

- 13 What kinds of learning activities could you design to assist your students to explore the context of culture and context of situation of this text?
- 14 What text might you sequence next in your teaching program and why? You might choose this next text because it:
- has the same overall purpose but gives students the opportunity to achieve this purpose in a different context of situation
 - has the same field but gives students the opportunity to work with a different tenor and mode
 - is different only in terms of field so that the students have the opportunity to use this type of text in a different subject area.

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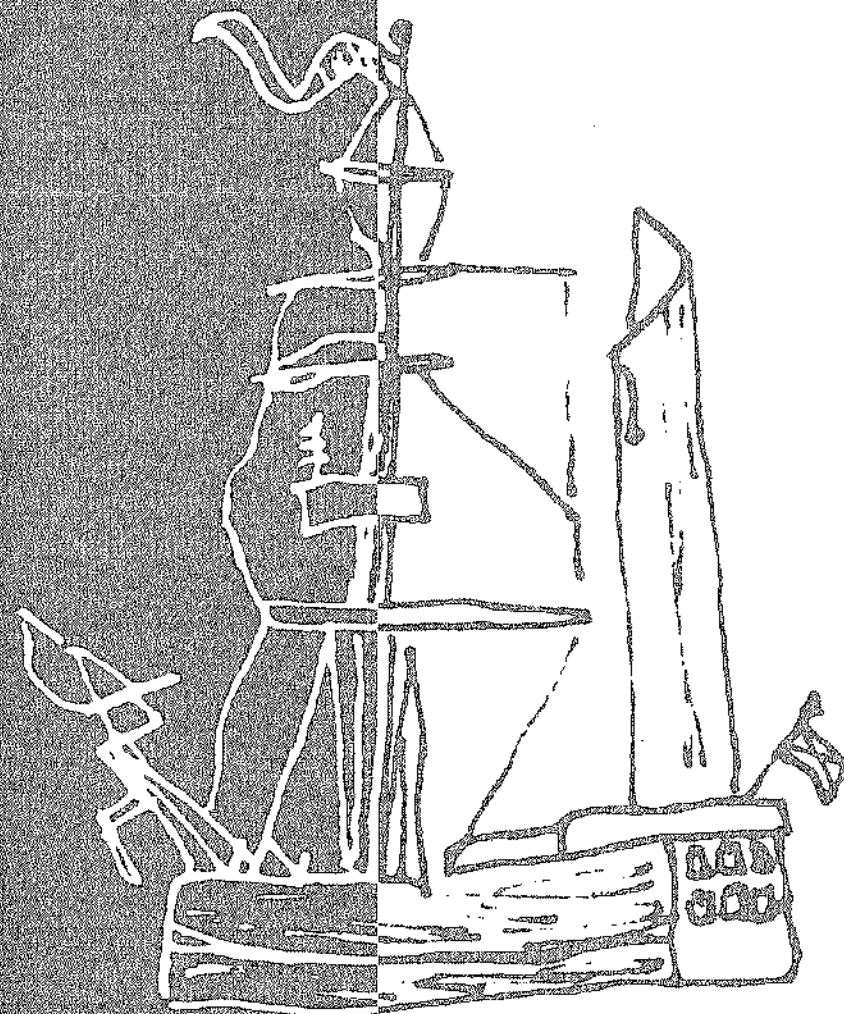
Towards a functional grammar

Introducing ...

- Notions of grammar
- Building on traditional grammar
- Towards a functional grammar
- Clauses and their constituent parts

Discussing ...

- Implications for language teaching



Notions of grammar

One of the first things we need to do in our exploration of a functional approach to grammar is to explore what we mean by the term *grammar*. To many people the term signifies a fairly rigid set of rules for speaking and writing, the breaking of which will mark you out as uneducated, unsophisticated or even uncouth. Once upon a time you could not finish school in most parts of the English-speaking world without having learned at least a little of this type of grammar. Nowadays many people have had little or no instruction in anything called grammar, but still a kind of mystical importance surrounds the way we talk about grammar. Some people apologise for their written English, explaining that they have never been taught grammar properly; others say that grammar is too technical and difficult for them to handle; still others feel that if they had learnt a foreign language they might have grasped grammar. Even those who have been taught something called grammar in school may have gained the impression that it is indeed a mysterious art in which you learn special terms (such as *verb* and *clause*) and master obscure rules to eradicate such errors as the *split infinitive*.

It is true that 'grammar' can mean something like a grammar book or a set of grammatical rules, particularly rules that people will keep breaking unless they are firmly taught them. But there is another sense in which 'grammar' means something like *the way in which a language is organised*. In this second sense all of us have a command of grammar, even if we speak only one language and have never consciously learned any grammatical rules or terms.

This point is not always readily accepted in English-speaking countries, partly because of an educational tradition of concentrating on only some parts of the language. In speaking English, we all follow rules of grammar, but this rarely, if ever, attracts much attention. Since *rule* may keep reminding us of rules set out in a book, let's drop that word and think instead of patterns of language – and in particular of regular patterns. We all arrange words in certain patterns to construct sentences and, if we grew up speaking English, we don't need formal training in identifying, for example, which of the following is modern English usage:

Did you see Alice's new car?
Did you Alice's new car see?

Did you see car new Alice's?
Saw you Alice's new car?
Did see you Alice's car new?

