7. LANGUAGE STRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE FUNCTION

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In this chapter Halliday distinguishes three grammatically relevant 'language functions', and illustrates them from English: (i) the 'ideational', (ii) the 'interpersonal' and (iii) the 'textual'. The first refers to what is commonly called the 'cognitive meaning', or 'propositional content', of sentences; the second to distinctions such as those of 'mood', or 'modality' (e.g. the differences between statements, questions and commands); and the third to the way in which the grammatical and intonational structure of sentences relates them to one another in continuous texts and to the situations in which they are used. It is in terms of the 'textual function' that Halliday describes certain kinds of so-called 'stylistic' variation (e.g. the use of an active or passive sentence to express the same 'cognitive meaning').

As I pointed out in the previous chapter (p. 129) and as Halliday himself mentions below, his account of the 'ideational' component of grammatical structure in terms of 'transitivity functions' has much in common with Anderson's (1968a) or Fillmore's (1968) treatment in terms of 'deep cases'. According to Halliday the distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs is becoming more and more 'marginal' in English: 'action clauses . . . seem to be organized on an ergative basis' (p. 157).

Halliday's criticism of the distinction between 'competence' and 'performance' as either 'unnecessary' or 'misleading' (p. 145) may be compared with what Campbell and Wales have to say in a later chapter. Unlike Halliday, they do not reject the distinction between 'an idealized knowledge of a language and its actualized use'. They propose instead that the notion of 'competence' (or 'idealized knowledge') should be extended beyond purely 'grammatical competence' to include what they call the speaker's 'communicative' ability (which seems to correspond quite closely with Halliday's 'textual function').

Also worth noting is Halliday's claim that 'each tone group represents what the speaker decides to make into one unit of information' (p. 162). This would seem to be supported by what Laver says about speech production: that the tone group 'is handled in the central nervous system as a unitary behavioural act' p. 69).

I. THE FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE

WHY is language as it is? The nature of language is closely related to the demands that we make on it, the functions it has to serve. In the most concrete terms, these functions are specific to a culture: the use of language to organize fishing expeditions in the Trobriand Islands, described half a century ago by Malinowski, has no parallel in our own society. But underlying such specific instances of language use, are more general functions which are common to all cultures. We do not all go on fishing expeditions; however, we all use language as a means of organizing other people, and directing their behaviour.

A purely extrinsic account of linguistic functions, one which is not based on an analysis of linguistic structure, will not answer the question; we cannot explain language by simply listing its uses, and such a list could in any case be prolonged indefinitely. Malinowski's ethnographic account of the functions of language, based on the distinction between 'pragmatic' and 'magical', or Bühler's well-known tripartite division into the 'representational', 'expressive' and 'conative' functions, show that it is possible to generalize; but these generalizations are directed towards sociological or psychological inquiries, and are not intended primarily to throw light on the nature of linguistic structure. At the same time, an account of linguistic structure that pays no attention to the demands that we make of language is lacking in perspicacity, since it offers no principles for explaining why the structure of language is organized in one way rather than in another.

Here, therefore, we shall consider language in terms of its *use*. Structural preoccupations have been dominant in linguistics for some time; but the usefulness of a synthesis of structural and functional approaches has long been apparent from the work of the Prague linguists (Vachek, 1966) who developed Bühler's

ideas, especially in the study of grammar. The particular form taken by the grammatical system of language is closely related to the social and personal needs that language is required to serve. But in order to bring this out it is necessary to look at both the system of language and its functions at the same time; otherwise we will lack any theoretical basis for generalizations about how language is used.

It is perhaps most helpful to begin with the notion of an act of speech, regarding this as a simultaneous selection from among a large number of interrelated options. These options represent the 'meaning potential' of language. In speaking, we choose: whether to make a statement or ask a question, whether to generalize or particularize, whether to repeat or add something new, whether or not to intrude our own judgement, and so on. It would be better, in fact, to say that we 'opt', since we are concerned not with deliberate acts of choice but with symbolic behaviour, in which the options may express our meanings only very indirectly: in the same sense we may be said to 'opt' between a long vowel and a short one, or between a straight arm and a bent one (where the meaning is likewise mediated through the symbolic significance of the distinction between a handshake and a salute). The system of available options is the 'grammar' of the language, and the speaker, or writer, selects within this system: not *in vacuo*, but in the context of speech situations. Speech acts thus involve the creative and repetitive exercise of options in social and personal situations and settings (Firth, 1968; Pike, 1967; Ellis, 1966).

It is fairly obvious that language is used to serve a variety of different needs, but until we examine its grammar there is no clear reason for classifying its uses in any particular way. However, when we examine the meaning potential of language itself, we find that the vast numbers of options embodied in it combine into a very few relatively independent 'networks'; and these networks of options correspond to certain basic functions of language. This enables us to give an account of the different functions of language that is relevant to the general understanding of linguistic structure rather than to any particular psychological or sociological investigation.

1. Language serves for the expression of 'content': that is, of the speaker's experience of the real world, including the inner world of his own consciousness. We may call this the *ideational* function, though it may be understood as easily in behavioural as in conceptual terms (Firth, 1968: 91). In serving this function, language also gives structure to experience, and helps to determine our way of looking at things, so that it requires some intellectual effort to see them in any other way than that which our language suggests to us.

