

ADVANCES IN FUNCTIONAL DISCOURSE GRAMMAR: INTRODUCTION

Marize Mattos Dall'Aglio Hattner¹
Kees Hengeveld²

Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG, HENGEVELD; MACKENZIE, 2006, in which the following outline is based; HENGEVELD; MACKENZIE, 2008, Forthcoming) is a new version of Functional Grammar (DIK, 1997). It is characterized by the following properties:

- (i) FDG constitutes the grammatical component of an overall model of the natural language user. This overall model furthermore contains a conceptual, a contextual, and an output component;
- (ii) FDG takes the discourse act as its basic unit of analysis. It is thus a discourse rather than a sentence grammar and is capable of handling discourse acts both larger and smaller than a sentence;
- (iii) FDG distinguishes an interpersonal, a representational, a structural, and a phonological level of linguistic organization;
- (iv) FDG orders these levels in a top-down fashion. It starts with the representation of the linguistic manifestations of the speaker's intentions at the interpersonal level, and gradually works down to the phonological level;
- (v) Internally, FDG structures each of these levels hierarchically.

The general architecture of FDG is shown in Figure 1. In this figure, within the grammatical component, the boxes represent sets of primitives relevant for the respective level of analysis, the circles represent operations combining these primitives, and the rectangular forms represent the results of those operations.

¹ UNESP – Instituto de Biociências, Letras e Ciências Exatas – Departamento de Estudos Linguísticos e Literários – 15054-000 – São José do Rio Preto – SP – Brazil. E.mail address: marize@bilce.unesp.br

² UvA – Universiteit van Amsterdam – Department of Theoretical Linguistics – Spuistraat 210 – 1012 VT – Amsterdam – The Netherlands. E.mail address: p.c.hengeveld@uva.nl

