

# FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

## A FIELD APPROACH

Alexander V. Bondarko

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by

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# **FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR: A FIELD APPROACH**

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Alexander V. Bondarko

*Functional Grammar: A Field Approach*

## Preface

This book is an enlarged English version of *Funkcional'naja grammatika* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1984). The sections "The concept of function", "The interpretational component of language content", and "Semantic categories of grammar" are taken from the author's introduction to *Teorija funkcional'noj grammatiki. Vvedenie. Aspektual'nost'. Vremennaja lokalizovanost'. Taksis*. Leningrad: Nauka, 1987 (The theory of functional grammar: Introduction. Aspectuality. Temporal Localisation. Taxis). The section "The category of aspect and its environment in the Russian language" includes extracts from the author's works on this subject published throughout the 1980s, and also some unpublished fragments. The bibliography is enlarged to include the latest publications.

This version of *Functional grammar*, based on the concept of functional-semantic field, has profited from discussions in the Department of Grammatical Theory and Typological Research of the Leningrad Branch of the Institut of Linguistics, Academy of Sciences of the USSR. I wish to thank my colleagues for their valuable contribution. I also wish to extend my gratitude to my teachers and students.

Leningrad, March 1989  
A.V. Bondarko

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## Chapter I

### Functional grammar: subject matter and goals

#### General view

Every grammar has, to a greater or lesser extent, a functional aspect. What then are the grounds for speaking of functional grammar as a special type of grammatical description? What are the specific features of this type of grammar?

The distinctive character of functional grammar can be revealed only on the basis of the principle of unity of *system-structural* (system-categorical) and *functional aspects* of grammar as a whole. The first aspect is a system of grammatical units, classes and categories (and also lexico-grammatical and word-formative features connected with them). What is meant here is a potential of language means (together with their meanings) which are at the disposal of speakers of a given language, a certain mechanism underlying the functioning of grammatical and other related elements, this mechanism's principles and structure. The second aspect is a system of laws and rules governing the functioning of grammatical units in cooperation with the elements of different language levels which take part in expressing the meaning of the utterance. This aspect links the system of language with the system of speech, paradigmatics with syntagmatics, statics with dynamics. It is directly connected with a definite speech situation, i.e., the communication process. Both aspects, as already mentioned, form an organic unity. Grammar as a certain mechanism, as a system of elements with its own structure, and as a set of language means with their own meanings, is aimed at functioning and is manifested in the use of language elements in speech. On the other hand, the



system of functioning is determined by the system of language units together with the classes and categories represented by them.

The principle of unity of the system-structural (system-categorical) and functional aspects of grammar determines the place of functional grammar in the overall system of grammar as a science. Functional grammar is not opposed to traditional grammar as a system based on the description of grammatical units, classes and categories. Neither is it an absolutely new and separate scientific discipline. Functional grammar is rather a specific development of the functional aspect of grammar as a whole. The goal of grammar under consideration is to elaborate the dynamic aspect of the functioning of grammatical units in their interaction with elements of different language levels taking part in expressing the meaning of the utterance. At the same time, functional grammar does not break its ties with the system-structural (system-categorical) aspect of language. On the contrary, its essential component is description of the system of language means which are employed in speech. What makes functional grammar special is that this description is built not according to separate levels and aspects of the grammatical system (morphology, word-formation, syntax of the simple and complex sentence), but according to functional-semantic units of the language which combine elements of different levels interacting on a semantic basis. Within the variant of functional grammar dealt with in this work, the system-structural (system-categorical) aspect of grammatical description is realised in the form of an analysis of the structure of functional-semantic fields (taking into account such matters as the correlation between the centre and periphery of the field, the main links between its components, and overlapping with other fields). Thus, the system of language means is seen through the semantic principle of their grouping. It is this objective foundation of the grouping of language means employed in speech that provides the possibility of description - typical of functional grammar - proceeding not only from form to meaning (from means to functions), but also from meaning to form (from functions to means).

