are larger than, the clause. These sections are preceded by a short introduction which, despite the book's title, is the only genuinely introductory chapter. Only here does the author assume no theoretical-linguistic sophistication on the part of his readers, and issues such as the following are dealt with: the meaning of 'function' and 'grammar'; the relationship between grammar and semantics; the differences and the connections between spoken and written language; and the uses to which a knowledge of functional grammar can be put (including the analysis of ordinary conversation and of teacher-pupil communication, comparisons of different registers, stylistic analyses of literary and non-literary texts, and the like).

From the very first chapter of Part I it becomes obvious that this book is no run-of-the-mill grammar. Thus the initial discussion of the notion of constituency focuses not just on syntactic structure, but includes orthography (in English, Russian and Chinese script!) and the structure of verse (written and spoken forms). Other chapters in Part I examine the clause - again, not simply in syntactic terms, but rather from the perspective of the three major kinds of meaning identified in Hallidayan grammar; the textual, the interpersonal and the ideational.

Textual meaning has to do with the organisation of clauses as messages, and the most important aspect of this kind of organisation is the *thematic structure*. The *theme* of the clause is 'the element which serves as the point of departure of the message: it is that with which the clause is concerned' (p. 38). The remainder of the clause is called the *rheme*. Thus in the sentence

[1] *The president has just snubbed the party leader*

the president is the theme and *has just snubbed the party leader* is the rheme.

Interpersonal meaning, the second main type of meaning identified, has to do with the organisation of clauses as exchanges, i.e. as interactive events involving a speaker or writer and an audience. Four primary types of interaction, or 'speech functions' are proposed, i.e. offers, commands, statements and questions, each being matched by a set of response types, i.e. accepting an offer, carrying out a command, acknowledging a statement and answering a question. The different functions are signalled in the clause largely by way of different arrangements of the subject with what Halliday calls the 'finite element', which expresses tense and modality. Thus in the statement given as [1] above, the subject *the president* precedes the finite element *has*, but in the question

[2] *Has the president just snubbed the party leader?*

it is, of course, the order of these two elements that changes. The functional elements that are not affected by changes in mood or modality form what is called 'the residue', which consists of three elements: the predicator, the complement and adjunct. Without going into further detail on this, we can say that in [1] and [2] the predicator is *snubbed*, the complement is *the party leader* and the adjunct is *just*. Chapter 4 of IFG deals in some detail with the five functional elements in terms of which the clause is structured as a message, i.e. as an interpersonal event.

Chapter 5, on the other hand, focuses on the clause in its ideational function, i.e. 'its role as a means of representing patterns of experience. A fundamental property of language is that it enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of their experience of what goes on around them and inside them. Here again the clause is the most significant grammatical unit, in this case because it is the clause that functions as the representation of processes' (p. 101). In Halliday's terms, it is the system of *transitivity* that specifies the different types of process recognised in the language, and the structures by which they are expressed.

There are three components in the transitivity system, i.e. the process itself, the participants in the process and the circumstances associated with the process. Thus in our sentence [1], for example, *has snubbed* is the process, *the president* and *the party leader* are the participants (the former would be characterised as the actor and the latter as the goal), and *just* expresses a circumstance.

Space considerations prevent me from examining the three main types of meaning (textual, interpersonal and ideational), as they are mediated by the clause, in greater detail. The brief overview just given should, however, capture something of the flavour of this book, which is - for most English teachers at any rate - a most unusual grammar.

The uniqueness of this grammar carries over into Part II, which looks both at units that are smaller than, and larger than, the clause. Literary buffs will find no less than an entire chapter devoted to 'metaphorical modes of expression'. In this area too the originality of Halliday's contribution is apparent: metaphorical uses of language are analysed in terms of the central distinction between interpersonal and ideational meaning.

Also unusual in a grammar is any treatment of intonation and rhythm. The intersection of these linguistic features with syntax is an area into which most grammarians fear to tread, but Halliday is of course one of the best known pioneers in this field. Chapter 8 ('Besides the clause: intonation and rhythm') is clearly and concisely written and will broaden the horizons of many a language teacher.

A positive feature of IFG - and of the systemic-functional theory on which it is based - is the orientation towards the textual rather than simply towards the morphological and syntactic. The publishers claim that it is 'a practical book, in that it sets out to provide a descriptive and analytical tool for examining texts of all kinds', and even in Part I, which deals essentially with the internal structure of the clause, concepts are shown to be relevant to the larger whole: texts as well as sentences and clauses are analysed. There is

also an entire chapter (Chapter 9: 'Around the clause: cohesion and discourse') devoted to the interclausal connections that make a text a text. The discussion here proceeds essentially along the lines of Halliday and Hasan's now classic study, *Cohesion in English* (Longman 1976), though some modifications have been effected. One of the most important - and badly needed - of these is that the domain of (non-structural) cohesion has been defined in terms of the clause and the clause complex instead of in terms of that very arbitrary unit, the orthographic sentence. *Cohesion in English* stimulated a great deal of interest and research in the area of textual cohesion and coherence, such that many feel that these are topics that no self-respecting grammar can today afford to ignore. I know of no general grammar that covers this area as well as IFG does.

This book is not without its weaknesses. A fairly general problem with systemic-functional grammar - one which perhaps explains at least partially why it remains something of an in-group preoccupation, only really practised in some parts of the United Kingdom and at the University of Sydney, where Halliday now works - is the vagueness of the definitions of many of the key categories. To take just one example, a *subject* is characterised as 'the element that is held responsible, in which is invested the success of the clause in whatever is its particular speech function' (p. 36). As noted earlier, the terminology in the book is densely packed, and the opaqueness of many of the definitions and the absence of an index will try the patience of even highly motivated readers. All the same, those who are particularly interested in the linguistic analysis of texts and who will not insist on too rigorous an explication of functional-grammatical concepts, will find in this book much that is novel, instructive and intriguing.

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