

## Chomsky's Universal Grammar and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics: An Appraisal and a Compromise

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Recent developments in theories of language (grammars) seem to share a number of tenets which mark a drastic shift from traditional disentangled descriptions of language: emphasis on a big number of discrete grammatical rules or a corpus of structure patterns has given way to a more unitary, explanatory powerful description of language informed by a sound theory of language acquisition, on the one hand, and verified/refuted by observations on samples of language use, on the other. Two widely welcome of such theories are Chomsky's Universal Grammar and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. These two theories have been initiated and developed almost independently and each has been successful in accounting for aspects of language from a particular perspective. However, they seem to stand more in a complementary position with respect to each other than in a confronting stance against one another. This article aims at providing evidence for such a claim to support the argue that not only aren't these two theories mutually exclusive but they are rather mutually dependent; there is a sense in which each needs to internalize and incorporate aspects of the other if a fully-fledged account of language is to be achieved.

**Key Words:** systemic functional linguistics, universal grammar, (in) congruent forms, cliticization

### 1 Introduction

Since its birth in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, linguistics has witnessed a big number of changes in its trends, orientations, subjects of study, and hence theories of language and language acquisition. Apart from the influential re-orientation from the 'historical or diachronic linguistics' towards a 'synchronic linguistics' which marked the beginning of modern linguistics, the most salient demarcation line between current theories of grammar can be sketched by way of reference to Saussure's consideration of syntagmatic versus paradigmatic relations among linguistic items (Sampson, 1980). Linguistic items are said to be syntagmatically related when viewed as a linear sequence and paradigmatically related when viewed as potential substitutes for their similarly-positioned counterparts within the given

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sequence. Grammars, then, could be viewed as seeing the language as knowledge of either primarily syntagmatic relations among linguistic constituents or predominantly paradigmatic relations among linguistic items. The former has led to grammars such as Markov's Finite-State grammar, structural (descriptive) linguistics, and Chomsky's generative transformational grammar (now UG), and the latter has given rise to Firth's London school of linguistics, Jakobson's Prague school of linguistics, and Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (see Lyons, 1981 and Sampson, 1980).

Two theories, of those just mentioned have attracted most attention and have been frequently addressed and employed in literature on both linguistics and applied linguistics. They are Chomsky's Universal Grammar and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. These two theories have been initiated and developed almost independently and each has been successful in accounting for aspects of language from a particular perspective. However, they seem to stand more in a complementary position with respect to each other than in a confronting stance against one another. The following lines bear an account of these two theories of language, their merits and inadequacies, and the way in which each would contribute to the completion of the other.

## **2 Chomsky's Universal Grammar**

In Chomskyan tradition, grammar of a language is an account of the grammatical competence (rather than performance) of the native speakers of that language. Grammatical competence is defined as the native speakers' tacit knowledge of the grammar of their language (Chomsky, 1965). Native speakers' grammatical competence is determined by eliciting their intuitions about grammaticality of sentences generated in their own language (known as *grammaticality judgments*) and about the interpretation of sentences (e.g. realizing ambiguous or paraphrase forms, etc.) (ibid). A grammar is said to be *descriptively adequate* if it yields the same statements about the (un)grammaticality and interpretations of the sentences as the native speakers of that language do. A Universal Grammar, however, is not an account of the grammar of an individual language (e.g. English, or French). It is, more precisely, a *theory of grammar*; it is, in Radford's (1997) words, "a set of hypotheses about the nature of possible and impossible grammars of natural (i.e. human) languages" (p.5). It follows that any grammar could be descriptively adequate if and only if it describes the properties of the intended language in accordance with and from among those universal properties already predicted and devised within the theory of Universal Grammar. This gives rise to one further criterion; that of *universality*. The second criterion of adequacy for grammars is that of explanatory adequacy. A theory of Universal Grammar (henceforth UG) is said to be *explanatorily adequate* if it could successfully explain why it contains the properties it does.

In addition to all these criteria, there are still three more conditions to be satisfied by a theory of UG: one that any theory of UG must be *restrictive* in nature; that is the descriptive power of the UG must not be so unlimited that its descriptive

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devices could describe as well the artificial languages (e.g. computer and mathematics languages) or other human and non-human communication systems. One more criterion of adequacy that a theory of language must meet is the *learnability* principle which assumes that a linguistic theory is adequate if and only if the grammar it generates could be easily learned by children in a relatively short period of time just as they normally do in early childhood. In other words, the grammar must be as simple as possible. These have led to a new movement within UG, beginning in 1990s by Chomsky himself, which aims at minimizing the theoretical and descriptive devices in devising grammatical properties of natural languages in favor of maximizing the simplicity and hence learnability of the grammar. This movement is known as *Minimalism*.

