

# *Discourse structure in grammar*

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## ABSTRACT

Recent approaches in functional grammar favour either a separation of grammar and pragmatics, or an integration of discourse into a model including clauses, utterances and discourse moves. Both kinds of analysis show difficulties in relating syntactic units to pragmatic ones. A possible way to account for discourse structure is the concept of hypotaxis, as opposed to subordination, so that a correspondence between main or hypotactic clauses and discourse units may be established, as in *rhetorical structure theory*. It is further argued that *sentence structure* itself is organized so that sentences may be linked one to another within discourse structure. The analysis of Spanish sentence-initial *que* constructions shows that their sentence structure accounts for the way each sentence is linked to others in various specific discourse structures. As a result, grammar includes discourse structures, which are made up of sentences, which in turn make up text structure.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the main problems facing grammatical theory today is its extension to discourse phenomena <sup>1</sup>. This paper deals with speech acts and their relation to discourse. My point of departure in section 2 is the account of basic speech acts (sentence types) and their illocutionary conversion and modification in Dik's (1989) Functional Grammar, as it applies to a specific Spanish kind of sentence structures, with sentence-initial *que* (otherwise a subordinator). These constructions show a conflicting combination of sentence type and

illocutionary force, previously analyzed in Functional Grammar in terms of illocutionary modification.

Recent approaches favour either a separation of grammar and pragmatics (section 2.1), accounting for sentence type in the grammar and illocutionary force or speech act type in the pragmatic module, or an integration of discourse into a layered model for clause structure (section 2.2), with utterances as components of discourse moves. This integration of utterances into moves is nevertheless questioned on the basis of the difference between discourse and grammar (section 2.3).

Rhetorical structure solves the alleged mismatch between clauses and acts by means of the concept of hypotaxis, as opposed to subordination (section 3.1). Text structure determines the organization of structured sequences of sentences (section 3.2). The specificity of sentence-initial *que* constructions is thus shown to be a sentence internal property which accounts for the way the sentence is linked to others in a discourse structure (section 3.3). As a result, an approach to grammar is proposed in the conclusion that includes discourse structures (as structured sequences of sentences).

## 2. PRAGMATICS VERSUS GRAMMAR

### 2.1. A pragmatic module

Dik (1989: 254) considers sentence types as expressing the four basic speech acts or basic illocutions, which fits well his concept of syntax as included in semantics, and semantics as a part of pragmatics. In addition, illocutionary conversion accounts for other types of speech acts in terms of converted illocutionary operators. For instance, in a tag question, a declarative illocution is converted into an interrogative one by means of the tag, which is analyzed as an operator. As Vet (1996) points out, it is not clear how this conversion is to be understood. Would the speaker first intend to utter an assertion, and then turn it into a question? What happens with indirect speech acts, such as declaratives turned into requests? According to Vet, when a declarative is said and understood as a request, a specific intonation pattern signals the speaker's dissatisfaction to the addressee. The request interpretation does not have the same expression as the basic declarative illocution, because of the difference in intonation. The same applies to tag questions: they also differ in expression from the original declaratives. The problem, in Vet's account, remains the same: a speech act is first a declarative and then a request (see Risselada 1990: 9 for a similar criticism).

The solution, according to Vet, is to separate the speech act itself (the request) from the illocution (the declarative, that is, the sentence type); speech acts belong to a pragmatic module, while illocutions (sentence types)

are dealt with in the grammar. Interface rules account for the «translation» of speakers intentions into expressions. This approach is thus consistent with Dik's (1989) analysis in terms of pragmatic conversion, which is to be explained outside the grammar, by a theory of verbal interaction.

Vet's criticism to illocutionary conversion applies also to illocutionary modification, where the force of the basic speech act is reduced or increased (Dik 1989: 258; Hengeveld 1990: 10). For instance, in (1), according to Hengeveld (1989: 140), the Spanish subordinator (in Hengeveld's term) *que* combined with an interrogative illocutionary force yields an emphatic question.

- (1) ¡Que si vienes mañana!  
 that whether come-PRES:IND:2:SG tomorrow  
 'Are you coming tomorrow???'

It is clear that *si* is crucial to the interrogative illocutionary force, as its absence in (2) shows.

- (2) ¡Que vienes mañana!  
 that come-PRES:IND:2:SG tomorrow  
 'You are coming tomorrow!!!'

