

**THE SENTENCE:
FUNCTIONAL ASPECT. ACTUAL
AND PRAGMATIC SYNTAX**

Lecture 13.

Functionalism in linguistics

Vilem Mathesius (1882-1945)

Prague School linguists (1926-1945)

"the phonological, grammatical and semantic structures of a language are **determined by the functions** they have to perform in the societies in which they operate"



Functionalism has become associated with

Michael Halliday



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- Russian linguists:
- A.V. Bondarko,
N.A. Slusareva,
T.S. Sorokina,
G.A. Zolotova,
G.A. Veikhman

Two ways of the functional side of the sentence

1. to study the **functions of the sentence components** within a sentence - "**actual syntax**", or the study of "**the actual aspect** of the sentence";
It reflects **internal functions** of sentence components.
2. to study **the function of the sentence as a whole** in speech - "**pragmatic syntax**", or "**the pragmatic aspect** of the sentence".
It reflects the **external function** of the sentence.

Actual aspect of the sentence.

Theme and rheme.

Any sentence **conveys some information** structurally and semantically expressed by its components (individual pieces).

The individual pieces of information should be given the right emphasis and put in the right order (Лич, Свартвик).

The basis for studying the communicative function of the sentence is **the information it conveys, units of information and their arrangement / organization.**

The theory of sentence division

- 1. The actual division of the sentence** (Vachek, Dahl, Блох) emphasizes the division of the sentence into constituents in actual speech.
- 2. The functional sentence perspective** (Danes, Mathcsius, Halliday) stresses the functional goal of the sentence in the process of communication.

The functional structure of the sentence

- **"information structure"** (Halliday, Quirk et al.),
- **"theme"** and **"rheme"** (widespread),
- **"topic-comment"** (Hockett, Палмер),
- **"topic-focus"** (Кверк, Лич),
- **"given-new information"** (Halliday).

The notions of 'theme' and 'rheme'

- "theme" - Greek root [*the*] "to set", or "to establish", and means "*that which is set or established*".
- "rheme" is derived from the root [*rhe*] "to say" or "to tell", and means "*that which is said or told*" (about that which was set or established beforehand).

Theme and rheme – logical categories of subject and predicate

In **logic** the categories of subject and predicate are analyzed as units of **certain forms of thinking** (**proposition**).

In **linguistics** the categories of theme and rheme express the **significance** of sentence parts in terms of their informative role in the sentence (Блох).

The information structure of the sentence

The theme - given information, i.e. information already supplied by the context. **(the initial position)**.

The rheme - new information for the sake of which the sentence has been uttered or written **(at the end of the sentence)**.

Information structure of the sentence

Theme	Rheme
<i>Tomas</i>	<i>gave Sophie that Easter egg.</i>
<i>That Easter egg</i>	<i>was given to Sophie by Tomas.</i>
<i>Sophie</i>	<i>was given that Easter egg by Tomas.</i>

Features of theme in English

- 1) they express **given information**, which is already known from the context.
- 2) they are **placed in the initial position** in the sentence,
- 3) they **coincide with the** group of the subject.
- **unmarked themes**.

The **theme** is something **other than the subject (marked)**:

*Talent (T), Mr.Micawber has;
money (T), Mr.Micawber has not.*

The **rheme**: *It is Charles (R) who went to Paris.*

Functional stylistics

- The rheme of the sentence in **oral speech (actual communication)** is marked by **intonation and sentence stress**.
- The rheme of the sentence in **written speech (virtual communication)** is taken out of **context** and may seem **unmarked**: *Mary is fond of music.*

Means of sentence stress

- any sentence performs its **communicative function** in a wider **context**, which actualizes or **marks the rheme** of the sentence in a **certain way**:
- **Mary** | *is fond of music* (as an answer to the question "*Who is fond of music?*");
- *Mary* | **is fond** of music (as a contradiction to "*Mary hates music*");
- *Mary is fond of* **music** (as a correction of "*Mary is fond of poetry*");
- *Mary is fond of music* (as a contradiction to "*Mary is not fond of music*").

