

## Role of functional grammar in teaching and learning English

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**Abstract:** This paper enlightens functional grammar and its core function and role in the entire teaching and learning process of English language. It aims at exploring the way to facilitate the tots/ learners in learning English as a foreign language. This study proves helpful in terms of bringing out the real meaning of Functional Grammar as well as exploring the difference between Functional Grammar and Traditional Grammar. In short, the core objective is to support the EFL teachers in order to comprehend the core concept and functions of Functional Grammar in making the teaching and learning more fruitful and effective.

**Key words:** *Functional grammar; Traditional Grammar (TG); English as Foreign Language (EFL); Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)*

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### 1. Introduction

A language is one of the most productive sources of communication. Indeed, it is a cheap but much more effective tool of communication that may be carried out both in written and oral forms. There are some proper rules and regulations in any language regarding how to speak, write or how to use and fix a proper word in a specific place. These rules are smoothly laid down by none other than grammar. In another word, grammar has to play to a key role as it makes the flow of a stream fluent and smooth. There are certain forms and types of grammar. Modern linguistic researches are being carried out in order to explore the various aspects of uses and functions of grammar such as TG (or traditional grammar), FG (or functional grammar) and even SFG (or systemic functional grammar) etc. As it has been mentioned already, one of the core objectives of this study is to bring forth the functions of functional grammar.

The concept of functional grammar was first introduced by Halliday in the mid of twentieth century almost in 1960. Although this grammar is more than a half century old but still it is new for many EFL teachers. But it is the modern flow of linguistic researches that infuses the name and fame of FG in the realm of modern teaching system or method. Now, it is getting much more name and fame at school level and proving helpful in terms of achieving the desired goal of EFL learners. It is equally productive in both written and oral phases. The top secret is that FG furnishes and polishes the communicative process; how to speak an English language fluently while giving chance to the EFL learners in order to explore the linguistic elements and its features which are backbone to learn at school atmosphere (Schleppegrell, 2004).

The literature review portion of this study pertains certain research questions: what does functional grammar mean? What are the core concepts? What are the differences between FG and TG? What is the role or what are the functions of FG in teaching and learning field? However, the core objective of this study is to highlight the importance of FG in terms of achieving the desired goal of EFL learners particularly at school level.

### 2. What does FG mean? Or what is FG?

According to Halliday (1994), "a functional grammar is essentially a natural grammar in the sense that everything in it can be explained, ultimately, by reference in order to know how a language is used." He is, further, of the view that it has been called as Functional Grammar as it was based on functional elements from three effective domains or perspectives including its explanation and interpretation such as (a) of text, (b) of functional systemic as well as (c) linguistic structures. The first shows how language is carried out and shaped into a proper system in order to convey the desired meaning in a proper manner.

According to Feng (2013), "FG is not genetically oriented to our neurophysiology in this way. Rather, it focuses on the development of grammatical system as a means for people to interact with each other. FG sees grammar as a shaped by, and as playing a significant role in shaping, the way we get on with our lives. Its orientation is social, another word, rather than biological."

However, FG is a way of using a language to share our experience related to our surroundings, interact with others as well to organize our intended message in a systemic way both in spoken and written (Thompson, 1996).

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In short, on the basis of social and cultural perspective, FG is an effective tool of analyzing and interpreting the way language to be carried out in both oral and script phases. Moreover, it plays a vital role in terms of polishing and boosting the communicative skill of the language practitioners.

**3. What are the concepts regarding FG?**

Grammar is a vast deep field, as its term is concern. A numbers of researches have been conducted and still being carried out enormous books has been written on FG by various writers. They presented their point of views, on the basis of their researches, findings and results, regarding the said aspects of grammar known as Functional Grammar. However, the prime objectives of all of them were same as all of them struggled and still striving to bring forth the core function and role of the mentioned grammar. On the basis of study Xu (1993), Feng (2013) jots down, "Functional Grammar has many concepts, so it is not easy to provide a clear and ordered explanation of them.

Different books arrange various concepts in different orders. In the book, "A Theoretical Grammar of English academically introduces the theory and concepts in detail."

Unlike FG, Traditional Grammar throws light over various elements of which a sentence is structured or formed systematically. Generally, these are known as parts of speech. Basically, there are nine parts of speech. These are; noun, pronoun, verb, adverb, adjective, preposition, article, conjunction and interjection etc.

**Traditional grammar**

For example "Bravo! He has successfully made a long speech on education and stood first".

**Functional grammar**

Bravo! (Interjection) He (pronoun) has (helping verb) successfully (adverb) made(verb) a(article) long (adjective) speech(noun) on(preposition) education(abstract noun) and (conjunction) stood (main verb) first (adverb).

**Table 1: Traditional grammar**

Noun	Pronoun	Verb	Adverb	Adjective	Article	Preposition	Interj.	Conjunction
Speech	He	Made	Successfully	Long	A	On	Bravo	And

**Functional grammar**

For example:

"He has made a long speech."

"He (sub or actor) has made (process) a long speech (logical obj. or goal)"

Morpheme (consists of) word (consists of) group/phrase (consists of) clause

Or Clause (consists of) group/phrase (consists of) word (consists of) morpheme.

