



FUTURE SCIENCE

sentence

structure

verbal
groups

message

nominal
groups

linguistics

syntax

Editor : Dr. Baiatun Nisa

SYNTAX AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE

A Functional Approach

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SYNTAX AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE: A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

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PREFACE

Language is not merely a system of formal rules; it is a dynamic resource through which people make meaning, build relationships, exchange knowledge, and position themselves in social contexts. This volume, *Syntax and Sentence Structure: A Functional Approach*, is founded on the shared understanding that sentence structure can only be fully understood when examined in relation to function, context, and communicative purpose. From this perspective, grammar is viewed not as a fixed set of prescriptions, but as a network of meaning-making choices shaped by social use.

This book brings together contributions from fourteen scholars, each offering a chapter that explores syntax from a functional perspective. While the authors draw on diverse experiences and areas of expertise, their work is united by a common theoretical orientation rooted in functional linguistics, particularly Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and related traditions. Collectively, the chapters demonstrate how syntactic structures operate in authentic communication—organizing information, enacting interpersonal relationships, representing experience, and contributing to broader discourse patterns.

The organization of the volume reflects a progression from foundational theory to wider applications. Early chapters establish the theoretical grounding of functional syntax, introducing key concepts such as language as social semiotic, metafunctions, and grammar as a resource for meaning. Subsequent chapters examine the clause from multiple functional perspectives: as message, as exchange, and as representation. These discussions are then extended to sentence complexity, clause combination, and the internal structure of nominal, verbal, prepositional, and adverbial groups.

Beyond the clause and sentence, the volume addresses how syntax operates across registers, genres, and discourse contexts. Several chapters highlight variation between spoken and written language, explore how syntactic choices contribute to cohesion and coherence, and consider how sentence structure can index identity, social positioning, politeness, and power relations. In this way, the book underscores the inseparability of syntax, discourse, and social meaning.

The final part of the volume turns to research and application. Contributors discuss methods for investigating functional syntax using naturalistic and corpus-based data, and they explore applications in language teaching, translation, academic communication, and emerging areas such as artificial intelligence and computational linguistics. These chapters illustrate the continuing relevance of functional approaches to understanding language in contemporary, digitally mediated environments.

This book is intended for undergraduate and graduate students in linguistics, applied linguistics, language education, communication studies, and translation, as well as for researchers and practitioners interested in discourse-oriented approaches to grammar. By bringing together theoretical insights, analytical tools, and applied perspectives, the volume aims to offer readers a comprehensive and context-sensitive understanding of syntax as a resource for meaning in social life.

We would like to express sincere appreciation to all contributing authors for their scholarly commitment, intellectual generosity, and collaborative spirit in shaping this volume. Gratitude is also extended to the academic communities and students whose questions and discussions continue to inspire new ways of seeing language as social action. It is hoped that this collection will contribute meaningfully to ongoing

conversations about how sentence structure reflects the richness and complexity of human communication.

Malang, February 2026

Editor

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO FUNCTIONAL SYNTAX

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INTRODUCTION

Human communication stands as one of the most sophisticated cognitive achievements of our species, and at its heart lies syntax, the intricate architecture through which we transform thoughts into structured, meaningful utterances. Every sentence we construct, whether in casual conversation or formal writing, reflects countless systematic choices about how to package information, establish relationships, and guide our interlocutors through the landscape of our intended meanings. Yet syntax is far more than a mechanical assemblage of words following arbitrary rules. Rather, it represents a dynamic resource for making meaning, shaped fundamentally by the communicative purposes it serves (Kempson, 2015).

For much of the twentieth century, linguistic inquiry into syntax focused predominantly on formal properties: the rules governing grammatical structures, the abstract principles underlying sentence formation, and the computational mechanisms believed to generate infinite expressions from finite means. While these formal approaches yielded invaluable insights into the structural regularities of human language, they often treated syntax as an autonomous system, divorced from the contexts in which language actually functions. This book adopts a fundamentally different perspective. Drawing on the rich tradition of functional linguistics, we approach syntax not as an end in itself, but as a tool, a meaning-making resource that

speakers and writers deploy strategically to achieve communicative goals in specific social contexts(Rizzi & Cinque, 2016).

The functional approach to syntax, pioneered by scholars including Michael Halliday, Simon Dik, and their intellectual descendants, insists that form cannot be fully understood apart from function. Syntactic structures exist because they encode particular kinds of meanings; word order patterns emerge because they solve specific communicative problems; grammatical constructions proliferate because language users require diverse options for packaging information, managing interaction, and organizing discourse. This perspective has profound implications for how we analyze, teach, and think about language. Understanding functional syntax means recognizing that every grammatical choice—from passive versus active voice to the positioning of adverbial phrases—carries communicative significance, reflecting speakers' decisions about how best to convey their message given their audience, purpose, and context(Roozafzai, 2025).

This book matters because it bridges a persistent gap between abstract syntactic theory and the reality of language in use. For students, teachers, translators, and researchers working with authentic discourse, functional syntax provides analytical frameworks that illuminate why languages are structured as they are, how different constructions contribute to textual coherence, and what motivates the systematic variation we observe across registers, genres, and communicative situations. In an era when computational models increasingly shape our engagement with language, when multilingual communication demands a nuanced understanding of cross-linguistic differences, and when educational practices emphasize communicative competence, the functional perspective offers both theoretical rigor and practical applicability(Yusuf & Rofiawati, 2024).

UNDERSTANDING SYNTAX IN LINGUISTICS

At its most fundamental level, syntax refers to the study of sentence structure and word order, the principles governing how words combine into phrases, how phrases build into clauses, and how clauses integrate into complex sentences. Syntactic analysis examines the systematic patterns through which languages organize meaningful elements into larger structural units. Consider the simple sentence "*The student submitted the assignment.*" This five-word utterance exhibits specific structural relationships: the definite article "*the*" modifies the noun "*student*," which functions as the subject of the verb "*submitted*," which in turn governs the direct object "*the assignment*." These relationships are not random but reflect systematic syntactic principles that speakers of English internalize and deploy unconsciously.

Yet syntax encompasses far more than identifying structural slots and grammatical categories. Modern syntactic theory recognizes that sentence structure interfaces intimately with other linguistic levels. Phonologically, syntactic boundaries influence prosodic phrasing and intonation patterns. Morphologically, syntactic configurations determine word formation processes and agreement patterns. Semantically, syntactic structures provide scaffolding for meaning composition, mapping participants to roles and events to temporal frameworks. Pragmatically, syntactic choices encode information status, speech act force, and interactional stance. The clause thus emerges not merely as a syntactic unit but as a multifunctional device that simultaneously represents experience, enacts social relationships, and organizes discourse (Bakuro, 2017).

Traditional views of syntax, dominant through much of twentieth-century linguistics, conceived grammar as a system of formal rules and abstract principles. Within this paradigm,

syntactic analysis aimed to specify the well-formedness conditions that distinguish grammatical from ungrammatical strings, often relying on native speaker intuitions about constructed examples. The notion of "*universal grammar*", an innate linguistic endowment shared across all humans, motivated searches for syntactic principles transcending individual languages. While this research program uncovered important structural generalizations, it typically examined sentences in isolation, bracketing questions about how syntactic forms contribute to communicative effectiveness in situated discourse(Jundi & Nabila, 2023).

Increasingly, however, linguistic theory acknowledges what should perhaps have been evident from the outset: language is fundamentally a social tool designed for interaction and communication. Human languages did not evolve as abstract formal systems but as practical resources enabling us to coordinate action, share knowledge, express emotion, and construct social realities. This recognition shifts our analytical focus from grammaticality judgments to communicative intent, from isolated sentences to discourse contexts, from formal adequacy to functional motivation. When we analyze syntax from this perspective, we ask not merely "*Is this structure grammatical?*" but rather "*What communicative work does this structure perform? What alternatives were available, and why might a speaker have selected this particular option?*" Such questions direct attention to syntax as a meaning-making resource rather than a self-contained formal system(Fedorenko et al., 2024).

SYNTAX FROM A FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Functional linguistics represents a diverse family of approaches united by the conviction that language structure

cannot be adequately understood apart from language use. While multiple frameworks fall under this umbrella—including Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Functional Grammar (FG), Role and Reference Grammar (RRG), and usage-based Construction Grammar, they share core commitments: language serves communicative and social functions; linguistic structures have evolved and continue to evolve in response to functional pressures; and adequate grammatical description must account for how forms map onto meanings in context(Gong, 2023).

Among these frameworks, Systemic Functional Linguistics, developed primarily by M.A.K. Halliday and colleagues since the 1960s, has exercised particularly profound influence on discourse analysis, language education, and applied linguistics worldwide. Halliday reconceptualized language as a "*social semiotic*", a meaning-making system embedded in social contexts and shaped by the functional demands of human communication. Recent applications of SFL have expanded into multimodal discourse analysis, demonstrating how visual, textual, and interactive elements combine to construct meaning in digital communication contexts. Central to SFL is the notion of choice: language users navigate networks of systemic options, selecting from among available alternatives at each point in constructing an utterance. These choices coincide across multiple functional dimensions, which Halliday theorized as three metafunctions: the ideational (representing experience), the interpersonal (enacting social relations), and the textual (organizing discourse)(Herman et al., 2023).

The ideational metafunction concerns how language represents our experience of the world—both the external world of actions and events and the internal world of thoughts and perceptions. Syntactically, this metafunction is realized through transitivity systems, which specify process types (material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential) and their

associated participant roles. When we say "*The company launched a new product*," we encode a material process with an Actor ("*the company*") and a Goal ("*a new product*"), representing the external world of doing and happening. Alternatively, "*The CEO believes the strategy will succeed*" represents a mental process with a Senser ("*the CEO*") and a Phenomenon ("*the strategy will succeed*"), representing the internal world of cognition. Still differently, "*The meeting was productive*" exemplifies a relational process attributing a quality to an entity. These different process-participant configurations reflect distinct ways of construing experience, demonstrating how syntactic structure embodies ideational meaning. Research examining transitivity patterns in various discourse types reveals how systematic choices among process types construct particular representations of reality. Corporate reports may favor material processes to emphasize agency and achievement, while academic discourse may privilege relational and mental processes to foreground knowledge states and logical relationships (Shamal, 2025).

The interpersonal metafunction addresses how language enacts social relationships and positions speakers relative to their interlocutors. Syntactic resources for realizing interpersonal meaning include mood systems (declarative, interrogative, imperative), modality (expressing degrees of certainty, obligation, or permission), and appraisal structures (conveying evaluative stance). Consider the difference between "*You must submit the report by Friday*" (high obligation modality, directive speech function) and "*Perhaps you could submit the report by Friday?*" (low probability modality, indirect request). These variants encode different power relations, levels of politeness, and degrees of imposition, all realized through syntactic choices. Contemporary research on interpersonal meaning in educational contexts reveals how teachers employ

varied mood and modality resources to construct authority, establish rapport, and facilitate learning. Studies show that declarative clauses dominate teacher commentary when assessing student performance, while interrogative forms invite participation and collaborative meaning-making(Yanto & Pravitasari, 2023).

The textual metafunction concerns how language organizes information into coherent, contextually appropriate discourse. Key syntactic resources include Theme-Rheme structure (clause-initial position versus the remainder of the clause) and given-new information patterns. In English, the Theme typically appears in clause-initial position, establishing the point of departure for the message. Compare "*Yesterday, we completed the project*" (temporal circumstance as Theme) with "*We completed the project yesterday*" (Actor as Theme). This variation in thematic organization reflects different information-packaging strategies, demonstrating how syntax manages the flow of discourse. Studies of thematic progression patterns in student writing demonstrate that effective academic texts employ systematic thematic choices, particularly linear progression where the Rheme of one clause becomes the Theme of the next, creating cohesive chains that guide readers through complex arguments. Research comparing texts produced by proficient and developing writers consistently shows that thematic organization distinguishes successful from less successful academic prose(Suharsono et al., 2024).

Beyond SFL, Simon Dik's Functional Grammar proposed an alternative model viewing language fundamentally as an instrument for social interaction. Dik's framework emphasizes the communicative function as the central organizing principle, treating pragmatic and semantic considerations as primary rather than derivative. Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG), an updated version of Dik's model, provides explicit mechanisms

for relating pragmatic, semantic, morphosyntactic, and phonological levels of representation. FDG has proven particularly valuable for typological research, as its architecture facilitates cross-linguistic comparison while accommodating language-specific realizations of universal functional categories (Matthiessen et al., 2022).

More recently, usage-based approaches, particularly Construction Grammar, have reconceptualized grammatical knowledge as emerging from exposure to actual language use, with constructions—form-function pairings at various levels of abstraction and complexity—serving as the basic units of linguistic representation. Under this view, grammar is not a separate module of linguistic knowledge but rather a structured inventory of conventional form-function mappings, from fully lexically specific idioms like "*kick the bucket*" to highly abstract patterns like the ditransitive construction. Research on construction learning demonstrates that language users form generalizations across instances they encounter, with the resulting representations reflecting the statistical distributions and contextual properties of actual usage. These frameworks collectively underscore that syntax is shaped by, and best understood in terms of, the communicative functions it serves, with recent computational studies using large language models providing striking evidence that distributional patterns in usage can give rise to grammatical knowledge (Goldberg, 2024).

KEY DIFFERENCES FROM FORMAL/GENERATIVIST APPROACHES

To appreciate functional syntax fully requires understanding how it diverges from the formalist tradition epitomized by generative grammar. Since Noam Chomsky's revolutionary work in the late 1950s, generative approaches have dominated syntactic theory, particularly in North American linguistics.

Chomsky proposed that linguistic competence consists of internalized knowledge of an autonomous formal system—a computational mechanism generating the infinite set of grammatical sentences from a finite lexicon and a finite set of rules. Core assumptions include Universal Grammar (an innate linguistic endowment specifying parameters that individual languages set), and syntactic autonomy (syntax as an independent module not directly shaped by semantic or pragmatic factors)(Bavali & Sadighi, 2008).

The fundamental contrast between formalist and functionalist orientations concerns whether syntax is viewed as an autonomous system or as a system shaped by external functional pressures. Generative approaches treat syntax as a cognitive module with its own principles, largely independent of meaning and use. Functional approaches, conversely, maintain that syntactic patterns reflect communicative needs, processing constraints, and semantic relations. Where generativists seek elegant formal accounts of structural regularities, functionalists seek functional motivations for why languages exhibit particular patterns(Austin, 2022).

These theoretical contrasts manifest in specific methodological differences. Generative syntacticians typically rely on introspective judgments about constructed examples, often using grammaticality contrasts to diagnose underlying structural principles. Functional syntacticians typically prioritize attested discourse from corpora, examining how syntactic patterns distribute across registers, genres, and communicative contexts. This methodological divide reflects different priorities: generativists aim to model competence (the abstract knowledge system), while functionalists aim to account for performance (actual language use). Additionally, generative theory treats variation as peripheral, a matter of "*performance factors*" or stylistic choice. In contrast, functional theory treats variation as

meaningful, with alternative constructions encoding different pragmatic and discourse-semantic nuances(Fauzan, 2022).

Consider how these approaches analyze passive constructions differently. A generative account might propose that passives derive from active counterparts via syntactic transformation, motivated by formal principles such as Case theory or argument structure. A functional account emphasizes that passives serve specific discourse functions: backgrounding agents, foregrounding patients, maintaining topical continuity, or managing information flow. The sentence "*The policy was implemented last year*" may be chosen over "*The government implemented the policy last year*" not because of formal syntactic requirements but because the passive better serves discourse-pragmatic goals, perhaps maintaining "*the policy*" as the topic or avoiding mention of the responsible agent(Khaleel Ghali Al-Badri & Fadhil Kadhim Al-Janabi, 2022).

Despite their differences, formalist and functionalist approaches need not be viewed as incompatible antagonists. Increasingly, scholars recognize that both perspectives offer valuable insights. Formal approaches have illuminated important structural generalizations and computational properties of syntax. Functional approaches have explained why particular structures exist and how they contribute to communication. Contemporary linguistics benefits from dialogue between these traditions, acknowledging that comprehensive accounts of syntax require both structural precision and functional motivation(Jieun, 2023).

RELEVANCE OF FUNCTIONAL SYNTAX IN REAL LANGUAGE USE

The true test of any linguistic theory lies in its capacity to illuminate how language actually works in the contexts where humans deploy it. Functional syntax excels precisely because it

addresses language as it manifests in natural conversation, professional writing, classroom interaction, digital communication, and countless other domains of use. This section explores how functional perspectives enhance our understanding of syntax across multiple practical applications(Roozafzai, 2025).

In spontaneous spoken discourse, functional syntax explains choices that formalist accounts might dismiss as irregular or performance-based. Consider how speakers manage turn-taking, repair sequences, and interactive alignment in real time. The utterance "What I'm trying to say is..." exemplifies a thematic equative construction that allows speakers to reorganize information mid-turn, highlighting particular elements for rhetorical effect. Such constructions make sense not as deviations from idealized sentence structure but as functional adaptations to the exigencies of real-time interaction, where speakers must simultaneously plan content, monitor comprehension, and respond to interlocutors(Wiltschko, 2023).

For language teaching and learning, functional approaches offer transformative insights. Rather than presenting grammar as arbitrary rules to memorize, functional pedagogy enables learners to understand how syntactic choices create meaning and achieve communicative purposes. Teaching the passive voice, for instance, becomes not merely drilling transformations but developing awareness of when and why writers select passive constructions—to emphasize affected entities, maintain topical continuity, or background responsibility. Research demonstrates that explicit instruction in functional grammar, particularly regarding Theme-Rheme structure and information packaging, significantly improves students' writing quality and textual coherence across various educational contexts(Vu, 2024).

Professional and specialized registers reveal particularly clearly how syntax adapts to functional requirements. Legal

language employs complex nominal structures and extensive modification to achieve precision and avoid ambiguity. Academic writing favors nominalization and impersonal constructions to project objectivity and authority. Workplace communication balances directness with politeness through modal expressions and interrogative structures. These systematic patterns reflect functional adaptations: syntactic structures that have been conventionalized within discourse communities because they effectively serve those communities' specific communicative needs(Gong, 2023).

Translation and cross-linguistic analysis benefit immensely from functional perspectives, which emphasize that equivalence transcends word-for-word correspondence. Translators must identify the functions that syntactic structures serve in source texts and find target-language structures that achieve comparable functions, even when form-level correspondences are absent. For example, English often uses passive constructions, whereas German might employ impersonal constructions, and Indonesian might use the active voice with generic agents, different forms serving similar discourse functions. Understanding Theme-Rheme organization helps translators maintain information structure across languages with different word-order constraints(Retnomurti et al., 2023).

In discourse analysis and text interpretation, functional syntax provides powerful analytical tools. Tracking thematic progression patterns reveals how texts maintain coherence across clause sequences. Analyzing transitivity choices uncovers how texts represent agency, causality, and responsibility, which are crucial for critical discourse analysis examining how language constructs social realities and power relations. Studying mood and modality patterns illuminates the author's stance, certainty levels, and interactional positioning. These analyses demonstrate that syntactic choices are never merely

formal but always carry ideological and interpersonal significance(Omer & Ali, 2023).

Functional syntax also illuminates language acquisition and development. Children's early syntactic productions reflect functional motivations: they use simple constructions to request, comment, and establish joint attention—communicative functions that drive structural development. As language develops, children acquire increasingly sophisticated syntactic resources for encoding complex meanings and managing discourse, demonstrating that syntactic growth is fundamentally tied to expanding communicative repertoires. Understanding these functional foundations enhances both theoretical models of acquisition and practical approaches to supporting language development(Kusunza et al., 2025).

Even computational linguistics and natural language processing increasingly recognize the value of functional insights. Semantic role labeling—identifying who did what to whom—draws directly on functional concepts of transitivity and participant roles. Machine translation systems that incorporate discourse-level considerations and information structure achieve better results than purely syntactic approaches. Sentiment analysis and opinion mining benefit from understanding how syntactic choices convey evaluative stance. As NLP systems aim for more human-like language understanding and generation, functional frameworks provide essential guidance for moving beyond surface syntax to communicative function(Fan et al., 2023).

SCOPE OF THE BOOK AND INTENDED AUDIENCE

This book offers a comprehensive introduction to syntax from a functional perspective, designed to be accessible to readers encountering these frameworks for the first time while providing sufficient depth for advanced study and application.

The chapters progress systematically from foundational concepts to a detailed examination of significant syntactic phenomena, and then to practical applications across diverse domains.

Following this introductory chapter, subsequent chapters address core topics in functional syntax: clause structure and transitivity systems, information structure and thematic organization, mood and modality, clause combining and grammatical metaphor, register and genre variation, and applied perspectives on functional syntax. Each chapter integrates theoretical exposition with authentic examples drawn from diverse text types, demonstrating how functional principles illuminate patterns in actual language use. Analytical exercises encourage readers to apply concepts to new data, developing practical skills alongside theoretical understanding(Alves et al., 2023).

The primary audience includes graduate and advanced undergraduate students in linguistics, applied linguistics, and related fields. The book assumes familiarity with basic linguistic concepts, word classes, phrase structure, and clause elements, but does not presume prior training in formal syntax or functional theory. Students will find the book valuable for coursework in syntax, discourse analysis, grammar pedagogy, and text linguistics. Language teachers and curriculum developers constitute another key audience, as functional approaches directly address pedagogical challenges of making grammar instruction meaningful and relevant. The frameworks presented here have been successfully implemented in language teaching contexts worldwide, particularly for developing academic writing skills.

Researchers in discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, translation studies, and text linguistics will find functional syntax essential for analyzing how grammatical choices

contribute to textual meaning and social action. The book provides theoretical frameworks and analytical tools applicable across diverse research questions—from examining political discourse to analyzing patient-doctor interaction to studying scientific writing conventions. Additionally, computational linguists working on natural language understanding, text generation, and semantic analysis will find that functional perspectives offer insights complementary to statistical and neural approaches.

For readers to benefit fully, particular prerequisites facilitate engagement with the material. Understanding basic linguistic terminology, such as nouns, verbs, clauses, phrases, and modifiers, is essential. Familiarity with standard grammatical categories and relationships, even at an introductory level, provides necessary scaffolding. Most importantly, readers should approach the book with openness to functional reasoning, recognizing that grammatical patterns can be explained by reference to communicative purposes and contextual factors rather than solely by formal principles.

By the book's conclusion, readers will have developed multiple competencies: understanding the theoretical foundations of functional syntax and how they differ from formalist alternatives; recognizing form-function relationships in linguistic data across diverse text types; applying functional frameworks to analyze authentic examples, identifying how syntactic choices create specific meanings; evaluating syntactic variation through functional lenses rather than prescriptivist or formalist assumptions; and engaging critically with contemporary debates in syntactic theory, assessing the strengths and limitations of different approaches.

The book maintains a consistent focus on syntax as encoding meaning in use, supported by cross-linguistic evidence demonstrating that functional pressures shape syntactic patterns

universally, though their specific realizations vary across languages. Throughout, practical implications are emphasized—for teaching, analysis, translation, and computational applications—ensuring that theoretical insights connect to real-world applications. While presenting current understanding of functional syntax, the book also acknowledges unresolved questions and promising directions for future research, inviting readers to contribute to the ongoing development of the field.

CONCLUSION

This opening chapter has introduced functional syntax as an approach that views grammatical structure not as an autonomous formal system but as a meaning-making resource shaped by communicative functions. We have traced how this perspective emerges from recognition that language is fundamentally a social tool, used by humans to represent experience, enact relationships, and organize discourse. The functional lens reveals that every syntactic choice carries significance—reflecting speakers' decisions about how to package information, manage interaction, and construct coherent texts,

We have contrasted functional approaches with formalist traditions, particularly generative grammar, highlighting fundamental differences in assumptions, methods, and priorities. Where formalists emphasize syntactic autonomy and seek elegant accounts of structural regularities, functionalists emphasize syntax-pragmatics interfaces and seek explanations grounded in communicative needs. Yet these perspectives need not be adversarial; indeed, a comprehensive understanding of syntax benefits from both structural precision and functional motivation. The most productive path forward involves dialogue between traditions, acknowledging insights from each while recognizing their different but complementary contributions.

The promise of functional syntax lies in its capacity to bridge abstract linguistic theory and concrete language use. For students and teachers, it makes grammar meaningful by connecting forms to functions. For researchers, it provides frameworks for analyzing how syntactic choices contribute to textual meaning and social action. For language professionals—translators, editors, content developers—it offers principled bases for making and evaluating grammatical decisions. For computational linguists, it points toward meaning-oriented approaches that complement statistical and neural methods.

As you proceed through subsequent chapters, you will encounter detailed analyses of specific syntactic phenomena—transitivity systems, thematic structure, modal expressions, clause complexes—each examined through the functional lens developed here. You will see how these frameworks illuminate patterns across diverse languages and text types, demonstrating both universal functional principles and language-specific realizations. You will develop analytical skills applicable to any discourse you encounter, whether analyzing political speeches, scientific articles, casual conversation, or digital communication.

Ultimately, this book invites you to see syntax anew: not as arbitrary rules but as elegant solutions to communicative challenges, not as barriers to expression but as resources for meaning-making, not as prescriptive constraints but as systematic options enabling infinite creativity within functionally motivated patterns. This functional understanding enriches our appreciation of language's remarkable capacity to serve human needs, illuminates why languages are structured as they are, and provides practical tools for more effective analysis, teaching, and use of language in all its magnificent complexity.

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CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

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INTRODUCTION

Functional grammar represents a paradigm shift in linguistic theory, moving away from viewing language as an abstract formal system toward understanding it as a dynamic social tool shaped by communicative purpose. Unlike formal grammar traditions that prioritize syntactic structures divorced from meaning and context, functional approaches position language as fundamentally purposeful—a resource humans deploy to make meaning in social contexts (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This chapter explores the theoretical foundations that underpin functional grammar, with particular emphasis on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the most comprehensive and influential functional framework developed over the past six decades.

This chapter proceeds through six interconnected theoretical dimensions. After introducing the historical development and core principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics, we examine language as a social semiotic system, the relationship between meaning, choice, and context, the trinocular conception of metafunctions, and the characterization of grammar as resource rather than rules. These foundations collectively demonstrate how functional grammar provides a theoretically robust and practically applicable framework for understanding how language works to create meaning in social life.

SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS (HALLIDAY AND SUCCESSORS)

Historical Development

Systemic Functional Linguistics emerged from the work of Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday, who synthesized influences from diverse linguistic traditions including Firthian linguistics, Prague School functionalism, and anthropological linguistics. Halliday's groundbreaking 1961 doctoral thesis began articulating principles that would evolve into SFL's distinctive architecture (Halliday, 1961). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Halliday developed the notion of language as a system of systems—a meaning-making resource organized into simultaneous networks of paradigmatic choices (Halliday, 1973, 1978).

The publication of Halliday's *Introduction to Functional Grammar* in 1985 (revised in subsequent editions, most recently Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) provided the first comprehensive statement of SFL theory and descriptive apparatus. This work established SFL as a complete linguistic framework capable of describing language systems at multiple strata, from discourse semantics through lexicogrammar to phonology and graphology. Halliday's approach fundamentally reconceived the relationship between form and function, arguing that linguistic forms have evolved specifically to realize particular communicative functions (Banks, 2021).

Successors and Contemporary Developments

Following Halliday's foundational contributions, several scholars have extended and refined SFL theory. Christian Matthiessen has been instrumental in developing the system network formalism and extending SFL descriptions to additional languages beyond English, demonstrating the framework's

typological applicability (Matthiessen, 2023). Matthiessen's work on instantiation and the cline from potential to instance has clarified how SFL conceptualizes the relationship between language system and language use (Matthiessen, 2020).

James Martin has significantly expanded SFL's engagement with discourse semantics, developing detailed models of appraisal, periodicity, and discourse structure (Martin & Rose, 2023). His work demonstrates how functional grammar interfaces with larger discourse patterns and social purposes. Ruqaiya Hasan's contributions to semantic variation and context theory have deepened understanding of how situational and cultural contexts shape linguistic choices (Hasan, 2015; Bartlett & O'Grady, 2021). More recently, scholars like Lise Fontaine have advanced theoretical debates about SFL's architecture and its relationship to other linguistic frameworks (Fontaine, 2023). Contemporary SFL scholarship has embraced multimodality, recognizing that meaning-making increasingly involves semiotic resources beyond language, including images, gesture, sound, and spatial arrangement (Bateman, 2023; Djonov & Zhao, 2022). This expansion reflects SFL's adaptability to evolving communicative practices in digital environments. Additionally, computational applications of SFL have grown substantially, with researchers developing tools for automated text analysis, natural language generation, and corpus linguistics grounded in functional principles (Taboada & Carretero, 2021; O'Donnell, 2021).

LANGUAGE AS A SOCIAL SEMIOTIC SYSTEM

A cornerstone of functional grammar is the conception of language as a social semiotic—a meaning-making system fundamentally shaped by its role in social life. This perspective, articulated comprehensively by Halliday (1978) in *Language as Social Semiotic*, positions language not as an autonomous

cognitive module but as a resource that has evolved to serve human social needs. The social semiotic view emphasizes three key principles: that language is shaped by the functions it serves, that these functions are social in nature, and that language both reflects and constructs social reality (Zappavigna & Martin, 2022).

Understanding language as social semiotic requires recognizing its dual character. On one hand, language provides the semiotic resources—the meaning potential—available to speakers and writers. On the other hand, actual instances of language use represent selections from this potential, choices motivated by social contexts and communicative purposes (Hasan, 2015). This dialectic between potential and instantiation is fundamental to SFL's architecture. The language system does not exist independently of its uses but rather is constantly shaped and reshaped through communicative practice (Matthiessen, 2023).

The social character of language manifests at multiple levels. Phylogenetically, language has evolved in response to social pressures, developing structures that facilitate complex social coordination, cultural transmission, and collaborative activity (Hasan, 2016). Ontogenetically, children learn language through participation in social exchanges, gradually building their meaning-making repertoire by engaging in diverse social contexts (Painter, 2020). Instantiationally, each text represents a social act, responding to particular situational demands and enacting specific social relationships and purposes.

Recent scholarship has extended the social semiotic perspective to address digital communication, where language increasingly interacts with other semiotic modes in complex multimodal ensembles (Djonov & Zhao, 2022). Social media discourse, for instance, integrates linguistic text with images, emojis, hyperlinks, and interface affordances, creating novel

semiotic assemblages (Zappavigna, 2021). These developments underscore the continued relevance of viewing language as one element within broader social semiotic processes, even as communicative practices evolve in digital contexts.

MEANING, CHOICE, AND CONTEXT

Meaning as Choice

In functional grammar, meaning arises from choice. Every linguistic act involves selecting from among alternatives, and it is precisely this selection process that creates meaning (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This principle represents a fundamental departure from structural linguistics, which emphasizes syntagmatic combinations (what goes with what) over paradigmatic contrasts (what could have been chosen instead). SFL, by contrast, foregrounds the paradigmatic dimension, arguing that meaning inheres not simply in the forms we use but in the choices we make from available options (Matthiessen, 2020).

The system network represents SFL's formal apparatus for modeling paradigmatic choice. A system network displays the options available at each choice point in the grammar, organized hierarchically from most general to most specific (Matthiessen, 2023). For instance, an English clause involves choosing among declarative, interrogative, and imperative mood types, and this initial choice constrains subsequent options regarding subject-verb inversion, modality, and other features. The system network makes explicit that grammatical structure results from accumulating choices across multiple simultaneous systems (Fontaine, 2023).

The Role of Context

Context plays a constitutive role in functional grammar, shaping what choices speakers make and constraining what meanings can be made. SFL distinguishes two contextual levels: context of situation (the immediate communicative environment) and context of culture (the broader social-semiotic system within which communication occurs) (Martin & Rose, 2023). These contexts do not merely influence language externally but are realized through language—enacted, negotiated, and potentially transformed by linguistic choices (Bartlett & O'Grady, 2021).

The context of situation is theorized through register theory, which identifies three key variables: field (what is happening, the nature of social activity), tenor (who is participating, their roles and relationships), and mode (the role language is playing, including channel and medium) (Martin, 2022). These register variables systematically correlate with patterns of linguistic choice. For instance, technical scientific discourse (specialized field) typically employs dense nominal structures and grammatical metaphor, while casual conversation (everyday field) favors congruent clause structures and verbal processes (Halliday & Martin, 2023).

The context of culture is modeled through genre theory, which examines recurrent configurations of meaning that accomplish recognized social purposes (Martin & Rose, 2023). Genres represent staged, goal-oriented social processes that cultures have evolved to achieve particular outcomes, from arguing positions to recounting experiences to explaining phenomena. Recent work has examined how digital technologies create novel genres and reshape existing ones, requiring new analytical frameworks while demonstrating the enduring relevance of functional approaches to understanding meaning-making practices (Bednarek & Caple, 2020).

THE NOTION OF FUNCTION AND METAFUNCTIONS

Functional Diversity

The term 'functional grammar' itself requires clarification, as 'function' operates at multiple levels. At the most basic level, function refers to how linguistic elements work—what role they play in larger structures. Thus, subject and predicate are grammatical functions within clause structure. However, functional grammar's more profound insight concerns the communicative functions language serves: how it enables humans to make meaning about the world, enact social relationships, and organize messages coherently (Banks, 2021).

Halliday's crucial theoretical innovation was recognizing that grammar simultaneously serves multiple high-level functions, which he termed metafunctions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Every clause in English (and by extension in other languages, though realized differently) simultaneously makes three kinds of meaning: ideational (representing experience), interpersonal (enacting relationships), and textual (organizing information). These metafunctions are not sequential but simultaneous—every utterance performs all three functions at once, though particular contexts may foreground one over others (Martin, 2022).

The Ideational Metafunction

The ideational metafunction concerns how language represents experience and constructs our understanding of reality. It divides into two components: the experiential, which construes phenomena (processes, participants, and circumstances), and the logical, which construes relationships between phenomena through coordination, subordination, and expansion (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Experiential meaning is realized primarily through transitivity—the system

of process types (material, mental, verbal, relational, behavioral, existential) and their associated participant roles (Matthiessen, 2023).

The choice of process type profoundly shapes how we construe events. Representing an action as a material process ('The government implemented the policy') versus a mental process ('The government believed in the policy') creates fundamentally different meanings about agency, causation, and responsibility. Recent corpus-based research has demonstrated how systematic patterns of transitivity choices construct particular ideological positions in media discourse, scientific writing, and political rhetoric (Bartlett, 2020; Bednarek & Caple, 2020).

The Interpersonal Metafunction

The interpersonal metafunction concerns how language enacts social relationships and expresses speakers' attitudes, judgments, and positions. It is realized through systems including mood (declarative, interrogative, imperative), modality (degrees of certainty, obligation, inclination), and appraisal (evaluative language expressing affect, judgment, and appreciation) (Martin & White, 2020). Through interpersonal choices, speakers position themselves and their addressees, negotiate authority, express solidarity or distance, and construe subjective orientations toward the propositions they advance (Zappavigna, 2021).

Appraisal theory, developed by Martin and colleagues, provides a sophisticated framework for analyzing evaluative meanings. It distinguishes attitude (emotional reactions, ethical judgments, aesthetic assessments), graduation (scalability of evaluations), and engagement (dialogic positioning regarding alternative viewpoints) (Martin & White, 2020). Appraisal analysis has proven particularly productive in examining

persuasive discourse, online interaction, and social media communication, where explicit evaluation and stance-taking are central to communicative purposes (Zappavigna & Martin, 2022).

The Textual Metafunction

The textual metafunction concerns how language organizes ideational and interpersonal meanings into coherent messages appropriate to contexts. It is realized through theme-rheme structure (information flow within clauses), cohesion (reference, ellipsis, conjunction, lexical relations), and information structure (given-new distribution) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The textual metafunction creates texture—the quality that makes a collection of sentences recognizable as unified text rather than random utterances (Martin & Rose, 2023).

Theme choice—selecting what to position as the clause's point of departure—represents a key resource for managing information flow. In English, unmarked themes (subjects of declarative clauses) create smooth progression, while marked themes (fronted elements like temporal or spatial adjuncts) signal shifts in discourse organization (Matthiessen, 2020). Corpus studies have demonstrated how theme patterns differ systematically across registers and genres, with academic writing employing more marked themes to create clear organizational signals than conversational discourse (Banks, 2021).

GRAMMAR AS RESOURCE, NOT RULES

Perhaps the most fundamental reorientation functional grammar offers is reconceiving grammar as a resource for making meaning rather than a set of rules governing well-formedness. This shift has profound implications for how we understand linguistic creativity, language variation, and the

relationship between grammar and meaning. Where formalist approaches emphasize what language permits or prohibits according to syntactic principles, functional approaches emphasize what language enables—what meanings speakers can make using available resources (Banks, 2021).