What speakers of English know, by virtue of being speakers of English, is not just how to put specific words together to create sentences, but how to follow and exploit some very general smaller patterns of language that regularly occur within sentences, as component parts – or CONSTITUENTS – of sentences. *Alice's new car* illustrates a general pattern for expressions such as:

Harry's old typewriter
Mother's dusty books
My sister's lifelong ambition
Someone's dirty shoes

Our first example also points to a fundamental distinction in English between statements and questions, a distinction that is achieved by patterned wording as the following examples demonstrate:

Statement	Question
You saw	Did you see?
You heard	Did you hear?
She laughed	Did she laugh?
You work	Do you work?
Bill paints	Does Bill paint?
They ski	Do they ski?
Carla's working	Is Carla working?
He was laughing	Was he laughing?
They'll write	Will they write?
Denis can hear	Can Denis hear?
I should stay	Should I stay?

These patterns of language can be described as part of English grammar – they are part of how we express ourselves in English. Other languages may or may not have similar patterns. In some languages, for example, the wording of *Alice's new car* may be equivalent to *the new car of Alice*. Interestingly, few languages turn out to have a pattern that matches the English question pattern represented by *Did you see?* In many languages the question pattern is simply a reversal of the corresponding statement; that is, *Saw you?* In fact this was once the pattern in English too but it has been replaced. In 16th century English we do find patterns like:

Know ye what I have done to you?
Died he not in his bed?

while more modern equivalents would be:

Do you know what I have done to you?
Didn't he die in his bed?

Grammar as taught in schools in the past often had little or nothing to say about patterns like these, and in a way this was understandable since most of us learned the patterns quite unconsciously before going to school. What *was* taught as grammar was often directed towards understanding and learning the patterns of other languages, especially Latin. (A grammar school was a school that taught Latin grammar.) That was also understandable, given the importance of Latin in the educational system of the time. It was unfortunate, however, that English grammar tended to be judged in the light of Latin grammar. In general, grammarians and teachers fostered the idea that you needed to learn special rules to be able to speak English properly – or more particularly to be able to produce elegant *written* English. In some instances they actually tried to make English conform to Latin patterns. Thus, many people even today have an uneasy feeling that the way they normally use English cannot be quite right and that they need to remember and apply artificial rules to their written English.

Even more demoralising is the notion held by many speakers of English, native as well as non-native, that their *spoken* language is somehow faulty or improper. The grammatical conventions of face-to-face spoken language and those that apply to formal writing are different in many ways. The grammar teaching of the past tended to obscure this fact, with the result that all too often people – especially those whose spoken variety of English was not that of the dominant middle class – became ashamed of the way they spoke as well as the way they wrote.

Functional approaches to grammar description and pedagogy

A functional approach to grammar description and teaching can help alleviate the irrational feelings of shame identified above, at the same time as it empowers people to look closely at, and feel comfortable about, analysing their own choices and those of others around them. There have been several initiatives in the direction of a functional approach to grammar over the last three decades. Systemic functional linguistics, the approach presented in this book, is one of the most recent – and we would argue one of the most systematically developed – of these initiatives. However, many of the readers of this book will be familiar with other functional grammar initiatives. *Communicative grammars* and *corpus-based grammars*, in particular, are pedagogical grammars claiming a functional approach that have had considerable relevance for English language teachers around the world. We will just mention two such grammars in passing.

In the preface to *A communicative grammar of English*, Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik (1975: 10) describe their book as:

A communicative grammar of English is a new kind of grammar. In writing it, we have assumed that studying grammar ... makes most sense if one starts with the question 'How can I use grammar to communicate?'. Thus the main part of the book is devoted to the USES of grammar, rather than to grammatical STRUCTURE.

The *Collins Cobuild English grammar* was published fifteen years later. Compiled by a team of linguists working at the University of Birmingham in Britain, this grammar has strong links to the Bank of English – a computer database (corpus) of English texts, both spoken and written, which seeks to monitor the way in which English is actually used in the modern world. In their introduction the editors make this point (1990: v):

People who study and use a language are mainly interested in how they can do things with the language – how they can make meanings, get attention to their problems and interests, influence their friends and colleagues and create a rich social life for themselves. They are only interested in the grammatical structure of the language as a means to getting things done.

A grammar which puts together the patterns of the language and the things you can do with them is called a functional grammar.

Michael Halliday, whose functional approach to grammar description underpins *Using functional grammar*, was a consultant to the Birmingham editorial team, and many of the ideas about language use and grammar choices that are reflected in the *Collins Cobuild English grammar* are shared by grammarians who use Halliday's theory of systemic functional grammar description.

It is important to remember that all functional approaches to grammar description and grammar teaching are firmly steeped in earlier traditions, building on the past not rejecting it. We explain this approach below, with particular reference to systemic functional grammar.

Continuing classical and rhetorical traditions of grammar description

Systemic functional linguists have sometimes been accused of rejecting the strengths of traditional approaches to grammar and to text description. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, many of the concepts and goals of systemic functional linguistics incorporate ideas about linguistic philosophy that have carried over from some of the intellectual pre-occupations of the classical world. In particular:

- the concern for turning the study of language back to the applications of speaking, writing, and interpretation
- the treatment of words and grammar as part of a more general study of discourse
- the classification of different registers (or text types) according to the different purposes involved and the different resources used to affect the audience – namely, through *pathos* (emotions), *logos* (reasoning), or *ethos* (personal character)
- the integration of the basic notions of grammar and rhetoric – for example transitivity, mood, modality, theme/rheme, finiteness, tense, voice.

A major concern of linguistic philosophy since classical times has been the consistent separation of function and class labels. Continuing this tradition, systemic functional linguists seek to avoid the contradictions inherent in such grammatical descriptions as SVO; that is, Subject (a functional label), Verb (a class label), Object (a functional label).

