THE STANCE OF SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS AMONGST FUNCTIONAL(IST) THEORIES OF LANGUAGE AND ITS ‘SYSTEMIC’ PURPOSE

The purpose of my paper is to question the place of Systemic Functional Linguistics against two different backgrounds

▪ one the one hand in the history of functional theories of language

▪ and in the other hand in relation to the concept of “system” / “systemicity” as developed in von Bertalanffy’s General System Theory or systemics.

The first section shall be devoted to an overview of nine decades of functional theories of language.

Three periods are to be distinguished: first from the twenties to the sixties of the 20th century with four main centers of research in Prague, Vienna, Geneva and Paris; then the period of the seventies and eighties with a displacement of the main poles from Prague and Paris towards London, Amsterdam, Buffalo and the US West Coast; and finally from the nineties to 2014 with a wide spreading of research topics which pertain either to the realm of internal (or structural) theories or that of external (or non structural) theories of linguistic functionalism.

In the second section we shall investigate the stance of systemic functional linguistics amongst structural functional language theories, first identifying the spectrum of present linguistic functionalism and second focusing on so called structural-functional theories that is SFL, the Dutch FG and RRG.

And in the third section we shall explore the systemic ambition of SLF, first by questioning the systemicity of the views of Saussure and his successors in diverse structuralist schools (Hjelmslev’s glossemics, Lamb’s stratificational grammar and Mel’cuk’s meaning-text theory), then by evoking the General System theory in its relationship to cybernetics, and finally by pointing to the genesis of linguistic systems in the theory of emergent grammar.

Please notice that the PDF file projected here is available and downloadable at following page of my site: http://www.interlingua.fr/accueil/actualites/
1. NINE DECADES OF FUNCTIONAL(IST) THEORIES OF LANGUAGE (1929-2014)

1.1. From the twenties to the sixties of the 20ty century

The first functionally oriented linguistic theories seem to appear in the twenties of the 20th century with on the one hand the so-called “thèses du cercle de Prague” in 1929 and in the same year the anticipatory work of the Swiss linguist Henri Frei entitled *La grammaire des fautes* with a very explicit sub-title: *Introduction à la linguistique fonctionnelle, assimilation et différenciation, brièveté et invariabilité, expressivité* [The grammar of failure: introduction to a functional linguistics, assimilation and diversification, brevity and invariability, expressivity].

In the next decade, three linguists firmly establish the domain of functional linguistics in three rather different directions:

- first Karl Bühler, a pioneering psycholinguist at the university of Vienna with his *Sprachtheorie* in 1934 which sets down the foundations of linguistic pragmatics,

- then Charles Bally, former colleague of Ferdinand de Saussure in Geneva with *Linguistique générale et linguistique française* (1936) which develops the notion of ‘functionally equivalent expressions’ in every language (the topic of ‘internal linguistics’) and between languages (that of ‘external linguistics’),

- and Nicolaï Troubetzkoy in Prag with the groundbreaking *Principles of phonology* (1939)

In the fifties, they were followed by three influential linguists interested in language comparison and evolution, namely

- Roman Jakobson, first in Prag and from the forties on in Harvard, studying child language and aphasia from the point of view of functional phonology (1941) and developing a linguistic theory of translation – (1959),

- André Martinet, author in 1955 of *L’économie des changements phonétiques* [The economy of sound changes] following Troubetzkoy’s functional phonology (then in New-York and in the sixties in Paris),

- and Eugenio Coseriu, teaching in Montevideo and from the sixties on in Tübingen, proponent of a functional view of grammar diverging from Saussure’s doxa by introducing the concept of (usage) norm between
system and speech (1952) and rehabilitating the study of the evolution of language structures between synchronic stages (1958).

Details about the diachronic views of Martinet in phonology and Coseriu in morphosyntax and semantics may be found in my paper *Functionalist views on the genesis and development of grammar* presented at the 25th European Systemic Functional Linguistics Conference in Paris last summer (see the electronic address in the bibliography).

**1.2. In the seventies and eighties**

This second period is characterized by the developing study of the functional structure of the sentence in Prag by Jan Firbas and Peter Sgall, whose conclusions about the distribution of theme, rheme, topic and focus becomes a significant part of Simon Dik’s *Theory of Functional Grammar* in Amsterdam (1978, 1989) and are later best theorized in the work of Knud Lambrecht, *Information structure and Sentence Form* in 1996.

