

# Discourse Analysis and English Language Teaching : A Functional Perspective

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## Abstract

This paper aims at manifesting the role of Discourse Analysis in English Language Teaching from a Functional Perspective. Most of the research to date has been concerned with discourse analysis as an alternative method for understanding language cognition process. In this paper the concern will be on how functional properties of sentential elements (interrogatives will be taken as an example) act as prompts to hearers in different contexts, to facilitate the integration of on-line information. In addition, discourse analysis is a methodological tool, which easily lends itself to the investigation of the functional properties of talk, developmental process as well as discrimination by identifying social attitudes and ideologies responsible for observed linguistic patterns. Most teachers have a tendency to teach language in isolation with its use. As a result, the context is lacking and when it is time to practice the things they have learned in real life situations the students fail to use the language and find it difficult to recognize the function of the utterance guided by the speaker.

## 1. Introduction

It is possible to approach language from a great variety of directions. These directions would be linguistic-non-linguistic, formal-informal, formal-functional etc., but there is no doubt that throughout history, linguistics tended to study the sentence or units below the sentence. Many valuable data were gathered. However, sentences and words were considered in isolation from their use in language. As a result of this, such studies could not go beyond useful

generalizations found in grammar books. And yet, these studies must not be accepted worthless or a waste of time, because without a formal background the functional studies cannot be discussed in any way. The functional analysis of sentences considering utterances in a particular appropriate context and focusing on speech acts are necessary in order to go beyond formalism. In this work, *interrogative sentence patterns will be taken as an example*. When a question is asked, what kind of a question should be used in a particular

situation and how can this question functionally be valid under certain circumstances?

What meaning/information does it request from /ask to the listener? Since sentences are taught apart from their contexts, the students can never understand the functional value of the particular language item they have learned. Therefore, in this paper, it is suggested that a functional analysis of several question answer patterns from a discourse perspective would provide a better understanding of the functional interpretation of communication.

## 2. Formal and Functional Aspects of Language

In the course of time language was studied from several perspectives by linguists belonging to different movements. The starting of a more scientific approach to language could be observed in the Structuralist Approach. Structural linguists tried to find out the grammatical properties of language; in other words, the formal aspects of language. Sounds, words, sentences are explored from many points of views and by thousands of people and consequently those studies met at a single point. Sentences, which a person utters in order to communicate, are formal constructs and they are groups of related words in which grammar is the base. In fact, this common thought and aim in language studies cannot be ignored, but there is always a need to go beyond these studies. In applied linguistics it is proved that structural grammar-teaching in EFL materials does not make people speak and it only reflects the abstract side, so what is beyond "the form"? Antithetically, it is "the function".

The functional study of language means studying how language is used. For instance, trying to find out what the

specific purposes that language serves, and how the members of a language community achieve and react to these purposes through speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Simpson (1984:175) states "It is clear that the use of language...is part of a communication channel that includes non-linguistic behaviour. Linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour may be inseparable from the point of view of the speaker and the hearer: e.g. : Hand me over the ... (pointing) and the role of nudges, winks, facial expressions, tone of voice, and so on." In this respect, the typical psychological concept "stimulus-response" can easily be considered as an example. When a person asks a question, the other person responds, but there are several ways of asking the same question. The essential issue to reclaim here is that, one has to ask the question related to a purpose. In this respect, Allerton (1979:142) states "A linguistic functionalist is one who tries to determine how speakers manage to reach their communicative ends by means of a language and who is ready to classify and hierarchise facts accordingly, even at the expense of formal identities."

The structural study of language helps understand the functional approach. To begin with, the grammatical function of language has to be studied, thus, form and function have to be compared. Since grammar reflects the formal counterpart, when someone says "book" and "the book" there may only be a very slight difference between the two. Whether one says "book" or "the book", the responder understands both, hence there is no need to consider function in this perspective, but what about the relationship between the noun and the verb. For example, "smile" and "baby". When these two words are organized in two different ways they reflect two separate meanings. One is "baby smiles" and the other

"smiles baby". When these two constructions are used in any context the meaning they convey to the hearer is apparent.