2. Language serves to establish and maintain social relations: for the expression of social roles, which include the communication roles created by language itself – for example the roles of questioner or respondent, which we take on by asking or answering a question; and also for getting things done, by means of the interaction between one person and another. Through this function, which we may refer to as *interpersonal*, social groups are delimited, and the individual is identified and reinforced, since by enabling him to interact with others language also serves in the expression and development of his own personality.

These two basic functions, to each of which corresponds one broad division in the grammar of a natural language, are also reflected in Bernstein's studies of educational failure (e.g. Bernstein, 1970). Bernstein's work suggests that in order to succeed in the educational system a child must know how to use language as a means of learning, and how to use it in personal interaction; these can be seen as specific requirements on his control of the ideational and interpersonal functions of language.

3. Finally, language has to provide for making links with itself and with features of the situation in which it is used. We may call this the *textual* function, since this is what enables the speaker or writer to construct 'texts', or connected passages of discourse that is situationally relevant; and enables the listener or reader to distinguish a text from a random set of sentences. One aspect of the textual function is the establishment of cohesive relations from one sentence to another in a discourse (Hasan, 1968).

All these functions are reflected in the structure of the clause. In this chapter we attempt to show, by reference to English, what a clause is: how it serves for the realization of a number of very

general meanings, or semantic options, relating to the interpersonal, ideational and textual functions of language; and how these are expressed through various configurations of structural 'roles' – functional elements such as 'process' and 'actor' that derive from these basic functions. For a more detailed exemplification we shall consider an aspect of ideational meaning, the system of transitivity; the remaining areas, which have the same formal properties, will be referred to only briefly. Any one clause is built up of a combination of structures deriving from these three functions (for the sake of brevity we shall leave out the logical component in linguistic structure, which is somewhat different in its realizations).

II. LANGUAGE AND EXPERIENCE

Since normally every speech act serves each of the basic functions of language, the speaker is selecting among all the types of options simultaneously. Hence the various sets of structural 'roles' are mapped onto one another, so that the actual structure-forming element in language is a complex of roles, like a chord in a fugue: for example *Sir Christopher Wren*, in the clause *Sir Christopher Wren built this gazebo*, is at once actor and subject and theme (see 13 below). Each of these three represents a value in some configuration – some melodic line, so to speak – such as 'process plus actor plus goal'. And all such configurations are meaningful, since what we have called the basic functions of language, looked at from another point of view, are simply different kinds of meaning.

So for example there is a difference in meaning between (li) and (lii):

(li) She would marry Horatio. She loved him.
(lii) She would marry Horatio. It was Horatio she loved.

The difference concerns the organization of the second clause as a piece of information, and it derives from the textual function. There is also a difference between (li) and (liii):

(liii) She would marry Horatio. She did not love him.

But we cannot say that this difference is 'greater' or 'more meaningful' than that between (li) and (lii); it is merely of a different kind. The speaker does not first decide to express some content and then go on to decide what sort of a message to build out of it – whether to turn it into a statement or a question, whether to make it like (li) or (lii), and so on. If he did, the planning of each sentence would be a totally discrete operation and it would be impossible ever to answer a question that had actually been asked. Speech acts involve planning that is continuous and simultaneous in respect of all the functions of language.

Linguistics is not as a rule concerned with the description of particular speech events on individual occasions (although it is possible to write a theoretical grammar of just one instance if the need arises; it usually does not). It is concerned rather with the description of speech acts, or texts, since only through the study of language in use are all the functions of language, and therefore all components of meaning, brought into focus. Here we shall not need to draw a distinction between an idealized knowledge of a language and its actualized use: between 'the code' and 'the use of the code', or between 'competence' and 'performance'. Such a dichotomy runs the risk of being either unnecessary or misleading: unnecessary if it is just another name for the distinction between what we have been able to describe in the grammar and what we have not, and misleading in any other interpretation. The study of language in relation to the situations in which it is used – to situation types, i.e. the study of language as 'text' – is a theoretical pursuit, no less interesting and central to linguistics than psycholinguistic investigations relating the structure of language to the structure of the human brain.

We shall consider each of the functions in turn as it is reflected in the structure of the English clause, beginning with what we have called the 'ideational'. To the adult – though not, be it noted, to the child – the predominant demand that we make on our language (predominant, at least, in our thinking about language; perhaps that is all) is that it allows us to communicate about something. We use language to represent our experience of the processes, persons, objects, abstractions, qualities, states and relations of the world around us and inside us. Since this is not

the only demand we make on language it is useful to refer to it specifically; hence 'ideational function', 'ideational meaning' etc. (other terms that have been used in a similar sense are 'representational', 'cognitive', 'semantic', 'factual-notional' and 'experiential').

Let us consider the expression of processes: of actions, events, states and relations, and the persons, objects and abstractions that are associated with them. For this purpose we will focus our attention on one unit of linguistic structure, namely the clause. In any language, a vast number of different processes can be distinguished; but these are reducible to a small number of process types, and the grammar of every language comprises sets of options representing broad categories of this kind. The most familiar, and simplest, model is that which groups all processes into the two categories of 'transitive' and 'intransitive'.

Associated with each type of process are a small number of functions, or 'roles', each representing the parts that the various persons, objects or other classes of phenomena may play in the process concerned. For example, in

(2) Sir Christopher Wren built this gazebo

we have a 'transitive' clause containing three roles: an 'actor', a 'process' and a 'goal'. (The specification of this clause, assuming just these categories, would involve (i) selection of the option 'transitive', from the system transitive/intransitive; which would then determine (ii) the presence of the functions 'process', 'actor' and 'goal'; these being realized (iii) by *built*, *Sir Christopher Wren* and *this gazebo* respectively.)