Closely associated with a theory of UG is the problem of explicating the acquisition of grammar known as the Logical Problem (Hawkins, 2001, p.1; Foster-Cohen, 1999, p.5). It addresses the important question of how children acquire the grammar of their language (the initial stage) so rapidly and uniformly in a remarkably short period of time (at around the age of 18 months up to around 30 months). A second problem, known as the developmental problem, concerns the way(s) in which children go through other stages (transition and final stage) of learning (ibid). Chomsky's explanation for such phenomena is that children are genetically predisposed with an innate language faculty which facilitates the acquisition of language. This innate language faculty is what Chomsky conceives of as UG which comprises a set of implicit abstract *principles* that govern the grammatical operations allowed and not allowed in all natural languages. Examples of such principles are *structure dependence principle* (which holds that all grammatical operations are structure-dependent, i.e. they are, according to Radford (ibid, p.15), sensitive to the grammatical structure of the sentences they apply to).

To account for the observed differences across languages in their grammatical structure, UG has incorporated into its structure a number of language-specific variations "which children have to learn as part of the task of acquiring their native language. Thus, language acquisition involves not only lexical learning but also some structural learning" (ibid, p.16). These grammatical variations are referred to as *parameters*. It follows that while some aspects of the grammatical structure of languages are determined by innate grammatical principles which will not have to be learned by children, some others have to be acquired as parametric variations across languages. "In other words, structural learning will be limited to *parameterized* aspects of structure" (p. 16). Examples of parameters include *null subject parameter* according to which some languages (Italian, Spanish, Irish, Chinese, etc.) are null-subject, i.e. their finite verbs license either overt or covert (null) subjects, while others are non-null subject languages (French, English, etc.), that is finite verbs in such languages license only overt subjects, not null subjects. One important point to consider is that there are genetic constraints on the range of structural (parametric) variation allowed in different languages so that, in principle, all parametric variations appear to oscillate along a binary choice (with only two possible settings) and that any language allows for only one (uniform) possibility

and not a combination of both (no single language with some forms set to one value and others set to the other).

*Word order* is an important aspect of grammatical structure which is parameterized along various constructions. One such construction makes up the *wh-parameter* which determines whether *wh*-expressions can be fronted or not. Another type of word-order variation is called the *head position parameter* which states that languages vary in terms of the relative position of heads with respect to their complements within phrases: while English is a head-first language, Japanese is a head-last language.

In light of the above, one can generalize that “the only structural learning which children face in acquiring their native language is the task of determining the appropriate value for each of the relevant structural parameters along which languages vary” (p. 20).

### **3 Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics**

Systemic Functional Grammar or Linguistics, first introduced by Michael Halliday (1985), refers to a new approach to the study of grammar that is radically different from the traditional view in which language is a set of rules for specifying grammatical structures. In this view, language is a resource for making meanings and hence grammar is a resource for creating meaning by means of wording. Halliday & Matthiessen (1999, p.3) clarify their position with respect to SFL as follows:

For the task of constructing such a meaning base, we shall use a *systemic* grammar. A systemic grammar is one of the class of functional grammars, which means (among other things) that it is semantically motivated, or ‘natural’, in contradistinction to formal grammars, which are autonomous, and therefore semantically arbitrary, in a systemic grammar every category (and ‘category’ is used here in the general sense of an organizing theoretical concept, not in the narrower sense of ‘class’ as in formal grammar) is based on meaning: it has a semantic as well as a formal, lexico-grammatical reactance.

To capture the essence of the distinction between grammar and theories of grammar, Halliday and Matthiessen (1997, 1999) call the latter ‘grammatics’. They further underscore the need for a richer theory of grammar (i.e. SFL), claiming that the traditional ‘grammar as rule’ type of theory falls far short of the demands that are now being made on grammatical theories:

At this stage in history, we need a richer theory of grammar to meet the challenges of the age of information, e.g. in education and in computation (Halliday and Matthiessen, 1997, p. 1).

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Unlike the 'grammar as rule' type of theory, SFL takes the resource perspective rather than the rule perspective, and it is designed to display the overall system of grammar rather than only fragments. That's why it has come to be known as a Systemic Functional Grammar. In Halliday's (1985, p.xiv) terms:

The theory behind the present account is known as 'systemic' theory. Systemic theory is a theory of meaning as choice, by which a language, or any other semiotic system, is interpreted as networks of interlocking options... whatever is chosen in one system becomes the way into a set of choices in another, and go on as far as we need to, or as far as we can in the time available, or as far as we know how.