The challenge for text linguistics is to explain how a community, a social network, or even two people make use of language across changing contexts, changing social memberships and changing modes (from speech to writing, for example). In the classical tradition the rhetoric of Attic Greek sets out to prepare citizens for public debate and for the evaluation of knowledge. *How different is this in education today* we might ask. Clearly the modes have multiplied (think of the screen and email) but the critical goals of the study of discourse have remained the same.

The crucial difference today, in the context of a language like English (so different from the inflecting forms of Greek and Latin), is that all the concepts of traditional grammar and rhetoric need to be thought through in the specific conditions of English and in the specific registers of a new (once unimaginable) technology. Systemic functional linguistics is a proposal for language description that is consistent with this aim. A dynamic theory, it is itself changing in order to address the changing patterns by which meaning is made.

Building on traditional grammar

If you have had any formal training in grammar, back in primary school for example, you will already be familiar with some grammatical terminology. You may, for instance, have divided a sentence up in terms of its subject and predicate, you may know something about person and tense, and you may be familiar with most of the following words:

adjective	adverb	noun	verb
article	conjunction	preposition	pronoun

In traditional grammatical terminology, these are known as *parts of speech*. You are probably able to suggest useful working definitions for some of them (for example, a *noun* is a naming word, a *verb* is a doing word, an *adverb* adds to the meaning of a verb, a *conjunction* is a joining word, a *pronoun* stands in for a noun and so on).

Now let's, for a moment, look at some rather more technical definitions of these terms. Figure 2.1 contains some definitions from the *Macquarie dictionary* (1997).

Grammatical terms like those in Figure 2.1 are called CLASS terms – they allow us to classify words according to the way they are normally used in the roles they usually play in language. But how useful, and indeed how accurate, is such classification in any quest to describe and explore the grammar of a language?

ADJECTIVE

one of the major word classes in many languages, comprising words that typically modify a noun.

ADVERB

one of the major parts of speech comprising words used to modify or limit a verb, a verbal noun (also, in Latin, English and some other languages, an adjective or another adverb), or an adverbial phrase or clause.

NOUN

(in most languages) one of the major form classes, or 'parts of speech', comprising words denoting persons, places, things, and such other words as show similar grammatical behaviour, as English *friend, city, desk, whiteness, virtue*.

VERB

one of the major form classes, or 'parts of speech', comprising words which express the occurrence of an action, existence of a state, and the like, and such other words as show similar grammatical behaviour, as English *discover, remember, write, be*.

ARTICLE

- a word whose function is to determine the syntactic scope of the noun with which it is associated.
- (in English) any of the determiners *the, a* or *an*.

CONJUNCTION

- (in some languages) one of the major form classes, or 'parts of speech', comprising words used to link together words, phrases, clauses or sentences.
- such a word, as English *and* or *but*.

PREPOSITION

(in some languages) one of the major form classes, or 'parts of speech', comprising words placed before nouns to indicate their relation to other words or their function in the sentence. *By, to, in, from* are prepositions in English.

PRONOUN

(in many languages) one of the major form classes, or 'parts of speech', comprising words used as substitutes for nouns.

Figure 2.1: Technical definitions of traditional grammar terms
Macquarie dictionary (1997)

If you think of a noun as a naming word, a word that denotes a person, place or thing, it is obvious that the names of concrete, seeable, touchable objects are nouns: *tree, cat, desk, shop, town, teacher, Mary*. But your dictionary (or maybe your own linguistic sensitivity) will tell you that the words *contrivance, emotion, classification, emergence, and difficulty* are also nouns. In what ways are the concepts expressed by these words object-like? What qualities are shared by *tree* and *emergence* that allow us to classify each as a noun? Doesn't *emergence* describe a happening or event? How then can it denote a thing?

Similarly, if you were taught that a verb is a doing word, then you will have no trouble identifying the verb in the following sentence: *Most birds build nests in trees*. What most birds *do* is build. But there is no 'doing' word in the following sentence from a well-known song: *I am woman*. Here the speaker is expressing *being* rather than *doing*, and the verb in the sentence is *am*, which those with some knowledge of traditional

grammar will recognise as the first person, present tense form of the verb *to be*. It is interesting to note that not all languages express *being* (existence of a state according to the *Macquarie dictionary* definition of verb) by way of a verb. In Indonesian, for example, it is normal to say *mereka masih di rumah* 'they are still at home' (literally: they still at home). In this book we will be making a distinction, in functional terms, between *doing, being, and saying, thinking, and feeling* kinds of verbs (see under Clauses as processes in Chapter 3).

Let's now explore some other problems with traditional grammar terminology. First, compare these four sentences:

- 1 *Bathurst* is a *town* in the *country*.
- 2 *Bathurst* is a *country* *town*.
- 3 My cousin has bought a *town* house in *Bathurst*.
- 4 Stop here for a real *Bathurst* experience.

Bathurst, town and *country* are all nouns in sentence 1. But what about *country* in sentence 2, *town* in sentence 3 and, indeed, *Bathurst* in sentence 4? We could say these words are still nouns in terms of CLASS, but in terms of FUNCTION they are playing a different role. In sentences 2, 3 and 4, each of these words plays the role we expect an adjective to play, that is as a describing word to provide additional information about a noun. So *Bathurst* in ... a real *Bathurst* experience belongs to the class *noun*, but it functions to provide information about another noun – *experience*. Usually when a noun acts as if it is an adjective, we apply the functional label CLASSIFIER, but more about that in the next chapter.

