Functional Linguistics

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The Modern Linguistics Timeline

Historical Linguistics

Late 19th century

Neogrammarians

Language change

The Modern Linguistics Timeline

Historical Linguistics → **Structural Linguistics** →

Late 19th century

Early 20th century

Neogrammarians

Ferdinand de Saussure

Language change

Language as a system of signs and structures

The Modern Linguistics Timeline

Historical Linguistics	Structural Linguistics	Generative Grammar
Late 19th century	Early 20th century	Mid-20th century
Neogrammarians	Ferdinand de Saussure	Noam Chomsky
Language change	Language as a system of signs and structures	Innateness of language and language acquisition

The Modern Linguistics Timeline

Historical Linguistics		Structural Linguistics		Generative Grammar		Functional Linguistics
Late 19th century		Early 20th century		Mid-20th century		Late 20th century
Neogrammarians		Ferdinand de Saussure		Noam Chomsky		Michael Halliday
Language change		Language as a system of signs and structures		Innateness of language and language acquisition		Views language as a tool

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

- The SFL was developed by **Michael Halliday** in the **1960s**, is a functional approach to Linguistics.

- Focuses on **<u>meaning-making</u>** in different contexts rather than abstract rules.

Michael Halliday

- Studied at the **University of London**

- He saw **language as a functional tool for meaning-making**

- Introduced **SFL** in the **1960s** as a reaction against formalism

- Influenced fields like **education, discourse analysis, and language learning**.

Born: 1925, in Leeds, England
Died: 2018

Functionalism

- Functionalism in linguistics views language as a **tool for communication**, emphasizing its social functions over abstract structure.

- It arose from the need to **study language in real-world communication** rather than as an abstract system of rules.

Functionalism

- In language learning, functionalism focuses on **context, interaction, and the role of communicative needs** in acquisition rather than rules.

Formalism vs. Functionalism

- Functionalism emerged in the **mid-to-late 20th century as a reaction against formalism**, particularly Chomsky's generative grammar.

- **Formalism** focuses on the structure of language as an abstract system of rules and principles instead of language use.
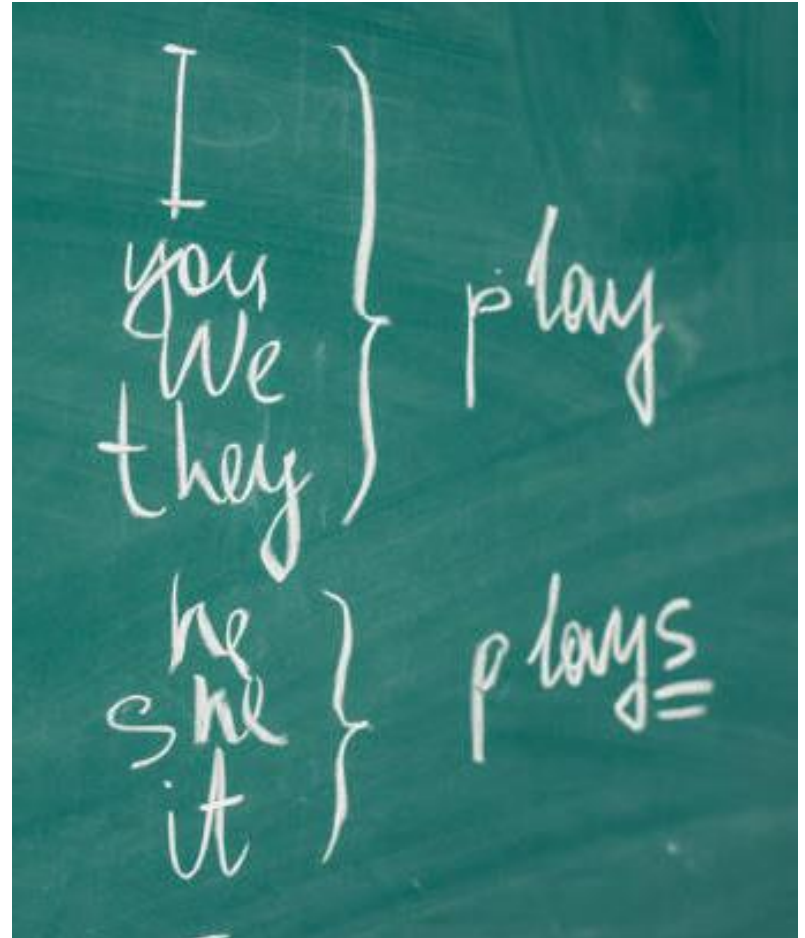
Formalism vs. Functionalism

- These perspectives differ in how they understand language structure and function.

Formalism vs. Functionalism

In language teaching …

- **Formalism** advocates for the Grammar translation method (e.g., memorizing grammar rules like verb conjugation activities)

Formalism vs. Functionalism

In language teaching …

- **Functionalism** advocates for meaning oriented practice through Communicative language teaching (e.g., roles plays)

Key Concepts in Functionalism

Functional linguistics is based on three major concepts:

1. **Metafunctions of Language**

2. **Register**

3. **Systemic Choice**

1. Metafunctions of Language:

Language has three main functions:

1. **<u>Ideational Function</u>**: Expresses ideas/ emotions (e.g., I love chocolate) and describe experiences (e.g., I feel happy).

2. **<u>Interpersonal Function</u>**: Manages relationships and how we talk to others (e.g., "Pass me the salt" request; "Good morning" greeting).

3. **<u>Textual Function</u>**: Organizes speech or writing logic (e.g., On the other hand, additionally, in conclusion).

2. Register

Our language use (register) varies/ changes based on the context. Three factors affect that:

1. **Field:** What is happening? (Topic of conversation).

2. **Tenor:** Who is involved? (the relationship between speakers—formal or informal).

3. **Mode:** How does communication occur? (Spoken, written, online, etc.).

3. Systemic Choice

- Language users choose words and structures based on meaning needs rather than fixed grammatical rules.

3. Systemic Choice

- For examples, a speaker can express the same idea in different ways:

1. **Formal Setting:** *I would appreciate it if you could lower your voice.*
2. **Casual Setting:** *Can you speak a bit quieter?*
3. **Urgent Situation:** *Be quiet!*

The **choice of words** depends on **social context, politeness, and purpose**, rather than following a single fixed grammatical rule.

Applications of Functionalism

- Language Learning: Teaching language in context rather than just grammar rules.

- Discourse Analysis: Understanding how journalists, advertisers, and politicians use language.

Summary

Discussion

1. How do formalism and functionalism differ in their approach to language?

2. Can you think of an examples of formalism and functionalism in your course?

Further Reading

- Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). An Introduction to Functional Grammar.

- Eggins, S. (2004). An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics.

- Celce-Murcia, M., & Olshtain, E. (2000). Discourse and Context in Language Teaching.