

Implications of Functionalist Linguistics for Language Varieties: Instances of English Speeches from Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times*

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Abstract

This work is a study on the descriptive scope of functionalist linguistics and its implications for the varieties or dialects of language. The theoretical basis of the framework is that the grammatical structure of language is frequently affected by the discourse-pragmatic use of language in a given language community. It argues on the same basis that, to understand language form, one will need to understand its function. The grammar also recognizes language as both dynamic and diverse in nature, which implicates, therefore, that the dialects of a language are not only functional, but also interrelated and interdependent in the language community. This being the case, the study maintains that the practice of teaching only one dialect of language to second language learners places them at a disadvantage, and, therefore, advocates the inclusion of all dialects of language, even in the second language teaching and learning curricular.

Key Words: Functionalism, functionalist linguistics, language structure, language function, language varieties, speech community

Introduction

The basic concern of theoretical linguistics is a scientific description of language structure. Crystal (1985, 82-4) states that linguistics seeks to 'establish general theoretical principles which will explain the structure of particular languages and ultimately language as a whole', describing language as 'both the end and means' of this practice. A linguistic study therefore consists in the theoretical description of grammatical structure of languages. But linguistic science differs remarkably from other sciences by the fact that, 'whereas other sciences work with objects that are given in advance', in 'linguistics' 'the viewpoint creates the object' (Saussure 1966, 8). Thus the impression seems to be that language structure proceeds from theory.

The mode of scientific description in linguistic studies may be formal or non-formal. The formal theories of language look at language as a system that complies with rules. In it there is a tendency towards 'regulating' language, so that any aspect of it that does not adhere strictly to the rules is ignored. Linguists who share this opinion seem convinced that only those aspects of language, which are explainable under the theory, are actually worthy of attention. But the non-formal theories, to which functionalist linguistics belongs, are more concerned with the natural features of language.

Arguments of this kind are a frequent source of concern to language teachers who, on a day-to-day basis, grapple with class room problems bordering on usage and correctness. Hence, as language teachers and language users, we must continue to look for a linguistic theory that explains and addresses the most, if not all of language problems, which is the ultimate justification for a study such as this.

History of Functionalist Linguistics

Perhaps one area where functionalism has had the greatest influence is in linguistic studies. It is not precisely known when the

theory made its first entry into linguistics. However, de Beaugrande (1997b) suggests that functionalism in linguistics today has had 'the longest continuous history', citing the 'Prague school' which was founded in 1926 (Crystal 1985, 254) as antedating and anticipating recent functionalist linguistics; in short he described the Prague school as being the 'secret history' of functionalism, but whose ideas had been wrongly understood as formalist. Defending this claim, de Beaugrande points out that 'the comparative view point of the Prague school has naturally resisted formalism, which highlights how each language distributes its forms on purely internal grounds, and welcome functionalism which highlights how the several languages exploit their respective formal means to perform similar functions.' Although Crystal believes that much of the inspiration for its work came from Saussure, many specifically linguistic features of their work are not to be found in Saussure at all. He lists some of the prominent scholars of the school as Roman Jakobson, Nikolai Trubetsky and Karl Bühler. But Akwanya and most other scholars look at André Martinet as the progenitor of modern functionalist linguistics. The framework is contained in his *A Functional View of Language*.

Meaning of Functionalist Linguistics

The maxim around which Martinet's linguistic theory revolves is that which states that 'function is the criterion of linguistic reality' (in Akwanya 1996, 52). Martinet's use of 'function' here, according to de Beaugrande (1994), translates that 'people use language to do things'. In this theory, therefore, 'function' is the key word, or as he captures it, 'the basis and framework of language'. This notion of language was mooted earlier by Malinowski who, after his experience in the Trobriand Islands, describes language as 'a mode of action', arguing further that language should be seen as used by the people for hunting, cultivating, looking for fish, and so on (in Palmer 1981, 51). Lyons

(1977) calls this 'the instrumental character of language.' Similarly, Austin (1962) states that language both describes and performs actions, the descriptive function he calls 'constative' and the other 'performative', and Kempson (1977) has expanded this view by stating that we use language to promise, to insult, to agree, to criticize, and so forth.