Now look at the following pair of sentences:

- 1 The swallows come to our valley in early spring and we know the warm weather is not far behind.
- 2 The coming of the swallows in early spring brings a promise of warm weather not far behind.

The swallows do something in early spring and what they do is expressed in each case by the English word *come* (*coming*). In sentence 1, *come* is clearly a doing word and is also clearly functioning in the way we expect verbs to function. However, in sentence 2, the word *coming* looks like a doing word (verb) but is functioning in one of the ways we would expect of a noun; that is, it is preceded by the definite article *the*, and is itself doing something: *The coming ... brings a promise ...* In other words, it is acting like a thing rather than a happening or event.

Another telling example of the problem with traditional grammar terms is the highly colloquial Shakespearian riposte to an argumentative adversary:

But me no buts

In this expression *but*, a word we would normally think of as a conjunction, is used first as an imperative verb and then as a plural noun.

From the examples above, it should be clear that the old classification of words is useful only up to a point. Functional grammarians do not reject, discard or replace the terminology of traditional grammar but, to capture what goes on in language, build on and refine the notions of traditional grammar in several ways. The first way is to recognise that words have functions as well as class and that how a word functions can tell us much more than any description of words in terms of class can about the piece of language, where it occurs, the person who chose to use it in that function, and the culture that surrounds the person and the message. This refinement from word class to word function leads to another refinement of traditional grammar, the RANK SCALE.

Towards a functional grammar: The rank scale

If language cannot be fully explained by labelling words according to their class, if we need to take account of functions as well as classes, then we also need to look beyond mere words. Language is much more than a stringing together of words; we need to be able to analyse and describe patterns of language at several different levels. Just as some scientists look at slides through microscopes with varying degrees of magnification, recognising units at different levels, such as molecule, cell and organism, so linguists look at language at various levels or on various scales. Michael Halliday in *An introduction to functional grammar* (1994) describes language in terms of a RANK SCALE. This concept of a rank scale is very important for an understanding of how a system as intricate as human language works. We present it here, with a brief explanation, and will return to the idea at key points in the book.

	clause complex
	clause
RANK SCALE	group or phrase
	word
	morpheme

The units at each rank are made up of one or more units of the rank below. The highest rank is the CLAUSE COMPLEX and is made up of one or more clauses. (Obviously clause complexes join together to make paragraphs, and paragraphs make up texts, but these are rhetorical and semantic units rather than grammatical or syntactic units.)

A clause complex	consists of	one or more clauses
A clause	consists of	one or more groups or phrases
A group or phrase	consists of	one or more words
A word	consists of	one or more morphemes

Clause complex is probably a term that needs some explanation. You may already have some ideas about words combining into phrases, phrases into clauses and clauses into SENTENCES. The term sentence is a bit of a problem word in language studies as it has not always been used consistently by linguists in the past. It really relates to a pattern of language that occurs in written texts.

A **sentence** is a piece of written language that in English conventionally begins with a capital letter and ends at the next following full stop.

Spoken language is not divided into sentences, although we often think and talk about it in those terms as the following statements illustrate:

He never lets me finish a sentence!

What age does a child begin to talk in full sentences?

Spoken language obviously predates written language – both in terms of human history and in terms of the personal history of any individual – yet prescriptive grammars and grammarians of English in the past have had a tendency to treat spoken forms as if they were imitations or reflections of written forms, as if the written form should be taken as the standard to follow when speaking. This tendency is perhaps understandable when you consider that our culture has been literate for a long time, that writing is such an important part of our lives, and that grammarians of the past based their observations almost exclusively on written texts.

However, there are significant differences between the grammatical norms for speaking and writing, as more recent linguistic research – especially in the latter part of this century – has demonstrated. Since we need a systematic approach that will cover language description for either spoken or written texts, we use the term *clause complex* as an umbrella term for the patterns of language at the level above clause, remembering that in written texts a clause complex often corresponds to a sentence.

A **clause complex** is a language structure that consists of one clause working by itself, or a group of clauses that work together through some kind of logical relationship (see Chapter 7).

Now let's use a text to explore the different levels on the rank scale using Text 1.

Text 1

Mr Harper's call for a rise in interest rates should not surprise us. When the national economy is growing fast, many economic analysts will claim that interest rates should rise to prevent a situation of boom and bust. Of greater surprise are his optimistic long-term projections for growth in the Australian manufacturing sector.

Text 1 has three clause complexes; the first and third consist of one clause only while the second consists of four clauses working together. We have used this second clause complex in Table 2.1 to explore the different levels of the rank scale.

Table 2.1: Levels of the rank scale

CLAUSE COMPLEX	When the national economy is growing fast, many economic analysts will claim that interest rates should rise to prevent a situation of boom and bust.			
CLAUSES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 When the national economy is growing fast 2 many economic analysts will claim 3 that interest rates should rise 4 to prevent a situation of boom and bust. 			
GROUPS OR PHRASES	the national economy many economic analysts interest rates a situation of boom and bust	is growing will claim should rise to prevent	fast	when
WORDS (incomplete list)	national economic analysts	the claim interest	growing rates situation	
MORPHEMES (incomplete list)	nation econom grow situ-at(e)	-al -ic -ing	the claim interest -ion	

Table 2.1 demonstrates the fact that a unit can consist of one or more lower-level units (just as an organism can consist of a single cell or many cells, or a building may consist of one room or many rooms). In English, for example, many words are single morpheme words (*grow, the, claim, rate, interest, nation, many, you, finger, ticket, mother*), while others can be analysed into two or more morphemes (*growing, rates, national, situation, fingertips, progressing, forgettable, unforgettable, backpack, backpacker, backpackers*).