At the same time Martinet develops in Paris his conception of functional syntax (1975), whereas Michael Halliday publishes in 1973 his *Explorations in the functions of language* soon followed by his seminal work on syntax at the text level, *Cohesion in English* (in 1976 together with Rakiya Hasan).

Two years later Simon Dik publishes in 1978 the first outline of his *Functional Grammar*, thus founding the Dutch School of Functional Grammar whose views are soon disseminated through the Benjamins *Functional Grammar Series* and the Amsterdam *Working Papers in Functional Grammar*. Some years later, in 1984, William Foley and Robert van Valin set down the foundation of Role and Reference Grammar in their work *Functional Syntax and Universal Grammar*.

Meanwhile Christian Lehmann, who is then the main collaborator of Hansjakob Seiler in the research team UNITYP (Language Universals and Typology) in Cologne writes down in 1982 his *Thoughts on grammaticalization*, a crucial milestone in the genesis of external (or non structural) linguistic functionalism whose main proponent in Germany is to be Bernd Heine in the next decade.

In 1979 Talmy Givon had noticed in *Understanding grammar* that morphology is settled syntax, a view already suggested by Franz Bopp, the main founder of the comparative grammar of indo-european languages in the first half of 19th century in his so-called “agglutination theory” (see François 2015). And 5 years later Givon establishes the founding principles of the functional typology of languages in his *Syntax : A Functional Typological Introduction* in two volumes (1984-1900) followed by a fully revised second edition in the next decade.
1.3. From the nineties to 2014 : Internal vs. external functionalist theories of language

The last decade of the 20th century is the most exciting for the simultaneous strengthening of internal (or structural) functionalism mostly in Europe and the blossoming of external (or non structural) functionalism mostly at the US West Coast and in Germany.

This period is marked by the publication of the second edition of Michael Halliday’s Introduction to Functional Grammar (First ed. 1985) for SFL, of Kees Hengeveld’s Non-verbal predication in 1992, a milestone in functional typology of languages in the FG vein together with the posthumous publication by the same Hengeveld of the second volume of Dik’s Theory of Functional Grammar in 1997, and for RRG by the publication of van Valin’s Advances in RRG and especially of Syntax : Structure, Meaning, and Function together with Randy LaPolla in 1997, that became soon the bible of the emerging community of RRG researchers centered in Buffalo.

Concerning the external vein of linguistic functionalism Hansjakob Seiler publishes in 1991 together with Walter Premper a crucial work devoted to the dimension of participation which explains how every language organizes the predicate frames (or argument structures) as the result of the competition and cooperation of linguistic and extraneous pressures, whereas his younger colleague in Cologne, Bernd Heine begins a tour of The Cognitive Foundations of Grammar (title of one of his books, 1997a) with studies about auxiliarization in 1973 and the grammatical expression of possession in 1997.

A the same time (more exactly from 1986 on) Construction Grammars (by Charles Fillmore and Paul Kay, George Lakoff, Adele Goldberg, William Croft, etc.) and Usage based theories of language (by Ronald Langacker, Bryan MacWhinney, Joan Bybee, etc.) flourish in the USA, especially at the West Coast universities.

A crucial publication at the beginning of the new millenium, in 2003, is Chris Butler’s Structure and Function – A guide to three major structural-functional theories in two volumes, the first devoted to the SFL, FG and RRG Approaches to the simplex clause, and the second to the complex stentence, the discourse dimension and the high or low integration of psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic aspects. The ambitious comparison of Butler is soon reinforced by the publication of the third edition in 2004 and the fourth in 2014 of Halliday’s Introduction to Functional Grammar, from then on in collaboration with Christian Matthiessen, by that of Kees Hengeveld’s and Lachlan MacKenzie’s Functional Discourse Grammar in 2008 and by Robert van Valin’s Exploring the syntax-semantics interface in 2006. And conversely these works urge Butler, together with Francisco Gonzalvez-Garcia to the publication last year of Exploring Functional-Cognitive Space, a work exploiting a questionnaire submitted to all the major representatives of functional linguistics about the modelling of language systems.
by universal cognitive features and thus exploring the overlapping and affinity between the functional typology of language on the one hand and cognitive linguistics on the other hand.