In Systemic Functional Linguistics, 'clause' rather than 'sentence' is the unit of analysis. In Systemic theory, a clause is a unit in which meanings of three different kinds are combined. Three distinct structures, each expressing one kind of semantic organization, are mapped onto one another to produce a single wording. These semantic structures are referred to as Meta-functions:

(i) *The interpersonal meta-function* is concerned with the interaction between speaker and addressee, the grammatical resources for enacting social roles in general, and speech roles in particular, in dialogic interaction, i.e. for establishing, changing, and maintaining interpersonal relations. The building blocks of this semantic function configure as Subject, Finite, Predicator, and Complement.

(ii) *The ideational meta-function* is concerned with 'ideation', grammatical resources for construing our experience of the world around and inside us. This meta-function is analyzed in terms of Transitivity system, i.e. a choice between the six processes and the participants and circumstances associated with those processes. A clause in its ideational function is a means of representing patterns of experience, i.e. to build a mental picture of reality. This is what people employ to make sense of their experience of what goes on around them and inside them: these goings-on (processes) are sorted out in the semantic system of the language and expressed through the grammar of the clause. The system that works out the types of process and hence participants in the process and circumstances associated with the process is known as the Transitivity system. In English, the processes are of the following types (Halliday, 1985, 1994, 2004):

(1) *Material Process* or the process of doing, construes doings and happenings including actions, activities, and events. A material clause is characterized by particular structural configurations, such as Process+ Actor+ Goal (+Recipient), and Process+ Range. There is always an Actor, which can be realized by a nominal group or even a non-finite clause. Further options determine whether the process is

‘directed’, in which case there is a Goal as well [the policeman (=Actor) hunted (=Process) the demonstrator (=goal)], or not [the policeman (Actor) ran (=Process)]. If the process is directed, it may be ‘benefactive’, and if it is, there may be a Recipient [the judge (Actor) gave (Process) the demonstrator (Recipient) a legal document (Goal)].

(2) *Mental process* construes sensing, perception, cognition, intention, and emotion; configurations of a process of consciousness involves a participant endowed with consciousness and typically a participant entering into or created by that consciousness, configured as Process+ Senser+ Phenomenon. There is always a Senser, which is realized by a nominal group denoting a being endowed with consciousness (e.g. *she* in ‘*She saw them crossing the road*’). It is much more constrained than the Actor and in fact the most constrained of all the participants in any of the process types.

(3) *Relational process* serves to characterize and to identify. If ‘material’ process is concerned with our experience of the material world and ‘mental’ process is concerned with our experience of the world of our own consciousness, both of this outer experience and this inner experience may be construed by relational processes; but they model this experience as ‘being’ or ‘having’ rather than as ‘doing’ or ‘sensing’. They are concerned with the relationship set up between two things or concepts, e.g. ‘Edward is clever’, ‘Mary is the doctor’. Relational processes are expressed in two modes: ‘attributive’ and ‘identifying’. In the attributive mode, an Attribute is ascribed to some entity (carrier), while in the Identifying mode, one entity (identifier) is used to identify another (identified). In the example, *Edward is clever*, *Edward* is the Carrier; the verb *is* signifies an Attribute Relational Process and *clever* is the Attribute. But, in the example, *Mary is the doctor*, *Mary* is the Identified element, *is* represents an Identifying Relational process, and *the teacher* is the Identifier.

(4) *Behavioral Processes* are processes of physiological and psychological behavior, like smiling, coughing, laughing, breathing, etc.. they usually have one participant only— the Behaver; for example, *John smiled gently*. They are intermediate between material and mental processes, in that the Behaver is typically a conscious being, like the Senser, but the process functions more like one of ‘doing’.

(5) *Verbal Processes* are processes of ‘saying’ of any kind. It covers “any kind of symbolic exchange of meaning”, in Halliday’s terms (1986, p.129) “like *the notice tells you to keep quiet* or *my watch says it’s half past ten*.” The verbalization (the message) itself is termed ‘verbiage’ and the participants associated with it are ‘sayer’, the one who gives out the message, and ‘Receiver’, the one to whom the message is addressed. For example, in *she told me a story*, *she* is the Sayer, the verb *told* represents a ‘Verbal Process’, *me* is the ‘Receiver’ of the message, and finally *a story* is the ‘Verbiage.’

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(6) *Existential Processes* show that something exists or happens. The word *there* is frequently used in such clauses, but it has no identified function or meaning, and is merely a subject filler. The typical verbs used in these clauses are 'be', 'exist', 'arise' and other verbs expressing existence. The nominal group that follows these verbs is called 'Existent'. For example, in *There was no choice, no choice* is the 'Existent' and *was* the 'Existential Process.'