At word level in our analysis we can recognise words from some classes of traditional grammar such as adjectives, nouns, verbs and adverbs. At group level the picture is somewhat different. Functional grammar recognises the nominal group, verbal group, adverbial group, conjunction group, preposition group, and just one kind of phrase – the prepositional phrase, which consists of a preposition and a nominal group. All other traditional classes are subsumed into these groups with pronouns, adjectives and articles all being considered within normal nominal group structure. Remember that a group consists of one or more words, so a verbal group may have just one word like *eats* (not in this text), or a main verb and several auxiliaries like *is growing, should rise, will claim, or might have been going to be caught* (this last not in this text).

A morphological aside

In this book we will focus mainly on the ranks of clause complex, clause, and group or phrase. However, morphemes are part of the rank scale and since the word MORPHEME may be an unfamiliar term a brief discussion of morphemes seems useful at this stage.

Morpheme derives from the Greek word *morphe*, meaning *form*. In linguistics it is the traditional term to describe the most basic building blocks (in terms of meaning) of a grammatical system. A morpheme has been defined as 'the minimal linguistic sign, a grammatical unit that is an arbitrary union of a sound and a meaning and that cannot be further analysed' (Fromkin, Rodman, Collins and Blair 1990: 124). Every word is made up of one or more morphemes, and this is so no matter what language you are looking at.

The division of words into morphemes must not be confused with the division of words into SYLLABLES, which is a phonological division rather than a grammatical one. Some words of more than one syllable are single-morpheme words (*interest, nation, ticket, mother, finger, pocket*), while some words of only one syllable are made up of two morphemes (*rates, boys, things, tried, speaks*). Sometimes the phonological division into syllables does coincide with the grammatical division into morphemes (*backpack, blackbird, friendly*), but there are many words where it does not (*fingered, pockets, oysters*).

In Table 2.2 we analyse some examples of morphemes. Note that where a morpheme has a hyphen mark (-) before or after it, it means that the morpheme is a BOUND morpheme; that is, it cannot function by itself, but rather is attached to a root word to alter its status in some way, for instance to show tense as with *-ed* or to mark a plural noun as with *-s*.

Table 2.2: Division of words into morphemes

one morpheme	the	claim	rate	you	tell
	nation	interest	ticket	mother	finger
two morphemes	rates	=	rate + -s		
	oysters	=	oyster + -s		
	growing	=	grow + -ing		
	tried	=	try + -ed		
	backpack	=	back + pack		
	progressing	=	progress + -ing		
three morphemes	fingertips	=	finger + tip + -s		
	backpacker	=	back + pack + -er		
	unforgettable	=	un- + forget(t) + -able		

The word *progress* illustrates another interesting aspect of morphology (the study of morphemes). In Table 2.2 we have treated *progress* as a single morpheme (thus

progressing as two morphemes), but someone with a knowledge of the Latin root of this word may very well want to call *progress* two morphemes because they ascribe meaning to the Latin suffix *pro-* and compare *progress* with other words like *congress, regress* and *egress*. The division of English words into morphemes is therefore not always absolute but often depends on our depth of historical linguistic knowledge. For most people *progress* will rightly be one morpheme, but for some it will equally rightly be two.

Clauses and their constituent parts

CLAUSE is one of those words that plays several different roles in our language. It is a technical term in the language of law and legal documents, for example:

A new clause has been written into the contract.

Clause 5(a) of Regulation 6 states that ...

It is also a technical term in linguistics and it is this sense that concerns us here.

Some of you will already have a fairly clear idea about what a clause is; others may have vague memories about adjectival clauses, noun clauses, adverbial clauses – even perhaps finite clauses – from excursions into grammar in the past. In the following chapters we hope to expand your knowledge of what a clause is and finetune whatever working definition you bring with you.

In all human languages so far studied, the clause is the fundamental meaning structure in our linguistic communication with each other. As anyone who has ever tried to learn another language will know only too well, a dictionary is not a sufficient resource on its own, as words alone are not enough. To communicate effectively we need to know something about how the syntax of the language works; in other words we have to be able to combine words into meaningful message structures, and the most fundamental message structure in any language – in terms of a message that has any sort of completeness about it – is a clause.

An understanding of what a clause is and how to know one when you see it, is essential for both understanding and exploring the workings of the English grammatical system. So we need to spend a little time looking at some clauses and testing our reactions to clause constituency – how would we break any one clause up into its discrete units or component parts. For this task we will use seven-year-old Josephine's text, which she wrote for a second class composition assignment. We will first of all break the text into clauses, and then, in Table 2.3, look more closely at some of the clauses to see what their constituent parts might be.

Text 2: Josephine's text

One day a monster came out of my hot water pipe. I was very frightened. I called my mum and she came and saw the Floogleboogy and ran outside. I wanted to make friends with it and give it a name and so I called it a Floogleboogy and that night it came to bed with me. And I found that a Floogleboogy snores very loud indeed and mum was too frightened to come and kiss me goodnight.