English has **fixed word order**

- a definite and permanent place is assigned to every part of the sentence.
- Modern English has a **system of special** means to show that a word or a phrase corresponds either to the **theme** or to the **rheme** of the sentence.

Means of marking the theme

Ways to mark the theme in the English sentence:

- Syntactic means.
- Morphosyntactic means.
- Lexicogrammatical means.
- Lexical means.

Syntactic means (changes in the fixed word order)

The theme of the sentence - object, the adverbial modifier or the predicate (**fronted**):

- ❑ object: **His face** \ *I am not fond of, but his character* \ *I despise* .
- ❑ adverbial modifier: **Willingly** \ *he'll never do it*.
- ❑ predicative: **Rich** \ *I may be*.
- ❑ predicate: **Followed** | *five minutes of acute misery*.

If we change the word order the themes will turn into rhemes. These constructions are mainly confined to **rhetorical** speech.

Morphosyntactic means (definite article)

It is used to identify the referent of the noun, to show that the object has already been mentioned and, thus, expresses the "given" information:

- *The* delegation \ was met by a group of students.

Lexicogrammatical means

(personal pronouns, pro-verbs, pro-adjectives, pro-adverbs and pro-conjunctions),

1. Proforms refer back to something already stated:

- *The child ran into the road. **He** \ was hit by a car./*
- */John came early, and **so did** Fred./*
- */ He told them about the job he had left. **Such** information | was just what they needed./*
- */ She got pregnant. **Therefore** he \ was unable to avoid an unwelcome marriage.*

2. Loose parenthesis:

- *I've invited Andy, Bob and Mark. **As for Stephen, I** \ don't care if I never see him again in my life.*

Lexical means (proper names)

- presuppose that the person has already been introduced:
- (**His name is Bill*). **Bill** | **is** a student.

The **theme need not** something **known in advance**.

In many sentences it is already familiar.

The theme

sometimes is something **mentioned for the first time** and yet it is **not the information center**.

In this case it is **the starting point of the sentence**, not the point of its completion (the opening sentences in the story:

- *Marshall Zebatinsky felt foolish.*
- *Jehan Shuman was used to dealing with men in authority.*

Opening sentences: opinions differ

1. No **theme** - the whole of each sentence represents **the rheme** (Veikhman).
2. **The theme** is represented by proper names as the **starting point** of communication (Ильиш).
3. Some **implicit introductory information** in every story precedes the first sentence and represents the theme (Khomutova):
 - *(*I am going to tell you about Marshall Zebatinsky.)
Marshall Zebatinsky | felt foolish.*

Means of marking the rheme

Rheme of the sentence is:

1. **the information center** (Слюсарева),
2. **information focus** (Лич, Свартвик),
3. **comment** (Палмер),
4. **point of completion** of the sentence (Кверк).
5. **the nucleus** of new information: *He / was speaking to me, not to you* (Mathesius, Кверк).
6. **the group of the predicate or VP** (Chafe, Halliday)

Different ways of marking the rheme

1. **Phonological means.**
2. **Lexical means.**
3. **Morphosyntactic means** (indefinite article, passive voice).
4. **Syntactic means** (contrastive complexes, cleft complexes, sentences with emphatic *do*, one-member sentences, inversion of the subject and predicate)
5. **Non-linguistic means** (fonts: bold, italics, regular, Roman, etc.)

Phonological means (intonation and logical stress)

Different theme-rheme models in speech:

- *Mary* \ *is fond of music* (as an answer to the question "*Who is fond of music?*");
- *Mary* | *is fond* of music (as a contradiction to "*Mary hates music*");
- *Mary is fond of* \ *music* (as a correction of "*Mary is fond of poetry*");
- *Mary is* fond of music (as a contradiction to "*Mary is not fond of music*").

Lexical means

Such as intensifying particles *only, even, so, almost, at least*, etc.:

- **Even** a child | could do this.
- **Only** George | could make a mistake like that.
- **Almost** all | liked her.