The underlying principle of functionalist linguistics, according to Lyons (1977, 214), rests on the view that 'the structure of every language system is determined by the particular functions it has to perform.' The idea of 'determination of structure by function' is, therefore, very central to the theory. The relationship is such that structure is and should be dependent on function, function in this case playing the role of a 'guide'. According to Croft (1995, 490-532), functional analysis of grammatical phenomena and the functionalist approaches that promote them are appealing to those who believe that an integrated view of language structure and language function is desirable. In *Language and Linguistics*, Lyons restates this position that functionalism is characterized by the belief, 'that the phonological, grammatical and semantic structure of languages is determined by the functions they have to perform in the societies in which they operate' (1981, 224-7).

Adeoye (2014, 87) succinctly makes clear that in functionalist linguistics, there is a relationship in which 'language function (that is, what it is used for) is often more important than language structure (how it is composed). Explaining language from a functional perspective, Dick (1980) says that language performs conversational functions and notes that the structure of a language cannot be adequately understood if these pragmatic purposes are left out of consideration. It is in recognition of the pragmatic roles of language that Newmeyer (2001, 101-126) stresses that in the paradigm, 'a language is in the first place conceptualized as an instrument of social interaction among human beings, used with the intention of establishing

communicative relationships'. Similarly, the mission of functionalism, according to de Beaugrande, is 'to reconnect language and inquire how the arrangement of words, phrases and utterances are determined by social and historical conditions' (1997b), while Akwanya (1996, 51) says that it aims 'to account for how language is used, and postulates that it is the uses of language that have shaped the system.'

In a lecture entitled *On Functionalism*, Delancey (2001) outlines the outstanding features of functionalism as distinct from formalist grammars. He posits that functionalism is 'a framework for thinking about and explaining linguistic structure and behavior.' Language, under functionalism, according to him, is seen as a tool, or, better, a set of tools, whose forms are adapted to their functions, whereas formal linguistics generates explanations out of structure. Formalism emphasizes structure, but functionalism looks beyond structure, and extends even to 'authentic contexts of situation, and speakers' and hearers' status, plans and goals' (de Beaugrande 1997b).

Functionalist linguistics professes opposition to what Delancey (2001) describes as 'strict theoretical or methodological boundaries'. Instead, it has formulated, in de Beaugrande's terms, 'flexible and negotiable solutions emphasizing the unity of language and applying large issues' (1997b). It opposes the kind of rigidity we come up against in formal grammars. Functionalism is different from a rule-based grammar, which, as Akwanya (1996, 51) explains, is more concerned with 'setting up general rules on the basis of an observed part, and explaining away the forms that do not agree with the rules as deviance or rule violation.' Formalism creates frontiers, but functionalism pulls them down.

de Beaugrande (1997b, 1997c, 1998) characterizes functionalism as 'a practice-driven theory' because, according to him, the theory focuses on 'actual data and real activities of speakers and language communities'. It is said to be a theory that uses what he calls 'real language and real speakers' in its analysis.

In *Functionalism and Corpus Linguistics in the Next Generation* (2005), de Beaugrande places upon functionalist linguistics, 'the task of restoring real language', criticising formalism for attempting 'to replace real language with ideal language'. de Beaugrande's real language should be understood as any variety of a language that is spoken by a section of the speech community. As Akwanya (1996, p. 52) puts it, functionalism builds 'a model for the analysis of speech phenomena themselves.' Functionalism, then, is a more practical way of describing speech events. In a nutshell, what language is, and not what language ought to be, is of primary concern to functionalism.

Proponents of functional grammar have consistently maintained that it is a natural way of using language. Halliday (1985, p. xvii) states that 'the relation between the meaning and the wording is not an arbitrary one; the form of the grammar relates naturally to the meanings that are being encoded.' The grammar, according to Akwanya (1996, p. 51), 'is seen in the way the language is used'. For this reason the term 'natural' grammar has been used in some places to refer to functionalism. And it is so called because the theory is built on the language conventions of the speech community, which owns the language.