Viewing grammar as resource highlights the productive, meaning-making potential of language. Speakers do not simply comply with grammatical requirements but actively deploy grammatical options to achieve communicative goals. A simple example: English allows speakers to choose between active ('The committee approved the proposal') and passive ('The proposal was approved by the committee') voice. Formal grammar might treat these as equivalent, differing only in surface realization. Functional grammar recognizes that voice choice creates different meanings, foregrounding different participants and redistributing experiential roles in ways that matter for message construction (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

The resource perspective also clarifies how grammar interfaces with lexis. Rather than treating grammar and vocabulary as distinct modules, SFL theorizes a lexicogrammar—a unified stratum where more abstract, schematic patterns (grammar) shade into more delicate, specific selections (lexis) (Halliday & Martin, 2023). This continuum allows SFL to capture the systematic relationships between grammatical and lexical choices in register variation. Scientific discourse, for instance, employs both particular grammatical structures (nominalization, grammatical metaphor) and specialized lexical items, working together to construe technical knowledge (Halliday & Martin, 2023).

Importantly, treating grammar as resource does not eliminate normativity but recontextualizes it. Functional grammarians acknowledge that certain choices are more

effective than others for particular purposes in particular contexts, and that speakers may face social consequences for departures from expected patterns. However, these norms are understood as socially constructed regularities that have emerged through communicative practice, not as inherent properties of an idealized language system (Martin, 2022). This perspective proves especially valuable in language education, where the goal is not rule-following but developing students' capacity to make effective choices across diverse contexts (Rose & Martin, 2020).

Recent work has extended the resource metaphor to multimodal communication. Just as verbal grammar provides resources for meaning-making through language, visual grammar, gestural systems, and spatial arrangements offer complementary resources operating through different semiotic channels (Bateman, 2023; Djonov & Zhao, 2022). Multimodal analysis examines how these diverse resources combine in contemporary texts—from websites to videos to social media posts—to create complex meanings no single mode could achieve alone. This expansion demonstrates the generalizability of functional principles beyond language per se to any organized meaning-making system (Kress, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the theoretical foundations of functional grammar, demonstrating how this paradigm reconceives fundamental aspects of linguistic theory. By viewing language as a social semiotic system shaped by communicative functions, functional approaches provide tools for understanding not just what forms language takes but why those forms exist and how speakers deploy them to accomplish social purposes. The principle that grammar represents a resource for meaning-making rather than a set of autonomous

rules reorients our understanding of linguistic structure, variation, and creativity.

Systemic Functional Linguistics, as developed by Halliday and extended by subsequent scholars, offers the most comprehensive realization of functional principles. Its architecture—encompassing stratification (phonology, lexicogrammar, discourse semantics), instantiation (from system to instance), and metafunction (simultaneous realization of ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings)—provides an integrated framework for describing how language works in social contexts. This theoretical sophistication has enabled SFL to address phenomena ranging from language development to discourse structure to multimodal communication.

The concept of metafunctions reveals that grammar has evolved to simultaneously serve multiple communicative purposes. Every utterance represents experience (ideational), enacts relationships (interpersonal), and organizes information (textual). This multifunctionality reflects the complex demands of human social life, where we must simultaneously convey propositional content, negotiate social positions, and create coherent messages. Understanding these metafunctions illuminates how grammatical choices create nuanced meanings that formal approaches often overlook.

Context plays a constitutive role in functional grammar. Through register variables (field, tenor, mode) and genre structures, context shapes the probability distributions of linguistic choices, creating systematic patterns of variation across situations and social purposes. Crucially, language does not merely reflect context but actively construes it—each text both responds to its context and contributes to constructing that context. This dialectical relationship explains both the regularities and the creativity of language use.

Contemporary developments in functional linguistics continue extending these foundational principles. Multimodal analysis applies functional insights to diverse semiotic resources, recognizing that meaning-making in digital environments increasingly involves orchestrating language with images, sound, gesture, and spatial design. Computational applications develop automated tools for functional analysis, enabling large-scale investigations of how linguistic choices correlate with contextual variables. Applied work in education, discourse analysis, and translation demonstrates the practical utility of functional approaches.

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CHAPTER 3

THE CLAUSE AS MESSAGE

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INTRODUCTION

In systemic functional grammar (SFG), the clause is regarded as the fundamental unit of meaning, as it encapsulates core dimensions of communication, including mood, modality, and the representation of human experience. Blessing (2024) underscores that the clause simultaneously operates in three principal capacities: as a message, as an exchange, and as a representation. These metafunctional roles are essential for understanding how meaning is constructed and negotiated within discourse. Through its internal organization, the clause enables speakers to articulate intentions and viewpoints while engaging interlocutors in communicative interaction (Kholilah & Rosyidah, 2023).

The theoretical foundations of the clause have also been examined by Poudel (2022), who emphasizes the importance of integrating linguistic form with communicative function. This integration highlights the clause as a functional unit whose significance extends beyond structural considerations to contextualized language use. Such a perspective aligns with the view that each clause not only conveys propositional content but also enacts social relations, thereby firmly establishing it as a primary unit of meaning in discourse (Botchwey et al., 2023).

Within the framework of functional grammar, the notion of “message” is closely associated with the Theme–Rheme structure of the clause. This structure enables the clause to

realize its communicative purpose through the interaction of two key components: the Theme, which serves as the point of departure, and the Rheme, which carries the new or focal information (Botchwey et al., 2023). Such an organization allows speakers to strategically manage given and new information, thereby enhancing clarity and communicative effectiveness.

In addition to textual organization, interpersonal considerations play a crucial role in clause-based communication. Kholilah & Rosyidah (2023) argue that the mood and modality systems embedded within clauses facilitate the exchange of attitudes, judgments, and emotions between speakers and listeners. Through these interpersonal resources, SFG demonstrates that the clause functions not merely as a syntactic unit but as a dynamic medium for the enactment of interpersonal meaning, reinforcing its central role in message conveyance.

The central role of the clause in communication arises from its multifunctional capacity to integrate ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. As demonstrated by Wakarindi et al. (2022), clauses are interconnected through logico-semantic relations, such as expansion and projection, which enable speakers to construct complex ideas in a coherent and systematic manner. This capacity for combining meanings across clauses allows discourse to remain both economical and expressive.

Furthermore, Opoku (2024) notes that the systematic classification of clauses and their functional roles presents both analytical challenges and opportunities for more nuanced discourse analysis. Examining how clauses interact within broader textual and situational contexts provides valuable insights into conversational dynamics and argumentative structure. Studies of institutional discourse, such as parliamentary speeches and news editorials, illustrate how

clause-based analysis reveals underlying thematic patterns and functional strategies (Saragih et al., 2021). Collectively, these findings affirm that the clause is not merely a structural unit of grammar but a central conduit for complex, socially embedded communication.

THE CONCEPT OF “MESSAGE”

Message vs. Sentence Meaning

The distinction between message and sentence meaning is crucial in functional grammar. While sentence meaning refers to the literal interpretation derived from the syntactic structure, the message encompasses the intent and focus that the speaker wishes to convey. According to Ismail and Kardina, the theme serves as a "starting point" or "signpost" for the speaker's chosen message, indicating the topic the speaker intends to address. The rheme comprises the remainder of the clause, wherein the theme is elaborated upon, effectively representing the bulk of the message being communicated (Ismail & Kardina, 2021). This interconnectedness suggests that while a clause conveys a specific structural meaning, it is within the theme and rheme dynamics where the richness of the message unfolds (Bratayadnya et al., 2021).

Clause as a Carrier of Information

In the SFL framework, clauses are not merely syntactic units but act as carriers of information. Each clause embodies a specific function through Halliday's three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational metafunction relates to the conveyance of content or experience, the interpersonal metafunction addresses the social interactions occurring via language, and the textual metafunction focuses on

how information is organized within the text (Amukasa & Nandelenga, 2024).

Halliday's Metafunctions and the Message

Halliday's metafunctions collectively elucidate how messages are constructed and understood in language. The ideational metafunction allows for the expression of experiences and ideas, while the interpersonal metafunction establishes relationships through language choices, and the textual metafunction concerns the organization and coherence of messages within discourse (Amukasa & Nandelenga, 2024). These functions interact to craft a multi-dimensional approach to meaning-making through language.

THEME AND RHEME

Definition of Theme

In the context of linguistics, *theme* refers to the element of a clause that serves as the starting point of the message, often representing known or given information. The theme sets the stage for what follows in the sentence, thereby establishing the informational load that the speaker or writer aims to convey. According to Hussein and Ahmed, the theme denotes "the point of departure of a clause," and is integral for presenting familiar information within a communicative context (Hussein & Ahmed, 2021). Furthermore, the concept of theme has been highlighted in various studies as playing a significant role in establishing narrative or descriptive continuity, which is important for cohesion in texts (Nurlea et al., 2023).

Definition of Rheme

Rheme, on the other hand, is the component of the sentence that provides new information or elaborates on the theme. It

unfolds the implications of the clause, serving to either inform or summarize the key point introduced by the theme. As noted by Kasmita and Sujarwati, rheme is characterized as "supporting sentences which will explain the theme in more detail," ultimately facilitating the reader's understanding of the message conveyed (Kasmita & Sujarwati, 2022). This structure underscores rheme's function in elaborating upon the initial assertions made by the theme and can assist in providing clarity in communication (Hussein & Ahmed, 2021).

Thematic Structure of the Clause

The thematic structure of a clause is characterized by the interplay between theme and rheme, which contributes significantly to the overall cohesion and coherence of a text. This duality can be illustrated through various thematic progressions in writing. For instance, in discussions surrounding EFL learners' compositions, Fitriati and Gayatri revealed a common tendency for students to misassign theme and rheme, resulting in weak coherence and abrupt thematic introductions (Fitriati & Gayatri, 2021). Such findings underscore the importance of a well-structured thematic framework in promoting effective communication.

Theme-Rheme as Message Organization

The organization of messages within discourse through the theme-rheme framework is vital for clarity and comprehensibility. Each thematic choice shapes how information is perceived, thereby influencing readers' interpretations. In the study by Noviarini, it was found that understanding the theme-rheme relationship significantly enhances students' abilities to organize their ideas systematically and develop critical thinking in writing (Noviarini, 2025).

The articulation of theme-rheme can be viewed through systemic functional linguistics, which reveals distinct thematic configurations across different genres and discourses. For instance, Kanwal et al. conducted a study on Pakistani English newspaper editorials, where varying thematic strategies were employed to enhance credibility and engagement (Kanwal et al., 2025). This highlights the nuanced role that the management of theme and rheme plays in producing effective and persuasive texts across differing contexts.

TYPES OF THEME IN FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

Topical (Ideational) Theme

A Topical Theme is primarily concerned with the subject matter of the clause. It represents the point of departure for the message in the clause and is usually realized by a nominal group, an adverbial group, or a prepositional phrase. It serves to orient the listener or reader to the most significant element of the clause (Mahriyuni et al., 2023). Research indicates that Topical Themes are often the most dominant type found in various texts. For instance, in a study by Siahaan, Topical Themes constituted about 62% of all themes identified in biblical texts (Siahaan, 2023). This dominance underscores their significance in constructing meaning and a sense of cohesion in texts.

For example, Mahriyuni et al. explored both simple themes (comprising merely a Topical Theme) and multiple themes, which included combinations of various theme types (Mahriyuni et al., 2023). Such findings are reflective of broader patterns observed across different genres, including literature and instructional materials, where Topical Themes frequently lead the thematic structure (Ayunani et al., 2025).

Interpersonal Theme

Interpersonal Themes are integral for establishing the relationship between speaker and listener, enabling the expression of attitudes and engagement. These themes often include elements such as modality and adjuncts that express the speaker's viewpoint or interaction (Puspitasari & Sujatna, 2023). In their examination of various texts, Halim et al. noted the role of Interpersonal Themes in crafting engagement strategies within discourse communities, particularly in website communication where coherence is crucial (Halim et al., 2021).

Furthermore, Puspitasari and Sujatna demonstrated that Interpersonal Themes significantly contribute to the narrative structures within storybooks, influencing how characters interact and convey emotions (Puspitasari & Sujatna, 2023). This illustrates that Interpersonal Themes, while less frequently represented than Topical Themes in some analyses, are essential for illustrating verbal interaction and social relationships in texts.

Textual Theme

Textual Themes serve to organize the discourse and connect ideas within and across clauses. They include elements like connectives, which guide the reader through the text and ensure logical progression (Haider, 2022). In the context of educational materials, Siahaan highlighted that Textual Themes account for a notable fraction of the themes analyzed, specifically around 26% in his study (Siahaan, 2023). This indicates the important function of these themes in providing coherence and a sense of flow in longer stretches of text.

Research such as that by Yusuf et al. has also highlighted how Textual Themes, when combined with Topical Themes, create a more complex and cohesive narrative structure (Yusuf et al., 2025). The interplay between these themes can embody

various patterns of thematic progression, aiding in effective communication.

Multiple Themes in a Clause

Multiple Themes reflect the phenomenon wherein a single clause may include more than one type of theme. This complexity allows for a richer communication of meaning within a relatively concise verbal unit. Mahfud et al. emphasized that multiple themes often occur together in discourse, where combinations of Topical, Interpersonal, and Textual Themes are realized in a single clause (Mahfud et al., 2024). This synthesis not only represents the structural tendencies within language but also denotes how different layers of meaning can be simultaneously conveyed.

MARKED AND UNMARKED THEMES IN FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

Unmarked Themes in Declarative Clauses

Unmarked themes are predominantly found at the beginning of clauses, often conflating with the grammatical subject in declarative sentences. This conventional structure aligns with the expectations of English grammar, facilitating reader comprehension by presenting familiar elements as thematic starters (Anis et al., 2022). According to Anis et al., unmarked themes serve as the thematic anchor of a clause, grounding the new information that follows, referred to as the rheme (Anis et al., 2022). Evidence suggests that unmarked themes are frequent in educational contexts; for instance, Hermayenti et al. reported that unmarked simple themes were the most prevalent type found in their analysis of textual data from literature (Hermayenti et al., 2021). This dominance indicates not only

their linguistic utility but also their role in promoting clarity and coherence in communication.

Marked Themes and Emphasis

Marked themes arise in instances where the theme does not align with the grammatical subject of the clause, frequently utilizing adjuncts or prepositional phrases instead (Chang, 2021). These themes serve to emphasize particular information or elements that would otherwise be secondary in the narrative framework. For example, Chang points out that marked themes often enhance the thematic richness of a sentence, drawing attention to specific details or contextual elements that deviate from the typical subject positioning (Chang, 2021).

The Role of Markedness in Meaning

The concept of markedness in thematic analysis contributes significantly to our understanding of communication dynamics. It highlights how the positioning of themes affects the interpretation and reception of a message. Unmarked themes typically present information straightforwardly, which can effectively communicate clear and common ideas. In contrast, marked themes challenge the norm and encourage deeper reflection or analysis, steering the discourse toward more nuanced interpretations (Anis et al., 2022).

THEMATIC CHOICE AND MEANING

How Speakers Choose Themes

Speakers often select themes based on the desired emphasis and the information structure they wish to convey. According to Mahriyuni et al., the choice of themes is influenced by their function within the clause, determining if they serve as a focal point or background information (Mahriyuni et al., 2023). In a

similar vein, Yulianti and Jayantini emphasize that the clause structure, initiated by the theme, critically shapes the delivery and reception of the message (Yulianti & Jayantini, 2023). The selection can also be influenced by the perceived importance of the information within the context, with speakers favoring topical themes that align with expectations of clarity and cohesion.

Thematic Choice and Communicative Purpose

The choice of theme is intrinsically tied to the communicative purpose behind a given interaction. Marked themes can denote emphasis and set the stage for rhetorical effects, as illustrated in the analysis of the Quranic texts by Abdulla, where markedness is leveraged to create emphasis and guide reader focus (Abdulla, 2025). This demonstrates a functional motivation behind thematic choices, underscoring the relationship between thematic structure and rhetorical strategies.

Thematic Variation Across Contexts

Thematic variation is influenced by contextual factors, including genre, audience, and purpose. In educational settings, variations in thematic structures may reflect differences in writers' proficiency levels. For example, Okta et al. found that high-achieving students displayed more sophisticated thematic structures, applying linear progression that enhanced coherence and idea development, while lower-achieving peers often relied on theme reiteration (Okta et al., 2023). Such findings illustrate how thematic choice not only shapes individual responses but also aligns with broader contextual conventions.

Theme and Speaker's Perspective

Themes serve as reflections of the speaker's perspective, allowing for the expression of attitudes, identities, and social

relationships. A speaker's thematic choices can indicate their stance on the subject matter, as highlighted in the analysis of political speeches, where themes are strategically deployed to convey messages effectively (Stevani et al., 2023). This further emphasizes the ideological implications of thematic choice, contributing to the construction of meaning in discourse.

THEME AND INFORMATION FLOW

Theme and Information Structure

The theme serves as the starting point for a clause, setting the stage for subsequent information, referred to as the rheme. In this framework, the theme often presents the "given" information, while the rheme delivers the "new" information. As Rahardjo et al. summarize, the thematic framework effectively outlines how readers or listeners are guided through the textual hierarchy, determining how the information is introduced and contextualized (Rahardjo et al., 2021). This importance is underscored by Hussein and Ahmed, who emphasize that the organization of themes facilitates the communication of known information and provides clarity regarding new developments in discourse (Hussein & Ahmed, 2021).

Furthermore, researchers like Botchwey et al. argue that the effective use of thematic structures enables audiences to interpret and engage with the content more meaningfully, facilitating a coherent understanding of the material presented (Botchwey et al., 2023). This viewpoint aligns with the principle that the organization of information is strategically manipulated in various forms of communication, particularly where clarity and focus are of utmost importance.

Given vs New in the Clause

The distinction between given and new information in thematic structures is critical for effective communication. Given elements (the theme) typically represent what the audience is already familiar with, providing a basis for integrating new information presented in the rheme. As Jia elucidates in his examination of political speeches, a nuanced understanding of how given and new information is managed can significantly impact an audience's interpretation and response (Jia, 2022).

For example, in the declarative clause “The government implemented a new policy,” “The government” serves as the given information (theme), while “implemented a new policy” introduces new information (rheme). This clear delineation aids in maintaining the flow and coherence of the discourse, ensuring that listeners or readers can follow the development of ideas smoothly.

How Theme Guides Interpretation

Themes are not merely structural components; they play a functional role in guiding audience interpretation. Thematic choices influence how information is perceived and prioritized, which can determine the overall impact of a message. For instance, in news reporting, as demonstrated by Xie et al., thematic organization can reflect deeper ideological intentions and emotional nuances, shaping how stories are understood across different cultural contexts (Xie, 2024).

Moreover, according to Anis et al., the manipulation of themes within a narrative can be effectively leveraged in persuasive contexts, allowing communicators to foreground critical information preferences. This adaptation invites audiences to interpret the importance of content according to

how the theme is presented, which can be particularly powerful in diplomatic and political discourse (Anis et al., 2022).

Examples from Texts

Examining thematic structures in real texts reveals the practical application of these theoretical concepts. In the thematic analysis of President Akufo-Addo's 2023 State of the Nation Address, Botchwey et al. noted that marked themes were used strategically to underline significant points and shape audience perception regarding government priorities (Botchwey et al., 2023). Here, the use of thematic variation reflects the speaker's intent to draw attention to specific topics within the broader address.

Another notable example is found in the thematic structures present in Edgar Allan Poe's poems, which utilize unmarked topical themes to achieve clarity while allowing for complex thematic layering when establishing emotional resonance (Khalfan et al., 2021). Such variations indicate the poet's deliberate choice in guiding reader interpretation and emotional engagement, as the theme/rheme relationship perfectly aids in enhancing narrative cohesion.

CLAUSE TYPES AND MESSAGE

Declarative Clauses

Declarative clauses constitute the most common type of clause in English, primarily used to make statements or convey information. Their structure typically follows a Subject-Verb-Object format, where the theme, often the subject, is followed by the rheme that provides new information about the theme. For instance, in the statement "The government passed a new law," "The government" serves as the theme, anchoring the

discourse, while the rheme elaborates the action taken (Yulianti & Jayantini, 2023).

Research shows that declarative clauses often carry a weight of authority and informativeness. Azzahra and Rukmini noted the predominance of declarative moods in Donald Trump's presidential letters, emphasizing how such clauses assert information clearly, thereby shaping audience understanding and engagement (Azzahra & Rukmini, 2023). Furthermore, Blessing highlighted that historical speeches such as those by Nelson Mandela exhibited a majority of declarative clauses, reinforcing their role in emphasizing key events and assertions (Blessing, 2024).

Interrogative Clauses

Interrogative clauses are designed to elicit information, seeking clarification or engaging listeners in dialogue. These can be classified into yes/no questions or WH-questions. For example, "Did the government pass the new law?" exemplifies a yes/no question, while "What laws were passed by the government?" is a WH-question (Muhammad, 2024). The choice to use interrogative clauses affects how information is exchanged, inviting the audience to partake in the conversation actively.

Muhammad analyzed public health communications regarding COVID-19, noting that while imperatives and declaratives dominated, interrogative forms played a critical role in engaging the public and prompting dialogue about health risks (Muhammad, 2024). This illustrates the use of interrogatives as a strategic means to shape public discourse and awareness, enabling a more interactive flow of information.

Imperative Clauses

Imperative clauses are commands or requests that prompt the listener or reader to perform specific actions. Their structure often omits the subject, directly addressing the audience with the verb in the base form, such as "Please pass the law". As indicated by Muhammad, the predominance of imperatives in health communication during COVID-19 reflected an authoritative approach emphasizing the necessity for action and compliance.

This type of clause is particularly effective in motivating behavior, asserting authority, and enhancing engagement in contexts such as public health. The authoritative tone of imperatives reinforces expectations for audience response, thus influencing how messages are understood and acted upon (Muhammad, 2024).

How Clause Type Affects the Message

The type of clause employed has profound implications for the conveyed message and audience interpretation. Declarative clauses create a foundation of facts, providing clear information that can be easily assimilated by the audience. In contrast, interrogative clauses foster interaction, seeking engagement and allowing for two-way dialogue, which may promote a sense of involvement and agency among the listeners (Panggabean et al., 2023).

Imperative clauses, on the other hand, are persuasive by nature, as they compel audiences to act. The effectiveness of this clause type lies in its ability to frame the speaker's authority and the urgency of the message, a technique frequently observed in political speeches and health communications (Muhammad, 2024).

For example, in BTS's speech at the UNGA, over 92% of the clauses were declarative, underscoring the intention to share

critical information with a global audience (Wintara et al., 2022). This choice reflects a communicative strategy aimed at informing rather than questioning, setting a serious tone geared toward audience education and awareness.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated that within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, the clause functions as the primary unit of meaning through which messages are constructed and communicated. The clause simultaneously realizes ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings, enabling speakers and writers to represent experience, enact social relations, and organize information coherently. Central to this process is the Theme–Rheme structure, which allows the message to be strategically organized by distinguishing between given and new information. The discussion of thematic structures, including topical, interpersonal, and textual themes, as well as marked and unmarked themes, highlights how thematic choices contribute to coherence, emphasis, and communicative effectiveness in discourse.

Furthermore, the analysis of clause types reinforces the view that grammatical choices are intrinsically linked to communicative purpose. Declarative, interrogative, and imperative clauses each shape how messages are interpreted and how audiences are engaged, whether through informing, questioning, or directing action.

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CHAPTER 4

CLAUSE AS EXCHANGE IN SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a social tool that people use to construct meanings, maintain relationships, and convey messages within specific situations. Instead of treating language only as a system of rules, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) views it as a set of meaningful choices shaped by social purposes. Developed by Halliday and expanded upon by later scholars, this approach emphasizes that grammar is closely tied to how language functions in everyday communication. Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. (2014)

One of the main principles of SFL is that each clause performs three functions at once: representing experience (ideational), managing interaction (interpersonal), and organizing discourse (textual). Among these, the interpersonal metafunction is concerned with how speakers and writers use language to relate to others. Within this domain, the notion of Clause as Exchange explains the clause as a move in interaction between participants. Hoang, V. V. (2021).

From this viewpoint, clauses are not merely grammatical forms but acts of social exchange. Utterances such as “Can you open the window?”, “I will assist you,” or “They finished the project” function as exchanges in which people give or demand information or actions. These interactive roles are realized through the grammatical systems of Mood and Modality.

The concept of Clause as Exchange is important because it shows how grammar encodes relationships. By selecting declarative, interrogative, or imperative clauses and using modal expressions like *may*, *should*, or *must*, speakers position themselves toward others and shape expected responses. Grammar thus becomes a resource for negotiating meaning in context.

Recent research confirms the value of the interpersonal metafunction for examining classroom talk, academic texts, online communication, and political discourse. Such studies demonstrate that Clause as Exchange remains useful for exploring how attitudes, authority, and solidarity are expressed through language.

In education, this perspective is highly relevant. Language learners must master not only correct forms but also how to request, offer, question, and respond appropriately. Knowledge of Mood and Modality helps learners develop communicative competence. For this reason, this chapter presents an overview of Clause as Exchange with explanations and examples.

FOUNDATIONS OF SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS (SFL)

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by M.A.K. Halliday, conceptualizes language as a social semiotic resource used by speakers to construct meaning within specific social contexts. In contrast to formalist or generative approaches that prioritize abstract syntactic structures, SFL places primary emphasis on the functions of language in social interaction.

Language is described as both systemic and functional. It is *systemic* because it consists of networks of interrelated choices available to language users, and it is *functional* because these choices are always motivated by meaning-making purposes.

From this perspective, grammatical structures are not arbitrary forms but realizations of semantic and social functions.

Metafunctions of Language

According to Halliday, language simultaneously performs three fundamental metafunctions, each corresponding to essential human needs in communication. Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. (2014).

1. Ideational Metafunction

The ideational metafunction is concerned with the representation of human experience, including both external experience (actions, events, and states in the physical world) and internal experience (thoughts, perceptions, and feelings). This metafunction is realized primarily through the transitivity system, which organizes meaning in terms of processes, participants, and circumstances. The logical component of the ideational metafunction further accounts for the relationships between clauses, such as coordination and subordination.

2. Interpersonal Metafunction

The interpersonal metafunction enables speakers to enact social relationships, negotiate roles, and express attitudes, judgments, and evaluations. Through this metafunction, language functions as a means of interaction, allowing speakers to make statements, ask questions, give commands, and make offers. The key grammatical systems realizing interpersonal meaning are the Mood system and Modality.

3. Textual Metafunction

The textual metafunction allows language to function as a coherent and cohesive text rather than as a collection of isolated clauses. It is responsible for organizing information and creating links between parts of a text and between the

text and its context. Systems such as Theme–Rheme, information structure, and cohesion are central to the realization of textual meaning.

These three metafunctions operate simultaneously within every clause. A single clause therefore represents experience (ideational), enacts social relations (interpersonal), and organizes a message into a coherent discourse (textual) at the same time Hoang, V. V. (2021).

CLAUSE AS EXCHANGE: KEY IDEAS

Definition

In Systemic Functional Linguistics, Clause as Exchange refers to the interpretation of the clause as an interactive unit through which a speaker or writer either gives or demands something from an addressee. The commodity exchanged is typically information or goods and services. From this perspective, the clause functions not merely as a grammatical structure, but as a form of social action embedded in interaction (Berry et al., 2019).

Within an exchange, participants adopt complementary interpersonal roles, such as giver and receiver in the exchange of information, or demander and provider in the exchange of goods and services. These roles are not fixed but are dynamically negotiated through grammatical choices.

The negotiation of these roles is realized through the interpersonal systems of Mood and Residue, which encode the speaker's role in the interaction, the expected response from the addressee, and the degree of interpersonal authority, commitment, or politeness. As such, the clause as exchange provides a crucial analytical lens for understanding how

language enacts social relationships and interpersonal meaning in discourse.

MOOD SYSTEM AND SPEECH FUNCTIONS

Within the interpersonal metafunction of Systemic Functional Linguistics, the clause is interpreted as clause as exchange, functioning as a unit through which speakers negotiate meaning with others. This negotiation involves the exchange of either information or goods and services, and it is realized grammatically through the interaction between the Mood system and speech functions.

Relationship between Mood Types and Speech Functions

Speech functions refer to the communicative roles performed by a clause in interaction, such as making statements, asking questions, giving commands, or making offers. Mood types, on the other hand, are grammatical configurations that organize the interpersonal structure of the clause, primarily through the arrangement of Subject and Finite element. Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. (2014).

Mood Type	Typical Speech Function	Example
Declarative	Statement	<i>The meeting starts at nine.</i>
INterrogative	Question	<i>Does the meeting start at nine?</i>
Imperative	Command	<i>Start the meeting at nine.</i>

In English, there is a typical or congruent relationship between mood types and speech functions:

In these congruent realizations, the grammatical form of the clause directly reflects its communicative function, making the speaker's interpersonal intention relatively explicit.

Incongruent Realizations of Speech Functions

In actual discourse, however, speakers frequently employ incongruent realizations, where a mood type is used to perform a speech function that is not its typical one. Such incongruence is a key interpersonal resource, allowing speakers to manage politeness, power relations, and social distance. Berry, M., Fontaine, L., & Alam, H. (2019)

For example:

- **Interrogative Mood realizing a Command**
Could you close the door?
Although grammatically interrogative, this clause functions interpersonally as a **command**. The interrogative mood reduces the force of the demand and presents it as a request, thereby softening the speaker's authority and increasing politeness.
- **Declarative Mood realizing a Question or Request**
I was wondering if you could help me.
Structurally declarative, this clause functions as a **request** rather than a statement. The declarative mood allows the speaker to express tentativeness and respect for the addressee's autonomy.
- **Declarative Mood realizing a Command**
You will submit the report today.
While declarative in form, this clause functions as a **command**, especially in institutional contexts. The absence of an imperative form increases the authority of the speaker by presenting the command as an unquestionable fact.

These incongruent realizations demonstrate that mood choice does not mechanically determine speech function. Instead, mood operates as a meaning potential, whose interpretation depends on contextual factors such as social roles, institutional power, and the relationship between participants.

Modality in the Interpersonal Metafunction

The relationship between mood types and speech functions highlights the fundamentally interpersonal nature of grammar in SFL. By choosing a particular mood, speakers position themselves in relation to others, negotiate degrees of authority and solidarity, and anticipate specific types of responses.

Congruent realizations tend to be direct and efficient, while incongruent realizations allow for greater interpersonal flexibility. Consequently, the analysis of mood and speech functions must consider not only grammatical form but also the social meanings enacted through those forms in context.

EXAMPLES AND ANALYSIS

Statement

She has submitted the assignment.

Function: Statement; Mood: Declarative; Commodity: Information; Expected response: acknowledgement.

Question Clause

Did you receive the email?

Function: Question; Mood: Interrogative; Commodity: Information; Expected response: answer.

Command Clause

Send the report now.

Function: Command; Mood: Imperative; Commodity: Action;
Expected response: compliance or refusal.

Offer Clause

Would you like some help with that?

Function: Offer; Mood: Interrogative with modal; Commodity:
Service; Expected response: acceptance or rejection.

Each example illustrates how a clause operates as an exchange by identifying the role, function, Mood type, and likely response.

MODALITY AND INTERPERSONAL MEANING

Modality plays a central role in the construction of interpersonal meaning because it allows speakers and writers to position themselves with respect to the certainty, obligation, or inclination expressed in a clause. Within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, modality functions as an interpersonal resource that mediates between positive and negative polarity, enabling language users to express degrees of probability, usuality, obligation, and willingness rather than absolute statements. Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. (2014).

In the context of Clause as Exchange, modality is closely related to the negotiation of roles and relationships between interactants. Modal expressions such as *may*, *must*, *should*, or *probably* signal how strongly a speaker commits to a proposition or demands compliance from others. High modality often indicates authority, certainty, or strong commitment, while low modality tends to express tentativeness, politeness, or openness to negotiation. Through these choices, speakers manage interpersonal alignment and shape expected responses in interaction. Thompson, G. (2014).

Furthermore, modality reflects social and cultural norms governing interaction. Different contexts and cultures prefer different levels of modality when making requests, giving advice, or expressing opinions. For instance, indirectness and low modality may be valued in contexts emphasizing politeness and harmony, whereas high modality may be acceptable or expected in institutional or hierarchical settings. Awareness of these patterns is crucial for effective communication, particularly in second language learning and intercultural contexts. Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1989); Zhang, Y., & Liu, X. (2023).

From a pedagogical perspective, understanding modality enhances learners' ability to use language appropriately rather than merely accurately. Teaching modality as part of interpersonal meaning helps learners recognize how grammatical choices express attitudes, stance, and social relations. By analyzing authentic texts and interactions, learners can develop sensitivity to how modality contributes to persuasion, negotiation, and pragmatic effectiveness across different communicative situations. Eggins, S. (2004); Thompson, G. (2014).

Modality expresses a speaker's judgment about probability, obligation, or willingness.

Examples:

- You might want to check your email. (probability)
- You must finish it by Monday. (obligation)

Through modality, speakers can soften or strengthen their stance and manage interpersonal relationships more delicately. Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. (2014); Zhang, Y., & Liu, X. (2023).

PEDAGOGICAL AND ANALYTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Understanding Clause as Exchange is highly valuable for both pedagogical practice and linguistic analysis, as it views clauses not only as grammatical units but also as social actions in interaction. Within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, language functions as a resource for negotiating meanings, roles, and interpersonal. Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. (2014); Eggins, S. (2004).

From a discourse analysis perspective, Clause as Exchange enables learners and researchers to identify how power relations, politeness, and negotiation strategies are realized through grammatical choices. For example, declarative clauses may function as indirect commands, reflecting authority or attempts to maintain politeness. Analyzing mood and speech functions helps uncover implicit meanings such as dominance, solidarity, or resistance that may not be immediately visible at the lexical level Thompson, G. (2014); Bloor, T., & Bloor, M. (2013).

In language teaching, Clause as Exchange plays an important role in developing learners' communicative competence. Learners often produce grammatically correct sentences but may struggle to use them appropriately in real communication. Teaching the relationship between mood types (declarative, interrogative, imperative) and speech functions (statement, question, command, offer) helps learners understand how grammar operates in context and supports the production of socially appropriate and meaningful interactions. Eggins, S. (2004); Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1989).

Furthermore, in intercultural communication, Clause as Exchange helps learners recognize subtle interactional expectations embedded in grammatical structures. Different cultures employ different strategies for making requests, giving commands, or expressing disagreement. Without awareness of these differences, misunderstandings may occur even when the

language used is grammatically accurate. Therefore, integrating Clause as Exchange into language instruction enhances learners' intercultural awareness and pragmatic sensitivity. Zhang, Y., & Liu, X. (2023).

Overall, Clause as Exchange provides a practical framework for understanding language as a dynamic social process and offers significant benefits for discourse analysis, language pedagogy, and intercultural communication.

Understanding Clause as Exchange is valuable for:

- **Discourse analysis** : Identifying power, politeness, and negotiation Strategies
- **Language teaching** : Helping learners recognize and produce appropriate speech functions.
- **Intercultural communication** : Understanding subtle exchange expectations embedded in grammar (Zhang & Liu, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Clause as Exchange conceptualizes clauses as interactive moves through which speakers and writers negotiate meanings and social relationships. By analyzing the grammatical systems of Mood and Modality, this chapter has shown that grammar functions not merely as a set of formal rules but as a social resource for enacting roles, expressing attitudes, and managing interaction in context. Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. (2014).

Through the discussion of mood types, speech functions, congruent and incongruent realizations, and modality, it becomes evident that interpersonal meaning is dynamically constructed through choice. Speakers strategically select grammatical forms to negotiate authority, politeness, solidarity, and commitment, shaping both expected responses and

interpersonal alignment (Thompson, 2014; Bloor & Bloor, 2013). Thompson, G. (2014); Bloor, T., & Bloor, M. (2013).

In line with the objective of this chapter, the overview and analyses presented here provide a theoretical and practical foundation for understanding how Clause as Exchange operates within the interpersonal metafunction of language. This understanding is intended to support further linguistic analysis and pedagogical application, particularly in helping learners and analysts recognize how grammatical choices contribute to effective and appropriate communication across contexts. Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1989) ; Zhang, Y., & Liu, X. (2023).

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CHAPTER 5

CLAUSE AS REPRESENTATION

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INTRODUCTION

Clause as representation is derived from ideational meaning especially experiential meaning. This type of meaning is one of Halliday's meaning systems (Systemic Functional Linguistics) comprising the other two types of meanings, namely interpersonal meaning and textual meaning. Among ideational, textual, and interpersonal meanings, the first has been perceived as the basic tool of meaning making. Ideational meaning is mainly associated with clause of representation that views a clause as linguistic tool to represent meanings. In particular, it represents an event with selective linguistic feature and patterns as a way to achieve the functional goal of a text either in the spoken or written form.

Clause as representation divides all kinds of events into six categories of experiences starting from the concrete one to the abstract one. Halliday's six types of experiences encompass material process, verbal process, behavioural process, mental process, existential process, and relational process. Each process involves at least a thing termed participant and a setting that underlies or surrounds the process known as circumstance. A process is realized by a verbal group while a participant is realized by a nominal group. Different from a process and a participant, a circumstance is represented by a prepositional phrase or an adverbial group.

In SFL, the choices of process, participant, and circumstance types as well as the choices of their patterns are not arbitrary, but determined by the social goal of a genre. This means that the grammar from the perspective SFL is various. Each genre has its own typical grammar. This is what makes functional grammar different from formal grammar that has one ‘correct’ standard or convention. Practically, in functional grammar, the purpose of a text affects the process types and the relationship between their elements. The more functional the choices of process, participant, and circumstance are, the more functional the text is and this contributes to achieving the purpose of the text. A process along with its participant and circumstance to obtain a purpose of a text is known as the transitivity system.