III. TRANSITIVITY FUNCTIONS: PROCESS AND PARTICIPANT ROLES

The roles which appear in the expression of processes are of different kinds. First there is the process itself, usually represented by a verb, e.g. *built* in (2). Then there are the participant functions, the specific roles that are taken on by persons and objects, e.g. *Wren* and *gazebo*; and finally there are what we may call the circumstantial functions, the associated conditions and

constraints such as those of time, place and manner (Fillmore, 1968, where the two together are referred to as 'cases'; Halliday, 1967/68).

It has been customary to recognize three participant functions in English, namely 'actor', 'goal' (or 'patient'), and 'beneficiary'. Various subdivisions and modifications have been proposed, such as the distinction between goal and 'object of result' (Lyons, 1968: 439; cf. 'factitive' in Fillmore, 1968: 25) as in

(3i) The Borough Council restored this gazebo
(3ii) Sir Christopher Wren built this gazebo

where *this gazebo* is goal in (3i) but object of result in (3ii); in (3ii) the gazebo comes into existence only as a result of the process of building. Similarly, the beneficiary may be the recipient of an object, as *Oliver* in (4i), or the recipient of a service, as *Frederick* in (4ii):

(4i) I've given Oliver a tie
(4ii) I've made Frederick a jacket

These subclassifications are not made arbitrarily; they account for systematic distinctions in the grammar, e.g. the related prepositional form is *to Oliver* but *for Frederick* in (4), and in (3) *restore* but not *build* can be substituted by *do to* (*what they did to this gazebo was restore it*). But there may be many, often contradictory, criteria to choose from (see below, IV); moreover the more categories one sets up, the more indeterminate instances will arise – for example, is *I've brought Percival a pullover* like (3i) or (3ii)?

The same function may often be expressed in more than one way, e.g. *Oliver*, *to Oliver* above. Similarly, *General Leathwall* is actor throughout (5i, ii, iii):

(5i) General Leathwall won the battle
(5ii) The battle was won by General Leathwall
(5iii) General Leathwall's winning (of) the battle . . .

This is what makes it necessary to distinguish 'logical' from 'grammatical' categories (Sweet, 1891: 10ff., 89ff.). In Sweet's

terms, *General Leathwall* is the logical subject in (5i–iii), though it is the grammatical subject only in (5i). Conversely in *the book sells well*, *the book* is grammatical subject but 'logical direct object'. The concepts of actor, goal and beneficiary are represented in Sweet's account as 'logical subject', 'logical direct object' and 'logical indirect object' respectively.

The linguistic expression of processes, and of the participants (and, by extension, the circumstances) associated with them, is known by the general term *transitivity*. Transitivity comes under what we have called the 'ideational' function of language. Actor, goal and beneficiary are structural functions, or roles, in transitivity; and just as the same transitivity function may be realized in more than one way, as in (5), so also the same constructional form may express different transitivity functions. Thus *by the fire* is actor in (6i), place in (6ii):

(6i) it was singed by the fire
(6ii) it was stored by the fire.

This also illustrates the conflict of criteria. In (6i), *by the fire* might be considered instrument rather than actor, on the grounds that it is inanimate. Fillmore (1968) distinguishes actor and instrument as, respectively, the 'typically animate perceived instigator of the action' (his 'agentive'; cf. VIII below) and the 'inanimate force or object causally involved in the action'; the latter may also be grammatical subject, and if not may also be expressed by *with* as in (7):

(7i) the key opened the door/John opened the door with the key
(7ii) the door was opened with the key.

But *with* is not normally used where the action is unintentional (*the window was broken with the ball* is odd), nor can it be substituted in (6i). We need here a further distinction between instrument and (natural) force, the latter not being subject to any external intent.

We might therefore list, as participant roles,

(a) actor ('logical subject'): prepositionally *by*
(b) goal ('logical direct object')

(c) beneficiary ('logical indirect object'): prepositionally *to/for*
(d) instrument: prepositionally *with/by*

with the possibility for further distinctions such as

(b) goal: goal, resultant [ex. (3)]
(c) beneficiary: beneficiary, recipient [ex. (4)]
(d) instrument: instrument, force [ex. (6i), (7)]

where 'force' may simply be equivalent to (inanimate) actor.

IV. OTHER TRANSITIVITY FUNCTIONS: CIRCUMSTANTIAL ROLES

The three main types of transitivity role – process, participant, circumstance – correspond, by and large, to the three major word (or word group) classes found in most languages: verb, noun, adverb. In English, typically, processes are expressed by verbal groups, participants by nominal groups and circumstances by adverbial groups – the last often in the form of prepositional phrases. There are also incongruent forms of expression, with functions of one type expressed by classes primarily associated with another type, as in (8):

(8) dinner of roast beef was followed by a swim.

Here the processes of eating and swimming are expressed by nouns; the temporal relation between them by the verb *follow*; and of the two participants, one is omitted and the other (*roast beef*) is made to qualify *dinner* (contrast *in the evening they ate roast beef and then swam*).