In the previous terms, (2) is an emphatic declarative. But the status of *que* itself as illocutionary ("emphatic") operator remains unclear. The same criticism made by Vet about illocutionary conversion applies to this case of illocutionary modification: How is the emphatic status in (1) to be produced? First as a question, then as an emphatic question? If the answer is that emphatic status is equal to focus status, then Vet's pragmatic module and interface seem to be warranted, if, as Bolkestein (1996) points out, focus assignment belongs to the pragmatic module. According to Bolkestein, focus assignment is pragmatic in nature since it is best explained in discourse terms. But *que* seems to belong to the grammar, since it licenses the presence of *si* in (2), that is, "interrogative" *si* ('whether') appears when and only when it is preceded by *que*. On the one hand, there are no interrogative sentences starting with *si*, but only conditional ones. Without *que*, (3) is the first part of a conditional sentence with the second part missing.

- (3) si vienes mañana  
 if come-PRES:IND:2:SG tomorrow  
 'If you come tomorrow'

On the other hand, *que si* appears in reported speech about a previous question, as in (4).

- (4) Dice que si vienes mañana  
 say-PRES:IND:3:SG that whether come-PRES:IND:2:SG tomorrow  
 'He/she asks whether you are coming tomorrow'

So there seems to be evidence for including the *que si* construction and its interpretation in the grammar. This leads to extending the grammar beyond the sentence.

## 2.2. Discourse moves

Hengeveld's (1997) alternative to having a separate pragmatic module is enlarging the grammar with an extra discourse layer. In the layered structure of the clause (Dik 1990: 255; Hengeveld 1990: 12), illocutionary operators and satellites belong to its top layer, representing the event of doing the speech act. The first step towards such an extra layer is the inclusion of operators accounting for "textual relations" (in Hengeveld 1990: 13). Thus, textual satellites are placed outside the speech-act layer in the structure. Then, in Hengeveld (1997), this level is expanded in order to include moves, discourse type and the discourse itself. These are the units proposed by Kroon (1995), which will be taken up in the next section. In Hengeveld's approach these units are integrated into the layered structure, so that they do not belong to a separate discourse module. As in Kroon's analysis, three levels are proposed by Hengeveld (in line with Halliday's 1985 systemic grammar): representational (up to propositions), interpersonal (including illocutions and speech acts) and rhetorical (concerning paragraphs, discourse frames and texts). In this way, as in Kroon's approach, Hengeveld (1996) includes utterances in their discourses, such as (5) in (6). In (5) I have introduced minor changes, such as the SUBJunctive marking or the *go* gloss (instead of Hengeveld's *come*).

- (5) ¡Que vayas a comer!  
 That go:SUBJ:2:SG to eat  
 'You should go and eat'
- (6) a. (P<sub>1</sub> to P<sub>2</sub>): Dónde está Pepe?  
 where is Pepe  
 'Where is Pepe?'  
 b. P<sub>2</sub> to P<sub>1</sub>: en la calle  
 in the street  
 'On the street.'  
 c. P<sub>1</sub> to P<sub>2</sub>: ¡Que venga a comer!  
 that come:SUBJ:3:SG  
 'Tell him to come and eat'



- (8) a. That man, he is a liar.  
b. He is a liar, that man.

The two discourse acts stand in the relation of one being central and the other one subsidiary. In (8a), there is a rhetorical relation of orientation between the Theme constituent, which functions as the subsidiary act, and the “core” of the sentence, which functions as the central act. In (8b), the relation of elaboration holds between the Tail and the sentence core, which function, respectively, as the central and the subsidiary discourse acts. Sentence constituents and discourse units do not coincide, so that, in Kroon’s perspective, two different modules should account for them.

Even when the limits of discourse acts do coincide with those of speech acts, the former are defined in terms of rhetorical relations, while the latter depend on the lexical and grammatical properties of the utterance itself, according to Kroon (1995: 65, 77). In Kroon’s example (9), a speaker says (9a) and (9b) in a row, and (9c) is said by the other participant in the conversation.

- (9) a. I’ve got an extra ticket for the Santa Fe Chamber Orchestra.  
b. Are you interested?  
c. Yes, wonderful.