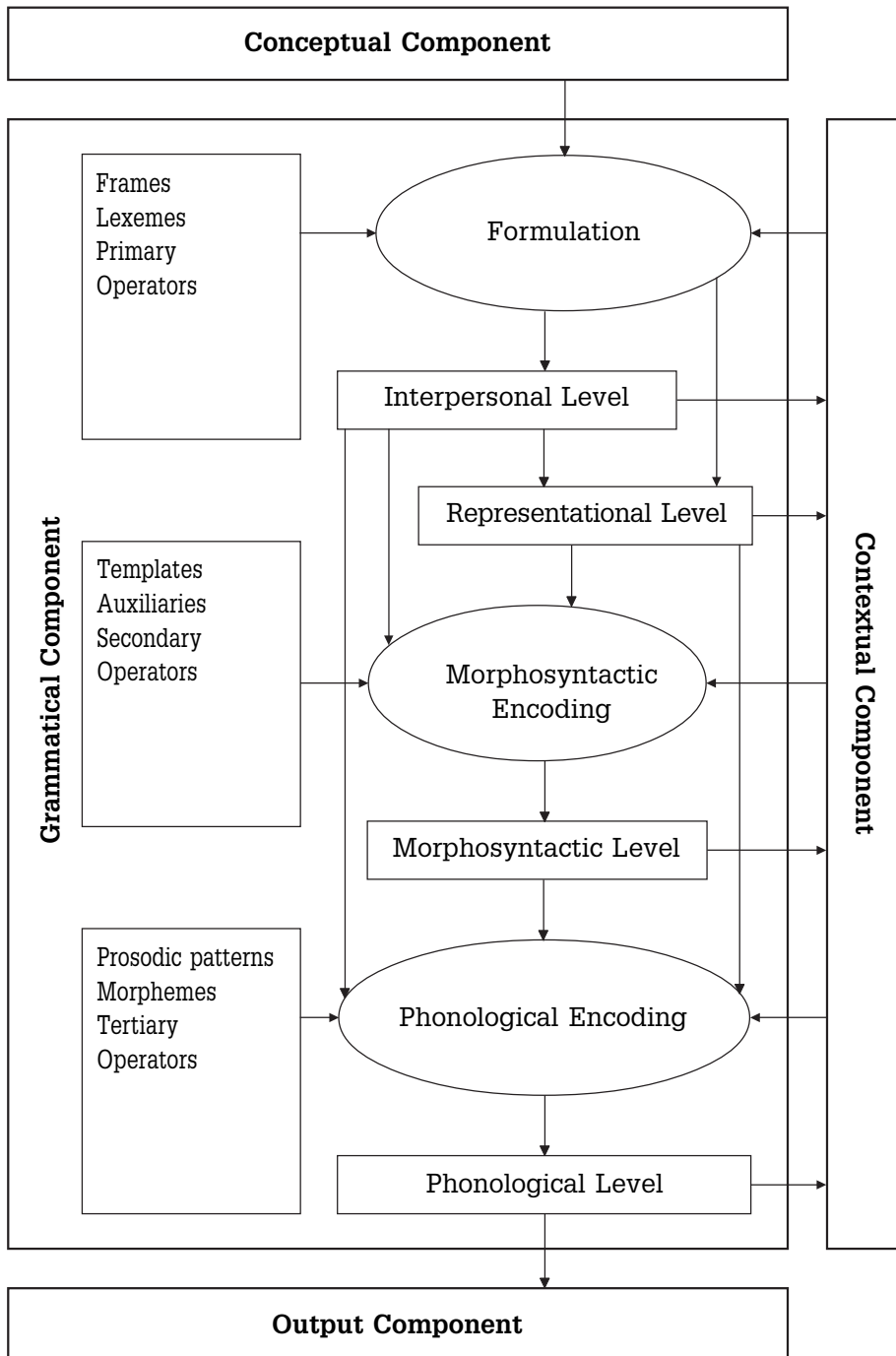


Figure 1 – General layout of FDG

By organizing the grammar in this way, FDG takes the functional approach to language to its logical extreme: within the top-down organization of the grammar, pragmatics governs semantics, pragmatics and semantics govern morphosyntax, and pragmatics, semantics and morphosyntax govern phonology. The organization furthermore enables FDG to be a discourse grammar rather than a sentence grammar, since the relevant units of communicative behaviour form its point of departure, whether they are expressed as sentences or not.

A further advantage of this architecture is that it allows FDG to take the typological approach to language to its logical extreme: since the model carefully distinguishes, for every discourse act, its interpersonal, representational, morphosyntactic, and phonological characteristics, languages can be compared for each of these aspects separately. A few examples may help to illustrate this point. At the interpersonal level, the question of which basic communicative intentions receive special treatment in the language is of interest (pragmatic typology). At the representational level the ways in which languages represent event types is of interest (semantic typology). At the morphosyntactic level topics like the organization of paragraphs in languages ask for attention in a discourse oriented approach (syntactic typology). Finally, at the phonological level the organization of prosodic systems poses new challenges when considered from the perspective of the discourse act rather than the sentence (phonological typology).

The contributions in this volume study a variety of aspects of the FDG model outlined above, and are grouped in relation to the various components and levels that are distinguished in the model as represented in Figure 1.

The first paper, by John Connolly, concerns the organization of the CONTEXTUAL COMPONENT. The next one, by Evelien Keizer studies the dividing line between lexical and grammatical elements, an issue that is relevant to various aspects of the GRAMMATICAL COMPONENT. The other papers address questions that pertain to one of the levels of organization within this component, and are ordered following the top-down organization of the model.

Four papers concern the INTERPERSONAL LEVEL: Ahmed Moutaouakil studies the ways in which interpersonal units can be coordinated; Kees Hengeveld et al. present a typological view on the distribution of basic illocutions; and the papers by Niels Smit and Elena Martínez Caro address the issue of information structure in FDG.

The REPRESENTATIONAL LEVEL is targeted in the next four papers: Miriam van Staden and Niels Smit propose a revised formalism for the representational level; Daniel García Velasco studies the place of the lexicon in FDG; Sandra Gasparini Bastos et al. go into the distribution of modal categories; and Roberto Gomes

Camacho analyzes nominalizations and their underlying semantic representation.

Finally, three articles address issues related to the MORPHOSYNTACTIC LEVEL: Christopher Butler discusses the general organization of this level and compares it with the approach defended in Role and Reference Grammar. Dik Bakker and Anna Siewierska analyze the place of grammatical relations in FDG; and Erotilde Goreti Pezatti discusses adjunct order in Brazilian Portuguese within an FDG approach.

References

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