Table 2.3: Clauses from Josephine's text*

1	One day a monster came out of my hot water pipe.	9	and give it a name
2	I was very frightened.	10	and so I called it a Floogleboogy
3	I called my mum	11	and that night it came to bed with me.
4	and she came	12	And I found out
5	and saw the Floogleboogy	13	that a Floogleboogy snores very loud indeed
6	and ran outside.	14	and mum was too frightened to come and kiss me goodnight.
7	I wanted		
8	to make friends with it		

*Note on division into clauses

You might not agree with this division of the text into clauses. As so often in language description, things are never black and white, and there are several possible 'right' answers here. For instance you might want to call clauses 7 and 8, *I wanted to make friends with it*, one clause not two. Or you might feel clause 14 is actually two clauses: *and mum was too frightened to come and kiss me goodnight*. Then again, you might want *to come*; and *and kiss me goodnight* to be two clauses: *to come*; and *and*

(to) kiss me goodnight. We have made clause 14 one clause because we are treating *too frightened to come and kiss me goodnight* as a single constituent part of the clause in that it represents a description of what mum was. Compare: *Mum was happy*; *Mum was frightened*; *Mum was too frightened to come and kiss me goodnight*. Exploring such problem areas in grammatical description is one of the fun things about language studies, and one of the skills we hope you will gain from using this book.

The constituents of clauses in Josephine's text

In our analysis of Text 2, the following abbreviations are used to label the constituents of the clauses:

- ng = nominal group
- vg = verbal group
- conj g = conjunction group
- adv g = adverbial group
- pp = prepositional phrase

Clause 1 is a complete sentence: recalling our rank scale, it is a one-clause, clause complex. It has four discrete units or constituents and these are labelled according to the class of the group or phrase.

One day	a monster	came	out of my hot water pipe
ng	ng	vg	pp

Clauses 2, 3 and 8 each have three constituents:

I	was	very frightened
ng	vg	ng

I	called	my mum
ng	vg	ng

to make	friends	with it
vg	ng	pp

You might feel that Clause 8 has only two constituents where the phrase *to make friends* acts as a verb, synonymous with *befriend*:

to make friends with	it
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And if you disagreed with our division of Clauses 7 and 8 in Table 2.3, seeing them as one clause *I wanted to make friends with it*, then your clause has four constituents:

I	wanted to make	friends	with it
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or three constituents:

I	wanted to make friends with	it
---	-----------------------------	----

As you can see, the division of texts into clauses and clauses into their constituent parts is not always straightforward.

The last clause we will look at from Josephine's text is Clause 11. It appears to have six constituents:

and	that night	it	came	to bed	with me
conj g	ng	ng	vg	pp	pp

One of these constituents (*and*) is rather different to any of the others we have been looking at. Most of our clause constituents can be seen as expressions of our experience in terms of the things, events and happenings of our world, as well as the circumstances under which those events and happenings occur. The word *and*, however, is a conjunction and does not function as an expression of experience in terms of things and events and circumstances. In Clause 11 it is functioning as a linking device that allows us to express some kind of logical relationship *between* clauses rather than within one clause. For this reason we will leave such words out of our constituent analysis of clauses, but come back to them in Chapters 6 and 7.

As we have suggested, the clauses of English typically express our experience of the world in terms of things and events and the various circumstances that surround those events, but it is the event that is central to way we express our experience.

According to Halliday (1994: 106) 'Our most powerful impression of experience is that it consists of "goings-on" – happening, doing, sensing, meaning, and being and becoming'. These 'goings-on' are the events or processes of our experience, and expression of PROCESS or event is the fundamental constituent of a clause.

In traditional grammar terms, every clause must have a verb. In our functional model of grammar, the one obligatory constituent of a clause is the Process, expressed by a verbal group which is essentially realised by a nucleus or head word that belongs to the class verb. Remembering the principles of the rank scale, this verbal group expression of process may consist of one word, for example *snores*:

A Floogleboogy snores very loud indeed

or several words, for example *might have been snoring*:

The Floogleboogy might have been snoring all night

Some clauses will also have constituents that tell us who the PARTICIPANTS in the Process are, and under what CIRCUMSTANCE the process takes place.

Now it's time to test your own reactions to clause constituency. Try your hand on the following clauses. Don't worry too much about attaching labels to the constituent parts for the moment, but just look for what seem to be the natural groupings of words within the clause structures. To get you started we have underlined the process (verbal group) constituent:

- 1 The furious child frantically chased our neighbour's cat up and down the street
- 2 Pigs might fly
- 3 crawling cautiously through the undergrowth
- 4 Do you want some more coffee?
- 5 Stop!
- 6 protected from the wind on three sides ...

Remember that, according to our rank scale, a clause is made up of one or more groups or phrases. We could, of course, say about Clause 1 above that the clause comprises thirteen words, and that those words are thus the constituents of the clause. This is true

but not very helpful. We need to look at the way the thirteen words are patterned into smaller groupings in the clause design, each grouping fulfilling a different function:

The furious child	frantically	chased	our neighbour's cat	up and down the street
ng	adv g	vg	ng	pp

We can test the validity of this constituent break down of the clause in a number of ways. Try changing the word order of the clause, presenting the same information while not changing any of the words. There are several possibilities and all involve changing the position of one or both of the following boxed constituents:

frantically	up and down the street
-------------	------------------------

Two possibilities are:

Frantically the furious child chased our neighbour's cat up and down the street
Up and down the street the furious child chased our neighbour's cat frantically

If we move anything else around we either get a pattern that is not the norm for English:

Chased the furious child our neighbour's cat frantically up and down the street

or we get a different message:

Our neighbour's cat frantically chased the furious child up and down the street

unless we also make certain adjustments to two of the constituent groupings:

Our neighbour's cat was chased frantically up and down the street by the furious child

A further simple test of clause constituent break down is to see what questions about the message are answered by the different constituents. So, in our example clause:

the furious child	answers the question <i>who did</i> the chasing?
frantically	tells us something about <i>how</i> the chasing was done.
our neighbour's cat	tells us <i>who had</i> the chasing done to it.
up and down the street	tells us <i>where</i> the chasing happened.