1. The baby smiled to the balloons.
2. Mother smiled to the baby.

In the first example, the doer of the action is the baby, she smiled to the balloons and balloons are effected. In the second one, the doer of the action who smiled is the mother and the baby is affected by the action. Indeed, these two examples firstly remind us of Saussure's 'Sign' concept in Semantics which consists of a signifier and a signified and linked by a psychological associative bond, and next the famous semiotic triangle of Ogden and Richards presented in 1923. Palmer (1982:24) states "Ogden and Richards saw the relationship as a triangle. The 'symbol' is, of course, the linguistic element – the word, the sentence, etc., and the 'referent' the object etc., in the world of experience, while 'thought and reference' is concept. According to the theory there is no direct link between symbol and referent (between language and the world) – the link is via thought or reference, the concepts of our minds."

For Ogden and Richards the link is in the minds of people, but they do not focus on how this meaning could be achieved. If the items "smile" and "baby" are replaced on this triangle it makes no sense except formalism. Therefore it is nothing more than a "doer – affected" relationship, syntactically a "subject – object" relationship. Hence, 'baby' and 'smile' could be easily applied to this triangle. *Symbol*: 'Baby' and 'Smile'. *Referent*: Baby: A very young child. Smile: A happy impression on face. *Thought or Reference*: What hearer understands when 'baby' and 'smile' are

said. Now it is time to ask a few questions:

- a. When the words are applied to this triangle what result could be achieved?
- b. What is the interrelation between these elements?
- c. What meaning do they convey to the hearer?

To be more precise, it is impossible to find the answers of these questions in this theory or in any other semantic theory for or against Ogden and Richards, because any semantic theory simply searches for the answer of 'What is meaning?' , but functional study of language is a step beyond. It is the use of the meaning appropriate to purpose on particular occasion. What brings contextual meaning to these words is the sentence, the little context in which they are used. To illustrate, Brown and Yule (1983:25-26) state,

"...in recent years the idea that a linguistic string (a sentence) can be fully analyzed without taking 'context' into account has been seriously questioned. If the sentence-grammarians wish to make claims about the 'acceptability' of a sentence in determining whether the strings produced by his grammar are correct sentences of language, he is implicitly appealing to contextual considerations. After all, what do we do when we are asked whether a particular string is acceptable? Do we not immediately, and quite naturally, set about constructing some circumstances (i.e. a 'context') in which the sentence could be acceptably used?"

The words and the sentences in a language are arranged in different ways which act according to the purpose of the speaker. Here Allerton (1979:147) points out "The main point about functions, which basically sets them apart from all other significant units in language, is their establishing a one-way relation

between other significant units." Here, the notion 'function' determines the purpose of language use, but this term cannot be simply equated with 'use'. It has to be considered within the limits of context, which underlies studies of discourse analysis.

## 2.1 Formal and Functional Paradigms in Discourse

To begin with, it is appropriate to determine the term discourse. For Cook (1989: 1) " Discourse Analysis examines how stretches of language, considered in their full textual, social, and psychological context, become meaningful and unified for their users." On the other hand, Brown and Yule (1983:1) state " ...the analysis of discourse, is necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs."

For Fairclough (1989:23), there is a reciprocity between language and society: "Language is a part of society; linguistic phenomena are social phenomena of a special sort, and social phenomena are linguistic phenomena." Schiffrin (1994:32) summarizes these views as:

"A definition of discourse as language use is consistent with functionalism in general: discourse is viewed as a system (a socially and culturally organized way of speaking) through which particular functions are realized. Although formal regularities may very well be examined, a functionalist definition of discourse leads analyst away from the structural basis of such regularities to focus, instead, on the way patterns of talk are put to use for certain purposes in particular contexts and/or how they result from the application of communicative strategies. Functionally

based approaches tend to draw upon a variety of methods of analysis, often including not just quantitative methods drawn from social scientific approaches, but also more humanistically based interpretive efforts to replicate actors' own purposes or goals. Not surprisingly, they rely less upon the strictly grammatical characteristics of utterances as sentences, than upon the way utterances are situated in context."

The nature of language cannot be clearly understood out of context and there is a need to go beyond form. Therefore, all these needs meet at a single point that is discourse analysis. Widdowson (1979a:93) states "We may now use the label discourse analysis to refer to the investigation into the way sentences are put to communicative use in the performing of social actions, discourse being roughly defined, therefore, as the use of sentences." On the other hand for Stubbs (1983:1) "The term discourse analysis is very ambiguous. I will use it in this book to refer mainly to the linguistic analysis naturally occurring connected spoken or written discourse. Roughly speaking, it refers to attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause, and therefore to study larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts. It follows that discourse analysis is also concerned with language in use in social contexts, and in particular with interaction or dialogue between speakers."

