

ANGELA DOWNING AND PHILIP LOCKE. *A University Course in English Grammar*. Prentice Hall, 1992. Pp. xvii, 652.

As the authors themselves explain in the introduction to the course-book, the central aim of this up-to-date descriptive grammar is to familiarize students of English as a Foreign Language with a new applied perspective on grammar which relates form to meaning and meaning to situation. This is, in itself, a very commendable enterprise which comes to bridge the existing gap between communicative language teaching materials, on the one hand, and functional approaches to grammar, on the other, which have often proved difficult to introduce into the classroom.

While acknowledging their debt to various well-known grammars such as those by Randolph Quirk, Sydney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, Jan Svartvik, and Rodney Huddleston, and to the works of Michael Halliday, whose influence is basically felt in the treatment of the clause and the clause complex, the authors have combined the previous descriptive efforts in an original way, providing their own divergent views on many important areas of the grammar such as tense, aspect, modality, illocutionary force, topic, etc., to name only a few. The motivation lies in the different aims sought by a purely theoretical presentation of a model of grammar versus an applied account that offers a means of analysing texts. The latter was the central aim for which a *University Course in English Grammar* was written, and this, we think, has been amply achieved.

The book is structured in three blocks:

(a) The first chapter gives a general overview of the whole course and defines the basic concepts and terms used in it. The chapter is divided into three modules:

Module 1 presents the systemic-functional approach to the description of language by relating the clause (the most significant unit) to three different types of meaning: experiential, interpersonal and textual. These meanings, called "metafunctions" by Michael Halliday, are the very general purposes which language serves: (i) to represent our experience of the world, (ii) to interact with others in it, (iii) to organise our messages. Following Halliday, the authors use the clause as the basic unit for the expression of these three kinds of meaning: as the linguistic representation of patterns of experience, as a communicative exchange between interlocutors, and as an organised message. These three kinds of meaning are basically realised through different kinds of structures: experiential meaning through transitivity structures, interpersonal meaning through mood structures, and textual meaning through thematic structures. This module is very important to understand the authors' theoretical and methodological point of view: the consideration of the clause as a configuration of meanings, each one realised by a different kind of structure which are mapped on to one another to produce a single wording, is one of the central organising principles of the book. This is both theoretically and pedagogically sound, since it provides students with a motivated methodology to understand and analyse the structure of the clause — the most complete meaning-making resource available to grammar — and to integrate the study of others units, such as the group and the clause complex, within the same semantic framework.

Module 2 outlines the basic syntactic concepts on which the functional analysis of structures is based: the hierarchical arrangement of units into a scale of rank, their boundaries, classes and the relationship holding between them. Module 3 provides a brief overview of how those linguistic units can be expanded.

(b) Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 develop the ideas outlined in the first chapter by concentrating on the structure of the clause from syntactic, semantic and functional points of view.

Chapter 2 describes the syntactic structure of the clause analysing each of its elements in detail. This syntactic description is further developed in chapter 3, which provides a detailed presentation of the main verb complementation patterns in English in an attempt to give an overall view of the main configurations, relating each to its possible meanings.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 concentrate on describing the types of clausal structure which realise the three main kinds of meaning presented in chapter 1 above: transitivity structures realising experiential meaning, mood structures realising interpersonal meaning, and thematic information structures realising textual meaning. These three chapters constitute an exhaustive analysis of the expressive possibilities of clausal structures. The theoretical rigour together with the clarity in the presentation of the material makes the reading of these three chapters both an interesting reference source for the trained linguist and an invaluable learning material for the student.

Chapter 7 studies the next unit immediately above the clause in the rank scale: the clause complex. Without rejecting the use of the term "sentence", the authors favour the "clause complex" as a broader grammatical category which can capture more syntactically complex clause combinations than the purely sentential ones. The use of the clause complex allows the analyst to be more explicit about the grammatical structures functioning in a larger stretch of language and the semantic relations holding between component clauses. More importantly, the authors explain, the clause complex fulfils a textual function as a linguistic expression of a complex situation which reflects the cognitive organization of our experience into what is more salient and what is less salient (p.274).

(c) Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 are dedicated to the study of group units starting from a semantic characterization and then moving on to the study of their syntactic structures. Thus, the Verbal Group typically expresses our perception of events (covering all types of processes: events, actions, states or acts of consciousness), the Nominal Group our perception of "things" or "entities", the Adjectival Group typically expresses attributes, and the Adverbial and Prepositional Groups express a wide range of circumstances.

