

Daniel García Velasco  
Universidad de Oviedo

*Syntax. Structure, Meaning and Function* offers an introduction to the main syntactic problems in current linguistic research from the perspective of the theory of *Role and Reference Grammar* (RRG), mostly developed by the first author and some of its disciples (see Van Valin 1993). As such, the book is concerned with many of the phenomena which such theory intends to account for and, in particular, it reflects the authors' strong commitment to typological research. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the most interesting issues in present syntactic analysis are those raised by grammarians working in the GB tradition (binding, subadjacency, quantifier scope, control constructions, etc.). Van Valin & LaPolla (henceforth VV&L) try to give an account of these phenomena too, and, in fact, a persistent desire to contrast their approach with Chomsky's pervades the whole book.

The book is divided into nine main chapters and a short epilogue. At the end of each chapter, the reader finds several exercises on which to apply the concepts and analytical tools introduced in each of them.

The opening chapter, entitled «the goals of linguistic theory», introduces basic concepts and notions in grammatical analysis. VV&L attempt at identifying the basic tensions and controversies in the different existing models. The authors classify linguistic theories in terms of the goals they want to attain (explanation, description or understanding the cognitive dimension of language). But even though the goals of contemporary grammatical theories are, roughly similar or shared by most models, the authors claim that there are sharp differences as to their exact formulation and the degree of importance conferred to each one of them. In this vein, two main paradigms to the study of language seem to emerge: the syntactocentric perspective and the communication-and-cognition perspective. As its main exponent, the first group includes Chomsky's Generative Grammar, which takes syntax as a crucial aspect of language while at the same time denying that communication is the main function of language. On the other hand, models within the communication-and-cognition perspective share the view that «human language's role as a means of communication, its role in broader cognitive processings (...), and its relations with other cognitive systems such as perception and knowledge are all relevant to and indeed crucial to the study of language structure» (11). This paradigm includes the so-called functional theories: Halliday's SFG, Dik's FG, Van Valin's RRG and the work of Givón, Comrie, etc., non-Chomskyan formal models such as Pollard and Sag's HPSG, Bresnan's LFG and cognitive-oriented models such as Langacker's Cognitive Grammar, Fillmore's Construction Grammar or Jackendoff's Semantic Structures among others. Even though the authors are quick to admit that all theories in the communication-and-cognition perspective need not agree on all major syntactic issues it is nonetheless undeniable that this classification seems to suggest that current linguistic practice consists of one main stream (Chomsky's) and a number of miscellaneous approaches whose only point in common is to reject Chomsky's proposal. It is somehow surprising that the authors do not subscribe to the widely assumed formal vs. functional distinction (e.g. Newmeyer 1998), which, although fuzzy at times, seems at the very least pedagogically useful. As mentioned above, the authors follow the RRG approach, which falls within the second perspective. In the following chapters, therefore, VV&L present the fundamental concepts of this model.

Chapter two introduces the basic units of clause analysis from the perspective of RRG. The clause is analysed as containing four different layers: the nucleus, the core, which contains the nucleus and its arguments (direct and oblique), the clause and the sentence. In addition, one more syntactic unit is posited for non-arguments at the level of the core: the periphery.

The authors contrast their proposal with that of GB. They reject multiple levels of representation in syntax (21) arguing that only one mapping from semantics to syntax is necessary in the theory. They also question the validity of phrase structure rules as a reliable method to represent comparable syntactic relations across languages (24). This point is illustrated with the case of free word order languages like Dyirbal and head-marking languages like Lakhota (23). Evidence from these languages leads the authors to reject the VP as a universal category.

Apart from the clause levels and syntactic positions mentioned above, and which can be considered universal, VV&L propose two pairs of non-universal syntactic positions in the representation of the sentence. These are the left/right-detached position and the pre/post core slot. These syntactic positions are strongly dependent on linear order. For example, in the English sentence *Yesterday, what did Robin show to Pat in the library?* *yesterday* would occupy the left-detached position, whereas *what* would be in the pre core slot. The syntactic difference between both positions is related to the degree of integration within the clause: unlike *yesterday*, the wh-element is not separated from the rest of the sentence by a pause or intonation break. The pre/post core positions are thus clause internal, whereas the left/right detached positions are sentence internal but clause external.

Next, the authors deal with the representation of operators within their clause model. Operators include notions such as tense, aspect, modality, status and illocutionary force which, in turn, can be divided into more fine-grained distinctions. As the authors comment, the crucial thing about operators is that they have influence over different layers in the representation of the sentence. As a consequence outer layers have scope over inner layers.