Although they coincide as to their limits, the two illocutionary acts (or speech acts) in (9a) and (9b) are different from the two discourse acts. The speech acts are an assertion and a question, respectively. The discourse acts are a subsidiary act and a central act. They stand in a rhetorical relation of preparation or orientation or, rather, act (9a) has the rhetorical function of preparation. Together, as discourse acts, they constitute an initiating move, which has the interpersonal function of invitation. This move, together with the reactive move (9c), constitute an exchange, which itself is part of an interaction. Kroon thus posits two different levels, beside the representational one: a presentational level for rhetorical relations, and an interactional one, for relations between moves.

If we were to accept Hengeveld’s integration of utterances into moves, we would then run into to this second, additional difficulty, pointed out by Kroon: utterances, that is, the top units in the grammar, seem to be different from acts, the bottom unit in the discourse component. We will now see that there is a way out of both problems, or, rather, out of the only existing problem, namely the mismatch between sentence structure and discourse structure. Let us tackle Kroon’s objection first.

### 3. DISCOURSE

#### 3.1. Rhetorical structure

Kroon's discourse acts do not coincide with clauses, that is right, but the problematic assumption is that they should, in a one-to-one way. There is a correspondence, but it is a different one. According to Mann, Matthiessen and Thompson (1992: 51), the clause is "roughly" the unit that enters into rhetorical relations (such as orientation and elaboration mentioned above), except for clausal subjects and objects and restrictive relative clauses. Embedded clauses are instances of *subordination*, while non-embedded clauses and adverbial clauses are instances of *hypotaxis*, a distinction they take from Halliday (1985). Accordingly, they segment example (10) into three separate rhetorical units: "satellites" (10b) and (10c) stand in an "elaboration" rhetorical relationship to the "nucleus" (10a).

- (10) a. Staffers stayed late into the night,  
 b. answering questions  
 c. and talking with reporters from newspapers, radio stations and TV stations in every part of the country.

My point is that, while there is a wider, rhetorical structure, its units are made up of sentence units and clausal components within the sentence. In order to arrive at this correspondence, sentence structure has to be considered as including extra-clausal constituents, such as Theme and Tail, together with other components, which share a peripheral status with them, such as satellites, or, rather, adverbial phrases and adverbial subordinate clauses. Instead of a layered structure, the sentence has a (main) clause core (which includes verb, subject and object) and a periphery. This periphery includes parenthetical expressions, adverbial expressions (phrases or subordinate clauses), and constituents previously called Theme and Tail. If these elements occur before the core, they provide the "frame of interpretation" for the event represented in the core; if they occur after the core, they provide further information, as an "afterthought". They may also provide a "thought in between", if they appear between core elements, in a parenthetical expression.

Blanche-Benveniste (1996: 113-123), in her utterance syntax (as opposed to "standard" sentence syntax), makes a general distinction between the core ("noyau") of the utterance, which coincides with a speech act, and all the other utterance constituents, called extra-clausals here, which she classifies as prefixes, suffixes and parenthetical expressions. This analysis, intended for utterances in spoken French, can be integrated into the present analysis of sentence structure, which provides for a core and a periphery within the sentence; see Garrido (in press a).

All these (adverbial or parenthetical) components are outside the core, and they represent information additional to that of the core. They give extra information about the event, as an orientation or as an elaboration, or just as additional data to keep in mind in order to better process the event information itself. The core in (8) is *he is a liar*, and this information is to be processed together with the data that the speaker is referring to *that man*. The syntactical connection is that of sentence periphery to sentence core, and so is the semantic connection: the central point is calling somebody a liar, and the additional point is that the person is the one present in the speech situation or mentioned before.

In (9) the two discourse acts are represented in different sentences (9a) and (9b), but they might well be joined into one, as in (11a).

- (11) a. I've got an extra ticket for the Santa Fe Chamber Orchestra, in case you are interested.  
b. Yes, wonderful.

The requirement is that the two units do not belong to the sentence core; one of them is the core (of the main clause in the sentence), while the other one is an adverbial subordinate clause (in the periphery of the sentence). They thus represent events which are related by the rhetorical relation of elaboration. Notice that in (11a) the invitation interpretation seems to arise from the additional data on the event of having an extra ticket, namely, the possibility that the addressee might be interested in the concert. But (12) could also be possible.

- (12) a. I've got an extra ticket for the Santa Fe Chamber Orchestra.  
b. Wonderful.