Concerning the diachronic and typological orientation of external functionalism, **Bernd Heine** publishes in 2002 together with **Tania Kuteva** a *Word Atlas of Grammaticalization* that summarizes two decades of research on that topic across hundreds of languages, and in 2011 Heine edits in collaboration with **Heiko Narrog** a state of the art with their *Oxford Handbook of Grammaticalization* based on the bewildering work of Paul Hopper, Elisabeth Traugott, Talmy Givon, Joan Bybee, Wiliam Croft, etc.

2. **THE STANCE OF SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS AMONGST STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONAL LANGUAGE THEORIES**

2.1. The spectrum of present linguistic functionalism

The following figure summarizes the present outcome of the story of linguistic functionalism I reported in Section 1. Nowadays, the spectrum of functional theories of grammar and language includes three major structural theories and two major non structural theories.


2.2. Structural-functional theories

Now it is time to enter these various theoretical frameworks for identifying the domains of investigation they favor and those they presently neglect. Butler (2003) is the main reference for that multilevel comparison. The next figure is intended to compare first SFL and Dutch FG with its recent development as FDG.
In SLF syntax, discourse or text and social background are overrepresented, and cognition, typology and diachrony underrepresented. In FG, semantics and typology are overrepresented, and in FDG discourse organization, whereas syntax, diachrony and society are underrepresented. Thus the profile of both theories is quite different. For instance in SFL syntax appears to prevail against semantics whereas in FG semantics (including linguistic pragmatics) is pre-eminent, almost omnipotent. And the social background is neglected in FG while this is a significant factor of systemization in SFL.

According to Dirk Geeraerts emphasizes that distinctic feature of SFL:

"Within the group of functionalist frameworks, Systemic Functional Linguistics is the one that most distinctly follows up on this SOCIAL CONCEPTION OF LANGUAGE. Thinking about language in social, interactional terms suggests that the systemic descriptive and theoretical framework might be particularly suited for socially oriented types of linguistic investigation (D. Geeraerts, 2010).

And concerning RRG, syntax and semantics are there investigated in mutual relation and typology is a primary concern, whereas discourse organisation, diachony and social dimension are underrepresented.

3. SFL, PARALLEL ARCHITECTURE AND COGNITIVE GRAMMAR IN CONTRAST

The ambition of ‘systemicity’ in SFL may be appreciated only by comparing it to other theories that aim for systemicity too insofar as they focus on the linking between expression and content (in Hjemslev’s terminology) or between syntax and semantics, namely Ray Jackendoff’s theory of Parallel Architecture (1997, 2002) and Ronald Langacker’s theory of Cognitive Grammar (2008).

The main difference between the two former views is that for SFL (see Halliday & Matthiessen 2004, 2014), the whole linguistic apparatus builds a continuous hypersystem from phonemes to textemes, whereas Jackendoff extends the generative principle beyond the syntax upstream to phonology and downstream to conceptual semantics in the form of three generators operating in parallel, yielding a Parallel Architecture.

The difference between these two views and that of Cognitive Grammar is that according to Langacker the structures of human cognition ‘inform’ the grammar. In this conception, the challenge consists in accounting for the diversity of the world languages despite the universal cognitive features permeating every grammar.

For, as Talmy Givon understines it (see 1995 : 439-443), the construal of a protolanguage is facilitated by iconicity, but conversely arbitrary linguistic signs are crucial for elaborating language structures having the power to free the working memory of the interlocutors and thus to allow a fast and effective communication.
But the three theories share a negative feature, namely their trifling involvement in the study of language dynamics. Actually Halliday & Matthiesssen (2004:46sq) evoke the topic of grammaticalization that they propose to deal with at three levels

a) that of language acquisition (ontogenetic time)

b) that of the evolution of language faculty (phylogenetic time) that they regard as unattainable for the linguist, and

c) that of the discourse flow (logogenetic time), an original view but apparently restricted to the study of event anaphora (see 2004, chap.X).

And the authors conclude (p47):

“So when we talk of the ‘system’ of language, as the underlying potential that is instantiated in the form of text, we are in effect theorizing a language as the outcome of ongoing grammaticalization in all these three dimensions of time.”

As for Jackendoff, he actually deals with the phylogenetic dimension suggested by Halliday & Matthiessen (see 2002:231-266) and this exploration leads in 2005 to a decisive article of Jackendoff together with Steven Pinker as a reply to that of Hauser, Chomsky and Fitch in 2002 trying to distinguish between Broad and Narrow Language Faculty, but he explores the dynamics of language only in his work on the emergence of ‘Constructions’ (see Jackendoff & Goldberg’s paper in 2004 about the so-called family of resultative constructions in English).