(iii) The textual meta-function is concerned with the creation of text with the presentation of ideational and interpersonal meanings as information that can be shared by speaker and listener in text unfolding in context. This meta-function consists of two sub-functions, Theme and Rheme.

### 4 UG or SFG?

While these two theories, as mentioned above, are different in their orientations towards the description of language (syntagmatic as opposed to paradigmatic), neither has denied the significance of insights from the other. They have, however, left them to be pursued further within other disciplines. Radford (1997, p.2), for instance, holds that performance is not totally irrelevant, but merely left for psycholinguists to be studied:

This is not to deny the interest of *performance* as a field of study, but merely to assert that performance is more properly studied within the different – though related – discipline of psycholinguistics, which studies the psychological processes underlying speech production and comprehension.

Halliday (1989, p.4), similarly, regards his social-semiotic perspective towards the description of language as one among a number of other possible perspectives:

When we consider what realities there are that lie above and beyond language, which language serves to express, there are many directions in which we can move outside language in order to explain what language means. For some linguists (e.g. Chomsky, 1957; Lamb, 1966), the preferred mode of interpretation is the psychological one, in which language is to be explained in terms of the processes of the human mind or the human brain. For other linguists, perhaps, the direction might be a psychoanalytic one, or an aesthetic one, or any one of a number of possible perspectives. For us, then, the perspective primarily adopted – not to the exclusion of the others, but because this is where we look first to seek our explanations for linguistic phenomena – is the social one.

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We attempt to relate language primarily to one particular aspect of human experience, namely that of social structure.

Attempts have been made here to show that they must feed on insights from one another if a fully-fledged theory of language is to be achieved. We will, therefore, try to pinpoint a number of inadequacies associated with each theory and then to compensate for them, making use of the adequacies evident in each.

### 4.1 Where SFG lags behind

#### 4.1.1 Cliticization

Take the following sentences:

1. Who don't you want to marry Lisa?
2. I wonder where she is.
3. Should I have bought the antique?
4. Yes, she is.

They are all well-formed sentences which both SFG and UG would inarguably generate. Now take the same set of sentences with slight modifications applied to them.

5. \*Who don't you wanna marry Lisa?
6. \*I wonder where she's.
7. \*Should I've bought the antique?
8. \*Yes, she's.

While UG highlights the above examples as erroneous forms by way of recourse to 'trace theory' (more recently copy theory, see Radford, 2006: 191), SFG lacks a similar device and is inadequate as such. In other words although SFG may, similarly, highlight them as deviant, it cannot provide reasons as to the ungrammaticality of such forms and cannot ban the cliticizations as such. Once evaluated against UG, however, these same cliticizations and the resulted sentences come to be unacceptable and ungrammatical, respectively: according to the *copy theory* when an element is moved away from its original place within the sentence or is omitted it leaves a copy behind which blocks *cliticization* and *vowel reduction*. Accordingly, in case of (5), it is ungrammatical on the grounds that WH-movement has already left a copy between *want* and *to*, so that it blocks cliticization and hence formation of *wanna*:

Who don't you want *t* to marry Lisa?

Note that there are cases where a constituent comes in between those to be cliticized and as such blocks the cliticization. Thus, in ordinary unmarked



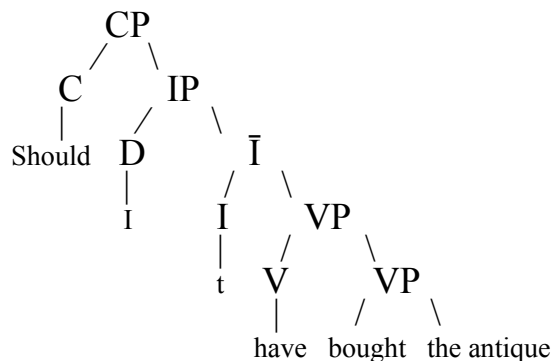
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statements, the condition to be met for a cliticization to occur is that the constituents involved must be adjacent. That's why it is possible to say 'I *want* that man *to be* executed' but not '\*I *wanna* that man be executed'. However, it is possible to produce a variation for 'I *want to* execute that man' in the form of 'I *wanna* execute that man' as the adjacency principle is met.

As a general principle, then, contracted forms cannot be used when (i) they are not adjacent (intervened by a *constituent* or a *copy*) or when (ii) there is a missing constituent, either moved or omitted, in the form of a copy immediately following the to-be-cliticized constituents.