TRANSITIVITY SYSTEM

Transitivity system refers to a set of linguistic unit consisting of a process involving a participant/participants with or without a circumstance, employed to make meaning. As a unit of language, it represents experiences or events in a systematic and measurable way. In linguistics, it serves as either a tool of analysis or an object of study. The system of transitivity comprises six different process types as exemplified in the following table.

Table 5.1. The Summary of Transitivity System

Process	Participants	Function
<i>Material (Process doing/happening)</i>	<i>Actor; Goal; of Range/Scope; Beneficiary</i>	<i>Representing an activity or action either in the form of concrete or abstract experience</i>

Process	Participants	Function
<i>Mental</i> (Process of sensing/thinking/feeling)	<i>Senser; Phenomenon</i>	<i>Representing a conscious activity in the sense, mind, and emotion</i>
<i>Verbal</i> (Process of saying)	<i>Sayer; Verbiage; Target</i>	<i>Representing a verbal activity</i>
<i>Behavioural</i> (Mental process resulting in observable reactions)	<i>Behaver; Behaviour; Range; Phenomenon</i>	<i>Representing a behaviour</i>
<i>Relational</i> (Process of being/having)	<i>Carrier/Identified; Attribute/Identifier</i>	<i>Establishing identities or values towards an entity</i>
<i>Existential</i> (Process of existing)	<i>Existent</i>	<i>Showing the existence of an entity</i>

MATERIAL PROCESS

Material processes are associated with the process of doing, happening, going-on, and other similar events (see Eggins, 2004; Gerrot & Wignell, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014; Martin et al., 1997; Thomson, 2014). Some examples of material processes are *plant*, *conserve*, *water*, etc. This type of process can involve two parties, three parties, even only one-side party. The thing involved in the material process is termed participant. The first participant that conducts the action is known as ‘actor’ while the second participant that is affected by the actor is categorised as ‘goal’ (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014). When the second participant is not affected by the first

participant, or only as the extension of the process, it is classified as ‘scope’ or ‘range’ (see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014; Martin et al., 1997). When the material clause involves three parties, the third participant that receives the entity (goal) from the first party (actor) is named ‘beneficiary’ (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014). A beneficiary that receives a thing or object is classified as ‘recipient’ while a beneficiary that receives information or message is called ‘client’ (see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014). In short, a material clause represents the process of actions or activities.

The actions or activities represented by material clauses can be in concrete or abstract experiences. The point is that there is the flow of energy that causes a thing change or occur. By means of material clauses, the created meaning is measurable and it leads to objective representation. Due to its typical function, material process is commonly employed to affect the community of discourse in objective ways. In research articles, for example, material clauses have been dominantly used to build knowledge in objective manner (see Martínez, 2001). While in the introduction and finding sections they represent the occurrences of scientific phenomena, in the method they construe how the data have been collected.

Further, due its measurability parameter, material clauses can be used as a tool of analysis for revealing ideology. This can be seen from the type of material process, the role of each participant, and the relationship between the participants. The study of Emilia et al. (2017) has disclosed the patriarchal and gender inequality in the English textbooks for senior high school students. Whereas female character are represented as undergoing passive or less adventurous physical activities, male characters are portrayed in the opposite side. In the analyses of Manar et al., (2025), material clauses have been also employed to explore the economic ideology in English textbooks for

Indonesian senior high school students. By means of the framework of material clauses, the analyses have revealed that productive activities outnumbered the consumptive ones. Nevertheless, there has been the tendency to represent money as the goal. This representation can lead students to money-oriented paradigm.

Apart from the educational context, the use of material clauses as tool of analysis also contributes to reveal how human beings treat the nature. Environmental sustainability has been a critical issue for the past decades due to humans' exploitation to the nature, causing the global warming, climate change, and the loss of habitat. The use of material clauses as the analysis framework for disclosing linguistic strategies in texts concerning ecology has been found in the study of Dallyono & Sukyadi (2019). By means of material processes, a text should be represented as a medium to create balance in the cosmos, not vice versa. In tourism brochures, for example, material clauses contribute to disclosing the relationship between humans and nature. In particular, they allow the revelation about how the tourism company treats the nature. The mistreated representation can lead to what the targets (tourists) will do in the tourism site. In the following extracts of material clauses, there is a different tendency in representing the roles between humans and the nature.

<i>The snow-white beaches and crystal-clear sea of Billiton</i>	<i>increase</i>	<i>your good mood.</i>
ACTOR	PROCESS	GOAL
(You)	<i>explore</i>	<i>the snow-white beaches and crystal-clear sea of Billiton.</i>
ACTOR	PROCESS	GOAL

In the first extract, ‘The snow-white beaches and crystal-clear’ (the nature) functions as an actor with ‘your good mood’ as the goal. However, in the second clause, human being/tourist serves as an elliptical actor with ‘The snow-white beaches and crystal-clear’ (the nature) as the goal. The second clause compared to the first one has more tendency to damage the environment because human being is represented as the one that conducts a concrete action to nature (the goal). Based on the perspective of ecology, human beings are the part of nature, not as its controller. Thus, material clauses should be employed to represent them in harmony for creating the balance in cosmos.

MENTAL PROCESS

Mental processes are associated with the coconscious activities occurring in humans’ psychological domain, namely in the perception, cognition, and emotion. In general, they encompass the process of sensing, thinking, and feeling. The first participant involved in a mental clause is called ‘senser’ while the second participant that is sensed, thought, and felt is known as ‘phenomenon’. Different from the second participant (goal/range) in material clause, that is commonly in the form of things, the one in mental process can be in the form of things or even ideas. The distinct types of phenomenon in mental clause are exemplified in the following extracts.

<i>Millennial citizens in the town</i>	<i>enjoy</i>	<i>the view of their green neighbourhood ranging from natural river to endemic garden.</i>
SENSER	PROCESS	PHENOMENON

<i>Millennial citizens in the town</i>	<i>believe</i>	<i>that if they damage the environment, they will endanger their own life.</i>
SENDER	PROCESS	PHENOMENON

In the first clause, the phenomenon is a thing, that is, ‘the view of their green neighbourhood ranging from natural river to endemic garden’. The main thing is ‘the view’. In the second extract, the phenomenon is in the form of idea, namely ‘that if they damage the environment, they will endanger their own life’. Mental clauses have different functions across different genres. In academic discourse especially the genre of knowledge building like research articles, they serve to allow the authors to maintain interpersonal engagement with the readers (see Martínez, 2001), as a way to balance the impersonality. Further, in this type of genre, cognitive mental clauses outnumber other types of clauses because they represent the process of higher-order thinking like *hypothesise*, *perceive*, *consider*, etc. As it has been known, the production of knowledge starts from the ability to think. In another genre like creative writing especially narrative, mental clauses assist the authors and main characters to assess the events or phenomena in the story (see Emilia, 2014). In this type of genre, emotive mental clauses play salient roles because they reveal what the characters feel and want. This engages the emotion of the readers.

VERBAL PROCESS

A verbal process represents the activities of saying originally occurring in the mouth like *say*, *report*, *claim*, etc. The participant that expresses the saying activities is known as ‘sayer’ while the content of the saying is termed ‘verbiage’. A verbal process can also contain another participant that receives

the saying activities and it is classified as ‘target’. In the following extract verbal clause, the verbal process is ‘have reported’ involving ‘the green activists’ as the first participant (sayer) and ‘the massive deforestation as the result of palm oil plantation’ as the second participant (verbiage).

<i>The green activist</i>	<i>has reported</i>	<i>the massive deforestation as the result of palm oil plantation.</i>
SAYER	PROCESS	VERBIAGE

Further, a verbal clause can project a new or another process derived from the main clause. This commonly occurs when the verbal clause contains another clause as exemplified in the following extract.

<i>The green activist</i>		<i>claims</i>	
SAYER		PROCESS	
<i>that</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>will save</i>	<i>the mountain, the forest, and the river.</i>
	ACTOR	PROCESS	GOAL

In the preceding sample of verbal clause, the verbal process is ‘claims’ involving the first participant (the green activists as the sayer. Further, “that he will save the mountain, the forest, and the river” reveals another experience or process, in this case, a material process.. Thus, the derived clause can be analysed as a new process.

Although verbal clauses can be found across different genres, they in particular play a typical and salient roles in certain types of genres like in the genre of media especially news article. This is in line with the social goal of news article. While news articles have a purpose to disseminate daily

information that is vital for the public, verbal clauses underpin this process of meaning making by facilitating how to report convincingly. In particular, verbal clauses allow the use of sayers as the source of information and this contributes to making the reported events or stories trustworthy. What more important is that verbal clauses enable to pack the meaning in different ways. In other words, by means of ‘managed’ patterns of verbal clauses, the same event can be reported in contradictory ways according to the ideology or goal embedded in the media. In the following extract, for instance, the way the participants involved in events is represented differently by means of different roles assigned to the participants.

<i>The politician</i>	<i>is called</i>	<i>by the corruption eradication. commission</i>
TARGET	PROCESS	SAYER

<i>The politician</i>	<i>reports</i>		
SAYER	PROCESS		
<i>that</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>will come</i>	<i>to the corruption eradication commission</i>
	ACTOR	PROCESS	CIRCUMSTANCE: PLACE

In the first clause, the politician is positioned as the target and this way of representation depicts him as the weaker role in terms of power. As reported by Manar (2016), this strategy of verbal process tends to create negative meaning or impression towards the target, in this context, the politician. In the second clause, the politician is positioned as the ‘sayer’. Then in the material clause derived from the verbal clause, the actor is

considered as the one that will initiatively come to the corruption eradication commission. By means of different ways of representation, the meaning constructed on the participant can be intentionally made positive or negative.

BEHAVIOURAL PROCESS

Behavioural processes represent the psychological processes resulting in physiological reactions. In other words, this type of experience is the combination between mental and material processes (see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014). It is claimed partly as mental process because the first experience occurs in the psychological domain while it is further claimed partly as material process because the result of the inner experience is noticeable. Behavioural experiences encompass *smile, sob, sniff*, etc. Like the three types of processes explained earlier, behavioural processes also involve things as their participants. The first participant in behavioural clause is termed ‘behavior’ while the second participant can be labelled as ‘behaviour’, ‘range’, or ‘phenomenon’ (see Gerrot & Wignell, 1994; Martin et al., 1997). In the following clause, the behavioural process is ‘is sniffing’ with ‘the kid’ as the behavior and the smell of fresh durian as the phenomenon.

<i>The kid</i>	<i>is sniffing</i>	<i>the smell of fresh durian</i>	<i>in his parents’ plantation</i>
BEHA VER	PROCESS	PHENOMENON	CIRCUMSTANCE: PLACE

Compared to other types of processes, behavioural processes are the least employed clauses. As a behavioural process represents material and mental experiences, its compatibility is limited. However, in certain types of genre, for example the genre of creative writings like narratives, it

contributes to achieving the goal of narratives by portraying a character deeply and this helps the readers feel and imagine what the character experiences.

RELATIONAL PROCESS

Relational processes are associated with the processes of creating the meaning by relating two entities. Briefly speaking, it can be understood as the process of being or having (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014). Compared to other four process types elaborated earlier, relational process is abstract since the events are not explicit, visible or tangible. In terms of its function, a relational process serves to relate a thing with its attributes or identities. When a thing is related to its part, it is known as attribute relational clauses (see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014). However, when a thing is related to its whole entity, it is termed as identifying relational clause (see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014). Whereas the two entities in identifying relational clause are equal or interchangeable, the ones in attribute relational clause are not switchable, as exemplified in the following extracts.

<i>The plantation of palm oil</i>	is	<i>detrimental to the environment.</i>
CARRIER	ATTRIBUTIVE PROCESS	ATTRIBUTE

<i>At the present time</i>	<i>the giant sequoia</i>	is	<i>the largest and tallest tree we have on the planet.</i>
CIRCUMSTANCE: TIME	IDENTIFIED	IDENTIFYING PROCESS	IDENTIFIER

In the first extract, being detrimental is only a part of characteristics of palm oil plantation and the role is not switchable. In the second clause, the largest and tallest tree on the planet is not a part of sequoia but its equal representation. The role in the second clause is switchable, namely “at the present time, the largest and tallest tree that we have on the planet is sequoia”. In the attributive relational clause, the participant being represented is called ‘carrier’ while its part of entity or characteristic is known as ‘attribute’ (see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014). In the identifying relational clause, the first participant is termed ‘identified/token’ and its equal entity is classified as ‘identifier/value’ (see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014).

One of typical functions of relational clauses is for establishing values towards a thing. The values are either positive or negative, depending on the goal of text ‘producers’. Thus, relational clauses can be employed as an analysis tool to reveal the hidden meaning including ideologies behind a text. This has been proved by the study of Al Fajri (2018) and Manar, (2016;2021) that the analysis by using relational clauses has disclosed how meaning towards the same event is created differently.

EXISTENTIAL PROCESS

Existential processes represent the existence of a thing (see Eggins, 2004; Gerrot & Wignell, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014; Martin et al., 1997; Thomson, 2014). Unlike other types of processes that can involve two even three parties of participants, this type of process only involves one-side participant. Commonly, the existential process in English is represented by the process ‘be’ with ‘there’ as the common marker. In Indonesian, the process is realised by ‘ada’. The only-one side of participant in existential clause is termed

‘existent’ (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014). Unlike other clauses that represent events, this type of clause just like the relational clause has no concrete event except the participant. This is what make existential clause is abstract in terms of the event.

Existential clauses serve to increase the awareness of text consumers about the existence of something. In the genre of creative writing like narrative, for example, it is employed in the orientation section to introduce the existence of the main characters. In the genre of knowledge building like research article, it is used in the introduction section to introduce that a research issue has existed. The use of existential clauses in the orientation of narrative and in the introduction of research article is exemplified in the following extracts.

<i>Once upon a time,</i>	<i>there</i>	was	<i>a motherless girl named Bawang Putih (White Onion).</i>
CIRCUMSTANCE: TIME		PROCESS	EXISTENT

<i>To the present time,</i>	<i>there</i>	<i>has been</i>	<i>plethora of studies investigating the ecological values in English course books.</i>
CIRCUMSTANCE: TIME		PROCESS	EXISTENT

In the extracts mentioned earlier, the existential processes are represented by ‘to be’ namely ‘was’ and ‘has been’. The participants are ‘a motherless girl named Bawang Butih (White Onion)’ and ‘plethora of studies investigating the ecological values in English course books’. Different genres need a typical participant types of existential process. In educational context, the higher the level of education is, the more abstract the existent is. Among other genres, the genre of knowledge building requires more abstract existent compared to other genres especially the genre of creative writing.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The system of transitivity in relation to language pedagogy has so far been associated with the genre-based approach. In genre-based pedagogy, each type of genre has a typical goal and this leads to a typical process type as well. Thus, the use of linguistic features including grammar is not random or in isolation, but it is learned in context according to the main and specific goals of the genre.

Under the genre of knowledge building like research articles, the process types taught for language learners are made in line with the main goal and specific purposes of the genre. A research article in general has a function as the medium of knowledge production and this requires objective process especially material and relational clauses. The former, in particular, creates impersonality (Martínez, 2001). On the other hand, there is also a need for researchers to maintain connection with the readers and this is accommodated by employing mental clauses (Martínez, 2001). Further, a research article has four common sections or sub-genres known as introduction, method, result, and discussion and each of these sections has a distinctive function (Swales, 1990). The process of meaning making in the introduction section for example is outnumbered by material

clauses. This type of clauses has been also found to be dominant in the method section (Zheng et al., 2014). Further, whereas the section of result is typically outnumbered by frequent material and relational clauses, that of the discussion is commonly underpinned by material, relational, and verbal clauses.

Another genre is addressed to the creative-writing genre like narratives. The genre of narratives has a function as a medium for entertaining and disseminating values. In particular, narratives consist of different common sections. They are orientation, evaluation, complication, and resolution; setting, complicating, action, and resolution; or orientation, complication, climax, resolution and evaluation (see Gerrot & Wignell, 1994; Johnstone, 2016; Ulatowska et al., 1990). Since each of this section has a distinct purpose, each requires typical process-type distribution. Commonly, the genre of narrative is frequently supported by material, mental, verbal, and relational clauses. Material clauses serve to represent the chronological physical events and the problematic events while mental clauses serve to represent how the writer or the character in the story views the events. Further, whereas verbal clauses make the story authentic by using direct speech, relational clauses help in establishing the values towards the events or characters in the story.

The incorporation of SFL especially the transitivity system and the genre-based approach has been proved to be effective in teaching a functional narrative for English-as-a-second-language (ESL) learners (Ko, 2010). In learning how to write a creative writing by means of transitivity system and genre-based approach, language learners increase their awareness about the relationship between the function of a text along with the function of each section in the text and the functional linguistic features.

Genre-based pedagogy and the system of transitivity also contribute to revealing language learners' difficulties in constructing a meaningful text. The comparative transitivity analyses of Manar (2022) and Manar (2023) have exposed that tertiary student writers still encountered challenges in writing functional thesis introduction sections. Compared to the introduction sections composed by experienced writers, they still lacked investigating-like process types. In the secondary level, the use of transitivity system in relation to genre-based pedagogy has also revealed the gap between fast and slow learners in making use of process types in their creative writing (Mulyaningsih, 2013). The fast learners tended to adopt more relational clauses compared to their slow counterparts (Mulyaningsih, 2013).

In the context of students with special needs, the comparative studies of Manar (2022) and Manar (2023) have revealed that deaf student writers in comparison to the hearing ones still faced challenges in representing the participants and circumstance in their stories. Besides, they still found challenges in employing relational clauses compared to the material ones (Manar, 2022a). Further, their existential clauses compared to those of the hearing counterparts still lacked abstract existents (Manar, 2022a). By providing special attention and practices on the use of lexico-grammatical features that are still challenging for struggling special-need students, it is expected that they, in particular deaf learners, can improve their language even their abstract thinking skills. The adoption of transitivity system in genre-based approach for teaching language contributes to assisting learners produce text functionally, especially writing with a purpose in mind and selected functional linguistic features.

CONCLUSION

Clause as representation can be inferred as the function of clauses as representing six different experiences, namely material, mental, verbal, behavioural, relational and existential processes. Each process involves a typical type and patterns of participants as well as optional types of circumstance. The choices in certain types of processes, participants, circumstances, and their relationship are not arbitrary. Rather, they are determined by the context of culture and context of situation. In particular, they are driven by the social goal behind a text. Based on the perspective of clause as representation, each genre has its own typical grammar. Further, each ‘sub-genre’ or section requires its own typical grammar as well, in this sense, the clause types and the patterns of their elements.

In relation to the language pedagogy, the understanding about clause as representation assists language learners how to produce texts functionally according to the social goal behind the texts, like the goal of creative writing to entertain and the goal of academic writing to construct, develop, and disseminate knowledge. Apart from producing texts in meaningful ways, the understanding about clause as representation also builds language learners’ critical literacy. This is salient as they are living in the era of cyber media where meaning is not neutral anymore but is suited to the ideology or propaganda of text producers. Last but not least, whereas formal grammar helps language learners construct texts appropriately according to ‘one’ grammatical standard, functional grammar through clause as representation contributes to assisting them how to construct text functionally.

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CHAPTER 6

SENTENCE STRUCTURE AND CLAUSE COMBINATION

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INTRODUCTION

Functional grammar provides a coherent, new approach to the structure of the sentence and at the same time, presents a theory of grammar as a resource for meaning rather than as an end in itself. From this perspective, sentences and clauses are interpreted in terms of how ideas are related to one another or presented in an orderly manner; and how writers' or speakers' intentions are conveyed in situational contexts. It implies, therefore, that syntax is an active ingredient in meaning, and it intersects with semantics and discourse rather than being independent of them.

In the field of functional linguistics, syntax involves the arrangement of words and phrases to create sentences. Words clump together to create phrases, phrases swarm into clauses, and clauses mingle to produce sentences. This layered structure is key to understanding the role of grammatical form in interpretation. Asridayani & Magria (2022) point out that syntactic relations are central to meaning and coherence, for example, in coordination. These researchers demonstrated that sentence structure is not random but rather tightly correlated with communicative intelligibility and optimal message formulation.

Sentence structure also contributes significantly to the coherence and cohesive relations of a text. Sentences are not

used in isolation, but as part of larger patterns of discourse use. Information flow, emphasis and thematic progression are affected by the types of clauses being combined. From a communicative perspective, effective communication depends on how sentence-level structures meet the demands of discourse functions, generic requirements and recipients' expectations. By examining the structure of a sentence at the level of discourse, one can gain a richer understanding of how meaning is achieved over longer spans rather than in individual sentences (Mohammed & Al-Marsumi, 2022).

Clauses are at the focus of functional grammar in so far as they represent the principal unit through which meaning is expressed. A sentence may consist of one or more clauses, but it is the clause that determines processes, participants and circumstances. The structure of a sentence derives from the interplay between clauses. The contrast between independent and dependent clauses enables language to manipulate information density, control emphasis, and articulate logical relations. Recent studies on compound and complex sentences suggest that meanings such as cause-effect, contrast, condition, and elaboration are created through clause relations to produce a more sophisticated expression (Rasulova & Mirzayeva, 2024). Functional grammar also assumes that (different) clause types have specific communicative functions. Independent clauses tend to express main propositions, whereas dependent clauses offer subsequent, specifying or modifying information. For example, relative and coordinate clauses add to the amount of descriptive information available thus providing clarity of expression or propositions at an equal level. In terms of role relations, these types of clauses are not only structural designations but strategic devices for the expression and introduction of meaning. Their responsible application allows writers and speakers to emphasize vital information, and to align

sentence structure with the theoretical objectives of a broader discourse.

The relationship of clauses is also reflected in complex sentences, which are made up of coordination and subordination. Adjoining structures combine parallel elements at the same grammatical level and provide juxtaposition without subordination. Subordinate structures on the other hand establish asymmetrical relationships, in which one clause constitutes a frame, qualifications or contextualizes another. Rasulova & Mirzayeva (2024) have argued that such relations are algebraic in nature, and influence the interpretation of sentences to a great extent by mediating between coordination and subordination; achieving a compromise between grammatical independence and semantic dependence. The combination of clauses is important for textual coherence. Opoku and Adjei (2023) demonstrate that clause complexing serves as a strategic tool in editorials, to subserve both argument deployment and coherence. Their results provide support for the functionalist claim that sentence structure is not merely a product of formal constraints but rather reflects communicative aims.

In sum, this chapter presents the sentence structure and clause combination within a general functional framework that incorporates contributions from syntactic, semantic and discourse analysis.

TYPES OF SENTENCE STRUCTURES

In functional grammar, sentence structures are analyzed not merely as formal patterns, but as resources for organizing meaning. Different sentence types reflect different ways of combining clauses to express relationships between ideas and to manage information, express logical relations, and achieve communicative goals with varying degrees of complexity, emphasis, and logical connection. From a functional

perspective, sentence types are closely related to how clauses are combined and how meanings are expanded across discourse. This chapter addresses the four various major types of sentence structures, primarily focusing on simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences. and explains their communicative roles—through a functional lens, emphasizing how clause relations shape meaning in discourse.

Simple Sentences and Single Independent Clauses

Simple sentences consist of a single independent clause containing a subject and a predicate that expresses one complete process or event. Functionally, simple sentences are used when the speaker or writer intends to convey information clearly and directly, without elaboration or logical dependency on other clauses, such as instructional texts, procedural descriptions, or early stages of language learning. Because they involve minimal clause embedding, simple sentences allow readers or listeners to process meaning efficiently. They also serve as the foundational structure from which more complex sentence forms develop, enabling speakers and writers to gradually expand meaning through clause combination (Cui, 2024). In academic and instructional contexts, simple sentences are often used to present definitions, key points, or factual statements because they reduce processing load and improve clarity. For example, the sentence “*The students submitted the assignment*” consists of one clause that directly represents an action and its actors. Another example: “*The lecturer explained the concept*”. This sentence contains only one clause with a clear process (explained), participant (the lecturer), and goal (the concept).

Compound Sentences and Paratactic Relations

Compound sentences consist of two or more independent clauses linked through parataxis, meaning that the clauses have equal grammatical status. These clauses are typically connected by a comma and a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) or a semicolon. Paratactic relations are common in narratives, descriptive writing, and spoken discourse, where ideas unfold step by step. In functional grammar, compound sentences are useful for showing balance, contrast, or continuation between ideas without establishing hierarchy and the choice of coordination reflects a speaker's intention to present information as equally important.

An example of a compound sentence is “*The experiment was challenging, but the results were rewarding.*” Here, both clauses function independently while jointly constructing a contrastive relationship. From a functional standpoint, parataxis allows speakers and writers to present ideas as parallel or equally important, which is particularly useful in narrative progression, argumentation, and persuasive discourse (Kristianingsih et al., 2023). Another example is *the students understood the explanation, and they completed the task*. Each clause can stand alone, yet their combination adds a logical relation—in this case, addition or sequence.

Complex Sentences and Hypotactic Relations

Complex sentences consist one independent clause and at least one dependent clause, often starting with subordinating conjunctions (e.g., because, although, if, when). This relationship is known as hypotaxis, where one clause depends on another for its interpretation. Hypotaxis enables speakers and writers to express relationships such as cause, condition, time, or concession. For instance, in the sentence “*The students succeeded because they worked collaboratively.*” Here, the

dependent clause (because they worked collaboratively) provides a reason for the main clause. Hypotactic relations allow speakers and writers to express cause, condition, time, concession, and purpose. Another example, “*Because the data were incomplete, the analysis was postponed,*” the dependent clause provides causal background for the main clause. Functionally, this allows additional layers of meaning to be integrated into a single sentence. Complex sentences are especially prominent in academic and formal writing, where precision and logical structuring of information are essential (Abbasova, 2025). From a functional perspective, complex sentences enable the construction of more nuanced meanings and are especially important in academic writing, where explanation and reasoning are central. Hypotaxis supports meaning elaboration by embedding contextual information within clauses and reflects a hierarchical organization of ideas, guiding the reader toward what is foregrounded and what is supportive.

Compound–Complex Sentences from a Functional Perspective

Compound–complex sentences combine coordination and subordination, involving at least two independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses, incorporating both paratactic and hypotactic relations. They feature of both compound and complex structures. For example:

- *Although the task was difficult, the team completed it, and they presented the results confidently.*
- *The lecturer explained the theory, and the students asked questions because they wanted clarification.*
- *The cat ran, and the dog barked because it saw a squirrel*

In sum, from a functional perspective, each sentence type serves distinct communicative purposes: simple sentences provide clarity, emphasis, definition through single independent clauses, compound sentences connect ideas and provide addition, contrast, sequence through paratactic relations, complex sentences provide explanation, causality, condition and enrich meaning through hypotaxis, and compound–complex provide detailed reasoning sentences and integrate the ideas and strategies to express intricate relationships. Understanding these sentence structures is essential for analyzing how syntax functions as a resource for meaning-making in spoken and written discourse. Functional grammar emphasizes that speakers and writers choose sentence structures strategically, depending on context, audience, and communicative goals.

CLAUSE COMBINATION: COORDINATION AND SUBORDINATION

The study of clause combination is a core issue in functional syntax because it allows for an understanding of how speakers and writers construct elaborate meanings by means of the relationships among clauses. In a functional perspective, there is no random combination of clauses. They are interrelated by logical-semantic, and functional-systemic grammatical relations corresponding to communicative purposes and discourse requirements. Two main processes of clause combining are distinguished from one another: Coordination (or parataxis) and Subordination (or hypotaxis). Each provides different roles in meaning-making and defines a type of organizing the information and relating between clauses, ideas in discourse.

Coordination (Parataxis)

Coordination (Parataxis) occurs when two or more elements coordinated clauses of equal syntactic and functional status are combined. In the case of coordinating constructions, each clause is free and complete in its own right. Coordination of clauses take place, mainly, by the use of coordinating conjunctions like and, but, or, yet and so to indicate relations such as addition, contrast, alternative between clauses which have equal weights.

For example, in We wanted to go to the zoo, but it was raining, both clauses — We wanted to go to the zoo and it was raining — have equal grammatical weight. Neither clause is qualified or dependent upon the other. Instead, there is a but that expresses the two propositions being equally important. Meho (2025) describes that this equating enables utterances to convey related ideas at the same time while equally distributing load in information structure. Another example: The economy slowed and inflation accelerated. In this example, both clauses have individual meanings of their own but joining the two clauses with and indicates that these two events are linked and equally significant. These structures are common in analytical or expository prose, where a series of facts or developments present themselves.

Coordination is also an important aspect of argumentative and expository discourse. Such words can be used to connect two independent clauses in parallel so that multiple claims, causes, or observed fact are listed. For example: The policy saves money, and it increases access to education.

Subordination (Hypotaxis)

Subordination (Hypotaxis) involves the combination of clauses through a hierarchical relationship. In hypotactic ones, one clause plays the role of the main or primary clause that contains what is primarily to be communicated, and the other

functions as a subordinate or secondary dependent clause that relates in some way (cause, condition, time relation, contrast) to the main clause for its interpretation. This dependence is typically indicated by subordinating conjunctions, like because, although, if, when or while.

Subordination is identified in functional grammar as a major device for the addition of meaning. Liu (2025) points out that subordination allows us to precisely specify logical relations, a key property in written academic as well as formal texts. Information load and emphasis are also influenced by subordination. By containing one idea within another, writers can direct readers toward what should be foregrounded and what ought to be read as background. Zhang et al. (2024) argue that hypotactic structures are common in academic writing as a mean to construct arguments, provide reasoning for claims and present conceptual relations. Like “They decided to stay indoors because it was raining.” Here, 'because it was raining' is an adverbial clause explaining why something happened. This dependence creates a natural hierarchy of data. The Independent Clause sends the main idea and The Dependent Clause adds information.

Finally, Coordination and subordination are complementary means of combining clauses in functional grammar. Coordination can promote an equally-sided expression of ideas and accentuate equality, continuity, whereas subordination highlights logical order and dependencies that enable explanation, qualification, logical structuring. The choice between them depends on how speakers or writers wish to have their message understood in context. These mechanisms work together in the service of control over complexity, emphasis and coherence in linguistic performance. If we want to discuss sentence structure as a resource for meaning (i.e. interpretation, reasoning), then we need to know how coordination and

subordination function. Readers who learn to read coordination and subordination in terms of text function have the opportunity to discover how syntactic options generate clarity, emphasis, and coherence on a higher level in discourse.

CLAUSE COMPLEXES AND CLAUSE CHAINS

There are two predominant means by which complex clauses can be combined to construct meaning in a larger discourse: clause complexes and clause chains. From a functional perspective of syntax, however, these cognitive structures are not taken as mere formal devices but as meaning-oriented emergence that have evolved to address communicative pragmatics, discourse planning and typological factors. Both constructions reflect how speakers and writers, when moving beyond single clauses to encode span sequences of events, logical relations and complex thoughts. Despite their multi-clause nature, the two exhibits different complex dependency and sequence and discourse functions.

Clause Complexes

Clause complexes comprise two or more grammatically linked clauses in a single sentence. A complex clause is a type of sentence structure that links an independent clause with one or more dependent (subordinate) clauses, showing relationships such as time, cause-and-effect, and condition between the two parts: these are mediated by subordinating conjunctions or relative pronouns. Khorina (2024) describes the notion of clause complexes as a connecting form where the main clause contains an essential message, while subordinates deliver a non-essential message that relies on the main for interpretation. This structural feature allows speakers to involve multiple layers of meaning within a single sentence, while still ensuring intelligibility.

One of the most popular clause complexes in English is as follows: when, before, after, while, since and until (time); because or since (cause/reason); although/even though/while (contrast). For instance, Although they studied hard, they didn't pass the exam (represents contrast between what was expected and what happened). Likewise, “She enjoys reading books because they expand her knowledge” is causal subordinate clause to explain motivation.

Clause complexes also contain relative clauses, which modify or restrict a noun. In the sentence “The woman who called two days ago is here,” the relative clause (who called two days ago) refers to a noun (the woman). Another is “The movie (which) I watched is very interesting,” where the dependent clause simply specifies which movie was engaging.

Noun-clauses with conditional meaning are also frequent. For example, “If it rains tomorrow, they will stay home” states a condition and its result. In the sentence “We won’t pass the exam unless we study,” the subordinate clause gives a condition of necessity.

The clause complex may also contain embedded clauses. In “The dog, although it was scared, didn’t bark,” the dependent clause is embedded in the main clause. Another example is “That she will tell a lie is known to all,” where the subject is nominal clause. Examples such as these demonstrate that clause complexes facilitate precision and logical clarity by embedding information in one sentence.

Clause Chains

Clause chains offer an alternative approach to clause linkage. A chain of clauses is a sequence of several linked together along linear and with an object. According to Stenzel (2024), chain clauses require discourse continuity over hierarchical subordination: In languages with more elaborated

clause chaining, switch-reference marking is a means of keeping track of participants through clauses. Subject continuity in English is sometimes inferred rather than overtly expressed.

Such fast-paced sequences of events are often depicted using English clause chains. For instance, the sentence 'Getting up early and dressing and eating breakfast, he drove to work' can be understood as a series of medial clauses detailing how something is done, followed by an initial clause indicating what has been done. Another is "Taking the keys, opening the door and walking inside, she finally relaxed." The medial clauses develop a progression which affects the outcome described in the final clause.

Some of the features found in clause chain include: 1) medial clauses are less inflected, (2) the clausal subject is repeated or continued throughout the sentence and (3), sequencing as opposed to subordination. These are the reasons why clause chains also prove effective in action-packed narrative and switching discourse.

Thus, Clause complexes and clause chains provide two different means of combining clauses. Clause complexes make use of subordination and embedding for communicating logical relationships between propositions in a sentence. The definition and examples of these two components will reveal how sentence structure serves as a productive meaning-making resource in functional grammar.

LINKING LOGICAL

Linking Logical (some people call them "linking words") in English is used to join two clauses or two sentences, forming a single idea that makes the text easier to read and the meaning clearer. They are an indispensable tool for getting organized, writing well and developing a polished product. Logical connectors serve to specify the grammatical marker of specific

kinds of relation such as *addition, contrast, cause, sequence, condition, example or illustration*.

Additive connectors like *and, also, moreover, besides, as well as too, not only but also, furthermore and in addition* make it possible for writers to develop their argument without breaking down the structure of combinations at all. They enable the accumulation of meanings without changing structure. This fits in with Halliday's description of clause complexes as a meaning-driven system rather than something purely formal (Halliday & Hasan, 2022). The sentence examples are: *He is handsome **and** kind; The car is luxurious. **Furthermore**, the price is expensive; We have motorbike as well a car.*

Contrastive connectors such as *however, despite, although, but, in spite of, yet, nevertheless, on the other hand, conversely and whereas* indicate that the reader must shift his expectations when he comes to a new clause. These are adherence to alternatives or opposing concepts. They force readers to go over what has gone before in light of new information. This contrast involves turning semantics around more than just contrasting syntax. In functional grammar, these connectors are interpersonal resources which express attitude and evaluation while at the same time they maintain coherence (Thompson, 2023). For instance, ***Although** He was tired, He stayed up to watch the football game.*

Cause-affirmation or consequence relation puts tighter constraints on clause structure. Connectors like *because, consequently, thus, hence, therefore and as a result* customize the relationship between propositions. Subordinators such as *because, and since* set causal relationships in first position within a sentence; whereas conjunctive adverbials like *therefore and thus* operate across sentences. Both express causality but they differ in stress and how information is dropped. For example, corpus research shows that writers vary between these

forms two states of bringing out the argument's strength (Biber et al., 2023). For instance, *she failed her TOEFL test, therefore, she took it again*. Sequence and time connectors organize clauses into ordered processes. Expressions like first, then, meanwhile, afterward, etc, slowly lead readers through procedural or argumentative development. These connectors provide textual organization, making it easy for people to follow the coherence and reducing mental effort. In functional terms it is more helpful to look at such connectors as basic discourse organizers rather than optional stylistic devices (Hyland, 2022). For example, *Finally, Thank you all for your attention*. Condition show that one thing depends on another. Expressions like unless, if, Otherwise, or else. For example, *we had better hurry. Otherwise, we will be late*. Lastly, Example or illustration shows examples or to make explanations more specific. Expressions like for instance, such as, for example, namely. Sentence example is *I like fruit, such as mangoes and durians*.

To sum up, linking logical directly and practically support the growth of coherent and understandable English writing. They guide readers through concepts by illustrating the connections between phrases and sentences—whether by giving specifics, creating contrasts, describing causes and consequences, setting time and sequence, describing settings, or offering instances. Studies on functional grammar show that these connectors do more than simply unite sentences mechanically; they also help regulate meaning, emphasis, and reader expectations while preserving the organization and readability of the text. When writers employ them well, they can present ideas with ease, strengthen arguments, and clearly communicate connections between ideas.

SEMANTIC RELATIONS

Semantic relationships are the conceptual foundation which logical connections rely on. They are the thread and weave of language, which allows for connection through relationship. such as *synonymy*, *antonymy*, *hyponymy* and *meronymy* govern how clauses connect based on meaning. Meanwhile in phrase/sentence-level, it is to show relationships between components, such as actors, actions, or locations.