3.1. “System” in SFL

Halliday & Matthiessen (2004:20) draw five dimensions of language:

▶ Structures on the syntagmatic axis, hierarchized in a series of levels;

▶ Systems on the paradigmatic axis, categorized according to their delicacy with on the one hand the closed system of grammar and one the other hand the open system of lexis;

▶ Stratifications, with various sorts of fulfillment (semantic, lexico-grammatical, phonological or phonetical);

▶ Instantiations, specifying instances, types or potentials; and
> METAFUNCTIONS, categorized as ideational, interpersonal or textual.

Their ambitious figure 1-6 entitled The dimensions of language, p.21, see p.10) aims at perspectivizing these five dimensions. The two dimensions 1 (structure) and 2 (system) feature in the “lexico-grammatical” square in the right bottom area. That square is reduplicated in the left bottom area (dimension 3 : stratification) with a first extension on the vertical axis with semantics, phonology and phonetics, and a second extension on the horizontal axis with the text level (dimension 5 : metafunction). Lastly the dimension 4 (instantiation, erroneously numbered as 1) contributes to perspectivizing the hole architecture by distinguishing the three levels of potential, type and instance.

And the authors add a commentary which shall turn out to be crucial for comparing their point of view with those of Jackendoff and Langacker:

video 9

(...) all these compositional hierarchies are ultimately variants of a single motif: the organization of meaning in the grammar. As the language has evolved, they have drifted apart (as will tend to happen in the history of every language); but traces of their equivalence remain (e.g. tone group : sub-sentence : line : clause). When we come to analyse the grammar, we find that the structure of each unit is an organic configuration so that each part has a distinctive function with respect to the whole; and that some units may form complexes, iterative sequences working together as a single part. Grammar is the central processing unit of language, the powerhouse where meanings are created; it is natural that the systems of sound and of writing through which these meanings are expressed should reflect the structural arrangement of the grammar. They cannot, obviously, copy the functional configurations; but they do maintain the grammatical principle that units of different rank construe patterns of different kinds (2004 : 21-22).

video 10

For Halliday, the information structure of the sentence is a major concern – following the theory of the “functional sentence perspective” of Firbas and Sgall – and by integrating the ideational, interpersonalans textual dimensions, SFL excludes any bordary line between semantics and pragmatics, unlike Jackendoff’s “Parallel Architecture”, because Jackendoff agrees with Chomsky’s restrictive view of linguistics as exploration of language competence and leaving that of language performance to the researchers in functional grammar, discourse analysis and sociolinguistics.

Jackendoff set the foundations of his theory in 1983 (Semantics and Cognition) by introducing a semantic generator beside the syntactic one. He entitled “X-bar semantics” that bigenerative architecture in 1990 (Semantic Structures) and completed it in 1997 (The Architecture of the Language Faculty) by adjoining a third phonological generator. The following figure borrowed from his work of 2002, Foundations of Language, delivers the three “integrative processors”, interrelated through three internal interfaces between phonological, syntactic and conceptual structures. By mentioning the place of working memory and introducing dynamic external interfaces from audition, to vocalization and to perception and action, Jackendoff aims at implementing the parallel grammar as a “processing architecture”

One major difference between the Parallel Architecture and Cognitive Grammar is following : on the one hand Jackendoff designs a priori relations of mutual information between the three generative components (phonology, syntax and conceptual semantics) and on the other hand Langeckers conveys of the lexico-grammatical system as essentially informed from universal cognitive structures, like those of spatiality, temporality, subjectivation or energy transfer modelling the systems of semantic roles, etc.)

