

Julia Lavid, Jorge Arús and Juan Rafael Zamorano Mansilla 2010: *Systemic Functional Grammar of Spanish: A Contrastive Study with English*. London: Continuum. XI + 443 pp. ISBN: 9781441126009 (paperback); 9780826482952 (hardcover)

ANNE MCCABE

Saint Louis University, Madrid Campus

mccabea@slu.edu

Systemic functional grammar (SFG) has developed immensely in depth and extension over the last fifty years. From groundwork laid first by Bronislaw Malinowski, followed by J.R. Firth, and cultivated by its main architect, M.A.K. Halliday starting in the 1950s, it has become both highly theorized and widely applied. It is especially exciting to see a book such as *Systemic Functional Grammar of Spanish: A Contrastive Study with English*, by Julia Lavid, Jorge Arús, and Juan Rafael Zamorano-Mansilla, appear on the scene, given that, while the bulk of theoretical and applied work in SFG has centred on English, its basic tenets are designed to be applied to all languages.

Systemic Functional Grammar of Spanish: A Contrastive Study with English (henceforth *SFGS*) is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 provides a brief introduction, including the book's aims: to add to the growing pool of SFG of descriptions of languages; to show the usefulness of an SFG perspective for discourse analysis in Spanish; and to provide a selection of SF Spanish grammar contrasts with parallel selections from SF English grammar, contrasts which are functional and discourse-oriented. The authors suggest that these aims will appeal to a variety of readers: those familiar with SFG, but not with the lexicogrammar of Spanish, those familiar with both English and Spanish but not with SFG, and those interested in typological comparisons from a functional perspective with an eye to theoretical and practical applications. Most of the chapter is then devoted to introducing key concepts from SFG, beginning with the *cline of instantiation*, a principle which suggests that all languages consist of, at one end of the cline, the overall system potential which is realized, at the opposite end, by specific instances of text, which in turn serve to construe the system potential. Thus languages can be compared through analysis of specific instances of texts, or moving along the cline, of text types, or further along, of the languages as systems. The chapter introduces the organizing principles of language in the SFG view: *system* and *structure*. The concept of system applies to the notion of language as a whole, as well as to individual systems from which structures are derived, a view of system which highlights that languages are sets of paradigmatic options, arranged through syntagmatic patterns of structures. The distinction between system and structure is highly useful when comparing languages, as we can examine the similar/different choices at

the level of system, while structures which realize the systems may differ widely. Indeed, one purpose of *SFGS* is, as its subtitle indicates, to provide functional contrasts between Spanish and English. An illustration of part of the system network —the standard SFG theoretical representation of paradigmatic choices— for the clause in Spanish is included. The authors explain the data sources used to draw examples from throughout the book, large available corpora in Spanish and in English, as well as the methodology applied in creating the SFG descriptions of Spanish, which is both quantitative and qualitative, with a focus on systemic choice as meaning in context.

The remaining chapters centre on various theoretical aspects of SFG, and follow the format of: explanation and illustration in English, descriptions for Spanish illustrated through the corpus data, contrasts between Spanish and English, and a summary. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are drawn from the metafunctions of language; in the SFG view, all languages have developed to serve three broad metafunctional purposes: *ideational*, *interpersonal* and *textual*. The ideational metafunction consists of two sub-metafunctions: the *experiential*, which refers to the ability of languages to express our experience of the world, whether real or imagined/abstract, and the *logical*, the ability to express relationships between events. The interpersonal metafunction allows for the establishment/maintenance of relationships with others, as well as for the expression of opinions on propositions, events, etc. The textual metafunction serves to draw the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions together into ordered sequences.

Chapter 2 focuses on the logical metafunction, and explains the system for clause complexes in Spanish, which is the same as the English system. There are two simultaneous choices for clauses in entering a complex: the systems of TAXIS and of LOGICO-SEMANTIC TYPE.¹ In terms of taxis, clauses are in a relationship based on either hypotaxis (relations of dependency) or on parataxis (relationship of equals). As clauses enter into the system of TAXIS, they also enter into a logico-semantic relationship with each other, with one clause either projecting or expanding the other. In the case of projection, one clause can project another either as a locution or as an idea. In the case of expansion, clauses can elaborate, extend or enhance other clauses. Each of these logico-semantic relations can be further classified in terms of the types of meaning they provide, in ever more degrees of delicacy. The authors highlight the differences in structures which carry out the various semantic functions; for example, they show that Spanish uses mood choice (indicative/subjunctive) to mark a difference in condition: concessive relations, which English marks through use of the nexus *even though* (*although*)/*even if*.