The rank scale and logical meanings

As we've pointed out, a clause complex consists of one or more clauses. When there is more than one clause, the two or more clauses are joined in some sort of logical relation. In Chapter 7 we look in a general way at patterns of clause combination but do not go into all the finer details of clause combinations as set out in Halliday's system (1994: Chapter 7). One of the general principles we do need to appreciate, however, is that sometimes the clauses will be of equal value, while at other times one clause will be dependent on another. Here students of traditional grammar will be remembering

principal and subordinate clauses. The terminology preferred in this book is *independent* and *dependent* (see Chapter 7), but many of the principles you are familiar with will be the same.

Conjunctions (and some punctuation devices) express the logical relationships between clauses in a clause complex. For example, clauses joined by *and*, *but*, *or*, *that is*, or even a comma, colon, or semi-colon, are of equal value in the clause complex. But clauses beginning with *although*, *because*, *since*, *if* will always be dependent, even when they come at the beginning of the clause complex.

This notion of complexing, where two or more elements are joined in some sort of logical relationship, can also apply at lower ranks in the rank scale. At group level, two or more nominal groups can join to make a single clause constituent; two or more verbal groups to make a single clause constituent and so on. Here are some examples:

The lion and the unicorn	were fighting	for the crown
ng complex	vg	pp
ng 1 + ng 2		

The answer to the question 'Who were fighting?' is 'The lion and the unicorn', so the two nominal groups join together to make one nominal group complex as a single clause constituent.

The wolf	huffed and puffed
ng	vg complex
	vg 1 + vg 2

If we ask what the wolf did, the answer is *huffed and puffed* as one action, so the two verbal groups join together to make one verbal group complex as a single clause constituent.

Bill, my gardener,	is weeding	the rose garden
ng complex	vg	ng
ng 1 = ng 2		

If we ask *who* is weeding the rose garden, the complete answer is *Bill, my gardener*, so the two nominal groups join together to make one nominal group complex as a single clause constituent. This example is rather different from the previous two – here, instead of two different entities being added to make a group complex, the two parts of

the nominal group are different ways of referring to the same entity. That is why we used + between the parts of the group complex in the first two examples, and = between the nominal groups in the last example.

In the following chapters you will learn more about the clause, its constituent elements and its three separate but simultaneous functions. In preparation for this, the last section of this chapter gives a general overview of the three basic functions of language discussed briefly in Chapter 1.

Functions of language

As we saw in Chapter 1, there are three broad functions of language that are central to the way the grammar works in the language system:

- 1 Language has a representational function – we use it to encode our experience of the world; it conveys a picture of reality. Thus it allows us to encode meanings of experience which realise field of discourse (EXPERIENTIAL MEANINGS).
- 2 Language has an interpersonal function – we use it to encode interaction and show how defensible we find our propositions. Thus it allows us to encode meanings of attitudes, interaction and relationships which realise tenor of discourse (INTERPERSONAL MEANINGS).
- 3 Language has a textual function – we use it to organise our experiential and interpersonal meanings into a linear and coherent whole. Thus, it allows us to encode meanings of text development which realise mode of discourse (TEXTUAL MEANINGS).

Notice that language encodes all three of these kinds of meanings simultaneously. If you say to someone:

The high school students put on a noisy protest.

you are simultaneously representing or describing something, interacting with someone (whoever you are talking to) by telling them something, and organising the linear flow of your message. Each of these aspects of your utterance is achieved through all the linguistic or grammatical options at your disposal. Firstly, you could have said, for instance:

The high school students protested noisily.

or

High school students organised a noisy protest.

and in each case you would have been saying something slightly different. You would have represented a slightly different reality. More on this in Chapter 3.

Secondly, you could have said, for instance:

The high school students put on a noisy protest, didn't they?

or

Did the high school students protest noisily?

in which case your interpersonal meaning would be different. You would be seeking confirmation or asking for information rather than telling or stating. For more on this see Chapter 4.

And thirdly, you could have said:

A noisy protest was what the high school students organised.

A noisy protest was organised by high school students.

In this case you have conveyed a different textual meaning by organising the message differently. These last possibilities could be the predicted version in certain contexts. The first might be your choice if the context had already included a discussion of certain groups organising some kind of gathering, and you wanted to emphasise what kind of gathering the students had organised. The second example is in fact the passive voice version of our previous example: *High school students organised a noisy protest*. This version allows you to thematise the protest rather than the protesters. In other words, the textual function has to do particularly with the flow of information and points of departure. More on this in Chapter 6.

Exercises

- 1 Give two or three English words to illustrate each of the traditional classes of words mentioned in this chapter: adjective, adverb, article, conjunction, noun, preposition, pronoun, verb. If you are uncertain of these terms, check their dictionary definitions again.
- 2 Find some examples of your own to illustrate the rank scale from clause complex to morpheme. First copy out your sentence (clause complex) then set out your rank scale like the example in Table 2.1.
- 3 Divide the following clauses into their constituent groups.
 - a. Pigs might fly
 - b. crawling cautiously through the undergrowth
 - c. Do you want some more coffee?
 - d. Stop
 - e. protected from the wind on three sides ...
 - f. Next week the committee will announce the winner of the competition
 - g. The three wise men of Gotham went to sea in a bowl.

Implications for language teachers

In contrast to thinking about grammar in terms of rules which *prescribe* the way language is structured, in this chapter we have been asked to think about grammar as a way of *describing* regular language *patterns* and the *functions* these patterns achieve.