The circumstantial functions seem less central to the process than do the participant functions; this is related to their inability to take on the role of subject. But this peripheral status is not a feature of all circumstantial elements, which can be subdivided into an 'inner' and 'outer' type. Within the function 'place', in

(9i) he was throwing stones at the bridge
(9ii) he was throwing stones on the bridge

at the bridge (the 'inner' type) seems more central to the process than *on the bridge*: we can say *what was he throwing stones at?*

and not (in this sense) *what was he doing at the bridge?* (on the other hand, we can say *what was he doing on the bridge?* and not *what was he throwing stones on?*) However, the sense of 'inner' and 'outer' is contributed to by various factors not all of which coincide. For example, in (10) the place element is obligatory in (i) but optional in (ii):

(10i) he put all his jewels in the wash
(10ii) he lost all his jewels in the wash.

In (11), there is a difference of clause type; (i) is a relational clause (see VII below) whereas (ii) is an action clause (Fillmore, from whom (11) is taken, gives this as an instance of dependency between functions: the place element is 'outer' if an actor is present and 'inner' otherwise):

(11i) John keeps his car in the garage
(11ii) John washes his car in the garage.

V. INHERENT FUNCTIONS

The distinction between obligatory and optional roles helps us to relate transitivity functions to a system of *clause types*. As, however, this involves recognizing that an 'obligatory' element may in fact be absent, we shall use the term 'inherent' rather than 'obligatory'. An inherent function is one that is always associated with a given clause type even if it is not necessarily expressed in the structure of all clauses of that type. (We are not here talking about ellipsis, which is a matter of textual structure.)

Consider a pair of clauses such as (12):

(12i) Roderick pelted the crocodile with stones
(12ii) the crocodile got pelted.

The verb *pelt*, as it happens, is always associated with three participant roles: a pelter, a pelted and something to pelt with; and this holds for (ii) as well as for (i) (cf. Svartvik, 1966, on 'agentless agentives'). Similarly there are inherently benefactive clauses without a beneficiary, such as *we're giving a silver coffee-pot*. So

(12iii) Roderick pelted the crocodile

is '(inherently) instrumental', and although no instrument is mentioned the receiver interprets the process as having an instrumental role associated with it.

The same verb may occur in clauses of more than one type. But within one type there may be different sets, and different alignments, of participants; this is the function of the system of 'voice' – of the choice between active and passive, though the actual patterns are more elaborate than this. The options in the voice system (simplifying somewhat) are (a) middle/non-middle (see next paragraph); if non-middle, then (b) 'active'/'passive' (not exactly equivalent to active and passive in the verb; see Halliday, 1967/68: I 39ff., where they are referred to as 'operative' and 'receptive'); if 'active', then (c) plus/minus goal; if 'passive', then (d) plus/minus actor. The reason for choosing one rather than another of these options lies in the textual function of language (see XI and XII below); but which options are available to choose from depends on transitivity.

Voice is concerned with the roles of actor and goal (but see VIII below), both as inherent and as actualized roles. A 'middle' clause is one which has only one inherent participant, which for the moment we will continue to refer to as the 'actor'; examples are *Hector sneezed, the cat washed.* A 'non-middle' clause is one which has two, an actor and a goal, but one or the other may not be actualized: if 'active', there may be no goal, e.g. *Mary is washing* ('the clothes'), and if 'passive', no actor, e.g. *the clothes have been washed* ('by Mary'). All actions are classified into those involving one participant role and those involving two; there are then different ways of presenting the situation in those cases where there are two.

The point was made earlier that the notion of 'participant' derives from the more fundamental concept of syntactic function, or 'role'. The basic elements of transitivity structure are the various roles associated with processes; and two or more such roles may be combined in one participant, as in a reflexive clause such as *John is washing* ('himself') where *John* is both actor and goal at the same time. The elements that operate as actor, goal, etc. also play a part, simultaneously, in other structures of the clause, expressing aspects of the interpersonal and textual

functions of language. The principle of combining a number of roles in a single complex element of structure is fundamental to the total organization of language, since it is this that makes it possible for the various functions of language to be integrated in one expression. We return to this in IX below.

VI. TRANSITIVITY CLAUSE TYPES: ACTION CLAUSES

All the clauses so far considered have been concerned with actions or events, and have involved an 'actor' as inherent role. Let us refer to this type as *action* clauses. Action clauses all have corresponding equative forms as in example (32) below, having *do* or *happen* in them, such as

(13i) what Lionel did was (to) jump off the roof
(13ii) what happened to Lionel was that he fell off the roof.

The following table shows the full range of possibilities of voices in action clauses, together with the roles associated with each of them:

	voice (*clause*)	*roles*	*voice* (*verb*)	*example*
	middle	actor	active	the gazebo has collapsed
non-middle	'active'	actor, goal	active	the Council are selling the gazebo
non-middle	'active'	actor (goal)	active	the Council won't sell
non-middle	'passive'	goal	active	the gazebo won't sell
non-middle	'passive'	goal, actor	passive	the gazebo has been sold by the Council
non-middle	'passive'	goal (actor)	passive	the gazebo has been sold

The roles in parentheses are inherent but not expressed.

Not all clauses are of the 'action' type. English appears to recognize three main types of process: action, mental process, and relation. Mental process clauses, and clauses of relation, are associated with what are at first sight rather different sets of participant roles.