- *Synonymy*: words with similar meanings. For example: Beautiful – Pretty, Small – little
- *Antonymy (Opposition)*: Words with opposite meanings. such as light/dark, fast/slow, etc
- *Hyponymy/Hypernymy (Hierarchy)*: A specific term (hyponym) under a broader category (hypernym). such as "cat" (hyponym) is a "pet" (hypernym).
- *Meronym /Holonymy (Part-Whole)*: One word is part of another, such as finger- hand, leaf-tree
- *Polysemy* : One word with multiple related meanings, such as "bank" (financial institution vs. river side), "run" (fast movement vs. operating a business), and "get" (procure vs. understand).
- *Homonymy*: Words that look/sound the same but have different meanings. such as, right: correct or the opposite of left.

Examples in Context: Actor-Action: *He roasted the lamb.*
(Actor: He / Action: roasted)

Possession: *Her daughter. Rose's house*

In conclusion, semantic relationships provide the meaning-based structure that allows logical connections to function clearly in language. Relations such as synonymy, antonymy,

hierarchy, part-whole links, and meaning variation explain how words and clauses connect beyond grammar alone. At the phrase and sentence level, these relationships clarify roles like actors, actions, and possession, helping readers interpret who does what and how ideas relate. Understanding these semantic links supports clearer expression and more precise interpretation of meaning in written and spoken communication.

CONCLUSION

In functional grammar, sentence structure and clause combination are understood as active resources for constructing meaning rather than as purely formal grammatical patterns. Meaning emerges from how clauses are organized and related within a sentence, and these relationships directly influence coherence, emphasis, and the flow of information across a text. Previous studies support this position, showing that sentence structure plays a crucial role in intelligibility and textual coherence (Asridayani & Magria, 2022; Mohammed & Al-Marsumi, 2022). In particular, logical relations such as cause, contrast, condition, and elaboration are not inherent in isolated clauses but are produced through the interaction between clauses within a sentence (Rasulova & Mirzayeva, 2024).

From a functional perspective, different sentence types serve distinct communicative purposes. Simple sentences are typically used to present information in a direct and unambiguous manner, making them effective for definitions and key statements. Compound sentences link independent clauses through parataxis, allowing writers to present ideas as equally important or sequential. Complex sentences rely on hypotaxis to express logical dependency, enabling explanation, reasoning, and justification. Compound-complex sentences integrate both coordination and subordination, offering greater flexibility for expressing layered and detailed relationships between ideas.

Research shows that these sentence types are selected strategically based on communicative needs and context (Cui, 2024; Kristianingsih et al., 2023; Abbasova, 2025).

Clause combination further reinforces meaning through the use of coordination and subordination. Coordination allows clauses of equal status to be presented side by side, supporting balance and continuity in discourse. Subordination, by contrast, establishes hierarchical relationships in which one clause provides background or supporting information for another. This distinction is especially important in academic writing, where reasoning, explanation, and argument development depend on clear logical structure. Studies emphasize that coordination and subordination are not interchangeable but serve different discourse functions: coordination highlights equivalence, while subordination guides interpretation by foregrounding key ideas and embedding supporting details (Meho, 2025; Liu, 2025; Zhang et al., 2024). Beyond individual sentences, clause complexes and clause chains demonstrate how meaning can be expanded across multiple clauses to represent sequences of events, logical progression, and complex relationships (Khorina, 2024; Stenzel, 2024).

Logical connectors and semantic relations further strengthen sentence structure by explicitly signaling how ideas are connected. Connectors help readers follow arguments by marking addition, contrast, causality, sequence, and condition, while semantic relations clarify how words and clauses relate in meaning. Together, these elements support coherence and reduce interpretive effort by making relationships transparent across clauses and sentences. Overall, this discussion confirms that sentence structure functions as a strategic tool for meaning-making. Through informed choices in clause combination, writers and speakers can manage complexity, maintain

coherence, and communicate relationships between ideas with precision in both spoken and written discourse.

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CHAPTER 7

NOMINAL GROUPS AND NOUN PHRASE EXPANSION

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INTRODUCTION

Within contemporary linguistic theory, the Nominal Group (or noun phrase) occupies a central position in explaining how language encodes complex experience into compact grammatical forms. Far from being a simple string of words organized around a noun, the nominal group constitutes a hierarchical syntactic domain in which meaning, reference, and abstraction converge. Recent research in functional and generative linguistics consistently demonstrates that the expansion of noun phrases is a key mechanism through which English achieves high informational density, particularly in academic and scientific discourse (Biber, Gray, & Staples, 2021; Römer & O'Donnell, 2022).

From a systemic functional perspective, nominal groups serve as the primary locus of experiential meaning, allowing processes and relations to be reconstrued as entities through grammatical resources such as modification and nominalization. Although Halliday's foundational concept of grammatical metaphor predates the last five years, it remains theoretically indispensable and has been actively refined in recent scholarship, especially in corpus-based studies of academic writing (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Derewianka & Jones, 2023). These studies confirm that advanced academic texts rely heavily on expanded nominal groups to stabilize knowledge, suppress agency, and foreground concepts rather than actions.

At the structural level, the internal organization of the nominal group is governed by a principled interaction between the Head and its dependents. Current syntactic research emphasizes the functional distinction between modifiers, which contribute optional descriptive or classificatory information, and qualifiers, which complete or restrict the semantic potential of the head noun (Aarts, 2021; Huddleston & Pullum, 2022). This distinction is not merely terminological; it reflects deeper constraints on constituency, adjacency, and recursion that shape how readers process complex noun phrases in real time.

Equally significant is the distribution of information between pre-modification and post-modification. Empirical studies drawing on large academic corpora show that English increasingly favors dense pre-modification in professional registers, while reserving post-modification for syntactically heavier constituents such as relative clauses and extended prepositional phrases (Gray & Biber, 2023). This pattern aligns with the well-established End-Weight Principle, which continues to be validated by psycholinguistic research on processing efficiency and cognitive load (Wasow, 2021). In this sense, noun phrase expansion is not stylistic ornamentation but a cognitively motivated strategy for managing complexity.

The importance of nominal groups becomes even more apparent when viewed through a cross-linguistic lens. Typological research over the past decade highlights that English occupies a hybrid position between head-initial and head-final systems, combining dense pre-nominal modification with recursive post-nominal qualification (Comrie, 2020; Shibatani, 2022). For writers operating in international academic contexts, this hybridity poses both challenges and opportunities, particularly for those whose first languages rely more heavily on clausal elaboration rather than nominal compression.

Taken together, these theoretical and empirical insights position the nominal group as a cornerstone of academic literacy. Mastery of noun phrase expansion enables writers not only to convey information efficiently but also to shape argumentation, abstraction, and epistemic stance. Consequently, the study of nominal groups is not a peripheral grammatical concern; it is a gateway to understanding how language structures knowledge itself and how syntax guides the reader's interpretive path through complex ideas.

HEAD, MODIFIER, AND QUALIFIER

To dissect the expansion of a nominal group with scientific precision, a scholar must look beyond the surface-level linear string and identify the specific structural "weight" and hierarchical depth each constituent occupies. In contemporary English syntax, the relationship between the Head and its dependents is no longer viewed as a simple cluster; it is a rigid, rule-governed hierarchy that distinguishes strictly between Complements (Qualifiers) and Adjuncts (Modifiers) (Carnie, 2021).

The Primacy of the Head (The Nucleus)

The Head (N) functions as the categorical anchor and the semantic "engine" of the phrase. In any syntactic expansion, the Head noun dictates the selectional restrictions and the formal morphological features of the entire projection. According to Radford (2023), the Head serves as the "probe" that determines:

- **Feature Checking & Agreement:** The Head dictates whether the phrase triggers singular or plural agreement (e.g., "The analysis [singular] of the findings is...").

- Subcategorization Frames: Certain Nouns possess "valency", they inherently demand specific prepositional complements to satisfy their internal semantic logic.

Syntactic Divergence: Modifiers (Adjuncts) vs. Qualifiers (Complements)

While traditional pedagogical grammars often conflate all descriptive elements, formal syntax, specifically within the Minimalist Program, establishes a sharp boundary based on attachment depth:

- Modifiers (Adjuncts): These function as optional, peripheral attributes. Structurally, they attach to the N' (N-prime) level, which facilitates Infinite Recursion. This allows a writer to stack multiple adjectives (e.g., "a meticulous, high-resolution, digital mapping") without saturating the Head's requirements (Adger, 2022).
- Qualifiers (Complements): These are structurally proximal to the Head, occupying the "sister" position within the tree. They fulfill a semantic void. In the phrase "the depletion of resources," the unit "of resources" is the Complement because the Noun depletion requires an internal object to be semantically operational.

Empirical Validation: The One-Substitution Test

To demonstrate that Modifiers and Complements reside at distinct strata in the mental lexicon, syntacticians employ the One-Substitution Test. The pro-form "one" can replace an N' constituent (Head + Adjunct) but is incapable of replacing a lone Head that is still semantically bound to its Complement (Sportiche et al., 2022).

Rule of Integrity: In "The complex analysis of data and the simple one," the substitution fails if "one" only replaces the

Noun while leaving the "of data" Complement stranded. This proves the Complement is part of the "core" N level, not the recursive N' level.

The Adjacency Requirement

Recent studies in processing efficiency confirm the Adjacency Requirement: Complements must remain adjacent to the Head to minimize "dependency distance" (Gibson et al., 2024).

- Grammatical: "A researcher [of genetics] [with a fellowship]." (Complement is adjacent).
- Unmarked/Dysfunctional: "A researcher [with a fellowship] [of genetics]." (The Adjunct interrupts the essential selectional bond).

The Zonal Architecture of Expansion

In a fully realized English nominal group, elements are mapped onto a predictable "Zonal Order," which reflects the cognitive distance from the Head (Cinque, 2023):

Zone	Functional Label	Syntactic Role
Specifier Zone	Determiner	<i>Establishes referentiality and deixis within the DP Specifier.</i>
Pre-mod Zone	Adjective Phrases	<i>Hosts recursive, optional attributive Adjuncts attached to N-prime (N').</i>
The Nucleus	Head Noun	<i>The categorical anchor and probe for feature checking.</i>
Post-mod Zone	Qualifier	<i>Syntactic Complements providing restrictive semantic integrity.</i>

PRE-MODIFICATION AND POST-MODIFICATION PATTERNS

The structural expansion of the English nominal group is governed by an exacting bilateral arrangement. In contemporary Generative Syntax, this is no longer conceptualized as a mere horizontal string of lexical items, but as a multi-dimensional Hierarchical Projection of the Noun (N) into a complex Determiner Phrase (DP). This projection is regulated by the interface between the mental lexicon and the computational system of language (Chomsky, 2021).

The Cartographic Order of Pre-modifiers

In the current decade, the arrangement of pre-modifiers is analyzed through the Cartographic Approach, which posits that adjectives are not scattered but are hosted in a series of fixed functional projections. This hierarchy is a direct manifestation of Cognitive Proximity, attributes that represent intrinsic, immutable qualities of the Head are merged closer to the nucleus, while evaluative, transient attributes are hosted in higher-order peripheral slots (Cinque, 2023).

As illustrated in the structural mapping below, the English pre-nominal field follows a rigorous "unmarked" sequence that facilitates rapid semantic decoding:

- Logical Anchors (Determiners/Quantifiers): (e.g., those, several)
- Axiological Modifiers (Opinion/Value): (e.g., exquisite, dubious, innovative)
- Ontological Dimensions (Physical Description): (Size > Age > Shape > Color)
- Phylogenetic Markers (Origin/Proper Adjectives): (e.g., Indonesian, French, Gothic)

- Constitutive Substance (Material): (e.g., wooden, synthetic, paper)
- Functional Classifiers (Purpose/Qualifier): (e.g., cooking, medical, research)
- The Semantic Nucleus (Head Noun)

Syntactic Evidence of Functional Constraints

A violation of this linearization, such as "the wooden exquisite ancient bowl," triggers a "processing lag" and results in a marked structure. This empirical evidence confirms that the internal grammar of the speaker processes these layers as a fixed vertical hierarchy, where the most subjective modifiers must "scope over" the more objective ones (Radford, 2023).

Post-modification and the Computational End-Weight Principle

While pre-modification primarily utilizes Phrasal (AdjP) structures, the post-nominal field, or Qualifiers, introduces high-order clausal and prepositional complexity. Modern English adheres to the End-Weight Principle, a syntactic strategy designed to minimize Dependency Distance (Gibson et al., 2024). By shifting "heavy" constituents to the right of the Head, the syntax optimizes the reader's working memory during real-time parsing.

Key categories of high-density post-modification include:

- Relational Prepositional Phrases (PP): These provide spatial, temporal, or possessive anchoring (e.g., "the student with the crimson scarf").
- Finite Relative Clauses: These offer full clausal expansion, often utilized to provide restrictive identification (e.g., "the hypothesis which researchers have debated since 2021").

- Non-finite Reduced Clauses: Using participles to maintain lexical density without the overhead of a full Tense Phrase (TP) (e.g., "the data extracted during the simulation").

The Discrete Infinity of Recursion

The most profound trait of the nominal group, and indeed of human language, is Recursion. Within the Minimalist Program, this is the result of the Merge operation, which allows a constituent to embed another constituent of its own category indefinitely (Chomsky, 2021). In the post-modification zone, this manifests as a "Russian Doll" effect, where a Prepositional Phrase hosts a Nominal Group, which in turn acts as the host for another Prepositional Phrase.

Structural Analysis of Recursive Nesting:

"The analysis [of the report [by the team [from the university]]]."

This recursive property is what grants human syntax its Creative Infinity. It enables the construction of nominal groups of indefinite length while maintaining a strictly nested logic, allowing scholars to map multi-layered scientific realities into a single, cohesive syntactic unit (Adger, 2022).

COMPLEX NOMINAL STRUCTURES IN ACADEMIC TEXTS

The hallmark of advanced academic literacy is the strategic manipulation of lexical density, a quantitative and qualitative metric that separates scholarly prose from vernacular or "congruent" registers. While everyday communication is primarily clausal, characterized by high verbal frequency and paratactic structures, academic English utilizes the Nominal Group as its primary semiotic vehicle. Current research in

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) suggests that these intricate structures are not merely stylistic choices but are engineered to anchor complex theoretical frameworks within a stable syntactic environment (Biber & Gray, 2021).

The Mechanics of Conceptual Packaging

In the contemporary scientific landscape, efficiency is achieved through a process known as Conceptual Packaging. This involves the condensation of multiple propositions into a single, cohesive Noun Phrase (NP). Within the Minimalist Program, this is seen as an efficient "Merge" operation that shifts the focus from dynamic processes to stable entities (Adger, 2022).

- Congruent Narrative (Spoken Register): "Researchers observed that the temperature rose quickly, and this changed how the chemicals reacted."
- Syntactic Synthesis (Scholarly Register): "The accelerated thermal increase fundamentally altered the chemical reaction kinetics."

By crystallizing dynamic, time-bound processes into nominal entities, the writer creates a "synoptic" view of reality. This allows for the objective analysis of relationships between variables without the distracting "clutter" of temporal verbs or human agents (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; updated by Biber & Gray, 2021).

Functional Layering and Classifier Stacking

A primary indicator of expert academic competence is the ability to navigate pre-nominal functional layering. In advanced syntax, pre-modifiers are rarely merely descriptive; they function as Classifiers that narrow the referential scope of the

Head Noun with surgical precision. According to the Cartographic Approach (Cinque, 2023), these classifiers occupy fixed functional projections that must be resolved before the core identity of the noun is established.

Consider the structural composition of: "A high-resolution spatial-temporal climatic model." In this instance, each modifier, from resolution to temporal domain, acts as a restrictive filter. This "functional stacking" ensures that the reader is presented with a precise, unambiguous definition, facilitating what is known as Pre-predicative Informational Load (Radford, 2023).

Recursive Depth and the Architecture of Qualifiers

The true structural complexity of modern academic English resides in its recursive post-modification. Adhering to the End-Weight Principle, scholars shift "heavy" informational units, such as Prepositional Phrases (*PP*) and Relative Clauses, to the right of the Head. This minimizes Dependency Distance, thereby reducing the cognitive effort required for real-time parsing (Gibson et al., 2024).

An expert-level nominal expansion might manifest as follows:

"The discrepancy [in the metabolic rates [of indigenous species [subjected to erratic seasonal shifts]]]..."

In this architecture, each qualifier embeds a subsequent nominal group, creating a "nesting" or "matryoshka" effect. This recursive depth allows scientific texts to map multi-layered empirical realities into a single, coherent syntactic unit without losing grammatical integrity (Sportiche et al., 2022).

Rhetorical Utility: Depersonalization and Cohesion

Beyond informational density, these complex nominal structures serve vital rhetorical functions in high-impact research:

- **Strategic Depersonalization:** By utilizing nominalization to make the "phenomenon" the grammatical Subject, the writer achieves the "neutrality" and "objectivity" expected in top-tier journals. It removes the subjectivity of the researcher and elevates the data to a universal status.
- **Anaphoric Summation and Coherence:** Complex nominal groups often function as **Logical Bridges**. They encapsulate broad concepts discussed in preceding paragraphs into a single phrase at the beginning of a new section. This acts as an "Advance Organizer" for the reader's cognitive processing, ensuring seamless thematic progression (Biber & Gray, 2021).

In advanced academic English, the nominal group functions as a linguistic paradox: it is simultaneously the vehicle for extreme specificity and the architect of high-level abstraction. Mastering this duality is what separates a novice writer from a scholar who can navigate the complexities of theoretical discourse.

CROSS-CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE VARIATION IN NOMINAL GROUPS

The structural expansion of the nominal group is a universal linguistic imperative; however, its typological realization exhibits profound variation across the world's linguistic systems. For the international academic writer, navigating these cross-cultural syntactic shifts is not merely a matter of translation, but of mastering a distinct "cognitive logic." Recent

research in **Comparative Syntax** suggests that the way a language packages information within the Noun Phrase (NP) significantly influences the reader's real-time processing strategies (Dryer, 2022; Roberts, 2021).

The Parameter of Directionality: Head-Initial vs. Head-Final Systems

At the core of nominal variation lies the Head-Directionality Parameter. Modern linguistics categorizes languages based on the "branching" direction of their syntactic trees, which determines where a Head Noun resides in relation to its dependents.

- **Head-Final (Left-Branching) Systems:** Languages such as Japanese, Korean, and Turkish operate under a strictly left-branching architecture. In these systems, all descriptive data, qualifiers, and situational anchors must be processed before the Head noun is ever introduced. This requires a high degree of "proactive" memory on the part of the reader (Saito, 2021).
- **Head-Initial (Right-Branching) Systems:** Conversely, languages like Indonesian, Arabic, and the Romance family (French, Spanish) prioritize the "D-M" (*Diterangkan-Menerangkan*) logic. Here, the semantic anchor is established first, followed by a sequence of restrictive modifiers. This right-branching flow allows for immediate conceptual grounding (Song, 2023).
- **The English Hybridity:** English occupies a unique, "split-system" position in linguistic typology. It functions as a **Head-Final** system for simple attributive modifiers (e.g., "*The [red] book*") but switches to a **Head-Initial** logic for complex prepositional phrases and clauses (e.g., "*The book [on the table]*"). This hybridity is a primary source of interference for non-native scholars.

Information Density: "Nominal Stacking" vs. "Clausal expansion"

A defining feature of contemporary Anglo-American academic discourse, often termed the "Global Academic Register", is Nominal Stacking. This involves the conversion of complex phrases into dense pre-modifiers.

- **The English Prototypical Stack:** *"Global [climate change] [mitigation] [strategies]."*
- **Cross-Cultural Divergence:** Many languages, particularly those from the Austronesian or Romance families, find this "noun-heavy" stacking opaque or syntactically "clogged." In Indonesian or French, the internal logic requires "unpacking" via prepositions: *"Strategies for the mitigation of changes to the global climate."*

Biber and Gray (2021) note that non-native scholars frequently carry this "unpacked" logic into English, resulting in Over-Clausalization (an excessive reliance on which or that). Mastering the English nominal group requires a cognitive shift from "describing through clauses" to "defining through stacking."

Morpho-Syntactic Agreement and the Analytic Shift

In morphologically rich languages like German, Russian, or Latin, the nominal group is bound by the Agreement Principle. Every adjective and determiner must "agree" with the Head noun in gender, number, and case. This provides a clear "semantic map" regardless of word order.

English, however, has evolved into a predominantly Analytic Language. Having shed most of its inflectional endings, English relies almost entirely on Syntactic Position to convey function. This rigidity means that a misplaced modifier

in English does not just sound "wrong", it fundamentally alters the truth conditions of the sentence (Radford, 2023).

Implications for Global Academic Literacy

Variation in the nominal group is inextricably linked to Cognitive Load Theory. Readers of English expect the thematic Subject to be established with high "Immediacy." When writers from Head-Initial backgrounds utilize overly long, clausal post-modifiers prematurely, it creates a "processing lag," forcing the reader to hold too much information in suspension (Gibson et al., 2024).

Comparative Structural Mapping

To illustrate these divergent syntactic "skeletons," we can map the same conceptual unit across two distinct systems using **Functional Projection** notation:

1. **English (The Hybrid/Split Model):**[Specifier] + [Attributive Adjunct] + [HEAD NOUN] + [Recursive Qualifier]*Example: "The [small] village [near the river]."*
2. **Indonesian (The Right-Branching Model):**[Specifier] + [HEAD NOUN] + [Attributive Adjunct] + [Recursive Qualifier]*Example: "Desa [kecil] [itu] [di dekat sungai]."*

CONCLUSION

As this investigation into the structural and functional nuances of the Nominal Group draws to a close, it becomes strikingly evident that this constituent is far from a static repository for lexical items. Rather, the nominal group represents the most sophisticated and dynamic site of information management within the English language. From the initial deictic anchoring of the Specifier to the virtually infinite recursive potential of the Qualifier, the noun phrase serves as the

primary architectural foundation upon which the edifice of human knowledge is constructed, categorized, and disseminated. Through this discourse, we have navigated the intricate verticality of Pre-modification, where we observed that cognitive proximity, rather than arbitrary convention, governs the layering of our perceptions through the Cartographic Hierarchy (Cinque, 2023). We have rigorously dissected the End-Weight Principle, uncovering the elegant mechanism by which English manages the processing of "heavy" informational units by shifting structural density to the right-branching periphery (Gibson et al., 2024). Furthermore, we have explored the transformative agency of Nominalization, the quintessential "grammatical metaphor" that facilitates the crystallization of ephemeral, time-bound actions into enduring, stable theoretical constructs (Biber & Gray, 2021).

For the contemporary researcher and the advanced scholar of syntax, the insights articulated in this naskah provide a refined lens through which to engage with academic literacy:

- **The Paradigm of Lexical Density:** We have established that academic "prestige" is a function of information packaging. It is not characterized by prolixity, but by a strategic "stacking" of classifiers within the nominal shell to achieve maximum conceptual weight (Adger, 2022).
- **The Precision of Theoretical Abstraction:** This study has debunked the fallacy that abstract nominals are synonymous with ambiguity. On the contrary, through the mechanics of nominalization, abstraction provides the most surgical tool for empirical inquiry, allowing the scholar to examine complex processes as objective, measurable entities.
- **Typological and Cross-Linguistic Awareness:** By analyzing the hybrid nature of English syntax, its unique synthesis of head-initial and head-final structures, writers are now equipped to navigate cross-cultural interference and

the "processing lags" associated with divergent branching directions (Dryer, 2022).

Ultimately, the mastery of the Nominal Group is synonymous with the mastery of Conceptual Clarity. In the repertoire of a skilled writer, the noun phrase is not a restrictive cage for words, but a recursive engine of infinite intellectual possibility. Every Noun Head functions as a semantic universe waiting for expansion, and every Modifier represents a deliberate choice that shapes the very reality we attempt to describe.

"To master the Nominal Group is to master the architecture of the mind itself."

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



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CHAPTER 8

VERBAL GROUPS AND TENSE-ASPECT SYSTEMS

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INTRODUCTION

Syntax occupies a central position in linguistic theory and description because it provides the structural framework through which meaning is organized, negotiated, and realized in language. At the level of the clause and sentence, syntactic choices are never neutral; they are intrinsically connected to how speakers construe experience, express temporal relations, and interact with others. In English, one of the most critical syntactic components in this meaning-making process is the verbal group, which functions as the core of clause structure and serves as the primary site where tense, aspect, modality, and voice are grammatically encoded. Understanding verbal groups, therefore, is fundamental not only to grammatical analysis but also to interpreting how meaning unfolds in real communication. This chapter is situated within this broader understanding of syntax as a functional resource, rather than merely a formal arrangement of elements.

Traditional syntactic studies, particularly those rooted in formal or structuralist traditions, have often approached verbs and verb phrases as abstract configurations governed by hierarchical rules and transformations. While such approaches have contributed significantly to the description of grammatical patterns, they frequently fall short in explaining why speakers choose particular tense-aspect combinations in specific communicative contexts. Recent scholarship has increasingly

recognized that grammatical structures, including verbal groups, cannot be fully understood in isolation from meaning, use, and discourse context (Biber et al., 2025; Matthiessen & Teruya, 2023). This limitation has led to a growing interest in functional approaches to syntax, which view grammatical systems as resources for making meaning rather than as autonomous formal objects.

Within this functional paradigm, syntax is understood as a system that enables speakers to represent experience, enact social relationships, and organize information into coherent messages. The verbal group plays a particularly crucial role in this system because it realizes the process element of the clause, the grammatical representation of actions, events, states, and relations. In English, verbal groups are not limited to a single lexical verb but may consist of a complex sequence of auxiliaries and lexical items that jointly encode tense, aspect, modality, polarity, and voice. These elements work together to express how an event is temporally located, whether it is ongoing or completed, how it relates to the moment of speaking, and how the speaker positions themselves toward the proposition. As recent functional grammar studies suggest, this complexity makes verbal groups a rich site for examining the interface between form and meaning (Cheng, 2024; Matthiessen & Teruya, 2023; Wegener et al., 2025)

A purely formal account of tense and aspect often treats them as fixed grammatical categories associated with specific verb forms, such as past, present, perfect, or progressive. However, such descriptions frequently obscure the fact that tense and aspect choices are deeply motivated by communicative purposes and discourse contexts. For example, the present tense in English is not restricted to describing actions occurring at the moment of speaking; it is also used in narratives, academic writing, instructions, and habitual

descriptions. Similarly, the perfect aspect does not merely indicate past time but often signals relevance, result, or connection to the present. These functional meanings cannot be adequately captured by rule-based explanations alone. As Todeva (2024) argues, grammar instruction and analysis must move beyond form to include meaning and use if learners and analysts are to develop a deeper understanding of how language operates in authentic contexts.

The relevance of a functional perspective becomes particularly evident when examining how verbal groups operate in real communication. In spoken and written discourse, speakers constantly make choices among tense-aspect options to shape how events are interpreted by listeners or readers. These choices are influenced by genre, register, communicative goals, and shared knowledge. For instance, academic writing often favors the present tense to present arguments as generally valid, while narrative texts may employ tense shifts to foreground or background events. A functional approach allows these patterns to be explained systematically by linking grammatical form to discourse function (Hyland, 2024; Schleppegrell & Oteíza, 2023). Consequently, analyzing verbal groups from a functional standpoint provides valuable insights into both linguistic theory and applied domains such as language education.

Within functional syntax, verbal groups are defined not simply as verb phrases but as structured grammatical units that realize processes within clauses. Unlike traditional verb phrase analyses, which often focus on constituent structure, functional grammar emphasizes the semantic and interpersonal roles of verbal elements. A verbal group typically consists of a finite element, which anchors the clause in time or modality, and a lexical verb, which specifies the type of process involved. Additional auxiliary elements may encode aspectual distinctions, passive voice, or modal meanings. This functional

configuration distinguishes verbal groups from simpler verb phrases by highlighting their role in clause-level meaning construction rather than merely their syntactic form (Matthiessen & Teruya, 2023).

The distinction between verbal groups and simple verb phrases is particularly important for learners and analysts of English. In many pedagogical grammars, verbs are introduced primarily through tense tables and conjugation rules, often without sufficient attention to how multiple verbal elements interact within a single clause. As a result, learners may struggle to understand why certain tense-aspect combinations are preferred in particular contexts or how meaning changes when auxiliary verbs are added or removed. A functional view of verbal groups addresses this issue by treating tense and aspect as systems of choice rather than as isolated forms. This approach aligns with recent trends in grammar pedagogy that emphasize usage-based learning and contextualized grammar instruction (Cheng, 2024; McManus, 2024).

Central to the functional analysis of verbal groups is their relationship to clause processes. In functional grammar, the clause is seen as a representation of experience, and the verbal group functions as the grammatical realization of the process through which experience is construed. Different types of processes such as material, mental, relational, or verbal are associated with different patterns of verbal group structure. For example, material processes often involve dynamic actions and may favor progressive aspect, while relational processes frequently occur in the present tense to express general truths. Understanding these relationships enables a more nuanced analysis of how grammatical choices reflect underlying meanings and communicative intentions (Wegener et al., 2025). Tense and aspect, within this framework, are understood as meaning-making resources rather than as purely temporal

markers. Tense situates a process in relation to the moment of speaking, while aspect provides information about the internal temporal structure of the process, such as whether it is ongoing, completed, or repetitive. Functional interpretations of tense and aspect emphasize concepts such as duration, completion, relevance, and speaker perspective. These interpretations are particularly important in discourse analysis, where the same tense-aspect form may serve different functions depending on context. Recent studies in functional and discourse-based grammar highlight the need to analyze tense-aspect systems in relation to larger stretches of text rather than at the level of isolated sentences (Biber et al., 2025; Schleppegrell & Oteíza, 2023). The study of tense-aspect systems in relation to discourse and context is therefore essential for a comprehensive understanding of English grammar. In authentic communication, grammatical choices are shaped by genre conventions, communicative purposes, and audience expectations. For example, the use of the present perfect in academic abstracts often serves to highlight the relevance of previous research to the current study, while narrative discourse may employ past perfect forms to establish temporal sequencing. A functional approach provides the analytical tools necessary to account for these patterns by linking grammatical form to discourse function and social context. This perspective is increasingly recognized as crucial in both linguistic research and language education (Hyland, 2024; Todeva, 2024). Against this theoretical and pedagogical background, the present chapter aims to contribute to the functional analysis of English syntax by focusing specifically on verbal groups and tense-aspect systems. The primary purpose of this chapter is to analyze the structure of English verbal groups and to explain how tense and aspect function as interconnected systems of meaning within clauses. By adopting a functional perspective, the chapter seeks to

demonstrate how verbal groups realize experiential meaning and how grammatical choices reflect speakers' ways of construing time, action, and relevance. This analysis is intended to bridge the gap between theoretical descriptions of grammar and practical concerns in language teaching and learning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO SYNTAX

Overview of Functional Grammar

Functional grammar is grounded in the view that language is fundamentally a resource for making meaning rather than a mere system of formal rules. From this perspective, grammatical structures are shaped by communicative needs and social purposes, and linguistic forms are selected because of the meanings they enable speakers to express in particular contexts. This conception contrasts sharply with formal syntactic models that prioritize abstract structural relations and generative mechanisms over communicative function. In functional grammar, syntax is inseparable from semantics and pragmatics, and grammatical analysis is concerned with explaining how linguistic choices realize meaning in real discourse (Matthiessen & Teruya, 2023; Wegener et al., 2025)

One of the central principles of functional grammar is that meaning is multifunctional. Language simultaneously serves to construe experience, enact social relations, and organize information into coherent texts. These three metafunctions: experiential, interpersonal, and textual are realized through grammatical choices at the clause level. Consequently, the clause is not treated merely as a syntactic configuration but as a meaningful unit that integrates these metafunctions. Recent functional linguistic research emphasizes that this clause-based perspective provides a more comprehensive account of grammar

than sentence-level or phrase-structure approaches, particularly in applied and educational contexts (Martin, 2022).

Within this framework, syntax is viewed as a system of choices rather than a fixed set of rules. Speakers choose among available grammatical options to encode their perceptions of reality, their attitudes toward propositions, and their relationships with interlocutors. These choices are context-sensitive and vary across registers and genres. For example, academic discourse, narrative writing, and conversational interaction exhibit systematic differences in syntactic patterns, including tense usage and verbal group complexity. Usage-based studies over the last five years have demonstrated that these patterns are best explained through functional models that integrate form, meaning, and use (Biber et al., 2022; Hyland, 2024).

A key distinction between functional and formal syntactic approaches lies in how they conceptualize grammatical explanation. Formal syntax typically seeks to describe grammatical competence in terms of abstract rules and hierarchical structures, often independent of meaning and context. While such models offer precision in structural description, they frequently struggle to account for variation in actual language use. Functional syntax, by contrast, prioritizes explanation over description by asking why particular grammatical forms are used in particular contexts. This explanatory orientation is especially relevant for the analysis of verbal groups and tense systems, which are highly sensitive to discourse context and communicative purpose (Uliniuc, 2025).

The Clause and Its Functional Components

In functional grammar, the clause is the primary unit of grammatical analysis because it represents a complete configuration of meaning. Experientially, the clause construes a

slice of human experience; interpersonally, it enacts relationships and attitudes; and textually, it organizes information into a coherent message. Each of these metafunctions is realized through specific grammatical components within the clause. From the experiential perspective, the clause consists of three core elements: process, participant, and circumstance.

The process is the central component of the clause and represents the type of action, event, state, or relation being construed. It is grammatically realized by the verbal group. Participants are entities involved in the process, typically realized by nominal groups, while circumstances provide additional contextual information such as time, place, manner, or cause. This tripartite structure allows functional grammar to link grammatical form directly to semantic roles, offering a more transparent account of how meaning is constructed in clauses (Matthiessen & Teruya, 2023).

The verbal group plays a pivotal role in this configuration because it encodes the process and anchors the clause in time, modality, and voice. Through its internal structure, the verbal group integrates tense, aspect, polarity, and modality, thereby shaping how the process is interpreted. For example, the difference between *writes*, *is writing*, and *has been writing* reflects not merely formal variation but distinct ways of construing the same underlying process. Functional analyses emphasize that these distinctions are motivated by meaning and discourse function rather than arbitrary grammatical rules (Wegener et al., 2025).

Recent functional studies have further highlighted the importance of analyzing verbal groups as clause-level phenomena rather than isolated verb forms. By situating verbal groups within the broader clause structure, researchers can account for patterns such as tense choice in narrative

sequencing, aspect selection in academic writing, and modality use in persuasive discourse. This clause-centered approach provides a robust theoretical foundation for the analysis developed in the following sections.

STRUCTURE OF VERBAL GROUPS IN ENGLISH

Definition and Components of Verbal Groups

In functional grammar, a verbal group is defined as a group of verbal elements that collectively realize the process in a clause. Unlike traditional verb phrase analyses that focus primarily on constituent structure, functional descriptions emphasize the semantic and interpersonal roles of verbal elements. A verbal group may consist of a single lexical verb or a complex sequence of auxiliary verbs and a lexical verb, each contributing specific meanings related to tense, aspect, modality, polarity, or voice.

Lexical verbs are the core of the verbal group because they specify the type of process being represented, such as material action (run), mental perception (think), or relational state (be). Auxiliary verbs, on the other hand, modify the process by encoding grammatical meanings. These include tense (has, will), aspect (be, have), modality (can, must), and voice (be in passive constructions). The interaction between lexical and auxiliary verbs allows English to express fine-grained distinctions in meaning within a single clause (Martin, 2022).

A crucial distinction within the verbal group is between finite and non-finite elements. The finite element anchors the clause in terms of tense or modality and establishes its interpersonal relationship with the subject. It is this element that allows a clause to function as a proposition that can be affirmed, denied, or questioned. Non-finite elements, by contrast, do not carry tense or modality independently and depend on the finite

element for their interpretation. This distinction is central to understanding how verbal groups operate functionally within clauses (Matthiessen & Teruya, 2023).

Modality and polarity are also realized within the verbal group. Modal auxiliaries express degrees of certainty, obligation, or possibility, while polarity distinguishes between positive and negative clauses. These meanings are not peripheral but integral to the process of meaning-making, particularly in academic and argumentative discourse where stance and evaluation are crucial (Hyland, 2024).

Table 8.1. Basic Components of English Verbal Groups

Element	Function	Example
Finite	Tense / Modality	<i>has, will</i>
Auxiliary	Aspect / Voice	<i>been, being</i>
Lexical Verb	Process	<i>writing</i>

Source: Hyland (2024)

This table illustrates how different components of the verbal group contribute distinct but complementary meanings, reinforcing the view that verbal groups function as integrated meaning-making units rather than as linear verb strings.