3.3. Back to the structuration of the “systems” in SFL

In relation to the “integrative processors” of Jackendoff’s Parallel Architecture, one must notice that the ‘systems’ of SFL turn out to be generative processors as well. But they do not operate on the syntagmatic axis as in generative syntax (with A rewritten as B + C) but on the paradigmatic axis (with A specified as either B or C). For instance, the system of Polarity (a functional and not a syntactic category)

may be reformulated as rules of alternating specification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. polarity</th>
<th>positive</th>
<th>negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2. negative polarity [type]</td>
<td>generalized</td>
<td>specialized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2. negative polarity [specialized type]</td>
<td>[NP-function] &amp; [Clause-function]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2.1 negative polarity [specialized type] [NP-function]</td>
<td>deictic</td>
<td>thing-person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2.2. negative polarity [specialized type] [Clause-function]</td>
<td>in participation</td>
<td>in circumstance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As suggested by the combinatorial notations am, an, bm and bn, the functional category of Polarity has various instantiations across different places in the general lexico-grammatical system. The main ‘systemic’ feature of SFL is therefore the purpose to elaborate graphs devoted to the progressive
specification of major functional categories whose instantiations are conceived of as lexical or morphosyntactic.

3.4. Langacker’s lexico-grammatical systems as reflexes of perceptual and cognitive systems

In his bewildering work of linguistic metatheory, *Structure and Function*, Chris Butler (2002:56-57) defines Cognitive Grammar as

(i) a usage-based theory (like other *Construction Grammars*)

(ii) viewing human language as a communication tool (like all functional grammars)

(iii) regarding communication devices like metaphor as crucial (unlike most functional grammars, but like Lakoff’s Construction Grammar)

(iv) rejecting the autonomy of the language system (like Jackendoff),

(v) postulating cognitive motivations (as in Hopper’s “emergent grammar”)

(vi) and conceiving of syntax as a symbolic link between semantic and phonology (like Jackendoff).

In short, Langacker views Cognitive Grammar as construing differentiated lexico-grammatical systems from universal cognitive features by weighting crosscultural preferences.

As an illustration one may mention the two main ways of syntactically combining a motion and a change of place caused by that motion according to Talmy (1985). Romance languages pick up as finite verb the predicate conveying the caused change of place and express the causing motion as a gerundive or a prepositional phrase (for ex. fr. *Paul a traversé la Manche en nageant / à la nage*).

Conversely German languages, including English, pick up as finite verb the predicate of the causing motion and express the change of place with the means of a directional preposition or adverb (for ex. Engl. *Paul swam across the channel* ; Germ. *Paul schwam hinüber*). In this second instantiation a transitive expression is possible by incorporating the preposition in the morphological substance of the vb (for ex. Germ. *Paul durchschwamm den Kanal*).
4. FROM “SYSTEMIC” TO “SYSTEMICS”

4.1. The General System Theory of L. von Bertalanffy

In 1947 the biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy founded a new large “theory of everything”. He wrote [see the left column page 14]

“We postulate a new discipline called general system theory. General System theory is a logico-mathematical field whose task is the formulation and derivation of those general principles that are applicable to “systems” in general.” von Bertalanffy, 1947, 1955: reprinted in [Bertalanffy 1968, pp. 32, 253]"

As a matter of fact the birth of General System theory had to do with the success in the same time of Norbert Wiener’s new “cybernetics” (the general theory of government). The motivation of the two views was different: for Wiener it was the development of self-directing missiles during World War II and for Bertalanffy it was the modalization of the evolution of species following the so-called “New synthesis” merging Darwin’s natural selection and Mendel’s genetic inheritance in the thirties).

But the main common idea was that of homoeostasis (or more commonly of feedback loop) that is “the property of a system in which variables are regulated so that internal conditions remain stable and relatively constant” (Wikipedia). The whole excerpt in the right column borrowed from an article of 1972 in which Bertalanffy recalls the genesis of General System Theory or Systemics with regard to cybernetics merits wachfull reading:

“In the meantime a different development had taken place. Starting from the development of self-directing missiles, automation and computer technology, and inspired by Wiener’s work, the cybernetic movement became ever more influential. Although the starting point (technology versus basic science, especially biology) and the basic model (feedback circuit versus dynamic system of interactions) were different, there was a communality of interest in problems of organizations and teleological behavior. Cybernetics too challenged the “mechanistic“ conception that the universe was based on the “operation of anonymous particles at random” and emphasized “the search for new approaches, for new and more comprehensive concepts, and for methods capable of dealing with the large wholes of organisms and personalities”. Although is is incorrect to describe modern systems theory as “springing out of the last war effort” – in fact, it hat roots quite different from military hardware and related technological developments – cybernetics and related approaches were independent developments which showed many parallelisms with general system theory.” (Bertalanffy 1972 : 413-4)
4.2. Emerging linguistic systems

The crucial question is now if some present linguistic theories may be "systemic" in the sense of Bertalanffy's "systemics". Obviously, it is not the case with Systemic Functional Grammar, because SFG is a structural or internal theory of language functions in which external motivations or pressures able to shape the architecture of natural languages is not questioned.