Similarly, (6) is not a well-formed sentence because the trace (copy) left blocks the cliticization of *is* onto *she*. As for (7), it could be argued that since inverted auxiliaries move from I to C and leave behind an empty category trace *t* in the *I* position from which they move, the empty category *t* intervenes between *have* and *I* which as such prevents *have* from cliticizing onto *I*. The process can be roughly shown as below:

Figure 1. Bans on **I** and **have** Cliticization



(8) is similar to and at the same time different from (6). In the former sense, they both contain the auxiliary *is*, and in the latter, while (6) involves the *displacement* of a constituent, (8) contains the *omission* of a bigger constituent (e.g. a phrase, a sentence) than those observed above.

One may wonder, at this time, if short answers including *not* would yield similar ungrammatical sentences. The answer is *no*. If you compare the ungrammatical \*(8) *Yes, she's* with (9) *No, she isn't*, it becomes clear that the contraction in (8) is not possible because the missing constituent (here the omitted sequence) immediately follows the to-be-contracted constituents. These same constituents, however, are not immediately succeeded by the missing part in (9), a fact that makes the contraction possible and yields a grammatical sentence.

### 4.1.2 Displacements

In English, like any other language, there are a large number of sentences which involve a *displaced category*:

10. The book my friend has given to me.
11. That man I asked to be executed.
12. This job he can do well.
13. She has been given several awards by the committee.

In his explication of Functional Grammar, Halliday (1986, 1994, 2004) analyses ‘displacement’ within *Thematic Structures*. As noted earlier, the two functions *Theme* and *Rheme* are associated with that aspect of the meaning of the clause which organizes it as a message. The Theme is the starting point for the message; it is “what the message is concerned with: the point of departure for what the speaker is going to say” (Halliday, 1985, p.36). It follows that part of the meaning of any clause is determined by which element is chosen as its Theme. Halliday also notes that the function *Theme* must be distinguished from the other two functions *Subject* and *Actor* which are associated with two distinct, but relevant, modes of meaning within the clause, i.e. Interpersonal (clause as an exchange) and Ideational (clause as a representation) meanings, respectively. While *Theme* is, in Halliday’s words, “the ‘starting point’ of the *message*”, *Subject* is viewed as “the ‘resting point’ of the *argument*” (ibid, p. 77), that is something by reference to which the proposition can be affirmed or denied (one which is held responsible for realizing the assertion). A *Subject* is structurally realized, in a declarative clause, as the element which is picked up by the pronoun in the tag. Similarly, an *Actor* is the active participant in the *process*. The distinction made between these functions on the one hand, and between the particular meaning structures with which each is exclusively associated, on the other, has significant implications in that while within Chomskyan tradition they are treated as functioning within the same syntactic structure, they are treated as distinct semantic structures in Hallidayan tradition (see 4.2. below).

It follows that when describing sentences with displaced constituents such as (11) above, proponents of Chomsky’s generative grammar would argue that the observed displacements in such sentences could be accounted for within the Syntax itself by recourse to a transformational ‘movement’ other than PS rules and Lexical Insertion rules as the latter alone cannot explain the absence of the NP object from the object position of the verb and its location in the initial position. They may rather generate an intransitive VP structure, which is actually ungrammatical, instead of the required transitive structure. Hence a need for a transformational ‘movement’.

Therefore, to explain the observed discrepancy between the function (object) and the (initial) location of the NP in (11), the Movement Transformation is called for which assumes that the NP, actually, originates in the object position of the verb, generated by PS rules and LIR, and is then displaced (topicalized) to the sentence initial position through the application of the transformation which displaces the NP “this job” from the object position of the verb to the initial position of the sentence.

But what enables language users to correctly locate the original position of the displaced category and produce, for example, “(14) That man, I wanna execute”, but not “(15) \*That man, I wanna be executed”. This is exactly where SFG lags

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behind and UG provides the answer by way of reference to the *trace convention* and the language users' tacit knowledge of such a convention: a phonetically unrealized (empty) category, i.e. a copy, is left behind in the position from which the displaced category (that man) once moved. This empty category which intervenes between *want* and *to* blocks their cliticization and hence forbids the production of the erroneous form (15).

### 4.2 Where UG lags behind

#### 4.2.1 Transitivity systems

Take the following sentences:

16. John kicked the ball into the net.
17. I saw Marry yesterday.
18. She told me a story.

UG will describe all the above sentences in the same way as containing an NP subject, a VP and the related NP object(s), with the lexical items projected into syntax with respect to these categories and their associated functions. A closer look at these sentences, however, would reveal considerable differences between them in that they don't seem to be mapped onto the same semantic state of affairs. In other words, there is no correspondence between the semantic domain within which the sentences have been produced and the syntactic elements used to represent them. In 16, John actually does something and his action is transacted to ball. However, the same physical activity is not evident in 17 and 18. Nor do the actions (in case of 17 a reaction is even more appropriate!) are transacted to Marry and me. Yet, they are all treated similarly within UG.