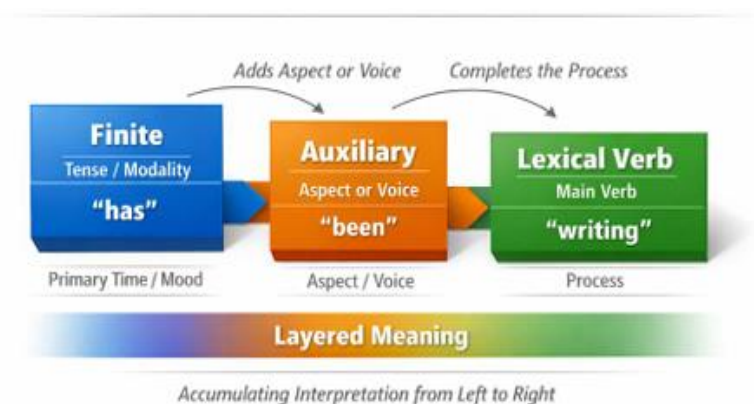
Types of Verbal Groups

English verbal groups vary in complexity depending on the number and type of verbal elements involved. At the simplest level, a verbal group may consist of a single lexical verb, as in *She writes every day*. Such simple verbal groups typically encode basic tense distinctions and are common in instructional and descriptive texts.

Extended verbal groups include one or more auxiliary verbs in addition to the lexical verb. These structures allow speakers to express aspectual distinctions, such as ongoingness (*is writing*)

or relevance (has written). Extended verbal groups are particularly frequent in academic and narrative discourse, where precise temporal and aspectual meanings are required (Gray, 2022).

Complex verbal groups contain multiple auxiliaries that jointly encode tense, aspect, modality, and voice, as in The report will have been written. These structures represent the highest level of verbal group complexity and demonstrate the cumulative nature of grammatical meaning in English. Functional analyses show that such complex forms are not arbitrary but reflect layered semantic choices made by speakers or writers to achieve specific communicative goals (Uliniuc, 2025).



Source: Uliniuc (2025)

Figure 8.1. Hierarchical Structure of an English Verbal Group (Description)

This figure represents the verbal group as a hierarchical structure in which the finite element occupies a central position, followed by auxiliary elements encoding aspect or voice, and culminating in the lexical verb that realizes the process. The

hierarchy illustrates how meanings accumulate from left to right, with each element adding a layer of interpretation to the process.

TENSE SYSTEMS IN ENGLISH VERBAL GROUPS

Functional Concept of Tense

From a functional perspective, tense is understood as grammaticalized time, that is, a linguistic system through which speakers locate processes in relation to the moment of speaking. Rather than being a direct reflection of chronological time, tense represents a set of conventionalized choices that speakers use to construe temporal relations. English primarily distinguishes among past, present, and future, although the future is often realized through modal constructions rather than inflectional forms.

Tense is realized through the finite element of the verbal group, which establishes the temporal and interpersonal grounding of the clause. The choice of tense reflects not only when an event occurs but also how the speaker chooses to present it. For example, the present tense in academic writing often conveys general validity rather than present-time reference, while the past tense in narratives serves to sequence events and establish temporal distance (Schleppegrell & Oteíza, 2023).

Functional analyses emphasize that tense choices are motivated by discourse considerations rather than purely temporal ones. This view is supported by corpus-based studies showing systematic patterns of tense usage across genres, registers, and communicative purposes (Gray, 2022).

Tense and Meaning in Context

A key insight of functional grammar is the distinction between grammatical tense and temporal reference. While

grammatical tense is encoded morphologically or syntactically, temporal reference is interpreted in context and may diverge from tense form. For example, the present tense may refer to future time (The lecture starts tomorrow), and the past tense may be used for politeness or hypothetical meaning (I was wondering if you could help). These mismatches underscore the need for a functional explanation of tense usage.

Shifts in tense are also a common discourse strategy, particularly in narrative and academic writing. Narrative texts often alternate between past and present tense to foreground events or create immediacy, while academic texts may shift tense to distinguish between established knowledge and current research findings. Functional approaches account for these patterns by linking tense choice to discourse function and rhetorical purpose (Hyland, 2024; Matthiessen & Teruya, 2023)

Table 8.2. Tense Forms and Their Functional Meanings

Tense Form	Typical Function	Example
Present	General truth, immediacy, relevance	<i>Water boils at 100°C</i>
Past	Narrative sequencing, temporal distance	<i>The experiment was conducted</i>
Future	Prediction, intention, modality	<i>The results will be discussed</i>

Source: Hyland (2024)

This table demonstrates that tense forms are multifunctional and that their meanings emerge from interaction with context, genre, and discourse purpose.

ASPECT SYSTEMS AND THEIR FUNCTIONAL ROLES

Overview of Aspect in English

Aspect is a central component of the English verbal group because it provides speakers with grammatical resources to construe how a process unfolds over time. Unlike tense, which situates a process relative to the moment of speaking, aspect concerns the internal temporal structure of the process itself—whether it is ongoing, completed, repeated, or relevant to another point in time. From a functional perspective, aspect is not merely a formal verb category but a system of meaning choices that allow speakers to shape how events and states are experienced and interpreted in discourse (Matthiessen & Teruya, 2023; Wegener et al., 2025)

English primarily realizes aspect through auxiliary verbs combined with lexical verbs, resulting in three major aspectual patterns: the progressive aspect, the perfect aspect, and the perfect-progressive combination. Each of these patterns contributes distinct experiential meanings and interacts systematically with tense to produce nuanced interpretations of processes.

The progressive aspect, typically realized through the auxiliary *be* followed by a present participle (-ing), construes a process as ongoing, incomplete, or temporary. Functionally, the progressive aspect foregrounds duration and dynamism, presenting an event as unfolding rather than as a completed whole. For example, the contrast between *She teaches English* and *She is teaching English* reflects a difference in how the process is construed: the former presents teaching as a habitual or general activity, while the latter emphasizes its temporary or current nature. Corpus-based studies indicate that the progressive aspect is especially frequent in spoken discourse and

narrative writing, where immediacy and vividness are communicative priorities (Biber et al., 2022).

The perfect aspect, realized through the auxiliary have followed by a past participle, functions to link a past process to a relevant reference point, often the present. Rather than simply marking past time, the perfect aspect highlights completion, result, or relevance. For instance, She has finished the report emphasizes the current relevance of the completed action, such as the availability of the report. Functional analyses consistently show that the perfect aspect plays a crucial role in academic discourse, where writers often need to relate previous research or findings to the present argument (Hyland, 2024; Schleppegrell & Oteíza, 2023).

Perfect-progressive combinations (has been writing) integrate meanings from both the progressive and perfect aspects, construing a process as ongoing over a period leading up to a reference point. These forms are particularly effective for expressing duration with relevance, such as emphasizing sustained effort or continuous activity. Although less frequent than simple progressive or perfect forms, perfect-progressive constructions are semantically dense and exemplify the cumulative nature of meaning in English verbal groups (Hao et al., 2021).

Aspect as a Meaning Resource

From a functional standpoint, aspectual choices reflect the speaker's or writer's perspective on a process rather than objective properties of the event itself. The same real-world situation can be construed differently depending on the aspect selected. For example, The students read the article presents the activity as a complete, bounded event, while The students were reading the article foregrounds its ongoing nature, potentially

leaving the outcome unspecified. These choices shape how listeners or readers interpret the experience being described.

Aspect is therefore a key resource for construing experiential meaning in clauses. It enables speakers to represent processes as dynamic or static, completed or ongoing, temporary or habitual. In functional grammar, these distinctions are not treated as optional stylistic variations but as systematic choices that contribute to the overall meaning of a text. Recent discourse-based research demonstrates that aspectual patterns are closely tied to genre conventions. For example, procedural texts favor non-progressive forms to present actions as generic steps, while narratives rely heavily on progressive forms to create temporal flow and engagement (Cheng, 2024; Gray, 2022)



Source:Gray (2022)

Figure 8.2. Interaction between Tense and Aspect in Verbal Groups (Description)

This figure illustrates how tense and aspect intersect within the verbal group to produce a range of meanings. Tense establishes the temporal location of the process (past, present, future), while aspect modifies how the process is internally

structured (ongoing, completed, or ongoing with relevance). The figure visually represents this interaction as a matrix, showing, for example, how present tense combines with progressive aspect (is writing) to express current ongoing activity, and how past tense combines with perfect aspect (had written) to indicate completion prior to a past reference point.

By conceptualizing aspect as a meaning resource rather than a mechanical verb form, functional grammar provides a powerful explanatory framework for understanding how English speakers construe time and experience in discourse.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined verbal groups and tense aspect systems within the broader framework of syntax and sentence structure from a functional perspective, demonstrating that verbal groups constitute the core of English clause organization. As the discussion has shown, verbal groups are not merely sequences of verb forms but complex grammatical units through which experiential, interpersonal, and textual meanings are simultaneously realized. By functioning as the grammatical realization of processes within clauses, verbal groups play a decisive role in shaping how actions, events, states, and relations are construed in English. Their internal structure comprising finite elements, auxiliaries, and lexical verbs enables speakers and writers to encode temporal location, aspectual contour, modality, and voice in an integrated and systematic manner. This centrality confirms that any comprehensive account of English syntax must place verbal groups at the heart of clause analysis.

A key insight emerging from this chapter is that tense and aspect operate as interconnected meaning systems rather than as isolated grammatical categories. Tense provides the grammatical means for anchoring processes in relation to a reference point,

typically the moment of speaking, while aspect allows speakers to construe the internal temporal organization of those processes in terms of duration, completion, continuity, and relevance. The analysis has demonstrated that tense–aspect combinations are motivated by communicative purpose and discourse context, not merely by formal rules. Progressive, perfect, and perfect-progressive constructions, for example, reflect distinct ways of viewing experience and are systematically deployed across genres to achieve particular rhetorical effects. This functional interdependence of tense and aspect highlights the limitations of purely formal descriptions that focus on morphological forms without sufficiently accounting for meaning, use, and contextual variation.

By adopting a functional approach to syntax, this chapter has shown that grammatical explanation gains depth and coherence when form is consistently related to meaning and function. Unlike formal syntactic models that prioritize structural abstraction, functional grammar offers a principled account of why particular verbal group configurations are selected in specific communicative situations. This approach explains not only how verbal groups are structured, but also why certain tense–aspect, voice, and modality choices are preferred in academic writing, narrative discourse, or everyday interaction. As such, functional syntax provides a more explanatory and pedagogically relevant framework for understanding English grammar, especially in contexts where learners and analysts seek to connect grammatical patterns with authentic language use.

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CHAPTER 9

PREPOSITIONAL AND ADVERBIAL GROUPS

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INTRODUCTION

Language is structured through patterns that allow speakers and writers to express relationships, actions, and circumstances with clarity and precision. Among the most important of these patterns are **prepositional groups** and **adverbial groups**, which play a central role in expanding meaning beyond the core elements of a sentence. This book, *Prepositional and Adverbial Groups*, explores how these groups function within sentences to convey information about place, time, manner, reason, condition, and degree. Prepositional groups help establish relationships between words by linking nouns or pronouns to other elements, while adverbial groups modify verbs, adjectives, clauses, or even entire sentences, enriching communication with detail and nuance.

Speaking the language is human nature. We all have language acquisition devices that allow us to pick up or learn any language system used in this world. Therefore, everyday people can speak two or more languages if they are exposed to an environment in which those languages are spoken or participate in language learning. The first language (called L1) is the language that people use for the first time, and then they will be able to use the second language (called L2) due to their learning or interaction with other speakers. In most schools, from elementary to higher education, students begin to learn foreign languages such as English, German, French, etc. “At this

stage, students or learners of a foreign language must learn a new grammar that differs from the previous one. their native (first) language” (Aliah et al., 2023)

Designed for students, teachers, and language enthusiasts, this book provides a systematic explanation of the structure, forms, and functions of prepositional and adverbial groups. Through clear definitions, illustrative examples, and practical exercises, readers will gain a deeper understanding of how these grammatical units operate in both spoken and written English. By mastering prepositional and adverbial groups, learners can improve sentence variety, accuracy, and expressiveness. This book aims to guide readers toward that mastery, offering a solid foundation for further study in grammar, linguistics, and effective communication

A **prepositional phrase** is a combination of words that starts with a preposition and is followed by its object, used to show how one element in a sentence is related to another in terms of place, time, movement, or condition. Preposition is a word placed before a noun or pronoun to show in the relation the person or thing denoted by it stands in regard to something else. It concerned with study of various usage of preposition in English. This book also explains about adverbial groups, such as definitions and examples. An **adverbial group** is a grammatical unit consisting of one or more words that collectively function as an adverb, modifying a verb, an adjective, or an entire clause by expressing circumstances such as manner, time, place, reason, or degree. In other words, a set of words that functions as an adverb in a sentence, providing additional information about how, when, where, why, or to what extent an action or situation occurs.

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF PREPOSITIONAL GROUPS

The structure of a prepositional group consists of a preposition as the head element, followed by a complement, which is typically a noun, pronoun, or nominal group. The complement may include determiners and modifiers that further specify the object of the preposition. “Prepositional phrases are one of the essential components of a sentence, as they help establish relationships between the subject, object, and verb, often providing additional information” (Jaya et al., 2024). It means a prepositional phrase is one of the important aspects to make a sentence.

Preposition + Complement (Nominal Group)

Extended structure:

Preposition + (Modifier) + Head Noun + (Qualifier)

Examples:

- *in the room*
- *under the old wooden table*
- *because of the sudden change*

Structurally, the preposition determines the relationship between its complement and another element in the clause, allowing the group to function as an adverbial or adjectival element within the sentence.

Prepositional phrases (often termed prepositional groups in systemic functional linguistics) are essential, versatile components of English syntax that connect nouns or pronouns to other words in a sentence. They consist of a preposition and a complement (typically a noun phrase, pronoun, or clause) and function to provide context regarding time, place, manner, or cause.

Structure of Prepositional Phrases

A prepositional phrase is generally structured as a **preposition followed by its complement** (PP = P + C).

- **Simple Prepositional Phrase:** Composed of a single preposition and its object (e.g., "in the room," "with his mother").
- **Complex Prepositional Phrase:** Formed using compound prepositions, often containing two or three elements (e.g., "according to," "in front of," "by means of").
- **Complement Variations:** The object of the preposition is often a noun phrase, but can also be a pronoun, gerund, or clause.

Functions of Prepositional Phrases

Prepositional phrases fulfill several critical functions within a sentence:

- **Adjectival (Adnominal) Function:** Modifies a noun or noun phrase, acting like an adjective to specify "which one" (e.g., "The girl **in the garden** was walking").
- **Adverbial Function (Adjunct):** Modifies a verb, adjective, or adverb, answering questions such as *when*, *where*, *why*, or *how* an action occurred (e.g., "They studied **before class**").
- **Complement Function:** Provides required information after a verb, noun, or adjective (e.g., "She is fond **of music**").
- **Postmodifier:** Used within noun phrases to provide detailed, complex information, which is a key feature of academic writing, aiding in information density.

Types of Prepositional Groups by Meaning

- **Locative:** Indicates position, direction, or location (e.g., "under the table").

- **Temporal:** Indicates time or duration (e.g., "during the meeting").
- **Agentive:** Identifies the agent of an action, often in passive voice (e.g., "by the author").
- **Instrumental/Manner:** Indicates how something is done (e.g., "with a pen")

Based on recent linguistic studies and academic journals, prepositional phrases (often termed "prepositional groups") in English are defined as a structure comprising a **preposition** followed by a **prepositional complement** (typically a noun phrase, pronoun, or gerund). They act as vital connectors that establish relationships—such as time, location, or direction—between elements in a sentence.

Structure of Prepositional Groups (PPs)

- **Basic Structure:** Preposition + Object/Complement.
- **Types of Prepositions:**
 - **Simple Prepositions:** Single-word prepositions (e.g., *in, at, on, of, by, with, for*).
 - **Complex Prepositions:** Multi-word combinations (e.g., *according to, in front of, by means of, on behalf of*).
- **Internal Components:** The complement is usually a noun phrase, but it can also be a nominal clause or a gerund.
- **Functional Grammar View:** Some perspectives treat PPs as "minor clauses" or "minor processes" rather than simple phrases because the preposition operates as a "minor predicator".

Functions of Prepositional Groups

Prepositional phrases serve several syntactic functions in English, primarily categorized as adjectival or adverbial.

1. **Adjectival Function (Noun Modifier/Postmodifier):**

- Modifies a noun or noun phrase to provide more specific details.
- *Example:* The girl **in the garden** was walking. ("in the garden" modifies "the girl").

2. **Adverbial Function (Verb Modifier/Adjunct):**

- Modifies a verb, often answering questions such as *where, when, why, or how*.
- *Example:* She studied **before the exam**. ("before the exam" acts as an adverb of time).

3. **Complements:**

- Prepositional phrases can serve as complements to verbs, adjectives, or nouns.
- *Example (Adjective complement):* She is quite tall **for a five-year-old**.
- *Example (Verb complement):* I rely **on your help**.

4. **Information Compressing:**

- In academic writing, they are used to increase information density by condensing complex ideas into shorter phrase

ADVERBIAL IN FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

From a functional perspective, adverbials are elements in a clause that add extra information about the situation or process, rather than being required by the verb. Their function is to modify or extend the meaning of the clause. In functional grammar, adverbials are described according to what they do in the clause, not just their form.

Preposition constructions continue to be a source of difficulties for students whose original language contains either

prepositions or postpositions, even as students' competence levels rise. It happens due to the various possibilities and polysemic nature of meaning (Damayanti & Sundari, 2022)

Adverbials from a functional perspective (such as Systemic Functional Linguistics or Functional Discourse Grammar) are not viewed as a single adverbial class, but rather as functional elements within clauses that provide additional (satellite) information about the situation, time, place, manner, or attitude of the speaker. Based on the search results, the following is a summary of studies on adverbials from a functional perspective from various journals

Adverbs have the most diverse syntactic function. It is really convenient to be placed. Adverbs can appear at the end, beginning and middle of a sentence. In general, the presence of adverbs in sentences is arbitrary. Adverb constituents are usually in the form of prepositional phrases, nouns or nominal phrases, numerals or numeral phrases, or adverb phrase (Palit et al., 2022)

EXPRESSING SPACE, TIME, AND MANNER

Adverb of place indicates the place where an event or situation occurs. Unlike adverb of time, adverb of place can only be filled with prepositional phrases. An adverbial of space (also called *adverbial of place*) is used to show where an action happens or the direction/movement of an action.

An **adverbial of space** expresses **location, position, distance, or direction** in a clause. It answers questions like:

1. Forms Used to Express Adverbial of Space

These directly indicate place or direction.

- *here* → She is **here**.
- *there* → Put the bag **there**.
- *away* → He ran **away**.
- *inside / outside* → Wait **outside**.

Preposition + noun phrase.

- **in the room** → They are waiting **in the room**.
- **on the table** → The book is **on the table**.
- **under the bridge** → He slept **under the bridge**.
- **to the park** → She walked **to the park**.

Noun Phrases Indicating Distance

- **two kilometers away** → The school is **two kilometers away**.
- **a long way** → The village is **a long way** from here.

Directional Expressions

- **upstairs / downstairs**
- **north / south**
- **forward / backward**

Adverbials of space usually appear:

- **At the end** of a clause (most natural): She sat **near the window**.
- **At the beginning** for emphasis: **On the wall**, there is a painting.

Examples in Sentences

- The children are playing **outside**.
- She placed the keys **on the desk**.
- He walked **towards the beach**.
- The library is **across the street**.

2. Forms Used to Express Time Adverbials

A time adverbial is used to express when, how long, how often, or until when an action happens. An adverbial of time gives information about the time of an action or event.

It answers questions such as:

- **When? How long? How often? Until when?**

Single Adverbs

- **now** → She is studying **now**.
- **then** → We lived there **then**.
- **today / yesterday / tomorrow**
- **recently / lately / soon**

Preposition + noun phrase.

- **at night** → He works **at night**.
- **in the morning** → She exercises **in the morning**.
- **on Monday** → The exam is **on Monday**.

Noun Phrases

- **last year** → They graduated **last year**.
- **next week** → I will call you **next week**.
- **every day** → She studies **every day**.

Duration Expressions

- **for two hours** → He studied **for two hours**.
- **all day** → She worked **all day**.
- **since 2020** → They have lived here **since 2020**.

Frequency Expressions

- **often / always / never, twice a week, every month**

Time adverbials can appear:

- **At the beginning:** **Yesterday**, we met the teacher.
- **In the middle** (especially frequency adverbs): She **usually** arrives early.
- **At the end:** They left **after the class**.

Examples in Sentences

- The lecture starts **at 8 a.m.**
- She has lived here **since childhood.**
- We meet **every Friday.**
- He waited **for a long time.**

3. Forms Used to Express Manner Adverbials

An adverbial group of manner explains how an action happens — the way something is done. An adverbial group of manner is a word group (usually an adverb or an adverbial phrase) that modifies a verb by describing the manner or method of the action.

Forms of Adverbial Group of Manner

1. **Single adverb** : He speaks clearly, She ran quickly
2. **Adverbial phrase (prepositional phrase)**
 - *She solved the problem **with great care.***
 - *He answered the question **in a polite manner.***
3. **Adverb + modifier**
*The students worked **very carefully,** She sang **quite beautifully.***

Position in a Sentence

Adverbial groups of manner usually appear:

- **After the verb or object**
 - *He finished the work **efficiently.***
- **At the end of the sentence**
 - *They completed the task **with enthusiasm.***

Common Questions Answered

How? In what way? By what means?

- *The teacher explained the lesson **clearly and patiently.***
- *The child crossed the road **carefully.***

- *She wrote the report **in a professional way***

POSITIONING ADVERBIALS FOR EMPHASIS

Positioning adverbials for emphasis is about *where* you place an adverbial in a sentence to highlight meaning, focus, or attitude. The same adverbial can feel very different depending on its position.

Initial Position (Fronting) — Strong emphasis

Placing the adverbial at the **beginning** draws attention and sets the scene. **Structure:**

Adverbial + clause

Examples:

- **Carefully**, she placed the glass on the table.
- **In the morning**, the students take a vocabulary test.
- **With great confidence**, he delivered the speech.

Medial Position — Subtle or neutral emphasis

The adverbial appears near the verb, often between the subject and main verb or after auxiliary verbs.

Examples:

- She **carefully** placed the glass on the table.
- He **usually** arrives early.
- They **have carefully** analyzed the data.

Final Position — Information focus

This is the most common position. The adverbial adds information without strong emphasis.

Examples:

- She placed the glass on the table **carefully**.

- The experiment was conducted **under controlled conditions**.
- He spoke **with enthusiasm**.

Dislocation / Detached Position — Stylistic emphasis

Adverbials may be separated by commas for extra impact.

Examples:

- She placed the glass on the table, **carefully**.
- He accepted the offer, **without hesitation**.

Emphasis in Academic Writing

Academic texts often front adverbials to control focus:

- **In this study**, the data were collected through interviews.
- **From a functional perspective**, adverbials play a key role.

STYLISTIC AND DISCOURSE EFFECT

Stylistic and discourse effects refer to how language choices—especially adverbial positioning shape *tone, emphasis, flow, and reader interpretation* beyond basic grammar. Below is a clear, functional explanation you can use for linguistics, discourse analysis, or academic writing.

1. Stylistic Effects

Stylistic effects concern how a sentence sounds or feels.

a. Emphasis and Focus

Fronted adverbials highlight specific information.

- **With great care**, the experiment was conducted.
Emphasizes *method* over the action itself.

Compare:

- The experiment was conducted **with great care**.
(neutral)

b. Formality

Initial adverbials often create a **formal or literary tone**.

- **In recent years**, research has focused on discourse markers.

Common in academic writing, news report, and literary narratives

c. Rhythm and Flow

Adverbials affect sentence rhythm.

- **Slowly and deliberately**, he turned the key.
Mirrors the pace of the action.

This is a stylistic technique in storytelling.

d. Subjectivity and Attitude

Certain adverbials express the writer's stance.

- **Surprisingly**, the results contradicted the hypothesis.
- **Frankly**, the proposal lacks clarity.

These add **evaluative meaning**, not just information.

2. Discourse Effects

Discourse effects relate to **how sentences connect and develop meaning across a text**.

a. Thematic Organization (Theme–Rheme)

Fronted adverbials often function as **Theme**, guiding readers.

- **In this study**, data were collected from three schools.

b. Cohesion and Coherence

Adverbials create logical links between ideas.

- **As a result**, student performance improved.
- **In contrast**, previous studies reported different findings.

They act as **discourse markers**.

c. **Framing and Perspective**

Adverbials set the interpretive frame.

- **From a sociolinguistic perspective**, language varies across groups.

d. **Managing Information Flow**

Initial adverbials often present **given information**, while new information comes later.

- **At the beginning of the semester**, students feel motivated.

This supports smooth **information progression**

CONCLUSION

A **prepositional phrase** is a combination of words that starts with a preposition and is followed by its object, used to show how one element in a sentence is related to another in terms of place, time, movement, or condition. Preposition is a word placed before a noun or pronoun to show in the relation the person or thing denoted by it stands in regard to something else. It concerned with study of various usage of preposition in English. This book also explains about adverbial groups, such as definitions and examples.

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Aprillia was born in Jakarta on April 7 1988. The author is a mother of two children and currently resides in Bekasi, Indonesia. Completed her primary, secondary, and senior high school education in Bekasi. Then continued her higher education by earning both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Jakarta. Her professional focus is in the field of education. Teaching is her passion, as it allows her to interact directly with learners, share knowledge, and exchange experiences. Throughout her career, she has actively engaged in various educational activities, including participating in academic seminars, delivering materials in community service programs, and writing educational journals. Through her work, she is committed to contributing to the development of education and improving the quality of teaching and learning. She is actively involved in the field of education, with teaching as her main passion. She enjoys teaching because it allows her to interact directly with learners, share knowledge, and exchange experiences. In addition to teaching, she has participated in various academic seminars, contributed as a speaker in community service programs, and written several educational journal articles. Through her writing and teaching, she aims to contribute positively to the development of education

CHAPTER 10

SYNTAX, REGISTER, AND GENRE

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INTRODUCTION

Syntax does not occur independently of social context, and the impact of situational factors on grammatical organization is well documented in contemporary corpus studies. As Gan (2024) asserts different registers yield variant probabilistic grammars in second language production, influencing structures such as the English dative alternation. This quotation foregrounds how linguistic structure, including choices of syntactic constructions, shifts systematically with sociolinguistic context because learners produce distinct patterns in spoken versus written registers. The study's empirical findings thus demonstrate that context-based register differences go beyond lexicon to shape core grammatical preferences. These insights confirm that syntax is inherently sensitive to social and functional contexts.

Understanding syntax within varied text types of benefits from examining how linguistic features adapt across discourse communities and purposes. Ahmad, Mahmood, Siddique, Imran, & Almusharraf (2024) note, academic writing reflects specificities related to audience, context/discipline, and purpose, resulting in differences in the use of clausal, intermediate, and phrasal features. This quotation highlights that even within a tightly defined genre like academic writing, syntactic variation correlates with disciplinary context and communicative goals. Varying frequencies of structures across disciplines illustrate

that register and genre expectations shape how writers deploy syntactic constructions to satisfy professional norms. Such evidence underscores the dynamic interplay between grammatical form and communicative function.

The relationship between register, genre, and syntactic variation has been clarified in systemic functional linguistics, where situational contexts are linked to linguistic choices. According to a comprehensive review, register variation is concerned with patterns of linguistic variation found in certain settings and the purposes performed by language features, while genre variation is concerned with the customary organization of entire texts (Biber, Gray, Staples, & Egbert, 2020). This quotation distinguishes register and genre by scope: register locates syntax within specific situational contexts, and genre encompasses broader text patterns with conventional structures. Such conceptualization emphasizes that both register and genre co-determine syntactic realization in real communicative practice.

Explicit analysis of linguistic variation demonstrates that syntactic complexity is not a fixed property of language but varies according to communicative situation and social context. As reported in a recent corpus-based study, the results revealed that L1 English students tended to produce more noun phrases in academic writing than L1 Chinese students with the increase of years (Shen, Guo, Shi, Qu, & Tian, 2023). These findings highlight that register differences are reflected in empirically observable syntactic patterns, particularly in the preference for phrasal rather than clausal structures in academic discourse. Consequently, syntactic variation should be understood as systematic rather than incidental, shaped by communicative purpose, audience expectations, and disciplinary conventions.

Beyond descriptive accounts, recognizing syntactic variation across registers and genres also has important

methodological and pedagogical implications. Corpus-based approaches that incorporate register-sensitive analysis enable researchers to move beyond categorical notions of grammatical correctness toward probabilistic patterns of use, revealing how learners acquire context-appropriate syntactic options. From a pedagogical perspective, this view challenges form-focused instruction that treats syntax as uniform across contexts and instead supports genre-informed and register-aware teaching practices. By explicitly linking syntactic choices to communicative purpose, audience, and discipline, language instruction can better prepare learners to adapt grammatical resources flexibly across spoken, academic, and professional settings. Thus, syntactic variation should be foregrounded not only as an object of linguistic description but also as a central component of applied linguistic research and pedagogy.

Beyond register and genre, recent usage-based approaches further reinforce the view that syntactic variation emerges from patterned language use in social interaction. From a usage-based perspective, grammatical structures are shaped by frequency, entrenchment, and communicative routines within specific discourse environments. Filipović & Hawkins (2018) argue that second language syntax develops as an adaptive system, where learners' grammatical choices are probabilistically conditioned by recurring contextual cues rather than by abstract rules alone. This quotation emphasizes that syntactic forms are learned and stabilized through repeated exposure to socially situated input, such as classroom discourse, academic prose, or conversational interaction. As a result, syntactic variation reflects not only cognitive processing constraints but also the social distribution of language use across communicative domains. Such findings strengthen the argument that syntax is fundamentally usage-sensitive and socially embedded.

In addition, discourse-pragmatic research highlights how information structure and interactional demands influence syntactic realization across contexts. Studies grounded in corpus pragmatics demonstrate that syntactic choices, such as word order, clause combining, and grammatical metaphor, are often motivated by speakers' and writers' needs to manage stance, information flow, and interpersonal alignment. Hyland (2022) notes that writers strategically deploy syntactic resources to negotiate authority, evaluation, and reader engagement, particularly in institutional and academic settings. This quotation illustrates that syntactic variation is closely tied to pragmatic functions, as different contexts require different configurations of grammatical resources to achieve communicative effectiveness. Consequently, syntax cannot be fully understood without considering how social interaction and pragmatic goals shape grammatical form in discourse.

In summary, the literature illustrates that syntactic variation is deeply intertwined with social context through the interacting concepts of register and genre. Empirical studies across learner corpora, academic writing, and functional linguistic theory consistently show that syntactic choices respond to situational variables, disciplinary conventions, and communicative purposes. Registers shape probabilistic grammars, genres impose structural conventions, and both construct the social meaning of texts. Awareness of these contextual influences enhances linguistic analysis and language pedagogy by foregrounding how grammar functions in actual use. Consequently, a comprehensive understanding of syntax necessitates integrating social and textual context rather than isolating syntax as an abstract system.

REGISTER VARIATION IN SYNTAX

Register variation in syntax refers to systematic differences in sentence structure that correlate with situational context, including field, tenor, and mode. Szmrecsanyi & Engel (2023) corpus study on future temporal reference demonstrates that grammatical choices such as *will* versus *be going to* vary significantly across spoken and written registers, with constraints modulated by register context. This finding shows that syntactic variation is not random but conditioned by contextual factors: in written formal registers, formal grammar choices are more prevalent, whereas informal spoken contexts level certain syntactic differences. Consequently, register variation in syntax functions as a probabilistic grammar sensitive to communicative context.

One syntactic implication of register variation is the differential use of complex versus simple clause structures in formal and informal contexts. Multivariate analyses reveal that formal written registers tend to exhibit higher complexity in grammatical alternations, such as probabilistic constraints on variant choice, compared to informal registers. For example, formal newspaper prose often shows a richer set of syntactic constraints than informal spoken conversation, indicating that structural complexity is tied to register-specific norms. These empirical results support the view that register variation operates at the level of syntax, with situational variables shaping how speakers and writers realize grammatical alternations in context. An additional dimension that reinforces the argument for register-sensitive syntax concerns methodological advances in corpus-based and probabilistic modeling of grammatical variation. Large-scale corpora and mixed-effects regression analyses allow researchers to disentangle the relative contributions of internal grammatical constraints and external contextual variables, demonstrating that register is not merely a

background factor but an active predictor of syntactic choice. By modeling register alongside factors such as lexical aspect, animacy, and information structure, recent studies show that contextual variables systematically interact with grammatical constraints rather than overriding them. This interactional view suggests that syntactic knowledge is gradient and usage-based, with speakers internalizing probabilistic patterns that are conditioned by recurrent communicative situations. Consequently, register variation provides empirical support for theories of grammar that integrate form, meaning, and use, positioning syntax as a dynamic system shaped by both cognitive representation and contextual experience.

In general, register variation in syntax highlights the systematic alignment between grammatical choices and communicative situations. From a pragmatic perspective, linguistic competence involves knowing how to deploy language appropriately across contexts, a capacity referred to as pragmatic competence Kecskés (2014). However, variationist sociolinguistics traditionally maintains that internal grammatical constraints operate independently of social and stylistic variation (Guy, 2005; Labov, 2010). Recent discussions suggest that this separation is not absolute, particularly when register-sensitive syntactic choices recur across communicative domains. Thus, register variation should be understood as a functional interface between grammatical knowledge and contextual demands, rather than as a matter of stylistic ornamentation alone.

SPOKEN VS. WRITTEN GRAMMAR

The contrast between spoken grammar and written grammar is foundational to understanding how language functions in different communicative contexts. As Biber et al. (2020) and Park (2022) articulate, spoken productions exhibit more frequent coordination and less subordination, whereas written texts tend

to have longer sentenced and denser clause structures in empirical syntactic comparisons. This distinction reflects the real-time nature of speech versus the pre-planned nature of writing: speakers use coordination (e.g., and, but) to link simple clauses spontaneously, while writers deploy subordination (because, although) to structure complex ideas. For example, in casual conversation one might say “*I went home and ate dinner*”, whereas a written report might read “*After I returned home, I prepared and consumed dinner*”, demonstrating subordination and nominalization typical of written grammar.

A central feature of spoken grammar is its reliance on discourse markers and ellipsis, which facilitate interactional meaning. Research on discourse and grammar notes that spontaneous spoken language is characterised by ellipsis, repetitions, and discourse markers that support interactivity and context grounding in real-time communication (Dobrovolski, n.d.). These markers (such as *well, you know, so*) and omitted elements allow interlocutors to adjust meaning dynamically, relying on shared situational context. In contrast, written language must encode logical relations explicitly because writers cannot rely on immediate feedback. For instance, in dialogue one might say “*Yeah, I’ll do it, you know, right after lunch*” with repeated markers for pacing and engagement; this would read as unstructured in formal writing.

Because of their different mediums, spoken and written grammars also differ in lexical and phraseological complexity. Published studies in applied linguistics have confirmed that “*written responses elicit greater lexical and phraseological complexity than spoken responses*,” with writers producing more elaborate vocabulary and structural density (Kim & Crossley, 2023). This difference arises from the cognitive demands of composing in writing, where authors have time to plan, revise, and densify information. For example, an oral description might

use “*big changes happened*”, while written academic text may render this as “*the phenomenon underwent significant structural transformations*”, illustrating nominalization and lexical precision characteristic of written grammar.

In summary, the systematic differences between spoken and written grammar arise from their communicative purposes and cognitive constraints. Spoken grammar is shaped by immediacy and interactivity, favoring coordination, discourse markers, ellipsis, and simpler lexical choices, which aid fluency and listener comprehension. Written grammar, by contrast, privileges elaborated subordination, nominalization, and explicit logical connections that support dense, coherent presentation of ideas without shared context. Recognizing these modality-specific grammatical patterns enables learners to adjust their language use appropriately, reducing the inappropriate transfer of spoken patterns into formal writing contexts.

ACADEMIC, PROFESSIONAL, AND CASUAL REGISTERS

The academic register in English communication is characterized by structural complexity, impersonal tone, and syntactic patterns that foreground objectivity and evidence-based reasoning. As noted in studies of linguistic perspectives on register, “language users change their written and spoken language according to the situational characteristics and communicative purpose of production” when engaging in academic contexts, with a systematic preference for features such as passive constructions and explicit logical relations (Goulart et al., 2026). This emphasis on register variation reflects how academic writers organize information into coherent arguments using subordinate clauses, nominalizations, and discipline-specific lexis, which collectively support precision and evaluative distance. For example, biology research

articles typically adopt passive voice to depersonalize methodology and complex noun phrases for specificity. Consequently, academic register exemplifies a distinct syntactic ecology designed to balance clarity, rigor, and epistemic accountability.

The professional register mediates between formal academic discourse and everyday speech, balancing clarity with genre conventions and context-specific norms. Research into professional discourse emphasizes that “professional communicative practices are shaped by institutional norms, power structures, and goals,” requiring language that precisely conveys directives, responsibilities, and professional expectations (Staples & Brookes, 2025). In professional settings such as business or legal correspondence, modal verbs (e.g., “shall,” “must,” “should”) and standardized lexical choices are prevalent, serving to express obligations, recommendations, and policies with minimal ambiguity. For instance, a formal business proposal may contain sentences like “The contractor must provide quarterly reports to ensure compliance,” which demonstrates the interplay of obligation modals and specialized vocabulary. Thus, professional register functions as a pragmatic register that maintains clarity and institutional efficacy while respecting audience expectations.