VII. TRANSITIVITY CLAUSE TYPES: MENTAL PROCESS CLAUSES, RELATION CLAUSES

In mental process clauses, such as

(14) I liked your hairstyle

we cannot really talk of an actor and a goal; it is not possible to say, for example, *what I did was like your hairstyle*, or *what I did to your hairstyle was like it*. The inherent roles are those of a human, or at any rate animate, being whose consciousness is impinged upon, and some phenomenon which impinges upon it. Let us refer to these as the 'processer' and the 'phenomenon'. The voice potentialities are now somewhat different; among the non-middle (two participant) clauses there are two types, those having the phenomenon as subject in active voice (15i), and those having the processer (15ii). In the first type, the passive form is much more frequent than the passive in action clauses; in the second type it is much less so:

(15i) the gift pleased her/she was pleased by (with) the gift
(15ii) she liked the gift/the gift was liked by her.

This is because the passive is a means of bringing the element governed by *by* into prominence as the focus of information (see XII below); in (15ii) the *by* element, i.e. *her*, is the processer, and in English this tends to be the 'given' element in the situation (*she* must have been referred to already in the text), and thus does not appropriately carry such prominence.

Mental process clauses express (a) perception, e.g. *see*, *look*; (b) reaction, e.g. *like*, *please*; (c) cognition, e.g. *believe*, *convince*; (d) verbalization, e.g. *say*, *speak*. They are distinct in that the 'phenomenon' – that which is perceived, reacted to, etc. – is not limited, as are the participants in action clauses, to the class of 'things', namely persons, objects, abstractions and the rest of the phenomena on the plane of experience.

What is perceived or felt or thought of may be a simple phenomenon of this kind, but it may also be what we might call a 'metaphenomenon': a *fact* or a *report* – a phenomenon that has

already as it were been filtered through the medium of language. Here words as well as things may participate in the process.

For example, in (16) all the 'processed' entities are simple phenomena, or 'things':

(16i) I noticed Helen over there [person]
(16ii) I noticed a discrepancy [abstraction]
(16iii) I noticed a quarrel (going on)/them quarrelling [event]
(16iv) I noticed what (the thing that) she was wearing [object].

In (17) and (18), however, they are metaphenomena; facts in (17), reports in (18):

(17i) I noticed what (the fact of what) she was wearing
(17ii) it worries me that you look so tired
(18i) I notice the bank rate's going up again
(18ii) he says the bank rate's going up again.

We could insert *the fact* (*that*) in (17) and *the report* (*that*) in (18i); not however in (18ii), which is a clause of verbalization, since such clauses accept only reports, and 'reported speech' is the meaning of clauses of this type. The difference between fact and report is that a 'fact' is a representation at the semantic level, where the truth lies in the meaning – (*she regretted*) *that he had gone away*; whereas a 'report' is a representation at the lexicogrammatical, or syntactic, level, where the truth lies in the wording – (*she said*) *that he had gone away.*

In relational clauses, the 'process' is simply a form of relation between two roles. One type is the attributive, such as

(19i) Marguerite is a poet
(19ii) Marguerite looks desperate

where the relation is one of class membership: 'Marguerite belongs to the class of poets,' '. . . the class of people who look desperate'. This is a relation between entities of the same order of abstraction but differing in generality.

The other type, exemplified by (20)

(20i) Templecombe is the treasurer
(20ii) the treasurer is Templecombe

has two functions, resembling the two terms of an equation, where the one serves to identify the other, as in $x = 2$. Here the two entities are alike in generality but differ in abstraction: the identifying element may be of a higher order of abstraction, as in (21i), where *the treasurer* expresses Templecombe's function, or of a lower order, as in (21ii) where *the fat one* expresses Templecombe's form, how he is to be recognized:

(21i) (which is Templecombe?) Templecombe is the treasurer.
(21ii) (which is Templecombe?) Templecombe is the fat one.

(21i) could be interpreted in the sense of (21ii) if the committee were in view on the platform; there is in fact partial ambiguity between these two sub-types.

These two major types of relational clause, the attributive and the equative, differ in various respects. The attributive are non-reversible (e.g. we can say *that man is a poet* but not *a poet is that man*), have the role 'attribute' which may be an adjective and is usually indefinite, express class inclusion, are usually questioned by *what?* or *how?* and are expressed by the verbs *be*, *get*, *turn*, *keep*, *remain*, *seem*, *sound*, *look*, etc. The equative are reversible (i.e. have a 'voice' system), have the role 'identifier' which must be a noun and is usually definite, express class identity, are usually questioned by *who?* or *which?* and are expressed by the verbs *be*, *equal*, *represent*, *resemble*, *stand for*, etc.

It is interesting to note that, in relational clauses, quite unlike clauses of action or mental process, the verb is regularly unstressed. This is a symptom of its much weaker function in the clause. Contrast the pronunciation of *equals* in (22i) and (22ii):

(22i) England Equals (Australia's Total of) 512 [action]
(22ii) $2^9 = 512$ [relation]

VIII. THE ERGATIVE

As far as the ideational component of grammar is concerned, the English clause shows the three principal types – action, mental process and relation – and associates with each a set of different inherent roles, or structural functions. The system of clause types is a general framework for the representation of processes in the

grammar; possibly all languages distinguish three such categories. We need to ask, at this point, whether the structural functions can be generalized across clause types; whether, for example, an actor in an action clause can be shown to be equivalent to a 'processer' (one who does the thinking, etc.) in a mental process clause. This may be approached through a reconsideration of the functions in action clauses, a reconsideration which such clauses demand anyway.

