RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE GLAMOUR OF LANGUAGE

Dr.B.MALLIKHARJUNA RAO

Lecurer in English, P.V.K.N Govt. College,   CHITTOOR. A. P.

ABSTRACT

Any piece of human creation or human endowment gets its glamour from its structure, system and functional value. The internal grammar of a language is captured properly only when the linguist-grammarian or the teacher-grammarian first understands the ingredients that give grammar its glamour. We need not forget that 'glamour' is actually an alternate spelling of grammar.

Whether we are dealing with the architecture of synchronic grammar (Halliday and Mathiessen 2004) or the architecture of diachronic grammar (Vesser 1973) or the genesis of Syntactic Complexity (Givon 2009) or even the neurological bases of language (Ramachandran 2010), we do need to handle all the three ingredients of glamour/grammar: STRUCTURE, SYSTEM and FUNCTION. If someone says or said that meaning is not within the purview of linguistics, then that theory is defective because it ignores the real function of language.

Any piece of human creation or human endowment becomes presentable and is considered as having glamour only when its structure, system and functional value are perceived holistically. This holistic perception is in other words the grammar of the given endowment or creation. Incidentally the word glamour is considered a Scottish English alteration of grammar meaning enchantment, spell. Any one who delves deep into the grammar of a languge we really find it enticing and enchanting. There is a sanskrit saying which goes as follows :

A grammarian feels more delighted when he can save half a syllable in a grammatical formula than when he begets a son.

Ancient Indians treated grammar as a sacred subject because it helped them retain the authenticity of a sacred text. They included in grammar almost all the subjects which we now treat as part of linguistics.

The glamour of any phenomenon emanates from the proportionality of its constituents. In the case of the grammar of a language, we get excited about an aspect which structurally and systemically reflects the functional value of an expression. An Englishman once said at a seminar at York (1970) that English mother can always say to her son "why are your hungry an

so soon", when he says" I am hungry". But he said an Indian mother cannot find fault with him because he says "to me hunger is happening". 'But this is not really true. Whatever be the theory no one can ignore the fact that we have to deal with what is available, what is not available and how the availables are availed to signify the intended function. In a sentence the following items are available :

        a. Lexicogrammatical items (realized by phonological / graphological units)

        b. Marks of punctuation / intonation contours

The following items are not available :

        a. Other lexicogrammatical items

        b. Other marks of punctuation / intonation contours

The unsaid items confirm what is said. For example, in a sentence like

1. I want some coffee the available item is coffee and the nonavailable items are Tea, Juice, Water, Whiskey, etc. The person who asked for coffee can always say that he did not want tea if he was given that. In other words tea is not coffee, coffee is not tea.

This negation of comparable items is considered important for our understanding of the available item. This is the core of the Buddhist theory of meaning Apoha (Prakasam 1985 : 87-94). The Saussurean theory which says that in language there are only differences, without positive terms is essentially referring to the same. The Firthian concept of system which later became part of a fulfledged theory of Systemic Functional Grammar of the Hallidayan school of linguistics is also referreing to the same concept of differentiation being implicit in identification.

When the decoder of a sentence confuses an item with a relatable non available item he is not too much off the target. If the confusion is with a non relatable item the decoder will be found fault with. If a word like the lake is taken to mean a pond, it is not a big issue. But if it is taken to mean can, it will be objected to. In other words, our comprehension is contingent on knowing what is given and what could have being given.

If there is in the structure of a sentence a noun like a tree, it can be preceded by the adjective like small, big, deciduous but not hot, lazy, unless a metaphorical use is intended. This kind of mutual expectancy of words is common in language. The grammarian perceives this phenomenon and calls it collocation. This means we discover a phenomenon and give it a name. In the discussion of any phenomenon we discover a pattern and give it a name. The pattern is its structure which in turn has a sequence and an order. In a phrase like 'dry cough' dry and cough occur in a sequence and their relationship is one of classifier and phenomenon. On the other hand, in the phrase 'dry weather' dry is an epithet but not a classifier. A grammarian sees the difference by observing the acceptability of very dry weather and the non acceptability of very dry cough.