Casual register is widely recognized in sociolinguistics as the linguistic variety used among peers in informal settings, where simplicity, directness, and relaxed syntax prevail. In research contrasting slang and register, scholars argue that informal or casual language often incorporates elements “trendy, sometimes ungrammatical, vocabulary used primarily by youth in informal settings,” distinguishing it from formal written registers tied to occupation or academic discourse (Djamereng, Ali, & Abdullah, 2024). Such registers, speakers frequently prefer simple sentences, contractions, and idiomatic expressions

to convey immediacy and social solidarity. For example, classmates planning an event might say, “Let’s meet up later and sort things out,” where the use of contraction and colloquial phraseology signals an egalitarian, peer-oriented register. Consequently, casual register exemplifies how syntactic simplicity and pragmatic flexibility facilitate effortless interpersonal communication among friends or peers.

Across academic, professional, and casual domains, register variation reflects the interplay between purpose, audience, and situational context, shaping syntactic and lexical choices in systematic ways. Academic register prioritizes structural complexity and evidential precision, professional register balances formality with clarity and institutional norms, and casual register favours simplicity and immediacy to support social rapport and ease of understanding. Collectively, these registers illustrate the functional diversity of language and underscore how competent language users adjust syntactic patterns and lexical resources to align with audience expectations and communicative objectives. Mastery of register variation therefore remains central to effective communication across disciplines and social settings, enabling speakers to navigate diverse linguistic demands with awareness and adaptability.

GENRE-SPECIFIC SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION

Genre-specific sentence construction is most visible in academic research writing, where syntactic choices reflect disciplinary norms and epistemic caution. As Hyland (2014) observes, research articles privilege compressed noun phrases and hedging devices to manage claims and align writers with disciplinary expectations. This observation highlights how syntax functions not merely as form, but as a social resource. Dense nominal groups allow writers to package complex ideas

efficiently, while modal verbs and cautious adverbials signal tentativeness. Such patterns are reinforced through peer review and academic training. In conclusion, research genres shape sentence structure to balance precision, credibility, and accountability within scholarly communities (Biber et al., 2020). In contrast, narrative and promotional genres rely on syntactic variation to guide reader engagement and emotional response. According to Swales (1990), narratives favor sequential clause chaining to foreground temporality and agency, a feature that supports storytelling coherence. Similarly, advertising discourse often adopts short, verbless clauses to maximize impact, as noted by Cook (2001) in his analysis of promotional language. These syntactic strategies reduce cognitive load and enhance memorability. The contrast with academic prose is instructive: genre dictates not only what is said, but how it is syntactically staged. Ultimately, such variation enables genres to fulfil distinct communicative purposes (Forceville, 2020).

Beyond written texts, genre-specific syntactic patterning is also evident in digital and multimodal communication, where sentence construction and linguistic features adapt to platform constraints, user interaction, and hybrid semiotic resources. Contemporary research on digital communication highlights that language use on social media and other digital platforms manifests new genre norms, including simplified syntactic structures, ellipsis, code-mixing, and the integration of visual and symbolic elements such as emojis and memes to convey meaning efficiently under technological constraints. These adaptations reflect how digital genres are not merely derivatives of traditional written or spoken forms but dynamic communicative practices shaped by rapid interaction rhythms, multimodal affordances, and social-community norms. As a result, sentence construction in digital contexts functions not only to convey propositional content but also to negotiate

identity, emotion, and affiliation within participatory networks, confirming that genre remains a responsive and evolving framework in both linguistic and multimodal studies. This perspective reinforces that syntactic choices are continually reshaped by the affordances of digital media and emerging communicative conventions rather than static disciplinary prescriptions (Pirdaus & Vera, 2025).

Taken together, genre-specific syntactic patterns operate as interpretive signals that help readers anticipate meaning and intention. Across informational, narrative, instructional, and persuasive texts, sentence construction reflects socially shared expectations rather than individual stylistic choice. As Fairclough (2013) argues, “genres stabilize linguistic form to sustain recurring social actions,” underscoring the link between syntax and context. Recognizing these patterns enhances critical reading and genre awareness, particularly in academic and professional settings. In summary, genre-sensitive sentence construction is a central mechanism through which texts achieve clarity, efficiency, and rhetorical alignment, enabling communication to function effectively across diverse discourse communities (Hyland, 2022).

TEACHING REGISTER AWARENESS IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Teaching register awareness in language education begins with explicit recognition that learners must connect grammatical form to appropriate contextual use to communicate effectively with diverse audiences. As researchers note, pragmatic competence involves understanding language use in social settings beyond mere correctness (Muliyah, Setyowati Ciptaningrum, Hawanti, Nurhayat Hakim, & Danial, 2025), which foregrounds register as a pedagogical priority. For instance, asking students to rewrite an informal email into a

formal job application letter highlights register distinctions in vocabulary and tone, reinforcing that a sentence can be grammatical yet pragmatically inappropriate without audience consideration. This example illustrates how syntactic choices shift with audience expectations to foster contextual sensitivity. Therefore, register awareness must be integral to communicative language instruction.

Another dimension of teaching register awareness is engaging learners with authentic materials to reveal how language varies by context, purpose, and social roles. In one study, scholars reported that learners become aware of underlying socio pragmatic norms when exposed to authentic interaction and task-based activities (Fitrianingsih, 2025), demonstrating how learners' exposure to real discourse supports interpretive skills. An example is analyzing recorded dialogues from workplace meetings versus casual conversations; learners compare turn-taking, politeness strategies, and lexical choices across these registers. This comparative task elucidates how language choices are conditioned by situational norms rather than abstract grammatical rules. Consequently, authentic text analysis strengthens learners' register sensitivity and adaptive competence.

Integrating role-play activities further enhances register awareness by situating learners in contextually varied communicative roles that require pragmatic adaptability. As research emphasizes, pragmatic awareness-raising tasks help learners notice how socio-cultural and situational variables influence appropriate language use, pointing to the value of interactive practice (Rose & Kasper, 2001; Taguchi, 2021; Wang & Liu, 2024). For example, role-playing a customer-service dialogue versus a faculty meeting encourages learners to adjust formality, request strategies, and politeness formulas, which reveals pragmatic dimensions not evident in isolated

grammar exercises. Through iterative feedback, learners discern which syntactic and lexical choices align with expected social norms. This demonstrates the pedagogical utility of combining role play with guided reflection.

In conclusion, teaching register awareness in language education requires structured intervention that bridges formal rules and pragmatic use by focusing on contextual variation, authentic materials, and interactive tasks. The evidence from recent research underscores that register awareness is not peripheral but essential for developing communicative competence; learners who engage with multiple registers become better equipped to negotiate meaning across social situations, thus avoiding pragmatic mismatches that impede communication. Embedding register-focused tasks within curricula enhances learners' ability to choose appropriate syntactic structures and lexical items for varied audiences, genres, and purposes, ultimately fostering adaptive and context-sensitive language users.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, syntax cannot be separated from the social and functional dimensions of language, as it operates in close relation to register and genre. The ways sentences are structured are shaped by who is speaking or writing, for what purpose, and in which context. Differences between spoken and written language, as well as across genres, illustrate how grammatical choices respond to communicative demands rather than fixed rules alone.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



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CHAPTER 11

SYNTAX AND DISCOURSE ORGANIZATION

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INTRODUCTION

Discourse refers to a structured and coherent system of communicative interaction that extends beyond the mere use of isolated linguistic forms to include the organization of meaning across clauses and sentences within broader communicative contexts. As conceptualized by Schiffrin, discourse consists of “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk,” highlighting the importance of organized and interconnected components in the construction of meaningful communication; accordingly, discourse organization involves the systematic arrangement of linguistic and pragmatic elements that guide interpretation and maintain coherence, with discourse markers playing a crucial role in signaling relations between propositions and structuring interaction through transitions, contrasts, and elaborations (Leuckert & Rüdiger, 2021).

The relationship between syntax and discourse is intrinsically interconnected, as syntactic structures substantially shape how meaning is produced and interpreted in communicative contexts. Contemporary research shows that grammatical elements such as clauses, sentence boundaries, and syntactic patterns perform discourse-level functions, demonstrating that syntax extends beyond rule-governed sentence formation to become an essential resource for discourse organization; for example, clauses introduced by subordinate conjunctions may function pragmatically to signal

topic shifts, elaboration, or emphasis, thereby illustrating the dynamic interaction between formal grammatical structures and communicative purposes in shaping how discourse unfolds (Rodríguez, 2021; Yarkulovna, 2025; Zhou, 2023).

The integration of discourse into functional syntax is essential for understanding how language operates in authentic communicative settings, as a discourse-oriented perspective links abstract syntactic theory to actual language use and reveals how structural choices contribute to coherence, cohesion, and communicative effectiveness. In addition, the capacity of languages to express complex meanings through adjuncts, connectors, and other syntactic devices underscores the need to examine grammatical structures within their discursive environments and supports pedagogical approaches that treat syntax not as an isolated system but as a functional resource for meaningful interaction, thereby demonstrating how grammatical forms serve pragmatic and communicative purposes in real-world language use (Yarkulovna, 2025; Балыгина et al., 2025).

SYNTAX BEYOND THE SENTENCE

Limitations of Sentence-Level Syntax

The traditional view of syntax predominantly emphasizes the structural properties of individual sentences, often neglecting the complexities of continuous discourse, a limitation that restricts its ability to capture the fluid and dynamic nature of communication. Sentence-based grammar, by focusing narrowly on isolated structures, overlooks the interrelationships and dependencies between clauses that arise in actual language use, resulting in a fragmented understanding of how meaning is constructed in context; as discourse extends beyond single sentences, such an approach fails to account for the coherence and meaningful connections that emerge across multiple

utterances and interactions, thereby reducing the explanatory power of linguistics in real-world communicative behavior (Zhou, 2023).

Clause Relations in Discourse

Understanding clause relations in discourse is crucial for grasping how meaning is constructed and conveyed in extended stretches of language. Clausal relationships often interact to create cohesive narratives and enrich the communicative act; for example, clauses may function in subordination, where one clause provides context or elaboration for another, or in coordination, where clauses work together to express parallel ideas (Badash, 2021). Such relationships often extend semantic content and create nuanced meanings that are absent in isolated sentence analysis. Studies have demonstrated that the way clauses are structured and linked in discourse greatly influences the thematic and cohesive quality of communication, impacting how information is interpreted by listeners (Omisakin et al., 2024). Thus, a discourse-oriented approach to clause relations can illuminate the intricate patterns that govern language usage outside of strict grammatical confines (Badash, 2021; Zhou, 2023).

Interclausal Cohesion

Interclausal cohesion refers to the mechanisms through which different clauses within a discourse connect, ensuring the flow and coherence of the overall message. Cohesive devices, such as conjunctive adverbs and discourse markers, facilitate these connections by guiding readers or listeners through the logical relationships among clauses (Song & Deng, 2024). For example, the use of transitional phrases like "however" or "in addition" can explicitly signal the relationship between clauses, thus enhancing comprehension and coherence. Furthermore,

interclausal cohesion is significant not only in written texts but also in spoken discourse, where speakers must navigate complex information and maintain the attention of their audience. The analysis of interclausal cohesion thus reveals essential insights into the strategies that speakers use to effectively organize and present information, enhancing the communicative effectiveness of their discourse (Omisakin et al., 2024).

Syntax as a Resource for Organizing Information

In discourse, syntax serves as a critical resource for organizing information and guiding how listeners comprehend and process ideas. Specific syntactic structures, such as topicalization or cleft sentences, can highlight particular informational content, thus influencing the prominence of certain ideas within a narrative (Hsiao et al., 2022; Zhou, 2023). For instance, starting a sentence with the object (“The solution, we decided...”) can foreground the information, allowing speakers to manage listeners’ attention and expectations strategically. Additionally, systemic functional grammar proposes that the organization of syntax is inherently linked to its function in context; thus, analyzing syntax through a discourse lens reveals how language can be shaped to fulfill different rhetorical and communicative objectives (Zhou, 2023). As such, syntax is not simply a framework for sentence construction; it is a vital tool that speakers and writers employ to convey meaning effectively and purposefully within discourse.

THEME–RHEME STRUCTURE IN DISCOURSE

Theme and Rheme in Functional Grammar

In systemic functional grammar (SFG), the Theme-Rheme structure is integral to understanding how information is organized within discourse. The Theme represents the starting

point of a clause, encapsulating the main idea that the speaker wants to bring to the audience's attention. This is often referred to as "given" information, which leads the listener into the new information presented in the Rheme. The Rheme provides additional details or developments concerning the theme (Rahardjo et al., 2021). The Theme-Rheme system underscores the dynamic nature of communication, illustrating how clauses are constructed to convey coherent messages by establishing connections between old (known) and new (unknown) information (Haider, 2022).

Thematic Progression in Texts

Thematic progression refers to how Themes are organized and developed across a text, thereby facilitating coherence and guiding the reader through the discourse. The systematic arrangement of Themes influences the overall flow of the text and aids in the reader's comprehension (Okta et al., 2023). A well-structured thematic progression allows for logical connections that help to maintain the audience's focus and clarify the relationships between various ideas presented in the discourse. Research indicates that effective thematic progression can significantly enhance text coherence and ensure that the audience can easily follow the unfolding information (Fitriati & Gayatri, 2021).

Types of Thematic Progression

There are several recognized patterns of thematic progression, each serving different communicative functions:

1. **Constant Theme**

This type occurs when the same Theme is reiterated throughout a text or passage, establishing continuity and reinforcing a central idea. It encourages the audience to

maintain focus on the central topic while presenting various related aspects (Zamroni et al., 2023).

2. Linear Theme

In this progression, each new Theme builds upon the Rheme of the preceding clause, creating a sequential flow of ideas. This pattern is effective for narrating events or constructing logical arguments since each step logically follows the last ((Fitriati & Gayatri, 2021).

3. Split Theme

This occurs when the Theme is divided into separate components, allowing for the presentation of multiple angles on a central idea. This pattern can add complexity and depth to discourse, catering to more intricate ideas or arguments (Zamroni et al., 2023).

Role of Theme in Discourse Coherence

The Theme plays a pivotal role in ensuring discourse coherence by acting as a guiding framework that contextualizes the information presented in the Rheme. A coherent use of Themes allows speakers and writers to create logical connections between ideas, facilitating smoother transitions and more sophisticated argumentation within a text (Sari et al., 2023). The effective management of Theme and thematic progression helps establish the relationship between different parts of the discourse, enhancing clarity and enabling audiences to navigate complex information seamlessly (Haider, 2022). Discourse that skillfully utilizes Theme and Rheme structures thus leads to greater engagement and retention of information, ultimately fostering more successful communication outcomes (Okta et al., 2023).

INFORMATION STRUCTURE AND DISCOURSE FLOW

Given vs New Information

The distinction between given and new information is fundamental in understanding discourse structure and coherence. Given information refers to what is already known or retrievable by the audience, while new information introduces fresh content that contributes to the ongoing discourse (Vân, 2022). In systemic functional linguistics, this differentiation plays a crucial role in structuring communication effectively. By presenting given information at the beginning of a clause (the Theme), speakers orient listeners and ease them into the new content (the Rheme), thereby establishing a cognitive framework that facilitates understanding (Mohammed & Al-Marsumi, 2022).

Information packaging hinges on the successful communication of given and new information, as it helps in managing the audience's expectations and guiding their comprehension throughout a discourse. According to Halliday's framework, properly using given and new information enhances discourse coherence and supports logical progression in a dialogue, ensuring that each communicative turn builds appropriately on previous exchanges (Mohammed & Al-Marsumi, 2022; Rahardjo et al., 2021).

Focus and Emphasis

Focus and emphasis are intricately connected to the presentation of given and new information within discourse. The use of syntactic structures, such as cleft sentences or topicalization, plays a pivotal role in highlighting certain pieces of information over others (Karimli, 2025). For example, emphasizing a particular element in a sentence can shift the

reader's or listener's attention effectively, allowing the speaker to prioritize essential elements of the discourse.

Emphasis can manifest through variations in syntactical structures, including altered word order or the deployment of specific constructions that signal importance. As demonstrated in various studies, these structures can enhance the clarity of the intended message and guide audience interpretation by foregrounding key components essential for understanding the overall narrative (Botchwey et al., 2023; Karimli, 2025). Thus, how focus is managed through syntax becomes instrumental in constructing coherent and effective discourse.

Information Packaging Through Syntax

Information packaging refers to how information is organized within syntactic structures to support discourse flow and clarity. The arrangement of clauses, phrases, and the use of functional elements like conjunctions and discourse markers contribute to this process (Zeldowicz, 2024). Effective information packaging through syntax creates a framework that enhances the accessibility of ideas, facilitating smoother transitions between given and new information.

Systemic functional grammar posits that syntactic choices, such as word order and the use of thematic structures, play a critical role in the arrangement of information. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how different syntactic forms can signal relationships among ideas and dictate how they are understood by the audience (Najjar, 2024; Rasim, 2021). Efficient information packaging aids in constructing clear and coherent narratives, ensuring that the intended meaning resonates with the audience.

Word Order and Information Distribution

Word order significantly influences information distribution within discourse, establishing how both given and new information are presented. In languages that utilize fixed word order, like English, the conventional Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) structure typically positions given information at the beginning of sentences, setting the stage for introducing new information in a coherent manner (Karimli, 2025; Mohammed & Al-Marsumi, 2022). Conversely, variations in word order can be deployed for specific emphasis or to manipulate the focus of a discourse.

The interplay between word order and thematic structures facilitates different types of thematic progression, helping speakers manage the flow of information effectively (Li & Wang, 2021). For instance, fronting elements can draw attention to specific topics, while passive constructions may shift focus away from the agent to the action or result (Najjar, 2024). Consequently, adjusting word order can strategically alter the conveyed emphasis, tailoring the discourse to meet specific communicative purposes and enhance coherence throughout the dialogue (Botchwey et al., 2023).

CLAUSE COMBINING AND DISCOURSE RELATIONS

Coordination and Subordination

Clause combining involves the connection of two or more clauses to construct complex sentences, employing two primary methods: coordination and subordination. Coordination connects clauses of equal syntactic status, typically using conjunctions like "and," "but," or "or." This allows for the juxtaposition of ideas, enhancing the fluidity and rhythm of discourse (Traugott, 2023). Subordination, on the other hand, links an independent clause with one or more dependent clauses, which rely on the

main clause for meaning. Subordinating conjunctions like "because," "although," and "if" introduce these dependent clauses, allowing speakers to convey complex grammatical relationships and to embed nuances of meaning within the discourse (Couper-Kuhlen, 2022). Understanding these methods provides crucial insights into the structural organization of discourse and the ways in which language conveys complex ideas and relationships between them.

Logical Relations Between Clauses

The logical relations between clauses in discourse include causes, contrasts, conditions, and elaborations. These relations enhance the coherence of discourse by providing listeners/readers with explicit cues about how clauses relate to each other.

1. Cause

Clauses may exhibit a causal relationship where one clause serves as the reason for another. For example, using a structure such as "Because it was raining, we stayed inside" explicitly connects the cause (the rain) with the effect (staying inside) (Zhang, 2025).

2. Contrast

In contrastive relationships, one clause presents an idea that opposes or qualifies the information in another clause. Phrases like "but," "however," or "on the other hand" typically signal this relationship, e.g., "I wanted to go for a walk, but it was raining" (Traugott, 2023).

3. Condition

Conditional clauses express dependencies that establish outcomes based on certain conditions, often introduced by conjunctions like "if" or "unless." An example is, "If it stops raining, we will go outside," where the outcome is

contingent on the condition being met (Couper-Kuhlen, 2022).

4. **Elaboration:** Elaboration involves providing additional details or explanations to reinforce or expand upon the information presented in a preceding clause. This can take the form of clarifications or examples, e.g., "I love outdoor activities, like hiking and biking," which supplements the initial statement (Yip, 2022).

Clause Complexes in Discourse Development

Clause complexes function as the building blocks of discourse development, as they allow for the integration of multiple ideas within a single communicative unit. A clause complex, comprising one main clause and one or more subordinate clauses, enables speakers to link various pieces of information logically and contextually (Özsoy et al., 2022). This integration reflects the intricacy of human thought processes and allows for the conveyance of complex narratives and arguments.

Moreover, clause complexes provide structure to discourse by managing focus and continuity. For example, the logical connectives used in clause combinations articulate the relationships and transitions among ideas, fostering coherence throughout the discourse. Research has underscored that successful clause combining contributes significantly to narrative flow and enhances the audience's understanding of the speaker's or writer's intended message (Sang, 2021). Thus, mastery of clause complexes is essential for effective communication, particularly in contexts that demand clarity and logical progression.

COHESION AND COHERENCE

Definition of Cohesion

Cohesion refers to the linguistic resources that link different parts of a text, thereby creating semantic and grammatical connections among sentences and clauses that contribute to its unity and interpretability. These resources enable readers to perceive how ideas are related and how information progresses throughout the discourse. By establishing explicit relationships among textual elements, cohesion facilitates the logical flow of ideas and supports readers in constructing meaning from the text. Consequently, cohesion is a fundamental component of textual organization, as it allows readers to follow arguments and narratives with clarity and minimal cognitive effort (Fitriati & Gayatri, 2021).

Grammatical Cohesion

Grammatical cohesion is realized through a set of structural mechanisms that connect clauses and sentences within a text. The principal categories of grammatical cohesion include reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction (Rasim, 2021).

1. Reference involves the use of pronouns or definite noun phrases to refer back to or forward to entities previously mentioned or assumed to be known in the discourse. For example, in the sentences “*The car was red. It drove very fast,*” the pronoun *it* refers to *the car*, thereby establishing a clear link between the two clauses.
2. Substitution entails replacing a lexical item or phrase with another element to avoid unnecessary repetition while maintaining textual continuity. For instance, in “*I have read the book. I would recommend it,*” the pronoun *it* substitutes for *the book*, ensuring cohesion without redundancy.

3. Ellipsis refers to the omission of information that can be recovered from the surrounding context. In the sentence “*I like apples; she does too,*” the phrase *does too* stands in for *likes apples*, which is understood from the preceding clause.
4. Conjunction involves the use of connective devices such as *and*, *but*, *therefore*, and *however* to signal logical relationships between clauses or sentences. For example, in “*I wanted to go for a walk, but it started to rain,*” the conjunction *but* marks a contrast between two propositions, guiding the reader through the progression of ideas.

Lexical Cohesion

Lexical cohesion is achieved through the patterned use of vocabulary that creates semantic links within a text. It operates through several mechanisms, including repetition, synonymy and antonymy, and hyponymy (Zamroni et al., 2023).

1. Repetition of key lexical items reinforces central concepts and helps readers track the thematic focus of a text.
2. Synonymy and antonymy, the use of words with similar or opposite meanings, respectively, allow writers to maintain semantic continuity while avoiding monotony. For example, alternating between *happy* and *joyful* strengthens cohesion while enriching expression.
3. Hyponymy refers to the hierarchical relationship between general and specific terms, such as *flower* and its subcategories *rose* or *tulip*. Such lexical relations enhance precision and contribute to the structured development of ideas within a text.
4. Lexical cohesion complements grammatical cohesion by reinforcing semantic relationships among concepts, thereby contributing to the overall unity and clarity of discourse.

Coherence as a Discourse Principle

Whereas cohesion concerns the explicit linguistic ties within a text, coherence refers to the underlying logical and conceptual organization that enables readers to interpret a discourse as meaningful and unified. A coherent text allows readers to understand how ideas relate to one another and to the text's overall communicative purpose. Coherence is often achieved through effective thematic progression, whereby known information is systematically connected to new information in a way that supports comprehension (Zamroni et al., 2023).

Narrative strategies and thematic structuring further enhance coherence by ensuring that each part of the discourse contributes to the development of the central message. Ultimately, coherence arises from the interaction between cohesive linguistic devices and well-organized thematic patterns, producing a text that is not only structurally sound but also cognitively and communicatively effective (Rahardjo et al., 2021; Zamroni et al., 2023).

DISCOURSE MARKERS AND SYNTACTIC ORGANIZATION

What Are Discourse Markers?

Discourse markers (DMs) are linguistic expressions that serve to organize, manage, and enhance the coherence of discourse. These markers function not only as connectors between ideas but also signal the speaker's attitude, the relationship between statements, and the progression of, or shift in, topics. Common examples include words and phrases such as "however," "therefore," "well," and "like." By helping to connect larger discourse segments, DMs play a crucial role in guiding listeners through the speaker's reasoning and

emphasizing specific points within discourse (Drozdova, 2022; Kızıl, 2021).

Syntactic Position of Discourse Markers

The syntactic positioning of discourse markers can vary depending on their function within a sentence or discourse unit. DMs can be found at several points in a sentence:

1. **Initial Position:** When placed at the beginning of a sentence or clause, discourse markers often indicate a transition or signal a new idea. For example, "Well, I think we should try a different approach" utilizes "well" to prepare the listener for a shift in thought (Chen, 2022)
2. **Medial Position:** Discourse markers can also appear in the middle of clauses, functioning to link ideas within a complex sentence. For example, "We can go to the park, but, if it rains, we might change our plans" employs "but" to introduce a contrast in the planning of activities.
3. **Final Position:** In some cases, DMs can conclude a discourse segment, summarizing or reinforcing the preceding content. For example, "This is a significant step forward, right?" places "right" at the end to seek confirmation or agreement from the listener (Asgarova, 2022; Chen, 2022) .

Functions in Organizing Discourse

Discourse markers serve multiple functions within both spoken and written discourse, enhancing clarity and coherence. Some key functions include:

1. **Structuring Information:** DMs aid in outlining arguments or narratives by clarifying the relationships between ideas, which helps the audience follow the discourse more easily. For example, "First, we need to assess the data. Secondly,

we can propose solutions" uses "first" and "secondly" to create a clear sequence (Huneety et al., 2023).

2. Signaling Relationships: They indicate logical relationships such as cause, contrast, or elaboration. For instance, "Although it was raining, we still went for a hike" uses "although" to signal the contrast between two clauses, highlighting the relationship between the conditions and the action (Jin, 2024; Kayed, 2021).
3. Repairing Discourse: Discourse markers can also serve to manage communication breakdowns or shifts. For instance, "That is, we need to revise our approach" allows the speaker to clarify or redirect the conversation flow, enhancing listener comprehension (Asgarova, 2022; Drozdova, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The discussion in this chapter has shown that syntax constitutes far more than a mechanism for generating grammatically well-formed sentences; it functions as a fundamental system for organizing discourse. The analyses of clause relations, Theme–Rheme structure, information distribution, and cohesive mechanisms reveal that grammatical choices are instrumental in structuring how meaning is developed and interpreted across extended stretches of text. Patterns of coordination and subordination, thematic progression, and word order enable speakers and writers to manage informational prominence, establish logical relationships, and maintain continuity, thereby ensuring that discourse unfolds as a coherent and integrated sequence of meanings rather than as a series of isolated clauses.

In addition, the examination of cohesion, coherence, and discourse markers underscores the interdependence between syntactic form and discourse function. Grammatical and lexical cohesive devices such as reference, ellipsis, conjunction, and

lexical relations provide the explicit links that connect clauses and sentences, while principles of thematic organization and information flow contribute to the underlying coherence of texts. Discourse markers further enhance this organization by signaling transitions, contrasts, and elaborations within discourse.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



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Since childhood, the author has had a habit of reading. A variety of reading materials, ranging from fiction such as folk tales to those related to general knowledge, have always been of interest to the author. The author pursued a Bachelor's degree in English Education at the University of Lampung in 1995. Five years later, in 2000, the author completed the undergraduate program. In 2010, the author continued their education at the Master's level at the State University of Jakarta. After two years, in July 2012, the author completed their studies and earned a Master's degree in English Language Education. As an academic, the author has written various studies, both independently, in collaboration, and as part of a team, particularly related to their background in English Education. Some of these include studies on pure and applied linguistics, such as the use of picture sequences, the pictorial game, challenges in students' perspectives on English teaching, critical reviews on English skill development, designing ESP syllabi for editing courses, revitalizing the importance of language assessment literacy, and evaluating project-based course programs in learning planning courses. Currently, the author is actively teaching at Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University in Banten, in the English Education Department.

CHAPTER 12

SYNTAX, IDENTITY, AND SOCIAL MEANING

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INTRODUCTION

Syntax is traditionally defined as the system that governs how words are combined into phrases, clauses, and sentences. In many introductory accounts, it is presented as a formal and largely autonomous component of grammar, concerned with rules, structures, and well-formedness. However, a functional approach to syntax views sentence structure not as an isolated system but as a resource shaped by communicative purposes and social contexts. From this perspective, syntactic choices are closely tied to how speakers represent experience, manage interaction, and position themselves and others in the social world (Auer, 2014).

This chapter adopts that functional orientation and extends it by focusing specifically on the relationship between syntax, identity, and social meaning. It argues that sentence structure is never socially neutral. Choices such as who appears as the grammatical subject, whether an action is expressed in active or passive voice, how clauses are linked, and how much information is made explicit or left implicit all contribute to how speakers construct social relationships and enact identities. In other words, syntax is not only a matter of structure; it is also a matter of stance, alignment, and social positioning.

A key assumption underlying this discussion is that grammar emerges from recurrent patterns of language use in context (Bybee, 2006). Speakers select grammatical forms to

fulfill communicative needs: to highlight particular participants, to background others, to manage the flow of information, and to signal attitudes or degrees of commitment. Over time, these patterned choices become associated with particular social practices and groups. As a result, certain syntactic constructions may come to index, or signal, social meanings that go beyond their literal propositional content (Venhuizen & Brouwer, 2025).

The notion of *indexicality* is central here. Linguistic features can point to aspects of the social context, including identities, relationships, and institutional roles. While indexicality is often discussed in relation to pronunciation or vocabulary, it is equally relevant to syntax. For example, the use of inclusive pronouns such as 'we' *can index solidarity and shared responsibility, whereas impersonal constructions like 'it is believed that...' may index distance, authority, or institutional voice.* Similarly, complex subordination and dense nominal structures are frequently associated with academic and bureaucratic registers, while shorter, coordinated clauses are more typical of everyday conversation (Grieshofer née Tkacukova et al., 2021). These patterns illustrate how syntactic variation aligns with social and situational variation.

Identity, in this chapter, is understood as dynamic and interactionally constructed rather than fixed. Individuals do not simply “have” identities; they actively perform and negotiate them through language in specific contexts (Wedin, 2020). Syntax plays an important role in this process. Through choices of agency, evidential framing, and clause structure, speakers can present themselves as authoritative or tentative, aligned or distant, cooperative or resistant. For instance, a teacher saying *We will now look at the next example* positions the class as a collective learning community, whereas *You must complete the task now* constructs a more hierarchical relationship. Such differences are grammatical, but they are also deeply social.

Syntactic choices are also embedded in systems of power. Certain varieties and styles—often those associated with formal education and dominant social groups—are granted higher prestige and institutional legitimacy. These varieties tend to favor particular syntactic patterns, such as extended noun phrases, passive constructions, and nominalizations, which contribute to an impersonal and authoritative tone (Indarti et al., 2025). In contrast, other communities may rely more heavily on different patterns, such as clause chaining, ellipsis, or alternative word orders. When these patterns are evaluated as “informal” or “incorrect” in institutional settings, the result is not simply a linguistic judgment but a social one, tied to broader inequalities in access, status, and power.

Another domain where syntax and social meaning intersect is politeness and interpersonal alignment. Research on politeness has shown that indirectness is often used to mitigate imposition and maintain social harmony (Lestiana et al., 2025). Syntactically, indirectness is realized through interrogatives (*Could you open the window?*), conditionals (*If you have time, could you...*), and subordinate clauses that soften directives. These structures are not chosen solely for grammatical reasons; they reflect culturally shaped expectations about respect, hierarchy, and solidarity. Thus, sentence structure becomes a key mechanism through which speakers manage face, negotiate roles, and align with or distance themselves from others.

Importantly, the relationship between syntax and social meaning is probabilistic rather than deterministic. A given construction does not carry a single fixed meaning across all contexts. Instead, meanings emerge through repeated use in particular communities and situations. Speakers may also manipulate expectations, using marked or unexpected structures to challenge norms, signal irony, or resist dominant positions. For this reason, the study of syntax, identity, and social meaning

requires close attention to authentic language use across diverse contexts, including conversation, classrooms, workplaces, media discourse, and digital communication.

For practitioners, educators, and students of linguistics, this perspective highlights the value of connecting grammatical analysis with real social practices. Understanding syntax as a functional and social resource enriches both linguistic description and language education. It encourages analysts to ask not only *how* sentences are structured, but also *why* particular structures are chosen in specific contexts and *what* social meanings those choices help to create.

The sections that follow explore these issues in detail. We begin by examining how syntactic variation relates to social positioning, then consider how particular constructions index identity and group belonging. We also discuss how power relations are encoded in sentence structure and how politeness and alignment are achieved through syntactic means. The chapter concludes with case studies from diverse speech communities, demonstrating how syntax operates as a central resource for constructing identity and social meaning in everyday language use.

LANGUAGE VARIATION AND SOCIAL POSITIONING

As outlined in the Introduction, a functional view of syntax treats sentence structure as a resource for making meaning in a social context. One important implication of this view is that syntactic patterns vary systematically across situations, communities, and social groups, and that this variation is closely tied to social positioning. In other words, differences in clause structure, complexity, and grammatical choices are not random; they are linked to how speakers locate themselves and others within networks of roles, relationships, and institutions.

Language variation has long been a central concern of sociolinguistics, which demonstrates that linguistic forms correlate with social factors such as age, gender, social class, ethnicity, and community membership (Nimavat & Upadhyay, 2025)). While early variationist studies often focused on phonological features, subsequent research has shown that grammar—including syntax—also exhibits socially meaningful variation (Bender, 2007). From a functional perspective, such variation reflects the different communicative demands and interactional norms associated with particular social settings and identities.

One key dimension of variation concerns **register**, or variation according to use. Different institutional and situational contexts favor different syntactic patterns because they serve different communicative purposes (Djamereng & Abdullah, 2024). Academic writing, for instance, frequently employs complex noun phrases, nominalizations, and embedded clauses to condense information and present arguments in a dense, abstract manner. In contrast, everyday conversation tends to rely more on shorter clauses, coordination, ellipsis, and clause chaining, which support real-time interaction and shared situational knowledge. These patterns do more than organize information efficiently; they also position speakers as members of particular discourse communities—such as scholars, professionals, or peers in informal interaction.

A related dimension is variation across social roles and institutional positions. Speakers in positions of authority often adopt syntactic styles that foreground institutional voice rather than personal agency. Passive constructions (*The application was rejected*) and impersonal structures (*It has been decided that...*) can background the decision-maker and present actions as neutral or inevitable. Such patterns are common in bureaucratic, legal, and administrative discourse and contribute

to the construction of authority and objectivity (Caldas-Coulthard & Coulthard, 1996). In contrast, speakers in less formal or more collaborative roles may prefer active clauses and personal pronouns, which foreground human agents and interpersonal relations. These differences in syntactic style index not only the setting but also the relative power and responsibilities of participants.

Community-based variation further illustrates how syntax relates to social positioning. Speech communities develop conventional ways of structuring information that reflect shared histories, values, and interactional norms. For example, some communities make extensive use of narrative sequencing with coordinated clauses, while others favor more hierarchical subordination. Such preferences are not simply stylistic; they can become markers of in-group identity and solidarity. When speakers use locally valued syntactic patterns, they align themselves with community norms; when they shift toward more standardized or institutionally privileged patterns, they may be positioning themselves differently—perhaps to claim educational authority, professional status, or wider social mobility.

Importantly, speakers often move across social contexts and therefore shift their syntactic choices. This phenomenon, sometimes described as style-shifting or register-shifting, reflects the dynamic nature of social positioning (Lipski & Fernández-Mallat, 2025). A university lecturer, for example, may use dense, hypotactic structures in a research article, more explicit and pedagogically oriented clauses in the classroom, and shorter, more interactive structures in casual conversation. These shifts are not merely adjustments in formality; they signal changes in footing, role, and relationship with the audience. Syntax thus becomes a flexible tool for navigating multiple identities and expectations.

Another important aspect of variation concerns standard and non-standard syntactic forms. Educational institutions and other powerful social structures often promote particular grammatical norms as “correct” or “proper.” These norms are typically associated with standardized, written varieties. However, many spoken and community-based varieties use alternative syntactic patterns that are systematic and rule-governed, even if they are socially stigmatized. When speakers use these patterns, they may be indexing local identity, solidarity, or resistance to dominant norms. Conversely, adopting standardized syntax in certain contexts may index aspiration, professionalism, or alignment with institutional authority. In both cases, syntactic variation plays a role in how speakers position themselves within broader social hierarchies.

Digital communication provides a contemporary domain where language variation and social positioning are especially visible. Online interaction often encourages syntactic brevity, ellipsis, and fragmented structures that mirror spoken conversation. At the same time, users may strategically adopt more elaborate and formally structured sentences in professional or academic online spaces. These choices help construct online personae, signal group membership, and negotiate credibility. Once again, syntactic form participates in the performance of identity across shifting social contexts.

