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Syntax: A Functional-Typological Introduction II
by Talmy Givón. Philadelphia: John Benjamins 1990.

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Syntax: Volume II is the second book in Givon's two-volume morphological and syntactic survey of language from a functional perspective. (For a review of the first volume, see Heath, 1986) As a functionally-oriented grammarian, Givón concerns himself not with formal syntax but with the systematic uses to which constructions are put. Syntax is for him functional in a strong sense: the form of language is claimed to be a direct reflection of users' communicative needs at all levels of analysis. While the heavily English-oriented second volume may be read independently of the first, some grounding is in order. For Givón, the levels of analysis appropriate to syntax are the discourse-pragmatic, the propositional-semantic, the lexical-semantic and the phrasal-semantic; the four have individual requirements which occasionally conflict. To understand syntax is to understand these levels and the conflicts among them. Knowledge of diachronic change is also essential to a proper understanding of structure.

Chapter 12, the opening chapter, deals with the coherence of noun phrases (NPs). The order of pre- and post-nominal modifiers is held to be determined on a scale of relevance as in Bybee (1985); there is a partial parallel to the placement of complements and adjuncts in formal approaches. Elements of NPs tend to be contiguous rather than scattered through a clause for iconic reasons, to preserve functional unity. Conjunction of NPs is limited to NPs of equal thematic status with similar case roles. "Separate events will tend to be encoded by separate clauses" (p. 488); a fairly detailed section illustrates the "pragmatic-cognitive" difficulties of this phenomenon. In a section on nominalization of clauses, a scalar order of nominal-like phrases is presented, with *for-to* clauses at the bottom and the *enemy's destruction of the city*-type nominals at the top. Exactly what this would mean in syntactic terms (e.g., the inability of infinitives to serve well as the subjects of yes-no questions) is not addressed.

Chapter 13 deals with verbal complementation, investigating the semantic nature of the relationship between main and embedded

clauses. The chapter illustrates what are seen as weaker semantic bonds with cognition-utterance ('know') verbs compared to the successively tighter bonds with manipulative ('order') and temporal aspect ('finish') types. The relative strength of bond is reflected in the syntax, attesting to the latter's iconicity. The more loosely bound a main verb is to its dependent clause, the more likely the presence of a complementizer; how this squares with missing 'that' in English bridge clauses (*I said he's here*) is unclear.

Chapter 14 covers voice and detransitivization. A systematic comparison is made of active/passive/antipassive/reflexive with regard to topicality, case marking, promotion, and demotion. The need for semantic marking of passive topics conflicts with the requirement for pragmatic marking, creating a 'functional bind' for the morphology; this bind is treated in greater detail in Volume I.

Most types of relative clauses are treated in Chapter 15. Restrictives and nonrestrictives are contrasted with respect to their position in the higher clause, marking of verbal elements, use of relative pronouns, presence of gaps vs. resumptives, and word order. Sections on clausal extraposition, the Complex Noun Phrase Constraint (CNPC), and center embedding underscore the gulf between the formal approaches and Givon's functional approach: the CNPC is seen here as a limit which is probably based on physical distance rather than on constituent structure alone (cf. Newmeyer's (1983) discussion of Givón (1979) on this point).

The next two chapters treat contrastive focus and marked topic constructions. Much space is devoted to illustrating what is presented at the end of Chapter 16 as the "preposed order principle," according to which less predictable but more important information is viewed as "more likely to be placed earlier in the clause" when placed in the context of precessing and memory (p. 737). Exceptions (such as pseudoclefted NPs and determiner-noun order) abound, but are not addressed as counterexamples. In a natural continuation, Chapter 17 deals with marked topics including shifted datives (viewed as topic promotions) and raising constructions. Raising to object, now a relic in generative theory, is argued also to be a case of topic promotion. Without a true raising rule, however, the chameleon-like nature of belief-type objects could be reinterpreted as a case of closer event integration of the lower with the higher clause.

Chapter 18 is an overly cursory treatment of non-declarative sentence types. These types are, as often is the case with types in Givon's work, placed on a continuum with prototype peaks.

The lengthy Chapter 19, "Interclausal Coherence," covers the relations between adverbial and main clauses, coordinate clauses, and larger discourse units. The links among such units are argued to be looser than those between main and complement clauses. Semantic evidence is a greater freedom to break continuity links; syntactic evidence lies in intonational contours and the ability of adverb clauses to prepose, thereby effecting higher topical status. Participial clauses are seen as more or less integrated, depending on their type. Introducing yet another scale, Givón redefines "finite" as a complex of features including tense-aspect-modality, agreement, and other (including nominal) affixes. There is also a long section on clause-chaining and typology.

Chapter 20, "The Grammar of Referential Coherence: A Cognitive Reinterpretation," might have been more fitting as an opening chapter of the book. Grammar is reinterpreted "as mental processing instructions" (p. 894) and Givón promises testable hypotheses based on domains outside grammar, though we are largely left without a clear means to test for the derivative status of grammar. The "mental proposition" is the basic unit of stored information, but since discourse is multi-propositional and shared, grounding is necessary. New propositions are viewed as a felicitous combination of old and new information, with the former serving to ground and the latter serving to move the discourse along. Grounding is based in grammatical devices which code referentiality and definiteness; thematic coherence across clauses is established primarily by the "grammar of topicality" (the establishment of topics using mainly nominal arguments as signals). "Coherent discourse is characterized by equi-topic clause chains" (p. 902). There is an attempt to underpin the notion of referential coherence in cognitive terms; definite vs. indefinite NPs and lexical vs. pronominal NPs are reinterpreted in terms of "active vs. existing memory files" and "short- vs. long-term memory searches."