For example, on the basis of the semantic category of time, there emerges a certain system of means of expression of temporal relations interacting at different levels, that is to say, a functional-semantic field of temporality. In the Russian language, the centre of this field is a system of tense-forms of the indicative mood in the active voice. The immediate

periphery includes such expressive means as analytical passive participial forms, such as:

*byl rassmotren* - *rassmotren* - *budet rassmotren* ("was examined - is examined - will be examined"),

full-form past participles, e.g.:

*rassmatrivavšij* - *rassmotrevšij* - *rassmotrennyj* ("who was examining - who has examined - which has been examined"),

and present participles, e.g.:

*rassmatrivajuščij* - *rassmatrivaemyj* ("who is examining - which is being examined");

forms denoting habitual action in the past, like

*govarival* ("would say"),

*jedal* ("would eat"),

*žival* ("would live"),

*našival* ("would wear"),

*peval* ("would sing"),

*xažival* ("would visit");

verbless syntactical constructions denoting situation in the present, e.g.:

*Noč* ("It is night"),

*Tišina* ("It is quiet"),

*Otec doma* ("Father is at home"),

*Trudno poverit'* ("It's hard to believe"),

correlative with constructions that include forms like *byl* ("was") and *budet* ("will be"). The remote periphery of this field can include such language means as syntactical constructions with modal meaning implying the temporal reference of the situation or of one of its elements to the future, e.g.:

*Ujdite!* ("Go away!"),

*Postroit'sja!* ("Fall in!"),

*Vam dežurit'* ("It's your shift"),

*Pomoč tebe?* ("Can I help you?"),

*Ko mne mogut zajti družja* ("Some of my friends could drop in"),

*V ètom godu my xotim poexat' v Krym* ("This year we want to go to the Crimea"),

adverbial modifiers, such as

*sejčas* ("now"),

*zavtra* ("tomorrow"),

*čerez dve nedeli* ("in two weeks"),

*včera* ("yesterday"),

*god tomu nazad* ("a year ago"),

*davno* ("long ago"), etc.,

and various contextual means of expressing temporal relations which do not have any concrete and homogeneous structural characteristics, e.g.:

*togdašnjij* ("in those days"),

*v bolee pozdnix proizvedenijax* ("in his later works"),

*ja vspominaju* ("I recall").

The system-structural aspect of description, as applied to this type of grammar, is marked by a pronounced functional orientation: groups of language means of different levels are described according to a principle based on the objective laws of functioning of language means in speech, the chief aim being to communicate the sense. To achieve this, language means of different levels are used, grouped on a semantic basis.

Both structural and functional trends of linguistic research are embraced by the system principle, which has specific forms of realisation of each of these trends.

Since traditional grammar divides its object of study into the levels of morphology and syntax, and into subsystems representing classes of words, word-forms and syntactical constructions, it is based on the principle of *system differentiation*. As to functional grammar, it integrates language means of different levels within functional units and from this point of view is characterised by the opposite feature of *system integration*.

These types of system analysis in grammar may be correlated with the concepts of *monosystem* and *polysystem analysis* used in general systems theory. Monosystem analysis implies the division of complex objects into homogeneous units, and deals with strata, or levels. Polysystem analysis is aimed at comprehensive investigation of interaction between systems of different levels (Kuz'min 1978: 26-33).

The above-mentioned types of system analysis in grammar supplement each other. One of them is aimed at determining the specific features of formal and semantic structures belonging to each of these subsystems. For example, temporal correlation of actions is considered separately in describing: (a) categories of tense and aspect, (b) participles and adverbial participles, (c) sentences with homogeneous predicates, (d) complex sentences with subordinate clauses of time, etc. The aim of the other type of system analysis is a comprehensive examination of a certain range of semantic functions and all the language means used in their realisation. For instance, a field of taxis is singled out which embraces all the types of temporal correlation of actions and all the language means of their expression in a given language (see below, and also *Teorija funkcional'noj grammatiki ...* 1987).

Different methods can be employed in studying and describing the dynamic aspect of the functioning of language units taking part in expressing the meaning of the utterance. Traditionally, linguists investigated the use of grammatical units (forms and structures) operating with such concepts as "a particular meaning of the grammatical form" and "a function of the grammatical form". One must also consider the possibility of using such concepts and terms that could be applied in analysing semantic functions at the level of utterance, taking into account all formal means in interaction. The concept of *categorical situation*, as formulated in the present variety of functional grammar, serves this aim. In accordance with this concept, a particular aspect corresponding to a given functional-

semantic field is singled out of the general situation expressed by the utterance.

