

Formal and functional grammar

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This paper compares generativist and functionalist accounts of the relation between form and function on the various levels of language: sounds and graphs, morphs and words, sentences and clauses, utterances and texts and speech acts. Metalanguage and notational systems for the description of word order in subordinate clauses in Danish used by grammarians such as Diderichsen, Hrafnbjargarson, Ken Christensen, Hansen and Heltoft, and Togeby are discussed, and it is shown that these approaches, despite their differences, are not incompatible, but that the notational systems of formal grammar, such as a grammar with rewrite rules, offer the best guarantee for a consistent and non-contradictory description. Methods for falsification of the theories are compared, and it is shown that philological methods afford more sophisticated procedures than acceptability tests. Generative grammar has as its goal to find and describe universal grammar competence (generativity and recursivity) which make up the biological grounding for linguistic performance. Functional grammar tries to explain how a specific language has developed through evolution and history based on sociality, trust and culture. In the end, it is shown how these epistemological goals, biology and sociality, have influenced the description of the change of construction from *Det fortryder mig* (literally 'It regrets me') to *Jeg fortryder det* ('I regret it'). It is concluded that the two linguistic schools would benefit from collaboration on specific descriptions.