Analyzing Literary Texts through Functional Grammar

Naveed Rehan
University of Management and Technology- Lahore, Pakistan.

ABSTRACT
Functional Grammar (FG) or Systemic Linguistics was developed by Michael Halliday in the 1960s as a model of grammar to show how language *functions* in a text. Unlike formal grammar, FG focuses on the contextual functions of language. In this paper I analyze and compare two texts through the lens of Functional Grammar. I attempt to show that FG is a useful tool for analyzing literary texts. The texts I use are excerpts from two essays: “Love” by D. H. Lawrence, and “A Short History of Love” by Lawrence Stone. Canonical writers of English like D. H. Lawrence or James Joyce— to give but two examples—often depart from traditional grammatical rules in order to make their language express something that correct grammar is incapable of communicating. Functional Grammar uncovers fascinating details about how writers construct their texts in keeping with their purpose and audience. While both the texts I analyze talk about the same phenomenon (romantic love) and reach the same conclusions, the means by which they reach these conclusions are very different—Lawrence uses a highly subjective and rhetorical style, whereas Stone, a historian, presents a more objective and scientific argument. My aim is to show that language users have linguistic choices and that these choices are seldom neutral.

Keywords: functional grammar, systemic linguistics, literary analysis