There are several other ways in which functionalist linguistics has been characterized. de Beaugrande (1996, 1997b, 1997c) argues that functionalism performs connective functions, working 'to reconnect language' to society. It does so by taking cognizance of the meta-functions of language, or something resembling Danes' three-step analysis, listed as, 'textual, ideational and interpersonal' functions; He calls them 'linguistic, cognitive and social aspects' respectively (1997b, 1996). By connecting language to society, functionalism is in direct opposition to formal grammars, described as 'a linguistics that had disconnected language from the society' (1997c). It explains further that the very nature of both language and society ensures that the major notions about either one richly interconnect with (and

“presuppose”) each other (1997 c). In this case, Saussure’s ‘language studied in and for itself’ (1966, p. 232) is untenable.

Functionalism in linguistics not only connects to society the various levels of usage, it also interconnects the various components of language as ‘working partners’ in the language system. Akwanya (1996, p. 51) explains that functionalism ‘studies each linguistic element in terms of its function in the whole.’ It is like McClelland’s explanation (2005), which views society as a system of interrelated parts whereby a change in one part affects all others. A complete explanation of this would mean that the letters and the phonemes in a language contribute in their own ways to the system, as do syntax and discourse. In a non-formal grammar such as functionalism, the usual watertight classification of core linguistics into components (phonology, syntax, semantics, discourse) is dissolved; according to de Beaugrande (1994), ‘the functionalist scheme sees the levels as related to each other.’

To wrap up this topic, therefore, functional grammar may best be described as a grammar ‘of the people, by the people, and for the people’. In this theory, the speech community, and not the linguist, dictates what is, and what is not in the language. It is for this reason that Delancey (2001) hails the emergence of functionalism as ‘the true revolution’. But de Beaugrande suggests that ‘the description of a language should be couched in statements at varying degrees of generality between the entire language and the specific discourse context’ (1994). The consequence is that the fullest understanding of the nature of language is not in grammar texts, and this has far-reaching implications for language varieties, which is the basis of the next topic.

Implications of Functionalist Linguistics for Language Varieties

The functionalist analysis of language structure implicates a number of lessons for language varieties. As we earlier noted,

language can be used to do many things, which follows also that the framework expects language to have as many dialects or varieties as are possible. Functionalist linguistics is not blind to the diversities in language, a reason, which prompted de Beaugrande to propose that language should be described 'in respect to variations due to time, place, or identity of speakers' (1994). Even in his understanding of Martinet, Akwanya says that Martinet's linguistic theory presupposes the existence of a variety of possible applications of language (1996, 51). This means that the framework recognizes and accepts both the standard and the non-standard dialects of language.

The standard dialect is the codified variety, such as Standard English and Standard Igbo. In terms of the English Language, Yule explains that it is 'the variety which forms the basis of printed English in newspapers and books, which is used in the mass media and which is taught in schools' (1997, 227). So, standard language is similar to Bernstein's "elaborated code", which has "accurate grammatical order and syntax" (in de Beaugrande 1998, 128-139). In *Oliver Twist*, for example, the parting meeting between Dick and Oliver is in Standard English:

'Hush, Dick!' said Oliver, as the boy ran to the gate, and thrust his thin arm between the rails to greet him.

'Is any one up?'

'Nobody but me', replied the child.

'You mustn't say you saw me, Dick', said Oliver. 'I am running away. They beat and ill-use me, Dick; and I am going to seek my fortune, some long way off. I don't know where. How pale you are!'

'I heard the doctor tell them I was dying', replied the child with a faint smile. 'I am very glad to see you, dear; but don't stop, don't stop!'

‘Yes, yes, I will, to say good-bye to you’, replied Oliver. ‘I shall see you again, Dick. I know I shall! You will be well and happy!’

‘I hope so’, replied the child. ‘After I am dead, but not before. I know the doctor must be right, Oliver, because I dream so much of heavens, and Angels, and kind faces that I never see when I am awake...’ (60, ch.vii).