This is how the subject of grammar becomes one of glamour once we go deeper into it. Let's get in to the details of the three aspects we have mentioned : strucutre, system and function. Structure is what we get when items come together on syntagmatic axis. Which items can come together depends on the language we are dealing with. For example demonstratives like this, that, these and those cannot cooccur with possessives like my, your, his, her, our and their in English. But in Hindi and Telugu their equivalents can come together. This our land is not possible in English, but yah hamara vatan in Hindi is possible. This is due to the fact that the system of determiners in English is different from the system of determiners in Hindi. This shows the structuring of items is conditioned by systemic memberships the items. The systemic membership is the association of the items on paradigmatic axis. This kind of syntagmatic organisation and paradigmatic association is apparent in every aspect of language. In Telugu for example, there are three types of length : vocalic length, consonantal length and nasal length. In the earlier stages of Telugu vocalic length could cooccur with nasal length. But later they got systemicised and one of them got dropped :

     2. va:ndu > va:du (that he)

     3. i:nga > i:ga (flea)

     4. ku:nkudu > ku:kudu/kunkudu (soap nut)

This change from a cooccurrence posssibility to substitutability is one of the diachronic changes languages go through.

If we look at grammar as an instrument of communication again we have look at both coocurrence possibilities and substitutability, besides the communicative function. Givon (2009) treats grammar as an adaptive instrument of communication, assembled upon the preexisting platform of prelinguistic object - and - event cognition and mental representation. He treats diachrony as the communal enterprise directcly responsible for fashioning synchronic morpho- syntax and cross-language diversity and ontogeny   as the individual endeavour directly responsible for acquiring the competent use of grammar. He says that syntactic complexity is an integral part of the evolutionary rise of human communication.

The architecture of synchronic grammar (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004) with its hierarchical organisation of   recognisable   linguistic units, word groups reflecting sense groups, specific choices and specific non-choices all with identifiable contextual functions is characterised the three principles of grammar / glamour - structure, system and function.

There we have a sentence used by a Texan : "I better go now, bettern't I ?"

Here better, though an adjective, is functioning as a modal and so becomes past of the tag.

When we look at the way grammar of a language change across time we realise that the principles continue to operate. An Historical Syntax of the English Language by F.Th.Visser gives us a great treasure of data to show how languages change, but according to certain method (wihout madness) without violating the three basic ingredients - structure system and function.

Ramachandran (2010) discusses the neurological basis of language. The human brain with its Broca's area, Wernicke's area and the angular gyrus have all the required infrastructure to learn a language. Ramachandran says that Broca's area "might be specialized not just for the syntax, or syntactic structure, of natural language, but also for other, more arbitrary languages that have formal rules, such as alzebra or computer programming. Even though the area might have evolved for natural langauge, it may have the latent capacity for other functions that bear a certain resemblance to the rules of syntax" (2010: 159). He rightly says a word is just the handle, or focus, around which swirls a halo of associations meanings and memories. All this besides its linguistic characteristics like phonic, marphosyntactic, lexical and semantic values. The halo we mentioned in the previous sentence can be subsumed under pragmatics. Ramachandran says that "human language seems so complex, multidimensional, and richly evocative that one is tempted to think that almost the entire brain, or large chunks of it atleast, must be involved" (ibid).

The International Congress on English Grammar (iceg) came into existence in 1999 as an academic person after two International Grammar - cum - Workshops in 1997 - 1998 proved that grammar conferences and seminars can be made both relishable and cherishable. We cherish values and theories and relish products and objects. The main value we cherish when we talk about grammar is the perceptible relationship between expression and content. What we relish is an elegant and comprehensive account of the relationship which we are unconscious about but comprehend all the same. What we expect from a good grammar of a language is to make us conscious of the relationship we have referred to.

When people learn English as a Second language, or Foreign language, or National Foreign language we generally are attracted to its GROSS and GLOSS Gross refers to all the linguistic aspects of a given expression and Gloss refers to the content of the expression. In other words gross refers to structure and system and gloss refers to the semantic and pragmatic function. As the word suggests, the gross refers to the total encoding / dcoding aspects of the expression. The grammatical terms we use are what we create to capture the underlying phenomena. When we use   terms like subject, object, complement, transitive, intransitive, ergative, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, article, determiner, epithet, classifier, we are actually describing what we discover with help of certain technical terms which become the technical register of the particular subject. The unseen grammar operative when we use language gets described and explained in

the seen grammar of a grammarian. When we use language to talk about language what we get is language turned back on itselft, as Firth puts it.