SFG's approach to the description of such fine differences is more promising: As noted earlier, within SFG meanings of three distinct types are mapped onto one another in order to create meaning. They are then realized in different stretches of lexico-grammar such as groups, clauses, and texts. In its ideational meta-function (corresponding to the syntactic realization of the sentences in UG), a clause comprises a combination of processes and the relevant participants and the circumstances associated with each process (different transitivity systems). The process types for 16, 17, and 18 are *physical*, *mental*, and *verbal* respectively. In 16 'John' is the *Actor*, 'the ball' is the *Goal*, and 'into the net' is the *locational circumstance*. In 17, 'I' is the *senser*, and 'Marry' is the *phenomenon*. In 18, 'she' is the *sayer*, 'me' the *receiver*, and 'a story' the *verbiage*.

This way of describing the sentences is descriptively more adequate than the one provided by UG which, given the above merits for UG, provides ample evidence in favor of a compromise to transcend the differences and thus to compensate for each theory's inadequacies.

It is not the end of the story, however! It seems that SFG has more to offer as contribution to a comprehensive theory of grammar. The point we want to make in

the next part pertains to the semantic system as well as the lexico-grammar, an integrated theory of meaning and form; something which UG apparently lacks.

#### **4.2.2 Lexico-grammatical metaphors**

In any language there are cases where there is a skewing between the semantic concepts and the lexico-grammatical means of expressing those concepts (cf. Larsen, 1998, p. 31). A descriptively adequate grammar, then, must account for such discrepancies between meaning and form. Since UG relies mostly on syntax, its permeability towards the incongruencies in the form is so much limited and therefore regards as ungrammatical most of otherwise acceptable incongruent forms. For instance, the first line of a well-known poem by Cummings *Me up at does...* contains a skewing, i.e. the use of auxiliary *does* as a noun, which UG would inarguably not generate. Within SFG's framework, however, this form is completely acceptable. Skewed forms like this are referred to as Lexico-grammatical metaphors after Halliday's particular use of the concept 'metaphor'.

Semantic resources are realized in lexico-grammar in the form of typical or 'congruent' means of expressions; i.e. processes and the participants and circumstances with which they are most typically associated. However, not all linguistic instances are congruent; semantic phenomena can be represented by categories other than those that evolved to represent them. In other words, a meaning may be realized by a selection of words that is different from that which is in some sense typical or unmarked. The following example indicates how employing different lexico-grammatical devices to realize the same semantic configuration leads to the creation of two different wordings; a congruent and an incongruent realization:

- 19) *The cast acted brilliantly so the audience applauded for a long time.*  
20) *The cast's brilliant acting drew lengthy applause from the audience.*

The difference between the two expressions can be highlighted as follows:

- i) The 'sequence' (i.e. 19) congruently realized by a 'clause complex' (clauses with a coordinator or a subordinator conjunction) is incongruently realized by a 'clause' (i.e. 20).
- ii) The verbs *acted* and *applauded*, functioning as Events in verbal groups functioning as Processes in different clauses, have been replaced by the nominalized forms *acting*, and *applause* respectively, each functioning as Thing in a nominal group, with the two nominal groups functioning respectively as Actor and Goal in the same clause.
- iii) The conjunction '*so*', functioning as logical-semantic relation between two clauses, has been replaced by the verb *drew* functioning as Event in a verbal group functioning as Process in a single clause.

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iv) The adverb *brilliantly*, functioning as Quality in an adverbial group functioning as Manner in clause (19), has been replaced by the adjective *brilliant*, functioning as Epithet in a nominal group in (20); while the expression *for a long time* (in origin a prepositional phrase but now codified as a single item) functioning as Duration in clause (19) has been replaced by an adjective *lengthy* functioning as Epithet in the nominal group within(20).