In multi-dialectal language communities where there is the need for intelligibility among members, the standard dialect is there to serve this purpose. Quirk and Greenbaum (1972) write in that any institution, which must attempt to address itself to a public beyond the smallest dialectal community, will necessarily use this variety. Such institutions they list as government agencies, learned professions, political parties, the press, the law court and the pulpit (2000, p. 3).

On the other hand, non-standard language is often used by linguists in apparent reference to the local varieties, like regional and uneducated dialects, considered by formal grammar as ungrammatical, or incorrect, and so unacceptable, like our examples from Dickens’ novels. A non-standard language is the variety that Chomsky would describe as consisting of ‘fragments and deviant expressions’ (in de Beaugrande, 1998, pp. 128-139), or according to Ogbuehi, those ‘varieties with all manner of imperfections’ (2001, pp. 41-8). A non-standard language resembles Bernstein’s “restricted code” which has “poor syntactic form”. In England, besides Standard English are other substandard varieties such as Scouse, Geordie, Hiberno, and so forth. There also might be slang and antilanguage. In *Hard Times*, for instance, as Stephen Blackpool meets with Bounderby to press his case for divorce, the latter’s response does not suggest the slightest lack of intelligibility on the part of his interlocutor:

‘I ha’ coom’, Stephen began, ... ‘to ask yo yor advice. I need’t overmuch. I were married on Eas’r Monday nineteen year sin, long and dree. She were a young lass—pretty enow—wi’ good accounts of herse In. Well! She went bad – soon. Not along of me. Connows I were not a unkind husband to her’.

‘I have heard all this before’, said Mr. Bounderby. ‘She took to drinking, left off working, sold the furniture, pawned the clothes and played old gooseberry’.

‘I were patient wi’ her... I were very patient wi’ her. I tried to wean her fra’t ower and ower agen. I tried this, I tried that, I tried t’ other. I ha’ gone home, many’s the time... from bad to worse, from worse to worsen, she left me...’ (56, ch.xi).

The function of the non-standard language dialects is chiefly interactive. What really matters is for a variety to be intelligible to those using it. It is as Montgomery emphasizes, that ‘any variety... whether it be a regional dialect, social dialect, antilanguage or whatever, ... as long as it is sustained by a group of speakers, must, by that fact, adequately serve their communication needs’ (1995, p. 177). Delancey argues that ‘human language is not simply a device for presenting and pointing to interesting objects and events in the world’ (2001), and as de Beaugrande stresses, ‘people are not simply out to generate well formed sentences’, but pursue what he calls ‘an agenda of plans and goals’ (1994). The conversational use of the non-standard dialects of English in the novels of Charles Dickens is the basis of the preceding chapter of this study.

Note should, however, be taken that what the framework means for language, therefore, tends to narrow down greatly, the discrepancy between the standard and the non-standard dialects as conceptualized in formal linguistics. In practice, there is no

speaker that uses only one language dialect at all times. As we may have observed, the dialect used above does not pose the least barrier to intelligibility. In any given language community, functionalism apportions to all language dialects some roles. The various dialects, in fact, are in a state of mutual co-existence, so that among them, there is no 'first among equals' dialect; there is no prestigious or debased variety, no inferior or superior dialect.

One other implication of functionalist linguistics is the power, which it invests on the speech community. Yule defines a speech community as 'a group of people who share a set of norms, rules and expectations regarding the use of language' (239). According to Akwanya, a key principle in functionalist linguistics is that 'language is shaped by the language community in the context of use', saying that functionalism deduces the grammar from the way the language is actually used (51). In functionalism, the speech community may be described as the ultimate arbiter on all issues of usage, 'beyond which there is no appeal'. Members of the speech community have unlimited and unquestionable powers over their language. Since they are the owners of the language, such issues as language change, standardization and acceptability are exclusively in their power. The speaking community of Stone Lodge differs a lot from that of Coketown in *Hard Times*. Stone Lodge is a secluded area within the larger Coketown; it is populated by the educationally conscious Gradgrinds, and frequently visited by the politically and economically powerful Bounderby. As we would observe, the dialect of English in use among them appears to wear more features of formality than we are likely to find in other communities in Coketown:

'Bounderby,' said Mr Gradgrind, drawing a chair to the fireside, 'you are always so interested in my young people—particularly in Louisa—that I make no apology for saying to you, I am very much vexed by

this discovery. I have systematically devoted myself (as you know) to the education of the reason of my family. The reason is (as you know) the only faculty to which education should be addressed. And yet, Bounderby, it would appear from this unexpected circumstance of today, though in itself a trifling one, as if something had crept into Thomas's and Louisa's minds...'

'There is certainly no reason in looking with interest at a parcel of vagabonds', returned Bounderby. 'When I was a vagabond myself, nobody looked with any interest at me; I know that.'

'Then comes the question,' said the eminently practical father, with his eyes on the fire, 'in what ways has this vulgar curiosity its rise?

'I'll tell you in what. In idle imagination.'

'I hope not', said the eminently practical; 'I confess, however, that the misgiving has crossed me on my way home.' (p. 15-17, ch.iv)

However, among the factory workers of Coketown, who can be said to constitute another language community of their own, there is little or no regard at all for formality. The dialect of English in use among them may be noticed to contain a lot of vulgar and archaic forms as will be seen in the following excerpts of conversation between Stephen and Rachael:

'She don't know me, Stephen; she just drowsily mutters and stares. I have spoken to her times and again, but she don't notice! 'Tis as well so. When she comes to her right mind once more, I shall have done what I can, and she never the wiser.'

'How long, Rachael, is't looked for, that she'll be so?'

‘Doctor said she would haply come to her mind tomorrow.’

His eyes fell again on the bottle, and a tremble passed over him causing him to shiver in every limb. She thought he was chilled with the wet. ‘No,’ he said, ‘it was not that. He had a fright.’

‘A fright?’

‘Ay, ay! Coming in. When I were walking. When I were thinking. When I—’ It seized him again; and he stood up, holding by the mantel shelf, as he pressed his dank cold hair down with a hand that shook as if it were palsied.

‘Stephen!’

She was coming to him, but he stretched out his arm to stop her.

‘No! Don’t, please; don’t. Let me see thee as I see thee setten by the bed. Let me see thee, a’ so good, and so forgiving. Let me see thee as I see thee when I coom in. I can never see thee better than so. Never, never, never!’ (p. 65-6, ch.xiii)

Our lesson from the above experience points to the fact that a city or a town is not necessarily a homogenous language community. A large settlement can possibly have more than one speech community. Coketown provides a very good example. The manner of usage is such that the members of a given speech community use the language as they feel like, and as it suites their varying needs. They are the sole judges on all language matters.

Functional grammar redefines the role of linguists. In formal linguistics, linguists have very wide powers. They are both ‘umpires’ and ‘legislators’, always spelling out language rules. But Functionalist linguistics reduces the job of linguists. Here, they are no longer ‘the self-appointed guardians and grammarians’, who are always inventing ‘an arbitrary and gratuitous apparatus of

“rules” and “features”. They are no more like persons who are not part of the speech community. Functionalism reintegrates them with the society by virtue of them being members of the population (de Beaugrande 1998). They are assigned a marginal role, which is no more than that of an observer. Thus, in the grammar, their duty is limited to describing what the language community does and says (Akwanya 88).

Although we have tried to claim that in functionalism the ultimate judge on matters of usage is the speech community, the framework nonetheless recognizes and respects the identity of the individual language user. In the *International Encyclopaedia of Linguistics*, Thompson says that functionalist linguistics considers very much the cognitive, social and physiological properties of the human user, and Lyons states that the language-system will provide the means for an individual to indicate ‘who he is, whether he indicates this intentionally or not.’ According to him, besides voice quality and paralinguistic features, which are individual-identifying indices, he may also choose to employ a particular form or lexeme or the use of a particular grammatical construction (615). The implication is that what a person is, or the over all make of an individual, weighs a considerable influence on how he will use his language. In *Hard Times*, for instance, speech idiosyncrasy shows up in the speeches of the President and Blackpool, when Stephen is charged with anti-labour tendencies:

‘My friends’, said he, ‘by virtue o’ my office as your president, I ashes o’ our friend Slackbridge, who may be a little over hetter in this business, to take his seat, while this man Stephen Blackpool is heern. You all know this man Stephen Blackpool. You know him awlung o’ his misfort’ns and his good name’.