The subtle changes that take place in the grammar of language do pose serious problems to people who do not grow up the the language as part of socialization and maturation; in other words for people who do not use it as their first language. Now we will take up two items of English Grammar and discuss their glamour :

a. Tense and aspect

b. 'Ngp of Ngp' - constructions

Structure, System and Function will all be discussed to show how language structurates itself to suit the context and acquire labels like nice, beautiful, appropriate, etc., which can be called the ingredients of glamour. Tense and aspect are the two interrelated grammatical categories which reflect the relationship between the time of narration and the time of action, state process, besides the state of action (Shiny, 2007). Here we take three different analyses dealing with tense and aspect in English. Tense expresses time through verbal forms as past, present and future. Tense relates the time of situation to the moment of encoding it. Aspect refers to the nature or state of action. When we say action is complete or incomplete, in progress, in state, repetitive, we are referring to the nature or state of action. Generally the following discription is given in our grammar books:

5. She went to office by car (past)

6. She goes to office by car (present)

7. She will go to office by car (future)

8. She has gone to office by car (present perfect)

9. She had gone to office by car (past perfect)

10. She will have gone to office by car (future perfect)

11. She is going to office by car (present progressive)

12. She was going to office by car (past progressive)

13. She will be going to office by car (future progressive)

These nine sentences are very simple sentences reflecting present, past, future, and perfect and progressive. If we look at these sentences carefully we realize that state of action doesn't get reflected on its own, whereas tense gets reflected independently. This is what is generally said, in spite of the fact that present as such cannot be captured except in the case of stative verbs like be and have. This is the reason why we do not bring in aspectual modifications in sentences like

14. I am a teacher

15. I have two cars.

In the case of all other verbs what we general call simple present is actually basic verb reflecting habitual aspect or the basic meaning of the verb where the intended action has not been completed. The sentence

16. She goes home by bus tells us that her going home by bus is not a completed process but a going on process. If this is how we loot at tense and aspect the nine sentences given above will have to be re-described:

17. She went to office by car (perfect)

18. She goes to office by car (non-perfect)

19. She will go to office by car (future)

20. She has gone to office by car (present perfect)

21. She had gone to office by car (past perfect)

22. She will have gone to office by car (future perfect)

23. She is going to office by car (present progressive)

24. She was going to office by car (past progressive)

25. She will be going to office by car (future progressive)

Future in English is actually a moralized form. When the action of going is complete we use perfect. Here an interesting point has to be noted. Look at the following two sentences :

26. He came

27. He has come Sentence (26) can be followed by

28. He has gone back.

On the other hand (28) cannot follow (27). How come? Fillmore (1968) makes a perceptive remark that in many languages have and be are translatable by only one word with some differences in sentence structure sentence. (26) shows that coming is completed but doesn't say whether the person who came is still around. 27, on the other hand shows that the person is still around. That means 27 is equivalent to 29 :

29. He came + He is (here).

There is one more point to note. A sentence like the following

30. If I came at 5 tomorrow, would it be alright?

is considered correct only because the coming will be completed at 5 and it can go into a past situation or future situation. Because completed action will be only hypothetical in a future situation the conditional expression if is used. If the action of coming is over in a explicit past situation, than we would get had come.

The base for this analysis is Prakasam (1970) where in the following analyse was given

FIN	NFIN		Pr	Pt	
Perf	ate	eaten	have	has	
NPerf	eat(s)	eating		have	had
be	am	was			
is					
are	were				

Halliday (1994) does not recognise aspect in constructions like the following :

31. Had taken (past in past)

32. Has taken (past in present)

33. Will have taken (past in future)

34. Was taking (present in past)

35. Is taking (present in present)

36. Will be taking (present in future)

37. Took / did take (past)

38. Take(s) / do(es) take (present)

39. Will take (future)

Whatever be the categories we use, we have to keep in mind the three ingedients of grammar /glamour we talked of in the beginning.

Let's now look at 'Ngp of Ngp' constructions in English (Prakasam 1996) 'of' is considered a preposition but Sinclair (1991) says that 'of' acctually deserves to be a different and independent word class / part of speech.

Consider the following expressions :

40. The Kingdom of Nepal

41. The King of Nepal

42. A number of schools

43. The number of schools

44. The legs of a table

45. The idols of five metals

46. The daughter of the king

47. The Church of England

48. A scholar of extraordinary brilliance

49. A glass of wine / the glass of wine

50. None of them has come

51. None of them have come

52. I want a cup of tea

53. She has added two spoons of sugar

In these expressions we have of bringing together two Nominal Groups. This poses problems for structural analysis because the functions are different. So the analysis will have to be different for different expressions reflecting their function. In the case of 'Kingdom of Nepal' how is expressing an equative relationship where Kingdom is linked to Nepal appositively. The Kingdom is the identified and Nepal is the identifier and of is a linker. We can say

54. I visited the Kingdom of Nepal in 1956

55. I visited the Kingdom in 1956

56. I visited Nepal in 1956

But not

*57. I visited Nepal's Kingdom in 1956

We can say

58. I had an audience with the King of Nepal

59. I had an audience with the King.

60. I had an audience with Nepal's King. But not

*61. I had an audience with Nepal

In the case of the King of Nepal of is functioning as possessiviser of Nepal which together function as postmodifier / possessive deictic to King.