Coulthard (1987:7) states that "Any attempt to characterize discourse structure in terms of functional units must conform the problem of grammatical realization – how do the four major clause types, 'declarative' , 'interrogative' , 'imperative' and 'moodless', realize a multiplicity of different functions, and how can a hearer correctly interpret which function is intended?" That does not mean that

discourse is the study of the use of sentences. Sentences are the paths, windows that open for a purpose. As Crystal (1980:114-5) points out "Discourse is a term used in linguistics to refer to a continuous stretch of (especially spoken) language larger than a sentence – but within this broad notion, several applications may be found. At its most general, a discourse is a behavioural unit which has a pre-theoretical status in linguistics: it is a set of utterances which constitute any recognizable speech event."

All in all, the purpose of studying discourse analysis is to describe the conversational structures, that take place in an appropriate context. Coulthard (1987:11) also comments on the importance of discourse in language study. He states "The... major concern of discourse analysis, ... is the relationship between the discourse and the speakers and hearers by and for whom it is produced – a concern with how speakers take the relinquish the role of speaker, how social roles affect discourse options in terms of who speaks when and what they can talk about, how non-verbal signaling works and how the actual form of utterances is conditioned by the social relationships between the participants." Any question-answer pair can be the starting point of this analysis.

### Example

**(Two friends are talking at a café after school.)**

**A:** Are you coming to the cinema with us tomorrow?

**B:** I don't think so.

Because of the creative aspect of the mind there are several different ways of asking or answering the same question-

answer pairs in both languages i.e. ( the mother and the target one).

*Speaker 'A' can utter his question in different ways, such as:*

1. Would you like to come to the cinema tomorrow?
2. Is tomorrow okay for cinema?
3. Cinema, tomorrow?
4. We are going to the cinema tomorrow. Will you come?

*In the same way, speaker 'B' can respond in different ways, such as:*

1. No, I am not going to come with you.
2. I can't stand it.
3. I hate cinemas!
4. No I will not.
5. Tomorrow is impossible.

As seen in the example above, there are several ways of asking the same thing and several ways of responding, but it must not be forgotten that these are just a very few examples. Many could be uttered in the same way, but they all differ from each other. "In the first place, we need to understand the grammar and vocabulary used in constructing the sentences which make up each text. However, for Nunan (1993:2) we need more than this, because, taken by themselves, each of these sentences ... is grammatically unexceptional, so it is obviously not the grammar that accounts for the oddity of the text. Of course, the sentences that make up a text need to be grammatical, but grammatical sentences alone will not ensure that the text itself makes sense." What makes them unique and different in meaning is the purpose, i.e., the function. Here are some example sentences and their functions.

**Examples:**

1. Give me that book!
2. Pass the salt please.
3. Take the second on the left.
4. Come round on Monday to Jimmy's
5. Try to relax!

In addition, functional studies cannot be kept apart from 'form'. The topics, such as, stress, tone, intonation are also included in the functional studies though they are topics of phonology. The arrangement of the words in the sentence also reflects the way the message is uttered. In this case, there can be a need to study function with syntax and morphology and even semantics could provide opportunities to understand what is said and what is meant, but too much formalism must not overshadow functional approach in language teaching, because studying language formally and observing it in real life should be maintained in modern linguistics.

Now, it is time to give some example conversations in which the functions of interrogatives are studied. A point has to be clarified again. The purpose here is not to examine the functions of interrogatives, but the following conversations will provide good opportunities to see how the meaning of a language item can change in different contexts though their grammatical structure is the same. The following examples should also be accepted as tools which emphasize the importance of context in foreign language teaching.

Any question-answer pair can be the starting point of this analysis. As appreciated, questions and answers play

**Functions**

- Order
- Request
- Instruction
- Invitation
- Suggestion

an important role in establishing accurate and functional communication both in written and spoken format.

**2.2 Functional Analysis of Sample Conversations**

In order to better understand the functional value of communication, the following sample dialogues are taken as examples:

**Example (1)**

Gary: It's cold, isn't it?

Brian: Yes, it is not very warm ...

(Haycraft and Creed,1985)

This kind of tag asks the hearer to agree that the statement in the main clause is true. It is sometimes obvious that the statement is true. For example, in the conversation both speakers know that it is colder today. The tag (isn't it) is not just, really, a request for confirmation but also an invitation to the hearer to continue the conversation.