With that, the chairman shook him frankly by the hand, and sat down again. Slackbridge likewise sat

down, wiping his hot forehead—always from left to right, and never the reverse way.

‘My friends’, Stephen began, in the midst of a dead calm; ‘I ha’ hed what’s been spok’n o’ me, and ’tis likly that I shan’t mend it. But I’d liefer you’d hearn the truth concerning myseln, fro my lips than fro onny other man’s, though I never cud’n speak afore so monny, wi’out bein moydert and muddled’.

Slackbridge shook his head as if he would shake it off in his bitterness.

‘I’m th’ one single Hand in Bounderby’s mill, o’ a’ the men theer, as don’t coom in wi’th’ proposed reg’lations. I canna’ coom in wi’ ’em. My friends, I doubt their doin’ yo onny good. Licker they ’ii do yo hurt’ (108-9, ch. Vi).

Every language user is an input to the language system, so that the individual speaker is not just a mere user of language, but is also an important element in the making of the language system. He is entitled to his “idiolect”, defined by Dittmar as ‘individually different speech behaviour’ (Quoted in de Beaugrande 1998). It is as Lecercle argues, that language speaks, and we speak language.

Another principle in functionalist linguistics is the consideration it gives to dialect area as a determining factor in the dialect a person will always use. This means that in the grammar, there is no absolute standard of correctness. Thus, the language environment conditions correctness, incorrectness, and acceptability. These are only relative terms, since correctness will necessarily consider what Stanley calls “appropriate” and “inappropriate” language environments (2001). For example, Standard English is only accepted as correct in the appropriate contexts; it is not so accepted in inappropriate environments. Cockney can hardly convey any meanings in the Coalmines, in much the same way that Scouse will be unacceptable for BBC

programmes. Thompson says that functionalist linguistics assumes that the internal organization of language is ‘a complex response to its ecological setting’, while de Beaugrande holds that in functionalism, results are judged by what he calls ‘ecological validity’ (1994). In *Hard Times*, we may regard the circuit as a dialect area, because the horse riders who dwell in there actually have a ‘sociolect’, or a dialect of their own. Bounderby and Gradgrind are scarcely mindful of this and the problem that they run into here stems largely from their inability to come to this realization. In other words, they forgot that they were in an entirely different dialect area. Thus, it is their own ignorance that is responsible for the confusion, into which they are thrown, during their visit to the Pegasus’s Arms:

‘What does he come cheeking us for, then?’ cried master Kidderminster, showing a very irascible temperament. ‘If you want to cheek us, pay your ochre at the doors and take it out’.

‘Kidderminster’, said Mr. Childers, raising his voice, ‘stow that! – Sir’, to Mr. Gradgrind, ‘I was addressing myself to you. You may or you may not be aware... that Jupe has missed his tip very often, lately’.

‘Has—what has missed?’ asked Mr. Gradgrind, glancing at the potent Bounderby for assistance.

‘Missed his tip’.

‘Offered at the garters four times last night, and never done ’em once’, said Master Kidderminster. ‘Missed his tip at the banners, too, and was loose in his ponging’.

‘Didn’t do what he ought to do. Was short in his leaps and bad in tumbling’, Mr. Childers interpreted.

‘Oh!’ Said Mr. Gradgrind, ‘that is tip, is it?’

‘In a general way that’s missing his tip’, Mr. Childers answered.

‘Nine oils, merrylegs, missing tip, garters, banners and ponging, eh!’ ejaculated Bounderby, with his laugh of laughs.

‘Queer sort of company, too, for a man who has raised himself’. (P. 25, ch.vi).