Morphosyntactic means (&)

1. **Indefinite article** - object is referred to a certain class & expresses new information:

*The door opened | and **an** old man (R) | came into the room (T). – There is an old man in the room.*

2. **Passive voice** makes it possible to place new information:

*The vase (T) | was broken **by Uncle George (R)**.
Compare with *Uncle George (T) | broke **the vase (R)****

Syntactic means

1. **Contrastive complexes** attract the listener's attention to the most important information, i.e. information focus:

- *The dress | is meant **for your sister, not for you!***
- ***He | works at a factory, not at a bank.***

2. **Cleft sentences** are emphatic sentences of the type "It is (was) ... who/that...":

- *It was **Charles** who went to Paris. **It is to Paris** that Charles went.*
- *It is **by train** that he went to Paris.*

3. Sentences with emphatic *do* and other auxiliaries:

- ❑ (**/ thought John worked hard*) He **did** work hard.
- ❑ (**Why haven't you had a bath?*) I **have** had a bath.
- ❑ (**Look for your shoes.*) I **am** looking for them.

4. One-member sentences:

- ❑ ***Never mind.***
- ❑ ***What a wonderful world!***
- ❑ ***A nice summer day.***
- ❑ ***Look!***

These sentences are rhematic, as they express only new information, which cannot be parsed.

5. **Elliptical sentences** have undergone thematic reduction and contain mostly new information (rheme):

☐ *Your name is? - **Marvin.***

☐ *How is she? - **Sleeping.***

☐ *What are you doing today? - **Nothing.***

Such elliptical sentences are contextually conditioned.

6. **Inversion of the subject and predicate:**

☐ *Here comes (T) | **the bus (R).** "Go away!" \ said (T) | **the child (R).***

☐ *There is **a book** in the cupboard.*

☐ *There is **a man** in the room. (The theme may be treated as cleft in such cases).*

The functional model of the sentence: Different approaches

- ❑ **Instead of the two** categories of theme and rheme, there should be **three, five and even six units**.
- ❑ **Jan Firbas** put forward a trichotomic division of the sentence into theme, rheme and **transition** (Firbas).
- ❑ The Russian linguist **Gregory Veikhman** offers a tri-, penta-, and hexapartition of the sentence, the last two being more detailed variations of tripartition (Veikhman).