**Example (2)**

(Sue and Ellen are at a jazz concert. They surprisingly see that Tom is dating with Janet.)

Sue: He is Tom, is he?

Ellen: Yes, he is. (Ibid.)

Eastwood (1994:40) states that the use of this tag "... asks the hearer to agree that the statement is true. It also suggests that the speaker has just learnt, realized or remembered the information.

## Example (3)

(At the meeting room, lieutenant Gary tries to express his ideas about the new electronic defence system, but the colonel orders.)

Colonel: Sit down, will you?

Lieutenant Gary: No, I won't! (Ibid.)

The Colonel does not ask his question to expect, to confirm, or deny information ...etc., but it is used as an order. Colonel also tries to give the message that if Lieutenant Gary does not sit down something bad will happen.

## Example (4)

(The servant asks Mr. Robert whether he prefers a drink at breakfast.)

Servant: Will you take a coffee or tea for breakfast, sir?

Mr. Robert: I'll have coffee with little sugar in it, please. (Ibid.)

The information which Mr. Robert supplies is one of the choices presented by the servant and is asked to get the necessary information from Mr. Robert.

## Example (5)

(Andy and Brian are in the office on a hot Monday morning.)

Andy: Bah! What a day!

Brian: Then you think the work is hard?

Andy: No, I didn't mean that.

Brian: So you admit something is difficult?

Andy: Oh, no ... no.

Brian: Well, you weren't satisfied with the increase in your salary yesterday?

Andy: Of course not. It was yesterday. You know that I came over that problem.

Brian: Yes, I know. Would you please start talking? What's the matter with you?

Andy: Nothing, but the room. It's too hot inside. (Ibid.)

To analyze the conversation between Andy and Brian, it seen that Andy has some problems, but she does not want to tell it to Brian. On the other hand, Brian insists on knowing it and asks questions. The purpose of asking these questions are:

1. Make Andy talk.
2. Receive a confirmation or denial from Andy.

In this respect, Brian tries to guess the problem and she expresses her thoughts by using declarative questions. As a result of his efforts he received negative from Andy. Brian asked a 'wh'-question for information and got the answer in the end.

## Example (6)

(Two girls are waiting for their father's arrival at the train station.)

Andy: It is five o'clock.

Claire: What did you say?

Andy: I said it is five o'clock.

Claire: I am sorry, but I am afraid I can't hear you!

Andy: It is five! (Ibid.)

Function: In this example, the message 'five o'clock' is repeated several times for meaning clarification.

## Example (7)

Birling: Well, when she comes back, you might drop a hint to her. And you can promise that we'll try to keep out of trouble during the next few months.

They both laughed

Eric enters.

Eric: What's the joke? Started telling stories?

Birling: No. Want another glass of port?  
(Priestley,1983:9)

Function: Sarcasm.

Example (8)

Mrs. Birling (alarmed): Have you been up to his room?

Birling: Yes. And I called out on both landings. It must have been Eric we heard go out then.

Mrs. Birling: Silly boy! Where can he have gone to?

Birling: I can't imagine. But he was in one of his excitable queer moods, and even though we don't need him here.

(Ibid.,1983:42)

Function: Information seeking, asking for the place of someone and satire.

Example (9)

Pickering: Excuse the straight question, Higgins. (a) Are you a man of good character where women are concerned?

Higgins (moodily): (b) Have you ever met a man of good character where women are concerned?

Pickering: Yes. Very frequently.  
(Shaw,1978:50)

Functions:

(a) Sarcasm and confirmation.  
(Doubt?)

(b) Sarcasm and confirmation.

Example (10)

(John is in a hurry and asking for a request.)

John: Can I borrow your bicycle?

Jack: Sure!  
(Haycraft and Creed,1985)

Function: Polite request but informal.

Example (11)

(The customer and the shopkeeper are talking in the boutique.)

Shopkeeper: Will you try this one?

Customer: Oh, no thank you. I'd like to buy this one please.

Shopkeeper: Sure.  
(Haycraft and Creed,1985)

Function: Polite request.

Example (12)

Taximan: Can I drive you and the lady anywhere, sir?

(They start asunder)

Liza: Oh, Freddy, a taxi. The very thing.

Freddy: But, damn it, I've no money.  
(Shaw,1978:114)

Function: Permission. (Informal)/  
(Offer?)