For linguistics students, educators, and practitioners, recognizing the link between syntactic variation and social positioning has important implications. It encourages analysts to view grammatical patterns not simply as correct or incorrect, simple or complex, but as socially situated choices. It also supports more inclusive approaches to language education by acknowledging the legitimacy and systematicity of diverse syntactic practices while helping learners understand how different structures function in different social domains.

In sum, language variation at the level of syntax is a key mechanism through which social positioning is enacted. Patterns of clause structure, information packaging, and grammatical choice reflect and construct roles, relationships, and group affiliations. By examining these patterns functionally and sociolinguistically, we gain a deeper understanding of how sentence structure contributes to the ongoing negotiation of identity and social meaning introduced in the previous section.

SYNTAX AS INDEX OF IDENTITY AND GROUP BELONGING

Building on the previous discussion of language variation and social positioning, this section focuses more specifically on how syntactic choices function as indices of identity and group belonging. If Section B emphasized that different contexts and roles favor different structural patterns, the present section highlights how these patterns become socially recognizable signs of who speakers are, where they belong, and how they wish to be perceived.

From a sociocultural linguistic perspective, identity is not a fixed attribute but an ongoing accomplishment in interaction. Speakers actively construct and negotiate identities by drawing on available linguistic resources, including syntax (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Through repeated association with particular communities and practices, certain syntactic patterns come to be linked with specific social identities—such as student, professional, community elder, youth peer, or digital-native user. These links are not inherent in the structures themselves; rather, they emerge through social use and shared interpretation.

One important mechanism in this process is the grammatical encoding of agency. Choices about who appears as the subject of a clause can index responsibility, authority, and alignment. In Indonesian academic or institutional contexts, for

example, writers frequently use passive constructions such as *Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk...* (“This research was conducted to...”) rather than active forms like *Kami melakukan penelitian ini untuk...* (“We conducted this research to...”). The passive construction backgrounds the human agent and foregrounds the activity or process, aligning the writer with an impersonal, institutionally valued academic identity. In contrast, the active form with *kami* (“we”) may index a more personal or collaborative stance, often found in less formal or more pedagogically oriented texts.

Pronoun choice also plays a central role in indexing group belonging. Inclusive forms such as *kita* in Indonesian can signal shared identity and collective responsibility, as in *Kita perlu menjaga etika berbahasa di media sosial* (“We need to maintain language ethics on social media”). Here, *kita* positions the speaker and audience within the same moral and social community. By contrast, *kami* excludes the addressee and may index institutional or group boundaries, as in *Kami dari panitia mengucapkan terima kasih* (“We, the committee, would like to thank you”). The syntactic integration of these pronouns into clause structure helps construct social relations of inclusion and exclusion.

Clause combining and complexity can also index identity. In many educational settings, the ability to produce extended, hypotactic sentences with clear subordination is associated with academic competence and intellectual authority. For instance, a sentence such as *Although the data were limited, the findings suggest that students benefit from collaborative learning* reflects a style valued in academic discourse. Students who successfully adopt such structures may be seen as aligning with the identity of competent academic writers. In contrast, speech styles that rely more heavily on coordination and shorter clauses—common

in everyday conversation—may index informality, intimacy, or local community belonging rather than institutional authority.

Within Indonesian youth communities, especially in digital communication, syntactic reduction and ellipsis often function as markers of in-group identity. Utterances like *Udah kirim belum?* (“Already sent or not?”) omit subjects and auxiliary elements that would typically appear in more formal structures. These reduced forms are efficient and context-dependent, indexing familiarity, shared knowledge, and peer solidarity. When used in formal academic or professional settings, however, the same structures may be evaluated as inappropriate, demonstrating how syntactic forms carry different social meanings across contexts.

Another way syntax indexes identity is through stance and evidential framing. Structures such as *menurut saya* (“in my opinion”) or *berdasarkan data yang diperoleh* (“based on the data obtained”) position the speaker in relation to knowledge and authority. The first foregrounds personal stance, often associated with reflective or dialogic interaction. The second backgrounds the speaker and foregrounds evidence, aligning with a more objective, research-oriented identity. These choices are syntactic as well as lexical, involving the integration of stance markers into clause structure in ways that shape how knowledge and responsibility are presented.

Syntactic patterns may also index professional and disciplinary identities. Legal, governmental, and bureaucratic Indonesian frequently employ long noun phrases and passive constructions, such as *Permohonan tersebut akan diproses sesuai dengan ketentuan yang berlaku* (“The application will be processed in accordance with the applicable regulations”). Such structures construct an impersonal, procedural voice associated with institutional authority. By contrast, teachers in classroom interaction may prefer more dialogic and interactive syntax,

including questions, imperatives, and inclusive pronouns: *Sekarang kita lihat contoh berikutnya* (“Now let’s look at the next example”). These differences in sentence structure help signal whether the speaker is acting as an official representative of an institution or as a facilitator of learning.

Importantly, the relationship between syntax and identity is flexible and strategic. Speakers can adopt or avoid particular syntactic patterns to align with or distance themselves from certain groups. A university student, for instance, may use informal, elliptical structures with peers but shift to more elaborated academic syntax in assignments to index scholarly competence. Such shifts demonstrate that syntactic features are part of a broader repertoire for performing multiple, sometimes overlapping identities.

For linguistics students and practitioners, examining syntax as an index of identity encourages a more nuanced understanding of grammar. It shows that sentence structure is not merely a technical skill but a social resource. Recognizing how syntactic choices signal belonging, authority, solidarity, or distance can deepen analysis of discourse and support more socially aware approaches to language teaching. Rather than treating certain structures as universally superior, educators can help learners understand how different syntactic patterns function in different communities and communicative contexts.

In sum, syntax contributes directly to the construction of identity and group belonging. Through patterns of agency, pronoun use, clause complexity, and stance marking, speakers signal who they are, which communities they align with, and how they relate to others. These processes extend the discussion of variation and social positioning from the previous section, showing in greater detail how sentence structure becomes a key site where grammar and social identity intersect.

POWER RELATIONS IN SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION

The previous sections have shown that syntactic variation is closely tied to social positioning and that particular sentence patterns can index identity and group belonging. Extending this line of discussion, this section examines how syntax also participates in the construction, maintenance, and negotiation of power relations. From a functional perspective, power is not expressed only through explicit vocabulary such as *authority*, *rules*, or *obligation*, but also through subtle grammatical choices that shape how actions, responsibilities, and voices are represented in discourse (Shehzad et al., 2026).

One of the most widely discussed syntactic resources for encoding power is the management of agency. Choices about who appears as the grammatical subject of a clause influence how responsibility and control are perceived. In institutional and bureaucratic contexts, passive constructions are frequently used to background human agents and present decisions as impersonal processes. For example, in Indonesian administrative discourse, sentences such as *Permohonan Anda belum dapat diproses* (“Your application cannot yet be processed”) avoid specifying who is unable or unwilling to process the application. The absence of an explicit agent constructs the decision as procedural and unavoidable, thereby reinforcing institutional authority while limiting the possibility of direct accountability.

By contrast, active constructions foreground agency and can either assert or challenge power. A sentence like *Pihak sekolah memutuskan untuk menunda kegiatan tersebut* (“The school authorities decided to postpone the activity”) explicitly identifies the decision-maker, reinforcing the school’s institutional role. In other contexts, foregrounding agency may function critically, as in *Perusahaan itu membuang limbah ke sungai* (“The company discharged waste into the river”), where the syntactic positioning of *perusahaan itu* as subject assigns clear

responsibility and can support a stance of accusation or resistance. Thus, the same grammatical resource—subject selection—can serve to legitimize or contest power.

Another important resource is nominalization, the transformation of processes into nouns. Nominalizations such as *pelanggaran*, *penyesuaian*, or *pelaksanaan* (“violation,” “adjustment,” “implementation”) are common in formal Indonesian, especially in legal and policy documents. For instance, *Terjadi pelanggaran terhadap peraturan tersebut* (“There was a violation of the regulation”) presents the event as an abstract occurrence rather than as an action carried out by identifiable individuals. This syntactic packaging can obscure agency and present social processes as objective, technical matters, thereby contributing to an authoritative and impersonal style. Critical discourse analysts have noted that such structures can naturalize institutional perspectives and reduce space for alternative interpretations (Sadeghi & Belali, 2025).

Modality and clause type also play a role in expressing power relations. Direct imperatives such as *Kumpulkan tugas Anda besok* (“Submit your assignment tomorrow”) position the speaker—often a teacher or supervisor—in a role of authority. However, power does not always appear in overtly commanding forms. It may be realized through declaratives with strong modality, such as *Semua peserta wajib mengikuti aturan ini* (“All participants are required to follow this rule”). The declarative form presents the statement as factual and non-negotiable, while modal expressions like *wajib* (“must/required”) encode obligation. In institutional contexts, such syntactic patterns help construct hierarchical relationships and expectations of compliance.

Power can also be exercised through control of turn-taking and information structure. In classroom interaction, for example, teachers often use question–answer sequences where the teacher

asks, the student responds, and the teacher evaluates. Syntactically, this may involve tightly controlled interrogative forms followed by short student clauses, as in:

Dosen: Apa kesimpulan dari teks ini?

Mahasiswa: Teks ini membahas pentingnya literasi digital.

Guru: Ya, benar.

Here, the teacher's control over questioning and evaluation structures the interaction in ways that reinforce institutional authority. At the same time, teachers may soften this asymmetry through inclusive syntax, such as *Sekarang kita coba pahami bagian ini bersama-sama* ("Now let us try to understand this part together"), which redistributes participation and constructs a more collaborative stance. These shifts show that syntactic choices can both enact and mitigate power.

In wider social discourse, **impersonal and evidential constructions** can also index authority. Phrases like *Berdasarkan hasil penelitian...* ("Based on research findings...") or *Telah dibuktikan bahwa...* ("It has been proven that...") foreground evidence while backgrounding the individual speaker. Such structures are common in academic and policy discourse and contribute to a stance of objectivity and expertise. By presenting claims as grounded in external authority, these syntactic patterns strengthen the speaker's epistemic position and can limit challenges from others.

Importantly, power relations are not only imposed from above; they can also be negotiated and resisted through syntax. Speakers may deliberately reintroduce agents into passive or nominalized constructions to make responsibility visible. For example, changing *Terjadi kesalahan dalam sistem* ("An error occurred in the system") to *Tim pengembang membuat kesalahan dalam sistem* ("The development team made an error in the system") shifts the discourse from impersonal accident to accountable action. Such rewording illustrates how alternative

syntactic choices can reframe social reality and redistribute power.

For students and practitioners of linguistics, recognizing the role of syntax in power relations encourages more critical and reflective analysis of language. It highlights how seemingly neutral grammatical structures can support particular perspectives, institutional interests, and social hierarchies. In educational contexts, this awareness can help learners understand why certain syntactic styles are valued in formal settings and how they may strategically adopt or question these styles depending on their communicative goals.

In sum, sentence construction is a key site where power is enacted, legitimized, softened, or contested. Through the management of agency, the use of passives and nominalizations, modality, and information structure, syntax shapes how responsibility, authority, and knowledge are distributed in discourse. This discussion builds on the previous sections by showing that the identities and social positions indexed through syntax are deeply intertwined with broader structures of power in society.

POLITENESS, INDIRECTNESS, AND ALIGNMENT

The previous section demonstrated how sentence construction can encode and reproduce power relations. However, interaction is not shaped by power alone. Speakers also use syntactic resources to maintain social harmony, manage interpersonal distance, and signal alignment with others. Politeness and indirectness are central to this process. From a functional perspective, these are not merely matters of word choice but are deeply embedded in clause structure, modality, and patterns of subordination (Li & Wongwaropakorn, 2024).

Politeness involves attending to the social and emotional needs—or “face”—of interlocutors. Indirectness is one common

strategy for doing so, especially when making requests, giving instructions, or expressing disagreement. Syntactically, indirectness is often realized through interrogatives, conditionals, modal constructions, and subordinate clauses that soften the force of an utterance. These structures allow speakers to reduce imposition, express respect, and leave room for negotiation.

In Indonesian contexts, indirectness is a prominent feature of polite interaction. Compare the following directives:

1. **Direct imperative:**

Tutup pintunya.

(“Close the door.”)

2. **Interrogative request:**

Bisa tutup pintunya?

(“Can you close the door?”)

3. **Conditional and mitigating clause:**

Kalau tidak keberatan, bisa tutup pintunya?

(“If you don’t mind, could you close the door?”)

Each sentence conveys the same basic action, but the syntactic packaging differs significantly. The first uses a bare imperative, which may be appropriate in contexts of clear authority or close familiarity. The second shifts to an interrogative structure with modal *bisa*, reducing directness. The third adds a conditional clause that explicitly acknowledges the hearer’s autonomy, further softening the request. These differences illustrate how syntax functions as a tool for calibrating social distance and deference.

Politeness is also closely tied to **alignment**, the process through which speakers signal solidarity, empathy, or shared perspective. Inclusive syntactic forms play a key role here. In classroom discourse, for instance, a teacher may say:

Sekarang kita coba kerjakan soal ini bersama.
("Now let's try to work on this question together.")

The use of *kita* and the inclusive imperative *coba* constructs the activity as a joint effort rather than a top-down instruction. This syntactic choice reduces hierarchical distance and promotes a sense of collaboration. By contrast, *Kerjakan soal ini sekarang* ("Do this question now") foregrounds authority and task obligation rather than shared engagement. Thus, alignment is not only expressed lexically but also structurally.

Hedging and stance marking provide another link between syntax, politeness, and alignment. Clausal frames such as *saya kira...* ("I think..."), *menurut saya...* ("in my opinion..."), or *mungkin bisa dipertimbangkan...* ("perhaps it could be considered...") embed propositions within matrix clauses that present them as personal viewpoints rather than absolute claims. For example:

Menurut saya, pendekatan ini bisa lebih efektif untuk siswa pemula.

("In my opinion, this approach may be more effective for beginner students.")

The main clause *menurut saya* functions syntactically to background the assertion and foreground the speaker's subjectivity. This reduces the risk of face-threat, especially in academic or professional discussions where disagreement is possible. Such constructions promote alignment by acknowledging alternative perspectives and inviting dialogue rather than imposing conclusions.

Indirectness is also frequently used in contexts of disagreement or correction. Instead of saying *Pendapat itu salah* ("That opinion is wrong"), a speaker might say:

Mungkin ada cara lain untuk melihat masalah ini.
("Perhaps there is another way to look at this issue.")

Here, the modal *mungkin* and the existential construction shift the focus from direct evaluation of the interlocutor to the existence of alternative viewpoints. The syntactic structure allows the speaker to challenge an idea while maintaining interpersonal harmony.

Politeness strategies are shaped by cultural expectations about hierarchy, age, and social roles. In Indonesian society, respect toward elders, teachers, and authority figures is often expressed through more elaborate and indirect syntactic forms. Students addressing lecturers, for example, may write:

Mohon izin, Ibu/Bapak, saya ingin menanyakan tentang tugas yang kemarin.

(“With your permission, Ma’am/Sir, I would like to ask about yesterday’s assignment.”)

The clause *mohon izin* and the embedding of the request within *saya ingin menanyakan...* create a multi-layered structure that signals deference and respect. The same student might use much simpler syntax with peers: *Tugas kemarin gimana?* (“What about yesterday’s assignment?”). These contrasts show how syntactic complexity and embedding can function as markers of politeness and social awareness.

Importantly, politeness and alignment are not merely about being “nice”; they are ways of managing relationships within existing power structures, as discussed in the previous section. Indirectness may soften authority, but it can also obscure it. For instance, *Sebaiknya laporan ini dikumpulkan hari ini* (“It would be best if this report were submitted today”) appears advisory but may function as a firm directive in institutional contexts. Thus, polite syntax can both mitigate and subtly reinforce power.

For linguistics students and practitioners, analyzing politeness at the level of syntax reveals how interpersonal

meaning is woven into grammatical structure. It also has pedagogical relevance, particularly in language education, where learners need to understand not only what is grammatically correct but also what is socially appropriate in different contexts.

In summary, politeness, indirectness, and alignment are key interpersonal functions realized through sentence construction. Through interrogatives, conditionals, modal expressions, inclusive pronouns, and clausal embedding, speakers manage face, signal solidarity, and negotiate relationships. These syntactic strategies connect closely with the issues of identity, variation, and power discussed in earlier sections, further demonstrating that syntax is a central resource for social meaning in interaction.

CASE STUDIES FROM DIVERSE SPEECH COMMUNITIES

The preceding sections have shown that syntactic choices are deeply intertwined with social positioning, identity construction, power relations, and interpersonal alignment. To illustrate how these dimensions come together in real-world language use, this section presents several brief case studies from diverse speech communities. Each case highlights how sentence structure functions as a social resource, indexing identities, negotiating power, and shaping relationships in context.

1. Academic Discourse in Indonesian Universities

In Indonesian higher education, academic writing and formal presentations often favor syntactic patterns associated with objectivity, caution, and institutional legitimacy. Passive constructions and nominalizations are especially prominent:

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengkaji pengaruh media digital terhadap motivasi belajar.

(“This study was conducted to examine the influence of digital media on learning motivation.”)

Here, the passive form *dilakukan* backgrounds the researcher and foregrounds the research process. This aligns the writer with an academic identity that values impersonal, evidence-based argumentation. Similarly, nominalizations such as *pengaruh*, *peningkatan*, and *pengembangan* condense processes into abstract entities, contributing to a dense informational style typical of scholarly discourse. These syntactic features index membership in the academic community and familiarity with its communicative norms.

At the same time, lecturers may shift syntactic style when interacting with students in the classroom. More inclusive and dialogic structures appear:

Kita lihat dulu hasilnya sebelum menarik kesimpulan.

(“Let’s look at the results first before drawing conclusions.”)

The inclusive pronoun *kita* and the imperative-like structure soften authority and construct a collaborative learning identity, demonstrating how the same speaker navigates multiple roles through syntax.

2. Bureaucratic and Institutional Communication

Governmental and administrative discourse in Indonesia provides a clear example of how syntax encodes power and distance. Official announcements often rely on impersonal and passive constructions:

Diberitahukan kepada seluruh mahasiswa bahwa perkuliahan dilaksanakan secara daring.

(“It is hereby announced to all students that classes are conducted online.”)

The absence of a clear human agent and the use of formal passive verbs create a tone of institutional authority. The message appears as a neutral directive rather than a decision made by specific individuals. This syntactic style reinforces hierarchical relationships and presents institutional policies as procedural and non-negotiable.

In contrast, community-based organizations may adopt more personal and direct syntax:

Kami mengundang Bapak/Ibu untuk hadir dalam kegiatan ini.

(“We invite you to attend this event.”)

Here, the explicit subject *kami* foregrounds human agency and relational engagement, constructing a more personal and inclusive institutional identity.

3. Youth Interaction in Digital Spaces

Digital communication among Indonesian youth demonstrates how syntactic reduction can index in-group identity and solidarity. Messages in chat platforms often omit subjects, auxiliaries, or formal markers:

Udah makan?

(“[Have you] eaten yet?”)

Besok jadi kan?

(“So it’s on tomorrow, right?”)

These elliptical structures rely heavily on shared context and mutual understanding. Their brevity and informality signal closeness, equality, and peer-group belonging. When the same individuals write emails to lecturers, however, their syntax typically becomes more elaborate:

Mohon maaf mengganggu waktunya, Ibu. Saya ingin menanyakan tentang jadwal presentasi besok.
 (“Sorry to disturb your time, Ma’am. I would like to ask about tomorrow’s presentation schedule.”)

The shift from elliptical clauses to full sentences with mitigating expressions reflects a shift in social positioning—from peer solidarity to respectful deference within an academic hierarchy.

4. Classroom Interaction in Multilingual Settings

In multilingual Indonesian classrooms, especially where local languages, Indonesian, and English interact, syntactic choices can index both educational identity and linguistic background. Teachers often model standardized Indonesian or English syntax associated with formal education:

Please submit your assignment through the learning management system before Friday.

Students, however, may draw on mixed syntactic patterns in peer interaction:

Nanti upload aja di LMS, ya.
 (“Just upload it to the LMS later, okay.”)

The hybrid structure, combining Indonesian syntax with English lexical items (*upload*, *LMS*), indexes a digitally literate student identity and peer-level interaction. Such patterns show how syntax participates in the construction of contemporary, technology-oriented group identities.

5. Community Storytelling Practices

In some local and oral storytelling traditions, narratives may favor sequences of coordinated clauses rather than deeply embedded subordination:

Dia pergi ke hutan, ketemu harimau, lalu lari sekuat tenaga.

(“He went to the forest, met a tiger, then ran as fast as he could.”)

This paratactic style supports vivid, event-driven storytelling and reflects oral narrative norms. In formal written retellings, the same events might be expressed with more hypotactic structure:

Setelah pergi ke hutan dan bertemu harimau, dia berlari sekuat tenaga untuk menyelamatkan diri.

(“After going to the forest and encountering a tiger, he ran as fast as he could to save himself.”)

The shift toward subordination indexes alignment with literate, school-based narrative conventions. Thus, syntactic differences here relate not only to style but also to educational and cultural positioning.

Across these case studies, a consistent pattern emerges: syntactic structures function as socially meaningful choices. Whether in universities, government institutions, digital youth culture, multilingual classrooms, or local storytelling traditions, sentence construction helps speakers signal who they are, how they relate to others, and what kinds of authority or solidarity they claim. These examples reinforce the central argument of this chapter: syntax is a key site where identity, power, and social meaning are enacted in everyday language use.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has approached syntax from a functional and social perspective, demonstrating that sentence structure is far more than a formal arrangement of words. Across the discussion, syntax has been shown to operate as a key resource

for making social meaning. Variations in clause structure, agency, pronoun use, complexity, and information packaging are systematically linked to how speakers position themselves and others, construct identities, and signal group belonging. In this way, grammar participates directly in the ongoing negotiation of social life.

The chapter has also highlighted the close relationship between syntax and power. Through passives, nominalizations, modality, and impersonal constructions, sentence structure can legitimize institutional authority, obscure responsibility, or present claims as objective and unquestionable. At the same time, speakers can strategically reshape these patterns to soften hierarchy, build alignment, or challenge dominant perspectives. Politeness and indirectness further illustrate how syntactic choices help manage interpersonal relations, allowing speakers to balance authority, respect, and solidarity in culturally meaningful ways.

Taken together, the analyses and case studies underscore the importance of integrating grammatical description with social interpretation. For students, educators, and language practitioners, understanding syntax as a socially embedded resource encourages more critical, context-sensitive engagement with language. Rather than viewing certain structures as inherently superior, this perspective emphasizes appropriateness, purpose, and social meaning. Ultimately, examining syntax through the lenses of identity, variation, power, and alignment reveals how deeply grammar is woven into the fabric of human interaction.

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CHAPTER 13

RESEARCH METHOD IN FUNCTIONAL SYNTAX

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INTRODUCTION

Functional syntax is a way of looking at language that focuses on how people use sentences to communicate meanings and intentions in real situations (Roberts, 2008). It focuses on how sentence structures serve semantic and pragmatic goals rather than treating grammar as a set of formal rules (Jiménez-Fernández, 2020). In contrast to more traditional syntactic theories, this perspective views language as a tool for making meaning, thereby offering a broader picture of how communication works. As the field of linguistics has developed, methods for studying functional syntax have also become more sophisticated and diverse, reflecting the complex ways in which language operates in social life. Within this approach, functional syntax describes how sentence patterns are shaped by their roles in communication (Roberts, 2008). Moreover, unlike generative grammar, which prioritizes the abstract rules that govern sentence formation (Chomsky, 1957), functional syntax examines how syntax interacts with meaning and context to support effective communication. In addition, a key idea is that grammatical structures are not random; they are shaped by the communicative purposes they serve (Halliday, 2000). From this perspective, the way language is organized reflects the needs of speakers and listeners in specific contexts (Lanteigne et al., 2021).

Functional syntax sets itself apart from other approaches to syntax by closely examining how sentence structure interacts with meaning and context in honest communication. Instead of searching mainly for universal rules that apply to all languages, as generative grammar does (Cedeño & Corver, 2025), functional syntax focuses on how people use language across different cultures and situations (Biber, 1988). From this perspective, researchers can see how the flow of discourse influences choices in sentence structure, the speaker's aims, and the surrounding social situation. Key ideas in functional syntax include “*theme*” and “*rheme*,” which relate to how information is arranged within a sentence, and the distinction between “*given*” information that the listener already knows and “*new*” information that is being introduced (Halliday, 2014). These notions highlight how speakers structure their messages so that what they say remains clear and logically connected. In addition, functional syntax often draws on cognitive linguistics, recognizing that language use is shaped by both mental processes and social interaction (Langacker, 2008).

Research methods play a crucial role in building and supporting theories in functional syntax by showing how ideas work with real language data (Garcia, 2021). Empirical studies are critical because they connect theoretical claims to what can be observed in everyday language use. By analyzing authentic examples of spoken or written language, researchers can identify patterns and differences in sentence structures that reveal underlying functional principles (Byram & Morgan, 1994). This kind of work moves linguistics beyond speculation and into a closer engagement with how people use language in daily communication (Lawless, 2007a). Many functional syntax studies focus on how syntax interacts with discourse. For example, researchers may examine how different sentence structures are chosen to signal emphasis, politeness, or urgency

in conversation (Latham & Ewing, 2018). Other researchers examine how syntax helps shape narratives or arguments, asking how speakers use grammatical choices to guide listeners' understanding of a message (Schiffrin et al., 2013).

These investigations deepen our knowledge of syntax and illuminate broader questions about language in society (Makinde, 2019). However, researching functional syntax brings several difficulties (Jiménez-Fernández, 2020). One major challenge is that language use varies significantly across situations, making it difficult to find patterns that apply broadly. In addition, because functional analysis often depends on interpretation (Manzini et al., 2020), different researchers may reach different conclusions based on the same data. Therefore, strong methodological frameworks are required to maintain reliability and validity (Biber et al., 1998). In addition, collecting suitable data can also be demanding, particularly when dealing with spoken language, which tends to be more fluid and less neatly structured than written text (Pan & Aroonmanakun, 2022).

The history of research methods in functional syntax begins with early attempts to explain how sentence structure relates to meaning (Mertova & Webster, 2019). Michael Halliday was especially influential in this regard, as his work on systemic functional grammar laid the groundwork for subsequent studies (Halliday, 2000). He stressed how strongly context shapes linguistic choices and promoted research strategies that combine qualitative descriptions and quantitative analyses (Djamba & Neuman, 2002). As the discipline evolved, the tools for examining functional syntax expanded and became more data driven. With the emergence of corpus linguistics in the late 20th century, researchers were able to analyze extensive collections of real-world language (Bavelas, 1994), uncovering syntactic patterns that might be overlooked in smaller or more

introspective studies (Biber et al., 1998). This shift enabled a more detailed, fine-grained understanding of how syntax works in practice.

Contemporary research in functional syntax increasingly adopts an interdisciplinary perspective. Researchers integrate concepts from cognitive science, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis, frequently employing mixed methods approaches that combine corpus studies, qualitative analysis, and experimental research to investigate the interaction between syntax and other linguistic components (Biber et al., 1998; Yang & Li, 2020). This movement towards methodological diversity underscores the significance of employing varied approaches to capture the communicative functions of syntax (Roberts, 2008). The evolution of research methods in functional syntax reflects a dynamic and progressive field that integrates theoretical frameworks with empirical investigation. By examining the role of syntactic structures in communication, researchers have enhanced our comprehension of language as a tool for social interaction and meaning making. As these methodologies continue to advance, they provide valuable insights into the richness and complexity of human language and its influence on our worldview (Byram & Morgan, 1994).

COLLECTING NATURAL LANGUAGE DATA

Methods for gathering natural language data have expanded as digital communication platforms have increased. Instead of relying solely on traditional approaches, such as interviews and surveys, researchers now use automated tools, including web scraping and social media mining (Baclic et al., 2020; Chersoni et al., 2021), point out that these automated methods help researchers collect large amounts of data quickly, which is crucial for building machine learning models. Simultaneously, Ziafati Bafarasat (2021) warns that these approaches can

introduce issues with data quality and representativeness and stresses that automated collection techniques must be carefully checked to ensure that the data are accurate and trustworthy.

In recent years, researchers have become increasingly interested in using crowdsourcing to collect natural-language data. Platforms such as Amazon Mechanical Turk and Prolific enable researchers to recruit participants from diverse backgrounds and collect a wide range of language samples (Sabou et al., 2012). This not only boosts the amount of data they can work with but also makes it more diverse, which is key for building inclusive language models. Simultaneously, Ziafati Bafarasat (2021) emphasized that researchers should carefully design their tasks to avoid bias and ensure that the data accurately reflect the people they intend to study. A newer approach to gathering natural language data is through mobile applications that capture language use as it happens. Apps for language learning, for example, often let users record themselves speaking and then give instant feedback on their performance (Nehe et al., 2023). Recording in real time provides valuable insights into how language is used in daily life, benefiting both linguistic research and education. However, researchers must consider the limitations of mobile technology, such as the precision of speech recognition and the consistency of user engagement with the app. (Nehe et al., 2023).

As innovative methods for gathering natural language data develop, the ethical dilemmas associated with these activities are becoming more intricate. Collecting language data from sources such as social media and other public platforms raises issues regarding individuals' privacy, their consent to participate, and the actual ownership of the data. Chellappan (2024) notes that researchers must carefully address issues of informed consent when relying on online data. The researchers emphasize that, even when data is publicly available, ethical researchers should

reflect on the implications of using someone's language data without their explicit consent. The way natural language data is gathered can introduce bias, posing a significant issue because it may skew researchers' understanding of language use across groups. (Zahle, 2025) notes that when collection methods are biased, they can yield datasets that overrepresent specific demographics and underrepresent others, leading to misleading conclusions. For example, if most of the data comes from one region or social group, the findings might say more about that group than about the overall language patterns. However, Zahle (2025) therefore suggests using approaches such as stratified sampling and deliberately including a wide range of speakers to ensure more voices are heard.

Ethical concerns extend beyond data collection, as AI and machine learning systems trained on this linguistic data can perpetuate those biases. When models are trained on biased datasets, they may replicate and even amplify those biases, a challenge commonly known as algorithmic bias (Sabou et al., 2012). This can have serious real-world effects, such as strengthening harmful stereotypes or further excluding marginalized communities. To reduce these risks, Sabou et al. (2012) argue that researchers should place fairness and accountability at the center of both their data collection strategies and modeling decisions. The applications of collected natural language data are vast and varied, spanning multiple domains, including healthcare, marketing, and education. In healthcare, natural language processing (NLP) techniques are increasingly used to analyze patient records and clinical notes, enabling healthcare providers to extract valuable insights from unstructured text data (Baclic et al., 2020). For example, NLP can help identify trends in patient symptoms or treatment outcomes, ultimately improving patient care; however, as Baclic et al. (2020) note, the successful application of NLP in

healthcare relies on the availability of high-quality, domain-specific language data. In marketing, businesses are leveraging natural language data to enhance customer engagement and personalize advertising strategies. Social media platforms provide a rich source of consumer language data, which can be analyzed to understand customer sentiments and preferences. By employing sentiment analysis, marketers can tailor their messages to resonate with target audiences, resulting in more effective campaigns. However, marketers must remain transparent about their data collection practices to maintain consumer trust.

Education is another domain where collecting natural language data has transformative potential. Language-learning applications that leverage natural language data can provide personalized feedback to learners, enhancing their language acquisition experience (C et al., 2024). By analyzing learners' speech patterns and writing samples, these applications can identify areas for improvement and suggest targeted exercises. However, C et al. (2024) emphasize the need for ongoing research to assess the effectiveness of these applications and ensure they meet learners' diverse needs. The collection of natural language data is a dynamic and evolving field that presents both opportunities and challenges. Advances in methodologies, such as crowdsourcing and mobile applications, have expanded the possibilities for data collection, while ethical considerations surrounding privacy, bias, and algorithmic accountability remain paramount. The applications of natural language data span various domains, including healthcare, marketing, and education, underscoring its significance in contemporary research and practice. As researchers continue to explore innovative methods for collecting and analyzing natural language data, a commitment to ethical practices and inclusivity

will be essential to fostering responsible, impactful research outcomes.

CORPUS-BASED APPROACHES

Corpus-based approaches have gained significant traction in functional syntax research, allowing linguists to analyze large datasets of authentic language use. These approaches can be subdivided into three primary components: types of corpora, techniques for corpus compilation and annotation, and tools for corpus analysis. Corpora used in functional syntax research vary widely, encompassing both written and spoken language data. Recent studies have used diverse types of corpora, including specialized corpora focused on specific genres or registers (Biber, 1988). For example, Biber (1988) discusses the use of academic corpora to investigate syntactic structures in scholarly writing, while also emphasizing the importance of including spoken corpora to capture the dynamic nature of language in conversation.

Additionally, multilingual and cross-linguistic corpora have emerged as valuable resources for examining syntactic phenomena across different languages. These corpora facilitate comparative analyses, allowing researchers to identify universal patterns and language-specific variations in functional syntax (Olohan, 2002). In functional syntax research, compiling and annotating corpora are essential processes. Recent progress in this field has emphasized the incorporation of automated tools and methods to improve the efficiency and precision of corpus development. For example, machine learning algorithms have been utilized to aid in the annotation of syntactic structures, thereby decreasing the time and effort needed for manual coding. Additionally, the adoption of standardized annotation frameworks, like the Universal Dependencies project, has

enabled cross-linguistic comparisons and enhanced the reliability of syntactic analyses. (Makebo et al., 2022).

Corpus-based approaches are grounded in the belief that language comprehension is enhanced by analyzing actual language usage rather than depending solely on introspective methods or theoretical frameworks. As outlined in the chapter, these approaches offer a practical perspective on syntax, emphasizing the link between linguistic structures and their communicative functions. This practical perspective aligns with the tenets of Functional Grammar, which posits that language serves as a communicative instrument fulfilling various roles in social contexts. By employing corpora, researchers can investigate language usage patterns across different contexts and genres, thereby revealing the dynamic nature of language. According to Biber et al. (1998), analyzing linguistic data from corpora can reveal trends that are not readily apparent in traditional grammatical analysis. This empirical basis is particularly valuable in functional syntax, where the focus is on how syntactic structures contribute to meaning-making in discourse.

In recent years, there have been notable advancements in the methodologies of corpus linguistics, especially with the creation of more advanced tools for analyzing corpora. Recent research has emphasized the incorporation of computational approaches and machine learning techniques to improve the examination of linguistic data. For example, natural language processing (NLP) can facilitate the automated detection of syntactic structures within extensive corpora (Liu et al., 2020), thereby facilitating a more nuanced understanding of functional syntax. Moreover, the accessibility of large-scale corpora, such as the British National Corpus and the Corpus of Contemporary American English, has enabled researchers to conduct cross-linguistic studies that were previously challenging due to data

limitations. This has led to a growing body of literature that examines language variation and change across different sociolinguistic contexts (Harris, 2017). The ability to analyze diverse datasets has enriched the understanding of how syntax functions in various communicative situations, reinforcing the functional approach advocated in the chapter (Jiménez-Fernández, 2020).

Corpus-based methods are not limited to theoretical research; they have practical applications in areas like language instruction, translation studies, and computational linguistics. For example, in language teaching, these methods have been used to guide curriculum development and teaching strategies. In the realm of translation studies, corpus-based techniques have played a crucial role in uncovering translation patterns and methods. The work of Bisiada (2021) emphasizes the role of corpora in revealing the nuances of translation choices, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the interplay between syntax and semantics in translated texts (Lawless, 2007b). This aligns with the functional perspective that views syntax as inherently tied to meaning and context.

Moreover, in the field of computational linguistics, corpus-based approaches have enabled the creation of algorithms for syntactic parsing and language generation. The latest progress in deep learning and neural networks, as highlighted by Cho (2018), have shown promise in creating models that can analyze and generate syntactically and semantically coherent text, further bridging the gap between functional syntax and computational applications. Despite the advancements in corpus-based approaches, several challenges remain. One significant issue is the representativeness of corpora. As noted by Desagulier (2017), the selection of corpora can introduce bias, potentially affecting the generalizability of findings. Researchers must be cautious in their corpus selection and

consider the implications of genre, register, and sociolinguistic factors on their analyses. Another challenge lies in interpreting data. While corpus analysis provides empirical evidence, the theoretical implications of such findings require careful consideration. The integration of qualitative and quantitative methods (Akerman et al., 2008), as advocated, can enhance the interpretative framework, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of functional syntax. In the future, research should broaden the range of corpus-based methods to include languages and dialects currently underrepresented, while also examining the effects of digital communication on syntactic structures. The swift changes in language in digital settings offer researchers an opportunity to study how syntax evolves in response to new communication environments (Pan & Aroonmanakun, 2022).

To sum up, corpus-based methodologies have greatly enhanced the field of linguistics, especially in the analysis of functional syntax. These empirical approaches offer a solid framework for comprehending the relationship between syntax and meaning in language usage. As the discipline advances, researchers must address challenges in corpus selection and data interpretation while leveraging technological advancements. The continued investigation of corpus-based techniques is likely to provide valuable insights into the intricacies of language, underscoring the significance of empirical evidence in linguistic studies.