The analysis of the clause is relevant to many of the phenomena to be discussed in the rest of the book and, hence, this section would have required more elaboration and justification. It might have been helpful to provide a more extensive comparison with the clause model proposed in FG, taking into account the important similarities between both models. However, only a short paragraph is devoted to this issue (46) and no clear indication is given as to why the RRG proposal is to be preferred to the FG one.

The authors also introduce the basic pattern of the NP in this chapter. Following the work of several scholars and, in particular, that of Jan Rijkhoff within FG, VV&L assume the existence of a strong parallelism between the syntactic structure of the NP and that of the sentence. It is rather surprising, however, that the authors treat adjectives as operators over the head in the NP. This assumption has important theoretical consequences because, unlike in GB, operators in RRG can not head syntactic projections. On page 68, VV&L justify this position on the basis of the fact that those adjectives which can take an argument structure can not manifest it in attributive position: *\*the very proud of Pat teacher* vs. *The teacher is very proud of Pat*. The authors do admit the possibility of having adverbs modifying adjectives within the NP, but these form what they call an 'operator group', not a syntactic unit.

The analysis the authors offer for genitives phrases is also questionable. From a typological perspective it seems that expressions of the type *the enemy's destruction of the city* are not frequently found across languages. The fact that one can place in the possessive position elements which otherwise seem to take a peripheral position suggests that this slot does not parallel the subject of the sentence: *yesterday's shelling of Paris by unknown forces* vs. *yesterday unknown forces shelled Paris*. But, obviously, there are important restrictions as to what arguments may occupy that position in those NP's headed by deverbal nominals. Having then conflicting evidence, the authors conclude that this slot corresponds neither to the left-detached nor the pre core slot in the sentence and decide to give it the name «NP initial position». This move somehow distorts the structural parallelism between the sentence and the NP, one of the relevant observations that led to the theory of X-bar syntax.

At the end of the chapter the authors introduce general linear order rules for both operators (based on scope relations) and lexical items (predicates and arguments). They also introduce the concept of *constructional template*, syntactic structures which are stored in a syntactic inventory and which restrict the range of possible structures within a language in accordance with specific ordering principles. The concept of *constructional template* is evidently related to the notion of *construction*

in Construction Grammar (e.g. Goldberg 1995) and, just like the linguists in this model, VV&L propose to include further semantic and pragmatic aspects in their templates as their work develops.

The following two chapters introduce the authors' approach to the semantic representation of the sentence. In chapter three, VV&L offer their characterisation of the lexicon component. In order to do so, they start by distinguishing a number of states of affairs and the participant roles derived from them. To represent those SoA's the authors employ a system of lexical decomposition with which they group verbs into four main categories, *States*, *Achievements*, *Accomplishments* and *Activities* (92), which are characterised on the basis of the features  $\pm$ telic,  $\pm$ static,  $\pm$ punctual. To establish the type of Aktionsart of a predicate, the authors use a number of syntactic and semantic tests.

The four types of predicates identified are represented in the theory through Logical Structures (LS) consisting of constants, which mostly represent predicates, and modifiers (BECOME, INGR, CAUSE, etc.). The authors make it clear that these elements are not words from any natural language, but items of a semantic metalanguage. Thus, the following is an example of an LS for the accomplishment verb *die*: BECOME **dead**' (x). The verb *run*, an activity, is represented as **do**' (x, [**run**' (x)]).

The advantages of VV&L's approach to the semantics of natural languages are self-evident: the authors deftly combine a decompositional system with a monadic one, since predicate constants are not decomposed. Thus, while taking the benefits of lexical decomposition (an adequate treatment of inferences and entailments) they put aside its problems (the fact that the definitions offered for lexical items are hardly ever complete). But keeping constants in the representations still leaves a problem as it is not clear where their meaning lies; if one represents *run* as **do**' (x, [**run**' (x)]) it is necessary either to further decompose **run**' or to tie this constant to a concept or referent in a pre-linguistic (conceptual) representational level. Otherwise one cannot claim to have provided a definition for the verb *run*.

An important advantage of this system, on the other hand, lies in the fact that the Aktionsart of a verb and, consequently its LS, is established on the basis of linguistic tests, and hence the structures are not merely intuitively proposed. This way, the system allows for a more precise treatment of semantic roles. Following Jackendoff (1990), the position of a variable in the LS serves to establish the type of semantic role it bears. As the authors indicate: «The implications of this scheme for deriving thematic relations from logical structures are very important. If it is the case that the thematic relations which a verb takes are a function of the argument positions in its logical structure, and there is a system of lexical representation in which there are independent criteria for assigning logical structures to verbs, then there are independent criteria for assigning thematic relations to verbs» (115). This seems to me one of the most interesting aspects of the theory, since, as leading GB theoreticians admit, it is difficult to determine the number and type of arguments a verb may take other than relying on one's intuition (Williams 1994: 25).