Example (13)

Beatrice: Ay, put it on, William. What's the matter? Tell'em the cat ate it.

Ernest (hesitating): Should I?

Beatrice(nudging his elbow): Ay, go on.  
(Lawrence,1969:56)

Function: Suggestion. (Hesitation?)

Example (14)

Blackmore: Will you come with me?

(a) Mrs. Holroyd (after a reluctant pause): Where?

Blackmore: To Spain. I can any time have a job there, in a decent part. You could take the children.

(The figure of the sleeper stirs uneasily, they watch him.)

(b) Blackmore: Will you?

Mrs. Holroyd: When would you go?

Blackmore: Tomorrow, if you like.  
(Ibid.,1969:176-7)

Functions:

(a) Offer. (Invitation?)

(b) Offer and Doubt.

Example (15)

Liza: Do my clothes belong to me or to Colonel Pickering?

Higgins (coming back into the room as if her question were the very climax of unreason): What the devil use would they be to Pickering?

Liza: He might want them for the next girl you pick up to experiment on.

(Shaw,1978:107-8)

Function: The question represents two choices, and Higgins has to give an explanatory answer, so it has information seeking function.

The example dialogues mentioned above reflect the idea that the functional interpretation of language is necessary to understand the communicative value of language. It is also suggested that the functional value communication is determined through a variety of circumstances, like: the setting, the mood of the speaker and hearer and the purpose. Such question-answer patterns not only play a key role in natural verbal communication but in the language classroom as well. A functional approach to language teaching is directed by several question-answer patterns which make communication more meaningful, appropriate to the purpose and accurate in the classroom.

Preparation of functional syllabus can be the best starting point to better emphasize the necessity of functional teaching. A functional syllabus not only considers the goals and the objectives of the course interactively but also paves the way of student-centered language teaching, preparation of authentic materials and enables communicative testing.

### 3. The Role of Discourse Analysis in Language Teaching

#### 3.1 Language Teaching as Communication

From a traditional point of view the goal teach language should be from a formal perspective. It was suggested that grammar could make learners speak accurately in the target language. For instance, in the Grammar Translation Method, the teacher used to give detailed explanations of the intricacies of grammar and instruction used to focus on form and inflection of words. However, in Direct Method, the communicative value of language started to receive more attention rather than form, and grammar was taught inductively. The students never experienced explicit grammar rules. The syllabus was based on topics and/or situations. The linguistic rules were used as tools to communicate meaning in the given situations. In Audio-Lingual Approach, linguistic structures were not considered in isolation with their uses. They mostly occurred naturally in contexts. The primary goal of this method was to teach language for communicative purposes. Moreover, in Cognitive Code Approach, as Krashen (1987:134) states "As is the case with Grammar Translation, the assumption of cognitive code is that conscious learning can be accomplished by everyone, that all rules are learnable, and that conscious knowledge should be available at all times." Simply, the Cognitive Approach studied language acquisition as rule formation.

It is possible to duplicate the earlier-mentioned examples. Since these methods were mainly concerned with grammar, the students were able to learn the rules of grammar and when it came to adopt this knowledge into practice they had difficulty in manipulating language for communicative purposes. The result therefore was failure during communication.

Towards the end of 1970s teachers changed their direction to

teaching language as communication. Studies in Discourse Analysis (text, context, authentic texts, conversation analysis, function) and pragmatics (speech acts, psychopragmatics, sociopragmatics) paved the way for emergence of such a change. It has become clear that the learners should experience form with function to provide accuracy and fluency in the target language. As Widdowson (1979b: 1) mentions "Knowing a language does not mean to understand, speak, read, and write sentences, it means to know how sentences are used to communicate effect." Since the purpose is to accept language as a tool for communication, the students have to be trained accordingly. Therefore, teachers should turn this principle into action by using functional syllabus in their language classes.

### 3.2 *Functional Syllabus and Communicative Teaching*

As a result of the emergence of Applied Discourse Analysis in Educational Linguistics, the need to use functional syllabus has emerged. About this, Cunningsworth (1984:18) claims,

"In a functional syllabus, the functions are selected and sequenced according to their usefulness to the learner and the extent to which they meet the learner's communicative needs. ... Some advantages of the functional syllabus are that the learning goals can be identified in terms which make sense to the learners themselves."