Functional model of the sentence

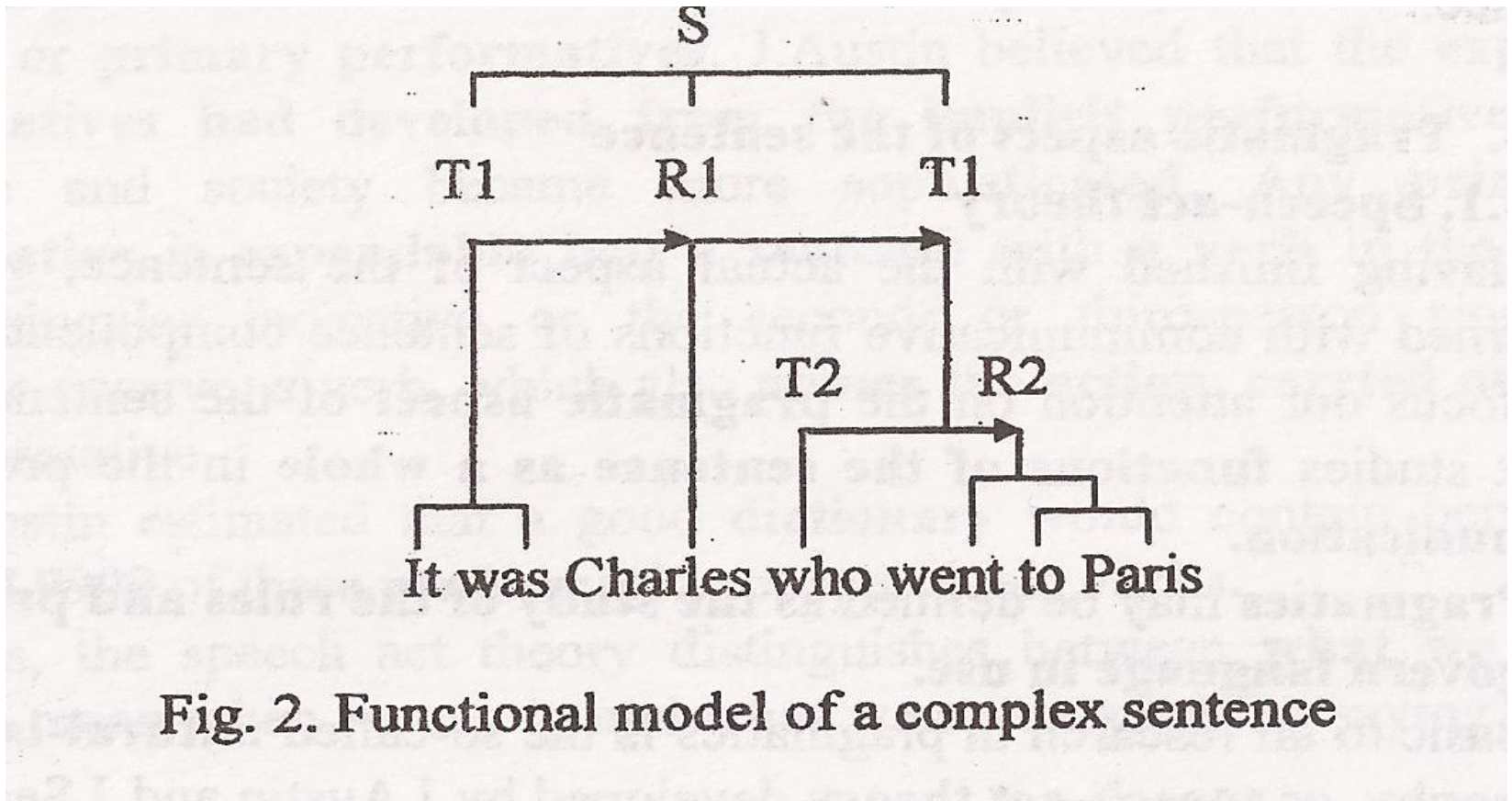


Fig. 2. Functional model of a complex sentence

Pragmatic aspect of the sentence

Speech-act theory

- **Pragmatic aspect** studies **functions of the sentence as a whole** in the process of **communication**.
- **Pragmatics** - the study of the rules and principles that govern language in use.
- **Natural-language philosophy**, or **speech-act theory** (J. Austin and J.Searle).
- A **declarative sentence** is always used to describe truly or falsely some **state of affairs** or some fact.



John Langshaw Austin

(26 March 1911 – 8 February 1960)
British [philosopher of language](#) and leading proponent of [ordinary language philosophy](#), perhaps best known for developing the theory of [speech acts](#).

John Rogers Searle

(born July 31, 1932)

American [philosopher](#) and currently the Professor of Philosophy at the [University of California, Berkeley](#).



J. Austin

Declarative sentences do not describe, report, or state anything. The **utterance** is the **action itself** -> **performatives**, or performative utterances:

- *I do*, as uttered at a **marriage ceremony**;
- *I name this ship Queen Elisabeth*, as uttered by the appropriate person while smashing a **bottle against the stem of the ship**;
- *I give... my watch to my brother*, as written in a **will**;
- *I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow* and the like.

Performatives

- clearly **marked** as performatives **by** containing within them **a verb** which **stands for the action** being performed :
 1. *I do* = I am doing (taking the man to be my lawful husband),
 2. *I name* = I am naming,
 3. *I bet* = I am betting, etc.
- **performatives, which do not contain performative verbs:**
 1. *I warn you that there is a dog/bull/fire.*

Explicit performatives vs. Implicit (primary) performatives

1. The **explicit performatives** had developed from the **implicit performatives**.
2. **Any primary performative** is **expandable** into a **sentence** with a **verb** in the 1st person singular indicative or the 2nd- or 3rd-person singular indicative passive.