Some teachers might be uncomfortable with letting go of the idea of grammar rules. Many of their teaching techniques may focus on grammar rules which prescribe 'correct' language use. Other teachers may be equally surprised that they are being asked to think about grammar at all! Their teaching techniques may focus on immersing their students in language as communication. They may believe that learning grammar will prevent their students from using the language fluently and communicatively.

The material in this chapter is of most help to teachers who would like to find a middle way between teaching prescriptive grammar rules and teaching no grammar at all. If teachers think about grammar as a way of describing language in terms of pattern and function, they are inclined to develop teaching techniques that draw students' attention to the regular grammatical patterns which make language use *functional* in its context.

What do teachers want for their students?

Teachers who focus on rules and accuracy want their students to reach an accepted and valued *standard* of language use. This approach, however, may obscure the variation which occurs in real-life language use; it might even imply that some variations are sub-standard. It may also obscure the fact that every language learner progresses via an *interlanguage* towards increasingly effective use of the target language, and that the 'errors' learners make during this process reveal important information about how language learning progresses.

Teachers who focus on communication and avoid teaching grammar want their students to be able to communicate with ease without being burdened with rules and standards. This approach, however, may lead to students being stranded in their interlanguage. They may not be able to use the varieties of language they need, for example, to apply successfully for employment, to write about technical or abstract concepts, to argue their case effectively or to negotiate a delicate personal or business dilemma.

Most language teachers want their students to be both accurate and fluent users of English, but they are faced with an educational paradox. If they demand students use English on the basis of the prescribed rules of traditional grammar, students may be unaware of the variety of language use available to them, and teachers may be unaware of the actual progress students are making with authentic language use. If, on the other hand, teachers expect students to use English without any knowledge of English grammar, students may not have the knowledge they need to use language in a variety of ways and this may restrict the progress students are able to make.

What we have learned in this chapter suggests that one way of resolving this paradox might be to:

- think about grammar in terms of pattern and function
- work with the grammar of whole texts in context.

What do teachers need to know in order to teach about the grammar of whole texts?

In this chapter the traditional view of grammar has been extended in the following four ways:

- 1 A set of functional labels builds on and enriches the traditional set of class labels.
- 2 A rank scale allows for a more detailed exploration of clause structure.
- 3 The constituent parts of the clause can be described in terms of the way each contributes functionally to the message of the clause.
- 4 The three meanings made simultaneously in clauses are revealed by exploring clause constituents and the way these constituents are organised to reflect the context of situation.

Now let's look at each of these from the perspective of language education. Firstly, we are told not to abandon what we already know about grammar – for example the familiar traditional grammar labels for the parts of speech. These labels describe elements of language in terms of their *class* or, in other words, in terms of what they *are*.

We are shown, however, that identifying parts of speech alone is not enough if we are to describe consistently and fully the grammatical work of words and structures. So next we are shown how these terms can be built on and enriched with a second set of labels which identify what a word *does*; that is, its *function*. This second set of labels extends the metalanguage available to those who teach and study language, allowing them to talk about both the forms that language elements take and the work that language elements do.

Next we are introduced to a series of grammatical units in a *rank scale*. This scale opens up the structure of the English clause allowing us to examine comprehensively and systematically how the parts of a clause are organised. At each rank, functional linguists are able to describe how words are organised into patterns in order to achieve the different functions within clauses. These descriptions reveal the potential for meaning-making available at each grammatical rank.

Using knowledge based on the rank scale, students can structure language patterns at all levels (morpheme, word, group, phrase, clause and clause complex) and strategically organise and integrate all these patterns as they structure clauses. A particularly useful by-product of the rank scale is that students no longer need to talk about spoken language in terms of the sentence – a unit which has never been very compatible with spoken language.

As well as thinking about the clause in terms of its ranks, we are asked to think about the clause as 'a meaningful message structure' with each constituent part playing a functional role in the message. This idea suggests that instead of giving students the rule *Every clause must have a verb*, teachers might more usefully show students how an event takes the central role in constructing the message of a clause. From this starting point, classroom activities can be designed in which students explore:

- how to break a clause down into its parts
- the structure and functional role of each clause part
- how the parts combine into clauses around the central event
- how clauses are combined into clause complexes.

These activities can be designed using the language of real-life texts that are relevant to the students' learning goals.

We are shown how to test whether we have effectively broken a clause down into its constituent parts. This is done by working out the question each part answers about the message. Students can use these questions to guide them as they explore the structures and meanings found in different types of clauses. This idea will be explored further in Chapter 3.

Finally, we are shown how every clause makes three kinds of meanings at once, depending on the constituent parts we choose and how we choose to organise these parts. Every clause (1) represents experience, (2) interacts with someone and (3) organises the message so it makes sense. We know from Chapter 1 that these three kinds of meaning systematically reflect the context of situation. If students know how to choose and structure the parts of a clause to make each of these kinds of meaning effectively and functionally, they will control the full meaning potential of the English clause in whole texts across a variety of contexts.

In the following chapters we will be introduced to different ways of exploring the structure of the English clause to reveal how each of the three kinds of meanings is made in the clause. In addition we will explore the potential different types of clause constituents have for making each of these kinds of meaning.

Further reading

Chapter 2 of *The functional analysis of English: A Hallidayan approach* (Bloor and Bloor 1995) explores class and function labels in some detail.

de Silva Joyce and Burns (1999) in *Focus on grammar* answer the question 'What is grammar?' In Chapter 1 and in Chapter 2 they explore different views of grammar and provide an historical account of the way our views about language standards have changed over time. In Chapter 3 they review the different ways grammar has been used in language teaching.