In chapter four VV&L introduce the notion of macroroles. These are generalisations over the semantic functions introduced by specific verbs which have significant grammatical consequences (139). There are only two macroroles: actor and undergoer, and the arguments of a verb receive one of the two on the basis of an assignment hierarchy (146). The question then arises as to what to do with those verbs with more than two arguments and with two alternative realisations for them. An obvious example is the so called locative alternation illustrated by the verbs *load* and *spray*. VV&L analyse this phenomenon in terms of an alternation in macrorole assignment. For example the difference between the expressions *load the hay onto the truck* and *load the truck with the hay* lies in the fact that in the former *the hay* is conceived of as the primarily affected entity (hence undergoer), whereas in the latter, it is *the truck* which receives undergoer status. (145) The only problem with this approach is that the authors do not make explicit the circumstances under which a verb can alternate. For instance, what hinders undergoer assignment to *the table* in *put books on the table*/\**put the table with books*?

It is interesting to mention the treatment that VV&L offer for adpositions: three different types are introduced (159): argument-marking prepositions, which are non-predicative and function as case-markers, adjunct prepositions, which are predicates and heads of a PP, and argument-adjunct pre-

positions, which are predicates and introduce an argument in the clause but share its logical structure with the verb.

The chapter concludes with a brief introduction to the linking of syntax and semantics, some aspects of lexical rules in the model and the semantic characterisation of nouns, which is largely based on Pustejovsky's qualia theory.

Chapter five presents the authors view on the organisation of information within the sentence which is mainly based on Lambrecht's findings. VV&L concentrate mostly on focus assignment and define the concept of «potential focus domain», the range of application of focus within a sentence which can vary across languages (212). The differences in focus assignment are related to the degree of rigidity of syntactic order in languages. In fact, the existence of VP in those languages that manifest it seems to be a derivation of the projection of focus structure on the syntactic representation (218). The chapter also deals with such matters as negation and quantification scope and intrasentential pronominalization.

It is rather surprising, however, that the authors only devote 40 pages of their book to a topic of paramount importance for a functional-communicative model. Moreover, all of the phenomena treated in this chapter are intrasentential and only one attested example (226) is provided. Another worrying aspect is the fact that this chapter contains much fewer typological data compared to other chapters. It seems that the standards of pragmatic and typological adequacy which the authors embrace are sometimes difficult to reconcile.

Chapter six begins by reviewing some of the conceptions of (syntactic) grammatical relations which have been proposed in different theories. The authors identify two main tendencies in the field: either grammatical theories are treated as primitives or derived from some other grammatical phenomenon (243). As an example of the first group, the authors mention Chomsky's Generative Grammar. According to VV&L, the problem with this model is that it relies too strongly on configurational relations. The object of the clause is the complement of the VP, but in those languages in which the existence of that category is difficult to justify GB grammarians are forced to assume a rigid SVO underlying order as well as, at least, two levels of syntactic representation. Among the theories in the second group, the authors refer to Dik's FG, Langacker's Cognitive Grammar, Givón's work and Bresnan's LFG. As a common feature, these theories treat grammatical functions as derived notions and rely heavily on the use of devices such as semantic role hierarchies.

The authors wonder next whether all languages have grammatical relations. The criterion they use to identify grammatical relations is illustrated in the following quote: «there are purely syntactic grammatical relations in a language if there is at least one construction with a restricted neutralization of semantic and pragmatic relations for syntactic purposes. This is the case as we have seen, in English and Enga. The converse of this is that if there are no constructions in a language in which there is a restricted neutralization of semantic and pragmatic relations for syntactic purposes, then there is no evidence of a syntactic predicate-argument relation in the language that can be called a grammatical relation» (255).

From the evidence of Acehnese, an Austronesian language spoken in Indonesia, the authors conclude that «there are good grounds for believing that syntactic relations like subject and object are not universal» (260). But even in those languages in which there seem to be grounds on which to identify these relations, they do not seem to be the same cross-linguistically, so that it seems to be difficult that these notions can stand up to the ideal of typological adequacy.