If we look at examples like (23i and ii)

(23i) the sergeant led the recruits
(23ii) the sergeant marched the recruits,

they appear to be clearly distinct, (i) being transitive, with actor and goal, (ii) causative, with initiator and actor. However, there is a problem with (23iii):

(23iii) the sergeant trained the recruits

Is it like (23i) or like (23ii)?

Actually it is like both; (23i) and (23ii) are not really different as far as transitivity is concerned. In English no very clear distinction is made between doing something to someone and making someone do something, so that (23iii) can be interpreted in either way without any sense of ambiguity. This is why so many verbs are labelled 'vb trans. & intrans.' in the dictionary.

The concepts of actor and goal are not well suited to describing this situation, since with these we are forced to describe (23i) and (23ii) differently. The distinction between them is by no means entirely unreal, since there are verbs like *lead* which are normally transitive (two inherent participants) and others like *march* which are normally intransitive (one inherent participant). But with a large number, especially of the more frequently used verbs, either form seems equally normal: there is nothing to choose, as regards the more typical use of the verb *bounce*, between *he bounced the ball* and *the ball bounced.* In addition there are a number of verbs which, while themselves clearly transitive or clearly intransitive, group into pairs differing only in transitivity, so that *Mary put out the fire* is to *the fire went out* as *Polly lit the fire* is to *the fire lit.*

It has been pointed out by various linguists (Anderson, 1968; Fillmore, 1968; Halliday, 1967/68: §3) that action clauses in English seem to be organized on an ergative rather than on a transitive (or 'nominative') basis. This means that, with any action clause, there is associated one inherent role which is that of the participant affected by the process in question. Fillmore describes this as the 'semantically most neutral' function, and labels it the 'objective'; I used the term 'affected', which I will retain here. In (23) *the recruits* has the role of 'affected' in every case, even though it is goal (if an actor–goal analysis is used) in (23i) and actor in (23ii); in general, the affected is the goal in a transitive and the actor in an intransitive clause.

We have now turned what was the borderline case, such as (23iii), into the most central clause type. This is the type in which both middle (one-participant) and non-middle (two-participant) forms are equally normal; it may be considered the 'favourite' clause type of Modern English. The transitive and intransitive types – those with non-middle as norm and with middle as norm respectively – are the marginal ones, and they seem to be becoming more marginal as time goes on.

Hence all the examples in (24i) have the same structure, with a process and an affected. Those in (24ii) also have a 'causer' (Fillmore's 'agentive'):

(24i)
they're being led
they're being trained/they're training
they're being marched/they're marching
(24ii)
he's leading them
he's training them
he's marching them.

These two ways of representing processes, the transitive and the ergative, are very widely distributed; possibly all languages display one or the other, or (perhaps always) both, in different mixtures. In English, the two occur side by side. The transitive system asks 'does the action extend beyond the active participant or not?'; the ergative, 'is the action caused by the affected

participant or not?' The ergative component is more prominent now than it was in Middle English, and this appears in various ways, for example, the change from impersonal to personal forms in mental process clauses (formerly *methinks, it likes me*). In the modern form *I like, I* cannot be explained as an actor (among other things we cannot say *what he does to jam is like it*); but it can be shown on various grounds to have the function 'affected'.

As this suggests, the ergative pattern, whereby a process is accompanied by an obligatory 'affected' participant and an optional 'causer', is more readily generalizable than that of actor and goal. It extends beyond action clauses to those of mental process, and perhaps even to clauses of relation as well. We want to say that *Paul* has the same function in both (25i) and (25ii)

(25i) Paul fears ghosts
(25ii) ghosts scare Paul

– not that they are identical in meaning, but that the transitivity roles are the same. This is not possible in actor-goal terms. But in an ergative system there is considerable evidence for regarding *Paul* as the 'affected' participant in both cases. The ergative, therefore, represents the more general model of the transitivity patterns of modern English – that is, of the options available to the speaker of English for talking about processes of all kinds.

IX. OTHER DIMENSIONS OF CLAUSE STRUCTURE

So far the discussion has been confined to the expression of ideational meanings. We have not yet considered the structure of language in its other functions, the 'interpersonal' and the 'textual'. Both these functions are manifested in the structure of the clause.

Certain problems that have arisen in the history of the investigation of subject and predicate provide an insight here. A sentence such as (26i) presents no problem in this respect: *my mother* is clearly subject and the rest predicate. But in (26ii) there seem to be three candidates for the status of subject, *these beads, my mother* and *I*:

(26i) my mother gave me these beads
(26ii) these beads I was given by my mother.

The solution was to recognize different kinds of subject. For Sweet, *my mother* was 'logical subject', *I* was 'grammatical subject'; *these beads* came to be known as 'psychological subject'. In (26i), all three coincide. The notion of subject conflates three distinct roles which, although they are typically combined into one element, are nevertheless independent of one another. We may think of this as governed by a 'good reason' principle: many linguistic systems are based on this principle, whereby one option (the 'unmarked' option: see p. 17, above) will always be selected unless there is good reason for selecting otherwise (cf. Jakobson, 1963: 268ff.).