Chapter 3, on the experiential metafunction, begins with the system of TRANSITIVITY, divided into NUCLEAR TRANSITIVITY, which refers to the process types and participants in a clause, and CIRCUMSTANTIAL TRANSITIVITY, which refers to the circumstances surrounding the events in the clause. Up until this point, *SFGS* follows 'standard' SFG practice as most widely cited from *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (Halliday and

¹ In SFG, systems are written in small caps.

Matthiessen 2004; henceforth *IFG*). It diverges by dividing NUCLEAR TRANSITIVITY into three simultaneous systems: PROCESS TYPES, AGENCY, and CAUSATION, and by dividing the system of PROCESS TYPES into four: *material*, *mental*, *verbal* and *relational*; the two further process types from *IFG* are classified as subcategories: *behavioural* processes as a subtype of *material* processes, and *existential* processes of *relational* ones; The system of AGENCY exists in many accounts of SFG, including, as is pointed out, SFG descriptions of other languages, and is divided into the choices of *middle* (Agentless, e.g. *The glass broke*), and *effective* (+ Agent). *SFGS* includes *pseudo-effective*, where the process extends to something that is not a true participant, e.g. *They climbed the mountain*. *SFGS* cites Davidse (1992: 132) who argues “there is no way the transitive and ergative pseudo-effective constructions can be generalized into a single schema” (88), and thus a third overall system under NUCLEAR TRANSITIVITY is added, the system of CAUSATION, which categorizes clauses as either *ergative* or *transitive*; ergative processes can be both middle and effective, such as the verb *break*, while transitive processes realize either one or the other, as, for example, *row* and *pound*. In *IFG*, clauses are analysed using both an ergative model, a general way of analysing the experiential structure of the clause with no participant labels specific to the process type, and a transitive model, in which case the different process types are connected to different sets of participant labels. In the *SFGS* model, all clauses are *either* transitive *or* ergative, and thus the authors include participant labels for the different process types in both the transitive and ergative systems. The chapter then includes a description of the system of CIRCUMSTANTIAL TRANSITIVITY, which follows that of *IFG*.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the interpersonal grammar of the clause. An explanation is provided of primary speech functions (questions, commands, offers and statements), which are connected to congruent (e.g. interrogative clauses realize questions) and non-congruent realizations (e.g. a declarative clause realizing a command). The systems of POLARITY and MODALITY are explained, and their realizations in Spanish analyzed. The point is made that, while in Spanish the imperative mood is realized through verb inflection, the difference between interrogative and indicative moods is realized prototypically through the intonation contour of the clause, which contrasts with mood realization in English through the sequencing of Subject and Finite. Indeed, several points of the chapter highlight the minor role played by the mood element (the Subject-Finite structure) in the Spanish clause; it is never picked up on by the tag element, which is instead more closely related to polarity (e.g. *¿no?* or *¿verdad?*). The section on interpersonal contrasts focuses on the differences in realizations and in systems, which include, in addition to the differences with respect to the mood element, the possibility in Spanish for more options in the imperative mood, as well as a more delicate set of options to express high probability.

Chapter 5 centres on the textual metafunction, which orders the interpersonal and ideational metafunctions into text via two mechanisms, *thematic* structuring and *information* structuring. Theme and Rheme are defined from a more standard SFG