Therefore we must pay attention to theories integrating such motivations, in other words external theories of language functions. At least two pioneers of that view are noteworthy, namely John DuBois with his paper of 1985 entitled Competing motivations in John Haymann Iconicity in syntax, and Paul Hopper with his contribution to the publications of the Berkeley Linguistic Society in 1987 entitled Emergent Grammar.

DuBois summarizes his view in Competing motivations in his homepage as follows:

A simple exchange of utterances between two speakers contains a virtual microcosm of meaning, structure, prosody, pragmatics, interpretation, interaction, cognition -- all the issues that linguists have found interesting enough to build disciplines and theories around.

Understanding the organization of complexity in language provides deep intellectual challenges. I find it interesting to ask how grammars coordinate different layers of function -- expressing semantic relations and managing information, for example -- as they co-exist and compete for control of the organization of linguistic structures, like the clause.

I see grammar as resolving competing motivations in systematic ways, thus driving the self-organization of grammatical systems and the emergence of complexity in linguistic structure -- a really exciting new perspective for linguistics today.

(Homepage http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/people/john-w-du-bois)

Please notice

- first the topic of "self-organization of grammatical systems" that obviously derives from the concept of feedback loop born in Wiener’s cybernetics and developed in Bertalanffy’s systemics;

- and then that the idea of competing and cooperating motivations has been exploited in a ranch of generative linguistics, the so-called "Optimality
Theory”, first in phonology and later in syntax (see Geraldine Legendre and Paul Smolensky’s “Harmonic Grammar” from 1990 on).

As to Paul HOPPER, he develops similar ideas in his paper of 1987 [page 16], I quote him:

I meant to suggest that structure, or regularity, comes out of discourse and is shaped by discourse as much as it shapes discourse in an on-going process.

Grammar is hence not to be understood as a pre-requisite for discourse, a prior possession attributable in identical form to both speaker and hearer. Its forms are not fixed templates, but are negotiable in face-to-face interaction in ways that reflect the individual speakers’ past experience of these forms, and their assessment of the present context, including especially their interlocutors, whose experiences and assessments may be quite different (...)

The notion of EMERGENCE is a pregnant one. It (...) takes the adjective EMERGENT seriously as a continual movement towards structure (...) a view of structure as always provisional, always negotiable, and in fact as epiphenomenal, that is, at least as much an effect as a cause. (p.142)

As a matter of fact, the concept of emergent grammar is not persuasive always and everywhere, but only in social configurations where strong innovative external pressures challenge weak conservative pressures. For instance, that is not the case in present French because the prestige of metropolitan French inhibits the influence of Belgian, Swiss, Canadian or African French, but it begins to be the case for English since there exist bilingual dictionaries of British vs. Singapurian English strongly influenced by Malay.

And it was obviously the case in the 5th ot 8th centuries in western Europe with the fast disintegration of spoken latine and the emergence of various Romances languages : French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Occitan, Catalan, Rheto-romance and at the eastern side Romanian.

Newmeyer (1999: 474) acknowledges the reality of functional motivations, but he does not conceive of them as able to directly fashioning linguistic structures. Therefore he disposes between motivations and structures a structural system shaped by these very motivations and conversely shaping these structures. This view is obviously persuasive when the conservative pressures successfully challenge the innovative and therefore disintegrating pressures.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion I regard SFG/SFL as being actually ‘systemic’ in the usual sense of structural linguistics.

But this view of SYSTEMICITY is irreconcilable with that of Bertalanffy’s SYSTEMICS or GENERAL SYSTEM THEORY, because Halliday’s view is a STRUCTURAL one, assuming that the linguist is concerned only by motivations inherent to the SEMIOTIC SYSTEM and not by motivations between this SEMIOTIC SYSTEM, the EMBODIED COGNITION and the EXTRANEOUS WORLD.


I recall as evidence in favour of that conclusion two extracts of DuBois and Hopper:

John DuBois

▶ I see grammar as resolving competing motivations in systematic ways, thus driving the self-organization of grammatical systems and the emergence of complexity in linguistic structure

Paul Hopper

▶ EMERGENCE is (...) a continual movement towards structure.

Thank you for your attention!