The speech act theory distinguishes between speech acts involving **locution**, **illocution**, and **perlocution**.

J. Austin segregates the speech act itself into three component acts

1. A **locutionary act** (ЛОКУТИВНЫЙ АКТ) involves just the uttering of a sentence with sense and reference.
2. An **illocutionary act** (ИЛЛОКУТИВНЫЙ АКТ) is the act performed in **uttering the sentence** with a certain **communicative intention**.
3. A **perlocutionary act** (ПЕРЛОКУТИВНЫЙ АКТ) is **the consequential effect** of an utterance on an **interlocutor**, such as what is **achieved** by saying something.
=> total speech situation.

The speech act – the center of the study of language

J.Searle: the basic unit of human linguistic communication is the **illocutionary act**.

Classes of speech acts:

1. **representatives** (statements, conclusions, boasts, etc),
2. **directives** (requests, orders, challenges, etc.),
3. **commissives** (promises, menaces),
4. **expressives** (thanks, congratulations),
5. **declarations** (arguments, replies, assumptions).

Pragmatic study of the sentence

Pragmatics - the study of human communication in general.

Pragmatic syntax studies the sentence (the utterance) - the basic unit of communication.

Every sentence is **correlated** with the communicative intention of the speaker, e.g.:

"I'll come" - communicative intention of the speaker may be a **statement, a promise, a warning, a threat**, etc.

Proposition – the pragmatic model of the sentence

It reflects the communicative intention of the **speaker**.
The proposition **differs** by their **pragmatic** component,

"Come at once!" may **be**

- **an order, a request** (*please, intonation*),
- **a threat** (*or I'll show you a thing or two!*),
- **a warning** (*or you '11 miss the show*), etc.

The **decisive** criterion for assigning a sentence to a specific **pragmatic type** - the **character of its pragmatic component**.

Pragmatic types of sentences

1. Constatives.
2. Directives:
 - ✓ Injunctive sentences (orders);
 - ✓ Requestive sentences (requests);
3. Questions.
4. Promises and menaces.
5. Performatives.

Constatives – sentences, which **constate**:

- *The Earth rotates.*
- *We live in Russia.*
- *Novosibirsk is my native town.*

The communicative intention of constatives is correlated with the formal characteristics of the sentence.

Directives – cause the listener to act:

- "Get out!",
- "Don't tell anybody about it!"

Directive sentences are subdivided **into**:

1. **injunctive** sentences (or orders): *Will you tell nobody about it?*
2. **requestive** sentences (or **requests**): *Bring me some chalk, please.*

They are **distinguished by** their intonation and the use of "*please*" and "*Let's*" for **requests**.

Questions - interrogative sentences in their traditional treatment:

- *What is your name?*
- *Where are you from?*
- *How old are you?*

A **common** feature - the purpose of **causing the listener to act**.

- **Questions** presuppose a **verbal** response,
- **Directive** sentences produce a response which is an **action**.

Promises and menaces (threats)

- **statements**: *I'll come tomorrow* (promise). *I'll show you a thing or two* (menace).
- Used in the **first person** and refer to the **future** (subject is **agentive**, the predicate expresses an **action**).
- The **second person** as the subject sometimes occurs in **sentences** expressing promises and menaces (the subject is **never agentive**): *You '11 get this chance -> You '11 be given this chance.*
- The **third person** as the subject occurs **only if the realization of the event described in the sentence depends on the speaker**: *He '11 do this -> *I'll make him do this --> */ promise you he'll do this.*

Performatives – actions themselves

- *I name this ship Queen Elisabeth.*
- *I apologize for my words.*

Grammatically both sentences - **statements**, but **not constatives**, they are **performatives**.

Performative verbs: *thank, approve, congratulate, censure, welcome, guarantee, etc.*