

## Writing interactional organization into a grammar

Keeping the balance between describing language in its own terms vs. following an external grid of functional categories, imposed by analyses of better-known languages and prevalent theoretical approaches, is a common problem for grammar writers. This contribution aims to discuss the challenges of expanding the methodological framework by incorporating interaction-organizing categories into the grammatical description.

Attention management is a core function of language, especially in face-to-face settings (Evans et al. 2018). Interactional demands are also known to be a central organizing principle of grammar (e.g. Auer 2005; Hopper 2011). It can thus be expected that many apparent grammatical parallels are by-products of shared principles of e.g. turn-management and attention-drawing. And yet, rarely do the grammatical correlates of interactional organization and of attention management find their way to reference grammars. Neither do grammarians nor typologists expect to have referential grammatical categories (in terms of Silverstein 1976), directly contributing to truth-values of utterances, described in terms of attention management, which traditionally belongs to the domain of pragmatics. How should we adapt grammar writing principles considering not only that interactional functions are a core organizing principle of everyday language use and are pivotal for the grammatical polysemy, but even more so, that they can serve as a basis of cross-linguistic comparison?

In the current state of research, the view that grammatical organisation extends beyond the sentence-level domain has nearly reached a consensus. However, interactional studies also often find that phenomena traditionally regarded as belonging to the sentence-domain can be better analysed from the supra-sentential, interaction-oriented perspective. For instance, studies of “wh-clefts” in English, German, Hebrew and Japanese find that the initial wh-clause alone is a structure used to announce a multi-unit turn while foreshadowing the speaker’s goal (Hopper and Thompson 2008; Günthner 2011; Maschler and Fishman 2020; Mori 2014). Such analyses capture a broader array of language-specific facts that syntactic analyses oriented at Information Structure. Moreover, they open the way for a typological comparison of interactional devices related to turn-management. However, this availability of comparable interactional analyses is rather an exception. Interactional findings often appear as language-specific and idiosyncratic and defy a straightforward incorporation into a typological research. It thus remains unclear whether and how to include interactional analyses of “traditional” phenomena in the grammar.

Let us consider an example from Mano, a Southern Mande language: its marker *lé* is used in a number of functions, including: 1) presentative copula, 2) relativization marker, 3) focus marker, 4) question marker, 5) narrative linking device. In a traditional grammar, all these functions would belong to distinct chapters on predication, complex clauses, information structure, illocutionary acts, and discourse organisation, respectively. The relationship between presentatives, focusing, relativisation and questions is actually well-known cross-linguistically, in what is traditionally analysed as “cleft structures”. The cleft-based view could also be partially applied for the Mano data. We argue however that these functions are epiphenomenal and derive from a more basic function of interactional organization of attention management.

This set of functions can in turn be compared with “emphatic particles” in some South-East Asian languages (e.g. Burmese). These particles exhibit both discourse-organizing and information-structuring functions, which can be jointly captured by interactional accounts of intersubjective alignment. And yet, in the current state of research, such analyses cannot be easily fitted into a grammar. They must be additionally bridged with the currently operable albeit epiphenomenally related concepts, such as relativisation, focus, cleft, or “narrative marker”, obscuring the nature of the discussed phenomena and the typological parallelism.

### Mano examples:

- (1) à kē sèlè diè lḗ bē.  
3SG do village:CSTR INT ATTN DEM  
'(Lying, we do too much of it), but here is the very village of its doing.'
- (2) ηwó lḗ è ī kè ē bāá yí d5?  
problem ATTN 3SG.SBJV 2SG do:IPFV DEM 2SG.NEG>3SG interior know  
'The problem that is happening to you, don't you know it?'
- (3) ηwó gáa lḗ ñ gèē wē  
problem strong ATTN 1SG.SBJV>3SG say:IPFV DEM  
'I am speaking SERIOUSLY (lit.: it is a serious thing that I am saying)'
- (4) dēñ mià lḗ dī?  
who person:CSTR ATTN there  
'Who are the people there?'
- (5) lḗ wā wóó wā wóó  
ATTN 3PL.PST>3SG pick.up 3PL.PST>3SG pick.up  
'And so they collected and collected it...'

### References:

- Auer, Peter. 2005. "Projection in Interaction and Projection in Grammar." *Text* 25 (1): 7–36.
- Evans, Nicholas, Henrik Bergqvist, and Lila San Roque. 2018. "The Grammar of Engagement I: Framework and Initial Exemplification." *Language and Cognition* 10 (1): 110–40.
- Günthner, Susanne. 2011. "Between Emergence and Sedimentation: Projecting Constructions in German Interactions." In *Constructions: Emerging and Emergent*, edited by Peter Auer and Stefan Pfänder, 156–85. Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter.
- Hopper, Paul J. 2011. "Emergent Grammar and Temporality in Interactional Linguistics." In *Constructions: Emerging and Emergent*, edited by Peter Auer and Stefan Pfänder, 22–44. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.
- Hopper, Paul J., and Sandra A. Thompson. 2008. "Projectability and Clause Combining in Interaction." In *Typological Studies in Language*, edited by Ritva Laury, 80:99–123. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/tsl.80.06hop>.
- Maschler, Yael, and Stav Fishman. 2020. "From Multi-Clausality to Discourse Markerhood: The Hebrew Ma She- 'What That' Construction in Pseudo-Cleft-like Structures." *Journal of Pragmatics* 159 (April): 73–97.
- Mori, Junko. 2014. "The Re-Examination of so-Called 'Clefts': A Study of Multiunit Turns in Japanese ;Talk-in-Interaction." In *Usage-Based Approaches to Japanese Grammar*, edited by Kaori Kabata and Tsuyoshi Ono, 193–222. Studies in Language Companion Series 156. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Silverstein, Michael. 1976. Shifters, linguistic categories and cultural description. In Keith H. Basso & Henry A. Selby (eds.), *Meaning in Anthropology*, 11–55. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.