

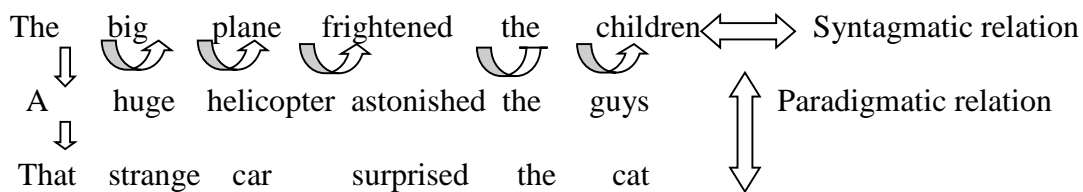
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**Lesson 13****Functionalism**

De Saussures' structuralism inspired other linguists. A similar theory was that of C.Sanders Pierce who assumed that the best way to study a system of communication would be « semiotics ».

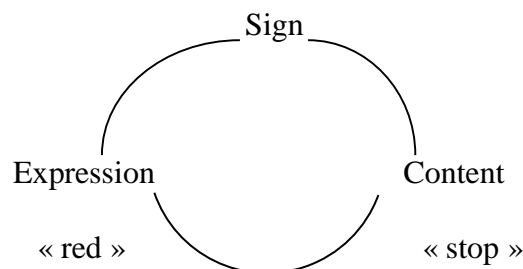
**Semiotics** also called **semiotic studies** or (in the Saussurean tradition) **semiology**, is the study of signs and sign processes (semiosis), indication, designation, likeness, analogy, metaphor, symbolism, signification, and communication. Semiotics is closely related to the field of linguistics, which, for its part, studies the structure and meaning of language more specifically. Semiotics is often divided into three branches:

- **Syntactics**: Relations among signs in formal structures.



- **Semantics**: It means determining existing relation between signs and the things to which they refer; their *denotata*, or meaning. To explain this, we can exemplify with traffic lights :
- The sign « red » denotes (means) « stop », the sign « green »denotes « go on ».
- **Pragmatics**: Relation between signs and the effects they have on the people who use them. For instance, the sign red in traffic lights implies « stop » and peoples 'act of stopping is « the paradigmatic act »(in semantics you understand and in pragmatics you act).

Another linguist is L. Hjelmsleo (Russian linguist) who defined language as an abstract system and to describe it we need to define the internal relationships of its items or signs. He used two words : Content and Expression



The best example to take would be « traffic lights », the red means an expression whose content is « stop »,The relationship between red and stop is commutative or implicative.

I.A. Richards and C.K Ogden (1923) : have simply repeated the idea of de Saussure' signifier-signified and the linguistic sign differently. They said that whenever we say a

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word we have a « symbol » a « referent » and a «reference » , and there is a permanent association of the referent and the reference stored in our brain.

De Saussure's theories had been largely developed by his followers from Geneva School like F.Frey.. , Copenhagen School...ect but the immediate historically most important effect of de Saussure's structural theory of language was Prague School.

**Prague school :** School of linguistic thought and analysis established in Prague in the 1920s by Vilém Mathesius. It included among its most prominent members the Russian linguist Nikolay Trubetsky and the Russian-born American linguist Roman Jakobson; the school was most active during the 1920s and '30s. Linguists of the Prague school stress the function of elements within language, the contrast of language elements to one another, and the total pattern or system formed by these contrasts, and they have distinguished themselves in the study of sound systems. They developed distinctive-feature analysis of sounds; by this analysis, each distinctive sound .

**Functionalism:** In linguistics, the approach to language study that is concerned with the functions performed by language, primarily in terms of cognition (relating information), expression (indicating mood), and conation (exerting influence). Especially associated with the Prague school of linguists prominent since the 1930s, the approach centres on how elements in various languages accomplish these functions, both grammatically and phonologically. Some linguists have applied the findings to work on stylistics and literary criticism.

**Stylistics:** Study of the devices in languages (such as rhetorical figures and syntactical patterns) that are considered to produce expressive or literary style.

**Literary Criticism:** The reasoned consideration of literary works and issues. It applies, as a term, to any argumentation about literature, whether or not specific works are analyzed. Plato's cautions against the risky consequences of poetic inspiration in general in his *Republic* are thus often taken as the earliest important example of literary criticism.

## Grammatical Functions

Functions exist at all levels of grammar, and even in phonology, where the function of the phoneme is to distinguish between lexical material.

1. **Semantic function:** (Agent, Patient, Recipient, etc.), describing the role of participants in states of affairs or actions expressed.
2. **Syntactic functions:** (e.g. subject and Object), defining different perspectives in the presentation of a linguistic expression
3. **Pragmatic functions:** (Theme and Rheme, Topic and Focus) Predicate) , defining the informational status of constituents, determined by the pragmatic context of the verbal interaction.
4. **Functional theories of grammar** are those approaches to the study of language, that see the functions of language and its elements to be the key to understanding linguistic processes and structures. Functional theories of language propose that since language is fundamentally a tool, it is reasonable to assume that its structures are best analyzed and understood with reference to the functions they carry out. Functional theories of grammar differs from formal theories of grammar, in that the latter seeks to define the

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different elements of language and describe the way they relate to each other as systems of formal rules or operations, whereas the former defines the functions performed by language and then relates these functions to the linguistic elements that carry them out. This means that functional theories of grammar tend to pay attention to the way language is actually used in communicative context, and not just to the formal relations between linguistic elements.

5. In a broad sense the theories implicit in most work within descriptive linguistics and linguistic typology fit within the category of functional linguistics

There are several distinct grammatical theories that are employing a functional approach.

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- The structuralist functionalism of the Prague school, was the earliest functionalist framework developed in the 1920s. Simon Diks Functional discourse grammar was originally developed in the 1970s and 80s, has been influential and inspired many other functional theories. It has also been continuously developed by Linguists such as Kees Hengeveld.
- Michael Halliday's systemic functional grammar argues that the explanation of how language works "needed to be grounded in a functional analysis, since language had evolved in the process of carrying out certain critical functions as human beings interacted with their ... 'eco-social' environment". Halliday draws on the work of Bühler and Malinowski.
- Role and reference grammar, developed by Robert Van Valin employs functional analytical framework with a somewhat formal mode of description. In RRG, the description of a sentence in a particular language is formulated in terms of its semantic structure and communicative functions, as well as the grammatical procedures used to express these meanings. Danish functional grammar combines Saussurean / Hjelmslevian structuralism with a focus on pragmatics and discourse. Lexical functional grammar, developed by Joan Bresnan and Ronald Kaplan in the 1970s, is a type of phrase structure grammar, as opposed to a dependency grammar. It mainly focuses on syntax, including its relation with morphology and semantics.

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