**Table 2: Functional grammar**

Actor/subject	Process	Logical object/goal
He	Has made	A long speech.

**3.1. Linguistic unit hierarchy**

The main objective of Functional Grammar is to make the communication process much more functional. However, at different levels of language, various natures of functions can be observed. It indicates the organizational principle related to segments of linguistic element that means larger groups of sentence or clause are formed while getting smaller segments together.

The players are playing very well in the ground.

The players+are playing+very well+in the ground.

The above mentioned example consists of only on clause but it is persisting four prominent groups such as nominal group (the players), verbal group (are playing), adverbial group (very well) and prepositional group (on the ground) etc. Moreover, the nominal group is consisting of two words like "the" and "players". But the word players further consists of two morphemes such as "player" and "s".

In short, the linguistic unit hierarchy can be grasped well with the help of the following prominent model:

**3.2. Transitivity**

The term transitivity analysis is a dire system that decides the necessity and need of an object of a verb according to the situation. According to Thompson (1996), an individual uses a language to share both his internal and external knowledge and information on the basis of personal experience. The concept of transitivity has been introduced and nourished by Halliday that regularized his renowned grammatical element transitivity analysis that further persist six more processes to manipulate in a real manner. These processes are: material process, mental process, relational process, behavioural process, verbal process and existential process etc. For example in Table 3.

**3.3. What is difference between FG & TG?**

According to Schleppeprell (2004), Martin & Painter (1997), and Halliday (1994), some of the distinct differences between the two are as under:

- Functional Grammar is the new and developed concept of grammar while Traditional Grammar has very old and primitive concept.
- FG is the new method or way putting the language together but traditional grammar is just opposite of it.
- Traditional Grammar is formal one unlike it Functional Grammar is functional in nature.

- Functional Grammar considers a language as a system of theme and meaning regarded as the system of system of syntactic structures.
- Functional Grammar proves itself as a tool of describing how a language is carried out in multidimensional aspects.
- The concept of Traditional Grammar is confined to surface structure of a sentence while the Functional Grammar goes into the depth of a sentence having no any specific limit.
- Functional Grammar is an emerging concept in the field of modern teaching and learning. And it has also become the cynosure of modern linguistic researchers and scholars.

**4. Implication in teaching and learning**

It is well said that changing colour is the face of life. The flow of changing, revolution and invention is the basic characteristics of human beings. With the passage of time, not only the way of human life changed but the teaching and learning style also. The arrival of Functional Grammar and even Systemic Functional Grammar revolutionized the entire concept of teaching and learning. Though Traditional Grammar is carried out in teaching EFL tots but it (TG) is very effective in teaching the rules than communicative domain.

However, it is a bitter fact that today, particularly in the era of science and technology, the communication skill is very necessary. It is the basic requirement to survive in the flow of modern prevailing needs and requirements. Indeed, this very fundamental need is met by dint of new phase of grammar called FG or Functional Grammar. It is social and cultural oriented but much more functional in mood. Its main job is to carry out while comparing the multidimensional aspects in both teaching and learning take place in various situations and context for specific purposes. It is the top secret that EFL learners badly need it (FG) to furnish and brush up the communicative skill. A considerable members of researches have been carried out to know the worth and importance of FG. Jotting down the experiment of Beikoff (1996), Feng (2013) is of the view, “Beikoff carried out a research regarding the worth of FG and gives a positive report in Daily Tale graph that FG was successful when it was used to teach early literacy. He comments that FG is not just a new type of jargon but another way of understanding sentences.” Jing (2010) also carried out a similar an experiment study that was comparative in nature. He reports that the experiment was to aim at exploring the influence and effectiveness of teaching through Functional Grammar. For the purpose of his study, he divided the class (of learners) into two groups such as group A and B. Group A was taught through Traditional Grammar while group B was taught by dint of Functional Grammar. At last, his study proved that group B which was given the teaching instruction

through FG showed much more productive and satisfactory result.

**Table 3: Transitivity**

S. no	Process	Example
1	Material	He (actor) <b>made</b> (process) a <b>speech</b> (goal or logical object).
2	Mental	I <b>dislike</b> music.
3	Relational	Allama Iqbal (R.A) <b>is</b> our national poet.
4	Behavioural	He <b>dreamed</b> me.
5	Verbal	They <b>play</b> .
6	Existential	<b>K-2</b> is in <b>Baltistan</b> (Gilgit-Baltistan province of Pakistan).

**5. Conclusion**

Language is an effective source of human communication process. It is an easier and cheaper means to convey one’s feeling and shares one’s ideas as well as knowledge in a productive way. This study was carried out to highlight the nature and influence of Functional Grammar and explore it comparison with Traditional Grammar. In the lens of the results and findings of the study, researcher comes to the point that although, FG has very young in age particularly in the field of teaching and learning but soon it need to be introduced as a necessary and fundamental part of pedagogy particularly teaching English as a foreign language to the learners so that their communicative skill can be furnished and polished in a meaningful and effective manner.

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