Hence, the authors deem it necessary to propose a new theory of grammatical relations. Such theory is based on the notions pivot and controller, which refer to the syntactically most relevant elements in a given construction. The most important point about the concepts of pivot and controller is that they are construction-specific, and, consequently, not universal. This may seem a loss of generalisation, but the authors argue that it is a necessary solution in the light of the impossibility of providing universally valid definitions for subject and object.

The following chapter is devoted to make explicit the linking between semantics and syntax in simple sentences. The main principle guiding the linking process is the Completeness Constraint

(325), which ensures that all arguments in the LS must be realised syntactically in the sentence (with the exception of unspecified arguments) and that all referring expressions are linked to an argument position in the LS. The two main steps in the linking process are (1) the mapping of arguments in LS into macroroles and (2) mapping of macroroles and other arguments into the syntax (384). Among the different aspects that are treated in this review of the linking process it is worth mentioning VV&L's approach to adposition assignment. In short, the authors believe that the choice of argument-marking and argument-adjunct prepositions can be predicted from the logical structures. For example, the preposition *to* is always assigned to the non-macrorole argument in the LS: BECOME/INGR **pred'** (x,y), whereas *from* is derived from the sequence BECOME/INGR NOT **pred'** (x,y).

Chapter eight discusses VV&L treatment of complex sentences and noun phrases. The authors assume that a theory must provide an answer to two fundamental questions about complex sentences: (i) what are the units involved in complex sentence constructions? and (ii) what are the relationships among the units in the constructions? The answer to the first question derives from the structure of the sentence itself: the nucleus, the core and the clause are taken to be the fundamental building blocks of complex sentences (441) and form the basis of what the authors call theory of *junction*. The relationships among these units is taken care of in the theory of *nexus*. The most interesting proposal in this chapter is related to the interaction of both theories. The three nexus types distinguished (coordination, cosubordination and subordination) are possible with the three juncture types (nucleus, core and clause). This gives nine possible juncture-nexus types, which the authors classify in a hierarchy according to the tightness of syntactic relationship among them (477). This hierarchy is assumed to mirror the semantic relationships which those syntactic units usually express. Together, those two parameters define a theory of syntactic and semantic relations in complex sentences, which is summarised in the Interclausal Relations Hierarchy (481).

Chapter nine deals with the linking of syntax and semantics in complex sentences. Following the principles laid out in chapter seven the authors treat syntactically relevant phenomena such as control constructions and raising or matrix-coding. As for control constructions, the authors propose a theory in which the choice of controller is linked to the semantics of the verb (544). This theory states that in causative and jussive verbs, the undergoer is the controller, whereas the rest of transitive verbs manifest actor control. In accordance with the main principles of the model employed, this account of control constructions does not rely on configurational relations, so that it seems applicable cross-linguistically.

The book concludes with an epilogue in which the authors argue against the postulation of a Language Acquisition Device *à la* Chomsky as an indispensable component to account for the phenomenon of language acquisition. VV&L argue that language may evolve from other cognitive abilities, and, in particular, from a level of mental representation in which human beings can handle ontological categories such as event, place, object, etc. These categories translate very easily into the logical concepts predicate and argument, which function as fundamental relations in the model proposed in the book.

It is impossible to pay due justice here to the impressive number of phenomena discussed and interesting ideas raised by VV&L. The extension of the book (713 pages) and the wide range of topics covered prevents me from commenting on aspects and proposals which are undoubtedly worth considering for anyone interested in the syntax of natural languages. Although mainly based on RRG, the book incorporates ideas from other theoretical approaches: Construction Grammar, Functional Grammar, and the work of scholars such as Lambrecht, Pustejovsky, Jackendoff, Givón, etc. The authors' in-depth knowledge of sundry grammatical traditions is striking, above all in a linguistic scientific world in which new models mushroom constantly and where intertheoretical comparison is not always common practice.

As their only weakness, I could only mention the fact that the allegedly communicative-cognitive orientation of the model is not always easily perceived in the analyses and phenomena handled, possibly due to an excessive interest in proving their theory superior to GB. One could argue that, as the title of the book indicates, the authors restrict themselves to the treatment of syntactic (hence in-

trasentential) phenomena. Granted that, it is nonetheless true that very little is said about the potential integration of the theory in a wider conceptual framework (psychological adequacy) or the possible expansion of the system to account for the structure of discourse and the conditions governing language use.

All in all, the book provides an excellent introduction to the main syntactic problems in current linguistic research from the point of view of a theory strongly committed to typological research. Thus, it can only be considered a must for those interested in typology and in alternative ways to account for the many and puzzling problems in contemporary syntactic research.

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