Thus, *functional grammar* can be defined as a grammar (1) which is aimed at studying and describing the laws of functioning of grammatical units in interaction with elements of various language levels taking part in conveying the meaning of the utterance, and (2) which makes it possible to carry out an analysis proceeding not only from form to meaning (from means to functions), but also from meaning to form (from functions to means). This type of grammar should include, in one form or another, (a) an analysis of the system of language means taking part in realisation of the functions under study, and (b) an analysis of the semantic functions being realised in the utterance, i.e., in speech. In our variety of functional grammar, there are two components that serve these aims: (a) *a description of the structure of functional-semantic fields* within the system of fields of a given language (*field structuring*), and (b) *a description of categorial situations* (aspectual, causal, conditional, etc.) based on a certain functional-semantic field and representing elements of its content and expression in the utterance.

Functional grammar is mostly concerned with examining the functions of language means, the laws and rules governing their functioning in an utterance, and the interaction of elements of different levels and aspects of the language system in speech. As far as the orientation of grammatical analysis is concerned, the most important thing in describing the concept of functional grammar is above all to recognise the fundamental possibility of analysis proceeding from meaning to form (from functions to means). Such a possibility is characteristic of functional grammar as contrasted with formal (structural) grammar. At the same time, this is not a constant or obligatory attribute of functional grammar. Grammatical description may only be based on analysis proceeding from form to meaning (from means to functions) - but nevertheless it will be functional if it is specially aimed at examining the laws of functioning of grammatical units in speech.

The correlation between means and functions can be most exhaustively described by an organic combination of approaches from the point of view of means and from the point of view of functions.

The expediency of a dual approach to describing the functions of language means is dictated above all by the principle of "the asymmetri-

cal dualism of the language sign" (according to S.O. Karcevskij), which implies the absence of isomorphism between the units of the expression plane and the content plane, that is, the possibility of one unit of the expression plane corresponding to several units of the content plane and, conversely, one unit of the content plane corresponding to several units of the expression plane. Hence the need to take into account, on the one hand, the diversity of language meanings, which is only possible in analysis proceeding from means, and on the other hand, the diversity of language means, which is possible only in analysis proceeding from functions. It should be borne in mind that analysis from functions to means corresponds to the point of view of the speaker, whereas analysis from means to functions corresponds to the point of view of the listener. Hence the need to synthesise the aspects of passive grammar (for the listener) and active grammar (for the speaker).

Functional grammar forms part of the overall functional model of language (see: Jakobson 1965; Daneš 1967; Zvegincev 1977). As part of functional linguistics, in its theoretical foundations and analytical methods it is associated with the functional approach in the modern theory of scientific knowledge (and at present it is important to develop these ties). This area of grammatical research is covered by the general problems of behaviour (functioning) of the system, the types of its interaction with outside objects (that is, with the environment), and the general trends of interactions between the functional and system-structural approaches.

The sphere of functional grammar overlaps with such areas of research as grammatical typology (cf. S.D. Kacnel'son, A.A. Xolodovič, V.S. Xrakovskij, V.P. Nedjalkov et al.), contrastive grammar (see V.N. Jarceva), various trends of research in grammatical semantics, grammar of discourse, grammatical aspects of psycholinguistics, and applied linguistics.

It is important to stress the autonomy of functional-grammatical descriptions of different languages (though this does not rule out the possibility of comparing these descriptions inasmuch as they are based on fundamental semantic categories). Functional grammar is not a description of the universal-logical type. Central to functional-grammar research (in our understanding) are the laws and types of functioning of grammatical units in their interaction with the units of other levels and aspects of language - and, as far as present-day research suggests, these laws can

differ greatly from one language type to the next. The principal object of analysis is not universal concepts, but rather the actual semantic functions of language, which contain both universal and non-universal elements. The laws governing the functioning of grammatical units are included, as already mentioned, in the notion of the grammatical system of language, representing its dynamic aspect. Everything that has been traditionally seen as the grammatical differences between languages of different types, also belongs to the aspect of language structure under review. Even structurally similar forms and categories of related languages can show substantial differences from the point of view of their functioning (Bondarko 1983: 66-88).

Differences may concern the general attributes of the system of functional-semantic fields in a given language, the correlation between macro- and microfields, the structure of each field, the content and level of its components, the types of interrelations between grammar and vocabulary, the overlap of fields, the overall picture of semantic variation within a field, and the relationship between explicit and implicit meaning. Thus, functional grammar does not constitute a comprehensive universal method of description applicable to all languages. Although the various principles of functional grammatical description reveal certain general trends, the concrete applications of these descriptions must proceed in each case from the type and system of a particular language.