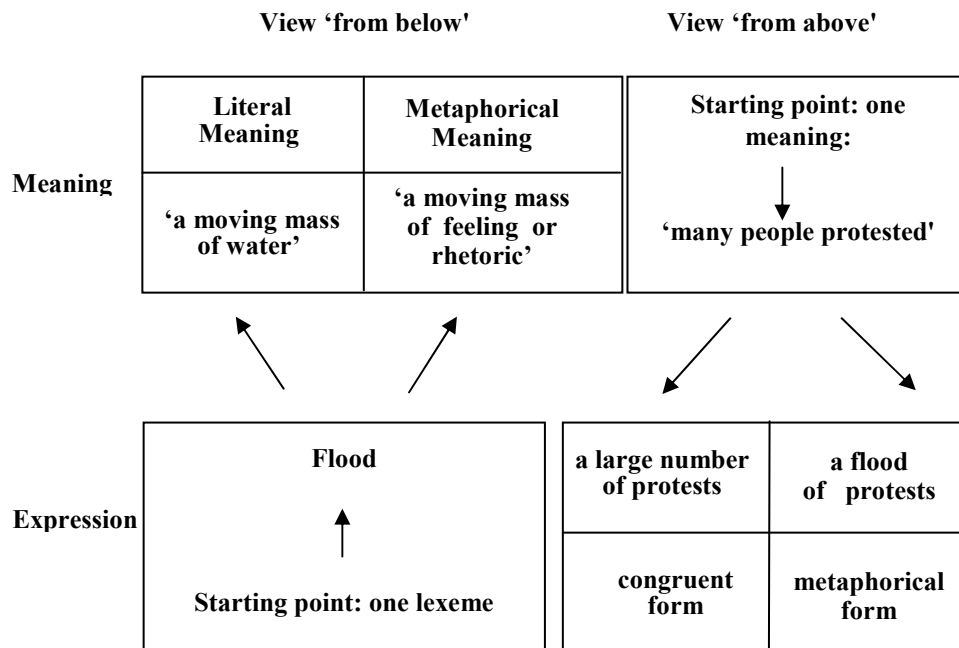
In place of the term 'incongruent,' Halliday (1985, p. 321) chooses to use the term 'metaphorical' and asserts that "for any given semantic configuration, there is (at least) one congruent realization in the lexico-grammar. There may, then, be others that are, in some respect, transferred, or Metaphorical." The concept of 'metaphor' is an important notion in SFL and has particular implications in our understanding of the types of relations between semantic and lexico-grammatical configurations. Due to the importance of the concept 'metaphor', the following lines have been devoted to an elaboration of the notion and a short account of the way it first came into vogue and gained the significance and status with which it is still associated.

Metaphor is usually described as a type of 'figures of speech' recognized in rhetorical theory. It is defined by Abrams (1970, p. 61) as a figure of speech in which "a word — that in standard (or literal) usage denotes one kind of thing, quality, or action — is applied to another in the form of a statement of identity instead of comparison, for example, *my love is a red rose*."

Traditionally defined, then, metaphor, is viewed as variation in the use of words, i.e. variation in meanings and hence the consequence of lexical or lexico-semantic processes. This is a view 'from below', in Halliday's terms (1985, p. 320), taking the words as starting point and then saying something about the meanings these words realize (this has now come to be known, in a more accurate sense, as lexical metaphor).

Metaphor is, however, employed here in a relatively new sense to refer not to the variation in the use of words with a transferred meaning but to variation in the expression of meaning, following a systemic Functional Approach to the study of grammar proposed by Halliday (1985). Unlike the former view, this one is a view 'from above' where the starting point is a particular meaning and the relevant question is how it can be expressed or realized. Taking this 'from above' view, we recognize that metaphorical variation is lexico-grammatical rather than purely lexical, and that lexical selection is just one aspect of lexico-grammatical selection or wording; the other aspect is grammatical. The two alternative views are represented in Figure 2 (after Halliday, 1985, p. 342):

Figure 2. Two perspectives on metaphor (Halliday, 1994, p. 342)



As stated before, metaphors are hardly purely lexical. In other words, it is hard to find alternative expressions of a given meaning which differ only in their lexical wording. To justify the need for a new and complementary interpretation of the term 'metaphor', Halliday (1985, p. 320) provides the following example: the expression *protests flooded in* can be realized as *protests came in in large quantities*, *protests were received in large quantities* or *very many people protested*. In none of these is the variation purely lexical; there is also a difference in the grammatical configuration: in *protests came in in large quantities*, a prepositional phrase is added; in *very many people protested* the noun 'protest' is now represented by a verb. This brings Halliday to grammatical metaphor, and in fact, convinces him to claim that grammatical variation does even play a more important role than lexical variation in the expression and realization of meanings:

There is a strong grammatical element in rhetorical transference; and once we have recognized this we find that there is also such a thing as grammatical metaphor, where the variation is essentially in the grammatical forms although often entailing some lexical variation as well. (Halliday, 1985, p.320)

In this new Interpretation of the term 'metaphor', the view 'from above', metaphor is defined as variation in the expression of a given meaning, rather than

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variation in the meaning of a given expression., i.e. what comes to be compared are grammatical configurations, whereas in the traditional perspective, the focus is on meanings of a single lexical item. This, however, does not mean that we can or we want to dispense with lexical metaphors altogether; we actually need to know about the nature of lexical metaphors if we want to gain useful insights into the nature of grammatical metaphors. Halliday (ibid, p. 321) further asserts that:

If something is said to be metaphorical, there must also be something that is not: and the assumption is that to any metaphorical expression corresponds another, or perhaps more than one, that is 'literal'—or, as we shall prefer to call it, 'congruent'. In other words, for any given semantic configuration there is (at least) one congruent realization in lexico-grammar. There may then be others that are in some respect transferred, or Metaphorical.