perspective, with a mention of the polemic surrounding definitions of Theme and the lack of agreement on the element of the transitivity structure of the clause at which an analysis of Theme ends. The *SFGS* framework for analysis includes the *Thematic Field*, “a complex functional zone in clause/initial position serving a variety of clausal and discourse functions” (299). The *Inner Thematic Field* includes the *Thematic Head*, which functions to signal the most central participant(s), either explicitly through pre-verbal lexicalized Subject or Complement or implicitly through the verbal suffix indicating person, or through Complement expressed as a pre-verbal clitic, as well as to “present some experiential element as most closely aligned with the speaker’s vantage point of view” (300). The Inner Thematic Field also includes the *Pre-Head*, which can be realized by verb stems and any Circumstantial elements occurring before the Subject or person marker. The *Outer Thematic Field* includes *textual* and *interpersonal Themes*, participial clauses and *absolute Themes*. Full-length texts are used to illustrate the application of the framework to Spanish. Then the notion of markedness is explained and illustrated through unmarked and marked options in Spanish clauses. In the second part of the chapter information structure is explained, beginning with Halliday’s description of the information unit, which conveys an interactive tension between what is presented as known or predictable, on the one hand, and new or unpredictable on the other, and which is realized in English through intonation. The chapter provides the paradigmatic options and realizations of retrievable information in Spanish, where information *focus* is “dynamically assigned by the text producer in the construction of discourse by identifying the concept(s) which are most central to the mental processing (the inferences) required by the listener to understand the message, and to follow a coherent progression of information” (337). Also provided are the typical realizations of *New Focus* (through post-verbal subject or predicated Theme), *Contrastive Focus* (through marked Theme constructions, post-verbal subject, and special focus markers) and *Emphatic Focus* (through special focus markers), and the different types of focus and their typical realizations are illustrated. Previously analysed texts are re-analysed to show the interplay of Theme and Focus in Spanish.

Chapter 6 outlines the grammar of groups and phrases. After a brief introduction, the experiential structure of the Spanish nominal group is analyzed, and the function of its different elements, Thing, Deictic, Numerative, Epithet and Classifier are explained and illustrated with corpus examples. Also analysed is the logical structure of the nominal group, as are the meanings conveyed by the relative positioning of the experiential elements. The same pattern of explanation and illustration is followed for the verbal group: the experiential structure expresses meanings related to voice, modality, tense and aspect, and the logical structure determines the syntagmatic arrangement. The chapter further illustrates the meanings, functions and structures of adverbial and adjectival groups, as well as of the prepositional phrase.

There is no doubt that this book is an important contribution to the theoretical and applied activity of SFG. The descriptions of Spanish are strongly theorized and empirically tested through corpus data, and thus allow for comprehensive and insightful functional

contrasts with English. These insights include: the explanation of differences between conditional and causal meanings and their structural realizations; the positioning of the Subjunctive mood in Spanish in the realm of hypotactic enhancement as well as in some kinds of projection (again allowing for a linking of meaning and structural realization); the interesting observation that the order of elements in the English clause serves textual needs, while in the Spanish clause it serves interpersonal ones; and the clear explanation about the tri-metaphunctional interplay, which has to manifest itself differently across the two languages, as in English the more rigid interpersonal order (Subject before Finite) means that a passive structure may be needed to achieve the same experiential arrangement which in Spanish can be achieved via the flexibility of the order of elements in the clause, to mention just a few. The tables and figures which draw meanings and realizations together are highly useful in summarizing the explanations and examples.

At the same time, the book is not always easy to follow. Chapters are not uniform in their use of tables and figures; for example, the system network in Chapter 1 (4) uses a bracketing system which, unfortunately, does not distinguish between systems with choices which are entered simultaneously or those for which a single option must be chosen; while Figure 2.1 (11) does show this difference, it is not explained. The type of systems networks which are prevalent in Chapter 3 would be welcome in Chapter 4. While the intended audience of the book is stated as wider, the ideal reader is one who actually knows both SFG and Spanish. Grammatical metaphor is included early on (Chapter 2), mentioned as a familiar concept, and readers are expected to understand what the Mood element is. The reader not familiar with Spanish might benefit from the section on the verbal group (Chapter 6) before reading some of the sections in Chapter 2, which rely on understandings of tense and aspect in construing indicative and subjunctive mood. The section on Theme Markedness in Chapter 5 would be useful before the illustrations of Theme in Spanish. Also, the explanations in some chapters are much less in depth than in others; for example, Chapter 4 provides a very vague sketch of the exchange structure of the clause in Spanish, while, in Chapter 3, the complexity of description via the different sets of labels across processes for transitive and ergative constructions (which definitely does have the advantage of illuminating more subtle similarities and differences between the two languages at a more systemic level in terms of meaning potential and of paradigmatic realizations), has the disadvantage of being highly tangled even for the seasoned SF linguist, as also included is what the authors call a 'general' system to be able to compare with *IFG's* ergative system, making for a myriad of labelling. Finally, in Chapter 5, the assigning of focus in Spanish is not wholly clear, in part because the realizations overlap across the different focus types, and thus the reader wonders how focus for many of the examples was decided.