### **Types of functional-grammatical description**

The differences between existing types of functional-grammatical descriptions cannot be reduced only to analysis of form and meaning (means and functions), yet this general orientation of analysis must be taken into account in considering the different types and varieties of functional grammar.

From this point of view, the following types of functional-grammatical description should be singled out: (a) descriptions proceeding from form to meaning, from means to functions; (b) descriptions proceeding from meaning to form, from functions to means; and (c) descriptions based on a combination of the two above principles at different stages of analysis. Let us consider each of these types separately.

*Functional-grammatical descriptions proceeding from form to meaning, from means to functions*

It is evident that reliance on form as the starting-point of functional-grammatical description brings this type of functional grammar close to formal (structural) grammar, since any structural grammar contains, to a greater or lesser extent, a functional aspect (for instance, in defining the meaning of grammatical forms, in characterising the functions of different parts of the sentence, or in describing semantically characterised types of complex sentences). There is no clearcut boundary line between this type of functional grammar and formal-structural grammar with pronounced functional aspects. However, the specific character of functional grammar is clearly discerned if the special object of research and description is the functioning of grammatical units, if it is the functions of grammatical units and other language elements interacting with them that come under scrutiny, if special attention is devoted to context and speech situation in their interaction with the meaning of grammatical units, and if the analysis is not limited to studying grammatical categories in the language system but is markedly geared to the utterance and speech as a whole and its specific conditions in the communication process.

Linguistic tradition contains quite a number of instances of grammatical research and description which include analysis of the functions of grammatical units and rules of their functioning. For example, in Russian linguistics, the aforementioned functional aspects were exhaustively studied by F.I. Buslaev, K.S. Aksakov, N.P. Nekrasov, A.A. Potebnja, F.F. Fortunatov, G.K. Ul'janov, A.A. Šaxmatov, and A.M. Peškovskij. In the Soviet period, by far the greatest contribution was made by V.V. Vinogradov.

Vinogradov managed to integrate in his grammatical theory of the word an analysis of how word-forms are employed in live speech. He built on the achievements of pre-revolutionary Russian linguistics in the study of the functioning of word-forms, carrying out an in-depth analysis of the complex relationships between the categorial meanings of grammatical forms, the lexical meaning of word-forms, and the surrounding context.

In modern linguistic literature, functional-grammatical research and description proceeding exclusively or basically from form to meaning are



extensively represented in studies of syntax (including research in communicative syntax and syntactical semantics) and to a lesser extent in the study of morphology (nevertheless, functional morphology, which comes close to the so-called "syntax of parts of speech" is not such a rare genre in linguistics).

A very pronounced functional orientation is characteristic of aspectology. Aspectology has always been predominantly functional (cf. such works on Slavic aspectology as Razmusen 1891; Mazon 1914; Koschmieder 1934, 1979; Seidel 1936; Maslov 1959; Ivančev 1961; Kopečný 1962; Barnetová 1968; Scheljakín & Schlegel 1970; Šeljakin 1983; Forsyth 1970; Barentsen 1973, 1978; Panevová, Sgall 1973; Lomov 1977; Veyrenc 1980; Glovinskaja 1982).

One of the branches of functional grammar of the type under review is opposition analysis of grammatical categories. The foundations of opposition analysis were laid down by R.O. Jakobson (see, for example, Jakobson 1932, 1936) and other representatives of the Prague School of functional linguistics, and also by certain representatives of the Copenhagen School. The functional analysis carried out by R.O. Jakobson takes into account particular meanings of grammatical forms actualised in speech and conditioned by the context; still in all basic aspects it is geared to general grammatical meanings and their interrelations in the language system. Such is the orientation of analysis of grammatical meanings according to their distinctive semantic features (Jakobson 1958).

Of particular importance for the theory of functional grammar (both synchronically and diachronically) is the concept of primary and secondary functions advanced by Jerzy Kuryłowicz (Kuryłowicz 1962) (cf. the interpretation of primary and secondary functions of grammatical forms by Křížková 1966).

An original functional-grammatical concept was advanced by E. Koschmieder, who drew a distinction between the D-plane (*designatum*, *Bezeichnetes*, *signifié*), which includes the functions of grammatical forms which vary in a given language, and the I-plane (*intentum*, *Gemeintes*, the content of thought), which includes noemes representing interlinguistic constants, i.e. invariants (Koschmieder 1965; 72-89, 101-106, 159-160, 211-213 ff.).

Quite in a class by itself in functional grammar is the French School of functional linguistics (André Martinet and his followers), which