The sentence sequence is different. Notice that (12b) is a sentence fragment: it is declarative, it represents an assertion, but it does not contain a clause, that is, an inflected-verb phrase. The sequence is different in (12), since there is no answer with *yes* in (12b), but the invitation and acceptance interpretation remains the same. Saying that one has an extra ticket can be interpreted as an invitation. This can only happen when the expression is put into context. This is the key: sentences are not produced in isolation, and their connections to other sentences occur in linguistically restricted ways: in ways established by the grammar, so that they are linked in sentence sequences.

### 3.2. Discourse structures

These structured sentence sequences, or discourse structures, are grammatical in nature, that is, their sequencing is determined by the grammar,

both in syntactic and in semantic terms. They are organized into a larger structure, a text structure. As Mann, Matthiessen and Thompson (1992: 64) point out, text structure, in conceptual terms (“pre-realizational”), including “inferential paths”, explains the way discourse structures, such as (9) and (10), are put together. Rather than creating structure, discourse markers signal it, they argue. Depending on the degree of coherence (since speakers and writers may be successful to different degrees in expressing themselves), there is an unequivocal way to put together those discourse structures within a given text. In (9), for instance, (9a) and (9b) are put together as an invitation and its acceptance, in the wider frame of a conversation, which as such has a text structure (see Garrido 1997).

The same holds for other cohesive devices, such as discourse markers, for instance the Latin ones analyzed by Kroon (1995). Markers support an existing structure, and, as Mann, Matthiessen and Thompson stress, there are other instances where it has to be totally inferred (from the information of the single sentences), such as in (12). Kroon considers extended (written) monologue as a complex move, consisting of a recursive hierarchy of central and subsidiary moves, while conversation is made up of exchanges, and those of moves, as we have seen. She posits two different units, the conversational move and the written extended move (or the paragraph, which Kroon rejects). Instead, both types of texts, the oral and the written, are organized into sub-units, into sentence sequences which are discourse structures, while extended monologue may be considered not a complex move but a text type. Structured sentence sequences (discourse structures) are linked as wholes to other discourse structures, in the recursive way Kroon attributes to moves. The problem of a subsidiary exchange embedded in a move (such as defined by Roulet 1995), posed by Kroon (1997: 29), would thus be solved, since both would be discourse structures, a recursive category. Text structure (in the sense of text-type characteristics, what Mann and colleagues call “holistic structure”) provides extra information as to how to link the discourse structures to each other within the text they belong to. For instance, in a news text, the headline (a sentence sequence, a discourse structure) stands in a specific, genre-prototypical relation to the lead (again, a sentence sequence, a discourse structure) and the text body (a recursive hierarchy of discourse structures); see Garrido (in press b).

A discourse structure is thus determined by text structure (or adapted to it), since discourse units are linked to each other following the requirements of text structure. In a similar way, sentence structure has a discourse function, since it is made up so that sentences are linked to each other within discourse structure. This will now be shown in sentence-initial *que* structures.

### 3.3. Discourse function of sentence structure

The key to the relation between imperative utterance and informative move in Hengeveld's analysis is the status of sentence-initial *que* in his example (5). In other words, *que* plays a role in the relationship between sentence structure in (5) and discourse structure in (6).

There are two properties of initial *que* at issue. The first is a not very well defined one, existing in various Romance languages, mostly in oral speech. Koch and Oesterreicher (1990: 99) call this usage "polyvalent" *que*, since its exact value (causal, temporal, consecutive, etc.) cannot be determined without a context (that is, without the preceding sentences). This *que* marks a linking between a previous "basis" (a preceding sentence or sentences) and the sentence it introduces as "development" of that basis, as (13b) in (13a) shows.

- (13) a. me gusta la música que no quiere decir que entienda la música  
que eso es otra cosa  
'I like music, which does not mean that I understand music: that is something else'
- b. que eso es otra cosa  
that:CONJ that:DEM is another thing  
'that is something else'

The fact of not understanding music is the basis; the development is considering liking music as different from understanding it. In (13b), the English translation has only the equivalent for the Spanish demonstrative *eso* 'that', and there is no equivalent for the preceding "polyvalent" *que*. The other *que* occurrences in (13a) are regular instances of the subordinating function of *que* (they do not link clauses hypotactically), either a relative clause (*que no quiere...*, 'which') modifying the first main clause, or an object clause with a subordinating CONJUNCTION (*que entienda...*, 'that'). In (13b), *que* is not a relative, because it is *eso* which refers to the preceding clause, and it is not a subordinating conjunction either, since it is not governed by any preceding verb. Since it links otherwise independent sentences within a discourse structure, it may be called a discourse connective (such as English *and* or *but* in sentence initial position).