Chapter 8 and 9 center around the Verbal Group, the syntactic category which typically expresses our perception of events. Chapter 8 is dedicated to the syntactic analysis of the Verbal Group and to the different multi-word verb combinations, whereas chapter 9 focuses on different kinds of functional meanings expressed through the verb: the relation of the event to the speech time realised by the system of tense, the internal character of the event realised through aspectual contrasts, and the attitudes of the speaker towards the event realised through modality. Even though modality, the authors explain (p. 384), is a semantic category which can be expressed at different points throughout the clause, it is discussed in this chapter because modal meanings in English are basically realised by modal and lexico-modal auxiliaries, whereas the other modal elements simply reinforce the modal meaning expressed by the verb. The only exception to this tendency is when the modal meaning is realised metaphorically by the semantic relationship of projection as in: "I think it is going to snow". Here, the speaker's attitude towards the event is

not coded as a modal element within the clause (as in “it will probably snow”, but as a projecting clause (“I think”) in a hypotactic clause complex.

Chapter 10 provides an extensive treatment of the experiential structure of the Nominal Group as the syntactic category through which we express “things” or entities”, including not only concrete entities such as objects, persons or places, but also actions, abstractions, relationships, and phenomena, among others. One of the most interesting aspects of this chapter is the way in which the authors explain the meanings of some of the nominal group systems from a discourse perspective. For example, definiteness is explained in textual terms as a functional category by which the speaker signals whether the referent can be identified somewhere, either in the text or in the situation or in our common knowledge of the world. If the referent is identifiable, this fact will be reflected in the Nominal Group by the presence of the definite article *the* or a deictic determinative; if it cannot be identified, it will be reflected in the use of the indefinite article *a(n)*, *some*, *any*, or the absence of a marker. The choice of one of these two possibilities is, the authors suggest, motivated by discourse factors such as the structuring of information into Given and New items. This type of account which tries to explain grammatical categories in discourse terms is very useful as an illustration of the functional perspective developed in this grammar, lending coherence and unity to the global architecture of the book.

Finally, chapters 11, 12, and 13, devoted to the study of the adjectival, adverbial and prepositional groups, respectively, follow the same approach and methodology outlined above.

For teaching and learning purposes, each chapter is divided into “modules” which summarize the main points to be addressed. Each of the modules is accompanied by a varied number of practice tasks grouped at the end of each chapter, which, given their flexibility and adaptability, constitute an invaluable learning and teaching aid. For those tasks which have a single solution, a “key” is provided at the end of the book, to which students are discouraged from resorting without having properly grasped the contents of the module and performed the task at hand.

The applied perspective on grammar which characterizes this course-book is reflected in the extensive use of authentic texts and transcriptions, both for analysis and for illustration of grammatical points. There are no invented and very few isolated examples, as has been usual practice in the writing of grammars, but “real” texts, taken from a variety of genres, which make the practice tasks more attractive for the learner.

Finally, while being essentially a sentence-grammar, which aims at illustrating the natural use of the features described, not at offering a method of discourse analysis, some of its chapters can also be used from a discourse perspective. This is the case of chapter 6, dealing with Theme and information structuring, and of chapter 7, which studies the grammar of clause combining. The presentation provided by the authors serves as a bridge to further textual explorations in courses on discourse analysis.

In this sense, one of the great merits of the book is its adaptability. It can be used both as a complete course for undergraduate and postgraduate students of English as a Foreign Language, and as a background course for stylistic and discourse studies. And, while not pretending to be comprehensive (is there such a

thing as a “complete” account of the grammar of a language?), the authors have provided university students with a wide and integrative view of grammar, one which places the study of language as a system of meanings which come to be realized by syntactic structures. Furthermore, they have managed to reconcile theoretical rigour with applied practice - not an easy task in itself-, making accessible to university students the kind of linguistic knowledge which will help them to interpret texts.

*A University Course in English Grammar* has been a long-awaited and much needed book. Those who, when teaching the grammar of English to university students of EFL, have felt the need for an applied textbook which is both theoretically satisfactory and pedagogically appropriate, will now be able to see their wishes come true with the publication of this book.

Julia LAVID  
Universidad Complutense de Madrid