Also, less canonical applications of SFG theory in the book assume a consensus amongst linguists working on Spanish. As illustrated here, theoretical decisions, such as that related to transitivity as well as that of thematic structure, diverge from 'standard' SF theory. This in and of itself is not a problem —within SFG there is not always consensus,

and it is agreed that testing of the theory on empirical data, followed by suggestions for changes, is an important endeavour. At the same time, debate in the SFG literature usually references others; at times *SFGS* does so, as in Chapter 3, which draws on Davidse's (1992) work on transitivity. Yet this addition to the transitivity network needs further discussion. Chapter 4 could have usefully drawn on Quiroz's (2008) description of the Spanish MOOD system in furthering the difference with the use of the mood element in English; Quiroz describes the Negotiator (based on SFG descriptions of French) as the central function which realizes MOOD choices through the verbal group. Also, the *SFGS* framework for analyzing thematic structure is unlike others in the literature. *SFGS* aims to provide Theme and Rheme categories as "measurable constructs which can be subject to empirical verification" (298); the *SFGS* scheme is verified through the functional analysis of text samples, and other researchers could replicate its application. However, other empirical contrastive studies have used an analysis in which Theme is characterized as the first experiential element in the Clause, whether that be a process, participant or a circumstance, notably the process in Spanish, an analysis which is acknowledged and used by the authors in other investigations (e.g. Arús 2010). As long as the characterization of Theme is operationalized in a uniform way, realizations in the different languages can be compared. The authors' explanation of Theme is thorough, and their inclusion of many definitions of Theme, including Matthiessen's (1992: 70) "guide to appropriate expansion points" (298) illuminating; however, the reduction of the role of Theme to the introduction of participants suggests that other clausal functions, notably processes and circumstances, do not provide expansion points. The wary reader will want to keep in mind the continuing debate on thematic analysis.

The above concerns notwithstanding, *SFGS* is a valuable resource book for analytical descriptions of Spanish through SFG. The use of corpora to illustrate instances of the language, especially the longer stretches of text in chapter 5, allow the authors to make insightful points about the language system of Spanish and its contrasts with English. The wealth of analysed examples will serve those wishing to apply SFG to their own analysis of the Spanish language in good stead. *Systemic Functional Grammar of Spanish: A Contrastive Study with English* adds much to the enrichment of SFG through analysis of other languages.

WORKS CITED

- ARÚS, Jorge 2010: 'On Theme in English and Spanish: A Comparative Study'. Elizabeth Swain, ed. *Thresholds and Potentialities of Systemic Functional Linguistics: Multilingual, Multimodal and Other Specialised Discourses*. Trieste: EU Trieste. 23-48. <<http://www.openstarts.units.it/dspace/handle/10077/3597>> (Accessed 25 August, 2011)
- DAVIDSE, Kristin 1992: 'Transitivity/Ergativity: The Janus-headed Grammar of Actions and Events'. Martin Davies and Louise Ravelli, eds. *Advances in Systemic Linguistics: Recent Theory and Practice*. London: Pinter. 105-35.

- HALLIDAY, M.A.K. and Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen 2004: *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. 3rd ed. London: Arnold.
- MATTHIESSEN, Christian M.I.M. 1992: 'Interpreting the Textual Metafunction.' Martin Davies and Louise Ravelli, eds. *Advances in Systemic Linguistics: Recent Theory and Practice*. London: Pinter. 37-81.
- QUIROZ, Beatriz 2008: 'Towards a Systemic Profile of the Spanish MOOD.' *Linguistics and the Human Sciences* 4.1: 31-65.

Received 1 September 2011

Revised version accepted 16 March 2012

Anne McCabe is Chair of the Languages and Literature Division at Saint Louis University's Madrid Campus, where she teaches linguistics, ESL and writing pedagogy to undergraduate and graduate students. She has published numerous articles and two edited collections of papers on application of Systemic Functional Linguistics to educational contexts and to discourse analysis, as well as *An Introduction to Linguistics and Language Studies* (Equinox, 2011).

Address: Languages and Literature Division. Saint Louis University, Madrid Campus. Avda. del Valle, 34. Madrid, 28003. Tel.: +34 91 5545858, ext. 237. Fax: +34 91 5546202.