Little do they realize that even horse riders and clowns have a language system, which is only intelligible to the inmates of the circuit. So, to them, words such as Tight-Jeff, stow, nine oils, merrylegs, missing tips, garters, banners, ponging and so forth, are all nonsense. But their own dialect of the language fails to spare them of embarrassments in the hands of the horse riders, who, using familiar words in different ways with slang, not only confound them, but none the less mess up their pride! The Prague school linguists had pointed out that at any one time, certain forms, lexemes or expressions will strike the average member of the language-community as old-fashioned and that other forms, lexemes or expressions may strike him as new (in Lyons1977, p. 621). It is for this reason that the task, which Stanley places on language users, is ‘to recognize what language fits which environment’. In some environments what we hold as standard English might as well be frowned at. Since functionalist linguistics deals with real language, real speakers and hearers, and obtains its data directly from the owners of the language, it follows that whatever dialect a particular speech community deems right or correct, is the standard for that environment.

Finally, functionalist linguistics departs radically from the ‘uniform, stable and abstract system’ projected in formal grammars. According to de Beaugrande, ‘language is an evolving system that is not uniform overtime’ (1994). Language change, therefore, is an essential element of the grammar. Language is as unstable as society itself, and some language postulates have lent credence to this. It is as Danes claims, that ‘we live in a period in which the world of human language is in a turbulent state of flux’

(1995, p. 187), and Akwanya states that 'language changes in unpredictable ways as cultural values change' (48). All this is supported by an earlier view, where Sapir notes, that 'back of the face of history are powerful drifts that move language, like other social products to balanced patterns' (1921). The changing nature of language is attributable to both diachronic and synchronic factors. What English was in the seventh century is not what it is today. Many words in old English have lost both form and sense in contemporary English. 'Mete', for example, was used for any kind of food, but 'meat' today is restricted to some specific types (Yule 222). Whenever this is the case, language is only showing its dynamic nature. To conclude this topic, therefore, the above implications of functionalist linguistics free language from the grips of formal linguistics and establish an enduring relationship between language and society.

Conclusion

Our tasks have been to relate the scope of functionalist linguistics to actual language-use and explain what the relationship implicates for language dialects. The ontology of functionalist linguistics is that the grammatical structure of every language is determined and influenced by the discourse-pragmatic function that the language performs in the language community. Linguistic functionalism stresses further that to understand the grammar of a language, one will as well need to understand the varying roles of the language, arguing, therefore, that since functionalism is a natural grammar, which draws on data from real language and real speakers, language structure should not be determined by linguistic rules, but by sociolinguistics. Language as used by members of the speech community is what it actually studies; hence it is seen as a more practical framework.

That language possesses these attributes requires that a framework that must attempt to describe the grammatical structure of a language has to sufficiently take into cognizance,

these distinguishing features. This is what functional grammar does. The edge, which the framework has over the other grammars, is its ability to recognize all language dialects as part and parcel of the same language, whether they are standard, substandard, and non-standard dialects. This raises the possibility of a non-standard grammar of languages, like English. Again, it collapses the sharp distinction between and among the various dialects. Indeed there is really no watertight separation between standard and non-standard dialects of language. There is a frequent overlap, so that often, most speakers of language alternate between the various forms. Really speaking, there is no language user who uses only one dialect of a language at all times. Language dialects are actually interrelated and interdependent.

The consequences of all these make nonsense of such concept as error, especially in native language environments. The fact that the varieties or dialects are interrelated, interdependent and coexist with one another compels us to advocate the inclusion of all language dialects in the second language learning curricular. The current practice whereby only one dialect of language is taught in second language learning environments does not go far enough because it places such learners at a disadvantage. As a matter of fact, there are no practical justifications for teaching only one language dialect in second language learning environments, when several other dialects are in actual use in the native language setting. Language teaching should be holistic, since language is used for several purposes. In the language system, therefore, whether a language dialect is standard, substandard, or non-standard, it is still the same language.

To conclude this topic, therefore, the above implications of functionalist linguistics free language from the grips of formal linguistics and establish an enduring relationship between language and society.

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