The other property of initial *que* is its use in exclamative sentences, such as (2) and (14a), which might be considered to be focus structures as opposed to regular structures like (14b). Notice that in these constructions, *que* is unstressed, different from stressed *qué* in examples such as *¡Qué valiente es!* ('How brave he/she is!').

- (14) a. ¡Que viene Juan!  
that comes Juan  
'Juan is coming!'



same as *si* is in (1) in order to code the sentence type of the repeated interrogative sentence. Notice that sentence-initial *que* plus subjunctive is a regular structure in the grammar, dating back to a Latin construction. As Risselada (1993: 143) points out, the Latin imperative cannot be used in syntactically dependent directive clauses, and either the subjunctive or the infinitive have to be used. This subjunctive requirement in (6c) and (6d) is related to the fact that in dependent clauses linked by *que* to the main clause verb, the subjunctive mood in the subordinate verb and *si* in the subordinate clause are respectively necessary, as in (16a) and (16b), to mark the original imperative or interrogative status. Without such markings, the original unmarked declarative status is represented, as in (14b), and it is repeated in (16c).

- (16) a. Dice                    que vayas                    a comer.  
           say:PRES:3:SG that go:SUBJ:2:SG to eat  
           ‘He/she is telling you to come and eat’
- b. Dice                    que si                    vas                    a comer.  
           say:PRES:3:SG that whether go:SUBJ:2:SG to eat  
           ‘He/she is asking whether you are going to eat.’
- c. Dice                    que viene Juan  
           say:PRES:3:SG that comes Juan  
           ‘He/she says that Juan is coming.’

In addition, there is no possible morphological marking for a third-person imperative: *que* plus subjunctive is mandatory. Compare Lyoubi’s (1996) analysis of a similar difference in Arabic between second-person imperative (with its own morphologically marked verb form, *?uktub* ‘write!’), versus the third-person form, *liyaktub* ‘let him write!’) with a verb morphology similar to the present tense, *yaktubu* ‘he writes’), except for the final vowel, plus a preceding “particule de type de phrase” *li*, in terms of Moutaouakil. According to Wehr (1961), *li* is a “conj.[unction] with the subjunctive”; “(with apoc.[opated verb form]) expressing an order, an invitation: *li-yaktub* he shall write”.

Instead of modification processes, examples in (16) show various sentence structures that organize both the internal structure of one event, namely the one where someone says something already said before, and the relation of the event to others in the discourse, in (1), (5), and (14a). In the latter case, sentence initial *que* links the sentence to the previous sentence (as repeated instances) or to an information introduced in the discourse representation. The discourse structure thus coincides with some of the internal properties of the linked sentences. This is also the case for basic illocutions or sentence types: they are to be derived from the properties of the sentence itself, as a part of the sentence structure, rather than being added to it as a higher level (or outer layer) component or operator, as Risselada (1993: 78) points out.

There is an “information-management” level, but it is not pragmatic in nature (see Garrido 1994). It results from the discourse structure itself, from the way the grammar accounts for the linking strategies of discourse structures in various text types. It has to do with the way the speaker (or writer) stages the information, following a *principle of connection*: Every unit requires additional information in order to be connected to the other ones. The speaker not only designs each sentence, but also the way it fits into its context, that is, into the wider discourse structure. Thus context is given, and it is calculated by the speaker, contrary to the relevance account by Sperber and Wilson (1986: 142). The actual hearer has to find this additional information, either in preceding sentences, in preceding discourse structures, or he has to build it into the expression in the only way that the wording demands it and accepts it (that is, the way it has been designed by the speaker, when communication succeeds).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Sentence-initial Spanish *que* may be analyzed in terms of a two-step model, where the grammar accounts for the sentence type and a pragmatic component deals with their emphatic nature. But sentence-initial *que* in those expressions has been shown to stand in relation with both their inner structure and what has been described as their outer, discourse connection. *Que* keeps some of its otherwise subordinating properties, in terms of its relation to the subjunctive mood or to *si*, but it no longer heads a dependent clause. It is therefore proposed that it belongs to the grammar and it functions as a discourse connective, linking the sentence to a preceding one, within a wider discourse structure. This amounts to extending the grammar beyond the sentence, so that that discourse structures are recursively put together following grammatical patterns, up to text structure.

#### NOTES

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