For Cunningsworth, in a functional syllabus, functions are selected and sequenced in a way to serve the needs of the learners. Here, structure is used as a

tool to convey the message accurately and effectively to the hearers. In this respect, the goal of the teacher is to make students aware of where to use which structure in real life situations.

The application of functional syllabus brings many advantages to language teaching. Some of them are:

- a-The primary goal of the functional syllabus is to encourage students to communicate in foreign language. Thus, *student-centered language teaching* may contribute to achieve this purpose. By reducing the teacher's dominance in the classroom, student-centered language teaching increases the rate of student participation in the classroom. In this case, it is important to note that the teacher should give praise and encouragement for the positive aspects of the student's work.
- b-Functional syllabus makes use of the *Authentic Materials* and it provides the opportunity to students to experience natural language from various sources. Texts from newspapers, magazines, selected radio or television programmes give students the chance to read and hear real language. By doing so, the students become aware of various functions like advertising, greeting, apologizing, etc.
- c-Functional language teaching also enables *communicative testing*. As Bachman (1995:2) suggests "Language Testing almost never takes place in isolation. It is done for a particular purpose and in a specific context." When students are given a test, their knowledge in the subject area is tested. There can be no doubt that linguistic items (i.e. words, phrases, sentences) can come to different meanings when

used in different contexts. Thus, communicative testing, contrary to discrete point testing, attempts to take account of this by testing a student's ability to perform in a communicative situation, using a variety of sources and combinations of skills and abilities where necessary. Again as Cunningsworth (1984:44) mentions:

"...communicative testing assesses larger and more complex chunks of language, using global tests such as cloze and dictation, and relying on the more subjective judgment of the tester aided by checklists of performance descriptions."

There can be no doubt that the outcomes of such applications in language testing relies on more realistic data which gives way to further progress in the learner's foreign language proficiency.

Nowadays, it is good to state that such tests and assessment procedure receive much appreciation by the teachers and students. By doing so, the teacher is provided with the opportunity to test students' knowledge from a variety of directions by making use of four skills together appropriate to purpose.

## Conclusions

Throughout the conduct of this paper it is hypothesized that every single utterance is meaningful and has a function in language in particular circumstances since it is produced for a purpose if considered in appropriate context. Thus, the importance for focusing on functional interpretation of language in context in a teaching situation was the focus on emphasis. It is

observed that the same form can come to a different meaning in different contexts.

Thus, in order to avoid such difficulties in language teaching, discourse of language has to be studied carefully by the teachers and the students. Study of form and function should not be kept apart, but too much structuralism must not shadow functional studies. Language should not be used in isolation with its use.

This study has proved the prime emphasis of form and function being two different dimensions in language and there may be differences between functional interpretation of the same form in English. This factor has to be strongly considered while teaching English to avoid expected problems at the discursal level. Therefore, the emphasis on teaching a foreign language is to provide communication through a functional syllabus by making use of the integration of four language skills by the help of the student-oriented classes, authentic texts and applying communicative testing principles to teaching. Thus, the discourse functions of the target language should be clearly understood and taught to students to enable effective and fluent communication.

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## ملخص البحث:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تبيان دور تحليل الخطاب في تدريس اللغة الانكليزية من منظور وظيفي. لقد تناولت معظم الدراسات الحديثة تحليل الخطاب كونه طريقة بديلة لفهم عملية إدراك اللغة. لقد جاء اهتمام هذا البحث منصبا على كيفية أن الخصائص الوظيفية للمكونات الجميلية (استخدام الاستفهام مثلا) تكون أدلة للسامعين في مختلف السياقات لتسهيل تكامل انسياب المعلومات. هذا بالإضافة إلى كون تحليل الخطاب هو أداة طرائقية من السهولة أن تعبر نفسها في البحث عن الخصائص الوظيفية للتحدث وللعملية الإدراكية كذلك كونها أداة تشخيص الاتجاهات الاجتماعية والأفكار التي تكون السبب وراء الأنماط اللغوية الملحوظة. يميل معظم المعلمين (المدرسين) في تدريس اللغة بمعزل عن استخدامها. وبالنتيجة فإن السياق يكون ناقصا وعندما يحين الوقت لممارسة الأشياء التي تعلمها الطلبة في المواقف الحياتية الواقعية تجدهم يفشلون في استخدام اللغة مما يجعل الأمر صعبا عليهم بمكان إدراك وظيفة اللفظة التي يوجهها المتحدث.