The final chapter explores the concepts of markedness and iconicity in syntax. Markedness is seen as a function not only of relative structural complexity and frequency but also of cognitive complexity, the last being defined in terms of "attention, mental effort or processing time" (p. 947). Canonical declaratives are seen as the unmarked type; the prevalence of non-declarative manipulatives in early child speech is seen as an evolutionary throwback to stages when such clauses were unmarked. Markedness scales for nouns and verbs with respect to affixes and referentiality are a carryover from Givon's longer treatments in Volume I.

Autonomous syntax is here repudiated much as it is in Givón 1984. Three "iconic coding principles" are set, two of them clearly morphosyntactic. The "quantity principle" gives the larger, less predictable, and more important information a larger "chunk of code" or more "coding material" (969). How the terms *'important'* and *'predictable'* are operationally defined and how the three might be collectively measured in their interaction is not explained. The "proximity principle" places "functionally, conceptually, or cognitively" similar "entitites" closer together in the sentence, as evidenced in the relative syntactic integration of two clauses (cf. Chapter 13) and the relatively non-scattered nature of elements of phrases within clauses (cf. Chapter 12). The "linear order principle" places clauses in connected discourse in sequential order in unmarked cases. What is non-iconic in syntax is held to combine with the iconic so as to "reinforce" the latter. In the final section, there is an attempt to ground iconicity in biology with arguments from genetics and animal communication.

In a general way, the sequencing from the beginning of the first volume to the end of the second involves a movement from smaller-scale phenomena (e.g., case marking, tense-aspect-modality, agreement) to large units of language that extend beyond syntax in the usual sense. As the sequence proceeds, the case for a functional approach seems to grow roughly with the size of the unit examined. The larger the unit, the more the syntactic choices for the user of language, and where genuine options exist, the investigator can study the contexts for the choices. Givón is at his most plausible in reporting the high likelihood of referential continuity across *and*-clauses as compared to *but*-clauses (Chapter 19) or on the pragmatics of marked topic constructions, where a systematic comparison of discourse anaphors, dislocated and other NPs is made with regard to referential distance from like material. The repeated references to the fact that speakers make syntactic choices rings far truer here than in Volume I, where the more basic elements of syntax discussed are simply given by the grammar; one can reasonably choose to cleft, but one cannot dictate the form a cleft will take. Here the two senses of functionalism are confused: one is the functionalism of day-to-day usage, the other the alleged functionalism of linguistic evolution. It is possible to accept the one without completely accepting the other.

If this volume (and the first) purported to be concerned with the discourse functions of syntactic constructions, it would be easier to accept on the whole. The fact that it attempts to treat syntax as an essentially discourse-grounded phenomenon makes it harder to

accept. Formal relations are a ghost in Givon's machine; yet the existence of formal, less plainly iconic phenomena is implicitly suggested throughout the book. If *She is believed to be a crook* is an example of topic promotion from the embedded clause, then **She is believed [ ] is a crook* ought also to be possible; it is not, but in this framework we have no apparent means of determining why. The fact that that clauses are less referentially integrated than infinitives does not really solve the problem because one may topicalize from either an infinitive or a complement clause. Similarly, Givon's pervasive use of scalarity would seem to predict more of a continuum of word order possibilities than actually exists; focusing may be an initial (*Him I dislike*), medial (*It's him I dislike*), or final (*I dislike him, but I like her*) option, but the medial **I him dislike* is disallowed for unexplained reasons. Surely such a sentence is more than merely pragmatically inefficient. In the first volume constraints are said to exist (1984: 36), but it is not clear that they are ever explicitly elaborated. In fact, we do not know exactly what they are constraints on. In general, we do not learn how functional considerations alone can really predict the form that a given language will take or be prevented from taking.

The term "functional grammar" means different things to different people. (For a review of these different meanings, see Tomlin 1990.) If researchers seek correlations between particular structural types and particular discourse functions, that is a relatively modest goal. If one seeks to render formal syntactic theory superfluous, that is a much more ambitious goal, and one which may not be feasible (cf. Newmeyer 1983: 119ff.). At any rate, one needs a fully developed theory of discourse requirements which exists independently of grammar, as well as a method of mapping function onto structure, and a means of accounting for counterexamples, in order to successfully derive syntax from the theory. An attempt to show that a specific construction is configured in a particular way simply because that is the most functional way for it to be configured must show independently that some other arrangement would not be equally functional. In the second-to-last chapter, Givón does actually begin to do this by linking grammar to cognitive principles, but the discussion remains quite speculative.

A more modest goal for a functional grammar is worthy in spite of being modest. It is worthwhile, for example, for second-language teachers to know more than simply how wh-clefts are formed; it is worthwhile to know what they do, and for this purpose a functional complement to traditional or formal grammar is useful.

This complement need not seek a discourse function for every aspect of syntactic structure; even if the search were successful, it is not certain what role some facts (e.g., "aspect before tense") could play in teaching. Many of the areas treated in *Syntax: Volume* II do seem relevant in just this respect, in particular speech acts, contrastive focus, interclausal coherence, and generally all areas which deal with topicality. Overall, however, this volume does not quite fit the description of a book fulfilling the more modest goal. Perhaps no existing book does, though Dik (1989) and Halliday (1985) seem to come closer.

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