These three 'kinds of subject' relate to the functions of language as described above. The logical subject is the actor; this is a transitivity role, deriving from the ideational function. The other two have different sources, though they are no less meaningful. The grammatical subject derives from the interpersonal component in language function; specifically, it has to do with the roles taken on by the performer and receiver in a communication situation. The psychological subject belongs to the textual component; it is concerned with the organization of the clause as a message, within a larger piece of discourse. The next two sections will examine these in turn.

X. MOOD

As we have said, one function of language is to provide for interaction between people, by allowing the expression of statuses, social and individual attitudes, assessments, judgements and the like; and this includes participation in linguistic interaction. Language itself defines the roles which people may take in situations in which they are communicating with one another; and every language incorporates options whereby the speaker can vary his own communication role, making assertions, asking questions, giving orders, expressing doubts and so on. The basic 'speech functions' of statement, question, response, command and exclamation fall within this category (though they do not

exhaust it), and these are expressed grammatically by the system of *mood* (cf. Sweet, 1891: 105), in which the principle options are declarative, interrogative, (yes/no and wh– types), and imperative etc. The difference between *he can* and *can he?* is a difference in the communication role adopted by the speaker in his interaction with a listener.

The notion 'grammatical subject' by itself is strange, since it implies a structural function whose only purpose is to define a structural function. Actually, just as the 'logical subject' is a function defined by transitivity, so the 'grammatical subject' is a function defined by mood. If we consider an example such as (27)

(27) Tigers can climb trees. – Can tigers climb trees? – They can climb trees, can't they? – No they can't.

we find that one part, *tigers can*, has the function of expressing mood throughout; it also typically carries the positive/negative option. It consists of the finite element of the verb, plus one nominal (noun or noun group) which is the 'grammatical subject'.

The function of the 'grammatical subject' is thus a meaningful function in the clause, since it defines the communication role adopted by the speaker. It is present in clauses of all moods, but its significance can perhaps be seen most clearly in the imperative, where the meaning is 'I request you to . . .'; here the speaker is requiring some action on the part of the person addressed, but it is the latter who has the power to make this meaning 'come true' or otherwise, since he can either obey or disobey. In the usual form of the imperative, this modal entity, or 'modal subject' as we may call it, is the listener; and the only option is plus or minus the speaker himself, as in *let's go home* as opposed to (*you*) *go home*. Hence, in a passive imperative such as *be guided by your elders*, although the actor is *your elders*, the modal subject is 'you'; it is the listener who accedes, potentially, to the request, fulfilling the modal function defined by the speaker's role.

XI. THEME

The basic unit of language in use is not a word or a sentence but a 'text'; and the 'textual' component in language is the set of

options by means of which a speaker or writer is enabled to create texts – to use language in a way that is relevant to the context. The clause, in this function, is organized as a message; so in addition to its structure in transitivity and in mood, it also has structure as a message, what is known as a 'thematic' structure. (It was linguists of the Prague school who first studied this aspect of language, cf. Mathesius, 1928; Firbas, 1959, 1964; Svoboda, 1968 and references therein.)

The English clause consists of a 'theme' and a 'rheme'. The theme is another component in the complex notion of subject, namely the 'psychological subject'; it is as it were the peg on which the message is hung, the theme being the body of the message. The theme of a clause is the element which, in English, is put in first position; in (28 i–v) the theme is the item outside the brackets, what is inside being the rheme:

(28i) I (don't know)
(28ii) yesterday (we discussed the financial arrangements)
(28iii) his spirit (they could not kill)
(28iv) suddenly (the rope gave way)
(28v) people who live in glasshouses (shouldn't throw stones).

As we have seen, theme, actor and modal subject are identical unless there is good reason for them not to be (cf. (26) above). Where they are not, the tendency in Modern English is to associate theme and modal subject; and this is the main reason for using the passive. The passive has precisely the function of dissociating the actor from this complex, so that it can either be put in focal position at the end or, more frequently, omitted, as in (29):

(29i) this gazebo was built by Sir Christopher Wren
(29ii) this gazebo is being restored.

The typical theme of a declarative clause is thus the modal subject (or 'grammatical subject' – *this gazebo* in both cases); in interrogatives, however, the picture is different. If we ask a question, it is usually because we want to know the answer, so that the typical theme of an interrogative is a request for information. Hence we put first, in an interrogative clause, the element

that contains this request for information: the polarity-carrying element in a yes/no question and the questioning element in a 'wh–' question, as in (30)

(30i) didn't (Sir Christopher Wren build this gazebo?)
(30ii) how many gazebos (did Sir Christopher Wren build?).

In English there is a definite awareness of the meaning expressed by putting something in first position in the clause. The theme is the point of departure for the message; a paradigm form of it is the headword in a definition, e.g. *a gazebo* in (31):

(31) a gazebo is a pavilion or summerhouse on an eminence, open for the view.

In addition to the selection of a particular element as the theme, the speaker has other options in thematic structure open to him (Halliday, 1967/68: §2); for example, any clause can be split into two parts by the use of nominalization, as in

(32) the one who built this gazebo was Sir Christopher Wren

where the theme is the whole of whichever part comes first – here *the one who built this gazebo.*

XII. INFORMATION STRUCTURE

Thematic structure is closely linked to another aspect of the textual organization of language, which we may call 'information-structure'. This refers to the organization of a text in terms of the functions 'given' and 'new'. These are often conflated with theme and rheme under the single heading 'topic and comment'; the latter, however, is (like the traditional notion of 'subject') a complex notion, and the association of theme with given, rheme with new, is subject to the usual 'good reason' principle already referred to – there is freedom of choice, but the theme will be associated with the 'given' and the rheme with the 'new' unless there is good reason for choosing some other alignment.