So, for example, instead of *Mary saw something wonderful*, one may choose to say *Mary came upon a wonderful sight*, where the Process has been represented as a Material Process *came upon* and the Perception has been turned into a Participant *a sight*, or one may say *a wonderful sight met Mary's eyes*, With the Process of Perception split up into Actor *a sight*, Material Process *meet* and Goal *eyes*; and *Mary* represented simply as the Possessor of the eyes. Experiential or ideational categories in semantics are called *phenomena*. A phenomenon is the most general experiential category, i.e. anything that can be construed as part of human experience. The phenomena of experience are of three orders of complexity: 1) elementary (a single *element*), 2) configurational (configuration of elements, i.e. a *figure*), and 3) complex (a complex of figures, i.e. a *sequence*).

Figure 3. Typical realization of Sequences, Figures, and Elements  
(from Halliday and Matthiessen, 1999)

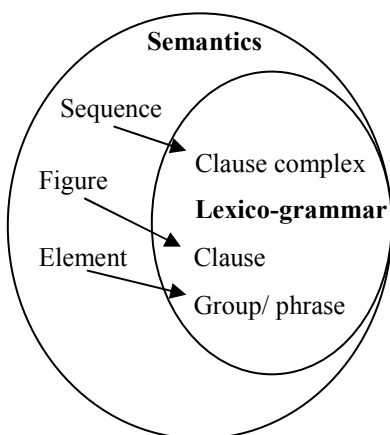
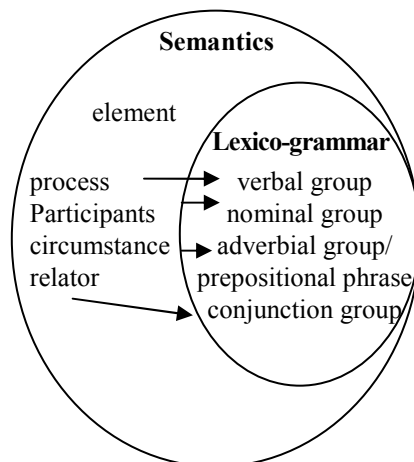


Figure 4. Typical realization of Elements in lexico-grammar  
(from Halliday and Matthiessen, 1999)



It is evident that *Sequences*, *Figures*, and *Elements* are congruently realized in the grammar as follows:

Figure 5. Lexico-grammatical realization of semantic categories (congruent forms)

	Clause complex	Clause	Group
Sequence	✓		
Figure		✓	
Element			✓

But these resources may be expanded by taking up further options in realization; for example, *sequences* may alternatively be realized by clauses and even groups. This is what we refer to as grammatical metaphor. Grammatical metaphor, therefore, expands the semantic potential of the system (Table 2. below).

Figure 6. Lexico-grammatical realization of semantic categories (cong. vs. metap.)

	Clause complex	Clause	Group
Sequence	Congruent	Metaphorical	Metaphorical
Figure		Congruent	Metaphorical
Element			Congruent/ metaphorical

## 5 Conclusions

It goes without saying that if UG (or rather SFG) is armed with the potentials of its counterpart theory in the form of a compromise or a two-tire model, there will be a much stronger theory of language which will meet most – if not all – of the criteria to be met by an adequately adequate (!) grammar of language. While Chomsky’s grammar supersedes Halliday’s in some respects such as the explication of *cliticized forms* and *displacements*, it seems to lag behind when it comes to describe semantic variation along *transitivity systems* and *metaphorical modes of expression* to the effect that a compromise between the two and in particular between the syntagmatic and paradigmatic perspectives associated with each seems to be inarguably inevitable.

With respect to the future course of action, while it might be tempting and at the same time safer to ascribe one theory (UG) to the task of first language acquisition and the other (SFG) to the development of that language in a social context, it could be argued that, in light of all the above evidence, universal principles could be extended to include as well (as syntactic universalities), a set of semantically related principles along the three interrelated meaning functions, and similarly parametric variations could include as well variations as a result of presence or absence of particular semantic concepts within any language. The *only* catch about the latter is that they are not going to be of binary value!



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