CODING AND FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Functional syntax posits that the structure of language is shaped by its communicative functions. Wang (2020) said that systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) is a cornerstone of this approach, emphasizing language as a social semiotic system. According to Halliday (2014), language serves three primary

metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Each of these functions influences the syntactic structures speakers employ in various contexts (Halliday, 2014). Research in functional syntax often seeks to analyze how these metafunctions manifest in different linguistic structures. For example, Biber et al. (1998) conducted a comprehensive study of the relationship between syntax and discourse, demonstrating that communicative context often influences syntactic choices. This underscores the need for rigorous coding and analysis procedures to capture the nuanced interactions between syntax and function.

1. Coding Procedures in Functional Syntax Research

Coding is a systematic process for categorizing and quantifying linguistic data for analysis. In functional syntax research, coding procedures are vital for transforming qualitative observations into quantitative data suitable for statistical analysis. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1995), coding involves identifying patterns and themes within the data, allowing researchers to draw meaningful conclusions. In functional syntax, coding procedures often involve identifying specific syntactic structures and their corresponding functions. For instance, researchers may code instances of clause types, such as declarative, interrogative, and imperative clauses, alongside their functional roles in discourse (Eggins, 2007). This dual coding approach enables researchers to examine not only the frequency of specific syntactic forms but also their functional significance within a given context. One notable application of coding in functional syntax research is the analysis of discourse markers. Discourse markers, such as *"however"* and *"therefore,"* play a crucial role in signaling relationships between ideas and guiding the reader's interpretation (Schiffrin, 1987). In conclusion, by coding the

occurrence and function of these markers, researchers can gain insights into how speakers organize information and manage interactions in conversation.

2. Functional Analysis Procedures

While coding offers a structure for organizing linguistic data, functional analysis methods go further by exploring the connections between syntax and meaning. This type of analysis looks at how particular syntactic choices fulfill communicative roles, thereby shedding light on the relationship between form and function. A notable method in functional analysis is systemic functional grammar (SFG), which enables researchers to investigate how different grammatical selections reveal underlying social and contextual influences (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1985). SFG posits that grammatical structures are not merely arbitrary but are shaped by the social functions they serve. For example, the choice between the passive and active voice can influence the focus of a sentence and the perceived agency of participants (Biber et al., 1998). Through functional analysis, researchers can uncover the motivations behind these choices and their implications for meaning-making. Moreover, functional analysis procedures often incorporate discourse analysis techniques, which examine language use in context. Wang (2021) argues that discourse analysis provides valuable insights into how social identities and power dynamics are constructed through language. By combining functional analysis with discourse analysis, researchers can explore how syntactic choices are influenced by factors such as speaker identity, audience, and situational context.

3. Integrating Coding and Functional Analysis

The combination of coding and functional analysis techniques provides a thorough method for examining functional

syntax. By using coding to measure linguistic elements and functional analysis to interpret their significance, researchers can gain a more complete understanding of language usage. For example, in a study investigating modality in academic writing, researchers might code occurrences of modal verbs and their functions, followed by a functional analysis to investigate how these choices indicate the writer's perspective and the degree of certainty expressed (Thompson, 2008). Furthermore, the combination of these methodologies enables a more nuanced exploration of language variation across genres and contexts. For example, the syntactic structures employed in spoken discourse may differ significantly from those in written texts, reflecting the distinct communicative demands of each medium (Biber, 1988). By coding and analyzing these variations, researchers can uncover the functional motivations behind different syntactic choices and their implications for effective communication.

Despite the advantages of coding and functional analysis procedures, researchers must navigate several challenges when employing these methodologies. One significant challenge is ensuring the reliability and validity of coding schemes. As Miles and Huberman (1994) note, developing a robust coding scheme requires careful consideration of the linguistic features being analyzed and the contexts in which they occur. Inconsistent coding can result in erroneous conclusions and compromise the research's integrity. Furthermore, the subjective aspect of functional analysis introduces its own set of difficulties. Researchers must be alert to biases that could affect their interpretation of syntactic choices and their functions. To reduce this risk, it is crucial to engage in reflexive practices, such as peer debriefing and triangulation, to ensure that interpretations are firmly rooted in the data (Lincoln et al., 1985).

To sum up, coding and functional analysis methods are essential in the examination of functional syntax, equipping researchers with the means to investigate the complex connections between syntax and meaning. By methodically organizing linguistic data and analyzing the functional consequences of syntactic decisions, researchers can obtain significant insights into the operation of language as a social semiotic system. As the field of functional syntax progresses, incorporating these methodologies will undoubtedly deepen our comprehension of the dynamic relationship between language structure and its communicative role.

INTERPRETING FUNCTIONAL PATTERNS

Functional syntax is grounded in the principles of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), notably as advanced by Halliday (2014). SFL posits that language is a social semiotic system in which meaning is constructed through the interplay of various linguistic elements. According to Halliday, syntax cannot be divorced from its functional role in communication, suggesting that grammatical structures serve specific purposes in conveying information, expressing attitudes, and facilitating social interactions. One of the key concepts in functional syntax is the distinction between "*clause as representation*" and "*clause as exchange*," which highlights the dual role of clauses in representing experiences and facilitating interpersonal communication (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1985). This duality is crucial for interpreting functional patterns, as it allows researchers to analyze how different syntactic structures serve diverse communicative functions. For instance, the choice between declarative, interrogative, and imperative clauses can significantly alter the meaning and intent behind a statement (Thompson, 2013). Another influential figure in the field is Lambrecht (1994), who introduced the notion of "information

structure," which refers to how information is organized within a sentence to reflect the speaker's intentions and the listener's expectations. This concept is instrumental in interpreting functional patterns, as it provides insights into how syntactic choices are influenced by the need to manage information flow in communication.

1. Methodological Approaches to Interpreting Functional Patterns

The methodologies employed in interpreting functional patterns in functional syntax vary widely, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative approaches. One prevalent method is discourse analysis, which examines language use in context to uncover the functional roles of syntactic structures. Discourse analysts often focus on the interactional dynamics of spoken language, exploring how speakers manipulate syntax to achieve specific communicative goals (Fairclough & Fairclough, 1995). For instance, research by Biber et al. (1998) employed a corpus-based approach to analyze the functional patterns of different syntactic structures across various genres. Their findings revealed significant variations in syntactic choices, illustrating how context influences the use of specific structures. This corpus-driven methodology enables a more comprehensive understanding of functional patterns by providing empirical data to support theoretical claims. Conversely, experimental methods have also been utilized to investigate functional syntax. For example, psycholinguistic studies often employ sentence-processing tasks to examine how individuals interpret syntactic structures in real time (Grodner et al., 2005). These studies reveal the cognitive mechanisms underlying syntactic interpretation, shedding light on how functional patterns are processed during language comprehension.

2. The Role of Context in Functional Syntax

Context plays a pivotal role in interpreting functional patterns, shaping the meaning and function of syntactic structures. According to Gumperz (1982), language use is inherently context-dependent, and understanding the situational factors that influence communication is essential for interpreting functional syntax. This notion is echoed by studies in pragmatics, which emphasize the importance of speaker intention and listener interpretation in shaping syntactic choices (Levinson, 1983). Research by Clark and Carlson (1982) highlights the significance of shared knowledge and common ground in determining how functional patterns are interpreted. Their findings suggest that speakers often tailor their syntactic choices to their assumptions about the listener's knowledge, leading to variation in the use of specific structures. This adaptability underscores the dynamic nature of functional syntax, reflecting the interplay between linguistic form and contextual factors.

Furthermore, the concept of "*register*" is critical in understanding how different contexts influence functional patterns. Register refers to the variations in language use associated with other social settings, genres, and communicative purposes (Biber, 1988). By examining the syntactic features of various registers, researchers can gain insights into how functional patterns manifest across different communicative contexts.

3. Implications for Language Structure and Use

The exploration of functional patterns in syntax has significant implications for our understanding of language structure and use. One of the primary contributions of this research is the recognition that syntax is not merely a set of rules governing sentence formation but is deeply intertwined with

meaning and function. This shift in perspective challenges traditional views of syntax as a purely formal system and highlights the importance of functional considerations in linguistic analysis (Miller et al., 1982; Kortmann, 2020; Taguchi & Roevers, 2019). Moreover, interpreting functional patterns has practical applications in fields such as language teaching, computational linguistics, and discourse analysis. For instance, educators can leverage insights from functional syntax to develop more effective teaching strategies that emphasize the functional use of language in real-world contexts (Halliday, 2014). Additionally, computational models of language processing can benefit from incorporating functional insights, leading to more nuanced algorithms for natural language understanding (Jurafsky & Martin, 2008).

In summary, the interpretation of functional patterns in functional syntax represents a rich area of research that bridges theoretical linguistics, discourse analysis, and cognitive science (Jurafsky, 2007). By exploring the relationship between syntax, meaning, and context, researchers can uncover critical insights into the role of language in communication. The techniques used in this area, including discourse analysis and experimental studies, provide a strong foundation for investigating the intricacies of functional syntax. As research progresses, it is crucial to acknowledge the impact of these discoveries on our comprehension of language structure and usage, setting the stage for future investigations into the ever-changing nature of human communication.

REPORTING FINDINGS IN RESEARCH PUBLICATION

The reporting of research findings is fundamentally rooted in the frameworks that guide data interpretation. According to Hyland (2013), the presentation of research findings is not merely a technical exercise but a rhetorical act that shapes the

reader's understanding. This perspective aligns with the principles of functional syntax, which posits that language is a tool for interaction and meaning-making in specific contexts (Halliday, 2014). The choice of syntactic structures in reporting findings can thus influence how the audience perceives and understands the results. One of the predominant frameworks in functional syntax is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which emphasizes the relationship between language and its social functions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1985). SFL suggests that language fulfills three main metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Each of these plays a significant role in the way findings are communicated. For example, the ideational metafunction concerns the depiction of experiences and concepts, which is crucial for accurately presenting research results. The interpersonal metafunction concerns the connection between the researcher and the audience, shaping how findings are framed and delivered. Lastly, the textual metafunction pertains to the structuring of information, which is essential for ensuring clarity and coherence in research publications (Lincoln et al., 1985).

In the domain of functional syntax, various methodological approaches have been developed to enhance the reporting of findings. These methodologies emphasize clarity, precision, and the contextualization of results. One approach is the use of thematic structures to organize findings. According to Martin and Ringham (2012), thematic organization allows researchers to highlight key findings while providing a coherent narrative that guides the reader through the data. By employing thematic structures, researchers can effectively communicate the significance of their findings in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks. Another important methodological consideration is the use of visual aids in reporting findings. Recent studies have shown that incorporating visual

representations, such as graphs and charts, can enhance the comprehension of complex data (Rühlemann, 2020). In the context of functional syntax, visual aids can illustrate the relationships among different syntactic structures and their functions, thereby enriching the reader's understanding of the findings. This aligns with the textual metafunction of SFL, as it helps organize and present information in a manner accessible to the audience.

Despite advancements in reporting methodologies, researchers often face challenges that hinder effective communication. One significant challenge is the tendency to prioritize technical jargon over clarity. As noted by Swales (2014), specialized language can alienate readers unfamiliar with a field's terminology. This is particularly relevant in functional syntax, where the nuanced meanings of syntactic structures may not be readily accessible to all audiences. To mitigate this issue, researchers must strive to balance technical accuracy with readability, ensuring that their findings are communicated in a manner that is both precise and understandable. Another challenge is the potential for bias in the reporting of findings. Researchers may unintentionally emphasize specific results while downplaying others, leading to a skewed representation of the data. This issue is particularly pertinent in qualitative research, where the interpretation of findings can be subjective (Fryer, 2006). To address this challenge, researchers need to adopt reflexive practices (Woods, 2006), critically examining their own biases and the potential impact on the reporting of findings. Additionally, employing triangulation methods, where multiple data sources or perspectives are used, can enhance the credibility and robustness of reported findings (Denzin, 1978).

Peer review plays a crucial role in the reporting of findings, ensuring the quality and integrity of research publications.

According to Hagan and Barron (2019), the peer review process provides an opportunity for researchers to receive constructive feedback on their reporting practices, thereby enhancing the clarity and impact of their findings. In the context of functional syntax, peer reviewers can offer insights into the appropriateness of the syntactic structures used to report findings and the overall effectiveness of the presentation. Moreover, the peer review process can help to identify potential biases in the reporting of findings. Reviewers can critically assess whether researchers have adequately represented their data and whether the conclusions drawn are supported by the evidence presented. This oversight is essential for maintaining the credibility of research publications and ensuring that findings contribute meaningfully to the body of knowledge.

In conclusion, reporting findings in research publications is a multifaceted process influenced by methodological frameworks and challenges. Within the context of functional syntax, the choice of syntactic structures and the organization of information are pivotal in shaping the reader's understanding of research outcomes. By employing thematic structures, visual aids, and reflexive practices, researchers can enhance the clarity and impact of their findings. Furthermore, the peer review process serves as a critical mechanism for ensuring the quality and integrity of reported findings, ultimately advancing knowledge in the field. As research continues to evolve, scholars must remain cognizant of the importance of effective reporting practices and strive to communicate their findings with excellence.

CONCLUSION

In the realm of linguistic research, especially in functional syntax, the outcomes of research methodologies are essential for integrating findings, affirming theoretical models, and guiding

future research. This paper has delved into the multiple facets of functional syntax, highlighting its importance in comprehending linguistic structures and their practical implications. The conclusions drawn here encapsulate the fundamental insights from the study, emphasizing the necessity of methodological precision and theoretical consistency to enhance our understanding of syntax in language use. Functional syntax, as a theoretical framework, suggests that the structure of language is intrinsically linked to its communicative function. This viewpoint contrasts with traditional syntactic theories that often emphasize form over function. Our investigation has demonstrated how functional syntax facilitates a more refined understanding of language, one that is attuned to the social and contextual factors that influence communication. The conclusions from our study highlight the imperative to incorporate functionalist principles into syntactic analysis, thereby deepening our understanding of how language functions as a medium for interaction.

One of the principal conclusions of this study is that a robust methodology in functional syntax research should incorporate both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative analysis provides an in-depth exploration of linguistic phenomena, capturing the subtleties of language use across various contexts. Conversely, quantitative methods offer empirical data to substantiate theoretical claims and detect patterns within large corpora. By combining these methods, researchers can achieve a more comprehensive understanding of syntax that includes both the intricacies of language and its broader communicative functions. Furthermore, our research has underscored the significant impact of context on syntactic structures. The findings indicate that syntax cannot be disentangled from the pragmatic aspects of language; instead, it is closely connected to speakers' communicative goals and the

situational dynamics of discourse. This insight challenges traditional syntactic models that often treat syntax as an isolated system. Instead, the results suggest that future research should emphasize context-sensitive approaches that account for the interplay among syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. This holistic perspective is essential for capturing the complexities of human language and its adaptive nature.

The study shows that looking at how sentences work in conversations is essential. By studying this, researchers can see how sentence choices affect communication. The results highlight the need to focus on how language changes to meet communication needs. This view helps us better understand sentences and aligns with the idea that language is a changing system influenced by social roles. Another key point is the value of studying different languages to improve our understanding of sentence structure. Our findings suggest that comparing languages can show standard rules and unique features. This approach helps researchers test and improve theories with real-world evidence. The study calls for research across many languages to better understand how sentences work. The research also has practical uses in teaching, computer language processing, and the study of language in society. By using these ideas, teachers can develop more effective teaching methods that better match real language use. Similarly, computer language systems can improve by using context-aware sentence models. The study stresses the need for different fields to work together to connect theory with practice, leading to a better understanding of language.

Based on these findings, there are significant areas for future research in functional syntax. First, we need long-term studies to see how sentence structures change with new ways of communicating. This can help us understand how language changes and what causes these changes. Also, exploring how

functional syntax works with the latest technologies, such as AI and machine learning, is an exciting area. By using functional syntax in these technologies, we can improve language processing systems and create better language models.

Furthermore, we should study how syntax relates to identity. Language shows who we are, and understanding how sentence choices reflect social identities can show us how language works in society. Future research should examine how syntax helps build identity across different social settings, thereby enabling us to understand the social aspects of language use better. In summary, the research method used in this study underscores the importance of viewing syntax functionally, highlighting the links among syntax, context, and communication goals. The findings suggest a broad, interdisciplinary approach to studying syntax, recognizing language as a dynamic system shaped by social interaction. As we continue, researchers should keep exploring the many sides of syntax, using different methods and theories to deepen our understanding of this key part of human language. This will help us appreciate the role of syntax in communication and its impact in various fields.

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Dr. Nico Irawan is an academic and educator whose work focuses on English language education in international and intercultural contexts. He currently serves as an Assistant Professor in the English Language Education Master's Program at Universitas PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya, Indonesia, where he teaches, develops curricula, and mentors students. In addition to his role in Indonesia, he serves as the Program Leader of the PhD in English Language Teaching (ELT) at the Graduate School of Stamford International University in Thailand. In this role, he has played a key part in designing, implementing, and maintaining the ELT curriculum to align with international academic standards. Dr. Nico Irawan has accumulated more than a decade of experience teaching in international higher education settings. His professional background includes working with linguistically and culturally diverse student populations from more than ten countries across Asia, Europe, and Africa. This extensive cross-cultural teaching experience has strongly shaped his scholarly interests and pedagogical approach, particularly in fostering intercultural awareness and inclusive learning environments in English-medium instruction. His research interests lie primarily in qualitative research methodology, intercultural communication, English language teaching (ELT), second language acquisition, and cultural studies. Much of his academic work emphasizes understanding learners' lived experiences, identity negotiation, and communication practices in multilingual and multicultural educational settings. He is particularly interested in how language, culture, and identity intersect in international education and how these intersections can inform more responsive and ethical teaching practices. Beyond teaching and research, Dr. Nico Irawan is actively engaged in academic program development and graduate supervision. His work reflects a commitment to advancing English language education through research-informed pedagogy, curriculum innovation, and cross-border academic collaboration.

CHAPTER 14

APPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter treats functional syntax as applicable linguistics: grammar is not only a description of sentence patterns, but a practical way to explain how language does social, rhetorical, and disciplinary work in real contexts (Banks, 2024; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Matthiessen, 2012; Schleppegrell & Oteíza, 2023; Xuan et al., 2025). The end-goal of the book is a toolkit mindset: using functional categories to analyze texts, support writing, strengthen teaching, and design sharper research across institutional, academic, and digital environments (Biber & Conrad, 2019; Conrad, 2015; Handford & Gee, 2023; Zappavigna & Logi, 2025). Across the chapter, “application” follows a simple path: explanation → analysis → intervention. Explanation asks why a structure is chosen and what meanings it enables, linking grammar to metafunctional work, organizing the message (textual), enacting stance and exchange (interpersonal), and construing experience (ideational/experiential) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin & White, 2007; White, 2015). Because the same resources - Theme, clause combining, voice, nominal group expansion, modality, and appraisal - can shift agency, density, evaluation, and evidentiality, they also shape what counts as “appropriate” in a register and what counts as “effective” in a genre (Bednarek & Caple, 2017; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Hood, 2010; Hyland, 1996).

Analysis is what makes functional claims usable and shareable: define a unit (often the clause), segment consistently, track recurring choices (Theme, mood/modality, transitivity, complexing), and interpret how patterning realizes purpose in context (Derewianka & Jones, 2022; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Matthiessen & Teruya, 2023; Schleppegrell, 2004). In literacy and genre traditions, this becomes a practical metalanguage for explaining why some texts “sound academic,” how disciplines build knowledge, and how revision can target meaning control (coherence, density, abstraction, stance) rather than only surface correctness (Christie & Derewianka, 2010; Derewianka & Jones, 2022; Rose & Martin, 2012; Schleppegrell, 2001, 2004). The same reasoning travels to public discourse and institutional writing, where grammatical choices can manage accountability and evaluation while preserving a veneer of neutrality (Bednarek & Caple, 2017; Biber & Conrad, 2019; Schleppegrell & Oteíza, 2023), and it extends naturally to digitally mediated discourse in Indonesian contexts where platform pressures shape stance, identity, and compressed translingual practice (Ali et al., 2023; Handford & Gee, 2023; Kusuma et al., 2023).

Intervention is the payoff: using functional insights to improve communicative outcomes, clearer information flow, more responsible attribution, better stance control, and tighter alignment with genre expectations. In education, genre-based pedagogy shows that explicit attention to meaning-making resources supports learners’ control of valued genres, especially when instruction moves from noticing to joint construction and purposeful revision (Christie & Derewianka, 2010; Derewianka & Jones, 2022; Rose & Martin, 2012). This intervention logic also aligns with classroom-based work on feedback, collaborative learning, and pedagogical strategies that make meaning-making explicit for learners (Anasta & Dharmawan,

2025; Wahyudi et al., 2024). In professional and institutional contexts, functional reasoning supports clarity and accountability, intersecting with plain-language concerns where passives, modality strength, abstraction, and nominalization directly affect transparency and traceability (Ayine et al., 2025; Besien, 2023; Boginskaya, 2022; Eckhard & Friedrich, 2025; Rastelli, 2025). A compact anchor for the whole chapter is the form–function–context loop: form is what you can observe, function is what that pattern does in meaning, and context explains why certain choices are likely, valued, or risky in a register and genre (Biber & Conrad, 2019; Derewianka & Jones, 2022; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Rose & Martin, 2012; Schleppegrell, 2004). Treating these as a loop prevents a common analytic mistake, assuming a feature has one fixed meaning regardless of audience, genre, platform, or purpose, especially in public texts and fast-moving digital genres (Bednarek & Caple, 2017; Handford & Gee, 2023; Zappavigna & Logi, 2025).

The next two sections (A.1–A.2) establish the practical analysis core: first, a portable workflow for moving from “text in hand” to evidence-based interpretation; second, brief demonstrations of how that workflow travels across news, academic prose, policy writing, and digital discourse (Bednarek & Caple, 2017; Biber & Conrad, 2019; Conrad, 2015; Derewianka & Jones, 2022; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Handford & Gee, 2023; Matthiessen, 2012; Schleppegrell & Oteíza, 2023). Section B then shifts from analysis to pedagogy: how the same functional categories become teachable choices, classroom tasks, and assessment criteria that reward meaning control rather than only error avoidance (Christie & Derewianka, 2010; Derewianka & Jones, 2022; Rose & Martin, 2012; Schleppegrell, 2001, 2004). Sections C–F extend the applications outward, to translation and interpreting, to AI/NLP

and computational contexts, to cross-linguistic generalization problems, and to research opportunities, before a brief conclusion (G) closes the chapter by returning to the toolkit mindset and the form–function–context loop.

FUNCTIONAL SYNTAX IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Applications in language teaching

This section translates functional syntax into classroom practice by treating grammar as meaning-making rather than rule-checking. When learners are trained to ask what meaning does this structure realize here?, they develop practical control over coherence (how messages flow), stance (how claims are calibrated), and responsibility (how agency is assigned). Those controls transfer across tasks because they are really about shaping texts for particular audiences in particular genres and situations (Derewianka & Jones, 2022; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Rose & Martin, 2012; Schlepppegrell, 2004). In this view, explicit grammar instruction is less “error policing” and more repertoire-building: widening what students can do when revising, arguing, narrating, and explaining. This orientation is compatible with Indonesian EFL work showing that meaning-making often draws on translanguaging and multimodal resources, so functional teaching can be integrated with how students already communicate rather than positioned against it (Cahyanti & Dharmawan, 2025; Hidayati et al., 2024). A small, carefully chosen metalanguage supports the shift, terms such as clause, Theme, modality, participant, process, circumstance, and nominal group operate as shared handles for noticing patterns and justifying revisions without turning lessons into terminology recitation (Derewianka & Jones, 2022).

Teaching sentence structure through function

A useful framing is teach choices, not just rules. Functional grammar treats sentence structure as a decision-space: different options realize different meanings, and appropriateness depends on audience, purpose, genre, and relationship. This reframes the teacher's role from correction-only to meaning coaching, while still keeping correctness in view as one dimension of effectiveness. Three choice clusters are especially teachable because they recur across curriculum genres and strongly shape how texts are read: Theme/fronting for coherence, voice and agency for responsibility, and tense–aspect choices for temporal framing (Derewianka & Jones, 2022; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Theme makes coherence visible because it sets the clause's point of departure and guides how information unfolds across sentences; in revision, small shifts in openings (time, contrast, topical focus) often change whether a paragraph feels cumulative or random (Derewianka & Jones, 2022; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Rose & Martin, 2012). Voice matters because passives can legitimately foreground procedures and match institutional registers, but they can also blur responsibility by backgrounding agents, so the pedagogical move is not “avoid passives” but “name the effect” and decide when the effect is appropriate (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Schleppegrell, 2004). Tense–aspect choices matter because genres differ in how they “live in time,” and learners often need help using aspect to frame events as completed, ongoing, habitual, or relevant now (Derewianka & Jones, 2022; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Across these clusters, a portable classroom sequence is notice → name → choose → justify: students compare alternatives, label the feature (Theme/voice/aspect), select what fits a stated purpose, and justify the choice with simple metalanguage. This supported noticing shifts attention from surface error toward meaning control and makes feedback

more teachable and actionable (Derewianka & Jones, 2022), aligning with student-centered perspectives that treat feedback as revision for meaning rather than correction for its own sake (Wahyudi et al., 2024).

Classroom activities and assessment

Classroom tasks can keep preparation low while making functional concepts visible through manipulation, and they scale well within a genre-based cycle (model → joint construction → independent construction) (Derewianka & Jones, 2022; Rose & Martin, 2012). In clause surgery, students rewrite sentence openings to compare participant-first and circumstance-first Themes and experience how coherence and reader expectation shift while content stays similar (Derewianka & Jones, 2022; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In role-based dialogue rewriting, they remake the same exchange for different power relations by shifting mood and modality, learning that appropriateness is grammatical as well as lexical because mood and modality enact relationship and authority (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In agency flip, students rewrite agentless passives and nominalizations into actor-explicit clauses (and sometimes back again), making responsibility and ethical transparency discussable across genres (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Schleppegrell, 2004). In genre transformation, they convert chat-style writing into an academic paragraph by adding clause relations, managing Theme progression, packing information through nominal groups/nominalization, and hedging where warranted, learning that “academic style” is patterned grammatical choice rather than mysterious tone (Derewianka & Jones, 2022; Rose & Martin, 2012). If grammar is taught as meaning-making, assessment should reward meaning-making rather than only error avoidance: the guiding question becomes not simply *Is it correct?* but *Does it do what*

this genre and task require? (Derewianka & Jones, 2022; Schleppegrell, 2004). A usable rubric can therefore track message clarity (Theme and information flow), interactional appropriateness (mood/modality and stance), representation accuracy (participants, processes, circumstances, agency), and text-level coherence (cohesion and staging). Consistency matters: when the same functional categories are used in teaching, peer review, feedback, and grading, students experience grammar as a coherent system of choices, and teacher comments can target control of coherence, stance, and accountability rather than isolating errors as disconnected problems (Derewianka & Jones, 2022).

APPLICATIONS IN TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING

Functional syntax offers a practical bridge between “what the source text says” and “what the source text is doing,” which is exactly the translator/interpreter’s daily problem. A functional lens keeps attention on three transferable questions: how the message is organized (Theme and information flow), how stance and negotiation are managed (mood/modality and evaluation), and how experience and responsibility are construed (participants, processes, circumstances) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin & White, 2007; Matthiessen, 2012). In translation, this helps avoid a common trap: preserving lexical content while accidentally shifting agency, certainty, or interpersonal distance. For example, a passive-heavy institutional source text may be “faithful” lexically but misleading pragmatically if the translation re-inserts explicit agents, strengthening accountability beyond what the institution projected (Besien, 2023; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Conversely, translating a direct, actor-explicit clause into an

agentless passive may unintentionally soften blame or responsibility.

Interpreting magnifies these issues because time pressure increases the risk of meaning drift. Functional awareness can be trained as rapid monitoring: keep the Theme chain coherent so listeners can follow; preserve modality strength (must/should/may) because obligation and permission are often the legal and ethical core; and track who is represented as acting, deciding, or being affected, because those participant choices carry real-world consequences (Boginskaya, 2022; Eckhard & Friedrich, 2025; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In practice, the “workflow” from A.1 can be adapted as a pre-task strategy: identify genre and tenor constraints (field/tenor/mode), anticipate likely high-stakes grammatical zones (modality, passives, nominalizations), then monitor those zones during delivery. This preserves the chapter’s applicability principle: transparent, teachable decisions that connect form to meaning and meaning to context (Banks, 2024; Matthiessen, 2012).

RELEVANCE TO AI, NLP, AND COMPUTATIONAL LINGUISTICS

Functional categories matter in AI/NLP contexts because they offer interpretable bridges between surface forms and discourse-level effects, exactly what current systems struggle to represent reliably when moving beyond sentence-level correctness into genre-appropriate meaning control. In evaluation, functional syntax provides criteria that are stricter than “fluency” but more relevant than error counts: Does the output maintain coherent Theme progression? Does it preserve modality and evidential stance (especially hedging)? Does it alter agency (e.g., by shifting active/passive or nominalizing actions into entities)? (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Hood, 2010; Hyland, 1996; Martin & White, 2007). These criteria

align with the chapter's concern about AI-mediated drafting and feedback ecologies, where the risk is not only incorrect grammar, but invisible shifts in responsibility, certainty, and institutional voice (Guizani et al., 2025; Jovic et al., 2025; Shi et al., 2026; Wang et al., 2025).

Functional syntax also supports corpus-informed computational inquiry by providing principled labels for phenomena that matter socially and educationally: register variation, genre staging, information packaging, and stance calibration (Biber & Conrad, 2019; Biber & Reppen, 2015; Conrad, 2015; McEnery & Hardie, 2011). When combined with corpus methods, functional categories help justify interpretive claims as patterned distributions rather than isolated examples, which is crucial when AI-generated text amplifies volume and variability (Biber & Conrad, 2019; Le et al., 2025; Skantsi & Laippala, 2025). The point is not that computational systems must “become SFL,” but that functional categories offer a human-interpretable semantics of revision: changes can be tracked as shifts in message organization, stance, and agency rather than as vague “improvements.”

CHALLENGES IN CROSS-LINGUISTIC GENERALIZATION

Functional grammar is powerful partly because it generalizes: it treats meaning functions as stable pressures across contexts. But cross-linguistic generalization is never automatic, because languages distribute metafunctional work differently across grammar, discourse conventions, and genre traditions. This challenge becomes sharper in multilingual classrooms and in translanguaging environments, where meanings are achieved through coordinated resources across languages and modes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Schleppegrell & Oteíza, 2023). For instance, Theme as “point of

departure” is a functional idea, but the grammatical resources that realize it vary across languages; likewise, modality systems and evidentiality may be encoded through different lexical, grammatical, or pragmatic strategies. The consequence for application is methodological: analysts and teachers must keep the form–function–context loop honest by not treating an English-anchored description as a universal template (Biber & Conrad, 2019; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Rose & Martin, 2012).

In educational settings, the implication is pedagogical as well as analytic: teaching functional choices in English must acknowledge learners’ existing repertoires and the pragmatic norms carried from other languages, rather than treating cross-linguistic influence as mere “error.” This connects to Indonesian work on translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy and on students’ meaning-making across linguistic diversity, where the instructional question becomes how to leverage repertoires for genre control and stance management (Cahyanti & Dharmawan, 2025; Hidayati et al., 2024; Prasatyo et al., 2023). Cross-linguistic generalization is therefore best treated as a design problem: decide which functional contrasts are high-leverage for the target genres, then teach them as choices with clear effects, not as universal rules.

FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Several research directions follow directly from the chapter’s applications logic (explanation → analysis → intervention) and from the changing ecology of writing and feedback. First, corpus-informed functional research can continue mapping how register pressures shape grammatical distributions across disciplines and educational levels, especially when curricula demand genre control but assessment still rewards surface correctness (Biber & Conrad, 2019; Biber &

Reppen, 2015; Conrad, 2015; McEnery & Hardie, 2011; Schleppegrell, 2004). This includes trajectories of nominal group density, thematic progression, modality patterns, and shifts in institutional voice across genres and platforms (Le et al., 2025; Skantsi & Laippala, 2025).

Second, AI-mediated writing environments create urgent questions about what “improvement” means and how it should be evaluated. Reviews and empirical studies point to learning support and feedback gains alongside concerns about reliability, misuse, and shifting norms of authorship and evaluation (Guizani et al., 2025; Jacobsen & Weber, 2025; Jovic et al., 2025; Kinder et al., 2025; Ladegaard, 2025; Shi et al., 2026; Urzúa et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2025). Functional syntax suggests a concrete research agenda here: track whether AI-assisted revisions systematically shift agency (passives/nominalizations), stance strength (modality and hedging), and message organization (Theme and cohesion), and test how those shifts affect reader judgments, institutional accountability, and learner development. The goal is to keep evaluation tethered to observable linguistic evidence rather than impression (Banks, 2024; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Schleppegrell & Oteíza, 2023).

Third, classroom-based intervention research can deepen the “teaching as meaning-making” strand by testing which functional teaching moves produce durable gains in genre control, especially in multilingual/translanguaging classrooms, where learners’ repertoires are resources for meaning rather than obstacles (Derewianka & Jones, 2022; Rose & Martin, 2012). This connects naturally to Indonesian EFL studies emphasizing translanguaging, multimodality, and student experience in speaking/writing development (Anasta & Dharmawan, 2025; Cahyanti & Dharmawan, 2025; Hidayati et al., 2024; Wahyudi et al., 2024). Finally, digital discourse remains a rich site for

functional research because it exposes how stance and identity are negotiated under platform pressure—an area where functional categories (exchange meaning, appraisal, ellipsis, agency strategies) can connect micro-choices to social effects (Dharmawan, 2023; Handford & Gee, 2023; Kusuma et al., 2023; Zappavigna & Logi, 2025).

CONCLUSION

The chapter’s central claim is practical: functional syntax is a toolkit for connecting sentence-level form to discourse-level effects, and for turning those connections into better analysis, better teaching, and better communicative outcomes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Schleppegrell & Oteíza, 2023). The form–function–context loop keeps application honest: it anchors interpretation in observable evidence while respecting the fact that meanings are conditional on register, genre, audience, and platform (Biber & Conrad, 2019; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Rose & Martin, 2012). Across text analysis, pedagogy, translation/interpreting, and AI-mediated writing environments, the same promise holds: grammar is not mystical “style,” but visible meaning-making work. Functional analysis makes that work describable, teachable, and revisable, so that “tool use” stays tethered to meaning, ethics, and evidence in rapidly changing communicative worlds (Banks, 2024; Handford & Gee, 2023; Schleppegrell & Oteíza, 2023; Zappavigna & Logi, 2025).

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



Yanuarius Yanu Dharmawan

is an Indonesian applied linguist and EFL educator whose work examines how learners and teachers make meaning across languages, modes, and institutional settings. His scholarship links classroom pedagogy with discourse study, with a recurring commitment to “applied” analysis: linguistic description should be usable for explanation, teaching, and revision. In recent publications, he investigates translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in Indonesian senior high schools and explores how multimodal learning practices can enhance speaking development and foreign language enjoyment. He also studies how students experience and use English writing feedback, and how focused classroom interventions, such as collaborative learning and semantic mapping, can strengthen descriptive writing. Beyond classroom settings, his work addresses language diversity and heritage-language maintenance, and it extends to the language barriers, discrimination, and resilience experienced by Indonesian migrant workers. He has additionally examined digitally mediated meaning-making, including translingual practices on social media, where stance and identity are negotiated under platform pressures. Methodologically, he blends close qualitative analysis with classroom-based inquiry and intervention-oriented design, aiming to produce findings that teachers can implement without specialist software. These interests align with functional approaches to grammar and discourse: sentence patterns are treated not as rules to police, but as choices that build genres, enact relationships, and distribute agency. His current agenda emphasizes teaching, ethical communication, and genre control in EFL writing. His work speaks to teacher education, curriculum innovation, and assessment practices that value meaning control over surface error, and it supports researchers who want links between linguistic evidence and grounded interpretation.

SYNTAX AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE

A Functional Approach

Syntax and Sentence Structure: A Functional Approach offers a comprehensive examination of sentence structure as a key resource for meaning in authentic communicative contexts. Drawing on functional linguistics, particularly Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the book conceptualizes grammar not as a rigid set of prescriptive rules, but as a dynamic system of choices that language users employ to fulfill specific communicative goals. A central framework of the book is the view that clauses function simultaneously in three interconnected dimensions: as message, organizing information within a text; as exchange, enacting interpersonal relationships between speakers and listeners or writers and readers; and as representation, construing human experience and reality. Building on this perspective, the chapters analyze major syntactic units such as clauses, nominal groups, verbal groups, and prepositional and adverbial groups, demonstrating how they operate within broader discourse structures. The book further explores how syntactic choices vary according to register, genre, and social context. It discusses differences between spoken and written grammar, the contribution of sentence structure to cohesion and coherence, and the role of syntax in expressing identity, stance, and social relations. In addition to theoretical insights, the volume addresses research methods in functional syntax and practical applications in language education, translation, academic writing, professional communication, and emerging fields such as AI and computational linguistics.



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