In English, information structure is expressed by intonation. Connected speech takes the form of an unbroken succession of distinctive pitch contours, or 'tone groups'; each tone group

represents what the speaker decides to make into one unit of information. This is not necessarily the same length as a clause, though it often is so. The information unit consists of an obligatory 'new' element – there must be something new, otherwise there would be no information – and an optional 'given' element; the main stress ('tonic nucleus') marks the end of the 'new' element, and anything that is 'given' precedes it, unless with good reason – which means, here, unless it is a response to a specific question, either asked or implied. The function 'given' means 'treated by the speaker as non-recoverable information': information that the listener is not being expected to derive for himself from the text or the situation.

(33) illustrates the interaction of information structure with thematic structure (information unit ('i.u.') boundaries are marked by //; main stress is indicated by bold type; 4 = falling-rising tone, 1 = falling tone):

(33) //4 **this** gazebo //1 **can't** have been built by Wren//
(clause: theme . . . rheme . . . . . .)
(i.u.(1): new . . . .; (2): new . given . . . . . .)

meaning 'I am talking (theme), specifically, (new) about this gazebo: the fact is (rheme) that your suggestion (given) that Wren built it is actually (new) quite impossible'. No such suggestion need actually have been made, for this clause to occur; one of the features of the 'given–new' structure is its use for various rhetorical purposes, such as bullying the listener. Given and new thus differ from theme and rheme, though both are textual functions, in that 'given' means 'here is a point of contact with what you know' (and thus is not tied to elements in clause structure), whereas 'theme' means 'here is the heading to what I am saying'.

The functions of given and new link up in turn with the functions in transitivity. It was noted earlier (see III above) that a number of participant roles may be expressed in either of two ways, either directly or through the mediation of a preposition, for example the beneficiary in

(34i) I've offered Oliver a tie
(34ii) I've offered the tie to Oliver.

The members of such a pair have the same ideational meaning but differ in information. Typically, the prepositional form of the beneficiary is associated with the function 'new', the other form with the function 'given'; and if we assume here the expected intonation pattern, then in (34ii) *Oliver* is new and *the tie* is given, the implied question being 'who did you offer the tie to?', while in (34i) *a tie* is new and *Oliver* is given, answering 'what have you offered to Oliver?' (note that one of the meanings of definiteness – not the only one – is 'given', hence the likelihood of *the tie* in (34ii)).

A general principle underlies the existence of these two informationally distinct forms, one with a preposition and one without, for expressing participant roles. The textual function of language requires that, for effective communication, new information should be made grammatically explicit. New lexical content has to be backed up, as it were, by adequate quanta of grammar; specifically, it has to be made clear what is the ideational function of any new material in the discourse, and here it is the preposition that indicates the role of the unfamiliar element. The use of a preposition to specify function in the clause in just those cases where the element in question is typically 'new' (compare the use of *by* with the actor in a passive construction) illustrates how the 'texture' of discourse is achieved through the interplay of varied grammatical resources expressing different facets of the total meaning.

XIII. CONCLUSION

The subject, in its traditional sense, is thus a complex of four distinct functions, three in the structure of the clause (cf. Lyons, 1968: 343–4):

1. actor ('logical subject'): ideational;
2. modal subject ('grammatical subject'): interpersonal;
3. theme ('psychological subject$_1$'): textual.

together with a fourth function which is in the structure of the 'information unit':

4. given ('psychological subject$_2$'): textual.

These coincide unless there is 'good reason' for them not to do so; thus in (35i) *the Borough Council* is actor, modal subject and theme, whereas in (35ii) *the Borough Council* is actor, *this gazebo* is modal subject and *next year* is theme:

(35i) the Borough Council will restore this gazebo next year
(35ii) next year this gazebo will be restored by the Borough Council.

No mention has been made of subject and predicate as a logical relation. We might introduce 'predication' as another dimension of clause structure, with *the Borough Council* in (35i) being also 'subject in predication' and the rest predicate; but the subject in this sense would be identical with the modal subject. The subject–predicate structure is entirely derivable from mood, and has no independent significance (cf. Fillmore, 1968: 17; and Fillmore's reference, ibid., to Tesnière, 1959: 103–5). As a form of generalization, it may be useful in that it expresses the fact that actor, modal subject and theme are regularly associated; but it obscures the equally important fact that they are distinct and independent structural roles.

The multiple function of language is reflected in linguistic structure; this is the basis for the recognition of the ideational (including logical), interpersonal and textual functions as suggested here. It is not necessary to argue that one function is more abstract, or 'deeper', than another; all are semantically relevant. The investigation of these functions enables us to relate the internal patterns of language – its underlying options, and their realization in structure – to the demands that are made on language in the actual situations in which it is used. As performers and receivers, we simultaneously both communicate through language and interact through language; and, as a necessary condition for both of these, we create and recognize discourse (the textual function is thus instrumental to the other two). A speech act is essentially a complex behaviour pattern which in most instances combines the ideational and interpersonal functions, in varying degrees of prominence. These very general notions in turn encompass a broad range of more specific patterns relating to the creative and the repetitive aspects of language in use.