A number of and the number of yield different results :

62 He inspected a number of schools, and found their functioning satisfactory.

63. The number of schools he inspected is much below the target .

The pronominalization of the subsequent reference indicates clearly what the focussed referent of the antecedent nominal group is. Also consider the following :

64. There are a number of schools in Patiala

65. The number of schools in Patiala is too small.

In this context Sinclair says : "the identification of headword is the first step in describing a nominal group. It is reasonable to expect the headword of a nomi nal group to be the principal reference point to the physical world (1991 : 86-87). The acceptability of both singular and plural verb in (50) and (51) is dependent on how we are treating none and them. If none of is like two spoons of or a cup of then the plural verb is chosen. If on the other hand of them is like of Nepal in 'the King of Nepal' then singular verb is chosen.

This discussion strengthens the desire expressed by Sinclair to give of a one-member word class status we can call it a pendent which functions as a post- positional element, a pre-positional element and an inter-positional element giving us different points of salience - Ngp1, or Ngp2 or both Ngp1 and Ngp2.

When we take a double headed nominal we have an interesting situation :

I what to marry the daughter of the King, and for that I will have to impress him.

I have seen the daughter of the King, and I think I can't live without her.

I saw the daughter of the King, and I think they resemble each other quite a bit. This is one place where both the preceding noun and following noun are salient. Let me close my presentation with three more examples :

66. He preponed his journey

67. Jim, don't vanish it

68. We will meal at a veg restaurant

Prepone is commonly used alternant to advance in this context. This is treated as an Indian expression. To begin with we have to say that it doesn't sound unEnglish. It is parallel to postpone. When we can have prewar poetry and postwar poetry why not prepone. Postpone is derived from post+ponere and we can derive prepone from pre+ponere. Morever advance is a bit confusing. When soldiers advance they go forward, whereas when we advance a date it comes backward which is better captured by prepone. Concise Oxford Dictionary has given it as an entry at the turn of the century.

A student used vanish as a transitive while asking his teacher not to erase what he had written on the blackboard. An Indian scholar objected to the expression. The teacher said that he could not consider it as an incorrect because the student as a native speaker used it and he as a native speaker understood it. We can add that ergative constructions are common English and it is said English speaking children learn ergatives at the age two. What the Australin student did was to treat an intransitive verb as an ergative verb.

Using meal as a verb in an sms was accidental. Once I used it, I understood it. I asked my friend how they understood that expression. They casually said : 'meal is have a meal'. This expression is also not unEnglish because English has many verbs used as nouns. Structurally, systemically and functionally the expression was acceptable. Its glamour / grammar was unquestionable.

REFERENCES

Fillmore, C.J. 1968 "The case for case" in Bach and Harms (eds) Universals in Linguistic Theory New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Givon. T. 2009. The Genesis of Syntactic Complexity. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. Halliday. MAK 1994 An Introduction to Functional Grammar 2nd edition.London : Arnold. Halliday. MAK and Christian MIM Matthiessen. 2004. An Introductionto Functional Grammar. 3rd edition. London : Hodder Arnold.

Prakasam, V. 1970 The Syntactic Patterns of Telugu and English : A Study in Contrastive

Analysis. Hyderabad : CIEFL (Manograph 5)

Prakasam, V. 1985 The Linguistic Spectrum, Patiala : Punjabi University Publication Bureau. Prakasam, V. 1996 "'NGp of NGp' Constructions : A Functional - Structural Study" in Margaret

Berry et al (eds). Meaning and Form : Systemic Functional Interpretations Norwood, New

Jersey : Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Ramachandran, V.S. 2010. The Tell-Tale Brain. Noida:Random House India

Shiny, K.P. 2007 Tense and Aspect: A Pedagogical Linguistic Study (M.Phil Thesis, Madurai

Kamaraj University)

Sinclair, J. 1991 Corpus, Concordance, Collocation, London: Oxford University Press. Vesser, F.Th. 1973. An Historical Study of the English Language, Leide: E. J. Brill.